

**POLICE PROMOTIONS AND ASSIGNMENTS:
UNDERSTANDING LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS' EXPERIENCES WITH
PARTICULARISM**

by

John Leo Glasser III

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

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APPROVED BY:

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this qualitative descriptive study was to have police officers describe how they experience, understand, and navigate within their agency as it relates to their decisions to assign and promote police personnel within the scope of particularism in New Jersey. The conceptual framework guiding this study was the debate between researchers, and industrial-organizational psychologists who have reached opposing viewpoints on whether particularism and similar practices are beneficial or detrimental in the organizational context. Three research questions guided this study: 1) How do police officers describe their experiences with their agency as it relates to their agencies' decisions to promote police officers under the concept of particularism? 2) How do police officers describe their understanding of their agency as it relates to their agencies' decisions to promote police officers under the concept of particularism? 3) How do police officers describe their navigation of their agency as it relates to their agencies' decisions to promote police officers under the concept of particularism? Judgmental sampling was used to recruit 20 current and recently retired police officers in the State of New Jersey for this study. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews and was coded through thematic analysis with assistance from NVivo. Primary (parent) themes of 1) *Experience with Particularism* 2) *Understanding of Particularism* 3) *Navigation of Particularism* were used to code data specific to recurring themes that addressed the research questions. The findings revealed that police officers experience particularism through a variety of unique circumstances and incidents, and that they understand it to be a pervasive and expected, but negative part of their organization. Different ways officers navigate the phenomenon were also discussed and explored. Implications of the study's findings, limitations, and recommendations for future research are also discussed.

Keywords: particularism, social ties, police, promotions, assignments, New Jersey

Dedications

To my wife, for the encouragement, support, love, and patience you've shown through both of our doctoral journeys. Our successes and journey together have been nothing short of amazing, and I look forward to what's to come...most especially Baby G. in December 2022. May he or she learn to be an empathetic, loving person like their mother. I love you more.

To my parents, Jack & Diane, for many years of tolerating my persistence that has led to this and other accomplishments. You have always supported and encouraged me to achieve my dreams, and I cannot ever thank you enough for raising me to be the person I am today. I love you both to the moon and back.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Chapter One introduces the phenomenon of particularism and, more specifically, introduces the need to better understand its uses as associated with outcomes within the law enforcement organization. A background on the topic is introduced, followed by the discussion of the problem statement of this study. Both the background and problem statement provide a brief overview of the phenomenon and establish why it is a problem worthy of exploration and understanding. The purpose and significance of the study are then introduced, highlighting the importance of having officers describe how they experience, understand, and navigate the phenomenon of particularism within their organization as well as the associated outcomes with its use in selecting personnel for promotion and special assignments. Chapter One also includes definitions of key terms that will be used throughout this study. The following section introduces the phenomenon of particularism through a discussion of its background.

Background of the Problem

Particularism is the reliance on social ties rather than merit-based evaluations of qualified candidates and is comprised of both nepotism and favoritism (Hudson et al., 2017). Particularism has often been referred to both colloquially and in literature as the “good ol’ boy network” (Reynolds & Hicks, 2017). Literature on the topic of particularism asserts that the phenomenon of particularism exists in all cultures and organization types, and the practices of preferential treatment based upon social ties are prevalent worldwide and are commonly perceived to be associated with corruption (Bagchi & Svejnar, 2015; Hudson et al., 2017). Law enforcement organizations are not immune from the reach of particularism; in fact, evidence of its existence is well documented (Reynolds et al., 2017; Reynolds & Hicks, 2015; Cordner, 2017; Wolfe et al., 2018). Police officers generally feel nepotism is often a predictor in law enforcement agencies

with regards to which officers will be promoted and which officers receive preferred duty assignments (Reynolds & Hicks, 2015; Reynolds et al., 2017). Reynolds and Hicks (2015) interviewed 24 police officers from multiple states in the United States with the goal of better understanding officers' experiences and perceptions of justice within their agencies. Over half of the officers interviewed indicated they believe social relationships matter more than job performance or qualifications when determining promotions and assignments among other job-related benefits (Reynolds & Hicks, 2015). This qualitative study supports that particularism exists within law enforcement agencies and police officers have developed their own perceptions based upon their own experiences and observations of particularism being used to make decisions to assign and promote personnel. Understanding particularism and its use in personnel decisions is important because the assignment and promotion of police personnel help shape the success of law enforcement organizations. Research indicates that individual officers' skills, knowledge, and character should be carefully evaluated to determine the best qualified candidates (Brodin, 2018). Particularism also influences the decisions by administrators regarding which personnel receive promotions and special assignments (Reynolds & Hicks, 2015; Reynolds et al., 2017).

Like many organizations, promotions and assignments in police agencies build the foundation of the personnel structure. Determining the structure of any given organization based upon personal relationships can undermine the concept of rewarding employees based upon performance and has the potential to result in negative effects such as increased coworker distrust and decreased employee satisfaction and commitment (Pearce, 2015). On the other hand, when police officers perceive procedural justice within their agency, their views regarding outcome of decisions, trust in their administration, job satisfaction, commitment to the agency,

and overall perception of their agency are all positively influenced (Donner et al., 2015). Additionally, when officers feel that adequate procedural and organizational justice exists at their agency, they are more likely to have trust in the people of the communities they police thus making police-community relations better (Carr & Maxwell, 2018). Because of these connections demonstrated in literature between organizational justice, commitment, and police-community relations, officers' experiences, understanding and navigation of particularism an important topic to be explored as it may relate to organizational justice.

While existing research supports the relationship between organizational fairness and procedural justice to the factors of job satisfaction, trust, and community relations (Abdelmoteleb, 2019; Chordiya et al., 2017; Haas et al., 2015; Froese et al., 2019; Omar et al., 2017; Reynolds et al., 2017; Van Craen, 2016; Van Craen & Skogan, 2017; Wolfe & Nix, 2017; Wolfe et al., 2018, Wnuk, 2017), a gap in literature exists with respect to how the use of particularism in promoting and assigning police personnel are perceived by police officers in the organizational setting as well as the outcomes associated with these perceptions. Existing literature notes most officers report that they perceive promotions and assignments to be based upon social ties rather than merit or performance, which has the potential to undermine performance-based rewards leading to increased distrust and decreased job satisfaction and commitment. Additionally, officers placing their interests in the hands of organizational decision-making risks exploitation or rejection through failure to achieve special assignments or promotions which can lead to a loss of their self-identity (Reynolds & Hicks, 2015; Reynolds et al., 2017; Pearce, 2015; Wolfe et al., 2018). Though the existing research identifies perceptions of the problem exist, the existing research does not delve any deeper into the nuances of the particularistic decision making with respect to promotions and assignments other than

identifying it as a problem as perceived by law enforcement officers (Reynolds & Hicks, 2015; Reynolds et al., 2017).

Reynolds et al. (2015) found police officers perceived unfair practices in their agencies associated with having blocked career aspirations including promotions and special assignments. The research further found that officers perceive that nepotism and politics often predicts both who will be promoted and who will be assigned to the preferred duty assignments in the agency (Reynolds et al., 2015). Reynolds and Hicks (2017) found that if a police officer is outside of the “good ol’ boy network,” it is often more difficult to get promoted, get a preferred schedule, and receive other benefits and assignments. This research noted that these benefits and assignments should be based upon merit, experience, seniority, and performance rather than being based on social ties (Reynolds & Hicks, 2017). Because of the gap in knowledge between the identification of the problem of particularism existing in law enforcement and a deeper understanding of the phenomenon itself, this study asked police officers to specifically describe their experiences with particularism to further expand upon the understanding of particularism as it relates to promotions and assignments in police agencies.

Problem Statement

The problem that this study sought to examine is how police officers describe how they experience, understand, and navigate within their agency as it relates to their decisions to assign and promote police personnel (particularism). The general population of this study was all active and recently retired sworn police officers who have worked for a municipal, county, and/or state law enforcement agency. The specific population for this study was both active and recently retired sworn police officers who work or have worked for a municipality, county, and/or state

law enforcement agency within the State of New Jersey. For the purposes of this study, recently retired police officers were defined as a police officer who has retired within the past five years.

This study examined the descriptions provided by police officers and their perceptions, experiences, and observations related to the effects of particularism to better understand this phenomenon in the law enforcement field. The findings of this study were a result of these descriptions given by law enforcement officers relevant to the phenomenon of particularism and can provide law enforcement administrators with a better understanding of the effects of their decisions regarding promotions and assignments, thus providing them with potential means to increase both organizational justice and quality of operations. The outcomes of this research also provided insight on how individual needs and aspirations are being perceived by police officers.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative descriptive study was to have police officers describe how they experience, understand, and navigate within their agency as it relates to their decisions to assign and promote police personnel within the scope of particularism in New Jersey. The conceptual framework guiding this study was the debate between researchers, and industrial-organizational psychologists who have reached opposing viewpoints on whether particularism and similar practices are beneficial or detrimental in the organizational context (Bagchi & Svejnar, 2015; Biermeier-Hanson, 2015, Calvard & Rajpaul-Baptiste, 2015; Colarelli, 2015; Hudson et al., 2017; Hudson & Claasen, 2017; Jones & Stout, 2015; Marcou, 2020; Palmer & Fleig-Palmer, 2015; Pearce, 2015; Riggio & Saggi, 2015; Wated & Sanchez, 2015).

This study was an inquiry that took a qualitative descriptive approach to addressing the research questions. The location of the study was within the State of New Jersey and used a purposive sampling method to recruit police officers within the state. The study was

conducted by using semi-structured interviews to determine how active and recently retired officers describe their experiences, understanding, and navigation of their agency's decisions to promote and assign police officers under the concept of particularism. Semi-structured interviews were conducted in a one-on-one setting with the use of Zoom calls. Questions asked were designed to have participants describe their experiences, understanding, and navigation of the phenomenon of particularism in their organization specific to the assignment and promotion of police personnel. Once the interviews were completed, they were transcribed and coded using NVivo and thematic analysis was subsequently performed. To ensure validity of data, member checking and peer debriefing were used for the semi-structured interviews. Common identified themes will be discussed further in this dissertation as well as recommendations for future study.

Research Questions

This research sought to answer the following questions regarding the effects of particularism on police promotions and assignments:

- RQ1: How do police officers describe their experiences with their agency as it relates to their agencies' decisions to promote police officers under the concept of particularism?
- RQ2: How do police officers describe their understanding of their agency as it relates to their agencies' decisions to promote police officers under the concept of particularism?
- RQ3: How do police officers describe their navigation of their agency as it relates to their agencies' decisions to promote police officers under the concept of particularism?

To address these research questions, data was obtained from primary source of semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 20 police officer participants where open-ended, primary questions were asked regarding specific examples of particularistic decision-making relative to assignments and promotions in the law enforcement

field and the officers' experiences with the outcomes and implications of these decisions. Probing questions were also asked to elicit deeper insight relative to participants' perceptions, feelings toward, and worldviews on the topic of particularism.

Significance of the Study

The responsibility for promotions and assignments in the law enforcement organization is held by police management, and the decisions made regarding these personnel actions can have significant outcomes for individual officers and the organization. Officers' perceptions of the procedural fairness of these decisions can influence their levels of organizational commitment, and perceived fairness of these decisions can mitigate the decrease of motivation and productivity by individual officers (Johnson & Lafrance, 2016). The responsibility of police management to make the right decisions for the organization is critical, however not all leaders in law enforcement organizations are equally inclined to use fair practices in their dealings with subordinate officers (Wolfe et al., 2018). If management practices such as these are perceived to be ethical and carried out in a way that supports the organization's employees, there tends to be less employee turnover and higher levels of commitment to the organization (Demirtas & Akogan, 2015; Brunetto et al., 2017; Piotrowski, 2021). Likewise, when police leaders treat their officers with dignity, fairness, and respect, officers are more likely to show initiative and seek to do a good job, and they are more likely to be committed to organizational goals and building relationships with the community (Tyler et al., 2015). Finally, perceptions of fairness in the workplace can also impact employee health and well-being (Eib et al., 2018).

Because of these factors, the extent to which the prevalence of particularism in police organizations is described by officers as being related to certain organizational and employee outcomes should be of great importance to personnel at the administrative levels of law

enforcement, and this study seeks to provide the needed information to key decisionmakers. This study also sought to address the gap in literature that failed to address how the use of particularism in assignments and promotions is perceived by officers to lead to the outcomes specified in the research questions by having officers describe their experiences and perceptions as well as how they navigate this phenomenon occurring in their organizations. The analysis and synthesis of these officer interviews will provide insight into perceptions and experiences of police officers that will allow police managers to compare the potential outcomes of basing their decisions regarding promotions and assignments on particularism rather than through merit-based evaluations.

Definitions

The following terms have been identified as being pertinent to the study and are defined as follows:

Particularism: Particularism is the reliance on social ties rather than merit-based evaluations of qualified candidates and is comprised of both nepotism and favoritism (Hudson et al., 2017).

Social Connection Preference: Social connection preference is defined as preference being given to fellow members of the decision maker's social groups outside of the organization which can include family, friends, and club members (Jones & Stout, 2015).

Job Satisfaction: There is no one concrete definition of "job satisfaction," however this concept is concerned with an employee's positive or negative feelings about their job to include what the employee receives from their employer and the work environment (Chordiya et al., 2017).

Organizational Commitment: The strength in an employee's identification with and involvement in the organization to include belief in organizational goals and values, being willing to give extra effort for the organization, and the desire to remain affiliated with the organization (Chordiya et al., 2017).

Organizational Justice: The level of perceived fairness and justice within the organization with respect to internal processes (Carr & Maxwell, 2018).

Procedural Justice: The fairness of outcomes and the fairness of means and processes used to reach said outcomes, specifically in this study with respect to the police-community relationship (Carr & Maxwell, 2018).

Organizational Stress: Stressors that arise from the context of the law enforcement job to include organizational characteristics, behaviors, and people internal to the organization that produce stress for personnel (Shane, 2010).

Law Enforcement Officer: A person who is employed in a sworn law enforcement position who serves the community in a municipal, county, state, or federal agency tasked with enforcing and upholding the law.

Assumptions, Limitations and Delimitations

Assumptions are those things that were accepted as true and/or plausible for the purposes of this dissertation (Glesne, 2016). The following assumptions were identified in this study:

Assumption One: This study assumed that participants who volunteered had lived experiences with or observations of particularism in their law enforcement career that they were willing and able to discuss with the researcher. Another assumption was that the semi-structured interviews would elicit responses from participants that resulted in the identification of shared themes across participant perceptions regarding the use of particularism in their organization.

Assumption Two: It was further assumed that participants provided honest, accurate, objective, and unbiased descriptions of their experiences, understanding, and navigation of the phenomenon of particularism based upon their lived experiences within the organizational setting.

The limitations of this study are those factors that are potential weaknesses but are outside of the researcher's control (Glesne, 2016). The following limitations have been identified in this study:

Limitation One: One of the limitations is that the possibility exists that officers who have negative perceptions of particularism or concerns about its use in their organization would be more inclined to volunteer to participate to verbalize their grievances on the topic than those who have a neutral or positive view, which could potentially cause biased results. The officers who

participate were, however, qualified to discuss their experiences, understanding, and navigation of particularism based upon their own perceptions while working as police officers.

Limitation Two: The COVID-19 pandemic has presented a unique limitation in both recruitment and participation in the semi-structured interviews. Police agencies have been at reduced staffing levels and restrictions on those who enter their buildings, which had the potential to limit recruitment efforts. Additionally, potential participants may have been reluctant to volunteer for the study, especially if they felt they must have in-person contact with others that may expose them to pathogens.

Limitation Three: Officers in this study were found to be more likely to self-report positive navigations of particularism but were willing to describe the negative ways other officers navigated their experiences with the phenomenon. This inconsistency could be attributed to one of two things. First, participants may have been reluctant to self-report negative or counterproductive behavior, which would then be a limitation of the study. On the other hand, this could be attributed to the professional mindset of law enforcement officers and a recurring theme among these participants. This recurring theme was that there was still a job that needed to be done for the community, and that law enforcement officers as professionals realize this and continue to do the best job despite their negative perceptions of the internal organizational environment. This is discussed in detail in Chapter Five.

Limitation Four: Descriptive studies cannot test or verify the research problem statistically, and therefore the results of this descriptive study may reflect a certain level of bias due to the absence of statistical tests. The majority of descriptive studies such as this are not able to be replicated due to the observational nature of the study.

Limitation Five: The demographics of the police officer participants in this study generally lacked diversity. Of the twenty participants, sixteen were white, three were Hispanic, and one was biracial (black/white). Because of this limitation, it is recommended that future studies on particularism attempt to examine the experiences of a more diverse sample of police officers.

Limitation Six: Finally, time and financial resources are limitations placed on this dissertation by its nature and connection to a doctoral program. The researcher had time guidelines for the completion of the PhD program and was limited to his own personal finances for expenditures related to the study. Because of this, it is recommended that more in-depth studies be conducted in the future on the topic of particularism in law enforcement that are guided by the findings of this dissertation.

The delimitations of the study are the research boundaries that the researcher sets relevant to study design and methodology (Glesne, 2016). The following delimitations have been identified in this study.

Delimitation One: This study includes a sample size that is relatively small compared to the total number of police officers nationwide. In the semi-structured interviews, 20 police officers participated and shared their experiences, understanding, and navigation of the phenomenon of particularism. There are over 680,000 police officers nationwide (FBI, 2018), therefore the size of this sample should not be interpreted as representing all police officers from every law enforcement agency nationwide.

Delimitation Two: Similarly, the geography of this study was limited to the State of New Jersey, which may have identified perceptions and explanations from a geographic subculture in the law enforcement community that may not exist nationwide. This study did, however, achieve

saturation by identifying shared themes across perceptions regarding particularism that are present in the law enforcement field.

Delimitation Three: Finally, the study provided insight into the understanding of officers' perceptions on the topic of particularism, but the qualitative descriptive approach inherently may lead to low external validity of the study. Future studies on this topic should be performed to confirm the validity of these findings on a larger scale throughout the law enforcement profession.

Summary

The background on the topic of particularism in law enforcement presented in this chapter has established that the phenomenon of particularism is pervasive in all organizations and cultures, and that law enforcement is not an exception to this rule. Furthermore, the background established in Chapter One indicates that police officers believe that social relationships matter more than merit-based factors when assigning and promoting police personnel. This study sought to examine how officers experience, understand, and navigate the prevalence of particularism in their agencies as it relates to the decisions made to assign and promote police personnel. Chapter Two provides a conceptual framework of this study which is grounded in literature that shows opposing viewpoints on whether particularism and similar practices are beneficial or detrimental in the organizational context. Chapter Two also provides a comprehensive review of recent and relevant literature on topics closely related to particularism as well as topics associated with the outcomes of the use of particularism in the law enforcement setting.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

This chapter contains the conceptual framework and literature review relevant to the topic of particularism as it is used to make decisions in law enforcement agencies with respect to police promotions and assignments. The assignment of personnel and selection of police supervisors are important tasks that are key to the success of the law enforcement organization, and these selections require a thorough evaluation of the individual officers' skills, knowledge, and character when seeking the best qualified candidates (Brodin, 2018). Making assignment and promotion related personnel decisions based upon particularism, social connections, and associated practices is debated by scholars and researchers to have the potential to both positively and negatively affect organizations (Bagchi & Svejnar, 2015; Biermeier-Hanson, 2015, Calvard & Rajpaul-Baptiste, 2015; Colarelli, 2015; Hudson et al., 2017; Hudson & Claasen, 2017; Jones & Stout, 2015; Marcou, 2020; Palmer & Fleig-Palmer, 2015; Pearce, 2015; Riggio & Saggi, 2015; Wated & Sanchez, 2015).

There is evidence that the use of particularism, which Hudson et al. (2017) defines as the reliance on social ties rather than merit-based evaluations of qualified candidates, has connections to outcomes relative to the factors of job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and trust within the organization (Abdelmoteleb, 2019; Chordiya et al., 2017; Omar et al., 2017; Froese et al., 2019; Wnuk, 2017). Similarly, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and organizational justice can have significant outcomes for how police officers interact with the public and provide service to the community (Haas et al., 2015; Reynolds et al., 2017; Van Craen, 2016; Van Craen & Skogan, 2017; Wolfe & Nix, 2017). The potential for organizational environment and culture as a predictor of how officers will interact with the public has serious

implications and practical applications that provide a foundation for which to evaluate how particularism contributes to both organizational culture and community relationships in the law enforcement field.

The review of literature contained in this chapter highlights these interwoven facets of both individual and organizational contexts that are relevant to the problem statement of this study. This is of particular importance given the relationships that have been established in existing literature between organizational justice and associated outcomes pertaining to job satisfaction, organizational commitment, trust, health and well-being of employees, and police-community relations (Johnson & LaFrance, 2016; Demirtas & Akogan, 2015; Brunetto et al., 2017; Tyler et al., 2015; Eib et al., 2018; Piotrowski, 2021). Research clearly exists regarding the importance of maintaining organizational justice within law enforcement agencies (Reynolds et al., 2017; Reynolds & Hicks, 2015; Carr & Maxwell, 2018), however it remains unknown how police officers describe their experiences, observations, and perceptions of the use of particularism by their agencies in the decisions to assign and promote police personnel.

To add to the importance of exploring this topic, research exists that has identified particularistic decision making internal to police agencies with respect to assignments and promotions to have significant outcomes for law enforcement officers and their respective agencies (Reynolds & Hicks, 2015; Reynolds et al., 2015; Pearce, 2015). Previous research by Reynolds and Hicks (2015) and Reynolds et al., (2015) and Pearce (2015) has found that most officers report that they perceive promotions and assignments to be based upon social ties rather than merit or performance, which has the potential to undermine performance-based rewards leading to increased distrust and decreased job satisfaction and commitment. Though the existing research by Reynolds et al. (2015) and Reynolds and Hicks (2015) both identify perceptions of

the problem exist, the existing research does not delve any deeper into the nuances of the particularistic decision making with respect to promotions and assignments other than identifying it as a problem as perceived by law enforcement officers.

The search strategy for this study to develop a conceptual framework and to conduct a comprehensive literature review included searches for relevant literature were through the Liberty University Jerry Falwell Library and Google Scholar. All literature located through Google Scholar was vetted through the Liberty University library search to ensure peer-review. Key words that were used in the search were “*police*,” “*law enforcement*,” “*nepotism*,” “*favoritism*,” “*cronyism*,” “*particularism*,” “*organizational justice*,” “*police culture*,” and “*police stress*.” Through this search the following peer reviewed journals were used in the development of this chapter. They include *Industrial and Organizational Psychology*, *Journal of Police and Criminal Psychology*, *Industrial and Organizational Psychology*, *Police Practice and Research*, *Policing: An International Journal of Police Strategies & Management*, *Journal of Business Ethics*, *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, *Police Quarterly*, and *Journal of Criminal Justice*.

Chapter Two introduces the conceptual framework for this study which is rooted in the opposing viewpoints in reviewed literature relative to the phenomenon of particularism and the closely associated concept of social connection preference. The conceptual framework analyzes the opposing viewpoints and the supporting findings of the stances for or against particularistic decision making and concludes with an introduction of the limited literature available on particularism in police promotions and assignments. Chapter Two then reviews the relevant literature on topics that are closely related to the causes and outcomes associated with the use of particularism in organizations. This discussion begins with an analysis of organizational justice,

more specifically as it relates to the linkage between internal procedural justice in law enforcement and the service provided to the community. The police occupational culture is then discussed, followed by a review of literature on organizational stress as it relates to officer health and job performance. Finally, a review of literature relative to organizational and societal trust in law enforcement is discussed. All these topics are analyzed and discussed to the extent that they are relative to the phenomenon of particularism in police organizations.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of this study focused on the opposing viewpoints in academic literature relative to the topic of particularism and associated practices such as social connection preference, cronyism, nepotism, and favoritism. A review of the relevant literature found that there is not a consensus on whether particularism is a beneficial or detrimental practice in the organizational setting (Jones & Stout 2015; Colarelli, 2015; Riggio & Saggi, 2015; Palmer & Fleir-Palmer, 2015; Biermeier-Hansen, 2015; Calvard & Rajpaul-Baptiste, 2015; Pearce 2015; Bagchi & Svejnar, 2015; Wated & Sanchez, 2015; Yasmeeen, 2019; Shaheen, 2019; Hudson & Claasen, 2017; Hudson et al., 2017). In fact, journal articles and research exist that support both viewpoints and contain valid evidence and expert perspectives regarding the benefits and drawbacks of using particularistic decision making with respect to personnel actions in organizations. The following section introduces the opposing viewpoints of particularism, beginning with the literature that supports the use of particularism followed by the literature that has negative views of its use. This section concludes with an introduction of the limited literature that exists relative to particularism and its use in police promotions and assignments.

Particularism: Opposing Viewpoints

Hudson et al. (2017) implemented the term particularism in their research to account for a broad range of social ties across varying organizational types. The definition of particularism included the reliance on social ties rather than merit-based evaluations of qualified candidates, and the researchers asserted that this practice exists in all cultures and organization types and is comprised of the practices of both nepotism and favoritism (Hudson et al., 2017). Scholars and industrial-organizational psychologists alike debate whether particularistic practices such as nepotism, cronyism, and favoritism are beneficial or detrimental to organizations (Jones & Stout 2015; Colarelli, 2015; Riggio & Saggi, 2015; Palmer & Fleir-Palmer, 2015; Biermeier-Hansen, 2015; Calvard & Rajpaul-Baptiste, 2015; Pearce 2015; Bagchi & Svejnar, 2015; Wated & Sanchez, 2015; Yasmeen, 2019; Shaheen, 2019; Hudson & Claasen, 2017; Hudson et al., 2017). The particularistic practices of nepotism and cronyism have existed throughout history and are not likely to ever cease to exist. These practices have the potential to create social networks that create groups of elites within organizations (Hudson & Claasen, 2017).

The extent to which particularism and similar practices effect both individual and organizational outcomes remain a topic that researchers disagree on, with some holding that these practices have negative impacts on the organization and others demonstrating that they may have positive outcomes if implemented and managed correctly. The following two sections present both the negative and positive viewpoints of the use of particularism based upon the review of relevant literature. These opposing viewpoints contribute to the identified gap in literature that does not address how particularism is explained and perceived by police officers in their profession, and whether these explanations and perceptions have a positive or negative context and associated outcomes.

Positive Views of Particularism

Jones and Stout (2015) reviewed relevant literature on the topic of social connection preference, finding that these particularistic practices can increase organizational effectiveness. Social connection preference is defined by Jones and Stout as preference being given to fellow members of the decision maker's social groups outside of the organization which can include family, friends, and club members. The research led to other publications from experts in the industrial and organizational psychology field that critically evaluated the assertions made by Jones and Stout. These included publications from experts in the industrial and organizational psychology field that show evidence that the use of anti-nepotism and cronyism policies in organizations are counterproductive because they prevent qualified candidates with social ties to the organization from filling certain positions (Colarelli, 2015; Jones & Stout, 2015; Riggio & Saggi, 2015). Further supporting the use of particularism is evidence that the organization can benefit from particularism being present within organizations, as family and friendship relationships tend to be rooted in altruism and cooperative efforts, which can have positive implications for the internal environment of the organization and the relationships built therein (Colarelli, 2015; Jones & Stout, 2015).

