Anti-police Sentiment, Perceived Organizational Support and Perceived Danger

among Police Officers in a Post-Ferguson Era

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Abstract

Recently, there has been concern that police officers are at higher risk of victimization from targeted physical attacks, verbal affronts, racial accusations, and false allegations since the tragic 2014 shooting of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri (USA). This study surveyed police officers in a southern state (USA) and used OLS regression to examine the association between anti-police sentiment, along with perceived organizational support on officers' fear of on-duty victimization and their perceptions of the likelihood of being victimized while on-duty. Findings support that anti-police sentiment and perceived organizational support are both antecedents of police fear of victimization and their perceived likelihood of victimization.

Introduction

Policing has permeated pop culture over the last five years with an emphasis on social justice inspired initiatives (e.g., Black Lives Matter (BLM)) and attention directed toward police training/procedures involving the de-escalation of force, along with suggestions to defund the police. The social justice movement in the United States has brought policing to the forefront of the national debate surrounding equity and fairness for everyone. Anti-police sentiment has increased in the United States in response to high-profile police-involved shootings and the deaths of unarmed persons of color, which have sparked increased media attention and public scrutiny of policing practices and policies (Lee, Weitzer, & Martinez, 2018; Weitzer, 2015). Subsequently, the media attention increased public visibility and shaped citizens' views of the police (Lee et al., 2018), while diminishing police legitimacy and reducing police-citizen relations to levels not seen since the civil rights era (Weitzer, 2015). Rising concerns over police misconduct and historical patterns of racially biased policing practices has spawned public outcry for increased accountability and police reform (President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing, 2015). This has resulted in both anti-police (e.g., BLM) and pro-police movements (e.g., Blue Lives Matter; Lee et al., 2018). Consequently, there has also been emerging concern among the law enforcement community that police officers may be at higher risk of victimization in the form of overt aggression toward them, verbal affronts, racial accusations, and false allegations stemming from concern over increases in protests and anti-police rhetoric (Oliver, 2017), which is aligned with Mac Donald's (2016) "War on Cops" hypothesis. For instance, some researchers have noted that increased anti-police sentiment may prompt enraged citizens or political groups to target officers in retaliation for perceived mistreatment and historical injustices (Barrick, Hickman, & Strom, 2014; Weitzer, 2015). For example, the sniper attack on officers that occurred during a BLM protest in Dallas, Texas, and the ambush-style attacks in Baton Rouge, Louisiana; Los Angeles, California; New York city, and others.

For these reasons, research has begun focusing on how increased anti-police sentiment is linked to work-related attitudes and behaviors of police officers. For example, there is a concern that officers will reduce proactivity (e.g., de-policing) or have limited contact with the public (Nix, Wolfe, & Campbell, 2018; Rushin, & Edwards, 2016; Wolfe & Nix, 2016). Although the extent that increased conflict between police and citizens will alter police policies and practices is still unknown, most would agree that increased tension with the public would intuitively influence police work-related behaviors and attitudes. Fortunately, research has emerged that supports perceptions of organizational justice which can mitigate work-related stressors, such as anti-police sentiment or negative media coverage (Nix & Wolfe, 2016; Smith, Helfers, & Reynolds, 2021; Wolfe et al., 2018), and are related to enumerable positive work-related outcomes (Donner et al., 2015).

Research in organizational and management fields provides promising evidence that when employees perceive that their organization cares about them and values their contributions, the result may be the promotion of positive work-related attitudes (Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchinson, & Sowa, 1986; Eisenberger, Armeli, Rexwinkel, Lynch, & Rhoades, 2001). This research also suggests supportive work environments provide employees emotional support to overcome fears and concerns associated with their work. Furthermore, previous research that examined perceived organizational support, which is the primary component of organizational support, have revealed beneficial behaviors (e.g., task performance and organizational citizenship) and organizational commitment contribute to positive work outcomes (Baran, Shanock, & Miller, 2012; Kurtessis et al., 2017; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002; Riggle, Edmondson, & Hansen, 2009) while simultaneously reducing counterproductive work behaviors (Colquitt et al., 2013). Even though the research within this domain originated with a focus on private sector enterprises, the findings from research focusing on police organizations in the United States (Armeli, Eisenberger, Fasolo, & Lynch, 1998; Brunetto, Teo, Farr-Wharton, Shacklock, & Shriberg, 2017; Helfers, Reynolds, & Maskaly, 2019; Tucker, 2015) and abroad (Boateng, 2014; Gillet, Huart, Colombat, & Fouquereau, 2013: Smith et al., 2021) are similar. Therefore, perceived organizational support

(hereafter POS) should provide a useful theoretical framework to examine organizational support helping to reduce perceptions of fear and the likelihood of victimization among police officers. This study explored how police officers' perceptions of anti-police sentiment and POS are associated with their perceived danger. This was accomplished through an online survey of police officers in a southern state (USA).

