Improving Police Legitimacy: Assessment of Police-Community Relations and Training Needs of Law Enforcement in Kentucky

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Abstract

The national discourse on police-community relations suggests public trust in law enforcement, particularly from the perspectives of minorities, has continued to decline in recent years. La Vigne, Fontaine, and Dwivedi (2017) describe this trust as "tenuous at best" (p. 1). However, distrust of law enforcement among African-Americans is not a new phenomenon given the violence they have experienced from the police since the founding of this country. From slave patrols in the early eighteenth century to the modern police force of the twenty-first century, racially-biased policing has persisted. As a consequence, it has created a "legitimacy crises" (Nix, 2017, para American policing) through diminished public trust in law enforcement among minorities, especially in African-American communities. The literature suggests more training is required for law enforcement personnel to be more efficient, effective, and responsive to individuals in the communities they take an oath to serve and protect. The purpose of this survey study was to assess the climate of police-community relations and training needs of Kentucky Law Enforcement Agencies (KLEAs) to improve perceptions of legitimacy. The survey was administered to a random sample (N = 72) of agency administrators among KLEAs. Of the respondents (n = 25) who returned the survey, results indicated that from the perspectives of KLEA administrators, continuous training is needed in specific areas, notably, pertaining to race issues. Through continuous training across a spectrum of topics meaningful to law enforcement and the community, such as use of force, race relations, situational encounters, racial profiling, and ethics, police-community relations can be strengthened and perceptions of legitimacy held of law enforcement by the community strengthened.

Keywords: law enforcement, policing, police-community relations, training, legitimacy

Introduction

There can be no doubting that experiences of minorities with law enforcement, particularly for African-Americans, differ significantly from those experiences of Caucasians. Throughout American history African-Americans have been subjected to disparate treatment by law enforcement. For example, during the slavery era, slave patrols--an early form of policing--controlled the behaviors of slaves often by brutal means (Hansen, 2019). During the Jim Crow era following the Civil War, Black Codes were enforced by the police, and "Blacks who broke the laws or violated social norms often endured police brutality" (Hassett-Walker, 2019, para For about). While the civil rights movement ended Jim Crow laws, the violence experienced by African-Americans from law enforcement persisted. Siff (2016) noted, "Perhaps the most troubling unattained goal of the civil rights movement is ending police brutality and use of deadly force" (para Perhaps the most).

In recent years, all-too-familiar incidents reported in the media involving negative encounters between law enforcement and minorities, especially young, black males, highlight the African-American experience with law enforcement.

Individuals such as Michael Brown, Philando Castile, Terence Crutcher, Freddie Gray, and Jordan Edwards, among many others, are synonymous with all that is wrong with policing today. These incidents and experiences have created a division between law enforcement and many African-American communities and, thus, affected trust in the police and perceptions of police legitimacy (Lewis, Wilks, Geiger, Barthelemy, & Livermore, 2017). Such negative encounters involving law enforcement have largely shaped the national discourse on the criminal justice system in the 21st century--especially pertaining to race issues--and the need to repair the "broken" criminal justice system (Hackett, 2018; Neily, 2019; Trine, 2012). In response, during former President Obama's administration the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing was implemented and charged to respond to the "rifts in the relationships between local police and the communities they protect and serve" (President's Task Force Final Report, 2015, p. 7). As stated in the Report, "distrust…exists between too many police departments and too many communities—the sense that in a country where our basic principle is equality under the law, too many individuals, particularly young people of color, do not feel as if they are being treated fairly" (p. 7). As noted by Jackson (2015), there are "profound fractures in trust between some police departments and the communities they are charged with protecting" (p. 1). These fractures can only begin to close when all people, regardless of demographic, can trust and support law enforcement; only then will the legitimacy of law enforcement be established.

Hinds (2008) notes, "Public satisfaction with police is an important area of research as it is linked to people's confidence in and support for police, which is significant to people's willingness to report crime and suspicious events, obey police decisions and rules and comply with the law more generally" (p. 54, citing Tyler, 1990). Thus, confidence and support of law enforcement by the community inextricably relate to police legitimacy. A number of studies have investigated the perceptions of police legitimacy based on factors such as race and class (see, for example, Henry & Franklin, 2019; Kochel, 2019; Madon, Murphy, & Sargeant, 2015, Nuño, 2018). However, fewer studies have examined policy legitimacy in the context of officer education and training requirements (e.g., Thompson and Payne, 2019). More research is needed to examine specific education and training needs of officers in the areas that contribute to trust and support and, thus, police legitimacy.

