Underrepresented: The Experiences of Black People Who Pursued Careers in Minnesota Law Enforcement

A Dissertation

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BLACK EXPERIENCES IN MINNESOTA LAW ENFORCEMENT

Author Note

An active discussion continues among scholars regarding terminology and capitalization conventions when describing racial or ethnic identity. When referring to racial identities, I have adopted the style convention of using, in lower case, the terms *whites, blacks,* and *people of color*. The perspectives offered by Perlman (2015) have been especially helpful in selecting this convention. *People of color* (or POC) is a referent to a superset containing all non-Caucasian people and will include blacks (i.e., people of African descent), Asians, Native Americans, and Hispanic peoples of all races. Finally, the terms *people of color* and *minorities* will be used interchangeably.

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Inspiration to pursue this path has come from a Higher Power, as well as my children, whose safety has and will always be my constant concern, and whose stories of their own encounters with law enforcement were further motivation for my research.

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Abstract

While African Americans are overrepresented in Minnesota police shootings and officer-involved fatalities, they are underrepresented in Minnesota law enforcement. The reasons are complex, interconnected, grounded in historical racial barriers and racist practices, and reinforced by current obstacles such as career awareness, concerns about the legitimacy of the law-enforcement function, and academic credentialing. Scholarly literature and law-enforcement leadership agree that *a comprehensive effort to bolster public confidence and police legitimacy must include an increase in racial and ethnic diversity in order to better match the populations being served.* ROTC and STEM are two examples of partnerships and proactive collaborations between higher education and future employers in response to the society's continuing need for well-qualified, appropriately prepared talent.

This investigation used an ethnographic case study framework to explore the lived experiences of 13 people of color who pursued careers as Minnesota police officers. A review of the literature surfaced seven salient career choice factors, *role models and mentorship, social capital, perceptions, interests and skills, financial access, post-secondary credentials*, and *capacity for self-authorship*. These served as a starting point for the development of a semistructured interview framework. A participatory research lens was used to sharpen the insights and enhance the legitimacy of these findings. This study identified specific barriers to black participation in representative numbers—most prominently a culture intolerant of difference. Of the seven career-choice elements, the *capacity for self-authorship* emerged as the most significant enabler of career access and

success for black police officers. Initiatives to improve representation that offer the greatest promise include active promotion, by leadership, of the importance of a more diverse and inclusive work environment to rank-and-file officers; recruitment initiatives tailored to build career awareness among underrepresented identities; and investment in pathway programs like Law Enforcement Training Opportunities (LETO) and Law Enforcement Career Path Academy (LECPA), as well as paid developmental opportunities such as community service officer and cadet positions. These tactics will have the greatest impact if deployed in concert.

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Chapter 1: Background and Overview

Background of the Study

Nationally, there has been increased interest in reducing differences in racial and ethnic demographic representation in local law-enforcement departments relative to the communities they serve. This interest has been reflected in national policy studies, such as the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing (2015), as well as the news media, including media outlets in Baltimore (Collins, 2015), Pittsburgh (Zullo, 2015), and Minneapolis/Saint Paul (Kaste, 2015; Kaiser, 2015; Jany, 2016; McKinney, 2014b; Magan, 2016; Gottfried, 2016). Typical stories lead with headlines like this article by David Collins, of NBC-TV affiliate WBAL, Baltimore, MD: "Police struggling to recruit minorities, testimony reveals" (2015).

Research suggests that poor relations between the police and communities of color are both a cause and an outcome of persistent underrepresentation of minorities in law enforcement (Crank, 1998; White, Cooper, Saunders, & Raganella, 2010). Those poor relations continue to be a factor in longstanding difficulties that police departments experience in attracting applicants to the field (White, Cooper, Saunders, & Raganella, 2010; Jany, 2016).

In December 2014, President Barack Obama appointed George Mason University criminology professor Laurie Robinson and Philadelphia Police Department Commissioner Charles Ramsey to co-chair an eleven-person Department of Justice task force; the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing. The task force, composed of law-enforcement leaders, academics, and community leaders, was tasked by the president

to examine "how to build public trust and foster strong relationships between local law enforcement and the communities that they protect, while also promoting effective crime reduction" (White House Office of the Press Secretary, 2014). The value of having a police force representative of the diversity present in the community being served was validated by the findings of the President's Task Force:

> Law enforcement agencies should strive to create a workforce that contains a broad range of diversity including race, gender, language, life experience, and cultural background to improve understanding and effectiveness in dealing with all communities (President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing, 2015, p. 86).

As with any critical, complex public-service function, local law-enforcement agencies across the country face multiple challenges. Four of these challenges are potentially interrelated. One is the difficulty local law-enforcement agencies face in recruitment. The standards that candidates for entry-level sworn peace-officer positions must meet are stringent and multifaceted (DeCicco, 2000; White & Escobar, 2008; Hilal, Densley, & Jones, 2015). Consequently, many who express interest in law enforcement fail to meet the requirements (Hilal, Densley, & Jones, 2015), while police departments struggle to meet recruitment goals (McKinney, 2014; Kaiser, 2015; White & Escobar, 2008; Zullo, 2015).

A second challenge is that community and law-enforcement leaders agree that local police departments frequently fail to reflect the diversity of racial identities that make up the communities they serve, particularly in communities that have significant

black or Hispanic populations (President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing, 2015; Priesmeyer, 2014; Magan, 2016).

A third challenge is that the nature of police work is evolving, necessitating an evolution in the mindset and skills required of the ideal police candidate. "Law enforcement culture should embrace a guardian—rather than a warrior—mindset, to build trust and legitimacy … with the public" (President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing, 2015, p. 1). This challenge is particularly daunting, as candidates for a career in policing are likely to be those drawn to the image of policing, an image shaped by past history rather than present and future requirements. The classic "public face" of police work has typically been that of a white male (Hilal & Erickson, 2009; Quinn, 2011; President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing, 2015) crime fighter exerting command authority and, when necessary, physical force to subdue perpetrators while protecting the innocent (Quinn, 2011; Crank, 1998). The classic role of law enforcement is to maintain order through the use of its command authority to sustain the status quo. "Officers don't simply patrol areas, they control them… areas are an officer's responsibility, a trust from the state and an obligation an officer accepts to keep the peace" (Crank, 1998, p. 44). While these familiar images and roles remain a part of police work, they fail to recognize the emerging demands of 21st century policing. "Today's line officers and leaders must meet a wide variety of challenges including international terrorism, evolving technologies, rising immigration, changing laws, new cultural mores, and a growing mental health crisis" (President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing, 2015, p. 51).

Finally, public confidence in law enforcement has been eroded (Morin & Stepler, 2016). Particularly among historically marginalized communities, the belief that police not only subject the public to unwarranted uses of force but routinely engage in violent behavior with minimal consequences undercuts the legitimacy of the law-enforcement function.

While overt manifestations of racism may be less prevalent today than in the past, police use of force against minorities under questionable circumstances, often resulting in serious injuries and fatalities, continue to be commonplace. In the past four years, Eric Garner, Tamir Rice, Freddie Gray, and Walter Scott have become household names, black men and boys whose stories of fatal encounters at the hands of law enforcement are well known, particularly among the black community. At the same time, they are but four names among more than two hundred unarmed African American men whose lives are lost in encounters with law enforcement each year (*Washington Post*, n.d.).

According to the Washington Post analysis, the number of whites killed by police constitutes a narrow majority of all fatalities at the hands of police; yet on a proportional basis, blacks as well as Hispanics, are significantly overrepresented. In 2015, black people were three times more likely to have a fatal police encounter than whites. The statistical gap was even more dramatic when comparing the number of deaths of unarmed blacks to unarmed whites (*Washington Post*, n.d.).

While some scholars believe American policing is rooted in the ethical policing principles established by Sir Robert Peel in 1829 (Peel. 1829; Rennison & Dodge, 2015), others argue that the most influential template from which American police

practices originate are the "slave patrols developed by the white slave owners as a means of dealing with runaways" (Williams & Murphy, 1990, p. 3). Compared to whites, black people have much higher levels of concern as to how they will be treated in an encounter with law enforcement. Figure 1 illustrates the contrast between the responses of whites and blacks who were asked the question, "Do you have confidence in your local police department?" Of the participants, 81% of white responses fell within the top two categories of "A lot" or "Some," while among blacks, only 55% responded in the top two categories. The response category "None at all" had four times as many black respondents, or 24%, when compared with white correspondents, where only 6% expressed no confidence in local police. Only 14% of black correspondents expressed "A lot of" confidence in local policing, compared with 42% of whites (Morin & Stepler, 2016).

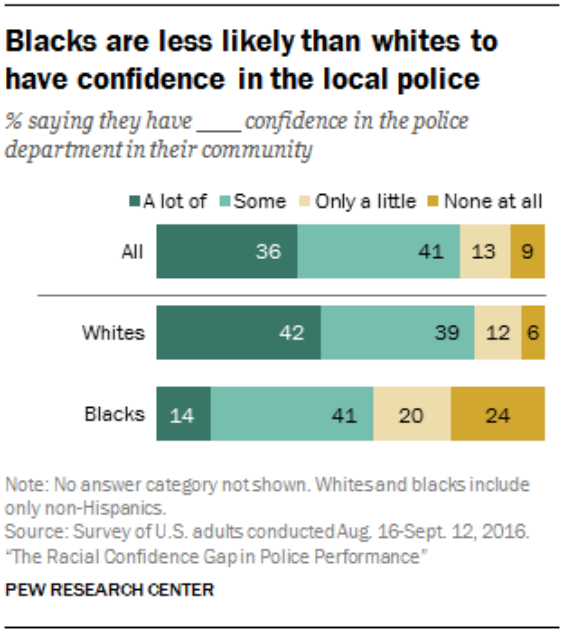

Figure 1. Blacks are Less Likely than Whites to Have Confidence in the Local Police. From "The Racial Confidence Gap in Police Performance," by R. Morin and R. Stepler, Pew Research Center.

Even police officers of color, when off duty and out of uniform, widely report being profiled and treated in a harsh and discriminatory fashion by their fellow police officers until their status as law-enforcement officers become known (Conlin, 2015; Shapiro, 2016). In a recent survey of 25 current and former NYPD police officers conducted by Reuters, 24 of the 25 reported experiencing at least one personal incidence of racial profiling (Conlin, 2015).

Incidents of racial profiling and inappropriate use of force lead to lawsuits and the award of monetary damages in the millions of dollars. For example, in Minneapolis, Minnesota, between 2006 and 2012, the settlement of police misconduct lawsuits cost the city nearly $14 million (Matos & Furst, 2013). Beyond the financial cost, the adverse impact that such incidents have on the public's perception of the legitimacy of police authority is substantial. Particularly in the context of this study of the experience of black police officers and how they came to choose a law-enforcement career, this public perception of the nature of police work takes on a special significance. How perceptions of police legitimacy affect law-enforcement career interest will be among the topics this study explores.

Increasing diversity in the ranks of law enforcement should not be thought of as an automatic panacea. For example, among the largest police misconduct payouts associated with a Minnesota police officer were a pair of police brutality charges brought in 2010 and 2011 by black city residents against a black police officer from the Minneapolis fourth police precinct. The settlements for these cases totaled $410,000, a cost born by city taxpayers (McKinney, 2014a). And more recently, charges have been

brought against Mohamed Noor, a black, Somali-American Minneapolis Police Department officer, in the 2017 fatal shooting of Justine Damond, a Southwest Minneapolis resident who called 911 to report a suspected sexual assault (Nelson, 2018; Ibrahim, 2018). Increasing black representation in law enforcement does not automatically eliminate racial profiling or inappropriate use of force. But when police look more like the people they are policing, it reduces the perception of policing being an externally imposed source of oppression. It creates the potential for police power to be perceived by community members as legitimate. Legitimate police power is more likely to be met with compliance (President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing, 2015), and compliant responses are less likely to be met by force (Johnson, 2004; Schwarzkopf, E. N., Houlihan, D.D., Kolb, K., Lewinski, W., Buchanan, J., & Christenson, A., 2008).

Put another way, when the demographics of law enforcement differ dramatically from the demographics of the communities they serve, the power and discretion that society has assigned to the law enforcement function can appear coercive, rather than legitimate. In Minnesota, disproportionately low numbers of people of color are a pervasive feature of police departments across the state. Table 1 details the extent of racial underrepresentation across the state's eight largest police departments. By facilitating a direct comparison between the representations of people of color in each service area and their representation in each respective police department, Table 1 facilitates visualization of the severity of underrepresentation in each department. The percentage data contained in the far right-hand column, *Police of Color–Gap*, can be used to make direct comparisons of the degree of underrepresentation in different departments,

even between departments of different sizes. The adjacent column, *Police of Color–Shortfall* indicates in absolute numeric terms how many white officers in a department would have to be replaced by officers of color in order to achieve a racial balance reflective of the racial balance in the community served by that department, thus providing another measure of imbalance severity. For example, the Hennepin County Sheriff's Office would need to triple the number of people of color currently within its ranks in order to close its representation gap.

With the exception of Minneapolis and Duluth, each of the eight largest police departments would have to increase the number of police officers of color by at least a factor of two in order to eliminate the racial representation gap within that department.

Table 1 also includes an analysis of *African American* underrepresentation in one department, the Minnesota State Patrol. To close the African American representation gap, the State Patrol would need *ten times* the current number of African American officers.

Table 2 focuses on Minneapolis, which is served by the state's largest police department. On a percentage basis, the Minneapolis Police Department (MPD) has the smallest representation gap of any of the state's eight largest departments. For every four sworn officers of color currently on the MPD police force, the department would need to hire three more officers of color to close the representation gap. On a numeric basis, the MPD is tied with Saint Paul for the largest shortfall of officers of color. To match the representation of POCs in the city of Minneapolis, the MPD will need to hire 134 more POC.

Table 1. *Underrepresentation in the Eight Largest Police Departments in Minnesota*

		General population		Police force		People of color		Police of color		
		Total	People of Color	Total	People of Color	General population	Police Force	Total	Shortfall	Gap
Minneapolis Police Dept.		382,599	138,500	**840**	**170**	36.2%	20.2%	170	**134**	**78.9%**
Saint Paul Police Dept.		285,068	113,742	**606**	**108**	39.9%	17.8%	108	**134**	**123.9%**
Minnesota State Patrol *		5,519,952	805,913	**615**	**32**	14.6%	5.2%	32	**58**	**180.6%**
Hennepin County Sheriff		1,223,149	298,448	**335**	**26**	24.4%	7.8%	26	**56**	**214.4%**
Ramsey County Sheriff		538,133	165,207	**217**	**30**	30.7%	13.8%	30	**37**	**122.1%**
Duluth Police Dept.		86,266	8,282	**156**	**8**	9.6%	5.1%	8	**7**	**87.2%**
Rochester Police Dept.		106,748	19,215	**132**	**9**	18.0%	6.8%	9	**15**	**164.0%**
St. Cloud Police Dept.		65,946	10,156	**97**	**6**	15.4%	6.2%	6	**9**	**149.0%**

		General population		Police force		African Am. (black)		African Am. (black) police		
		Total	African-Am.	Total	African-Am.	General population	Police force	Total	Shortfall	Gap
Minnesota State Patrol*		5,519,952	342,237	**615**	**3**	6.2%	0.5%	3	**35**	**1171.0%**

Note. All eight of Minnesota's largest police departments have significant underrepresentation of people of color. Only two (Duluth -- 87.2% increase required; and Minneapolis -- 78.9% increase required) require less than ***twice*** the number of people of color currently employed as sworn officers in order to reflect the proportion of POC in the populations they serve. Other Minnesota departments would need to ***more than double*** the number of police officers of color in order to close the representation gap. The Hennepin County Sheriff's office would need to ***more than triple*** the number of people of color (56 more than the current 26 sworn officers of color) to reach representative parity. Minnesota State Patrol would need ***ten times*** the current number of African American officers in order to achieve representative parity.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau (retrieved 2017).
U.S. Dept. of Justice -- Bureau of Justice Statistics (unpublished 2013 data; accessed 2017).

*Source: Minnesota State Patrol staff interview.

Table 2. *Underrepresentation: An Example Using the Minneapolis Police Department*

City of Minneapolis—Minneapolis Police Department

General Population		Police Force		People of Color		Police of Color		
Total	People of Color	Total	People of Color	General population	Police Force	Total	Shortfall	Gap
382,599	138,500	840	170	36.2%	20.2%	170	134	78.9%

Note: With a city population that is more than 35% people of color, an 840 person police force that matched city demographics would include over 300 non-white officers. That would require an increase of 134 officers of color from current force levels.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau (retrieved 2017)
U.S. Department of Justice—Bureau of Justice Statistics (unpublished 2013 data; accessed 2017)

The connection between perceptions of citizen safety and the legitimacy of the policing function, and the connection between police legitimacy and the relative attractiveness of law enforcement as a career path for blacks and other people of color are the dynamics that lie at the heart of this study. By understanding the experiences of black people who have chosen careers in law enforcement, this study seeks to better understand factors that either support or hinder access to law-enforcement careers, particularly for blacks. By itself, increasing the number of minorities in law enforcement will neither restore police legitimacy, or enhance perceptions of safety. But local law-enforcement leaders and national experts agree that a comprehensive initiative to improve relations between communities of color and law enforcement must include increasing diversity representation to better match the populations being served (President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing, 2015; Bayley, 2002; Perrott, 2008).

Problem Statement

The central problem addressed by this study is how to create a diverse, well-qualified workforce of law-enforcement officers who are positioned to address the complexities of community policing in the 21st century. My framing of this problem is guided by the final report of the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing (2015). The findings of the task force are organized into six categories, referred to in the report as *pillars*. All six pillars contained elements that informed this study. The pillars include "Policy and Oversight," "Technology and Social Media," "Community Policing and Crime Reduction," "Training and Education," and "Officer Wellness and Safety." However, the first of the six, "Building Trust and Legitimacy," proved to be foundational to this study (President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing, 2015). Legitimacy is foundational because "people are more likely to obey the law when they believe that those who are enforcing it have authority that is perceived as legitimate" (President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing, 2015, p. 1). This legitimacy is conferred when law enforcement is perceived as a component of the community rather than an external occupying force and when law enforcement operates in ways that are seen as procedurally just (President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing, 2015).

Supporting this pillar of trust and legitimacy are tactics that include promotion of a *guardian* (versus a *warrior*) mindset, programs to support law-enforcement officer residency within the communities where they work, and public acknowledgment of law enforcement's historical association with socially mandated racial inequality. Most notably, the task force recommendations include strong support for the racial

diversification of police officer ranks, such that they more closely resemble the racial demographics of the communities they serve (President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing, 2015). Today's challenge is to successfully recruit a more diverse police force at a time when police departments find it difficult to recruit qualified recruits of any ethnic identity (White & Escobar, 2008; Zullo, 2015).

Recruiting candidates from the black community is particularly challenging. For many black Americans, the legitimacy of law enforcement is deeply damaged because of the historical role that law enforcement has played in enforcing social norms of racial bias and oppression. In poor black communities, direct knowledge of police misconduct is widely known. Compared with middle- and upper-income communities, the number of times the average resident of a lower-income community experiences a contact with law enforcement is significantly higher, as enforcement efforts are focused on poor communities (Quinn, 2011; Stuart, 2016). And police in poor black neighborhoods are more likely to deploy high levels of force, breaking down doors in police raids, and occasionally invading the homes of innocents whose only crime is having the misfortune of living adjacent to criminal activity. Young black men are detained, handcuffed, and even beaten, only to later be proved innocent of criminal act or intent, with a regularity that would not be tolerated in white middle-class neighborhoods (Quinn, 2011; Alexander, 2012; Stuart, 2016). Officers who plant evidence and file reports falsely attesting to illegal acts may be rewarded for their productivity (Chin and Wells, 1998; Quinn, 2011). Police deception and perjury are known concerns and are the subjects of past studies (Chin and Wells, 1998; Skolnick, 1982; Crank, 1998). These are law-

enforcement behaviors that have a negative impact on poor, predominantly minority communities. As a result, the legitimacy of the police and the law-enforcement process can be badly compromised in the eyes of the residents of these communities (Karabel, 2016).

The compromised reputation of law enforcement appears to hinder local police departments in their efforts to implement the President's Task Force mandate to "build trust and legitimacy" by creating a diverse workforce that reflects the racial identities of the communities they serve. Law-enforcement leaders and academic research concur that certain demographics are highly valued but challenging to recruit. These groups include people of color, women, people with four-year degrees and diverse work experiences, and candidates with personal qualities such as high levels of empathy, well-developed communication skills, a second language, and a service-oriented *guardian* mindset (President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing, 2015).

Study Purpose

Despite the obstacles, many black people *do* choose a career in law enforcement, particularly in some of the largest U.S. cities, such as New York and Chicago. As previously mentioned, approximately 37% of the U.S. population were ethnic or racial minorities (U.S. Census, 2015) while only 27% of sworn law-enforcement officers were minorities (Reaves, 2015). The purpose of this study is to understand the experiences of law-enforcement officers of color and the pathways that lead them to careers in law enforcement. Particular attention is paid to the obstacles these officers encountered and how they overcame them. In addition, the study seeks to understand the role that higher

education plays in supporting or hindering access to the peace-officer career path for people of color, as well as how effective higher education has been in preparing this population of students to succeed. The study focuses on factors that led these individuals to consider a career in law enforcement and the particular individual qualities that supported their entry into this profession.

Research Questions

This study will interrogate the following research questions:

- What have been the *experiences* of black people who have chosen a career in law enforcement?
- For black people who have chosen a law enforcement career, what sparked their initial interest in this career, what factors facilitated their pursuit, what challenges did they encounter, what role did higher education play in either supporting or hindering their career path, and what did they experience as law-enforcement officers?

Significance of the Study

This study lies in the intersection of research that examines career-access challenges faced by minority groups and studies of American law-enforcement culture, while also extending the body of literature pertaining to the role of higher education in facilitating career interests and career access. Today, colleges and universities play important roles in preparing future professionals for roles in military leadership, through the ROTC program (Ayers, 2006), and in research, through pre-professional programs like McNair Scholars (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.; McNair Scholars Program,

n.d.). What role do institutions of higher learning play in developing future police officers?

This study will examine the experiences of black men and women who have chosen careers in law enforcement. In doing so, it is hoped that underlying reasons for persistent minority underrepresentation can be identified. This study may also help future policymakers and police leaders identify unmet needs that could be addressed by new programs and policies designed to enhance recruitment and retention. Improved racial representation may serve, in turn, to enhance the perceived legitimacy of the police function and reduce antagonism between local law enforcement and the communities they serve (President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing, 2015; Jany, 2016).

The potential benefits of improved racial representation extend beyond enhancing the legitimacy of the policing profession. In Minnesota, the unemployment rate for blacks, as well as the employment and household income gaps between blacks and whites, are all among the highest in the country (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, n.d.), while Minnesota police departments offering starting salaries that are above the national mean struggle to fill vacancies (McKinney, 2014; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2015). Reducing entry barriers and engaging more blacks (and other minorities) in law-enforcement careers could contribute to a reduction in racial economic disparities.

One final benefit, while difficult to assess, could, in human terms, be the most significant. Perhaps the life experiences and communication skills embodied in a more diverse police force will help "improve understanding and effectiveness in dealing with all communities" (President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing, 2015, p. 2), and in

turn reduce the number of unfortunate escalations that lead to significant citizen injuries and, on an annual basis, roughly 1,000 civilians being killed by the police, as reported by the *Washington Post* (n.d.), and the *Guardian* (Swaine, Laughland, Lartey & McCarthy, 2015).

Organization

Chapter 2 provides a review of the relevant literature and includes scholarly literature on career choice and college major choice, as well as a combination of scholarly and journalistic literature exploring alternative models of career access and preparation. The current context and historical foundations of often strained relations between law enforcement and communities of color are also examined. Chapter 2 also includes a review of literature that explores the dynamics of law enforcement and minoritized identities, including public perceptions, recruitment processes and challenges, access, training, and daily experiences. The study design, detailed in Chapter 3, follows the methodologies, conceptual frameworks, analytical approaches, and interview techniques of established qualitative research practice. My research will be further informed by my own life experiences with law enforcement as a as a black American.

Chapter 4 will summarize the data collected from interviews from 13 currently active and retired minority law-enforcement officers, 12 of whom are African-American or black. In addition, the themes identified within the data will be described. Chapter 5 will contextualize the research findings within the evolving mission and current challenges of law enforcement in America, and specifically in Minnesota. These research

findings have significant implications for organizations that hope to recruit African Americans and other underrepresented identities. The implications are significant for current and future officers of color as well.

Chapter 2: A Review of the Literature

Underrepresentation of Black People in Law Enforcement

People of color are severely underrepresented in law enforcement nationally, and black people especially so. While 37% of Americans are ethnic or racial minorities, just 27% of law-enforcement officers are people of color (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015; Reaves, 2015). This disparity is particularly stark in Minnesota, the context in which this study is undertaken. Nearly 20% of Minnesotans are people of color, but only 7% of law-enforcement officers are racial or ethnic minorities (Magan, 2016). In 2014, blacks made up over 18% of the general population of Minneapolis but only 9% of the Minneapolis Police Department (MPD); Hispanics made up over 10% of the city's population but just 4% of the MPD (Priesmeyer, 2014). Efforts to increase POC representation to better match the demographics of communities served by law enforcement have been largely unsuccessful. Significant racial disparities remain, despite highly visible, regularly expressed interest, accompanied by notable efforts, to close the gap. These efforts have been undertaken by a multitude of local, state, and national law-enforcement leaders.

Looking specifically at blacks in law enforcement, there are reasons to believe that the degree of underrepresentation is even more severe than this top-line review of the statistics would suggest. Consider that people of African descent make up 13% of the U.S. population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015). Yet, looking specifically at the pool of education- and age-eligible persons, blacks make up 17% of that pool (Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense, 2014). In the military, a highly accessible career path for African Americans for several decades, blacks make up 20% of all active Army

soldiers, down from a peak of 27% as recently as 1995 (Zoroya, 2014). This is pertinent, as military service is a common background in law enforcement.

The balance of this chapter opens with a contextual history of law enforcement in the United States and the relationship between law enforcement and people of color. It continues with an exploration of the role of higher education in career selection, the support of career pathways, career choice, and insights from the literature on postsecondary persistence. Barriers to selection and proportional representation are considered. The chapter also includes a review of the literature on personality type theory as it relates to law enforcement. Prior research on the relationship between postsecondary degree attainment and effective law enforcement is considered. The chapter concludes with a reflection on common perceptions of the profession of law enforcement, of people of color, of the relationship between the two, and how those perceptions potentially affect the profession's ability to successfully recruit and retain people of color. Collectively, these contextual elements serve as a foundation for understanding how college major-selection and career-selection processes have contributed to the persistent pattern of underrepresentation of POCs in law enforcement in Minnesota and nationally. It also serves as a foundation for understanding the barriers POC have overcome in joining the ranks of law enforcement.

Legitimacy, social control, and origins of distrust between police and black people. The historical and contemporary context in which law enforcement is viewed with trepidation and distrust within African American communities appears to be a contributing factor to a reduced level of interest in law enforcement as a career. Law

enforcement in the United States is a vocation that has its very roots grounded in social control and racial oppression. The history of law enforcement as an instrument of oppression, degradation, and violence extends back more than 300 years and actually predates both the United States and police work as a professional discipline. Policing in the U.S. has its origins in the slave patrols of the South (Williams & Murphy, 1990; Reichel, 1988). Prior to the modern-day concept of the local police department, South Carolina statutes of the late 17th century authorized ordinary white citizens to capture and punish runaway slaves (Reichel, 1988). Williams and Murphy paint a vivid picture of the connection between the roots of policing and its current practice:

> [The law] not only countenanced but sustained slavery, segregation, and discrimination for most of our country's history…. [T]he fact that the police were bound to uphold [that law] set a pattern for police behavior and attitudes toward minority communities that has persisted until the present day. That pattern includes the idea that minorities have fewer civil rights, that the task of the police is to keep them under control, and that the police have little responsibility for protecting them from crime within their communities. (Williams & Murphy, 1990, p. 2)

Precursors of modern policing emerged somewhat later in the postcolonial North, as Northern cities began to experience rapid population growth, poverty, and social unrest driven by immigrant populations from Germany, Ireland, Italy, and Scandinavia (Reichel, 1988). Policing in America was also influenced by emerging trends in policing in England, most notably Sir Robert Peel's ethical policing principles, published in 1829

(Peel, 1829; Rennison & Dodge, 2015). By the 1830s, urban Southern centers like Charleston had formalized their policing structure, but their primary function of regulating the movement of blacks, catching runaway slaves, and preventing slave revolts remained unchanged.

Echoes of this dark legacy permeate American law enforcement. Glover observed how the role law enforcement played during the civil rights period of the 1950s and 1960s served to reinforce African American perceptions that law enforcement as widely practiced in America served not as a protector of personal safety but as a primary threat to that safety:

> … during the late 1950s and throughout the 1960s .... police officers were used to arrest peaceful demonstrators, enforce segregation laws, deny equal education, and, in some cases, to assist in carrying out vigilante justice. A number of the most sensational and brutal killings in African American history have been attributed to police officers … includ[ing] the 1959 lynching of Mack Parker, who was found floating in a river after being taken from a jail cell. (Glover, 1992)

It was the police who backed up Governor George Wallace as he fulfilled his pledge to "stand in the schoolhouse door" in his fight to prevent federally mandated desegregation of the University of Alabama in 1963 (Elliot, 2003). It was the police who struck an unarmed and unresisting Rodney King 56 times, an assault captured on video, and who then subsequently were acquitted of wrongdoing, leading to the Los Angeles riots of 1992 (Cable News Network wire staff, 2012). In 2014, the public availability of video evidence escalated dramatically. The nation watched the video evidence of an

unarmed and unresisting Eric Garner being choked to death by law enforcement, again without any criminal finding against the responsible officer (Apuzzo, Goldman, & Rashbaum, 2016). The public's curiosity about the number of fatal police encounters was sparked, and at the end of 2015 for the first time, comprehensive national statistics were published, aggregated from public data by the *Guardian* and the *Washington Post*. Across the nation there was dismay and concern that more than 1,100 people lost their lives to law enforcement that year (Swaine, Laughland, Lartey & McCarthy, 2015). This same analysis indicated that fewer than half were in possession of a firearm at the time of their death. In addition, young black men ages 15 to 34 were being killed by police at a rate five times that of young white men of comparable age (Swaine, Laughland, Lartey & McCarthy, 2015).