Review of Literature

The occupational danger inherent in police work is well documented in seminal police literature (Barker, 1998; Crank, 2010; Skolnick, 1994; Van Maanen, 1973). Although researchers may argue as to the extent that police work is dangerous relative to other occupations (Fridell, Faggiani, Taylor, Brito, & Kubu, 2009), the role that officers perform places them at risk daily. While policing is not the most dangerous occupation, it does differ from many jobs because most of the threats to officers are unknown and unpredictable (Barker, 1998; Skolnick, 1994). Thus, the perception of danger can be argued to be rooted deep in the police-subculture (Crank, 2010; Paoline, 2000) and internalized early in officers' careers through socialization during the police academy and early years in the profession (Crank, 2010). In fact, the concept of danger is considered a major component that defines police officers' working personality (Skolnick, 1994, p. 43). The perceptions of danger persist even if officers believe that the likelihood of victimization is rare (i.e. paradox in policing, see Cullen, Link, Travis, & Lemming, 1983).

Undoubtedly, police administrators and public officials strive to provide police officers the necessary policies, training, and equipment to enhance officer safety and reduce risk. The nature of police work and the variety of required job tasks place officers in situations and circumstances that can result in officers being injured and even killed in the line of duty (Barker, 1998; Brown, 1988; Fridell et al., 2009). Unfortunately, the same individuals that officers are tasked to serve can become threats to officers' safety, financial security, and their professional career (Crank, 1998; Skolnick, 1994). Interactions with community members can also expose officers to attacks (physical and verbal), allegations of misconduct resulting in departmental sanctions, and lawsuits based on civil rights violations (Mac Donald, 2016).

Occupational Dangers and Victimization

Police directed violence differs from other forms of victimization solely due to the nature of the police occupation and the role the police occupy in society (Margarita, 1980; Mawby & Zempi, 2018). This claim is supported by the fact that federal and state laws make assaulting an officer a specific or aggravated offense. As Margarita (1980) emphasized society often overlooks the police officer as a victim, but the fact is victimization has been occurring since the inception of policing. All criminal victimization is serious and acknowledging that police can be victimized is important in policing scholarship. In this study, police victimization included, but not limited to, disparaging remarks, threats, physical violence, and false complaints or allegations.

Overall, most police victimization studies have been descriptive in nature, examined risk factors, or factors associated with actual victimization versus perceptions such as perceived fear of victimization. Extant research reveals that environmental factors (Caplan, Marotta, Piza, & Kennedy, 2014), socio-economic conditions (Kaminski, Jefferis, & Gu, 2003; Willits, 2014), racial composition of citizenry and the police force, intensity of enforcement activities in a community (Kuhns, Maguire, & Leach, 2015), opportunity and motivation (Chamlin & Cochran, 1994), officer characteristics (Ellrich & Baier, 2016; Rabe-Hemp & Schuck, 2007), number of officers present on scene (Covington, Huff-Corzine, & Corzine, 2014), and personal issues such as substance abuse, work and family conflicts, reduced job satisfaction (Ellrich, 2016), are all related to police victimization.

There has been much debate recently regarding the extent that rising friction in police-community relations may lead to increased retaliatory attacks against police by civilians (Barrick et al., 2014; Mac Donald, 2016; Weitzer, 2015) and civilians by police (Bejan, Hickman, Parkin, & Pozo, 2018). For example, a preliminary study by Maguire, Nix, and Campbell (2017) found no evidence of increased officer killings through March 2016 in the United States. In some cases, research supported a different scenario developing, arguing that police attacks on citizens may be increasing as officers perceive themselves under attack (Bejan et al., 2017). While the extent that officers may or may not be under attack will continue to be debated, there is no doubt that rising anti-police sentiment will inevitably increase danger to both civilians and law enforcement (Barrick et al., 2014; Oliver, 2017).

