

ABSTRACT

Title of thesis: NEIGHBORHOOD CONTEXT AND POLICE BEHAVIOR: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF THE FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE POLICE USE OF FORCE BEHAVIOR IN DISADVANTAGED NEIGHBORHOODS

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Previous empirical research suggests that patrol officers' arrest and use of force behaviors are differentially distributed across neighborhood contexts. Using a qualitative interview approach, this exploratory study elaborates upon earlier findings by investigating if officers' use of force behavior (particularly on the verbal end of the force continuum) in a police-suspect encounter varies by neighborhood context in the small community of Plum Town. Specifically, this study attempts to provide a clearer understanding of the mechanisms through which officers interpret their beat and the extent to which certain neighborhood factors play a role in influencing their actions. In Plum Town, situational and individual level factors –in particular, the need for officer safety and previous police experience— lead officers to lower their verbal use of force threshold and increasingly threaten arrest. However, the interviews suggest that, to some extent, these variables are rooted in and influenced by place.

NEIGHBORHOOD CONTEXT AND POLICE BEHAVIOR:
AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF THE FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE POLICE USE
OF FORCE BEHAVIOR IN DISADVANTAGED NEIGHBORHOODS

by

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Chapter I: Introduction

In many respects, the patrol officer's sanctioned capacity to use coercive force lies at the core of the police role in our modern society (Bittner, 1967; Klockars, 1985). When patrol officers take an oath to serve and protect their community, society trusts that they will use their authority with integrity and restraint. Many situations arise where patrol officers' use of force is legitimate and necessary in order to fulfill their mandate to protect and serve. At the same time, however, this force can be used inappropriately, undermining police legitimacy. Accordingly, it is important to understand the situations and extra-legal factors that may influence a patrol officer's use of force behavior.

Previous research has identified several factors that influence patrol officers' discretion to use force. Individual level factors (Lawton, 2007; Paoline and Terrill, 2007; Smith and Visher, 1981), departmental and organizational factors (Reiss, 1992; Wilson, 1968), cultural factors (Paoline and Terrill, 2005; Terrill, Paoline and Manning, 2003), suspect/victim factors (Klinger, 1997), among others have all helped paint a more complete picture of patrol officers' use of force behavior. However, these studies have primarily focused on differences in the characteristics of individuals (e.g., officer, victim, suspect) and the situations (e.g., type of crime, type of police interaction) as a means to explain differences in police behavior. Only recently, have studies increasingly turned to place-based cues and contexts as a means of explaining police officer decision-making and discretionary behaviors (Lum, 2010a, 2010b). This is precisely where this study tries to pick up. In acknowledging that situational- and individual-level factors appear to have an influence on a patrol officer's use of force behavior, this study seeks to identify if these factors may in fact be rooted in and a function of place and neighborhood context.

Over the past century, researchers across academic disciplines have stressed the importance that places can have on human behavior (Taylor, 1998). In the field of criminology, scholars have turned to neighborhood context as a way to explain victimization trends (Grasmick, 1993), deviant behavior (Shaw and McKay, 1942) and violent crime (Sampson, Raudenbush and Earls, 1997). These studies suggest that the attributes of a place—the physical, social, and cultural aspects of the environment— can influence the behaviors and actions of those exposed to them (Galster, 2001; Lum, 2010a, 2010b). By extension, patrol officers who are generally assigned to work in specific geographic areas are not immune from these environmental forces. Accordingly, a study of place-based neighborhood cues, especially those most noticeable to a patrol officer (e.g., socioeconomic status, crime level, poverty, racial and ethnic make-up) is imperative, given that place may significantly influence a patrol officer’s mental schemas and adoption of cognitive landscapes, which could thereby impact his/her use of discretion and behavior (Klinger, 2004; Lum, 2010a, 2010b; Stark, 1987).

Smith (1986), Terrill and Reisig (2003), and Lum (2010a, 2010b), have empirically validated the independent effect of neighborhood context in affecting patrol officers’ decisions to arrest and use force. Their findings suggest that socioeconomic status (SES), racial and ethnic make-up, as well as other place-based cues, play an important role in explaining differential police behavior and use of discretion in different neighborhood contexts, substantiating the early observations of Banton (1964), who observed “in different neighborhoods police provide different services” (pp. 136). When police rely on such extra-legal, place-based cues in informing their decision-making and discretionary behavior, it can lead to a systematic bias in the distribution of police

services based on generalizations and stereotypes. This is especially alarming with regard to police use of force, as patrol officers may be more likely to use force in certain neighborhoods, which in turn can then further perpetuate negative views toward the police, decrease due process rights afforded to suspects (Mastrosfki, Reisig and McCluskey, 2002; Sun and Triplett, 2008), and work to undermine police legitimacy (Tyler and Wakslaw, 2004).

Given that police departments are increasingly adopting community-oriented policing practices (COP) that advocate a more community-tailored police intervention, police administrators have increasingly turned to place-based proactive police strategies such as hotspots and problem-oriented policing as a means of dealing with crime through a geographic lens (Braga, 2001; Moore, 1992; Myers, 2004). These place-based strategies require a strong police-community relationship and exchange in order to understand and know how to address localized crime issues. By employing procedural justice principles and focusing on the due process rights of community members, police departments following the COP doctrine have advocated a fair treatment of the community in order to enhance police legitimacy and secure greater cooperation and support (Tyler and Fagan, 2008). In a time when police departments are focusing more and more on place-based police strategies, it is important to better understand the impacts of neighborhood context on patrol officers' use of force behavior in order to identify possible police malpractice and develop ways to limit such behavior.

Thus far, the literature of neighborhood context on influencing patrol officer behavior has largely been limited to empirical assessments of broad outcomes (e.g., arrest, use of physical force, proactive vehicle stops) (Smith, 1986; Terrill and Reisig,

2003), leaving many questions unanswered. Whereas the finding that patrol officer behavior and services are unequally distributed by neighborhood context appears to be empirically validated, little is known about the specifics of *how* environmental context is interpreted by patrol officers and translated into differential behavior, especially as it relates to police use of force. Further, these studies also limited their conceptualization of force to a dichotomous outcome variable, or they have focused primarily on physical or deadly force (Fyfe, 1988; Smith, 1986). The continuum of force, however, is much more nuanced (Garner, Schade, Hepburn and Buchanan, 1995; Terrill, 2001) and broader consideration should be given to the various ways patrol officers use and can threaten to use force. Gaining insights into the point at which patrol officers may start their use of force behavior during a police-suspect encounter, and how quickly and why patrol officers may skip through different stages on the use of force continuum cannot be captured by a mere dichotomization of the use of force variable.

The nuances and particularities of a patrol officer's use of force behavior become extremely important in examining patrol officers' emphasis on due process rights and how just they treat their communities. Under the procedural justice philosophy, the fair treatment of citizens throughout the police encounter is more important than the actual disposition or outcome (Engel, 2005). In particular, the threat of arrest can be seen as an important, yet often neglected, specific point on the police use of force continuum that warrants close attention. In many ways the threat of arrest represents a sort of tipping point in regard to a potential escalation of police use of force (Moskos, 2008; Muir, 1977). If the threat of arrest has been issued and a suspect fails to comply with the patrol officer's request, the patrol officer will quickly escalate his/her use of force until the

suspect is arrested. In part, if the officer does not follow through with the actual arrest, he/she may risk ridicule by peers and suspects, and thus risk losing face, respect and credibility in future suspect encounters (Anderson, 2000; Moskos, 2008; Muir, 1977). Further, the threat of arrest offers police officers an easy way to handle situations and gain compliance from suspects even in instances where the issuance of such a threat is not based on legitimate legal grounds. Accordingly, the use (and misuse) of the threat of arrest can be informative regarding the overall level of procedural justice that patrol officers may exhibit toward certain communities but not toward others.

This thesis addresses gaps in the current state of the literature concerning the impact of neighborhood context on police use of force in two key ways: 1) it expands the conceptualization and operationalization of police use of force as employed over the life of a police-suspect encounter, and 2) it aims to gain insights into the mechanisms through which police officers may turn to neighborhood factors in guiding their use of force behavior through the entirety (from beginning to end) of a police-suspect encounter. In particular, this study also focuses on the role that the threat of arrest plays in a patrol officer's use of force repertoire when engaging in a police-suspect encounter, and how this may vary by neighborhood area within a jurisdiction.

This study can be seen as exploratory, with the goal of gaining a qualitative understanding of the ways in which neighborhood context may influence differential police use of force behavior, and importantly why and how police choose to behave differently in different neighborhoods. Police officers, in their daily work environments, are not automated responders; they are continuously faced with making important and oftentimes split-second decisions in highly ambiguous situations. In informing these

decisions officers draw from a variety of sources, such as situational and individual level factors, and neighborhood factors. Accordingly, when we speak of the mechanisms by which patrol officers are influenced by neighborhood context, we are interested in better understanding how patrol officers are influenced by their surroundings and how this may (or may not) influence their decision-making and use of force behavior, especially in relation to other factors. As suggested by Lum (2010a), in commenting on the findings of her own study, “despite these steps forward, this study, like so many others examining whether disparities in police service exist, still cannot tell us why we see this differential response. This analysis cannot give us insight into the minds of officers as to whether racial bias influences their decisions” (pp. 657). The author goes on to say that qualitative approaches, in particular in-depth interviews, would be well suited to gain further insights into the patrol officers’ decision-making processes as influenced by neighborhood context. It is important to note however that while officers may report being influenced by certain factors and behaving a certain way, in a real life setting their expected thought-processes and intended behaviors may differ from their actual behavior (Collett and Childs, 2011; Ford, Weissbein and Plamondon, 2003). With this in mind, a qualitative inquiry does provide a promising avenue to directly inquire and attempt to gain insights into factors that appear to matter most in influencing patrol officer behavior.

The current study used an in-depth qualitative interview method at the Plum Town Police Department¹ (PTPD), located in Plum Town, a small suburb community located within one of the largest metropolitan areas in the United States, and directly

¹ In order to shield the true identify of the study location and police department at which the research was conducted, throughout the interity of document fictious pseudonyms are use to mask the identify of actual geographic locations, individuals, and institutions. Protections are also used to maximize the confidentiality of the research participants. For more information see the sample and methods section, pg. 37-38.

bordering said metropolitan area's central city, Giant Ville. The PTPD has an officer population of less than 20 full-time sworn police officers. Most police departments in the United States are staffed by 25 or fewer full-time sworn police officers, yet in comparison to large urban departments, small-town departments are understudied (Falcone, Wells and Weisheit, 2002), thus making an inquiry such as this study particularly relevant. By interviewing current PTPD patrol officers, I was able to gain insights into how patrol officers' work environments influenced their use of force behavior, in attempting to answer my formal research questions: How does neighborhood context, specifically disadvantaged neighborhoods (as characterized by high-crime rates, high minority population, high poverty and low SES), influence the starting point on the police use of force continuum that patrol officers engage in when dealing with suspects? In addition, does neighborhood context influence how quickly patrol officers turn to the coercive threat of arrest in order to gain compliance and maintain control during a suspect-police encounter?

Chapter II: Literature Review

The patrol officer's right to use coercive force underlies every police-citizen encounter (Klockars, 1985). This force can range from verbal commands up to actions that cause death. Skolnick and Fyfe (1993) described the continuum as a progression from low levels of force to the highest level, deadly force: "mere presence, verbalization, command voice, firm grip, pain compliance technique, impact technique, deadly force" (pp. 39). Depending on the definition of use of force and the sample used, patrol officers' use of force is generally found to occur in less than 10% of observed police encounters (Fyfe, 1989; Garner, Maxwell and Heraux, 2002; Skolnick and Fyfe, 1993). Notably, Reiss' (1971) systematic qualitative observations of police-suspect encounters in high-crime areas of large American metropolitan cities found that when use of force occurs, it is primarily verbal in nature; only in roughly 0.8% of encounters with citizens, and 2.8% of encounters with potential offenders/suspects did patrol officers engage in the use of physical force. Additional recent work suggests use of force is more frequent than prior studies have suggested. Terrill and Mastrokfi (2002), for example, reported that police using force at the verbal level was as high as 58.4% of encounters; however, their study has been criticized as having bias rooted in place effects by surveying primarily high crime, disadvantaged areas.

Klinger's (1995) assessment of the microstructure of non-lethal force further refines what level of force is most commonly employed when patrol officers engage in the use of force. He found 40% of police-suspect encounters resulted in use of force, and that patrol officers started by using voice commands in 98% of all cases. Further, these instances progressed to using physical force in 42% of these cases, when suspects were resisting. Even when physical force was used, in most instances, it would likely fall into

what Skolnick and Fyfe (1993) termed as firm grip or pain compliance technique categories. Klinger's (1995) study provided an interesting assessment of use of force because it indicates that generally within one police-citizen encounter there is a progression in the use of force used, and, most commonly, patrol officers do not need to exceed the verbal command stage in their use of force repertoire. However, Klinger's study makes no reference to the level at which patrol officers start their use of force in an encounter, which could influence the remaining possibilities for deescalating a situation, for example, if the threat of arrest was issued early in the encounter. Even when viewing use of force on a continuum, little insights are gained into the factors that influence why and in what ways patrol officers engage in the use of force.

Factors Affecting Use of Force

Because use of force is central to the police role and omnipresent in every police-citizen encounter (Klockars, 1985), it is governed by legal and departmental policies. Police administrators have integrated the use of force continuum as a means to instruct their officers on the appropriate level of force to be used, given a suspect's changing level of resistance and force employed against the officer (Terrill, 2001). Most police departments actively train new recruits on the appropriate level of force to be used; however, these primarily prescriptive guidelines arguably cannot cover the variety of situations police may encounter and subsequently an ambiguity in the definition and measurement of appropriate force remains (Garner et al., 1995; Reiss, 1971).

Regardless of the formal organizational rules governing patrol officer use of force behavior, studies indicate that the organizational culture of police departments may also drive police use of force behavior, especially to the extent to which patrol officers associate with the traditional crime-fighter role of police. These studies find that

departments following the crime-fighter model generally call for more aggressive law enforcement tactics and more punitive approaches (Wilson, 1968), which may result in patrol officers using greater levels of force when engaging with suspects (Terrill et al., 2003). Even in departments that publically advocate community-oriented and problem-solving approaches, if the informal organizational norms and culture fall more in line with the crime-fighter model, police officers appear to be more likely to engage in aggressive police tactics that may result in increased use of force (Brown, 1981; Paoline, 2004). This is an important observation to keep in mind, given that departmental culture (formal and informal) may offset the extent to which officers turn to other factors in guiding their use of force behavior.

Other studies have turned to individual and situational level factors in explaining differential police use of force. Black's study (1976) found that police act more punitively toward suspects who are of a lower social status, of minority status, and who are poor and young. Further, if suspects show disrespect, are resistant, or under the influence, Black found that police view these individuals as deserving of more control and punishment. The situational elements that make up a police suspect encounter can influence the severity of enforcement and level of force police officers will use (Black, 1976; Muir, 1977).

On the other hand, research has also identified that the characteristics of patrol officers can have an impact on police use of force behavior. For example, Paoline and Terrill (2007) identified that officers with a college degree were significantly less likely to use force as compared to officers with just a high school degree. Other researchers have argued that patrol officers adopt different working personalities depending on their

work environment (which includes organizational, cultural and contextual factors). In particular, Skolnick (1966), Muir (1977) and Broderick (1987) argued that patrol officers' personalities could be characterized by their view of human nature and their attitudes and use of coercive authority. Officers that have a more pessimistic and suspicious view of human nature and that see their role as relying more on coercive authority, tend to be more punitive in their policing style. Further, as Bayley and Bittner (1984) and Bayley and Garofalo (1989) suggested, in light of the limited guidance provided to patrol officers on how to employ force in their everyday duties, patrol officers tend to rely on past experiences as a structuring force of future use of force behavior.

As illustrated above, a number of factors have been shown to influence patrol officers' use of force. Although some of these factors appear to have a legitimate role in influencing how patrol officers should use force (e.g., suspect resistance, imminent danger), others could be considered extra-legal. Assessing to what extent these extra-legal factors and cues play a legitimate role in influencing patrol officers' use of force behavior is important because some factors may lead officers to engage in unwarranted or inappropriate use of force. Understanding the variety of factors that may influence patrol officers' behaviors is of merit because of the importance officers ascribe to certain external influences, such as neighborhood context, may be influenced by and a function of the individual and organizational beliefs officers hold and the specific situational factors they are dealing with.