Jones and Stout (2015) further demonstrate that such policies and practices, though not defined as workplace discrimination, are discriminatory in nature as they immediately exclude candidates from the organization based solely upon family ties or social relationships. Riggio and Saggi (2015) support this through their findings that if a candidate who has social or familial ties to someone in an organization is determined to be the best qualified and is hired or promoted after all candidates for a given position have been subjected to thorough screening and performance assessments, then no damage is done. To mitigate the potential for negative

perceptions of nepotism and cronyism to impact motivation and satisfaction of other employees, the decision-making assessments must be fair, objective, and transparent to show employees and candidates have been given an equal opportunity to obtain the position they are competing for (Riggio & Saggi, 2015).

Palmer and Fleig-Palmer (2015) evaluated social connection preference with respect to the element of trust internal to an organization. These experts in the industrial and organizational psychology field show that there can be significantly positive or negative outcomes associated with the use of social connection preference. Palmer and Fleig-Palmer also support personnel decisions based upon social connection preference, so long as the candidates' trustworthiness and interpersonal relationships are evaluated as part of the decision-making process. Similarly, Biermeier-Hanson (2015) finds that social connection preference can work within an organization if leaders maintain a culture where selection and promotion of candidates is transparent and consistent while also relying on merit-based evaluations. Biermeier-Hanson warns that if this type of culture is not maintained, other employees may perceive there to be less organizational justice which will lead to lower job satisfaction and potential for counterproductive work behaviors.

Publications exist for the potentially positive impact of particularistic practices within the law enforcement field as well. In a recent article on PoliceOne.com, Lt. Dan Marcou (2020) notes that prohibiting the employment of children of officers is not only unfair but are un-American and unconstitutional as well. An example of the effectiveness of family legacies he provided was the Congressional Medal of Honor recipient General Arthur MacArthur who served during the American Civil War. His son, General Douglas MacArthur followed in his father's footsteps and eventually became one of the most prominent leaders in World War II.

Precluding Douglas MacArthur from the Army due to anti-nepotism practices could have had horrible consequences for the history of the United States. Marcou (2020) noted that during his 33-years of experience as a police officer he made significant observations about children who followed in their parents' footsteps and became police officers. These observations included that these legacy officers were inspired positively by their parents, often had pre-taught skills, seemed to be born to be a police officer, were easily trainable, had strong desires to succeed and knew what they were getting into in this profession. Marcou further noted that many of these officers became leaders, trainers, and role models themselves and ended up raising children who wanted to be police officers as well. Marcou asserts that denying children of police officers from gaining employment due to anti-nepotism policies can be harmful to both the individual and the organization, especially with the difficulties faced in the modern recruiting environment of law enforcement agencies (Marcou, 2020).

Calvard and Rajpaul-Baptiste (2015) also critiqued Jones and Stout's perspective from an industrial and organizational psychologist perspective. These psychologists demonstrated that employees who are appointed based upon nepotism who are qualified may also need additional support to ensure their performance and well-being is maintained, but overall, they are viewed with similar legitimacy as their peers who have no connections rooted in nepotism. More importantly, Calvard and Rajpaul-Baptiste classified social connection preference as a topic that needs more extensive research that includes the overlapping elements of favoritism, cronyism, nepotism, and other forms of social connection preference with respect to qualified and unqualified persons for certain positions. This corroborates the stated significance of the focal point of this dissertation, which seeks to examine police officer experiences with particularistic decision-making in their own organizations to better understand these potential connections.

Negative Views of Particularism

Though several studies were published in support of Jones and Stout's (2015) industrial and organizational psychology perspective, there were also scholars in the industrial and organizational psychology field that introduced evidence contrary to the assertions made in their journal article, and their assertions will be discussed in the following paragraphs. Pearce (2015) found that practices that favor social connection preference are bad for organizations because personnel decisions that are based upon personal relationships have the potential to undermine the concept of rewarding employees based upon their performance. Pearce also asserts that when decisions are made based upon social connections, standard procedures within the organization are often ignored and the outcomes of these decisions can lead to increased coworker distrust and decreased employee satisfaction and commitment (Pearce, 2015).

Other literature reviewed outside of the industrial and organizational psychology field also presents the negative aspects of particularism, social connection preference, and associated decision-making practices. Particularistic decision-making practices based on social ties are found to exist throughout the world and are commonly associated with being connected to corruption (Bagchi & Svejnar, 2015). Nepotism is also perceived as an unethical abuse of power to show favoritism to family members that could lead to less organizational justice and counterproductive employee behaviors. The practice of nepotism itself may have roots in cultural values, thus making it harder to change without also making change within the specific organizational culture (Wated & Sanchez, 2015). Because of this, it is important to understand how particularistic practices are viewed within the culture in which they occur. With respect to this study, the prevalence and effects of particularism within the police culture should be evaluated for both the outcomes experienced by police officers and how officers perceive the

legitimacy of particularistic decision-making. The intricacies of the police culture will be discussed more in-depth later in this literature review.

Limited research exists relative to the elements of particularism; however, two studies were located that are worthy of introduction into this section. Yasmeen (2019) conducted explanatory research with a sample of 150 employees in public-sector hospitals to explore the human resources implications associated with nepotism and favoritism in an organization. The research found that there was a significant relationship between both favoritism and nepotism and employee performance, and the researcher recommended change of policies to prevent practices such as nepotism and favoritism as a result. Shaheen (2019) collected survey data from 250 participants who represented multiple different ministerial (public sector) offices in Pakistan relative to the topic of organizational cronyism. The findings of the research indicated that unhealthy behaviors and environments are a result of organizational cronyism. More specifically, the research concluded that cronies receive benefits and rewards even when their performance, knowledge, and skills are lacking and that they excel in the organization easier than non-cronies.

Because particularism can have implications for a multitude of organizational and individual outcomes, it is important to understand the potential for both negative and positive outcomes associated with the use of these practices. The pervasiveness of these particularistic practices is said to have significant impact on both employees and organizations alike. Nepotism and cronyism can negatively impact job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and perceptions of fairness, employee motivation, and trust within the organization. These practices may also cause important personnel decisions and actions to be influenced by social relationships rather than qualifications and skills, which in turn reduces the overall knowledge, abilities, and resources of the human capital component of the organization (Hudsen & Claasen, 2017).

Hudson et al. (2017) surveyed 437 employees across both the public and private sector in China and found that particularism frequently occurs in organizations everywhere and that is detrimental to both perceived organizational justice and employee commitment to the organization. They found particularism to be a powerful yet negative practice that has undesirable consequences on both individuals and organizations. On the other hand, perceptions by members of the organization that the practices of particularism are acceptable and legitimate may decrease the potential for these negative outcomes (Hudson et al., 2017). To add to this, those who have benefited from practices such as nepotism and are found to be unqualified for their position tend to underperform and have lower levels of well-being within the organization (Calvard & Rajpaul-Baptiste, 2015).

Similarly, a study that examined the public sector in Pakistan found a positive correlation between the prevalence of cronyism and deviant workplace behavior (Shaheen et al., 2017). This literature corroborates the importance of examining the perceived legitimacy of the promoted employee and his or her new position as well as how practices of making decisions rooted in particularism are perceived within the organization. Because the organizational factors of organizational justice and job satisfaction are noted in the literature as potentially being outcomes that are linked to particularistic decision-making, it is prudent to review the existing research and literature on both factors which are presented in the following section.

Particularism in Police Promotions and Assignments

There is limited literature that is specific to particularism as used in police promotions and assignments, however the prevalence of this phenomenon's pervasiveness is clearly established. Police officers generally perceive promotions and special assignments as being decided based upon social ties rather than evaluation factors based upon merit (Reynolds &

Hicks, 2015; Reynolds et al., 2017). When organizational fairness is examined in the law enforcement setting, the concept most often expressed by officers is equality with respect to how rewards, discipline, and promotions among officers is distributed. Officers indicate that they desire fairness within their organizations to include consistency in administrative decisions such as promotions and assignments (Reynolds & Hicks, 2015). Like these notions, industries outside of law enforcement experience similar sentiments among employees. Even when reward systems (including promotions and assignments) are structured to be merit based, employees generally do not have faith in the system and believe that there is still favoritism, nepotism, and cronyism that occurs behind closed doors (Pearce, 2015). While the literature reviewed clearly indicates that officers perceive particularism and social connection preferences as being used to make decisions regarding police promotions and assignments, what remained unknown prior to the study at hand is how officers specifically describe this phenomenon as they experience, understand, and navigate its presence in their lives. The following section addresses the related literature on the topic, which includes a discussion of the potential outcomes associated with the officer perceptions of organizational injustice associated with police promotions and assignments that was introduced in this paragraph.

Related Literature: Topics Associated with the Use of Particularism

This discussion on the related literature for this study reviews the relevant literature on topics that are closely related to the causes and outcomes associated with the use of particularism in organizations. An analysis of organizational justice is presented first and discusses the topic as it relates to the linkage between internal procedural justice in law enforcement and the services provided to the community by law enforcement. The police occupational culture is then discussed, followed by a review of literature on organizational stress as it relates to officer health

and job performance. Finally, a review of literature relative to organizational and societal trust in law enforcement is discussed. The topics presented in this related literature section are analyzed and discussed to the extent that they are relative to the phenomenon of particularism in police organizations.

Job Satisfaction and Organizational Commitment

Job satisfaction is considered as the most important predictor of employees' organizational commitment, which can have significant implications for the organization's well-being. Chordiya et al. (2017) found that increasing employees' job satisfaction can increase their attachment to the organization and thus promote ethical behavior, increased transformational leadership, and overall employee commitment. Similarly, this can decrease negative employee practices such as absenteeism and turnover which reduces costs of replacing employees and training new ones (Chordiya et al., 2017). Human resources practices have an impact on employee job satisfaction, in that when employees perceive practices to be fair and there is opportunity for growth and professional development there are higher levels of job satisfaction (Lambert et al., 2017; Omar et al., 2017). Likewise, negative correlations have been found between job stress and organizational commitment, finding that job satisfaction is the mediating factor between the two. When employees have less stress, they are more satisfied with their jobs, and thus the more committed they are to their employer.

Organizational commitment helps satisfy individual employee needs and increases their motivation and other positive emotional states (Abdelmoteleb, 2019). Police management is responsible for assigning officers to specific positions within their agency, and officers' perceptions of the procedural fairness of these assignments is of concern with respect to their organizational commitment (Johnson & Lafrance, 2016). Unfortunately, not all leaders in police

agencies are equally inclined to use fair practices when dealing with subordinate officers (Wolfe et al., 2018). In organizations where management practices are perceived to be ethical and supportive of officers, there tends to be less employee turnover and higher levels of employee commitment (Demirtas & Akogan, 2015; Brunetto et al., 2017; Piotrowski, 2021). When police leadership treat officers with dignity, fairness, and respect, officers are more likely to show initiative and seek to do a good job, and they are more likely to be committed to organizational goals and building relationships with the community (Tyler et al., 2015). Additionally, perceptions of fairness in the workplace can also impact employee health and well-being (Eib et al., 2018). Because of these factors, the extent to which the prevalence of particularism in police organizations impacts organizational and employee outcomes should be of great importance to personnel at the administrative levels of law enforcement, and this study sought to provide such information to these key decisionmakers.

Significant to the study at hand regarding particularism versus merit-based assignments and promotions, Froese and colleagues (2019) found that merit-based rewards have a direct positive effect on job satisfaction which thereby reduces voluntary turnover rates. This further supports the evidence that merit-based rewards can positively affect employee attitudes and compel positive employee behavior. Furthermore, these researchers found that employees have higher rates of job satisfaction when they believe that their performance directly results in career advancement and success (Froese et al., 2019). The extent to which employees perceive that they are supported by their organization also has a positive correlation with job satisfaction. Increasing this effect is the relationship between perceived supervisor support and job satisfaction, whereby an employee who feels that their supervisor supports them also feels that their own values are in line with the organizational values, thus also increasing job satisfaction

(Wnuk, 2017). The concept of perceived fairness within the organization and how it is explained as influencing job satisfaction and organizational commitment is prevalent in the existing literature on the topics at hand, showing the significance of the concept of organizational justice as it relates to employee well-being and satisfaction.

Organizational Justice in Law Enforcement

Relevant to the study at hand, organizational justice has been identified as both a relevant and important topic because perceptions of justice in an organization can produce very specific and impactful outcomes. Literature on the topic that is analyzed and discussed in the below sections demonstrates a clear linkage between organizational justice within the law enforcement organization and outcomes associated with the police-community relationship. This is relevant to the study at hand, as officer perceptions about the fairness of particularism could potentially shape their perceptions of organizational justice and thus how they interact with members of the community. The literature reviewed and discussed below also demonstrates that officers already perceive unfairness within their organizations, with specific literature focusing on the connection between decisions made based upon social connection and these perceptions of fairness. The literature presented in the following sections shows these connections, and thus demonstrates the significance of this study with respect to better understanding particularism and its associated outcomes.

Procedural Justice and Service to the Community

A significant correlation has been found between trust internal to a police organization and the extent to which police officers demonstrate procedural justice external to the organization as well as the trust between the police and the public (Haas et al., 2015; Van Craen, 2016; Van Craen & Skogan, 2017). Law enforcement agencies must constantly evaluate and

change policies to meet the needs of the public in a dynamic society with constant change. The policy changes within the organizations are only successful in meeting the public's needs if officers support and adhere to said policies. When officers feel that they are treated fairly within their organization, they are more likely to comply and accept the policies and expectations of the agency and thus fairly treat citizens as well (Haas et al., 2015; Helfers et al., 2020; Lawson et al., 2021). Similarly, when police officers perceive there to be procedural justice within their agency, their views regarding outcome of decisions, trust in their administration, job satisfaction, commitment to the agency, and overall citizen perception of their agency are all positively influenced (Donner et al., 2015).

Agencies that are comprised of more officers who trust their employer are in a better position to provide services to the public than those with mistrust among the ranks (Wolfe & Nix, 2017). Additionally, when officers feel that there is adequate procedural and organizational justice at their agency, are more likely to have trust in the people of the communities they police thus making police-community relations better (Carr & Maxwell, 2018; Wolfe et al., 2018). Van Craen and Skogan (2017) assert that the extent to which the public perceives that police practice procedural justice is directly related to mutual trust between the police and the public. When police supervisors treat their subordinates by principles of respect, neutrality, accountability, and voice, that officers are more disposed to treat the public with the same principles. Perceptions of fairness and justice in all these dealings increase mutual trust between police and the public.

Relevant to the current study, existing literature asserts that one action that should be taken to ensure that internal procedural justice is present within an organization is for cronyism and discrimination in decision making to be eradicated from the organization completely (Van Craen, 2016; Van Craen & Skogan, 2017). This existing literature is directly related to the study

at hand, implying at a foundational level that internal fairness has the potential to significantly impact police service to the community and relationship with the public. The extent to which particularism is explained and perceived by police officers to have positive or negative outcomes with respect to internal organizational justice remains unknown with respect to police agencies, thus highlighting the significance of this study.

Perceptions of Lacking Organizational Justice

Discussed in the previous section is the importance of procedural and organizational justice within law enforcement agencies and the effect that fairness inside the organization can have on police-public relations. Unfortunately, existing literature highlights that there is a pervasiveness of police officer perceptions of lacking organizational justice internal to their agencies. Reynolds and Hicks (2015) conducted a phenomenological study through interviews of current and former police officers. Their research found that 92% of police officers interviewed perceive some form of unfair practices within their agency. Additionally, 42% of those officers alluded to some fairness or attempts at fairness, but an ultimate lack of success in organizational justice within their agency. These officers cited lack of consistency, differential treatment of individual officers as problems that contributed to this unfairness. The research also found that lack of empathy, transparency, and objectivity from supervisors as organizational issues that exacerbated this problem. Relevant and material to the present study, officers also discussed double standards within their agencies to include the practices of cronyism, favoritism, and nepotism in decision making, promotions, and assignments (Reynolds & Hicks, 2015).

Most specific and relative to this study is the perception reported by most officers that promotions and assignments are based upon social ties rather than merit or performance, which has the potential to undermine performance-based rewards leading to increased distrust and

decreased job satisfaction and commitment (Reynolds & Hicks, 2015; Reynolds et al., 2017; Pearce, 2015). The implications of a lack of organizational justice within law enforcement agencies also has the potential for severe negative outcomes. When officers have experienced organizational injustices, they have self-reported to have purposely reduced their productivity at work to only meet minimum requirements to both meet supervisors' expectations and protect themselves from further risk of negative outcomes caused by proactivity (Reynolds et al., 2017). This literature shows that there then exists the potential that if officers perceive particularism as an organizational injustice, the presence of particularistic practices may increase the risk of negative organizational outcomes as well as strained police community relations.

Police Occupational Culture

The culture in police organizations can be unique compared to other organizations given the dynamic environment in which police operate. The final report from the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing noted that "organizational culture eats policy for lunch," and that established departmental policies can be meaningless if the police culture conflicts with the policies of the organization (pp. 11-12). The President's Task Force report also mentions culture as a significant factor that impacts policing several times throughout their findings and evaluation. Police culture tends to vary between organizations rather than being uniform throughout the law enforcement profession, thus making it a phenomenon that is specific to each individual organization. This variance can also produce varying behavioral results that effect police relationships with the public (Cordner, 2017). For example, Ingram et al. (2018) issued a study across multiple states and jurisdictions to 1,460 patrol officers over a two-year period. This study focused on cultural attitudes regarding top management, aggressive patrol tactics, and citizen distrust. The research found that these cultural attitudes within police cultures in certain

organizations or groups have direct relationships with officer behaviors, specifically being directly related to use of force and complaints against officers (Ingram et al., 2018).

One of the most prevalent factors within police organizational culture is the concept of solidarity and loyalty between officers. This loyalty, solidarity, and trust are described as creating an environment referred to as the police family, which is based upon shared experiences and common understanding of the police function in society (Brough et al., 2016). Cordner (2017) conducted a survey within the police subculture, surveying 13,146 sworn officers across 89 different police organizations. Within this police subculture, only a small percentage of officers (33%) responded that they believe that those officers who do good work are rewarded by their administration, with only 29% of respondents indicating they were supportive of their upper-level administration and how they manage the agency. On a more positive note, it was found that within this culture most officers (73%) support community policing as a means of positive policing, also indicating that they maintain positive views of the public and the potential for mutual trust with citizens (Cordner, 2017). The existing literature on police culture further demonstrates how factors internal to police agencies can affect relationships with the communities that officers serve. The literature also demonstrates that loyalty and solidarity are important aspects within the police culture in that they have the potential to influence the overall camaraderie and trust within an agency.

Organizational Stress in Law Enforcement

The law enforcement career field is commonly associated with high levels of stress which has the potential to lead to negative outcomes for both police officers and their respective organizations (Habersaat et al., 2015; Lawson et al., 2021). Though many people outside of the law enforcement career field may perceive the violence, danger, and tragedy experienced

through police work to produce the most stress for police officers, police officers themselves perceive that most of their significant stressors originate within the walls of their organization. In fact, officers perceive organizational stress as being more significant and having more negative outcomes than the critical incidents they experience within the field (El Sayed et al., 2019, Gershon et al., 2009; Shane, 2010; Pyle & Cangemi, 2019). Gershon et al. (2009) found that a likely explanation for this is that officers expect to experience critical and volatile incidents in the field, but they do not expect to be betrayed by their peers and supervisors or to be subjected to unfair organizational practices. The following subsections will review the relevant literature on the topic of organizational stress, its potential outcomes, and its relationship with organizational practices and culture.

Organizational Stress and Police Officer Health

Organizational stressors are particularly important to discuss relative to the law enforcement field because their presence has the potential to create negative outcomes for officers and their organizations. Arguably the most noteworthy outcomes are the serious physical and mental health implications that stress can lead to for police officers which include Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), depression, anxiety, thoughts of suicide, and cardiovascular complications and diseases (Gershon et al., 2009, Janczura et al., 2016; Kivimaki et al., 2012). Police officers have been found to be among the lowest ranking professions with respect to physical and mental wellness, and evidence exists that highlights a direct relationship between organizational stress as producing most of the officers' stress that ultimately leads to these adverse health outcomes (Johnson et al., 2005; Goh et al., 2015; Kivimaki et al. 2012). Goh et al. (2015) found relationships between organizational stress to include imbalance between work and family life, demanding nature of jobs, low control, and lack of social support with negative

outcomes associated with both physical and mental health. Employees who experience conflicts between their work and family lives were 90% more likely to self-report poor physical health, and employees who perceived there to be low organizational justice in their workplace were at a 50% higher risk of having a physician-diagnosed condition (Goh et al., 2015). Consistent with these findings, Kivimaki et al. (2012) found that the organizational stressors associated with increased job demands increased physician-diagnosed illnesses by 35% and, more specifically, increased the risk of cardiovascular disease by 23%.

Of extreme concern is the fact that high levels of stress in the law enforcement field also contributes to police officers being at a heightened risk of suicide when compared to other career fields (Ramchand et al., 2019). The mental health implications of organizational stress can thus be seen as being worthy of further exploration. Evidence exists that organizational stress can lead to depression, which can then lead to other adverse outcomes. Three out of four officers surveyed who experienced stress in their job roles also reported experiencing depression, and 7% of those officers indicated they also had thoughts of suicide (Gershon, et al., 2009; Bishopp et al., 2019). To add to this problem, police officers generally believe that there are more risks than benefits associated with seeking mental health treatment or discussing their struggles with peers and medical professionals, further dissuading them from seeking help and treatment (Arocha, 2021; Wester et al., 2010). The police culture discussed in the previous section also contributes to the reluctance to seek help, as the police occupational culture which traditionally frowns upon seeking treatment and accepting that police officers need to be tough and without emotion to persevere (Arocha, 2021; Hakik & Langlois, 2020). These implications that organizational stress has for officers' health clearly has the potential to produce extremely severe outcomes, but it

remains unknown how officers describe particularism as relating, if at all, to perceived organizational stress.

Stress and Job Performance

The phenomenon of organizational stress in law enforcement also has the potential to impact external stakeholders through the outcome of decreased job performance by police officers. Reynolds and Hicks (2015) note that it is important to better understand officer perceptions of fairness and unfairness within the police organization, because these perceptions can have a direct impact on the quality of service that the agency provides to the community. The importance of better understanding outcomes associated with these police officer perceptions is supported by literature more specific to stress and associated outcomes, as occupational stress has been confirmed through research to have the potential to lead in decrease in police job performance (Shane, 2010; Nisar & Rasheed, 2020). Officers who experience burnout as a direct result of stress tend to have more negative perceptions of the public, and they also have the tendency to decrease their job performance, proactivity with respect to crime prevention, and engagement with the community (McCarty, 2019). Likewise, organizational stress factors of the police organization have been found to directly cause reduced job performance and quality of services provided to the community (Schaible & Six, 2016; Shane, 2010; Nisar & Rasheed, 2020). If officers become less likely to want to engage members of the public and provide them with quality police services, then this is another significant outcome of police stress that negatively affects external stakeholders. The potential also exists that this outcome can create a significant strain on police-community relationships, which is already the subject of contemporary issues in criminal justice and widespread media scrutiny.

McCarty et al. (2019) studied the two elements of burnout among officers, emotional exhaustion, and depersonalization, by surveying a population of approximately 13,000 sworn officers across 89 law enforcement agencies. The researchers in this study defined burnout as the absence of wellness and a serious response to stress that negatively impacts both physical and emotional health. Relevant to job performance and quality policing, this study found that officers who do not support the direction of their administration, their emotional exhaustion and depersonalization is felt toward the public who they are tasked with serving. The researchers in this study assert that burnout competes with job performance, crime prevention, community engagement, accountability, and transparency (McCarty et al., 2019). Strong evidence exists that burnout caused by job related stress not only impacts the officer and the organization but also impacts the relationship between the police and the community and the quality of service that is provided to the public (McCarty et al., 2019; Schaible & Six, 2016).

Relevance of Organizational Stress

The review of literature on the topic of organizational stress is relevant to the current study of particularism within law enforcement agencies. Previous studies have noted that officers perceive special assignments and promotions to be based upon social ties rather than merit-based factors (Reynolds & Hicks, 2015; Reynolds et al., 2017; Pearce, 2015). In one of these studies, 92% of interviewed officers described their agency as having some form of unfair practices, citing decision making based upon nepotism, cronyism, and favoritism among these unfair practices (Reynolds & Hicks, 2015). This section on organizational stress has corroborated the evidence rooted in literature that stress within organizations, some caused by unfair organizational practices, tends to produce the most stress for police officers when compared to other job-related stressors (El Sayed et al., 2019, Gershon et al., 2009; Shane, 2010; Pyle &

Cangemi, 2019). On the other hand, evidence exists that organizational justice in law enforcement agencies can mitigate the negative effects of stress as well as misconduct that may stem from police stress (Lawson et al., 2021). This section has provided evidence that unfair practices lead to organizational stress, which then has the potential to lead to negative outcomes with respect to officers' health, organizational environment, and police-community relationships. What remained unknown prior to the study at hand being completed is how officers describe their experience, understanding, and navigation of particularism. It was of interest to this study to determine if officer descriptions contained common themes relative to the fairness of particularism and/or the relationships between fairness, particularism, and organizational stress and its adverse associated outcomes.

Trust: Organizational and Societal Implications for Officers

Research about police officers' trust is said to be a rare and unexplored academic topic, but it is theorized that the levels of trust determine officers' responsiveness, cooperation, and compliance both internal and external to the agency (Van Craen, 2016). Internally, officers are more inclined to trust and support agency policies and procedures if they have good and trustworthy relationships with their supervisors and management (Haas et al., 2015). Similarly, if officers feel that they cannot trust their supervisors, they may feel that no one can be trusted which can result in deteriorated trust between officers and members of the public (Van Craen & Skogan, 2017). The relationship between trust and effective operations and community relations is well-documented, however more research is needed to see how the practice of particularism effects trust levels within law enforcement agencies.

Internally, the police culture is rooted in solidarity and loyalty, which calls for trust and camaraderie among peers (Brough et al., 2016). Externally, the extent to which citizens feel they

have been treated with procedural justice and police competence shapes the level of public trust of the police (Alalehto & Larsson, 2016), and as previously discussed internal procedural justice and levels of trust within law enforcement agencies can impact the extent to which officers use procedural justice in citizen contacts (Haas et al., 2015; Van Craen, 2016; Van Craen & Skogan, 2017; Wolfe et al., 2018). Distrust that is present within any given police subculture has been found through research to be directly related to higher levels of use of force and citizen complaints. On the other hand, officers who believe there is adequate organizational justice within their agency are more likely to have more trust in the community and engage in better community relationships (Ingram et al., 2018; Carr & Maxwell, 2018; Wolfe et al., 2018). Relationships have also been found between the previously discussed element of officers' job satisfaction and relationships with the public to include mutual trust (Paoline & Gau, 2020). It can be assumed, then, that trust is a critical component of both internal operations of law enforcement organizations as well as the external role of police in providing services to the community and fostering positive police-public relationships. Because of this, the extent to which particularism impacts trust within the police organization and culture was a significant consideration of this study.

