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POLICE PERCEPTIONS AMID THE BLACK LIVES MATTER MOVEMENT

by

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Lee Honors College Thesis

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Abstract

In 2014, following the police-involved deaths of Eric Garner and Michael Brown, researchers focused their attention on the existence of a “Ferguson Effect,” such that rising homicide rates could be attributed to a reduction in proactive policing due to concerns over heightened public scrutiny. While UCR data would eventually refute the existence of such an Effect, previous research has found that there does appear to be evidence of a perceptual belief in the Ferguson Effect among municipal officers. To date, very little research concerning officer perceptions or experiences has been conducted with campus police departments, creating a substantial gap in the research literature that this study attempted to address. Data for the current study comes from an anonymous, 22-question, web-based survey that was administered to the WMU Public Safety (WMUPS) police department. This study was conducted in an effort to explore the impact that the Ferguson Effect has had on officers’ perceptions of the Black Lives Matter movement and their experiences. The conclusion of this study is that a perceptual belief in the Ferguson Effect does exist among some officers within the WMU Public Safety police department. Experiences at BLM events seem to be consistent with most officers agreeing that they were peaceful overall, but with some indicating that they did experience antagonism.

Keywords: Black Lives Matter, police, officer perceptions, campus police department

Contents

Introduction	4
Literature Review	8
Methodology	23
Research Questions	25
Results	26
Officer Explanations.....	40
Discussion	42
Limitations	50
Conclusion	52
Reference List	56
Appendix	61

Introduction

On May 25th, 2020 46-year-old George Floyd went into a convenience store in Minneapolis and purchased some cigarettes using a twenty-dollar bill. The store clerk, believing the bill to be fake and following store protocol, contacted the police who arrived on scene approximately seven minutes after the call was made. When the officers attempted to place Floyd into the back of their police car, a struggle ensued as Floyd refused to let officers place him in the squad car, stating that he was claustrophobic. It was at this time that the officers noted that Floyd appeared to be under medical distress, and backup arrived on the scene in the form of officers Tou Thao and Derek Chauvin. The officers were eventually able to place Floyd in the police car until, at 8:19, Officer Chauvin pulled Floyd from the passenger side of the vehicle and Floyd landed face down on the ground, his hands restrained by cuffs behind his back. Two officers held Floyd down, while Chauvin placed his knee on the back of Floyd's neck (Cramer et al., 2020). Numerous cell phone videos captured the incident, and George Floyd can be heard saying "I can't breathe" more than twenty times in the seven minutes and 46 seconds that Derek Chauvin's knee is on his neck (Johnson, 2020). In the days following Floyd's death, protestors swarmed the streets of Minneapolis. Within five days of Floyd's death, Minneapolis was the site of the most destructive riots America has seen since the 1992 L.A. riots, which had erupted in response to the acquittal of the four officers who had nearly beaten Rodney King to death in 1991(Cramer et al., 2020).

The killing of unarmed black men in our society by police officers can hardly be considered novel. It is a phenomenon we have been witnessing for decades, and it is reflected in data that indicates that a black man is almost three times more likely to be killed by police than their white counterparts (Streeter, 2019). According to the research and advocacy group,

Mapping Police Violence, 1,066 people died as a result of police brutality in 2020. Of the 1,066 people killed by police in 2020, 28% (approximately 298 people) were black. This is especially alarming when one considers the fact that black people comprise only about 13% of America's total population (Mapping Police Violence, 2020). If the killing of black men by police is so commonplace in America, then why did George Floyd's death at the hands of Derek Chauvin garner such widespread attention and condemnation?

The answer lies in the Black Lives Matter movement. Over the course of June of 2020, the month following George Floyd's death, over 26 million people in the U.S. participated in Black Lives Matter demonstrations, making it the largest protest movement in United States history up to this point (Osborne & Cooke, 2020). The phrase "black lives matter" originated as a hashtag in a Facebook post, authored in reaction to the 2013 acquittal of George Zimmerman for having shot and killed Trayvon Martin, another unarmed black teen. The verdict was perceived by many to be tremendously unjust, and its declaration spurred dozens of protests across the country. Initially a social media movement, relegated to the post section of Facebook, Black Lives Matter gained further traction in 2014 after the deaths of Eric Garner in New York, and Michael Brown in Missouri (Black Lives Matter, 2020).

On July 17th, 2014, Eric Garner, a 43-year-old African American father of six, was accused of illegally selling loose cigarettes and confronted by Staten Island police officer, Daniel Pantaleo. Cell phone videos show Pantaleo taking Garner down using a chokehold that had been banned by the NYPD. Later a medical examiner ruled Garner's death a homicide and would testify that the officer choked Garner with such force that it caused internal bleeding to his neck and ultimately triggered a fatal asthma attack. Despite the medical examiner's testimony, and the testimony of numerous other officials stating that Pantaleo had used a prohibited chokehold on

Mr. Garner, and that he should face disciplinary action, Pantaleo was never charged for Garner's death. With the grand jury apparently finding "no reasonable cause" to indict Pantaleo criminally for Garner's death, the only consequence Pantaleo suffered for having killed Eric Garner was that he was fired on August 19th, 2019-- over five years after Garner's death (Chan, 2019).

Less than a month later and almost 1,000 miles away in Ferguson Missouri, 18-year-old Michael Brown was shot and killed by another White police officer named Darren Wilson on August 9th, 2014. Michael Brown and his friend were walking in the road, apparently blocking traffic, when Wilson stopped and questioned them. A struggle ensued, and Brown attempted to flee. At that point, Officer Wilson stepped out of his police cruiser and twelve shots were fired in three volleys, with six of them hitting Michael Brown (Department of Justice, 2015). Wilson later testified that he had shot Brown in self defense when the teen had turned back around toward Wilson and "lunged" at him. Witness accounts differed, with some saying that Brown had looked as though he was charging the officer and some saying that Brown had had his hands up in surrender and that his movement toward Wilson had been more of a "walk" or a "stumble" (Somashekhar & Kimbriell, 2014). Ultimately, if not expectedly, Darren Wilson was never charged or indicted for the death of Michael Brown (Department of Justice, 2015).

The deaths of Eric Garner and Michael Brown and the lack of accountability for the officers responsible for their deaths, though by no means unprecedented, exacerbated the tensions that had already existed between communities of color and the police for decades. Their deaths brought national attention to problems of institutional and systemic racism that African Americans were already very familiar with. This time, familiarity was not met with complacency. Protests and demonstrations erupted in Ferguson and Staten Island and in cities across the country. Rallying cries of "hands up don't shoot," and "I can't breathe," resonated

across America in a manner reminiscent of the way “Justice for Trayvon” had spread across the country just the year before. In Ferguson, public discontent was so strong after the grand jury decided not to indict Darren Wilson in November of 2014 that then Governor Jay Nixon declared the city to be under a state of emergency and deployed the Missouri National Guard to help quell the riots (Chase, 2018). Their deaths also served as the catalyst that would see Black Lives Matter transition from a hashtag to what would become the largest protest movement in United States history in just six years. It was at this time that we started seeing “Black lives matter” being held up at demonstrations on signs and hearing it used as a rallying cry by protesters and by October of 2014, the first official demonstrations under the banner of Black Lives Matter began. The movement began to organize itself nationally as chapters popped up in major cities across the country, hosting further demonstrations, such as the Black Friday BART demonstration in California and the Mall of America demonstration in Minnesota. By the end of 2014, Black Lives Matter had become a full blown national civil rights movement (Chase, 2018).

With tensions and polarization between the police and minorities mounting, the vast majority of the research literature has been dedicated to the exploration of the effects this has had on minorities rather than police. In recent years, as the Black Lives Matter movement has gained traction, and the attitude of the public towards police continues to worsen, more research has been dedicated to the identification and exploration of the effects that this has had on individual officers and policing more generally. A great deal of the early research that explored the police-perspective was devoted to ascertaining whether the unfavorable media coverage of police had resulted in less proactive policing tactics, and a subsequent increase in violent crime. Ultimately, the researchers found that the violent crime data did not support this supposition. But, regardless of what the data said, researchers found that many officers still subscribed to a perceptual belief

in this phenomenon, and that this perception affected both their morale and productivity. This inspired researchers to shift their focus, and they began investigating the causes and consequences of this perception among officers.

These studies, invaluable as they have been in determining how and to what extent policing has been affected by the events that transpired in 2014 and beyond, leave much to be researched. One issue, in particular, that remains to be explored is: how have the perceptions held by officers' regarding the Black Lives Matter movement been affected as an unintended consequence of the Ferguson Effect? The current study was conducted in an attempt to answer this question.

Literature Review

Merton's Theory of Unintended Consequences

In sociology, "unintended consequences" refers to the results of a purposeful action taken by an individual-- but most often refers to actions taken by a government-- that were unintended or unforeseen (Norton et al., 2020). This concept has existed in and guided the disciplines of sociology, philosophy, and economics for centuries, but it gained considerable prominence in 1936 when American sociologist Robert Merton published his article "The Unanticipated Consequences of Purposive Social Action." This was the first analysis of the concept of unintended consequences as it relates to the actions taken by people or groups to exact social change. Merton identified five potential causes or sources of these unintended consequences: ignorance, error, imperious immediacy of interests, basic values, & the self-fulfilling prophecy.

Of these five sources, (1) ignorance is the most ubiquitous. The idea is that when an individual or government lacks sufficient knowledge of a situation then they will be unable to accurately foresee the potential outcomes of their action. In Merton's words, "situations which

demand... immediate action of some sort, will usually involve ignorance of certain aspects of the situation and will bring about unexpected results.” Following ignorance, and perhaps as pervasive, is (2) error. This cause of unintended consequences can manifest itself either in the individual or government believing that an action taken in the past will achieve the same results as it did at that previous time, or in instances when the actor either neglects or refuses to consider all aspects of a situation so that the outcomes can be more accurately considered (Merton, 1936).

