

12-2018

# Officer Use of Force: A Multicase Study of Institutional Betrayal

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OFFICER EXCESSIVE FORCE: A MULTICASE STUDY  
OF INSTITUTIONAL BETRAYAL

by

MARGARITA ELENA MCAULIFFE

A DISSERTATION

Presented to the Faculty of the University of the Incarnate Word  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

UNIVERSITY OF THE INCARNATE WORD

December 2018

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank my committee chair, Dr. Doshie Piper, for her calm confidence and guidance, for sharing her in-depth knowledge of the criminal justice system with me, and for her friendship. I thank Dr. Sharon Herbers for her constant encouragement and insightful questions and suggestions. Thank you to Dr. Alfred Ortiz for pushing me to think outside the box and to reach beyond my comfort zone. A special thank you to Dr. Audra Skukauskaite for not asking only What?, So What?, and Now What?, but also Why Not? I would also like to acknowledge the university library staff, who provide so much assistance and information to so many people, to Duncan Hayse whose knowledge and patience are awe inspiring.

I want to acknowledge Dr. Evgenia Prilipko and Gloria Almeyda for their friendship and support, as well as my former colleague and longtime friend Michele Stockdale, who has walked every step of this long, sometimes challenging journey with me. I thank my Quaker Friend Carol Balliet for being a fearless companion in the exploration of the world of criminal justice and my brother Tom McAuliffe for showing genuine interest in my work. To my sister Dr. Cathy McAuliffe and my dear friend Dr. Martha Trevino, thank you for serving as both motivation and role models. And to my son, Sean McAuliffe, thank you for your steadfast belief in me.

Finally, I want to acknowledge every person who participated in this study. Reliving such experiences took courage, strength, commitment, and faith that it would make a difference, not for yourselves, but for others. I am humbled by the trust you placed in me, and will continue to work to make your voices heard.

Margarita McAuliffe

## DEDICATION

With deep gratitude I dedicate this work to my son, through and from whom I have learned so much, and who regularly encouraged me with his question, “When am I going to be able to call you Dr. Mom?” It is also dedicated to this study’s participants, their families and friends, and to all the victims of officer use of force, those who survived their encounters and those who did not. And finally, to my late parents, Margaret Quigley McAuliffe and John McAuliffe, who passed their love of reading on to me and who taught me the value of education.

## OFFICER EXCESSIVE FORCE: A MULTICASE STUDY OF INSTITUTIONAL BETRAYAL

Margarita E. McAuliffe

University of the Incarnate Word, 2018

Law enforcement officers in the United States are authorized to utilize force (Alpert & MacDonald, 2001); however, the use of force can cause physical and emotional trauma to the person against whom it is used, and to the person's loved ones (APA, 2013; Bloom, 2012; WHO, 2002). The needs and rights of traumatized individuals must be addressed for healing to occur (U.S. DOJ, 2013). It was not known if the needs of the survivors of officer use of force were being met. Filling a gap in the literature, this exploratory multicase study investigated 5 use-of-force incidents with demographically diverse participants that occurred between 2009 and 2014 in a county in Texas. The primary purpose was to explore the perspectives of individuals and perspectives of loved ones of individuals who had experienced officer use of force by inquiring about the impacts their experiences had had on them. In-person interviews, expert interviews, and document and archival materials were data sources. The aim was to understand and document what the participants experienced, where they sought relief, what challenges they faced, and the meaning they ascribed to their experiences. Two findings were that the incidents had long-lasting emotional and psychological impacts on participants. A third finding was that the experiences negatively impacted participant attitudes toward and confidence in law enforcement, and for some, in the legal system and social institutions in general. Participant responses made clear that the behavior of officers, their agencies, and the legal system

constituted institutional betrayal. The fourth finding was that unlike other groups who experience violence (crime victims, domestic violence victims, child abuse victims, and law enforcement officers) the victims of officer excessive force are unidentified and unacknowledged as trauma victims and do not qualify for any governmentally legislated or agency-recommended services or support.

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## Chapter 1: The Use of Force and Trauma

### Background of the Problem

Officer use of force is a daily occurrence in the United States (Kirschner, 1997). With the now pervasive use of cell phones for video recording, reports documenting officer use of force, including deadly shootings, appear regularly on the internet, in magazines, and in newspapers. Some of those reports document what some citizens perceive to be excessive force, but even before the widespread use of cell-phone technology, the once firmly held belief that officer use of excessive force was the exception to the rule had been changing (Miller, 2004). One of the factors that contributed to this shift in perception was the increasing number of news stories concerning officers involved in abuse and corruption (Miller, 2004).

Contributing to this increased awareness has been the work of numerous grassroots groups whose efforts have been aimed at shining a light on and demanding an end to officer use of excessive force since the end of the 20th century. These groups include Police the Police, Cop Watch, Cop Block, the Peaceful Streets Project, Mothers Against Police Brutality, Campaign Zero, and Police Reform Organizing Project, to name a few. These groups' social media posts and articles document instances of officer use of force, adding to the information provided in stories published by media outlets. Criminal justice professor and expert on police militarization, Dr. Peter Kraska (2007), found that officer use of force increased notably in the last 2 decades of the 20th century. In paramilitary SWAT team raids alone, he claims that between 1980 and 2000 the use of force increased by more than 1,400%. Even the Congressional Quarterly has addressed the fact that the number of documented police killings is on the rise (Jost, 2012).

In 2011, 63 million, or 26%, of the U.S. public aged 16 or older had had at least one contact with police (no other law enforcement personnel are included) during the previous 12

months (Langton & Durose, 2013). They reported that about half (49%) of those contacts were initiated by police and were involuntary; the other contacts were the result of requests for assistance. Langton and Durose (2013) found that among pedestrians involved in street stops, 25% thought that the police had acted improperly. Ten percent of drivers stopped in traffic held the same view.

Data relating to fatalities and injuries resulting from officer use of force are incomplete and underreported because neither law enforcement agencies nor hospitals are required to submit that data to any entity for compilation (Richardson, Vil, & Cooper, 2016). The information that is compiled is submitted by the agencies that voluntarily choose to do so. Based on the incomplete data available through the Bureau of Justice (BOJ) Statistics, Langton and Durose (2013) determined that officers threaten or use physical force in 1% to 2% of their public contacts not identified as arrests. Weapons, weaponless tactics, restraints, and motion are four elements of the physical force available to police (Garner & Maxwell, 1999). The 1% to 2% of people not arrested against whom police used one of these types of force in 2011 represent from 630,000 to nearly 1.3 million of the 63 million people estimated by Langton and Durose (2013) to have contact with police in a year.

Officer use of force increases to 15% to 20% when an arrest is made (Smith et al., 2010). According to the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), nearly 12.2 million people were arrested in 2012 (FBI, 2012). If force was used in 15% to 20% of those arrests, as estimated by Smith et al. (2010), then anywhere from over 1.8 million to 2.4 million arrested individuals experienced officer use of force during that period of time.

An earlier BOJ Report indicates that 707,520 of the 43.5 million people reported to have had personal contact with police in 2005 had force used against them (Durose, Smith, & Langan,



2005). Nearly 15% of them, approximately 106,000 people, were injured. Three years later, 18.9% of persons who experienced officer use of force, 146,664 people, were injured during their encounter, despite the fact that there were 3.5 million fewer reported contacts with police (Eth & Durose, 2008). Similar statistics concerning injuries are not available in the BOJ Statistics' most recent report on the subject (Langton & Durose, 2013).

To be sure, officers are also injured and killed during some of their encounters with the public. Part of their job is to pursue criminals and they can be exposed to danger (Malmin, 2012) In 2015, roughly 50,000 sheriff and police patrol officers, 8% of the nation's nearly 653,740 captured in the Bureau of Labor Statistics Occupation Profiles (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2015), were assaulted in the line of duty. Of these, approximately 29%, or 14,260 officers, suffered injuries (FBI, 2015). Another .06 % of the population studied, or 41 officers, died as a result of criminal acts. "Over the last ten years, an annual average of 51 officers were feloniously killed in the line of duty according to data collected by the FBI. In the same time period, an average of 57,000 officers were assaulted every year (with approximately 25% of those assaults resulting in physical injuries). But for all of its risks, policing is safer now than it has ever been. Violent attacks on officers, particularly those that involve a serious physical threat, are few and far between considering the fact that police officers interact with civilians about 63 million times every year. In percentage terms, officers were assaulted in about 0.09% of all interactions, were injured in some way in 0.02% of interactions, and were feloniously killed in 0.00008% of all interactions (Stoughton, 2014).

Police abuse is longstanding (Hoffman, 1992; Westley, 1953), and according to Human Rights Watch (1998) it is one of the most serious human rights violations in the United States. Levenson (2001) identifies it as one of the nation's major challenges. To address this challenge,

governments have ordered a number of studies and the formation of several investigative commissions and a task force over the last 5 decades beginning with the 1965 President's Commission on Law Enforcement and the Administration of Justice (President's Commission, 1967). These short-term work groups strove to identify problems, their sources and extent, and then published reports of their findings with recommendations for reforms. Upon completion of their assignments, the groups were dissolved.

An example of one of those work groups is The Knapp Commission, which New York Mayor John Lindsay created in 1970. Johnson (2006) explained how the exposure of corruption by Patrolman Frank Serpico and Sergeant David Dur in the New York Police Department in the late 1960s preceded the formation of that Commission. Similarly, Martin (2005) discussed Los Angeles Mayor Tom Bradley's same response to his city's police officers' nationally televised beating of Rodney King in 1991. The work group that was formed in response to that incident became known as the Christopher Commission.

Despite these and other commissions' recommendations for reform (Levenson, 2001), police misconduct and the use of excessive force persist. Since 1994 the Department of Justice (DOJ) has conducted 69 investigations into law enforcement department civil rights violations (DOJ, 2017). Those investigations resulted in 40 total reform agreements, 20 of which were court-ordered consent decrees, and 20 of which were memoranda of agreement or settlement agreements between the local jurisdictions and the federal government. Twenty-five of those agreements involved a pattern and practice of use of excessive force (DOJ, 2017) at law enforcement agencies across the country from Albuquerque, New Mexico, to Cleveland, Ohio; from Seattle, Washington, to Miami, Florida; and from Newark, New Jersey, to Los Angeles, California.

FBI Director Comey alluded to the problem of police brutality in a speech he delivered at Georgetown University in 2015 (FBI, 2015). In that same year, President Barak Obama determined that it was necessary to establish the Task Force on 21st Century Policing. This was in response to events that sparked public outrage, such as the officer-involved shooting of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri, and the choking death of Eric Garner while being arrested by police officers in New York City (President's Task Force, 2015). The task force identified best practices and suggested the implementation of several that would achieve the goal of crime reduction while at the same time building public trust in law enforcement officers.

It is too early to tell what effect, if any, the President's Task Force will have on officer use of force. Despite a century of recommended and sometimes implemented reforms, officers have continued to subject citizens in the United States to excessive and too often unnecessary use of force. The voices of family members whose loved ones have been beaten and/or killed continue to be heard through the years. Iberia Hampton was a mother who mourned the death of her son killed by law enforcement officers in 1969. Her son was 21-year-old Black Panther leader Fred Hampton. She supported a lawsuit against law enforcement because she wanted people to see her son as the community organizer, talented orator, and future attorney she knew him to be (Haas). In the end though, she concluded, "They (the Chicago Police Department and the FBI) got away with murder" (Haas, 2009, p. 129).

In 2006, 15 years after Rodney King was beaten by four Los Angeles police officers, the Chicago Tribune published Creamer's (2006) article titled "Rodney King's Sister Comes out of Shadow." Concerning her reaction to stories of police brutality that have appeared in the news since the incident with her brother, Ratasha King is quoted as saying, "It brings up emotions every time."

The article also quotes Rodney's mother, Odessa King. "It was devastating.... There aren't words to express what I felt. It still brings up hurt when we talk about it. It felt like a spear went through me when all that happened. Any mother would feel that pain."

Frank Graham's son, 18-year-old Ramarley Graham, was killed by New York police who entered without a warrant into the apartment where he was with his grandmother. In 2012 Graham made the following statement: "Losing a child is the worst possible thing any(one) can go through. You don't sleep at night and you wonder during the day.... You cry yourself to sleep when you do get sleep and you wake up with tears" (Mathias, 2016).

Many of these incidents have been documented. The commissions' and work groups' recommendations have been documented. Both the excesses and the recommendations have been addressed in the research literature. However, the perspectives of individuals who have experienced officer use of force, their subsequent needs, and the help they have received to deal with the impacts of state-sanctioned use of force have rarely been addressed there.

### **Definitions of Terms**

**Case.** "A case" is an officer-citizen encounter in which force was used.

**Citizen.** The term "citizen" is used to refer to residents or inhabitants of a city, regardless of citizenship status. This is the term Norm Stamper, former Seattle chief of police, uses instead of "civilian" (2016). The logic behind this choice is that the more commonly used term, civilian, is generally used to make a distinction between military personnel and community members. Municipal police forces are not military forces.

**Officer.** In this dissertation, the term "officer" is used to refer to sworn personnel, those authorized to make arrests (Reaves, 2011), employed by any law enforcement agency.

**Violence.** The World Health Organization's (2002) definition of violence is "the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment or deprivation" (p. 4). This, along with verbal abuse, humiliation, and shaming, behaviors defined as violent by psychiatrist and trauma specialist Sandra Bloom (2000), form the definition of "violence" that is applied in this study.

**Use of force.** Throughout this study, the term "use of force" is used in place of the term "violence."

**Excessive force.** This term is used comprehensively to include unnecessary, unreasonable, extra-legal force, and brutality.

**Trauma.** The term "trauma" can refer to both an event and a reaction (Trauma, 2004). A traumatic event is one which exposes a person to threatened or actual death, serious injury, or sexual violence (American Psychiatric Association [APA], 2013). The exposure can be direct through personal experience or it can be indirect, through learning about a traumatic event that a close family member or friend has gone through (APA, 2013). As a reaction, trauma can be a physical or emotional wound or an emotional shock (APA, 2013).

**Victim.** A victim is a person who has been harmed in some way, or who has experienced a loss due to another person's purposeful or careless behavior (McCann, Sakheim & Abrahamson, 1988). The DOJ (2015) also uses the term victim to refer to someone whose rights have reportedly been violated.

**Quintain.** The phenomenon that the individual cases exemplify is a "quintain" (Stake, 2006). It is the target collection, the arena that contains the cases (Stake, 2006). In the current

study, the quintain is the impacts of officer use of force. Each separate incident represents one case within the quintain, one example of the phenomenon.

### **Perspective of the Researcher**

I am a parent whose first non-traffic-related interactions with law enforcement took place when my child was in middle school in the 1990s. In the intervening years, I have had numerous interactions with officers from different agencies. Many of those interactions have been positive; I came away from them feeling as though I, my child, or my child and I were treated fairly and respectfully. Others have left me feeling frightened and powerless.

My direct experience with officer force occurred when, based on a false complaint made by a disgruntled individual, the local police conducted a warrantless search of my home in my absence. I returned home to see an officer exiting my front door with a rifle in his hands. He had found nothing, but during a search of the attic he had fallen through the floor without sustaining any injury. I, on the other hand, was left with a large hole in my laundry room ceiling, a pile of insulation and crumbled dry wall on the floor, and a deep sense of violation. I asked the supervisor who would be responsible for the clean-up and repair. He told me to file a claim with the department. I did not want to have any further contact with the department because I did not trust them and was fearful. I did not believe it would be of any use and wanted as little as possible to do with the organization. Therefore, the responsibility for the clean-up and repairs was mine.

While I have not personally experienced officer use of physical force, family members have, and I have been threatened with it. It was after one of those incidents that I sought redress and found none, which left me feeling even more fearful and less empowered than I had felt immediately after the incident occurred. Unfortunately, though fewer in number than the positive

experiences, the negative experiences have strongly affected my view of law enforcement. My inherent trust and respect have been replaced with skepticism, fear, and an unmet desire for justice and accountability. At the same time, I have developed empathy and a sense of connection with other people who have been subjected to warrantless searches and the thousands of residents whose homes have been raided by police, sheriff, and ICE SWAT teams across the country (Kraska, 2007). Because of my personal experience, I have discussed methods of addressing personal bias in Chapter 3.

As a student earning a doctorate in Organizational Leadership, I began to look at the issue from an organizational perspective. I wanted to learn which governmental, non-profit, health, and/or educational organizations provide services and support to people who find themselves in similar situations. I personally had been unable to locate any and was ultimately drawn to an exploration of others' experiences under similar circumstances. I sought to understand their interpretations of their experiences and the types of support they looked for and received. This was in hopes of being able to provide helpful information for others who experience officer use of force.

The following section provides a broader perspective of the context of the phenomenon. It includes statistics relating to law enforcement numbers and discusses officers' various forms of power. It also presents more details and data on use of force incidents and provides a definition of violence and a brief introduction to the effects of violence.

### **Problem in its Current Context**

**Law enforcement numbers and power.** The United States has a plethora of law enforcement agencies. Virtually every municipality has its own police force, as does every county and every state. In addition to the typical municipal police force, numerous other local

law enforcement agencies affiliated with school districts, universities, community colleges, public transportation entities, and parks all exist within the same city.

Reaves (2011) reported that the most recent census of state and local law enforcement agencies showed that the United States had 17,985 state and local law enforcement agencies. Those agencies employed 765,246 full-time, and 44,062 part-time sworn personnel having the authority to make arrests (Reaves, 2011). Furthermore, the federal government employed an additional 120,000 full-time sworn officers at 73 different agencies at that time (Reaves, 2011).

These sworn officers have multiple sources of power. The first is what Kraska (2007) labels state sanction, bestowed by the governmental organization that employs the officers to accomplish the task of enforcing the law. When officers elect to use any type of force against an individual, Harmon describes it as “the states’ use of force by police officers” (Harmon, 2008, p. 1123). French and Raven (as cited in Nahavandi, 2012) identify this as legitimate power. The second source is what Nahavandi labels coercive power, or the ability to punish. Officers have a range of tools on hand for this purpose. The following items are weapons that officers have at their disposal: handcuffs, baton, flashlight, chemical agent, Taser, handgun, rifle/shotgun, motor vehicle, and canines (Garner & Maxwell, 1999).

Another source of power is the support law enforcement officers receive from members of the community whom they vow to serve and protect. Nahavandi (2012) calls this referent power, and it is based on the respect people have for officers. This respect is frequently unquestioning, due to the fact that, as Levenson (2001) points out, many people prefer not to question or criticize the people they have put in charge of their protection. She maintains that it has always been a challenge for attorneys to convince jurors that the people who have taken an oath to serve and protect could choose to harm a member of the public. But sometimes they do



(Cornish, 2014; Hoffman, 1992; Johnson, 2006). Criminal Justice professor Dr. Michael Gilbert believes that people's willingness to believe a deceitful officer before they will believe a truthful citizen with a record is a travesty in American justice (personal communication, M. Gilbert, September 26, 2017). "They believe a police officer wouldn't lie," he stated. "They're credible, even if they're deceitful and lying."

**Incidents of officer use of force.** Nearly every day of the year, headlines in the news across the country indicate that not all law enforcement personnel are deserving of the public's trust. The following are just a small sample of them. "Cops Use Informant to Frame a Business Owner by Planting Crack in his Store" (Agorist, 2014); "Professors Detail Brutal Tangle With Police" (McKinley, 2014); "Friends of Longmont Man Killed in Deputy Involved Shooting Shocked at his Death" (Shield, 2013); "Dash Cam Video Shows Deadly Officer Shooting" (Grimstad, 2014); "Cops Bloody Old Man—For Jaywalking" (Sheehan, 2014). Headlines such as these run in newspapers and on websites from California to New York, Chicago to Texas, and many communities in between.

Some cases receive national and international attention, such as the ones involving the deaths of Botham Jean (McDonnell-Parry, 2018), Justine Damond (Pearce & Butler, 2017), Michael Brown (Vega, 2014), Eric Garner (Goldstein & Schweber, 2014). This was also true of the beating of Rodney King in 1991 (Levenson, 2001). Numerous cases are reported in the local news but fail to ignite the public's anger or attract much attention (Barajas, 2013; Parker, 2014; Wilson, 2013).

According to the most recently available BOJ report, 26,000 Americans filed complaints against police for excessive use of force in 2002 (Hickman, 2006). However, fewer than 5% of people who thought that the police had acted improperly filed a complaint against the officer

who had detained them (Langton, 2013). If 26,000 individuals are but 5% of the total number of people who believed an officer had acted improperly, another 494,000 others had the same belief, but did not file complaints.

The National Police Misconduct Statistics and Reporting Project (NPMSRP) listed 2,541 instances of police misconduct in its semi-annual report in 2010 (Packman, 2011). The largest category of misconduct between the months of January and June of 2010 was the use of physical force against members of the public. According to the NPMSRP, 124 deaths and government pay outs across the country totaling \$148.5 million in judgments and settlements resulted from these police misconduct cases (Packman, 2011).

David Klinger, criminal justice professor and expert on police use of force, told a *Washington Post* reporter that statistics on police use of force are essentially useless (Lowery, 2014). Another criminal justice scholar, Samuel Walker, concurred in an interview with *Mother Jones* magazine (Lee, 2014) that there is no comprehensive data on police killings. They cite the incomplete, inaccurate, non-standardized, voluntary reporting procedures for making it impossible to know how many Americans actually are survivors of police misconduct. David Couper (2015), former police chief and author of works on policing, cites the number of people killed in 2014 as determined by an ongoing internet project, killedbypolice.net: approximately 1,000. According to the Police Violence Report (Mapping Police Violence, 2017) officers killed 1,131 citizens in 2014; the total killed in 2015 was 1,152; in 2016 it was 1,129; and in 2017 it was 1,147.

Finally, in comparison with some other first-world countries, the United States stands head and shoulders above all in numbers of officer-involved shootings. For example, from 2008 to 2011, Australian police killed 14 people; in the 22 years from 1989 to 2011, the total was 105

(Goldsworthy, 2014). Police in Scotland have not shot or killed anyone since 2013, despite nearly 2 million emergency calls a year (Police Executive Research Forum, 2015).

After police officers shot and killed four people in Denmark in 2006, the national police commissioner ordered a study of police officers' use of firearms (Olsen, 2008). The study compared firearm use in seven European countries from 1996 to 2006 and included the number of people wounded as well as the number of people killed. Table 1 shows the number of people killed per year, the percentage killed per million, and the total population of each country studied.

Rounding the number of people killed in the United States in 2014 and 2015 down to 1,000 and using that as the most accurate statistic available at this time, and using the 2000 estimated U.S. population of 321,418,820 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015), the number of people killed per million in the United States is 3.11, nearly 23 times greater than the highest rate per million in the Danish study. If the population of 281,421,906 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2013) in the year 2000 is used for the calculation, the rate increases to 3.5 deaths per million inhabitants. On the face of it, this may not seem to be a significant number, but again, it is appreciably greater than the rates of officer-involved shootings in other industrialized countries. Furthermore, this statistic does not account for the number of victims resulting from the ripple effect that such violence has on the victims' families, communities, and society as a whole.

**Effects of violence.** The intentional use of threats and force are both termed "violence" by the World Health Organization (WHO, 2002). The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) lists six types of violence on its website (CDC, n.d.). These are child abuse and neglect; elder abuse; intimate partner violence; sexual violence; suicide; and youth violence. The World Health Organization report includes the same categories of violence plus two more: elderly abuse and

Table 1

*Number of Civilians Killed by Police Officers Annually, 1996-2006*

	Average killed per year	Total killed 1996-2006	Killed per 1 million inhabitants	Total population (year 2000)
Denmark	1	11	0.187	5,330,020
Sweden	1.18	13	0.133	8,861,426
Norway	0.27	3	0.060	4,478,497
Finland	0.18	2	0.034	5,171,302
Germany	7.36	81	0.089	82,163,475
Netherlands	2.18	24	0.137	15,863,950
England/Wales	2.27	25	0.042	52,943,300
Canada	25	250	.710	35,985,751
The U.S.	1,000	10,000	3.110	321,418,820

*Note.* From “The Use of Police Firearms in Denmark,” (Olsen, 2008). Copyright 2008 by the Danish Police. Adapted with permission.

Canadian population data for 2015 (Statistics Canada, 2016). Canadian shooting data from Lartey, 2015.

collective violence, which refers to war and regional conflict (WHO, 2002). Neither organization mentions law enforcement violence on its website even though officer beatings, shootings, and killings clearly fit within the WHO definition of violence.

Morris (2007) explains that some of the consequences of all types of violence are death, disease, family disruption, loss of potential, diminished quality of life, social disruption, economic loss, and psychological trauma. These effects are not classified on the basis of who the perpetrator of the violence is. However, betrayal trauma, distinct from other types of trauma, may result from officer use of force (Smith & Freyd, 2014).

Despite the substantial number of people who are estimated to experience officer force and the potential for physical and psychological damage resulting from that experience, there is a

dearth of academic scholarly research published on the subject. In searching through the electronic databases and specific journals in the criminal justice field such as “American Journal of Criminal Law” and “Journal of Contemporary Criminal Justice” using keywords police brutality, police misconduct, and police violence, the retrieved studies focused largely on community perceptions of police; officer perception of police misconduct; race and gender; and accountability. A sampling of the articles includes “Police Use of Deadly Force: Police Perceptions of a Culture of Approval (Belur, 2009), “Racial, Ethnic, and Gender Differences in Perceptions of the Police: The Salience of Officer Race Within the Context of Racial Profiling” (Cochran & Warren, 2011), and “Police Responses to Officer-Involved Shootings (Klinger, 2001). However there is scant research that directly addresses the effects of officer use of force on individuals and their significant others, as is presented in Chapter 2 of this study.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The primary purpose of this study was to explore the perspectives of individuals and family members and friends (secondary victims) of individuals who had experienced officer use of force. The aim was to understand and document what the participants experienced, where they turned for support, and what challenges they faced. I conducted participant interviews and analyzed and incorporated relevant data from print, video, and audio documents. This provided a multifaceted understanding of the effects officer use of force can have on people, the ways in which these people cope, and the meaning they attribute to their experiences. Secondary purposes were to provide an opportunity for the participants to tell their stories and to understand the context within which their experiences took place. Finally, the impact that officer use of force has on people is an area in which scholarly research is deficient. This study aimed to fill

the gap in the literature by examining the stories of people who have had such experiences involving law enforcement officers in Texas.

### **Research Questions**

The overarching question of this study asked what could be learned from people's experiences with officer excessive force. Four interrelated sub questions were:

- How does officer use of force impact individuals who experience it directly?
- How does officer use of force impact family members or friends (secondary victims) of individuals who experience it directly?
- What supports, if any, do people seek after they or a family member or friend experience officer use of force?
- What supports, if any, do people utilize after they or a family member or friend experiences officer use of force?

### **Research Setting**

The setting for the research was a city in South Texas with a population of more than 1 million people. Two of its primary industries are health care and the military. The two largest law enforcement agencies are the municipal police department, with more than 2,000 sworn personnel, and the sheriff's department with over 500.