Summary

Several different components related to the experiences of police officers were found to be interrelated through this review of existing literature. Throughout varying organizations and cultures worldwide, particularism remains present in every corner of existence and in the vast majority of organizations (Hudson et al., 2017). Much debate exists over the theories of whether or not this pervasive existence of particularistic practices impacts individuals and organizations positively or negatively (Bagchi & Svejnar, 2015; Biermeier-Hanson, 2015, Calvard & Rajpaul-

Baptiste, 2015; Colarelli, 2015; Hudson et al., 2017; Hudson & Claasen, 2017; Jones & Stout, 2015; Marcou, 2020; Palmer & Fleig-Palmer, 2015; Pearce, 2015; Riggio & Saggi, 2015; Wated & Sanchez, 2015). What is known, however, is that particularism has the potential to influence and effect employees' commitment to the organization, job satisfaction, and trust within the workplace if it is perceived by personnel as an unfair practice (Abdelmoteleb, 2019; Chordiya et al., 2017; Omar et al., 2017; Froese et al., 2019; Wnuk, 2017). These connections can have serious implications for modern policing, as the job satisfaction and organizational commitment of police officers can determine how they behave and interact with members of the public (Haas et al., 2015; Ingram et al., 2018; Reynolds et al., 2017; Van Craen, 2016; Van Craen & Skogan, 2017; Wolfe & Nix, 2017). The critical element of trust within the organization as well as mutual trust with members of the public has been a recurring theme throughout the review if literature, solidifying the importance of including an exploration of how particularism impacts trust. The potential for particularistic decision-making to influence the totality of these interrelated components reflects the significance of this study, as there can be significant outcomes related to individual officer experiences, officer stress and health, organizational justice, and police-community relationships. Chapter Three discusses the methodology of this study to include the research design, participants, data collection, and data analysis.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

The purpose of this qualitative descriptive study was to have police officers describe how they experience, understand, and navigate particularism within their agency as it relates to their decisions to assign and promote police personnel in New Jersey law enforcement organizations. Chapter Three discusses the methodology that will be used to conduct this qualitative, descriptive study. The population and sample selection, sources of data, data collection and management, and data analysis procedures specific to this study are explained in the sections of this chapter. Additionally, the steps taken to ensure trustworthiness and ethical considerations are discussed in this chapter as well. The researcher was granted Liberty University IRB approval prior to beginning this study, under Liberty University IRB Number IRB-FY21-22-880.

Research Questions

This research sought to answer the following questions regarding the effects of particularism on police promotions and assignments:

- RQ1:** How do police officers describe their experiences with their agency as it relates to their agencies' decisions to promote police officers under the concept of particularism?
- RQ2:** How do police officers describe their understanding of their agency as it relates to their agencies' decisions to promote police officers under the concept of particularism?
- RQ3:** How do police officers describe their navigation of their agency as it relates to their agencies' decisions to promote police officers under the concept of particularism?

Particularism is the reliance on social ties rather than merit-based evaluations of qualified candidates and is comprised of both nepotism and favoritism (Hudson et al., 2017). Particularism has often been referred to both colloquially and in literature as the “good ol’ boy network”

(Reynolds & Hicks, 2017). This study examined particularism and decision making rooted in this phenomenon with respect to special assignments and promotions in the law enforcement field. Through the use of semi-structured interviews, the research explored how police officers describe their experiences, understanding, and navigation of the phenomenon of particularism with respect to promotions and assignments.

Population and Sample Selection

Population

The general population of this study was all active and recently retired sworn police officers who have worked for a municipal, county, and/or state law enforcement agency. The specific population for this study was both active and recently retired sworn police officers who have worked for a municipality, county, and/or state law enforcement agency within the State of New Jersey. For the purposes of this study, recently retired police officers will be defined as a police officer who as retired within the past five years. The Federal Bureau of Investigation (2018) reports 686,665 sworn law enforcement officers in the United States in 2018, with 13,497 law enforcement agencies nationwide.

Sampling

This study included a sample of 20 active and recently retired police officers who participated in the semi-structured interviews. Participants must have been active or recently retired (within the last 5 years) law enforcement officers work or have worked for a municipality, county, and/or state law enforcement agency within the State of New Jersey to meet the criteria for participation. Because the researcher was targeting this population with specific employment criteria and recruiting participants who are confirmed to be bona fide law enforcement officers, this can be classified as judgmental sampling, also known as purposive sampling. Those outside

the law enforcement community cannot provide the perspective and insight relevant to this descriptive research, therefore judgmental sampling must have been used to specifically select those who meet the active or recently retired officer criteria (Taherdoost, 2016). Additionally, Kim et al. (2017) notes the usefulness of purposive sampling for providing broad insight and rich information in qualitative studies such as this study took a qualitative, descriptive approach.

To have been selected in this study, a participant must have met the criteria of being an active or recently retired law enforcement officer from an agency based in the State of New Jersey. Recently retired will include those who have retired within the past five years from a law enforcement organization. To find a population to recruit participants meeting these criteria from, the researcher searched for a forum where a large numbers of law enforcement officers were engaged as a medium for recruitment efforts for this study. The researcher identified the Facebook group *Street Cop Training (Private LEO Group)* as this medium suitable for the recruitment of an adequate sample of officers meeting the established criteria. The following paragraph further describes the page and the affiliated organization and demonstrate why it was an effective population to recruit from.

The *Street Cop Training (Private LEO Group)* group had approximately 91,100 law enforcement officer members on Facebook prior to conducting this study, representing a large network of active law enforcement officers to recruit from. Because of the popularity of this training and thus the Facebook group among law enforcement officers, the researcher identified this group as the most promising recruitment source for identifying potential interview participants who have already been vetted and confirmed to be active law enforcement officers. “Street Cop Training (Private LEO Group)” is a private Facebook group operated by the company Street Cop Training, LLC based out of Windsor, NJ. Because of its foundations in New

Jersey, Street Cop Training has a significant following of active and recently retired New Jersey police officers, who met the criteria for this study during recruitment.

Street Cop Training, LLC strictly requires that law enforcement identification be submitted and verified before being able to join this Facebook group, and the group is restricted to only those users who have been verified through credentials to be bona fide law enforcement officers. The staff at Street Cop Training constantly monitors the group to ensure compliance. Street Cop Training is a verified law enforcement training company founded and managed by CEO Dennis Benigno, a retired New Jersey law enforcement officer. Dennis Benigno and Street Cop Training have a significant following of law enforcement officers nationwide and offers courses of instruction both in-person and virtual to police officers across the United States. Using the Street Cop Training Facebook group for recruitment was approved by CEO Dennis Benigno via electronic communication, and the CEO agreed to help facilitate the posting of the request for participants on the Facebook page. It is not criteria for participation in this study to have attended any of the Street Cop Training courses.

Sampling Method

The sampling method for this study was a purposive/judgmental sampling option, where the researcher posted a scripted request for participants on the Street Cop Training Facebook page. The scripted Facebook post was formulated using the Liberty University IRB Social Media Recruitment Template and is included as Appendix C of this dissertation document. This post asked participants to contact the researcher directly through direct messaging if they are interested in being a participant. Once a message was received from interested participants, the researcher then verified the potential participants' status as active or recently retired law enforcement before proceeding by reviewing their identification or credentials. Though Street

Cop Training, LLC has already verified its members as bona fide law enforcement officers, this additional step was taken to ensure validity and trustworthiness of the study. Additionally, at the time the message was received indicating participants' interest in the study, the researcher provided them with the appropriate informed consent form via e-mail which they were asked to review, sign, scan, and return to the researcher prior to their scheduled semi-structured interview.

Site Authorization

No site authorization was needed to conduct this study, as no one specific organization or physical setting was used. The confidentiality of participants and their respective law enforcement organizations was and will continue to be maintained by the researcher, and there has not been, nor will there be disclosure of any identifiable organization or setting. All semi-structured interviews were conducted virtually via Zoom, eliminating the need to obtain permission to use a physical location for the study. The use of Zoom was predicted to increase the level of participants' comfortability, as they could participate from the physical location of their choosing and the use of video chat was optional.

Sources of Data

Semi-structured interviews (Appendix B) were the primary research methods for the purposes of this study. Interviews were conducted via Zoom on a virtual platform and had a semi-structured approach, which allowed for a questioning plan as well as a natural flow of conversation about how officers have experienced particularism in their agencies. The semi-structured approach in data collection allowed the researcher to collect qualitative data while also allowing the opportunity to exist for exploring unexpected topics during the interviews. Semi-structured interviews allowed the researcher to maintain consistent structure throughout the data

collection while also allowing for follow-up questions and discussion that allowed for elaboration on certain topics that arose during the interviews (O'Leary, 2010).

Semi-structured interviews contained a series of preliminary questions to obtain background information on the participant and his/her law enforcement organization. This information was needed to demonstrate the demographics of participants and their organizations as a representation of the general population from which they were selected. The questions were designed to provide the researcher demographic data without revealing the identity of the participants or their respective organizations. These demographic questions were straightforward, non-threatening, and assisted the researcher in developing a rapport with the participant (Patton, 2015).

Following the demographic questions, the semi-structured interview questions were asked and were specific to the phenomenon of this study (particularism) and the participants' experience, understanding, and navigation of the phenomenon within their own agency or organization. The semi-structured interview questions were designed to elicit responses that were directly relevant to addressing the research questions of this study. The semi-structured interview questions were constructed based upon the research questions of this study, and a preliminary interview guide was drafted. This interview guide is included in Appendix A of this dissertation. After the guide was drafted, a field test was conducted and analyzed, which led to the formulation of the final interview guide that was ultimately used in this study and is contained in Appendix B. This interview guide was the guide used for the semi-structured interviews in this study.

Field Tests

While drafting Chapter Three, the researcher conducted a field test to ensure adoption of a well-established data collection plan. This improved the credibility of the semi-structured interviews by eliciting feedback from test volunteers that led to modification of the interview guide for the semi-structured interviews. The selection of test volunteers mimicked the criteria for participants in this study, and all three volunteers were active or recently retired law enforcement officers from organizations within the State of New Jersey. The field tests were conducted via Zoom and will be recorded consistent with the procedures outlined for this study, which included transcription as well as thematic analysis using NVivo software. The number of transcript pages and code identification are included in Table 1 below. A preliminary codebook was formulated from this field test and was used as a foundation to build upon to draft the final codebook in this study. The field study data and volunteer feedback were used to modify the semi-structured interview guide to produce more credible data and to ensure questions are being asked in a clear manner that better elicits truthful and accurate responses. More specifically, questions that produced responses that were not rich in thematic data were restructured to elicit more probing to lead to better thought-provoking responses. The revised interview guide is attached as Appendix B.

Table 1

Semi-Structured Interview Field Testing

Field Test Participant	Test Setting Location	Duration	Number of Transcribed Pages	Number of Codes Produced
FTV-1	Zoom	00:10:33	4	10
FTV-2	Zoom	00:35:24	10	12
FTV-3	Zoom	00:20:40	6	7
Average		00:22:12	6.67	9.67
Total		00:66:37	20	17 Codes

Trustworthiness

This section addresses how the trustworthiness of this study was ensured and maintained, specific to the credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability of the study. Each section details the methods consistent with a qualitative, descriptive approach that were used to achieve each aspect of trustworthiness. The trustworthiness of this study was ensured by taking additional steps such as field tests, member checking, and thick description to improve credibility while also documenting thorough evidence and records as well as peer debriefing to maintain dependability. The following paragraphs discuss in detail the steps that were taken to yield a trustworthy outcome of this study.

Credibility

The internal validity of this study was ensured through providing an accurate description of how police officer participants experience, understand, and navigate the phenomenon of particularism. This section discusses the steps that were taken to provide rich, credible findings and also qualifies the analytical abilities and experience of the researcher. Through the use of field tests, member checking, and a thick description in the subsequent chapters, the credibility of this study is established and maintained. The following sections discuss the tools and methods used to ensure said credibility.

Member Checking

Transcripts from the semi-structured interviews were reviewed by the researcher to include comparison to the audio recordings to ensure accuracy. Member checking was then conducted by providing participants with a copy of the transcript for their review. To accomplish this, the researcher e-mailed the transcripts to the participant for their review. The participants were asked to review the transcript and respond via e-mail to indicate that they are a fair and

accurate transcript of the semi-structured interview. Nineteen of the twenty participants responded to requests for member checking. Two of the nineteen requested minor revisions to be made to the transcript that did not affect the meaning of the conversation or any statements made. If the participant highlighted any discrepancies in the transcript, they were again reviewed by the researcher and compared to the audio recordings and the necessary revisions were then made. Participant input on accuracy of the transcripts were considered valuable to ensure the credibility of the results of this study. Once the participants validated that the transcripts were a true, fair, and accurate representation of their responses in the semi-structured interview, thematic analysis was conducted.

Thick Description

The researcher in this study has been a member of the law enforcement community since 2005, and in a full-time, sworn-officer status since 2008. The researcher has therefore been immersed in the culture and phenomena specific to the law enforcement profession, to include the phenomenon of particularism specific to promotions and special assignments. This is relevant in that the researcher was both qualified and able to probe participants through semi-structured interviews and describe their experiences, understanding, and navigation of particularism in a manner consistent with a thick description of the phenomenon. This description went “beyond the mere or bare reporting of an act (thin description), but describes and probes the intentions, motives, meanings, contexts, situations and circumstances of action” (Denzin, 1989, p. 39). Further, the researcher used the interview transcripts to author Chapters Four and Five in a way that was descriptive and allowed the reader to understand the context of researcher interpretations (Glesne, 2016).

Dependability

Evidence & Records

The data collection methods in this study ensured dependability by maintaining evidence and records of the semi-structured interviews, member checking, and subsequent thematic analysis. Full transcripts of the semi-structured interviews were prepared using NVivo software. These transcripts were reviewed by the researcher to include comparison to the audio recordings to ensure accuracy. Member checking was conducted by providing participants with a copy of the transcript for their review. Member checking was conducted via e-mail and transcripts of e-mails were retained to document the review of the transcripts by participants. E-mail addresses and any other personal identifying information were redacted, and the e-mail documents were labeled with the participants' pseudonym. All audio recordings, transcripts, and e-mail records will be retained for a period of three years following this study.

In addition to the retention of data collection evidence, records of the data analysis process (thematic analysis) were retained for dependability documentation as well. Codebooks were used and thorough documentation of how coding schemes were developed were prepared. NVivo software was used for manual coding of the semi-structured interview transcripts, and the coded dataset is organized and is retained within the NVivo platform. Records of thematic analysis procedures will be retained for a period of three years following this study.

Peer Debriefing

To further ensure dependability of the study, this research used three experts in the policing and criminal justice fields to assist with peer debriefing. Using peer debriefing confirms data and theme credibility as well as trustworthiness of findings while ensuring unbiased and ethical research methods and conclusions. The debriefers have been identified as having a

knowledge of the phenomenon being examined and are those who the researcher can develop and maintain a relationship rooted in trust with (Spall, 1998). The identified peer debriefers for this study are three individuals who have experience in the law enforcement field in the State of New Jersey, which is also consistent with the specific population of this study. In addition to their decades of law enforcement experience, these three peer debriefers also hold doctoral degrees with research in related fields and have experience instructing both criminal justice and policing topics in higher-education settings. The profiles and qualifications of the peer debriefers are contained in the following paragraphs.

Thomas Shea, D.Sc. is the program director of the Police Graduate Studies Program at Seton Hall University in South Orange, New Jersey. He is a retired police officer with twenty years' experience to include command experience of four different operational units. Dr. Shea was previously a security director at a New Jersey school district and currently co-owns four expert consulting businesses. Among his research interests are topics relevant to this study and discussed in Chapter Two, including police-community relations, police ethics, and police leadership. Among his published works, Dr. Shea has authored a publication titled *Promotion and Politics*, which is closely related to the problem to be explored through this study, which specifically focuses with social connection preferences (particularism) in police promotions and assignments. Dr. Shea's research, publications, and police experience positions him to debrief this study through several different lenses to ensure the dependability of the data collected.

Ian Finnimore, Ed.D. has over ten years' experience as both an adjunct and assistant professor of Criminal Justice at Stockton University in Galloway, NJ. He is a retired supervisory level county detective with twenty-five years' experience in multiple different police agencies that included uniformed patrol, criminal investigations, and police intelligence. Dr. Finnimore's

former positions and experience placed him in a unique position observe the inner workings of a variety of local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies to include the intricacies of law enforcement promotions and special assignments. His publications include topics related to leadership, experience, and emotional issues specific to homicide investigations as well as topics related to police training and police-community relations. Dr. Finnimore's experience in policing, academia, and his networking experience positions him to be able to evaluate the data analysis in this study. Additionally, the researcher has had past conversations with Dr. Finnimore regarding his firsthand observations and experiences with particularism in the law enforcement organizational setting.

William Perkins, Ed.D is an adjunct professor at both the Atlantic Cape Community College (Mays Landing, NJ) and Stockton University (Galloway, NJ), teaching in higher education in both the criminal justice and business management fields. He has over twenty years' experience as a municipal police officer and over thirty years' experience in the United States Air Force where he achieved promotion to the highest enlisted position in his wing. His doctoral studies and research interests are in organizational leadership, specifically postconventional leadership and cultivating future leaders of the organization. Dr. Perkins' unique education and experience allows him to evaluate this study from an organizational leadership perspective in addition to his own experiences within the law enforcement field specific to assignments and promotions.

The peer debriefers completed a non-disclosure form where they were compelled to agree to not disclose any of the data obtained to best maintain participant confidentiality. The themes identified through the thematic analysis and their implications for the law enforcement field were reviewed with the peer debriefers to ensure that they are trustworthy and dependable. Once these

themes were confirmed by the experts to have this dependability, they were be discussed as the findings of this study as being relevant to the research questions posed in Chapter One.

Transferability

The results of this study are directly applicable to the processes in which law enforcement agencies select personnel for promotions and special assignments. It has been documented through a review of the literature in this study that particularism and associated practices exist in every culture and organization, and it has also been found that police officers perceive nepotism and politics to be the best predictor of who receives preference on assignments and promotions (Hudson et al., 2017; Reynolds et al., 2015). It was assumed in this study that participants were willing and able to discuss their experiences with particularism with the researcher and that the semi-structured interviews elicited responses from participants that resulted in the identification of shared themes across participant perceptions regarding the use of particularism in their organization.

The researcher interviewed 20 active and recently retired police officers as a sample that will be representative of the much larger general population of sworn law enforcement personnel. These participants represented eighteen different law enforcement organizations across six different counties in the State of New Jersey. Three participants worked for state agencies, two participants worked for county agencies, and fifteen worked for municipal police departments. This variety of organizations eliminated the potential for there to be bias caused by organizational culture and practices as opposed to the industrial culture of law enforcement. Additionally, this ensured sampling sufficiency, in that the semi-structured interviews represented 20 individual experiences within multiple New Jersey law enforcement organizations.

By constructing a thick description of the lived experiences of participants relative to their experiences of particularism, a better understanding of how officers experience, understand, and navigate the phenomenon was established. This description of the phenomenon put into context how particularism is used to make decisions regarding assignment and promotion of police personnel. Through such a thick description, the results of this study are transferable to organizational policies and practices as well as future research that is more specific to police organizations and their culture. These descriptions also provided insight into the phenomenon of particularism and the outcomes associated with its use in making personnel decisions.

Confirmability

To ensure confirmability in this study, the researcher maintained a codebook which contains clear, well-defined codes to include their definitions and examples from participant quotations (Appendix E). The thematic analysis was an ongoing and dynamic process, and the final codebook and codes used were thoroughly documented to show the patterns identified in the data to demonstrate trustworthiness of the researcher's analysis and interpretation.

Transcripts were retained by the researcher in NVivo software as evidence of the use of coding, which also allows accessible review of the coding in the transcripts within the NVivo platform as well as the codebook internal to NVivo software.

The researcher also recognizes the shortcomings of this study's methods and their potential effects. It is recognized that descriptive studies such as this one cannot test or verify the research problem statistically, and therefore the results of this descriptive study may reflect a certain level of bias due to the absence of statistical tests. Many descriptive studies such as this are not able to be replicated due to the observational nature of the study. Additionally, with only 20 participants in this study, the sample size is relatively small compared to the over 680,000

police officers in the United States and this study was limited to officers in only one state. It is recommended that future studies on this topic can be performed to confirm the validity of these findings on a larger scale. Though these threats to external validity are present, the researcher is confident that the confirmability of this study is high, as the literature review and data analysis have both established that particularism is a widespread and pervasive issue that also exists within the law enforcement profession.

Data Collection and Management

The following steps were used in the data collection process:

1. Prior to data collection, approval from the Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB) was secured by submission of this proposal and the required application. Approval was obtained under Liberty University IRB Number IRB-FY21-22-880. Once IRB approval was obtained, the data collection for this study began with the recruitment of qualified participants. The researcher recruited 20 police officers to participate in the semi-structured interview that was the primary data collection method of this study.
 - a. The primary and sole sampling method for this study was to use a scripted Facebook post in the group *Street Cop Training (Private LEO Group)* by the researcher. This post asked participants to contact the researcher directly through direct messaging if they were interested in being a participant. The scripted Facebook post was formulated using the Liberty University IRB Social Media Recruitment Template and has been included as Appendix C of this dissertation document.

2. Participants were e-mailed an informed consent form which they reviewed, printed, signed, scanned, and returned to the researcher via e-mail if they chose to consent to participation. The researcher also confirmed the participants' status as bona fide law enforcement officers through a review of their credentials.
3. A date and time to conduct the semi-structured interview was scheduled with each consenting participant.
4. Semi-structured interviews were conducted. Zoom was used to conduct the semi-structured interviews, which allowed the researcher to record audio or audio/video of the interview. The participants were given the choice to activate his or her video recording for the interview or to solely use audio to participate. This ensured participant's comfortability with respect to their confidentiality being maintained.
5. The recordings within the Zoom platform were then be imported into NVivo software for automatic transcription. This step also created a location on the researcher's computer where the audio recordings could be organized and retained within NVivo.
6. The researcher then carefully compared the transcription to his notes as well as the audio recordings of the semi-structured interviews to ensure accuracy, as computer software is commonly known to sometimes misinterpret the audio input and thus transcribe the spoken words incorrectly. Any needed revisions were then made by the researcher.
7. Member checking was then conducted by providing participants with a copy of the transcript for their review. To accomplish this, the researcher e-mailed the

transcripts to the participant for their review. The participants were asked to review the transcript and respond via e-mail to indicate that they were a fair and accurate transcript of the semi-structured interview. If the participant highlighted any discrepancies in the transcript, they were again reviewed by the researcher and compared to the audio recordings and the necessary revisions were then made. Once the participants validated that the transcripts were a true, fair, and accurate representation of their responses in the semi-structured interview, thematic analysis was conducted.

8. The researcher used NVivo to code the transcripts of the semi-structured interviews and to conduct thematic analysis. A codebook was maintained (Appendix E) and tracked the codes used for thematic analysis. The researcher identified, analyzed, and interpreted themes within the data as they related to the research questions of this study.
9. Three experts in the policing and criminal justice fields assisted with peer debriefing. The peer debriefers completed a non-disclosure form where they were compelled to agree to not disclose any of the data obtained to best maintain participant confidentiality. The themes identified through the thematic analysis and their implications for the law enforcement field were reviewed with the peer debriefers to ensure that they are trustworthy and dependable.
10. The researcher prepared Chapters Four and Five of this dissertation, describing the findings of the thematic analysis of the data and conclusions drawn from the data. Chapter Four contains a thick description of the data and findings that

highlight the common themes described by participants that are based upon participants' own lived experiences with particularism.

11. The transcripts were saved and organized in the NVivo platform along with their respective audio recordings. All recordings and transcripts will be retained on the researcher's password protected computer inside his locked office for a period of three years following the study.

12. After the three-year period has passed, the evidence will be destroyed.

Data Analysis Procedures

Because this study sought to produce a more nuanced understanding of the phenomenon of particularism by examining the individual perceptions of participants, thematic analysis was identified as the most appropriate data analysis procedure. The data collected from the semi-structured interviews (transcripts) were analyzed through identification of common themes and participant perceptions (Glesne, 2016; O'Leary, 2010). Specific to the topic of particularistic decision making in police assignments and promotions, the thematic analysis sought to identify the positive, negative, and neutral elements and outcomes of the experiences, understanding, and navigation of this phenomenon by law enforcement officers.

Castleberry and Nolen (2018) highlight the steps to take for successful thematic analysis of qualitative research data. First, the researcher compiled and familiarized himself with the data, which in this study included conducting, recording, and subsequently transcribing the interviews as described in the previous section of this dissertation. Since the researcher in this study conducted the interviews, he was familiar with the data immediately and reviewed the data thoroughly through the transcription process. The second step is referred to as disassembling, where preliminary coding was used to create meaningful groups of data that are identified as

specific groups of themes, beliefs, experiences, or perceptions that are found in the interviews. After this, the researcher reassembled the codes to put them in context with each other, specifically by looking for recurring patterns or themes across multiple interviews. The researcher then interpreted the data by identifying which themes identified were pertinent with respect to the research questions of the study, and the researcher then articulated the themes and their relationships. Finally, the researcher produced a report of the common themes and his conclusions drawn from these themes relevant to providing potential answers for the research questions posed in the study (Castleberry & Nolan, 2018).

Prior to conducting the study, the researcher established primary (parent) codes that were directly related to the research questions in this study. Specifically, primary codes were relative to the participant's description of particularism and included "Experiences," "Understanding," and "Navigation." The code "Experiences" identified participant descriptions of the specific incident(s) of particularism they have experienced within the organizational setting. "Understanding" highlighted descriptions from participants of their perceptions and associated outcomes of experiencing particularism. "Navigation" identified the descriptions from participants that elaborate on how they personally navigated particularism after having experienced the phenomenon within their organization. Coding also identified whether participants experiences, understanding, and navigation of particularism were positive, negative, or neutral. Secondary (child) codes were added to the thematic analysis upon review and analysis of the transcripts of this study. From the field test conducted for this study, preliminary child codes were identified, and a preliminary codebook was formulated. This preliminary codebook was subject to change once data was collected in this study; however, the preliminary was used

as the foundation for which to develop the codebook that was developed in this study (Appendix E).