Law enforcement in the black community—competing narratives. Competing narratives are offered for this disparity in police violence. Some scholarly observers note that blacks are disproportionately engaged in criminal or violent activities (French, 2015). French cited the Uniform Crime Reporting Statistics, which indicate that in 2013, blacks made up just 13% of the U.S. population but accounted for the majority of homicide and robbery arrests (U.S. Department of Justice, 2014). Other scholars take exception to the suggestion that police use of force against blacks is simply a function of higher levels of criminality in the black community. They argue that elevated crime statistics in poor black communities are the predictable consequences of historical, systemic, race-based oppression. They note the disproportionate extent to which blacks are concentrated in communities with high levels of poverty, the tendency for predominantly minority

communities to experience a more pervasive police presence, and the propensity for police to conduct searches, make arrests, and use force in encounters with minorities wherever they may be encountered, particularly when the subjects are young black men (Alexander, 2012; Quinn, 2011; Coates, 2015). In other words, the counternarrative to French's observations is that higher objective measures of criminal behavior among blacks are a function of higher levels of police surveillance in predominantly black neighborhoods and, on average, lower socioeconomic status for blacks.

Another factor that may contribute to the harsh treatment of blacks at the hands of law enforcement are perceptions that black men are perceived by non-blacks to be larger, more muscular, more capable of causing harm, and therefore more dangerous than white men of the same size, and black youths are perceived as older (Wilson 2015). Anecdotal experience bears out the research. Officer Christopher Manney, who was fired but not charged with a crime for shooting and killing Dontre Hamilton, a homeless man sleeping in a public park in Milwaukee, said that Hamilton "most definitely would have overpowered … me or pretty much any officer I can think of, to tell you the truth. He was just that big, that muscular … I would say he would be impossible to control if you were one man." By contrast, in the medical examiner's report, Hamilton was described as a 169 pound, 5-foot-7 "well-developed … overweight adult-black male" (Hayes, 2014). Putting those statistics in context, the Center for Disease Control reports that the average American man over age 20 weighs 196 pounds (Center for Disease Control, 2018).

Use of force and police legitimacy. An examination of narratives describing police-civilian interactions shows that one can find opposing schools of thought with

sharply different opinions as to the justifiability of police use of force, even when presented with the same set of facts. Narratives of police encounters resulting in civilian injuries or death are processed through a lens of prior beliefs about the legitimacy of law enforcement. These lenses appear to be self-sustaining and self-reinforcing.

Those who believe in the legitimacy of modern-day law enforcement tend to see the same factual patterns and visual evidence very differently from those who see those factual patterns within a metanarrative of a history of police work conflated with racial oppression and systematic devaluation of black people (Crank, 1998; Quinn, 2011; Alexander, 2012; Coates, 2015). What is perceived as clearly unjustifiable police use of force by some, others see as an appropriate response to a failure to respect police authority. An example of this dynamic in operation is detailed in Appendix F: Anatomy of an arrest—how prior beliefs reinforce contrasting viewpoints on police legitimacy.

Further exacerbating the community's perception of injustice is the absence of corrective or punitive consequences, even for officers with a repetitive history of questionable uses of force, or a history of use-of-force complaints resolved through monetary settlements (Matos & Furst, 2013; McKinney, 2014a; Alexander, 2012; Quinn, 2011). Such incidents add additional fuel to negative perceptions among people of color about the legitimacy of policing (Morin & Stepler, 2016). One possible impact of this context is that it may discourage justice-minded people of color from considering careers in law enforcement.

Higher Education and Pathways to Careers in Law Enforcement

Higher education, targeted recruitment, and career choice. Higher education plays a significant role in influencing career choices for students. For example, in American universities, the presence of large, highly visible, and well-funded sports programs, such as football and men's basketball, facilitates their schools' access to the nation's most talented student athletes. The visibility that high-profile sports programs bring to their colleges and universities has considerable impact. The benefits to the football or basketball scholar-athlete who participates in one of those programs include both tangible rewards, such as scholarships, and the possibility of a highly remunerative sports career, and indirect rewards, such as social prestige on campus. The visibility and support thus provided to professional football and basketball result in the creation of a bountiful pool of high-quality athletic talent, groomed by four years of intense, high-quality training and development, from which the National Football League and the National Basketball Association can recruit. Less prestigious sports, such as bowling and badminton, offer fewer benefits and, consequently, attract smaller talent pools (Renick, 1974).

The same dynamics are at play with regard to nonathletic careers. Certain careers, such as law, engineering, and medicine, are advantaged relative to others, such as law enforcement. These more esteemed careers are associated with the nation's more prestigious four-year colleges and universities; while other, less highly regarded careers, such as law enforcement, HVAC maintenance, and automotive repair, are more closely

associated with two year colleges, for-profit institutions, and less selective, regional colleges.

Higher-education partnerships that close talent gaps. There are a number of examples where higher education has stepped up in response to persistent talent gaps. STEM programs have strengthened engagement levels for women and people of color for over a decade through higher education partnerships with a wide variety of stakeholders like the National Science Foundation, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, and the U.S. Department of Energy (Nast, P., n.d.; U.S. Department of Energy, n.d.). Higher-education leaders and policy makers have played an important role in securing scholarship funding, promoting targeted recruiting practices, and providing critical cocurricular support in service to the public's interest in increasing the participation of high-potential talent in these fields. Likewise, higher education may also play a role in promoting and facilitating access to careers in law enforcement, helping students appreciate police work as a rewarding, community-serving career alternative.

One model of higher education's response to an inadequate talent pipeline is the Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) program. By supporting the presence of campus-based ROTC programs and promoting military service as a "calling" that offers not only a secure employment path but significant remunerative and nonfinancial rewards, colleges help facilitate the connection between potential candidates and career opportunities in the military (Ayers, 2006). Furthermore, higher education has a demonstrated capacity to respond when particular candidate profiles are underrepresented. Put simply, higher-education leaders have a history of focusing

admissions recruitment efforts on attracting underrepresented or otherwise desirable population segments.

White and Escobar (2008) suggest police departments be challenged to approach talent sourcing differently and to incorporate emerging techniques such as proactive recruitment (White & Escobar, 2008). Among the findings of the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing is a recommendation that diversity efforts be multifaceted. They suggest that local departments identify, celebrate, and share best practices, that technical support be offered to departments with the greatest diversity gaps, and that financial incentives should be considered (President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing, 2015).

Higher education, in concert with external partners, has favored certain career paths with financial and nonfinancial support, resulting in higher levels of student consideration and engagement. A notable example would be the Reserve Officers' Training Corps program, which provides program participants with financial support and favorable campus visibility, resulting in greater awareness of, and participation in, careers in the military (Ayers, 2006).

Postsecondary access, persistence, and success. The literature on higher-education access and persistence provides useful insights applicable to people of color and their navigation of pathways to careers in law enforcement. In particular, there are lessons to be learned in comparing the *undermatching* that contributes to lower levels of academic attainment for blacks (Hoxby, Kurlaender & Carrell, 2013) and what could be termed undermatching, or underrepresentation of blacks, in law enforcement. Undermatching in higher education refers to the phenomenon where a high-performing,

well-prepared student fails to apply or matriculate into highly selective schools commensurate with the student's aptitude, high school preparation, and presumed capacity for academic rigor. Undermatching generally occurs when students are poorly informed about the differences in school selectivity and the benefits of attending more selective schools. It can also occur when students are not aware that, despite the higher published cost of attendance often associated with more selective schools, their discounted cost, after scholarships, may be comparable or even lower than the cost of less selective schools (Dillon & Smith, 2013).

This lack of informed decision-making is often associated with lower socioeconomic status. Applying this concept to career selection and law enforcement, individuals making college major or career decisions may fail to consider the possibility of law enforcement simply because of a lack of awareness of how their skills and interests aligned with the qualities demonstrated by successful police officers, or because they were unaware of the remunerative benefits of police work, such as high salaries, flexible work hours, or guaranteed retirement benefits.

There is an extensive body of literature on postsecondary access, persistence, and success, which may have application and yield insight into access and career success in law enforcement. Much has been made of the challenge of financial access to higher education. Even when college costs do not completely preclude postsecondary access, limited or tightly constrained financial circumstances are often associated with less-than-optimal decisions about institutional choices and the reduced likelihood of initiating or completing postsecondary education (Perna, 2006; Dowd, 2008; Tinto, 2002).

The literature on postsecondary persistence may have a direct application to the development of an understanding of underrepresentation in law enforcement. Successful strategies that institutions have employed to enhance persistence have been broken down into five specific areas of focus (Tinto, 2008). The first is institutional commitment to investing in persistence, along with the commitment of key stakeholders (e.g., the faculty) to successful outcomes. The second is the establishment of an environment where expectations for success are high, consistently held, and clearly communicated. The third is strong support, including mentorship, social support, and functional (e.g., academic) support. The fourth is clear and timely feedback. The fifth retention strategy is promoting engagement, both inside and outside the classroom (Tinto, 2008). Each of these strategies can be applied to law enforcement, a profession that requires extensive training before candidates "graduate" to the status of sworn law-enforcement officer.

Choice of major field of study and access to law-enforcement careers. The pathway to a law-enforcement career also relates to the choice of college major. While alternatives for accessing a Minnesota law-enforcement career exist that do not depend on completion of a law enforcement-specific college curriculum, in this state those alternatives require relevant professional experience, such as service as a law enforcement officer in another state, or military police experience. For the purpose of this study, the decision to pursue a postsecondary degree will be considered as an additional option within the major choice decision process. There is a developed body of literature on choice of major field of study in college. Scholars in this area examine how academic ability (Arcidiacono, 2003; Fizer, 2013), perceived earning potential (Arcidiacono, 2003;

Wiswall & Zafar, 2014; Arcidiacono, Hotz, & Kang, 2010; Fizer, 2013), role models, and prior exposure (Fizer, 2013) influence students' selection of a major field of study.

Choice of major can be particularly critical in the context of minimum standards that must be met in order to enter the profession. These standards can vary significantly from one state to the next. For example, the state of Minnesota is particularly stringent in that its minimum eligibility requirements include both the completion of a two- or four-year degree, as well as 24 credits of law enforcement-specific coursework (Hilal & Erickson, 2009). Minnesota is unusual in that it combines a high minimum level of academic attainment with the expectation that candidates seeking a Minnesota peace-officer license bear their own specialized training costs (Hilal, Densley, & Jones, 2015). These specialized academic requirements represent an incremental expense relative to other career options that require a two- or four-year degree but do not require specific coursework—for example, entry-level corporate analyst positions.

Connections between academic credentialing and high-quality policing.

Scholars have investigated the relationship between quality of policing and degree completion among police officers. One hypothesis is that higher educational standards for officers could lead to a better quality of policing (Hilal & Erickson, 2009). However, research that supports that theory has been limited, and the results have been mixed (Hilal, Densley, & Jones, 2015).

Other research by Rydberg and Terrill (2010) specifically identified three measures that have been associated with policing quality: namely, the ratio of police contacts to arrests, searches, and the use of force (Rydberg & Terrill, 2010), and analyzed

these measures in a sample of "3,356 encounters between officers and citizens suspected of some manner of wrongdoing" in two cities, St. Petersburg, Florida, and Indianapolis, Indiana (Rydberg & Terrill, 2010, page 101). They then correlated these encounters with the educational background of the officers. Rydberg and Terrill's literature review reinforced the findings of their 2010 study, which suggested that no meaningful correlation existed between officer education level and arrest rates or search rates. However, their research also correlated with previous findings that higher levels (either some college completion or college degree awarded) had a statistically significant inverse correlation with the frequency of force used (Rydberg & Terrill, 2010). In other words, additional education appears to produce officers who are less likely to resort to force in the fulfillment of their duties, but additional education does not otherwise affect their efficiency or productivity, either positively or negatively.

Rydberg and Terrill (2010) note that prior research has offered a mix of hypothesis-based and atheoretical methodologies. That is to say, some research has been designed to validate specific theories, while others were designed without an intention of either proving or disproving a specific hypothesis. They go on to note that while theories have been offered as to how post-secondary education might influence the use of force, they do not believe their research findings support ascribing a rationale as to why postsecondary education seems to be correlated with a reduction in the use of force. They suggested that future research should be conducted on this topic.

The research on high-quality policing and its connection to degree attainment has implications for future efforts to diversify Minnesota law enforcement. Minnesota is

distinctive in requiring that candidates for law-enforcement positions hold a two- or four-year college degree (Hilal & Erickson, 2009). Minnesota also has among the nation's highest degree attainment gaps between whites and blacks (Hoxby, Kurlaender & Carrell, 2013). The findings of Rydberg and Terrill are not conclusive but do suggest that establishing access pathways for recruits without a college degree, in combination with degree-completion support resources, such as loan forgiveness programs, could be material to securing the benefits of a diverse police staff. The findings further suggest that establishing such programs would not necessarily be associated with a compromise in the quality of policing. Minnesota's particularly stringent postsecondary educational criteria have been cited as poor tools for screening the best-qualified candidates (Hilal, Densley, & Jones, 2015).

Disproportionate impact of higher education requirements on people of color. The peculiar academic requirements of Minnesota law enforcement present a significant barrier to entry that is likely to disproportionately impede career access for people of color. This high educational bar is exacerbated by the significant historical gap in degree attainment between whites and people of color and between low-income and middle- or high-income families (Cahalan, Perna, Yamashita, Ruiz, & Franklin, 2016; Zinshteyn, 2016). Minnesota, as well as other states that are experiencing large gaps in educational attainment between whites and people of color can anticipate that these gaps will further complicate efforts to close racial representation gaps in law enforcement. In 2016, Minnesota had the second highest gap in the country when comparing white and black public high school 4-year adjusted cohort graduation rates (National Center for

Education Statistics, 2016). In 2015, nearly four out of ten black and Hispanic children failed to graduate from Minnesota high schools on time; by comparison, more than 85 of every 100 white children earned their high school diploma within four years (Minnesota Department of Education, 2016). This context suggests that the state of Minnesota would experience corresponding disparities in its academically qualified applicant pool, increasing the difficulty of achieving proportionate racial representation in Minnesota law enforcement.

Modeling college major choice. Arcidiacono (2003) uses quantitative methodology and a dynamic model to evaluate the relationship between quantitative indicators, such as standardized test scores, qualitative characteristics, such as relative math and verbal ability, and college major choice. Arcidiacono's research findings suggest that earnings premiums are driven by math ability and by major choice more so than by verbal ability and college ranking. His dynamic model identifies how feedback received through the higher-education process—including personal affinity for the subject material, peer interactions, information received concerning likely earning outcomes, and grades received—also affects major choice.

Arcidiacono's research focuses on identifying the determinants of ability sorting. The implication of this focus is that traditional measures of academic ability become the basis for steering students to particular majors. This is problematic, as it is now well-known that traditional measures, for example, standardized tests like the SAT, are subject to cultural bias (Allen, 2014; Brittain & Landy, 2014) and in particular are disproportionate in their adverse impact on black and Hispanic students, as well as

students of all races from low-income families (Brittain & Landy, 2014). As a result, to the extent that Arcidiacono failed to take cultural bias in standardized testing into consideration, systemic bias had the potential to influence his research findings.

An additional potential limitation of Arcidiacono's approach is its emphasis on high-ability versus low-ability students, high-quality schools versus low-quality schools, more difficult and less difficult majors, and more and less lucrative major fields of study. He also equates "difficult majors" with "lucrative careers." However, a study that suggests career quality can be determined solely by earning potential fails to consider other quality indicators, such as job impact and job satisfaction (Wiswall & Zafar, 2014).

Still, Arcidiacono's framework, by exploring correlations between academic choices made during college and career choices made after college, makes important contributions to the topic. An adaptation of Arcidiacono's methodology might prove useful in identifying whether *undermatching* (Hoxby, Kurlaender, & Carrell, 2014; Smith, Pender & Howell, 2013) is taking place. The language that describes *undermatching* in the context of high school students of color who fail to be identified as high potential and who subsequently are not provided with learning opportunities and support consistent with preparation for selective colleges, could be applicable in the context of law-enforcement career preparation. Here, *undermatching* might manifest itself as a systemic failure to identify people of color and place them on an appropriate path for a career in law enforcement, despite possession of the qualities associated with law-enforcement talent requirements and career success.

Complementing Arcidiacono's research, the study by Wiswall and Zafar (2014) adds value as it explicitly focuses on nonfinancial as well as financial determinants of college major choice selection. Their research introduces two important determinants of college major choice not explicitly addressed by Arcidiacono. One is the matter of "tastes," which refers to students' preference for one subject matter over another. The other is the issue of subjective beliefs; that is to say, the fact that student beliefs about aspects of one career path versus another, for example the earning potential of medical doctors or the time demands of a school teacher, may not align with objective measures. Tastes and subjective beliefs, along with earning potential, are significant determinants for college major choice selections in the Wiswall and Zafar study design (Wiswall & Zafar, 2014).

Wiswall and Zafar (2014) use a series of complex relationships and quantitative measures to capture student beliefs about the relationship between choice of major, choice of career, and likely earnings. Their findings clearly suggest that the relationship between the likely earning potential of various college majors and perceptions of earnings by college students is relatively weak. Students are likely to guess significantly higher or lower than actual or average earnings. This was true across various fields, irrespective of whether or not the students were themselves studying in that field. This finding is consistent with speculation that relative lack of interest in careers in law enforcement is due, in part, to an absence of information regarding the earning potential and nonsalary benefits, such as retirement pensions, associated with law-enforcement careers.

When presented with more accurate information about likely earnings, students adjusted their estimates in a fashion consistent with the new information. This suggests that students are open to revising their salary expectations based on credible new information that they may receive. These findings have particular significance when seeking to understand POC underrepresentation in law enforcement, and when devising strategies to reverse that underrepresentation. Consider the possibility that college students of color, lacking familial or other personal connections to law enforcement, may have limited insight into the earning potential of law-enforcement careers. Increasing POC awareness of typical law-enforcement salary and nonsalary benefits (e.g., generous retirement pensions, sick leave, vacation pay, etc.) could have a material impact on the number and the "quality" of students of color willing to consider careers in law enforcement.

Other factors affecting choice of major and degree attainment. Questions about major choice must be understood within the broader context of degree attainment across income categories. The relationship between family-income levels and college-degree attainment is well established. The difference in the rate at which high school graduates from high-income families attain a four-year college degree in comparison with high school graduates from low-income families was significant from the early 1970s through the early 1990s, and the gap has persisted in more recent times (Cahalan, Perna, Yamashita, Ruiz, & Franklin, 2016). Bachelor's degree attainment by age 24 for individuals in the lowest family-income quartile has fluctuated between a high of 14% in 1977 to a low of 7% in 1992. During this same time period, degree attainment in the top

income quartile has ranged from 45% to 60%. In other words, being born into a low-income family dramatically reduces a young person's chances of achieving a four-year degree by age 24. Those odds plummet from a one in two chance for a child born into the top 25% of income earners to roughly one in nine for a child born into the lowest quartile (Cahalan, Perna, Yamashita, Ruiz, & Franklin, 2016).

Among the barriers to proportionate minority representation in law enforcement, the disproportionate number of blacks and Hispanics in lower-income brackets will predictably lead to non-representative levels of qualifying prospective law-enforcement officers in the candidate pool. In 2014, for example, white students proceeded directly to college after high school graduation at a rate of 72%, which was 12 percentage points higher than the college attendance rate for black students; between white and Hispanic students, the gap was 21 percentage points. (Minnesota Statewide Longitudinal Education Data System, or "SLEDS," 2016).

In summary, what is known about choice of major field of study, including the choice of whether or not to pursue a postsecondary education, indicates that the history of a significant degree of underrepresentation of POC with the academic credentials necessary to enter the field of law enforcement can be expected to continue. Blacks and other people of color are less likely to have family members who are in law enforcement, so they are less likely to have accurate information about police salaries and other benefits. The relative absence of family members in law enforcement also means that people of color are less likely to be aware of the profession's academic credentialing requirements as they enter college, when those costs can be minimized by combining

specialized curricular requirements with the general requirements of earning a two-year degree.

This is significant in the state of Minnesota, where a two-year degree, along with specialized coursework, is required of all new law-enforcement officer candidates. This confluence of factors leads to questions this study helps to address. Minority students with skills and interests that make them well suited to careers in law enforcement, often fail to choose criminal justice or law enforcement as a major field of study, because they lack the "insider insight" that would help them see the alignment of the job demands of law enforcement to their interests. And the lack of insider insight to the true nature of law enforcement work is exacerbated by the disconnect between the "image" of police work and the actual day-to-day demands of the role.

Choice of Career and Career Access

Choice of career, as distinct from choice of college major, is another area of research that has developed an extensive body of literature. This section explores the interrelated set of factors that contribute to career choice, including law-enforcement careers.

Factors that influence career choice. The factors influencing the choice of law enforcement as a career may include perceptions about relative financial rewards, the presence or absence of role models (Castaneda & Ridgeway, 2010), or perceptions about relative levels of societal prestige and nonmonetary rewards (Hilal, Densley, & Jones, 2015). High-quality candidates may not be aware that they are well–suited for a career in law enforcement (Hilal, Densley, & Jones, 2015). However, research by Wiswall and

Zafar (2014) suggests that college student major choice preference can be influenced by the introduction of more accurate information about career-choice factors such as compensation levels and skill requirements.

How factors such as role models and access to accurate information about remuneration operate on choice and interact with each other, particularly within the context of minorities, may shed valuable insight into the relatively low representation of blacks and other people of color in law enforcement. In one study, over half of the officers recently recruited to the department were first prompted to consider a law-enforcement career by family or friends employed in law enforcement (Castaneda & Ridgeway, 2010). Studies by Foley, Guarneri, and Kelly (2008) reinforce the importance of the influence of family and friends not only in stimulating initial interest but also in providing insight on an ongoing basis that helps young friends or family members to negotiate the process of preparing for a law-enforcement career. Other studies, while not specific to the profession of law enforcement, reinforce the importance of familial influencers in stimulating career choice (Saleem, Hanan, Saleem, & Shamshad, 2014). Given the historical lack of participation in law enforcement by blacks and Hispanics in representative numbers and the importance of familial role models, one can anticipate that the absence of these role models among people of color represent yet another barrier to overcoming generational underrepresentation.

Negative perceptions as a stimulus for career interest. As previously noted, law enforcement lacks legitimacy in the eyes of many people of color, an impression that can serve to suppress career interest. In some instances, however, law enforcement's

tarnished image can serve to stimulate career interest. Consider, for example, the experience of Miami police veteran Delrish Moss, who in March 2016 was selected to serve as the new chief of police for Ferguson, Missouri. In an interview, Chief Moss stated that his interest in law enforcement was sparked by the poor treatment he received at the hands of a police officer while he was growing up in Miami more than 30 years ago. He was stopped, frisked, and called the *N-word*, without provocation or explanation. Moss recognized that people in his community were not receiving the quality of law-enforcement services that they deserved. The next year, he successfully applied to the Miami police department, determined to be a part of improving the experience of being a person of color in the community where he grew up. He spent the next 32 years as a Miami police officer (Pearson, 2016; Moffitt, 2016; Shapiro, 2016).

Racial bias as a barrier to the selection of minority applicants. Many elements among the white majority have long and deeply held beliefs regarding the cultural, intellectual, and moral deficits of non-whites. These factors are explored by Williams and Murphy (1990), Sklansky (2006), Colvin (2006), Hilal, Densley, and Jones (2015), and Kaste (2014), specifically in the context of law enforcement; by Dynarski (2016), from a broader societal context; and by Demerath, Lynch, Milner, Peters, and Davidson (2010), from an anthropological context. These feelings of racial animus were affirmed and amplified in the interviews and focus groups conducted for this study, and are detailed in Chapter 4.

This legacy of racial bias leads to a diminished sense of the legitimacy of policing and suppresses career interests that black people might otherwise have in law

enforcement. This same legacy of race-based bias and discrimination also makes it more difficult for blacks to be seen as qualified, to access support necessary for successful navigation of educational qualification, job application, training, and on-boarding processes, and ultimately, to realize a successful career in law enforcement. Beyond outright racism and race-based discrimination, sociologists and anthropologists point out that broadly accepted screens and signals for key attributes such as intelligence and integrity are subject to systemic cultural bias. It is also likely that candidates of color appear less attractive to hiring decision makers because they lack access to valued experiences, for example, experience as a volunteer police reserve officer (Hilal, Densley, & Jones, 2015). Supportive mentor relationships have been positively associated with retention, performance, career progress, and career success (Wright & Wright, 1987); their absence may also be a factor in black underrepresentation. Experiences that lead to the confidence and self-efficacy necessary to succeed in law enforcement may be lacking in "minoritized" and low socioeconomic-status populations (Stewart, 2013; Jackson, Potere, & Brobst, 2006).

Unconscious bias also plays a role in influencing manager preference, not only in the hiring process, but also in how managers and other stakeholders provide grooming and developmental opportunities to individuals who subsequently are more attractive when they become candidates in the future. Studies show that the workplace environment of local law enforcement presents particular challenges and stresses for people of color, as well as for women (Hassell & Brandl, 2009). Critical race theory, particularly as applied to human resource development, provides additional insight into the barriers to

career-path access, retention, and career success (Rocco, Bernier, & Bowman, 2014). Briefly summarized, this literature centers the role that race and racism play in social structures, including the workplace, and promotes advocacy and challenging the status quo in order to counteract the impact of systemic racial bias and realize the full productive capacity of all participants. Critical theoretical approaches serve to illuminate the roles that power and language play in human understanding of our world (Crotty, 2013).

Overdependence on traditional talent pipelines. While historical forces have created distance between POC and the profession of law enforcement, the momentum of modern social dynamics and established career pipelines also operate to sustain a pattern of underrepresentation of POC in the law-enforcement profession. Exacerbating this dynamic is an industrywide tendency to focus recruiting efforts on narrow, traditional talent pipelines. Those pipelines draw heavily from populations that largely exclude people of color; for example, young adults who have current or former peace officers within their immediate family (Foley, Guarneri, & Kelly, 2008; Crank, 1998).

Current recruitment efforts focus on candidates who have already chosen, or are at least inclined to *consider*, law enforcement as a career and largely fail to stimulate interest among suitable candidates who have not previously included law enforcement within their career choice set. The language of a recruiting Web site for a suburban police department in Minnesota reflects this orientation:

> Do you want to be a police officer? … Brooklyn Park may be able to help you start your police career…. The objective of the Police Cadet Program is to

facilitate the entry of qualified candidates for police officer positions into the Police Department. (Brooklyn Park, Minnesota, Police Department recruitment Web site, 2016)

Other barriers to participation, and implications for effective law enforcement. The root causes underlying the invisible barriers that result in underparticipation by POC in law enforcement are multifaceted. Understanding them requires a critical assessment of how the current law-enforcement career pipeline operates. In addition, it is important to understand how identity, both self-identity as perceived by the prospective applicant and identity as perceived by hiring decision makers, affects beliefs about who does or does not belong in uniform.

While the President's Taskforce report (2015) is clear about the qualities and characteristics of the desired talent profile, it fails to offer a prescription for how to successfully recruit that profile. It may be that the history and image of law enforcement works against it. Police wear military-style uniforms, are trained like soldiers, and carry weapons like soldiers (President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing, 2015). It is therefore not surprising that the culture and image of law enforcement is more attractive to and supportive of a warrior mindset, rather than the guardian mindset that the report recommends be recruited in larger numbers.

Another potential barrier to a racially diverse police department is the historical role that law enforcement has played in enforcing societal norms of racial marginalization. The lessons of that history continues to be reinforced by the modern-day experiences of the black community. There is ample evidence that racial bias influences

both the perception of the police officer on the beat and the internal workplace culture of law enforcement:

> Dealing with racism is not about identifying *rotten apples* in the police organization. It cannot be dealt with by re-educating officers who show prejudicial and racist attitudes, nor by making sure they have ethics training. It is about the work they do. One simply had to look at the history of police in the United States to understand how racism has been a pervasive characteristic since agencies were first founded (Crank, 1998).

Law enforcement serves not only to enforce the law but also to support the values and norms of society. Consequently, the culture of law enforcement in America and its evolution towards equality will be paced, to a significant degree, by the evolution of racial equity in American society.

Personality Types, Identity, and Law Enforcement

College choice, career choice, and career success are related to personality type (Myers & Briggs Foundation, n.d.; Hanewicz, 1978; Hennessy, 1999) and identity (Abes & Hernandez, 2016; Smith, 2014; Collins & Rocco, 2015). There is a well-developed literature on personality types and their implications for occupational selection. Scholars have sought to use personality typography, as described by C. G. Jung's personality type theory and assessed through the popular Myers-Briggs Personality Type Indicator, to gain useful insights into the nature of police work. One application of this literature is to understand what personality types are more likely to be drawn to a career in police work.

Another has been to understand why some law-enforcement officers are more successful or effective (longer tenures; fewer complaints; higher productivity measures) than others.

Jung's theory of personality types and the MBTI. Carl Jung theorized that differing individual preferences in the use of mental capacities explained what otherwise appeared to be random differences in the behavior of different individuals. All individuals take in information, organize it, and use it to come to conclusions. But some are drawn to the intake of information (what he referred to as *perceiving*) over the organization and conclusion-drawing phase (what he referred to as *judging)*. Similarly, when making decisions, while everyone uses some combination of rules-based rationalization and consideration of their feelings for and about the people and personalities involved, some have a preference for the application of logical rules (*thinking*) while others prefer to depend on the consideration of the people involved and their circumstances (*feeling*) (Myers & Briggs Foundation, n.d.).

These word-pairs constitute two of the four axes defined by Jung's *theory of personality type* (the other two are *introversion* versus *extroversion*; and *sensing* versus *intuition*). The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) was designed to make the insights of Jung's personality type theory more accessible (Myers & Briggs Foundation, n.d.). The MBTI takes the four axes identified by Jung to describe individual preferences and details 16 personality types arising from the interactions among those preferences (Myers & Briggs Foundation, n.d.). No personality type is innately superior to another. However, Hennessy (1999) explores the significance and implications of the prevalence of some types among those who have chosen law enforcement as a career; the distribution of

personality types in this field are significantly different from the proportions observed in the general population. The connection between the way some people prefer certain modes of thinking and processing information and their ability to perform well as law-enforcement officers became the focal point of studies by Hennessy (1999) and also Hanewicz (1978).