The Context of Police Use of Force Behavior

Even though organizational, individual, and situational explanations of police use of force have enhanced our understanding of the variety of factors that can influence police discretionary behavior, Terrill and Reisig (2003) suggested that “these perspectives fail to take into account the possibility that police use of force varies according to the broader context concerning where the encounter takes place” (pp. 292). Lum (2010a, 2010b) further argued that a multitude of factors affecting use of force are ultimately rooted in the social geography of place. In fact, as Lawton (2007) suggested an understanding of the environment in which patrol officers make decisions must include an understanding of the individual and situational level factors that coincide with place. Branton (2007) added to this discussion, finding that the working personality that patrol officers adopt may be a function of their working environment and the extra-legal attributes (e.g., racial composition, SES, crime levels) that make up this environment. Additionally, the past experiences patrol officers have in certain geographic areas may cue their future behaviors in that place, given that previous experience was found to influence future police behavior (Bayley and Bittner, 1984; Bayley and Garofalo, 1989). Thus, Terrill and Reisig (2003) suggested that “symbolic neighborhoods” may outweigh individual- and situational-level factors in influencing actual patrol officer behavior (pp. 309).

One of the earliest studies that highlighted the importance of geographic context as underlying police behavior and decision-making is that of Smith and Klein (1984). Their study directly assessed the impact of extra-legal situational influences in relation to neighborhood factors on the decision of police to arrest in interpersonal dispute situations. They found that the impact of individual-level factors on police officers’

decisions to arrest, such as race and social status, were conditioned on the wider neighborhood racial composition and context. In fact, place-based cues may impact the underlying situational, organizational and individual factors that were found to impact police officers' use of force behavior (Lawton, 2007; Lum, 2010a, 2010b; Smith and Klein, 1984). Thus, turning to ecological explanations of differential patrol officer behaviors, especially as it relates to police use of force, may help explain why police services are distributed unequally by neighborhood context.

In 1986, Slovak observed there were “almost no serious efforts to tie ecological variations within a city to police patterns in particular or to social control efforts in general” (pp. 144); shortly thereafter, researchers increasingly turned to ecological and place-based explanations in explaining differential police behavior (Lum, 2010a, 2010b; Smith, 1986; Terrill and Reisig, 2003). In order to best understand what neighborhood factors may help cue patrol officers' behavior, it is important to first consider what is meant by neighborhoods. In borrowing from the urban planning literature, Galster (2001) provided a definition of neighborhoods that recognize their complex and multi-attribute nature: “a neighborhood is the bundle of spatially based attributes associated with clusters of residences, sometimes in conjunction with other land uses.” (pp. 2112). Although broad, this definition highlights the basic building blocks that generate neighborhoods: the physical structures and land use within a geographic area, and more importantly, the people, businesses and institutions that inhabit this area. The characteristics of a neighborhood develop through the interaction of people and businesses that inhabit the physical structures, creating a spatially bounded community, which in turn expresses a neighborhood's characteristics and “produces” its attributes (Galster, 2001).

In the context of criminology, it is these socio-spatial interactions that help shape a patrol officer's understanding and conceptualization of his/her beat (Anderson, 2000; Skolnick, 1966; Van Maanen, 1973). When patrol officers work in their neighborhoods, they may rely on a number of objective and subjective neighborhood attributes and experiences that help inform their behaviors; such as the physical condition, the types of individuals they encounter, the community norms of behavior, the racial and social composition, and crime levels (Lum, 2010a, 2010b). Consequently, there are a variety of factors and attributes of neighborhoods that help create an image that may drive a patrol officer's beliefs and perceptions and subsequently his/her behavior (Klinger, 1997; Lum, 2010a, 2010b; Muir, 1977; Werthmann and Piliavin, 1967). Accordingly, researchers have developed theoretical frameworks to help guide our understanding of how neighborhood context influences patrol officers' behavior and their use of discretion.

Early on, researchers such as Robinson (1936) questioned why official police data on juvenile arrests indicated a disproportionate representation of poor youth; she hypothesized that it was likely a result of differential police response and that police tended to respond more frequently and more severely in areas characterized by high-crime and poverty. In building on this notion of differential police response by neighborhood context, Werthmann and Piliavin (1967) provided a theoretical understanding of how neighborhood context can structure police behavior. The researchers contended that "residence in a neighborhood is the most general indicator used by police to select a sample of potential law violators" (pp. 76); put simply, as patrol officers work in certain neighborhoods they develop mental schemas of what types of people they will likely encounter in specific geographic areas or cognitive landscapes. By

cataloguing populations into physical territories, police are better able to manage their policing duties, and they come to learn how to best approach/interact with individuals in certain neighborhoods. The downside of what could be considered a form of generalizing or stereotyping entire neighborhoods or as Werthmann and Piliavin (1967) call it “ecological contamination,” is that all persons encountered in bad neighborhoods are then subsequently viewed by police as possessing the moral liability of the neighborhood as a whole. Thus they may be deserving of a certain type of police response. These ideas coincide with Skolnick’s (1966) notion of a working personality that patrol officers adopt in response to their work environment. Neighborhood contexts may serve as a cue that patrol officers use to better navigate their environment, but which may also prime patrol officers to behave in certain ways such as being more suspicious or using more force toward all citizens in a certain neighborhood.

Although not specific to patrol officers’ interpretation of neighborhoods, Sampson and Raudenbush (2005) suggested that an individual’s perception of crime and disorder may extend beyond what is physically observed and rely, in part, on racial stigmatization. Accordingly, geographically segregated minority neighborhoods may be stigmatized as urban ghettos regardless of the actual levels of crime and disorder that characterize the area. Hurwitz and Peffley (1997) and Quilian and Pager (2001) make similar observations in identifying that police officers tend to associate places with high concentrations of minority residents to areas of higher crime, even though such a relationship may not be empirically supported. Studies suggest that such perceptions may influence patrol officers’ arrests and proactive stopping behaviors. For example, these studies found that Blacks encountered in predominantly Black neighborhoods were more

likely to be arrested and stopped by police than Blacks encountered in non-majority Black neighborhoods, even when controlling for extraneous factors such as suspect resistance (Smith and Petrocelli, 2001; Smith and Visher, 1981). Kane's (2003) notion of a minority group-threat hypothesis may be one possible explanation to differential police behavior exhibited in high-minority Black neighborhoods. In line with a conflict theorist approach, Kane's hypothesis suggests that police may feel compelled to act more punitive and with greater intervention in neighborhoods with high-minority populations where the ethnicity of patrol officers may represent the minority.

Bayley and Mendelsohn (1969) argued that the larger the social distance between the police and the neighborhood they are serving, the more police tend to exhibit aggressive and punitive behavior, especially in neighborhoods with high proportions of minority residents. Accordingly, the theory would predict that a suspect-police encounter that occurs in a high-crime and high poverty area would result in police exhibiting more aggressive police behaviors such as proactively stopping citizens and using higher levels of force (Smith and Visher, 1981; Terrill and Reisig, 2003). Such police behavior would be directed toward all citizens within the same neighborhood context regardless if they act suspicious or not, thus having the potential to undermine the due process rights of the community members and decrease perceptions of police legitimacy (Tyler, 2004; Tyler and Wakslaw, 2004).

Similarly, Klinger's "vigor hypothesis" (1997), suggested that a place can influence the vigor with which police invoke legal sanctions and the extent to which police see their role as that of crime-fighters. Specific to neighborhood context, Klinger contended that patrol officers working in disadvantaged neighborhoods will focus their

proactive policing activities on the more serious crimes and offenders and will act more in line with the crime-fighter role. In such a role, police see suspects and criminals as deserving of a punitive and aggressive police response, which was found to correlate with increased use of force (Terrill et al., 2003). Thus, the literature suggests that patrol officers working in disadvantaged neighborhoods may be more likely to use higher levels of force in police-suspect encounters, which is something this study seeks to evaluate and better understand. This issue becomes particular salient, if as Klinger (2004) suggested, increased use of hotspots and problem-oriented policing methods may reinforce negative associations with certain places that patrol officers may hold.

A number of ethnographic and observational studies conducted in high-crime police environments have expanded our understanding of the impact that disadvantaged neighborhoods can have in shaping a specific cultural police response, and subsequent police behavior. Anderson (2000), Bittner (1967), and Moskos (2008) have all engaged in direct observations of police in high-crime areas, indicating that patrol officers appear to adopt a certain generalized way of dealing with suspects and engaging with citizens in certain areas. Anderson (2000), in his in-depth study of Philadelphia's inner-city disadvantaged neighborhoods, finds that a certain "code of the street" prevails and is adopted by police and community members alike. This code, which is specific to certain geographic areas of Philadelphia, to a large extent, dictates how interactions between suspects and the police are carried out. Anderson suggests that in disadvantaged neighborhoods the notion of respect toward police plays an important role in potentially inducing patrol officers to use higher levels of force when their authority/respect is questioned.

In the inner-city environment described by Anderson (2000), police officers highly value their authority leaving little room for disrespect; accordingly officers expect that suspects unconditionally defer to their commands regardless of what they are (Moskos, 2008). For police, the threat of arrest is a useful tool in gaining compliance from a suspect, because generally if threatened with arrest most suspects will quickly comply to avoid going to jail. However, when used by patrol officers without an actual legal basis to arrest a suspect, the threat of arrest may escalate a police-suspect encounter because a suspect may feel he/she is being unduly subjugated to police authority and his/her rights are being violated. Accordingly, if the illegitimate use of the threat of arrest is more prominent in a disadvantaged neighborhood setting, then this has the potential to further disenfranchise the community and lead to a growing mistrust toward police (Terrill and Reisig, 2003). In many respects, the above observations appear to fall in line with Klinger's (1997) vigor hypothesis in that in certain neighborhoods patrol officers may be more likely to enforce certain types of behaviors, such as not allowing a suspect to disrespect or question their authority. The threshold of what is considered normative behavior is likely to vary across neighborhoods and may not be a purely legal threshold. Instead, police behavior and use of force may in some ways mirror the dominant neighborhood norms. Such norms could be adopted and understood by police to hold true in the entire neighborhood, and thus applied to all community members that live there, regardless if they personally adopt such a moral code or are part of the criminal element (Slovak, 1986; Werthmann and Piliavin, 1967).

Neighborhood Context and Police Behavior

Whereas the literature on situational- and individual-level influences on police behavior has been more voluminous, comparatively few studies have directly addressed

how certain attributes of neighborhood context influence patrol officer behavior. Those studies conducted have primarily focused on ethnic/racial composition, SES, and crime levels of neighborhoods in influencing patrol officer decision-making (Lum, 2010a, 2010b; Mastrosfki et al., 2002; Smith, 1986; Smith and Klein, 1984; Smith and Petrocelli, 2001; Terrill and Reisig, 2003). It appears that their findings provide support for Klinger (1997), Werthmann and Piliavin (1967) and other scholars' notion that environmental attributes influence the perspective that patrol officers adopt in their working environment and consequently the behavior they exhibit when interacting with citizens. This suggests that neighborhood contexts may trigger certain mental schemas or behavioral responses that patrol officers will activate when working in these environments, especially when faced with needing to make quick decisions (Sun and Triplett, 2008). I now turn to a more in-depth and critical assessment of some of these key studies regarding neighborhood context and patrol officer behaviors; particular attention is paid to some of the limitations and knowledge gaps left by these studies and how my study has offered new insights into these areas.

Smith (1986) provided one of the first empirical assessments that focused specifically on examining if neighborhood context has an independent effect on patrol officer behavior, while controlling for situational- and individual-level factors. The data consisted of 5,688 police-citizen contacts that were observed by trained researchers who conducted ride-alongs in four large metropolitan police departments around the country. Smith's study concerned the impact that social, economic and demographic neighborhood characteristics had on police behavior. In regard to police behavior, the study was mostly concerned with how patrol officers spent their time, in particular, their

unassigned time (when not on a call for service), and what types of proactive police activity patrol officers engaged in. When an encounter between a patrol officer and a citizen occurred, the observers gathered information on if a report was filed, if coercive authority was used, and if an arrest occurred; these variables were dichotomized.

Smith (1986) found that neighborhood context had a main effect on police behavior: patrol officers were more likely to stop suspicious persons in racially heterogeneous neighborhoods, the likelihood of arrest increased in neighborhoods of low SES, and patrol officers were more likely to exercise coercive authority toward suspects encountered in non-White and racially-mixed neighborhoods. Thus, patrol officers' discretion (especially in situations when they are not on a call and are engaging in proactive policing activities) appears to be structured by mental schemas based on the cognitive landscapes of certain neighborhood contexts. The finding that patrol officers were more likely to use coercive authority on suspects (independent of suspect or individual level factors) in predominantly minority neighborhoods lends support to Klinger's (1997) vigor hypothesis and Kane's (2003) minority-group threat hypothesis. However, Smith's (1986) findings only allow us to make general observations about patrol officer behavior as it correlates to neighborhood context. One of the key limitations of the study is the dichotomized nature of the main outcome variables. By simply dichotomizing the outcome variables such as arrest or use of coercive force, much of the more nuanced details of the observed citizen-police encounter are lost. Little information is caught in regard to what led to the arrest, and how and at what level a patrol officer is engaged in coercive force, which is unfortunate given that the trained observers could have made note of such occurrences.

Terrill and Reisig's (2003) empirical study of the impact of neighborhood context on patrol officers' use of force directly attempted to address some of the limitations encountered by Smith (1986). Terrill and Reisig's (2003) dependent variables focused on police use of force as an ordinal outcome rather than a binary one; the researchers took into account the continuum nature of use of force by dividing it into a four point scale: 1 (no force), 2 (verbal force), 3 (restraint techniques) and 4 (impact methods). Their sample was made up of 3,544 police-suspect encounters observed by trained researchers in Indianapolis, IN, and St. Petersburg, FL. Neighborhood-level and encounter-level variables associated with these encounters were gathered by consulting available census and police crime record data.

Terrill and Reisig's (2003) findings support the claim that police use of force is distributed differentially across neighborhoods. Even when controlling for suspect behavior and other encounter-level factors, the researchers identified that police are significantly more likely to use higher levels of force when encountering suspects in neighborhoods with high levels of concentrated disadvantage and higher crime rates. In line with Klinger's (1997) notion that police adopt mental schemas Terrill and Reisig (2003) suggest that disadvantaged communities trigger a police response that is more prone to using higher levels of force because the patrol officers come to assume that most citizens within such a neighborhood context are up to no good and thus deserve a more aggressive and violent police response, falling in line with previous assessments of police cynicism (Muir, 1977). Further, these judgments based on neighborhood characteristics are echoed by the dangerousness-hypothesis and the role that perceptions can play as opposed to actual factual levels of deviance (Kane, 2003; Sampson and Raudenbush,

2005). However, even though Terrill and Reisig accounted for the fact that multiple levels of force may have been used in a single citizen-police encounter, they only counted the highest level of force used in an encounter, thereby limiting any insights into how the initial use of force levels patrol officers employed may in fact have led to an escalation of force.

Lastly, Lum's recent (2010a) study provides a detailed assessment of how place influences patrol officers' decision-making process. Specifically, Lum developed a comprehensive measure of police discretion by enumerating different steps along the police decision-making pathway, and assigning these decisions made a numerical value. Based on data from the Seattle Police Department for the year 2000, Lum conducted a statistical assessment of 267,937 incidents for which complete data from the beginning of the call for service to the point at which disposition occurred was available. The incidents were geocoded to specific block groups (more precise than census tracts) for which information on racial composition, social disorganization, SES and crime rates were collected. Lum labelled the choices that patrol officers made over the life of an encounter as upgrading or downgrading actions (or no changes). Upgrading actions generally represent a more severe enforcement action, such as choosing to write a formal report instead of issuing a warning. Downgrading actions were generally associated with decreasing the seriousness of an event or level of enforcement action, such as downgrading an initial classification of an aggravated assault to the status of a simple assault. Ultimately, Lum contended that "all else being equal, if race, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status were not factors in these [upgrading or downgrading] decisions, no

matter the legitimacy of those reasons, we might expect variation in these choices to be randomly dispersed” (pp. 641).