The third source of unintended consequences is the (3) “imperious immediacy of interest.” This simply refers to instances when the actor is so concerned about the immediate, foreseen consequences of their action that they deliberately ignore and thus do not anticipate other potential consequences of their action. The actors need for an immediate solution to one problem precludes their ability to foresee other consequences.

The fourth source was termed (4) “basic values,” and what this means is that the values held by an individual or a society makes them believe in the necessity of their actions to the degree that they do not consider the impact of those actions on other people or groups within society.

Finally, Merton termed the last source of unintended consequences to be those resulting from a (5) “self-fulfilling prophecy.” This describes instances when individuals or governments have a false conception of a situation, which causes them to take certain actions which ultimately make their initially false conception of the situation a reality (Merton, 1936).

Merton’s theory is often used to criticize government programs like social security, weighing the benefits of reducing geriatric poverty with the negative, unintended consequences of the elderly not saving and investing as much in their own retirement because they know they will receive social security (Norton et al., 2020). For our purposes, Merton’s theory will be used

to assess the unintended consequences that have come about as a result of the increased media attention on the Black Lives Matter movement and police violence. The Black Lives Matter movement is undoubtedly an example of “purposive social action.” According to Merton, “purposive action” refers to the conduct, rather than the behavior, of the actor. The distinction is that conduct encompasses actions that have a motive behind them and in which the actor has a choice between a variety of options. Merton further clarified that there are two types of “action” that can be engaged in: unorganized and formally organized. Unorganized action refers to acts by individuals that are considered distributed. Formally organized action, on the other hand, occurs when “like-minded individuals form an association in order to achieve a common purpose,” (Merton, 1936). Following this definition, the Black Lives Matter movement is undeniably an example of purposive social action, and thus can be framed and analyzed according to Merton’s Theory of Unintended Consequences as a way of assessing the impact that the group has had on policing, but more specifically on police perceptions and the manner in which they carry out the duties associated with their job.

Merton’s 1936 work, “The Unanticipated Consequences of Purposive Social Action,” was and continues to be incredibly influential in the field of sociology, and in studies of collective action. In the near century since Merton published his article, the sociological lexicon has been shaped by Merton’s words so much so that a very important distinction has been lost by many within the field. Since 1936, the word “unanticipated” has declined in use, while concurrently the use of the word “unintended” has risen within the discipline of sociology. The terms are erroneously treated as synonyms for one another, and taken to denote outcomes that are “unforeseen” or unexpected. This conflation precludes the investigation of outcomes that were unintended by the individual or entity, but entirely predictable-- in other words “permitted

outcomes,” (Zwart, 2015). The difference lies in the fact that an outcome that is unanticipated is always unintended, however an outcome that was unintended can either be anticipated or unanticipated. For example, China’s one-child policy was a government-led effort to curb the country’s rapid population growth. The intention of the Chinese government in creating and enforcing this policy was to slow population growth, however an unintended consequence of the policy was a marked deficit in the number of females being born as a result of the cultural prioritization of male offspring and parents selectively aborting female fetuses. Undoubtedly this outcome was not intended by policy-makers, but there is a great deal of evidence to support the fact that Chinese government officials anticipated it. Discussion and research on the sex disparity was prohibited, and attempts were made to educate rural populations on gender equality in an effort to curb rates of female infanticide and sex selective abortions (Zwart, 2015). The sheer size and scope of modern governments assures that their actions will have innumerable unintended consequences, but with the amount of information and research available to governments it is naive to presume that the unintended outcomes of their actions were not anticipated, often far in advance. When framed through this lens, the importance of disentangling the words “unintended” and “unanticipated” becomes all the more salient.

The process an actor must undergo to achieve formally organized action typically involves them clearly stating their purpose in some manner, such as in a mission statement (Merton, 1936). The mission of the Black Lives Matter movement, according to the organization's official website, is “to eradicate white supremacy and build local power to intervene in violence inflicted on Black communities by the state and vigilantes,” (Black Lives Matter, 2020). However, as Merton indicated there can be a myriad of unintended consequences for any purposive action taken by an individual or group. This paper attempts to explore the

impact that the Ferguson Effect has had on officers' perceptions of the Black Lives Matter movement. Previous research has looked into how and to what extent officers' perceptions and behaviors have been influenced as an unintended consequence of the Ferguson Effect, however there has been a considerable deficiency in the amount of inquiry into the perceptions of officers' related to the Black Lives Matter movement as an unintended consequence of the Ferguson Effect (Fields, 2019).

The Ferguson Effect

The term "Ferguson Effect" was first used in November of 2014, by St. Louis police chief Doyle Sam Dotson in an interview to describe the increasing crime rates that were being observed in several large cities in 2015, following the death of Michael Brown in Ferguson Missouri and the subsequent social unrest that had erupted across the U.S. In St. Louis alone, the number of violent crimes was 5.3% higher in 2014 than it had been in 2013 (Mac Donald, 2015). This led many to initially believe that there may be a relationship between the heightened levels of social unrest and the rising crime rates. The premise of the Ferguson Effect is that the increased media attention and public hostility towards the police has caused officers to refrain from using proactive policing techniques, and thereby spurred the increase in violent crime as criminals feel "empowered" and emboldened by the limited police activity (Rosenfeld, 2016). For a while the existence of such an effect was a matter of great contention and debate among scholars. Numerous studies were published utilizing small samples of crime data from cities across the country, some finding evidence to support the existence of a Ferguson Effect, others finding evidence to refute it. Obtaining a definitive answer to the question was delayed by the fact that the F.B.I. wouldn't release the data for 2015 in its Uniform Crime Reporting Index (UCR) until September of 2016. Once the information was made available, studies utilizing UCR

data from 2015 and beyond have concluded that, while there is a great deal of anecdotal evidence supporting the existence of a Ferguson Effect, the data does not support the supposition (Pyrooz et al., 2016).

In one 2016 study, researchers gathered the UCR aggregate and disaggregate Part I criminal offense monthly data for the twelve months before and the twelve months following August, 2014 (when Michael Brown was killed). Data was collected from 81 large (populations exceeding 200,000 people) American cities, and a discontinuous growth model was used to determine if the events that occurred in Ferguson, Missouri in August of 2014 had a real effect on crime trends-- that is, if the Ferguson Effect truly exists. The study did not find any evidence to support there being a pre-to-post Ferguson shift in the overall rates of violent and property crimes committed, and concluded that there was not enough evidence to support the existence of the Ferguson Effect in the country as a whole. However, when the researchers looked at the disaggregated data they found that robbery rates that had been decreasing in the preceding months, did increase in the months following August of 2014. The researchers ultimately concluded that “overall, any Ferguson Effect is constrained largely to cities with historically high levels of violence, a large composition of Black residents, and socioeconomic disadvantage,” (Pyrooz et al., 2016).

In another study published in 2019, researchers looked at arrest and homicide rates in 53 large U.S. cities using UCR data from 2010 through 2015 to determine whether or not a relationship existed between rates of arrest and homicide. The researchers reasoned that if there was indeed the presence of a “Ferguson Effect” and police were refraining from using proactive policing tactics as a result, then the number of arrests should have declined in the months following August of 2014. Conversely, homicide rates should have increased during the same

time period, and these shifts could not have occurred before August of 2014 to any significant degree if the Ferguson Effect is real. The researchers found that the national homicide rate increased by 11.4% between 2014 and 2015, lending support to the existence of the Ferguson Effect. When looking at arrest rates, the researchers found that they did decline between 2014 and 2015, but this finding could not support the existence of the Ferguson Effect because arrest rates had been declining for several years before Michael Brown's death (Rosenfeld & Wallman, 2019).

The researchers further reasoned that if there was a Ferguson Effect, and the declining arrest rates were driving the rising homicide rates then the relationship between the two variables should be negative, such that when the arrest rates decrease the homicide rates increase. The researchers found no evidence to support this type of negative association between overall arrest and homicide rates (regardless of the year or offense type). In fact, they found a significant positive relationship between the two variables in some instances, indicating that the police make more arrests when homicide rates are high (Rosenfeld & Wallman, 2019).

While the consensus among scholars is that the Ferguson Effect does not exist, there are many who still subscribe to it. Many of those that do are police officers whose personal experiences lend them to support the existence of such a phenomenon, and numerous studies have found that officers' belief in the Ferguson Effect does have an effect on their perceptions. Consequently, whether the Ferguson Effect does or does not factually exist has no bearing on this discussion. In the words of William Isaac and Dorothy Swaine Thomas, in a sociological theory they developed in 1928 and for which they are the namesake, when something is perceived to be real, then it is real in its consequences (Rohall et al., 2014). The purpose of this paper is not to add to the already immense debate over whether or not the Ferguson Effect is real,

but rather to examine how and to what extent it has affected officers' perceptions of the Black Lives Matter movement. To this end, data on arrests and crimes does little to answer the fundamental question of this study: how have the perceptions held by officers' regarding the Black Lives Matter movement been affected as an unintended consequence of the Ferguson Effect?

Officer Perceptions of the Ferguson Effect

There is a great deal of research that supports the notion that police officers perceive there to be a Ferguson Effect at play in this country, and that this perception affects the way they interact with the people that they're sworn to protect. A 2016 study published by Scott Wolfe and Justin Nix found that, as a result of the negative media attention surrounding the events in Ferguson, many of the officers in their study did feel a reluctance to perform their duties and that citizens' perceptions of the police had become increasingly negative. However, as Nix and Wolfe also discovered, the effects of negative police publicity resulting in reduced officer motivations could be counteracted in departments where there was a high degree of organizational justice and where supervisors were perceived to be fair (Nix & Wolfe, 2016).