In this study, the themes identified were compared directly to the extent to which they answer the questions regarding how police officers experience, understand, and navigate the phenomenon of particularism in their agency's identification of personnel to promote and assign to special assignments. To assist in this coding, the researcher used NVivo software to both transcribe and code the interview data obtained. Castleberry and Nolan (2018) describe NVivo as being easy to use for researchers and using both linguistic and semantic algorithms to detect co-occurring phrasing as well as sequencing in a way that is both systematic and reliable. This allows the researcher to better detect and analyze the data collected, especially when there are large and detailed data sources. Codebooks, codes, themes, and related records that thoroughly document the thematic analysis in this study will be retained by the researcher for a period of three years. After the three-year period has expired, these records will be destroyed.

Ethics

The semi-structured interviews that were conducted during this study were strictly voluntary in nature with participants being under no obligation to volunteer for an interview. Informed consent was given by participants prior to the semi-structured interview being administered. Informed consent forms detailed the risk to the participants, which researcher both anticipated and observed to be minimal. More specifically, the risk associated with this study was anticipated emotional in nature, as the questioning about lived experiences in the organizational setting was predicted to elicit negative emotions from the participant to include sadness, frustration, and anger. This was evident in some of the interviews, but there were no

other unanticipated risks that arose. Participants were e-mailed the informed consent form which they printed, signed, scanned, and returned to the researcher.

No persons from vulnerable populations were recruited to participate in this study. Participant confidentiality was of the utmost importance to the researcher and will continue to be maintained indefinitely. All interview questions were carefully phrased to be neutral to allow for the participants to provide truthful and accurate accounts of their experiences, understanding of, and navigation of the phenomenon of particularism. Any described profiles or biographical information of participants were described only to the extent that added context to their experiences with particularism without potentially revealing their identity or the identity of the law enforcement agencies that they are affiliated with. The interviewees were not to be influenced by any leading questions or unintended bias in question structure. Participants in this qualitative study did not have any direct relationship to the researcher or any conflicts of interest, and no other conflicts of interest arose.

Semi-structured interviews were audio or audio/video recorded via Zoom so that the researcher could focus complete attention on the interviewees without the distraction of taking notes and to reduce the potential of misinterpretation during later transcription and analysis. The participants had the option to use Zoom video in the semi-structured interview or to only use audio. Confidentiality of participants' identities will continue to be maintained by using pseudonyms to refer to participants, and audio recordings will not be released or shared. Additionally, the computer used to conduct the semi-structured interviews via Zoom will continue to be secured by the researcher in his locked office, and the computer is password protected. Only the researcher will continue to have unfettered access to the recording computer, audio recordings, and transcripts. The NVivo software will continue to be used on the

researcher's computer that is password protected and set to time out after periods of inactivity. The researcher's extensive experience and knowledge in the proper techniques for securing both physical and digital evidence was used to ensure confidentiality and security of data is maintained.

Summary

Chapter Three discussed what steps were taken in performing this qualitative descriptive study whereby police officers described how they experience, understand, and navigate the phenomenon of particularism within their organization. The use of semi-structured interviews as the primary data collection method yielded data that was subjected to thematic analysis, which was later scrutinized by peer debriefing. Additional steps were taken to ensure trustworthiness, to include member checking, thick description, and the keeping of evidence and records by the researcher. The study was conducted after obtaining Liberty University IRB approval by executing the methods described in the preceding chapter. Chapter Four discusses the findings of this study based upon data collected in the semi-structured interviews.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

The purpose of this qualitative, descriptive study was to have police officers describe how they experience, understand, and navigate within their agency as it relates to their decisions to assign and promote police personnel within the scope of particularism in New Jersey. Chapter Four presents the findings of this study as they relate to the research questions developed. This study sought to answer the following questions regarding the effects of particularism on police promotions and assignments:

RQ1: How do police officers describe their experiences with their agency as it relates to their agencies' decisions to promote police officers under the concept of particularism?

RQ2: How do police officers describe their understanding of their agency as it relates to their agencies' decisions to promote police officers under the concept of particularism?

RQ3: How do police officers describe their navigation of their agency as it relates to their agencies' decisions to promote police officers under the concept of particularism?

Chapter four contains a brief description of the demographic information for each participant in this study. After this, the results of the research are explained by presenting the themes developed through thematic analysis of the semi-structured interview data, to include a thick description of the experiences, understanding, and navigation of particularism as described by police officer participants.

Participants

This study included a sample of 20 active and recently retired police officers who participated in the semi-structured interviews. The years of experience for law enforcement officer participants ranged from 8 to 30 years, with 17.95 years being the mean number of years

of experience. Five participants were in the 25-35 age range, nine were in the 35-45 age range, and six were in the 45+ age range. Seventeen participants were active law enforcement officers and three were recently retired police officers. Seventeen of the participants were male and three were female. Sixteen were white, three were Hispanic, and one was biracial (black/white). See Table 2 below for participant demographics.

A total of eighteen different law enforcement organizations across six different counties in the State of New Jersey were represented by the participants. Three participants worked for state agencies, two participants worked for county agencies, and fifteen worked for municipal police departments. The specific law enforcement agencies and counties represented will not be disclosed as to better protect the confidentiality of the participants and their organizations. Nine participants reported being entry-level ranks, five were front-line supervisors, three middle-managers, and three administrators. The agencies represented by participants varied in size, location, and personnel organization. Of the sixteen participants who could categorize a specific jurisdictional area, with five urban, one rural, and ten suburban jurisdictions. The remaining four participants' organizations were responsible for areas that covered a combination of these community geographies or multiple areas.

Table 2*Participant Demographics*

Participant	Years of Service	Age Range	Race	Ethnicity	Gender	Current (Or Retired) Rank	Jurisdiction
Alpha	8.5	25-35	White	Non-Hispanic	Male	Entry-level	Urban
Bravo	19	45+	White	Non-Hispanic	Female	Front-line supervisor	Suburban
Charlie	13	35-45	White	Non-Hispanic	Male	Front-line supervisor	Suburban
Delta	12	35-45	White	Hispanic	Male	Entry-level	Suburban
Echo	22.5	35-45	White	Hispanic	Male	Administrator	Urban
Foxtrot	16	35-45	White	Non-Hispanic	Male	Entry-level	Suburban
Gulf	12.5	25-35	White	Non-Hispanic	Female	Entry-level	All (State)
Hotel	20	45+	White	Non-Hispanic	Male	Front-Line Supervisor	Suburban
India	10	25-35	White/Black	Non-Hispanic	Male	Entry-level	Suburban
Juliet	21	35-45	White	Non-Hispanic	Male	Administrator	Suburban
Kilo	18	35-45	White	Hispanic	Male	Administrator	Suburban
Lima	18	35-45	White	Non-Hispanic	Male	Entry-level	Suburban
Mike	25	45+	White	Non-Hispanic	Male	Middle Manager	All (County)
November	15	25-35	White	Non-Hispanic	Male	Entry-level	Urban
Oscar	30	45+	White	Non-Hispanic	Male	Front-Line Supervisor	Urban
Poppa	21	35-45	White	Non-Hispanic	Female	Middle Manager	Suburban/Rural
Quebec	20	35-45	White	Non-Hispanic	Male	Entry-level	Rural
Romeo	22.5	45+	White	Non-Hispanic	Male	Middle Manager	Urban
Sierra	30	45+	White	Non-Hispanic	Male	Front-line supervisor	Suburban
Tango	8	25-35	White	Non-Hispanic	Male	Entry-level	All

Alpha: has worked for a state agency for approximately 8.5 years, and his agency operates in an urban jurisdiction. He is a white male between the ages of 25 and 35 who is assigned to uniformed patrol as a K-9 Officer. He described having experienced particularism in his agency in both promotions and special assignments.

Bravo: has worked for approximately 19 years for a state agency that patrols a suburban environment. She is a white female over the age of 45 who is a front-line supervisor in uniform

patrol. Bravo described having experienced particularism in her agency by describing the selection of a particular individual for a special assignment.

Charlie: Charlie is a front-line supervisor in uniform patrol for a suburban community and has been a police officer for approximately 13 years. He is a white male between the ages of 35 and 45. Charlie described having experienced particularism in his agency by describing positions being created for certain individuals based upon favoritism.

Delta: Delta has approximately 9 years of service with a suburban police department and is at a rank categorized as entry-level. He has 12 combined years of service in multiple law enforcement agencies. Delta is a Hispanic male between the ages of 35 and 45. He described having experienced particularism in his agency specific to the selection of personnel for special assignments, which then gives those individuals advantages for future promotions.

Echo: Echo is a police administrator for an agency that patrols an urban area, and he has served as a law enforcement officer for approximately 22.5 years. He is a Hispanic male who is between the ages of 35 and 45. Echo describes having experienced particularism in his agency specific to special assignments earlier in his career, but that he and other administrators have taken part in eliminating favoritism in selecting personnel for special assignments due to their past experiences with particularism.

Foxtrot: Foxtrot is a patrol officer in a suburban area and has approximately 16 years in the law enforcement field. He is a white male who is between the ages of 35 and 45 and is also involved in the community policing function of his organization. Foxtrot described having experienced particularism in his agency specific to special assignments.

Gulf: Gulf is a detective with a state agency tasked with special investigations of a specific nature. She is a white female with approximately 12.5 years in the law enforcement field and is

between the ages of 25 and 35. She described having experienced particularism in her organization specific to promotions by means of created positions for certain individuals.

Hotel: Hotel is a front-line supervisor in a suburban police department with approximately 20 years in the law enforcement field. He is a white male who is over 45 years of age. He described having experienced particularism in his agency specific to the selection of an individual for special assignments, which then gave that individual advantages for future promotions.

India: India is a detective in a multi-jurisdictional agency and has ten years combined service in multiple agencies in the law enforcement field. He is a biracial (white/black) male who is between the ages of 25 and 35. He described having experienced particularism in his former agency specific to both special assignments and promotions.

Juliet: Juliet is a police administrator in a suburban law enforcement organization with 21 years in service. He is a white male between the ages of 35 and 45 who has experienced particularism with respect to promotions.

Kilo: Kilo is a police administrator in a suburban law enforcement organization with 18 years in the law enforcement profession. He is a Hispanic male between the ages of 35 and 45. He described experiencing particularism with respect to one specific individual who received a special assignment and subsequent promotions.

Lima: Lima is a white male between the ages of 35 and 45 who works as a patrol officer for a municipal police department in a suburban setting. His semi-structured interview indicated he did not experience the phenomenon of particularism in his agency; however, an unexpected and potentially related theme was discovered through his descriptions.

Mike: Mike is a retired county detective who served 25 years in law enforcement. He is a white male over the age of 45 and retired as a rank that would be categorized as a middle manager. He described his experiences with particularism relative to promotions in his former agency.

November: November is a patrol officer in an urban police agency with 15 years' experience. He is a white male between the ages of 25 and 35. He described particularism relative to a specific example of an individual who benefited by receiving a special assignment.

Oscar: Oscar is a retired police officer from an urban agency whose rank at retirement was categorized as front-line supervisor. He is a white male over the age of 45 and had 30 years' experience in law enforcement. He described his experiences with pervasive particularism in his agency, specifically with respect to special assignments.

Poppa: Poppa is a municipal police officer at a rank described as middle manager. She is a white female between the ages of 35 and 45 with 21 years in service. Her jurisdiction has both suburban and rural areas. She described experiences with particularism in her agency relative to promotions.

Quebec: Quebec is a retired municipal police officer who retired at an entry-level position after 20 years of service. He is a white male between the ages of 35 and 45 and described his jurisdiction as rural. He described his experience with particularism in his agency relative to promotions.

Romeo: Romeo is a middle manager in an urban police agency and describes his position as being the commander of a specific unit in his agency. He has 22.5 years in law enforcement and is a white male over the age of 45. He described his experiences with particularism as being prevalent in his agency in both special assignments and promotions.

Sierra: Sierra is a retired municipal police officer from a suburban jurisdiction who retired as a front-line supervisor. He is a white male over the age of 45 and retired after 30 years of service. He described his experiences with particularism in both special assignments and promotions in his agency.

Tango: Tango is a municipal police officer who works in a jurisdiction that has rural, suburban, and urban components all within its borders. He has worked for multiple police agencies in his career and has 8 years in the law enforcement field. He is a white male between 25 and 35 years old and currently serves as a patrol officer for his current agency. Tango focused his interview on a previous agency and has not had experiences with particularism in his career. He did, however, respond to the semi-structured interview questions in a way that generated an unexpected and potentially related theme.

Results

The primary data collection method for this qualitative, descriptive study was semi-structured interviews with the twenty law enforcement officer participants. After the interviews were completed, they were automatically transcribed using NVivo transcription software. The transcriptions were then compared against the audio by the researcher and revisions were made to ensure accuracy. After this, the transcripts were sent to the participants to review independently for accuracy (member checking). Nineteen of the twenty participants responded, with seventeen of the participants indicating that the transcripts were accurate and valid and two requesting minor revisions that did not change the meaning of the themes in the transcripts. One participant did not respond to the requests for member checking. After this, thematic analysis was conducted on the transcripts by the researcher. The researcher reviewed a total of 155 pages

of semi-structured interview transcripts to analyze the collected data for recurring themes. See Table 3 below for participant interview duration and transcription lengths.

Table 3.

Interview Duration and Transcription Length

Participant	Interview Duration	Transcription Length
Alpha	00:29:07	8 pages
Bravo	00:20:38	6 pages
Charlie	00:27:08	9 pages
Delta	00:23:03	8 pages
Echo	00:55:06	13 pages
Foxtrot	00:19:27	7 pages
Gulf	00:25:04	7 pages
Hotel	00:25:25	7 pages
India	00:23:45	7 pages
Juliet	00:17:00	6 pages
Kilo	00:35:31	10 pages
Lima	00:16:42	5 pages
Mike	00:24:05	7 pages
November	00:24:12	7 pages
Oscar	00:10:35	4 pages
Poppa	00:23:40	7 pages
Quebec	00:22:38	7 pages
Romeo	00:48:48	15 pages
Sierra	00:22:51	8 pages
Tango	00:26:24	7 pages
Average	00:26:03	7.75 pages
Total	08:41:09	155 pages

Theme Development

The themes developed were directly related to the research questions of this study. Unexpected themes were also identified and documented. The research questions and subsequent themes address the problem of this study, which examined how police officers describe how they experience, understand, and navigate within their agency as it relates to their decisions to assign and promote police personnel (particularism). A codebook was maintained to ensure dependability of this study and is attached to this dissertation as Appendix E. The following

sections will address the development of themes and sub-themes throughout the data analysis of this study. See Table 4 below for themes identified through thematic analysis.

Research Question One

Research question one asks, “How do police officers describe their experiences with their agency as it relates to their agencies' decisions to promote police officers under the concept of particularism?” For participant descriptions relative to the research question, the parent code “*Experiences with Particularism*” was created. The experiences of police officers yielded unique descriptions of the experiences of particularism within the participants' respective law enforcement organizations, and these descriptions were all coded under the child code “*Particularism (General)*.” Though the experiences in this code were unique to each participant, they clearly described what is known to be particularism as defined in this study.

Within the descriptions of officers' experiences with particularism, two recurring themes were also identified. The child code “*Career Progression*” was created for descriptions from participants that contained data on the effects of particularism on participants' career progression and the career progression of their peers. The child code “*Qualifications*” was created for the descriptions of the qualifications and competencies of those who have benefited from particularism. These child codes directly address sub-themes that recurred in the semi-structured interviews as officers described their unique experiences with particularism in their respective agencies.

Research Question Two

Research question two asks “How do police officers describe their understanding of their agency as it relates to their agencies' decisions to promote police officers under the concept of particularism?” For participant descriptions relative to the research question, the parent code

“*Understanding of Particularism*” was created. Within the descriptions of how officers understand the phenomenon of particularism were several sub-themes for which child codes were generated. The following paragraph will present the child codes used for recurring sub-themes under research question two.

The child code “*Pervasiveness*” contains descriptions of participants’ understanding of particularism as a widespread or pervasive phenomenon as opposed to being unique to any one organization. “*Relationships*” is a child code that was developed for participants’ descriptions of their understanding of the dynamics of the relationships that lead to particularistic decision making. The child code “*Morale, Motivation, and Demoralization*” contains descriptions from officers about their understanding of particularism’s effects on organizational morale as well as the motivation/demoralization of personnel. “*It’s Expected*” is a child code that addresses the recurring theme that participants understand that particularism is expected as part of the law enforcement organizational decision making. The child codes “*Negative Sentiment*” and “*Sentiment of Understanding*” were created based upon the recurring sentiment and perspectives of police officer participants and how these sentiments shaped their understanding of the phenomenon of particularism.

Research Question Three

Research question three asks “How do police officers describe their navigation of their agency as it relates to their agencies’ decisions to promote police officers under the concept of particularism?” For participant descriptions relative to the research question the parent code “*Navigation of Particularism*” was created. Within the descriptions of how officers navigate the phenomenon of particularism were several sub-themes for which child codes were generated.

The following paragraphs will present the child codes used for recurring sub-themes under research question three.

Codes were created to address recurring themes relative to the positive and negative ways police officers navigate particularism as described by the participants in this study. “*Positive Responses*” is the child code that was used for participants’ discussions about navigating particularism by making the best out of a negative situation and/or seeing the positive. Conversely, the child code “*Negative Responses*” was created for descriptions of how officers negatively respond to and navigate their experiences with particularism. Within the negative responses to particularism there were two sub-themes that were discovered. First, it was discovered that participants described officers’ negative responses to navigate particularism included deciding to not participate in future selection processes because of their experiences with particularism. For this, the child code “*Negative Responses: No Future Participation*” was created. The second recurring theme was that officers also navigate particularism by reducing their productivity at work. Descriptions relative to this finding were coded as “*Negative Responses: Reduced Productivity*.”

Participants’ descriptions of the navigation of particularism were not strictly positive or negative. Another recurring theme in participants’ descriptions of navigating particularism was that officers navigate particularism by initially responding negatively and then rebounding to a more positive response. The code “*Initially Negative then Rebound*” was created to address this navigation. Three participants who self-reported to be administrators all described contributing to changes in their agencies as part of their own navigation of particularism, and these descriptions were coded under child code “*Change by Administrators*.” Participants also described police officers navigating particularism by shifting their values in an attempt to benefit themselves, and

the code “*Value Shift*” was created for this sub-theme. Finally, participants were asked to describe how officer navigation of particularism related to the police-community relationship or services provided to the community, and responses relative to this question were coded as “*Police-Community Relations.*”

Unexpected Themes

The two themes produced that were unexpected were “*Protected Classes*” and “*Reverse Particularism.*” The themes were generated from participants responses that were not directly related to the definition of particularism, but that were supported by recurring themes in other participants’ interviews. These descriptions are relevant to research questions one and two, as they contain descriptions of how officers experience and understand particularism. The code “*Protected Classes*” was generated for the descriptions of favorable promotions or assignments of persons from protected classes as opposed to merit-based decisions. The code “*Reverse Particularism*” the descriptions of officers where personnel were prohibited from being promoted or receiving special assignments because they were disliked by decision makers.

Themes

Table 4.

Themes and Related Codes

Research Question One	
Themes (Parent Codes)	Sub-Themes (Child Codes)
Experiences with Particularism	Particularism (General) Career Progression Qualifications
Research Question Two	
Themes (Parent Codes)	Sub-Themes (Child Codes)
Understanding of Particularism	Pervasiveness Relationships Morale, Motivation, and Demoralization It's Expected Negative Sentiment Sentiment of Understanding
Research Question Three	
Themes (Parent Codes)	Sub-Themes (Child Codes)
Navigation of Particularism	Positive Responses Negative Responses <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No Future Participation • Reduced Productivity Initially Negative then Rebound Change by Administrators Value Shift Police-Community Relationship
Unexpected Codes	
Protected Class (RQ 1 & RQ 2)	
Reverse Particularism (RQ 1 & RQ 2)	

Experiences with Particularism

The experiences of law enforcement officers with respect to particularism was identified as a main theme in this study, and directly addresses research question one: How do police

officers describe their experiences with their agency as it relates to their agencies' decisions to promote police officers under the concept of particularism? During the semi-structured interviews, eighteen of the twenty participants were able to describe specific experiences with particularism in their law enforcement organization, accounting for 90% of the sample. Though each of these participants had a unique story to tell, their descriptions were consistent with the definition of particularism as defined in this study. Their unique descriptions of their experiences were categorized into the sub-theme *Particularism (General)*. Two recurring themes found within the experiences of police officers with particularism were also identified, and the sub-themes of *Career Progression* and *Qualifications* were created to address these recurring themes.

Particularism (General). The eighteen participants who described their experiences with particularistic decision making in their agency described specific instances of promotions and/or special assignments being made in their agencies based upon social ties as opposed to merit-based decisions. Alpha described the experiences within his agency, saying “So from what I've seen in my years and talking to people and seeing people get promoted at my agency at least...political connections are the, usually the most influential thing in getting promoted.” Similarly, Romeo described his experiences with particularism in his organization as “My agency is, and no exaggerations, literally run off of nepotism. We have policies against it, but that is...they don't hide it. They are clear when they use it.” This type of experience was common among the police officer participants in this study, with most of them describing having experienced agency decisions being made to assign or promote personnel based upon particularism. A number of the participants described very specific examples of particularism and the factors that weighed into the decisions that were ultimately made.

Participant Delta provided detailed descriptions of experiences in his agency, describing the relationship between the beneficiaries of special assignments and the decisionmakers as “They're all buddies. They all vacation together.” He further described his experiences with particularistic decisions by saying “But it doesn't matter. It doesn't matter how crappy your report is as long as you're friends with the right people. That's all that matters.” Other participants experiences in their agencies provided descriptions that were consistent as well, and these descriptions showed the specific influences in the decision making to assign a particular officer to a coveted assignment.

Foxtrot: Another officer who I started the same day as was moved into the Detective Bureau, because he spent a lot of time fishing with the supervisor of the Detective Bureau at the time and the captain of police at the time.

India: So, when the person in charge was in charge for a very long time in my previous agency, let's say for about 15 years, the current person was in charge of the entire agency. He picked and chose the people that were in their inner circle.

Mike: Promotions were based, was supposed to be based on merit. However, many times it was just politics who was friends with who, who was popular, who was one of the boys that went along with everything, never questioned anything else.

Career Progression. Seven of the participants discussed their experiences with respect to the effects of particularism on their own career progression and the career progression of their coworkers. All seven of the participants' descriptions contained negative experiences relative to how particularism effected career progression. Alpha summarized his experiences in a short but explicitly clear way, stating “Unless you have somebody pushing you forward, a promotion is almost unlikely to happen.” Other participants had more detailed descriptions, but their

descriptions were centered around similar premises, that their career progression and the progression of others' careers were hindered by those who benefited from particularism.

Foxtrot: Really, Like I said, he's not in my way, but at the same time, I know that for now, future promotions, when they're looking at me and him together on a scale of who to promote next, he is somebody who now has important sought-after experience in the law enforcement field with his ability to do investigations and the training that he has gotten as a result. And now he might have a leg up and probably has a leg up on me for every promotion going forward.

Hotel: The cons also, were it put him on a different promotional track which allowed him to be promoted without testing while everyone else had to test for the promotions. And it also gave him no competition for his promotions. So, the only person he was going against was himself. So therefore, he was just appointed to the next promotion instead of testing into it and earning it.

One participant explained that his own personal experiences with particularism and how it hindered his own career progression also made it difficult for him as a commander in his agency and helping officers under his command progress through their careers as well. Romeo questioned how he could help those he is tasked with leading understand how to progress in their careers, asking "How do I sit down and help them do what I would feel is a legitimate career progression, and this is how you prepare for promotion, when I myself didn't know?" The context of this question was that Romeo had experienced particularism that led him to question how he could achieve career progression as he observed others around him with social ties inexplicably be promoted.

Qualifications. Thirteen of the participants included descriptions of specific experiences with the qualifications of the beneficiaries of particularistic decision making. Many of these descriptions included those which portrayed persons selected for special assignment or promotion as being unqualified and even incompetent to receive the position. Some descriptions portrayed individuals who received assignments or promotions based on particularism as being qualified for the position while also having social ties. The descriptions of participants made it clear that they found it much more difficult to accept a person who was unqualified and promoted based upon social ties rather than someone who had social ties but still had the qualifications needed for the promotion of special assignment. These perceptions will be discussed further in the section for the “Understanding” of participants relative to particularism.

In ten of the thirteen descriptions relative to qualifications, participants described beneficiaries of particularism as being less qualified overall than others who were competing for the same promotion or special assignment received. These descriptions contained both the qualifications of the candidates who benefited from particularism and their ability to perform in their new role once they were appointed. While discussing the qualifications of the individuals who obtained their positions through particularism as compared to others seeking the assignment or promotion, Alpha said “And nothing sets them aside from anyone else. It's not like they were super active or did something great.” Sierra also discussed his experience with the comparison of qualifications between those who benefited from particularism and their competition.

It probably happened more than once that I'm aware of our agency was a civil service-based agency where you took a test for promotion, and it was a rule of three where they could bounce around with three names. There were several times that the number one guy was more qualified or had more years of service. And maybe the people picking that spot

this time were friends with him, or we called it the “Old Boys Club,” could have been more friendly with him or the person that got it, rather than the person that really deserved it (Sierra).

Participants also shared their experiences with those who received assignments or promotions as a result of particularism and how their qualifications effected their ability to perform in their new roles. India described those who did not have the benefit of particularism as “outsiders,” and elaborated on the experience of himself and other “outsiders” in the organization. “But in regards to the outsiders, it was terrible because you had people in charge of you or in positions that to make important decisions that weren't ready to have that leadership (India).” Similarly, Mike discussed the implications in his agency of having someone promoted to a supervisory position as a result of particularism while lacking the desired qualifications.

Essentially, what you had was a less experienced person put in a supervisory role that were either didn't have the proper education and didn't have the actual investigative experience in order to supervise subordinates. Often those individuals were ill equipped to make sound decisions and often had to resort to going to a higher-level rank in order to solve a problem or to make a decision which I would think would be a typical street level decision. They were just ill equipped to handle that (Mike).

Aside from participants’ descriptions about the lack of supervisory qualifications to include the lack of sound decision making, participants described the lack of qualifications of those benefiting from particularism to include characteristics of the individuals that were detrimental to the efficiency and reputation of the organization. Kilo provided a rich description of one such individual, who he experienced to not only have a lack of necessary qualifications but also had a lack of work ethic that effected the experience of others in the workplace.

There was a lot of cons. It showed favoritism. He wasn't well-prepared for the position. He shouldn't have been in a position. He didn't do anything in the position, didn't want to do anything in the position. Wasn't motivated, didn't have any drive, was not a team player, was not willing to help others. Literally, it was just about him. And I mean, and it was extremely obvious to the point where, you know, officers would come in and this detective at the time would literally just have his feet sitting up on a desk kicked back, cutting apples with a tactical knife. And did pretty much nothing (Kilo).

In addition to the lack of work ethic and qualifications for the position obtained in this description, another participant described experiences in his agency with “bad employees” benefiting from particularism and subsequently being investigated and charged by federal authorities.