Lum’s findings provide support for the general observations made by Smith (1986) and Terrill and Reisig (2003) in that police behavior appears to be differently distributed by neighborhood context. Broadly speaking, Lum found that the neighborhood attributes of wealth, % Black, %Hispanic and violence, all had a significant impact on patrol officers’ downgrading behavior. However, she also observed a strong relationship between areas of high violence and higher upgrading scores, indicating that in areas marked by more violence patrol officers appeared to be more legalistic, punitive, and potentially use higher levels of force. Nevertheless, although her findings identify no statistically significant relationship between high minority neighborhoods and areas of increased violence, Lum acknowledged that such a relationship has been proposed and empirically validated in earlier studies (Terrill and Reisig, 2003; Weitzer, 2006). Lum also found that neighborhoods with overall higher proportions of Black residents and high disorganization, and wealthy neighborhoods experience a significant degree of downgrading by patrol officers. Lum speculated that these findings appear to fall in line with Klinger’s (1997) assertion that police officers’ formal invoking of the law may be used more sparingly in high-crime neighborhoods and be reserved for more serious and violent infractions. She further proposed that a downgrading of incidents in disadvantaged communities may reflect on police choosing to rely on informal sanctioning mechanisms between community members, given that trust in the police is already low and a police intrusion should be reserved for more violent crimes and offenders.

In a later study, published as a report to the U.S. Department of Justice, Lum (2010b) more closely examined the influence of the race of places in comparison to other neighborhood attributes, using the same data from her previous study. This time, Lum more directly compared the differences in downgrading behaviors between wealthy block groups and socially disorganized block groups with high proportions of Black residents. Whereas her previous findings had indicated that both areas experienced significant downgrading, her re-analysis revealed that the extent of downgrading was even more significant in areas with high proportions of Black residents as compared to wealthy, primarily White neighborhoods. Thus, she argued that the racial composition of neighborhood appears to play a more important role in determining changes in police behavior as compared to other neighborhood factors. Accordingly, any assessment of neighborhood context should pay particularly close attention to the influence of racial/ethnic composition in potentially influencing the wider perceptions patrol officers hold of a neighborhood. When patrol officers rely on neighborhood stereotypes as a means to gauge their perception of crime rates and violence, then this could have a more pronounced impact on biasing patrol officers' behaviors exhibited toward certain communities. As Fyfe (1988) suggested: in places where there is more (real or perceived) crime and violence in the community, one may expect more police violence as higher levels of force may be seen as appropriate to counter the threat emanating from the community.

Limitations of Prior Work

Broadly speaking, there are two key limitations that emerge in the studies discussed above. These limitations, caused primarily by data collection and coding choices, are responsible for creating some of the knowledge gaps in regard to limiting our

understanding of the more nuanced ways in which patrol officer' use of force behavior is influenced by neighborhood context. These shortcomings primarily pertain to: 1) a too narrow conceptualization and operationalization of police use of force, and 2) a limited understanding of the mechanisms through which police officers may rely on neighborhood factors in guiding their use of force behavior.

With regard to the first issue, the literature strongly suggests that police use of force is best understood and operationalized as a continuum ranging from mere presence to deadly force (Garner et al., 1995; Klockars, 1985; Terrill, 2001). Thus, it is somewhat surprising that most studies concerning use of force and neighborhood context have operationalized police use of force in a dichotomous nature or have focused primarily on physical use of force (e.g., Terrill and Reisig (2003) simply used a binary code in their operationalization of use of force: use of force occurred/use of force that did not occur). The issue of basing one's study of use of force on such a limited operationalization of force is that it provides little additional information on how, in what progression, and at what level police engage in the use force at different points in a police-suspect interaction. This point becomes especially salient when considering more general studies on the prevalence of use of force that suggest that although use of force occurs infrequently, when it does occur, it primarily falls in the lower end of the spectrum, such as verbal commands (Bayley and Garofalo, 1989; Garner et al., 2002; Terrill et al., 2003). For example, while Smith's study (1986) observed an empirically independent effect of neighborhood context on patrol officer arrest behavior and use of coercive authority, his observations are limited in regard to making direct inferences what it is about neighborhoods that officers turn to in interpreting their environment (Terrill and

Mastrofski, 2002). For example, patrol officers may hold racialized preconceptions of certain neighborhoods as being highly violent and consequently they may use more coercive authority in an encounter. This could result in greater suspect resistance and thus contribute to higher arrest rates. Arguably, the underlying chain is not clear, and it could be that individual- and situational-level factors are in fact more important in influencing officer behavior, but that these variables are rooted within certain geographic contexts.

Not surprisingly, behaving in certain ways early on in a police-suspect encounter may limit the options of behavior at a later stage of the encounter (Muir, 1977; Terrill et al., 2003), thus once again suggesting the merit of considering police behavior at different stages of the encounter, particularly the beginning. As alluded to earlier, the threat of arrest appears to be a particular point on the use of force continuum that carries much significance in regard to escalating or deescalating the potential for use of force during an encounter depending on if the threat of arrest is applied legitimately or illegitimately by police (Anderson, 2000; Moskos, 2008). By limiting ones research to narrow outcome variables such as arrest, use of excessive or deadly force in determining how neighborhoods influence patrol officer behavior, researchers miss the more nuanced impacts of differential police behavior that are not reflected in formal outcomes such as police reports or crime data. Reiss (1980) posited that “because analysts of police use of force focus on situations in which the decision was made to use it, such as firing a weapon.... they ignore all decisions where force gave way to alternative ways of coping with situations” (pp. 127).

With regard to the second key limitation, Garner et al. (1995), suggested that police use of force may differ across the life of a police-suspect encounter and could be

influenced by a variety of contextual factors and neighborhood attributes. Whereas previous studies have suggested that some specific attributes such as neighborhood racial make-up and neighborhood disadvantage are associated with higher arrest rates and use of force behavior (Smith, 1986; Terrill and Reisig, 2003), these studies have done little to illuminate in what ways and why different neighborhood attributes may impact patrol officer behavior. Neighborhood attributes are made up of the individual, situational, and cultural factors of the individuals that inhabit them, all of which coincide in time and space in a geographic area (Galster, 2001). Thus, if environmental neighborhood cues may influence patrol officers' use of force, especially at the lower ends of the spectrum, this could lead to differential treatment of neighborhood populations and a difference in the types and quality of services provided by the patrol officers in different areas. Accordingly, by asking patrol officers how neighborhood context alongside other factors may drive their behavior during in a police-suspect encounter, as is attempted in this study, we can potentially disentangle which neighborhood factors may (or may not) play a more important role in influencing expected patrol officer behavior.

Lum's (2010a, 2010b) comprehensive approach toward assessing the impact of different neighborhood attributes at different stages of the patrol officer decision-making pathway can be seen as an important step in the right direction; however, her insights into why and how different neighborhood factors may influence officer behavior remain speculative. By exclusively relying on official data, as she acknowledged herself, her study gains limited insights into how patrol officers interpret or perceive their neighborhood environment. Whereas Lum's findings do suggest that police for example are less likely to invoke formal sanctions in areas of high minority populations, these

findings are simply inferred by conducting statistical analysis on police decision-making and geocoding these decisions to specific places. Notions about the actual mechanisms or thought-processes that patrol officers engage in when making these decisions, especially with regard to the underlying factors of a police-suspect encounter that may trigger use of force behavior, are purely speculative (Terrill and Mastrofski, 2002).

While not necessarily a key limitation, it is important to point out that the studies by Lum (2010a, 2010b), Smith (1986) and Terrill and Reisig (2003) were all conducted at large urban police departments covering extensive jurisdictions, especially when compared to the PTPD. While conducting a study with a large police department for the purposes of obtaining significant amounts of data and attempting to observe a high number of police use of force incidents is of merit, there are also trade-offs involved in choosing such a locale. Studies indicate that the majority of police officers in the United States work in small departments of 25 or less sworn officers (Falcone et al., 2002); accordingly, the policing experiences and challenges faced by their urban counterparts may not necessarily be the same. Further, small-town police officers covering a limited jurisdiction may be more attune to and knowledgeable about their working environment as opposed to officers from large departments, which can be beneficial when conducting a qualitative study concerning an in-depth inquiry into neighborhood context.

A Qualitative Approach

Mastrofski (2004) suggested that much of the insights and findings that characterize our knowledge of police behavior are based on correlational studies that test different variables (e.g., situational, organizational, neighborhood context) in relation to police behavior. He goes on to say that even the randomized experiments “examine the effect *of* the police, not the effects of anything *on* the police. In most of the cases, causal

inference is problematic” (emphasis in original, pp. 106). Accordingly, given that empirical correlational evidence already has substantiated that police use of force behavior varies by neighborhood context (Smith, 1986; Terrill and Reisig, 2003), the pressing questions this study attempts to answer are: in what ways and why does patrol officers’ use of force behavior differ in different neighborhood contexts.

A qualitative interview approach enables the interviewer to gather data on the factors that affect and reasoning that drives an interest group’s behavior. In the case of this exploratory study, open-ended, semi-structured interview questions are employed in order to facilitate a dialogue between the PTPD patrol officers and myself. As Miller (2005) suggested, qualitative interviews coupled with rigorous qualitative analyses can be of great utility in inductive theory development or theory refinement. Further, qualitative interview methods can allow researchers to better understand the micro-level interactional processes, and subsequently better situate them into to the larger social, cultural and structural systems of society or, in this case, the police institution (Wacquant, 2002). Because few studies to date have specifically examined the influence of neighborhood context on police behavior through a qualitative lens, this study represents an exploratory endeavor in this regard. Whilst keeping in mind that the behavior patrol officer express they would exhibit may sometimes differ from their actual behavior (Collet and Childs, 2011; Ford et al., 2003), a qualitative interview approach when applied to the study of neighborhood context and police behavior can help illuminate and advance a conceptual understanding of how (or if at all) and in what ways patrol officers are influenced by neighborhood factors, and how such differences may be expressed in differential police use of force behavior.

The use of qualitative in-depth interviews has previously been employed with great success in a study of the perceptions of legal cynicism among youth living in different Philadelphia neighborhoods (Carr, Napolitano and Keating, 2007). As is the case for this study, part of the motivation for the Carr et al. study was driven by what they claimed to be a notable absence of in-depth narrative accounts that describe encounters with and attitudes toward the police. Carr and colleagues (2007) praised the use of a qualitative in-depth interview technique by claiming, “it helps explore the often complex views young people have of police and law enforcement and uncovers the cognitive landscapes within which these views are formed.” (pp. 452). Similarly, the use of qualitative in-depth interviews in this study serve to allow me to gain a better understanding of how the cognitive landscapes that patrol officers employ may help inform their use of force behavior. Carr et al. (2007), go on to explain that “the narrative data provide a glimpse into a more complex and nuanced view of what formal social control should be, and it is one that emphasizes fairness and procedural justice” (pp. 468). So, too, could an qualitative approach regarding patrol officers’ use of force behavior by neighborhood reveal that an unequal distribution of use of force, in particular the illegitimate threat of arrest, may in fact hinder the fair and just application of procedural justice in certain communities.

Similarly, a study by Staller (2002) that used in-depth qualitative interviews and ethnographic observations of police officers in charge of monitoring runaways and homeless youth was able to gain insights into the mechanisms by which patrol officers guide their interactions with urban youths. Staller used the term “skullduggery” to describe the overarching worldview and mentality that the police adopted when dealing

with the youths, and that informed their behaviors and actions toward them. Staller contended that only through the use of this in-depth qualitative approach was he able to gain insights into the worldview of patrol officers, something that may have been missed by an empirical assessment of the interaction of patrol officers and youths in urban areas.

Although Terrill and Reisig's (2003) and Lum's (2010a, 2010b) studies can be seen as three of the most empirically rigorous assessments of the impact of neighborhood context on police behavior, they, too, indicate that further steps need to be taken in order to better understand patrol officers' interpretations of and views toward the neighborhoods they work in and why this may impact their behaviors. Terrill and Reisig (2003) stated: "Future research should continue to examine the role of neighborhood context on police use of force. Such an effort might begin with a better understanding of the officers' views toward neighborhoods and how such views may prompt their decision-making behavior... future work that incorporates officers' views of neighborhood context may enable researchers to draw a more explicit theoretical framework, which will then permit additional empirical testing" (pp. 309). In sum, it appears that a qualitative exploratory approach is best suited to answer my inquiry into how patrol officers interpret and are influenced by neighborhood context in the context of a small-sized police agency.

Chapter III: Data and Methods

This study examines if neighborhood context, in particular disadvantaged neighborhoods (as characterized by high crime rates, high minority populations, high poverty and low SES), influence patrol officers use of force behavior, and in particular, if neighborhood context may influence the starting point on the police use of force continuum and how patrol officers employ the threat of arrest during a police-suspect encounter. In order to address these questions, in-depth interviews were conducted with active patrol officers at the Plum Town Police Department (PTPD; please note that this is a pseudonym to protect confidentiality). By conducting the study with the PTPD, consideration is given to the dynamics of a small-town community-oriented police department of less than 20 full-time patrol officers, as compared to a large urban department. According to Falcone et al. (2002) the majority of police departments in the United States are made up of less than 25 full-time patrol officers, and thus the findings of this study may provide more insights into the dynamics of a small police agency, as opposed to the policing concerns of the larger departments on which a disproportionate amount of research is centered. It is important to point out that while the PTPD may be representative of a small police organization in terms of size of its sworn officer population, the PTPD's jurisdiction, Plum Town, appears to be highly diverse and integrated (racially and socially) and thus the policing experiences of officers in this setting may be less representative and generalizable to those of other jurisdictions.

Study Location

Located within one of largest metropolitan areas in the United States and directly bordering Giant Ville (the primary city around which the above mentioned metropolitan area is centered), the PTPD serves the community of Plum Town as its primary law

enforcement agency (please note that the county police also have jurisdiction, more details in sample section below). Plum Town can be described as a small town located within a metropolitan county. The town itself has roughly 8,000² residents and covers less than one square mile. Throughout the first half of the 20th century, Plum Town experienced extensive population growth resulting from the development of improved transportation channels linking the community directly to Giant Ville. As part of this growth, Plum Town started its own police force in the early 1900s in order to better serve a growing population and increases in crime rates. During the mid 1900s Plum Town experienced an extensive population decline bringing about housing-stock neglect, economic decline and increasing crime rates. Further, with extensive gentrification taking place in Giant Ville, over the past decades, many lower income minority residents have been displaced to surrounding suburban areas such as Plum Town in search of more affordable housing.

Today, Plum Town has attempted to retain its charm as a primarily residential commuter-community (with roughly 1,100 single-family homes and three large apartment complexes), by engaging in economic revitalization efforts. Dubbed a gateway arts community with a convenient location, quality and affordable middle-class housing, and an accessible transportation system, the town continues to attract a diverse community. With regard to crime rates and different neighborhood contexts, Plum Town serves as a beneficial study location. Plum Town can be described as a racially diverse

² All specific demographic values (crime rates, racial make-up, timeline events) provided in this section on Plum Town and nearby towns have been approximated (rounded, made less precise) in order to protect the identity. Deviations from the actual values are minimal, as to retain an accurate representation and characterization of Plum Town.

community with higher crime rates and poverty levels, when compared to communities of a similar size located in the vicinity of Plum Town (within a 10-mile radius).

Looking at Table 1, Plum Town's overall violent crime rate was 9.00 incidents per 1,000 individuals; more specifically, its homicide rate was 0.10, its robbery rate was 4.5, its assault rate was 4.00; its theft rate was 19.00, and its vehicle theft rate was 8.00. In all the above rates except for the homicide rate (although the difference is minimal), Plum Town exceeded the crime values of comparable towns nearby, most notably in regard to the vehicle theft rate, which is reportedly almost 2-3 times as high. Nevertheless, mirroring national trends, Plum Town's overall crime rate has been declining over the past decade, yet the community still experiences above average violent occurrences.

Plum Town's demographic make-up is indicative of the community's claim of being and attracting a highly diverse population. According to the 2010 census, Plum Town's racial/ethnic make-up was roughly 50% African American, 20% from other races, 20% White, 3% from two or more races, 2% Asian, and less than 1% Native American. Approximately 30% of the population reported a Hispanic or Latino descent, regardless of race, and arguably a large proportion of the above "other races" category would be described as being from Hispanic or Latino descent. With a median household income of roughly \$45,000, slightly less than 20% of the population living below the poverty line, high unemployment rates and a stagnant population growth, Plum Town appears to be a disadvantaged community experiencing greater economic hardship and higher crime rates when compared to towns of similar size located in the same metropolitan area (Neighborhood Scout, 2014; USA.com, 2014).

An assessment of the census tracts that cover the entirety of Plum Town suggest that three potential neighborhood areas can be identified: “City Center,” “Silver Garden,” and “Gold Garden,” where Silver Garden and Gold Garden correspond to the three large apartment complex areas within Plum Town. Silver Garden has the highest crime rate, the largest percentage of families living below the poverty line and the largest proportion of Black residents (approximately 75%), with the rest being primarily Hispanic. Gold Garden appears to be very similar to Silver Garden in regard to racial make-up (although with a slightly larger proportion of Hispanics), crime rates and income levels. By contrast, City Center has the largest proportion of White residents (approx. 33%), the highest comparative median family income and lower crime rates (Neighborhood Scout, 2014; USA.com, 2014). These census tract distinctions suggest that there are different neighborhood profiles within Plum Town and thus examining the impact of different neighborhood contexts on police behavior may be of merit.