### **Significance of the Study**

The goal of this study was to identify the effects of officer use of excessive force on the participants and what they experienced when they sought assistance as a result of their interactions with law enforcement officers. Research on this subject could be of use to individuals working in the field of criminal justice at every stage. It could inform law enforcement and prison and jail administrators in regard to the training choices they make for

their officers and guards. It could have an impact on judges' decisions when hearing cases of individuals who are suffering from the effects of use of force. Finally, it could influence public policy makers' and legislators' determinations in regard to laws, public safety, and mental health care.

Unaddressed issues and needs within communities revealed in this study could make useful facts available for advocates in their efforts to influence public policy and state legislation on behalf of victims and secondary victims of officer use of force. Mental health care providers, nonprofit organizations, governmental agencies, and other organizations that offer social services may then receive funding. They in turn could use the information to develop resources and programs to begin addressing the issues.

Ultimately, the study's findings could have significance for the people against whom officer excessive force results in injury and/or trauma by making available to them and their families the care and resources that they may need but do not currently receive. Last, but not of least importance, the study will hopefully have significance for the participants as well. Symonds (1975) states that the concept of protective silence is mistaken and serves to prolong the depression of people who have experienced violence. He found that the survivors of violence that he spoke with were eager to talk about what had happened to them. Furthermore, Hutchinson, Wilson, and Wilson (1994) offered the following seven potential benefits that qualitative interviews could have for participants:

- catharsis;
- self-acknowledgement and validation;
- sense of purpose;
- increased self-awareness;

- sense of empowerment;
- healing; and
- acquired voice.

Thus, by voluntarily recounting their own experiences, participants in this study may have benefited in a variety of ways.

### **Contribution to the Literature**

This was an exploratory inquiry due to the fact that existing literature on the subject is sparse. The findings from this study will contribute to the knowledge base related to the impact that officer excessive force has on people and their lives. Furthermore, it may provide other researchers information that can serve as a foundation and guide for subsequent inquiries.

### **Limitations of the Study**

One limitation of the research is that it represents just one county in one state, which may or may not be representative of other municipalities across the country. Another is that while the participants' education levels include at least some college or vocational school, people possessing a high school diploma or less are not represented in the sample. This was due at least in part to the challenge of locating and recruiting participants who were willing to discuss their experiences. This limitations is mitigated somewhat by the inclusion of individuals with different levels of post-secondary education, ranging from trade school to some college to a graduate degree. A third limitation is that participants were middle to-upper middle income citizens with no criminal records. The experiences of low- and high-income individuals and individuals with misdemeanors and felony charges may differ from those of this study's participants. Finally, due to the small number of participants, the study results may not be generalizable to others who experience officer use of force.



## Summary

This chapter introduces the problem addressed by the dissertation: issues and challenges arising from people's experiences of officer use of excessive force. Law enforcement officers are a significant and powerful segment of our society, and experts in the field of law enforcement and civil and human rights agree that police abuse is a serious, longstanding issue. Despite recommendations made by government-appointed commissions and criminal justice professionals, U.S. residents continue to be frequently subjected to officer use of force. The numerous harmful effects that use of force has on millions of people in the country have rarely been addressed. Similarly, the need for psychological, emotional, physical, and other types of treatment and support as a result of violent interactions with law enforcement personnel has largely been overlooked.

In view of the widespread use of force by officers, this dissertation research investigated the perspective of individuals who had experienced it, either directly or indirectly. The aim was to gain an understanding of the impact these experiences can have on people and to learn what community resources, if any, they availed themselves of afterwards.

Chapter 2 presents a review of the literature relating to the issue of officer use of force. It targets three topics: (a) officer use of force, (b) the ways in which violence can impact individuals, and (c) victims' needs, rights, and services.

## Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

Officer excessive force is a prevalent phenomenon that affects millions of Americans and their families (Hoffman, 1992; Kirschner, 1997; Kraska, 2007; Langton & Durose, 2013; Skolnick & Fyfe, 1993). However, most of the research and discussion surrounding the physical, psychological, emotional, and financial impacts of officer use of force has been covered by the popular media; academia has remained relatively silent on the subject. I have approached the literature review of the phenomenon through a scholarly lens.

For this study I reviewed literature related to police–community relations, trauma theory, betrayal trauma theory, and trauma victims’ needs and rights. According to Locke, Spirduso, and Silverman (as cited in Maxwell, 2006) relevant studies add significant information to the conceptual framework; failure to include them would be considered a major oversight by experts in the field. My goals were to (a) show that a problem existed, (b) establish the context of the problem, (c) determine the current state of the research relating to the problem (d) develop a theoretical framework, and (e) identify connections, relationships, and gaps in the literature (American Psychological Association, 2010).

The literature review consists of four sections. The first section establishes the historical context of the study by referencing relevant research on officer excessive force. The second section is an exploration of the themes in the literature that pertain directly to the impact that violence has on individuals and establishes that the impact of a specific type of violence in the form of officer excessive force is an area that has been overlooked in the research. What follows are the results of my investigation into the current research on those topics in other contexts. The topics are the physical, psychological, and emotional impacts that officer excessive force has on individuals; the challenges that people who experience violence face; and community resources

available to people against whom violence is used, and to their family members. The third section of this review of the literature discusses victims' rights and services, and the fourth addresses the theoretical framework.

### **Search Procedures**

At the outset of this study in 2014, the search terms I utilized were “police brutality, police misconduct, abuse of power, abuse of authority, use of force, excessive force, police violence, restorative justice, victims, victim compensation, victim’s compensation fund, and trauma.” I used the terms in combination and some in isolation to filter data from numerous databases, including Academic Search Complete, EBSCO, Google Scholar, and JSTOR.

Using Ex Libro Primo to search for peer-reviewed articles in the university’s entire electronic journal collection provided 64 articles when I entered the search terms “police brutality victims.” These studies addressed African Americans as victims of police brutality, police brutality and the war on terror; hip-hop music lyrics and victims of police brutality; and other topics. However, I found few studies that focused on the impact that officer use of force can have on individuals’ and their families’ well-being and lives. I received even fewer results with the terms “victims of police use of force,” and none of them focused on the impact that official use of force has on people and their families.

Inputting a combination of the terms EXACT “abuse of authority” and EXACT “law enforcement” in ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global database resulted in a list of 166 dissertations, none of which was an inquiry into the phenomenon proposed for this study. Some of the subjects targeted were policing and race and gender; communication between police and citizens; police attitudes toward use of force; and police use of force in different environments. I excluded articles that did not directly address the effects of the use of force against the public.

A ProQuest search query of peer-reviewed journal articles with the same terms produced 38 results. Their topics included reforming local law enforcement agencies; correlates of officer use of force decisions; policing and race, youth, and gender; characteristics associated with the use of force; protecting against false confessions; and police perjury among others. One of the articles, “Public Experiences of Police Violence and Corruption in Contemporary Russia: A Case of Predatory Policing?” (Gerber & Mendelson, 2008), asked how the public’s experience with police misconduct affected their perceptions of the police, but not how those experiences personally affected the individuals involved.

LexisNexis Academic is a database rich with law review articles concerning legal issues and rulings dating back to 1790. Inputting the terms “police brutality” and “victims (not “sexual,” not “domestic,” not “intimate”) resulted in 1,174 articles and notes. They dealt with topics such as legal remedies for misconduct, legal explanations concerning the legal system’s failure to convict abusive officers, government use of torture, warrantless arrests for misdemeanors, police court testimony in prosecuting members of minorities, and the impact a change in criminal rules has on police procedures. Two examples of brief mentions of the effects of use of force are, “Injury from police force can include psychological as well as physical harm” (Paradis, 2003) and “The harmful effects of police brutality reach far beyond the physical and psychological injuries of victims. They also extend into the courtroom” (Onyemaobim, 2015). While abundantly acknowledging that officer brutality and use of excessive force occur, none of the legal articles I reviewed targeted the impact of officer force on primary victims and secondary victims.

In a search of specific journals using keywords” police” and then “police brutality,” I found 835 articles dealing primarily with intimate partner violence, domestic violence,

prostitution, and sex trafficking in *The Journal of Interpersonal Violence*. Similarly, the eight peer-reviewed articles I found in the journal *Trauma, Violence and Abuse* using the keyword “police brutality” addressed domestic violence, intimate partner violence, violence against women, and spousal violence. A search in the same journal with the term “police violence” produced 158 articles about dating violence, marital violence, juvenile violence, sexual violence, violence and aggression in schools, economic violence, batterers, child abuse, and human trafficking.

I conducted further searches in criminal justice journals such as *American Journal of Criminal Law*, *Journal of Contemporary Criminal Justice*, *The Howard Journal of Criminal Justice*, and *National Institute of Justice Journal* using keywords “police brutality,” “police misconduct,” and “police violence.” The studies in those journals also focused largely on race, gender, officer and community member perceptions, and accountability; I was unable to locate any on the impact of officer use of force on individuals and their family members.

A search of medical and health databases was more productive. Using the search terms “police,” “officer,” “brutality,” “use of force,” “injuries,” and “trauma,” in isolation and in combination generated 13 hits from CINAHL Complete, four from Medline, one from PubMed. I determined 10 of the articles I found were relevant to my investigation.

Finally, I combed the reference lists of pertinent articles to find additional relevant research. In addition, I conducted searches using the names of known experts in the field of policing, e.g., David Klinger, James Fyfe, Samuel Walker, and Mike White. I included information from peer-reviewed articles and books written by authorities in the field that pertained to the history of officer use of force and the effects that violence can have on people. I also incorporated data from government websites concerning victims’ rights and the services that

victims are entitled to. The results of my searches were incorporated in the remainder of this literature review.

In the aftermath of the many nationally publicized instances of officer-related deaths beginning in 2014, the number of scholarly articles on the topic increased. A 2018 Google Scholar search using the terms “support for victims of police brutality” returned three relevant articles published since 2014. These were “Police Brutality and Black Health: Setting the Agenda for Public Health Scholars” (Alang, McAlpine, McCreedy, & Hardeman, 2017), “The Trauma Lens of Police Violence against Racial and Ethnic Minorities” (Bryant-Davis, Adams, Alejandre, & Gray, 2017), and “How Police Brutality Harms Mothers: Linking Police Violence to the Reproductive Justice Movement” (Rogers, 2015).

A search using the terms “trauma and police brutality” returned a relevant master’s thesis titled “‘Stop Resisting!.’ An Exploratory Study of Police Brutality and Its Impacts on Black and Latino Males, Their Communities, Mental Health and Healing” (Ortiz, 2016) and five other articles related to police brutality, African Americans, and psychological or racial trauma.

### **Historical Context of Officer Use of Force**

Police are empowered to use force when performing their duties in the United States (Terrill & Paoline, 2012; Westley, 1953). However, its use is legally limited to the amount of force that is necessary and reasonable to effectuate an arrest and should only be used as a last resort (Holmes & Smith, 2012; Micucci & Gomme, 2005; Prenzler, Porter, & Alpert, 2013). Most law enforcement agencies mandate a use-of-force continuum approach as a means of limiting use of force against individuals to a minimum. The continuum moves from the lower levels up to lethal force, although the steps of the continuum vary among departments (Terrill & Paoline, 2012), so that officers in one municipality may quickly escalate to the use of greater

force against individuals than officers in other departments. Fridel (as cited in Terrill & Paoline, 2012) found that the number of levels of force and their definitions differ from one police agency to another, but Terrill and Paoline (2012) point out that the extent of that variation is unknown.

Despite guidelines and restrictions on officer use of force, the literature regarding officer use of undue force is extensive. In 1953, sociologist William A. Westley wrote a pioneering study on policing titled *Violence and the Police: A Sociological Study of Law, Custom, and Morality* (Green, 2010). His case study of a city police department included observations while walking beats and riding in squad cars with officers. He also conducted in-depth interviews with more than half of the department's officers (Westley, 1953).

In his article "Violence and the Police," Westley (1953) asserts that violence has been associated with United States police since the inception of policing in 1844. He argues that illegal police violence results from officers' justification of its use and the blue wall of silence, which refers to officers' refusal to report the misconduct of their colleagues. According to Westley (1953), officers legitimize the use of violence to coerce respect or make an arrest for occupational goals which are more important to them than their legally specified duties. Two of those occupational goals are making numerous arrests and appearing to solve major crimes in order to please the public (Westley, 1953).

Police violence was also identified as a concern by the National Commission on Law Observance and Enforcement, commonly known as the Wickersham Commission (Lersch & Mieczkowski, 2005). President Hoover created the Commission in 1929 to investigate crime in general, which had increased after the passage of the 18th Amendment prohibiting the sale of alcohol (Wickersham Commission, n.d.). The Commission's report was published in 1931 and 1932. One volume, *Lawlessness in Law Enforcement*, was a condemnation of nationwide police

misconduct, including brutality in the form of “the third degree,” causing suspects pain and suffering (Wickersham Commission, n.d.).

In addition to the third degree, researchers have used a number of terms to identify the phenomenon of officer excessive force. These include “violence” (Westley, 1953), “unnecessary force” (Phillips, 2010), “police brutality” (Lawson, 2012), and “extralegal force” (Griffin & Barnard, 2003). The literature itself covers a wide range of topics related to police use of force, including the following: the personal consequences to police officers of using force (Klinger, 2010), complaints about officer use of force (Hickman, 2006), the reluctance of officers to report colleagues’ misconduct (Johnson, 2006), need for more and better officer training (Morrison, 2010), and the prevalence of excessive force (Westley, 1953). Other researchers have focused on theories which might explain the use of force (Alpert & MacDonald, 2001; Griffin & Bernard, 2003; Griffin & Ruiz, 1999; Kane, 2003).

The literature on officer use of excessive force makes visible the consensus that it is longstanding and widespread. In acknowledging that officer excessive force is a real phenomenon, researchers are at the same time tacitly acknowledging that people who have been subjected to such force need to be heard in order to understand the effects the use of force has had on them (Alpert & MacDonald, 2001; Griffin & Bernard, 2003; Griffin & Ruiz, 1999; Hickman, 2006; Johnson, 2006; Kane, 2003; Klinger, 2010; Morrison, 2010; Westley, 1953). However, scholarly research into the impacts that violence in the form of officer excessive force has on individuals is limited. The second part of this literature review focuses on academic literature and reports concerning the effects that violence, in general, can have on those who experience it.



## **Trauma: Effects of Violence on Individuals**

Approximately 2 to 2.5 million arrests involved the threat of or use of force in 2012 (FBI, 2012). The World Health Organization (WHO) states that threatened or actual use of physical force is a form of violence. WHO's definition of violence, in its entirety, is "the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment or deprivation" (2002, p. 4). This definition makes it clear that officers' behaviors, from threatening to use violence and roughly handcuffing an individual to beating or shooting a person, all qualify as forms of violence.

Along with the threat or actual use of physical force, psychiatrist Sandra L. Bloom, founder of the Sanctuary inpatient psychiatric programs for the treatment of trauma-related emotional disorders, includes verbal abuse, humiliation, and shaming in her definition of violence, referencing Courtois' description of dysfunctional systems (as cited in Bloom, 2000). Officer behavior which includes name calling and treating people disrespectfully, whether in or out of public view, can also be categorized as forms of violence according to this definition. Henceforth, throughout this study the term "excessive force" is used in place of "violence" and "brutality" and includes both WHO's and Bloom's definitions.

The literature on violence, violent crime, and trauma frequently includes the term "victim" (Jackson & Gouseti, 2015; Janoff-Bulmon & Frieze, 1983; Maguire, 1991; Symonds, 1975). In their article synthesizing findings about psychological responses to trauma, McCann et al. (1988) define a victim as a person who has been harmed in some way, or who has experienced a loss due to another person's purposeful or careless behavior. The use of the word victim in the works of criminologists goes as far back as the 1700s, but not until 1947 did

Benjamin Mendelsohn, now known as the Father of Victimology, coin the term “victimology” to refer to the study of victims (Dussich 2006). While some scholars prefer the term “survivor” to victim (Govier, 2015), victim is still an accepted and frequently used term in the literature.

Being the victim of violence has numerous impacts on individuals. Psychiatrist and founder of the Victim Treatment Center at the Karen Horney Psychoanalytic Center in New York, Martin Symonds, in 1975 was among the first to write about the psychological effects and aftereffects of experiencing violence. He presented the effects as phases which included shock and denial; fear and clinginess; and apathy accompanied by recrimination and rage directed at the self. He noted that the responses were similar to the ones people have when they suddenly experience an unexpected loss (Symonds, 1975.)

After writing his article in 1975, Symonds (1980) reviewed the psychological responses of approximately 600 violent crime victims and expanded his analysis of the aftereffects of violence to the following. The first phase of response, shock and denial, and the second phase, a falsely calm detachment, make up the acute responses to violence when a person responds to a perceived life threat. The third phase, called “I am stupid” (p. 35), is delayed and chronic, meaning frequently recurrent or persisting for a long time. During this phase, people’s feelings alternate between apathy, rage, anger, depression, and phobias. Symonds’ (2010) phase three included feelings of humiliation, injured pride, dreams that repeat the event or in which the person gets revenge, and the desire for justice, all resulting from a sense of powerlessness.

Since the time of Symonds’ writings, an entire new field, Traumatology, has opened up (Traumatology, 2008). Traumatology was first referred to as a study of psychological trauma in 1990, in *Healing the Hurt Child*, a book that discusses therapy for children who have experienced the trauma of emotional and physical abuse, by Donovan & McIntyre. The first issue

of *Traumatology*, an international journal, was published in 1995 (Traumatology, 2008). The purpose of the journal is “to expand the study and treatment of the psychological, biological, social, medical, and legal consequences of traumatic events” (Contributions to Traumatology, 1996). Articles in the journal address issues such as treating trauma victims; the classification of victims; changes in posttraumatic stress in relation to political violence; and race, criminalization, and historical trauma. In the years since 1995, conditions such as posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) have been named (PTSD, 2010) and additional reactions to traumatic events have been identified.

Based on their review of data on victimization, McCann et al. (1988) identified five major categories of response to traumatization. They were (a) emotional, (b) cognitive, (c) biological, (d) behavioral, and (e) interpersonal. Emotional responses include fear and anxiety; anger; shame and guilt; disruption of self-esteem; and depression. Cognitive or psychological responses are related to disturbances in perception that include flashbacks, hallucinations, and illusions. Somatic or physical disturbances such as muscle tension and seizure-like symptoms and physiological hyperarousal in the form of high blood pressure and increased heart and respiration rates are common biological responses to traumatization. Some of the behavioral responses are personality disorders, substance abuse, and aggression, while interpersonal responses may be revictimization, becoming a victimizer, and the development of problems in relationships (McCann et al., 1988).

Upon reviewing 50 empirical studies that quantified psychological distress after criminal assault, rape, partner abuse, and childhood abuse, Weaver and Clum (1995) added dissociation and disruptions in intrapersonal and interpersonal processes to the reactions to trauma that Symonds (1980) described. They found that the responses to trauma varied among individuals

and that in addition to psychological disorders, many people experienced difficulties in their daily lives. They further considered stressors—traumatic events—involving one person’s intentionally harming another (interpersonal violence) to be most likely to cause disease (Weaver & Clum, 1995).

In a study of some of the research on the connections between being violently victimized, judgments of risk, and the frequency of worry about violent victimization, Jackson and Gousseti (2015) found that in addition to psychological effects, victims of traumatic events experience a wide range of physical and socioeconomic impacts. Among trauma survivors, the socioeconomic impacts can be seen in lower levels of educational attainment, unemployment, and failure to adjust to the work environment after experiencing trauma (Jackson & Gousseti, 2015).

In addition, Crofford (2007) and Keeshin, Cronholm, and Strawn (2012) provide evidence of the impact violence can have on an individual’s neurobiology and, as a result, future health. They found increased rates of somatic disorders such as fibromyalgia, chronic fatigue syndrome, and irritable bowel syndrome in victims of violence (Crofford, 2007; Keeshin et al., 2012). Occurrences of respiratory disorders like asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) were also high among trauma survivors (Keeshin et al., 2012) and rates of obesity, cardiovascular disease, and cancer are more elevated than they are among non-traumatized populations (Keeshin et al., 2012).

Two additional effects of trauma not identified in earlier studies can be multiple addictions and automatic repetition of destructive behaviors (Bloom, 2000). Survivors frequently self-medicate with substances in an attempt to manage extreme anxiety and then develop addictions to the substances (Bloom, 2000). Some people develop an addiction to trauma itself and provide nonverbal cues that trigger experiences of past traumatization (Bloom, 2000). The

addiction to trauma has behavioral, emotional, physiologic, and neuroendocrinologic sources causing some victims to unconsciously expose themselves repeatedly to traumatizing situations (Van der Kolk, 1989). Other addictive behaviors that may develop post-trauma are smoking and unhealthy eating habits, which become coping strategies for victims of trauma (Keeshin et al., 2012).

Finally, the impact of trauma is not limited to the immediate victims and their family members and friends. In a report on the impact of victimization written for the Canadian Government, AuCoin and Beauchamp (2007) claim that victimization has significant societal costs. As a result of the trauma, victims, family members, and friends may be unable to accomplish their normal activities, causing a reduction in their contributions to society (AuCoin & Beauchamp, 2007).

### **Betrayal Trauma Theory**

In addition to the perceived threat to life or physical well-being that is the definition of traumatic response, betrayal trauma theory posits that betrayal is a second dimension in some interpersonal traumatic experiences (Sivers, Schooler, & Freyd, 2002). Betrayal trauma, a term coined by Freyd (1994), is the result of interpersonal trauma perpetrated by someone depended upon for survival, such as a parent or caregiver, and within other close relationships (Smith & Freyd, 2014). It also occurs in adults, for example, in cases of domestic violence and sexual assault (Freyd, 1997).

Betrayal trauma is not caused only by trusted caregivers, friends, or family members but can be caused by trusted institutions, or institutions which members of society are, of necessity, in a situation to depend upon as well, such as the legal system (Smith & Freyd, 2014). When people are dependent upon an institution, e.g. a church, a school, or as in the present context, a

law enforcement department, institutional betrayal occurs when that institution fails either to prevent misconduct or to respond supportively to victims of misconduct committed within the context of the institution (Freyd, 2015).

Institutional betrayal can occur through both actions taken and not taken (Smith, Gomez, & Freyd, 2014). Responding insensitively to trauma survivors and concealing information that would negatively impact the institution's reputation are overt acts of betrayal (Smith et al., 2014). Withholding information about the legal options available to the survivor and doing nothing to prevent future abuse are covert acts of betrayal. This type of betrayal, when measured directly, exacerbates the effects of trauma like anxiety and dissociation, among others (Smith, et al., 2014). It can also contribute to a number of the harmful health effects related to interpersonal trauma because survivors may initially be treated in an invalidating way by some health care providers who appear insensitive or who blame the individual for what happened to them (Campbell, 2006). As a result, these individuals are reluctant to return for needed follow-up care (Campbell, 2006).

According to betrayal trauma theory, the degree to which the survivor depends on and/or trusts the person who traumatizes them determines whether interpersonal traumas are classified as either high- or medium-level betrayal as assessed by the Brief Betrayal Trauma Survey (Freyd, 2013). The Brief Betrayal Trauma Survey is an instrument developed by Goldberg and Freyd (Goldberg & Freyd, 2006). According to Freyd, trauma caused by a trusted and depended upon perpetrator is high level; trauma caused by someone who is not trusted or depended upon is medium level; and trauma caused not by a person but by an event, such as a car accident, is low level. Both high and medium levels of betrayal are more mentally and physically traumatizing than trauma that involves no, or a low level, of betrayal (Freyd, 2013).

These levels of betrayal are significantly correlated with levels of PTSD symptoms (Kelley, Frank, Mason, & Pruneau, 2012). In a study titled, “Association of Life Threat and Betrayal with Posttraumatic Stress Disorder Symptom Severity,” Kelley, et al. (2012) looked at betrayal, perceived life threat, and injury and their connection with the severity of PTSD symptoms. They asked college students who had experienced traumatic events to complete self-reports. The items in the self-reports measured perceived life threat, trauma exposure, PTSD, level of medical care received, and betrayal. The results they obtained were achieved by employing hierarchical regressions that included perceived life threat, betrayal, and injury (Kelley et al., 2012).

Interpersonal violence is the type of violence that is most likely to cause disease (Weaver & Clum, 1995), and interpersonal violence that betrays an individual’s trust, whether in a depended upon person or an institution, has been shown to increase trauma levels (Freyd, 2013). Officer use of force is both interpersonal and carried out by members of a depended upon institution, therefore indicating the potential for high levels of trauma.

Betrayal trauma theory and trauma theory are two of the theories that constitute the theoretical framework of this study. The data analysis indicated the relevance of a third theory in understanding the meanings participants’ attributed to their experiences. Procedural justice then became part of the theoretical framework. That framework is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 5.

The emotional, psychological, behavioral, and social impacts of a traumatic experience leave victims with many needs. The next section of this literature review covers the legal rights and services that have been mandated for victims of violence, and the type of follow-up care they can benefit from.

## **Victim Needs and Rights**

**Trauma Victim Needs.** People suffering from trauma need procedural, informational, and interpersonal justice in order to cope successfully (Haynes, Cares, & Ruback, 2015). Procedural justice relates to victims' perception of the fairness of the procedures used to determine what happened after they reported their experiences to the legal system (Thibaut & Walker, as cited in Haynes et al., 2015). Informational justice encompasses the thoroughness, honesty, and validity of the information victims receive concerning the decisions made regarding their cases and the resources that they can access (Haynes et al., 2015). Finally, interpersonal justice as defined by Greenberg (as cited in Haynes et al., 2015), involves agents of the legal system treating people sensitively and respectfully.

More specifically, victims of violence need social acknowledgment and support in order to recover from their traumatic experience (Feldthusen, Hankivsky, & Greaves, 2000; Herman 2003). In addition, they need the reestablishment of a sense of power over their lives; the chance to tell their stories in their own voice in a location they determine; and, often, the option of limiting exposure to things that remind them of the trauma (Herman, 2003). In their study of sexual abuse survivors' experience of the legal system, Feldthusen et al. (2000) found that obtaining an apology, justice, revenge, and closure were needs that had to be met in order to achieve psychological recovery.

Cassell (2005) explains that because these needs were being neglected by the legal system, a movement advocating for victims' rights began in the 1970s. In response to increasing public awareness and support for victims, President Reagan created the President's Task Force on Victims of Crime in 1982 (DOJ, 2015). The Task Force made numerous recommendations in regard to federal victims' rights, which resulted in significant changes. One of them was the



legislature's passage of The Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) in 1984 to fund a federal victims' service. Another was the enactment of U.S. Code Title 42—The Public Health and Welfare Chapter 112—Victim Compensation and Assistance to establish crime victims' rights, services, and compensation in all aspects of criminal justice (DOJ, 2015).

The Office for Victims of Crime (OVC) was a result of VOCA (Office for Victims of Crime Fact Sheet, n.d.). Established in 1984, the OVC is responsible for administering the Crime Victims Fund and is a major funding source for victim services nationwide. In 2013, the cap on funds available for distribution was \$730 million (About OVC, n.d.). Through two grant programs, the OVC makes annual awards to states and territories that account for 90% of VOCA funds (OVC Fact Sheet, n.d.). All 50 states, the District of Columbia, and territories have victim compensation programs that are funded by both state and VOCA funds (Center, 2003).