Focusing on two of the four dimensions of mental processing defined by Jung's research, Hennessy gives the most attention to the decision-making dimension, and it gives his 1999 publication, Thinking Cop, Feeling Cop, its name. Hennessy's description of the two poles that define this dimension is useful:

> Making a decision through Thinking means you decide about a matter in a very analytical and impersonal way without necessarily taking into consideration the impact on the people involved…Strengths developed from the use of *Thinking* as a judgment preference include objectivity, impartiality, a sense of fairness and justice, and skill in applying logical analysis (Hennessy, 1999, p. 4).

Hennessy describes those who prefer to reach judgments through Feeling this way:

> [E]mploying a process of reasoning which involves taking people into consideration first. Strengths typically associated with the use of *Feeling* as a judgment preference include an understanding of people, a desire for harmony, and a capacity for warmth, empathy, and compassion. (Hennessy, 1999, p. 5)

Hennessy goes on to observe that while the general population is roughly split evenly between *T's* and *F's* within the law-enforcement community, 84% of all police

officers who have taken the MBTI were categorized by the inventory tool as *T's*. This suggests that the profession of law enforcement is more attractive to *thinkers* (logic-driven decisionmaking) than *feelers* (relationship-driven) or perhaps the profession values the contributions of *thinkers* over those of *feelers*, or perhaps both.

Hennessy's observations align with the recommendations of the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing. The Task Force recommendations include shifting away from a *Warrior* mindset and towards a *Guardian* mentality (President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing, 2015). Hennessy's observations include four points. First, the dominance of *Thinking* over *Feeling* personality types in law enforcement tends to shift the culture of policing toward more of a cold and analytical persona, where relationships and people's feelings can seem less valued. Second, the numerical dominance of the *Thinking* personality types means that even the *Feeling* types within the force may tend to take on the visible attributes of the dominant *Thinking* types. Third, as more officers come into the profession from a wider variety of cultural backgrounds, including fewer military backgrounds and police families and more Asian, African, and Hispanic ethnicities, the more accepting officers become of backgrounds different from their own.

Finally, Hennessy notes that early immigrants, the ethnic origins that continue to dominate the ranks of police, such as German, Irish, Scandinavian, and English backgrounds, are all what's called *low-context* cultures. In these cultures meaning is transmitted primarily by language and is less dependent on non-verbal cues, such as posture, gestures, and body language. More recent immigrant populations, such as Hispanic, Asian, and African, and also, historically marginalized Native American and

African American people, are all populations that employ more complex, *high-context* communication (Hennessy, 1999). "In Asian culture and American Indian culture, silence is also a form of complex communication. Hispano/Latino and Black American cultures can be more vocal and emotional, with less concern for direct meaning" (Hennessy, 1999).

The recommendations of the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing do not reference Myers-Briggs personality types. However, the Task Force recommendations for greater police force diversity—for diversity that reflects the ethnic identities of the populations being served and advocates for a shift from a *warrior* to a *guardian* mindset—dovetail neatly with Hennessy's observations of trends that he suggests will lead to more effective policing. Alleviating the underrepresentation in law enforcement of African Americans and other people of color can be expected to bring the more effective policing benefits that Hennessy describes.

Identity, intersectionality, self-authorship, and career choice. The literature on *self-authorship* provides insights that may be particularly germane when interpreting the impact of social and psychological forces at play for a person of color navigating a law-enforcement career path. Self-authorship refers to the capacity for individuals to make their own decisions, to reconcile conflicting priorities and values, and to self-validate their own decisions. The transition from high school, to college, to career makes increasing demands on young people. These demands could be heightened for a young person of color considering a career in law-enforcement. Compared with white male law-enforcement candidates, people of color are less likely to find support for their choice of

career among their family, friends, and community (Perrott, 1999; Robles, 2016). As a result, their ability to self-author their own meaning-making (Baxter Magolda, 1998) becomes more critical to their success. In addition to the resistance black youth may encounter within their own family structures and communities, the literature identifies people of color as oppressed identities (Abes & Hernandez, 2016), operating in opposition to an additional layer of institutionalized, societal resistance and marginalization.

A 2014 study by Natesha Smith examines the dynamics of military service as experienced by people of color. In particular, she employs the lens of intersectionality to understand how the military culture demands conformity in the performance of traditional masculinity and the adoption of a Western perspective on hierarchy and other cultural values. Intersectionality refers to the interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race, gender, and class, particularly as the individuals falling within those categories are subjected to similarly overlapping systems of disadvantage or discrimination (Crenshaw, 1989). Individuals reflecting one or multiple non-dominant cultures and identities run an increased risk of being stereotyped and “othered” if they fail to conform (Smith, 2014). The militarized nature of law enforcement suggests that the dynamics identified by Smith within military culture are likely to operate in civilian police culture as well.

Candidates of color seeking opportunities in law enforcement may also experience a lack of validation, if not outright resistance, from parents and peers in response to a pursuit that is not only less familiar among communities of color but seen

as being culturally and even physically antagonistic to minority identities. For example, Delrish Moss, who in 2016 became Ferguson, Missouri's first African American police chief, named what he described as a longstanding "disconnect" between black communities and the police as the reason why his identity as a black law-enforcement officer was difficult for both the black community and the police community to accept (Robles, 2016). In the absence of community and familial support, the need for well-developed capacities for self-validation and self-authorship is even greater.

Collins and Rocco (2015) apply Kolb's (1984) experiential learning model to the context of law-enforcement officers of nondominant identities, in this case a gay male identity. Their research evaluates the extent to which a departmental work environment is supportive of socially marginalized identities. This discernment process is described as experiential learning, and it may draw from explicit or implicit concrete examples, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, or active experimentation (Collins & Rocco, 2015). Among the study subjects, acceptance was consistently found to be predicated on conformity to "Law Enforcement Culture" (Collins & Rocco, 2015). Part of that conformity requirement included being accepting of language antagonistic to one's own identity (in the case of homosexual law-enforcement officers, "faggot" or "dyke") (Collins & Rocco, 2015).

In most social environments, there are indirect ways to isolate and target socially marginalized colleagues, and the nature of law enforcement provides numerous opportunities to do so. For example, the literature review included the story of a subject who reported feeling devalued and isolated by the remoteness of the areas to which he

was typically deployed on late-night patrols, presumably so that other officers on patrol would not have to worry about being backed up by "the gay officer" (Collins & Rocco, 2015). One might reasonably speculate that police officers of color, socially marginalized on the basis of racial identity, could be subjected to similar tactics.

The impact of social capital on career success (Seibert, Kraimer, & Liden, 2001), the connection between marginal identities and social capital (Parks-Yancy, 2010), and the tension between self-authorship and the desire for belonging and connection (Baxter Magolda, 2009) are factors that are well-documented in the literature.

Challenges to Recruitment and Retention

Barriers to the achievement of a diverse police force are not limited to constraints in the supply of academically qualified minority applicants. Recruitment, retention, and development pose significant challenges as well (Dowler, 2005). Organizational stressors can take on a variety of forms and can lead to compromised job performance and shortened careers for people of color. "Findings indicate that African American police officers are more likely to feel criticized, [and] more likely to believe they are perceived as militant" (Dowler, 2005). Another factor that is a likely inhibitor of greater participation in law enforcement, particularly among minorities, is the image and reputation of law enforcement in communities of color. The need to improve strained relations between law enforcement and the communities they serve, particularly minority communities, is one that has long been noted. Bayley (2002) observed that reducing distrust and increasing comfort levels among members of the community, including

people of different racial and ethnic backgrounds, was “the most important contribution the police can make.”

Summary and Concluding Discussion

Law enforcement pathways—express lanes and back roads. The literature presented in this chapter references three traditional pathways to careers in law enforcement. On the next page, Figure 2 illustrates the talent pools from which law-enforcement officers may come (on the left) and the pathways through which talent is typically developed and positioned for a career in law enforcement (in the center).

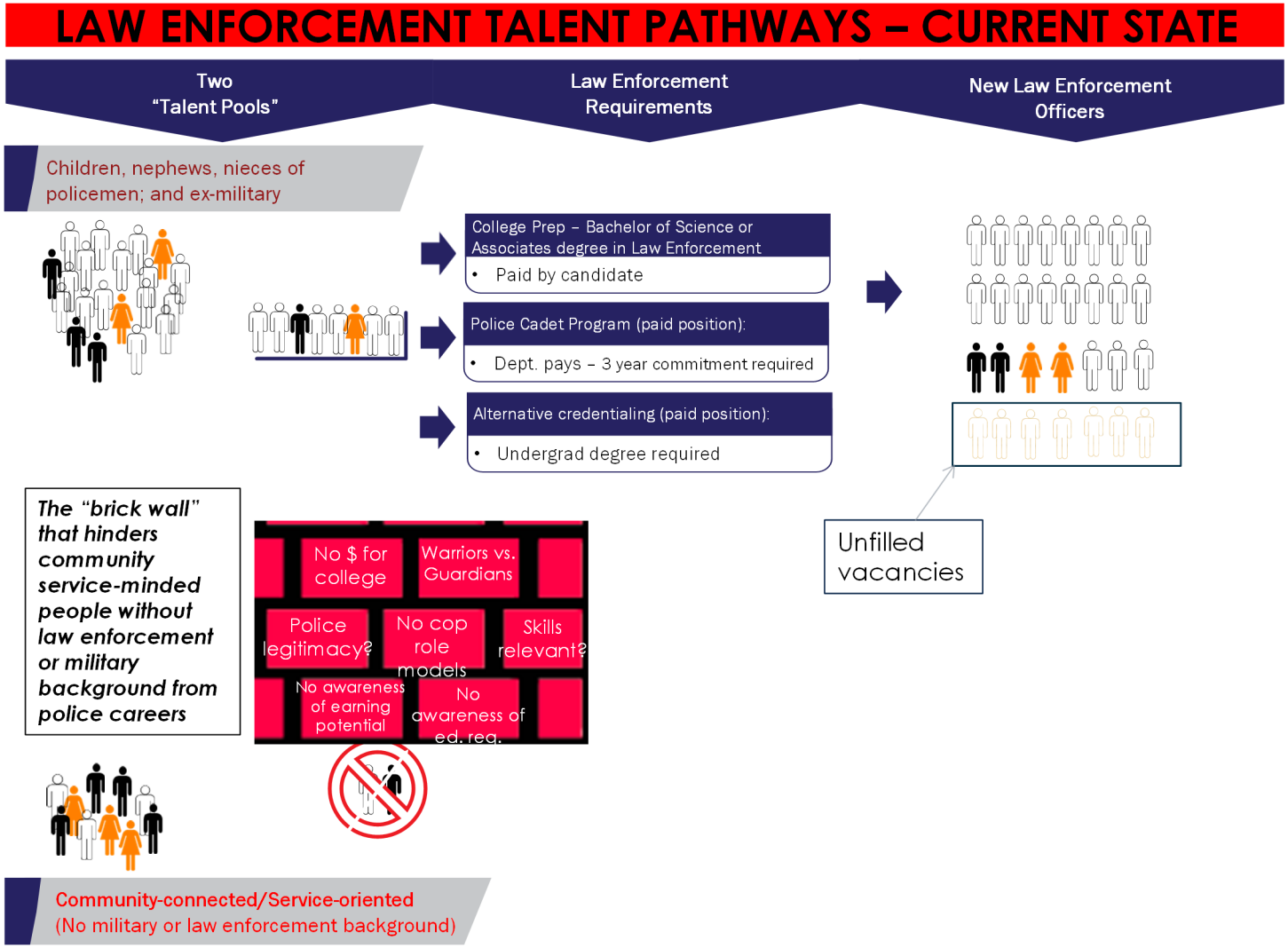

Figure 2. *Law-Enforcement Talent Pathways–Current State.*

Note. This is a graphic portrayal of the current state of law enforcement recruitment. Three established pathways are available to candidates who fall within the talent pool in the upper left hand quadrant, from which most police officers are drawn. Typical candidates have either family connections in law enforcement that can provide valuable mentorship through the sequence of prerequisites to securing a police career; or military experience that provides valuable social capital in in the form of familiarity with the paramilitary culture and hierarchical leadership structures of law enforcement. A military background also provides familiarity with the physical fitness and agility standards that police departments use as a screening tool, one that favors younger, male candidates. In addition, a military background incorporates a highly relevant orientation to the use of firearms, another skill area future police officers must master.

While the law-enforcement profession has been predominantly white, male, and populated by the talent pool portrayed in the upper left hand quadrant of the figure, people of color drawn to seek a community-serving career but lacking law-enforcement or military connections find themselves in the talent pool portrayed in the figure's lower left-hand quadrant. There candidates face a "brick wall" that includes a dearth of role models and mentors, and doubts regarding the legitimacy of the policing function; factors which combine to create greater navigational challenges and increased education acquisition costs. This brick wall is not insurmountable, but study results suggest that black people who overcome the obstacles possess unusually high levels of "self-authorship."

Figure 2, shown on the previous page, illustrates that today, most law enforcement officers come from the talent pool of the children of law enforcement families or ex-military (Crank, 1998); this talent pool is shown in the upper left hand corner, and is developed through three pathways. There are two alternatives to a two- or four-year degree program in law enforcement or criminal justice paid for by the candidate, which is the top most pathway. *Awareness* of cadet programs, the first alternative, has been limited and those outside of policing are often unaware. Compounding the awareness problem, the *availability* of the cadet program path, where the cost of acquiring required credentials is often paid by the employer, and a stipend provided during the training period, has been limited as well. However there are indications that more departments are either initiating or participating in these types of programs. Alternative credentialing, the second alternative path, is available only to veterans with military police experience, or candidates who have held sworn officer positions in another state. Familial law-enforcement connections are associated with a

positive regard for the profession of law enforcement, and insight into the prerequisites peculiar to a law enforcement career. Familial connections can also be a source of mentorship and sponsorship. Prior military experience facilitates access because the paramilitary culture of law enforcement and, in particular, the paramilitary nature of the law-enforcement training process is familiar to military veterans—veterans have undergone a similar, often even more rigorous physical training program when entering military service.

The lower left hand corner of Figure 2 portrays an additional pool of prospective law enforcement talent. This pool can be described as one made up of individuals who have connections to (urban) communities, possess a service-oriented mindset, and are motivated to pursue community-serving careers but lack a military or familial connection to law enforcement. This pool is made up of talent that, in many cases, would more closely match the demographic profile of the communities served by law enforcement but are dissuaded by a variety of barriers. These barriers include a lack of information about law-enforcement training requirements, a lack of awareness about the benefits (both remunerative and non-financial) of police work, the time and cost of earning a postsecondary degree, an absence of mentors and role models, negative perceptions of police culture, and concerns about the legitimacy of the law-enforcement function as practiced. While not unique to POCs, each of these factors tend to be particularly salient among blacks and other people of color.

Potential benefits of increasing law-enforcement career access for people of color. Increasing interest among people of color in law enforcement as a career option

should increase the size of the talent pool, allow police departments to be more selective, and improve their ability to secure the talent required to fill their vacancies. At the same time, increasing the proportion of non-white law-enforcement recruits directly addresses the recommendations of law-enforcement experts who suggest that better alignment between the identities of law-enforcement officers and the communities being served should be a community policing priority (President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing, 2015). Improving that alignment of identity and effectively expanding the size of the law-enforcement talent pool may also support the perceived legitimacy, as well as the operational effectiveness, of local police, which may in turn help restore community confidence in the law-enforcement function.

By understanding the experiences of black people who chose to pursue a career in law enforcement, the study design described in Chapter 3 will seek to better understand how higher education either supports or hinders access to law-enforcement careers, findings that hopefully can be leveraged to increase representation in that community, as well as be applicable more broadly.

Summary. People of color are underrepresented in law-enforcement careers. The reasons for this are complex and interconnected, grounded in historical racial barriers and racist practices and reinforced by current obstacles such as awareness, concerns about the legitimacy of the law-enforcement function, and academic credentialing. Law-enforcement leaders are seeking to improve relations between their departments and the communities they serve, particularly the black community, where confidence and a belief in the legitimacy of law enforcement are challenged by history and current events.

Law-enforcement leadership and scholarly law-enforcement experts agree that improving racial and ethnic representation in local agencies is an important component of efforts to increase police legitimacy and the public's confidence. The literature suggests that there is both precedence and rationale for higher education to be an active partner in expanding and preparing talent pools when community needs for qualified talent are not being met. ROTC and STEM are two examples of partnerships and proactive collaborations between higher education and future employers. *Law-enforcement experts agree that a comprehensive initiative to improve relations between communities of color and law enforcement must include increasing diversity representation to better match the populations being served* (President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing, 2015; Bayley, 2002).

Chapter 3: Design of the Study

Epistemological Perspective and Study Design

To illuminate and capture the experiences of black people who have chosen to pursue careers in law enforcement and, subsequently, surface themes emerging from the study, an epistemology appropriate to the task is required. Individual experiences are both shaped and given meaning by their social context. Following a constructivist tradition and informed by the perspectives of Creswell (2013), Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), and Crotty (2013), this study follows the design paradigm of an emerging new area of inquiry, engaging the infrequently explored intersection of law enforcement, higher education, and black experience. This singular case engaged subjects through a semistructured interview protocol, with professional experience selection criteria that limited sampling to individuals that were either currently serving in law enforcement, or were less than fifteen years into retirement from active service as a sworn officer. The consideration of this population as a single case follows the framework described by Creswell (2013).

Merriam (2009) describes an interpretive/constructivist epistemology as an approach well-suited for studies that aim to describe, understand, or interpret phenomena. In this case, it is my desire to describe and understand current and past experiences, not speculate on future possibilities, and so aspects of the interview design will be informed by interpretive/constructivist approaches as well. In addition, my data collection methodology and interpretation of findings will also be informed by phenomenology.

In the case of black police officers, a full understanding of their experiences requires understanding the social context of law enforcement as a cultural entity, as well as the social context of the families and neighborhoods in which the officers grew up, formed their values, and made their career decisions. The meaning of human experience "will be understood as received and interpreted by the men and women who lived it" (Creswell, 2013; p. 273). A qualitative research approach is compatible with the selection of an epistemology responsive to social context and its contribution to the making of meaning.

The semistructured interview was selected as the technique within the hermeneutic phenomenological qualitative method that offers two valuable functions: (1) as a means of gathering and exploring narratives that can deepen understanding of the experience of black law-enforcement officers and (2) a vehicle for developing a conversational relationship with the interviewee that can lead to deeper insights as to the meaning of their experiences (van Manen, 1997, p. 66). Phenomenology facilitates not just description but also researcher interpretation (Creswell, 2013).

Carlo Rovelli, a theoretical physicist, notes that our history of understanding is most frequently oriented around observing the world as a collection of things. He offers a challenge, which is to look beyond this narrow view. He suggests we recognize that reality is better described as a complex collection of interactions. He uses the analogy of a kiss as something that we cannot adequately describe as a "thing"; "We cannot ask ourselves, where will that kiss be tomorrow?" (Rovelli, 2016).

In this vein, my research aspires to engage the stories of study subjects not merely as a timeline of life events and decisions leading up to a law enforcement career, but as a tapestry of experience. From this study I aspire to a deeper understanding of how a complex mélange of interactions and personal qualities combine to shape personal narratives from which themes and insights emerge.

Creswell (2013) suggests that qualitative studies should be founded on a singular idea. The context that gives relevance to my research is that black people and other people of color are underrepresented in law enforcement. Intrigued simultaneously by two questions—how black people's interest in law enforcement is initially sparked and what barriers to pursuit of this career interest are most significant, I was ultimately drawn to an idea that embraced both. That is, "What have been the experiences of people of color who have chosen a career in law enforcement?"

Interview structure. The historical and contemporary context in which law enforcement is viewed with trepidation and distrust within African American communities appears to be a contributing factor to a reduced level of interest in law enforcement as a career. Law enforcement in the United States is a vocation that has its very roots grounded in social control and racial oppression. The history of law enforcement as an instrument of oppression, degradation, and violence extends back more than 300 years and actually predates both the United States and police work as a professional discipline. Policing in the U.S. has its origins in the slave patrols of the South (Williams & Murphy, 1990; Reichel, 1988). Prior to the modern-day concept of the local police department, South Carolina statutes of the late 17th century authorized

ordinary white citizens to capture and punish runaway slaves (Reichel, 1988). Williams and Murphy paint a vivid picture of the connection between the roots of policing and its current practice:

The interviews were guided by a grand-tour question (Spradley, 1979), with follow-on questions used to draw out any key elements that fail to surface in the course of the subjects' expository response. These interviews were used to capture *significant statements* and generate *thick descriptions* (Creswell, 2013; Geertz, 1973) of their lived experience (Van Manen, 1997). Appendix A provides a description of the interview protocol.

While the *grand-tour* question was intentionally open-ended, the follow-on questions were designed to engage specific topics identified as being of interest to my study in Chapter 2 and in this chapter. I have annotated the follow-on questions to make the connection between these questions and the Chapter 2 inquiry areas more easily identifiable. Those areas can be summarized under the broad categories of *career choice, choice of college major, financial access, social capital access,* and *impact of race and racism.* In this study, *choice of college major* will be inclusive of the choice of whether or not to attend college, for all considerations not related to financial access.

This study is focused on understanding past events and decisions. Specifically, understanding the context, considerations, and experiences of a specific kind of career choice among a certain population within the Minnesota workforce. While the discussion in Chapter 5 of this study will touch on the broader social implications, my data collection and analysis will be focused on how society, family experiences, and other

factors have shaped the experiences of black police officers. An inquiry into how increased numbers of black police officers have or could affect policing and, more broadly, society, would be an appropriate topic for a future study.

Exploring the impact of race. An investigation of black experience in the workplace predictably leads to the question of the role of race-related social dynamics—factors such as unconscious bias, white privilege, structural racism, stereotype threat, and racial microagressions—in shaping that experience. My *grand-tour* question is intentionally broad and does not specifically probe on subjects' impressions regarding the impact of race and racism on their experiences in law enforcement. Instead, the interviews followed where the interview subjects led the conversation. This approach is consistent with the ethnographic approach to research articulated by Spradley (1979). Being intentionally broad and leading with an open-ended, grand-tour prompt provides the researcher with the opportunity not only to discover *answers* but also to discover what *questions* are conceptually meaningful to the study subjects (p.81). A more detailed discussion of the rationale for my choice of research methodology can be found in Appendix E: The Significance of the Ethnographic Lens.

An example of the types of follow-on questions that could be stimulated by a rich response to an effective grand-tour question might be, "Please describe what you did when…" Or, "Can you describe how you felt when…" If in the course of our conversation mention was made of family members not being supportive of their interest in pursuing a career in law enforcement, an example follow-up question might have been, "Can you give me an example of a time when a family member expressed a negative or

positive attitude towards your interest in law enforcement?" This is consistent with Spradley's suggestions for "mini-tour questions," "example questions" and "experience questions" (p. 88).

Situating the Researcher Within the Study

My identity as a late middle-aged African American male from a non-law-enforcement background and as the father of two adult African American children certainly informs my interest in the experiences of people of color in law enforcement. While I did have a few (relatively benign but still memorable) personal experiences with law enforcement as a child and young adult growing up in Washington, DC, in the 1960s and early1970s, the real catalysts for my interest in the subject were the events of the summer of 2014. That summer, the news and social media were full of the images of Eric Garner, a black man killed by a police-applied chokehold in New York City, and stories of Michael Brown, a young black man shot to death by a policeman in Ferguson, Missouri. I shared a nation's curiosity, previously piqued by the beating of Rodney King in 1991 and the deaths of Amadou Diallo in 1999 and Trayvon Martin in 2012, concerning a fundamental question: to what extent is the assault of black men by law enforcement (or a neighborhood watch captain in the case of Trayvon) a function of their behavior versus their race? With the deaths of Garner and Brown, the questions evolved and multiplied. So many unarmed black men were dying at the hands of police. Was it rational? Was it acceptable? Or was this another expression of systemic racial enmity and law-enforcement dysfunction? Whose "fault" were their deaths? Their own? Law enforcement's? Society's?

A different question occurred to me—one that I hadn't seen as a part of the public discourse. Since almost no one seemed fully satisfied with the deaths of unarmed people at the hands of police, why was it that no practical strategies for reducing or eliminating these types of outcomes seemed to be forthcoming? As I was in the early stages of a graduate degree in organizational leadership and policy I wondered if the principles of change leadership and organizational effectiveness might find application in this context, as a means to discover new potential solutions. In addition, higher education has traditionally played an active role as a gateway to professional employment. Not only have colleges and universities evolved their curriculums in response to evolving demands within the various professions, they have also supported efforts to connect students to future professions by partnering in outreach programming like ROTC and McNair Scholars. What role had higher education played in the past, in the development of future law enforcement officers?

My lack of a law-enforcement background seemed to be a potential liability. On the other hand, given that "conventional" sources of law enforcement and public-policy wisdom had yet to identify comprehensive solutions, it occurred to me that a different vantage point might prove to be an asset as well.

The study design was informed by my understanding of my own personal history with law enforcement, as well as my positionality within the black community, and that community's relationship with law enforcement.

Data Collection

Primary data-collection tool—the semistructured interview. A semistructured interview format was used to facilitate the development of thick descriptions from which insights could be developed and reoccurring themes identified. I used a *grand-tour* question (Spradley, 1979) to engage each participant in a subject-directed reflection. Permission to record each interview was sought, facilitating a reduced level of dependence on detailed, real-time note-taking and allowing me to remain more focused on the conversation as it unfolded. The first few minutes of each interview were used to capture demographic data. In addition, a supplemental list of inquiry areas, included in the interviewer discussion guide, served as a source of follow-on questions. The supplemental questions were informed by my conceptual framework and helped to maximize the opportunity to surface data that could lead to evidence and be aggregated into themes. The grand-tour question and supplemental questions can be found in Appendix A.

The Minnesota context: Participant profile and recruitment process. The purpose of this study was to understand underrepresentation in the policing profession. While a number of demographic groups, including women and Hispanics, are also underrepresented in law enforcement, black police officers were selected, based on a particular interest in the dynamic between law enforcement and the black community.

I chose to focus this study on the experiences of black officers in the state of Minnesota. The state has seen rapid growth in its black population, which more than doubled in size, from 90,000 to 218,000, from 1990 to 2005, and in the next ten years

added another 100,000 to that number, totaling 332,000 (Minnesota State Demography Center, 2016; U.S. Census Bureau, 1990). During this time span the state's white population has remained relatively stable, at around 2.8 million. So while the state remains predominantly white today, the racial demographics are significantly more diverse than they were 25 years ago, a phenomenon that is even more marked in the Twin Cities, where the state's black and other nonwhite populations tend to be more concentrated.

Police training standards and licensing are managed by the Minnesota Peace Officers Standards and Training (POST) Board. The 15-member POST Board includes sheriffs, chiefs of police, police officers, academics, and community members; and is chaired by a member of the board named by the governor of the state. One mandate of the Minnesota POST Board is that in order to establish peace officer licensing eligibility, all officers in the state must complete a 2- or 4-year degree from one of roughly 30 colleges and universities around the state, as well as an additional curriculum known as Skills. An alternate credentialing path is offered for police previously licensed in another state, and ex-military police. A statewide requirement for a 2- or 4-year degree has been a distinctive feature of Minnesota police credentialing since 1977; and even today, is virtually a uniquely stringent educational requirement (Hilal & Erickson, 2009). Therefore, limiting the subject population to officers who gained access to their careers through the Minnesota system was a meaningful way to bound this singular case and facilitate a focus on subjects who successfully navigated a common professional credentialing system. Interview subjects either currently serve or have served as sworn

officers in Minnesota. A stratified purposeful sampling strategy (Creswell, 2007) was employed to facilitate the selection of interview candidates representing a range of departmental affiliations, ages, experience levels, and gender, successfully fulfilling the study's sampling objectives. The initial slate of candidates was recruited through referrals from Minnesota law-enforcement leaders and recruiters; snowball sampling (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992) was used to complete the interview slate.

My recruiting for a broad representation of ages and years of law-enforcement experience positioned the study to yield insights into how the experience of pursing a law-enforcement career as a black person is evolving over time. What aspects of this experience have remained constant? What new elements are emerging? What historical dynamics, including those that have shaped the public's perception of law enforcement, are receding in the 21st century?

Participant demographics. Between October 2017 and January 2018, I conducted a total of 13 formal interviews. The interview participants included eight men and five women. While the focus of the study was on the experience of officers who self-identified as black or African American, two participants identified as black and white biracial, one identified as black and Native American biracial, and one identified as Southeast Asian. The Asian participant presented visually as racially ambiguous and identified with the Muslim faith. A second study participant also identified as Muslim. These additional dimensions of diversity were not specifically a part of the sampling strategy. However, their inclusion provided useful points of comparison and contrast, as well as opportunities for broader insights.

The participants ranged from 25 to 68 years of age at the time of the interview. Tenure of service as sworn officers ranged from just under one year to 40 years. The average age at which these participants were first sworn as officers was just under 28 years of age, and the group included four whose careers began prior to age 25, as well as four who first became sworn after turning 30, with the oldest being sworn as an officer at age 36. Three of the 13 were no longer in law enforcement, while a fourth would be retiring within the year. Three held one or more nonsworn positions (Community Service Officer, Community Liaison Officer, Corrections Officer, Special Deputy, Medical Examiner) within other police departments prior to their initial employment as a sworn law-enforcement officer. Four of the 13 held sworn officer positions in other departments prior to their current employers. One of these four previously worked in law enforcement in another state, and one unemployed officer is currently planning to continue his career in law enforcement in another state.

Law enforcement has a paramilitary culture (Hanewicz, 1978; Colvin, R., 2009; Rydberg & Terrill, 2010), and it is frequently observed that prior military service is a common background among law-enforcement officers. This was borne out in this study sample. Eight of the 13 either had military experience or grew up with family members who had military service histories. In the general population across all adult age groups less than 13% of Americans have military service experience (Newport, 2012), which makes this finding noteworthy.

Only two of the 13 interview participants had family members who pursued policing careers. This is consistent with interview comments and literature that suggests

that racial barriers largely precluded substantial participation in law enforcement by minorities prior to the 1970s and 1980s, not only in Minnesota but also in the majority of departments nationwide.