Statistically, deaths of law enforcement personnel in the United States increased in the three years after Ferguson, but decreased in subsequent years, with 2020 being an anomaly due to COVID-19 (NLEOFM, 2021a). Yet, the perceived threat among police officers may not be unwarranted given the number of retaliatory attacks directed at police officers purportedly in retaliation to police-minority shootings and deaths. For example, on July 7, 2016, a sniper intentionally targeted law enforcement, killing five officers and wounding seven other officers and two civilians in Dallas, Texas (Fernandez, Perez-Pena, & Bromwich, 2016). In fact, more officers have been killed by gunfire than any other related category since 2016 (NLEOFM, 2021b). Although it can be debated whether the danger associated with police work has increased over the past few years, the important concept is psychological as perceptions will ultimately influence officers' work-related behaviors and attitudes. For example, Nix and Pickett (2017) noted the negative effect of hostile media was linked to increased fears by officers about being falsely accused of misconduct by citizens. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that officers' perceptions of anti-police sentiment would be correlated to their perceptions of danger.

Advances in video technology, combined with increased anti-police sentiment in the forms of negative social and news media coverage can negatively influence work-related attitudes and behaviors of line-officers (Nix &Wolfe, 2017; Simonson, 2016; Torres, Reling, & Hawdon, 2018) and management-level officers (Nix, Wolfe, & Campbell, 2018). As a safeguard mechanism, officers may curtail or adapt their enforcement activities and reduce their interactions with citizens, such as reducing proactive policing (i.e. de-policing; see Oliver, 2017) because this type of activity increases the risk of having a complaint filed against the officer, having to use force, and/or being assaulted (Oliver, 2017; Shjarback, Pyrooz, Wolfe, & Decker, 2017). This is especially important when officers perceive that organizational policies and practices regarding civilian complaints or disciplinary actions are perceived as unjust (Reynolds, Fitzgerald, & Hicks, 2018) or fails to support officers (Helfers et al., 2019).

External and Internal Influences on Police Officers Behaviors and Attitudes

Some scholars have noted that officers' policing behaviors and attitudes have been altered over the last few years due to increases in public scrutiny and uncertainty regarding how their actions may be interpreted by organizational leadership and the public (Carr & Maxwell, 2018; Nix & Wolfe, 2016; Nix & Wolfe, 2017; Nix et al., 2018; Oliver, 2017; Rosenbaum & McCarty, 2017; Rushin & Edwards, 2016; Shjarback et al., 2017). Although this is not unexpected, as officers' attitudes and behaviors may change as officers adapt to organizational or work environmental strains (Brown, 1988; Paoline & Terrill, 2013). For instance, negative publicity can adversely affect officers' self-legitimacy (Nix & Wolfe, 2017), the way police officers perceive civilians' attitudes toward them (Nix & Pickett, 2017), and officers' motivation, cynicism, and apprehensiveness (Torres et al., 2018).

Fortunately, emerging research also supports that organizationally just and supportive organizations can help officers reduce internal stressors and workplace uncertainty (Wolfe, Rojek, Manjarrez, & Rojek, 2018),

promote pro-organizational views (i.e. buy-in; Rosenbaum & McCarty, 2017), as well as reduce the negative influences of external organizational stressors such as public criticism and anti-police rhetoric and sentiment (Wolfe & Nix, 2016). Conversely, perceived mistreatment can make officers feel expendable (Reynolds & Hicks, 2015) and that their efforts are not appreciated (Armeli et al., 1998). For example, Nix and Wolfe's (2016) study demonstrated that organizational leadership could help mitigate external strains through promoting organizational justice principles by providing a buffer and a support system against public criticism through the promotion of organizational justice-based principles and practices.

Perceived Organizational Support

Another potential predictor of police fear and perceived likelihood of victimization is an officer's perception of organizational support (POS) which refers to the degree to which the organization is perceived to value employee contributions and caring for their well-being (Baran et al., 2012; Eisenberger et al., 1986; Eisenberger et al., 2001; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). From an organizational support theory framework, employees form a generalized belief of how committed their organization is to them based on their treatment and resources provided (Eisenberger et al., 1986; Eisenberger et al., 2001; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002; Shore & Shore, 1995).

Previous research also validates that many organizational activities can influence employee perceptions of support. For example, Rhoades and Eisenberger (2002) revealed that perceived fairness, organizational rewards, training, and staff support were linked to POS. Within the context of policing, favorable job outcomes (e.g., pay, promotions; Armeli et al. 1998), departmental policies, procedures (e.g., disciplinary actions, citizen complaints, promotion, and job assignments; Reynolds et al., 2018) and job-related factors (e.g., rank, tenure, duty-position; Reynolds & Helfers, 2018) beyond cofounding influences of individual traits and characteristics have shown to be associated with POS. Intuitively, this makes sense as each of the aforementioned factors could influence how officers' perceive their contributions as valued and the organization caring about their well-being.