Literature Review

Decades ago, Johnson and Gregory (1971) noted, "We have heard thousands of complaints…we have witnessed this brutality in person, in photographs, or on television screens…The problems are shocking, depressing, staggering and most of all, they press for immediate solution" (p. 94). In the years that have followed, countless studies have been undertaken to examine law enforcement issues. In fact, billions are spent annually by the federal government and private foundations to research criminal justice issues. For example, Meagher (2015) reports that between 1962 and 2014, the Office of Justice Programs (a bureau of the Department of Justice) spent 130.1 billion dollars to study crime and policing. According to Grant (2017), while the majority of criminal justice research is publicly-funded, support from private organizations to fund basic science research including in criminal justice reached 2.3 billion in 2016. The author states, "Private finders are starting to support big projects, and they're rewriting the playbook on fueling scientific research" Grant, para Private funders). The MacArthur Foundation, for example, reports investments in criminal justice research totaling 184.2 million dollars since 2013 (MacArthur Foundation, 2019).

Law Enforcement, Race, and Trust

A number of studies have examined law enforcement and race. LeCount (2017) researched the extent that racial attitudes of white police officers might be involved in the use of deadly force against minorities. More specifically, the author considered whether police officers have "a racial worldview that sets them apart from other citizens" (p. 1052) and, thus, contributes to racial bias and disparate outcomes for minorities. LeCount concluded the "unique racial conservatism of white police plays a role in shaping conflict, abuse of power, and disparate treatment of citizens of color" (p. 1065); therefore, understandably, minorities have greater distrust of the police.

In a study conducted by Chama (2019), the author analyzed reports found in two tabloid newspapers on the Black Lives Matter movement, crime, and police brutality. While differences were noted in the reporting between the two sources, the author stated while "the tabloid newspapers are notorious for stereotyping crime as a disproportionately African American problem…It influences anyone who comes into contact with the screaming headlines and often provocative images, including law enforcement agencies" (p. 214).

Lewis, Wilks, Geiger, Barthelemy, and Livermore (2017) examined differences between African-American and Caucasian college students' attitudes toward the police in a southern state familiar to police violence and racial tensions. The authors found African-American college students were more likely than Caucasians to possess negative attitudes toward the police. Specifically, African-American students agreed that police tend to use excessive force, they are likely to brutalize or kill minorities, and they need more training on cultural competence. Lewis et al., noted, "Negative attitudes toward police among communities of color may represent a symptom of a much larger issues of racial bias present in policing structure and policies" (p. 218). Further, "A critical component of improving relations between the community and police must lie in changing the public perception of the police" (p. 218).

Other studies have examined perceptions of trust and legitimacy of law enforcement held by other minority groups. Messing, Becerra, Ward-Lasher, and Androff (2015) studied perceptions of procedural fairness of the U.S. criminal justice system held by Latinas. The authors reported trust in law enforcement was more important than fear of deportation in their willingness to report crime victimization. "The lack of trust and negative perceptions of civic institutions held by the Latino community is detrimental and leas to a strained relationship between members of this Latino community and law enforcement…lack of trust diminishes the capacity of law enforcement to fulfill its public safety mandate" (Becerra, Wagaman, Androff, Messing, & Castillo, n.d., para The results). Similarly, in a study by Armenta and Rosales (2019), the authors concluded undocumented Mexican immigrants "express a great deal of ambivalence about American police [which] mirrors the tension between inclusion and exclusion that characterizes immigrant life in the United States" (p. 1350).

Issues of trust and legitimacy are not unique to the American minority experience. For example, in research conducted by Van Craen and Skogan (2015), the authors examined factors that influence trust in the police among different ethnic minority groups in Europe. Like minorities in the U.S., the authors explained the "experiences and perceptions of discrimination" (p. 306) by minorities in European countries "signal to the minority group members that they are not considered equal members of society" (p. 306). The consequence is these individuals are skeptical of those who discriminate and "of the authorities governing and shaping society" (p. 306) rules. The authors stated,

> Like the perception of discrimination by the police, the experience of being frequently discriminated against outside the context of policing fosters distrust in the police, we suppose by generating a generalized distrust in the majority group and its institutions, and by giving those who are injured the feeling that the police, together with core institutions of the government system, make too little effort or fail to limit discrimination in society. (p. 319).