So, one of them that I know of specifically, and this actually happened on more than one occasion in my organization, resulted in bad employees getting assignments, and both of those employees were actually what I titled criminal employees. And they were actually charged federally by the FBI for a number of crimes later on in their career (Oscar).

Though the descriptions of officer experiences with unqualified candidates benefiting from particularism made up the majority of the descriptions relative to the theme of Qualifications, experiences that showed the opposite side of this phenomenon existed as well. Three of the thirteen descriptions relative to qualifications discussing participants experiencing particularistic decision making in their agency where the beneficiary of the special assignment or promotion had qualifications making them a competitive candidate aside from their social ties. Two of these participants described their experiences of there being a mixture of qualified and unqualified officers who benefited from particularism in their organization.

Alpha: One or two people in there are actually decent, decent cops and they actually work. But there's a couple of other ones that did absolutely nothing. You know, their whole careers and they just because of their...the influence that they're connected to, you know, they've risen through the ranks in like two years are ready to get promoted again, etc.

Quebec: But on the other hand, you know, I didn't have any issues with it because if someone gets promoted over me and were qualified, I don't have an issue with that. You know, I'm not I'm not the best officer in the world. So, yeah, some people did get promoted because their connections with the brass. But with that being said. I'd say about half of them deserved it. Other half, I would say, didn't deserve it, and it turned out to be pretty poor supervisors.

The third participant who discussed a qualified candidate benefiting from particularism provided an account of one particular officer throughout his interview. Hotel described the positives and negatives of an officer who received both special assignments and then subsequent promotions as a result of particularistic decision making but shared that his experience with the officer was that he was, in fact, qualified for the positions.

I mean, he was good at his job. He did his job very well and he was he was supportive of the other officers. Again, we had to separate personal and professional feelings. So, he did his job well, which was, you know, he proved that he could do the job and he could do it well (Hotel).

Understanding of Particularism

Law enforcement officers understanding of the phenomenon of particularism was identified as a main theme in this study, and directly addresses research question two: How do

police officers describe their understanding of their agency as it relates to their agencies' decisions to promote police officers under the concept of particularism? While participants' experiences with particularism as discussed in the previous section were unique and indicative of the circumstances experienced within their own agencies, their understanding of the phenomenon was found to be more particularized and specific. Based upon the coding of themes specific to police officers' understanding of the phenomenon of particularism, the following sub-themes were identified: *(a) Pervasiveness, (b) Relationships (c) Morale, Motivation, and Demoralization, (d) It's Expected, (e) Negative Sentiment, (f) Sentiment of Understanding.*

Pervasiveness. The participants who shared their descriptions of the experiences of particularism in the workplace were asked the probing question “Do you believe that this type of assignment/promotion based upon social ties is unique to your organization, and can you please explain what observations you’ve made that contribute to your belief?” This question was designed to elicit responses specific to officer participants’ understanding of particularism to determine whether they understood the phenomenon to be pervasive or if they understood it to be unique to any organization or industry. There were no participants who responded that they believed particularism was a phenomenon unique to their organization. Some of the participants elaborated on this, commenting that particularism is present across most law enforcement organizations and others commenting that they understood it to exist in all organizations and industries in both the public and private sector.

Participants also asserted that particularism is a part of human nature, attributing it to social bonds and relationships people create. Bravo alluded to this, admitting that she has her own tendencies to favor employees but commenting that she was self-aware enough to not let favoritism affect her judgement.

But I do think that it is pervasive throughout any organization, whether or not people think it or not. We all we all have favorites. Even as a front-line supervisor, I have my favorites and then I have my not so favorites, and I kind of have to bring that into check sometimes and be like, OK, I need to, you know, I need to treat everybody fairly and give everybody a fair shot (Bravo).

Juliet and November also commented on particularism being a part of human behavior and being a pervasive phenomenon that exists throughout different organizations and industries.

Juliet: I don't think that law enforcement is unique. I think that the more I've been exposed to private industry, you see these types of special privileges and these types of warped systems exist in every industry. You know, those people that get certain privileges and there's people that are in the "in group" and people that are in the "out group". There's legacy hires. There's clearly a "in group, out group," you know, so I actually I used to think that we were unique and say, man, only in policing does this happen. But I think it's actually across the board. So, I just give I always give reference. I say look at politics, look at the education system. You know, look at this. It's the thing. It's not any different. It's human behavior that's more of what I've come to terms with.

November: I don't believe that this is unique to my organization, I think it's a very common thing in law enforcement. I suspect that it's probably very common in the private sector too, you know, that ultimately it's very hard for people and the society we live in to, you know, almost neglect their own instinctual bonds with people, you know, it's very common to surround yourself with people that are like minded or that people that you trust.

Relationships. Participants who had experiences with particularism described their understanding of the dynamics of the social relationships between the agency decision makers and the beneficiaries of particularism. The specifics of the relationships between the involved parties were unique to the participants' individual descriptions, however the shared theme is that the participant understood the relationships to have had a direct impact on the decisions to give promotions or special assignments to those who had social ties with the decision makers. Four participants specifically described these relationships using the words "in group" or "in crowd" versus an "out group" or "out crowd." Their descriptions revealed that their understanding of particularism was that those who were "in" were described as part of a social circle who received the benefits of particularism when it came to special assignments and promotions in the law enforcement organizations.

India: And you see that in a lot of agencies, there becomes a divide between the command staff and their subordinates. And it becomes, like I said in the very beginning and "in" and "out" crowd. And if you're not in that in crowd, beware. Because at any instance, you could be a target.

Poppa: You know, the cons were that people saw these in-groups and out-groups right away, and they knew that if they weren't in that, that click that they really weren't going to have a chance of getting whatever promotion or at least that was the that was thought behind it.

Other participants described the same understanding of the phenomenon without using the terms "in" versus "out," while similarly describing the dynamics of the relationships they understood to contribute to particularism being used in their organization. Gulf used the term "Good Old Boys Club" which was also used by Sierra to describe the "in" group or crowd.

Gulf: These people who got promoted because they were in the Good Old Boys' Club and they were friends with the right people who are in charge and they, you know, kissed ass to our director for lack of better terms, they were just, you know. They knew who to suck up to, and they knew who to align themselves with, and they knew, you know, they knew what they were doing politically and within the agency and outside the agency to get this type of momentum to propel their career forward. And they were solely focused on themselves.

In addition to these specific descriptions, three participants provided metaphorical descriptions to assist in interpreting their own understanding of the phenomenon and the relationships that contribute to particularistic decision making.

Sierra: Or I would say, take their high school experiences. You're in high school. Are you sitting at the cool kids table? If you're not the cool kids table, there's a strong likelihood you may not get a bump or you may not get that promotion.

Echo: It would be like, let's say you go to Wal-Mart and there's a line out the door and your friend Bob is the head cashier, and he waves you forward, and he says, "Don't worry about that line. You can come right to the front of the line." So that has an effect on everybody that's in the line.

Juliet: Why they are wrong is because it's a false perception of loyalty, you know, because somebody accepts your invitation to sit next to them at a luncheon or a steak and bake and you know, they're eating at the king's table per se.

Some participants described their understanding of the human nature dynamic described in the previous section relative to the pervasiveness of the phenomenon of particularism. Delta conveyed his understanding and acceptance by saying "So I always say that you always feel a

bias, you know, to people that you get along with, people that you work well with. I get that.”

Bravo also reiterated this understanding in her detailed description as follows:

And so, you have relationships with these people because you spend a great amount of time with them. And so, you create relationships and whether it's good or bad and favorites are not like it's hard for me to make an objective decision based upon, you know, well, if I'm going to if I'm going to promote somebody, I'm going to promote the guy that I get along with, not the guy that I don't get along with. Why would I promote the guy that I don't get along with? So, then I can fight with them even more?

Morale, Motivation, and Demoralization. Thirteen of the eighteen (72%) officer participants who described experiences with particularism in their agency also discussed their understanding of the phenomenon as being impactful to the morale of the organization as well as the motivation and/or demoralization of police personnel. Particularism having negative effects on morale was the most prevalent issue discussed, with the word morale being repeated 43 times in total throughout the transcripts of this group of participants who introduced this theme into their descriptions. None of the descriptions of morale indicated that particularism had a positive effect, with participants only describing an understanding of particularism negatively effecting morale. Though morale was the most used term for the understood effects of particularism, descriptions of declines in motivation and demoralization of personnel shared very similar context when described by participants. These participants also indicated that the declines in morale and motivation and an increase in demoralization were due to lack of incentives for officers who displayed proactivity, productivity, skill, and excellent work product while less-deserving employees were rewarded with assignments or promotions based upon practices associated with particularism.

November discussed this implication by stating “I would say that it definitely diminished morale overall because people saw what was happening, you know, whether people wanted the position or not, they knew that other people deserved it.” Making similar observations, Alpha described observing officers around him experience particularism and said of the effects that “You come in with high hopes and dreams. You see people's dreams get crushed and all their aspirations just go right down the drain.” Other officer participants described their own understanding of particularism relative to morale, motivation, and demoralization in the following quotes:

Foxtrot: I feel it is wrong because I believe, like I said, it affects the morale of other officers, you have other officers who may have worked harder or been more deserving, who were then passed over for a position who then...I think it sends a message to officers who have worked harder to like...why waste your time working harder?

India: But in regards to the individuals who should have been promoted it, it kind of takes their hunger away to do the job. And it kind of makes them bitter and angry towards the agency. And a lot of great officers turn into bad officers because they feel as though that, you know, they're going to they'll continue to be overlooked.

Mike: I want to work with people who are smart. I want to work with people who are hard workers. But there's always the slacker, the guy that always tries to skate, leave early, disappear during the middle of the day. When you see that person get promoted over someone who's a hard-working person, it's demoralizing. It's horrible. And you know, then it's because, oh, well, you know what? You know, no one will ever admit to it, but you know who he's friends with or who he hangs out with. And it becomes obvious, and it's happened on more than one occasion.

It's Expected. Most of the participants in this study alluded to particularism being an expected or even accepted practice in their law enforcement organization. Eight of the participants made statements that could be directly coded into this theme, citing their understanding that particularism is and should be expected by police officers as an experience they will encounter with respect to special assignments and promotions. Mike described this as both expected and foreseeable, saying "It's just it's one of those things where it's just, oh, here comes another one, we're just going to have to deal with it. We'll have to work around it." Juliet provided an eloquent explanation of this expectation of particularism and his own personal understanding of the phenomenon, stating:

As I've grown and I think that this happens with anybody, you mature emotionally and you understand that you know you're playing in a system that just it's not fair we would all agree with, you know, the whole "fair" word. It's not fair. But we shouldn't act surprised when we know the game that we're playing. So, shame on me for it. Like, I always look at it as you have a choice, right? If I know the system is skewed and then I, I knowingly partake in it, right, seeking that promotion, I can't really complain over outcomes of something I knew going in was going to be skewed. You have to do your best. You're only in control of yourself. You're not in control of the outcome. That's the way I look at it.

Participants provided a similar understanding of the promotional processes in their respective agencies. They described going into the processes as candidates for assignment or promotion both expecting and understanding that particularism would weigh heavily in the decision making and selection.

Alpha: Well, I knew the deal before I even interviewed for it. I knew what the deal was.

But you know, at the same time, you got to be in it for, you know, in it to win it. So, I said, you know what? I didn't expect anything. And for those reasons, I'm not disappointed I didn't get promoted from there because again, I recognize it for what it is.

Romeo: The way I would explain it to someone is, I kind of work in a system where the game is rigged. And you know the game is rigged, but yet it still happens. And I don't want to say it's not pushed, but it is definitely...I don't want to say encouraged, but it's acceptable. It's acceptable, and it's part of our culture.

Sierra: You kind of know it's coming. So our perspective....We knew it wasn't fair. We knew it wasn't fair. You would say to yourself, Man, I hope when I get ready to take this test, maybe this guy's not going to take it.

Sentiment. During the thematic analysis of the data collected in this study, it became evident that the sentiment and perspectives of police officer participants shaped their understanding of the phenomenon of particularism and how it is used and experienced in their organizations. While none of the participants had a particularly positive sentiment toward the practice of particularism, some expressed that they could understand its effectiveness in the organization by describing certain circumstances where they could understand the use of particularism. Generally, however, participants described a negative sentiment toward the use of particularism, especially when deserving officers were passed over for an assignment or promotion to the benefit of a candidate with social ties to key decision makers.

Negative Sentiment. Most participants described a negative sentiment as part of their understanding of particularism being used and experienced in their agencies, including both their own experiences and their observations of the experiences of others. This sentiment was described as more than merely an opinion or a perspective, but an understanding of how officers

experience the outcomes of particularism within their organization. Foxtrot explained his understanding of particularism as causing officers to have a negative sentiment toward the organization.

You really just see sometimes that decisions are made that they scratch your head, you don't know why they would have been made that way. You feel like you would have done it differently if you were in charge, which in and of itself in an agency, I think can become like a cancerous way of thinking. When you when you see things that are done wrong and you keep seeing them done wrong, you just...I think it really eats at you over time when you just know you lose faith that they're going to make the right decision and that you can trust them to support you if you find yourself in trouble or may need assistance something. I think overall it has a very negative effect on everybody's opinion towards the agency.

Hotel described his understanding of particularism as causing “resentment” throughout the agency, because one particular beneficiary of particularism was given a special assignment that led to future promotions before officers who were more senior and had more experience. Echo similarly used the word “disgusted” to describe the sentiment of officers after experiencing particularism, further explaining that it “undermines the whole organization” when someone scores low on a promotional examination and the decision makers try to promote them based upon particularism anyway. Delta described a similar understanding of the sentiment toward particularism, and was much blunter in his description, stating “You know, it pisses guys off. It really pisses guys off, you know, because we're not given the same opportunity as other people, just because you may not be as liked as somebody else.” India has worked for multiple different

law enforcement agencies, and he had a very similar description of the negative sentiment that he understands being caused by particularism. He said:

Well, most people in agencies are going to be angry about it, because in every agency you go to, there are always going to be people who should have been promoted sooner. And those are the individuals who kind of take it the worst.

Kilo described the use of particularism in his own understanding to be “wrong” and elaborated that if he put someone who was his friend into a certain position, they would need to have the skills necessary and he would also have much higher expectations of them. Kilo stated:

The fact that we're friends, that has nothing to do with it, in my opinion, matter of fact of your friend to me, like I actually expect you to work harder. I expect you to know more, to be motivated, to be driven like I am.

Kilo described throughout his interview that this was unfortunately not the case in his experiences and understanding of the phenomenon of particularism. His descriptions relative to his agency included a person being promoted due to social ties who lacked the leadership and technical skills for the job who purposely created problems throughout the agency. Kilo described the resulting sentiment from officers as “disenchanted and angry.”

Juliet also described negative sentiment from officers after experiencing particularism, describing some of them as taking on a “resignation mentality” while others displayed “cynicism” and “depression.” Juliet provided a description of his own personal understanding of particularism relative to negative sentiment toward police promotions, comparing it to the well-known law enforcement value of integrity. Juliet said:

You know, we look at entry level questions to become a police officer. They're all based upon integrity. And I always jokingly say, you know, why even bother asking those

questions? But then when we promote, we go against the integrity standard, that doesn't make sense.

Sentiment of Understanding. Eleven participants expressed they could understand the effectiveness of particularism in the organization by describing certain circumstances where they could tolerate its use and existence in their agency. These sentiments of understanding the phenomenon of particularism were not negative, but they were not necessarily positive either. Instead, they focused on instances where participants believed particularism in their agency was understandable and did not cause any negative effects within the organization. Participants Charlie and Gulf both described how the positions that were created to place a beneficiary of particularism in a better assignment or promotion also benefited the other personnel because these created positions allowed that individual to complete specialized tasks that the organization may have not otherwise been able to dedicate resources to.

Some participants who expressed some understanding and tolerance toward particularism discussed how a person who is promoted or assigned based upon particularism may also be qualified for the position. Oscar described this by saying “I mean, some of the selections were, although they were based on social ties or family ties, they were actually worthy of those assignments. So, you would also have to consider that also.” Quebec described a specific individual being promoted at least partially based upon particularism and his understanding of the promotion, stating “...he got promoted and I thought he deserved it. But he had some connections too, but I had no problem with it because he worked for it. He deserved it and he was qualified for it (Quebec).” This sentiment of understanding was also expressed by other participants as well whose quotes are as follows:

India: And in some cases, I will say this. A person will be promoted off of political or social ties will sometimes they still do deserve it. And they get a bad rap just because of those political and social ties. So, I've seen that happen as well.

Echo: You telling me, "Hey, I have if I have a friend who is really good at whatever it is and I think that they're qualified" and, you know, consideration is given to other people as well where they would be a good candidate for that position or a special assignment, then I wouldn't see a problem with that. But what I am against is just doling out positions or assignments just because you're somebody, you know, if you can be an asset somewhere or you can, you have some specialized skills in some area, then by all means, you know, like I said, round peg, round hole. It fits, it's easy to explain.

Sierra: So, there were some guys that got that were in the Good Old Boys Club that were younger officers. Maybe their family, their fathers had worked there, but they actually did a really good job, you know, within the community.

Participants also expressed their understanding of the dynamics of the social connection preferences leading to particularistic decisions being made. They described the societal relationships that would, in their understanding, create the need for particularism to exist within the agency. Poppa expressed such an understanding, saying "The pro would be that they actually, you know, there was some sort of unity. People work together because they did have those ties where they actually were able to get along with each other." Other participants described this understanding of the societal relationships from the beneficiaries' perspective as follows:

Juliet: So, I guess, you know, ironically, I look at it from both sides of the coin, I always have. And I understand, you know, the social part of it because as you rise up in rank and you get into a position of making those decisions, you want to surround yourself with

people that are socially parallel to you, naturally. You don't want opposites, you know, working with you. So, for that, I guess I can appreciate it.

November: Well, you know, if I'm looking out from the other person's perspective, you know, the pro would be that it, you know, they built a, you know, somewhat of someone that's going to be loyal. They've built loyalty into it. They've built trust, is that person because that person is not naive. They know that they were selected because of their relationships with their superior officers. So, they're going to go along with whatever the administrators say is what's best.

Navigation

The specific ways in which law enforcement officers navigate the phenomenon of particularism was identified as a main theme in this study, and directly addresses research question three: How do police officers describe their navigation of their agency as it relates to their agencies' decisions to promote police officers under the concept of particularism? This section will first introduce the findings relative to themes that described officers positive and negative responses to experiencing the phenomenon of particularism. To address these recurring themes, the codes of *Positive Responses* and *Negative Responses* were created. Sub-themes were found to exist within the descriptions of negative responses to navigating particularism, which included *Reduced Productivity* and *No Future Participation*. A third code was created and labeled as *Initially Negative then Rebound*, which addresses participants' descriptions of an initial negative navigation of particularism followed by a shift to a more positive navigation.

Three additional codes were produced based upon the descriptions of navigation of particularism by police officers. These codes were *Change by Administrators*, *Value Shift*, and *Police-Community Relations*. These codes address recurring themes outside of the descriptions

of the positive versus negative navigation of particularism that showed other ways officers navigated their experiences with the phenomenon.

Positive Responses. This theme includes those descriptions that contain positive ways officers describe the navigation of experiencing particularism in their respective agencies. The criteria used by the researcher to determine the positive nature of these descriptions is that the way they were described showed they were productive, contained a positive mindset and vision, and did not have the foreseeable potential to lead to self-destructive outcomes in the officers' professional lives. The main recurring theme within the positive responses code is that officer participants reported navigating particularism by continuing to do the best job they could as a law enforcement officer. Thirteen participants' interviews contained descriptions consistent with positive ways of navigating particularism.

Romeo captured the navigation of continuing to do the best job possible in his description of his role as a police commander, stating:

They pay me to do a job. I do my job very seriously, so I take it seriously and I try to give a good product. I work for the city, but I serve the people who I am in charge of, so I try to give them the best product I possibly can and do whatever I can, and I will come in every day.

November described a similar navigation of the phenomenon of particularism, describing navigating it by continuing to be consistent and hoping that it pays off later in his career.

So, I kind of have to, you know, tuck in and it's going to be true to yourself and stick with your, you know, stick with what you know. You know, if you're not the best at, you know, playing golf or fostering those relationships that at least at least be consistent in your work product and hopefully that pays off.

India also expressed a similar hope for the future based upon his navigation of continuing to work hard, saying:

I've always lived under the mindset that what's for you will be for you. You know. You just keep working hard and understand that that person that may be in charge at that time will not be in there forever.

Mike provided a description of his navigation of experiencing particularism throughout his career consistent with the recurring theme of continuing to do the best job possible and explained that this eventually paid dividends later in his career:

And I pretty much said to myself, I was going to put my head down, keep working hard like I always do. I didn't change anything the way I conducted myself. I always conducted myself in such a manner that I thought I was doing the right thing. Not everybody may agree, but that's what I always said to do. And you know, I let fate play out. Eventually, later in my career, towards the end of my career, I finally received another promotion, which was, you know, was which was very nice to happen. I felt I deserved it.

A noteworthy finding with respect to the navigation of particularism is that the thirteen participants who described positive navigations of particularism gave descriptions of their own navigation of particularism as being consistent with these positive responses and behaviors. Conversely, when it came to the descriptions of negative navigation of particularism, officers were more likely to describe observing other officers navigating the phenomenon in a negative way than they were to self-report negative navigation. This finding will further be addressed in the following section.

Negative Responses. Seventeen of the participants described their direct observations of police officers having negative responses to experiencing particularism within their organizations. As noted in the previous paragraph, these seventeen descriptions were based upon the participants' observations of how other officers navigated particularism, and participants tended to not self-report negative navigation behaviors or attitudes that they personally experienced. Nonetheless, the participants described their firsthand observations of the navigation of particularism by their police officer colleagues, which is relevant and material to the study at hand and provides direct findings that relate to research question three.

Participants in this study described observing police officers navigate particularism in a negative way emotionally which also had an effect on the internal organizational environment and how they interacted with other police officers. Hotel described officers throughout his agency navigating their experience with particularism, saying "...there was a lot of resentment and there's a lot of distrust. Both of the people who are in charge at the time and of the officer who got the promotion." He described that some employees still carry and display that resentment to the present day. India had a similar description of how officers in his agency navigated the experience of particularism and how these negative navigation behaviors effected the internal organizational environment.

So, in most cases, if not over 90 percent people take it the wrong way and that leads to a lot of backstabbing. That leads to a lot of bad talking about the individual, even if they've never even worked with that individual. They automatically believe that the individual is not deserving of it.

Other participants also described the effects that negative attitudes as a way police officers navigate particularism led to problems within the agency. Romeo similarly mentioned

that particularism led to officers navigating their experiences by “stabbing each other in the back,” and that particularism “turned people against each other.” Oscar said that officers “held grudges” as a result of particularism in their workplace. These descriptions were consistent with officers navigating their experience with particularism by allowing their negative emotions to affect their relationships and the internal organizational environment.

Participants also described negative emotional navigations that effected individual police officers on a personal level, also noting perceiving these effects on their mental health. Juliet described seeing different officers navigate particularism though “resignation mentality,” “cynicism,” or “depression.” Alpha directly discussed the different navigations he observed in his workplace as a response to particularism, also noting observations relative to officers’ mental health.

I've seen people borderline go out on stress leave. You could tell like someone who is normally like, you know, very happy, outgoing...their total, their mood completely just changes. They come into work every day mopey. They complain about the, you know, how they weren't selected and someone else was.

Reduced Productivity. Thirteen of the seventeen participants who described negative navigations of particularism specifically described officers navigating the phenomenon by purposefully reducing their productivity in the workplace. Twelve described their observations of others engaging in reduced productivity, while one participant self-reported that he participated in these behaviors himself. Charlie described seeing multiple officers in his agency reducing productivity. He described their reasoning in the following quote:

Other supervisors would have to work harder to get guys engaged because they didn't see a clear, merit-based path forward in their careers. They saw, if I'm here getting a

paycheck, I'm here getting a paycheck. The pay's OK. If I don't do anything they can't fire me for doing something wrong and getting the promotion then didn't really become worth it to them. This one guy said, "Why would I want to get promoted if I'm going to do a whole bunch of work and have no one give a shit about it?"

Charlie further described this in his interview as officers patrolling "with blinders on at times," meaning that they were potentially ignoring taking police action in instances where they normally would have. November also provided rationale for why officers navigate particularism by reduced productivity, saying:

You know, and then when you when you offer them something or provide a promise that their hard work will pay off and then pulled out from underneath them, yeah, there's going to be resentment. You become resentful and, you know, a lot of people probably kind of shut down. They slow down their productivity.

Delta offered a similar explanation of the navigation of particularism by reducing productivity, questioning if it is worth it to be productive in a system where particularism determines special assignments and promotions.

So, you're like, you know, why am I going to go out and hustle and try to make these arrests and, you know, get into cars and you know, write your quote unquote your tickets and everything that they want you to get at that point. It's just not worth it. Why even? And what incentive is there to work when there's, you know, when there's no trophy when the game's over? So, and then a lot of guys feel that way, they're like, you know what? They're like, "F it. I'm not putting in the effort because it doesn't matter what you do, it's just matter who you're buddies with."

Consistent with this description and explanation by Delta, other participants discussed a reduction in productivity by officers as a way of navigating a certain “message” that is sent by particularistic decision making.

Foxtrot: I think it sends a message that working hard doesn't reward you with anything, which then sends a message that maybe working hard isn't worthwhile. Maybe doing things such as writing a report as neatly as possible and as clearly as possible isn't going to matter. So, you now take shortcuts. You can write it quicker. You can put a little less effort into your work because at the end of the day, what is the benefit of doing it as perfectly as possible if you're not going to go anywhere?

Echo: When you have somebody that's kind of out on their own island and is unaffected by anything else that goes on because of their alliances, really drains everybody else to see that, you know. Well, it sends two messages. Either I'm just going to do the minimum or, you know, do the least to get by because it doesn't matter, somebody else is going to kind of lead the pack because of what they're doing.

Kilo described that he experienced senior officers navigating particularism within his agency as a young officer by both reducing their own productivity and peer-pressuring younger officers into reducing their productivity as well.

You have now you have disenchanted officers that, unfortunately for the agency as a result of this move were on the job for years that had influence on the younger guys, such as myself at the time that they're now at this, "We're not doing anything. And you better not do anything either. This is the position we're taking, don't do anything."

No Future Participation. Seven participants described observations of police officers in their respective agencies navigating their experiences with particularism specifically by declining

to participate in any future competitive processes for special assignments or promotions. Quebec described this by saying “Well, a lot of co-workers didn't take the test because they know that no matter how they did on it, the outcome was already decided.” He further described in his interview that his agency began having issues with a lack of officers interested in taking promotional examinations because officers knew particularism would be the ultimate determining factor on who was selected. Sierra noted that officers in his agency questioned the process in a similar fashion. “It makes guys say to themselves, ‘Why am I even going to take the exam?’ They know who's taking it. ‘Why would I even take this they're not going to promote me?’” Juliet indicated that officers who would have been great selections for the position made the conscious decision in his agency to not participate in future promotional processes as well.