Sample size and achievement of data saturation. Rather than a predetermined sampling size, data were collected until saturation was reached; that is to say, until data redundancy was achieved and it was apparent that additional samplings would no longer generate additional insights (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Primary and Secondary Data-Collection Methodology

Twelve of the interviews were conducted in person; the 13th was a Skype interview. Appendix B contains a sample of the *primary interview invitation letter* used during the recruitment process to frame the study objectives and protocols to potential participants. Five of the 18 recipients of the primary interview invitation letter declined to participate, resulting in a 72% participation rate.

The 13 formal interviews were complemented by extensive conversations and informal interviews with members of the law-enforcement community. These additional *secondary interviews* (see Appendix C for a sample secondary interview invitation letter) were leveraged to triangulate and support the analysis of the data. As a pilot to the formal interview protocol, four additional formal interviews were conducted prior to the start of the study, engaging officers who were outside the target population (three black officers who had retired from service in other states, and a white Minnesota police officer). Nearly a dozen, less-structured conversations were held with police leaders, including five top leaders (rank of chief or sheriff), and a similar number were held with midlevel

and senior leaders (ranks of deputy chief, inspector, or lieutenant). The conversations with police leaders were helpful in gaining an insight into leadership perceptions of barriers, inclusion efforts, and current departmental demographics.

The following is a list of the nine departments at which the interview participants were employed at the time of their interviews (for 10 of the 13), or were last employed prior to separation. Where the history of a department's employment of minority officers is so limited that inclusion of the department name could reveal the identity of the participant, the name of that department has been redacted:

- Brooklyn Center Police Department
- A rural police department serving a small town northwest of the Twin Cities ***(name redacted for confidentiality)***
- Metro Airport Police Department
- Metro Transit Police Department
- Minneapolis Police Department
- Minnesota State Patrol
- Ramsey County Sheriff's Office
- St. Louis Park Police Department
- Saint Paul Police Department

The interviewees also shared their experiences from time served as sworn or non-sworn employees of the following Minnesota police departments:

- A rural police department serving a small community in Western Minnesota ***(name redacted for confidentiality)***

- Golden Valley Police Department
- Hennepin County Sheriff's Office
- Minnesota State Fair Police Department
- A suburban police department serving a community southwest of the Twin Cities ***(name redacted for confidentiality)***
- Roseville Police Department

Protection of participant confidentiality. All of the interviewees consented to having the conversations recorded, and those recordings were used to supplement field notes to create detailed written summaries of each interview. Each participant received a letter detailing the study parameters (refer to Appendix B); participant consent, as well as permission to record was captured via audio recording. Participants were assured that personally identifying information would not be incorporated into the final report. In summarizing and reporting these narratives and study findings, the following steps were taken to ensure confidentiality:

- Aliases were used in place of participant names in this report.
- In some cases, the gender of the subject of specific stories was altered. This was mandated in part by the limited number of minority women in Minnesota law enforcement --one estimate is that out of the state's entire population of about 10,000 sworn officers (Minnesota Peace Officers Standards and Training Board, 2017) there may be fewer than a dozen black females.

- Uniquely identifying information has been removed or modified to mask the subject's identity.
- Finally, rather than connecting experiences to specific departments, when relating the stories of specific individuals we have aggregated their affiliated departments into the following three categories:
    - "Large urban" (includes Minneapolis and Saint Paul Police Departments)
    - "Regional and specialty" (includes Metro Transit Police, Metro Airport Police, Ramsey County Sheriff, and State Patrol)
    - "Small suburban or rural" (includes St. Louis Park, Brooklyn Center, and a rural department northwest of the Twin Cities)

Data analysis and coding. Interview notes and interview transcripts were considered together to inform the coding process. Preliminary interviews (using police officers outside the target population; for example, white officers or officers from other states) were conducted to validate the effectiveness of the interview protocol.

Validity. At the conclusion of a study, the true test of its value is, do the findings make sense? Are the findings internally valid? Are they credible? Are they authentic? (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014). Some researchers (Wolcott, 1990) reject the notion of validity in qualitative research, seeing validity as an attribute more appropriate to quantitative study. Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014) suggest that the purpose of qualitative research should be to "deepen our understanding" and posit that the qualitative researcher's goal should be a persuasively written account (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña,

2014). What is agreed (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 2009; Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014) is that useful qualitative studies incorporate thick (context-rich) descriptions. In addition, they are plausible, well-linked to established or emerging theory, and offer findings that are clear and coherent. Robust qualitative studies actively consider *rival explanations* and evaluate *negative* as well as *positive* evidence; while study predictions are assessed for *accuracy* (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014). In the paragraphs below, I explain the measures taken to ensure the quality and validity of my findings.

Identification of themes. Creswell (2013) describes the identification of recurring themes as a standard form of data analysis. This process involves reviewing the data captured—in this case through interviews—and coding it, and aggregating related codes into general themes, typically five to seven in number (Creswell, p. 186). I have followed his recommended approach for developing *themes* from *detailed descriptions*, focusing on the types of information most germane to *case study research*, as opposed to the information types more pertinent to other research approaches. For example, a *narrative researcher* would focus on coding *stories*, while an ethnogapher's particular focus might be cultural themes and how that culture is transmitted (Cresell, p. 186).

As this is a case study, the data I focused on isolating, capturing, coding, and aggregating into *families of themes* are *qualitative* in nature—specifically, *detailed descriptions* of the case under study. I was "on the lookout" for certain potential themes identified through my secondary research; for example, *the impact of the reactions of friends and family* to subjects' initial expressions of interest in law enforcement as a career (Foley, Guarneri, & Kelly, 2008; Saleem, Hanan, Saleem, & Shamshad, 2014). A

related theme, the impact of a role model (Castaneda & Ridgeway, 2010), might be aggregated into the same *theme family*, which, in this example, might be *social influences that encouraged or discouraged pursuit of law enforcement as a career.* Refer to Appendix A: Interview Guide, which includes the "Grand Tour Question" prompt presented to all interview participants. Appendix A also includes specific follow-on questions, which were utilized in cases where the grand tour question either failed to elicit observations on certain topics, or where the reflections of the interview participant were ambiguous.

While "put on notice" by my literature review to look for particular themes, I was also open to examining new or unanticipated themes. For example, themes such as the career access barriers imposed by the financial cost of acquiring prerequisite academic credentials (Cahalan, Perna, Yamashita, Ruiz, & Franklin, 2016), or by racial antagonism from peer officers (Hassell & Brandl, 2009; Jany, 2016), were anticipated as a result of my secondary research, and *prefigured* as codes in my coding template, which can be found in Appendix A. This template was developed to facilitate aggregation of interview responses into themes (Creswell, 2013). On the other hand, themes pertaining to career access barriers created by antagonistic field training officers, or stringent physical agility standards, surfaced through the interview process, and would be categorized as *emergent* themes (Creswell, 2013). I followed Creswell's coding process—a process described as one that plays a central role common to all ethnographic and case studies. I aggregated the text of my interview data into small information categories, while identifying evidence from the data to support the assignment of appropriate labels to that data

(Creswell, p. 186). Creswell starts with what he calls a "lean coding" (page 184) approach, using just five or six codes, or *categories* (he uses the terms interchangeably), and then building on the number of categories as a continuing review and re-review of the data as he suggests. Creswell reports that he does not ascribe to reporting the frequency with which codes occur, even as he notes that some qualitative researchers do. I followed a mixed approach. In cases where the number of recurrences of a theme provided insight into either significance or the extent of alignment, I have indicated in how many of my interview subjects those themes emerged. Creswell also offers a caution concerning the use of preexisting or "prefigured" codes, suggesting that researchers remain open to the possibility that additional codes may emerge during the analysis. Creswell's cautionary note proved valuable, as some of my study's most significant themes were themes that I had not anticipated prior to my primary data collection effort.

Ensuring quality. Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014) offer 13 different tactics for testing findings and ensuring quality and validity. In this study, I have sought to achieve *representativeness*, which is to say, I have strived to develop a sampling of black Minnesota police officers that appears to be representative of all black police officers in Minnesota. I have also used *intentionality* to ensure quality by selecting subjects that represent a range of the different characteristics that I have judged to provide meaningful variety within the sample. In this case, those qualities include a variety of experience levels, ages, and ranks. They also include a variety of departments with varying missions, including large urban departments, small suburban departments, functionally focused

departments (such as Metro Transit); and those with a regional focus (such as county sheriffs and the Minnesota State Patrol).

Another quality measure I have taken is checking for *researcher effects*, including bias in observations and inferences. Sources of bias include the effect of the researcher on the case and the effects of the case on the researcher. The narrow timeframe in which the study was conducted, especially in relation to the length of service of the more experienced officers interviewed, makes the first type of bias unlikely. But in the case of the second type of bias, the nature and impact of the case on the researcher certainly has potential to be a source of bias. Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014) describe the phenomenon of "being co-opted, [or] going native" (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, p. 296) or accepting without critique a biased view of events. Journaling, sharing field notes with a colleague, and intentionally engaging subjects with different, even divergent, non-mainstream viewpoints are three techniques Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014) offer and that I have used to minimize any potential impact of bias that the case may have on my research.

An important quality measure employed for this study involves the principle of *triangulation* (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña); in this case, by supplementing the primary data resource of the 13 subject interviews with complementary perspective generated through interviews with police trainers, recruiters, departmental leaders, police officers from non-Minnesotan jurisdictions, and Professional Police Officer Education (PPOE) program managers. More unstructured (i.e., conversational) in nature and occurring before, during, and after the primary data collection effort, these additional points of

reference have been used to affirm the data surfaced through the primary interviews and have also provided additional insight into matters such as profession-specific terminology, thereby helping to contextualize the primary interview data.

Other quality-assurance measures that I have incorporated include interrogating unexpected findings, assessing the significance of outlier data, considering rival explanations for findings, and using extreme cases to ensure that exceptional data are not glossed over, but are explored in order to understand their significance. In executing this study, I have strived to live by the principle suggested by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014)—that the masterful researcher seeks to remain open to multiple alterative explanations, giving rival explanations a chance to be proved or disproved by additional evidence.

Incorporation of a focus group. Several of these quality measures were further supported by the incorporation of a focus group. After completing the 13 formal interviews I extended eight invitations to a subset of the participants, with the intention of holding a two-to-three hour focus group discussion with between four and six participants. Four of eight were able to participate; I also included a fifth officer who had previously participated in an informal interview, and who otherwise met all of the original study inclusion criteria. The focus group participants included two sergeants, a retired inspector, a commander, and a former police chief. Their professional experiences spanned nine departments, including large urban, regional, specialty, small suburban, and rural departments. In the invitation, participants were directed to wear street clothing, and avoid wearing identifying outerwear such as jackets or hats bearing departmental

insignia. Upon arrival, each participant was assigned a fictitious name and a pre-printed name tent, and asked to avoid providing or requesting information that would identify themselves, the other participants, or their departmental affiliation.

The group discussion lasted just over two hours. The first fifteen minutes were used to discuss focus group protocols, review guidelines concerning confidentiality, and provide an overview of the overall study design and objectives. The balance of the time cycled between open discussion, and guided discussion of specific questions from a predefined list (see Appendix D: Focus Group Discussion Guide) chosen to draw out affirmations, corrections, example stories, or clarifications of themes that had emerged in the 13 formal interviews.

The focus group discussion provided a space to receive feedback on the accuracy with which I had captured and reflected the experiences, themes, and findings contained in this study. The participants provided feedback on the *plausibility* and *authenticity* of preliminary findings; in addition, the discussion facilitated exploration of *rival explanations*, and the opportunity to judge the *relevance* of *predicted themes* (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014). Incorporation of this focus-group review of study findings served as a check on *researcher effects* and *bias,* and supported a robust quality assurance effort (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014).

An additional benefit of the focus group is that it provided an important opportunity to deliver on the promise of using an *engaged research* approach. Specifically, it incorporated *community-based participatory research* (Nypaver & Shambley-Ebron, 2015), reflecting an intent to gain buy-in and encourage honest

reflection, while fulfilling a desire to connect this academic research to community needs through an investigation based on partnership between the community and the university (Fitzgerald, H.E., Bruns, K., Sonka, S.T., Furco, A., & Swanson, L., 2012).

Ethics, Bias, and Institutional Oversight

Like all qualitative studies, this investigation seeks to surface and make meaning of observed experiences. It does not seek to establish statistical significance, and while the development of findings generalizable to other populations would be fortuitous, that is not a primary objective. Further, any study that incorporates participant self-selection in the development of a sample population has a potential for selection bias. Among the protocols suggested by Stake (1995) and Merriam (2009) to triangulate study findings to confirm observations and interpretations are the use of narratives from the literature and journaling. Finally, experiences of black police officers as documented in local and national news media have been incorporated as an additional validation check.

All elements of this study protocol have been reviewed by the University of Minnesota Institutional Review Board, which has classified this study as an *oral history research project* (refer to Appendix G: Institutional Review Board Template).

Chapter 4: Study Findings

The Ethnographic Lens

As an ethnographic researcher without a prior background in law enforcement, I looked to my study subjects to teach me what was most critical to gaining entry and finding success as a law enforcement officer. Refer to Appendix E: The Significance of the Ethnographic Lens, for an additional reflection on this selection of research methodology. The ethnographer recognizes that subject matter expertise comes from the subjects of the study, and so I approached each interview in a posture of learning. In addition, I had the benefit of leveraging unstructured interviews with dozens of law enforcement leaders, recruiters, field trainers, and patrol officers over a three-year period as additional inputs to validate and refine the insights gained from the 13 formal interview participants. This approach allowed me to go beyond the predefined themes I set out to examine, and identify two emergent themes.

Key Emergent Themes

Emergent theme one: Size, physical ability, and "defensive skills." Themes relating to physical size, fitness, and the ability and willingness to use physical force, (as the officers refer to it, going "hands on") came up repeatedly as attributes necessary for law enforcement career access and success. For some, experience with a fitness regime from college football, employment as a fitness trainer, or a background in boxing, facilitated their ability to prove themselves physically capable of serving as peace officers. On the other hand, for many of the women, as well as for some of the men, successfully navigating the fitness screens, the Skills course and the police academies

were critical trials. In some cases those trials proved to be a significant impediment to achieving sworn officer status. “Sally” stands five feet, six inches tall, and estimates that fifteen years ago, when she was navigating the Skills course as a police candidate, she weighed about 135 pounds. Sally found a number of the training program elements to be very challenging. She had to develop proficiency in the use of firearms, having never handled a firearm before. Pursuit driving techniques were also difficult to master. Certainly getting maced and getting tased was unpleasant, but, “At least when you got to that part you knew you were near the end of the [Skills] program.” For Sally, one of the most demanding elements of the Skills course was learning defensive techniques, and, how to get handcuffs on a resistant suspect.

> I remember practicing handcuffing and defensive tactics on [the husband of my Skills classmate], and on her brother; and I practiced defensive tactics and handcuffing and fighting on my brothers—my brothers said to me ‘If you can fight me, and get handcuffs on me, and get me down to the ground, you can get anybody down to the ground,’ so I was handcuffing my kids, handcuffing my mother, handcuffing my brothers, handcuffing my friends, all so that I could get better.

The realities of the job as well as the perceptions of law enforcement candidates regarding the physicality of policework were important findings. Understanding how candidates perceive those requirements, providing clarification as to the demands of the role, and insights regarding how candidates can self-evaluate their capabilities as well as

prepare themselves to meet those expectations, could be material to addressing the problem of underrepresentation.

Emergent theme two: Class and law enforcement. Another consistent theme was that the majority of these 13 interview participants had working class origins. "Working class" can be defined in various ways. In some cases the interviewees used that or similar term to describe the circumstances of their childhood or their pre-law-enforcement career. In other cases a determination was based on personal biographies that included at least three of the following elements; having grown up in a single-parent household, working full-time while in college, paying for college primarily with student loans, growing up in a home where a primary breadwinner experience extended unemployment, or at some point the participant or their family received public assistance.

Sally described how she grew up in poverty, and had a child while still a teen. Shortly after becoming a sworn police officer Sally was able to purchase her first home and move out of Section Eight housing. "Chelsea's" father had drug problems, while her mother's work in real estate was interspersed with periods of unemployment, and "financial stability was something that ebbed and flowed." She began her studies at a community college while working full-time at a coffee shop; and completed her four-year degree at Metro State. Despite having followed a relatively lower cost educational path, Chelsea found the cost associated with college quite daunting—she still feels burdened by the substantial student loan debt she accumulated while earning the necessary law enforcement credentials.

"Calvin" reported growing up in the projects. His father worked at a car dealer and was skilled at purchasing and fixing up old used cars. He recalled a time while in his teens that the police, "not believing poor black kids could afford nice cars," towed away his father's old Cadillac, under false pretenses on the occasion of his older brother's prom night. Calvin had an opportunity to attend a four-year college on a football scholarship, but felt pressed to be a good provider for a young child he had fathered, and so he took a job as a bus driver instead. When, a couple of years later, an offer came to join a large urban police department he nearly turned it down, because it meant giving up his bus-driving job, which paid a better salary.

The significance of this emerging theme is that, while law enforcement might be seen as a less prestigious, more "blue collar" type of a career in some circles, particularly among college graduates, for those coming from lower income and less academically credentialed family backgrounds, law enforcement is likely to be seen in a more prestigious and more favorable light. Especially so, when viewed in comparison to other available career options. From a recruitment perspective, this could have important implications.

Interest in Law Enforcement--Why? And When?

Sources and timing of initial interest. One of the specific questions that the study was intended to illuminate is "why law enforcement?" It may be noteworthy that while four of the eight male participants were drawn to law enforcement before graduation from high school, only one of the five women in the study developed such an interest prior to attending college, and/or entering the work world.

For those who had actively considered law enforcement from childhood, there often was an older family member, or in some cases a close family friend, in law enforcement. "Eric," an officer from a department in the "small suburban and rural" category, recalls that childhood trips to a small town in the South to visit extended family sparked his interest in policing:

> I met my uncle…for the first time [at a family softball game]; he was in uniform, and [pulled up in] a squad car. [I saw] my uncle as a police officer and watch[ed] his career grow, from police officer, to sergeant, and then he made his way to police chief; [but] when I saw him for the first time, that's when I knew I wanted to become a police officer.

There were other, non-familial sources of early experiences that generated interest in a law enforcement career. "Steve," another officer from a department in the "small suburban and rural" category whose interest in law enforcement dated back to childhood, reported, "I told my dad at six years old that I wanted to be a cop." He was fascinated by the history of Bass Reeves, who was the first black U.S. deputy marshal west of the Mississippi River. Steve told a story that illustrated his early interest in law enforcement:

> I loved the TV show S.W.A.T. … There was one black actor who was the second-in-command of the SWAT team. In the intro, he would dive through the window and come up with this M-16 [rifle]. Well, I used to love that show so much my mom and dad bought me a SWAT jump suit, complete with … SWAT in white letters, and a plastic M-16… I would run through the house and dive over the couch, just playing around… One day… I come running through the living room

> with my M-16 and my SWAT suit, humming the song. I dove over the couch and… my foot caught the edge of a glass coffee table, and shattered the glass… my mom was freaking… I thought I was going to die; [and] that she was going to beat me with that plastic M-16; but they just made me take off the jump suit and I never saw it again.

While several participants reported these long-held interests in policing, over half of them "discovered" law enforcement as a possible career later in life, through chance interactions with police officers that led them to pursue the field. For example, "Karl" grew up as a member of the Somali community in Saint Paul, a community he described as "small and tight-knit." When the subject's uncle mentioned that his nephew was majoring in criminal justice to another Somali friend who was a patrol officer in the Minneapolis Police Department, the friend assumed that his intention was a career in law enforcement; in fact, Karl was planning on law school. Even so, upon meeting the nephew in his junior year of school, the Somali patrol officer offered a "ride-along" [a job shadowing experience where a civilian accompanies a police officer on patrol], and "the hook was set." The opportunity to experience a ride-along was pivotal for several of the officers interviewed.

Reform mindset as an incentive for persistence. Of the 13 interviewees, 9 expressed what could be termed a "reform mindset." That mindset was marked by comments that indicated a significant and pervasive dissatisfaction with some aspect of law-enforcement culture and practices, paired with actions intended to resist or influence them. In some cases, participants described past or planned actions to drive changes in

culture or practice, or both. These expressions of dissatisfaction and intentions to take action were focused at a local level; i.e., within the department where they were employed.

A Career in Law Enforcement—Barriers, Supports, and Incentives

Observing that screening protocols were having the impact of disfavoring well-qualified candidates, including a disparate number of candidates of color, "Amber" worked behind the scenes to change those screening protocols. Amber also expressed frustration with her peers on a social level. When she was a newly sworn officer, she received and accepted numerous invitations from peers to participate in activities that reflected her colleagues' interests, but not her own, such as ice fishing, country music concerts, and popular cinema featuring white movie stars. When she realized her peers were completely unwilling to reciprocate by participating in social activities that reflected her interests, such as popular movies with a black protagonist or a nightclub that featured hip-hop music, over time she began to withdraw from the invitations of her colleagues. Her description of this inflection point in the social dynamic made it clear--the realization that this "cultural exchange" would only go in one direction created a sense of rejection and social isolation. While this isolation created a degree of social distance between her colleagues and her, it also seemed to spark a deeper commitment to remaining engaged as a force for change within her department.

Five officers specifically referred to physical fitness screens as a qualifier that operated to exclude many candidates. In some cases, the officers had themselves been disqualified; while in other cases the screens had disqualified others they believed to be

high quality and very physically able candidates. In addition to Amber's department, at least one other, large urban police department is actively evaluating alternative physical fitness screening protocols.

Several interview participants expressed considerable dismay concerning the racialized and overtly racist language being used by their peers, particularly officers whose employment began before 2000. "Jim," recalling his rookie days in a department falling within the "small suburban and rural" category, described how a veteran on the force suggested that stolen cars being dumped in their jurisdiction were being stolen from "the nigger side of town," referring to North Minneapolis, a predominantly African American community. Conversely, the type of racial disconnect spoken of by younger officers tended to be more cultural obliviousness, rather than open antagonism. For example, "Chelsea," an officer in a department falling within the "small suburban or rural" category, was frustrated by colleagues who were either unaware of or insensitive to the impact that the officer-involved death of Jamar Clark might have on her as a black police officer (she reported feeling devastated).

Reversing underrepresentation as a factor favoring persistence. In addition, Chelsea explained that a factor driving her commitment to return to policing, despite nearly losing her job because of an off-duty lapse in judgment, was a recognition that she needed to serve as a role model for her fellow officers and the community.

Amber was sufficiently concerned about the lack of representative racial diversity in her department that she decided to compile detailed racial demographic information.

She expressed a strong commitment to lead and support efforts to improve those demographics to better match the demographics of the community her department serves.

Three female study participants reported that they were very heavily utilized as recruiters and ambassadors for their departments. In addition to the stress caused by the additional demands on their time, they also indicated that being singled out for these types of roles ahead of white male officers, often with more seniority, was a source of tension with their colleagues. "Sally" was the first African American woman hired by her current department, which falls within the "regional and specialty" category. Less than two years after she was hired, she was selected to serve on a very memorable special assignment. Sally described her experience this way:

> Being chosen to participate [in the Obama inauguration] was a phenomenal opportunity and I got a lot of crap for that… because I was junior to other officers passed over for an opportunity to be a part of the biggest event in [our department's] history. I received special training, such as for crowd observation, etc.; got to fly to D.C.; was given permanent permission to fly while armed; [and I believe I was picked] because I was black.

Despite these stress-inducing circumstances, the officers spoke of their commitment to continue serving in these roles as long as they are in policing and the needs they identified persist. Sally now has a decade of experience and the rank of sergeant. She described how, as her tenure has increased, minority officers from other agencies frequently seek her out, sharing stories of being treated as "less than." She sees herself becoming the person that they can count on to understand their circumstances.

Rather than this being a discouraging dynamic, Sally, and her other, tenured colleagues, seemed to take on the attitude of "if not me, then who?"—further increasing their commitment to the profession.

Navigating the path to law enforcement: Education and the roles of mentors. The stories of many of the interview participants made it clear that the path to securing a position in law enforcement is extremely difficult to navigate without someone on the inside to coach a prospect through the process. The story of "Mohamed," for whom navigating and succeeding in academic spaces appeared to be a strength, is illuminating. A graduate of a local private college, he was a chemistry major and a recipient of a four-year academic scholarship. In choosing a career in law enforcement, he turned down acceptances at four medical schools. A college internship that placed him in a Medical Examiner's office sparked his interest in becoming a police officer. But without the guidance he received from sworn police officers colleagues, he would never have known about cadet programs. Specifically, Mohamed was encouraged to look at cadet program offerings from Minneapolis, Brooklyn Center, and Brooklyn Park police departments.

Cadet programs offer current college students an opportunity to be paid while obtaining valuable work experience. The cadet program also pays for the student to take the specialized curriculum necessary to qualify for a position as a sworn officer. Successful cadets often receive a full time offer once they have completed the program.

Once accepted to a cadet program, once again it was a mentor from work, not an academic advisor, that helped Mohamed figure out which courses to take at Hennepin Technical College, in order to satisfy the pre-requisites for Skills class. Completing the

Skills curriculum is the next step in the process of preparing to be a qualified applicant to a sworn officer position in Minnesota.

> Without the help of the officers who have already gone through the program, I don't think I would be able to figure out what classes to take; once you're into the program, it's like "You're in. [Now] figure out how to register for classes and such." I wish I had known; I could have taken classes sooner, [satisfying pre-requisites that would have allowed more rapid completion of the curriculum]; I ended up getting pushed back a semester [and as a result] there was an opening [for a sworn position] and I couldn't apply because I hadn't completed Skills yet.

Karl, a Somali police officer, explained how connections within the Somali community created important mentorship connections. A chance encounter between an uncle and a law enforcement officer led to a mentor relationship that provided critical assistance in navigating the educational process, even though the two never worked in the same department:

> I didn't know what steps to take, or which department I even wanted to get into…he helped me navigate through everything. I can genuinely say I would not be where I am if he didn't help me out.

In this case, the same Somali mentor who had previously offered the ride-along stayed in the life of this officer, helping to navigate the educational requirements and screening processes. The mentorship and guidance proved to be crucial, even though they never ended up working in the same department. This officer also facilitated a connection to a second mentor, who proved to be instrumental in helping Karl secure a CSO

position. The second mentor also provided Karl with guidance regarding educational requirements, and suggested things to look for in considering where they wanted to work. This support was critical when it came to finding a job and selecting a department:

> He didn't necessarily say "stay away from that one," but he kind of let me know what problems certain departments had; or what issues might be too tough to tackle. [And then] he connected me to another officer in [a large urban PD].

In this case, one of Karl's mentors worked in a large urban police department, a second mentor worked in another large urban department, and Karl become a sworn officer in a third department that fell within the regional and specialty category, where he has served for two years at the time of our interview. This was an interesting demonstration of the impact of career mentorship across departmental lines.

During the focus group, concerns about the absence of support resurfaced; but it was also noted that part of the problem was that young officers of color sometimes failed to ask for help. In addition, recruits sometimes failed to understand that they needed to invest in lateral relationships and not just up and down the hierarchy; in other words, just because you have a good relationship with the chief, a commander or a lieutenant, that did not obviate the need to build positive relationships with peers and FTOs.

Further exploration of the role of education. The focus group was particularly helpful in interpreting what appeared to be conflicting perspectives on the role of education, particularly higher education in the attraction and development of future law enforcement officers. The older officers participating in this study came to law enforcement without post-secondary degrees, prior to the introduction of Minnesota's

requirement that law enforcement candidates complete a two- or four-year degree before applying. They tended to see post-secondary education as a barrier erected with the specific intention of reducing minority access to law enforcement careers. Younger officers, on the other hand, saw potential for higher education to have a positive impact on attracting people, including minorities, to the profession. However, they saw that potential as being largely unrealized. They did not have such strongly negative views of the educational requirements. "The way the world is going, you need to have a degree [no matter what profession you choose to pursue]." However, they still offered criticisms.

> There are a lot of retired cops [teaching in the two year programs] telling their students how policing *used* to be. [On the other hand,] four-year degree programs tend to be taught by academics who don't know policing [at all]. [At the end of the day] it depends on the quality [which can be highly variable] of the school and the instructors. (Focus group participant, March 15, 2018)

Yet a third perspective was offered by a veteran officer who experienced his training over two decades ago. He found the training he received from a local community college very rigorous but also very effective. He also singled out his internship experience for commendation. He found it very valuable, not only for his personal professional development but also for the development of his peers as well. His internship, which was in a small-to-midsized department in a midsized resort town well away from the Twin Cities, provided his sworn officer colleagues with their first opportunity to work closely with a black person. This was an important learning

experience for them, because all their prior experiences with black people "had been negative."

It was also observed that part of what makes police training a difficult experience for people of color is that instructors have a tendency to favor students who look like them and to be less favorable toward students who do not. This sentiment echoed some of the stories heard in the one-on-one interviews.

One focus group participant observed that colleges and universities had an (as yet unrealized) opportunity to promote law enforcement as a profession, for professionals; and that law enforcement could be not just a job, but a career. The value of incentives, in the context of law enforcement and educational access, was also mentioned. "They need an incentive [to follow this path]," one focus group participant observed.

> The word is getting out—currently there can be 300 applicants for 2 positions. The white kids think their chances are good—their dad knows someone [on the inside] and is going to put in a word for them, etc. The black kids hear [the number of applicants per vacant position] and get discouraged. (Focus group participant, March 15, 2018)

Another opportunity for colleges and universities is to utilize more blacks as instructors and role models. One focus group participant complained that the criteria for qualifying as a university adjunct instructor in a skills training curriculum were overly difficult to satisfy. This was affirmed by other participants. The value of allowing police recruiters and law enforcement guest speakers to interact with current students in the classroom was also cited; along with speculation that increased pressures on colleges to

satisfy curricular goals was making those invitations to connect with current students increasingly rare.

The complaints of the officers about education serving as a barrier to law enforcement did not mean that education and training were not seen as both important and valuable. The focus group participants affirmed that their colleagues were highly trained, that police officers are subject to high levels of continuing education and training, and that "as a black person you have to not just know the job—you have to master the job." One senior officer made the argument that, on average, black police officers have more education than their white peers. Three of the five focus group participants did not have a four-year degree before entering law enforcement, but subsequently earned bachelor's degrees. One has completed their master's as well, while another is currently taking a graduate certificate program, and is contemplating a graduate degree program.

