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College of Social and Behavioral Sciences

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Racquel Palmer

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Review Committee Dr. Grace Telesco, Committee Chairperson, Criminal Justice Faculty

Dr. Robert Spivey, Committee Member, Criminal Justice Faculty

Dr. Tamara Mouras, University Reviewer, Criminal Justice Faculty

Chief Academic Officer and Provost Sue Subocz, Ph.D.

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Abstract

An Examination into Fusion Centers Impact on Information Sharing Post 9/11

by

Racquel Palmer

MS, University of Phoenix, 2015

BS, Excelsior Community College, 2013

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Public Policy and Administration

Walden University

February 2020

Abstract

The aftermath of the 9/11 attacks on the United States resulted in the introduction of the National Fusion Center Network. This effort seeks to empower National Security by effectively sharing information between various law enforcement organizations. Since the establishment of the Network, information that addresses the Networks' standard operating procedures and existing barriers to share information effectively has been lacking. This caused many criticisms as to whether the network is in fact effective in fulfilling its mandate to effectively share information between the various law enforcement agencies. Utilizing Bandura's cognitive theory of behavioral change, this phenomenological study identifies the strategies utilized by the Fusion center Network to share information while addressing the barriers that arise during the process. Qualitative data consists of interviews conducted with a purposive sample of N=8 employees at two Fusion Centers in the Network. Data were inductively coded, analyzed, and summarized to answer the research questions and illustrate relevance to the framework. Findings made it clear that staff respondents believe that the Fusion Center Network has a tangible impact on Information Sharing between law enforcement, government, and nongovernment agencies. This expanded the field of knowledge regarding the Fusion Center Network and made room for future researchers to expound on. Recommendations offered by this study are geared towards assisting policy makers, partner organizations and the public at large to make better decisions toward protecting the Homeland from future acts of terror. This study carries implications for creating positive social change by providing recommendations to assist legislators develop effective policies and to increase national security measures of the United States.

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Dedication

The journey has been a very challenging one, with vast amount of sacrifices but with constant reminders to stay focus and be strong I excelled. As a result, I want to dedicate this dissertation to my deceased mother- Pearline Higgins, my son- King James, and my sweet and sincere significant other- Darrington James. Thank you all.

Acknowledgments

I wish to thank my committee members who were very patient and generous with me throughout this journey. Throughout the countless emails, texts, reading and rereading you still found it necessary to send me words of encouragement. I will say, you guys are amazing.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

The terrorist attacks in the United States of America (USA) on September 11, 2001 highlighted the need for changes regarding the operations of law enforcement information sharing (Sharing Law Enforcement and Intelligence Information: The Congressional Role, 2007). Since then, tremendous operating procedures have been made regarding information gathering and sharing. Both federal and local law enforcement agencies have become more involved in the fight against the epidemic of terrorism (Fusion Center Accountability and Intergovernmental Information Sharing, 2014). Police officers on regular patrols are now more involved in collecting information and assessing threats within communities potentially vulnerable to domestic or international terrorism. Law enforcement officers are better able to effectively pass on information to the necessary departments to initiate immediate investigations to defuse such threats.

The sharing or exchanging of confidential information can be tedious, as it requires collaboration, trust and strong leadership. However, collective efforts have been made, yielding positive results in the practice of counterterrorism (Fusion Center Accountability and Intergovernmental Information Sharing, 2014). To achieve interagency collaboration between the various law enforcement agencies in the United States, the federal government introduced the National Fusion Center Network (Global Intelligence Working Group, 2005). Fusion Centers were initiated to achieve a unified system among law enforcement organizations, public safety agencies, and the private sectors to effectively maximize efforts in counter-terrorism as well as other criminal acts.

Even though each state may have its own rules governing the operations of their Fusion Center, all operate under the requirements of 28 CFR Part 23, which are the Criminal Intelligence Systems Operating Policies outlining privacy requirements for federally funded Fusion Centers in each state (Global Intelligence Working Group, 2005).

In this study, the impact of Fusion Centers on information sharing since their implementation post 9/11 was explored. Focus was placed on the procedures used to rapidly share information by Fusion Centers in Washington D.C, New York and California. I also focused on identifying barriers associated with the effective sharing of information by the Fusion Centers and other agencies. The background, formation of Fusion Centers, success stories, and opposing views were also examined to effectively identify its impact thus far.

Prior examinations on Fusion Centers tend to focus on its effectiveness, structure, and performance to date but never really examined the procedures used to disseminate information across the various entities. As a result, the findings of this study may provide new perspectives useful to policy makers, directors, and managerial staff responsible for improving the system, making adjustments where necessary. This study is in line with Walden's vision as it promotes positive social change though the promotion of interagency collaboration to address an issue of national interest. The findings of the study will also help with integration of information to make counterterrorism strategies and public policies more effective.

In Chapter 1, the background, problem, and justification for conducting the study were explained. The purpose, significance, conceptual framework, research questions, nature of the study, assumptions, limitations, scope and delimitations were also addressed

in chapter 1. Chapter 2 includes various works on the topic being studied. A review of prior studies was done and important findings relevant to this research topic was drafted and utilized in the study. Chapter 3 includes the methodology used in the study. The reason for selecting the chosen research design and the need for the population sample was justified. Chapter 4 includes the data collection methods used as well as the background of the participants in the study. The final chapter contains the data analysis, results, and interpretation the findings.