Well, unfortunately, I've seen a few very, very highly qualified good officers, you know, accept and take on the resignation mentality. "Well, forget it. There's no future for me. That's why I hate these tests. That's why these processes," which is a shame, because I think they would have been good leaders.

Initially Negative then Rebound. Seven officer participants described the navigation of particularism as officers having the propensity to initially respond negatively to their experiences with the phenomenon, but later rebounding to a more positive response. Of these seven participants, four described themselves navigating instances of particularism in this specific manner, while three described observing others navigating particularism by initially responding negatively and later adopting a more positive approach. Bravo described members of her agency navigating particularism as such, initially navigating particularism through a “drop off in production.” She described the eventual rebound by saying “So yeah, there were just people that were disgruntled for maybe a month or two until they kind of like, you know, pulled their

bootstraps up, and they're like, alright, I've got to do my job.” Hotel described his own navigation with initially responding by reducing proactivity and then coming to the realization that he needed to focus on the long-term success in his career.

My initial reaction was I was very angry and pissed off. I remember I probably shut down workwise for a good number of weeks, if not months. And I realized I still had no 20 years ago, so I needed to make the best of it. So, I became...I did my job and I did it well. I exceeded my own expectations in terms of making arrests and the different type of arrests I made. And I kept working hard to recalibrate my own goals and to, you know, make the best of what I had in my career.

Juliet also shared his own experiences with a navigation that was initially negative and shifted to positive. His description was one that focused on emotions and mindset, which other participants also discussed in this recurring theme.

How did I react to that? Not well. But then when I finally started to say to myself, hey wait, I can't let these people win twice, right? They already won at the crooked games, but I can't let them win twice. So, how do I not let them win twice? I control my own destiny.

Change by Administrators. Participants Echo, Juliet, and Kilo all self-reported in the demographic questions of this study as being at the rank of administrator in their law enforcement organizations. As such, they have reached the highest levels of rank within their organization and are also involved with the decisions of which officers deserve special assignments and promotions. All three participants who reported being administrators described part of their navigation of particularism as allowing their own experiences with the phenomenon to lead to them implementing change within their agency that reduces and/or eliminates

particularism as a factor in these decisions. All three administrators' descriptions alluded to their negative experiences with and understanding of particularism causing them to enact change in their organization once they reached the administrative ranks.

Echo described the changes he and his administration have made to focus on the qualifications of the candidate:

I can confidently say, at least in my presence and the way I kind of carry myself, you know, one of the things that we always say is, you know, round peg, round hole. We try to match people with their skills to where they should be assigned.

Kilo similarly described his approach to assigning and promoting personnel as an administrator, implementing change because of his own experiences with particularism.

Listen, if I'm friends with you and I put you in a position, it's not because you're and I are friends. It's because you are best equipped for the position. The fact that we're friends, that has nothing to do with it, in my opinion, matter of fact of your friend to me, like I actually expect you to work harder. I expect you to know more, to be motivated, to be driven like I am. In that sense, it's almost problematic for that person if I'm friends with them because I expect a lot more from them. And I don't expect the same shenanigans if we want to call it that, the same rhetoric, the same processes that has plagued our profession.

Juliet weighed in on his views as an administrator, which differs from the "same old, same old" that he has experienced with respect to particularism in the past in law enforcement.

So, if you don't want it to be the same old, same old in terms of nepotism, I think we have to develop the metrics on how should we be picking these people. And for me, I think a blanket answer is very simple. It's just, you know, being observant as to who's affecting

behavior on other people as they're coming up. Who gives out directions? Who understands how to, you know, be good at the game themselves, right? Not the best player, because the best player doesn't necessarily make the best coach. Who's a good player, but most importantly, who makes other players around them better?

Value Shift. Five of the police officer participants described navigations of particularism by police officers that includes shifting their values in a way that would be more beneficial to themselves in terms of career progression and achieving coveted special assignments or promotions. Echo best described this as “If you can’t beat them, join them,” describing how certain officers shift their values to “kiss ass or, you know, do what I have to do to get the benefit, that somebody else is getting.” This and other similar descriptions show a shift in values of officers who embrace particularism and begin to try to develop social connections that will later benefit them and their career goals. November described this type of navigation as having to “play the game” due to a lack of “objective” ways to achieve special assignments or promotions.

You know, it's just, it's very tough because you almost want to change the kind of person you are. Or adjust your personality or your work, your work ethic. And re-evaluate your approach to these types of things, because, you know, there really is no objective pathway to do those positions. You have to kind of have to play the game.

Sierra also saw others navigating particularism in this way, and self-reported having partaken in a value shift to some extent as well, although he reiterated during his interview that he continued to work hard and be a productive employee at the same time.

What you sort of learn how to bob and weave through your agency. You sort of see the track record, how things are going, and I'm guilty of this as much as the next person.

Maybe you're more friendly to somebody you really don't like. You got to kind of like be in that boy's club a little bit and get close to certain people.

As Romeo described similar observations within his agency of officers shifting their values for their own benefit, he summarized this type of navigation of particularism by saying “I see less people being leaders, commanders and administrators and more people being politicians.”

Police-Community Relations. During the semi-structured interview questions relative to officers’ navigations of particularism, participants were asked about their observations of the police-community relationship and services provided to the community as a direct result of particularism in special assignments and promotions. Most participants reported that they did not see officers navigating particularism in a way that would negatively affect services provided to the community or the police-community relationship. Hotel summarized this consistent theme across interviews, stating:

I would say a lot of our officers are consummate professionals. They don't let the community really know about our internal squabbles. So, when it comes to the job that we do outside of our four walls of our headquarters, we don't let the internal struggles or the internal politics bleed over into our community.

Foxtrot also categorized the members of his agency as “professionals” who “keep a professional relationship” with the community. Delta reported that though officers may have been “disgruntled” they still “went out and they still did the job,” and India similarly stated “I mean, you still have a job to do.” Consistent with these navigation descriptions, Juliet said that:

Overall, even some miserable police officers, I still see them, you know, show up and get the job done, maybe not to the quality standard that somebody else would do. But I don't think that had too much of an impact.

It should be noted that Kilo described particularism in his agency by stating it “definitely affected the relationship with the community” in a negative way because “everything declined.” Foxtrot described the beneficiary of particularism being placed in his special assignment as being a “disservice” to the community because he did not take victim’s matters as seriously as someone else would have, but as noted in the previous paragraph he believed that overall, the officers maintained their professionalism while navigating experiences with particularism. Absent these negative descriptions of officers’ navigation of particularism, most participants felt that officers did not navigate particularism in a way that would negatively impact the police-community relationship or services provided to the community.

Unexpected Themes

In the overview of Chapter Four, it was introduced that eighteen of the twenty participants in this study responded to the semi-structured interview questions with experiences that were direct examples of particularism in their agencies as defined by this study. Two of the participants responded to the semi-structured interview questions with descriptions that did not meet the definition of particularism as stipulated in this dissertation, however the relativity of their experiences, understanding, and navigation of their unique set of circumstances can be relative to the totality of the phenomenon of particularism. This relation to particularism can be argued to be valid, as other participants who did directly address particularism included these themes in their descriptions during the semi-structured interviews. The two themes produced that were unexpected were *Protected Classes* and *Reverse Particularism*.

Protected Classes. This unexpected theme addresses the special assignment or promotions of officers who belong to a protected class. Examples of protected classes are race, color, religion, nationality, sex (including sexual orientation) or age. Participant Lima's responses to the semi-structured interview questions described an experience within his agency where a homosexual officer was promoted due to a superior officer saying an offensive slur resulted in that officer receiving a special assignment handed down by the same superior officer, for what appeared to other officers to be to avoid a complaint or lawsuit for his indiscretion. There were no social connections that existed before this special assignment that would have fit the definition of particularism, however Lima described how the superior officer gave the officer a special assignment and then brought him into his social circle in the workplace thereafter. Lima described the officer who received the special assignment as being a "good officer," but ultimately having less time and experience as other officers who may have qualified for the position. Part of Lima's understanding of this assignment was that the officer "checked off a box," which meant he was a member of a protected class. Two other participants alluded to their understanding of protected classes benefiting in special assignments and promotions to be related to particularism.

During her description of her experience with particularism, Bravo brought up her understanding of a special assignment in her agency where she felt race may have been a factor in the decision making. She stated:

It looked good to the rest of the world that we were giving a person of color (special assignment redacted) and that we're equitable and we're fair. And everybody at this department has that, you know, we're rainbows and unicorns to the outside world. But

inside the world, inside this department, the dynamics were really, really off. You know, people felt like it was unfair.

Romeo also brought up protected classes being hired and promoted by his agency as a matter of being “statistically driven.” He described the processes used in his agency as subjective and without clear guidance or definition on the qualifications for career progression. He alluded to one individual being promoted “because he was a minority” and that demographic statistics seem to be a priority over qualifications for positions.

Reverse Particularism. The term “Reverse Particularism” was created by the researcher for the purpose of coding this unexpected theme, where social connection preferences did not exist, but decisionmakers opted to not promote officers because they disliked those particular officers. According to Participant Tango’s semi-structured interview and descriptions therein, he did not experience particularism in his agency. Instead, he discussed how the persons who decided promotions in his former agency made decisions to not promote certain officers because of their dislike for them. He said that although a candidate had scored well on a particular promotional examination, the decision makers found “some loopholes to skip that person.” He summarized his understanding of this phenomenon as “It wasn't so much that they had social ties, it was just that they strongly disliked somebody and was just doing what they could to keep them from not getting promoted.”

Two other participants described their experience and understanding of what the researcher in this study will call “reverse particularism.” Echo describes having been assigned to the midnight shift and later received information from a reliable source that the chief at the time did not like him. Echo said:

So anyway, my friend that worked for him would tell me, "Yeah, he doesn't really care for you too much." And whatever, I worked midnights for a long time. I suspect that's what it was. You know, the saying goes, they don't want to look at you, they put you on midnights, which was fine by me.

India described his understanding of reverse particularism as it relates to the phenomenon of particularism and the potential for negative actions to be taken against someone who is disliked. He said "And it becomes, like I said in the very beginning and in and out crowd. And if you're not in that in crowd, beware. Because at any instance, you could be a target."

Member Checking

Transcripts from the semi-structured interviews were reviewed by the researcher to include comparison to the audio recordings to ensure accuracy. Member checking was then conducted by providing participants with a copy of the transcript for their review. To accomplish this, the researcher e-mailed the transcripts to the participant for their review. The participants were asked to review the transcript and respond via e-mail to indicate that they are a fair and accurate transcript of the semi-structured interview. Nineteen of the twenty participants responded to requests for member checking. Two of the nineteen requested minor revisions to be made to the transcript that did not affect the meaning of the conversation or any statements made. If the participant highlighted any discrepancies in the transcript, they were again reviewed by the researcher and compared to the audio recordings and the necessary revisions were then made. Participant input on accuracy of the transcripts were considered valuable to ensure the credibility of the results of this study. Once the participants validated that the transcripts were a true, fair, and accurate representation of their responses in the semi-structured interview, thematic analysis was conducted.

Peer Debriefing

The draft manuscript of Chapters One through Four of this dissertation were sent to the peer debriefers for review. The debriefers were asked to review the research questions and the themes developed in Chapter Four for feedback to ensure that this study and its findings are trustworthy and dependable. Chapters one through three were provided to the debriefers for context and methodology of the study through which they could critically evaluate the findings in Chapter Four. The feedback from the peer debriefers is discussed in the following paragraphs.

Thomas Shea, D.Sc.

Dr. Shea indicated that he believed that the dissertation was conceptually a great idea. He did highlight that the study lacked diverse demographics and that this should be addressed as a limitation of the study. Because of his feedback and the researcher agreeing, this was added to the limitations for this study as *Limitation Five*. Regarding the themes in Chapter Four, Dr. Shea said that it is his professional opinion that this study identified salient themes regarding a recurring issue in law enforcement. He said that as law enforcement professionals we know these findings are prevalent, but that the purpose of qualitative academic research is to validate what we know anecdotally with evidence-based research. Dr. Shea applauded the hard work of this dissertation in achieving that objective.

Ian Finnimore, Ed.D.

Dr. Finnimore indicated that he did not have any issues with the themes in Chapter Four of this dissertation, and he thought the data gathering method appeared to be appropriate. He highlighted the fact that the descriptions of officer participants in this study of other officers lacking of qualifications is based upon their own perceptions of their coworkers. Dr. Finnimore said that it would be interesting to identify the qualifications of those promoted due to perceived

particularism, but that this type of study would likely take years and law enforcement agencies may object to producing the data required to complete such a study. He further reiterated that without statistical data relative to the qualifications of promoted or assigned officers, this qualitative study only provides a contextual backing of the issue of particularism. Prior to the peer debriefing, this limitation had already been identified as “Limitation Four” in this study.

Dr. Finnimore expressed that he had a potential issue with the reliability of the responses from the three police administrators, especially in face-to-face interviews. He explained that while some police administrators could be honest and professional in the interviews, others may be less inclined to speak truthfully if they were promoted to their administrative positions due to particularism. They may also be less inclined to self-report that they promote or assign personnel based upon particularism. Dr. Finnimore raised this issue as a cautionary statement for a potential limitation of the study. He recommended that subsequent studies focus solely on police administrators and compare the data collected in that future study to the study at hand.

William Perkins, Ed.D.

Dr. Perkins commented that he could identify with the study through his extensive experience in a municipal police agency and, though he never had his career impacted positively or negatively by particularism, he had observed its existence and effects. He indicated that his observations were consistent with the literature review in that he saw both positive and negative effects of particularism. Dr. Perkins commented on the appropriateness of selecting a qualitative approach for this study and provided several implications for future research that he believes would be meaningful ways to move forward with researching this phenomenon in the future. He indicated that the topic is a real issue that creates unique challenges in the law enforcement profession, and that this study was effective in highlighting the existence of particularism and its

effects on both the culture and climate of law enforcement organizations. Dr. Perkins said that the themes that emerged presented significant implications for future research that would be a service to communities to conduct to better manage the problem of particularism.

Summary

This chapter discussed the thematic analysis of the data and subsequent findings of this study. The demographics of the participants have been introduced, and the extent to which the findings of this study addressed each of the three research questions has been presented. The identification of themes and sub-themes that addressed each research question were described in detail by thick description to include participant quotations from the semi-structured interviews. The major themes generated through thematic analysis directly addressed the three research questions of this study, and the primary (parent) codes in this study were 1) *Experiences with Particularism*, 2) *Understanding of Particularism*, and 3) *Navigation of Particularism*. Secondary (child) codes were identified based upon recurring themes within each one of these primary codes and were discussed in detail in this chapter as well.

To ensure the trustworthiness of this study specific to credibility and dependability, member checking and peer debriefing were conducted during the data collection and analysis. Two participants responded to member checking asking for revisions to their transcripts that dealt with grammar or diction, and these revisions did not change the meaning of their descriptions. One participant did not respond to member checking. The three peer debriefers raised no major issues with the themes in Chapter Four, but they reiterated the limitations of the study. The peer debriefers generally found the themes to be consistent with their experience in the law enforcement and criminal justice fields. Chapter Five discusses the implications and

conclusions of these findings with an emphasis on their relativity to the existing literature related to the topic of particularism and its associated practices.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Overview

The purpose of this qualitative, descriptive study was to have police officers describe how they experience, understand, and navigate within their agency as it relates to their decisions to assign and promote police personnel within the scope of particularism in New Jersey. Chapter Five presents a summary of the findings of this study, a discussion of these findings considering relevant literature, and the implications of the findings of this study for the law enforcement field. Chapter Five also discusses the delimitations and limitations of the research followed by the recommendations for future research on the topic of particularism in law enforcement.

Summary of Findings

This study sought to answer the following questions regarding the effects of particularism on police promotions and assignments:

- RQ1:** How do police officers describe their experiences with their agency as it relates to their agencies' decisions to promote police officers under the concept of particularism?
- RQ2:** How do police officers describe their understanding of their agency as it relates to their agencies' decisions to promote police officers under the concept of particularism?
- RQ3:** How do police officers describe their navigation of their agency as it relates to their agencies' decisions to promote police officers under the concept of particularism?

Research Question One

Relative to research question one (RQ 1), eighteen of twenty participants (90%) shared experiences with particularism that were consistent with the definition of the phenomenon adopted for this dissertation. Each participant had a unique story to tell about their experiences

where social ties were the deciding factor for special assignments or promotions in their organization. Within the descriptions of officer experiences with particularism, participants introduced the recurring theme that they and/or their coworkers experienced negative outcomes associated with their career progression. Their descriptions also produced the recurring theme that those officers who benefited from their social ties (particularism) with respect to assignments and promotions were often less qualified and less deserving than other candidates.

Research Question Two

Officers responded to semi-structured interview questions and described their understanding of particularism to address research question two (RQ 2). The phenomenon was found to be both a pervasive and expected part of law enforcement organizations, as officer participants described understanding and knowing particularism to exist within their respective organizations and other organizations and industries as well. They realized that certain social relationships contributed to the existence of this phenomenon but reported understanding that a common effect of its existence as causing declines in morale and motivation while increasing demoralization of officers. Most officer participants had a negative sentiment toward particularism based upon their own personal understanding of the phenomenon. Some explained situations where it could be understood or tolerated, mostly based upon when a qualified officer receives an assignment or promotion but also has social ties that factored into the decision.

Research Question Three

The findings relative to research question three (RQ 3) contain participant descriptions of how police officers navigate the phenomenon of particularism. When discussing their situation to self, most participants self-reported navigating their negative experiences with particularism by continuing to do the best job they can and dedicate themselves to the work that needs to be done

for the community by their law enforcement organization. Participants also described observing coworkers take a more negative approach to navigating particularism, engaging in negative attitudes and behaviors to include purposeful reductions in productivity and refusing to participate in future selection processes. Some descriptions indicated that some police officers initially responded with negative navigation and rebounded to a more positive approach. Those participants who were police administrators described how their negative experiences with particularism led them to effect positive change in the organization once they became administrators. Others embraced a “if you can’t beat them, join them” mentality where they abandoned their values and work ethic for more of a focus on building relationships so that they may benefit from particularism in the future. On a positive note, with respect to navigating particularism, the descriptions of police officer participants in this study indicated that most believed that they did not allow organizational unfairness and injustices to negatively affect their relationship with the community or the services provided to the public.

Discussion

This section discusses the study findings in relationship to the conceptual and empirical literature reviewed in Chapter Two. The discussions include how the study corroborates previous research as well as ways in which the findings of the study were contradictory to existing literature and research. The study had both predictable and surprising findings, and both are discussed throughout this section. This discussion also includes a comparison of how officers in this study described their experience, understanding, and navigation of the phenomenon of particularism relative to the literature introduced in Chapter Two. The following paragraphs discuss, in depth, the findings of the study as they relate to the reviewed literature.

Conceptual Literature

The foundation of the conceptual framework for this study was based upon the term “particularism” as it was introduced by Hudson et al. (2017). The definition of particularism included the reliance on social ties rather than merit-based evaluations of qualified candidates, and the researchers asserted that this practice exists in all cultures and organization types and is comprised of the practices of both nepotism and favoritism (Hudson et al., 2017). It was further noted in literature that the practices of nepotism and cronyism have existed throughout history and are not likely to ever cease to exist (Hudsen & Claasen, 2017). The understanding of police officer participants in this study of the pervasiveness phenomenon of particularism was unequivocally consistent with the existing literature on the topic. There were no participants who felt that particularism was unique to their organization, and some elaborated on this belief with comments based upon their understanding that particularism is present across most law enforcement organizations as well as among all organizations in both the public and private sectors. Some participants understood particularism to be a part of human nature as a product of social bonds and workplace relationships. Most of the participants alluded to particularism being an expected or even an accepted practice in their law enforcement organization.

In addition to the foundational definition of particularism to include literature on its pervasiveness, the conceptual framework of this study focused on the opposing viewpoints in academic literature relative to the topic of particularism and associated practices such as social connection preference, cronyism, nepotism, and favoritism. The literature guiding this conceptual framework included the debate between researchers and industrial-organizational psychologists who have reached opposing viewpoints on whether particularism and similar practices are beneficial or detrimental in the organizational context (Bagchi & Svejnar, 2015;

Biermeier-Hanson, 2015, Calvard & Rajpaul-Baptiste, 2015; Colarelli, 2015; Hudson et al., 2017; Hudson & Claasen, 2017; Jones & Stout, 2015; Marcou, 2020; Palmer & Fleig-Palmer, 2015; Pearce, 2015; Riggio & Saggi, 2015; Wated & Sanchez, 2015). The findings of this study were only partially consistent with the existing literature on the topic relevant to this conceptual framework. Research elicited descriptions from participants that described particularism from a mostly negative perspective. The participant descriptions did not include perspectives or understandings of particularism that were clearly positive in nature, but they did include descriptions of when participants understood particularism to be acceptable or tolerable in their organization. These participant descriptions of circumstances where particularism was acceptable or tolerable was consistent with the conceptual literature on particularism. The following sections discuss the findings of this study relative to the negative and positive views of particularism established in the conceptual framework of Chapter Two.

Sentiment of Understanding

Eleven participants in this study expressed that they could understand or at least tolerate the use of particularism in the organization by describing certain circumstances where this understanding or tolerance would be present. It remains noteworthy that though there was a sentiment of understanding expressed by participants that described the circumstances in which they could tolerate and understand the use of particularism, that the view and sentiment toward particularism was still overwhelmingly negative. Even those participants who expressed these sentiments of understanding provided descriptions of the negative perspectives and effects of particularism and its use in law enforcement organizations. While the existing literature showed both the positive and negative views of particularism, police officers in this study tended to see

particularism solely as a phenomenon that has negative implications for officers and their organizations.

Participants who described circumstances where particularism could be understandable highlighted that someone who is promoted or assigned based upon particularism may still also be qualified for the position they receive. Words such as “deserving,” “worthy,” and “qualified” were used in these participant descriptions. These circumstances as described by participants were consistent with some of the literature that took the viewpoint that particularism can work within the industrial-organizational setting. The literature in the conceptual framework of this study found that no damage is done when candidates who have social or familial ties are determined to be the best qualified for the position after all candidates are thoroughly screened in a way that is fair, objective, and transparent (Riggio & Saggi, 2015). When the organizational culture promotes transparency and merit-based evaluations in the selection processes, particularism and associated social connection preferences can work and maintain a perception of organizational justice among employees (Biermeier-Hanson, 2015). Biermeier-Hanson did warn, however, that when this type of culture is not maintained other employees may perceive there to be less organizational justice which will lead to lower job satisfaction and potential for counterproductive work behaviors. This proved to be a recurring theme in the data collected from research participants, and counterproductive work behaviors will be discussed in a later section.

When discussing their understanding of the phenomenon of particularism and how it can be understandable or tolerable in the law enforcement organization, participants also discussed the societal relationships that would, in their understanding, create the need for particularism to exist within the agency. Participants discussed how employees who had social connections could

work better together and get along better with each other in the workplace. They discussed that they could understand how administrators and managers would naturally want those socially aligned with them to be put into promotional or special assignment positions to promote loyalty and trust from those in positions of influence, especially where loyalty is a significant part of the police culture (Brough et al., 2016). The literature that supported particularism and social connection preference had very similar findings, nothing that family and friendship relationships tend to be rooted in altruism and cooperative efforts, which can have positive implications for the internal environment of the organization and the relationships built therein (Colarelli, 2015; Jones & Stout, 2015).

Negative Views of Particularism

In this study, it was found that participants mostly viewed particularism and associated practices in a negative way, describing experiences, understanding, and navigation of the phenomenon that were detrimental to police officers and their organizations. The literature on the negative views of particularism presented in Chapter 2 categorize particularism as a powerful yet negative practice that has undesirable consequences on organizations and individuals to include deviant and unhealthy workplace behaviors, unqualified beneficiaries of particularism in the workplace performing under standards and decreases in overall employee performance. More specifically, particularistic practices were found to negatively impact job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and perceptions of fairness, employee motivation, and trust within the organization (Yasmeen, 2019; Shaheen, 2019; Hudson & Claasen, 2017; Hudson et al., 2017; Calvard & Rajpaul-Baptiste, 2015; Pearce, 2015). The descriptions of police officer participants in this study were consistent with all these findings from previous literature on the negative views of particularism that researchers developed from exploration of other industries.

The prior literature cited in the previous paragraph was aligned with the descriptions from participants in this qualitative study. Participants described the beneficiaries of particularism as often being underqualified and subsequently underperforming in the role that they had been placed in due to particularism. They described purposeful productivity reduction by those officers who were disenchanted with and/or negatively affected by particularistic decision making. Participants discussed organizational declines in morale, increase in demoralization, and lack of motivation as products of particularism. These recurring themes were all consistent with the existing literature relative to the negative views of particularism in organizational settings. Because the experience, understanding, and navigation of police officers with respect to particularism was found by this study to be described from an overwhelmingly negative perspective, this discussion continues to be elaborated upon in more detail in the following paragraph specific to the empirical literature.

Empirical Literature

Officers' Experience with Particularism (Research Question One)

With this study uniquely examining the law enforcement field, consistencies between findings and literature address the unanswered question of how police officers experience particularism. Eighteen of the twenty participants in this study were able to describe specific experiences with particularism in their law enforcement organizations, each having a unique story to tell. Specific to assignments and promotions, officers described experiencing and observing the phenomenon of promotions and/or special assignments being made based upon social ties as opposed to merit-based decisions consistent with the definition of particularism that was adopted in the foundations of this study (Hudson et al., 2017). The high percentage (90%) of participants in this study who had specific experiences to describe with particularism highlights

the pervasiveness of particularism and social connection preferences in the organizational setting already known through academic literature as established in Chapter Two (Hudsen et al., 2017; Hudsen & Claasen, 2017).

Within the participants unique descriptions of their experiences of particularism, the recurring themes of *career progression* and *qualifications* were identified and were also consistent with the existing literature on the topic. Officer participants described how they experienced and observed particularism having negative effects on officers' career progression, noting that without social connections officers may not receive special assignments or promotions. Participants felt that beneficiaries of particularism would continue to have a competitive advantage in receiving future assignments and promotions because of their social ties. Consistent with these findings, the existing literature on particularism found that police officers generally perceive promotions and special assignments as being decided based upon social ties rather than evaluation factors based upon merit (Reynolds & Hicks, 2015; Reynolds et al., 2017). Additionally, and with respect to career progression, only 33% of officers in a previous study felt that if they did good work that it would be rewarded by their administration (Cordner, 2017). The literature and findings of this study align with respect to particularism having a negative effect on career progression of police officers who experience it as opposed to those who benefit directly from its existence.