From an organizational support theory framework, in which POS is the primary component, employees often form a generalized belief of how committed their organization is to them based on their treatment and providing valued resources (Eisenberger et al., 1986; Eisenberger et al., 2001; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002; Shore & Shore, 1995). This belief in their organization's commitment to them promotes attachment to the organization (Allen, Shore, & Griffeth, 2003) based on the reciprocity norm (Gouldner, 1960) and principles of social exchange (Blau, 1967; Homans, 1958) which are necessary for sustaining healthy work relationships. In fact, multiple meta-analyses have shown POS to be one of the strongest predictors for healthy work-relationships (Colquitt et al., 2013: Kurtessis et al., 2017; Riggle et al., 2009).

Relevant to this study, earlier research by Armeli and colleagues (1998) provided evidence that perceived organizational support can help fulfill and meet police officers' socio-emotional needs, thus protecting and relieving them from external stressors. This suggests that when police organizations demonstrate that they care for their employees and value their contributions, they may help relieve officers' work-related stressors and help calm officers' fears and concerns (Armeli et al., 1998).

Current Study

This study explored two potential antecedents of perceived danger among police officers in the form of police fear of victimization (PFOV) and perceived likelihood of victimization (PLOV) in a post-Ferguson Era by examining the influence of officers' perception of anti-police sentiment and POS. In particular, we examined how anti-police sentiment and POS are associated with PFOV, and how anti-police sentiment and POS are

associated with PLOV? Based on a review of the literature, four hypotheses are presented: 1) *There is a positive association between officers' perceptions of anti-police sentiment and PFOV*, 2) *There is a negative association between POS and PFOV,* 3) *There is a positive association between officers' perceptions of anti-police sentiment and PLOV,* and 4) *There is a negative association between POS and PLOV.*

Although this study only can only show associations between anti-police-sentiment, POS, and victimization due to the cross-sectional design, this study adds to the literature in several ways. First, this study increases our understanding of varying dimensions that anti-police sentiment can have on police officers' attitudes. Next, although researchers have previously examined varying factors associated with victimization of police officers, this study extends our knowledge on the relationship between organizational support and perceived danger among police officers. Finally, this study adds to the limited POS studies on police organizations and provides additional support for the influence that the police organizational work environment has on police officers' work-related attitudes.

Methods

The data for this study were collected from an online survey of police officers who were employed in five agencies in a southern state (USA). Access to the agencies was obtained through professional acquaintances with members of the agencies selected, thus this would be considered a convenience sample. Initially, seven agencies were selected, but two of the agencies' Chief of Police did not allow the survey to be distributed to their personnel. Thus, five agencies were included in this sample. The agencies represented small and mid-sized suburban police agencies in a large urban area in a southern state. Prior to the survey being distributed to the agencies, the research protocol was approved by the primary author's Institutional Review Board that is responsible for ensuring the safety and protection of individuals involved is not jeopardized. The survey was distributed to first-line patrol officers and was accessible from June 16, 2019, through August 18, 2019. After three weeks from the initial distribution, a second email was sent to encourage officers to respond to the survey. Then after another three weeks, a third email was sent. Each email introduced the purpose of the survey and let the officers know that their participation would be anonymous and confidential. The survey was distributed to 602 officers and 276 responded, which yielded a 45.8% response rate. This is a respectable response considering it was higher than the response rate for most online surveys (Tourangeau, Conrad, & Couper, 2013) and police studies (Nix, Pickett, Baek, & Alpert, 2017). Police studies often suffer from lower response rates in general due to officers often being reluctant to participate in research (Gordon, 2010; Nix et al., 2019: Reynolds & Helfers, 2018).

The survey contained items related to a myriad of environment factors related to a police officer's work environment, along with personal and organizational characteristics. For the purpose of this study, the items related to officers' perceptions of their fear of victimization, likelihood of being victimized, perceptions of anti-police sentiment in their communities, their POS within the agencies they work, estimation of the percentage of the area they police having minority residents, and other demographic variables.

The descriptive statistics for the sample are presented in Table 1. The sample contained officers that were primarily white, male, and non-Hispanic, which is consistent with most police agencies in the United States. The sample was also consistent with the demographics on state demographics for race and gender. The sample was 88.3% white and the state, according to the police officer licensing agency, was 92%. For gender, the sample was 86.1% male and the state was 89%. However, the sample was overwhelmingly non-Hispanic (95.2%) and the state statistic was 75%, but the sample was drawn from suburban agencies in an urban area not in proximity to the border of the United States with Mexico and was consistent with suburban agencies in the metropolitan area of the state. Additionally, the average length of service for the sample was 17 years.