In another 2019 study, researchers concluded that the Ferguson Effect has had a major effect on the culture and perceptions held by officers' in local police departments. They found that some of the officers that they interviewed did not feel that the police had a lot of public support, and further ascertained that this perception was most likely to occur in instances when there was a difference in race between the officer and the community member they were interacting with. Despite acknowledging that the Ferguson Effect impacted their perceptions, this study found that the majority of officers did not believe that it had affected their behaviors or the ways in which they carry out the duties associated with their job (Fields, 2019).

In 2017, Nix conducted another study with the help of Justin Pickett to determine whether officers believed that recent news coverage of policing has had an effect on crime rates-- or, to put it another way, to determine if officers perceive there to be a Ferguson Effect. They also wanted to see if there was a relationship between officers' perceptions of the negative media coverage, and officers' conceptions of citizens' attitudes towards the police as well as officers' fear of having false allegations levied against them. Of the 251 officers who responded to their survey, more than 80% reported that they felt the media's negative coverage of policing either increased or greatly increased crime rates. This demonstrated a strong belief in the Ferguson Effect among the officers surveyed. Furthermore, the researchers found that those officers who perceived there to be a higher degree of hostility present in the media's coverage of policing were significantly more likely to believe that the attitudes of civilians towards the police had also depreciated. These officers also tended to report a higher degree of fear related to false accusations (Nix & Pickett, 2017).

The studies outlined above were not conducted for the purpose of substantiating the existence of a Ferguson Effect. Rather, the key questions and findings posed by each study were concerned more with whether or not officers perceived the Ferguson Effect to be real, and how that perception influenced officers' conception of civilians. All three of the above outlined studies found that officers do believe there to be a Ferguson Effect, and that this does impact officers' perceptions of the level of hostility held for them by citizens. Furthermore, and as Fields found in his 2019 study, an officers' perceptions of hostility are heightened in instances when the officer and community member are not of the same race. This finding is of particular significance when we compare the racial composition of cities like Ferguson and Minneapolis, where protests were the most visible, to the racial composition of each city's police departments.

For example, in 2014 it was estimated that, while 65.6% of the population of Ferguson, Missouri were African American, only three of the city's police department's 53 members were Black (Lowery et al., 2014). At the time of Michael Brown's death, the racial makeup of the department to which Darren Wilson belonged in no way reflected that of the city, making it all the more likely that officers would perceive a higher degree of hostility from the community. Officers who are involved in these kinds of killings often claim that they felt that their life and safety were in jeopardy when they employed the use of deadly force, but as Fields suggested, officers' perceptions of citizen hostility are elevated when they are confronting someone of a different race (2019). Since its inception, White men have dominated the realm of policing and as of 2018, it was estimated that 65.5% of America's police force was White (Police officers, n.d.). With the U.S. Census Bureau estimating that, by 2044, the majority of the U.S. population will be people of color, this finding bears great significance to the discussion of the implications of heightened perceptions of public hostility towards the police (Progress 2050, 2015). The consequences of police officers' subscribing to this perception are insidious, far-reaching, and in some cases, deadly.

Consequences of a Perceptual Subscription to the Ferguson Effect among Police Officers

The negative media attention that policing has garnered in the last several years may not have culminated in a true Ferguson Effect, such that rising homicide rates can be attributed to the social upheaval America has been witnessing since August of 2014. However, and as research has shown, officers' perceptual belief in the Ferguson Effect has fundamentally affected many of their perceptions as they relate to public hostility. When officers perceive their interactions with certain communities and individuals to be rancorous, research has shown that this perception can profoundly and negatively affect things like police legitimacy, the quality of police-minority

relations, the degree of transparency present in police departments, and the frequency of violent/deadly encounters between police and African Americans.

One of the earlier interpretations of the Ferguson effect centered around the idea of legitimacy in policing. Broadly speaking, legitimacy refers to the belief that a societal arrangement is as it should be, and it is typically used to describe an individual or institutions' right to govern (Rohall et al., 2014). Police legitimacy, as defined in one 2017 study, "refers to the level of trust and confidence civilians have in the police, as well as the degree to which they feel obligated to obey the police," (Nix & Pickett, 2017: 27). As it pertained to the Ferguson Effect and the rising homicide rates in 2015, it was posited that declining police legitimacy as a result of increased media scrutiny had resulted in the increased incidences of violent crime nationwide because individuals and communities felt alienated from legitimate forms of social control such as the police. Indeed, research supports the notion that perceptions of police legitimacy have declined in response to highly publicized incidents of police violence such as the killings of Michael Brown and George Floyd. This is especially true among minorities. In another study conducted in 2017, researchers surveyed 390 residents of the geographic areas immediately adjacent to Ferguson Missouri in order to determine whether and to what extent citizens' opinions of the police had been changed following Michael Brown's death. Participants were contacted two to four times between 2012 and 2014 when the study concluded. The researcher found that, overall the opinions of the residents surveyed towards police did worsen following the events in Ferguson in August of 2014, but this effect was the most pronounced when the data was analyzed based on the residents' race. They found that the views of African Americans were the most negatively affected by Michael Brown's death, and the subsequent social unrest. Specifically, perceptions held by Black residents regarding the frequency with

which police utilize aggressive tactics increased by 21%, and perceptions regarding the legitimacy of the police fell by 8% following Brown's death (Kochel, 2017). The primary duties associated with policing are "to protect and serve," but when entire communities lose faith in the institution and do not feel that they are being protected nor that their interests are being served, the impact that this has on police relations within these communities is profoundly devastating.

The relationship between police officers and minorities, never good to begin with, has grown ever more strained in recent years. A Gallup panel conducted in fall of 2020 found that less than one in five Black Americans believe that the police in their community would treat them with courtesy and respect (Saad, 2020). The public's perception of police legitimacy can dramatically impact the productivity of an entire department. The police rely heavily on the voluntary cooperation of civilians to help them in their law enforcement efforts. With diminished perceptions of police legitimacy within communities of color, individuals are less likely to report crimes to the police, less likely to assist police in their investigations of crimes (i.e., as witnesses), and officers are therefore less effective in carrying out the duties associated with their job in these communities (Tyler, 2016). When people don't feel that they can rely on the police as a mechanism of social control, then they are more apt to take justice into their own hands. Conflicts between individuals and groups within these communities are resolved, not with the help of officers nor in a court of law, but in the streets. The people within these communities, unable to rely on law enforcement to help and protect them, develop and abide by their own codes that often demand that intimidation and disrespect be met with violence, further perpetuating crime rates in these areas (Anderson, 1999). Police officers are aware of the mistrust harbored for them within minority communities, and many perceive the events of 2014 as having further intensified these feelings. In a 2019 study, researchers conducted in-depth

semi-structured interviews with 20 officers in order to assess the perceptual impact of the Ferguson Effect on police in terms of their confidence, morale, and the strategies that they employ in the line of duty. This study also confirmed the existence of a perceptual belief in the Ferguson Effect among officers. In addition, several of the officers interviewed referenced a belief that the events in Ferguson, subsequent social unrest, and unfavorable media coverage of the police had manifested itself in a greater adherence to “no-snitching” policies in minority communities. As one county sergeant who participated in the study stated, “It’s the mentality, no one on the street ever wants to be a witness. They could be sitting on their front porches when a shooting happens and yet there are no witnesses,” (Deuchar et al., 2019).

Beyond damaging police-minority relations, police perceptions of heightened levels of public hostility can have a number of other untoward effects on police culture as outlined in a 2018 study conducted by Christopher Marier and Justin Moule. They found that officers who reported perceiving high levels of hostility among residents of their community were also significantly more likely to report a higher degree of social isolation, police solidarity, cynicism towards the public, and support for the use of physically coercive police tactics.

Police solidarity, as defined in this study, refers to an officer’s loyalty to his/her fellow officer above all else (Marier & Moule, 2018). Policing is often referred to as a sort of “blue fraternity” or “brotherhood,” and, in instances when an officer is accused of wrongdoing the media and internal investigations bureaus are met with what is termed the “blue wall of silence.” This is an informal code of conduct that exists within the police subculture and is reflective of the high levels of solidarity present in policing. The “blue wall of silence” compels officers to refrain from reporting misconduct and crimes committed by their peers, and it has been a contributing factor to the lack of police accountability in cases of police brutality such as that of

Darren Wilson and Derek Chauvin (Huq & McAdams, 2016). This study found that officers who perceive a higher degree of public hostility report a higher degree of police solidarity (Marier & Moule, 2018). Adherence to this code can insulate entire departments from external oversight, and makes it even less likely that the systemic issues that contribute to the deplorable state of police-minority relations and instances of police brutality can be addressed. This lack of transparency, in turn, intensifies feelings of mistrust towards the police within minority communities and drives the wedge between them even deeper.

Cynicism, in the context of this study, refers to an attitude of distrust held by police officers for the behaviors and motivations of particular individuals and communities. The researchers found that officers who perceived there to be greater levels of public hostility were also more likely to be distrusting of the citizens they serve. This is important because, and as this study also found, officers who enter into an interaction with suspicion are far more likely to support the use of force (Marier & Moule, 2018).

To date there is no reliable means of recording instances of police use of force for the country as a whole, however in 2015 the F.B.I. created the National Use of Force Data Collection instrument in the hope of ameliorating the lack of reliable data on the subject. The F.B.I. began collecting data on January 1st of 2019, and the information gathered wouldn't be made available until midway through the following year. Even this effort does not provide a reliable estimate of incidences of police use of force because participation in data collection was voluntary, and only 41% of all federal, state, local, and tribal sworn officers in the U.S. participated (Jackman, 2020). Any estimates that have been made about the frequency with which officers employ the use of coercive tactics against African Americans have been made based on information that was voluntarily recorded and reported by police departments. As luck

would have it, one such department that documented these occurrences also happens to be one that is relevant to this discussion: the Minneapolis Police Department.