Thirteen participants in this study also discussed their experiences with the qualifications of those who benefited from particularism by receiving special assignments and promotions. In ten of the thirteen descriptions relative to qualifications, participants described beneficiaries of particularism as being less qualified overall than others who were competing for the same promotion or special assignment received. These descriptions contained incidents of officers

with more experience and qualifications being passed over for assignment or promotion for someone with social connections, and these less experienced officers then were unable to make important decisions and take appropriate action once appointed to their new positions. These descriptions are consistent with administrators undermining of the concept of rewarding employees based upon performance (Pearce, 2015). Prior research also found that beneficiaries of particularism are often rewarded and excel easier in the organization than non-cronies, even when their performance, knowledge, and skills are lacking (Shaheen, 2019). This creates a problem in the organizations because it reduces the overall knowledge, abilities, and resources of the human capital component of the organization (Hudsen & Claasen, 2017). This study found that, consistent with the literature focusing on other industries, that officers who are more qualified for special assignments and promotions are often passed over by less qualified officers who have social connections to those influencing the assignment and promotion decisions.

Officers' Understanding of Particularism (Research Question Two)

As previously discussed in the section relative to the conceptual literature on this topic, police officer participants in this study described their understanding of particularism as a pervasive and expected part of the law enforcement organization. In a qualitative interview that focused on fairness in the police organization, Reynolds and Hicks (2015) found that 92% of interviewed officers described their agency as having some form of unfair practices, citing decision making based upon nepotism, cronyism, and favoritism among these unfair practices. Over half of the officers interviewed by Reynolds and Hicks indicated they believed social relationships matter more than job performance or qualifications when determining promotions and assignments. This is consistent with the descriptions of officer participants that point to particularism being expected in the law enforcement organization. Additional literature on the

topic corroborates the pervasiveness of particularism in all organizations and industries, even noting that it is not likely to ever be eradicated (Hudson et al., 2017; Hudson & Claasen, 2017; Bagchi & Svejnar, 2015). The consistencies between the existing literature on particularism and social connection preference and the findings of this study are not surprising, as both indicate that the phenomenon is pervasive in all organizations and that it is expected as a recurring phenomenon within law enforcement organizations.

Participants in this study described the dynamics of the social relationships between the agency decision makers and the beneficiaries of particularism. Some described this as an “in” group versus an “out” group, while others described it as the “good ol’ boys club” (Reynolds & Hicks, 2017). Regardless of how participants named the phenomenon, their descriptions met the definitions of particularism in the reviewed literature, whereby social ties (i.e. nepotism and favoritism) are relied upon over merit-based evaluations of qualified candidates (Hudson et al., 2017). Officer participants in this study discussed particularism by describing incidents of nepotism, favoritism, and cronyism. Most of the interviews focused on social connections that met the definition of favoritism and cronyism, but nepotism was still discussed by some applicants as shaping their understanding of particularism. There were no noteworthy differences between the specific social ties described, but it should be reiterated that most participants described particularism from a negative perspective.

Potentially the most noteworthy theme that emerged within the understanding of police officers of the phenomenon of particularism is the descriptions relevant to organizational morale and officers’ motivation and demoralization, as these descriptions contained information that demonstrated particularism being a significant detriment to officers and their organizations alike. The existing literature reviews in Chapter Two demonstrated that human resources practices

have an impact on employee job satisfaction, in that when employees perceive practices to be fair and there is opportunity for growth and professional development there are higher levels of job satisfaction (Lambert et al., 2017; Omar et al., 2017). Unfortunately, not all leaders in police agencies are equally inclined to use fair practices when dealing with subordinate officers (Wolfe et al., 2018). The findings of the study at hand portrayed particularism as an unfair practice, and the study contained descriptions from 72% of the participants on how particularism specifically causes organizational morale to decline, causes officers to have less motivation in the workplace, and causes officers to become demoralized with their jobs. The previous research on related topics is consistent with this finding as well, as it clearly shows the perception reported by most officers that promotions and assignments are based upon social ties rather than merit or performance, which has the potential to undermine performance-based rewards leading to increased distrust and decreased job satisfaction and commitment (Reynolds & Hicks, 2015; Reynolds et al., 2017; Pearce, 2015). The described decreases in morale and motivation and the tendency of officers to become demoralized as a result of particularism has the potential to create severely negative consequences for officers and organizations, which are discussed in the following section related to how officers describe how they navigate the phenomenon of particularism.

Officers' Navigation of Particularism (Research Question Three)

The review of existing literature portrayed a clear line between how employees respond to unfair practices in the organization. When employees feel they are treated fairly in the organization, their levels of job satisfaction, commitment to the organization, and motivation tend to be higher and they will seek to do a better job for the organization (Johnson & Lafrance, 2016; Demirtas & Akogan, 2015; Brunetto et al., 2017; Piotrowski, 2021; Tyler et al., 2015;

Lambert et al., 2017; Omar et al., 2017). Conversely, police officers and employees in other industries are said to navigate and respond to unfair practices by reducing their productivity, decreasing organizational commitment, increasing distrust, and engaging in counterproductive or deviant workplace behavior (Reynolds et al., 2017; Pearce, 2015; Shaheen, 2019; Shaheen et al., 2017). The navigation of particularism as described by police officer participants in this study showed both consistencies and inconsistencies with the existing literature on the topic. Because particularism was described in an overall negative light by participants, it might be assumed based upon the existing literature that all responses and navigation to experiencing the phenomenon would therefore be negative and counterproductive in nature. This was not the case in the study at hand, which has created opportunities for both interesting discussion and future research on the topic of particularism specific to law enforcement organizations. The following paragraphs discuss the consistencies and inconsistencies between this current study and the existing literature on the topic specific to how officers described navigating their experience with particularism in the workplace.

Officer participants in this study described both positive and negative ways that they have navigated particularism and have seen other officers navigate the phenomenon. Participants were more likely to self-report a positive navigation of their own negative experiences particularism and describe their observations of negative navigations by other officers. In fact, all thirteen of the officer participants who described their own navigation of particularism as opposed to their observations of others which tended to yield descriptions of negative ways that other officers navigated particularism. Within the self-reported positive navigation of particularism, officers described taking their job seriously and continuing to do the best job possible as a law enforcement officers, even if they had been negatively affected by particularism. Officers

described keeping a positive mindset, being consistent in work product, and doing what they believed was the right thing to do. These self-reported descriptions were contrary to and inconsistent with the literature on the topic as cited in the previous paragraph. When reviewing the literature, one may wrongly assume that officers who had negative experiences with particularism would then navigate the phenomenon by engaging in counterproductive and negative behaviors (Reynolds et al., 2017; Pearce, 2015; Shaheen, 2019; Shaheen et al., 2017). This inconsistency could be attributed to one of two things. First, participants may have been reluctant to self-report negative or counterproductive behavior, which would then be a limitation of the study, which will be discussed in the appropriate section. On the other hand, this could be attributed to the professional mindset of law enforcement and a recurring theme among these participants. This recurring theme was that there was still a job that needed to be done for the community, and that law enforcement officers as professionals realize this and continue to do the best job despite their negative perceptions of the internal organizational environment.

While the descriptions of positive navigation of particularism was surprising due to these findings being inconsistent with the literature, officer participants in this study also described the negative ways that police officers navigate their experience with particularism in ways that were extremely consistent with the relevant literature on the topic. Seventeen of the eighteen participants who clearly described experiences with particularism described how they have observed officers navigate particularism in ways that could be viewed as counterproductive and/or detrimental to individual officers and the organization. Participants described negative emotional and interpersonal responses such as resentment, distrust, backstabbing, and cynicism. These negative emotions and interpersonal responses should be expected given the existing literature, which points to these outcomes as being associated with unfair practices and, more

specifically, those related to social connection preference and particularism (Reynolds & Hicks, 2015; Reynolds et al., 2017; Pearce, 2015; Shaheen, 2019; Shaheen et al., 2017).

Participants also mentioned seeing officer's experience increased stress and depression in the wake of their experiences with particularism. Organizational stress has been linked to unfair organizational practices (El Sayed et al., 2019, Gershon et al., 2009; Shane, 2010; Pyle & Cangemi, 2019), and the findings of this study have clearly shown that officers perceive particularism to be an unfair practice that is pervasive within law enforcement organizations. Stress and depression are already mental health complications linked to the law enforcement profession and to organizational stress within law enforcement (Gershon et al., 2009, Janczura et al., 2016; Kivimaki et al., 2012), so the implications of this finding make it worthy of future research for the well-being of police officers. This is discussed further in the implications and future research sections of this dissertation.

In addition to negative emotional reactions as a way of navigating particularism, participants also described negative behaviors that officers engage in as a way of navigating their experiences with the phenomenon. The most discussed navigation method in this study by participants was a purposeful reduction in productivity by officers who have had negative experiences with particularism. Participants described particularism creating an environment where there is no incentive for officers to keep high levels of performance and productivity, thus justifying reducing their productivity to the minimum required of them by their supervisors. Reynolds et al. (2017) interviews of police officers that focused on fairness in police agencies found very similar ways that officers navigate general unfairness or injustice in their organization. When officers have experienced organizational injustices, they have self-reported to have purposely reduced their productivity at work to only meet minimum requirements to both

meet supervisors' expectations and protect themselves from further risk of negative outcomes caused by proactivity (Reynolds et al., 2017). Additionally, two separate studies have found that occupational stress placed on police officers has the potential to lead to decreases in police job performance (Shane, 2010; Nisar & Rasheed, 2020). The findings of this study combined with their applicability to the existing literature present a valid argument that both the injustices and organizational stress created by particularism contribute in a significant way to police officers purposely reducing their productivity and job performance, both because of lack of incentives (i.e., promotions and special assignments because of hard work) and for their own self-preservation.

Officers experiencing particularism in the law enforcement organization also were described by participants as having the potential to create change in how they operate within the organizational environment in the future. All three participants who self-reported being police administrators provided descriptions of how they implemented organizational change to focus on promoting and assigning qualified candidates based upon merit to replace the particularistic decision making that they experienced in the past within the organization. Having experienced the negative effects of particularism, these officer participants pushed forward until they found themselves in positions as key decision makers who were willing and able to change the organization for the better. Consistent with the literature on police promotions and assignments, these administrators understand that they are responsible for assigning officers to specific positions within their agency, and officers' perceptions of the procedural fairness of these assignments is of concern with respect to their organizational commitment (Johnson & Lafrance, 2016). Additionally, they also seem to understand that when employees feel they are treated fairly in the organization, their levels of job satisfaction, commitment to the organization, and

motivation tend to be higher and they will seek to do a better job for the organization (Johnson & Lafrance, 2016; Demirtas & Akogan, 2015; Brunetto et al., 2017; Piotrowski, 2021; Tyler et al., 2015; Lambert et al., 2017; Omar et al., 2017). This is an intriguing finding in the study at hand, in that current police administrators seem to be changing their organizations to reduce particularism because of their negative experiences in the past with encountering the phenomenon in the workplace.

Another change that officers were described by participants as making to navigate particularism, though more negative in context, is that they shift their values to embrace particularism in a “if you can’t beat them, join them” mindset. The President’s Task Force on 21st Century Policing noted that “organizational culture eats policy for lunch,” and that very well may resonate in these instances where officers choose this path. Part of that police culture that officers are already well versed with is creating family-type bonds rooted in loyalty and solidarity (Brough et al., 2016), so this may be the easy way for officers struggling with the navigation of particularism to gain the benefits of special assignments and promotions for themselves. By beginning to align themselves with other officers or influential persons (i.e., politicians or administrators) who they would not normally share social circles with, officers who choose this navigation abandon their current values and shift to embracing the fact that social ties may work better for them in getting ahead in the future than would merit-based factors. When considering the previous discussion relative to how particularism is understood to be both pervasive and expected by police officers in their organizations, then this shift in values would seem to be a viable option for those who cannot navigate the phenomenon in any other way.

Finally, it is important to discuss the findings of this study with respect to how, if at all, officers navigating particularism has any effect on the police-community relationship. When

reviewing the relevant literature, the extent to which fairness and procedural justice are present within a law enforcement organization is a direct reflection of the fairness and procedural justice that officers use when interacting with the public (Haas et al., 2015; Van Craen, 2016; Van Craen & Skogan, 2017; Lawson et al., 2021). When evaluating particularism through the lens of these empirical sources, one may assume that officers perceiving particularism as a negative phenomenon would lead to behaviors that were counterproductive to upholding the police-community relationship. Surprisingly, the study at hand found that most officers described their navigation of particularism as not negatively effecting the police-community relationship. Participants described knowing that a job still needed to be done and a service still needed to be provided to the community, and that officers are consummate professionals who do not let the internal organizational struggles impact their relationship with external stakeholders in the community. Though this is contrary to the aforementioned literature, it is consistent with Cordner's (2016) findings that within the police occupational culture, most officers (73%) support community policing as a means of positive policing, also indicating that they maintain positive views of the public and the potential for mutual trust with citizens. Though these findings were surprising, they are certainly indicative of a positive mindset and a commitment to service by law enforcement officers in New Jersey.

Implications

Conceptual Implications

The conceptual framework for this study was rooted in the positive versus negative perspectives and viewpoints on the practice of particularism in organizations. Scholars and industrial-organizational psychologists alike debate whether particularistic practices such as nepotism, cronyism, and favoritism are beneficial or detrimental to organizations (Jones & Stout

2015; Colarelli, 2015; Riggio & Saggi, 2015; Palmer & Fleir-Palmer, 2015; Biermeier-Hansen, 2015; Calvard & Rajpaul-Baptiste, 2015; Pearce 2015; Bagchi & Svejnar, 2015; Wated & Sanchez, 2015; Yasmeeen, 2019; Shaheen, 2019; Hudson & Claasen, 2017; Hudson et al., 2017). While there are positive and negative views across a wide variety of organizations and industries in the conceptual literature, this study has brought the implication forward that law enforcement is a unique industry with respect to the experiences, understanding, and navigation of the phenomenon of particularism. The law enforcement field is unique in that officer participants in this study described how they experienced particularism, understood the phenomenon, and navigated their experiences from a mostly negative perspective. The experiences described in this study had undertones consistent with organizational injustice. Officers understood particularism to cause negative outcomes for officers and agencies and they described navigation of the phenomenon to include counterproductive and deviant workplace behaviors. Unlike the existing literature general to particularism across multiple industries, there were no positive perspectives associated with particularism in this study that examined law enforcement specifically.

Implications from existing literature on police organizational justice were supported in the findings of this study as well. The perspective held by police officers that promotions and special assignments are typically decided based upon social ties rather than evaluation factors based upon merit (Reynolds & Hicks, 2015; Reynolds et al., 2017) was found to be alive in well in law enforcement organizations in the State of New Jersey in 2022. The recurring themes in the participant descriptions of this study that particularism and associated practices are both pervasive and expected in their respective law enforcement organizations raises some concern for the current state of organizational justice throughout modern police agencies. This further

confirms that, with respect to the conceptual literature on the topic of particularism, law enforcement is unique in that the presence of the phenomenon has generally negative implications regarding the outcomes associated with the phenomenon for police officers and their organizations.

Empirical Implications

This study has also generated implications for the law enforcement field based upon the empirical literature reviewed in Chapter Two, some of which were predictable and some of which were surprising. Potentially the most predictable finding that was consistent with the literature on organizational justice in policing was that particularism led to demoralization which then led to decreases in productivity and negative attitudes and behaviors in the workplace. Previous studies that examined organizational justice and fairness in policing laid the foundation for these predictable outcomes (Reynolds & Hicks, 2015; Reynolds et al., 2017; Pearce, 2015), and with officer participants in this study describing particularism as an unfair and negative practice these findings should then be no surprise. To this extent, this study has added to the academic literature in corroborating the findings relative to officer responses to unfairness while also introducing particularism as a specific unfair practice in the law enforcement field with negative implications and outcomes for the internal organizational environment.

To expand upon this outcome of the study, the descriptions relative to career progression for police officers and the implications of particularism also produced predictable findings. Recurring themes in the study highlighted blocked career progression and aspirations of otherwise qualified candidates for special assignments and promotions. This leads to once dedicated and motivated officers becoming disenfranchised with the organization and feeling that their hard work does not pay off. Some participants described reduction in productivity by

officer peers while others described officers refusing to participate in future selection processes for assignment or promotion. Determining the structure of any given organization based upon personal relationships can undermine the concept of rewarding employees based upon performance and has the potential to result in negative effects such as increased coworker distrust and decreased employee satisfaction and commitment (Pearce, 2015). This decline in motivation, productivity, and dedication to service has severely negative implications for the officers, agencies, and communities alike. When police leaders treat their officers with dignity, fairness, and respect, officers are more likely to show initiative and seek to do a good job, and they are more likely to be committed to organizational goals and building relationships with the community (Tyler et al., 2015). Particularism has been described by participants in a way that does not exemplify any of these needed elements of dignity, fairness, or respect and therefore it should not be surprising that officers knowingly and purposely reduce their commitment to the organization and productivity as a way of navigating particularism.

The qualifications of the beneficiaries of particularism are also a concerning implication in this study which is also found in existing literature. It has been found that beneficiaries of particularism are often less qualified and have less skills and job knowledge than other candidates, which can unfortunately reduce the overall knowledge, abilities, and resources of the human capital component of any given organization (Shaheen, 2019; Hudson & Claasen, 2017). Participants in this study provided descriptions that corroborated these findings, describing how those who benefited from particularism were incapable of making important decisions, lacked the qualifications or experience necessary to adequately perform their job, and were overall less qualified than other candidates who were passed over for assignments or promotions. As the relevant literature notes, this has the capability to reduce the quality of human capital and places

people in positions where their incompetence and unpreparedness for their new role has negative implications for the organization and its effectiveness in law enforcement. This also sends a message to police officers that qualifications and hard work may not be worthwhile. Participants described some officers responding to this message by embracing a “if you can’t beat them, join them” mentality whereby they abandon their values of hard work and dedication in exchange for building social relationships that will benefit them in future attempts to receive assignments or promotions based upon particularism. This may lead to less focus on policework and the duties and responsibilities of officers and more focus on building self-serving social relationships.

A pleasantly surprising finding in this study implies that, contrary to the existing literature, particularism has little, if any, negative effect on the police-community relationship and services provided to the community. Existing literature on police organizational justice found that the extent to which fairness and procedural justice are present within a law enforcement organization is a direct reflection of the fairness and procedural justice that officers use when interacting with the public (Haas et al., 2015; Van Craen, 2016; Van Craen & Skogan, 2017; Lawson et al., 2021). Though the conceptual framework implications proposed in the previous section are that particularism creates law enforcement organizational injustices, this study’s findings are contradictory to the existing literature on the police-community relationship. Multiple participants in this study described themselves and fellow officers as “professionals” who have a job to do regardless of how they feel about the internal organizational environment of their agency. They described still getting the job done and not letting the problems internal to the organization effect their relationship with the community and the services they provide to the community and external stakeholders. The implication of these findings is that law enforcement officers report that they still provide quality services to the community despite organizational

injustices. This recurring theme could potentially indicate that law enforcement is moving toward more of a professional response to navigating organizational injustices in 21st Century policing.

Practical Implications

The practical implications from this study focus on the metrics by which law enforcement administrators and other key decisionmakers base assignments and promotions of police personnel. The overwhelmingly negative experiences, understanding, and ways of navigating particularism as described by participants should be alarming to leaders in police organizations as well as leaders in the communities that they serve. Though police officer participants in this study offered certain situations where particularism was understood or tolerable, their perspective remained consistent. This perspective was that merit-based factors such as knowledge, skills, abilities, and qualifications should be the basis for special assignments and promotions. Consistent with existing literature, officers indicated that they desire fairness within their organizations to include consistency in administrative decisions such as promotions and assignments (Reynolds & Hicks, 2015). Because of this, it is strongly recommended that decisionmakers exercise transparency, fairness, and consistency when it comes to giving special assignments and promotions in law enforcement. Without these factors that ensure equity, the negative outcomes associated with particularism to include reduced productivity and poor attitudes and behaviors will continue to exist in law enforcement. Additionally, it has been described in this study that unqualified and often incompetent people have benefited from particularism and then been placed in positions where they cannot perform adequately or make the best decisions for the organization. Law enforcement administrators should consider learning from the three participants in this study who were administrators themselves, who saw the

negative effects of particularism and became positive change agents for their organization once they reached a high-ranking position.

The burden of the negatives associated with particularism cannot fall solely on the police administrator, however. Police officer participants in this study described particularism as being both pervasive and expected in their law enforcement organizations. They were not surprised when social-ties meant more than merit-based factors in determining promotions and special assignments. Some even described how officers decided not to participate in future competitive processes because of particularism. With officers clearly identifying particularism as a known phenomenon, it can be argued that they make a conscious decision to engage in negative attitudes and behaviors to navigate their experiences. One implication from these findings is that officers need to find more productive ways to manage their navigation of negative experiences with respect to organizational injustice. Recommendations could be focusing on health and wellness to include stress management and mental health counseling and/or maintaining a positive mindset and focusing on upholding the oath they took to provide unconditional service and protection to their respective communities.

Finally, this phenomenon is well known throughout other industries and organizations, but it's implications for the law enforcement organization are seemingly undocumented and unknown by those external to the law enforcement organization. Community leaders and members alike should be better informed on what is going on inside the law enforcement organization to include the selection processes for special assignments and promotions. This requires cooperation between law enforcement, the community, and academics to realize that particularism is a problem and to examine it more closely. The limited academic literature is certainly an issue with respect to this problem, and future research is warranted to paint a clearer

picture of the implications of particularism for law enforcement and the communities they serve. Recommendations for how to proceed with future research will be provided in a subsequent section.

Limitations and Delimitations

The limitations of this study are those factors that are potential weaknesses but are outside of the researcher's control (Glesne, 2016). The following limitations have been identified in this study:

Limitation One: One of the limitations is that the possibility exists that officers who have negative perceptions of particularism or concerns about its use in their organization would be more inclined to volunteer to participate to verbalize their grievances on the topic than those who have a neutral or positive view, which could potentially cause biased results. The officers who participate were, however, qualified to discuss their experiences, understanding, and navigation of particularism based upon their own perceptions while working as police officers.

Limitation Two: The COVID-19 pandemic has presented a unique limitation in both recruitment and participation in the semi-structured interviews. Police agencies have been at reduced staffing levels and restrictions on those who enter their buildings, which had the potential to limit recruitment efforts. Additionally, potential participants may have been reluctant to volunteer for the study, especially if they felt they must have in-person contact with others that may expose them to pathogens.

Limitation Three: Officers in this study were found to be more likely to self-report positive navigations of particularism but were willing to describe the negative ways other officers navigated their experiences with the phenomenon. This inconsistency could be attributed to one of two things. First, participants may have been reluctant to self-report negative or

counterproductive behavior, which would then be a limitation of the study. On the other hand, this could be attributed to the professional mindset of law enforcement officers and a recurring theme among these participants. This recurring theme was that there was still a job that needed to be done for the community, and that law enforcement officers as professionals realize this and continue to do the best job despite their negative perceptions of the internal organizational environment. This will be discussed in detail in Chapter Five.

Limitation Four: Descriptive studies cannot test or verify the research problem statistically, and therefore the results of this descriptive study may reflect a certain level of bias due to the absence of statistical tests. The majority of descriptive studies such as this are not able to be replicated due to the observational nature of the study.

Limitation Five: The demographics of the police officer participants in this study generally lacked diversity. Of the twenty participants, sixteen were white, three were Hispanic, and one was biracial (black/white). Because of this limitation, it is recommended that future studies on particularism attempt to examine the experiences of a more diverse sample of police officers.

Limitation Six: Finally, time and financial resources are limitations placed on this dissertation by its nature and connection to a doctoral program. The researcher had time guidelines for the completion of the PhD program and was limited to his own personal finances for expenditures related to the study. Because of this, it is recommended that more in-depth studies be conducted in the future on the topic of particularism in law enforcement that are guided by the findings of this dissertation.

The delimitations of the study are the research boundaries that the researcher sets relevant to study design and methodology (Glesne, 2016). The following delimitations have been identified in this study.

Delimitation One: This study includes a sample size that is relatively small compared to the total number of police officers nationwide. In the semi-structured interviews, 20 police officers participated and shared their experiences, understanding, and navigation of the phenomenon of particularism. There are over 680,000 police officers nationwide (FBI, 2018), therefore the size of this sample should not be interpreted as representing all police officers from every law enforcement agency nationwide.

Delimitation Two: Similarly, the geography of this study was limited to the State of New Jersey, which may have identified perceptions and explanations from a geographic subculture in the law enforcement community that may not exist nationwide. This study did, however, achieve saturation by identifying shared themes across perceptions regarding particularism that are present in the law enforcement field.

Delimitation Three: Finally, the study provided insight into the understanding of officers' perceptions on the topic of particularism, but the qualitative descriptive approach inherently may lead to low external validity of the study. Future studies on this topic should be performed to confirm the validity of these findings on a larger scale throughout the law enforcement profession.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study has created several areas where future research is recommended to advance the criminal justice field specific to the law enforcement profession. Because the phenomenon of particularism is still very much an unexplored topic in the academic field of criminal justice, a qualitative approach would be appropriate to continue to help us understand the nuances of the phenomenon before attempting to explore relationships and correlations quantitatively. One of the delimitations of this study was that the geography was restricted to the State of New Jersey

and officer participants were required to be recently retired or active police officers from a New Jersey agency to participate. During the recruitment process as outlined in Chapter Three, several law enforcement officers commented that they would participate and had experiences with particularism, but that they were from states outside of New Jersey. Therefore, the first recommendation would be to replicate this study on a national level to examine the extent to which the shared themes in this study specific to New Jersey law enforcement are applicable nationwide. This would also serve to further confirm the validity of the findings of this study on a larger scale.

One potential area for future research that the researcher noticed while conducting the semi-structured interviews in this study was also suggested by peer debriefer Dr. Perkins during his review of Chapter Four. Within the State of New Jersey, law enforcement agencies are either governed by a merit board system (Civil Service) or a non-merit board system (Title 40 aka “Chiefs’ Test”) with respect to police promotions. The Civil Service agencies have very specific parameters for selection of a candidate for promotion while Chief’s Test agencies can essentially create their own rules. With respect to methodology, Dr. Perkins recommended that a comparison study and emerging theory associated with homogeneous sampling between the merit board systems and non-merit board systems be used. The differences were suggested anecdotally by participants in this study but were not significant enough to generate recurring themes.

This study elicited the descriptions of police officer participants relative to how they experience, understand, and navigate the phenomenon of particularism. The police promotions and assignments discussed throughout this study are made by police administrators and officials who have authority over the law enforcement agency. It would be of interest to the study of the

phenomenon of particularism to focus research specifically on the experiences, understanding, and navigation of the phenomenon by police administrators with respect to the specific decisions they make to assign and promote police personnel. Though the three police administrators in this study shared the recurring theme of shifting their agency away from particularism because of their negative experience, the fact that officer participants still experience the phenomenon indicates that there are still administrators that assign and promote personnel based upon particularism. Focusing solely on the descriptions of police administrators who are making the decisions on which personnel to assign and promote would allow us to better understand a different perspective regarding particularism and may even include descriptions of justifications for why administrators use particularistic decision making.