Furthermore, the officers reported that they police diverse neighborhoods where just less than a quarter was occupied by African American residents (24.5%) and Hispanic residents (24.0%).

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Range
Dependent Variables			
Fear of Victimization (α=0.903)	35.577	12.433	10-60
Likelihood of Victimization (α=0.888)	37.175	9.060	12-54
Independent Variables			
Anti-police Sentiment (α=0.910)	41.571	6.379	8-48
POS (α=0.920)	26.719	9.280	8-46
Control Variables			
White	0.883	0.322	0-1
Male	0.861	0.347	0-1
Hispanic	0.048	0.214	0-1
Tenure	17.005	9.735	1-35
% of Neighborhood African American	24.5	19.175	1-90
% of Neighborhood Hispanic	24.033	14.290	1-85

Dependent Variables

There were two dependent variables used in this study. The first dependent variable was police officers' perception about their fear of being victimized (PFOV) during the course of their duty. This variable was operationalized as a scale using nine items from the survey. The items asked used a six-point Likert-type scale ranging from not concerned (1) to very concerned (6). Each officer responded based upon how concerned he or she was in reference to: being physically threatened with a weapon, being physically threatened without a weapon, being verbally degraded, being falsely accused of misconduct by a citizen, having increased resistance to arrest, having personal threats made toward them, having verbal insults directed toward their family, family members being physically assaulted (as a result of you being a police officer), and you being targeted by members of the community. All of these items were summed to create the fear scale with a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.903, which is excellent (George & Mallery, 2003). There are arguments that scale construction should not rely upon Cronbach's alpha as the sole test for satisfying the scale's usefulness. Thus, DeVellis (2017) recommends factor analysis being used to enhance confidence in the reliability of a scale. Factor analysis can confirm the items in the scale load on a single construct. The results of the factor analysis, with varimax rotation, revealed a one factor solution---and the eigenvalue was 5.030. Additionally, the factor loadings ranged from 0.593-0.845.

The second dependent variable used in this study was officers' perceptions of their likelihood of being victimized (PLOV) during their tour of duty. This variable was also operationalized into a scale from using nine items in the survey, which also used the same six option Likert-scale as mentioned in the fear of victimization scale. The items included beliefs about how likely the event will occur in regard to being physically threatened with a weapon, being physically threatened without a weapon, being cursed or verbally degraded, having increased resistance to arrests, having increased non-compliance to lawful commands, being falsely accused by a citizen, having personal threats directed toward your family, having verbal insults directed toward your family, and having family members physically assaulted. All the items were summed to create a likelihood of victimization scale with a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.888, which is considered good (George & Mallery,

2003). Factor analysis was also performed that yielded a one factor solution with an eigenvalue of 4.352 and loadings ranging between 0.580 and 0.780.

Independent Variables

There were two independent variables used in this study (anti-police sentiment and POS) to determine the association the variables had on each of the dependent variables (police officers' perceptions of their fear of victimization and their likelihood of being victimized). The anti-police sentiment variable was operationalized as a scale that included eight survey items. The survey items inquired into the degree of agreement on a Likert-type scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (6) for each of the following statements, Over the past few years…: trust between the community and the police has declined, respect for the police has decreased, false accusations toward police officers have increased, verbal assaults toward the police have increased, physical assaults toward the police have increased, there has been an increase in tension between the police and minority communities, there has been an increase in derogatory statements made about the police, and people are less likely to believe an officers' side of events. As mentioned, these eight items were summed into a scale with Cronbach's alpha coefficient yielding 0.91, which is excellent (George & Mallery, 2003). Again, factor analysis was performed which indicated there was one underlying construct (eigenvalue=4.665, loadings ranged from 0.651 to 0.837).

The POS variable was operationalized as a scale from eight items the respondents answered. The items were statements in regard to their level of agreement using a six-point Likert-type scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (6). The statements were as follows: my organization cares about my opinions, my organization cares about my well-being, my organization considers my goals and values, help is available from my organization when I have a problem, my organization shows little concern for me (reverse coded), my organization is willing to help me if I need a special favor, if given the opportunity---my organization would take advantage of me (reverse coded), and my organization would forgive an honest mistake on my part. The items were summed to create the perceived organizational support (POS) scale. This scale yielded a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.920, which is excellent (George & Mallery, 2003). Factor analysis was also used which indicated a one factor solution; thus, the statements had an underlying construct. The eigenvalue for the scale was 4.800 with loadings between 0.647-0.888.