The funds are awarded to victims of violent crimes with injuries and survivors of homicide victims, with 55% going to victims of domestic and nondomestic assaults (Center, 2003). Monies can be granted to victims, or survivors of victims, for a number of violent crime-related expenses. These include:

- medical expenses for physical injuries including mental health counseling and care;
- loss of wages due to physical injury; and
- funeral expenses (Center, 2003).

Money not used for state compensation grants is available for the Victim Assistance Formula Grants Program, which provides grants to state crime victim assistance programs. The grants are awarded to state and community-based victim service programs that administer crime victim

services such as criminal justice advocacy, short-term housing, crisis counseling, and information and referral assistance (Saco, 2015).

**Crime victims' rights.** Twenty years after the passage of VOCA, in 2004, President George W. Bush further expanded victims' rights by signing the Crime Victims' Rights Act (CVRA) into law (Cassell, 2005). The Act granted victims eight rights:

1. The right to be reasonably protected from the accused;
2. The right to reasonable, accurate, and timely notice of any public court proceeding, or any parole proceeding, involving the crime or of any release or escape of the accused;
3. The right not to be excluded from any such public court proceeding, unless the court, after receiving clear and convincing evidence, determines that testimony by the victim would be materially altered if the victim heard other testimony at that proceeding;
4. The right to be reasonably heard at any public proceeding in the district court involving release, plea, sentencing, or any parole proceeding;
5. The reasonable right to confer with the attorney for the Government in the case;
6. The right to full and timely restitution as provided in law;
7. The right to proceedings free from unreasonable delay;
8. The right to be treated with fairness and with respect for the victim's dignity and privacy (Cassell, 2005).

The first seven of these rights that victims are entitled to—inclusion, restitution, protection, timeliness, consultation with the attorneys handling their cases, being kept informed and being heard—are succinctly summarized by the eighth right, being treated with fairness and respect.

Protecting these rights can facilitate recovery from the emotional, psychological, physical, and financial impacts of the trauma that results from interpersonal violence.

The DOJ (2013, p. 11) suggests that crime victims who do not take advantage of the assistance that is available to them may fail to “regain a sense of normalcy in their lives” that support services are meant to facilitate. Victims may experience an increase in safety and a feeling of power through participation in the legal system, along with public recognition that they have been wronged (Herman (2003). Herman further states that the trust in the community that has been damaged by trauma may be restored when the legal system acknowledges and defends a victim’s rights, something that does not happen when there is no procedural justice and an offender goes unpunished (Herman 2003).

While the movement for victims’ rights has brought about notable improvements in the treatment of victims, room for improvement still exists (Fritsch, Caeti, Tobolowsky, & Taylor, 2004; Haynes et al., 2015; Trulson, 2005). Being offered victims’ services can have healing effects, but being determined to be ineligible for them can have the opposite effect. Although the intent of the victims’ rights movements was to include all victims of crime, in some instances, victims are not considered eligible for victim services (Trulson, 2005). This can be due to, among other things, failure to meet the formal definition of a victim, which varies from state to state. For example, in some states, a victim may be denied services due to participation in a risky lifestyle such as gang membership or prostitution. The consequence is that some victims are treated as more worthy than others and, through this process of exclusion, the legal system revictimizes some individuals who reach out for assistance (Trulson, 2005). This point underscores the importance of offering victims’ services to all victims of violence.

**Victims of community violence needs.** Another lens through which to consider trauma is the lens of community violence. This type of violence encompasses numerous behaviors identified in the Survey of Exposure to Community Violence (Richters & Saltzman, 1990). It poses questions pertaining to directly experiencing, witnessing, or hearing about violent acts, including the following:

- being chased;
- forced entry;
- threats;
- arrests;
- slapping, hitting, punching;
- beatings and muggings;
- carrying guns and knives;
- serious injuries, shootings, and killings; and
- seeing dead bodies.

Each of these is an authorized officer behavior, with the last one, seeing dead bodies, resulting from some officer actions. People in the community who witness this violence, like betrayal trauma survivors, often experience a loss of trust involving issues of power, victimization, and empowerment (Hamblen & Goguen, 2016). This means that witnesses and other citizens, both children and adults, who see or hear about acts of violence in their community are impacted.

Consequently, the VA recommends providing services after a violent incident for not only directly impacted individuals and families but others in the community as well (Hamblen & Goguen, 2016). It can be argued that, due to the dimension of betrayal that is present in incidents

of officer excessive force, this type of care is especially important for witnesses of officer violence. The care the VA recommends includes debriefing, access to a crisis hotline, identification of people at high risk for PTSD, and connecting people with continuing treatment.

**Traumatized officer needs.** The impacts of trauma are also acknowledged in the field of law enforcement where the term “critical incident” is used to refer to events that have the potential to traumatize personnel. Critical incidents include a coworker’s death or serious injury, a life-threatening assault on an officer, a serious injury or death resulting from an officer’s actions, and an event that receives high-profile media coverage (Kureczka, 1996).

The Police Psychological Services Section of the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) offers guidelines for responding to officers who have been involved in a shooting (Finn & Tomz, 1996). Among them are the following:

- Show concern at the scene.
- Contact the officer’s family before they begin to hear rumors.
- Call the officer’s friends and spiritual leaders.
- Give the officer administrative leave to manage the trauma. (Do not suspend without pay.)
- Have the officer participate in an obligatory session with a licensed mental health professional as soon as possible.
- Make opportunities for family counseling available to the officer’s spouse, children, and significant others.
- Expedite investigations and information sharing with the officer.
- Consider the interests of the officer when providing information to news outlets.

In the city where this study was conducted, the local police department has a Family Assistance Program staffed by volunteer officers appointed by the chief of police. The purpose of the program is to aid and support the families of officers who are seriously injured or who die.

The services offered include:

- notifying family members if an on-duty death occurs;
- transporting family members to the hospital;
- assisting the family in making funeral arrangements;
- helping the family in arranging immediate financial aid;
- aiding the family in completing paperwork necessary to receive all eligible benefits; and
- providing family members counseling.

The recommendations of the IACP and the services provided to officers and their loved ones by one police department in the event of a traumatic experience are clear acknowledgements by law enforcement administrators that interpersonal violence can have serious impacts on individuals, including even professionally trained officers. This is no less true for the victims of officer use of force and their family members.

### **Summary**

A review of the literature on officer use of force provided insight into numerous documented cases of officer use of force and attempts to understand and curtail it. These cases are simultaneously documented cases of civilian victimization and trauma. However, while it is widely acknowledged that victims of violent crimes, community violence, and officers involved in violent incidents require special attention, care, and services, the needs of victims of officer use of force have been overlooked. Few scholars have focused on this aspect of officer use of

force, resulting in a significant gap in the literature. The purpose of this study was to begin to fill this gap by asking four interrelated questions: What has been the impact of officer use of force on individuals? What has been the impact on their families and friends? What supports do people seek after experiencing officer use of force? And finally, What supports do people actually use and benefit from after experiencing officer use of force?

Through the use of a qualitative research design, I aimed to acquire a multifaceted understanding of what impact the officer use of force had had on some people and their lives. Participants' personal stories revealed what they had experienced, what services they attempted to access, and the challenges they encountered. Their stories made evident the meaning participants ascribed to their experiences.

### **Chapter 3: Research Methodology**

The broad purpose of any research is to produce new knowledge and understanding (Piantanida & Garman, 2009). The specific purpose of this qualitative study was to explore and gain knowledge and understanding of how individuals respond to officer use of force from the perspective of individuals who have experienced it directly and indirectly. According to Creswell (2007), when the desire is to explore and acquire a complex detailed understanding of a problem, qualitative research is an appropriate approach to use.

Another instance when qualitative research is suitable is when the researcher wants to understand the context within which the participants' experiences have taken place (Creswell, 2007). The context in which officer use of force occurred is an important element of participants' experiences and therefore important to comprehend. For these reasons, a qualitative research approach was appropriate for this investigation.

In this chapter the first section describes the research design. The second section explains participant selection and demographics. The next two sections describe the data collection and analysis procedures, including the coding employed for data interpretation. The remaining sections of the chapter provide evidence of validity and protection of human subjects.

#### **Research Design**

I selected a case-study inquiry as the means of gaining an in-depth understanding of the impacts of officer use of force. The main objective of case study is to engender thorough understanding of a topic in order to produce knowledge and possibly impact policy and community action (Simons, 2009, p. 15). A case study may look at either single or multiple cases (Yin, 2003); this study included multiple cases.



Scholars writing on case study hold differing views as to what it actually is. Some refer to it as a research design, a methodology, or a method (VanWynsberghe & Khan 2007). Yin (2003) describes case study as a strategy, in the same way that experiments, surveys, histories, and computer-based analyses are strategies. Stake (2006), on the other hand, says, “A case study is both a process of inquiry about the case and the product of that inquiry” (p. 8). Yin’s often cited definition of case study is “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (p. 13). For the purposes of this research, the term “case study” (and by extension “multicase study”) is used to mean a form of inquiry that focuses on a specific phenomenon. This approach assisted in developing an understanding of the impacts of officer use of force from the perspectives’ of the individuals involved.

The cases in a multicase study can be, among other things, examples of a phenomenon (Stake, 2006). Stake labels the phenomenon that the individual cases exemplify as a “quintain.” In the context in which Stake uses the term, quintain means the target collection, the arena that contains the cases (2006). In the current study, the quintain is the impacts of officer use of force. Each separate incident represents one case within the quintain, one example of the phenomenon. The separate cases were used to understand the impact officer force can have on individuals and on family members and friends of victims who did or did not survive a use-of-force encounter with an officer. I included primarily individuals involved in unrelated incidents in order to get a wider cross section of demographic characteristics than would most likely be attained by interviewing one surviving victim and his or her family members and friends. The focus of my inquiry was on “what is similar and different about the cases in order to understand the quintain better” (Stake, 2006, p. 6).

This multicase study is instrumental, exploratory, and interpretive. It is instrumental because the primary focus will be on what the cases reveal about a particular issue, not on the cases themselves, (Creswell, 2008; Stake, 2006). It is also exploratory due to the scarcity of scholarly research on the topic under consideration. An exploratory study is conducted when models and variables for evaluating a phenomenon do not exist (Creswell, 2007), or when a phenomenon is not well understood (Marshall & Rossman, 2011), with the goal being to lay the groundwork for future research (Yin, 2003; Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Finally, interviewing participants to learn how they experienced their interactions with officers and the meanings those individuals gave their experiences lent an interpretive quality to the investigation (Merriam & Associates, 2002). I have interpreted the meanings the participants gave to officers' actions and their own.

**Statement of the problem.** Law enforcement officers are authorized to utilize the amount of force necessary to effectuate an arrest or subdue a suspect (Alpert & MacDonald, 2001). The use of force can cause physical and emotional trauma to the person against whom the force is used, as well as to the person's family and friends (WHO, 2002; Bloom, 2012; APA, 2013). Individuals who experience trauma have needs and rights which must be addressed in order for physical, emotional, and psychological healing to occur (DOJ, 2013). It is not known if the needs of the survivors of officer use of force are currently being met.

**Research questions.** The overarching question of this study asks what can be learned from people's experiences with officer use of force. The first research sub-question is: How has officer use of force impacted a primary or secondary victim? The second sub-question is: How has officer use of force impacted a primary or secondary victim's family members and friends? Sub-question Three is: What types of support, if any, have people sought after they or a loved

one experienced officer use of force? The final sub-question is: What supports have people utilized after they or a loved one experienced officer use of force?

The literature is extensive regarding the impact that intimate partner violence, stranger violence, and family violence has on people, while the literature concerning the impact of violence carried out by officers is virtually non-existent. An individual who is a government employee sanctioned to use violence may be a stranger, but s/he is a very particular category of stranger, one whom people expect to be able to trust and even rely on for survival. Consequently, a violent interaction with an officer may have ramifications that are quite different from the ones resulting from such an interaction with any other unknown civilian or a family member.

**Role of the researcher.** “Research is only as good as the investigator” (Morse, Barrett, Mayan, Olson, & Spiers, 2002, p. 17). According to Morse et al. (2002), good research depends on the researcher’s flexibility, creativity, sensitivity, and verification strategy skills. What this means is that as a researcher I had to constantly be on the lookout for changes that needed to be made to my plan and be willing to create alternatives to it. For example, when my plan for participant selection did not yield the minimum number of cases, I needed to be willing to change the criteria for inclusion in the study by extending the qualifying number of years since the incident had occurred.

A qualitative researcher is the principal instrument for collecting and analyzing data (Creswell, 2007; Merriam & Associates, 2002). I gathered information through asking open-ended questions and by gathering collateral data myself. In addition to being the key instrument, I played the following roles: (a) interpreter; (b) biographer; (d) evaluator; (e) teacher; and (f) advocate (Stake, 1995).

As previously mentioned, I interpreted the responses the participants provided. The meanings that they had given their experiences passed through the filters created by my paradigm or worldview (Creswell, 2007; Lincoln, 2009) and were overlaid with my interpretations to some degree. While no person can be totally objective (Lincoln, 2009), it was my responsibility to be aware of and transparent about my own biases and views and to present the information I received as accurately as I could. In reporting the participants' accounts of their experiences, I functioned as a biographer and because some of my interpretations were evaluative, I at times took on the role of an evaluator (Stake, 1995). In regard to other roles I played, like all researchers, I acted as a teacher by selecting, organizing, and presenting material for future readers, and, in the process, I was acting as an advocate, doing my best to demonstrate the credibility of the conclusions and possible solutions I ultimately presented after thorough data analysis (Stake, 1995).

My personal experience with the phenomenon under consideration has impacted the proposed study. On the one hand, my understanding of what it is like to have a loved one who is a survivor of officer use of force and to be the victim of threatened officer use of force facilitated the building of rapport with the study participants by providing an immediate connection. On the other hand, I needed to be careful to set my own interpretations aside in order not to affect the process (Merriam & Associates, 2002). In order to do this, it was necessary to analyze my own perceptions and reactions to my experiences, bracket them, and approach each interview with an open mind (Creswell, 2007).

**Overview of methodology.** This is an exploratory qualitative multicase study. This type of inquiry allowed me as a researcher to encourage individuals to describe in their own words their experiences with officer use of force and the impact it had had on them. The most common

case study methods are observation, interview, coding, data management, and interpretation. Because the incidents in question had already occurred, observation was limited to the participant's behavior during the interview. In addition to interviews, I used as data sources digital, textual, and audiovisual materials that were relevant to the cases. The study focused on exploring and interpreting the meaning participants ascribed to their experiences. Additionally, it attempted to reveal the community supports in place to assist citizens who have experienced officer use of force. Finally, it uncovered unmet participant needs.

### **Participant Selection and Demographics**

My original plan was to use homogeneous sampling to select from four to five participants for this study. Homogeneous sampling entails purposefully sampling individuals “based on membership in a subgroup that has defining characteristics” (Creswell, 2008, p. 216). The subgroup was survivors of officer use of force, either as victim or secondary victim. Secondary victims included family members and friends who had been impacted by the incident. Specific criteria for inclusion in the sub-group created a system bounded by experience, time, and geography and were the following:

- 1) the incident occurred in the same city within the past 8 years, (the original timeframe was 5 years), and
- 2) the person
  - (a) had experienced police use of force first hand; or
  - (b) had a family member or loved one who had been subjected to force;
  - (c) stated that s/he was willing and emotionally prepared to talk about the incident;and
  - (d) was accessible for an interview.

In order to show different perspectives of the issue, I used purposeful maximal sampling (Creswell, 2007) to include cases within the subgroup that represented different ethnicities and demonstrated different viewpoints, for example, that of a young female survivor of officer use of force and that of a parent whose young adult offspring did not survive officer use of force. This was done in an effort to maximize what could be learned, the first criterion in selecting cases (Stake, 1995).

Three of the seven participants were people I knew from the community who had, during casual conversations, expressed their interest in participating in the study. Two people were recommended by other participants. A sixth participant responded to an email I sent to the local county membership of a statewide organization of family members of incarcerated individuals. The seventh person was someone I had met a few years earlier, days after his son had been killed by an officer. I did not have a phone number or email address for him and received no response to my outreach via social media, so I made two visits to his home. I was apprehensive about appearing unannounced; it was a sensitive topic to broac, and I did not know how receptive he would be to discussing it after nearly 5 years had passed.

On my first visit, no one was home; on the second visit his wife answered the door and I told her my reason for being there. She said that she remembered me from our interactions years earlier. She went in to tell her husband, SF, I was there; he came out to the garage, and listened to my request. He agreed to participate, and invited me in to see the shrine they had created for his son with pictures, military souvenirs, and belongings. He opened up and began telling me about many of the challenges and developments since his son's "murder." I eventually interrupted, although it felt awkward, to tell him I wanted to capture all that he was relating to me in an audio recording. We arranged for me to return the next evening for an interview.

The seven participants represented five separate incidents of officer use of force, or five cases. In this study, a case is an officer/citizen interaction wherein the officer used any of the forms of force included in the use of force continuum, from loud verbal directions to deadly force. Five is a number that is appropriate for multicase studies (Creswell, 2007) and, according to Stake (2006), “The benefits of multicase study will be limited if fewer than, say, four cases are chosen, or more than 10” (p. 22). I decided upon five in light of the fact that each case is an in-depth study in and of itself (Stake, 2006), and I wanted to choose cases from which the most could be learned (Tellis, 1997). One case included a primary and secondary victim; one included two primary victims; two cases each included one secondary victim; and one case included one primary.

In order to be able to compare the impacts of and meanings ascribed to officer use of excessive force among individuals from different demographic groups, I made an effort to include participants with varied demographic characteristics. These included age, ethnicity, gender, employment, and education level. Participants either selected or I assigned a pseudonym for use in the study. This information is summarized in Table 1 to maintain participant confidentiality.

Mac is a single African American male in his early 20s. Leta is a single African American female also in her early 20s. They were both students at a small private university. Red was a single European American male who identified as LGBTQ. He had his own business and was attending a public university full time. June is a married European American female retired from a helping profession. Jed, a primary victim, is a European American male over the age of 70 who is retired from a career in business. His wife, June, is also a European American over the age of 70. SF is a Hispanic male in his 50s who is a former small

business owner now working in the office of a small company. May is a Hispanic female in her 50s who owns a small business with her husband. Both May and SF are secondary victims whose sons were primary victims. Although all the participants were of middle- to upper-middle class backgrounds, this was not a result of the selection criteria. Despite not having participants who possessed lower education levels, low or high socio-economic levels, or legal records, this remains a good population sample.

Table 2

*Participant Demographics*

	Age Range	Ethnicity	Gender	Employment	Education
Mac	20-29	African Am	Male	Student	Some college
Leta	20-29	African Am	Female	Student	Some college
June	70-80	European Am	Female	Social service provider	Master's degree
Jed	70-80	European Am	Male	Businessman	College degree
Red	30-40	European Am	Male	Student & business owner	Some college
May	50-60	Hispanic Am	Female	Business owner	Trade school
SF	50-60	Hispanic Am	Male	Business owner	Some college

**Data Collection**

**Participant interviews.** Interviews were the primary means of data collection since the best way to access a person's lived experience is to have them narrate it (Nunokoosing, 2005). Interviews are also the most fitting data collection method to use if a goal is to understand and compare participants' perspectives (Patton, 2002). Interviews were unstructured, in-depth and open ended. I conducted unstructured interviews due to the sensitivity of the topic and in recognition of the vulnerability they might still have been feeling (Corbin & Morse, 2003). In an



unstructured interview, power lies with the participant rather than the interviewer; the participant decides what to talk about, sets the pace, and controls what and how much to disclose as well as the emotional intensity (Corbin & Morse, 2003). Furthermore, one of the situations in which unstructured interviews are indicated is when a new domain is being researched (Firmin, 2008). Due to the scarcity of research in the area of the impact of officer use of force, this topic can be considered a new domain.

I explored the interactions the participants had with law enforcement personnel, and their views on the impact those interactions had had on them. In the case of family members, I explored their views on the impacts that officer use of force against their loved one had had on them and their family. When participants described difficulties that had arisen as a consequence of officer use of force against them or a loved one, I inquired into whether or not they had sought any kind of help after the incident had occurred. If they had, I asked them to explain where they had turned for help and what type of help they had been offered and had received. If they had not sought help, I asked why that was the case.

I conducted 12 individual, face-to-face participant interviews between November 20, 2016, and December 26, 2017. The interview protocol consisted of open-ended questions related to the participants' experience with law enforcement and the use of force. I strove to set the participants at ease during our interview so that they would feel comfortable sharing their stories with me. I remained keenly aware of the sensitive nature of the topic and was tuned in to the emotional state of each participant as we interacted. Although all of the participants had stated that they were emotionally prepared to talk about their experiences prior to being included in the study, strong emotions arose unexpectedly. When I perceived physical signs of stress or emotion, I did my best to ensure the participant's comfort. Since no participant indicated a desire to end

the interview, we continued, in some cases after a period of silence in which the participant regained composure.

Interviews took place in the location of each participant's choice. I asked each person to choose the location for two reasons. One was to provide from the outset a shared sense of control over the interview. The other was to meet in a place where each interviewee would feel comfortable and at ease talking candidly about this sensitive topic and perhaps unexpectedly expressing emotions.

As a result, Mac and I agreed to meet and reserve a university library study room, as did Leta and I. While Mac and I were able to reserve one of the rooms (which cannot be reserved in advance) Leta and I were unable to. At her suggestion we found a vacant classroom instead. Both interviews were entirely private and uninterrupted. June proposed meeting at her house; her husband and daughter were home but were elsewhere in the house and eventually left as June and I talked in the living room. Red suggested meeting at his work studio where there were no other people and no interruptions, and SF invited me to his home.

Each participant read the letter I had composed explaining the purpose of the study, became familiar with the protocol, and signed a Participant Consent Form prior to the start of the interview. I gave the participants the opportunity to pose any questions they had regarding the study. After I had answered them, they signed a consent form, and gave me permission to record the interview with digital voice recorders. I chose to record the interviews because I wanted to give each participant my full attention.

The interviews ranged in length from 20 minutes to one hour and 46 minutes . The two youngest participants, Mac and Leta, had the shortest interviews. This could be due to a number of factors. One may be that although they were both threatened with guns, the physical violence

they actually experienced was on the less extreme side of the scale: shouting, handcuffing, brandishing of weapons. All the other participants were primary or secondary victims of dragging, beating or shooting. Neither Mac nor Leta had gone to attorneys or governmental or community organizations to look for help and had no follow-up interaction with the legal system. Their experience was limited to the incident itself and, in Leta's case, some telephone interactions with the police department afterwards.

In order to put the participants at ease, each meeting began with casual conversation. I had established rapport with six of the seven participants through our previous meetings or telephone conversations in which I had learned about their experiences with officer use of force and shared my own. I established rapport with the one participant whom I had not met in person prior to the interview by referencing our relationships with one of the other study participants, and we spent some time talking about our work toward our degrees. I shared the fact that I, on two occasions, and two of my family members had also experienced officer use of excessive force.

All but one participant showed what I interpreted to be signs of strong emotion at one or two points in the interview. Those signs included taking deep breaths, pausing for long periods of time, and throat clearing. Two participants blinked away tears, one let tears flow, and another broke down sobbing at one point; I was unsuccessful at holding back my own tears in these last two instances. I sensed that the most respectful way for me to handle those moments was to wait until they were ready to continue talking and to express empathy with what they might be feeling. I told the person who broke down "Take your time," but immediately wished I hadn't. It was a sentiment that could have gone without being stated and it sounded intrusive once I had said it. No one asked to end their interview as a result of emotional upset.

I used a digital voice recorder for each interview. I had intended to use a pen and notepad for note taking, but decided during the first interview to use them only sparingly because I wanted to focus fully on the participant, which I felt was essential to indicate caring and concern. If I had been taking notes throughout the entire interview, I would have felt a step removed from the participant and would not have been able to maintain eye contact. It would also have interfered with my ability to closely observe body language and facial expressions and might have been a distraction to the participants.

I interviewed Leta, Mac, June, and Red twice; May, SF, and Jed once. I interviewed Leta and Mac a second time several months after their first interviews because our first meetings were shortly after their experience and were relatively brief. I wanted to know if their perspectives had changed at all with time. Furthermore, with Mac's permission, I had obtained a copy of the incident report of their stop and they had not seen it; I wanted to know their reactions to it.

Red's initial interview also took place not long after his experience. Consequently, I wanted to determine whether or not his views about his experience had changed with time and follow up on the response he had gotten to charges he had pressed. June's second interview and Jed's first interview took place after they had received a settlement from City. Jed had not wanted to participate in the study while his case was pending, so our interview took place the week after the settlement was finalized. I wanted to learn June's reactions to the settlement and find out if receiving it had changed her opinions at all.

Although I communicated with both May and SF numerous times after their interviews, SF via email and May via email, phone, and text, I did not conduct a second interview with either of them. Their first interviews were both several years after their sons had been shot by officers. I understood that no major changes had taken place to alter their views on their

experiences. Each of them had both become quite emotional during their interviews. I did not want to put them through the experience again unnecessarily, despite an email SF sent me after his interview saying the following:

You must understand that the opportunity you presented to me last night was an avenue that God knew I would need to be able to release all of these emotions which had resurfaced due to the outcome of the Appellate Court's decision. I was able to rest somewhat better last night than the night before & I know without a doubt it was because you allowed me to express myself in your efforts to complete your dissertation.

It was reassuring to know that SF thought the interview experience was beneficial; nonetheless, I did not believe it would be appropriate to interview him or May again in the absence of new developments in their years-long struggles.

**Individual case notes.** In accordance with Stake's recommendations (1995), I wrote, or recorded and then later transcribed, a brief summary of each interview as soon as possible after it concluded. These records were helpful during data analysis and write up because they added some context, and when I referred to them they refreshed my memory of the interview experience itself. In each, I summarized what stood out for me in terms of content at that moment and described any significant body language, manner of speaking, and emotions. I also made note of any pertinent statements that were made after the recording device was turned off.

**Transcription.** Stake's (1995) position on the recording of interviews is that "Getting the exact words of the respondent is usually not very important, it is what they mean that is important" (p. 66). He suggests that the interviewer listen carefully during the interview, reconstruct the interview in a report as soon as possible afterward, and ask the participant to review it for accuracy (Stake, 1995; Stake, 2006). He recommends that recording and transcription be used only when they are essential to the final report and, unless they are, that the time required for transcribing be used for other things (Stake, 1995).

Hammersley states that whether or not to transcribe is one of a number of decisions researchers must make (Hammersley, 2010). One of the arguments in favor of transcription is that it provides a record of some of the evidence that researchers can return to for evaluating and re-evaluating their conclusions (Hammersley, 2010). Lapadat and Lindsay (1999) argue that while transcribing is time consuming, it is more precise and thorough than more expedient approaches, making the information from an interview more accessible and flexible. Lapadat (2000) points out another benefit of transcription, the resulting deep familiarity with the interview content that is important for its interpretation. For these reasons, in addition to the interview summary that Stake recommends, I transcribed each participant interview.

Another important decision regarding interviews is what type of transcription to apply. Researchers use transcription to create knowledge in different ways for different audiences and different purposes (Lapadat, 2000; Skukauskaite, 2014). For example, sociolinguists and conversation analysts produce more highly detailed transcriptions than do other types of qualitative researchers (Bucholtz, 2007; Hammersley, 2010). Bucholtz (2007) refers to these different types of transcriptions as “global” or “detailed.” I used global transcription for this study since my goal was not to analyze the discourse structure but to identify and create a written record of the content of the interviews that related to the pre-identified themes, as well as any new themes that arose during the interviews. The process that I used for thematic analysis is included in the following section on data analysis.