Two noteworthy findings in this study created an area where specific focus on the phenomenon of particularism should be explored. The first finding is that officer participants generally feel that they maintain their professionalism and do not let their negative experiences with particularism impact the police-community relationship or services provided to the community by their agency. The second finding is that some officers have the propensity to purposely reduce their productivity to navigate their negative experiences with particularism. A fascinating area of research would be to explore the intersection between these two findings, as it would seem improbable that reductions in productivity would not affect police-community relations or services provided to the community at all. Further research should be conducted on how these purposeful counterproductive behaviors and attitudes by officers specifically impact the services they provide to the community and what elements of their roles and responsibilities fall by the wayside in the wake of their reduced productivity. It would also be interesting to gauge the public's awareness of the phenomenon of particularism and elicit the perspective of

stakeholders in the community with respect to the existence of particularism in law enforcement organizations.

Chapter Two explored the topic of organizational stress and the implications that it has for officer health and wellness as well as job performance. The literature reviewed indicated that organizational stress is the main source of police officers' stress and that it places more stress on officers than critical incidents experienced in the field (El Sayed et al., 2019, Gershon et al., 2009; Shane, 2010; Pyle & Cangemi, 2019). The literature review also revealed a noteworthy outcome of police stress as being serious physical and mental health implications which include Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), depression, anxiety, thoughts of suicide, and cardiovascular complications and diseases (Gershon et al., 2009, Janczura et al., 2016; Kivimaki et al., 2012). Participants in this study mentioned stress and depression as outcomes associated with particularism, but not to the extent where it produced a recurring theme specific to organizational stress and/or officers' health and wellness. Chapter Two does, however, link organizational stress and unfair practices in the law enforcement agency, which are consistent with the findings of this study. With such severe consequences being associated with organizational stress in law enforcement, it would be strongly recommended that future research examine the relationship between particularism and organizational stress as well as the outcomes of this stress on police officers. This future research could help serve police agencies and healthcare providers in bettering the mental health services provided to police officers.

Summary

The purpose of this qualitative descriptive study was to have police officers describe how they experience, understand, and navigate within their agency as it relates to their decisions to assign and promote police personnel within the scope of particularism in New Jersey. The

conceptual framework guiding this study was the debate between researchers, and industrial-organizational psychologists who have reached opposing viewpoints on whether particularism and similar practices are beneficial or detrimental in the organizational context. Judgmental sampling was used to recruit active and recently retired police officers from the State of New Jersey to participate in semi-structured interviews regarding their experiences, understanding, and navigation of the phenomenon of particularism within their police organizations.

This study found that officers generally will experience or at least observe particularism within their law enforcement organizations and can describe unique incidents where particularism was used to assign or promote police personnel. Officers were found to understand particularism through an overwhelmingly negative lens, which includes only a very narrow scope of when they can understand or tolerate its existence in their agency. There were no descriptions of positive perspectives or understanding of the phenomenon, but participants described particularism as a pervasive and expected part of the culture of law enforcement organizations. The implications of its existence included declines in morale and motivation, and a resounding negative sentiment was held toward the existence of particularism. Officers were found to navigate particularism by either focusing on continuing to do the best job possible for their community or resorting to negative behaviors such as purposeful reductions in productivity, withdrawing from any future participation in selection processes, or shifting their values to a “if you can’t beat them, join them” mindset. The negative perspectives, outcomes, and implications of the phenomenon within the law enforcement field make particularism certainly worthy of further exploration through both academic research and reevaluation of organizational policies and procedures.

Though decision making based upon preference to social ties and particularism will likely never cease to exist (Hudsen & Claasen, 2017), police administrators and police personnel alike can find better ways navigate particularism to mitigate the potential for negative outcomes and consequences to plague their organizations. Police administrators and decision makers must realize the effects that making promotions and assignments based upon particularism have on officers and organizations alike. Based upon the literature and current research in this study, this would include focusing on ensuring that transparency, fairness, and consistency are present in deciding special assignments and promotions in law enforcement. Likewise, police officers who are negatively affected by their experiences or observations of particularism should focus on finding healthy and productive outlets to help navigate particularism as well as other perceived injustices internal to their organization. Participants in this study described particularism as pervasive and expected, and therefore should not be surprised when it is used to make decisions relative to promotions and assignments. Rather than resorting to negative and potentially self-destructive attitudes and behaviors, officers should resort to focusing on their own resiliency, health, and wellness. Every rank of the police organization from administrator to entry-level officer can benefit from reviewing the findings of this study, understanding the implications of particularism, and have discussions on how to mitigate the effects of particularism and increase the overall perceptions of organizational justice in law enforcement organizations.

VITA

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APPENDIX A: Interview Guide (Pretest)

Researcher Introduction

Thank you for taking the time to volunteer to participate in this study. Over the next 45-60 minutes, we will discuss your experiences within your law enforcement organization specific to promotions and special assignments.

We will begin with a few demographic questions about you and your agency, and then I will ask you to describe some of your experiences within your law enforcement organization. Do you have any questions before we begin?

Demographic Questions

- 1) How long have you been (or were you) a law enforcement officer?
- 2) Demographics (What is your...)
 - a. Age?
 - i. 18-24
 - ii. 25-35
 - iii. 35-45
 - iv. 45+
 - b. Race?
 - i. White
 - ii. Black
 - iii. American Indian / Alaska Native
 - iv. Asian
 - v. Native Hawaiian / Pacific Islander
 - c. Ethnicity?
 - i. Hispanic or non-Hispanic
 - d. Gender?
 - i. Male
 - ii. Female
- 3) How would you describe your current rank (or the rank you retired at)?
 - a. Entry level (officer or detective)
 - b. Front line supervisor (corporal, sergeant)
 - c. Middle manager (lieutenant)

- d. Administrator (lieutenant, captain, deputy chief, chief/executive)
 - i. *Note: Some agencies in New Jersey consider the lieutenant position middle management while others consider it administration.*
- 4) How would you describe your jurisdiction?
- a. Urban
 - b. Suburban
 - c. Rural

Semi-Structured Interview Questions

- 1) Can you describe a time in your organization where a sworn officer was selected for promotion or special assignment based upon social ties as opposed to merit-based factors or qualifications?
- a. What were the pros and cons of this selection?
 - b. What outcomes did you and your coworkers experience because of the promotion/assignment decision that was made?
- 2) Imagine that you were describing this experience to someone, and they were unable to grasp or understand how the promotion or special assignment that you described was made based upon social ties rather than merit or objective qualifications. Based upon your personal understanding of the event, how would you explain or interpret it to them?
- a. Would you describe this type of promotion or assignment as being unique to your organization?
 - b. Do you feel that this type of promotion or assignment is right?
 - c. What was your perspective and the perspective of your coworkers regarding the promotion/assignment decision that was made?
- 3) How did you personally react to and move forward in your professional life after the promotion/assignment decision that was made?
- a. Were there any struggles or obstacles for you after the decision was made? If so, how did you overcome and/or respond to them?
 - b. Was there anything about the promotion or assignment that made your situation in the workplace better? If so, how did you respond to these positive changes?

- c. What observations, if any, did you make about how other officers reacted to and moved forward with their professional lives after the promotion/assignment decision that was made?
- d. What observations, if any, did you make about the internal organizational environment after the promotion/assignment decision that was made?
- e. What observations, if any, did you make about officers' relationship with, and services provided to community and external stakeholders as a direct result of the decision that was made?

Interview Questions & Research Questions (Pretest)

This research will seek to answer the following questions regarding the effects of particularism on police promotions and assignments:

RQ1: How do police officers describe their experiences with their agency as it relates to their agencies' decisions to promote police officers under the concept of particularism?

RQ2: How do police officers describe their understanding of their agency as it relates to their agencies' decisions to promote police officers under the concept of particularism?

RQ3: How do police officers describe their navigation of their agency as it relates to their agencies' decisions to promote police officers under the concept of particularism?

Research Question	Topic to be addressed.	Primary interview question	Probing question
RQ1: How do police officers describe their experiences with their agency as it relates to their agencies' decisions to promote police officers under the concept of particularism?	Officers' experiences with particularism	1) Can you describe a time in your organization where a sworn officer was selected for promotion or special assignment based upon social ties as opposed to merit-based factors or qualifications?	A) What were the pros and cons of this selection? B) What outcomes did you and your coworkers experience because of the promotion/assignment decision that was made?
RQ2: How do police officers describe their understanding of their agency as it relates to their agencies' decisions to promote police officers under the concept of particularism?	Officers' understanding of particularism	2) Imagine that you were describing this experience to someone, and they were unable to grasp or understand how the promotion or special assignment that you described was made based upon social ties rather than merit or objective	A) Would you describe this type of promotion or assignment as being unique to your organization? B) Do you feel that this type of promotion or assignment is right? C) What was your perspective and the

		qualifications. Based upon your personal understanding of the event, how would you explain or interpret it to them?	perspective of your coworkers regarding the promotion/assignment decision that was made?
RQ3: How do police officers describe their navigation of their agency as it relates to their agencies' decisions to promote police officers under the concept of particularism?	Officers' navigation of particularism	3) How did you personally react to and move forward in your professional life after the promotion/assignment decision that was made?	<p>A) Were there any struggles or obstacles for you after the decision was made? If so, how did you overcome and/or respond to them?</p> <p>B) Was there anything about the promotion or assignment that made your situation in the workplace better? If so, how did you respond to these positive changes?</p> <p>C) What observations, if any, did you make about how other officers reacted to and moved forward with their professional lives after the promotion/assignment decision that was made?</p> <p>D) What observations, if any, did you make about the internal organizational environment after the promotion/assignment decision that was made?</p> <p>E) What observations, if any, did you make about officers' relationship with, and services provided to community and external stakeholders as a direct result of the decision that was made?</p>

APPENDIX B: Interview Guide (Post Test)

Researcher Introduction

Thank you for taking the time to volunteer to participate in this study. Over the next 20-40 minutes, we will discuss your experiences within your law enforcement organization specific to promotions and special assignments.

We will begin with a few demographic questions about you and your agency, and then I will ask you to describe some of your experiences within your law enforcement organization. Do you have any questions before we begin?

Demographic Questions

- 1) How long have you been (or were you) a law enforcement officer?
- 2) Demographics (What is your...)
 - a. Age range?
 - i. 18-24
 - ii. 25-35
 - iii. 35-45
 - iv. 45+
 - b. Race?
 - i. White
 - ii. Black or African American
 - iii. American Indian / Alaska Native
 - iv. Asian
 - v. Native Hawaiian / Pacific Islander
 - c. Ethnicity?
 - i. Hispanic or non-Hispanic
 - d. Gender?
 - i. Male
 - ii. Female
- 3) How would you describe your current rank (or the rank you retired at)?
 - a. Entry-level (officer or detective)
 - b. Front-line supervisor (corporal, sergeant)
 - c. Middle manager (lieutenant)
 - d. Administrator (lieutenant, captain, deputy chief, chief/executive)

- i. *Note: Some agencies in New Jersey consider the lieutenant position middle management while others consider it administration.*

- 4) How would you describe your jurisdiction?
 - a. Urban
 - b. Suburban
 - c. Rural

Semi-Structured Interview Questions

- 1) Can you describe, in detail, any specific events within your organization where a sworn officer was selected for promotion or special assignment based upon social ties as opposed to merit-based factors or qualifications?
 - a. What were the pros and cons of the selection of that officer for assignment/promotion?
 - b. What outcomes did you and your coworkers experience because of that officer's assignment/promotion?

- 2) Imagine that you were describing your experience to someone, and they were unable to grasp or understand why the decision was made to assign or promote that officer. Based upon your personal understanding of the event, how would you explain or interpret it to them?
 - a. What was your perspective and the perspective of your coworkers regarding the promotion/assignment decision that was made?
 - b. Do you believe that this type of assignment/promotion based upon social ties is unique to your organization, and can you please explain what observations you've made that contribute to your belief?
 - c. Can you explain why you feel that this type of assignment/promotion is right or wrong?

- 3) How did you personally react to and move forward in your professional life after the promotion/assignment decision you described was made?
 - a. Were there any struggles or obstacles for you after the decision was made, and, if so, how did you overcome and/or respond to them?
 - b. Was there anything about the promotion or assignment that made your situation in the workplace better? If so, how did you respond to these positive changes?

- c. What observations, if any, did you make about how other officers reacted to and moved forward with their professional lives after the promotion/assignment decision that was made?
- d. What observations, if any, did you make about the internal organizational environment after the promotion/assignment decision that was made?
- e. What observations, if any, did you make about officers' relationships with and services provided to community and external stakeholders as a direct result of the decision that was made?

Interview Questions & Research Questions (Post Test)

This research will seek to answer the following questions regarding the effects of particularism on police promotions and assignments:

RQ1: How do police officers describe their experiences with their agency as it relates to their agencies' decisions to promote police officers under the concept of particularism?

RQ2: How do police officers describe their understanding of their agency as it relates to their agencies' decisions to promote police officers under the concept of particularism?

RQ3: How do police officers describe their navigation of their agency as it relates to their agencies' decisions to promote police officers under the concept of particularism?

Research Question	Topic to be addressed.	Primary interview question	Probing question
RQ1: How do police officers describe their experiences with their agency as it relates to their agencies' decisions to promote police officers under the concept of particularism?	Officers' experiences with particularism	1) Can you describe, in detail, any specific events within your organization where a sworn officer was selected for promotion or special assignment based upon social ties as opposed to merit-based factors or qualifications?	A) What were the pros and cons of the selection of that officer for assignment/promotion? B) What outcomes did you and your coworkers experience because of that officer's assignment/promotion?
RQ2: How do police officers describe their understanding of their agency as it relates to their agencies' decisions to promote police	Officers' understanding of particularism	2) Imagine that you were describing your experience to someone, and they were unable to grasp or understand why the decision was	A) What was your perspective and the perspective of your coworkers regarding the promotion/assignment decision that was made? B) Do you believe that this type of assignment/promotion based

officers under the concept of particularism?		made to assign or promote that officer. Based upon your personal understanding of the event, how would you explain or interpret it to them?	upon social ties is unique to your organization, and can you please explain what observations you've made that contribute to your belief? C) Can you explain why you feel that this type of assignment/promotion is right or wrong?
RQ3: How do police officers describe their navigation of their agency as it relates to their agencies' decisions to promote police officers under the concept of particularism?	Officers' navigation of particularism	3) How did you personally react to and move forward in your professional life after the promotion/assignment decision you described was made?	A) Were there any struggles or obstacles for you after the decision was made and, if so, how did you overcome and/or respond to them? B) Was there anything about the promotion or assignment that made your situation in the workplace better? If so, how did you respond to these positive changes? C) What observations, if any, did you make about how other officers reacted to and moved forward with their professional lives after the promotion/assignment decision that was made? D) What observations, if any, did you make about the internal organizational environment after the promotion/assignment decision that was made? E) What observations, if any, did you make about officers' relationship with, and services provided to community and external stakeholders as a direct result of the decision that was made?

APPENDIX C: Social Media Recruitment Posts

Primary Sampling Method

ATTENTION STREET COP TRAINING GROUP MEMBERS: I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Doctor of Philosophy in Criminal Justice at Liberty University. The purpose of my research is to better understand how police officers experience, understand, and navigate the phenomenon of particularism as it relates to promotions and special assignments. Particularism is decision-making based upon social connection preferences such as nepotism, favoritism, and cronyism.

I need volunteers to participate in my study for the completion of my dissertation. To participate, you must be an active or recently retired (within the last 5 years) sworn law enforcement officer from a New Jersey-based law enforcement organization. Participants will be interviewed (20-40 minutes) virtually via Zoom. The interview will be audio or audio and video recorded. Participants will also be asked to review the transcripts from their interviews to ensure they have been transcribed accurately and are a fair and accurate representation of their conversation with the researcher. ****Participants' identities and data collected (interview transcripts) will remain confidential****

If you meet the study criteria and would like to participate, please send me a direct message for more information. A consent document will be e-mailed to you upon receipt of your direct message, and you will need to sign and return it via e-mail prior to your scheduled interview.

APPENDIX D: Consent Form

Title of the Project: Police Promotions and Assignments: Understanding Law Enforcement Officers' Experiences with Particularism

Principal Investigator: John L. Glasser III, Doctoral Candidate, Liberty University

Invitation to be Part of a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study. To participate, you must be an active or recently retired (within the last 5 years) sworn law enforcement officer from a New Jersey-based law enforcement organization. You will be required to show proof of active or recently retired law enforcement status. Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this research.

What is the study about and why is it being done?

The purpose of this study is to have police officers describe how they experience, understand, and navigate within their agency as it relates to their decisions to assign and promote police personnel within the scope of particularism in New Jersey.

What will happen if you take part in this study?

If you agree to be in this study, I will ask you to do the following things:

1. Participate in an audio or audio and video recorded interview via Zoom. You as the participant will have the sole discretion to participate in this interview with Zoom audio and video or audio-only recording based upon your level of comfort. The interviews are estimated to take 20-40 minutes.
2. After your interview is transcribed by the researcher, you will be e-mailed a copy of the transcription. You will be asked to review the transcription and respond via e-mail to the researcher indicating whether the transcript is a fair and accurate representation of your responses to the interview questions. Any discrepancies or inaccurate transcription should be brought to the researcher's attention by you, and the necessary changes will be made by the researcher. Review of the transcripts is estimated to take 5-10 minutes.

How could you or others benefit from this study?

Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study.

Benefits to society include a better understanding by the law enforcement community regarding how police officers experience, understand, and navigate the phenomenon of particularism as it is used in police assignments and promotions. This understanding could lead to more informed decision-making by police administrations regarding which personnel decisions to make for special assignments and promotions.

What risks might you experience from being in this study?

The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life. These risks include the potential for you to experience negative emotions associated with recalling your lived experiences within your organization.

How will personal information be protected?

The records of this study will be kept private. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records. This includes the audio and/or video recordings and transcripts of your interview. No information that will identify you or your agency/organization will be included in any documentation in this study, nor will there be any way for your organization to learn of your participation in this study or responses to the interview questions.

- Participant responses will be kept confidential through the use of pseudonyms.
- Interviews will be conducted via Zoom, where others will not easily overhear the conversation.
- Data will be stored on a password-locked computer inside a physically locked office and may be used in future presentations. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted.
- Interviews will be recorded and transcribed. Recordings will be stored on a password-locked computer for three years and then erased. Only the researcher will have access to these recordings.

Does the researcher have any conflicts of interest?

The researcher serves as a detective sergeant (supervisor) at the Brigantine Police Department located in Atlantic County, New Jersey. To limit potential or perceived conflicts, the researcher will not allow participants from the Brigantine Police Department or any participants with whom he is professionally affiliated. This disclosure is made so that you can decide if this relationship will affect your willingness to participate in this study. No action will be taken against an individual based on his or her decision to participate or not participate in this study.

Is study participation voluntary?

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

What should you do if you decide to withdraw from the study?

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address/phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study.

Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?

The researcher conducting this study is John L. Glasser III. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact him at [REDACTED] or [REDACTED]. You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, Dr. Vincent Giordano, at [REDACTED]

Whom do you contact if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at [REDACTED]

Disclaimer: The Institutional Review Board (IRB) is tasked with ensuring that human subjects research will be conducted in an ethical manner as defined and required by federal regulations. The topics covered and viewpoints expressed or alluded to by student and faculty researchers are those of the researchers and do not necessarily reflect the official policies or positions of Liberty University.

Your Consent

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The researcher will keep a copy with the study records. If you have any questions about the study after you sign this document, you can contact the researcher using the information provided above.

I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

- The researcher has my permission to audio record me as part of my participation in this study.
- The researcher has my permission to audio and video record me as part of my participation in this study.

Printed Subject Name

Signature & Date

APPENDIX E: Codebook

Research Question One (RQ 1)			
Parent Code	Child Code	Description	Example
Experiences with Particularism		The description of the incident(s) that are indicative of a participant having experienced particularism. This will include both positive and negative outcomes experienced.	
Experiences with Particularism	Particularism (General)	Descriptions of officer experiences of a variety of particularistic decisions made within their organizations	But it doesn't matter. It doesn't matter how crappy your report is as long as you're friends with the right people. That's all that matters.
Experiences with Particularism	Career Progression	Descriptions of officer experiences with particularism that discuss outcomes related to hindered or assisted career progression	A lot of guys are upset. A lot of guys could see the path laid out before him, and it would be much easier for him to get promoted than everyone else.
Experiences with Particularism	Qualifications	Descriptions of the qualifications and competencies of those who have benefited from particularism	Early on in my career, I can say that there were people that were in places that they really didn't belong and it was not a secret. People knew it.
Research Question Two (RQ 2)			
Parent Code	Child Code	Description	Example
Understanding of Particularism		How officers describe their understanding of particularism to include their perspectives of the phenomenon and why it exists.	
Understanding of Particularism	Morale, Motivation, and Demoralization	Descriptions from officers about their understanding of particularism's effects on organizational morale as well as the motivation/demoralization of personnel.	You see people's dreams get crushed and all their aspirations just go right down the drain.

Understanding of Particularism	Pervasiveness	Descriptions of participants' understanding of particularism as a widespread or pervasive phenomenon as opposed to being unique to any one organization	I believe it is not unique, I think it's pretty standard. I don't even think it's unique to law enforcement. I think that, you know, the old adage is, you know, it's about who you know.
Understanding of Particularism	Negative Sentiment	Participants' descriptions of negative sentiment or perspectives toward particularism	You know, it pisses guys off. It really pisses guys off, you know, because we're not given the same opportunity as other people, just because you may not be as liked as somebody else.
Understanding of Particularism	Sentiment of Understanding	Participants' descriptions of being understanding of why particularistic decision making can be effective.	And in some cases, I will say this. A person will be promoted off of political or social ties will sometimes they still do deserve it.
Understanding of Particularism	It's Expected	Participants' understanding that particularism is expected as part of the law enforcement organizational decision making	Again, once you once you see the process for what it is, you accept it. You know, you can't get upset if you accept that what it is.
Understanding of Particularism	Relationships	Participants' descriptions of their understanding of the dynamics of the relationships that lead to particularistic decision making	Or I would say, take their high school experiences, you're in high school. Are you sitting at the cool kids table? If you're not the cool kids table, there's a strong likelihood you may not get a bump or you may not get that promotion.
Research Question Three (RQ 3)			
Parent Code	Child Code	Description	Example
Navigation of Particularism		Descriptions of how police officers navigate the outcomes associated with their experience with particularism. This will include how they react to, respond to, and move	

		forward after experiencing particularism	
Navigation of Particularism	Negative Responses	Descriptions of how officers negatively respond to and navigate their experiences with particularism.	Some guys couldn't get over it. Some guys still have resentment.
Navigation of Particularism	Negative Responses: No Future Participation	Descriptions of police officers deciding to not participate in future selection processes because of their experiences with particularism.	Well, a lot of co-workers didn't take the test because they know that no matter how they did on it, the outcome was already decided.
Navigation of Particularism	Negative Responses: Reduced Productivity	Descriptions of police officers navigating particularism by making the decision to reduce their productivity in the workplace.	They just they come in and they go through the motions. They don't answer calls. If you submit reports, they just blanketly approve them. They don't care because or because that's how they feel the organization has treated them.
Navigation of Particularism	Positive Responses	Participants' discussions about navigating particularism by making the best out of a negative situation and/or seeing the positive	I personally just continue to work on the things that were within my control. I have my own interest in this field, the all my own areas that are important to me.
Navigation of Particularism	Initially Negative then Rebound	Participants' descriptions of navigating particularism by initially responding negatively and then rebounding to a more positive response	How did I react to that? Not well. But then when I finally started to say to myself, Hey, wait, I, you know, I can't let these people win twice, right? They already won at the crooked games, but I can't let them win twice. So, how do I not let them win twice? I control my own destiny.
Navigation of Particularism	Value Shift	Participants' descriptions of police officers	You know, it's just it's very tough because you almost

		navigating particularism by shifting their values in an attempt to benefit themselves	want to change the kind of person you are. Or adjust your personality or your work, your work ethic. And re-evaluate your approach to these types of things, because, you know, there's there really is no objective pathway to do those positions, you have to kind of have to play the game.
Navigation of Particularism	Change by Administrators	Participants' descriptions of police administrators effecting organizational change because of their personal experiences with and observations of particularism	So, you know, internally, we've also made some positive changes that have eliminated some of those the favoritism from the past.
Navigation of Particularism	Police-Community Relationship	Participants' descriptions relative to how officer navigation of particularism related to the police-community relationship or services provided to the community	I would say a lot of our officers are consummate professionals. They don't let the community really know about our internal squabbles. So when it comes to the job that we do outside of our four walls of our headquarters, we don't let the internal struggles or the internal politics bleed over into our community.
Unexpected Codes			
Parent Code	Child Code	Description	Example
Unexpected Codes		Codes that were not expected to arise during the semi-structured interviews. These codes are loosely related to particularism but do not meet the definition of particularism as stipulated in this study.	
Unexpected Codes	Protected Classes	The descriptions of favorable promotions or assignments of persons	It's really sad to say that I feel I feel like that officer at the time got it because

		from protected classes as opposed to merit-based decisions.	she was a certain race. She was a certain color. It looked good to the rest of the world that we were giving a person of color a dog and that we're equitable and we're fair.
Unexpected Codes	Reverse Particularism	The descriptions of officers where personnel were prohibited from being promoted or receiving special assignments because they were disliked by decisionmakers.	It wasn't so much that they had social ties, it was just that they strongly disliked somebody and was just doing what they could to keep them from not getting promoted.

APPENDIX F: IRB Approval

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

April 21, 2022

John Glasser
Vincent Giordano

Re: IRB Exemption - IRB-FY21-22-880 Police Promotions and Assignments: Understanding Law Enforcement Officers' Experiences with Particularism

Dear John Glasser, Vincent Giordano,

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed your application in accordance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations and finds your study to be exempt from further IRB review. This means you may begin your research with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your approved application, and no further IRB oversight is required.

Your study falls under the following exemption category, which identifies specific situations in which human participants research is exempt from the policy set forth in 45 CFR 46:104(d):

Category 2.(iii). Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording) if at least one of the following criteria is met:

The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects can readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects, and an IRB conducts a limited IRB review to make the determination required by §46.111(a)(7).

Your stamped consent form(s) and final versions of your study documents can be found under the Attachments tab within the Submission Details section of your study on Cayuse IRB. Your stamped consent form(s) should be copied and used to gain the consent of your research participants. If you plan to provide your consent information electronically, the contents of the attached consent document(s) should be made available without alteration.

Please note that this exemption only applies to your current research application, and any modifications to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty University IRB for verification of continued exemption status. You may report these changes by completing a modification submission through your Cayuse IRB account.

If you have any questions about this exemption or need assistance in determining whether possible modifications to your protocol would change your exemption status, please email us at irb@liberty.edu.

Sincerely,

G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP

Administrative Chair of Institutional Research

Research Ethics Office