Similarly, Crehan and Goodman-Delahunty found evidence of a "diminished sense of the legitimacy of the police service" (p. 58) in New South Wales; Madon, Murphy and Sargeant (2017) observed reduced perceptions of police legitimacy in Australia; and Ellison, Pino, and Shirlow (2012) found in Northern Ireland that perceptions of the police and confidence factors vary spatially, but "confidence in the police is governed by nebulous concerns about disorder, instability, and cohesion…[and] perceptions of the police are often influenced by poor police-public communication" (pp. 570-571).

To address issues of trust and legitimacy surrounding law enforcement, the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities (HCNM, 2006) in Europe proposed recommendations to improve and strengthen relationships within minority communities. The HCNM noted,

> Good policing in multi-ethnic societies is dependent on the establishment of a relationship of trust and confidence, built on regular communication and practical cooperation, between the police and the minorities. All parties benefit from such a relationship. The minorities benefit from policing which is more sensitive to their concerns and more responsive to their requirements for personal protection and access to justice. The police benefit from greater effectiveness, since good communication and cooperation are keys to effective policing in any community. The state benefits   both from the integration of minorities and from the greater effectiveness of its policing.   (pp. 3-4).

The author emphasized the need for agency policies that promote professionalism and service, and which observe human rights for all people; education of the general public on the role of law enforcement in promoting positive inter-ethnic relations; support from political and police leadership publicly concerning their support of this role; and cooperation from political leaders, police leadership, and minorities in monitoring such polices.

Additionally, HCNM (2006) identified several key areas for improvement: 1) recruitment and representation of minorities; 2) training and professional development; 3) engagement in ethnic communities; 4) operational practices; and 5) prevention and management of conflict. The author concluded,

> Police should always bear in mind that their actions are not separate from or 'outside' the dynamics of inter-ethnic relations: they are an integral part of an ongoing social and political process in a democratic State. As the agency of the state responsible for managing overt conflict internally, their actions may - at least in the short or medium term - have a crucial effect on the development of inter-ethnic relations and the future of the state generally. For these reasons their ability to maintain the confidence of all ethnic groups whilst managing conflicts and restoring public order is of fundamental importance. If they act in, or are perceived to act in, an ethnically partisan manner against minorities whilst carrying out this role, in the eyes of minorities their legitimacy for acting as representatives of the state will be destroyed. (p. 41).

Law Enforcement and Training

To effectively address police legitimacy, it is important to assess education and training requirements for law enforcement officials. Hurt (2014) acknowledged, "Of all the available weapons that law enforcement officials have at their disposal, one of the most important and frequently used is the training they receive" (para Of all). Further, "The better trained officers are, the more responsive and effective they will be in protecting the communities they are sworn to serve" (para In sum). Indeed, "training is central to the success of law enforcement responses, enabling officers to develop an understanding of issues and systems and hone skills to resolve challenging problems (Marglis & Shtull, 2012).

In a study conducted by Loftus and Price (2016), the authors examined attitudinal attributes of professionalism among officers who possessed and did not possess a college degree. Although some differences were noted based on education level, the authors determined those differences were not statistically significant. The findings indicated officers in the study, regardless of education level, demonstrated moderate to high attitudinal levels of professionalism.

McCandless (2018) examined social equity and how law enforcement agencies improve access, processes, quality, and outcomes to public services. The author noted social equity is especially important in policing as "crises manifest in police-community relations in that minorities often experience inequitable experiences with police, whether being stopped, searched, and arrested in greater proportions or being killed while unarmed" (p. 370). Investigating how strategies of police agencies that foster accountability for social equity affect citizen perceptions, the author determined those agencies had more positive perceptions when engaged with citizens in shaping policy and practice, when using social equity performance measurements (e.g., examining the agency's procedural fairness), and when requiring more academy and in-service trainings. As stated by McCandless, "What happens in a police-citizen interaction is a microcosm of discourses on the meaning of fairness, particularly whether agencies admit issues, which is the beginning of social equity accountability" (p. 382).