Since 2015, the police department has recorded approximately 11,500 instances where their officers utilized coercive tactics. Of these, 6,650 involved a Black subject compared to just 2,750 involving a White subject. This means that the Minneapolis Police Department utilized coercive tactics against African Americans at a rate seven times greater than that of White people, despite the former making up only about 20% of Minneapolis' total population whereas the latter represents 60% (Oppel & Lazaro, 2020).

Spurred by the lack of data, other collaborative research efforts have been made to shed light on police use of force such as Mapping Police Violence, a comprehensive database that compiles information gathered by other databases, as well as from social media posts, obituaries, police reports, etc. in order to provide detailed information on approximately 92% of the police killings that have taken place since 2013. According to their website, Black people are three times more likely to be killed by the police than White people (Mapping Police Violence, 2020). These data collection efforts demonstrate the stark racial disparity in terms of who is most likely to have force used against them by the police and who is most likely to die as a result of coercive police behavior. This discrepancy is due, at least in part, to the events that transpired in August of 2014, officers' ensuing perceptual belief in the Ferguson Effect, and their subsequent perceptions of public hostility.

The consequences of officers' perceptions of increasing public hostility outlined above are not independent of one another. They are cyclical to the point that anyone could be viewed as either the consequence of one particular behavior or the antecedent to another. The deaths of Michael Brown and Eric Garner sparked a national debate on issues such as police brutality and

accountability, and while there is no evidence to suggest that their deaths resulted in less proactive policing and rising crime rates, there is a great deal of research to support the fact that police have been perceptually altered by these events. In addition, research has also found that the events in Ferguson, Missouri affected public perceptions of police legitimacy, especially among minorities. This has culminated in police officers' perceiving a higher degree of hostility towards them among the public. Officers who harbor this perception are likely to report greater feelings of solidarity, which contributes to the blue wall of silence and the lack of officer accountability. The lack of accountability further damages minority perceptions of police legitimacy, and this erosion of trust makes minorities less willing to cooperate and interact with the police. This lack of public cooperation makes it more difficult for police to identify and solve crimes, and the lack of trust in the police to protect and serve certain communities results in the adherence to informal codes of justice that often encourage disrespect be met with violence. Poor police-community relations can severely limit the productivity of entire departments. Police become distrusting of a public that they perceive as hostile, which makes them more apt to support the use of physical coercion, further damaging minority perceptions of police legitimacy and adding to the likelihood of future deadly police encounters with minorities.

Methodology

The data for the current study comes from a volunteer, web-based survey that was sent to all sworn patrol officers currently employed by the WMU Public Safety (WMUPS) police department. Participants were recruited by an administrative contact within WMUPS who sent an email to all patrol officers on our behalf. The email contained a link to the survey, which was administered via the website Qualtrics, as well as a brief description of the study. Upon clicking the link, participants were then re-directed to the informed consent agreement; see Appendix.

Officers who did not wish to participate, indicated this by selecting the response “No, I have read this informed consent document, and I do NOT agree nor wish to take part in this study.”

Officers who did choose to participate, indicated their desire to do so by selecting “Yes, I have read this informed consent document, and I agree to take part in this study.” Those who selected this option were then taken directly to the survey questionnaire. The survey was composed of 22 questions and took participants approximately 20 minutes to complete. The first six questions were closed-ended multiple choice questions that gathered demographic information about each officer (i.e. race, gender, education, etc.). Then, the survey asked officers to rate how they view public perceptions of the police on WMU’s campus, and the United States as a whole, with possible responses ranging from “very poor” to “very good.” The survey then asked officers whether they themselves had witnessed instances of racial bias or the use of excessive force against a minority among their fellow officers within WMUPS in a yes/no format. Next the survey attempted to gauge officers’ support for the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement, and how well they understood the goals of the movement. The next questions asked officers the extent to which they either agreed or disagreed with a series of both positive and negative statements regarding the BLM movement on a five-point Likert scale (1- strongly agree, 3- neither agree nor disagree, 5- strongly disagree). Following that section, officers were asked a series of questions that attempted to gauge their experiences at BLM protests/rallies. Officers were asked whether they had ever worked security at a BLM event, and whether they had had any negative experiences in relation to a BLM event. Officers who responded “yes” to these questions were then asked to provide an explanation in an open-ended question format. The next questions asked officers to describe the general atmosphere of a BLM protest/rally, as well as the people in attendance, using a series of both positive and negative statements and a five-point

Likert scale (1- strongly agree, 3- neither agree nor disagree, 5- strongly disagree). Finally, the survey concluded with a series of questions that dealt with the number of times the officers had been either thanked or verbally abused by a community member within the past 30 days, and a question that asked officers whether they would make the same choice now (in 2021) to become a police officer knowing the current state of police-minority relations in the U.S.

Participants

The survey was administered to all sworn officers currently employed by the WMU Public Safety police department. An administrative contact within WMUPS sent a recruitment email to all eligible participants on our behalf. The email contained a link to the survey website, Qualtrics, as well as a description of the study. Participation in the survey was voluntary. After clicking on the link officers were re-directed to the informed consent agreement, where they indicated whether they wished to participate in the current study. Of the 30 sworn officers currently employed by WMUPS, six surveys were completed, giving us a response rate of 20%. The surveys were sent by our administrative contact on February 22nd, 2021 and participants were asked to respond to the 22 question survey within 14 days.

Research Questions:

Question 1: How do WMUPS patrol officers feel police officers are perceived by the public?

Hypothesis: Officers will rate public perception of police officers as being fairly low, both on campus and across the United States.

Question 2: To what degree do WMUPS officers support the BLM movement?

Hypothesis: Support for the BLM movement will be relatively lower among WMUPS officers than it is among the general public, but higher relative to municipal police departments due to its affiliation with a university.

Question 3: What have the experiences of WMUPS officers been at BLM events?

Hypothesis: The experiences of officers will not be particularly negative being that the BLM protests and rallies that have taken place in Kalamazoo in the past year have, for the most part, been non-violent.

Question 4: Have officers' behavior in the line of duty been affected as a result of their fears regarding public/media scrutiny?

Hypothesis: Officers will report that their behaviors have been moderately affected by their fears of public/media scrutiny.

Statistical Design:

The sample distributions, and question results will be examined and compared.

Comments will also be examined for themes and trends to gain a greater understanding of officer's experiences and perceptions.

Results

Demographic Characteristics

Table 1 provides a description of the survey respondents as well as their employment history as a law enforcement officer. The majority of survey respondents were male (66.7%) and White (83.3% with one value missing). Half of the respondents indicated that they were 51 years old or older, with the remaining 50% falling between the ages of 26 and 45. All of the respondents indicated that they had had at least some formal education beyond high school, with the majority (66.7%) holding a graduate degree. 66.7% of respondents indicated that they had had police experience prior to their work with WMU's Public Safety police department. The average number of years that the sample has been employed as law enforcement officers was 17.28.

Table 1: Description of the Respondents

Total N = 6	Frequency	Percentage	Mean
Male	4	66.7%	
White/Caucasian	5 (1 missing)	83.3%	
Aged 51+	3	50.0%	
Graduate/Professional Degree	4	66.7%	
Had prior police experience	4	66.7%	
Average number of years in law enforcement			17.28

Police Perceptions

Table 2 summarizes the respondent's initial perceptions of policing among the WMU campus community as well as the United States as a whole. As far as the perceptions of the police held by the WMU campus community (students, faculty, and staff), the majority of officers (83.4%) rated them to be either "good" or "very good." Public perceptions of the police across the United States as a whole were rated as "fair" by the majority of respondents (50%). Table 3 shows that half of the sample indicated that they had witnessed a fellow officer exhibit racial bias in the line of duty on at least one occasion, however only one respondent agreed that they had witnessed a fellow officer using excessive force against a person of color on at least one occasion.

Table 2: Initial Perceptions of Policing- WMU & U.S.

Total N = 6	Frequency	Percentage
Overall, how would you rate the public perceptions held by the WMU campus community (students, faculty, staff) of the police on WMU's campus?		

Fair	1	16.7%
Good	1	16.7%
Very Good	4	66.7%
Total	6	100.0%

Overall, how would you rate public perceptions of the police in the United States as a whole?

Poor	2	33.3%
Fair	3	50.0%
Good	1	16.7%
Total	6	100.0%

Table 3: Witnessing Racial Bias/Excessive Force

Total N = 6	Frequency	Percentage
Has witnessed officers exhibit racial bias	3	50.0%
Has witnessed officer use excessive force	1	16.7%

The Black Lives Matter Movement

Table 4 summarizes the respondent's perceptions regarding the Black Lives Matter movement as a whole. When asked about the extent to which they support the BLM movement, the majority (83.3%) of respondents chose "neutral." When asked how well they understand the goals and ambitions of the BLM movement, 66.7% of respondents indicated that they understood "some of the goals."

Table 4: The BLM Movement

Total N = 6	Frequency	Percentage
To what extent do you support the Black Lives Matter movement?		
Neutral	5	83.3%
Support	1	16.7%
Total	6	100.0%

How well do you think you understand the goals and ambitions of the Black Lives Matter movement?

I understand <i>most</i> of the goals.	2	33.3%
I understand <i>some</i> of the goals.	4	66.7%
Total	6	100.0%

The next section of the survey was a set of Likert-scale questions that presented respondents with a series of both positive and negative statements related to the BLM movement, policing, and police experiences. Respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they either agreed or disagreed with each statement by selecting one of the following options: 1- strongly agree, 2- agree, 3- neither agree nor disagree, 4- disagree, 5- strongly disagree. The results are presented in Tables 5-9.