Sample

Although Plum Town also lies within the larger county jurisdiction of a county police department, the city’s primary law enforcement agency is the PTPD. The PTPD is dispatched to field calls for service when they originate or take place within the city boundaries of Plum Town. Naturally, instances arise where the PTPD may request assistance from the larger county department and visa versa, but generally speaking the agency on whose primary jurisdiction the incident takes place will become the lead agency and be responsible for taking reports.

The PTPD can be considered a small police agency, as it is comprised of less than 20 sworn police officers and a small number of non-sworn support staff. While some of these officers may carry specialized roles (e.g., school resource officer, Chief of Police)

or have received extra training (e.g., SWAT) the majority of them, given the small size of the department, spend most of their time providing general patrol services, performing their specialized duties only when there is a need.

In order to ensure that only a sample of interest in regard to answering the research question is interviewed, this study is only concerned with a specific subsample of the PTPD sworn officer population. Specifically, officers that are not assigned to general patrol duties were excluded from the sample, given that they may not have the same experiences and knowledge of neighborhoods in Plum Town as officers assigned primarily to general patrol. In addition, only officers who have completed their probationary period (which lasts for one year post-academy graduation and includes field training) and who have been engaged as regular patrol officers for at least six months with the PTPD are included in the sample, so that I can ensure that these officers have had enough time and exposure to their assigned beat in Plum Town. By employing these sampling constraints I was left with a subsample of 13 PTPD patrol officers that I solicited for participation in the interview.

Of the 13 patrol officers that met the sampling constraints, I had the opportunity to approach 10 of them and inquire about their interest in participating in the current research project. The remaining three were either on leave or not available during the four-day research period at the PTPD. Of the ten officers available to participate in the interviews, all agreed to be interviewed, yielding a 100% response rate. Such a response rate exceeds the usually lower participation rates encountered in qualitative street-level policing research (Mastrofski and Ritti, 1996). I contend that such a high response rate is

in part a result of what appeared to be a strong openness to research conveyed and supported by the PTPD Police Chief.

Sampling Plan

The 10 participants were recruited by attending various role calls at the department headquarters over a span of several days in April 2014. During roll call, all present patrol officers were addressed and I gave them a brief description of the research questions and the nature and length of the interview. I also explained that only patrol officers who are not on probationary status and have been working for the PTPD for at least six months on patrol would be considered for interviews and that they should put down their names on a signup sheet. Further, I made it clear that participation in the interviews was completely voluntary, and that confidentiality would be ensured to the greatest extent possible. I then passed out a signup sheet for patrol officers to complete if they wished to be interviewed. The actual interviews were conducted orally while attending a ride-along, when the participating patrol officer was experiencing downtime and not responding to calls for service. For four of the ten interviews conducted, I was granted permission to record the interviews, while for the remaining six interviews, the patrol officers preferred not to be recorded and I took notes by hand.

Confidentiality

In addition to using fictional pseudonyms in order to protect the identity of the study location and corresponding police department, additional steps were taken to afford research participants the maximum confidentiality possible. All direct quotes reproduced in this document are not attributed to a specific officer and any potentially identifying information within the quote was intentionally redacted or completely removed. While

officers were broadly asked about their background in law enforcement and at the PTPD, these insights only served to roughly delineate between “younger” and “older” officers, and officers that has previously worked in other police departments.

No specific inquiry was made into officers’ individual demographic characteristics.

These steps, while limiting in regard to the inferences that can be made about how individual officer characteristics may influence use of force behavior, were necessary in order to ensure that confidentiality of participants is upheld.

Data Collection Procedures

Prior to conducting research at the PTPD, an earlier draft of the interview instrument was pretested with a patrol officer from another department. This officer was selected for pre-test because he/she worked in the same metropolitan area as Plum Town, although for a larger department covering a larger jurisdiction. The purpose of pre-test was to assess the functionality of the interview (timing, clarity, logical sequence), and if the questions elicited the type of information pertinent to answering the research questions. No substantive data was collected as part of the pretesting process. The pre-test was not administered in a ride-along setting and lasted about one hour. Following the pre-test, minor modifications were made to the interview instrument to be used at the PTPD (see Appendix I for interview instrument used at PTPD).

During research period at the PTPD, interview questions were read to the patrol officer in a ride-along setting while the/she was engaging in random patrol or parked in a stationary location. Only one officer was interviewed at a time. When the officer being interviewed did have to respond to a call for service or engage in proactive police activities the interview was halted until the situation was taken care of. The length of the interview when conducted at the PTPD and in the ride-along setting varied drastically,

with the shortest interview lasting for roughly 45 minutes and the longest, due to numerous calls for service, lasting almost four hours. Before starting the actual interview, the participants were asked to complete the interview consent form (see Appendix II). I ensured that all remaining questions or concerns on behalf of the officers were thoroughly addressed before starting the actual interview process.

In-depth Interview

The in-depth interview structure consisted of three main components: 1) brief background information questions, 2) open-ended questions, and 3) a vignette scenario. In the first section, officers were asked basic questions regarding their police experience (how they got involved in law enforcement, roughly how long they had been working as a patrol officer), and their duties and patrol area within the PTPD. These brief questions were meant to provide me with minimally invasive, yet broad background characteristics on the participants' experience in law enforcement. This section also served to allow the interviewee to get used to the interview process and the format in which the interview was conducted.

The second component of the interview instrument was meant to elicit the ways in which patrol officers interpret their neighborhood context and how/why this may influence their use of force behavior. The open-ended questions format was selected because previous literature has suggested a notable absence of a clear understanding of the mechanisms and ways in which patrol officers interpret their work environment (Lum, 2010a; Lum, 2010b). Concurrent with an exploratory approach to the topic, the open-ended nature of the questions proved effective in allowing officers to explain in their own words the often complex ways in which they experience and perceive their

working environment (Babbie, 2009). Additionally, for each open-ended question, I made use of a number of previously developed prompts in order to follow-up on any comments made by the patrol officer (for a review, see Appendix I). The questions the officers were asked broadly addressed these two areas: 1) description of neighborhoods and policing area, and 2) the role of neighborhood context in driving officer behavior in police-suspect encounters.

The questions were intentionally worded and ordered as to avoid priming patrol officers on their answers. For example, instead of asking patrol officers which neighborhood factors matter most to them and then listing a number of factors such as poverty, SES, and crime levels, patrol officers were asked to describe their working environment and highlight whichever factors were most noteworthy to them. Through the use probes I was able to identify if further neighborhood factors that the officer did not mention on their own may also play relevant role to patrol officers. Earlier questions were intentionally kept more broad and open-ended as to avoid priming patrol officer on their responses. The open-ended and semi-structured nature of the interview questions was useful in allowing me to probe participants on certain topics, and make them critically reflect and justify their initial answers. Further, this conversation-like format allowed me to address topics and areas of interest that were developed as a result officers' previous responses and that may have not been explicitly outlined in the original questions.

For the last component of the data collection, interviewees listened to one hypothetical scenario, taking place in different neighborhood contexts. According to Miller (2005) and Phillips (2009), the merit of using vignette style research questions is

that they can allow for more objective insights into a highly complex and subjective process such as a patrol officer's use of force behavior. In their own studies, the researchers turned to vignettes because it allowed them to integrate pertinent variables into scenarios in which respondents then could indicate their likely behaviors. Similarly in this study, officers were read one scenario of a loud music complaint and were asked to describe how they would react/what decisions they would make. The same scenario was simulated to take place in different neighborhood areas of Plum Town previously identified and described by the participant. By providing officers with the same hypothetical scenario but changing only the neighborhood context, I was able to better isolate the importance of neighborhood context in potentially influencing patrol officer decision-making and use of force behavior. However, it should be acknowledged that asking patrol officers about their intended behavior in hypothetical situations may be different to the behavior they would exhibit if such a scenario would occur in a real-world setting, given the unique and often unpredictable nature of any police-suspect encounter (Collett and Childs, 2011).

Key Variables

Dependent Variable(s)

The open-ended semi-structured interview questions were used to assess the variables of interest: how patrol officers interact with suspects in regard to their use of force behavior and what factors (in particular neighborhood factors) appear to influence said behavior. With regard to the dependent variable, part of the inquiry focused on the coercive threat of arrest and in what ways and why patrol officers may employ it in a police-suspect encounter. Further, attention is also given to examining the level of force

at which patrol officers start their police-suspect encounter and how their use of force progresses throughout the interaction. An assessment of the different levels of use of force in this study was based Skolnick and Fyfe's (1993) description of the use of force continuum introduced earlier in the literature review.

The first set of open-ended questions allowed me to inquire about the officers' characterization of Plum Town's different neighborhood areas. Based on said neighborhood descriptions, the later questions specifically asked the interviewees to describe how they would interact with a suspect based on a call for a suspicious person walking on the street, and a non-compliant driver in a traffic stop situation. Officers were directly asked how the neighborhood from which a call is dispatched may influence their behavior, and what specifically about that neighborhood may alter their use of force behavior, especially in comparison to other factors such as the situation at hand. Further, the interviewees were asked if, at what point, and why they may turn to the threat of arrest in the above-mentioned situations, in order to identify how they employ the coercive threat of arrest.

The hypothetical vignette scenario of a call for a loud music complaint posed towards the end of the interview served to more specifically identify how patrol officers may be cued by different neighborhood factors in regard to their use of force behavior. For this vignette, the same scenario is described to take place in different neighborhood contexts and the officer is asked to describe in detail how he/she would deal with such a call in different neighborhoods.

Independent Variable(s)

Previous studies have indicated that among the more obvious neighborhood factors that patrol officers are aware of in their working environment are racial composition, poverty, class structure and crime-levels (Lum, 2010a; Lum, 2010b; Smith and Visser, 1981); likely because these are also more visible. Further, the neighborhood factors that were found to influence differential patrol officer behavior appear to be a high proportion of minority residents (especially Blacks), high-crime areas, high poverty and low SES (Lum, 2010a; Lum, 2010b; Mastrofski et al., 2002; Smith and Klein; 2004, Smith, 1986; Terrill and Reisig, 2003). In this study, the characterization of different neighborhoods and a description thereof is achieved by directly asking patrol officers to describe what they believe to be specific neighborhood areas in Plum Town. Through the use of probes the interviewees were so asked to describe these neighborhoods with regard to their racial, social and economic composition. In addition, interviewees were asked to comment on the crime rate in different areas of Plum Town, and whatever other variables they deemed to be noteworthy.

These different neighborhood contexts in Plum Town serve as the independent variables in which officers were asked to describe their interactions with suspects, and the basis for the vignette scenario. In reference to the original research question of the study, a neighborhood identified as having a high minority population, high poverty and crime rates and a low SES, can collectively be described as a disadvantaged neighborhood. Identifying areas in Plum Town that meet this description allows me to best reflect upon the research question. An assessment of the different census tracts of Plum Town in the earlier section did suggest that there appeared to be disadvantaged neighborhood areas present in Plum Town.

By asking officers about how their use of force behavior in routine situations may be altered in different neighborhood contexts, I was better able to identify what factors of neighborhoods were the most salient in influencing intended officer behavior.

Accordingly, I employed an inductive approach by noting general trends of how neighborhood context appeared to influence patrol officer behavior throughout all the interviews. This was done by critically examining how officers' behaviors in situations differed by neighborhood context and then specifically addressing why officers altered their behaviors and what (if at all) the neighborhood in which an encounter took place was a key influencing factor.

Data Analysis

For the interviews conducted where the participants declined the use of a recording device, I transcribed the responses immediately during the ride-along, and then once the ride-along ended the responses were typed out and I expanded upon the questions from memory and notes. The recorded interviews were transcribed in full, excluding sections/conservations that were not directly relevant to answering the research questions (such as informal conversations about non-policing activities, formalities exchanged, or other talk related to building rapport with the patrol officer).

The transcribed responses of the interviews provided the basis of analysis for this study. An inductive analysis technique (Babbie, 2009; Miller, 2011) was used to analyze the interviews in attempting to identify broad patterns of police use of force behavior by neighborhood context. First, through continuous in-depth readings, individual profiles for each of the interviewees were developed, meaning a detailed description of each interviewee's characterization of neighborhoods in Plum Town, factors that influence his/her use of force behavior, the role of the threat of arrest and how the interviewee

responded to the various situational questions were developed. Constant comparative methods were then used when reading over these profiles in order to identify overarching neighborhood factors and elements that influenced how and why patrol officers engage with suspects in different contexts. These emerging trends were then tested by comparing them to the overall trends observed across all interviews. By grouping together the interview profiles that turned to similar mental schemas and factors in influencing officer behavior, and comparing them to profiles that seemed to behave differently I was able to better identify what the larger behavior profile of the PTPD appeared to be. Such an approach has proven useful in previous qualitative studies that have examined the behavior patterns and attitudes of specific subgroups, as it allows the researcher to more broadly analyze the data and observe more dominant patterns (Miller, 2011; Staller, 2002).

Lastly, the vignette responses on how patrol officers would interact with suspects based on a call for a loud music complaint were analyzed. In particular, interviewees' specific use of force behavior was noted, as well as the reasoning for why officers behaved in such a way. Unfortunately, the vignette questions (while not problematic during the pre-test) provided limited insights, given that officers identified only with a small number of unique neighborhoods available for comparison in Plum Town. In addition, officers indicated that departmental policies and city ordinances were fairly prescriptive in regard to how they are meant to handle loud music complaints. Accordingly, little variations in officers' approaches to the loud music complaints were identified, thereby limiting the extent to which comparisons and general observations can be drawn from the vignettes.

Chapter IV: Description of PTPD and Plum Town Neighborhoods

PTPD Officer Law Enforcement Background

In regard to their past policing experiences, the sample can be roughly divided in two broad categories. The officers who started their policing career at the PTPD, and the other group of officers that started at other departments and then made a lateral transfer to the PTPD. Only three of the officers interviewed started their policing career at the PTPD; primarily, the younger officers fell into this category. The remaining seven interviewees started their policing careers at other police departments, three of which previously came from mid-sized police departments, while four hailed from large urban departments notorious for policing highly violent areas and inner-city communities. Of the officers that transferred from these large police departments, all of them stated that they were tired of the dysfunctional, high-stress and high-violence environment they encountered policing in these areas and turned to the PTPD for the smaller community feel. None of the officers interviewed actually resided within Plum Town.

Patrol Sectors in Plum Town

When the interviewees were asked if they have a specific patrol assignment or area of expertise within PTPD jurisdiction, most officers responded with a somewhat ambivalent answer suggesting that on paper they may be assigned to a specific area of Plum Town, but in reality they are responsible for policing and knowing their entire jurisdiction. As one of the patrol officers put it “It came down from the higher-ups in the chain of command where they basically broke the city up in four quarters, and they call it team-patrolling-areas. It’s not so much that you are assigned to that area and you can’t leave that area, but you are supposed to know the area better than anybody else.” The other officers echoed a similar response in claiming that the PTPD Chief in a supposed

attempt to “mimic the big boys [big city departments]” introduced policing areas on paper, but in reality “we all police and are supposed to know all areas of Plum Town.” Such a response is not surprising given that whole of Plum Town is under one square mile in size. The officers also relayed that at times, given staffing levels and officers taking leave, it is not uncommon that only a single patrol officer may be on duty during a shift, again strongly suggesting that as an PTPD patrol officer, one’s area of responsibility covers the entirety of Plum Town.

Description of Plum Town and Neighborhoods

Given that most interviewees saw their policing area as the whole of Plum Town, the first interview questions regarding a description of their neighborhood/policing area of expertise was generally answered in regard to Plum Town as a whole. However, through the use of more in-depth questioning, most officers also reflected on more specific or distinct neighborhoods within Plum Town, and provided characterizations of these areas, as well. This was important for the purposes of later interview questions, given that these different neighborhood areas served as the emerging independent variables central to an assessment of differential use of force behavior by neighborhood context. Accordingly, the section below provides an in-depth characterization and description of the different neighborhood areas established by the PTPD officers through the interviews. First, however, a description of Plum Town as a whole is provided, given that most officers suggested the town is so integrated and diverse that one could view the entirety of the town as one big neighborhood.