**Expert interviews and archival data.** I conducted telephone interviews with two attorneys who have had multiple experiences in representing victims of officer use of force and a long-time criminal justice professor with over 50 years’ experience working with police. The two attorneys asked to remain anonymous.

**Email and telephone communications.** I communicated with some community experts and resources via email and telephone. These contacts included a police detective, two psychologists, and a staff member with the Texas State Office of the Attorney General's Crime Victim Compensation Program and several Office for Victims of Crime staff members.

**Document collection and storage.** Personal documents can provide a wealth of relevant information (Creswell, 2008). Some participants brought documents to give me and I asked permission to make copies of other documents they showed me or made reference to when I thought they would help answer the study's research questions. These included official reports, an essay, court documents, and emails, among other things. In addition, I searched online for news articles and reports related to the participants' stories. These and all other documents, forms, and interview transcriptions were kept in a locked cabinet in my home office. Digital material was kept on a password-protected computer. I kept the signed consent forms and interview transcriptions separate from participant contact information.

### **Data Analysis**

The purpose of multicase data analysis is to analyze cross-case findings in order to make assertions about the quintain (Stake, 2006). Each case in the study is included to better understand the quintain, the effects of officer use of force. My approach to the analysis was based on the one Stake (2006) suggests in his book *Multiple Case Study Analysis*.

I maintained what Stake calls an analyst's log from the outset of the study. This log was a record of my thoughts, decisions, and questions about the data, the participants, and myself as a researcher throughout the course of the study, all of which contributed to the transparency of my thought processes. I wrote a summary of each interview to record the main points and incidents as soon as possible after it was completed (Stake, 1995). I compiled the report of my findings

from the interview(s), my analyst's log, and all other information sources for each case. I then analyzed the completed report for each case, following the process suggested by Stake (2006) which is detailed below.

I created a document where I compiled notes related to my analysis of each case (Stake, 2006). These included thought about the participant interviews, my observations, and the information gathered from other sources. Topics included my synopsis of the case, any situational constraints, the uniqueness of the case among others, the prominence of each theme in the case, the expected utility of the case for developing each theme, findings, possible excerpts for the multicase report, and my commentary (Stake, 2006). The commentary section had quotations and notes on other things that I might incorporate into the cross-case report.

I transcribed and coded each interview as soon as possible after it was completed. In keeping with my data analysis plan based on Stakes' (2006) approach, I created a table for each participant that included each of the themes expressed in the research questions. They were:

- Impact on you;
- Impact on family and friends;
- Supports sought or not; and
- Supports used.

The known effects of traumatic experiences formed subcategories of Impact on You and Impact on Family and Friends. These were classified as emotional, psychological, physical, social, and behavioral responses (McCann et. al, 1988) and labeled with, for example, the emotion expressed, such as fear. The statement, "Oh, I'm scared of them." was coded as Impact on You\Reactions\Emotional Response\Fear.



I used open coding to identify and label all of the meaning units in each interview that related to each of these themes and placed them in the table accordingly (Aronson, 1995). Some appeared in two or more categories. Additional topics appeared during the first reading of the transcribed interviews and so I coded them and placed the meaning units related to them in the table as well. I labeled the new topics Actions, What Helped; and Coping Mechanisms.

During the second reading of the interviews, I manually searched for trauma-related words and their various forms that occurred in the interviews. They included “scared,” “scary,” “freeze,” “frozen,” “safe,” and “unsafe.” I then put each participant’s statements containing those words, and the statements before and after them, into a table. This provided an overview of each participant’s emotional, psychological, and physical reactions to her/his experience.

I uploaded the interviews to NVivo and input the existing codes. I analyzed each interview multiple times, creating numerous additional codes. In addition to the four themes resulting from the study’s four research questions, two new themes emerged from the data, Impact on Victim from Third Person Perspective and Group Identity. All the coded data became subcategories of these six themes. The themes and the number of references for each are displayed in Figure 1.

Interview Response Categories			
	Name	Sources	Referenc
+	Impact on You	6	562
	Supports Sought or Not	6	56
	Impact on Family and Friends	6	42
+	Supports Used	5	30
	Impact on Victim from 3rd Person Perspective	3	23
+	Group Identity	4	14

Figure 1. Revised list of codes used for labeling interview responses.

The greatest number of responses fell into the category Impact on You with 562 references from all seven participants. Supports Sought or Not was a far distant second category with 56 references, again from all seven participants. The third category, Impact on Family and Friends had 42 references from all seven participants, and Supports Used had the fewest references, 30, which five of the seven participants contributed.

The subcategories of Impact on You were Opinions, Reactions, Coping Mechanisms, Isolation, and Financial Costs. Figure 2 shows the numerical breakdown of the responses.

Interview Response Categories			
Name	Sources	Referenc	
Impact on You	6	562	
Opinions	6	279	
Reactions	6	233	
Coping Mechanisms	5	27	
Isolation	3	15	
Financial Costs	1	8	

Figure 2. Interview responses categorized under Impact on You.

The category with the greatest number of references was Opinions (279), with 178 related to law enforcement and 101 related to the legal system. and they touched on a number of topics. I coded this data as Impact on You (or Family Member)\Opinions\Law Enforcement (or Legal System) along with the topic the opinion related to. For example, the coding for the meaning unit, “They don't care about people's rights. All they care about is putting on a badge and saying, ‘I'm bigger and better than you are now.’” I coded as Impact on You\Opinions\Law Enforcement\Abuse of Power.

Two hundred fifteen Reaction references were trauma-related reactions—emotional, psychological, physical, behavioral, and social. They were primarily emotional (116 references) and psychological (87 references). Two other Reactions subcategories were Actions and PTSD.

Actions included references to things participants had done as a result of the officer use of force incident, and PTSD consisted of direct references to trauma and PTSD. The number of responses related to supports participants sought and used was significant because it was so low.

Participants spoke much more about a lack of support and services.

I then used the individual case analysis forms in the cross-case analysis. When moving to cross-case analysis, Stake (2006) recommends establishing a “case-quintain dialectic” (p. 46). This refers to the process of paying attention to both the individual cases and the quintain, going back and forth between the two, keeping the issues of the individual cases separate for some time before merging them into the larger study. Stake offers three alternate tracks for analyzing across cases. Track I retains the individual case findings and contexts, but Stake cautions that it is the most difficult and that the researcher may get bogged down by too many details (Stake 2006). Track II combines findings that are similar, retains little of the context of the individual cases, and proceeds toward generalization. Track III focuses on factors rather than findings, and is more quantitative than qualitative (Stake 2006). For this study I opted to use Track II, aiming at generalization among the cases.

Employing the procedure Stake (2006) proposes for Track II, I sorted and merged the individual findings from the interviews, documents, and artifacts to create cross-case themes, and more specific topics emerged. I then sorted and ranked the cross-case topics, indicating which theme each one exemplified and how important each topic was for that theme. I rated the importance of each as high, middle, or low. Stake (2006) suggests employing a matrix that includes the merged topics (with space for unmerged “special” topics that are worth noting in the final discussion), an indication of which cases they are from, and the themes they contribute to.

Using the most highly ranked merged topics, I made what Stake calls a tentative assertions worksheet about the effects of officer use of force, noting what they were, which specific themes they related to, and which cases provided the evidence for them (Stake, 2006). I was then prepared to conduct the cross-case analysis. This was an iterative process, involving much back and forth between the cases, the evidence, the assertions, and the quintain. The findings emerged through this process. When my analysis was complete, I wrote a summary discussing the emergent themes, the cases, the findings, and my assertions (Stake (2006).

### **Validity**

Stake (2006) recommends triangulation throughout the process to ensure validity and suggests one way of accomplishing this is by getting feedback on the findings from other people in the community who have knowledge of the quintain, the effects of officer use of excessive force. I interviewed two attorneys with experience in prosecuting officer excessive force' cases, a criminal justice professor, two psychologists, a detective, and state and federal employees. Additional sources of information for triangulation that were mentioned earlier were documents, news reports, photographs, and other artifacts. Another strategy I used to ensure validity was member checks (Merriam & Associates, 2002), asking some participants to confirm the accuracy of my interpretations and tentative findings. Peer review in the form of discussions with and feedback from the members of my dissertation committee was yet another means of ensuring validity, as was conducting data collection until no new information appeared (Merriam & Associates, 2002).

### **Protection of Human Subjects: Ethical Considerations**

For this study to have value, it was necessary to conduct it in the most ethical manner possible. In keeping with university requirements, I gained IRB approval before moving forward with participant recruitment and interviews and renewed it after 2 years. I informed participants of

the study and asked them to sign an Informed Consent Agreement prior to their interviews. I asked participants for pseudonyms or assigned one in order to protect their identities. I kept the consent forms with other documents and forms in a locked file cabinet in my office.

Because of the violence inherent in officer use of force, the topic is similar to some of the research topics that Fahie (2014) identifies as sensitive: domestic violence, homicide and rape, mental health, and death. In 1990, Lee and Renzetti defined a sensitive topic as "...one which potentially poses for those involved a substantial threat, the emergence of which renders problematic for the researcher and/or the researched the collection, holding, and/or dissemination of the research data" (p. 5). They list particular research areas which may be more threatening than others. These include (1) the private sphere and deeply personal experience because of the levels of emotional stress discussing them may produce, and (2) social control, the exercise of power and coercion, and the interests of the powerful in society due to the possibility of being stigmatized or retaliated against in some way.

The threat of being stigmatized or retaliated against is a risk with many types of research. However, Corbin and Morse (2003) point out that a break in confidentiality is always possible. They claim that the risk is less in a research interview than when people share information in confidence with friends and family due to the high ethical standards and requirements imposed on researchers.

While admitting that there are also risks of emotional stress associated with research inquiring into personal experience, Corbin and Morse (2003) argue that it is no greater than everyday life risks involved when people talk about those same issues with family and friends. They firmly contend that it is something that a skillful, ethical, sensitive researcher can manage. They share that in their combined 50 years of conducting research, much of it on sensitive

subjects, neither of them has ever had a problematic experience. Corbin and Morse (2003) attribute this to the use of unstructured interviews. They allow the interviewees to maintain a significant amount of control over the interaction, which is different from the degree of control that participants have in a medical experiment (Corbin & Morse, 2004). They also contend that people who are emotionally fragile or who do not think they can talk about the topic being researched do not volunteer for interviews.

I incorporated into my study Corbin and Morse's (2003) suggestions for ensuring participants' emotional safety when conducting sensitive research. These are to:

- have procedures in place for evaluating and terminating an interview if a participant appears too distressed. These may include ample wait time, telling the participant it is acceptable to express emotions, offering water and tissues;
- stay with participants until they are emotionally calm;
- provide a list of local counselors to any participants who become emotionally upset during or after the interview; and
- contact participants a few days or a week after the interview to confirm their well-being if they have become emotionally upset.

As mentioned earlier, I intended for participants to be individuals whom I had met in person or on the phone in previous years and had talked to about their experiences with officer use of force. I did not anticipate problems with emotional distress developing during the course of our interviews as there had been none in our previous conversations. While some participants became very emotional, in no case did it become problematic and in no case did offering a list of counselors seem appropriate.

## Summary

This chapter details the design and data analysis of the research. By conducting a qualitative study, I was able to gain an understanding of the participants' experiences and the meanings they attributed to them. Analyzing multiple cases provided different perspectives on similar experiences of diverse individuals in response to the following questions:

- What impact has officer use of force had on you?
- What impact has officer use of force had on your family and friends?
- What supports did you seek after the experience?
- What supports have you used?

This information could lay the groundwork for future scholarly research and begin to close an existing gap in the literature.

## Chapter 4: Findings

### Introduction

The primary purpose of this multicase study was to explore the perspectives of individuals, and family members and friends of individuals who had experienced officer use of force and the meanings they had ascribed to their experiences. The aim was to understand and document what the participants experienced, where they turned for support, and what challenges they faced. I used open-ended interviews with four primary victims and three secondary victims to address the following research questions:

RQ 1a: How has officer use of force impacted individuals who experienced it directly?

RQ 1b: How has officer use of force impacted family members or friends (secondary victims) of individuals who have experienced it directly?

RQ 2: What supports, if any, have people sought after they or a family member or friend experienced officer use of force?

RQ 3: What supports, if any, have people utilized after they or a family member or friend experienced officer use of force?

This chapter presents key findings that emerged from the analysis of participant interviews, documents, artifacts, expert interviews, and news reports. It begins with case vignettes that present each participant's account of and reactions to the excessive use of force incident in which they were directly or indirectly involved. The four main themes with subtopics follow the vignettes.



## Case Vignettes

The interview protocol consisted of open-ended questions designed to allow participants to feel free to follow their thoughts and answer as spontaneously and naturally as possible. They chose the issues they wanted to discuss. Consequently, the responses to each question contained a great deal of information that did not address the question directly, but was related to the person's experience and thoughts about it. Information that related to a question that had not yet been asked was frequently included in the response to another question. I attempted to ask as few additional questions as possible so as not to steer the narrative and aimed at limiting the ones I did ask for purposes of clarification and elaboration. The protocol did not solicit information concerning the incident itself. However, every participants spoke in detail about the actual event they or their loved one had experienced.

Each interview had its own predominant theme. In most cases it was a word that was used repeatedly and its synonyms; in each vignette, those words are italicized in participants' quotes. In others it was a combination of a frequently used word and its synonyms plus a sense that the overall narrative created. Each case is labeled with the term that law enforcement used to identify it, the participant's pseudonym, and the dominant theme(s) of the interview.

### **Case 1: Fraudulent use of ID.**

*Mac: Reality.* Mac was identified as a suspect in a case of fraudulent use of identification when he dropped a personal belonging off at a friend's home. When he returned to his car, a vehicle swooped up, two men jumped out, Mac and his girlfriend had guns pointed at their heads, and they were ordered out of their vehicle. They thought they were being robbed until Mac was put in handcuffs and frisked. They were separated, interrogated, and released. On a scale ranging from the least force used (officer presence) to the most force used (lethal force) the

level of force they experienced was on the lower end of the spectrum (Terrill & Paoline, 2012). Nonetheless, they were both perceptibly shaken and altered by the experience.

Mac's entire worldview appeared to have been changed. He used words relating to "reality" repeatedly throughout his interview. These included real, reality, really, and realized; they occurred 20 times in his initial, 20-minute interview.

- It's opened a view to *reality*, perspective to *reality*, a *reality* that others don't see, but a *reality* that I know a lot of people that not only look like me, but think like me, do the same things as me, they face that *reality*. This is the same *reality* you see on CNN, MSN, Fox. That's the *reality*.
- When I looked down the barrel of that gun I *realized* like OK, this is definitely *real*. If I move the wrong way I could lose my life and I could be another...another hashtag, another... just another name, another statistic really. I wasn't even doin' anything. That's just the worst part. Like I *really*---that *really* could've been me. That *really* could've been me.
- Every time I think about it, it brings it up. It brings up that mentality---OK that was *real*, this is how I feel like...Honestly it has driven my mindset lately. It's been part of it.
- I know that sometimes you have to say you dug within yourself but I for sure got a tighter grip to *reality*.

After talking about this new reality, Mac explained that he had grown up loving law enforcement. He said, "I grew up thinking they would save you." To encourage further elaboration I asked if his recent experience had had any impact on that view. He replied:

Definitely. Definitely. But I understand statistics, I understand. We've all taken stats. I understand there's outliers and everything, so I can't say that this reality has brought me to hate cops and all cops are bad. No. But based on what I do understand, and what I've seen, and what I've experienced, I can say most are, you know what I'm sayin? I can go, "Hey, OK until you show me otherwise, you're this. Just like you do it to me." Just like they assess threats, I assess threats as well, that's the human nature of things. We all assess threats, that's what we do.

In a follow-up interview, Mac expanded on his view of law enforcement officers. He had had some encounters with them since our last interview and those experiences had been positive

ones. That, he explained, is what is wrong with law enforcement. It's one of two choices: the officers are either "really cool or really bad," with nothing in between. He compared it to the flip of a coin.

Dr. Michael Gilbert is a retired professor of criminal justice and current executive director of the National Association of Community Restorative Justice. He has approximately 50 years' experience working with law enforcement and he corroborated Mac's assessment. While acknowledging that "knuckleheads" who do bad things are out there, he expressed the view that they are not representative of a majority of officers. However, he echoed Mac's observation, stating, "You don't know if you're going to get a thoughtful, decent officer or a knucklehead, so you're sort of girding yourself for the knucklehead."

When I asked Mac about the impact the incident had had on his family, I learned he had protected his mother, who is a widow, and his sister by not telling them about it. He said it would just give them another reason to worry and that they would both give him "the spiel" again. He said with a laugh that if his mother knew about it, "Her prayers would be a little stronger. And God's had enough, you know?"

When it came to the impact it had on his male friends he said, "I observed first that they see the same reality I see. That anybody could be 'It'." (He said this with a slight laugh.) "It doesn't matter you know. Anybody can be 'It,' so you just better walk as straight as you can." Concerning his girlfriend who was with him during the incident he said, "She worries more every day...It for sure blew her mind. She had some trauma. She definitely had some trauma."

In terms of any help he had sought afterwards, Mac said, "I can't say I really seek support. Other than stronger support from myself." Then he jokingly commented, "A Jack and Coke every now and then." He acknowledged that his friends' empathy and expressions of

“remorse” were helpful. When I asked if he would use any free community services if they were available he responded, “Why? For what? So I guess that’s just being ignorant to the damage but...” He said he would have to see some kind of damage before he would seek help, but then concluded with, “The reality is, that’s the reality. If this happened to somebody else, yes, they would need that. But me bein’ a black man in America, that can’t be me. It can’t be me.”

While sobered by the experience, Mac made no mention of any emotional or physical reactions he had had, either during or after the encounter. Even when talking about looking down the barrel of a gun and realizing that if he made the wrong move he could lose his life, he said nothing about experiencing fear. At times, though, he had to search for words, and it was unclear if those were moments he used to maintain control of his emotions, or if it was due to a genuine loss of words. I asked if he felt angry about the way he had been treated.

I wouldn’t say I felt anger. More like annoyed. Like, “Come on.” Toward the system. Toward the officers. It was what it was. That’s their power. In a sense they were only doing their job. They could’ve done their job better, but what am I going to do? Go train them? No.

Mac said the experience had not left him with a fear of law enforcement officers, again referencing reality. “You can’t be scared to face reality,” he explained. “You just suck it up and go about your day without facing the worst of that reality. You make the best of it.” He eschewed support of any kind, and acquired no documentation of the stop. He had not obtained a copy of the police report.

**Leta: Scared.** Leta was with Mac when he was detained but was not the primary target of the police stop; however, she too was directly impacted. Although she talked about being cautious around, but not scared of, officers as a result of her experience, the overriding theme of her interview was that of fear. She used the word “scared” five times, the word “freaked” three times, and “shock” once when recounting the incident.

- I think it made me more---I don't wanna say *scared*, but more *cautious* when I see a cop. I know if my boyfriend's gonna be out I tell him "Behave and don't do anything stupid. Don't call attention to yourself by doing something stupid."
- It made me more *scared* than anything to see that happen. Seeing him handcuffed and taken to the back. That's what kinda *freaked me out*. I was *crying*. I was *crying* and *shaking* cause I was like, "I don't know what's gonna happen. I don't know these cops. I don't know what they could do."
- When it (an unmarked police car) pulled up on the side of us really fast it was like, "Are we getting robbed? What's going on?" I didn't know what to do. I was just *in shock*. Honestly. Cause that's what that was like. "OK, we're about to get robbed."
- I see what happens on TV, and it was *scary* how they did it cause I've never had a gun pointed towards me.

The word Leta used to describe the impact the incident had had on both her friends and family was "shocked." Her friends did not think that what Mac was suspected of warranted the level of force that was utilized. Her parents, she said, are "probably a little more protective" now. Her father, it seemed, put the responsibility on her and Mac for what had happened to them, telling her that she needed to be more careful and more aware of her surroundings: "You should have seen (the car) parked down there." Leta, in defense of Mac and herself, explained that the car was unmarked and that it looked like a regular car. "There wasn't a computer in it or anything, so you couldn't really tell it was a cop car."

The only place Leta turned for support was the police department itself. One of the officers had taken her student identification card and failed to return it to her. The card is more important to a student than a driver's license because it is required to pay for meals at the campus cafeteria, check out books from the library, print and copy documents, and to manage other regular student activities. According to Leta, police department personnel and the officer involved in the stop were not helpful.

I was trying to go through the process of telling them, "You took my ID. I know that they still have it." They were kinda being jerks about it so I think that kind of just threw me

off to where I didn't wanna even have anything to do with them. ...they were giving me the run-around, like everyone had an attitude that I talked to. I know that they have a certain room where they put lost things. That took me about 2 days to even get them to tell me that.

She called and left a message for the officer who had taken her ID from her. She related the following about their interaction.

He finally got back to me after a week and he was like, 'I don't have it.' I was just kinda, "You have it. I gave it to you. You never gave it back to me." But he was just being rude about the situation, so I think that's why I didn't even talk to anybody about it. I just left it alone. It was just like a big run-around to try to get it.

After 2 weeks Leta gave up and bought a new ID. She explained, "I knew that if I just went and paid the \$11 I'd probably get it before they could give me an answer. So that's why I just went and bought another one."

In regard to wanting support with processing what had happened to her and the strong emotions the experience had evoked, Leta said the following:

I honestly don't even know where I would go to talk to somebody. I don't know what kind of organizations there are to try to speak about it. So I never just took the time to look for an outlet or an organization to talk to somebody about it.

Although most university campuses offer free or reduced-cost counseling, it didn't occur to Leta to access those services. Consequently, she received no professional counseling. Neither she nor her parents filed a complaint or even requested a copy of the police report of the incident. No media covered the incident so there is no public documentation of what occurred.

In a follow-up interview 11 months later, Leta did not complain of any long-term negative effects from her experience. She expressed what could be interpreted as contradictory statements in regard to fear of law enforcement officers. First she said, "I don't think I just automatically fear them every time I see them." However, a bit later she stated, "The fear that I felt during the incident has gone somewhat. I think it was just initial shock that I'd ever been put

in that situation....I still get a little fear but it's not...maybe if that situation happened again I think I'd react the same way."

Her opinions about the stop and the reasons for it appeared to have solidified. She made four separate statements related to the amount of force the officers used, one of which was, "...the excessive force wasn't necessary." She also made two new remarks about the level of force and ethnicity. One was concerning the fear she felt for Mac.

I was more fearful for him because they handcuffed him and in the back of my mind it's another situation of the young black male that's handcuffed. Then two other cop cars came up after that so it's like six cops and him.

The other remark about the level of force was a possible rationalization for it.

Probably cause they saw he was a young black male that OK, he's more likely, he probably does have a gun on him or something like that. I always think that's the situation cause it's always black males. Some people may be fearful towards them and think, "OK, they're automatically going to fight back or hurt me, or have a gun."

*Incident Report.* Leta and Mac's experience is typical of the thousands of stops and arrests made across the country every day. No cell phone video documented it, no witnesses came forward afterward, no media outlet provided coverage so there is only the police report as a record of what occurred. Neither Mac nor Leta had gotten a copy of the officers' report of the incident, but they both expressed an interest in seeing one. Mac provided me with his birthdate and the address where the stop occurred, so I was able to obtain a copy from police headquarters. Some of the details differed significantly in some respects from what I had understood from both Mac and Leta. Leta read and reacted during our second interview; Mac joined us after her interview had ended, read the report, and gave his reactions.

While they had stated that the officers did not identify themselves and they did not initially see anything identifying them as law enforcement, the reporting officer wrote that he and his partner were wearing authorized shirts that displayed police patches and their names and

that their badges were clearly displayed on their belts. He further claimed that his partner identified himself when he approached the driver side of the car. He reported that Mac continued to exit his vehicle after being told to stay in it, and so his partner drew his weapon the second time he ordered him to remain inside. Upon reading that, Mac laughed and said, “Not at all. They had guns drawn from the beginning. A badge was never shown to us.”

In regard to Leta, who was so frightened by having a gun pointed at her face outside her car window, the report merely states that she was a passenger in the car and she and Mac were removed individually “using verbal commands.” No mention was made of a gun being pointed at her head. After reading the report she observed, “But they didn’t even say that they drew the gun out on me too. They’re saying it was just him. It was both of us.” Her explanation for the discrepancies between her account and officers’ was that they had written it that way to hide the fact that the amount of force was excessive and that they were afraid of Mac because he was a young black man.

Mac’s final assessment of the situation was that the officers had decided:

“OK, we’re going to have some fun today.” I think that’s really what they did. And it backfired. They thought their report was going to say, “We solved this crime. We actually did something.” That was just going to be something for their year and they did that, so they had to alter their story.

### **Case 2: Failure to stop and render aid/arson/disturbance.**

**Red: Unsafe.** Officers were dispatched to Red’s home when he called to report an interaction he had had with the driver of a vehicle that had damaged his property. Officers gathered information from him and wrote a report. A few hours later, while Red was taking a shower, he said he heard banging or popping noises. When he opened the bathroom door he stated that smoke and flames were filling his bedroom. The noises he had heard were neighbors



pounding on his windows because they had seen fire on his front porch. The fire department came and a second police report was filed for arson. Red described the damage:

The front door was all burned. ...The whole front of the house. It went into the attic and through the bedroom and all of it was burned. ... They sprayed everything with water. I'm not just talking a little water. I had more water and smoke damage than anything.

However, the incident report states that “minimal heat, smoke and fire damage entered the home.”

The following night Red described someone “kicking on my front door and screaming.” He said the person was yelling in a language he couldn't understand, and he was certain it was the driver of the truck. Frightened, he had run, hidden, and called 911. The officer who was dispatched to his house had kicked in his front door when Red did not answer and found Red hiding in his laundry room. He had dragged Red out to the front of the house.

Red was terrified; he feared that the driver of the vehicle was going to kill him. He could not understand why the driver had not been arrested and so had been able to return to his house two times, presumably starting a fire one night and then banging on his front door the next. Red said that when officers questioned him about what had happened, they yelled at him and refused to believe the information he had given them was accurate. The result was that he was afraid of both the officers and the driver of the vehicle, which the following comments demonstrate.

- I feel *unsafe*. I feel scared. I don't feel like I have any trust in City PD.
- I was feeling very *threatened*. Just the voice and their tones and the way they were talking to me.
- "What are all these pill bottles for?" He didn't even ask me if he could grab them. He just starts grabbing them off my table. Made me feel very *uncomfortable*. I started just to feel *unsafe*.
- They were yelling at me. I felt *unsafe*. I felt like, man, this is not like what it should be. I mean, you think police officers, you *should be safe* and everything.

Red did not think the officers took him or the situation seriously. At one point they sat him down and told him they wanted him to start telling them the truth. They claimed he had given them an incorrect birthdate and an incorrect phone number. He did not understand how that could be possible; he said that he had only one number and of course just one birthdate. He conceded that he might have misspoken due to the panic he had felt, but under no circumstances had he attempted to deceive them.

