Arab Americans' Perceptions of Police Post 9/11 in Metropolitan Milwaukee

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Research Problem

Arab Americans as individuals tend to avoid any contact with the police because many Arabs shun from contacting police that may lead to community marginalization and alienation. The current literature fails to examine in-depth Arab Americans' perceptions towards police. The literature typically reflects how police officers view Arab Americans but it is silent regarding how Arab Americans view American police.

Focus Questions

Tackling the research problem three questions need to be answered by the participants.
1. How do Arab Americans view police after September 11, 2001?
2. How do Arab Americans' backgrounds influence their formal understanding of American police?
3. What are the critical incidents that define the relationships between Arab Americans and the police?

Value Claims (Implications)

Once this research is completed, the value claims are attainable. First implication is informing the police administration of the outcome of this study and how it can be infused in future sensitivity training for police academies. Second implication is learning about Arab Americans' perception toward American police can furnish the knowledge base for police departments to develop effective and efficient strategies and tactics in community policing. Third, Arab Americans' perception is under researched. This study will assist adult educators in different fields to understand the scope of Arab Americans' perception of the police.

Transformations of Data and Records

Data analysis approach will include creating a coding process and collapsing those codes into themes. Nvivo as a data management system will be used to organize and code the data. Maintaining reflexivity and research credibility repeated interviews member checking and triangulation will take place. Audit trails and personal journal will be part of the data transformations.

The research approach is a qualitative phenomenological study consisting of one-on-one in-depth interviews of 20 Arab Americans. Each interview will last approximately 45 minutes to an hour. These interviews will be audio recorded and transcribed.

As a future qualitative researcher acknowledging the role of reflexivity is important. Since the researcher is the primary "instrument" of data collection and analysis, reflexivity is deemed essential (Glesne, 1999). Being Arab American and as a former Milwaukee Police Officer, I encountered many occasions through casual conversation how police officers feel toward me and toward Arab Americans in general especially poste September 11, 2001. As graduate student I found plenty of focused literature on the police perception of Arab Americans but almost no

literature on Arab Americans' perception of the police. On many occasions striking conversation with members of the Arab community, I sensed that they have so much to say about the police. So I have decided to study the Arab Americans' perception of the local police post Sept. 11, 2001 in Milwaukee area; keeping in mind that the literature on this subject has failed to provide the counter narrative of perception. Arab Americans' perception of police is almost non-existent (Sun & Wu, 2011). Many Arab Americans tend to avoid any contact with the police due to their fear that such contacts may lead to misunderstanding and marginalization of those individuals as part of the community. I'm hoping to expand on this topic and 'transform' what I see and hear into intelligible account (Wolcott, 1994, p. 1).

Researchers Background & the Importance of Reflexivity

I was born and raised in a small city in the West Bank of Israel and have been through my share of overcoming obstacles. In 1990 I relocated from Israel to the United States coping with the hardships that run the gamut from establishing my credentials to adapting to my newly adopted culture. As one could imagine it has been difficult to incorporate two vastly different cultures. Yet, I have been able to position myself and find a balance where I feel I can communicate effectively with both. The structure of my knowledge was built and honed through the personal journey of education, immigration and having several career positions in the criminal justice system. Based on my epistemological position and my personal ideology of change to empower the poor class and the marginalized community such as Arab Americans community within the system of corporate America.

Being an Arab American former police officer and witnessing firsthand how other police officers treated me and what they think of my ethnic background put me in a unique position as graduate student and future researcher to research my mentioned topic. In addition to what is mentioned I have positioned myself within the Arab community as a community advocate who relates to community needs; deciding on my research topic stems from the differences between the dominate culture, and the Arab Americans as ethnic group that is different in many aspects and the individual accounts of police contacts.

Reflexivity is important component as qualitative researcher who is dealing with participants who share the same ethnic race as mine. Having so many things in common with my participants imposes so much pressure on the research credibility and validity. Having to interview my participants as an approach to my data collection will make some of the participants feel comfortable and willing to share their experiences and want to say what I want to hear. Moreover, my background and world view as a researcher may affect the participants' own world view.

References

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