Control Variables

The control variables used in this study were comprised of community-level and individual characteristic type variables. The community level control variable was the percentage of minorities the officers reported as part of the area they police. There were two continuous variables that measured this concept (African American and Hispanic). Each variable was operationalized by the number the respondent provided in the survey that asked for the percent of the population in the area you police is African American? Hispanic?

The remaining control variables were individual level variables based upon gender, tenure, race, and ethnicity. The gender variable was operationalized as a dichotomous variable, male (=1) and female (=0). Tenure was operationalized as a continuous variable for the total number of years worked in policing. Race was operationalized as a dichotomous variable as either White (=1) or non-White (=0), and ethnicity was also operationalized as a dichotomous variable as Hispanic (=1) or non-Hispanic (=0). These operationalizations were consistent with previous police research (Helfers et al., 2019).

Analysis Plan

Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression analysis was used to determine the association that police officers' fear of victimization and their perceptions of the likelihood they will be victimized have with police officers' perceptions of anti-police sentiment and POS, while controlling for the percentage of minorities in the community they police, gender, tenure, race, and ethnicity. To ascertain if OLS was the most appropriate method to use, the authors ensured the OLS assumptions were satisfied (linearity, homoscedasticity, independence of errors, normality). Additionally, the authors examined the variance inflation factor (VIF) statistic to determine if multicollinearity was a concern. The results revealed all variables and models' VIF statistic were under 4.0, which Gujarati (2003) suggests that multicollinearity was not a concern. Additionally, respondents with missing data were excluded from the analysis.

Results

As mentioned, OLS regression analysis was used to explore the association between police officers' fear of victimization and their perceptions of anti-police sentiment, along with their POS. The first model did not control for any characteristics of officers' community or for their personal characteristics. The overall model was statistically significant, $F(2, 191)=25.26$, $p<0.001$, and explained 20.9% of the variance in officers' fear of being victimized while on duty.

The full model (Model 2) that controlled for the minority composition of the area officers work and their personal characteristics was also statistically significant $F(8, 133)=7.34$, $p<0.001$, and explained 30.6% of the association between officers' fear of being victimized on duty and their perception of anti-police sentiment along with POS, while controlling for the percent of African Americans in the area they police, percent of Hispanics in the area they police, gender, tenure (number of years they have been a police officer), race, and ethnicity.

Table 2. OLS Regression Analysis Results

Independent Variable	Model 1 (DV=Fear)		Model 2 (DV=Fear)		Model 3 (DV=Likelihood)		Model 4 (DV=Likelihood)	
	Coeff.	SE	Coeff.	SE	Coeff.	SE	Coeff.	SE
Anti-police Sentiment	0.931***	0.150	0.870***	0.167	0.594***	0.11	0.549***	0.125
POS	-0.105	0.091	-0.213*	0.106	-0.163**	0.07	-0.216**	0.080
Control Variables								
White			-1.580	3.372			0.318	2.522
Male			0.790	2.570			-0.461	2.001
Hispanic			-3.507	5.235			4.801	3.915
Tenure			0.235**	0.093			0.011	0.070
% of Neighborhood African American			0.022	0.050			0.031	0.038
% of Neighborhood Hispanic			0.015	0.065			0.028	0.049
R^2	0.209		0.306		0.217		0.288	

The results suggest that officers' perceptions of anti-police sentiment had a positive association with their fear of being victimized (confirming the first hypothesis). For a one-unit increase in officers' perception of anti-police sentiment occurring in their community, there was a 0.870 unit increase in police officers' fear of being victimized, while holding all other variables constant. For officers' POS there was a negative association (confirming the second hypothesis)—there was a 0.213 unit decrease in police officers' fear of victimization for every unit increase in POS, holding all other variables constant. For the control variables, tenure was the only variable that was statistically significant. There was a positive association between years of service as a police officer (tenure) and fear of victimization. For each additional year an officer worked in the policing profession, there was a 0.235 unit increase in their fear of being victimized, holding all other variables constant.

The models for the second research question involving police officers' perceptions of their likelihood of being victimized were somewhat similar to the models involving officers' fear. The initial model that examined the association between police officers' perceptions of their likelihood of being victimized and their perceptions of anti-police sentiment and POS was statistically significant, $F(2, 189=26.14)$, $p<0.001$, and explained 21.7% of the variance in officers' perceptions of their likelihood of being victimized.