He's like, "Well you need to start telling me the truth. Are you lying to me?" And I'm like, "No, I'm not lying to you.." We were sitting there and he's like "I got another question for you." I thought I was being punked. I started thinking this was all a joke. It was a joke, it was like something that wasn't real. It was like something you see in a movie that---it's not real.

He blinked back tears as he recounted demanding that they treat him with respect or get out of his house.

For support, Red talked to a therapist that a friend recommended to him, and he took his case to an attorney. His doctor doubled the dosage of his anxiety medication. Red reached out to the police department numerous times, but to no avail.

I've called five different sergeants and lieutenants, the captain of the police. Not one phone call back. I've even went up there and filed assault charges on that guy. I had to file charges and I still haven't gotten one phone call back...I did get one response. And that's because I texted the police officer that he called me when he didn't believe that that number was there. I'm like "Hey, you know any new news?" He said, "Well you know what? I'm doing training with something something something. I'll get back to you in a week." That was it. Still no response from there.

His family members live in different cities, but he had talked to his sister, with whom he is close, about the incident. The impact he reported its having on her was that she was concerned and wanted to know why no one had been arrested. He described his friends as being "in shock" and "angry."

Red spoke of two past situations he knew of very well that others had had with law enforcement. One involved a neighbor's shooting and killing someone on his street. The other involved a neighbor's being cut and stabbed at the apartment next door to his at an apartment complex where he had lived. In both instances officers had been called out to the residences numerous times but, in Red's view, had done nothing. He seemed to fear the same thing would happen to him. "How come it has to wait until somebody's dead? Is that what they're waiting for, till he comes back and either shoots me or burns me to death or...?"

*Incident report.* Red provided me with three incident reports documenting officers' visits to his home (a) after his property had been damaged, (b) after the fire, and (c) after someone had yelled and knocked loudly on his front door. Red said that he was able to give the officers the truck license plate number and that they found out from talking to neighbors that the truck driver was dating his next door neighbor. The initial report states that Red "had info on who the driver is." Red insisted he had never seen the man before.

According to the first report, the man was not arrested or interrogated in person. Instead, the investigating officer talked to him over the phone. The driver's account of events was different from Red's, as he stated that Red had jumped out in front of his truck and that he had driven off because Red was being aggressive. The report was dated the night the driver damaged Red's property, but the officer had placed it on hold "and waited till the next day to contact SP1 (the suspect)." The report states:

SP1 said that he went back the evening of XX-XX-2016 to go pay for the damages to the cable box and that V1 [Red] came to the window and saw it was him and V1 then turned all the lights off and didn't answer the door. SP1 then left the location.

It concludes with, "SP1 said he was not trying to hit V1."

At the time of our second interview, a full year after the incidents, Red had had no response to any of his calls or to the charges he had pressed against the individual. He felt that law enforcement had failed him. He summed up his feelings in the following way: “Loss of trust. Just the way they treated me. I'm the victim. I've felt nowhere close to ‘victim.’ I've felt like I was the bad one. That I'm the one who should be in trouble.”

**Case 3: Public intoxication.**

*SF: Devastated.* SF's teenaged son, Raul, had recently graduated from high school where he was in a military reserve program. He attended church, worked on a military base, and was waiting until he was old enough to apply to the police academy. He had gone to a party at a relative's home on a weekend evening. When he became involved in a heated argument, someone suggested he take a walk to calm down. While he was out, another citizen called law enforcement about “a suspicious person” walking in the street. The officer who responded to the call reported that Raul was acting erratically and, after at first following the officer's instructions, became violent. The officer claimed that Raul tried to push him into traffic, and so he fired his weapon several times, killing him.

While Raul was gone, his relative at the party saw a news ticker reporting an officer-involved shooting in his neighborhood. He called SF to tell him the news and that Raul had not come home. SF called one law enforcement agency to say his son had not come home. When officers came to his house, they told him another agency was involved in the shooting and he would have to get information from them. He called Raul's mother who immediately went to the hospital where they thought he would be if he had been the person shot, but hospital staff said they had been directed not to give out any information. They told her she would have to wait to hear from the law enforcement agency that was managing the case. The agency did not notify SF

of his son's death for 36 hours, but by the time the officers came to his house he had already made funeral arrangements. "Throughout that period I assumed that that was the case 'cause Raul would never not call me," he explained. "He would never not come home."

SF is a veteran who was a peace-time military police officer. He has also taken the courses and test required to become a civilian law enforcement officer although he has never worked as one. His son had died 5 years before our interview. The day before we met, the appellate court had ruled in favor of the officer who had killed his son and the case against him had been dismissed. Whereas some people in that situation might have opted out of the interview, SF did not. In fact, he told me:

This is going to be the perfect time [for an interview] because you're gonna get it right when it's raw, just like the way it was at the very beginning. It felt like I'd just buried [my son] yesterday all over again.

True to his word, SF was openly emotional during our interview, choking with sobs when talking about learning that day of the court's dismissing their appeal against the officer who had shot his son. His wife had stayed for the interview for support, and neither she nor SF indicated in any way that the interview should end, so we continued.

SF is a man for whom religion plays a major role in life. He spoke a great deal about the impact officer use of force has had on his faith and the mental anguish and emotional torment his son's loss has caused him. The following responses to "How has office use of force impacted you?" provide an overview of the range of emotions and a sense of the anguish SF has experienced since losing his son.

- It was just *devastating*. I felt *no purpose* for living anymore. I didn't want to be alive anymore. I've never felt that before in my life. I wanted to be dead so I could be with him. There's *no peace*. There's *no comfort*. I think about him every day. I visit him between 1 and 3 times per week. I'm *suffering the agony* of not ever seeing my boy again.

- Not to mention the fact that you combine this with the feeling of *hatred* that I've NEVER ever experienced, that level of *hatred* in my life. *Anger*. Never experienced THAT level of *anger*. So all of these emotions, they were at the absolute limit. At this point I've not only battled with the *hatred*, *anger*, at a level that I never have before, but now I'm also told that I have *PTSD*.
- I can't bring myself to *forgive* this man for what he did. I've heard messages concerning *forgiveness*. I've heard messages concerning *mental health*. I've heard messages concerning *praying blessings* on people that have *hurt you*. Pray for your *enemies*, love your enemies. *I don't see how it's possible*.
- I'm tired of being strong. It's been 5 years and I have to *keep reburying* him over and over in my head. *I can't do this anymore*. I just *can't*. I'm *at a loss* and the only source of strength that I have is from God. I'm *so tired*. I feel *abandoned*.

He struggles to understand why his son was taken from him and over his inability to forgive the person who “murdered” (the only word he used to refer to the officer’s action) him. He explained, “I heard a message that talked about forgiveness and I battled and battled and battled, but I can’t bring myself to forgive this man for what he did.” At one point, a pastor told him that all he needed to do was tell God he forgave the officer, even if he didn’t mean it. He described what happened when he went to visit his son’s grave:

I went to see (my son) and I sat there. I said, “Alright God, if this is the place where I need to do this then I’ll do it right in front of my son. You know what? I forgive him.” And over the next several weeks it felt like the burden had begun to lift a little bit, but then I would drive down the road and I would see an officer pull over some car and it would start to eat me up again. That’s been the battle ever since then.

SF’s anger toward law enforcement is not directed at all officers or law enforcement agencies in general but at the officer who killed his son, that officer’s colleagues, and the department for which he worked. The fact that the agency had taken 36 hours to notify the family of their loved one’s death and that they had learned of it first on the news was something SF brought up three separate times. He talked about when his ex-wife had gone to the hospital where their son would most likely have been taken in order to find out if it was he who had been killed:

She demanded to see him. They're like, "You can't see him. The [agency] said you can't." She goes, "I gotta know if that's my son." They were like, "We can't give you that information. You're gonna have to wait until you hear from the [agency]." I mean they just covered everything up.

Moreover, SF spoke disparagingly of that agency's officers' appearance, behavior, lack of control and professionalism.

I believe the department is completely inadequate. I believe that there's so much room for them to be able to improve in their training. These guys are rude, they're obnoxious, they're overweight. They probably shouldn't even be in a uniform. They probably have to wear triple X uniforms because they're so huge and fat and very unprofessional. They don't care about people's rights. All they care about is putting on a badge and saying "I'm bigger and better than you are now."

He spoke of the grave consequences of failing to hold the department's officers accountable, warning, "If you guys think that you can get away with killing anybody you want, then it's every man for himself."

Eight months after appealing his son's case to the Supreme Court, SF received the news that a hearing had been denied. The following is some of what he wrote about that decision:

The high court in this land has denied us an answer and basically have ruled that the death of my son did not merit any more attention and this coward is free to continue to live his life free and clear of any wrong doing. I am constantly reminded by many that God has His purpose in all of this and that His Will will be done. While it may not be any of my business what that is, this denial does digress me back to square one where my grief, sorrow, pain, anger and hatred begin to resurface.

#### **Case 4: Robbery suspect.**

*May: Disgusted.* May's son Juan was in his early 30s when he was suspected of committing a string of robberies, pursued by an officer, and shot. The officer claimed Juan had threatened him with a gun. Juan survived and was hospitalized after the encounter. The following injuries were described in the EMS report: "...thru and thru lac. (laceration) to upper lip, possibly from fall and apparent GSW (gunshot wound) to posterior chest/clavicle and GSW to rt. elbow."

Juan admitted to committing the robberies. May said, “Of course he regrets it with all that he has that he even did that.” What she wants is for the charge of assault on an officer to be removed from Juan’s record. Juan maintains that he did not threaten the officer with a gun, and according to May and an expert witness, his injuries were not consistent with the officer’s account. May asked, “How is somebody pointing a gun at you face to face, gets shot in the back at the base of the neck and then the other shot was here coming in from—[points to back of arm]?” An eyewitness to the shooting corroborated Juan’s claim that he did not have a weapon and said that he was shot in the back after he had raised his hands.

When Juan was in the hospital May learned he had brain damage that she said resulted from an accident he had had when he was 12 or 13 years old. The doctors told her it had led to severe bipolar disorder and that his alcohol and drug use had aggravated his condition. Juan’s lawyer argued that the robberies had started the day after Christmas during a manic phase. He pointed out that Juan had been taking psychiatric medications during the 2 years he had been in jail awaiting trial, and had had no behavioral problems. May had expected the judge to take that information into consideration during sentencing, but she did not. Juan was sentenced to 40 years in prison.

May and her husband visit Juan in prison every week. She still wants the officer to be held accountable for unjustifiably shooting him and for his resulting injuries. She stated:

In my eyes I felt like my son shouldn't do one day in the prison. ... That cop gave him life in prison. He's never gonna be the same ever, and I don't even know how long he's gonna live because of all the injuries on the inside.

To date, no one has been willing to support her in an effort to hold the officer accountable.

Because Juan has been incarcerated in both jail and prison and has had a court trial, May has been immersed in the legal system for years. She has been impacted in numerous ways by



the officer's use of force against her son; the deepest impact communicated during her interview is a complete loss of trust in our legal system.

- This little statue you have with the scales, she's blind. She's not supposed to--she can only just hear what's going on and then has to weigh it. It's a *LIE*. I want to knock your stupid statue down cause you're *liars*. You're not weighing nothing. It has nothing to do with that statue. Has nothing to do with justice, with rights with liberties with nothing. It had to do---it's a *political game* they have. It was so *disgusting*.
- They just made a *fool* out of you, a *fool*, a *fool* out of you. Making you believe that you had rights, that you had a voice, that you had somebody that was gonna listen and do the right thing.
- I knew they were all on the same side. I didn't know it at the time we were going through this but they lie to you. They lead you on. At the end I felt like we were *such a joke*. We were the *joke* of that whole court. It was *stupid* cause you're thinking, "Oh they're really hearing you. I get to speak out. I get to say this." You feel *so stupid* because you believed them. You find out that they probably were all *laughing at you* and you were no different than anybody else in your category. You know how *dumb* it feels? They *played us* all along. When you think back and you think about that you think like, "Oh my God, we were the *laughing stock*."
- I feel like they (officers) are *laughing at you*. I know they're not. They don't know anything about the incident with my son. But I feel like they do. I feel like they're *laughing* and saying "They're a *joke*. We get away with what we want."

May believes that she, her husband, and her son have been deceived, cheated, and let down by the officer, three different attorneys, the district attorney, the medical examiner, and the judge. Her eyes filled with tears several times while she spoke and at one point she cried openly when talking about her trauma symptoms. One of them was picturing the image a witness had painted of her son after the officer had shot him:

I kept picturing what it musta looked like to see my son there. That's the hard part. This one person said, "I got to my front window. I saw your son on the ground in a puddle of blood and he was flapping around like a fish." I thought "Flapping around like a fish?" With his hands handcuffed. I can't imagine. Drowning in your blood, being in what kind of pain. I can't even imagine the pain. And you're tied up and you're flapping like a fish. I kept thinking, "Oh my God." I couldn't get that out of my mind. You go through that over and over and over and over. I didn't see it but you traumatize yourself from what you read and what you heard.

May is painfully aware of what some people thought of her son because he had committed crimes. She believes the majority of people would say, "If the guy would've died so what? He was doing criminal things anyway so that's what he deserves," even though, she points out, no crime he committed warranted the death penalty.

That awareness, along with the system's failure to provide any support in getting her son's case against the officer heard was deeply isolating. May lamented:

I wish people would understand. The people that don't are the ones that don't go through this. I can't trust anybody. Who am I gonna trust? Who am I gonna cry to? Who am I gonna call out to? Who's gonna listen? My own attorneys kept pushing it aside.

She told me that she and her husband were still trying to find someone who would hear them out. She followed that up though by adding that she knew that nobody was going to help them.

The experience has had a significant financial impact on her and her family. May estimates that she and her husband have spent nearly half a million dollars in the years since her son was charged. One hundred thousand of that was for defense attorneys who, she believes, did nothing to earn the money. She sold two rental houses intended for retirement income in order to pay \$50,000 to an attorney to appeal the court's findings and pursue a case against the officer. They lost the appeal and the lawyer took no action against the officer.

Despite all she has done and all the money they have spent, May feels helpless and powerless when confronting the legal system:

It's the ugliest thing...to be...I'm looking for the right word...I'm in handcuffs....but they're not really there. I'm in handcuffs. And I'm like this (hands behind back) and I have to sit there and watch everything, what's gonna happen to my son, and I can't lift a hand. I can't even move my feet because there's nothing, there's nothing.

Her experience of what she perceives as dishonesty and lack of human concern among many of the individuals she has encountered in the legal system have left her feeling "disgusted." She used varying forms of that word 13 times throughout her interview.

- The prosecutor, he *disgusted* me with this.
- They sooo doctor up their statements. It's *disgusting*.
- Of course when we were paying him, oh man, he was on the phone, the nicest person. That *disgusts* me with the lawyers.
- Has nothing to do with justice, with rights, with liberties, with nothing. It had to do—it's a political game they have. It was so *disgusting*.
- You know it was so *disgusting* because I didn't know who to turn to.

The impact this has had on her son's brothers and sisters, she related, is that they "are disgusted." They all miss him and want the truth to come out. Their brother's encounter with officer use of excessive force has caused them to fear law enforcement. "They're scared to be stopped by a police officer," May stated. "They really are. All of us are.

*Incident report.* May provided me with a copy of a sworn statement made by the officer involve in Juan's shooting and arrest and an eyewitness' sworn response to it. May said that the witness had gone to the police department and reported what she had seen. May recounted, "They said, 'Oh, OK ,well that's a whole 'nother different story. We're gonna call you. We're gonna call you so you can come back in and tell---.' They never called her back. They never called her back."

A couple of years later, the witness moved to a distant state. When the private investigator that May and her husband had hired located her, the witness volunteered to return to San Antonio at her own expense to give her account of events. Her sworn deposition contradicts the officer's statements. He reported that May's son had a gun in his hand when he turned to face the officer. The witness stated for the record, "This is not true. I saw both of Mr. Santos' hands as I said in my statement and he had no gun in either hand." The officer also stated that May's son pointed the barrel of the gun at him. In response to this, the witness stated, "This is not true.

Mr. Santos never pointed any gun at Officer Smith when Officer Smith shot Mr. Santos.” May said that the judge in her son’s case ignored this testimony:

Even the judge didn't care. I would think that it would've been her duty as a judge to say "Hey wait a minute, he got shot? And she's saying that there's a witness? Y'all have a paper here that has her statement? And nothing's being done? We're supposed to put this kind of aside because we made a deal behind these walls over here?" The more that I saw, the more that I was so angry.

As we ended our interview, May asked if she could read aloud a hand-written copy of verses 20 to 23 of Psalm 94 that she had brought for me. It speaks of how the Lord will punish crooked judges (a term May interpreted to mean officers, prosecutors, and judges) who use the law to make life difficult for people, and who falsely accuse innocent people. She concluded:

It is so fitting to anybody who has to deal with the justice system. We're really at the mercy of all these people. I don't know other than ask for God's protection cause I don't know what else you can do. There's nothing else we can do.

#### **Case 5: Medical emergency.**

*Jed: Blessed.* At the time of his encounter with law enforcement, Jed was in his 70s and had lived with a medical condition that had been diagnosed when he was 14. While driving home one night he began to feel disoriented. He pulled off to the side of the road, but not entirely, because he hoped drivers that had to pull around to clear his car would see that he was in distress and call 911. The last thing he remembers before losing consciousness is someone banging on his car window. When he regained consciousness, he said that he was on the ground and a policeman was on his back. He raised his shoulder, looked down, and saw blood on his shirt and chest. He said his response was, “What are you doing? I have [medical condition].”

Local television news showed the videocam recording of officers punching an unconscious, elderly man in the head and dragging him out of his car onto the ground and continuing to punch him. The story and video spread to the Washington Post, the New York

Daily News and numerous smaller news outlets and blogs across the country. Jed informed me that a friend in England told him he had seen it in the news in that country. In the comments sections after the online articles, readers expressed outrage at what they read and saw. A local grassroots organization created an online petition that was delivered to the city manager, mayor, and chief of police. It gathered nearly 700 signatures and dozens of comments, all demanding justice for Jed.

On the night of the encounter, Jed learned at the hospital that in addition to cuts and bruises on his face, head, and arms, he had broken ribs and a hole in his cheek where his teeth had punctured it. His head was so bloody that the medical personnel were concerned that his brain was bleeding, so they immediately ordered a CT scan. Fortunately he had not sustained any brain injuries.

He did not learn about the most serious damage until 3 days later when he was at home and was unable to breathe or get up from his chair. His wife and two other family members took him back to the hospital, where he was diagnosed with pneumonia. His pulmonologist attributed it to the e-coli and other bacteria in the gravel and dirt that he had inhaled when the officers dragged him along the asphalt and held him to the ground after pulling him from his car. Jed's condition was so serious that his physicians told his family that he was unlikely to survive. They and his friends came to the hospital to pray for him and say goodbye. But he survived, and after 2 weeks in the hospital he was able to go home.

Four years after the incident, Jed still had no memory of what had happened to him while he was unconscious. Despite the degree of physical force he sustained and the near loss of his life, he felt no anger or animosity toward the two officers who, he said, "tore into me like a...punching bag." He knew this because he had viewed the dashcam video recording of the

incident. He quoted one of his doctors, who had seen the video, as saying, “They just had a feeding frenzy of beating you and kicking you and just hurting you as much as they could.”

Jed described his experience as a religious one:

- I was *gifted* with some of this. I mean, I'm a nice guy, but in the hospital I was praying for these two guys as I was dying. That was just a *gift* I got. I got a number of *gifts*.
- It truly was (a spiritual experience). Truly was. I've always been a *spiritual* person, but this made me more focused to live each moment the best I can... I am much more accepting and less fearful of death because I was right there. That fear which I had before is gone.
- This incident even made it more focused that we're really here just a temporary time. We're all destined to die so you might as well just do your best every moment. It's helped me. Yeah, it's a *religious* experience.
- As far as anger towards them or anger towards this happening, no. I felt always at *peace*. ...I don't know why but I knew they need help.
- I look at it as a *gift* that I had zero anger through this whole incident.
- [My ribs] were already healed. I did have some pain when I pushed hard on them but I sneezed and no pain. No pain. So that was a *gift*. That shouldn't have happened.

While he holds no enmity toward the officers who used bodily force against him when he was unconscious, Jed did express bewilderment at their behavior. “That was one of the things that I couldn't understand. *Why* did they hate me so much? That did bother me,” he admitted. “I finally just let it go, but I have no explanation for that.”

Jed’s focus was on preventing future officer use of excessive force against people with incapacitating medical conditions. He wanted officers to receive required training so that none of those people or their families would experience what he and his family had undergone.

Consequently, he sought an attorney to represent him. Initially he had no luck. He explained:

We went to three or four, five [attorneys]. Nobody. They all said you can't win this. You have no cause of action. There's nothing in here. It's an '85, '87 rule that was put into

play that basically stops this kind of action against the city.

Finally, however, an attorney friend recommended someone to them.

Jed's wife, June, recounted what the attorney had told them the first time they went to see him. "You know, y'all may be the ones to try this cause you don't have any skeletons in your closet." He was, she told me, "the first person that I felt was interested in helping us at all." Their attorney succeeded in getting a jury trial set, but in such cases, the parties are required to attempt mediation before taking it to court. Both the mediator assigned to the case and Jed's attorney advised settling the case outside of court.

Jed said that the mediator had told him that in a jury trial they could easily get an award of \$5 million to \$10 million. However, she warned that they would never receive the money because the circuit court that would rule on it is "painted blue. Not Democratic, but police." His attorney agreed. Jed reported that his lawyer had explained to him that the cost to an attorney of taking a case to the circuit court was between \$325,000 and \$400,000. He explained that he did not take cases there if they involved police because neither he nor his client would receive compensation. Jed made it clear that money was not his primary goal, despite the fact that he had hoped he could have "a pile of money that could be set in trust that would be used for all those who are damaged by police."

After the mediation was "delayed, and delayed, and delayed," it took place after three and a half years. The terms agreed to included a relatively small monetary settlement, an apology from the department delivered by the police chief's assistant, and the implementation of 40 hours of training for all incoming cadets on how to handle cases involving people experiencing medical and mental health episodes. One of Jed's friends who was on the council of another local law enforcement agency had told him that because of Jed's and June's efforts the agency that he

worked for would be implementing 40 hours of training delivered by medical technicians too. “It is good,” Jed said. “It is good. So I feel good.”

*Incident reports.* Jed is not uncritical of law enforcement or the legal system. He found the FBI report and the EMS report to be full of inaccuracies and omissions. He labeled the EMS report, which does not mention the presence of officers when technicians arrived or as the cause of his injuries, “a complete farce.” He said the FBI agent who interviewed him had used some incidents he had related to her, but that she “did not state them right.” For example, he had told her of an occasion 20 years prior when he was in the hospital and had refused medication. That information was included in the report to demonstrate that he had been “combative” in the past. He said that he had told the City attorney, “. . .from the first sentence (it) was not accurate at all. And all the way through it's full of inaccuracies.”

Jed is an anomaly among this study’s participants. His case is what Stake (2006) calls highly unusual, one that challenges the generality of themes. He is the only participant who personally experienced life-threatening injuries and nearly died as a result of his experience. He has no memory of it, other than regaining consciousness with an officer on his back and seeing his blood-soaked shirt. He has, however, seen the video of the incident. Still, he is the participant who expressed the least anger and the only one who expressed forgiveness toward the officers involved in his encounter.

***June: Resentful.*** June is Jed’s wife, a secondary victim of officer use of force. Jed’s encounter occurred 3 years before our first interview. Despite the statement, “I just never have been able to feel anger,” her anger was evident in many of her comments.

- *I resent that. I resent what they did to them, my (family members) . . . I was also dealing with my children and my grandchildren's trauma. I'm the family therapist and so I was also dealing with their trauma, which made me so mad.*



- I'll never know if they've shortened his life or not. I *resent* that. And also, even if it doesn't, they took away 2 years.
- And then of course with the other thing. You know, with them driving around—"to serve and to protect." I mean I just *wanted to throw a rock* every time I saw it. I mean bullshit.
- My (adult child) called the guy in Internal Affairs and said, "This is the last talk we'll have. You lied. We're through." So they lied to us. I was--just lie after lie after lie. That was the thing. You just *wanted to vomit*.

Her anger was not only toward the officers and their agency. She had reached out to the FBI, the Justice Department, her congressman, and a medical association that she and her husband had contributed to for years and for which he had done substantial volunteer work. She was deeply disappointed by all of their responses.

They (medical association) are supposed to be an advocacy organization and they certainly weren't. I didn't wanna sit down and fill out a four-page form at that point. By that time we got so disgusted I told my (adult child), "Don't worry about it, we're not—" (blowing a raspberry) "Don't care. What are they gonna do? Obviously not much." Plus I was ticked. ... Internal Affairs is lying to you. The FBI, obviously it's a put-up job. ... We contacted the Department of Justice but ... at that point we did not fill out the affidavit because everything had been so "why bother" that we didn't. ... I know when I call someone and someone says "no" I say, "Get me someone else." I mean, I know—and it still didn't help...

June never spoke the word "betrayed," but she communicated a profound sense of betrayal. She explained that she and her husband have always been law-abiding, church-attending citizens who have fought for social justice and made substantial contributions to their community.

I'm a rule follower, and I thought that if you followed the rules that things like this didn't happen to you. I've tried to do volunteer work where you help people, and then for this to happen? How dare they?

Every trusted organization she had turned to for support had failed her, and her lack of trust in the system was evident when she spoke about the lawsuit Jed had filed:

I was still naïve enough to think that someone would listen. I mean someone governmental. I kept thinking, “God, there’s gotta be something.” And...there wasn’t....There's nothing. You are alone. ...I know we're going to lose. I do. We are. We are. But like Jed said, it doesn't matter if we lose because they are on record of what happened. It's on record.

June was not only conflicted because the system she and her husband had supported and whose rules they had followed had failed them. She expressed strongly mixed feelings toward officers. She and her husband had been long-time friends with some people from their church who were in law enforcement. At the same time, she was so negatively impacted by what officers had done to her husband that her trust in officers who were strangers was shaken. After she stated that she would never look at the world the same, ever, to clarify I asked “What about the way you look at police?” She responded:

Oh, scared of them. OK. I have several friends, very good friends, who are policemen. And of course I love them. They were horrified. But when it's a policeman I don't know....I don't know. I don't know. And I don't mean that I get, you know shaky, but I'm leery. And there's still nice ones. If I were in trouble and I was somewhere, yes I would still call for a policeman. But...yeah I'm leery. A little distance...I don't hate all policemen. I think there's a lot of good ones. I hate the blue line. I hate the fact that they're gonna support each other no matter what. I hate that. And I do know they have a dangerous job.

June spoke a great deal about the impact the incident had had on their family and friends. When not at work, one of her children had spent the first 2 weeks after it happened in bed, due to depression. Her teenaged grandchild incorporated the incident into a school presentation on the four things that had had the greatest impact during high school. June explained, “One of the points was it can happen to anybody.” Her grandchild had told classmates, “It happened to my church-going, angelic, saint of a grandfather. It can happen to you.” The impact June said Jed’s encounter had had on their friends was primarily that of jolting their worldview. She explained:

People are amazed when we tell [them] this story. Friends and just different people. They say, “That can't happen.” We'll tell friends, when the others are saying, “Well look what they did to that guy,” we'll tell what happened to Jed, and they'll say, "WHAT?"