Critical barriers to career access and retention. The focus group conversation (March 15, 2018) included a rich dialog on the topic of barriers to career access and retention in law enforcement. No single barrier emerged to dominate the conversation. However, a variety of issues that connected back to race and racism were presented. One of the most tenured of the participants stated, "No one has ever called me a nigger, but it's the coded, covert [racism that you will encounter again and again.]" He went on to describe how for years he worked under a police chief whose racism was well known by virtually everyone. This same chief was successfully sued ten years ago by five black

police officers for systemic racial discrimination and creating a hostile work environment (Jany, 2016).

Another focus group participant stated “because I’m black I get grief,” in the form of various innuendos about favoritism for receiving the same promotion-related perks (preferred parking spaces, a better office) her white predecessors received when they were similarly promoted (Focus group participant, March 15, 2018).

Minorities felt pressure to perform at a high level, presumably to counteract racial stereotypes. “In general there’s an assumption that black candidates will be lower quality; and that standards have been dropped” in order to bring on a black recruit. In the focus group (March 15, 2018), another officer observed that seasoned black officers can be subject to criticism for being supportive mentors to black recruits. On the other hand, the young cops will sometimes say, “Why can’t I just be a normal cop like everyone else?” To this, the veterans in the focus group had this response: “I need you to be a leader because I am not going to be here forever” (Focus group participant, March 15, 2018).

Another officer felt that his leadership was resistant to hiring black candidates, “because of concerns about what the community will think” (Focus group participant, March 15, 2018).

“Sally,” whom we met earlier, shared that while her current departmental assignment, her third, has been very gratifying, her first assignment, in a department falling within the “small suburban and rural” category, was a painful experience that ended with her being fired at the end of her probation. After the grueling effort of becoming a sworn police officer, losing her job was devastating, both financially and in

terms of her morale. “I was broken,” she stated. Sally was the first and remains the only African American that department has ever hired. She considered her termination to have been unjustified. “They knew they were wrong,” she said. A subsequent six-figure legal settlement that she won against the department would seem to validate her opinion.

The power of a “reformer” mindset, and barriers beyond racial animus. Among the 13 in-depth interviews, there was a mix of “reformers” advocating for change and “cheerleaders” who embraced the status quo. By contrast, the smaller focus group of five officers seemed to unanimously embrace a reform mindset. A seasoned veteran of a large urban department said when he was growing up, his mother told him, “If you’re pissed about how the cops treat you, then maybe you should be a cop” (Focus group participant, March 15, 2018). Another officer, a ten-year veteran of a large force in the “regional and specialty department” category observed, “Our focus is different. It’s not enough just to be a good cop. You need to reach back and help the next generation; and you also have to change processes” to make it possible to get more minorities in and to support their success. She went on to state, “I stayed because I was the only one. If I left, there’d be none. And then, when I got promoted, I was now in a position to change things” (Focus group participant, March 15, 2018).

This reform mindset was a significant source of positive pressure. “What we’re doing is bigger than ourselves. You give a lot of yourself, just so that others can have the opportunity.”

There was acknowledgement that pressure was pervasive, and wasn't always positive. "People [of color] may be drawn to law enforcement, but they may not stay [if the environment doesn't change]" (Focus group participant, March 15, 2018).

Beyond racial attitudes and racism, other barriers were noted as well. On the subject of the pros and cons of doing more recruiting from the neighborhoods being served, the benefits of not only matching the demographics of the community, but of having relationships and information sources that would make a cop a better policeman were noted. This was counterbalanced by, for example, the idea that cops who live in the neighborhood where they work can find themselves afraid to take their family to the local grocery store, for fear of being confronted by someone they previously arrested.

While there was some advocacy for recruiting from within the neighborhood being served, there was also criticism that departments tend to limit themselves to too narrow a "pool" when shopping for talent. In this case, the reference was not to geographic limitations, but rather to limiting recruitment efforts to certain strategies and promotional vehicles that tend to reach a limited candidate profile.

The interaction of social capital and financial access. The focus group concurred with my study findings, which suggested that black recruits tended to be older, were less likely to come from a law-enforcement family background, and were less likely to have initially chosen a law-enforcement curriculum in college, compared to their white counterparts. Each of these qualities tended to impose their own additional level of challenge to the successful navigation of the path to a position in law enforcement. Of particular note is how the lack of *navigational savvy*, a key attribute of *social capital*,

disparately impacts people from more constrained financial circumstances, as well as those with fewer educational credentials. Both are qualities overrepresented among black candidates. Didn't get the right major in college? Don't have a college degree at all? Perhaps a candidate needed time, and maybe a gym membership, to prepare for the physical agility test. And while preparing, does that candidate have savings or another income source to support themselves? Does the candidate have a young family to support while simultaneously pursuing their passion to become a police officer? In other words, the absence of knowledge of how to quickly and efficiently satisfy the academic credentialing and physical fitness requirements of law enforcement can be a barrier for anyone, but presents a significantly more challenging hurdle for candidates from more modest economic means.

What is not represented among this pool of 13 interviews are the law enforcement *candidates* who started on the path to law enforcement, and somewhere along the way either quit or were pushed out by the barriers and obstacles they faced. As this is a qualitative study, and a study of a pool of *successful* black officers, that story could be a significant one, but it is a story that will not be told here. It is a story hinted at by the experience of an officer working in a department falling within the specialty and regional category. This young woman's identity represented multiple underrepresented populations within Minnesota law enforcement. It was an identity that another, large urban department, one which she (unsuccessfully) applied to, was clearly unprepared to support. It seems likely that even if her candidacy had progressed, other barriers would have either blocked her entry, or undermined her chance for long-term tenure. Now

entering a successful fourth year, this officer is utilized heavily by her department as a mentor to prospective officers, and as a recruitment representative.

The importance of physicality. Ethnographic research principles dictate that the researcher recast themselves as the student, and his or her study subjects as the teacher. Not only to learn what is, but to learn the significance of what is. The ethnographer is challenged to set aside belief in "naïve realism" that is to say, the belief, almost universally held, that all people define the real world of objects and events in pretty much the same way (Spradley, 1979).

It is by being open to this notion of being taught what is significant by the subjects themselves that two important lessons about physicality, previously unconsidered by this researcher, came to the surface. One involved the ability to assert physical authority. This requirement was surfaced in one way or another by the great majority of the study participants, and seemed associated with but separate from a second physical attribute, which is the ability and willingness to physically engage with and subdue non-cooperative persons that an officer might encounter in the course of their duties. Skillfulness in fighting (euphemistically referred to as *defensive techniques* in Skills Training), and comfort with physicality (willingness to go "hands-on," as the officers described it), proved to be valued attributes among law enforcement officers. "In my day, it was, 'Is he big enough to fight and can he write a report?'" reported one local Minnesota police chief (Kaiser, 2015). Chelsea, an officer from a department in the small suburban and rural category, and, not coincidently, the only female officer among the interview subjects who would qualify as "above average" in physical size, trains boxers

at a local gym. She suggested that unlike many of her peers, she normally does not carry a firearm when she is off-duty—as she is more than happy to handle a situation "hands on" if the need should occur.

Physical authority, which might be another word for *presence*, could largely be established, I learned, through mere physical size. But size alone is not sufficient in every circumstance, apparently, nor would the absence of physical size preclude the capacity to establish presence. "Steve" told an entertaining story about a female colleague who grew up in the tough, working class neighborhood she was assigned to patrol. She was a woman of slight size and stature, and quite "lady-like" in her demeanor and speech, *unless* provoked. And if the offending subject was a black male from "the old neighborhood," she would reliably switch into a loud, aggressive, "street" vernacular that left a clear impression that the source of her authority was by no means confined to either her size, or her badge.

As mentioned, the capacity to establish a commanding physical presence is associated with but not the same as the second attribute, which is the ability and willingness to engage physically in order to resolve a conflict. Interestingly enough, the need to demonstrate this capacity was not limited to officers on street patrol engaging a drunk, or intervening in a domestic dispute. No fewer than five of the study participants shared stories of physical confrontations or near-confrontations with fellow officers. Some of these were encounters during the training phase, either in departmental academies, or in the course of Skills training. One bizarre case involved an officer who believed she may have narrowly avoided physical assault by a group of her peers—they

felt she was disloyal because she acted to protect the safety of civilians whose home was raided by the officers (see page 125).

The significance of physicality was also connected to being willing and able to back up their fellow officers in case of a physical confrontation or potential confrontation, as well as perceiving that a colleague is capable of taking care of themselves on the street. Part of this seems to stem from the belief that an officer with commanding physical presence is less likely to experience an escalation from a potentially combative suspect. Physical capability seemed to be as important a quality as judgment and reliability. “Amber” offered this observation, “Everyone wants to see the big guy on the team.”

Eleven out of 13 participants had some athletic background, either playing a sport at the college level, playing football or baseball in high school (in the case of two participants who joined law enforcement prior to attending college), or in three cases, working as a fitness trainer prior to pursuing a career in law enforcement. One woman trains male and female boxers at a local gym. Another marker of athleticism and physicality is that six of 13, or nearly half of the participants could be described as significantly larger than average (defined as weighing more than 200 pounds)—which is remarkable when keeping in mind that five of the 13 were female.

Reformer? Or cheerleader? The literature suggests that, generally speaking, the majority of (white) police officers chose law enforcement because law enforcement has an image they found attractive (Hilal, Densley, & Jones, 2015). Positive perception is a common driver of choice of career. Given that the reputation of law enforcement in the

black community is much more negative than is true among whites (Morin & Stepler, 2016), and that whites are over-represented in law enforcement, it is reasonable to speculate that blacks who choose law enforcement careers might have a different motivation for choosing that career path. Interviews of black and white police officers, along with a review of the scholarly literature and the news media, revealed that some police officers were drawn to the profession by a desire to reform the law-enforcement function, rather than being drawn to the profession because of their admiration for that field. Recall, for example, the words of Delrish Moss, whose 32-year career as a Miami police officer was sparked by poor treatment received as a teenager: "I decided I needed to become a police officer to teach these people how to treat people" (Pearson, 2016). So in each formal interview, cues that would identify the officer as being either a "police cheerleader" or a "police reformer" was actively listened for.

Interview participants in this study did not fit cleanly into one category or the other. Only two interview subjects seemed to have been completely embracive of police culture as they experienced it. A narrow majority of the 13 study participants reported enthusiasm for the image they held of policing prior to entering the profession, but once "inside," many found elements that were disturbing or disappointing.

Several study participants were clearly drawn to policing for reasons similar to those of Delrish Moss—they had a sense, based on their own previous law-enforcement experiences, that "the people deserve better." In other words, they were clearly reform-minded. Equally common, though, were study participants who expressed ambivalence about minority advocacy. For example, one interview participant from a large urban

department agreed that black youth benefit from seeing black role models in law enforcement; yet in the next breath, this same participant seemed to endorse his department's recruiting efforts trending away from prioritizing minority hires and towards such qualities as candidates' track record of community service.

"Steve," an officer from a department in the "small suburban and rural" category, actually seemed put off by the idea that his racial identity would give black citizens a sense of reassurance of fair treatment. He described how it is standard procedure for the first cop to arrive on site to "own the scene," serve as the lead, and direct the questioning of suspects or witnesses. If a black suspect expressed a preference to speak with him rather than the lead cop, it would create the potential for conflict, which Steve would resolve by leaving the scene.

Study Findings—Final Thoughts.

In Chapter 3, a review of the literature surfaced seven salient career choice factors, *role models and mentorship, social capital, perceptions, interests and skills, financial access, postsecondary credentials*, and *capacity for self-authorship*. These seven factors informed the pre-figured codes that framed the primary research discussion guide (see Appendix A). Chapter 4 summarized the primary research findings, organized within the framework of those seven choice-factors. The next and final chapter presents a synthesis of those findings, exploring their significance, and detailing the policy and practice implications they suggest. Specifically, Chapter 5 considers the role of race and racism in the ongoing persistence of racial underrepresentation, as well as the impact of higher education on law-enforcement career access. This chapter also details study

limitations, recommendations for future research, and directly addresses practice recommendations for the recruitment and training of law enforcement candidates that could potentially reduce the degree of underrepresentation in the future.

Chapter 5: Implications of Findings and Recommendations for Future Research

Predefined and Emergent Themes

Predefined themes: Connecting the existing body of career-choice literature to the findings of this study. My primary research was framed by a literature review that led me to look for the impact of traditional career-choice influencers among my law-enforcement study participants. Those influencers were detailed in Chapter 2, integrated into the interview guide found in Appendix A, and summarized below.

While it is tempting to attempt to sort the factors affecting career choice into neat categories, a rigorous analysis shows that the complex and interconnected nature of career choice can be resistant to such an approach. Still, it can be recognized that *role models and mentorship, social capital, perceptions, interests and skills, financial access, postsecondary credentials*, and *capacity for self-authorship* are seven major categories that address many of the established factors that influence decisions about POC to enter law enforcement careers.

Some factors engage more than one of those seven categories. Notably, family and friend connections are clearly a major component of the category of *role models and mentors*. But those connections also make an important contribution to the category of *social capital*. Family and friend connections also play a significant role in shaping *perceptions,* which is a third career-choice input from yet another research base. Family and friend connections, while generally a significant influence in choice of career (Saleem, Hanan, Saleem, & Shamshad, 2014) are particularly important in law enforcement, with one study indicating that more half the officers recently recruited to a

department were first prompted to consider a law-enforcement career by law-enforcement family members or friends (Castaneda & Ridgeway, 2010).

Race and gender provide another example of a factor that cuts across multiple categories. Racial identity influences access to *role models and mentors*. In the stories of these study participants, key role models and mentors usually shared the same racial identity. In addition, the participants tell us that black racial identity and female gender identity carry a sizable *social capital penalty* in a white, male-dominant, law-enforcement workplace. Finally, compared with whites, blacks experience substantial gaps in both post-secondary degree attainment rates and income levels, which means that black people, in the aggregate, are likely to face greater challenges in overcoming barriers associated with *post-secondary credential* acquisition, and *financial access*. One factor, identity, connects to four different categories, representing four different bodies of knowledge that drive career choice*; role models and mentors*, *social capital*, *post-secondary credentials*; and *financial access*.

Having acknowledged the messiness inherent in attempting to neatly categorize these career-choice factors, what follows is a description of how themes relating to these choice factors surfaced in the stories of these 13 interview participants.

Study findings and comparison of findings with predefined themes. The influence of *role models* and *mentorship* were much less evident among these 13 study participants than the literature (Castaneda & Ridgeway, 2010) would suggest is generally the case for law-enforcement officers. This finding is consistent with historical

underrepresentation of blacks in law enforcement and, consequently, a reduced level of access to role models and mentors for black police officers.

Social capital, a second category of career influence (Seibert, Kraimer, & Liden, 2001; Parks-Yancy, 2010), was also notable, primarily for its relative absence among the participants in this study. As with *role models and mentorship*, family members and friends with a connection to the profession of law enforcement are typical sources of *social capital* for future law-enforcement officers. However, as a result of low levels of participation in law enforcement by black people, the number of current black police officers who are available to provide social capital, or mentorship, or serve as a role model for future police officers is limited.

The prerequisites a candidate must satisfy to compete successfully for a sworn law-enforcement officer position are extensive. The right *social capital* and institutional knowledge can dramatically reduce the burden of meeting those prerequisites, and often make the difference between success and failure. Important social-capital elements include knowledge of what those prerequisites are, where they can be acquired, the required sequencing of those prerequisites, and how their acquisition cost can be offset.

Educational prerequisites include a POST Board-approved two- or four-year degree from one of 30 authorized Minnesota colleges as well as a POST-approved Skills course. The physical agility component of the law enforcement qualification testing, a component that varies considerably from one department to the next, was often cited as a prerequisite that filters out many otherwise well-qualified and well-prepared candidates.

Social capital can also include insight into best practices for successfully navigating the (typically) six month probationary period faced by new officers.

Sources of this *social capital* can include mentors, college curriculums, or the hiring police department itself (Seibert, Kraimer, & Liden, 2001). But the stories of these interviewees suggest that experienced police officers are the most important source of insight into the qualification and training process. Multiple interviewees indicated that the guidance received from colleges and police departments was inadequate. On the relatively rare occasions when officers did receive effective support from colleges and hiring departments, they found that support to be very helpful. But more often than not that support was lacking. Its absence was costly in terms of time to completion and financial expense. In addition to the absence of *social capital* in the form of navigational support, the *social capital penalty* of black identity, while looming less large for recent hires, remained an explicit factor for nine of the participants, including recent hires as well as 20-year veterans.

An alternative source of valuable social capital for the future law-enforcement officer is military service. Familiarity with paramilitary hierarchical structures, as well as prior exposure to intensive physical conditioning, surfaced as valued experiences for future police officers. However, in this group, personal military experience was limited, with only two of the 13 having served. Of the 13 interview participants, seven had close military family members. The ability to draw upon the *social capital* of military experience, even when gleaned second-hand, to spark consideration and facilitate successful navigation of the paramilitary culture of law enforcement seemed of greater

importance for the men in this study. Only two of the seven male participants lacked the influence of a family member with military experience and also had no personal history of military service.

The impact of *perceptions* of policing on career choice and the decision of the interviewees to pursue a career in policing was mixed. In the majority of the cases, positive attitudes held by the participants towards the policing profession were met by the negative perceptions of family members and peers. But in at least one instance, veteran officer "Calvin" was offered critical encouragement to pursue law enforcement by a trusted colleague. In his case, leaving his job as a metro transit bus driver to take a job as a patrol officer meant a reduction in pay. But his transit supervisor played a valuable mentorship role by observing that driving a metro bus was "a job," while law enforcement offered him "a career." The assurance that he could have his old bus driver job back if the police position did not work out was an important consideration as well. Of the 13 interviews, there were a few instances of positive perceptions and support from peers, but in most cases the positive validation came *after* the subject succeeded in obtaining a law-enforcement position. When in the process of contemplating the pursuit of a career in law enforcement, the interviewees were more likely to relate stories of negative feedback and either neutral or ambiguous comments from family and friends.

Similar to the mixed feedback about how *perceptions* of law enforcement influence choice of career, the role that *interests and skills* played in career choice seemed both muted and mixed. The themes that received somewhat consistent affirmation as qualities that strengthened interest in a law-enforcement career included

the adrenaline-charged moments that were a part of a patrol officer's job and the opportunity to help people. Mastering *defensive techniques* and passing the *physical agility* component of the qualification process are two aspects of law enforcement that came were cited in the interviews as barriers with roughly the same frequency as they were mention as specific areas of competence.

Financial access served as a law-enforcement career choice barrier. The difficulty of paying for a lengthy and narrowly defined academic path was mentioned by about half of the interview participants. The extended time typically involved was also identified as a financial hurdle. Several interview participants observed that completion of the background check process took approximately six months. For someone who is unemployed or considering multiple career options, such an extended timeframe creates a formidable financial barrier.

Post-secondary credentials and *financial access* are closely associated, as are their operation as barriers to a career in law enforcement. Not only can the cost of education be a barrier, but a significant amount of difficult-to-acquire *social capital* is required in order to navigate educational requirements in a timely and efficient fashion. It is interesting to note that this paradigm of higher education serving as a barrier to a career in law enforcement could potentially be reversed. For example, the U.S. military has stimulated the supply of qualified, well-prepared officer candidates by following a model of proactive investment in recruitment for many years. The *social capital* of information on how to enlist is freely available in shopping mall recruiting centers around the country. Campus-based Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) programs have been in

existence for a century. In addition to this career guidance *social capital*, today's ROTC programs provide *financial access* to a four-year college education as well. ROTC program participants receive scholarships and stipends in exchange for a commitment to the completion of a specialized, complementary military curriculum while in college, and a period of service as a military officer after graduation.

More recently, the cultivation of future researchers from amongst college students has been the objective of the McNair Scholars program. This federally funded program targets low-income, first generation, and underrepresented people of color, providing them with experiences and mentorship designed to engage and cultivate an interest in research. In addition to financial support and mentors who guide the student through a summer research project, the McNair program provides an array of benefits, including technical research assistance, opportunities to present research at regional and national conferences, graduate program tours, and assistance in applying to graduate programs. The program's goal is to increase the number of students who go on to pursue research doctorate degrees (PennState McNair Program, n.d.; McNair Scholars Program, n.d.).

The law enforcement profession has the opportunity to create programs that leverage templates like ROTC and McNair to transform post-secondary education into a *source* of *social capital* and *financial access* to college and a career path for future law enforcement officers. Financial incentives that can transform policing into a means of funding the cost of college have only recently begun to be explored. For example, the Saint Paul Police Department recently launched its *Law Enforcement Career Path Academy* (LECPA) program (Saint Paul Minnesota, n.d.). The program provides financial

support for classroom studies in law enforcement in exchange for volunteer service in police departments.

In the rare occasions (two out of 13 interviews) where higher education served as a bridge to a law enforcement career, rather than a barrier, it was because a participant's pursuit of a degree in criminal justice was mistakenly interpreted as a signal of interest in a career in law enforcement. In each case the misinterpretation led to opportunities to be exposed to the true nature of police-work, through internships and ride-alongs, and created opportunities for informal mentorship relationships to develop.

More often, *post-secondary education* served as a hindrance to an eventual successful entry into law enforcement for the interviewees. In some cases, law enforcement candidates already held a four-year degree, but since the degree they held was not POST-certified, they were required to complete additional college coursework before they could make application to law enforcement job postings. Repeatedly, the absence of clear and timely information about educational requirements resulted in additional time to complete the academic qualification process, as well as additional costs.

The pervasive significance of self-authorship. While most of the previously described career choice factors were either not strongly in evidence, or served as a barrier to law enforcement career choice, *capacity for self-authorship* emerged as a dominant enabling force in the stories of these interview participants. The literature describes how a high degree of self-authorship empowers individuals to make and self-validate their own decisions, as well as to reconcile conflicting priorities and values (Abes & Hernandez,

2016). Self-authorship is critical to overcoming the typically negative responses black candidates receive to their expressions of interest in a law-enforcement career. “Jim’s” mother had concerns for his safety, while his friends were noncommittal, at best, about his career choice. “Michael,” “Kate,” and “Amber” all reported they had friends who were either quite negative or would no longer speak to them because of their choice of career.

High levels of *self-authorship* are also called for to overcome negative attitudes towards minorities expressed by police peers and trainers. “Calvin” and “Jim” both shared stories of white fellow officers using the “N” word as a descriptive or derogatory comment. “Jane” reported a police peer complaining that “you people” (meaning black people) seemed especially prone to violence, while “Mohamed,” a Muslim officer, reported being called a “terrorist” by a community member. Feedback from the 13 interviews validated the research of Perrott (1999) and Robles (2016), which found that officers of color, when compared to whites, are less likely to find support for their choice of career among their family, friends, and community. These multiple sources of resistance to their chosen career path made strong self-authorship all the more critical to their success in realizing their career goals. This followed a similar pattern described by Baxter Magolda (1998).

The challenge presented by the *social capital* “penalty” of a black identity appeared to be mitigated primarily by deep reserves of *self-authorship*; or a refusal to allow the negative perceptions of colleagues or family members be a barrier to the realization of personal career goals. While three of the five female participants lacked

influential military or law-enforcement connections in their family background, and none had personal military experience, all the women in this study seemed to draw upon especially deep reserves of *self-authorship*. Four of the five women spoke spontaneously and at length about how their female identity was either counter to, or in some way marginalized by, the dominant culture of their department. At the same time, in several cases their career choice was also counter to the expectations and preferences of close family members. "Amber's" father, for example, did not think women should work as police officers. The ability of these officers to persevere and succeed in the face of these various sources of resistance speaks to a high level of self-authorship and relatively low need for external validation. This strong element of self-authorship and self-validation was also apparent in the stories of the men. For example, "Michael" and "Calvin" noted that they never considered themselves academically proficient and that they had to make exceptional efforts to pass the textbook-based components of the officer-training curriculum. Yet, later in their careers, when it came time to take the qualifying test for promotion to sergeant, both performed at or near the top of the scale. In fact, "Michael" performed so well his department initiated an investigation into whether he had discovered a way to cheat on the exam, a story he shared with a notable level of pride.

The astute reader will note that this discussion of career choice factors does not address Jungian personality theories and Myers-Briggs personality types (see the MBTI discussion in Chapter 2). There is, nevertheless, an argument to be made that *perceptions* are influenced by beliefs about law-enforcement culture and cultural fit. And there is a connection between workplace culture and individual personalities. However, the

ethnographic oral history investigative approach to acquiring data and discerning meaning, as utilized by this study, is not an appropriate tool for acquiring personality type data or evaluating the interaction between individual personalities and workplace cultures. An exploration of possible connections between personality types and the decision to pursue a career in law enforcement would best be served by other research methodologies.

Emergent themes. Two noteworthy examples of emergent elements of significance pertain to what I have categorized as "physical size" and "athletic orientation." Using subjective criteria, I sorted the 13 interview subjects into two categories. After hearing stories and reflecting on the interviews, I decided to define these qualities as follows: "Larger than average physical size" I qualified as body weight in excess of 200 pounds. The Center for Disease Control's Anthropometric Reference Data for Children and Adults indicates that the average American man over age 20 weighs 196 pounds; while the average American woman over age 20 weighs 169 pounds (Center for Disease Control, 2018). The second quality, "athletic orientation," was arguably even more subjective. I decided to categorize participants who played a varsity sport at the college level (or high school, for those that transitioned into law enforcement before matriculating into college), or who worked in a profession prior to law enforcement that incorporated physical fitness (three interviewees had worked as physical fitness trainers or physical therapists at one time), as having what I have called an "athletic orientation."

That athleticism and physical size were nearly determinative qualities of suitability for a law enforcement career was an unexpected find. The narratives of the

interview participants suggested that success as a police officer demanded a significant degree of physicality.

Policy Implications of Study Findings

In the following section I address implications for policy and practice that may be suggested by the findings of this study.

Are Minnesota's high educational standards an impediment to black participation in law enforcement? It would not be unreasonable to hope that this study might either validate the value of a postsecondary education for Minnesota's police professionals or else provide evidence that an advanced degree is unnecessary. And it is true that the stories gathered provided evidence that an exemplary career in policing did not depend on a college degree. But the increasing complexity of a police officer's job makes relaxing educational standards counterintuitive. Moreover, for at least two of the 13 participants in this study, college was the bridge that led them to a career in law-enforcement.

Overcoming late awareness of careers in policing—a potential remedy. A common theme emerged from the stories shared in this study, which was that discovering an interest in law enforcement late—i.e. while in college or after completing a college degree—results in an increase in the total cost of acquiring the postsecondary education necessary to pursue a career in law enforcement. If the goal is to reduce the barriers to participation by black people and other minorities, a more effective strategy could be to increase opportunities for young people, precollege, to gain exposure to law enforcement experiences and mentors.

The current level of underinvestment in this type of strategic approach to development of the talent pool represents low-hanging fruit, perhaps most tellingly with Minnesota's Police Explorer programs. In Minnesota, Police Explorer programs, which connect high school students with policing-related activities overseen by police officers who serve as supervisors and mentors, are concentrated in suburban areas that have minimal minority representation. Minneapolis, with the state's largest police department and by far the largest number of black and other POC police officers, participates in Police Explorers, but its program is very small, and poorly communicated to the public. Given the degree to which Minnesota's youth of color are concentrated in Minneapolis schools, the opportunity to strategically invest in Police Explorers in order to improve the representation of POC in the law enforcement talent pool, not only for Minneapolis, but for the Twin Cities metropolitan area and the state as a whole, is clearly being missed. This is particularly unfortunate, as Police Explorer-type programs are an ideal vehicle for repositioning the image of policing (warrior versus guardian mindset) at the point in their lives when many young people are contemplating career paths.

"Graduates" of pre-college programs like Police Explorers could also be more intentionally recruited into post-secondary programs such as Law Enforcement Training Opportunities (LETO), Law Enforcement Career Path Academy (LECPA), and Pathways to Policing. Such a strategy, combined with increased investment in these newly emerging programs, as well as traditional program offers such as Reserve Officer and Community Service Officer, could yield attractive returns. Emphasizing exposure to minority and female police officer role models could further enhance the effectiveness of

such initiatives, connecting future applicants with potential mentors in a profession where mentorship is particularly important.

Do fitness standards create an unnecessary or biased barrier to career access? The Cooper Institute-based fitness testing model (Cooper Institute, n.d.) was cited repeatedly in interviews as a barrier to entry. This widely used screening tool is used to assess the ability of candidates to meet the physical demands of law enforcement. Those who successfully passed Cooper Institute-based fitness assessments (hereafter referred to as the Cooper fitness test) fell into two categories. They either identified the Cooper fitness test as one of the most difficult aspects of qualifying for a sworn officer role, or they identified themselves as being exceptionally athletic. In fact, five of the 13 interview subjects were former college football players; and only two of the 13 did not possess some marker of physical fitness in their backgrounds (either school athletics or experience as a personal trainer). The value of mentorship to gain an understanding of the various fitness standards of different departments, and the techniques and timeframes required to be prepared to meet those standards, surfaced in several of the interviews. The Minneapolis Police Department was mentioned repeatedly for fitness standards that appeared challenging, arbitrary, and perhaps not well aligned to the actual physical requirements of the job.

Promoting law-enforcement careers to new talent "markets." Some agencies, such as the Minneapolis Police Department, the Minnesota State Patrol, and the Ramsey County Sheriff's Office, are actively developing and promoting the success of minorities and women among their sworn officer ranks, particularly younger officers with whom

future recruits might more readily identify. The Minnesota State Patrol has also explored using minority-focused media, such as local radio stations, to promote their brand and their career opportunities among minorities. The Saint Paul Police Department is partnering with AmeriCorps for both the funding and the promotion of its Law Enforcement Career Path Academy (LECPA). Saint Paul is also marketing the LEPCA program through alternative promotional channels such as Glass Door, an Internet-based job board.

The Impact of Race, Racial Dynamics, and Racism in Law Enforcement

As previously noted, while interview participants were aware that this research effort was focused on the experience of black police officers in Minnesota, the interviews were framed by a grand-tour question that made no direct reference to race. In two interviews the participants made no unprompted references to racial incidents, racialized experiences, or overtly racist behaviors. In those cases, I posed a follow-up question, asking how their racial identity made an impact on their experience as a candidate or as a police officer.