In a study conducted by Henry and Franklin (2019) the authors examined police legitimacy in the context of residents' general perceptions of the police and related to traffic stops. Findings indicated perceptions of legitimacy are significantly influenced by officers' behavior and respect toward individuals, particularly among African-American, Latino and economically disadvantaged study participants. The authors stated, "Our findings call for an increased emphasis on police training to ensure that officers provide citizens with an experience characterized by neutrality in decision making, respect/dignity, trustworthiness, and the ability to express oneself" (p. 412).

Procedural Justice and Police Legitimacy

Law enforcement legitimacy has been examined in context of the procedural justice theory. By focusing on the "causal links posited by the theory between perceptions of the justness of police practices, citizen perceptions of police legitimacy, and legal compliance" (Hagan & Hans, 2017, p. 2), the theory is useful for understanding and improving police-community relations. The theory of procedural justice holds that the legitimacy of individuals in positions of authority (e.g., law enforcement) is determined by the perceptions of the fairness of processes followed by those individuals in their decision-making. In other words, the community is concerned with how they are treated more than the outcome of the encounter (Bennett, Hine, & Mazerolle, 2018).   As noted by Tyler (2001), "The key issue is how people interpret experiences, that is, their view about the reason for the injustices they experience or observe" (p. 14366).

Methodology

Sampling

A probability sample using the systematic random sampling method was drawn from a list of Kentucky law enforcement agencies (KLEAs). Of the KLEAs surveyed (N = 72), the response rate was 35 percent (n = 25). The returned surveys included a cross-representation of KLEAs, with 12 percent (n = 16) from urban areas (50,000 or more residents), 64 percent (n = 5) from urban clusters (2,500 to 49,999 residents), 20 percent (n = 3) from rural areas (2,500 or fewer residents), and four percent not reported (n = 1). Kentucky is characterized as a rural state with most KLEAs classified as such. All (100%, n = 25) of the KLEAs sampled were identified as local (versus federal, state, or special jurisdiction) agencies. The respondents' administrative ranks included Chief (n = 7, 28%); Assistant Chief (n = 2, 8%); Sheriff (n = 6, 24%); Colonel (n = 3, 12%); Lieutenant Colonel (n = 1, 4%); Captain (n = 3, 12%); Lieutenant (n = 1, 4%); Sergeant (n = 1, 4%); and not reported (n = 1, 4%). The mean age was 47.2 years. Ninety-six percent (96%, n = 24) of respondents were male, and four percent (n = 1) were female. Eighty-eight percent (88%, n = 22) of respondents were Caucasian, and 12 percent (n = 3) were African-American. Forty-four percent (44%, n = 11) of the respondents possessed a college degree.

Design and Procedure

The Kentucky State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved this survey study. The survey was developed and mailed to a random sample of KLEAs. Included with the survey was a preamble letter that explained the purpose of the study and a self-addressed, stamped envelope for return of the survey; return of the survey was acknowledgement of informed consent. The instrument contained demographic questions, Likert-type questions, and open-ended questions. Guided by the literature, KLEA administrators were surveyed to 1.) Assess the climate of police-community relations, and 2.) Determine the training needs of KLEAs to improve perceptions of legitimacy. The internal consistency reliability of the instrument was excellent (α = .95), and the instrument appeared to have face validity.

Results

SPSS software was used to analyze the quantitative data. Descriptive and nonparametric tests (due to small sample size) were performed. For the qualitative data, themes emerging from responses to the open-ended questions on the survey were analyzed.

Quantitative Data

Respondents reported a number of issues confronting their departments. Chiefly, drug crimes (68%) and race relations (24%) within their communities were the primary concerns. Among Caucasian respondents, 16 percent (n = 4) identified race relations as a primary concern compared to eight percent (n = 2) among African-American respondents. Based on rank, 24 percent (n = 6) of the respondents who identified race as the primary concern were heads of their agencies, either Chief, Assistant Chief, or Sheriff. Concerns about race relations were comparable across KLEA locations whether urban, urban cluster, or rural (33.3% respectively). A majority of respondents (68%, n = 17) who reported race relations as a primary concern were administrators with extensive years of experience in law enforcement and experience within their current agencies. As seen in Table 1, 72 percent (n = 18) of respondents reported officers received academy training on race relations, and 24 percent (n = 6) did not know if officers received this training. Sixty percent (60%, n = 15) of respondents reported officers receive routine in-service training on race relations, and 28 percent (n = 7) did not know. However, 64 percent (n = 16) of respondents reported officers are not adequately trained and prepared for situations involving individuals of a different race.