Table 5: Consequences of the BLM movement

Total N = 6	Frequency	Percentage
“The Black Lives Matter movement has caused a growing resentment and dislike for law enforcement among the general population.”		
Strongly Agree	1	16.7%

Agree	3	50.0%
Disagree	2	33.3%
Total	6	100.0%

“The Black Lives Matter movement has brought national attention to blatant racial disparities in the way that black people are treated by the criminal justice system and law enforcement.”

Agree	4	66.7%
Neither agree nor disagree	2	33.3%
Total	6	100.0%

Table 5 summarizes the perceived consequences of the BLM movement by WMUPS officers. 66.7% of the officers surveyed either “agreed” or “strongly agreed” with the idea that the BLM movement has caused increased levels of resentment and dislike for police officers among the general public. However, the same proportion of officers also “agreed” that the BLM has brought national attention to the blatant racial disparities present in our nation’s criminal justice system.

Table 6: Policing & the BLM Movement

Total N = 6	Frequency	Percentage
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“I feel that, overall, the work that I do has a positive impact on my community.”

Strongly Agree	2	33.3%
Agree	4	66.7%
Total	6	100.0%

“The Black Lives Matter movement has made my job more difficult.”

Agree	3	50.0%
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Neither agree nor disagree	2	33.3%
Disagree	1	16.7%
Total	6	100.0%

Table 6 shows that all of the officers surveyed indicated that they do believe that the work they do has a positive impact on the community, indicating that WMUPS officers tend to have a positive perception of their work. It would also appear that the officers surveyed tended to believe that the BLM movement has made their job in law enforcement more difficult. 50.0% of respondents “agreed,” while 33.3% chose to “neither agree nor disagree” and only 16.7% indicated that they “disagreed.”

The fact that the same proportion of officers agreed that the BLM movement has both caused increasing levels of dislike for police officers among the general public and brought national attention to racial disparities in the criminal justice system demonstrates the complexity of the relationship between police officers and the Black Lives Matter movement, and of WMUPS officer’s feelings regarding this issue.

Table 7: The Phrase “Black Lives Matter”

Total N = 6	Frequency	Percentage
“The phrase "black lives matter" has brought national attention to the idea that the lives of black people have been routinely and systematically undervalued in the United States.”		
Agree	5	83.3%
Neither agree nor disagree	1	16.7%
Total	6	100.0%

“The phrase "black lives matter" implies that the lives of black individuals matter more than the lives of non-black individuals.”

Agree	1	16.7%
Disagree	3	50.0%
Strongly Disagree	2	33.3%
Total	6	100.0%

Table 7 encapsulates the meaning that WMUPS officers attribute to the phrase “black lives matter.” The majority (83.3%) of officers surveyed “agreed” that the phrase has brought national attention to the idea that the lives of Black people have been routinely and systemically undervalued in the United States. 83.3% of respondents either “disagreed” or “strongly disagreed” that the phrase “Black lives matter” implies that the lives of Black individuals matter more than the lives of non-Black individuals. Overall, it would appear that WMUPS officers have a fairly good understanding of the purpose and intentions of the BLM movement.

Table 8: BLM & Racial Tension

Total N = 6

Frequency

Percentage

“The Black Lives Matter movement has only served to heighten racial tension between the police and people of color.”

Agree	3	50.0%
Neither agree nor disagree	1	16.7%
Disagree	2	33.3%
Total	6	100.0%

“The Black Lives Matter movement has brought national attention to long standing problems and tensions between the police and Black community.”

Agree	5	83.3%
Neither agree nor disagree	1	16.7%
Total	6	100.0%

Table 8 presents the results of officer's perceptions of the impact of the Black Lives Matter movement on racial tensions between the police and minority communities. 50.0% of respondents "agreed" that the BLM movement has heightened racial tensions between the police and people of color, however 33.3% of the sample "disagreed" and 16.7% chose to "neither agree nor disagree." This may suggest the presence of mixed-feelings within the Public Safety police department. The majority (83.3%) of respondents "agreed" that the movement has brought national attention to a long legacy of problems and tensions between the police and minority communities.

Table 9: Policing In the Era of BLM

Total N = 6	Frequency	Percentage
"The Black Lives Matter movement and ensuing polarization has made me more fearful when I am dealing with people of color in my capacity as a law enforcement officer."		
Agree	1	16.7%
Neither agree nor disagree	1	16.7%
Disagree	4	66.7%
Total	6	100.0%

"Since the Black Lives Matter movement has gained increasing momentum (since May, 2020) I have found myself in situations where I felt pressure to NOT make an arrest or take official actions when dealing with people of color out of fear of public scrutiny or media attention."

Strongly Agree	2	33.3%
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Neither agree nor disagree	1	16.7%
Disagree	3	50.0%
Total	6	100.0%

The survey questions summarized in Table 9 were asked in an effort to gauge whether or not there appeared to be evidence of a Ferguson Effect among WMUPS officers. When asked whether the BLM movement and ensuing polarization has caused officers to be more fearful when engaging with a person of color, 66.7% of officers “disagreed.” It is worth noting that 16.7% of the sample did agree with this statement, while the remaining 16.7% elected to remain neutral. When asked whether they have felt pressure to not make an arrest or take official action when interacting with a minority individual for fear of the public scrutiny or media attention that their actions may garner, half (50.0%) of the respondents “disagreed.” However, and what was particularly interesting, 33.3% of the sample “strongly agreed” that they had felt disincentivized to take official action out of fear of public/media scrutiny. These two officers both later indicated that they had personally been involved in policing a BLM protest/event and that their experience(s) had been negative. They were also the only two officers in the sample who reported having been verbally abused in the line of duty on five or more occasions since May, 2020.

Policing a BLM Event

Table 10 describes the extent to which the officers surveyed have been involved in policing BLM protests and rallies. Half (50.0%) of the respondents indicated that they had worked security at a BLM event/protest, and the same 50.0% of respondents also indicated that they had had a negative experience while policing said event.

Table 10: Policing a BLM Event

Total N = 6	Frequency	Percentage
Has worked security at a BLM event- YES	3	50.0%
Has had a negative experience policing BLM Event- YES	3	50.0%

Officers were then asked a series of Likert-scale questions that presented respondents with a series of both positive and negative statements related to the overall atmosphere of a BLM event as well as those in attendance. Respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they either agreed or disagreed with each statement by selecting one of the following options: 1- strongly agree, 2- agree, 3- neither agree nor disagree, 4- disagree, 5- strongly disagree. It should be noted that this portion of the survey was available to all officers, not only those who had indicated that they had policed a BLM event/protest. The results are summarized in Tables 11-13.

Table 11: BLM Event Atmosphere

Total N = 6	Frequency	Percentage
“The overall atmosphere of a Black Lives Matter protest/rally is peaceful.”		
Agree	4	66.7%
Neither agree nor disagree	2	33.3%
Total	6	100.0%

“The overall atmosphere of a Black Lives Matter protest/rally is violent.”

Neither agree nor disagree	2	33.3%
Disagree	4	66.7%
Total	6	100.0%

Overall, the respondents indicated that the general atmosphere of a Black Lives Matter event/protest was peaceful (66.7%) and non-violent (66.7%). For both questions, 33.3% of the sample chose to “neither agree nor disagree” that these events were either peaceful or violent (Table 11).

Table 12: BLM Event Organization

Total N = 6	Frequency	Percentage
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“The Black Lives Matter protests/rallies that I have seen have seemed well-organized.”

Agree	1	16.7%
Neither agree nor disagree	3	50.0%
Disagree	2	33.3%
Total	6	100.0%

“The Black Lives Matter protests/rallies that I have seen have seemed very disorganized.”

Agree	2	33.3%
Neither agree nor disagree	3	50.0%
Disagree	1	16.7%
Total	6	100.0%

The results reported in Table 12 show that the majority (50.0%) of officers chose to “neither agree nor disagree” to statements asserting that BLM protests/rallies had been either very well-organized or very disorganized. Since the majority of respondents for both questions (50%) chose to neither agree nor disagree, it would appear the most common perception is one of neutrality. As one officer later clarified, “When answering about the BLM protests, I have worked multiple. Some were organized and peaceful, another was disorganized and violent. I picked neutral because both protests were polar opposites.”

Table 13: BLM Event Participants

Total N = 6	Frequency	Percentage
“Many of the people participating in Black Lives Matter protests/rallies behave in a manner that is very antagonistic towards police.”		
Agree	3	50.0%
Neither agree nor disagree	3	50.0%
Total	6	100.0%

“Many of the people participating in Black Lives Matter protests/rallies are compliant when dealing with the police.”

Agree	3	50.0%
Neither agree nor disagree	3	50.0%
Total	6	100.0%

Half (50.0%) of the respondents “agreed” that many of those in attendance at a BLM event/protest behave in a manner that is very antagonistic towards the police, while the other 50.0% elected to neither agree nor disagree with the statement. However, 50.0% of the sample also “agreed” that those in attendance at a BLM event/protest are compliant when dealing with

the police. For both questions, the remaining 50.0% of the sample chose to “neither agree nor disagree” with the statements (Table 13). Officer’s responses to an open-ended question that asked those who had worked a BLM event/protest to relay any negative experiences that they had had can supplement these findings. One officer said, “I can recall one student walking past me on the sidewalk and completely unprovoked yelled at me ‘Black lives matter!’ When I replied ‘yes they do,’ he asked me what I said and I told him ‘yes, Black lives do matter,” he proceeded to tell me ‘Fuck you!’.” Another officer stated that “During the event, I was called a racist cop by several individuals going to and leaving the event. It should be noted that all those individuals were white.” Finally, another officer stated that “I was screamed at and called names even though I agree there is no place in this society for police brutality or racism. I was there to keep the peace on both sides. Assumptions were made about my beliefs based on my occupation and the color of my skin.”