Interestingly, in reference to the different neighborhood areas identified by the census tracts in the methods section (for review see pg. 34-35), we can observe that officers generally viewed the “Silver Garden” and “Gold Garden” census tracts

collectively as the “apartments area” of Plum Town. This makes intuitive sense given that the demographic profiles of both tracts were fairly comparable, and somewhat distinct from the “City Center” tract. Similarly, the officer’s characterization of the rest of Plum Town as being seen primarily as the homeowner area³ corresponds to the delineation of the “City Center” census tract. A discussion of the officers’ perceived differences and profiles of these areas and an identification of specific neighborhood pockets within these areas is reported below.

Characterization of Plum Town

The word “diverse” was often used to describe Plum Town, in addition to “dense,” “tight-knit,” and “progressive.” Almost all of the officers made reference to Plum Town as being very racially diverse, yet also highly integrated; as one officer put it: “Blacks, Whites, Hispanics and even Asians all living together, it is a big racial melting pot.” Although generally integrated, one of the patrol officers remarked that if he had to generalize about the racial distribution of Plum Town he would say that, “South of Thruway Avenue you have Black and Whites nicely integrated, minus a pretty heavy Asian community in the southern corner. You have Hispanics mainly in the apartment buildings and Blacks, but most Whites live in the homeowner areas throughout the middle of Plum Town.”

In regard to a description of the overall social class and poverty levels of Plum Town, most officers responded that Plum Town is primarily a middle- to lower-class community. Only two interviewees even made reference to the existence of an upper-

³ Throughout the document the term “homeowner area” is used to describe the “City Center” area of Plum Town that is primarily made up of owner-occupied single-family homes; as compared to the “apartment area” that is primarily renter occupied and more densely populated. These distinctions and descriptions were derived through the patrol officer interviews.

class, which they saw as constricted to a few houses and areas within the homeowner area of Plum Town. In their description of Plum Town, the officers who had previously worked in more urban areas and large police departments would supplement their description of Plum Town as being lower to middle class with the caveat that while you certainly have pockets of poverty, it is not the type of severe poverty you might find in their previous inner-city jurisdictions: “overall the classification would be lower to middle income, with no real pockets of severe poverty.”

PTPD Relationship to Community

The interviewees described Plum Town as having a “tight-knit community feel” that was generally supportive of law enforcement. Officers also pointed out that they could leverage this support if needed, as one patrol officer expressed: “If little Johnny is not showing respect to the police, well I can talk to little Johnny’s mom and she is going to correct his behavior, everybody here is a close-knit community, they can e-mail or pick up the phone and call the Chief if they didn’t like anything, which is good because you know to be an effective police department, we have to have a connection, even if its good or bad, with the community.” Many officers thought that the older residents and homeowners of Plum Town were more supportive toward the PTPD and oftentimes helped hold the more delinquent youths accountable. Most officers made reference to town hall meetings and other forums where the PTPD actively seeks input from the community and tries to have citizens address their concerns, arguing that a clear line of communication between the community and police is fundamental in a community-oriented policing approach. As one of officer stressed, “I think we are definitely a community-oriented policing department, because our main job is patrol. Our Chief tells

us all the time, if you [the community] call we'll respond to any concerns you may have. Again going back to the whole, you know, you're providing a service to residents, and you're a public servant."

Only one of the younger officers, for whom the PTPD was his/her first policing job, claimed that: "it's no secret that in certain places of America the residents and the citizen have a different level of respect for police. In my experience in this area people don't respect the police. The majority of the population, doesn't matter the race or anything, in my experience, in my opinion, this area people have a very low respect levels for police." Two other officers that were older and had previously worked as police officers in more inner-city impoverished areas countered this claim by saying that in comparison to their previous jurisdiction, respect and support toward police was far greater in Plum Town.

Description of Apartment Area

Officers identified the "apartment area" as a unique neighborhood area of Plum Town, especially in comparison to the rest of Plum Town, which is primarily made up of 1,100 single-family homes. Constructed in the early to mid 1900s, there are three large-scale apartment complexes in Plum Town: Silver Garden, Gold Garden, and Iron Garden. Geographically speaking the apartment complexes are tightly clustered in the northeastern and northwestern section of the city, with Silver Garden being located in the northwestern corner along the border to Giant Ville, Gold Garden located in the northeastern section of the Plum Town city line and Iron Garden located between the two. For the purposes of the interviews, the officers regarded the different apartment complexes as a collective neighborhood. By contrast, the central area of Plum Town

(aside from the mainly commercial area around Throughway Avenue) is primarily made up of roughly 1,100 single-family homes.

When describing the apartment complexes, the most notable feature was how densely populated they are, as one officer put it: “census data can be deceiving, according to the census Plum Town has only 6,800 people [in fact, the 2010 census reveals around 8,000], but if you think about it, Gold Garden alone as 1,200 units, with many people living on top of each other, I’d imagine there’s at least 5,000 people in Gold Garden alone. Because of these statistics, the apartments are really quite the unique place, they certainly represent the highest density and foot traffic in the area.” Given this density, officers concurred that more calls for service originate from the apartment complexes than from any other areas of the city. The officers described the apartment complexes as being primarily Hispanic and Black, for lower- to middle-income individuals with higher levels of unemployment, large proportions of government-assisted housing, and generally considered to have higher crime levels. These descriptors resemble those identified in the “Silver Garden” and “Gold Garden” census tracts mentioned earlier.

Another component of why officers claimed crime was more prevalent in and around the apartment complexes is due to the physical features of the apartments. For one, the actual geographic layouts of the apartments themselves are more conducive to crime. Many of the apartments are connected by underground tunnels and have multiple entrances or exits allowing for easier escape routes for burglars or robbers, and easier illegal drug trafficking. All of the officers agreed that these unique geographic features of the apartment complexes require more in-depth knowledge of the layouts in order to counter this threat. This supports the notion that the environmental design of places can

make areas more conducive to crime (Jeffery, 1971; Newman; 1972). Specifically, Atlas (1990) pointed out that in areas in which there is limited control of access and minimal surveillance, such spaces may be viewed as more opportune by criminals and drug dealers. The other reason for a higher proportion of calls for service emanating from the apartment complexes is their proximity to the commercial businesses located just north of the apartments and the border to Giant Ville, all of which contribute to increases in foot traffic and the availability of targets for crimes (Cohen and Felson, 1979). As one of the more tenured officers argued, although the apartment areas have seen an overall decrease in crime, the apartment complexes still appear to be one of Plum Town's higher crime areas; "Today it is much better. On a 10-point scale, Gold Garden apartments used to be a 9, now I would say it is a 4 at most. However for Plum Town it still is considered kind of a high-crime area, with drug trafficking." Another officer added to the discussion of crime saying that generally the crimes in the apartment complexes are of a more violent nature: "If you look at the type of calls for service that occur in and around the apartment complexes, they tend to be more violent crimes. You can't really say, or at least I can't say that it has to do with income levels."

The relevance of the Plum Town border to Giant Ville was something of concern to all of the interviewees, as one officer put it bluntly "[the apartment complexes and surrounding parking lots] are like a one-stop-shop for shiteheads, they can pick whatever car they like, steal it or break into it and run right over the border into Giant Ville. Basically, unless it is a violent felony, we cannot pursue them into Giant Ville. Of course we will call up Giant Ville but by then they will be long gone, and of course the criminals know this."

In comparing the apartment area to the homeowner area of Plum Town, the officers specifically pointed out the element of transience associated with renters versus homeowners. As stated by one of the older officers; “just like any other multi-dwelling apartment complex, it’s very transient, you have people come, some people are on month-to-month leases, and some people stay there longer. You really don’t have the living stability that you would in the homeowner areas.” One officer further expanded that with this level of transience, residents form less of a connection and have less of an incentive to care about their community. Accordingly, he argues they have less respect and deference to law enforcement as opposed to homeowners, “[In the apartments] you have the fly-by-nighters, that are here probably six months to a year, they really don’t care [about their community], and they’ll let you know upfront that they don’t care. They have no local investment.”

Description of Homeowner Area

Most officers also specifically identified the homeowner area of Plum Town as a unique area; describing this area as primarily being made-up of middle-class single-family homes, populated on average by older residents and having lower crime rates. Here, too, these descriptions correspond to the demographic profile of the “City Center” census tract. In this area, most of the houses are owned and many are handed down within families, but a small proportion is also rented. The patrol officers’ experience with homeowners in the homeowner area appeared to be of a more positive nature in comparison to renters in the apartments, as stated by one of the officers: “The homeowners, they have the respect for authority, they have a stake here, they have an investment. So, they get along with the police department because that’s the authority that’s watching over your property, that’s the authority that’s making sure you are safe.”

Although it should be noted that two officers cautioned that the downside of dealing with homeowners is that “in the homeowner areas, sometime you have the problem of self-entitlement, where they [homeowners] will try to namedrop the mayor or someone, sometimes property owners are harder to deal with in that way.”

Due to the fact that homeowners have generally resided in Plum Town longer and have a greater stake in their community, patrol officers are more likely and able to leverage their cooperation. Similarly, all officers agreed that in the homeowner areas, it is easier to detect if someone or something appears to be out of place, whereas in the apartment buildings, due to the density and anonymity of the area, unusual or criminal behavior is more likely to go undetected. Likewise, it is easier to pinpoint your problem areas/problem houses within the homeowner areas as compared to the ever-changing turnover of renters in the apartments. Some of the interviewees even suggested that when calls for service do originate from the homeowner areas, something illegal is generally actually happening because multiple neighbors will call in things, and suspicious behavior is more likely to stand out.

Interestingly, as one of the officer aptly explained, the issue of the transient nature of the apartment complexes is that it is harder for individuals to form a collective and have their concerns and voices heard by the PTPD. As such, the officer suggested that in part due to that fact that homeowners have a greater voice than the apartment population, they tend to have a greater sway in influencing the PTPD policing style and resources:

“Yea I think without a doubt the people that are homeowners have more of a voice. There’s two reasons behind that, people that live in the homes have much more of a stake in their neighborhoods being protected and improved versus people in the apartment complexes. People in houses tend to vote you know, they stay more informed, and that’s where I think the difference comes in. When our Chief tries to talk to people in the town hall meetings, we keep track of our location and calls for service. So look, you are

complaining about police services, they are all over here [apartment complexes] because this is where they need us the most. Yet no one in the apartment complexes is organized enough to go to the city hall and say hey look something else needs to be done, we need more police officers we need more of that. Like I said they may be here three months or a year and then off they go.”

The interviews suggest the homeowners are more involved in their community and appear to be more supportive of the PTPD, this supports similar observations made by Reisig and Parks (2000) who found that homeowners were more satisfied with police services as compared to renters. By extension, homeowners may also be more likely to hold patrol officers more accountable and have higher standards of the policing services they expect from the PTPD.

Asian Pocket

Aside from the broad distinction between the homeowner and apartment neighborhoods of Plum Town, three interviewees made a brief reference to a small Asian enclave community in the southwestern part of Plum Town, which they saw as a unique neighborhood. Populated primarily by families of Korean descent, this community is said to live in close proximity to each other, often in duplex houses, and they occupy a small apartment complex in the southwestern area of Plum Town. This area stood out to one officer in particular because it is so self-secluded, describing it as “very quiet, not a bunch of people, somewhat introverted. They more or less stay to themselves all the time,” although the same officer continued in saying that: “We usually patrol down there, but not much happens down there as compared to other parts of the city. But, when it does happen, then it’s usually a big thing overall to me, though it’s a way lower crime area.” Another aspect of this area that made it stand out to two of the officers was that most of the Asian families only spoke limited English, so oftentimes there were language barrier issues. Generally speaking, the area can be described as a hard working middle-

class Asian enclave community. It may be the very quietness of the neighborhood that prompted some of the other interviewees to respond to me when I asked them about the area, that they had heard of it but never really found it or considered it to be its own entity. This suggests that the Asian community of Plum Town may in fact be less integrated as compared to other minority race groups.

Thruway Avenue Bus Terminal

Another specific area that a number of interviewees highlighted was Thruway Avenue, in particular, the bus terminal. This area was described as an area high in foot-traffic and a common place for drunks, drug-addicts and the homeless to congregate. One officer even went so far as to claim “right now, the highest crime area would be the bus terminal on Thruway Avenue. You know we’re always answering calls for service, patrolling over there.” Primarily surrounded by city administration buildings, some commercial businesses, small restaurants, a liquor store, and even the PTPD headquarters, this area does not represent a place where people generally reside, but where during the day and into the night foot traffic is higher and certain groups tend to loiter. This strip of Thruway Avenue that horizontally cuts through Plum Town also represents the area of highest vehicle traffic, acting as a major thruway from Giant Ville to the surrounding suburbs and providing access to a major national highway system.

Summary of Neighborhood Descriptions

The above-mentioned neighborhood distinctions represent the descriptions of the various independent variables of neighborhood context in which patrol officers use of force behavior will be analyzed. While the officers’ description of different areas closely coincided with the demographics of the census tracts identified in the above methods section, most interviewees based their delineation of Plum Town primarily on the

difference between the apartment and homeowner areas, and only a limited number of interviewees pointed to the existence of the Thruway Avenue bus terminal and Asian pocket as unique neighborhood areas. Overall, the task of probing patrol officers to identify specific neighborhoods in Plum Town proved more difficult than anticipated, and initially most officers maintained that they viewed Plum Town as one large neighborhood.

This difficulty in identifying neighborhoods was substantiated by the neighborhood-specific scenario question posed toward the end of the interview. For this set of questions officers were asked to identify and mark (if possible) on an enlarged map of Plum Town any specific and noteworthy neighborhoods. Of the ten interviewees, only three officers actually chose to mark the provided maps, with the remaining seven claiming that they thought it would be too difficult to generalize and truly delineate neighborhoods on a map of Plum Town, suggesting that Plum Town is so diverse, integrated and dense that it was hard to truly distinguish specific areas. This level of integration is illustrated in a statement made by one of the officers who did not mark the map: “you definitely have some areas where folks are borderline poverty, and in their backyard, because this area is so dense and so small you have people of the upper-class community.”

Nevertheless, having described and established the primary neighborhood contexts identified by the interviewees, we now turn to an analysis of the key trends that emerged in regard to differential patrol officer use of force behavior and the role that neighborhood factors, among others, play in the small-town context of Plum Town in influencing patrol officer behavior.

Chapter V: Assessment of Officer Behavior in Plum Town

Use of Force in a Police-Suspect Encounter

When the interviewees were asked to describe their general methods of approaching a suspect in a police-suspect encounter, all officers followed some kind of use of force protocol similar to what one officer dubbed the “ATM” approach: “I follow a pretty straightforward policy when dealing with suspects, ATM: ask–tell–make.” As such, all the interviewees suggested that the first part of any police-suspect interaction, regardless of the neighborhood in which it occurs, is to make contact with a suspect, positively identify the individual, assess the situation, and if necessary develop or substantiate suspicions. All officers stressed that early in the interaction they would let a suspect know why they are making contact and why the person is stopped, as explained by one of the interviewees: “first things first, we’ll conduct a field interview to get the basics, and we’ll tell them [suspects] why we are out here with him, we got call in reference to you.” The interviewees indicated that the initial contact will usually give them a good read of the situation, and if need be they may continue probing the suspect with generic questions such as where he/she is from and what he/she is doing here, in order to see if the person is consistent in their responses or may appear to be lying.

When the initial conversation with a suspect does not result in a resolution of the situation and the suspect is not compliant with an officer’s request or demands, then officers expressed they will move on to the next stage of the “ATM” approach, first the tell and then the make stage. One of the officers described his progression of force and the types of force available to patrol officers in their use of force repertoire:

“If I can’t talk sense into them, if the situation is beyond, if I’m not getting full compliance then I have to go to force, there’s no other option. The first thing they tell you about the use of force continuum, is you know, you have your presence, that’s the first

level, having this badge on, the gun. Now they know the situation is serious because the police is on the scene. The second level is my voice, my commands, I'm telling you to do, now, and if from there you don't get compliance, from there I would go to my batman belt [duty belt], and effect an arrest, you know, based on the resistance of the person that is not complying."

Said officer's description of the use of force continuum closely resembles that of Skolnick and Fyfe (1993), highlighting the fact that mere presence and verbalization play a key role at the lower end of the continuum. In fact, the above-mentioned acronym "ATM" suggests that at the initial stage of contact an officer will generally "ask" a suspect to do something followed by "telling" them what to do, which appears to be equivalent with the "verbalization" and "command voice" levels described by Skolnick and Fyfe (1993).

The Role of Coercive Threats

The inquiry into the use and role of coercive threats during a police-suspect was primarily based on asking officers how they would respond to routine situations. Specifically, all interviewees were asked how they would respond to a call for a suspicious person in the street, a routine traffic stop, and a loud music complaint in various neighborhoods (the vignette scenario). Through the use of probes the conditions of each of the scenarios were heightened in that the suspects engaged in minimal compliance with the officer's requests. This was meant to elicit how the interviewees' approach and demeanor may change when faced with passive –but not necessarily arrest-worthy– non-compliance.