She vividly described some of her reactions to the entire situation, to what was done to her husband, and to the upcoming lawsuit. She talked about how the injustice of it all was choking her. Approximately 3 months after the incident occurred, she called a friend who was a spiritual guide because she felt as though she was about to lose her mind. When she thinks about what they did to her husband, she said she gets frozen. And when she thinks about the upcoming court case, she confessed, "I want to go running into the night screaming."

June's second interview took place after she and Jed had agreed to a settlement with City. While she expressed relief that the lawsuit was behind them, she was still very angry and talked about her inability to forgive:

- I'm still mad as hell.
- Maybe I won't be angry sometime. And maybe I'm angry again because it's been settled and I can be.
- I hate the chief cause he could've done something. They chose in a moment of whatever reason to do what they did and then he covered it up. And so did some of the others, but he's responsible. And then to have the nerve to say that what they did was OK, even though obviously it wasn't.
- I hate them and I don't hate anybody else in my life. I've tried not to. I've tried. I can only pray that maybe someday I will want to forgive them. And I can't even pray that yet.
- I'll forgive the policemen before I forgive the police chief [who is also a practicing Catholic]. I want to say "Gee does it ever choke you?" That made me angrier about the whole thing. I want to say "Don't you worry about blasphemy?" Obviously he doesn't.
- [Jed] is doing well with it. His spirituality is so much stronger than mine. See with mine it is that they hurt somebody I loved. They hurt everyone I love but tried to kill someone I loved. I don't feel that way. I really don't. I guess if I were St. Teresa I'd say, "Oh well poor guys." And I don't care.

June acknowledged that she would have to learn to let go of her anger and forgive because the

only person the anger was hurting was her. What that meant was that the officers were still hurting her, and, she said, “I’m not going to let them.”

She discussed two effects of the incident. One was her “profound loss of trust in institutions,” despite the settlement. She reiterated what she had stated in her first interview. “There was no one who would help us. No one. There was no one. I mean NObody. I came out feeling there is not an institution out there to protect the public.” Another effect was having come to a realization of how long the after-effects of violence can impact a family. “We’re still battling them,” she explained. “Me, mostly. No the children, too. My grandkids. That fear of institutions, or loss of that. The implications go on and on and on.”

While the opinions she had expressed about law enforcement in her first interview were a combination of positive and negative, with time they seemed to have become more negative. She had as much, if not more, to say about her fear of “policemen,” the dishonesty and lack of professionalism she had encountered, and the absence of officer accountability. She reiterated that she would not interact with an officer during a traffic stop without using her cell phone video camera. “I don’t trust them,” she stated. “I’m scared and I don’t trust them. I’m not scared. Nah, I must be. I’m uneasy. I don’t trust them. I think it goes back to lack of trust.”

The dishonesty in the interactions she and her children had had with Internal Affairs had had a lasting impact. She repeated, “The lies. The lies that the Internal Affairs told us. ‘There was no film.’ ‘He was combative,’ that then they had to—Only because we fought for it did we ever find out.” She had become less willing to believe reasons officers give to justify use of force against citizens:

And then this whole thing about you know "I felt like I was threatened" with the guy running away. That's just gotten ridiculous. Where they always say, "I felt like I was in danger. It was self-defense." And they always say they were reaching for a gun, even if they weren't. And that they shoot first. If that's what you have to do then you shouldn't be

a policeman. If you're that frightened then you need another line of work.

Her view of how professional law enforcement officers should behave and the reality she had faced differed significantly.

Although the settlement had brought her a sense of relief, June did not feel that her family had gotten justice because the two officers had not been held accountable.

- And the fact they were never, never punished. I mean not even on desk duty, nothing. The next day they were on duty. They're on bike patrol now. I don't know why they're even doing that.
- Someone, a representative, said that they were looking at any time anything happened what kind of disciplinary action there was and that they could not find in Jed's case that there was disciplinary action.
- They really got away with almost beating a person to death. They got away with a crime. They think they can act with impunity. And they can.

This failure on the part of the legal system had made their settlement with the city bittersweet because, while it was an acknowledgement of the officer's wrongdoing, they had not had what June saw as serious consequences for nearly causing her husband's death.

She explained what she liked about the settlement. Primary was the sense of relief it had brought by ending ongoing interactions with the legal system. She also liked the fact that it validated everything she and Jed had told people about what had happened to him. In the face of disbelief, they could now say, "You know the story we told? Here's proof." The department's apology was also important to her:

Then we got the apology which we didn't ask for cause I didn't care. But you know what? I didn't care but it really meant a lot when I got it. And what meant more was "This should never have happened." When I tell this story I also say, "We made a settlement AND we got an apology AND we were told it should never have happened." Because to me that kind of said OK, so we were right. And it was worth it.

She summarized what the settlement meant by saying that although she was not at peace, she felt as if someone had taken a rock off her back. Still, she pointed out, “They changed the course of our lives and basically got away with it. That's hard.”

### **Cross-Case Findings: Impacts**

The purpose of the cross-case data analysis is to examine findings in order to make assertions about the quintain (Stake, 2006). Each case in this study was included to better understand the quintain, the effects of officer use of excessive force. The quintain is the focus of multicase study; the primary goal is to describe and interpret it, with respect for different perceptions of the phenomenon. With such an aim, comparison of individual cases is inappropriate (Stake, 2006).

The five cases selected to provide insight into the phenomenon of officer use of force were purposefully diverse, both in terms of participant demographics and in regard to the incidents themselves. Therefore, this design was intended to provide a broader overview of the phenomenon than might be afforded by a homogeneous sampling of encounters and of the meanings that might be attributed to the experience by one particular demographic. The levels of force that the study participants experienced were also diverse. They ranged from one end of the use-of-force continuum to the other, from loud verbal directions described by a participant as “shouting” to deadly force (Terrill & Paoline, 2012). Other forceful actions between these two extremes included handcuffing, dragging, punching, wielding guns, and nonlethal shooting.

In addition to experiencing the heterogeneous levels of force described above, participants had varying levels of involvement with the legal system. Consequently, in some cases a topic that was of high importance for one individual was of low importance in the multicase analysis. An example of this is the financial impact of the experience. May had spent

tens of thousands of dollars attempting to get justice for her son, so her family's finances were highly impacted. Mac, on the other hand, had not spent any money. This may explain why only two original themes had ratings of high importance and were identified as findings in the cross-case analysis: Emotional Responses and Psychological Responses. Three topics were related to the theme of Support Sought: families and friends, doctors, and attorneys. Just one sub-topic of the theme Support Used, family and friends, was significant across cases. One additional theme, Coping Mechanisms, was also of importance. Appendix B is a compilation of statements participants made that demonstrate how each theme was exemplified in their narratives.

**Finding 1: Emotional responses impacted participants' sense of well-being and security.** The emotional topics that were highly important were anger, fear, and isolation. Fear and anger were topics identified by McCann et al. (1988), Bloom (2000), Keeshin et al. (2012), and Weaver and Clum (1995) as responses to violence; isolation was not. Table 3 shows the number of responses and cases in which these topics were of high importance.

Table 3

*Emotional Impacts of High Importance*

Theme Type of Response	Topic	# of Cases/ Participants	Frequency	Rank
Emotional	Anger	5/5	47	H
	Fear	5/5	36	H
	Isolation (social and/or emotional)	4/4	32	H

**Anger and fear.** Participants talked about the fear they had felt during their experience and the fear they continued to feel toward law enforcement officers. Their anger was directed at law enforcement officers, law enforcement agencies, judges, attorneys, community

organizations/associations, and governmental agencies. A consistent noteworthy behavior was, when criticizing officers, all of the participants acknowledged that “not all cops are bad.” No one made the same concession when criticizing attorneys, judges, or members of other professions.

***Isolation.*** Participants spoke of two types of isolation, social and emotional. Social isolation resulted from being left to their own devices to resolve issues related to their experiences. The lack of available, affordable assistance left them feeling alone and unsupported, abandoned. Emotional isolation was a consequence of other people’s inability to understand, and in some cases believe, what participants had undergone or how they felt. Participants experienced a sense of aloneness due to a lack of empathy and sympathy.

The emotional responses of anger, fear, and isolation were intertwined with the participants’ psychological reactions. The clash of expectations of how law enforcement officers should behave with the reality that participants experienced caused anger and fear. The betrayal of some participants’ implicit belief that they would be supported in getting justice, and the assumption of others that no such support existed resulted in their experiencing a strong sense of isolation which, in turn, affected their thoughts about law enforcement and the legal system as a whole.

In addition to anger, fear, and isolation, participants spoke of emotions that did not rise to the level of high importance in the cross-case analysis. June, May, and SF talked about sorrow, anxiety, and disgust. May and Red spoke of humiliation (Appendix C).

**Finding 2: Psychological responses altered participants’ world views and their views of their place in it.** Participants had a number of psychological reactions, which are displayed in Table 4. These included incredulity, incomprehension, and an altered worldview; powerlessness; loss of trust; rationalization; doubt, PTSD; and conflicting views.



Table 4

*Psychological Impacts of High Importance*

Theme Type of Response	Topic	# of Cases/ Participants	Frequency	Rank
Psychological	Incredulity/	5/7	26	H
	Incomprehension/	3/4	6	
	New worldview	3/3	13	
	Powerlessness	5/6	32	H
	Loss of trust	5/5	19	H
	Rationalization	5/4	8	H
	Doubt	4/4	13	H
	PTSD	4/4	11	H

**Transformed perspective.** Every participant spoke of incredulity, incomprehension, shock, and/or a changed view of reality. They and their family and friends struggled to understand why officers had treated them the way they had; they could not make sense of the experience. Above and beyond their incomprehension of why it had happened was their disbelief that it could have happened at all. From Red's experience of officers speaking loudly and accusingly at him when he had called for assistance, to Leta's having a gun pointed at her head because she was suspected of a white collar crime, to SF's loss of his unarmed son, their experiences were not consistent with their expectations of our country's law enforcement or legal system. They and many of their friends and family members were so shocked that experiencing or simply hearing about the incident altered their worldview. Others who heard about it found it to be such a contradiction to their belief system that they could not accept that it was not an exaggeration of the truth.

**Powerlessness.** Without exception, study participants believed that the level of force used against them or their loved one was unjustified. However, when they spoke of getting justice,

holding officers accountable, or simply being heard, powerlessness, sometimes expressed as futility and helplessness, was a common topic. Some did not attempt to get help because they thought it would be futile or assumed none existed. Others tried and gave up when they got either no response or an unhelpful one. Feelings of humiliation, injured pride, dreams of revenge, and the desire for justice all result from a sense of powerlessness according to Symonds (1980), and are part of what he categorized as the third phase a person's response to violence.

***Loss of trust.*** The non-responses and negative responses participants received when they requested assistance, in addition to the use of excessive force itself, contributed to a loss of trust in law enforcement and the legal system as a whole. It even extended to politicians and institutions in general for some participants. Their different life experiences and levels of involvement with institutions may have been determinants in their level of trust prior to their use of excessive force experiences. Similarly, they may have been determinants in their level of loss of trust.

Speaking of SF's family, one legal professional observed that their lives "are based around institutions: the military, church, government" (Anonymous, personal communication, August 17, 2017). He said that they were experiencing shock and frustration at the length of time the process was taking and the government's continued support of the officer who had killed their son. If justice was not achieved in their case, he warned, it would cause a continued erosion in their faith in our system and the government (Anonymous, personal communication, August 17, 2017). For other participants whose previous experiences had taught them not to trust officers, although jarring, this more recent incident may not have had as great an impact on their existing low level of trust.

***Rationalization and blaming.*** Rationalization and blaming the victim were also highly important responses. Rationalization is “a defense mechanism that involves the justification of an unacceptable behavior, thought, or feeling in a logical manner, avoiding the true reason for the action” (Pedersen, 2018). Some participants and family members made statements that seemed to excuse the officers’ behavior, stating that they were just doing their job and stating that the job is dangerous. One held the department’s dispatch responsible for the officers’ behavior because dispatch had not provided them with complete information about the situation.

Others maintained that fear was the motivation behind the officers’ and their colleagues’ behavior. The reasoning was that they would not use force if they did not feel threatened. None of the suspects was armed or violent, so the officers’ fear was attributed to a fear of the public or particular types of people. Everyone acknowledged that not all officers are bad. However it was noted that “good” officers do not speak out against abusive officers because they are afraid of retaliation from their colleagues.

Being in the wrong place at the wrong time was another explanation participants put forth in an effort to make sense of their experience. Some family members went so far as to hold the victim responsible for what had happened. They claimed that if the victim had been more careful, paid more attention to their surroundings, or not even been at that location, the incident would not have occurred.

***Doubt.*** The incredulity, incomprehension, shattered worldviews, feelings of powerlessness, and loss of trust produced a sense of doubt in participants. They spoke of feeling unsafe in general as well as in the presence of law enforcement officers. They shared beliefs concerning the uncertainty of the future and the unpredictability of life. The unexpected way in

which their encounters occurred, changing their and in some cases their families' lives, appeared to have a long-term unsettling effect.

**PTSD.** The final psychological topic of high importance predicted by trauma theory was PTSD. More than half of the participants used this term to talk about the impacts either they or their loved one had experienced. Two of the primary victims who did not say they themselves had experienced PTSD said that a friend or family member had. One of those secondary victims confirmed in explicit statements that she had experienced PTSD; the other did not use that term. One participant who had been diagnosed with PTSD by two doctors refused to accept the diagnosis, despite his wife's concurrence with the doctors' opinions.

An altered worldview, a sense of powerlessness, loss of trust, rationalization, and PTSD were the psychological topics predicted by trauma theory that emerged as highly important in this study. Topics that did not rise to the level of high importance were a desire to confront the officers, a desire for accountability, and flashbacks, all of which were of medium importance. Of low importance were revictimization, vengeance, derogation, and empathy for others who have experienced officer use of excessive force (Appendix D).

**Finding 3: Participant views of law enforcement were negatively impacted.** Although participants' emotional and psychological responses to officer use of force were topics predicted by trauma theory, the large quantity of data they provided concerning their perspectives on law enforcement was not. When answering the question, "How has officer use of force impacted you?" all recounted the experience itself and included their opinions regarding the officers and the departments that employ them. Some included their views on the entire legal system. As stated earlier, all seven participants acknowledged "not all officers are bad," an item of high

importance. Table 5 displays these and the other opinions concerning officers that were highly important.

Table 5

*Perspectives on Law Enforcement*

Theme Type of Response	Topic	# of Cases/ Participants	Frequency	Rank
Psychological: Opinion of LE	Not all are bad	5/7	18	H
	Abusive	5/7	48	H
	Unresponsive	5/7	33	H
	Unprofessional	5/6	18	H
	Insensitive	5/5	10	H
	Deceitful	5/5	32	H
	Unaccountable	4/4	23	H
	Contradictory statements	4/4	20	H

***Not all cops are bad.*** Every participant made at least one comment to the effect of, “Not all officers are bad,” making this a topic of high importance. Everyone acknowledged this, in one way or another. This response stood out for two reasons, the first being that everyone stated it. The second reason was that, although participants made statements critical of attorneys, judges, medical association staff, and others, no one conceded that not everyone in that particular profession was bad.

***Officers are abusive.*** Included under this topic were statements concerning use of excessive force and abuse of power. Forty of the 48 comments coded in this category related specifically to use of excessive force. All participants believed the level of force used against them or their loved one was unwarranted. What they perceived as unjustified use of force contributed to their anger. Officers were described as going into a feeding frenzy, venting frustration inappropriately, and using force for fun. Excessive force was equated with abuse of

power. Other comments were about how officers “bully” people and think they are “high and mighty” and bigger and better than other citizens “because they wear a badge.”

***Law enforcement is unresponsive.*** Participants provided numerous examples of officer and departmental unresponsiveness. These included not having questions answered and not having phone calls returned. They also complained about having information withheld and being given misinformation. They were dissatisfied with not being informed about progress related to complaints and requests they had made. Witness testimony was ignored and there was a remark about witnesses becoming unavailable. A civilian review board investigation was terminated 2 months early and court dates were repeatedly postponed. Participants complained about good officers who do not speak out against their colleagues’ wrongdoing. They brought up the belief that law enforcement pays victims to buy their silence so that stories of abuse will not be reported. All of these unresponsive behaviors toward citizens and toward the officers they believed to be abusive, in addition to apparent stalling tactics contributed to participants’ sense of powerlessness and their belief in the futility of attempting to get any assistance from law enforcement institutions.

***Law enforcement is deceitful.*** Some of the comments regarding lack of transparency and honesty were scathing, revealing deep distrust of and disillusionment with law enforcement. Others were more restrained. According to participants, officers “doctor up” their statements, cover everything up, cover up for each other. They make changes on incident reports to slant the account in their favor. They “lie, lie, lie.” Officers say suspects were reaching for a gun, even if they were not. The terms “dirty rat,” “hypocrite,” and “liar” were used to refer to dishonest officers.

***Law enforcement is insensitive.*** Five of seven participants were disappointed by law enforcement's insensitivity. They expected at least an expression of concern for their or their loved one's well-being and, in some cases, an apology. Officers did not meet the expectation that they would acknowledge a person's distress and provide information about where follow-up assistance could be accessed. Failure to provide information in a timely manner was considered a lack of decency. Participants commented on the lack of concern that was shown for the difficulties, anguish, and loss they experienced in the aftermath of their experiences.

***Officers are unaccountable.*** A majority of the participants (four out of seven) perceived lack of officer accountability to be a serious issue. Some wondered how many untold others had had the same thing happen to them because abusive officers had not been checked. Participants expressed the view that because there is little accountability, officers know they can "get away with it." Some attorneys had warned against complaining for fear of retaliation. While participants called for officers to be held responsible for their actions, they spoke of abusive officers who had been promoted with no consequences for their unprofessional behavior.

***Officers are Unprofessional.*** The term "professional" has been defined as "exhibiting a courteous, conscientious, and generally businesslike manner in the workplace" (Professional, n.d.). Five of the seven participants described officers as "unprofessional," "disrespectful," and "unfair." The officers involved in their or their loved one's incident did not meet participants' expectations of a law enforcement professional. This included their appearance, manner of communicating, and behavior. Participants also talked about being treated rudely when they contacted a law enforcement department for help.

***Participants held conflicted views of officers.*** Some participants shared a number of conflicting opinions and feelings about law enforcement. Whereas everyone asserted that not all

officers are bad, five of the seven said they did not trust them. Five have a family member or friends who are law enforcement officers that they trust, but when it comes to officers they do not know, they are wary. They stated the belief that officers have a dangerous job; at the same time, they do not believe their situations warranted the amount of force that they used. Some participants said at one point that they were not afraid of law enforcement and at another point that they were, or that they felt leery or cautious about them. June made a distinction between officers and their behavior with statements such as, “I don’t hate officers, I hate that they are going to support each other no matter what.”

Other conflicting statements had to do with appreciating what law enforcement represents alongside the observation that officers are “corrupted.” Leta stated, “I’m not going to protest because I hate them” but later said, “I had wanted to protest, but my family stopped me.” May allowed that “some have hearts,” but pointed out, “I don’t see them stand up for what’s right.”

Additional opinions participants voiced were that officers are afraid and unfair. These were rated as being of low importance (Appendix E). Views that law enforcement officers are not all bad, are abusive, unresponsive, deceitful, insensitive, unaccountable, and unprofessional were all of high importance, as was holding conflicting views. Psychological conflict arose from acquiring new information that was not in alignment with the views and expectations of law enforcement officers that they had previously held. Many of the emotional and psychological impacts participants experienced stemmed from these opinions. The community’s failure to hold officers accountable and provide participants any form of support served to exacerbate these impacts.

**Finding 4: Affordable community support and services targeting victims of officer use of force are virtually non-existent.** When participants looked to the community for



assistance in holding officers accountable, obtaining justice, and accessing needed health services they found little to none. What they did find was only available for a fee. This reality compounded their feelings of anger and isolation.

The types of support participants wanted and the attempts they made to find it varied. Leta and Mac did not think they would find any support outside of family and/or friends, so they sought none. June and May contacted every person, organization, and agency they could think of (Appendix F). The amount and quality of assistance participants received when they did reach out varied.

Friends and family members, doctors, and attorneys were of high importance in terms of whom participants turned to for support. All seven participants talked to their friends and/or family members about their experiences. Five of the seven sought help from doctors and attorneys. Only friends and family members were of high importance in terms of support that was actually used (and also found to be beneficial). Doctors and attorneys provided needed support for just three of the five participants, so they were both of medium importance in the cross-case analysis. Table 6 summarizes the forms of support that were of high importance.

Three participants felt well supported by their spiritual communities. Two related that counseling had been helpful, two thought the media had been, and one found a private investigator to be supportive. Law enforcement, governmental agencies, and community organizations provided no support to any of the participants, except for in Jed's and June's case as a result of their filing a lawsuit.

***Friends and family.*** All participants sought support from friends and/or family members by talking with them about what had happened and found some of them to be helpful. However, not every participant got the support they needed from everyone that they talked to. Leta's

parents blamed her and Mac for their encounter and offered no sympathy, but her friends did provide the understanding she sought. The empathy expressed by friends who were law enforcement officers provided validation for June. May was bolstered by having her husband, who was experiencing the same pain that she was, at her side. SF's wife was his shoulder to cry on. Friends' willingness to listen, in addition to their shock and outrage at the officers' unfair treatment, provided consolation to participants.

Table 6

*Support Sought*

Theme Support Sought and Utilized	# of Cases/ Participants	Rank	Helpful
Friends and family	5/7	H	5/7
Doctors	4/5	H	2/3
Attorneys	4/5	H	2/3
Law enforcement department	3/4	H	0

Three of the four participants who were older than 50 found that friends and other members of their religious communities were supportive. They were grateful for the guidance, advice, and understanding they received from many of them. None of the younger participants mentioned a spiritual community.

***Community and government agencies.*** Outside of family, friends, and their religious community (for participants who had one), providers charged a fee for services. These were attorneys, doctors, counselors, and a private investigator. Community and government agencies provided no services or guidance. Participants shared their thoughts and feelings of frustration about the lack of available, affordable assistance. They told of calling and sending emails to community organizations and receiving no response. The two or three representatives of agencies that did respond said they could not be of assistance or had requirements the

participants found overwhelming. Contacts at elected representatives' offices said they could not help. Law enforcement employees appeared to see them as adversaries and either ignored their requests for assistance, provided inaccurate information, took their information and did nothing with it, or intimidated them. Their reports were slanted in favor of the officer and often against the participants.

Participants' unsuccessful attempts to locate support served to augment the emotional and psychological impacts of the incident. Even the individuals who succeeded in getting assistance from some sources felt the negative effects of being refused support by others. Furthermore, while participants who received support appreciated it and were grateful to those who helped them obtain it, it did not minimize their anger, restore their peace of mind, create a sense of justice, or reestablish their trust in law enforcement or the legal system (Appendix F).

***Self-Support: Coping mechanisms.*** As was the case concerning opinions about law enforcement officers, the interview protocol did not directly solicit information concerning coping mechanisms. Still, many of these strategies surfaced in the participants' narratives. In the absence of community support, participants employed different means of dealing with the aftermath of their or their loved one's encounter, but just one, avoidance, rose to the level of high importance in the cross-case analysis. Three of the participants spoke of their religious faith, although one of them did not have a spiritual community; three spoke of their spiritual community, while one of them downplayed her religious faith. Other strategies ranged from buying a gun, to having a drink, to doing breathing exercises (Appendix G).

***Avoidance.*** Avoidance is a symptom of trauma (Bloom, 2000). It is a strategy that five of the participants employed in different ways and it emerged as a topic of high importance.

Although they described these techniques, participants themselves never referred to them as “avoidance” (Appendix G).

One type of avoidance practiced by some was keeping occupied to distract themselves from thinking about their encounter with law enforcement. Another tactic was choosing not to see news reports, videos, or documents related to the incident. June has shielded herself from learning the names of the officers involved in her husband’s encounter and has refused to watch the dashcam video. Jed, who has seen the video of officers using physical force against him, has no trace of memory about it, despite having no brain damage. This could be due to what is sometimes referred to as “dissociative amnesia,” which some experts believe to be a form of post-trauma avoidance (Staniloiu & Markowitsch, 2014). SF has not watched the eyewitness video of his son’s shooting. Red kept himself fully occupied with college courses and two jobs. Mac chose not to share his experience with his mother or sister so that he could avoid the resulting conversation and the fear and concern the incident would engender in them.

Participants availed themselves of the support of family and friends, paid for professional services in some cases, and used coping mechanisms such as avoidance to manage the impacts of their experiences. The community organizations and government agencies they contacted did not provide or offer any support. This failure on the part of public entities to deliver expected services enhanced participants’ feelings of anger, isolation, and distrust of law enforcement and institutions.

## **Summary**

This chapter presented findings that emerged from cross-case analysis. The case vignettes described the participants’ accounts of their experiences and their reactions to them. These were followed by the major findings. The four findings were that (1) emotional responses, which

included anger, fear, and isolation, impacted participants' sense of well-being and security; (2) psychological responses, including incomprehension; powerlessness, loss of trust, and doubt altered participants' world views and their views of their place in it; (3) participant views of law enforcement were negatively impacted; and (4) affordable community support and services targeting victims of officer use of force are virtually non-existent. Chapter 5 explores these findings and the ways in which they relate to existing theory and identifies some of the implications as they relate to public health, community safety, and policies.

## **Chapter 5: Discussion and Recommendations**

Law enforcement officers are authorized to utilize force (Alpert & MacDonald, 2001; Harmon, 2008; Holmes & Smith, 2012). However, the use of force can cause physical and emotional trauma to the person who experiences it, as well as to that person's family and friends. Individuals who have been traumatized have rights and needs that must be addressed, regardless of who caused the trauma. Otherwise, physical, emotional, and psychological healing may be difficult to achieve (DOJ, 2013).

The primary purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore the perspectives of individuals, as well as family members and friends of individuals, who had experienced officer use of force by inquiring about the impacts it had had on them. It drew on the individual accounts of seven participants with diverse demographics. Face-to-face interviews with four pre-written open-ended questions, follow-up interviews, expert interviews, documents, and video provided data for the study. Documents and video included incident reports, legal decisions, court documents such as officer and witness statements, a medical examiner's report, and media reports. I transcribed, coded, and analyzed the recorded interviews both manually and with NVivo computer software. The aim was to understand and document what the participants experienced, where they sought relief, what challenges they faced, and the meaning they ascribed to their experiences.