Officer Experiences

Table 14: Officer Experiences

Total N = 6	Frequency	Percentage
“Since May 2020, how many times have you been thanked by someone for your work as a law enforcement officer?”		
1-2 times	1	16.7%
3-4 times	1	16.7%
5+ times	4	66.7%
Total	6	100.0%

“Since May 2020, how many times have you been verbally abused while working as a law enforcement officer? (e.g., insulted, belittled, etc.)”

Never since May, 2020	1	16.7%
1-2 times	3	50.0%
5+ times	2	33.3%
Total	6	100.0%

“If you were not already a police officer, and you were deciding whether or not to join this field and go to the police academy, would you make the same decision now (in 2021)?”

Yes	1	16.7%
No	3	50.0%
Maybe/Unsure	2	33.3%
Total	6	100.0%

Table 14 gives us an idea of the day-to-day experience of the respondents. The majority (66.7%) of respondents indicated that they have been thanked for their work as a police officer five or more times since May, 2020. However, 50.0% of respondents also indicated that they had been verbally abused (i.e. insulted, belittled, etc.) 1-2 times while on the job since May, 2020.

Table 14 also shows that half of the respondents indicated that, if they were not already employed in the field of law enforcement, they would not choose to join the police academy in 2021, while the remaining officers said either “yes” (16.7%) or “maybe/unsure” (33.3%). Since the majority (83.3%) said either “no” or “maybe/unsure,” there appears to be evidence of low officer-morale among the WMUPS officers surveyed.

Officer Explanations

Five of the six officers included in this sample provided an explanation as to why they had answered either “no,” or “maybe/unsure” in response to question 21 of the survey. Only one officer had affirmed that, if they were not already employed in the field of law enforcement, they would make the same decision to attend the police academy, now (in 2021). However, this officer did not provide any explanation as to why they had chosen this response.

Of the five officers who did provide some kind of explanation, three had said that they would not make the same decision, while two had indicated that they were “unsure.” After analyzing their responses, four common themes were identified: (1) a diminished perception of organizational justice among WMUPS officers, (2) allusions to the deaths of fellow officers, (3) assertions that being a police officer entails “being part of the worst day of a person's life,” and (4) a belief that police officers are not adequately compensated for the work they do.

Diminished perceptions of organizational justice:

All three of the officers who responded “no” made some allusion to a perceived lack of organizational justice within the field of policing. For the purposes of this discussion, organizational justice refers to officer perceptions of fairness within their field. Officer 1 stated that, “Politicians create too many laws and then demand that police enforce them with little or no discretion.” Officer 3 said, “Officers who are legally justified in their actions are still being condemned and lose their jobs due to lack of support,” and Officer 4 summarized his explanation by saying, “If you think you can do better, put on a badge and you tell me if the risk are worth the rewards.”

Alluding to officers killed in the line-of-duty:

Two out of the three officers who responded “no” made some allusion to violence that has been inflicted on officers and officers who have been killed while carrying out

the duties associated with their job. “I know three officers who have been killed in the line of duty since 2012,” said Officer 3, “and have seen an increase in violence against officers since the protests began by citizens... [Officers] have to go into hiding due to the increased violence and vigilantes.” Officer 4 said, “Too many in law enforcement are dying to protect a country they love, for too many people that want to criticize their actions when they've never walked in our shoes.”

“The worst day of a person's life,”:

Two of the five officers who provided an explanation used the phrase “the worst day of a person’s life,” when describing what being a police officer entails. One of the officers who used this phrase indicated that they would not choose to be a police officer now (in 2021), while the other officer who used the phrase said “maybe/unsure.” While both officers used similar words, the context in which they used these words was very different. The officer who had indicated that they would not choose to be a police officer in 2021 (Officer 3) said, “The majority of being a police officer is being part of the worst day of a person's life back to back, your entire shift and career. It is draining emotionally and physically.” On the other hand, the officer who had responded “maybe/unsure” to question 21 (Officer 2) said, “I still love having the ability to help people who are often having the worst day of their lives,” when describing what being a police officer entails.

Inadequate compensation:

Officers 2 and 3 also both made some reference to the low pay that the police receive. Officer 3 had indicated that they would not choose to be a police officer in 2021 and in their explanation said, “The pay and schedule sucks for the most part. Sure these are things I was prepared for when I signed up, however the current climate has increased

the stress.” Officer 2, who had indicated that they were unsure whether they would still choose to be a police officer in 2021, said, “Looking back, I would probably still become a police officer even though there is less stress and more money in other occupations. I will admit I try not to glamorize the job as I would prefer my children choose another line of work so they are not subjected to the ups and downs this profession has provided me.”

Discussion

To date, the vast majority of the research literature concerning increasing tensions and polarization between the police and minorities has focused on exploring the impact that this has had on the perceptions and experiences of citizens. Precious little research has been conducted in an effort to explore the impact that, the Black Lives Matter movement, and unfavorable media coverage has had on the perceptions and behaviors of officers while in the line of duty, and even less research still has focused on exploring how these facets have impacted the experiences and perceptions of campus police officers. Campus police officers occupy a unique position in the current climate of police-minority relations given that campus police engage regularly with a population that has been at the forefront of BLM protests and activism. Understanding the perceptions of campus police officers could be instrumental in addressing many of the underlying stressors and tensions between police and minorities given that campus police departments tend to be more successful at implementing community policing programs that foster and enhance police-community relations than traditional police departments (Willson & Willson, 2011). By surveying the Western Michigan University Public Safety police department, this study attempted to address this gap in the research literature in order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the experiences and perceptions of campus police officers.

Furthermore, while an academic consensus has been reached that there is no true Ferguson Effect, such that rising homicide rates can be attributed to the social upheaval America has been witnessing since August of 2014, there appears to be sufficient evidence to suggest that officers do believe there to be a Ferguson Effect, and that this does impact officers' perceptions of the level of hostility held for them by citizens according to the research literature. While several studies have reached this conclusion, their samples were composed of law enforcement officers employed in municipal police departments, and again there is a gap in the research literature concerning both the existence of a perceptual belief in the Ferguson Effect, and the consequences of this belief within campus police departments. There has also been a considerable deficiency in the amount of inquiry into the perceptions of officers related to the Black Lives Matter movement as an unintended consequence of the Ferguson Effect (Fields, 2019).

This research was conducted in an effort to enhance public understanding of the perceptions and experiences of campus police officers, and to explore the impact that the Ferguson Effect has had on campus police officers' perceptions of the Black Lives Matter movement. To that end, the guiding question of this study was: how have the perceptions held by officers' regarding the Black Lives Matter movement been affected as an unintended consequence of the Ferguson Effect?

To answer this fundamental query, four sub-research questions were developed that dealt specifically with public perceptions of police officers, officer support for the BLM movement, officers' experiences at Black Lives Matter events, and the effect of officer's fears of public/media scrutiny on their law enforcement-related behaviors. Guided by these research questions, a 22-question anonymous, web-based survey was developed and administered to the

Western Michigan University Public Safety (WMUPS) police department. The survey was sent out by an administrative contact within the department on my behalf via the officers' work emails. The emails were sent to all 30 sworn officers currently employed by WMUPS, and in total six surveys were completed giving us a response rate of 20%.

Research Question 1: Public Perceptions of Police

The Ferguson Effect suggests that increased negative media attention and public hostility towards police have resulted in less-proactive policing strategies and rising crime rates. As such, the first critical area of exploration for this study was to understand how WMUPS officers would rate the public's perception of police, both on-campus and across the country as a whole. I had hypothesized that WMUPS officers would rate public perception of police officers as being fairly poor, both on campus and across the United States. The data obtained from the survey indicated that officers perceive the WMU campus community as having a fairly positive perception of law enforcement, however they tended to rate national public perceptions of police as being fairly poor. As public perceptions related to the Black Lives Matter movement, the majority of officers surveyed indicated that they believe the movement has caused increased levels of resentment, hostility, and dislike for police officers among the general public, thus lending support to the latter portion of hypothesis one, but not the former.

The fact that WMUPS officers rated national perceptions of police officers as being fairly poor overall, and that the majority also perceived this to be due, in part, to the Black Lives Matter movement is concerning for a number of reasons. Research has found that officers who perceive there to be a high degree of public hostility are also more likely to report a higher degree of social isolation, police solidarity, cynicism towards the public, and support for the use of physically coercive tactics. These issues may lead to a lack of transparency and officer

accountability in instances where force is used inappropriately or in excess. This, in turn, increases feelings of mistrust for the police within minority communities and drives the wedge between them ever deeper, making future reconciliation or cooperation improbable, if not impossible (Marier & Moule, 2018).

Research has also found that officers who perceive a high degree of public hostility towards the police are also more likely to harbor feelings of mistrust for the public that they have sworn to protect. This is extremely concerning, given that officers who enter into an interaction with suspicion are more likely to support and utilize force, creating ever more opportunities for deadly police-minority encounters (Marier & Moule, 2018).

The inappropriate or excessive use of force by police officers is more likely to occur when there is a difference in race between the two parties. With nearly all of the WMUPS officers identifying as White/Caucasian (one value missing), and 31.4% of WMU's undergraduate student body being composed of minority individuals, the fact that this study found that WMUPS officers perceived national public perceptions as being fairly poor is extremely significant (WMU, 2021). These results may have implications for police-minority interactions on campus as the racial disparity could increase the likelihood that officers will engage in police solidarity, be distrustful of the public that they are serving, and that they will use physically coercive tactics in the line of duty.