Generally, interviewees described a consistent manner whereby they would handle traffic stops. The officers noted that they would carefully approach the car and engage the driver by asking for his/her license and registration, and then explain why

they stopped the vehicle (the scenario assumed that the driver was stopped for minor speeding, no warrants or other reasons warranting greater officer safety were given). When faced with non-compliance –if the driver passively ignored police demands– the next step of the encounter according to the interviewees was to quickly figure out what is the reason for the driver’s behavior. As one officer suggested, this does not necessarily mean the individual is doing something criminal, “I mean it could be that the individual is having medical issues such as a heart attack, or they are mute, or even more basic they don’t speak English and that’s why he cannot respond, I cannot immediately assume.” Regardless, all officers believed that as long as they had no certain answers about why the driver was non-compliant their sense of suspiciousness would be heightened, leading seven interviewees to call for back-up at this point given that the uncertainty of the situation calls for greater officer safety.

Once it is clear that the driver understands the officers’ requests but is intentionally ignoring them, coercive threats quickly come into play. The officers said they would quickly use a commanding voice in ordering the driver to exit the vehicle, with the goal of as one officer put it: “I need to gain control of the situation quick.” Thus, the “ATM” approach comes into play, as one officer suggested there is now a need to shift from a request to a demand: “[after refusal to give license] that’s when the threats come in pretty much, I have probable cause to stop you, you fail to display your license, if you don’t do it I have an issue.” Not surprisingly, if a suspect still continues to disobey commands, the officers all agreed that once back-up arrives they would affect the arrest and use whatever means necessary if the suspects resists.

Interestingly, the vignette scenario, which asked patrol officer's to describe how they would respond to a loud music complaint, yielded an even more uniform response of patrol officer behavior. As one of the officers divulged to me, PTPD departmental policy generally prescribes a fairly standardized approach toward dealing with loud music complaints: "First you cordially advise them they need to turn their music down. If you are called back then you give them a citation based on a city ordinance of disturbing the peace, which is about \$100. If you still have to come back then you issue them another citation, and you tell them this is their last warning before they get arrested. [Researcher: What if they still don't comply and you have to come back again?] In my whole career that has never happened before, but I guess if it did, I would arrest them." Regardless of the neighborhood context in which the vignette scenario was posed, all officers responded along the lines of the quote above, suggesting that in some instances formal departmental policy may be the primary factor that affects officers' behavior and restricts their discretion (Mastrofski, Ritti, and Hoffmaster, 1987). As discussed in the methods section, the vignette scenario posed in this study provided limited insights into differential patrol officer behavior by neighborhood context, accordingly most inferences were obtained through the open-ended questions (which included a number of individual scenarios officers were asked).

The Threat of Arrest

When discussing the use of coercive threats, the interviewees described the threat of arrest as a useful tool to gain compliance from suspects, but cautioned that it should only be used when they actually have the legal right to arrest someone. The threat of arrest has the ability to quickly settle down a situation and allow an officer to gain

compliance from a suspect in a situation that could otherwise have escalated, in what one officer called “escalating a situation in order to deescalate it.” On the flipside, if misused, the threat of arrest can also lead to a loss of credibility on behalf of the officer, which in a community the size of Plum Town can quickly discredit the officer in all future encounters. The quote below by one of the more senior officers expressed the inherently useful but also risky nature of using the threat of arrest to handle police-suspect encounters:

“Yea, there are situations [where officers use the threat of arrest], you know I hear that a lot if you don’t sit down or do something I’m gonna lock you up for public intoxication or disorderly. Over my career, yea, I did have to say I’m gonna lock you up for this if you don’t comply with my commands, and, right then and there you get compliance. And sometimes you don’t, you know. And then you got to eat your words and lock that person up because they didn’t believe you. Now if I don’t have anything, I know I won’t be saying, you know, I’ll lock you up for you know you’re hindering a police officer. You’ll have some people that’ll say okay lock me up, they’re calling your bluff. So the next time you’re sitting there, they ain’t buying anything you saying, and that’s bad. You just lost your street-creds.”

The importance of street credibility and the fear of losing face when issuing the threat of arrest without probable cause was a reoccurring theme echoed by the interviewees. All officers agreed that they generally would be hesitant to issue the threat without a legal basis.

Factors Affecting Officer Use of Force Behavior

By and large, the interviewees suggested that regardless of where a police-suspect encounter takes place, they try to take every encounter “at face value, it’s about the situation at that moment and how it pans out. Does the individual seem nervous, straightforward? It has less to do with where the call came from.” Still, officers did acknowledge that some factors shape how they approach a subject. An assessment of the interviewees’ responses as to what factors influence the type of behavior they exhibit in a

suspect encounter suggests that situational, individual and organizational/cultural factors can play a role. At the situational level, officers pointed to the importance of officer safety in guiding their behaviors with a suspect, and that the need for officer safety is influenced by the level of call details provided by dispatch. On the individual level, a patrol officer's previous experience with certain suspects and areas alongside an officer's perceived level of self-control appeared to matter. Lastly, the organizational culture and community expectations of police may play a role as well.

Officer Safety and Call Details

Seven out of the ten interviewees made reference to what they believed to be one of the most important underlying components of any police-suspect encounter that will dictate how an officer behaves and what actions he/she will take: officer safety. As stated by one officer: "The universal concern in reading a situation, which includes where it takes place, is officer safety." To some extent, officers appeared to equate officer safety with the level of suspicion they will bring to a suspect encounter. Officers strongly believed that complacency and routineness should be avoided at all cost and that the best way to counter complacency is to always be more suspicious and expect the worst; reminiscent of what Skolnick (1966) called an officer's working personality. "You have to treat every situation on its own, knowing that there's always the potential in any type of situation, whether it's a serious or less serious call, that something could, you know, go really, really bad. Don't be complacent when you go to any type of calls, the number one killer of police is complacency." Such a mentality of a continuous need for greater suspiciousness may be of merit in fostering greater officer safety, but arguably it may

also contribute to police officer pessimism and influence the level of procedural justice afforded to suspects (Tyler and Wakslaw, 2004).

Accordingly, when responding to a call for a suspicious person, the interviewees generally suggested that the details of the dispatch call for service and call history of a certain location or individual can dictate a greater need for officer safety and subsequently influence their level of suspicion and behavior exhibited toward a suspect. As one officer explained: “Like I said, you try to treat every situation with the same level of awareness. Just ‘cause you’re going to this part of the city you don’t want to let your guard down. Your level suspicion and how you treat things it’s really going to be dictated a lot by the type of call, the circumstances going into the call, and prior call history.” As one officer stated specific to calls for suspicious persons: “You know for most suspicious calls you might get the suspect is drinking alcohol or drugs or CDS or something where then you need to be on some type of high alert.” Thus, the situational aspects of a call for service such as the level of details that dispatch provides, as opposed to the mere location of a call for service, appear to be more telling in regard to the way in which an officer will approach a suspect.

Officer Experience and Perceived Level of Self-Control

Some of the interviewees suggested that their experience, training and background will also be a determinant of how they approach a situation and a suspect. As summarized by one officer: “experience with people and places as well as your training will certainly influence how you behave in situations, especially if they are reoccurring or occur with the same people over and over. You learn how to deal with them, which may involve being very direct.” This is a particular salient point made by a number of

interviewees saying that as one would expect, their behaviors will be different when dealing with the individuals that they have to continuously deal with or arrest—the so called “frequent flyers”— and/or particular problem houses in Plum Town. Previous encounters and experiences with frequent flyers, for example, may play a significant role in dictating the tone of future interactions, as one officer stated: “Yes, past experiences absolutely will drive future behavior, especially if those past experience are with a suspect you already kind of know and how you are going to need to talk to him to get the message across.” This stands in contrast to Sampson and Raudenbush (2005), who suggested that police officers’ perceptions of neighborhoods may matter just as much as their actual experiences there. Patrol officers of the PTPD said they primarily relied on their own actual experiences with specific places and individuals, and when dealing with a new situation, they try to treat it at face value without underlying prejudices. Of course, this is the officers’ views; actual behavior may provide different insight (Collett and Childs, 2011).

When asked if past experiences can be generalized to entire areas of the city, one officer stated “Here in Plum Town, [the demographics are] so mixed that you have people of the criminal element in all corners of the city. Those kind of individuals surely might need more heavy police talk to get the message across, but you can’t just start out that way because you can ran into someone in a certain neighborhood.” Thus, it appears that while previous experience with specific suspects and/or problem areas has the potential to future police behavior, in the context of Plum Town, given the town’s high level of racial and socioeconomic integration, it does not appear that certain areas can be generalized to require a certain type of police response or be associated with a specific

group of individuals. However, it would be shortsighted not to look at how neighborhood factors may in fact contribute to and influence the individual and situational factors that officers appear to primarily rely on.

The interviews suggest that officers' perceived level of self-control, which appears to vary by experience, can also contribute to differential use of coercive threats. Three of the interviewees expressed this by suggesting that, as one officer put it, "It all goes back to how comfortable you are, if you can diffuse a situation without threatening force or anything like that, then you are a better person, a better police officer. But, you know, there are situations that arise that you have to go in with force, and every officer you know, my threshold is different to your threshold, different from the next." Another officer specified that an individual's perceived level of self-control and professionalism play a large role in determining their behavior: "You need good self control, and that comes with experience. The more you do this, you just need to realize this is just a job and you are just providing a service. And, the more you remind yourself of that, the more it will help you keep your emotions in check and all that good stuff." Thus, it appears that individual officer characteristics may also play an important role in determining the use patterns of coercive threats.

One of the older officers cautioned that there is a fine line between maintaining your self-control and also avoiding being trampled on by suspects. This officer pointed out that: "Well, sometimes, yea, you know you have to kind of get a little aggressive verbally because you have to let a person know, you have to stay in your place. I'm in charge, not you. And, in some cases I found that some officers they don't respond a certain way, and that person they are with is running all over top of them." This can be of

particular concern to new rookie officers who often feel that they must be more aggressive to prove themselves as an authority figure when they are new to a community.

Departmental Culture/Community Attitudes

When officers were asked if they believed their use of force behavior was similar to that of their peers, the interviewees' responses quickly turned to a discussion of the broader departmental culture and community attitudes in influencing the behavior of all PTPD officers. As alluded to earlier, the PTPD prides itself in making itself accessible to the community and acting upon the needs expressed of Plum Town residents. A number of officers, throughout the interviews tended to emphasize how important it is to view their roles as public servants that are providing a service –in this case, a police service– to a client that is the community. Accordingly, if one aspires to provide valued service to a community, then one must value the input, which most of the interviewees said the PTPD and its officers do.

When asked if the community and culture of the PTPD can have an impact on the type of police services provided, one officer responded by saying:

“Yes absolutely, yes it does, all the way down to the Major’s office to the police administration they set tone for the police. It comes down to the community sentiment, what kind of policing they call for the, the community is the driver for the police force, they set the tone of what type of police department they’ll get it, if they want the COP they’ll get it, if they want the ground-pounding they’ll get it.”

Two interviewees specifically emphasized that they see their role as community-oriented police officers, and that part of this job description requires building trust with the community, and being able to listen to and address some of the concerns brought up by the citizens. When asked why it might be beneficial for departments to adopt a policing approach embraced by their community, one officer provided a practical

rationale. This officer suggested that police departments want to adopt an approach that will make them more effective and efficient, and that these two elements generally come with being more attune to community concerns and having the backing from the community (Kelling, Wasserman and Williams, 1988). This may be particularly important in a small-town setting and in a small police agency in which citizens and police officer may be very familiar with each other.

Alternately, when a department and its officers are not policing in a manner that their community expects or endorses, and residents are not afforded the same level of procedural justice, then this can have a negative impact on developing a strong working relationship (Taylor and Fagan, 2008; Taylor and Wakslaw, 2004). Thus, the misuse of coercive threats and abuses of force can be seen as having the potential to harm community-police relationships and undermine police legitimacy. And as one officer suggested, the outcome of this can be far reaching: “If you behave in such a way then you move from becoming a public servant to becoming a public nuisance. And, ultimately, you may get called out on your bluffs, and people will challenge you in court and then you will become known as that guy and then you will lose credibility, among your peers and the perps, and then you could lose your ability to be effective as a police officer.” Evidently, most of the interviewees were aware that the use of coercive threats or the threat of arrest when use illegitimately can severely undermine the department’s relationship to the community (Tyler and Fagan, 2008).

In light of the observation that the patrols officers’ relationships appeared to differ between renters and homeowners, and that homeowners may hold the PTPD and the services they provide to a higher standard, consideration should also be given to varying

levels of accountability that patrol officer may feel when dealing with homeowners in certain neighborhood areas. In particular with a department that truly operates under the COP model, the residents that are the most involved in the co-production of police services may also be the ones holding the police most accountable (Kelling et al., 1988; Reisig and Parks, 2000).

The Role of Neighborhood Factors

Geographic Features/Physical Make-up

Officers believed that one of the key factors of neighborhoods that may influence their behavior lies in the actual physical make-up of certain areas. The interviewees conveyed that they generally were more suspicious and likely to be abrupt in a police-suspect encounter in the apartment neighborhood because of the actual physical profile of this area. The underground tunnels and passageways, the multiple entrances and exists, the illogical numbering and labeling of the apartments, the proximity to the Giant Ville border, and the high level of foot traffic, were among the main reasons why officers place a greater emphasis on officer safety when responding to the apartment areas for any calls for service. In fact, when officers were asked to describe the apartment neighborhood to a new patrol officer starting at the PTPD, their focus was always on emphasizing to them the ins and out of the apartment complexes physical features: “Gold Garden apartments do make me more cautious and more likely to be firm in a situation because of their geography, they are turned inward and there’s always 2-3 ways out of a building, which makes it hard if you are looking for or chasing a perp so you have to be mindful of that.”

In similar vein, an officer's knowledge of an area or neighborhood can influence his/her level of suspicion, because he/she will quickly know if something appears to be out of place in that area:

“When you do this job long enough, you’ll know the differences in the different areas of the city, like where we are now you see a couple people walking, this is the 3700 block of Thruway Avenue, you don’t see a lot of people walking here usually, for example, as opposed to the apartment complex. So, if a call would come out for a person hanging out in the street hanging out here you would approach it differently, sure, I want to see what this person is up to, they are out of place you wouldn’t expect people just loitering on Thruway Avenue in front of the fire house.”

High-crime Neighborhoods

Generally speaking the interviewees revealed that the areas in which they would be more suspicious or careful are the areas associated with higher crime rates; “yes, certain areas that are high crime areas in Plum Town, surely come with a higher level of suspicion and anxiety. So, for example, near the 7Eleven [located in the apartments area], we have a lot of robberies, so thus if a call of a suspicious person comes from there I will be more likely to believe it is a real call. This knowledge will make you more aware, again leading back to officer safety.” Similarly, another officer expressed that previous experiences with certain areas of Plum Town do guide an officer's behavior in regard to what he/she should expect: “if a call comes in for possible CDS possession behind the liquor store near the transit center [bus terminal], then I’m pretty sure it is going to be a legit call because that are the type of problems we come to deal with there.” The description of the different neighborhood areas discussed earlier suggests that in Plum Town the high-crime areas were usually associated with the apartment complexes and the bus terminal. Demographically, the apartment areas also contained the largest percentage of minority residents. Terrill and Reisig (2003) and Lum (2010a, 2010b) found that in

such areas marked by high-crime and high minority populations, police use of force was higher and police tended to employ a more punitive policing approach.

Residents' Respect for Police

Three officers expressed that in areas where respect for authority and police is low, they may be more likely to take a more aggressive stance and put their foot down in order to get the point across, “Where in certain areas you may have an officer ask one time and the person will be completely compliant. Whereas in other areas you got the people who just are f-the police. So, yea, I do think depending on your demographic and area, and speaking for Plum Town, I do think that we have to engage in a type of command presence where you know people need to know who is boss.” However, this same individual when asked if he believed there to be certain geographic areas in Plum Town where he believed this type of approach was more common responded by saying, “It’s funny that you ask that, because I would have to say no. It really depends more on the situation, not so much the area. Sometimes less is better. Really it’s a case-by-case basis. So, yes and no.”