Respondents were surveyed about training on use of force. As seen in Table 1, while 100 percent (n = 25) of respondents reported officers received academy training on use of force, only 72 percent (n = 18) reported officers receive routine in-service training on use of force. Twenty percent (20%, n = 5) of respondents reported as a consequence officers are not adequately trained and prepared for situations involving use of force.

Respondents were also surveyed about training on routine police encounters. As seen in Table 1, while 88 percent (n = 22) of respondents reported officers received academy training on routine encounters, only 56 percent (n = 14) reported officers receive regular in-service training on routine encounters. Thirty-six percent (36%, n = 9) of respondents reported as a consequence officers are not adequately trained and prepared for routine encounters, although 20 percent (n = 5) reported they did not know if officers are adequately trained and prepared.

Table 1. *Frequency and Percentage of Respondents Reporting Training for Law Enforcement on Race Relations, Use of Force, and Routine Officer Encounters (n = 25)*

	Race Relations						*Use of Force*						*Encounters*					
	Yes		No		Don't Know		Yes		No		Don't Know		Yes		No		Don't Know	
	f	*%*	*f*	*%*	*f*	*%*	*f*	*%*	*f*	*%*	*f*	*%*	*f*	*%*	*f*	*%*	*f*	*%*
Training																		
Academy	18	72	1	4	6	24	25	100	0	0	0	0	22	88	0	0	3	12
In-service	15	60	3	12	7	28	18	72	7	28	0	0	14	56	3	12	8	32
Adequacy	6	24	16	64	3	12	20	80	5	20	0	0	11	44	9	36	5	20

The administered survey included 12 Likert-type rating questions pertaining to police-community trust, relationships, support, responsiveness, interactions, perceptions, respect, and race relations. The Mann-Whitney *U* statistic was computed to examine group differences in mean ratings for responses to these survey items. No statistically significant differences were observed based on ethnicity or dichotomously-scored independent variables including education level (i.e., college graduate or non-college graduate) or marital status (i.e., single or other). Generally, no statistically significant differences were observed based on agency accreditation status (i.e., yes or no) of the KLEAs, although a statistically significant difference was observed in the mean rating for responses to the question concerning *trust of law enforcement by the community* ($U = 108.50$, $p < .05$) based on agency accreditation status; Respondents employed by accredited KLEAs reported perceptions of less trust of law enforcement by the community ($m = 8.94$) than respondents employed by non-accredited KLEAs ($m = 15.28$).

A Kruskal-Wallis test was also computed to examine group differences. No statistically significant differences were observed based on agency location (i.e., urban, urban cluster, or rural) or administrator's rank (e.g., chief, assistant chief, sheriff, etc.). When considering the adequacy of training on race relations, use of force, and routine officer encounters, several statistically significant differences were observed. Based on race relations training, a statistically significant difference was observed in the mean rating for *relationships between law enforcement and the community* ($X^2(2) = 7.641$, $p = .02$), *support of law enforcement by the community* ($X^2(2) = 6.068$, $p = .04$), and *responsiveness of the community to law enforcement needs* ($X^2(2) = 8.220$, $p = .01$). Administrators who responded training on race relations was either inadequate or they "did not know" if it was adequate had less favorable views of community support and responsiveness to law enforcement compared to respondents who viewed training on race relations as adequate. Based on officer-community encounters training, a statistically significant difference was observed in the mean rating for *trust of law enforcement by the community* ($X^2(2) = 10.469$, $p = .00$), *trust of the community by law enforcement* ($X^2(2) = 9.895$, $p = .00$), *support of law enforcement by the community* ($X^2(2) = 11.982$, $p = .00$), *support of the community by law enforcement* ($X^2(2) = 9.014$, $p = .01$), *responsiveness of law enforcement to community needs* ($X^2(2) = 8.015$, $p = .01$), *responsiveness of the community to law enforcement needs* ($X^2(2) = 6.511$, $p = .03$), and *perception of law enforcement by the community* ($X^2(2) = 7.589$, $p = .02$). Likewise, administrators who responded that training on routine encounters was either inadequate or they "did not know" if it was adequate had less favorable views of trust between the community and law enforcement, support between the community and law enforcement, responsiveness between the community and law enforcement, and perceptions of law enforcement. No statistically significant differences were observed in the mean ratings to survey items based on use of force training.