Research Question 2: Officer Support for BLM

This study attempted to assess the Ferguson Effect's impact on officer perceptions of the Black Lives Matter movement. I hypothesized that support for the BLM movement would be relatively low among WMUPS officers than it is among the general public, but higher relative to other more urban police departments that are not affiliated with a college. Overwhelmingly,

respondents chose “neutral” when rating their level of support for the movement, lending support to the second hypothesis of this study. The lack of affirmative support for the BLM movement could be due to the fact that the officers surveyed also tended to believe that the movement had made their job in law enforcement more difficult. However, the officers surveyed also seemed to have an understanding of the goals and ambitions of Black Lives Matter with 83.3% of respondents agreeing that the phrase has brought national attention to the idea that the lives of Black people have been routinely and systematically undervalued in the United States. This is an important finding because it makes it more likely that trust and cooperation can be facilitated between WMUPS officers and the BLM movement.

Research Question 3: Policing BLM Events

This study also attempted to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the experiences of WMUPS officers at BLM events/protests that have taken place on WMU’s campus and in the surrounding city of Kalamazoo in the past twelve months. I hypothesized that the experiences of WMUPS officers would not have been particularly negative given that the BLM protests and rallies that have taken place in Kalamazoo in the past year have, for the most part, been non-violent. The results of the study do not seem to lend support to my hypothesis. Half of the sample indicated that they had been directly involved in policing the BLM protests that took place on campus and in the surrounding city of Kalamazoo in 2020. Their duties included roving security, peacekeeper, and functioning as a standby response unit for the National Guard. Of those who had direct involvement policing the protests, 100.0% indicated that their experience(s) had been negative. Regarding the organization of these events, the conclusion of this study is that WMUPS officers have adopted a position of neutrality. As one officer went on to clarify, they had chosen to “neither agree nor disagree” because they had been involved in policing multiple

BLM events, with some being organized and peaceful, and others being very disorganized and violent. Officers responses to an open-ended question that asked those who had worked a BLM event/protest to relay any negative experience(s) that they had had were presented in the results section and can be used to support this study's conclusion that the experiences of WMUPS officers at BLM events/protests had been very negative.

WMUPS officers reporting that their experience(s) policing BLM events/protests have been negative is important because of the impact that these experiences can have on officer's perceptions of the movement more generally. If officers perceive these events to be disorganized and composed of antagonistic and violent individuals, then they are more likely to enter into the interaction with cynicism and fear, thus increasing the likelihood of there being a violent/deadly encounter. The fact that these events are predominantly organized by and composed of minorities also adds to the likelihood of there being a violent police encounter, particularly given that policing is overwhelmingly dominated by White men. The racial disparity that is present in the majority of the United States between police departments and the communities they serve has played a role in the thousands of deadly police-minority encounters that have already taken place, and so it is important that more be done to understand the perceptions and experiences of police officers who are charged with working these events.

Research Question 4: The Ferguson Effect

With the fundamental query of this study being how the perceptions held by officers' regarding the Black Lives Matter movement have been affected as an unintended consequence of the Ferguson Effect, it was necessary to understand the extent to which officers' behavior in the line of duty had been affected as a result of their fears of public/media scrutiny. The hypothesis

of this study was that WMUPS officers would report that their behaviors had been moderately affected by these fears, and the findings lend support to this hypothesis.

Two of the survey questions attempted to gauge the extent to which WMUPS officers' behavior in the line of duty has been affected as a result of their fears regarding public/media scrutiny. The first asked WMUPS officers to indicate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed that the BLM movement and ensuing polarization has made them more fearful when they are dealing with people of color in their capacity as a law enforcement officer. While the majority of the sample did not, one officer did agree and another chose to neither agree nor disagree, indicating that some officers employed with WMUPS do seem to subscribe to a perceptual belief in the Ferguson Effect. This finding is similar to the findings of another study conducted in 2016 by Scott Wolfe and Justin Nix, where it was concluded that many officers felt a reluctance to perform their duties and that citizens' perceptions of the police had become increasingly negative as a result of the negative media attention surrounding the events in Ferguson in 2014.

The second question asked WMUPS officers to reflect on their experiences in the field in the past year since the BLM movement has gained increasing momentum (May, 2020 - present day). Officers were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed that they have found themselves in situations where they felt pressure to not make an arrest or take official action when dealing with a person of color out of fear of public scrutiny or media attention. While once again, the majority (50%) of the sample disagreed with this sentiment, two of the officers surveyed (33.3%) "strongly agreed" that they had felt disincentivized to take official action out of fear of public/media scrutiny. When comparing the responses of these two officers, two similarities stood out as being particularly salient to this discussion. First, both of these

officers indicated that they had personally been involved in policing a BLM event/protest in 2020, and as was mentioned earlier, all of the officers who had personally been involved in policing the protests had indicated that their experience(s) had been negative. Second, and even more interesting, these were also the only two officers included in the sample who had indicated that they had been verbally abused (e.g., insulted, belittled, etc.) in the line of duty on five or more occasions since May, 2020.

This study has added to the body of research that confirms the existence of a perceptual belief in the Ferguson Effect, as such a belief was found to exist among some of the WMUPS officers surveyed. This study has also concluded that the behaviors of some WMUPS officers have been affected as a result of their subscription to this belief. This finding is particularly significant as it contradicts the findings of other studies that have been conducted to ascertain the existence and impact of a perceptual belief in the Ferguson Effect among officers. These studies have concluded that, while the majority of officers acknowledge that the Ferguson Effect has impacted their perceptions, they were not willing to concede that it had impacted their behaviors (Fields, 2019). With 33.3% of the sample indicating that they “strongly agreed” that they had felt disincentivized to take official action out of fear of the public/media scrutiny that could result, this study has confirmed that a perceptual belief in the Ferguson Effect does indeed have an effect on the behaviors of some WMUPS officers while in the line of duty.

Campus police departments, given their proximity to college aged students and those who may be BLM activists, and their success at implementing community-policing programs, provide a unique opportunity for researchers to explore the impact that the BLM movement and associated protests are having on the field of policing. Yet police officers, especially those employed by campus departments, remain understudied. Greater efforts need to be made to

enhance our understanding of police perceptions and experiences as they relate to the Ferguson Effect and the Black Lives Matter movement, particularly on college campuses. While there does appear to be a perceptual belief in the Ferguson Effect among some of the WMUPS officers surveyed, research (e.g., Wolfe & Nix, 2016) has shown that the effects of negative police publicity resulting in reduced officer motivations can be counteracted in departments where there is a high degree of organizational justice and where supervisors are perceived to be fair (Wolfe & Nix, 2016).

Limitations

The findings of this study must be seen in light of certain limitations. The first is the relatively small sample size and low response rate that this study received. The WMU Public Safety police department currently employs 30 sworn officers including 19 police officers, two detectives, four patrol supervisors, four administrators, and three commanding officers. An anonymous, web-based survey was sent by an administrative contact within the department, and in total six surveys were completed and returned for analysis, giving this study a response rate of 20%. With such a low response rate, and given the voluntary nature of participation in this study, it is difficult to generalize the findings to the entire Public Safety police department, much less police departments across the United States.

The decision to utilize a web-based survey to obtain the data for this study, while perhaps not the best way to obtain this kind of information, was made for two primary reasons: (1) due to the controversial nature of some of the questions posed, and in an effort to ameliorate the effects of a social desirability bias when officers were answering these more serious questions, the anonymity provided by an online survey was seen as desirable; and (2) the COVID-19 pandemic, associated concerns with social distancing and limiting unnecessary personal contact, and the

lack of predictability in terms of the health of the researchers, and the participants made a web-based survey seem like the most practical approach to collecting data for this research.

Utilizing a web-based survey, as opposed to in-depth interviews with WMUPS officers or other research methods, presented several issues that limit the generalizability of these research findings. First, participation was completely voluntary and it is worth mentioning that the 20% of officers who chose to participate in this study may differ in some critical manner from the 80% of WMUPS officers who chose not to participate. Furthermore, during the study some concerns were expressed by officers that, due to the small size of the department, their demographic information could be used to identify them and their responses. While this was addressed in the informed consent agreement presented at the beginning of the survey, this fact likely also had an impact on this study's response rate. Finally, 83.3% of the sample identified as White/Caucasian (with one value missing), meaning that the perceptions of minority officers in regards to the Black Lives Matter movement were not captured by this study. The fact that 67% of WMU's campus also identifies as White/Caucasian could also be seen as a limitation of this study, as this demographic tends to be more supportive of police officers. Perceptions of police officers would likely be very different at a historically Black or more diverse college or university.

The second limitation of this study concerns conflicts that arose from the researcher's personal biases. The survey was sent out to the department on February 22nd, 2021, and all six of the completed responses were filled out on the same day. The survey was supposed to be available to officers for two weeks from the date that it was sent out, but it was closed early due to a lapse in participation that was observed. The lack of interaction that the survey received following February 22nd was due to a Facebook post that I shared in December, 2020. The post was seen by officers employed within the campus police department, and it caused many of them

to believe that I may harbor an anti-police bias and to question my intentions in conducting this research. This incident undoubtedly had an impact on the response rate of this study, and therefore warrants acknowledgment here.

The post in question was a screenshot from Twitter that featured a news article from instyle.com entitled, “One Police Officer’s Riot Gear Could’ve Bought PPE for 31 Nurses.” Above the article was the caption, “do not ever f*cking forget that nurses died working in COVID ICUs wearing trash bags over their clothes while cops dressed like video game characters beat the s*it out of people who dared ask that they not be murdered in their beds.” While my intention in sharing this post on Facebook had not been to criticize police officers, but rather the administration that prioritizes funding federal programs that militarize our country’s civil servants over protecting medical professionals during a global pandemic, the officers employed by WMUPS who saw this post assumed it was evidence of my harboring an anti-police bias and this impacted their willingness to participate in this research. This incident, while disappointing, and undoubtedly having had a tremendous impact on the findings of this study, has represented one of the biggest and most valuable learning experiences of this process for myself as a budding-researcher and professional. As I prepare to graduate and begin the process of applying for jobs, the hard lesson that has been learned here about the power of social media, and the impact that the things I post can have on other’s perception of me has been a difficult but incredibly necessary one to learn.