The Role of Place as a Driving Force Behind Officer Behavior

For the most part, at least in Plum Town, officers believed that neighborhood context influences their behavior primarily through a greater need for officer safety and previous experiences they had within a particular area. This falls in line with Werthmann and Piliavin (1967) and Klinger’s (1997) notion that situational and individual factors can be rooted in geography, and by extension neighborhood contexts. One example of how situational- and individual-level factors may be rooted in geography can be seen when considering that officers may have had certain individual experiences in a specific area,

such as problem houses, continuous calls for certain violations in certain areas, or dealing with frequent flyers. Further, the occurrence of certain situational factors may naturally be more predominant in certain areas of Plum Town. A number of the interviewees appeared to support this logic, with one officer claiming that “a lot of an encounter will depend on the person and people you have to deal with and you are simply more likely to encounter certain people in certain neighborhoods and areas of Plum Town.” In response to the question of which area of Plum Town may lead to more confrontational encounters, one officer pointed to the apartment area by claiming that certain situational factors are more prevalent in this area due to its high density:

“I’d think the apartments, because you know, most of the people that live their, most of the population of Plum Town live in those apartments. If you did a graphic chart of who lives where, you know those apartments; they’re like cities within cities. And so where there’s more people there’s more problems, and being that that area is more diverse there’s a culture clash so I would think in those apartment the probability would be higher. But, it still remains a function of the situations that arise and they arise more often in the apartment buildings.”

As mentioned earlier, another re-occurring theme running through the interviews was the notion that police behavior is learned and is informed by previous experience (outside of formal training). Accordingly, one of the officers nicely articulated how part of this learning experience may be a function of working in specific neighborhoods. In his view: “people within neighborhoods at the end of a day, for the most part become a product of their environment. But, the same applies to police, they too are a product of their environment, and a combination of their background, training, and experiences. So, in really high or low crime neighborhoods, the experience of the police officer will change and they must learn to adapt, and interact with people in the way that they best respond and are used to.” Although not directly expressed by the interviewees, it appears

that officers' greater need for officer safety (and concurrent use of force levels) in the apartment and bus terminal areas, in comparison to the homeowner areas, may be a result of different levels of police accountability. Given that homeowners are more directly involved in the co-production of police services with the PTPD, officers may feel that they are held more accountable and accordingly they may adjust their behavior to be more procedurally just in the homeowner area.

In Plum Town, it appears that the areas and locations where officers keep coming back to most often –oftentimes to deal with the frequent flyers– are the apartment areas and the bus terminal as well as specific problem houses. It is these areas where officers as one interviewee suggested: “may be [areas where I am] more likely to start an encounter, not with please and thanks, but with a demand...you have to put your foot down, otherwise they [suspects] will take advantage of your weakness.” Another officer concurred by saying that “experience with people and places as well as your training will certainly influence how you behave in situations, especially if they are reoccurring or occur with the same people over and over. You learn how to deal with them, which may involve being very direct.”

In sum, most of the interviewees agreed that it is hard to pinpoint specific areas or neighborhoods in Plum Town where they found themselves more likely to start a police-suspect encounter with a coercive threat, such as the threat of arrest. The importance of past experiences, engaging with frequent flyers, and the nature of the specific encounter and situational factors appeared to be indicative of the level of procedural justice afforded to suspects. Nevertheless, the interviewees did maintain that the crime levels, respect for

police, and physical make-up of certain areas do contribute to the type of police services provided.

One interviewee, who had previously worked in an inner-city large urban department, was asked if there are any areas in Plum Town where simply based on the area in which an encounter took place that he/she may be more likely to change his/her use of force behavior when approaching suspects, and he/she responded: “Not here, not in Plum Town, it’s not like that... in [previous place of employment], it is, I’ll put it to you like this. In certain situations you’re going to have to be really aggressive, not with the part where you’re going to punch somebody or anything thing like that, but you’re going to have to speak with them in a tone you are not accustomed to speak with, you know.” It appears that in Plum Town neighborhood factors by themselves have a limited independent effect on guiding patrol officer behavior, and yet when viewed in conjunction with situational- and individual-level factors neighborhood context does play a role.

Chapter VI: What Drives Patrol Officer Behavior in Plum Town?

Previous studies on neighborhood context and police behavior such as that of Lum (2010a, 2010b), Smith and Visher (1981), and Terrill and Reisig (2003), provided the empirical basis for this exploratory qualitative undertaking. These studies suggested that certain neighborhood factors lead to differential police services being provided in different areas. In disadvantaged neighborhoods specifically, police are more likely to arrest, use higher levels of force and stop citizens. Accordingly, this study attempted to provide an understanding of how patrol officers may be influenced by neighborhood factors and how and why this may result in differential police behavior. The findings of this study, based on the ten qualitative interviews with officers of the PTPD, are mixed with regard to the influence that neighborhood context can have on police behavior. The interview responses suggest that situational and individual and to a lesser extent organizational factors appear to play a more important role in influencing patrol officer behavior in particular the use of coercive threats. However, the findings also suggest that these variables appear to be related to geographic contexts.

An objective characterization of Plum Town neighborhoods based on demographic statistics (crime rates, poverty levels, SES) suggested that numerous distinct neighborhood contexts could be identified. In practice, however, from the perspectives of the patrol officers patrolling the area, these distinctions are minimal. Officers indicated that they believe that racially as well as socially, Plum Town is fairly integrated and that the jurisdiction is too small in order to identify numerous unique neighborhood areas. Instead, the interviewees pointed to the broad differences between homeowner and apartment areas as the most marked distinguishing factor of different neighborhood areas. The apartment area was considered to be lower class, higher crime and primarily Black

and Hispanic, with generally a shorter term occupancy. The homeowner area was described as lower to middle class, with lower crime levels, longer-term homeowners and with a higher proportion of White residents. The apartment area, at least in comparison to other areas in Plum Town, appears to contain some of the neighborhood attributes that according to Terrill and Reisig (2003) and Lum (2010a, 2010b) are indicative of a more disadvantaged neighborhood. Given the size small size of the PTPD jurisdiction, it is not surprising that interviewees for the most part viewed Plum Town as single unit, distinguishing neighborhood areas along broad lines and pointing only to a few distinct neighborhood areas.

What are the Primary Factors that Influence Police in Approaching Suspects?

The need for officer safety appeared to be an all-encompassing situational concern for all PTPD officers in altering their behaviors with suspects. An officer's concern for his/her safety was found to be primarily driven by the level of call details provided by dispatch and previous officer experience with frequent flyers or certain problem areas. When there was a greater concern for officer safety, the interviewees expressed that they approached a situation with more suspicion and were more likely to skip through the lower levels on the verbal end of the use of force continuum and issue coercive threats. The threat of arrest was noted to be especially useful because the officers expressed that when threatened with arrest, most suspects would quickly comply. However, officers believed threatening arrest without a legal basis was ill advised because if challenged they could lose credibility and respect. With regard to individual level factors, previous experience appeared to be highly relevant in influencing patrol officer behavior. As suggested by Bayley and Bittner (1984) and Bayley and Garofalo (1989),

patrol officers, given the general ambiguity of their job role and limited formal guidance, often rely on previous experience in guiding their future behaviors.

The findings also suggested that an officer's perceived level of self-control may play a role in determining to what extent an officer keeps his/her cool and avoids unnecessarily turning to coercive threats as a means to gain compliance from a suspect. At the PTPD, this was generally only an issue with rookie patrol officers that found a need to prove themselves on the street. This finding seems to support Broderick's (1987) notion of police officer typologies, suggesting that officers that buy into the more traditional view of policing (which none of the interviewees did), what the interviewees in the PTPD termed "ground-stopping police," those officer were more likely to rely on their authority and use coercive threats and commands to gain compliance.

On an organizational level, Wilson (1968) argued that the departmental culture, and according to Brown (1981) and Paoline (2004), even more important, the informal organizational culture and norms of police departments can play a large role in influencing use of force behavior. The findings of this study reveal that the PTPD publically as well as informally truly appears to advocate a COP approach that encourages building a strong working relationship with the community, and that the buy-in to this approach appears universal among the officers interviewed; in fact, multiple officers made a direct reference to seeing their roles as public servants.

However, the buy-in and support on behalf of the community may not be as strong in all areas of Plum Town. The interviews suggest that the homeowners as opposed to the renters, given that they have a greater stake in the community, appeared to be more supportive of the PTPD and more involved in the co-production of police

services under the COP model. As suggested by Kelling et al. (1988) the greater involvement of homeowners suggests that they may also hold the PTPD more accountable and place greater demands on police services and the quality thereof.

Nevertheless, one could argue that the large buy-in and focus of the PTPD on a procedurally just method of policing may in fact have served as a protective factor that helped avoid patrol officers stereotyping entire neighborhoods and provide unequal police services. This would question the often-held presumption that problem-oriented and hotspot police practices, given their focus on geographic locations (Moore, 1992), may make officers more likely to adopt mental schemas and stereotypes in certain areas. Evidently, further research with regard to the impact of these policing practices especially in a small-town setting is needed, in particular keeping in mind the impact different resident groups can have on demanding and guiding the distribution of police services.

Overall, the findings point to the fact that PTPD officers' use of force behavior appears to be primarily influenced by situational- and individual-level factors. However, as Lawton (2007) suggested, a thorough understanding of place or in this case neighborhood context includes an understanding of the situational and individual factors that may coincide in place, meaning that to some extent situational- and individual-level factors may be rooted in or influenced by place. This observation appears to also hold true in Plum Town, although as previously noted Plum Town is so small and integrated that it is harder to disentangle specific neighborhood factors that may influence place.

The Intersection of Factors in Place

A careful assessment of the findings does suggest that in areas where crime rates are relatively higher, at least when compared to other areas of Plum Town, PTPD officers tend to place a greater emphasis on officer safety, thus exhibiting higher levels of

suspicion and lowering their threshold of use of force behavior at the lower end of the use of force continuum. Similar observations were made in the study by Terrill and Reisig (2003) and Lum (2010a, 2010b), both of which suggested that, in particular, in high crime areas, police may develop a “dirtbag syndrome” where the moral liability of a certain area is applied to all police-suspect encounters that occur there. Applied to Plum Town, the findings suggest that the areas associated with higher crime and accordingly with a greater need for officer safety and higher levels of suspicion on behalf of the patrol officers would be the apartment areas and the bus terminal. This is key finding because it provides interesting insights into the apparent way in which officers are influenced by their neighborhood surroundings. While numerous previous studies have drawn attention to the impact of the race, SES, and crime rates of neighborhoods on guiding officer behavior (Lum, 2010a, 2010b; Mastrofki et al., 2002; Smith, 1986; Smith and Klein, 1984; Smith and Petrocelli, 2001; Terrill and Reisig, 2003), this study suggests that the influence of these variables may be filtered through a greater need for officer safety. While officers expressed that their need for officer safety was higher in the bus terminal and apartment area primarily because of the higher crime occurrences and their previous negative experiences there (individual and situational level factors), these areas also have a high proportion of minority residents and low SES. It should be noted however that as a whole Plum Town is a minority community, and thus future studies that examine racial minority neighborhood contexts in overall white jurisdictions may provide greater insights on the underlying factors that drive officer safety.

While officer safety is a legitimate concern that rightfully should heighten officers’ responsiveness and behavior, it is illegitimate to suggest that the entirety of a

neighborhood warrants a more heightened police response in every single encounter regardless of the circumstances. In particular, if officers' need for officer safety is driven primarily by race and SES, then this has the potential to undermine trust in the police and thus undermine police legitimacy (Tyler, 2004; Tyler and Wakslaw, 2004).

Another potential driving force behind the apparent greater need for officer safety (and corresponding variation in use of force behavior) in the apartment and bus terminal areas as opposed to the homeowner area may be police accountability. Not only do homeowners seem to be more supportive of the PTPD than renters, but their greater involvement (e.g. through town hall meetings, contacting the Chief) also allows them to hold officers more accountable in their actions and in the services they provide (Kelling et al., 1988; Reisig and Parks, 2000). Accordingly, officers may be more cognizant of their behavior and less likely to use unwarranted coercive threats or higher levels of force in the presence of homeowners. This suggests that in neighborhood areas where there is greater police accountability, police tend to be more procedurally just. By contrast, in neighborhoods such as the apartment area where involvement in the community and the police department are lower (likely a function of greater resident turnover), police behavior may be more likely to go unchecked.

Relatedly, the findings also suggest where officers' previous experiences have been mainly negative, they are less likely to apply the common courtesy they might afford to other areas, and they would be more likely to "directly cut to the chase." This observation lends support to Werthmann and Piliavin's (1967) notion of symbolic neighborhoods in which police officers, based on their previous experiences, develop mental schemas that drive their future behaviors. Not surprisingly, any encounters with

frequent flyers and problem houses appeared to also invoke more harsh responses by PTPD officers and they expressed that they would be more likely to issue coercive threats and start an encounter with a command in order to ensure compliance. This falls in line with Klinger's (1995) vigor hypothesis, suggesting that police will be more likely to act authoritative and invoke the full extent of the law for more serious of crimes in areas that are generally considered to have high levels of crime. Further, Black's (1976) findings suggested that greater disrespect toward police is positively associated with a greater severity of enforcement. This finding appears to be supported by this study given that most interviewees suggested that in areas where respect for police is low, compliance will also likely be lower and officers may need to put their foot on the ground in order to gain compliance, such as by starting an encounter with a coercive threat.

While officers identified areas where support for the police appeared to be higher (homeowners living in the homeowner area) and presumably where police are also more respected, none of the interviewees were able to directly identify pockets of severe disrespect toward police in Plum Town. This suggests that in Plum Town there were no identifiable neighborhoods requiring a heavy-handed policing approach in order for police to maintain their dominant role in the neighborhood such as those described by Anderson (2000).

Limitations and Future Directions

This exploratory approach into police behavior of a small-sized community-oriented police department covering a small jurisdiction has provided us with valuable insights into the driving forces and challenges that may predominate in small police agency setting that focuses on COP, especially given that most research neglects to focus on small police departments (Falcone et al. 2002). Nevertheless, while the PTPD may be

representative of a small police organization in terms of its sworn officer population, the PTPD's jurisdiction given its high level of diversity and integration is less generalizable and representative of other small departments. Further, if the goal is to identify more overt police stereotyping by neighborhood context, then this study may have been misplaced, and greater consideration should be given to larger police departments covering severely disadvantaged neighborhoods where such behavior is reportedly more common. In the context of the PTPD, the mechanisms that inform police behavior appear to be driven more by situational- and individual-level factors rather than by the more macro-level assessment of neighborhood context. In fact, as one of the interviewees who had previously worked for a larger police department in a more segregated city said: "I think you should take your study over to [the city he previously worked for], I really think you should. I think you'll get the answers there. If we were over there, my answers would be far different. [Researcher: Insofar as that if you're from this neighborhood you'll get this type of police of approach], right exactly that."

In order to address the limitation of minor neighborhood variation, and to allow for the collection of a larger sample size, it would be advised to conduct further qualitative interviews with police departments covering larger jurisdictions with greater neighborhood variations and areas that may be less racially integrated. It was in such areas that Smith (1986), Terrill and Reisig (2003), and Lum (2010a, 2010b) were able to empirically find independent differences in police behavior across various neighborhoods contexts. In a policing environment with greater neighborhood variations, a qualitative inquiry such as the one conducted for this study could shed some important light on the thought processes that influence patrol officers working in severely disadvantaged

communities, and what neighborhood factors influence their behavior most. Furthermore, a qualitative inquiry with a large department allows for a more rigorous analysis as greater consideration can be given to specific patrol officer characteristics/factors in influencing behavior. Given that the PTPD has less than 20 full-time officers, no information individual officer characteristics was collected in order to ensure greater confidentiality. In a larger department this would be less of an issue, and collecting information on individual officer characteristics and demographics would allow for more comparisons to be made in assessing the impact of these factors on officer behavior. A future qualitative inquiry of this sort might involve a larger number of interviews being conducted and a more systematic assessment and/or coding of the interview responses. All of these components could enhance the validity of the findings (Phillips, 2009), and make the findings more generalizable.

While the open-ended questions employed in this study provided useful insights, the success of the vignette scenario was fairly limited, given that PTPD departmental policy largely standardized officers' behavior and approach to dealing with loud music complaints; even though the vignette scenario posed no problems when pretested with a patrol officer of another agency. To avoid such pitfalls, future qualitative studies should closely examine and pre-test their data collection instruments, ideally in the actual setting in which the study will be conducted.