One participant essentially deflected the inquiry. “Steve,” a member of a department in the small suburban and rural category, when asked if he ever felt as if he were treated differently because of his race, replied, “I was raised to not accept barriers but to go through or around them.” He did observe, though, that it was clear to him that discrimination against women made things harder for them. Steve’s reaction suggests a belief that obstacles imposed by the behaviors of others are to be transcended rather than treated as a deterrent. This is consistent with Baxter Magolda’s descriptions of persons

who display high levels of self-authorship—while they recognize that external events might be beyond their control, how one responds to those events are an individual's responsibility. (Baxter Magolda, 1998).

By contrast, in the great majority of interviews, the participants made multiple unprompted references to what could be broadly categorized as *racialized experiences*. I made a distinction between racialized experiences and a subset of those experiences that I cataloged as instances of *outright racism*. Further, these racist behaviors fell into several different categories and these distinctions are significant.

One category was *racism expressed by peer officers and directed at someone other than the interview participant*. Those stories were the most common. A second category was *racism directed at the interview participant by a citizen or a suspect*. Those were the second most common. Last, I noted the stories about *overt or covert racist behavior directed towards the interview subject by another uniformed officer*, whether superior or peer. Those stories were less common and frequently were shared in an indirect or veiled fashion.

The stories seemed both authentic and typical; in my experience, antagonistic or demeaning behaviors are rarely unambiguously racist in nature. For example, when someone is terminated, it is almost unheard of that the reason given is due to racial animus towards the terminated employee. Yet, even a cursory review of the facts surrounding an incident often leaves little room for alternative explanations.

Stories of significant racial bias. One story shared by a tenured officer with over a decade of service in a department in the "regional and specialty" category detailed her

experience in her first position as a sworn officer. “Cathy” was terminated from a department in the “small suburban and rural category for “performance reasons” but later filed a lawsuit and won a settlement for wrongful termination. Cathy has subsequently secured employment in two other police departments, and in her current role, she is frequently asked to represent her department at state-level functions. In addition, she has won a promotion to sergeant, and was selected to lead her department’s recruitment and candidate background-check functions. It is noteworthy that the department that terminated her had never hired a black officer before, nor has it hired one since, as of this writing.

The story of black officers suing their departments, winning settlements for racial discrimination, and then enjoying long and successful careers as police officers is repeated over and over again in Minnesota, giving credence to Minnesota law enforcement’s reputation as a hostile work environment for people of color. In fact the evidence, based on conversations with senior black law-enforcement officers, both within and outside the formal study group, is that about half of all seasoned black Minnesota officers (ten or more years of sworn service) have won judgments against a police department for discriminatory practices. Many of those lawsuits are well-documented in the popular press (Jany, 2016; Chanen & Collins, 2007; Edwards, 2013). Among those senior black officers with settlement victories is the current chief of the Minneapolis Police Department.

“Terry” described the experience he had after completing Skills training towards the end of 2012. The chief of a small suburban department had personally recruited

Terry, first as a volunteer reserve officer, and then in a non-sworn position that departments utilize as a transitional role for candidates being considered for sworn-officer positions:

> The [department redacted] police chief said "I've got a reserve spot for you." [I] did that for a couple of months. Then [the chief] said 'I've got a CSO spot for you' – [that is a] Community Service Officer. I said, "Yeah I'll take it." Well then I got bumped from working at day to working at night. And I was working at night with officers that weren't as … [low chuckle]. That CSO spot lasted about two weeks. They flushed me out of there fast.

When asked, "What did they do … to get you out?" he responded by explaining the typical role played by CSOs. "CSOs get the animal calls and transport duties, such as transporting suspects to the jail." A CSO might be asked to transport evidence, write traffic tickets, etc. Terry discovered the sworn officers would consistently "freeze him out" of calls that CSO's would normally handle. For example, the sworn officers would do their own transport of suspects to the jail when he was on duty. Or, they would tell him not to come on duty because they were short on men—which seemed odd and counterintuitive to him, since if they were short, then it would presumably be even more important not to pull sworn officers off active patrol to do transport, etc. The next day, he would find out they had called in another CSO to cover the shift that had been assigned to him and claimed that he was a no-show on that shift.

The final straw involved another prospective recruit's insistence that some jurisdictions allowed CSOs to carry firearms. He knew that assertion was absurd, and

after a back and forth, he told the recruit that he should apply to [department redacted] and see if they would allow him to carry a firearm as a CSO. The sworn officer twisted the story around and told the chief that Terry was telling people outside the department that CSOs in [department redacted] were allowed to carry firearms. And on that basis, Terry's chief presented him with the option of either quitting or being fired. He was never even asked to tell his side of the story. It was clear that his future peers did not want him on the force. It was also clear the department chief was not going to spend political capital opposing their wishes, even though this chief had personally brought him into the department in the first place. The total time of his tenure as a CSO was just two weeks.

Like most stories involving allegations of bias, there is no definitive proof that race was at the root of the situation. But his brief tenure as a reserve officer and a CSO, the fact that every patrol officer in the department was white, his subsequent proven ability to be successful as a sworn officer in a different police department, and the fact that a white female CSO was treated very differently (they started at the same time and the female shortly thereafter transitioned from CSO to sworn officer) combine to present a compelling case for race-based discrimination. And there is a punctuation mark to the story: An Asian female law-enforcement officer who transferred in from a different department to [department redacted], at approximately the same time, reportedly had a very similar experience, including rapid termination, and a subsequent successful continuation of her police career in another department.

In retrospect, Terry felt that the suburban police chief who hired him had good intentions but was unwilling to advocate for someone that his rank-and-file officers had

aligned against, no matter the reason. Although Terry did not say as much, the clear implication was that he believed his failure to be accepted was a consequence of his racial identity.

Blatant examples of bias from peers and superiors. While the two examples above occurred within the past 15 years, the barriers to success as reported by officers whose service dates back to the 1980s were far more numerous.

"Calvin," a participant who joined a large urban police department in the 1980s, reported that during his academy class he had an instructor who was clearly antagonistic to him. When Calvin raised his hand to ask a question, this instructor would not call on him but instead would shoot him a withering look until he felt forced to lower his hand. As the only black candidate in the class, this treatment actually motivated his classmates, who initially were somewhat cool towards him, to be more supportive, as they could see he was not being treated fairly.

"Gerald" shared a more visceral example of racial antagonism. It was an incident he witnessed shortly after he had completed his field training in a large urban department in the mid-1980s. At the end of his shift he witnessed a black colleague who double-parked his red Corvette, blocking in a squad car in front of the precinct be addressed by a fellow officer thus: "You fucking nigger, move your goddamn car." That verbal assault was followed by a physical altercation that had to be broken up by police supervisors.

Although the stories were not always so harrowing, the majority of the study participants volunteered at least one incident in which police superiors or peers made marginalizing comments. For example, "Jennifer," an officer of Native American and

African American heritage and a veteran of a large urban department, described an overtly racist interaction with an officer she was partnered with. After a difficult arrest with a loud and talkative black suspect, her peer officer confronted her saying, “Why are you people so violent?” She asked him to clarify, what did “you people” refer to? “You mean women? Black women? Native women?” The other officer responded, “You black people!” She responded by telling him to shut up, and the next day, she asked to be reassigned to a different partner.

Examples of peer-officer racism and bias directed at others. “Calvin,” an officer who joined a large urban department in the mid-1980s reported that his peer officers were openly hostile to the women who were starting to enter law enforcement. They commonly referred to these new female colleagues as “cunts” (Participant interview, November 20, 2017). “Jim,” also from a large urban department, related a story of how he was partnered with a white female, where they had the same level of productivity, same arrest records, etc.; yet, on his evaluation, he received a 96, whereas she received a 77, which he attributed to his male supervisor’s bias against women police officers. “Jackson,” an officer from a department in the regional and specialty category, said he observed a pattern of disrespectful attitudes that appeared to focus on the Somali employees of the retail shops in his patrol area. Jackson also noted that his peers were more likely to run the license plates on certain types of cars and certain identities of drivers, a practice he felt appeared to be racial profiling.

One particularly dramatic story began with a fellow officer’s antagonism towards a citizen but then escalated to a threat of violence against “Jennifer,” who at the time was

a sworn officer on her six-month probation, partnered with a Field Training Officer (FTO). The escalation was sparked by Jennifer serving as an advocate for a family being antagonized by her fellow officers. Her peers had conducted a warrantless drug search of the home of a Hispanic family that was in the midst of preparing for a child's birthday party. Initially failing to find drugs, her colleagues called for a K-9 unit, which turned up a pound of marijuana; however, upon learning there was no search warrant, the K-9 officer refused to participate further and left the scene. Frustrated, Jennifer's colleagues sprayed the food prepared for the party with mace as they left the home empty-handed.

Shocked by that action, which she believed could have endangered the children's lives if they had eaten the now-contaminated food, Jennifer notified one of the occupants that the food was contaminated, presented her card, and told them if they wished to file a complaint that she would testify on their behalf. One of her police colleagues overheard the exchange and told the other cops on the scene. Jennifer's fellow officers were infuriated and approached her in an aggressive fashion that seemed suggestive of an intent to do her bodily harm. At one point, she put her hand on her service weapon, which caused them to momentarily back off, but they continued to speak and act in a threatening manner. She then pulled out her cell phone, called her brother (who was ex-military and apparently would be considered a "bad dude") and told him "remember these names." She then began giving the names of the officers who were continuing to stand around her in a threatening fashion. Her brother told her to give the phone to one of them. Later Jennifer learned that her brother had threatened them; saying that if anything happened to his sister, he would see to it that there would be justice.

Examples of racism directed at officers by the public. Outright racial hostility directed at officers by members of the public was perhaps the most common type of overt racism reported in these interviews, but this also appeared to be the least consequential form. “Mohamed,” a Muslim officer from a department in the small suburban and rural category, expressed it well, when he said, “People seem to try to elicit a reaction” by singling out some quality that is a part of your identity to provoke a response. “I’ve been called a terrorist by minorities, by African Americans as well as by white people. It’s hard for me to gauge if it’s racial or if they’re just trying to pick at something because I’m wearing the uniform.” “Steve,” an officer from a department with a similar profile, stated, “I’ve been called the N-word by white folks and an ‘Uncle Tom’ by black folks.” He offered a similar observation, that the intent seemed to be essentially to provoke a reaction by leveraging a “convenient element of identity, which happened to be race.” Several other officers, particularly younger officers and officers from small suburban departments, reported being called the N-word by community members, typically when dealing with people who appeared to be either drunk or high on drugs. Steve and Mohamed also reported encountering members of the community who insisted on speaking with the white officer they were partnered with and pointedly ignoring them. While it seemed that explicit racism by the public was less consequential, it was not completely without consequence. “Mohamed” expressed a great deal of appreciation for his white partner’s response to racial slurs. Almost invariably, the partner would intercede on his behalf, letting the authors of the offensive statements know that their racist sentiments were neither shared nor acceptable.

Reversing Underrepresentation in Law Enforcement: Priorities and Recommendations for Police Leaders

The literature as well as the participant interviews of this study suggest that the larger urban police departments have a longer history of seeking and securing racial diversity in their departments. Indeed, articles and scholarly research detailing the overwhelmingly white makeup of Twin Cities police departments (Montemayor, 2015; Gottfried, 2016; D'Haem & Jiabia, 2016), even those that serve communities with significant minority populations, align with the experiences of the interviewees, particularly the four participants who had brief, unsuccessful tenures in small suburban police departments. Of those four, it should be noted that three have subsequently enjoyed long, successful careers in larger, more urban departments. The nature of the root cause of this representation gap appears open to competing opinions, however. Montemayor (2015) suggests that suburban departments are eagerly seeking qualified talent but just cannot find it. The testimony of the interview participants in this study suggest otherwise. Repeatedly, their comments detail surreptitious and occasionally blatant acts by field training officers, sergeants, and rank-and-file peer officers designed to undermine minorities and force them out. Additionally, most Minnesota police departments seem ill equipped to develop, engage, or support the interests of candidates who do not have a traditional (white middle-class male) background. Reports of continuing marginalization of women candidates also appears to be a factor; and given the relatively high proportion of female-headed black households, the marginalization of women in law enforcement will disproportionately disadvantage black participation.

I would be remiss if I failed to note that all police departments should not be painted with the same broad brush. Whether the comparison is between one large urban police department and another, or two adjoining small suburban departments, the diversity of departmental cultures and attitudes is quite marked. My conversations with dozens of patrol officers and sheriff's deputies—as well as police chiefs, lieutenants, commanders, and sheriffs—have taught me that there is tremendous variation in the level of commitment, the understanding of recruitment and retention issues, and the degree of success that various departments have achieved in the hiring and development of officers of color. The reputations of different departments in terms of their diversity and the inclusiveness of their culture also vary significantly. In some cases, it appears that the reputation certain suburban departments have of being resistant to sworn officers of color has changed little over the decades. Conversely, the reputations of some other suburban departments for inclusiveness are much more favorable, despite the representation gaps that may currently exist.

Lessons learned and implications for police-recruitment strategies. One implication of the pattern of random and relatively late discovery of an interest in a law-enforcement career is a corresponding increase in the "acquisition cost" of the credentials required to be eligible to apply for a position as a sworn officer. Traditional college-age students, particularly students who are either high performing or low income, typically have access to grants and scholarships that can reduce the cost of acquiring an undergraduate education. But nontraditional (i.e., older) college students, part-time

students, and two-year or certificate-seeking students frequently do not have the same opportunity to subsidize the cost of their education.

If the sample represented in this study is representative, then black police officers and officer candidates are much less likely to come from a suburban middle-class background, compared with white officers. They are less likely to have law-enforcement mentors and role models in their circle. They are less likely to have had exposure to pre-professional law enforcement-related programming like Police Explorers. They are more likely to be nontraditional age college students. They are therefore less likely to have early (high school or earlier) aspirations to a career in law-enforcement. These factors align to both increase their cost of acquiring the appropriate academic credentials and reduce their access to the resources to pay for them. The lack of mentors means they are also less likely to be aware of access pathways and professional development opportunities frequently identified as important stepping stones on the path to becoming a sworn officer. These opportunities include recently emergent programs such as Pathways to Policing, a six agency cooperative program for college graduates who lack a traditional law enforcement degree (Glover, 2017); the Minnesota State Patrol's Law Enforcement Training Opportunities (LETO) program (Minnesota Department of Public Safety, n.d.); and the Saint Paul Police Foundation's Law Enforcement Career Path Academy (LECPA) program (Saint Paul Minnesota, n.d.). Each of these programs are specifically focused on or primarily oriented towards enhancing the number of people of color in law enforcement. They join more traditional access pathways such as Community Service Officer (CSO) programs, cadet programs, and reserve officer opportunities—pathways

that are ostensibly open to all, but typically known and utilized primarily by law enforcement "insiders" – those with older family members or mentors in law enforcement. These pathway programs provide free access to training, mentorship, and developmental experience. CSO programs, as well as LETO, Pathways to Policing, and LECPA, provide funded access, accompanied by a salary, to the academic credentials that are prerequisites to a career in policing. Ignorance of these access points to law enforcement careers is doubly limiting for black candidates who have, on average, more modest family incomes and are less likely to have completed a two- or four-year degree than their white counterparts.

It is relevant to note that none of our 13 interview participants came to law enforcement through LEPCA, LETO, or Pathways to Policing. Two female participants were connected to CSO programs through random encounters with police "insiders"; while a male participant gained access to a cadet program through insider contacts made during a summer internship at a crime lab; in each case these programs paid for the required academic credentialing for these candidates. *Reducing dependence on family and other "insider" policing connections as a source of candidate mentorship support is key. Deployment of mentorship networks that intentionally reach into underrepresented communities is an effective strategy that should be continued and expanded.*

Expanding and actively marketing minority-focused pathway programs such as LETO and LEPCA is a part of the solution, and programs like LETO and LEPCA are making an impact on the quantity of diverse candidates from which participating departments can recruit. But clearly, there is still much work to be done, both to make

these program opportunities more widely known and also to change the cultures of departments that still appear to actively resist racial minorities at the rank-and-file level, sometimes despite the desires of law-enforcement leaders to increase their diversity profiles.

The culture of policing: A responsibility shared by police leaders and the community. A responsibility shared by all police departments involves the image of law enforcement and the ability of each department to promote and deliver a culture that tolerates and even values a broader range of backgrounds. Communities have a role to play as well. To the extent that the community does not see law enforcement as a legitimate, respected profession, it becomes that much harder for those who might otherwise be drawn to the service aspect of law enforcement to see the opportunity for community service embodied in a law enforcement career. One can see in law enforcement a classic chicken-and-egg problem. The young professionals that law-enforcement leaders seek to attract can best be enticed by a department that already has a reputation for service-oriented professionalism. The greater the clarity Minnesota police departments have regarding that reputational goal, the greater their success will be in building a diverse 21st-century police force.

Workplaces have distinctive cultures, and savvy leaders know that for new hires to succeed, they must be able to successfully navigate and integrate into that culture. New employees must win the acceptance of their peers. It has been argued that the nature of the work of law enforcement makes this imperative of peer acceptance even more critical. The men and women of law enforcement have to depend on their colleagues not only to

execute their mission of keeping communities safe but also to protect each other from injury or death at the hands of violent criminals.

Advocating for diversity and inclusion: The importance of leading by example. Virtually all the police leaders I spoke with were interested in increasing the diversity of their departments. The departments of these leaders were actively leveraging their LETO, Cadet, or CSO programs to engage more people of color, including employed career-changers, recent college graduates or upperclassmen college students. Some were also using Police Explorers programs to expose high school- and college-age students to careers in police work. But it is important to acknowledge that the network of Minnesota police leaders cultivated for this study is not a representative sampling of the attitudes of all police leaders in Minnesota regarding the diversification of law enforcement. My network contains an oversampling of men and women referred to me by insiders who felt that they were progressive law-enforcement leaders who would be interested in my work. In other cases, our paths crossed because of shared interests in programming and initiatives that seek to improve police and community relations.

In fact, a less cohesive consensus about the importance of racial diversity in law enforcement was found among the 13 officers who participated in formal interviews than among the police leaders engaged for the purpose of triangulating to confirm the findings of this study. Among the formal interview participants, even those who acknowledged that their recruitment was the result of a prioritization of minority recruitment, the complete spectrum of attitudes was reflected. “Calvin” felt the current focus on increasing racial diversity in law enforcement would rightfully be replaced by other

objectives. A specific example he offered was a track record of community service, rather than race or ethnicity, as a recruitment focus or even a requirement for selection. At the other end of the spectrum, some participants were deeply concerned about the *lack of inclusiveness* in the culture of policing, *recruitment and selection protocols* that minimized minority participation, and *representation levels* in their departments that diverged sharply from the diversity in the communities they served.

Standing out versus fitting in: Balancing the tension. An excellent example of the tension between fitting in and being an agent for change was this testimony from an officer currently in a job search, one whose first experience as a sworn officer was in a department falling within the small suburban and rural category. With the exception of the final five minutes of our interview, I would have categorized "Eric" as being solidly affixed in the *non reform-minded* category:

Interviewer: "When you come to your next department, do you feel like you want to come in and fit in, or do you want to come in and help them evolve?"

Eric: "At this stage of my life I would like to just get into a department and fit in."

Then, as the interview approached its end, I asked if there was anything else he would like to add or anything that I didn't ask that I should have. In response, "Eric" shared the following story:

> Prior to getting into law enforcement, I have had, you know, run-ins with police. And here I'm just a citizen at this point; and I think one of the other reasons that I really wanted to pursue this is because I have been pulled over for "driving while black," and it happened in Golden Valley. And seriously, I'm driving my car,

> with good insurance, clear tabs, everything's proper. I look to my right, and there's this Golden Valley police officer, about to exit off on Highway 100, right; but no, he decides to get back onto the freeway because I looked at him, and continues to pull me over. So he pulls me over, for absolutely no reason at all. Because I wasn't speeding. I give him my driver's license, proof of insurance, registration; I own this little white car, you know? But yet he had absolutely no reason to pull me over. Everything was square. So he says "I guess everything is fine." He gives me my stuff back and I'm on my way. That happened in [the late 90s]… It's like [the] black guy can't get nowhere. I didn't do anything wrong. **That sort of experience pretty much told me I really should try to get in here and sort of even out the playing field** [emphasis added].

This was a very significant story. It spoke to the tension between the critical importance of fitting in, something mentioned repeatedly by most study participants, and the desire to have one's presence make a difference, especially for other minority citizens.

This sets up an interesting challenge for law-enforcement leaders. To be effective, a law-enforcement department should be composed of men and women who have a profound level of faith and trust in each other. At times, the life of a law-enforcement officer is literally in the hands of his or her colleagues. In Minnesota, that affinity has historically been predicated on a closed, insular community that is dominated, both numerically and culturally, by white middle-class, heterosexual, suburban males. While other identities are present in law enforcement, the stories of the minorities interviewed

for this study reaffirm the nature of law-enforcement's dominant culture. My research findings agree with the conclusion reached by Collins and Rocco (2015): acceptance in law enforcement typically means conformance with *the dominant culture of law enforcement*. As Collins and Rocco point out, that can mean accepting a workplace culture that is actively antagonistic to one's own identity, particularly if that identity is not white, male, heterosexual, and middle class (Collins & Rocco, 2015). This is illustrative of a classic challenge of meaning-making, as described by Baxter Magolda (2009)—the tension between the desire to define what is good and valuable for self, versus the desire to fit in and find acceptance and validation from peers.

In my interviews, participants shared story after story of open hostility expressed towards women and African Americans by their police colleagues. The experiences of the interview participants also affirm that those who cannot find a way to fit in to that culture find themselves systemically excluded and ultimately terminated. While the reasons given for dismissal by the departments invariably point towards competency as the reason for the separation, the subsequent career success of the interviewees suggests that the issue was not competency but an inability to find cultural acceptance. This pattern of exclusion denies talented individuals the opportunity to pursue their careers of choice, denies police departments the talent they claim to desire, and may serve, ultimately, to hinder the effectiveness of law enforcement, particularly when the goal is to maintain order and safety in multicultural communities.

Careers in law enforcement: Financial access and financial incentives. Access programs that underwrite the costs of acquiring the educational credentials necessary for

law enforcement may be particularly compelling. These programs can serve to attract candidates possessing the qualities demanded by the profession but who lack the means to attend college or who are drawn to a law-enforcement career later in life when the opportunity costs of education are higher. The talent profile that is underrepresented in Minnesota law enforcement (racial minority, female, working-class socioeconomic background) is also likely to find the economic value of a law enforcement career particularly attractive. For example, the current base pay of a Minnesota State Trooper candidate accepted into the Law Enforcement Training Opportunities, or LETO, program is $54,789 per year and includes room and board during training (Minnesota Department of Public Safety, 2018). That is a much more compelling level of compensation for the average black Minnesotan, with an average annual household income of $30,300, than it is for the average white Minnesotan, with an average annual household income of $67,000 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015). One is reminded of prior research that suggested beliefs about the earning potential of alternative career paths are subject to a significant amount of error and that more accurate earnings data can overcome erroneous beliefs and change career choices (Wiswall & Zafar, 2014). I concur with recommendations that diversity enhancement efforts be multifaceted, that best practices of local departments be shared, and that financial incentives, such as educational scholarships and stipends for qualified applicants, be offered (President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing, 2015).

The impact of higher education on access to careers in law enforcement. The education system, particularly at the secondary and postsecondary level, has the potential to play an important role in connecting blacks and other underrepresented identities to

careers in law enforcement. That potential is heightened by Minnesota's distinctively high academic bar for those aspiring to a law-enforcement career. Conversely, the cost of meeting those academic requirements serves as an impediment to career access for people from low-income families. Such an impediment can be anticipated to be of greater significance for black Minnesotans, because of Minnesota's unusually high degree-attainment gap between blacks and whites (Hoxby, Kurlaender & Carrell, 2013; Cahalan, Perna, Yamashita, Ruiz, & Franklin, 2016; Zinshteyn, 2016). *Police leaders should partner with foundations, as well as local and state governmental leaders, to build programs that leverage the higher education infrastructure and invest in programs that provide financial access and mentorship support for black candidates who might otherwise be blocked from pursuing a law-enforcement career.*

It would not be unreasonable to hope that the findings of this study might provide evidence of the value of a postsecondary education for Minnesota's police professionals. Evidence of value-added of a college education would be particularly desirable, given the clarity of the evidence that the cost of postsecondary education can serve as a barrier to career access, particularly for blacks, who collectively experience a significant gap in income and wealth when compared with whites (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, n.d.). The research question this study was designed to illuminate centered on the factors and circumstances that led to initial interest in a policing career, as well as the factors that supported or hindered pursuit of a career in law enforcement. Within this framework, the role played by a college education, either as a support or as a barrier, was of particular interest. The stories collected for this study offered no evidence that an exemplary career

in policing depend on a college education. A previous study explored the impact of a four-year degree on the quality of police work performed and found only limited, modestly positive impact, albeit in an important dimension, which was the frequency of force used (Rydberg & Terrill, 2010).

Yet the increasing complexity of a police officer's job argues against a relaxation of educational standards. In addition, for at least two of the participants in this study, the college experience served as a bridge that led them to their law enforcement careers. Furthermore, just because higher education has not played a prominent role in the development of interest in policing among black officers in the past does not mean college programming could not play an influential role as a source of interest engagement and support in the future.

This ethnographic study sought to capture stories that might illustrate how post-secondary education served as a bridge connecting people, specifically members of the black community, to law enforcement. Or whether educational requirements were more of a barrier to this community. The short answer is that in the majority of the stories that I explored, college presented as a "neutral." For the older officers in the study, including "Jim," "Calvin," and "Michael," their career paths as police officers were established without the benefit of a college degree; for two of them college came after their career as a policeman began. For others, college led to more-or-less chance interactions—an internship for "Mohamed," and a conversation with a community member in law enforcement for "Karl"—that ultimately sparked an interest in a law enforcement career. Yet, at least in the case of "Mohamed" the educational requirements also became a

burden. This pre-med was near the end of his four-year college degree, when he discovered a newfound interest in a policing career. Pursuing that interest meant additional classwork that was a burdensome, unanticipated expense. A less committed candidate might have been deterred.

As this study was limited to those who had successfully navigated the road to a career in law enforcement, it cannot reveal what factors prevented those who might have desired to pursue a law enforcement career from realizing their goals. It seems likely that for some the specialized degree requirements presented a barrier they failed to overcome.

Reforming selection screening. Cooper standards-based fitness assessments were singled out by both interview participants and by law-enforcement leaders as being another factor that is widely perceived to screen out high-quality candidates, including candidates believed to have the physical capacity to be law-enforcement officers. Local police departments base fitness standards on Cooper fitness assessments designed to how individuals rank "in comparison to others within the same age-group and gender" (Farrell, 2017). When a level of performance, for example, completion of a 1.5 mile run in 14 minutes 43 seconds or less (Minneapolis Police Department fitness standards, n.d.) is defined as a singular fitness "standard," such an approach to physical fitness assessment favors men over women, and younger adults over older adults. Based on the findings of this study, black law-enforcement candidates are more likely to be older and female. Consequently, when Cooper fitness norms are applied as a screening tool, black candidates are more likely to be adversely affected.

Other screening tools, ostensibly non-racially discriminating in nature, as a practical matter may operate to disproportionately disqualify otherwise promising black candidates. Examples of screening tools that may operate in this fashion include credit history criteria that disproportionately disqualify candidates from low-income families likely to experience greater financial stress; and psychological screens designed around white middle-class values. Moreover, as previously noted, the probationary period, during which time the candidate is trained and evaluated by a field training officer (FTO), is a critical chokepoint. The stories documented in this study suggest that this pivotal period has been a significant source of career derailment for black candidates. *Police leaders committed to enhancing racial, as well as gender, representation in their departments should seek to modify or replace standards that disproportionately and inappropriately screen out black people, other people of color, and women. Patterns of discrimination by FTOs and rank-and-file officers against candidates based on their identity should not be tolerated.*

Additional recommendations for police leaders committed to inclusion and proportional representation. While the reasons for the persistent underrepresentation of black people in law enforcement are complex and interconnected, the single most important factor in reducing the barriers to better representation of black and other minority candidates in Minnesota police departments may also present law-enforcement leaders with their greatest challenge. Simply put, *police leaders need to change the culture of their departments.* More specifically, leaders seeking to increase the ability of their departments to attract and retain black officers and other underrepresented

populations must successfully promote a progressive, inclusive departmental culture and subdue intolerant attitudes, or at minimum, drive such attitudes underground. They will have to find a way to sustain the trusting, tight-knit departmental culture that has traditionally characterized law enforcement, while simultaneously making room for a greater diversity of identities, communication styles, and life stories. See Appendix E for a further reflection on mastery of ethnographic skills as virtually a requirement for success as a black law-enforcement officer. An argument can be made that those skills are required of the 21st century department police leader as well.

If the goal is to reduce the barriers to participation by black people and other minorities, an effective strategy could be to increase opportunities for young people, precollege, to gain exposure to law-enforcement experiences and mentors. Including an emphasis on exposing participants to minority and female role models through programs that give high school- and college-age youth opportunities to interact and form relationships with police officers could further enhance the effectiveness of such initiatives in increasing consideration by underrepresented populations. This approach could be realized by expanding existing programs such as Police Explorers (a national program conducted in partnership with the Boy Scouts of America), or local programs such as the Minneapolis Police Activities League. These programs could be more intentionally connected to Reserve Officer, Community Service Officer, Law Enforcement Training Opportunities (LETO) and Law Enforcement Career Path Academy (LECPA) programs, and more intentionally focused on underrepresented minorities.

In addition, the law-enforcement profession could leverage the design of programs like the National Black MBA Association's Leaders of Tomorrow, the National Association of Black Accountants Accounting Career Awareness Program (NABA-ACAP), and the Black Data Processing Associates' (BDPA) high school computer camps—three examples of co-curricular programs that provide exposure to same-race role models in professional disciplines. The Police Explorer program currently exists to give high school- and college-age youth exposure to law enforcement but tellingly, in Minnesota's Police Explorer programs are concentrated in suburban areas that have minimal minority representation. While the Minneapolis Police Department also has an Explorer program, it is relatively small (fewer than ten participants as this is written), particularly in relation to the size of the department and the population it supports. The Minneapolis Police Explorer program is also not well-communicated to the public. This is particularly unfortunate, as a program like Police Explorer is potentially an ideal vehicle for repositioning the image of policing (guardian versus warrior mindset) in the eyes of young people. For young people to acquire that perspective—when they are still contemplating career paths, have not yet committed to a specific course of postsecondary education, and the acquisition costs of the prerequisite law-enforcement credentials are more modest—could be a game-changer.