The full model, Model 4, examined the association of officers' perceptions of the likelihood of being victimized and their perceptions of anti-police sentiments, along with the association of POS with the dependent variable (perceptions of the officers' likelihood of victimization), while also including control variables. This model was also statistically significant, $F(8, 131)=6.64$, $p<0.001$, and explained 28.8% of the variance in officers' perceptions of their likelihood of being victimized. Again, there was a positive association between officers' perceptions of anti-police sentiment and their likelihood of being victimized (confirming the third hypothesis). For a one-unit increase in officers' perceptions of anti-police sentiment yielded a 0.549 unit increase in their likelihood of being victimized, holding all other variables constant. And, there was again a negative association between POS and an officers' likelihood of being victimized (confirming the fourth hypothesis). For every one-unit increase in an officers' POS, there is a 0.216 unit decrease in their likelihood of being victimized, holding all other variables constant. Also, none of the control variables were statistically significant in the model.

Discussion

This is an important study as it extends our knowledge about the influence anti-police sentiment has on police officers' fear of victimization and their likelihood of being victimized, while also expanding our understanding of how the "Ferguson Effect" – the idea that officers will reduce proactivity and community contacts due to increase negative public sentiment leading to a rise in crime, along with influencing other aspects of policing. Furthermore, this study reiterates the need for fostering a supportive and caring work environment and echoes the benefits that a positive work environment can have on police work related attitudes and behaviors (Armeli et al., 1998; Boateng, 2014; Brunetto et al., 2017; Gillet et al., 2103; Helfers et al., 2019; Reynolds et al., 2018; Tucker, 2015).

The police are an integral aspect of any democratic society to maintain order while exercising their duties in a constitutional manner (Brown, 1988; Marenin, 2004). The police are considered to represent the thin blue line between anarchy and an ordered society, thus without their presence society would be chaotic (Nhan, 2019). However, for the police to effectively perform their duties they must feel they are doing the work of society and for the greater good without having to fear they are under attack (Mac Donald, 2016). Additionally, the sense of support for the police resides in a community's and society's confidence that the police will perform their duties professionally (Hinds & Murphy, 2007). This confidence in essence is ascribed to as police legitimacy and is at the heart of the anti-police movement (Maguire et al., 2017). This study focused on how the

perceptions that the police possess about society's views concerning them is associated with their fear and likelihood of being victimized.

The history of the police and their interactions with persons of color in the United States has been problematic, but the police are essential for the safety and security of any community (Weitzer, 2015). For the police to effectively perform their duties, they must feel secure that they will not be targeted (i.e. ambushed) by members of society simply because of the role they occupy. It is important for the reader to recognize that the overwhelming majority of the police perform their duties in an ethical and constitutional manner (Pollock, 2019). Thus, officers' perceptions of anti-police sentiment that is developed from community members' socialization may overgeneralize the institution of policing as targeting minority citizens may be perceived as unjustified by police officers (Lee et al., 2018). Police research has suggested that misconduct by police officers is not widespread and is restricted to a low percentage of officers in any given police agency (Harris, 2010; Terrill & Ingram, 2016). This is not to say that the incidents that have been publicized in recent years are not important and not a reason for societal concern, because they are serious and have been the impetus for discussion and recommendations for police reform (President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing, 2015). Additionally, even though the percentage of problem officers is low, police administrators institute many strategies to identify, correct, or disassociate themselves from problem officers--from recruitment/selection, training, coaching, discipline, etc. (Miller, 2004). This is salient because police practitioners recognize the authority and responsibility they possess in policing a democratic society is immense.

Since the death of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri (2014), the national spotlight on low occurrence, high profile police shooting incidents have generated anti-police sentiment throughout the American society (Rosenfeld, 2015; Weitzer, 2015). This has resulted in officers becoming concerned that the widespread anti-police sentiment is compromising their ability to effectively police their communities. Thus, when the police are fearful that they will likely be victimized, they will be unable to perform their duties at the highest level possible. This is based upon the premise that stress will result in subpar work performance (Anshel, Robertson, & Caputi, 1997; Chen, 2009; Hart, Wearing, & Headey 1995; Kaufmann & Beehr, 1989; Oldenburg, Wilken, Wegner, Poschadel, & Baur, 2014).

Policing is a profession where danger is associated with the job (Barker, 1998; Skolnick, 1994) and the authors, as former police officers, acknowledge danger is omnipresent. However, the incidents where police officers have been targeted occurred during instances where their perception of danger may be reduced (e.g., pumping gas at a service station or sitting in a police car). Each of these events has a level of danger, but officers do not expect to be targets for criminal acts. These incidents are concerning for the police and may provide support for the hypothesis that there is a war on cops (Mac Donald, 2016). The findings from this study provide support that officers are concerned about their safety while performing their job duties. Specifically, the negative police sentiment that the police perceive as present in their communities has resulted in police officers becoming more fearful about their safety and are concerned they will be victimized.