### **Theoretical Framework**

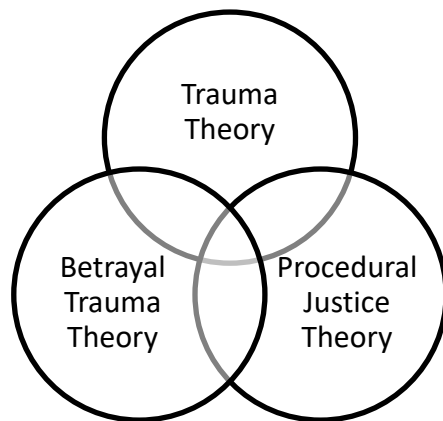
A theoretical framework, a theory or theories used to explain social and/or psychological processes, can be employed to understand phenomena (Anfara & Mertz, 2006). At the outset of this study, trauma theory and betrayal trauma theory formed the theoretical framework. Trauma theory predicted participants' emotional, psychological, behavioral, physical, and social

responses to trauma. Viewing law enforcement behavior through the lens of betrayal trauma brought institutional betrayal into focus. Betrayal is difficult to forget and can have a long-lasting, even permanent, impact because what was once a bond is replaced by an enduring barrier that is difficult to eliminate (Rachman, 2010). In other words, the damage betrayal does to trust most often cannot be repaired. As explained in Chapter 2, institutional betrayal occurs when a depended-upon institution fails to protect against, prevent, or respond to misconduct committed within the context of an institution (Freyd, 2015). In addition to the single incident of physical and/or psychological trauma caused by excessive force, study participants experienced numerous instances of institutional betrayal, which in and of itself can also be traumatic (Smith & Freyd, 2014). They felt betrayed not only by law enforcement, but also by medical personnel, politicians, community organizations, and governmental agencies. These multiple betrayal experiences may have further intensified participants' reactions (Freyd, 2013).

Trauma theory and betrayal trauma theory did not fully explain participants' consequent negative views of officers, law enforcement, and in some cases the legal system. Procedural justice theory provided a helpful lens through which to view those findings. Trauma theory, betrayal trauma theory, and procedural justice theory together then helped explain the social dynamic explored in this study as shown in Figure 3.

**Trauma theory explains emotional and psychological reactions and the need for support.** This study's review of trauma and betrayal trauma literature predicted two of the findings that emerged from the data: the participants' many emotional responses and psychological responses to officer excessive force, despite any justification the officers' may have had for initiating interactions with participants. This included justifiable or legitimate stops, responding to calls, and investigating complaints. The predicted trauma responses included sleep

disorders, as well as anxiety/panic attacks (Keeshin et al., 2012; McCann et al., 1988); anger (McCann et al. 1988; Symonds, 1980); fear and distrust (Freyd, Klest, & Allard, 2005; McCann et al. 1988; Symonds, 1975); and shock (Symonds, 1975), labeled “incredulity” in this study, among others. That most study participants sought support is also in accordance with trauma theory.



*Figure 3.* Trauma theory, betrayal trauma theory, and procedural justice theory together explain participant responses.

At the same time, the data indicate that the treatment the participants experienced was most often counter to what trauma theorists and health care practitioners recommend if trauma victims are to fully recover from their experiences. Table 7 includes some of the victim needs outlined by trauma theory, ways to meet those needs, and this study’s findings concerning ways in which the participants’ needs were overlooked. The participants who had the most needs met were the ones who succeeded in finding an attorney willing to represent them on a contingency basis.

**Law enforcement actions constitute institutional betrayal as explained by betrayal trauma theory.** Chapter 2 included an introduction to betrayal trauma theory and the concept of institutional betrayal. More detail concerning institutional betrayal follows here. This is because it is key to the higher level interpretations of this study’s findings.



Table 7

*Findings Related to Trauma Theory Best Practices*

Trauma Theory: Trauma Victims Needs	Best Practices	Findings
Support	Provide crisis counseling, therapy, and legal advocacy.	Participants were not offered and found no affordable professional community or governmental support. Support they received came from family and friends and in two cases, attorneys.
Procedural justice	Implement fair procedures.	Participants did not believe they were treated fairly by officers, law enforcement agencies, or the legal system.
Informational justice	Provide thorough, honest, valid information about decisions made concerning victims' cases and the resources they can access.	Participants discussed inaccurate and falsified reports, some with missing information. They reported that information they requested was withheld. All who sought information or support were met with silence on at least one occasion.
Interpersonal justice	Treat people sensitively and respectfully.	Participants thought they were treated insensitively and disrespectfully by officers and departmental personnel.
Social acknowledgement	Acknowledge that the victim was harmed.	One lawsuit resulted in an acknowledgement of harm. None of the other participants received such acknowledgement.
Empowerment	Allow victims to take meaningful actions such as presenting evidence and expressing their views.	Two of the five cases resulted in lawsuits, one finding in favor of the participants. The other participants had no opportunities for meaningful action.
Voice	Permit victims to tell their stories.	Participants in two of the cases told their stories to the media and attorneys. Others did not feel they were heard at all. Every participant was silenced in one way or another.
An apology	A person in authority should apologize to the victim for harm done.	Participants in one of the five cases received an apology, though not from the top official in the department.

*Characteristics, actions, and inactions of institutions prone to institutional betrayal.*

Institutional betrayal occurs when powerful, trusted institutions harm people who depend on them for safety and well-being (Smith & Freyd, 2014). The Catholic church, Pennsylvania State University, and the U.S. military are among three of the institutions that have had allegations of abuse leveled against some of their members (Smith & Freyd, 2014). More recently, the U.S. government has been investigated as a context of institutional betrayal (Smidt & Freyd, 2018). These organizations' responses, actions, and inactions constitute what Smith and Freyd (2014) have identified as institutional betrayal. They share two important traits, membership requirements and prestige.

Organizations prone to institutional betrayal have strict membership requirements and well established group identities. Conformity is demanded; when individuals deviate from the institutions' norms, other members swiftly correct them (Smith & Freyd, 2014). The institutions' prestige is connected to their high standing in their communities or society; the public's high regard for them makes it difficult for people to accept or even imagine they would be capable of abuse (Smith & Freyd, 2014).

In addition, institutions prone to betrayal have several shared behaviors that constitute action and inaction. They include the following:

- failing to prevent abuse;
- prioritizing other concerns over members' well-being;
- denying wrongdoing;
- punishing victims and whistleblowers;
- normalizing abusive contexts;
- providing inadequate responses; and

- supporting cover-ups and misinformation (Smith & Freyd, 2014).

Law enforcement organizations have membership requirements and prestige. They practice inaction and take the actions characteristic of institutions at risk of betrayal when citizens allege misconduct. Therefore, institutional betrayal theory is a useful lens through which to view the aftermath of officer use of excessive force and the victims' interpretations of their experiences.

*Law enforcement membership requirements.* Conformity is a hallmark of policing (Kingshott, Bailey, & Wolfe, 2004). Newly hired cadets attend academies where instructors train them to meet the organization's standards. The majority of officers must wear uniforms that have their department's logo on them, and badges. They are taught to conform to "the code of silence," "the blue code of silence," or "the blue wall of silence." Adhering to the code requires falsifications and refusals to report or discuss colleagues' misconduct, including excessive force, in order to protect fellow officers (Cottler, O'Leary, Nickel, Reingle, & Isom, 2014; Koepke, 1999; Nolan, 2009; Scully, 2008; Skolnick, 2002; Stamper, 2016). Officers who violate the code are promptly corrected and risk serious consequences if they continue to deviate (Cottler et al., 2014; Johnson, 2006; Stamper, 2016).

*Law enforcement prestige.* Members of law enforcement and many citizens of the communities they police have great regard for officers and the institution of policing. In response to a Gallup Poll survey of Americans' respect for police, 76% of those who responded said that they had "a great deal" of respect for police in their community (McCarthy, 2016). The prestige inherent in officers' positions places them, in the view of many, beyond question and above reproach (personal communication, M. Gilbert, September 26, 2017; Levenson, 2001; Scully,

2008). Law enforcement officers themselves commonly display a sense of elitism (Kingshott et al., 2004).

*Failing to prevent abuse.* The literature review for this study included numerous historic accounts of officer excessive force and expert views on how to end it. Despite the many past recommendations, this study's participants and most of their friends and families perceived that they or their loved ones had been victims of excessive force. Although excessive force incidents in this country have been exposed and condemned across the decades, law enforcement institutions continue to fail to prevent abuse.

*Prioritizing other concerns over citizen well-being.* Law enforcement organizations prioritize their prestigious reputations and unity over citizen well-being. Maintaining this prestige is of great importance to members of these institutions (Bandes, 1999; Gallagher, Maguire, Mastrofski, & Reisig, 2001) because the public's view of them affects levels of support and cooperation (Sunshine & Tyler, 2003). Writing in *Police Chief* magazine (Margolis & March, 2004), two police chiefs advise readers to regularly remind the community of how good their agency is in specific areas. They stress the need to tell success stories frequently and consistently and to take advantage of every media opportunity possible to do so (Margolis & March, 2004).

Many actions and inactions recounted by this study's participants were intended to protect agencies' and officers' reputations. In an interview for this study, a legal professional supported the contention that law enforcement's desire to protect its reputation is paramount. He explained that his experience had been that "(Internal Affairs) think their job is to whitewash anything that comes in the door and protect all officers" (Anonymous, personal communication, August 17, 2017).

*Denial of wrongdoing.* Denial is another action law enforcement commonly takes to protect its reputation in response to allegations of wrongdoing (Bandes, 1999; Scully, 2008; Waegel, 1984). Officers frequently file charges against victims of excessive force, contending that the citizen, not the officer, initiated the aggression (Lawson, 2012). This aligns with Smith and Freyd's (2014) description of institutional denial. One of the participants claimed this had happened in her loved one's case. While the officer asserted that he had used lethal force because the suspect had pointed a gun at him, the witness steadfastly disputed the officer's account.

*Punishing victims and whistleblowers.* Also in accord with institutional betrayal, law enforcement investigates the backgrounds of citizens who make claims against them and uses any past legal involvement or questionable behavior to discredit them (Lawson, 2012) and protect the agency's image. Participant attorneys alluded to this as they considered accepting a case when they said "...you don't have any skeletons in your closet." While none of the participants stated that they were punished for speaking out, another action institutions at risk for betrayal take, participant and attorney concern was expressed concerning retaliation for doing so.

*Normalizing abusive contexts.* One of the participants reacted strongly to the chief of police's asserting on television that landing blows to an unconscious person's head was handling a situation properly even before an investigation had begun. This is an example of attempting to normalize an abusive context. Normalization also occurred when a sheriff stated that shooting an unarmed, intoxicated youth three times looked "justified," with no investigative report to substantiate his claim (Moravec, 2012).

These institutional traits and behaviors present considerable obstacles for victims of excessive force who strive to obtain justice. However, the remaining two behaviors, providing inadequate responses and supporting cover-ups and misinformation, were part of the most

formidable strategy every study participant encountered. Those behaviors contribute to one of the important themes of this study, that community-wide silence surrounds officer excessive force. This silence relates directly to the fourth major finding, that resources for victims of officer excessive force do not exist in the community where this study was conducted.

*Providing inadequate responses and supporting cover-ups and misinformation.* All officers learn early in their careers to respect, follow, and enforce the blue wall of silence. This unspoken norm embodies the prioritization of institutional unity over citizen well-being and is indicative of the importance of that unity relative to reporting and investigating complaints of wrongdoing (Koepke, 1999; Skolnick, 2002). It also protects law enforcement's prestigious reputation by preventing the widespread publicization of information concerning misconduct and abuse.

Every participant related encounters with the blue wall of silence in the form of inadequate (including no) responses, cover-ups, and misinformation. Omission of information is a form of silence, as is misrepresenting the facts, an act which silences the truth. According to participant accounts, omitted and/or inaccurate representation of events as they recalled them was a common thread across cases. Withholding information for long periods of time, providing misinformation, and misrepresenting facts in reports are actions that can be characterized as inadequate responses, cover-ups, and misinformation. Table 8 compares best practices to prevent institutional betrayal (Freyd, 2018) with the practices identified by this study's participants.

**Procedural justice theory explains diminished views of law enforcement and the legal system.** Procedural justice theory emerged from Tyler's (2004) work in regard to police legitimacy (Harkin, 2015). According to this theory, a critical factor influencing whether or not the public views officers as legitimate is their implementation of procedural justice when

interacting with citizens (Tyler, 2004). The way in which officers use their authority and how they treat citizens affects people's opinions more than officer effectiveness or fairness across different communities (Sunshine & Tyler, 2003).

The public's view of police legitimacy, or legal authority that deserves to be obeyed, is a key determinant in the relationship between the public and the police (Sunshine & Tyler, 2003). It directly affects the public's willingness to comply with the law and to cooperate with, assist, and empower law enforcement (Sunshine & Tyler, 2003). Furthermore, because law enforcement officers are the most conspicuous and commonly seen agents of governmental authority and control (Benson, 1981), the public's opinion of officers also affects citizen support for the legal and political order (Bridenball & Jesilow, 2008).

Sir Robert Peel, the creator of the British system of policing after which the U.S. system is modeled, incorporated this concept into his nine principles of policing (Stamper, 2006).

Principles 2 and 3 address the issue of public support:

Principle 2: The ability of the police to perform their duties is dependent upon public approval of police actions.

Principle 3: Police must secure the will and cooperation of the public in voluntary observance of the law to be able to secure and maintain the respect of the public.

The fourth principle cautions that the use of force negatively impacts public cooperation:

Principle 4: The degree of cooperation of the public that can be seen diminishes proportionately to the necessity of the use of physical force (Stamper, 2006).

The public's view of procedural justice in the courts is no less important. People's opinions of legal authorities are influenced more by how they think the authorities treat people than by the outcomes of proceedings (Tyler, 2001). People comply with laws and support courts

Table 8

*Institutional Courage as an Antidote to Institutional Betrayal*

Principles of Courageous Institutions	Best Practices	Related Findings
Comply with criminal laws and civil rights codes	Go beyond minimal standards. Excel at implementing nonviolence and equity.	Primary victim and their loved ones believed that officers used unnecessary violence. Participants believed they had not been treated fairly and their rights had been violated.
Respond sensitively to victim reports.	Avoid blaming or attacking the victim. Acknowledge the harm done.	Participants were met with silence or rebuffed.
Give victims a voice.	Allow victims to discuss their experiences.	Participants did not feel heard. They were largely silenced.
Be accountable.	Accept responsibility for mistakes.	Participants did not believe officers involved in their incidents were held accountable. The agencies did not admit to wrongdoing, other than in one case. This came about through a legal proceeding.
Apologize.	Offer an apology when appropriate.	Participants in one case received an apology through a legal proceeding. It would have had more weight had it come from the head of the organization.
Be transparent.	Share aggregate data, policies and processes with the public and be open to public input and scrutiny.	Information relating to participants' cases was withheld. It was only with the help of attorneys that some participants were able to access some information.
Encourage exposure of abuse.	Reward whistleblowers.	Participants were silenced when they tried to share their stories.

Note: Freyd, J. J. (2018, January 11). When sexual assault victims speak out, their institutions often betray them. *The Conversation*.



as institutions if they believe these institutions are largely fair (Tyler, 2004). Citizens' willingness to obey the law is central to crime control, but in order for citizens to respect and follow the laws of their community, they must see that legal authorities treat people fairly. Exercising authority unfairly results in noncooperation and hostility (Sunshine & Tyler, 2003).

The responses of the current study's participants support this theory. They were all middle- and upper-middle income, with strong mainstream beliefs, commitments to social institutions, and reputations to uphold. None had a criminal record or a history of mental instability. All of them had had a sense of security and trust in law enforcement and community institutions prior to their or their loved one's encounter with law enforcement and their ensuing interactions with agencies and institutions.

However, their officer excessive-force experiences destroyed their sense of security and trust. They did not perceive that they had been treated fairly by the officers, the officers' agencies, or the legal system. In other words, as shown in Table 9, they believed they had been denied procedural justice (Sunshine & Tyler 2003). As a result, three of the participants expressed rage toward officers and the legal system in general, and all expressed distrust. It is impossible to know what the long-term effects of that anger and distrust will be, but procedural justice theory predicts disaffection from, noncooperation with, and withdrawal of support for law enforcement and government institutions.

Tyler's and others' studies concerning procedural justice and law enforcement focus solely on officer behaviors; they do not take into consideration other law enforcement staff such as detectives, office personnel, or administrators who interact with the public. Participant accounts of being "given the run-around" and being lied to were not only in reference to the officers involved, but to other departmental employees as well. The data they and other

participants provided indicates that the way they were treated by departmental staff post-incident greatly impacted their opinions and levels of trust in regard to the agency itself.

Table 9

*Findings Related to Procedural Justice Theory Best Practices*

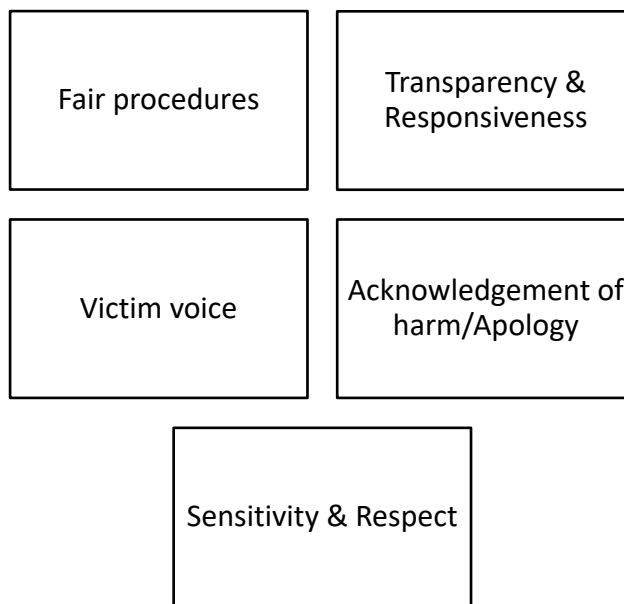
Procedural Justice Theory: What Citizens Want	Best Practices	Related Findings
Voice	Provide an opportunity for citizens to present their arguments, be heard, and have their views considered by the authorities.	Participants were largely silenced. The only ones able to present their arguments were those who found an attorney willing to represent them pro bono.
Respect	Be polite and show concern for individuals' rights.	Primary victims were not believed, held at gunpoint, beaten, and shot; secondary victims believed they were lied to, ignored, and ridiculed.
A neutral decision-making process	Base decisions on objective information.	All participants believed the agencies and the legal system were biased toward officers and made decisions in their favor.
Responsive, helpful authorities	Answer citizens' questions, respond to their concerns, provide useful, accurate information.	Participants encountered silence in response to requests for information and received misinformation. They received no support from authorities.
Authorities who are motivated by fairness	Exercise authority fairly.	Secondary victims thought their loved one and they were treated unfairly. Primary victims did not think they were treated fairly.
Fair outcomes	Follow fair procedures in order to achieve fair outcomes.	Participants who attempted to get justice did not think the outcomes of their cases were fair. Participants who did not expect a fair outcome did not attempt to obtain one.

Note: Tyler, T. R. (2006). *Why people obey the law*. Princeton University Press.

A synthesis of these three theories indicates that the victim needs that trauma and betrayal trauma theories identify and the behaviors of institutions concerned with preventing institutional

betrayal largely overlap. That is to be expected given that betrayal trauma theory is based on trauma theory. In addition, procedural justice theory identifies those same behaviors and needs.

These are summarized in Figure 4.



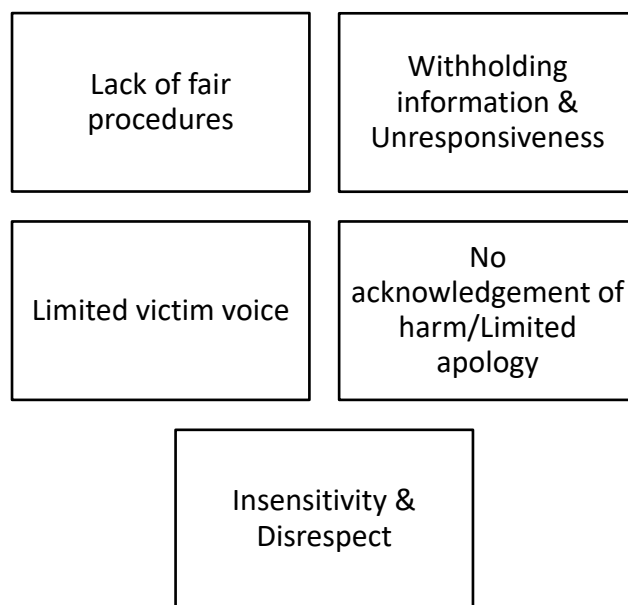
*Figure 4.* Victim needs according to trauma theory, betrayal trauma theory, and procedural justice theory.

This study revealed officers and law enforcement agencies met none of these needs automatically or willingly. None of the participants expressed the belief that they had experienced transparency and responsiveness, sensitivity and respect, or fair procedures in their interactions with law enforcement. Forty percent (four participants, two cases) received an apology as a result of mediation, though the participants in one case commented that the apology was not sincere.

Three of the seven participants (two cases) were given a voice when they were allowed to share their stories as a result of litigation. One of these participants expressed heartfelt gratitude to the judge who conducted the mediation because she felt she had finally gotten the ear of a

sympathetic authority. All three participants were deeply grateful to their attorneys for hearing and believing their account of events.

The same three participants had the opportunity to give voice to their experiences when they were interviewed by the local media. One interview occurred because a family member of the victim worked for a news outlet; the other took place because the local media frequently cover officer-involved shootings. In both cases, this opportunity arose months after the excessive force incident had taken place. The other participants had no such opportunities to be heard. At present in this study's locale, having the media take an interest in a particular incident and obtaining the support of a sympathetic attorney are the sole means of ensuring that some of the needs of victims of officer excessive force are met. It is important to note that national media does not typically cover the cases of citizens like the participants in this study. Figure 5 contrasts participant perceptions of how they were actually treated with the needs depicted in Figure 4.



*Figure 5.* Victim experiences contraindicated by trauma theory, institutional betrayal trauma theory, and procedural justice theory.

This study has exposed gaps in trauma theory, betrayal trauma theory, and procedural justice theory. Trauma theory research explores trauma in child victims of abuse, victims of property crimes and assault, victims of domestic violence, and victims of sexual assault. Including victims of officer use of force in future explorations would provide a more accurate representation of people experiencing trauma in this society. Betrayal trauma theory research has identified the military, the church, the health care system, universities, and the federal government as contexts for institutional betrayal. Law enforcement agencies fit the description of institutions at risk for fostering betrayal; therefore, incorporating them in future betrayal trauma research would expand the knowledge-base related to institutional betrayal. Finally, procedural justice theory focuses solely on officers and the effect they have on the public's perception of procedural justice as it relates to law enforcement. However, this study has shown that law enforcement agencies also figure prominently into the participants' perception of law enforcement's procedural justice and so those agencies warrant inclusion in procedural justice theory and police legitimacy research.

### **Unlike Other Traumatized Populations, Victims of Officer Excessive Force are Rarely Provided Resources and Services**

**Beyond the blue wall and the institution.** According to trauma theory, victims of violence need first and foremost to be able to tell their stories and be heard (Herman, 2003). However, law enforcement and the community weaponized silence against the participants and their families. At the same time that participants were confronted with silence, they continually encountered efforts to silence them and their stories, leaving them with few means of sharing their experiences and frustrations. They were treated as threats who had to be defended against, rather than as victims.

The blue wall of silence refers to a law enforcement behavior and does not accurately encompass what participants encountered. The term does not capture the breadth of the silence that pervaded the entire community as it related to the participants' excessive force experiences. That silence emanated not only from the system that was the involved law enforcement agency, but also the system that is made up of different types of law enforcement agencies; the system that is comprised of the courts, attorneys, and DAs; and the system that is the broader community within which all of the other systems exist. It was not only law enforcement personnel (the blue wall) that made it difficult, when not impossible, for participants to get information and assistance related to their excessive-force incidents. It was also political officials, service providers, medical personnel, members of community associations, and even members of the media.

Private citizens were also silent on this subject. A doctor of one of the participants is a case in point. The participant relayed to me the story of law enforcement misconduct that one of his doctors had shared with him. He provided me with the doctor's name and telephone number; when I called and asked the doctor about the incident, he denied having discussed it with the participant or even knowing anything about it. Additionally, numerous people who had been victims of officer excessive force declined my invitation to participate in this study.

Attorney and law professor Alexa Freeman validates participants' accounts of being ignored or brushed off. She has asserted that every level and every branch of government turns a blind eye to police brutality, which she argues is the result of numerous institutional failures (Freeman, 1995). She concludes that this behavior persists due to inaction, insulation, and refusal to take responsibility. She emphatically states that it could not flourish without the complicity of the court system and society at large (Freeman, 1995).

**Victims of excessive force are among the most silenced victims of violence.** While the silence participants encountered served to protect the reputation of law enforcement, it isolated the victims. They found no one in the community with whom to discuss common experiences. Consequently, they had the false impression that their circumstances were rare.

The isolation participants experienced as a result of the silence surrounding their traumatic experiences constitutes a type of exclusion, a form of revictimization (Trulson, 2005), and may explain why some participants chose not to seek support. Instead, they simply assumed they would get no resolution and spared themselves further negative experiences. Herman (2005), in writing about sexual assault survivors, has stated that the elements of isolation and degradation of victims are characteristic of crimes of dominance. They serve to publicly stigmatize victims should the crime be disclosed (Herman, 2005).

Victims of crimes of dominance and victims of excessive force, as distinct from victims of other types of violence, have this and much else in common. A comparison of these two groups further establishes victims of officer excessive force as an unacknowledged population who experience violence-induced trauma. Crimes of dominance are unlike other acts of violence because the perpetrators use it to demonstrate dominance, subordinate their victims, and show them how powerless they are (Brownmiller, 1975; Herman, 2005). Without question, excessive force has the same purpose. Victims of excessive force are left with no uncertainty as to where they stand in relation to officers. Victims of crimes of dominance realize that their abusers act with the unspoken, and often spoken, permission of their community (Herman, 2005). This is also true of excessive force victims, who realize that their abusers act with the permission of their government as well.

Sexual assault victims are silent about their experiences for some of the same reasons that excessive force victims are. Silence represents powerlessness in our society, and it is difficult to speak out about the experience that created the sense of powerlessness (Ahrens, 2006). When they do speak out, sexual assault victims encounter many of the same issues that study participants and/or their loved ones faced: blame (Brownmiller, 1975; Carper, 2018; Symonds, 1975), the question of resistance (Feild, 1978); disbelief (Feild, 1978); law enforcement sympathy for the perpetrator (Brownmiller, 1975; Feild, 1978; Symonds, 1975); character scrutiny (Campbell, 1998); and challenges in obtaining support (Campbell, 2001; Herman, 2003).

It is not uncommon for people to blame victims for their sexual assault, pointing to their behavior, dress, sexual history, and “poor choices,” such as walking in an unsafe area at night (Brownmiller, 1975; Carper, 2018; Symonds, 1975). Victims of excessive force are frequently blamed for the same things, although their legal-involvement history is substituted for sexual history. Sexual assault victims are faulted for not resisting enough (Feild, 1978); excessive force victims are faulted for resisting at all. Many people find both sexual assault victims’ and excessive force victims’ claims unbelievable, and law enforcement regularly sides with the perpetrator in sexual assault cases (Brownmiller, 1975; Feild, 1978; Symonds, 1975), as they do in excessive force cases. The character of sexual assault and excessive force victims is scrutinized in the same manner, and both types of victims encounter challenges in obtaining support.