The lack of a more visible Explorer program also denies Minneapolis youth the opportunity to connect with potential mentors in a profession in which mentorship is particularly important. Given that one in five black Minnesotans reside in the city of Minneapolis (U.S. Census, 2010), barriers to black participation in law enforcement in

Minneapolis, as well as efforts to eliminate those barriers, will significantly influence law enforcement participation statistics for people of African descent at a state-level.

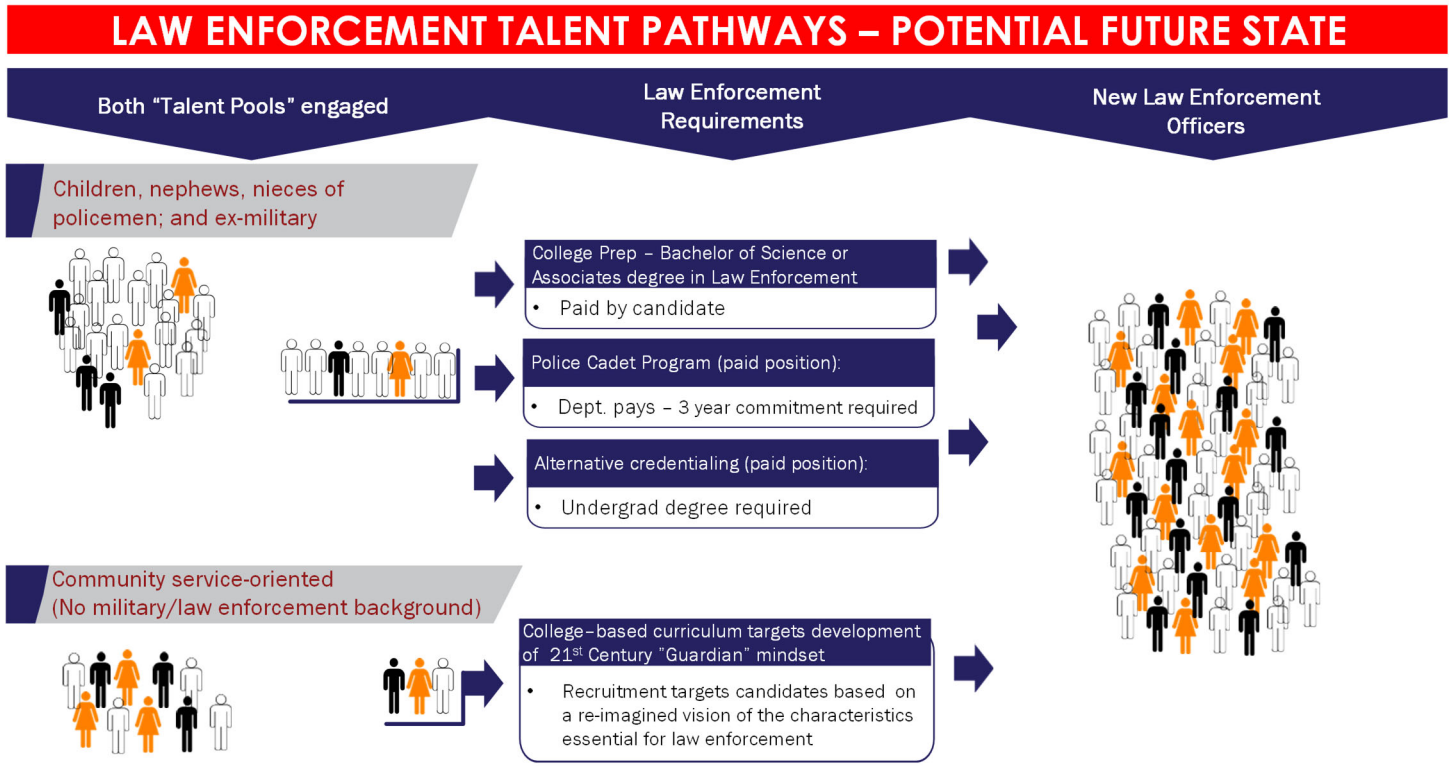

Figure 3. Law-Enforcement Talent Pathways: A Vision for the Future.
Note. This graphic portrays a desirable future state where three current pathways utilized primarily by candidates with either family connections in law enforcement or military experience are joined by a new well-defined pathway for candidates who seek a community serving career but lack law-enforcement or military connections. This additional talent pool is more racially and ethnically diverse and more gender balanced.

Figure 3 portrays a desirable future state in which the three current pathways dominated by candidates with either family connections in law enforcement or military experience are joined by a new well-defined pathway for a pool of candidates who seek a community-serving career but lack law-enforcement or military connections. This additional talent pool is more racially and ethnically diverse and more gender-balanced. This talent pool is not new—it has always existed. But historically this pool has faced significant barriers that will be mitigated in this future state.

In this new paradigm, successful navigation of the requirements will be less dependent on social capital, financial barriers will be lower, and screening protocols will be better aligned to job requirements. New recruits will enter a work environment that is more tolerant and appreciative of difference. That new environment will be more receptive towards and, therefore, less inclined to block the entry of women and minorities. Evidence of movement toward this future state can already be seen, but ideally, this movement will be accelerated and more pervasive in its adoption. For example, some Minnesota police departments have promoted black people and women into high-visibility recruitment leadership positions. Urban and suburban departments have also focused Community Service Officer (CSO) and Law Enforcement Training Opportunity (LETO) recruitment on the development of minority candidates. These steps are having an impact but as of yet have not been sufficient to overcome the imbalance imposed by historical barriers.

Study Conclusions, Limitations and Recommendations

This study focused on the experiences of black police officers currently serving in Minnesota law enforcement, or with significant experience in a Minnesota police department. Of particular interest was the development of insights into the sources of initial interest in law enforcement as a career, the factors that served as supports or barriers in the pursuit of that interest, and personal qualities common to those that successfully navigated the process of becoming a police officer. No attempt was made to assess differences between the experiences of black officers and other officers of color, or between black and white officers. Replicating the qualitative, ethnographic, and participatory design of this study in one engaging other racial backgrounds would allow for comparison of results and additional insights.

Future research designed to understand the experiences of other populations, including white officers as well as other minority groups, could serve to assess the generalizability of these findings, as well as identify the impact of race, gender, sexual orientation, or other dimensions of identity on officer experience. These insights could lead in turn to an understanding of how alternative strategies for reforming officer recruitment and training might be expected to affect widely held goals to improve the representation of minority officers, efforts that might take different shapes from one U.S. state to another, or might vary depending on whether the underrepresentation being addressed consists of people of African descent, or women, etc.

The literature is lacking in studies of how traditional police pipeline development programs, such as Police Explorers, Community Service Officer programs, or more

recently emerging programs such as Law Enforcement Training Opportunities (LETO), Pathways to Policing, and Law Enforcement Career Path Academy (LECPA), have impacted recruitment. A study that evaluated the characteristics of successful programs, and their impact, in terms of the quality, the effectiveness, the longevity, or the diversity of successful law-enforcement officer candidates, could inform future recruitment enhancement efforts. Colleges and universities play a role in preparing future professionals for roles in military leadership, through the ROTC program (Ayers, 2006), and in research, through pre-professional programs like McNair Scholars (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.; McNair Scholars Program, n.d.). This study examines the experiences of black men and women who have chosen careers in law enforcement. In doing so, it is hoped that underlying reasons for persistent minority underrepresentation can be identified. This study may also help future policymakers and police leaders identify unmet needs that could be addressed by new programs and policies designed to enhance recruitment and retention. Improved racial representation may serve, in turn, to enhance the perceived legitimacy of the police function and reduce antagonism between local law enforcement and the communities they serve (President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing, 2015; Jany, 2016). Perhaps most important, the life experiences and communication skills that a more diverse police force could be expected to provide may help reduce the number of unfortunate escalations that all too often lead to significant injuries and, on an annual basis, roughly 1,000 civilians being killed by the police, as reported by the *Washington Post* (n.d.), and the *Guardian* (Swaine, Laughland, Lartey & McCarthy, 2015).

Primary data collection for this study was focused on black participants. In addition, this study's qualitative methodological focus means that Also, this was a *qualitative* study. A *quantitative* study that included multiple demographics could reveal, for instance, whether the likelihood of successfully completing probation and securing a permanent position as a sworn officer varies significantly, based on factors such as race, gender, and the profile (urban vs. suburban, large vs. small) of the department. The fact that the State of Minnesota fails to collect racial identity for current police officers or candidates taking the POST licensing exam limits the ability to extract data from a meta-analysis of historical data, and increases the value of insight that collecting longitudinal racial identity data on a going-forward basis could provide. It would be particularly valuable to learn whether people of color are being lost at disproportionate rates during one or more specific phases in the training or probationary processes. Understanding *where* in the multi-step training and probationary process blacks are being screened out could be a critical first step to increasing yield rates and ultimately, representation in local police forces. It would also be helpful to understand how screen-out rates compare for whites, blacks, and other people of color. This knowledge would allow for targeted, well-informed operational responses that could increase the likelihood of successful completion for all qualified candidates, not just candidates of color.

Summary of findings and implications for police candidate recruitment and training. This study was designed to examine the following research questions:

- What have been the *experiences* of black people who have chosen a career in law enforcement?

- What sparked initial interest, facilitated pursuit, and presented challenges; and what role did higher education play in either supporting or hindering their career path?

The foundation of the research methodology employed was ethnographic—to capture the stories of our 13 study participants and to be informed by the meaning the participants ascribed to those experiences, while keeping the interpretations of the researcher in the background. At the same time, I remained alert to the possibility of recurring themes, particularly themes pertaining to how the participants came to be drawn to a career in law enforcement, factors that either facilitated or challenged their successful pursuit of that career, and the role higher education played. I was also alert to identifying experiences that had the potential to cause the participants to exit law enforcement prior to retirement or to retire early.

Higher education did not play a major role, either as a support or as a barrier, to the pursuit of a law enforcement career for the majority of 13 participants. It did play a modest supporting role for two of our participants, as their choice of major, for one, or their choice of a summer internship, for another, led to experiences and connections that sparked interest in a law enforcement career. Most of the participants were in college, or were of college age or older, when policing first surfaced as a possible career interest. This timing has important implications. Compared to other professions, law enforcement has an educational requirements profile that is both more specialized and more extended compared to competing career options requiring a two- or four-year degree. Several participants cited the cost of higher education as a hindrance to a law enforcement career.

Two participants had the cost their Skills course picked up by their department as a benefit of being chosen for the LETO program. One specifically stated that without LETO, the $5-8,000 cost of completing the Skills curriculum would probably have precluded her successful completion of the pre-requisites. As of this writing that officer has achieved the rank of sergeant and is a nine-year veteran in her department.

Generally speaking, the cost of acquiring the academic credentials required to access a career in Minnesota law enforcement will disproportionately impact minorities, due to the disparities in family income and wealth between whites and people of color.

As was suggested in chapter one, minority community perceptions of questionable legitimacy of law enforcement are heightened by incidents where the questionable justifications are offered for police use of force, particularly when that use of force leads to a fatality. Police legitimacy is also called into question when the racial composition of law enforcement looks very different from the racial composition of the community being policed. A perception of illegitimacy makes recruitment from minority communities more difficult, and contributes to the perpetuation of minority underrepresentation. Yet to be clear, increasing representation will not automatically result in a restoration of police legitimacy, nor will it, absent other reforms, lead to a reduction in questionable police use of force incidents.

Significance of the study. This study lies in the intersection of research that examines career-access challenges faced by minority groups and studies of American law-enforcement culture, while also extending the body of literature pertaining to the role of higher education in facilitating career interests and career access. One significant

contribution this research makes to the existing higher education literature is its demonstration of the applicability of the research findings of Baxter Magolda (1998), which focused on self-authorship as a driver of persistence and success in the context of postsecondary education, to success in pursuit of a career in law enforcement. The stories of the participants also validated and illuminated the description Baxter Magolda (2009) offered of the tension between self-authorship and the desire for acceptance as a member of the team. In addition, the findings of this research project affirm and amplify the findings of Perrott (1999) and Robles (2016), namely, that people of color who pursue careers in law enforcement are subject to significant levels of resistance and negative validation from family members and peers.

The relative absence of legacy connections among our interview participants tends to validate the literature suggesting that family connections (Saleem, Hanan, Saleem, & Shamshad, 2014) and mentorship (Seibert, Kraimer, & Liden, 2001) play important roles in career choice, particularly in the area of careers in law enforcement (Crank, 1998; Castaneda & Ridgeway, 2010). Of the thirteen interview subjects participating in this study, only two had close family members who proceeded them in law enforcement. That statistic should be considered in the context of minority underrepresentation in Minnesota law enforcement. Of the state's eight largest police departments, which includes the state's largest and most diverse cities (Minneapolis and Saint Paul), only two of the eight had at least half the number of officers of color needed to align with the representation of people of color in their service area. Hennepin County, the state's fourth largest police department, would need to more than triple the number of

sworn officers of color in order to reflect the representation of diversity in the region it serves.

Conclusion: Persistent underrepresentation—what are the causes? There are a number of factors in play that contribute to ongoing underrepresentation, despite the expressed desires of law enforcement leaders for more representative demographics, and even though certain departments are taking additional steps, like putting minorities into recruitment leadership positions, and focusing Community Service Officer (CSO) and Law Enforcement Training Opportunity (LETO) on the development of minority candidates. These steps are having an impact, but as of yet have not been sufficient to overcome the barriers detailed below:

- Recruitment efforts focus on engaging people who already have an explicit interest in pursuing a career in law enforcement, who are drawn to the current image of the crime-fighting, authoritarian, primarily white male warrior "lawman"; and who either understand from personal knowledge, or have access to mentors who can help them navigate the educational requirements and how to efficiently satisfy those requirements. Insufficient effort is being spent on engaging people who have no prior connection to law enforcement through family members, who lack the social capital provided by family connections or prior military service, who may not be aware of the strong salary and benefits paid by law enforcement, or who may be unfamiliar with the educational requirements of law enforcement

- Existing programs designed to target, engage, and support underrepresented identities, such as women and people of color, fail to reach their intended audiences or have their desired impact because they are poorly marketed. The Law Enforcement Career Path Academy (LEPCA), underwritten by the Saint Paul Police Foundation and designed to increase diversity in Saint Paul Police Department, is a prime example of this. In the recent past the program has been poorly communicated on the Saint Paul Police Department web site. And recruiting and promotional efforts seem haphazard—when the Saint Paul web site was reviewed in March of 2018, the most prominent career education opportunity was a link to a flyer promoting a career fair held in 2016!
- Many elements of the traditional law enforcement screening process are outdated, and operate disproportionately to exclude underrepresented populations, while serving questionable value in selecting candidates best suited to law enforcement. This can be seen in departments that employ standards based on Cooper fitness norms, or that disregard extenuating circumstances when evaluating credit histories and misdemeanor criminal records, or depend on psychological screens based on white suburban social norms. Using a "clean" credit history as a standard of fiscal responsibility may seem like a fair and unbiased standard, but the story may be more complex when a young black person may have assumed the responsibility of being the primary financial mainstay for an extended family as a young adult. Or to take an example right out of one of the 13 interviews, "Steve" sought a steady,

well-paid police officer job after he got married. His new wife came with two children and a mountain of unpaid credit cards, immediately impacting his own, previously unsullied credit history. Despite the circumstances, that credit history nearly disqualified him as a candidate for a position in law-enforcement.

- Rank and file peer officers and Field Training Officers are able to use their influence to "fail" any prospect that they don't wish to work with—and they disproportionately use that influence to exclude people of color, including candidates who over time assert their ability to be successful as police officers. This pattern seems to be particularly prevalent in small suburban and rural departments. Of the 13 interview participants, four shared stories of being "shown the door" at small suburban departments; in addition, the participants shared numerous stories of fellow minorities who experienced similar treatment. Of these four, three have found success in other departments, and collectively have acquired 50 years of law enforcement experience. The fourth was referred to me by an officer colleague who was on the verge of recommending him for police officer of the year at the time the participant was dismissed, based on performance he felt was exemplary.
- Inadequate support from role models, mentors and sponsors.
- Financial and navigational barriers to the necessary postsecondary credentials.
    - Hard costs as well as opportunity cost of acquiring a college degree, and Skills training

    - Lack of information about curricular requirements, sequencing, financial aid, and paid training options such as cadet programs
    - Lack of information about alternative credentialing pathways, such as LETO and LEPCA
    - Uncertainty that an investment in the acquisition of credentials will actually lead to a law enforcement career opportunity
- Poor, disconnected image in the community:
    - Concerns about ethics
    - Image plays up warrior mindset/plays down guardian mentality
    - Lack of emphasis on the importance of communications skills, empathy, language skills, and cross cultural communication skills

While the charter of this study does not extend to providing a "cookbook" of corrective actions, it is worthy of note that a successful response to the challenge of underrepresentation will in many cases come down to a matter of leadership will. Changing recruitment practices, screening protocols, onboarding, and training procedures; and, perhaps most importantly, spending political and personal capital to champion the value and the desirability of a more diverse, representative police force, particularly among the departmental rank-and-file, will take an investment by senior leaders that may be challenging but is no less essential to success. And, as one police chief interviewed for this study stated, "cover," i.e. the justification for change that academic research, such as what is offered by this study, may be helpful in realizing the goal of a more diverse and inclusive law enforcement function in Minnesota. Greater

diversity may in turn lead to enhanced legitimacy, and ultimately, enhanced effectiveness in achieving the mission of serving and protecting that is the universal aspiration of law enforcement.

Recommendations for future research. This study has focused on the experience of black law enforcement officers. Similarly constructed studies focusing on different populations, (e.g. other minorities groups, or whites, or women) could yield valuable insights; as well as a point of comparison relative to the experiences of black people in law enforcement.

It would be important to compare and contrast perceptions of performance, such as public perceptions of how respectful the officers are, between departments with very minimal racial representation and departments that have strong representations of racial minorities, to see if correlations exist between officer empathy and racial representativeness.

Research shows that Minnesota residents experience among the highest gaps in average household income levels, high school graduation rates, college matriculation rates, and degree attainment rates between whites and blacks of any state in the country (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2015; National Center for Education Statistics, n.d.; Hoxby, Kurlaender & Carrell, 2013). The Minnesota unemployment gap between blacks and whites is among the highest in the country as well (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, n.d.), while Minnesota police departments offering starting salaries that are above the national mean struggle to fill vacancies (McKinney, 2014; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2015). That context makes the predominance of working class family

backgrounds among participants in this study, in a field that offers a middle-income wage (Minnesota Department of Public Safety, n.d.) and that traditionally has a significant level of generational participation (Castaneda & Ridgeway, 2010) a significant finding that merits additional research. Reducing entry barriers and engaging more blacks (and other minorities) in law-enforcement careers could make a meaningful contribution to a reduction in racial economic disparities.

A quantitative study on the points of departure for candidates who fail to successfully navigate the process of securing a career in law enforcement could be very illuminating. Where are candidates being screened out of this career path, and in what proportions?

- The Skills course?
- The background check?
- The physical agility test?
- The departmental academy (where applicable)?
- No offer received (no reason specified)?
- Terminated from a CSO or Cadet program (where applicable)?
- Terminated during the post-hire probationary period?

Collecting data aggregated by key parameters including race, gender, year, and department would facilitate analysis for patterns. Are there specific phases in the education, screening, and onboarding processes that are generating differential candidate losses when evaluated by race? Are some departments having significantly different

outcomes compared to others? Are success rates significantly different for blacks vs. other minorities vs. whites? Are there patterns of gender difference?

Finally, through this study we can identify departments that have a relatively high success rate in terms of black officer representation, and success in hiring black officers, and departments that have relatively low success rates. A qualitative study that looks closely at the recruitment, selection, and onboarding practices of a set of high success and low success departments could generate additional insight as to how differences in practice leads to differences in recruitment and retention outcomes. It is the potential for this study and future studies to lead to findings that enable improved recruitment and retention outcomes, more diverse and representative police departments, and ultimately, to an improved sense of police legitimacy, in Minnesota, and perhaps across the U.S., that gives this study of underrepresentation in law enforcement its significance.

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Appendix A: Interview Guide

Interview Questions – Black experience in Minnesota Law Enforcement

Section 1

Introduction, review of rights, demographic data and "snowball" recruitment

(The following question is asked **after** turning on the digital recording device):

"Do you mind if I record our conversation?

Discontinue recording if response is "No." Otherwise, the recording of a "Yes" response serves as confirmation of participant consent.)

Name: _____

Birth year/month: _____

(note gender): _____

(Coding – initials of first and last name + two digits + M/F; Ex. XX99F) _____)

Racial self-identification Black/African-American/multi-racial (details)

_____

What year was it when you first began work as a sworn officer? [A: _____]. Was this also the year you began formal police officer training? [Y/N. If "No," year training began_____.] Have you retired? [Y/N____].

In what department are (were) you employed?

Have you served as an officer in other departments? [if Y,

list_____; and capture years in each department.]

What is your current rank? (If retired, what was your last rank held?) [A:

_____]

Would you mind sharing the names of a few other black police officers that you believe might be willing to participate in an interview and share their experience as law enforcement officers?

Section 2

GRAND-TOUR QUESTION

"Tell me the story of your decision to become a police officer. I'd like to hear your story, beginning, middle, and end, starting with your recollection of how you first became interested in police work. Also, please share your training experience and early experiences as a sworn officer."

Section 3

Ask these questions if they were not answered in the course of the narrative. Check them off as you hear them—but avoid note-taking – leave notetaking for post-interview coding.

Save these questions for the follow-up period after the interviewee has completed their narrative. As questions below are answered in the course of their narrative, check them

off or draw a line through them. Avoid notetaking during the interview—rather, focus on the subject's narrative, be an engaged listener, and encourage the interviewee to take the conversation where they are moved to.

Legend:

- Career choice (CC):
  - Career choice/family influence (CC/FI)
  - Career choice/peer influence (CC/PI)
  - Perceptions (positive or negative) and career choice (CC/P)
    [NOTE: Legitimacy concerns, and distrust of police maps back to perceptions and career choice (CC/P)]
  - Role models and career choice (CC/RM)
- Choice of college major/college access (CM):
- Financial access -- money for tuition; financial ability to change careers, etc. (FA)
- "Social capital" access -- insights from experiences, peers, family, or mentors that facilitate career access and navigation (SC)

1) "Tell me more about your training experience?"	Social capital (SC)
2) "Do you have family members who worked in law enforcement? Tell me about them (relationship; where they worked; how their serving affected your interest; are they still in law enforcement? What rank?)	Career choice/family influence (CC/FI) Social capital (SC)

3) Have you served in the military?" (Describe/discuss. Inquire about military police service; and how military service influenced their interest in law enforcement; how their military experience impacted their experience moving through the training phase and their subsequent experience in law enforcement)	Social capital (SC)
4) Military family history?	Career choice/family influence (CC/FI) Social capital (SC)
5) BEFORE you considered law enforcement as a career, what were your impressions of police officers, and policing as a profession? a. Would you say perceptions were positive, neutral, or negative? Explain. b. Who were your role models? c. Were there any police officers who were role models as you were growing up?	Perceptions and career choice (CC/P) Role models and career choice (CC/RM)
6) How old were you when you first considered law enforcement as a career? a. What sparked your initial interest?	Career choice/family influence(CC/FI) Career choice/Peer

b. What other career options did you consider?	influence (CC/PI) Perceptions and Career choice (CC/P) Role models and career choice (CC/RM)
7) Tell me about the family circumstances you grew up in; how would you describe your parents' income and educational level?	Career choice/family influence (CC/FI) Financial access (FA)
8) Approximately when did you feel you made a commitment to pursuing law enforcement as a career (either age or year)?	Perceptions and Career Choice (CC/P)
9) Describe the initial reactions of your parents and peers when you first expressed your interest in pursuing a career in law enforcement.	Career choice/family influence (CC/FI) Career choice/peer influence (CC/PI)
10) Briefly describe your entry into formal police training, and your process through it. a. Situate your college education within	Choice of college major/college access: (CM)

your law enforcement training – ie. Was your college education integrated into your police training? Or did college come before (or after)? b. How did you finance your police training? c. How did you finance your college education? d. Did you receive financial support for your college education or your police training that was connected to or contingent upon you joining a police department?	Financial access (FA)
11) Talk about how mentorship factored into your interest in police work as a career, and in supporting your navigation through training?	Career Choice/Role Model (CC/RM) Social capital (SC)
12) Talk about your relationships with peers who navigated training with you, or were just ahead of or just behind you in moving from recruit to sworn officer	Social capital (SC) Career choice/peer influence (CC/PI)
13) Talk about how your experience of being a part	Career Choice/Role

of the police community in the first 1-2 years of your experience as a sworn officer: a. Relationship with FTO b. Relationship with peers c. Relationship with family/friends/spouse/community d. Describe your initial (first 2-3 years) assignments e. (If applicable) how were you connected to the community you were assigned to patrolled (currently reside there/grew up there/familiar or frequent visitor before being assigned/new community—no prior connection)?	Model (CC/RM) Social capital (SC) Perceptions/Career choice (CC/P) Career choice/peer influence (CC/PI)
14) (If currently a sworn officer) Were there ever times that you felt like leaving law enforcement? (Or if retired), "Talk about the year prior to your decision to leave police work"	Social Capital (SC)
15) Talk about the most important relationship you have had, with regards to its impact on your career as a police officer	Social Capital (SC) Career Choice/Peer influence) CC/PI

	Perceptions and Career Choice (CC/P)
16) Talk about some of the most gratifying experiences you have had as a sworn officer	Social capital (SC)
17) How has your identity as a black (man/woman) impacted your experience as a police officer, either your interest, your ability to enter the field or your success as a police officer?	Social capital (SC) Career choice/perceptions (CC/P)
18) Have you personally experienced or witnessed racism as a police officer? Describe an example?	Social capital (SC)
19) Has race or racism been a significant impact on your interest, your access, or your career as a police officer?	Social capital (SC)

Section 4 – Concluding questions to ask of everyone (or confirm response if these already came up in the narrative).

20) If you had it to do over, what would you have done differently?	Social Capital (SC)
21) What advice would you give your young self as you prepared to move into a career in law	Social Capital (SC)

enforcement?	

Section 5 – snowball recruitment

22) Do you have suggestions for other officers that we should approach regarding participation in this research project? If so, how would you suggest we get in contact with them?	N/A Capture name; and if available, contact info, or dept. and precinct

Appendix B: Law-Enforcement Officer Recruitment Letter

Dear _____,

I would like to describe a research study in which I hope you will participate. I am a doctoral student at the University of Minnesota, and my doctoral dissertation will be based on interviews with law enforcement officers. Because people of color, and in particular, people of African descent are significantly underrepresented in law enforcement, I have decided to focus my research on the experiences of African Americans and other people of African descent who have chosen this career path. How policing first emerged as a possible career option for you; how you were either encouraged towards or discouraged from this career path by friends and family; the role played by mentors, supervisors, and peers; past personal interactions you had with police as a youth; the role and timing of your college experience; and your early experiences as a law enforcement officer; it is my hope that we can explore all of these aspects in our conversation.

The interviews will average 60-90 minutes in duration, and will be held in a mutually convenient location. The interviews will be conducted following confidentiality guidelines consistent with the standards established by the University of Minnesota Institutional Review Board (IRB). Respect for study participants and their privacy is a critical priority, and research findings will not be attributable to individual participants.

Some study participants may be invited to one or more follow-up interviews, subject to the mutual interest and availability of the participant and the investigator.

I look forward to confirming your participation, and to the opportunity to sit down with you and gain in-depth insight into your experience as you considered and then entered into law enforcement. In the interim, if you have any questions, please feel free to contact either me or my faculty colleague, David Weerts, who is supervising this study:

Bill Woodson: (612) 644-6609, or woods196@umn.edu

David Weerts: (651) 233-7538, or dweerts@umn.edu

Sincerely,

Bill Woodson

Ph.D. candidate

Organizational Leadership, Policy, and Development

University of Minnesota

Appendix C: Secondary Interview Solicitation Letter

Dear _____,

I would appreciate your participation in a research project I am leading. I am a doctoral student at the University of Minnesota, and my doctoral dissertation will be based on interviews with law enforcement officers. While my research is focused on a specific police officer profile, I would like to get a broad understanding of a variety of aspects pertaining to the recruitment, training, and professional development of law enforcement officers, as well as insight on the interactions between law enforcement and the communities they serve. You may also have recommendations for candidates interested in participating in the study.

I would like to request 30 to 60 minutes of your time. If you would be willing to connect, let me know and we can identify a mutually convenient location. Your participation as a secondary resource can be kept confidential, if you prefer, and all aspects of this research project will be conducted in accordance with ethical and confidentiality guidelines consistent with the standards established by the University of Minnesota Institutional Review Board (IRB).

I look forward to confirming your availability, and the opportunity to receive the benefits of your insights. In the interim, if you have any questions, please feel free to contact either me or my faculty colleague, David Weerts, who is supervising this study:

Bill Woodson: (612) 644-6609, or woods196@umn.edu

David Weerts: (651) 233-7538, or dweerts@umn.edu

Sincerely,

Bill Woodson

Ph.D. candidate

Organizational Leadership, Policy, and Development

University of Minnesota

Appendix D: Focus Group Discussion Guide

1. (Explain difference between a mentor and a sponsor). Did mentors or sponsors play a role in helping you successfully navigate a pathway to a career in law enforcement?
    a. How did you get connected with your mentor or sponsor?
    b. How did they support your success?

2. Were there role models that were important to your developing an interest in law enforcement?
    a. How can departments that want to target underrepresented populations facilitate and leverage the creation of role models?

3. What was the role of college in shaping your career path?
    a. What could college do differently to better support your entry into law enforcement?

4. Do you think colleges and universities currently provide the level of access and support necessary to facilitate attracting and preparing the next generation of law enforcement officers?
    a. If not, what would you like to see colleges and universities do that they are not doing currently?

5. Would you say that, in your experience, racist and/or sexist comments from citizens and suspects are (very/somewhat/not) common?
    a. Do you find racist and/or sexist comments from citizens and suspects to be (very/somewhat/not) troubling to you personally?