A Spearman's rank correlation was computed to determine the significance in relationships between age, number of years employed in law enforcement, number of years employed in the current agency and the survey items. A negative, moderate, and statistically significant correlation was observed between the *number of years respondents have been employed by their current agencies* and views on the *responsiveness of the community to law enforcement needs* ($rho(23) = -.407$, $p = .043$). The data support respondents with fewer years of agency experience possess more favorable views of community responsiveness to law enforcement needs than those with more years of agency experience. No other statistically significant relationships were observed.

Qualitative Data

Four open-ended questions were included in the survey to assess the climate of law enforcement and community relations as a measure of legitimacy from the perceptions of KLEAs. Respondents were asked the following questions: (1.) How would you describe the climate between law enforcement and your community? (2.) How would you describe the climate between law enforcement and communities across the United States? (3.) How can the climate between law enforcement and communities be improved overall? (4.) What additional comments would you like to provide? Overall, KLEAs responded favorably to question 1, but they responded negatively to question 2. Twenty percent (20%, $n = 5$) of the KLEAs did not respond to the questions. Several common themes were identified among the responses of the KLEAs to question 1. Thirty-six percent (36%, $n = 9$) described the climate between law enforcement and their communities as "good," 24 percent ($n = 6$) as "excellent," 16 percent ($n = 4$) as "positive," and four percent ($n = 1$) as "supportive."

For question 2, perspectives of KLEAs were less positive overall. Twenty percent (20%, $n = 5$) described the climate between law enforcement and communities across the United States as "good," 16 percent ($n = 4$) as "excellent," and 12 percent ($n = 3$) as "positive." However, others described the climate as "strained" (8%, $n = 2$), "poor" (8%, $n = 2$), "challenging" (4%, $n = 1$), "reluctant trust" (4%, $n = 1$), and "skewed in the negative" (4%, $n = 1$). Negative influences of the media were also identified among 20 percent ($n = 5$) of the respondents.

For question 3, various recommendations were offered by the respondents to improve the climate between law enforcement and communities.   Those recommendations are seen in Table 2 as verbatim quotes.

Table 2. _Respondents' Views on Improving Law Enforcement-Community Climate (n = 25)_

Respondent	Quote
1:	"Don't know. Climate has changed over the years to many people think they are entitled to?? No respect (not much anyway)"
2:	"Personal Responsibility, this includes the action of the citizen as well as the officer"
3:	"Both law enforcement officials and the community as a whole have to recognize improvement is needed from both groups"
4:	No response
5:	"Only with time."
6:	"No simple fix. Will take time and a change in leadership"
7:	"Training, communication, involvement, social interaction"
8:	No response
9:	No response
10:	"Meeting between the 2."
11:	"Back to community oriented policing"

Table 2 (continued.)

12: No response

13: "Community oriented policing"

14: "For the President and others to quite blaming police for every little incident that takes place. He is just keeping the fire going against the law enforcement community"

15: No response

16: "Focus on the multitude of positives in law enforcement instead of the handful of negatives

17: "Communication!!! Law enforcement must do a better job to educate the public on what we can and cannot do, as well as why we do what we do and do not do! I have found in my 28 years 9 out of 10 people have no idea about civics, law enforcement, basic govn't, nor the laws!"

18: "Not good due to lack of national leadership and media hype making the situation worse"

19: "Transparency & improving legitimacy—being straightforward why law enforcement reacts to a situation in a manner, and that 'manner' is usually bound by the legal system"

20: "National conversation"

21: "The community needs to appreciate what we do and understands the risks encountered."

22: "Collaboration and communication"

23: "The relationship between law enforcement and the community is positive. We need to continue to develop relationships of trust."

24: "It will take many years to undo the harm created by the media. We need to focus on the positive stories happening in our communities."

25: "Citizens have to have faith and trust in the police and the police must have faith and trust of citizens. It is a reciprocal need."