In order to recover, sexual assault victims need justice in the form of sharing their stories, holding their abusers accountable, repairing the harm done to them and their loved ones, and feeling safe while continuing to live in the same community with their aggressors (Herman,



2005). However, they face many challenges in achieving this justice (Herman, 2005). The same needs pertain to participants in this study. However, victims of excessive force face even greater challenges when they attempt to obtain justice due to the powerful entities that align themselves with officers. These include first and foremost their unions. In addition, the municipal government and the law enforcement department that employ them, judges (Freeman, 1995), the district attorney's office (Vitale, 2014), jurors (Hoffman, 1992; Stamper, 2016), the public in general and, as participant accounts have demonstrated, the FBI, EMS, elected officials, and community organizations are complicit in the denial of justice for victims of officer excessive force. This results from their failure to offer support, speak up on behalf of the victims, or even acknowledge the harm and injustice that have been done to them.

Herman (2005) has observed that the Constitution of the United States protects the rights of the accused but not the rights of victims. She asserts, "It is this dishonoring of the victim that renders crimes of sexual and domestic violence so intractable and so impervious to the formal remedies of the law" (Herman, 2005, p. 573). This is true many times over for the victims of excessive force as a result of the unquestioning high regard many members of the public have for law enforcement officers, who are representatives of the government. Given that in 2008, 86% of the people who believed that officers had mistreated them remained silent rather than file a complaint (Eth & Durose, 2011), it appears that victims of excessive force understand, as do victims of rape (Herman, 2005), that should they demand justice, what they would face in the legal system is public shaming.

Just as sexual and domestic violence crimes, with a 5% conviction rate, are crimes of impunity (Herman, 2005), officer misconduct is a crime for which there is little to no accountability. Table 10 displays the Cato Institute's National Police Misconduct Reporting

Project statistics related to allegations of misconduct against police and the subsequent rate of sentencing (Packman, 2011).

Table 10

*The Cato Institute's National Police Misconduct Reporting Project Statistics on Prosecution of Police Misconduct April 2009 to December 2010*

Reports of misconduct	Officers involved	Criminal charges brought	Officers convicted	Officers incarcerated
8,300	11,000	3,238 (29%)	1,063 (10%)	383 (4%)

Facing these statistical odds, encountering invalidating silence, and having to fight every step of the way for information, it is understandable that most victims of officer excessive force remain silent and do not attempt to obtain justice. The legal system that is responsible for holding just 4% of officers accused of excessive force accountable is the only recourse excessive force victims currently have, if they and their cases meet exacting standards. That is because institutional and community-wide silence on this topic has resulted in an absolute lack of services and resources for victims of officer excessive force.

**Support recommendations for officers and victims of crime and community violence.** The International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP), the national Office for Victims of Crime (OVC), and advocates for victims of community violence acknowledge that people who have experienced trauma need and have the right to services. The IACP urges police departments to provide services for employees, and the OVC provides funding to the states so that they can offer services to citizens who are victims of violence. The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), too, recommends mental health care after a violent community incident for not only directly impacted individuals and families but others in the community as well (Hamblen & Goguen, 2016). These services, eligible expenses, and recommendations are

included in Table 11. However, victims of excessive force are not eligible for the support that is available to other victims of violence.

Because the IACP offers guidelines only, police departments are not required to implement them. According to two psychologists who work with City's police department (Anonymous, personal communication, August 26, 2017 and September 27, 2017), that agency has three psychologists who provide free, "heavily utilized" services to officers and their families. They include individual and family therapy. The department's Psychological Services also coordinates a peer support program. These services are available only to employees and their family members.

The OVC offers no direct services to victims of officer excessive force, but they would refer people to, for example, PsychologyToday.com to locate counselors (OVC, personal communication, May 16, 2018). The Crime Victims' Compensation Program in the state in which this study took place, does not offer services to them either. "This program is for victims of crime. If no charges are filed on law enforcement for criminally injurious conduct, (this office) cannot help" (personal communication, August 7, 2017). The only means of filing charges against an officer is via a law suit. As has been shown, winning such suits is rare and takes years to accomplish.

The VA does not address officer use-of-force actions directly in its discussion of community violence. However, it is indisputable that many officer actions qualify as community violence wherever they occur. A shooting or any other violent act is potentially traumatizing, regardless of who commits the act.

Table 11

*Services, Eligible Expenses, and Recommendations for Care of Officers, Victims of Crime, Victims of Community Violence, and Victims of Officer Excessive Force*

IACP Guidelines & Local PD Services after Trauma-Inducing Event	OVC Trauma-Related Expenses Eligible for Funds	VA Recommended Services for Citizens After Incident of Community Violence	Services, Funds, & Recommendations for Victims of Officer Excessive Force
Show concern and support.	Medical bills resulting from physical injuries	Debrief.	
Ensure the company of a supportive colleague or supervisor.	Mental health counseling and care	Identify people at high risk for PTSD.	
Explain what will happen and why.	Loss of wages due to physical injury	Provide access to a crisis hotline.	
Recommend legal representation.	Funerals	Connect people with continuing treatment.	
Call or visit officer's family.			
Have employee who knows the family take them to the hospital.			
Call friends and chaplain for family support.			
Assign a high-ranking administrator to express personal concern and empathy face-to-face.			
Require a confidential session with a licensed mental health professional before a return to duty.			

IACP Guidelines & Local PD Services after Trauma-Inducing Event	OVC Trauma-Related Expenses Eligible for Funds	VA Recommended Services for Citizens After Incident of Community Violence	Services, Funds, & Recommendations for Victims of Officer Excessive Force
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Provide opportunities for family counseling.

Expedite administrative and criminal investigations and inform the officer of the outcomes.

Make peer counselors available in addition to a professional counselor.

Assist the family in making funeral arrangements.

Help the family in arranging immediate financial aid.

Aid the family in completing paperwork necessary to receive all eligible benefits.

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**Victims of excessive force are treated like victims of crime in the 1970s.** Study participants learned that no free or low-cost professional services are available to victims, or survivors of victims, of officer excessive force in the community where this study was conducted. As one participant stated, “There's nothing. You are alone.” This is generally the case throughout the nation, though in researching agencies that offer support to victims of excessive force I discovered a few community organizations doing this in different locations. One was

Communities United Against Police Brutality in Minneapolis-St. Paul, Minnesota. It was formed in 2000. Another was the Justice Teams Network, which launched in Los Angeles in May, 2018.

Communities United Against Police Brutality is a volunteer-run group that has a 24-hour crisis hotline that citizens can call to report officer abuse (Communities United Against Police Brutality, n.d.-a). They send crisis teams to investigate, document complaints, and provide immediate (unspecified) assistance. They follow up with health and legal referrals and work to have survivors' and family members' stories told in the media. They have built a support network for citizens who experience officer use of excessive force (Communities United Against Police Brutality, n.d.-b).

The Justice Teams Network is a coalition of organizations such as Black Lives Matter groups, the Just Love Coalition, and Fathers and Families of San Joaquin. They plan to use the Anti Police-Terror Project and Dignity and Power Now methods, including the use of "healing justice" to support the victims of officer excessive force (Peters, 2018). In addition, they plan to help families grieve, connect them with counselors and attorneys, and guide them through the legal system.

However, in the community where the study took place, as in many other communities across the country, no such grassroots organizations exist. The only remedy victims have is legal action, which can be very expensive, and participants discovered even that was difficult to obtain. According to one participant who succeeded in obtaining an attorney, several attorneys had previously refused to take the case because "they said chances of winning are remote." One participant incurred tremendous debt for legal costs, got no results, and did not believe that her attorneys acted in good faith. Another participant, on the other hand, thought highly of the attorney who fought his son's case. He worked on a contingency basis, so the participant did not

spend any money for his services. In the end, however, the court did not rule in their favor. And even though two participants did win a settlement from the City in their case, insofar as they received an apology and a check, they were dissatisfied, and one said she was “still mad as hell.”

Victims of officer excessive force are, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, where other victims of violence found themselves in the 1970s, before the victims’ rights movement, but with the added dimension of betrayal, which fuels deep anger and a sense of despair. The very people in the organizations and institutions they turn to for protection and assistance reject their requests for aid. Victims of officer excessive force have few rights and little support, other than that provided by family and friends and an occasional attorney and, at times, the media. They do not qualify for the services and benefits of the OVC, but Trulson (2005) has cautioned that treating some victims as more worthy than others and excluding them when they reach out for support revictimizes them. The U.S. DOJ (2013, p. 11) itself has advanced the view that victims of violence who do not receive the type of assistance that the OVC provides may fail to “regain a sense of normalcy in their lives.” Trauma theory, institutional betrayal trauma theory, and procedural justice theory provide support for this view.

### **Implications and Recommendations**

The findings of this study that officer use of excessive force had strong emotional and psychological impacts on participants and negatively impacted their views of law enforcement while leaving them without community resources or services have implications for law enforcement, the legal system, and communities across the country. All three have a vested interest in the minimization of any officer use of force, but particularly excessive force, and in the health and well-being of citizens who experience excessive force, both directly and indirectly. Sustained use of excessive force over decades has created a largely hidden,

unacknowledged, and unserved population of traumatized individuals. Continuing to ignore the impacts of excessive force has immediate negative effects on individuals, but it also has long-term adverse consequences for society as a whole.

This is due in part to the fact that law enforcement agencies need the cooperation, support, and trust of the public to effectively control crime and maintain secure communities (Freeman, 1995; President's Task Force, 2015; Tyler & Fagan, 2008). Furthermore, procedural injustice and ignoring the victims of officer excessive force can have serious implications for law enforcement officer safety (Tyler, 2011). The participants of this study were stable community members with commitments to work and school. A potential danger for law enforcement exists, however, when victims of excessive force or their family members and friends do not have such constraints and stability.

The number of law enforcement officers who die in the line of duty is low, but it is a number that fluctuates. In 2016, the FBI (2016) reported 653,000 sworn officers in the United States. In 2017, 46 officers, or .007%, were feloniously killed (FBI, 2017), down from .011% (72 officers) in 2011 (FBI, 2011). However, in a study of retaliatory violence between law enforcement and citizens, Bejan, Hickman, Parkman and Pozo (2018) found that officer shootings of white non-Hispanics are associated with an increase in officers killed. (They observed the opposite effect after officer shootings of members of minority groups.) It is therefore in the interest of law enforcement officer safety to be responsive to the victims of officer excessive force and to treat them with fairness, consideration, dignity, and respect.

Society at large benefits from having productive, contributing citizens. People with trauma resulting from officer excessive force may be hampered in this regard. So, too, are people who have been disillusioned by a perceived betrayal of the institutions they once believed in. In



addition to diminishment of their support of institutions, their experiences can negatively impact their ability to fully participate in daily activities (AuCoin & Beauchamp, 2007). Therefore, acknowledging the harms resulting from officer excessive force, recognizing the rights of victims of excessive force, and meeting victims' needs are all in the best interest of the victims, law enforcement, and society.

**Recommendation One.** The distinction that is currently made between “victims of violence” and “victims of crime” harms victims of officer excessive force because it precludes them from receiving the resources and support that are extended to other victims of violence. All people who are traumatized by violence have needs and rights, no matter who the perpetrator. Research into the ways in which victims of officer excessive force can receive the same support services that other victims of violence receive would be helpful.

**Recommendation Two.** The IACP provides specific principles, strategies, and methods for handling law enforcement officers who experience trauma. It also outlines best practices for supporting victims of crime in the document *What Do Victims Want? Effective Strategies to Achieve Justice for Victims of Crime* (2000). Best practices for supporting victims of community violence have also been identified (Hamblen & Goguen, 2016). Research is needed into best practices for victims of excessive force to determine if these same or other approaches would benefit them most.

**Recommendation Three.** Research into police incident and arrest reporting and filing practices and avenues available to citizens for providing input and feedback could indicate a need for new policies and procedures. What procedures are in place for handling contested reports? How are discrepancies reconciled? What are the effects of allowing individuals who are not satisfied with an officer's report to submit a response to be included with the officer's

account of events? Research in this area could lead to implications resulting from citizens contesting an arrest report. Another option to investigate is the effects of providing citizens the opportunity to submit reports themselves through an independent but officially recognized agent.

**Recommendation Four.** An organization providing services and support to victims of excessive force is needed in every community. Crisis counseling, information and referral services, criminal justice advocacy, short-term housing, fund raising, support groups, and possibly other services would benefit survivors of officer excessive force. This could reduce the sense of isolation experienced by study participants and contribute to their ability to heal. In the form of a white paper, I will share the results of this study, particularly the guidelines provided by trauma theory, betrayal trauma theory, and procedural justice theory, with the grassroots community organizations that are currently making efforts to meet the needs of victims of officer excessive force.

### **Future Research**

Because this is an exploratory study, it opens several areas that warrant further investigation. These include expanded research into the impact that excessive force has on (a) citizens with misdemeanor and/or felony convictions and their family members, (b) people of lower and upper income levels, (c) people living in heavily policed communities, and (d) individuals, and the family members of individuals, who have experienced excessive force multiple times. As was previously mentioned, by incorporating victims of excessive force in their research, trauma and betrayal trauma investigators could broaden the base of knowledge related to traumatized individuals. Researchers in the field of procedural justice could shed further light on the public's views of law enforcement by going beyond citizen-officer

interactions and exploring citizen interactions with the law enforcement agencies that employ those officers.

Further study might include participants from multiple cities and states to achieve a wider understanding of the experiences of citizens involved in excessive-force incidents. It could also incorporate law enforcement officers' views of the impact their actions have on citizens, the community, and the public's view of law enforcement. Investigation of use of force incidents through the lens of community violence is needed, with a focus on how officer excessive force, the number of officers dispatched in response to an incident, and behavior of officers toward community members during such incidents impacts community members. Other researchers might investigate the public's awareness and depth of knowledge concerning officer use of excessive force in their community and the rights of citizens who experience it. This could be achieved qualitatively through interviews or quantitatively by means of surveys, polls, and questionnaires with closed-ended questions.

### **Concluding Remarks**

City commission members, as well as sociology, political science, legal, criminal justice, and law enforcement scholars, many of whom are former law enforcement officers themselves, have investigated and written prolifically throughout the 20th and 21st centuries on the issue of officer excessive force. It is an issue which affects every member of our society, either directly or indirectly because, in one participant's words, "Anybody can be It," and whoever is "It" has family members, friends, colleagues, and neighbors who are indirectly impacted.

Furthermore, psychologists, psychiatrists, social workers and counselors have identified and documented the impacts of violence and the needs of survivors of citizen-perpetrated trauma. In fact, services and resources are provided for officers and victims of violent crimes. This

exploratory, multicase study has shown, however, that victims of officer excessive force and those who care about them are in a category apart from all other victims of violence. We must integrate the conversations about excessive force and victims of violence in order to include the victims of excessive force and to focus on their needs and rights. It is in the interest of the victims, their family members, their friends, their communities, our society, and law enforcement itself to do so.

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## Appendices

## Appendix A Disclaimer

The quote in Chapter 4, page 80, is a father's account of how he felt at the time of his son's death. The research participant was not having suicidal thoughts or ideation at the time of the interview.

Appendix B  
Cross-Case Themes and Topics

Theme	Topic	Statement
Emotional Response	Anger	I'm still mad as hell. June
		Anger. Never experienced that level of anger. SF
		You're so angry because when you find out the facts...all of a sudden, oh man, the anger will well up in you and you will feel like "I'll tear you apart." May
		For him to start blaming me, wrong telephone number, birth date, really? And then my prescriptions on my table, just start grabbing them in my house? Ask me. It's still my damn house. It might be burned or halfway burned but... respect me. Don't be yelling at me and tell me to calm down. Red
		When I do see those things on the TV, situations where someone's shot or killed, it does make me mad. Leta
Psychological Response	Incredulity/ Incomprehension	I never thought it could happen in the first place. June
		I was just in shock. Leta
		I just don't see it. I don't understand it. SF
		Are you kidding me? It's clearly on here. Even the police knew that day what happened. May
		I thought I was being punked. I started thinking this was all a joke. It was a joke. It was like something that wasn't real. It was like something you see in a movie that's not real. Red
		That was one of the things that I couldn't understand. Why did they hate me so much? That did bother me. I finally just let it go, but I have no explanation for that. Jed



Loss of trust

One (impact) is my profound loss of trust in institutions. Not just the police. June  
 I can go hey, OK until you show me otherwise you're this. Just like you do it to me. Just like they assess threats, I assess threats as well. Mac  
 Please don't stop me (for a traffic violation) because if you guys think that you can get away with killing anybody you want, then it's every man for himself. SF  
 If I'm somewhere, let's say going to a restaurant and there's maybe 3, 4 or 5 cops sitting there I feel like...they're laughing at you. May  
 Just the trust. Just the trust. It's just been broken. Red

Powerlessness/  
Futility

When I call someone and someone says, "No," I say, "Get me someone else." I know--you know, and it still didn't help. June  
 But he was just being rude about the situation so I think that's why I didn't even talk to anybody about it. I just left it alone. Leta  
 I haven't gotten a lawyer or anything like that just cause I know there's no point. I'd be investing in nothing. Mac  
 I'm just a subject. We're all just subjects. Through that process I began to feel very, very insignificant as a human being. SF  
 There for a while I was ready to pack up and go home. I was done. Red  
 You have no justice if it (lawsuit against law enforcement officers) gets passed and it gets to the Xth Circuit. Jed

Views of law  
enforcement

Not all cops are bad

I don't hate all policemen. Cause I think there's a lot of good ones. June  
 I know there's good cops out there and they do their job. But there are some that abuse their power. Leta

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Just the officers that are out there, I might trust 50% of 'em. Red

I don't want to think that because I know not all the police are like that. I know there has to be some that have some kind of hearts but I don't see them stick up for it. May

Whereas the XX Department, I've always held them in the highest respect because I've known some of my dearest friends that have gone to the Department and I respect them. SF

When you encounter law enforcement it's automatically one of two choices. He can either be really cool or he's going to be really bad. When you see it like that it's like gambling. It's like a roll of the dice. Mac

I have found out that probably I would say 95% are outstanding people. But 3 to 5 percent... Jed

Abusive

They went into a feeding frenzy. That's the thing. And the one--the guy that started it the other guy who came around just joined in. The other guy was already beating Jed up. And he just came around to get---one of our policemen friends called it a feeding frenzy. June

They were acting like we had just robbed somebody or we were in on some big scam that's been going on for years. It was just the way how they pulled up on the side and pulled out the guns and just how they were just acting in general. It didn't seem like they had to do all that. Leta

I'll say [what happened to me] was excessive. He had his gun angled. He was just ready. That's the thing, the angle. He just lined it up. He wasn't going to miss. And he was right there on me. There was no way he was going to miss. Mac

I'm familiar with what's necessary for the use of deadly of force and in Raul's case it was absolutely not necessary. He did not pose a threat. He was unarmed. He was wearing a pair of shorts and no shirt, his hands up in the air. SF

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Why did you shoot him? He wasn't doing none of what you're saying. May

Just the voice and their tones and the way they were talking to me. "You need to sit down."

Red

Obviously these two, one of them in particular, lost it and just tore into me like I was a piece of punching bag. Jed

Deceitful

But he (attorney) said, "June...life is not like television. They will lie for each other. They will do anything they can for each other."

June

I feel like they purposely wrote it (the incident report) that way, so it wouldn't seem as bad.

Leta

I mean they just covered everything up.

SF

That's why I don't even think they should be taking statements because they will doctor them up, just moving little things around so that it has to make that picture...that the policeman---it has to go with his story. May That first was the thing that apparently was said (that I was combative) but they pretty quickly changed that. They took that away. They just said "non-cooperative" after that. "Non-compliant." Jed

Unresponsive

The deposition came and they kept postponing when the mediation was. June

It was just like a big run-around to try to get it (my ID) back. I knew that if I just went and paid the \$11 I'd probably get it before they could give me an answer. So that's why I just went and bought another one. Leta

I said, "I haven't heard from my boy. and my son is now telling me that there's a ticker up on his TV saying that there was a young man shot." He's like "I can't give you any information. It has to come from the County." SF

She (an eyewitness) went and she told them (a detective) and they said, "Oh ok well that's a

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whole different story. We're gonna call you. We're gonna call you so you can come back in and tell---." They never called her back.

May

I haven't heard back from the detective's office. I've left messages with probably 14 different people that I've talked to. I've had one phone call back and that's been months and months ago. One phone call. Out of all the phone calls and messages.

Red

Unprofessional

They were kinda being jerks about it so I think that kind of just threw me off to where I didn't wanna even have anything to do with them. They were giving me the run-around. Like everyone had an attitude that I talked to.

Leta

They thought, "Yeah, OK, we're going to have some fun today." I think that's really what they did.

Mac

They're very, very unprofessional people.

SF

Nobody's on the same page. Everybody's just scatterbrained.

Red

You have violated my civil rights by what you've done. ... It's a federal violation of your right to life. They tried to take it away from him (another victim) as they tried to take it away from me.

Jed

Insensitive

They didn't know he almost died. Didn't care.

June

They apologized in a sense. They were like "Have a good day. We're sorry." Yeah they did. But was the apology sincere? No. It was just one of those things...and that's why I was like, "OK."

Mac

He actually kept my ID so I didn't get it back. I paid \$11 to get a new one. (It) took about 2 and a half weeks to get it back.

Leta

We weren't notified by the sheriff's department that Son had been murdered for 36 hours. SF

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		<p>It was all about their paperwork. They did their job, they're leaving. They come back, but no information on where do I go from here. Red</p>
	<p>Unaccountable</p>	<p>I don't think people know the kind of impunity with which policemen can work. June</p> <p>It would've been swept under the rug anyway. Just like Michael Bennet's case might get swept under there. He'll have his 15 minutes of fame and then we'll forget about it. There's been things worse than what we, I, any of us have experienced and that still gets pushed under the rug. What's the point? Mac</p> <p>The (law enforcement) department completed their investigation and released my son's killer back out on the streets after his paid 10 -day suspension. SF</p> <p>They know they're gonna get away with it . That's the sad part. They know they're gonna get away with it and they get away with it over and over. Very few get a little bit of a slap on the hand, but not a lot. May</p> <p>We went to three or four, five [attorneys]. Nobody. They all said you can't win this. You have no cause of action. There's nothing in here. It's an '85, '87 rule that was put into play that basically stops this kind of action against the city. Jed</p>
<p>Support sought</p>	<p>Family and friends</p>	<p>I learned was just how loving my family and friends were. That was the positive thing. We wouldn't have made it without them, still wouldn't. They were so kind and so good. That was a gift. June</p> <p>Mm-hmm, [I would say that the supports I used were my friends]. Mac</p> <p>She (my wife) was my shoulder to cry on. SF</p> <p>I never realized how much it means to have the person that you're married to the father of your children there every step of the way, crying the same as you, hurting the same as you, fighting the same as you. May</p> <p>He (my boyfriend) comforted me. Leta</p>

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Lack of support

My sister was very concerned and she was like "I can't believe that they haven't contacted you. He hasn't been arrested." Red

There was no one who would help us. No one. I've told you that. There was no one. I tried. I'm a [profession]. I know who to try. I mean NObody. I came out feeling there is not an institution out there to protect the public.

June

I can't trust anybody Who am I gonna trust? Who am I gonna cry to? Who am I gonna call out to? Who's gonna listen? My own attorneys...kept pushing it aside. May

I honestly don't even know where I would go to to talk to somebody. Like I don't know what kind of organizations there are to try to speak about it. So I never just took the time to look for an outlet or an organization to talk to somebody about it. Leta

I haven't gotten a lawyer or anything like that just cause I know there's no point. I'd be investing in nothing. Mac

(My attorney) said we didn't have enough evidence to be able to pursue any criminal charges against him. Then he dropped out. SF

We went to three or four, five [attorneys]. Nobody. They all said you can't win this. You have no cause of action. There's nothing in here. Jed

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Appendix C  
Emotional Impacts Officer Use of Excessive Force

Theme Type of Response	Topic	# of Cases/ Participants	Frequency	Rank
Emotional	Anger	5/5	47	H
	Fear	5/5	36	H
	Isolation (social and/or emotional)	4/4	32	H
	Sorrow	3/3	15	M
	Disgust	3/3	13	M
	Anxiety	3/3	13	M
	Humiliation	2/2	10	L

Appendix D  
Psychological Impacts of Officer Use of Excessive Force

Theme Type of Response	Topic	# of Cases/ Participants	Frequency	Rank
Psychological	Incredulity/	5/7	26	H
	Incomprehension/	3/4	6	
	New worldview	3/3	13	
	Powerlessness	5/6	32	H
	Loss of trust	5/5	19	H
	Doubt	4/4	24	H
	PTSD	4/4	11	H
	Rationalization	3/4	12	H
	Flashbacks	3/3	8	M
	Revictimization	3/3	6	M
	Desire to confront	3/3	3	M
	Want accountability	3/3	3	M
	Vengeance	2/2	7	L
	Derogation	1/1	2	L
	Empathy	1/1	2	L



Appendix E  
Perspectives on Law Enforcement

Theme Type of Response	Topic	# of Cases/ Participants	Frequency	Rank
Psychological: Opinion of LE	Not all are bad	5/7	18	H
	Abusive	5/7	48	H
	Unresponsive	5/7	33	H
	Unprofessional	5/6	18	H
	Insensitive	5/5	10	H
	Deceitful	5/5	32	H
	Unaccountable	4/4	23	H
	Fearful	3/4	7	M
	Contradictory statements	3/4	20	M
	Unfair	1/1	4	L

Appendix F  
Where Participants Sought Support

Resource	# Cases/ Participants	Rank	Helpful
Attorneys	5/4	H	2/3
Doctors	5/4	H	2/3
Family & Friends	5/7	H	5/7
Counseling	3/3	M	2/2
Police Department	3/3	M	0
Church	2/3	M	2/3
Eyewitness	2/2	L	2/2
Private investigator	1/1	L	1/1
Media	1/1	L	1/1
Community orgs (3+)	1/1	L	0
PD Civil Review Board	1/1	L	0
Congressman	1/1	L	0
Justice Department	1/1	L	0
FBI	1/1	L	0
Medical association	1/1	L	0

Appendix G  
Coping Mechanisms

Mechanism	# of Cases/ Participants	Frequency	Rank
Avoidance	4/5	17	H
Resignation	2/3	3	M
Faith	2/2	11	L
Increased anxiety medication	1/1	1	L
Purchased a gun	1/1	1	L
Positive self-talk	1/1	1	L
Breathing exercises	1/1	1	L
Playing music	1/1	4	L
Journaling	1/1	2	L
Breathing exercises	1/1	1	L

Appendix H  
Permission to Adapt Table

Hello,

Thank you for your request – you are wellcome to use the statistics in your paper. Good luck with the work,

Yours sincerely

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Fra: McAuliffe, Margarita E. [<mailto:mcauliff@student.uiwtx.edu>]  
Sendt: 13. oktober 2018 19:21  
Til: KOS FP Kommunikation  
Emne: Permission to Use Statistics

Hello,

I am writing to ask for your permission to use an adaption of Table 3 in the report The Use of Police Firearms in Denmark, the main findings of a multidisciplinary analysis of Danish police officers' use of firearms 1996-2006 with focus on the period 2002-2006. Comparative statistics from Finland, Norway, Sweden, England, the Netherlands and Germany are included. I would like to incorporate the statistics into my doctoral dissertation.

Thank you for your time and assistance.

All the best,  
Margarita McAuliffe

Margarita McAuliffe  
Ph.D. Candidate, Organizational Leadership  
University of the Incarnate Word