6. Would you say that in your experience racist and/or sexist comments or attitudes from your fellow officers are (very/somewhat/not) common?

   a. Do you find racist and/or sexist comments or attitudes from fellow officers to be (very/somewhat/not) troubling to you personally?

7. Do you believe current Minnesota educational requirements (2 year associates minimum/4 year bachelors preferred; degree must be in criminal justice or law enforcement; plus completion of Skills course) for prospective police officers are (very/somewhat/not at all) aligned with standards important to the hiring of men and women who are prepared and positioned to be effective cops?
   a. How much of a barrier were these educational requirements for you personally?

8. Do you believe the current physical fitness/agility standards (if necessary, specify which standards) for prospective police officers are (very/somewhat/not at all) aligned with standards important to the hiring of men and women who have the capacity to be effective cops?
   a. How much of a barrier were the fitness/agility standards for you personally?

9. Do you think it is important, or valuable for young people to have an earlier awareness of law enforcement as a career path?
   a. Would discovering law enforcement earlier have impacted you? How so?
   b. What steps would you recommend be taken to help young people discover law enforcement earlier

10. Do you think it would be important that more options or supports be made available to help working adults transition into careers in law enforcement?
   a. Would a mid-career transition pathway have impacted your entry into law enforcement? How so?

b. What do you think a mid-career transition pathway should look like (qualifications; resources; how promoted; who pays?)

11. What are the most important challenges or priorities facing law enforcement today, in your opinion?

Appendix E: The Significance of the Ethnographic Lens (Or, Some Philosophical Ramblings About Ethnography)

It is not unreasonable to conclude that black people who successfully navigate the culture of American law enforcement are themselves ethnographers, as defined by skillset if not by career. This seems especially true when we look at those study participants who have no prior exposure to the distinctive culture of law enforcement, and yet possess the combination of skill and determination required to find a way to be accepted into this insular law enforcement culture. Beyond being "qualified," that ethnographic skill set is required because the significance of words and symbols within the law enforcement world are distinctively different from their significance in the civilian world. So much so that, without an ability to study context, to put aside prior notions of meaning, and to learn the spoken and unspoken rules of engagement that are particular to law enforcement, and more broadly applicable to para-military cultures in general, achieving acceptance into this policing culture is virtually impossible. Indeed, the stories of the study participants are liberally seasoned with tales of cultural clashes, of difficulties with gaining acceptance, or culture-based friction, often subtle and unspoken, that in some cases led to reassignment, and even involuntary termination. This despite the fact that almost to a person, the passion for the *idea* of law enforcement remained undiminished, and study participants were emphatic in their appreciation for the rewards of the job.

The stories of the four officers who were terminated or encouraged to resign during the Community Service Officer (CSO) or Field Training probationary period, are particularly poignant examples of how the ethnographic focus on contextual significance

is critical to successful pursuit of a career in law enforcement. In the case of three of those four dismissals, it is significant that these officers went on to enjoy successful law enforcement careers in a different department. It is conceivable that some other explanation as to why these three black officers (the fourth, as this is written, is awaiting formal extension of a patrol offer in another state) would "fail" in one department, yet enjoy significant success, including promotions to significant levels of responsibility, in another. However, what appears most likely is a disconnect, where a supervisor who equates "how I perform the function of police officer" with "how the function of police officer is correctly performed," experiences an officer with a different identity and a different way of performing this function. That supervisor then decides "different" means "wrong," and therefore this trainee is not qualified to be a policeman.

Repeatedly I heard stories of how successfully navigating the probationary process meant giving the supervising officer "what they wanted to see" regardless of whether the protocols they demanded be followed were meaningful to "quality policing" and even when their guidance went contrary to formal training guidelines or common sense.

This study draws heavily upon ethnographic research principles, which offer valuable insight into navigating the significance of a distinctive culture, in this case the culture of law enforcement—a culture which is apart from and somewhat cloistered from the view of those outside of law enforcement. Spradley (1979) tells us that ethnography is specifically oriented towards understanding meaning within its cultural context, rather than through the lens of researcher. This requires that the researcher becomes the *student*

of the people we seek to understand. Spradley suggests the researcher must set aside their *naïve realism* -- that is to say their belief that all people define the real world of objects and events in the same way. For example how a birth or a death is perceived. Whether a particular animal is a food source, a domestic companion, a sacred spirit, or a nuisance. The essential qualities of a comfortable home. The ethnographic researcher is self-aware, and does not impose his own significance on the perceptions of the people he seeks to understand, but rather seeks to understand their meaning. This means moving beyond detailing the artifacts and symbols observed, to understanding their meaning from the cultural context of those being observed.

This notion of culture, and the capacity for navigating across cultural divides, was so foundational to my approach to this study that when I encountered a definition of culture that struck me as particularly fresh and forward looking definition of culture I embraced it as a cornerstone of my thought process:

> Culture consists of the following:
>
> - Shared beliefs
> - Artifacts
> - Rituals
> - Language
>
> The alchemy of these factors, when adopted within a population of people, is said to represent their culture. (Collins, M., 2018)

Classical social science research follows a sequential process that typically resembles the following: Select a program; formulate hypotheses; collect data; analyze data; write up results (Spradley, 1979).

Spradley tells us that ethnography differs from this model. The ethnographic point of departure is, what cultural meanings are people using to guide their behavior and interpret their experience? While this study is not organized as a pure ethnography, this study was intended to incorporate a spirit of discovery. That is to say, I hoped that my interview subjects would not only tell me their experiences, but also help me to appreciate the significance of their experiences. While I had my own ideas as to how best to organize the phases of their career journeys, I wanted to remain open to discovering organizational schemes that aligned with what was significant to them. As a result, the data collection phase incorporates a degree of iteration and refinement. Certain elements not initially known to be significant, surfaced as repeating themes, and subsequently were captured through the interview process, or in some cases through follow-up conversations.

The use of cultural, contextual significance as a point of departure for understanding the experience of these 13 study participants is particularly appropriate. Law enforcement is a singularly distinct subculture within the U.S. While generalizing carries a degree of risk, as significant variations can be observed from department to department and from region to region, the law enforcement function has somewhat intentionally set itself apart from the communities it serves. The racial-cultural divide in this country takes a very different shape. While the nature of that division is also subject

to significant variation, making generalizations risky, there can be little question but that the history of law enforcement in America, and the history of being black in America, makes the intersection of the two identities worthy of study, and the study findings significant.

Appendix F: Anatomy of an arrest—how prior beliefs reinforce contrasting viewpoints on police legitimacy

Narratives of police encounters resulting in civilian injuries or death are processed through a lens of prior beliefs about the legitimacy of law enforcement. These lenses appear to be self-sustaining and self-reinforcing. One might speculate that these self-reinforcing narratives and skepticism regarding police legitimacy contribute to the ongoing dynamic of underrepresentation of blacks and other minorities in law enforcement.

Those who believe in the legitimacy of modern-day law enforcement tend to see the same factual patterns and visual evidence very differently from those who see those factual patterns within a metanarrative of a history of police work conflated with racial oppression and systematic devaluation of black people (Crank, 1998; Quinn, 2011; Alexander, 2012). Incidents that some perceive as clearly unjustifiable police use of force (Karabel, 2016), others see as an appropriate response to a failure to respect police authority.

The framing of law enforcement as an illegitimate occupying force (Jany, 2016), rather than a valued essential community service, is a common theme in black communities. Consider the case of Nandi Cain Jr., of Sacramento, who on April 10, 2017, was stopped on an allegation of jaywalking, got into a verbal altercation with the officer, was violently arrested, and later released due to the absence of a chargeable offense. What should have been a routine interaction quickly escalates. Cain acknowledges the unidentified officer but does not stop. The officer accuses Cain of jaywalking, an

accusation that Cain denies. A review of video of the incident corroborates Cain's assertion. The officer puts his hand on the butt of his gun, to which Cain responds by raising his hands, and then stopping, turning to face the officer while continuing to argue his case, and suggesting that the officer is bullying him with impunity because the officer is armed, while the officer commands Cain to "get down on the ground." Cain then removes his jacket, to which the officer responds by grabbing Cain, pulling him to the ground and punching him repeatedly in the face.

Why does this happen? The officer alleges that by removing his jacket, Cain was signaling his intention to fight the officer. Cain alleges he was taking off his jacket to show the officer that he was unarmed. Cain does not return the officer's blows but tries to protect his head. Other officers arrive, Cain is put in handcuffs, taken into custody, and is released, with all charges dropped, approximately eight hours later (Sacramento Police Media Relations, 2017; Wootson, 2017).

It appears that narratives of this nature may be more commonplace than many Americans realize. For those who see such types of narratives as evidence of the oppressive and unjust nature of police work as currently practiced, a career as a law-enforcement officer may be unattractive, or even unthinkable. The greater an individual's passion for justice, the more unthinkable a career in policing might be for such a person.

But for those who do not question the legitimacy of American law enforcement, a different narrative exists. This same April 10, 2017, incident is seen in a completely different light in the story as related by a self-described law-enforcement advocacy web page:

> A textbook use of force turned into sensationalized BS after Fox 40 reporters obtained a video showing a Sacramento police officer arresting Nandi Caine Jr. on Monday.
>
> Please spread the word that we need to … see that this officer is treated fairly. This officer didn't hesitate. He reacted like he was trained, and he's exactly the type of officer I want backing me up. (*Blue Lives Matter,* 2017)

The article links to the same video evidence as the Wootson article but clearly arrives at a different conclusion.

This incident did not result in a fatality, but similar conflicting narratives exist in the case of fatal uses of force, including the circumstances leading to the deaths of Eric Garner, Walter Scott, Jamar Clark, and Tamir Rice (the 12-year-old playing with a toy gun in a public park who was killed by a Cleveland police officer). For those already inclined to question the legitimacy of policing, such cases only serve to reinforce the perception that policing is not so much a legitimate public-service function as it is an extension of race-based social control (Alexander, 2012; Stafford, 2015; Eccher, 2016; Karabel, 2016; Heisig, 2017; Golden, E., Walsh, P., & Chanen, D. 2016).

Appendix G: Institutional Review Board Template

PROTOCOL TITLE: Underrepresented: The experiences of black people who pursued careers in Minnesota law enforcement

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR or FACULTY ADVISOR:

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VERSION NUMBER/DATE:

Version 1. September 12, 2017

REVISION HISTORY

Revision #	Version Date	Summary of Changes	Consent Change?
1	Oct 10, 2017	N/A	

ABBREVIATIONS/DEFINITIONS

- POC. Abbreviation for *people of color*. Refers to non-Caucasian people, and includes blacks, Asians, and Native Americans, as well as Hispanic people of all races. *People of color*, or *POC*, will be used interchangeably with the term *minorities*.
- Black. Refers to *people of African descent.*

STUDY SUMMARY

Study Title	Underrepresented: The experience of black people who pursue careers in Minnesota law enforcement
Study Design	Qualitative Case Study
Primary Objective	Identify and document recurrent themes present in the experience of a representative sampling of black Minnesota law enforcement officers.
Secondary Objective(s)	By understanding prominent or recurring enablers and barriers to participation in law enforcement, develop insights that could enhance the success of future recruitment and retention efforts. And by contributing to more racially representative Minnesota police departments, enhance the perceived legitimacy of the law enforcement function, which may in turn lead to more effective policing and reduced friction between law enforcement and the communities they serve.
Primary Study Intervention or Interaction	Interview
Study Population	Current and retired Minnesota law enforcement officers
Sample Size (number of participants)	Between twelve and thirty.
Study Duration for Individual Participants	Between 45 and 90 minutes.

1.0 Objectives

1.1 Purpose:
This study is designed to interrogate the following research question: What has been the experience of black people who have chosen a career in Minnesota law enforcement? More specifically, what sparked their initial interest; what factors facilitated their pursuit; what challenges did they encounter; what did they experience as an officer; and what role did higher education play in either supporting or hindering their career path?

2.0 Background

2.1 Significance of Research Question/Purpose:

Studies have been conducted, within and outside of the field of law enforcement, to understand how marginalized populations, such as ethnic minorities, women, and GLBTQ community members, have experienced the culture of policing and the navigation of the process of gaining entry to this field. But no such study exists for black police officers. Particularly in a time where law enforcement, locally and nationally, have found it difficult to successfully recruit representative numbers from the black community, it is hoped that the findings from this study can help to refine future recruitment and retention efforts for black officers.

2.2 Preliminary Data:

At a state level, aggregated data on the number of Minnesota sworn police officers who are of African descent is not readily available. The Police Officers Standards and Training Board, does not collect this data. But by all accounts, based on articles published in the popular press, and research into specific police departments, including Minneapolis, Saint Paul, Brooklyn Park and St. Louis Park, representation of black people within the ranks of sworn police officers is proportionately much lower than their representation in the community.

2.3 Existing Literature:

The recommendations of the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing include a recognition of the need to improve community perceptions of police legitimacy, and improve the community's confidence in law enforcement. Among the measures recommended to accomplish these goals is to realign the racial makeup of law enforcement to better reflect the demographics of the communities served.

Considerable research exists detailing the presence and impact of cultural barriers to social integration in the workplace of minoritized identities, including racial minorities, as well as women, gays and lesbians. Specific research on the acceptance, social integration, and cultural barriers experienced by black police officers does not exist, and such research could lead to a better understanding of the connection between underrepresentation of blacks in law enforcement, and the possible presence of cultural barriers, such as racial bias, unconscious bias, microagressions, and a failure to value experience and perspective from minoritized peoples.

3.0 Study Endpoints/Events/Outcomes

3.1 Primary Endpoint/Event/Outcome:

Blacks who have pursued careers in law enforcement are expected to have a range of experiences and perspectives on the factors that sparked their interest in law enforcement as a career, that supported their navigation through the education and training required to secure the necessary credentials, that surfaced as challenges to be overcome, and that sustained their success once access to a sworn officer position was secured. From these stories it is expected certain common themes will emerge, leading to insights that could be leveraged to enhance future recruitment and retention efforts.

3.2 Secondary Endpoint(s)/Event(s)/Outcome(s):

N/A

4.0 Study Intervention(s)/Interaction(s)

4.1 Description:

No interventions are associated with this study. Study interactions will be a series of interviews varying from 45 to 90 minutes in length, with between 10

and 30 interview subjects. Additional interactions include meetings and phone conversations with subjects outside the study population, including peer police officers, supervisors, trainers, law enforcement leaders, political leaders, community activists, and affiliated influencers, such as representatives of the Minnesota Police Officer Standards and Training (POST) Board, and the Minnesota Chiefs of Police Association.

5.0 Procedures Involved

5.1 Study Design: Describe and explain the study design.

In order to illuminate and capture the experiences of black people who have chosen to pursue careers in law enforcement, and subsequently surface themes emerging from the study, an epistemology appropriate to this task is required. Individual experiences are both shaped and given meaning by their social context. Following a constructivist tradition, and informed by the perspective of Creswell (2013), Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), and Crotty (2013), this study follows the design paradigm of an emerging new area of inquiry. It engages the infrequently explored intersection of law enforcement, higher education, and black experience. This singular case will engage subjects through a semistructured interview protocol, with professional experience selection criteria that will limit sampling to individuals who are either preparing for a law enforcement career, currently serving in law enforcement, or are less

than five years into retirement from active service as a sworn officer. The consideration of this population as a single case follows the framework described by Creswell (2013).

Merriam (2009) describes an interpretive/constructivist epistemology as an approach well-suited for studies that aim to describe, understand, or interpret phenomenon. In this case, it is my desire to describe and understand current and past experiences, not speculate on future possibilities, and so aspects of the interview design will be informed by interpretive/ constructivist approaches as well. In addition, my data collection methodology and interpretation of findings will also be informed by phenomenology. In the case of black police officers, a full understanding of their experience requires understanding the social context of law enforcement as a cultural entity, as well as the social context of the families and neighborhoods in which the officers grew up, formed their values, and made their career decisions.

5.2 Study Procedures:

The primary research protocol is a one hour, semistructured interview, to be conducted in a neutral location, such as a library study room; or a private office at the subject's place of work, if preferred by the study participant. All participants will be adults who are employed, in the process of being qualified for, or are retired from a career as a law enforcement officer—a profession with strict

screening protocols for mental health. Given that the nature of the engagement is confined to a one hour interview, the risk of encountering or causing a significant mental health issue is deemed to be small. The subjects will be reminded that they have access to EAP counseling services available through their place of employment, if so desired.

5.2.1 See Semistructured interview guide, attached. (Appendix A)

5.3 Follow-Up:

The interviews are designed to collect historical reflections of personal experiences, including experiences from childhood, leading up to the participant's decision to enter the law enforcement profession; as well as their experiences in the profession including, if applicable, their experiences leading up to their decision to leave the profession.

5.4 Individually Identifiable Health Information:

N/A. No individually identifiable information will be incorporated into the final report. All field data will be kept under tight control, with access limited to the researchers and professional transcription services.

6.0 Data Banking

N/A

7.0 Sharing of Results with Participants

7.1 All or portions of the final report (which will not include personally identifiable data) may be made available to study participants, and/or leaders within the departments participating in the study.

8.0 Study Duration

8.1

- Each study participant is expected to participate in an interview between 45 and 75 minutes in duration.

- Over half of the expected total number of study participants have already been identified. All interviews are expected to be completed within 100 days

- All study procedures and data analysis is expected to be complete within six months.

9.0 Study Population

9.1 Inclusion Criteria:

Interview subjects will include black people who serve or in the past have served as sworn officers in Minnesota, or at some time have held "license-eligible" status as per Minnesota POST eligibility standards, or are currently in a

law enforcement educational track or cadet program in Minnesota. A stratified purposeful sampling strategy (Creswell, 2013) will be employed, facilitating the selection of interview candidates representing a range of departmental affiliations, ages, experience levels, and gender. An initial slate of candidates has been recruited through a referral process, utilizing snowball sampling (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992), and referrals from Minnesota law enforcement leaders and recruiters. No vulnerable populations will be eligible for inclusion in the study.

9.2 Exclusion Criteria:

Exclusion criteria include candidates who do not identify as black, or black/multiracial; candidates who serve in police departments outside of the state of Minnesota; and candidates who work for a Minnesota police department but do not and have not held "license-eligible" status, are not enrolled in a training program designed to qualify them for a sworn Minnesota police officer position, and do not intend to pursue license-eligibility.

9.3 Screening:

Initial inclusion will be the result of referrals from a variety of sources, including police leaders and academic colleagues. At the outset of each interview, participants will be asked to confirm how do they racially self-identify; and to confirm that their current or past employment includes service as a sworn

Minnesota law enforcement officer. A snowball sampling technique (Bogden & Biklen, 1992) will be used to identify additional candidates.

10.0 Vulnerable Populations

10.1 Vulnerable Populations:

☐ Children

☐ Pregnant women/Fetuses/Neonates

☐ Prisoners

☐ Adults lacking capacity to consent and/or adults with diminished capacity to consent, including, but not limited to, those with acute medical conditions, psychiatric disorders, neurologic disorders, developmental disorders, and behavioral disorders

☐ Approached for participation in research during a stressful situation such as emergency room setting, childbirth (labor), etc.

☐ Disadvantaged in the distribution of social goods and services such as income, housing, or healthcare

☐ Serious health condition for which there are no satisfactory standard treatments

☐ Fear of negative consequences for not participating in the research (e.g. institutionalization, deportation, disclosure of stigmatizing behavior)

☐ Any other circumstance/dynamic that could increase vulnerability to coercion or exploitation that might influence consent to research or decision to continue in research

☐ Undervalued or disenfranchised social group

☐ Members of the military

☐ Non-English speakers

☐ Those unable to read (illiterate)

☐ Employees of the researcher

☐ Students of the researcher

☒ None of the above

10.2 Adults lacking capacity to consent and/or adults with diminished capacity to consent are ineligible for inclusion in the study:

10.3 Additional Safeguards: N/A

11.0 Number of Participants

11.1 Number of Participants to be Consented:

Minimum required for data analysis: 8

Maximum possible participation: 40

12.0 Recruitment Methods

12.1 Recruitment Process:

Recruitment will be by referral, including snowball referrals from earlier participants. Referrals may in some cases be followed up by informal conversations during which an invitation to participate in the study may be offered.

All participants will receive a formal invitation via email correspondence (sample attached) providing a more formal description of the study, including a description of the participant rights to confidentiality.

Identification of potential participants began over two years ago. Potential participants will continue to be identified via referral from current participants in the study, until data saturation is achieved (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

a. Source of Participants:

Recruitment will be by referral, including snowball referrals from earlier participants. Senior police leaders from multiple agencies have been contacted and asked to nominate members of their department. In some cases names have been captured from news articles. Some potential participants have provided referrals to other possible participants (snowball recruitment).

b. Identification of Potential Participants:

As mentioned, candidates will be identified primarily through referrals. Most commonly, the referrer is a senior law enforcement leader, and the initial contact is a connection made via email, from the leader to the prospective candidate, with a copy to me. The next step in this type of recruitment process is a follow-up email from me. In some cases, I will request a coffee meeting. In other cases, the follow-up is the formal email invitation to participate in the study (see Exhibit A) from me. Each potential participant, regardless of recruitment method, will be invited to be recruited into the study via the formal email invitation.

c. Payment:

N/A. No compensation is being offered for participation.

13.0 Withdrawal of Participants

a. Withdrawal Circumstances:

Study participants may be withdrawn from the study without their consent, if it is determined that they do not meet the study criteria; i.e. the subject does not identify as black; or the subject is not a sworn officer, or a current participant in law enforcement training program

b. Withdrawal Procedures: N/A.

c. Termination Procedures: No further action is required if the participant chooses to decline prior to the start of the interview. Incomplete interview data will not be integrated into the final report.

14.0 Risks to Participants

For each risk or set of risks below, include the procedures to be performed to lessen the probability, magnitude, duration, or reversibility of those risks.

a. Foreseeable Risks: There are no physical, social, legal, or economic risks associated with participation in this study. Psychological risks associated with the recollection of memories that might cause discomfort or distress are anticipated to be very rare. Some participants may find recalling and sharing their experiences to be somewhat unsettling or uncomfortable. These occurrences are expected to be very mild, and rare.
b. Reproduction Risks: N/A
c. Risks to Others: N/A

15.0 Incomplete Disclosure or Deception

a. Incomplete Disclosure or Deception: N/A.

16.0 Potential Benefits to Participants

a. Some participants may find recalling and sharing their life history to be a pleasurable and/or gratifying experience. No other tangible benefits of participation in this study are offered.

17.0 Data Management

a. Data Analysis Plan, and data integrity:
Like all qualitative studies, this investigation seeks to surface and make meaning of observed experiences. It does not seek to establish statistical significance, and the development of findings generalizable to other populations is not a primary objective. Like any study that incorporates participant self-selection in the development of a sample population, there is a potential for selection bias. Among the protocols suggested by Stake (1995) and Merriam (2009) to triangulate study findings to confirm observations and interpretations are the use of narratives from the literature and journaling. In addition, the experiences of black police officers have been the subject of extensive journalistic media coverage that will be used as an additional validation check.

b. Power Analysis: Provide a power analysis, if applicable.

N/A

18.0 Confidentiality

a. Data Security:

Field data will be maintained securely offsite. Digital recordings accessible through Internet protocols will be accessible only through password-protected accounts. Digital audio recordings of the interviews and interview transcripts will be accessible to me alone; with the exception of recordings provided to bonded transcription services, and recordings and transcripts made available to my faculty advisor for validity auditing purposes, and subsequently destroyed. Digital data recording devices will also be password protected, and the recordings will be stored on a password protected drive. Audio recordings will be stored in a private data archive. Field notes and transcripts will be filed securely offsite.

Confidentiality will be protected by the use of pseudonyms for both the interview subjects, and the departments in which they work; and by either removing uniquely identifying information from the final report, or modifying it to mask the subject's identity.

19.0 Provisions to Monitor the Data to Ensure the Safety of Participants

N/A

20.0 Provisions to Protect the Privacy Interests of Participants

a. Protecting Privacy:

In order to protect participant privacy, interviews will be conducted in locations offsite from the subject's place of work, unless the participant specifically requests that interviews take place at their workplace; in which case, I will request that the interview take place in an otherwise unoccupied conference room, or other suitably private venue.

Interview subjects will be advised that they have the option of not responding to any question they feel uncomfortable answering. Participants will be observed during the interview process, and if they demonstrate signs of being uncomfortable with the line of questions being asked, will be asked if they wish to continue. In the unlikely occurrence that pronounced signs of interview subject discomfort continue, the interview will be terminated.

b. Access to Participants:

N/A

21.0 Compensation for Research-Related Injury

a. Compensation for Research-Related Injury:

N/A

b. Contract Language:

N/A

22.0 Consent Process

Note: You must follow "SOP: Informed Consent Process for Research (HRP-090)" and "SOP: Written Documentation of Consent (HRP-091)."

a. Consent Process (when consent will be obtained):

Verbal consent will be verified prior to the start of the

b. Waiver or Alteration of Consent Process (when consent will not be obtained, required information will not be disclosed, or the research involves deception):
- *N/A*

c. Non-English Speaking Participants:
- *N/A*

d. Participants Who Are Not Yet Adults (infants, children, teenagers under 18 years of age):
- *N/A*

e. Cognitively Impaired Adults, or adults with fluctuating or diminished capacity to consent:
- *N/A*

f. Adults Unable to Consent:
- *N/A*

23.0 Interview Setting

a. International Research:
- N/A

b. Community Based Participatory Research:
- N/A (initial submission)
- Participatory research modification submitted and approved February 23, 2018 (request reproduced on next page)

- The participatory element will be conducted in a focus group format, in a conference room at a neutral community facility—the office of the Minneapolis Urban League.

Review Board Protocol Modification Request
Dated February 23, 2018

To summarize, I propose to brief a subset of my study participants (current and former law enforcement officers) on the preliminary findings emerging from my interviews. This will allow me to:

1) *Partially fulfill my commitment to share study findings with my research participants*
2) *Triangulate and validate my findings (does my synthesis align with their lived experiences?)*
3) *Utilize an established engaged research practice to gain deeper insights into how these research findings might be used for positive impact.*

A draft of the invitation letter appears below. The possibility of participation in a focus group was alluded to in the course of the initial interviews.

The commitment to confidentiality promised to study participants can be maintained by following the procedures below:

1) *Focus group participants will be asked to wear street attire, and not wear or bring any items that might identify them with a specific police department*
2) *Focus group participants will be assigned a pseudonym; and will be addressed by this pseudonym during the focus group*
3) *Participants will be asked to focus on general policies and practices as they have observed during the focus group, rather than seeking or divulging personal experiences.*
4) *Participants will be advised that if they desire to maximize assurance that their role as a participant in the study be kept confidential, that they should not elect to participate in this focus group. In any case, their specific experiences as shared in private interviews will remain confidential, as per the parameters of the study.*
5) *Prior to, during, and at the conclusion of the focus group, participants will be reminded that they should maintain the confidentiality of their own identity and not inquire as to the identity or departmental affiliation of other participants*

A draft of the focus group invitation letter is reproduced on the next page.

<u>Engaged Focus Group Invitation (D R A F T)</u>

Dear _____,

A few months ago you were interviewed as a part of a doctoral thesis research project, which I am conducting under the guidance of Prof. David Weerts. I would like to invite you to be a part of a focus group, where you along with between four and seven law enforcement peers would participate in a group dialog of between 90 minutes and two hours in length. During this meeting, I will review the major findings and key themes that emerged from my synthesis of the interviews. Specifically, I will be seeking your feedback on the following:

1. ***Do these findings feel like an authentic reflection of law enforcement policy and practice as you have experienced it?***
2. ***Is there something essential to the understanding of law enforcement policy and practice that is not reflected in these findings?***
3. ***What would you like to see emerge from this process? What would make you feel like the time you spent in sharing your personal story was time well spent?***

Please comment on your availability at the following times. A final determination of time as well as location will be made based on the best time for the group. We ask that you come in street attire, and not wear or bring any apparel that would identify you or the department where you currently work or have worked in the past. We will assign a pseudonym to each focus group participant and will not refer to you by name and ask that, even if you recognize another participant, that you refer to them only by their pseudonym.

Note that even while adhering to this protocol, in order to preserve a measure of anonymity, choosing to attend the focus group increases the possibility that your identity and your status as a study participant may become known. If the risk of being identified as a participant is of concern to you, then you should not elect to participate in this focus group. Your decision will not diminish the value you have already provided by your participation in this study, nor will it compromise the anonymous inclusion of your experiences into the final study report.

c. Research Sites:

All potential participants will be recruited in the state of Minnesota. The research modality will be the interview, and interviews will take place at a variety of "neutral" venues, including coffee shops and local libraries. The majority of potential participants will be identified by their senior leaders, a supervisor, or a peer officer. A few will be nominated by another colleague, such as a community leader or a family member.

24.0 Multi-Site Research

N/A

25.0 Resources Available

a. Resources Available:

This research is being conducted by a Ph.D. student with significant experience in market research and survey design. The faculty advisor is providing consultative expertise including guidance on the body of academic literature available to inform the study design, and protocols for assuring quality and validity.

Senior-level leaders in a dozen Minnesota law enforcement agencies have expressed enthusiastic support for this study, and have offered to connect me to potential interview subjects., These twelve agencies represent an estimated 50 to 100 subjects conforming to the desired profile, giving me high confidence that I will have access to the 8-30 subjects needed to complete the study.

As a full-time student, my expectation is that I can devote 20-30 hours per week to this data collection effort. I expect to make execution of this research plan my number one focus from now (September 2017) to an anticipated completion date sometime in March.

I have begun to research resources that could be leveraged to fund transcription of audio taped conversations, including the University of Minnesota's Common Ground Consortium.

In addition to my faculty advisor, I have found my other three dissertation committee members invaluable resources and sources of perspective, research reports, etc. And of course, the University of Minnesota has an impressive array of library and other-research resources.

26.0 IRB Proposal References

Bogdan, R. C., & Biklen, S. K. (1992). *Qualitative research for education: An introduction to theory and method.* Boston: Allyn and Bacon Inc.

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Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Merriam, S.B. (2009). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Miles, M.B., Huberman, A.M., & Saldaña, J. (2014). *Qualitative analysis: A methods sourcebook.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Stake, R. E. (1995). *The Art of Case Study Research.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.