Additional comments offered by the respondents are presented in Table 3 as verbatim quotes.

Table 3. *Respondents' Additional Comments (n = 25)*

Respondent	Quote

7: "Being an active part of your community in all situations is crucial. Social interaction in the community by officers is critical. You get to know families you serve and get an understanding of their problems and how to help them. You must have a relationship and an established communication platform to work together."

12: "I would like the CJ academics to calculate the number of calls for service that LE responds to across the nation per year and measure that against the number of calls where police were charged with misconduct. Also, review the vast amount of video available to see that LE does not work with the public a vast amount of time when the public is in the state of mind to act reasonable—This would be a more accurate reflection of policing in America."

14: "Obviously the only 'negative' relations citizens-police have is when you open-end questions to everyone. The criminals are obviously not going to say anything positive about police, only those who do not get in or stay in trouble will say positive marks."

17: "I have used recording devices of some type for decades. They have come to save me on multiple false complaints or court arguments."

Discussion

There are strengths and limitations of this study. A strength of this study was the ability to obtain data from KLEA administrators on a sensitive topic. Cram (2016) states, "Unsurprisingly, a sharp focus on questionable policing practices has heightened anxieties amongst those who control access to the policing arena and those who are asked to participate in the research, that is, police officers" (p. 360). Further, "the more at ease police officer [are] with their particular policing role, the more open they [are] to being researched" (Cram, p. 360). Anonymous surveys allow respondents to be candid, which increases data accuracy. The findings add to the knowledge base on our understanding of police-community relations, training, and legitimacy. On the other hand, the nonresponse bias of 65 percent calls into question the representativeness of the sample. The statistical accuracy of the survey, therefore, should be considered. Future research on this topic should consider survey of front line officers, as well as community members, to gain a more holistic understanding.

Perceptions of the legitimacy of law enforcement are influenced by many variables. As discussed in the literature, when mutual trust is established between officers and community members then perceptions of legitimacy are strengthened. Often, however, among minority communities there exists distrust between officers and community members. As noted by the U.S. Department of Justice (n.d.), "The ability of the police to perform their duties is dependent upon public approval of police actions (p. 9). Additionally, the "police must secure the willing cooperation of the public in voluntary observance of the law to be able to secure and maintain the respect of the public" (p. 10). This requires professional law enforcement agencies and officers to perform their sworn duties to protect and to serve the public.

A number of important findings resulted from the analysis of the quantitative and qualitative data. Respondents reported concerns about race relations within their communities and the impact on police-citizen relationships. A majority of respondents also reported officers are inadequately trained and prepared in areas that impact police-citizen relations, specifically, in race relations, routine officer encounters and, to a lesser degree, use of force. Respondents who reported training and preparation in these areas was inadequate also reported trust, support, responsiveness, and perceptions of law enforcement and the community as problematic. Poor race relations within communities coupled with inadequately trained and prepared officers ultimately impacts perceptions of legitimacy. These issues were recognized by the administrative heads of the KLEAs surveyed who represented a cross-section of Kentucky communities from urban to rural. An unintended finding was respondents employed by accredited KLEAs reported perceptions of less trust of law enforcement by the community than respondents employed by non-accredited KLEAs. Accreditation seeks is to enhance community understanding of law enforcement agencies and roles in the community, leading to citizen confidence in the policies and practices of the agency (Florida Accreditation Organization, n.d.).

Further, "Accreditation creates a forum in which police and citizens work together to control and prevent crime. This partnership will help citizens to understand the challenges that confront law enforcement. Law enforcement will, in turn, receive clear direction from the community about its expectations" (Florida Accreditation Organization, para To the community). This finding suggests accredited KLEAs have not achieved these goals. Qualitative data support these findings and provide additional perspectives concerning these issues. Common themes emerged indicating a need for improving relationships between law enforcement and the community through communication, collaboration, training, and transparency.

Conclusions

This survey study examined the perceptions of a random sample of respondents concerning the climate of police-community relations and the training needs of Kentucky Law Enforcement Agencies (KLEAs) to improve perceptions of legitimacy.   KLEAs should ensure officers are adequately prepared through continuous training in race relations, routine encounters, and use of force to increase community trust, relationships, support, responsiveness, interactions, perceptions, respect and, ultimately, legitimacy.

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