Conclusion

In sum, the exploratory qualitative findings of this study do provide limited support to the notion that neighborhood context influences patrol officer behavior independent of situational- and individual-level factors. On its own, neighborhood context was found not to be a primary driver of patrol officer behavior. In the context of

the PTPD, a small-town police department policing a small sized yet highly diverse and integrated community, the findings suggest that the mechanisms behind police behavior are based primarily on situational- and individual-level factors and that these can vary by encounter. However, some of the situational- and individual-level factors that the interviewees suggested might influence their need for officer safety and consequently their use of coercive threats may be intrinsically linked to place, either by virtue of the actual physical make-up of an area or by virtue of the more intrinsic neighborhood characteristics such as crime levels, poverty, racial make-up, SES. Generally speaking, in areas that were racially mixed and made up primarily of minorities that were renters as opposed to homeowners, and where crime rates were higher, officers found a greater need for officer safety. Suggesting that while previous studies hypothesized that race and SES may have a direct effect on officer behavior (Lum 2010a, 2010b, Terrill and Reisig, 2003), this study suggests that officers may be influenced through these variables by emphasizing a greater need on officer safety in such areas, although further investigation of this mechanism is needed. This coupled with other individual-level factors such as previous experience and perceived level of self-control, as the interviewees suggested, may lead officers to start an encounter at a higher level of force (command voice) or make officers more likely to threaten arrest in order to gain compliance.

Naturally, officers are not oblivious to their feelings and how their need for officer safety may vary in different contexts. In fact, the interviewees suggested that they try to make an overt effort to take each situation and encounter at face value, and avoid stereotyping certain neighborhoods or individuals. Especially given the small size of the jurisdiction and high level of integration (racially as well as socially), it really would be

hard for them to stereotype an entire neighborhood as requiring a specific type of police response. It is clear too that police departments to some extent are always beholden to their community (even if only financially through taxes), and thus community members need to be more involved in voicing their opinions and concerns in order to become co-producers of law enforcement, and to best influence the policing approach used in their communities. Especially in neighborhood areas where residents have a greater stake in their community and are more involved in the co-production of police services (the homeowner area in Plum Town), it appears that officers may be held more accountable and residents have higher expectations of the quality of police services provided in their area (Kelling et al., 1988; Reisig and Parks, 2000). Suggesting that in areas of greater police accountability the level of procedural justice afforded to citizens in these areas, by mediating effect on officers' use of force behavior and the unjustified use of coercive threats such as the threat of arrest.

Interestingly, some of the interviewees, especially those that had previously worked at other large urban inner-city police departments said that when taken outside of the context of Plum Town, in other areas, there may be a need and inherent utility for basing one's police response and behavior to a greater extent on the neighborhood in which a police-suspect encounter takes place. Those officers claimed that in areas, similar to those described by Anderson (2000), where crime rates were significantly higher and that had low levels of respect for police, police may need to be more heavy-handed in their approaches. Another officer concurred that historically, police in the very county in which Plum town is located used to have a different mentality toward policing than they do today: "Yea, this very county had a had a reputation of fear-based-respect, that if you

talked to the police in a certain way you were going to get smacked around. But you know times change, situations happen that change policing, the models, the way we go about policing all have changed over the years.” Though not in Plum Town, it does appear that police behavior being a direct function of neighborhood context may be more prevalent in more severely disadvantaged neighborhoods and further investigation is needed, especially in the urban setting.

In light of recent events such as the Ferguson shooting and riots (Berman, 2014), getting answers to the important questions posed by this study and insights into the thought processes and drivers of patrol officer behavior is fundamental. In times where distrust in the police, especially in high-crime and minority neighborhoods is exceedingly high (Anderson, 2000), it is ever more important to identify what types of services the police provide where and why. Going beyond mere empirical correlational studies that indicate where police are more likely to arrest or use force (Terrill and Reisig, 2003) is important in order to identify potential areas of interventions for policymakers.

Undoubtedly, the services, behaviors and attitudes police hold in certain neighborhoods as opposed to others has the potential to undermine the level of procedural justice afforded to different populations, and accordingly contribute to the loss of police legitimate (Bottoms and Tankebe, 2012; Tyler, 2004).

Tables

Table 1: Plum Town, Pear Town, and Apple Town Crime Rates⁴

Characteristics	Plum Town	Pear Town	Apple Town
Population	8,000	7,000	12,000
Area (square miles)	1.0	1.7	1.5
Crime Indicators per 1,000 individuals (raw counts in brackets)			
Violent Crime	9.00 (73)	5.00 (38)	2.50 (30)
Homicide Rate	0.10 (1)	0.15 (1)	0.00 (0)
Robbery Rate	5.00 (39)	2.00 (16)	1.50 (21)
Assault Rate	4.00 (32)	3.00 (21)	1.00 (9)
Theft Rate	19.00 (149)	18.00 (125)	11.00 (135)
Vehicle Theft	8.00 (66)	4.00 (26)	1.50 (22)

⁴ (Neighborhood Scout, 2014; USA.com, 2014) Neighborhood Scout and USA.com are both websites that provide aggregate data summaries about cities and communities in the United States. Crime data is based on the FBI's Uniform Crime Reports, while demographic data is based on the 2010 U.S. census, both of which are official government data sources. All of the towns selected are located within 10 miles from Plum Town.

Appendices

Appendix I: Thesis Interview Instrument⁵

In-Depth Interview

(Interviewer reads this script to participant)

Thank you for volunteering to be interviewed for this research. Before we formally begin the interview I ask that you read over and sign a consent form. If in this process you have any questions or concerns please do not hesitate to ask me for clarification.

The purpose of this study is to better understand what factors influence patrol officer street-level decision-making. Specifically, interview questions will cover your experience working in Plum Town and how you approach policing. The interview will last for about 1 hour and 30 minutes.

All your responses to interview questions will be kept confidential to the greatest extent possible. I will not ask about or record any identifying information. Additionally, if at any time you feel uncomfortable with a question or do not wish to answer it please let me know and I will skip to the next question. You can also stop the interview at anytime.

At this point, I would ask that you please read the consent form in its entirety (give consent form), and if you are willing to engage in this research please sign and date it. I will also provide you with a blank copy of the form for your records and my contact information. Additionally, if you allow me to record the interview, the recording will only be accessed by me and will be kept in a password-protected folder on my personal computer.

If you decline to be recorded I will be taking notes during the interview, these will be typed up by the end of the day, and the original paper copies shredded. The word document version of these notes will be maintained in a password-protected computer the same way as the audio-files and transcripts thereof. All of these electronic files/documents will be kept until the research project is completed and the thesis handed in likely in July 2014; thereafter they will be permanently deleted.

(If Officer is willing to participate and signs consent form). Again, thank you for being willing to participate. Let's begin.

A) Background Questions

- 1) Tell me about how you got involved in policing and ultimately ended up at the PTPD?

⁵ Please note that while in this document pseudonyms are used to protect the identify of the study location, in the actual interview instrument reference to the actual location/department was made. In addition, the maps that officers used to mark their perceived neighborhood contexts were removed in this document as well.

Probes:

- Roughly how long have you been working as a patrol officer? At the PTPD?
- 2) What is your current patrol assignment with the PTPD? Are you assigned to a specific geographic area/neighborhood? Roughly long have you been working in this area?

Probes:

- Did you choose to work in this area? If you could work a different area of Plum Town, would you switch, why/why not?

B) Description of Neighborhood/Policing Area

(Explain to the officer that the following questions specifically concern the geographic area he/she has been working in most recently. If the officer, given the earlier questions, has highlighted a specific geographic area within Plum Town, then this should be used as the specific geographic area of inquiry and noted down). The following questions only concern the area we have established you have most recently worked in and have the most intimate knowledge about.

- 1) Please describe your impressions of this neighborhood as if you were describing it to a friend – someone who does not work in law enforcement. Feel free to highlight anything you want.
- 2) Please describe your impressions of the neighborhood to a fellow police officer who doesn't work there. Please mention anything that you think would be important for a police officer to know about your neighborhood.

Probes:

- Why did you highlight these elements in your description to a fellow patrol officer?
 - Why and how do these elements matter to a patrol officer?
 - Do you think knowing this information might influence the policing approach an officer employs in that neighborhood? In what way? Why would it cause these changes, in your opinion?
- 3) (If the officer in his/her own description of his/her neighborhood did not cover these variables, ask him/her about them). Could you give me a description of this neighborhood in regard to your own impression of the social class, poverty level, crime level and racial composition that characterize this neighborhood?
 - 4) Imagine you are dispatched on a call for a suspicious person on the street in the neighborhood we have been speaking about. You go to the location and see a male fitting the description walking around. He gives you no signs of impairment or unusual behavior. Please provide details in how you would approach him and explain why. Please be specific in describing what you would say to him.

Probes:

- Do you believe that the suspect in this scenario is likely involved in something illegal before you have even talked to him? Why/Why not?
- 5) Do you approach a situation differently depending on the location/neighborhood it occurs in? How does the neighborhood an encounter takes place in influence your behavior, especially in regard to what you say and how you first interact with someone?

Probes:

- What to you is the single most important factor of neighborhoods that affects how you will approach a suspect in an encounter?
- How much do past policing experiences in that neighborhood matter?
- What are some other factors that you take into account?
- Are these factors shared by your peers/are common practice?

C) Neighborhood Context + Coercive Verbal Threats

Again, for these questions assume they are taking place in the policing area detailed above.

- 6) When you approach a suspect in a routine interaction (for example a traffic stop for a driving a little over the speed limit) and the suspect is passive (i.e. not really disobeying your requests but also not actively responding to your inquires). How do you act toward them in order to gain compliance (such as asking them to turn their engine off and give you their driver's license)? Please tell me what you would say and do, specifically how you would start the encounter (i.e. identify yourself, issue a command first)?
- 7) Continuing with the situation described above. Now imagine that the suspect continues to ignore your requests for him/her to provide you with ID. Although technically his act of passive non-compliance may not be an arrestable offense in and of itself, at what point of the interaction (or at all) would you threaten the suspect with arrest if he/she does not comply with your requests?

Probes:

- Do you use the threat of arrest in order to gain compliance in some instances? If so, in what situations?
 - Does the location in which a situation takes place influence how likely you would be to use the coercive verbal threats, in particular the threat of arrest?
- 8) Do you think gaining compliance with suspects in certain neighborhoods is best achieved by using coercive verbal threats? Specifically, the threat of arrest? Why, why not?

- Would you say that the threshold for when you threaten someone with arrest in order to gain compliance is lower/higher in certain areas of Plum Town? If so, why?

Probes:

- Does the neighborhood in which an encounter takes place impact how quickly you turn to threat of arrest in order to gain compliance?
- What elements of neighborhood context would make you more/less likely to use threaten arrest?

Neighborhood Specific Scenarios

The next set of questions are more broadly interested with your characterization of different neighborhoods in Plum Town.

- 1) Please describe and define what you believe to be distinct neighborhoods in Plum Town and tell me why? Please explain to me what marks them as distinct neighborhoods in your mind?

(Give officer an enlarged image of Plum Town map). If possible, could you roughly mark/sketch where these neighborhoods are located on the Plum Town map provided.

Notes, Description of Neighborhoods (for Interviewer purposes):

Neighborhood A:

Neighborhood B:

Neighborhood C:

Additional Neighborhoods (D, E,...):

Now I will pose a hypothetical situation that you would likely encounter in your daily work routine. You should respond to these questions by placing yourself into the situations and telling me how you would react/act.

Scenario I:

- 1) It is shortly past midnight on a Thursday night and you are dispatched to a loud music complaint coming from an apartment building in Neighborhood A. As you arrive at the scene you can already hear the loud music when you are walking up to the door.
 - a) Please explain how you would interact with the person opening the door after you make contact?

Probes:

- What was your expectation of how the situation would play out before you even knocked on the door?
 - Did you hold certain assumption/expectations? (ex. Did you assume it was likely to be a party, did you expect they would open the door, did you expect they would comply with your request or be argumentative).
 - What would need to happen in the interaction in order for you to issue coercive verbal threats? What would need to happen in order for you to threaten arrest?
- 2) Assume you were dispatched to a similar call in Neighborhood B/C? (And others if applicable). How would this have changed the way you interacted with the person opening the door and the expectations you may have had prior to making contact?
 - a) Why/why not did you have different expectations depending on which neighborhood the call came from?
 - b) (For all Neighborhoods) Do you think using the threat of arrest as means to handle situations (that may not really require arrest) could have an impact on how suspects view you and your authority as a police officer?

Appendix II: Interview Consent Form⁶

Consent Form

Please consider this information carefully before deciding whether to participate in this research.

Purpose of the research: To better understand how a patrol officer's work environment can influence his/her behavior and decision-making in regard to interacting with citizen/suspects.

What you will do in this research: If you decide to volunteer, you will be asked to participate in one interview. This interview will take place during a ride-along, while you are on duty and actively patrolling Plum Town. You will be asked a series of questions that will inquire into your current role working as a PTPD patrol officer. Some of the questions will cover your work environment and approach you use in dealing with citizen/suspects. The last set of questions will pose hypothetical scenarios and ask you to describe how you would handle them.

Time required: The interview will take approximately 1 hour and 30 minutes.

Risks: Although all possible steps are taken to ensure confidentiality, there is a risk that a breach of confidentiality could occur and that statements made during an interview could become attributed to a specific patrol officer. To mitigate this risk, limited potentially identifying information about you is collected, and all data will be securely stored and is only accessible to the researcher. Additionally, when choosing what direct quotes to use in the thesis the researcher will use extra precaution in attempting to exclude any quotes that could be attributed to a specific officer.

A second potential risk is that of potential minor emotional distress in regard to the potentially sensitive nature of the questions, and in recall negative past experiences. However, if you are uncomfortable during the interview, you can skip any questions, or the interview can be halted or ended anytime without penalty.

Benefits: There are no direct benefits to you for participating in this study, but this is a chance for you to tell your story about your experiences in law enforcement and how working in Plum Town may have influenced the way you go about policing

Confidentiality: Your responses to interview questions will be kept confidential to the greatest extent possible. No specific information on your demographic profile or other potential identifiers will be collected. If direct quotes or insights are used in the final thesis, pseudonyms will be used and any potentially identifying information will be omitted or obscured.

⁶ Please note that while in this document pseudonyms are used to protect the identify of the study location, in the actual consent form reference to the actual location/department was made.

None of the individual interviews will be shared with any of your superiors, nor do they serve any purpose beyond informing and providing the data for my research. All data collected (written notes/audio recordings/transcripts) will be securely stored. Audio recordings and transcripts will be stored in a password-protected folder on my personal computer. Written notes will be typed up by the end of the day of the interview, the original paper copies shredded, and then the typed up word documents maintained in the password-protected folder alongside the recordings/transcripts. All data will be only accessible to the researcher. All data (recordings/transcripts/word documents) will be permanently deleted/destroyed once the thesis is turned in (approx. July 2014). Participation in this research and answering any of the questions is completely voluntary and choosing (not) to participate will in no way influence your standing on the force.

Recording + written notes: With your permission, I will audio record the interview. The recording is for transcribing purposes only. You will not be asked to state your name on the recording and the recording can be halted at any point. Once recorded, I will be personally responsible for transcribing the interviews. The transcripts and recorded audio files will be kept in a password-protected folder on my personal computer and will be accessible only to me.

If you decline to have the interview recorded, then I will be taking notes (pen and paper) during the interview process. These written notes will then be typed up (at then end of the day) and then the original paper notes will be shredded. The word document version of these notes will be maintained in a password-protected computer the same way as the audio-files and transcripts thereof.

All files recordings/transcripts/typed written notes will be kept until the research project is complete and the thesis is turned in (likely July 2014) after which they will be permanently destroyed.

I _____ am willing to have this interview recorded **YES/NO**
(circle)

Participation and withdrawal: Your participation is completely voluntary, and you may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. You may withdraw by informing me that you no longer wish to participate (no questions will be asked). You may also skip any question during the interview, but continue to participate in the rest of the study.

Participant rights: If you have questions about your rights as a research participant or wish to report a research-related injury, please contact: University of Maryland College Park, Institutional Review Board Office, 1204 Marie Mount Hall, College Park, Maryland, 20742, E-mail: irb@umd.edu , Telephone: 301-405-0678

This research has been reviewed according to the University of Maryland, College Park IRB procedures for research involving human subjects.

To Contact the Researcher: If you have questions or concerns about this research, please contact: Jan Hudson, Phone: (509) 730-9001; 1222 Hemlock Street NW, Washington, DC 20012. Email: hudsonjs@umd.edu You may also contact the faculty member supervising this work: Dr. Jean McGloin, Phone: (301) 405-3007, jmcgloin@umd.edu

Agreement: Your signature indicates you are at least 18 years of age; your questions have been answered to your satisfaction and you voluntarily agree to participate in this research study. You will receive a copy of this consent form for your records.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Name (print): _____

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