Conclusion

The fundamental goal of this study was to understand how the perceptions held by WMUPS officers’ regarding the Black Lives Matter movement have been affected as an unintended consequence of the Ferguson Effect. The results obtained from the survey that was

administered to the campus police department indicated that there does appear to be a perceptual belief in the Ferguson Effect among some WMUPS officers, and that their experiences at BLM events/protests appear to have created a negative perception of the movement, despite many officers understanding its goals. A perceptual belief in the Ferguson Effect would lend support to the fact that WMUPS officers perceive there to be a high degree of public hostility among the WMU campus and Kalamazoo communities. Results from this study indicate that while WMUPS officers tended to rate public perceptions of police officers among the WMU campus community as being good overall, they rated national public perceptions of police as being fairly poor.

As far as WMUPS officer's perceptions and experiences regarding the BLM movement and associated events/protests that have taken place in Kalamazoo in the preceding year, the majority of WMUPS officers indicated that they believed that the movement is, at least in part, at fault for the rising levels of public hostility that have been targeted at police. WMUPS officers also tended to believe that BLM had made their job more difficult, with the majority of officers included in this study choosing "neutral" when rating their level of support for the movement. Half of the officers surveyed reported that they had personally been involved in policing a BLM event/protest that took place in Kalamazoo in 2020, and all of these officers also indicated that their experiences had been negative. However, the majority of WMUPS officers surveyed also agreed that the movement has brought attention to long-standing problems between the police and minority communities, as well as to racial disparities within our criminal justice system more generally. This finding could reflect the fact that all of the officers surveyed had attained some level of higher-education.

The experiences and perceptions of police officers in the field is a topic that remains understudied. Even more woefully underrepresented in the research literature are the perceptions and experiences of officers employed by campus police departments. This is unfortunate given that deepening our understanding of the experiences of officers employed by these departments could prove to be instrumental in addressing many of the underlying stressors and tensions between police officers and minorities across America. Studies have found that campus police departments tend to be more successful at implementing community policing programs that tend to foster and enhance police-community relations more so than traditional police departments (Willson & Willson, 2011).

This has the potential to aid in enhancing perceptions of police legitimacy, and police officers in general, among the public. While the present study has attempted to add to this gap in the research literature by surveying a local university police department, the small sample size makes its findings difficult to generalize to the entire department, much less campus police departments across the nation. I would recommend that more studies be conducted in the future that focus specifically on the experiences and perceptions of campus police departments as they relate to the BLM movement. To add to the existing body of knowledge, and to generate findings that are more generalizable, I would recommend that future researchers endeavor to administer similar surveys to campus police departments across the state of Michigan, or the United States as a whole in order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of their unique experiences.

Given the increasing tensions and polarizations between police and minority communities in the United States today, the experiences and perceptions of officers as they relate to this matter can be an incredibly sensitive topic for them to discuss. Police departments are notorious for being fairly closed environments when it comes to research, and with a plethora of studies

demonstrating that officers are perceiving a higher degree of public hostility towards them, this is likely more true now than ever. Bearing in mind the current social and political climate of the United States, I would recommend that researchers who are studying controversial or politically charged topics err on the side of caution when it comes to voicing their opinions publicly or on social media. You never know the way that the things you post are going to be perceived by others, and even the most well-intended post can have a detrimental effect on both the officer's individual responses (e.g., social desirability bias) and the overall response rate obtained for the study.

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Appendix

Informed Consent Agreement:

Western Michigan
University Department of
Sociology

Principal Investigator: Dr. Charles Crawford

Student Investigator for thesis: Eadoin Grim

Title of Study: Police Perceptions Amid the Black Lives Matter Movement

You are invited to participate in this research project titled "*Police Perceptions Amid the Black Lives Matter Movement*"

STUDY SUMMARY: This consent form is part of an informed consent process for a research study and it will provide information that will help you decide whether you want to take part in this study. Participation in this study is completely voluntary. The purpose of the research is to: determine the level of impact that the Black Lives Matter movement, and the ensuing polarization between minorities and the police has had on the profession of police work as a whole, and how patrol officers currently working in the field perceive themselves and will serve as Eadoin Grim's honors thesis for the requirements of the bachelor's degree. If you take part in the research, you will be asked to complete a 24-question survey composed of both open and closed-ended questions and Likert-scales. The survey will be administered via the internet and on the website Qualtrics because of the COVID-19 pandemic and associated concerns about social distancing and unnecessary personal contact. Your time in the study will take approximately 20 minutes to complete the survey. Possible risk and costs to you for taking part in the study may be mild psychological discomfort from answering sensitive questions, and the time it will take you to complete the survey. As a research participant, you will not likely receive any direct benefits from participating in this study. Your alternative to taking part in the research study is not to take part in it.

The following information in this consent form will provide more detail about the research study. Please ask any questions if you need more clarification and to assist you in deciding if you wish to participate in the research study. You are not giving up any of your legal rights by agreeing to take part in this research or by signing this consent form. After all of your questions have been answered and the consent document reviewed, if you decide to participate in this study, you will indicate your consent to participate by selecting the box corresponding with “Yes, I have read this informed consent document, and I agree to take part in this study.” If you do not wish to participate, indicate this by selecting the box that corresponds with “No, I have read this informed consent document, and I do NOT agree nor wish to take part in this study.”

What are we trying to find out in this study?

The purpose of this research is to determine the level of impact that the Black Lives Matter movement, and the ensuing polarization between minorities and the police has had on the profession of police work as a whole, and how patrol officers currently working in the field perceive themselves. The B.L.M. movement and the associated protests and riots that have arisen in the seven years since its creation have had a tangible impact on the public’s perceptions of and relationship with police officers, as well as on departmental policies and training for officers. For example, on June 5th, 2020, just 11 days after George Floyd’s death at the hands of Officer Derek Chauvin, the city of Minneapolis banned the use of chokeholds. Other major cities, including Chicago, Denver, and Washington D.C. have followed suit. In addition, the increased media attention garnered by the protests has caused there to be greater pressure placed on the investigatory agencies and District Attorney offices of the communities where officers have been accused of killing minorities, and the result has been more officers being charged with crimes, and the level of the charges implemented being more severe. All of these tangible outcomes have already changed the profession of policing, and promise to bring about more change in the future. They also have the potential to affect the way officers perceive themselves, and so it has become important that we determine to what degree this movement and the polarization has affected police work.

Who can participate in this study?

In order to participate in this study, you must be a sworn officer of the WMU Public Safety police department.

Where will this study take place?

The anonymous survey will be administered via the internet and on the website Qualtrics because of the COVID-19 pandemic and associated concerns about social distancing and

unnecessary personal contact. Therefore, participants will be emailed a link to the survey with instructions on completing it and they will be free to take the survey whenever is convenient for them. Two to three weeks after distributing the survey we will send a reminder to those who have not yet filled out the survey, requesting that they please do so. We will be aiming to wrap the survey up by the three to four-week mark.

What is the time commitment for participating in this study?

The survey will take participants approximately 20 minutes to complete, and it only needs to be completed one time.

What will you be asked to do if you choose to participate in this study?

If you choose to participate in this study, you will be asked to complete a 24-question survey composed of both open and closed-ended questions and Likert-scales, and administered via the website Qualtrics.

What information is being measured during the study?

For this study we will be measuring officer's perceptions of their job, the BLM movement, and their associated experiences.

What are the risks of participating in this study and how will these risks be minimized?

The risks associated with participation in this study are relatively low. No physical or psychological pain, or harm will come upon you because of your taking part in this study. The only potential harm that I can foresee in some subjects is mild psychological discomfort at some of the more serious questions being asked. If, at any point during the study, you feel uncomfortable with the questions being asked and wish to stop then you are free to do so, and any questions that you have already answered will not be included in the study. You will not be penalized in any way for choosing not to complete the study.

What are the benefits of participating in this study?

As a research participant, you will be given an opportunity to express and share your thoughts, perceptions, and experiences with policing in the era of the BLM movement. Additionally, your participation will be allowing me to add information to this body of research.

Are there any costs associated with participating in this study?

The only cost to participants of this study will be the time it takes to complete the survey (approximately 20 minutes).

Is there any compensation for participating in this study?

As a research participant, you will not be compensated for participation in this study.

Who will have access to the information collected during this study?

All of the information collected from you is confidential. Only Ms. Grim, and Dr. Crawford will have access to the data.

What will happen to my information or biospecimens collected for this research project after the study is over?

The information collected about you for this research will not be used by or distributed to investigators for other research.

What if you want to stop participating in this study?

Participation in this study is voluntary, and you may choose to stop participating in the study at any time for any reason. You will not suffer any prejudice or penalty by your decision to stop your participation. You will experience NO consequences if you choose to withdraw from this study. The investigator can also decide to stop your participation in the study without your consent.

Should you have any questions prior to or during the study, you can contact Dr. Charles Crawford at (269) 387-5292 or charles.crawford@wmich.edu or the Eadoin Grim at (248) 820-8644 or eadoin.o.grim@wmich.edu. You may also contact the Chair, Institutional Review Board at 269-387-8293 or the Vice President for Research at 269-387-8298 if questions arise during the course of the study.

This consent document has been approved for use for one year by the Western Michigan University Institutional Review Board (WMU IRB) as indicated by the stamped date and

signature of the board chair in the upper right corner. Do not participate in this study if the stamped date is older than one year.

I have read this informed consent document. The risks and benefits have been explained to me.

- Yes, I have read this informed consent document, and I agree to take part in this study.
- No, I have read this informed consent document, and I do NOT agree nor wish to take part in this study.