Furthermore, this study illuminated the importance of the internal environment for the police. The importance of leadership among organizational managers, regardless of profession, has been well researched and published. In reference to police agencies, leadership development has not generally been a priority and has led to practitioners referring to the policing institution as being "overmanaged and underled" (Enter, 2006; p. xix). Promising police research has also purported that when officers perceive their agency leadership supports them, they will feel valued and conform to organizational/community expectations (Arneli et al., 1998; Boateng, 2014; Gillet et al., 2013; Reynolds & Helfers, 2018). In a recent study of Metropolitan police officers in the UK, perceptions of organizational support partially mediated the negative effects of anti-police sentiment on perceived work-related dangers (Smith et al., 2021).

This study contributes to the literature that POS can reduce perceived danger even when community discontent exists with the police. As officers' perceptions of anti-police sentiment increases, there is a positive

association with their level of fear and the likelihood they will be victimized. But, when officers have higher perceptions of organizational support (POS), the association with their fear and belief they will be victimized decreases. In essence, perceptions of anti-police sentiment increased PFOV and PLOV, whereas POS decreases officers' perceptions of both types of danger.

Furthermore, we found the amount of time an officer has been employed was associated with their fear, but not with their likelihood of being victimized. This may be the result of the maturity of an officer that there are other "things" in life that are important (children, spouses, etc.). Thus, as one becomes more experienced and officers' conversations with these "important" other people in their lives impinge upon their psyche, they become more concerned about their own safety (e.g.; increased fear). However, actually being victimized is a rare event for an officer and they do not perceive themselves, regardless of experience, being a victim. This is also an area of further research to examine actual victimization experiences and how anti-police sentiment and POS are associated with victimization.

This study revealed that regardless of the demographic composition of an area an officer works, their fear and perceptions of their likelihood of victimization is the same, nor is there a difference in regard to ethnicity, gender, or race. Thus, the police are a homogenous group in regard to the concept of fear and their perceptions of being victimized. This is consistent with the manner the police are socialized. Nhan (2019) argued the attitudes officers have of others in society are consistent regardless of an officers' race or ethnicity.

Limitations

The findings of this study are important to help advance our knowledge of policing, but there are also limitations the reader must be aware of when interpreting and generalizing the results. First, this study was a cross-sectional study that used a non-probability convenience sample of police officers. Thus, the cross-sectional design precludes conclusions of causation being drawn (Wang & Cheng, 2020). Second, there were only a limited number of agencies represented in this study and the agencies were selected from one large urban area of a southern state in the United States, which may compromise the generalizability of the findings to other states, regions of the United States, and other democratic countries (Maxfield & Babbie, 2011). However, this does not negate the fact that surveys with small samples can provide valuable additions to the literature (Mullinix, Leeper, Druckman, & Freese, 2015). Third, the officers that participated in the research were overwhelmingly white and male. However, the demographics of the respondents to the demographics of the agencies that participated in the study were comparable. Even with these limitations, this study has value toward furthering our knowledge of policing. This was another step toward gaining an understanding of how anti-police sentiment is associated with officers' fear and likelihood of victimization. Future research should consider these limitations and delve deeper into the nuances of officers' perceptions and overcome the limitations of this study. Furthermore, additional research should not only attempt to replicate the findings of this study, but also expand on understanding the role agency leadership perceptions and communication have on their officers' fears, along with examining actual victimization experiences of officers and parsing out the nuances of officers' perceptions and how they evolve with experience.

Conclusion

This study explored the association of officers' perception of anti-police sentiment and POS on police officers fear of victimization (PFOV) and perceived likelihood of victimization (PLOV). This was accomplished using OLS regression to analyze cross-sectional online survey data gathered from a convenience sample of police officers from five agencies in a southern state (USA). This study provides police practitioners, scholars, and community members insight into how anti-police sentiment may impact police officers' fears and

their perceived likelihood of being victimized, simply because of the role they occupy in our society. This study also accentuates the importance for police administrators to embrace and value the officers in their agencies because officers' POS is important to fostering a healthy and beneficial work environment.

When officers' POS increases, the association with officers' fear and likelihood of victimization decreases. Thus, when officers feel valued and their contributions are appreciated in their organization, they may be less likely to have elevated fear or perceive they will be victimized while performing their duty. While a police organization has limited control on the inherent risks and dangers of policing, they can help alleviate some officers' concerns and fear by showing that they care for their officers' welfare and well-being. This is an important area of police inquiry and further research is required for us to better understand how societal perceptions of police behavior are associated with and impact police performance.

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