Background

On September 11, 2001 terrorists hijacked four airplanes to launch an attack on the United States. The attack intending to specifically maximize harm to the nations' financial and government centers. Two planes were flown into the World Trade Center towers in New York City, one was flown into the Pentagon in Washington D.C, and the fourth was crashed onto a large empty field outside of Shanksville, Pa., although its target was believed to be the nation's capital just 240 miles northwest (9/11 Commission Report, 2004).

The government released the 9/11 Commission Report shortly after the attacks. This report informed the public on the sequence of events and those believed to be the culprits of the violent assault. Osama bin Laden, who founded the radical Muslim terrorist militant organization al-Qaeda. He was implicated for coordinating terror attacks around the world and masterminding the September 11 attacks that resulting in the deaths of nearly 3,000 individuals and prompting the United States to initiate the War on Terror. It is broadly believed that al-Qaeda targeted the U.S. government and other western

countries with democratically elected governments for their freedom of religion, speech, to vote and assemble (9/11 Commission Report, 2004). The 9/11 Commission Report also highlighted that the opportunity to launch such attacks was increased because of the inadequate sharing of information between law enforcers and intelligence agencies in the United States. The 9/11 attacks have caused many changes to the practice of security measures and counter-terrorism strategies in the USA. Efforts to improve protection from both domestic and international threats of terrorism include the establishment of the Department of Homeland Security and The National Fusion Center Network. The latter was established to effectively disseminate information between law enforcement, intelligence, and public safety organizations throughout the United States (National Strategy for Counter Terrorism, 2010).

The Homeland Security Act of 2002 granted the Department of Homeland Security the power to protect and minimize damages from potential terrorist organizations and natural disasters. The United States had to restructure its national security guidelines and realign current government agencies into one single body with the primary mission of protecting the United States on a whole (National Strategy for Counter Terrorism, 2010).

According to Sharing Law Enforcement and Intelligence Information (2007), law enforcement information sharing is essential across all levels of government to effectively detect, prevent and respond to crimes especially acts of terrorism. However, based on the findings from the 9/11 Commission Report, prior to the attacks not enough emphasis was being placed on information sharing. To effectively solve the issue, the Bush

Administration formed the National Fusion Center Network (National Strategy for Counter Terrorism, 2010).

In this study, I sought to fill the gap in the literature by examining perceptions of barriers affecting the smooth flow of communication between the various agencies sharing information through the Fusion Center Network. This information is essential for increasing awareness to legislators, administrators, and the public on a whole.

Problem Statement

The inadequate sharing of information among law enforcement agencies is a common phenomenon in the country. This phenomenon was a subject of great concern when the post 9/11 commission report was released (The 9/11 Commission Report, 2004). Since then, many efforts were initiated to improve the flow of information sharing between the various law enforcement and intelligence agencies (Sharing Law Enforcement and Intelligence Information, 2007).

After the September 2001 terrorist attacks on the U.S.A, 79 Fusion Centers were established throughout the United States to function as a primary focal point for receiving, analyzing, and sharing important information to various law enforcement, intelligence and public safety departments across the country (Fusion Centers Location and Contact Information, 2018).

To date, a few studies have been conducted on the effectiveness of Fusion Centers on existing information sharing practices. This phenomenological study fills this gap by focusing on how the primary Fusion Centers located in three major cities inclusive of

New York City, Washington D.C, and Los Angeles seeks to address existing barriers to rapidly disseminate information between the various law enforcement agencies. The study's findings may be used to implement changes to improve productivity of Abstract

The aftermath of the 9/11 attacks on the United States resulted in the introduction of the National Fusion Center Network. This effort seeks to empower National Security by effectively sharing information between various law enforcement organizations. Since the establishment of the Network, information that addresses the Networks' standard operating procedures and existing barriers to share information effectively has been lacking. This caused many criticisms as to whether the network is in fact effective in fulfilling its mandate to effectively share information between the various law enforcement agencies. Utilizing Bandura's cognitive theory of behavioral change, this phenomenological study identifies the strategies utilized by the Fusion center Network to share information while addressing the barriers that arise during the process. Qualitative data consists of interviews conducted with a purposive sample of N=8 employees at two Fusion Centers in the Network. Data were inductively coded, analyzed, and summarized to answer the research questions and illustrate relevance to the framework. Findings made it clear that staff respondents believe that the Fusion Center Network has a tangible impact on Information Sharing between law enforcement, government, and nongovernment agencies. This expanded the field of knowledge regarding the Fusion Center Network and made room for future researchers to expound on. Recommendations offered by this study are geared towards assisting policy makers, partner organizations and the public at large to make better decisions toward protecting the Homeland from future acts of terror. This study carries implications for creating positive social change by

providing recommendations to assist legislators develop effective policies and to increase national security measures of the United States. Network sites in their efforts to increase citizen awareness and assure protection.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to obtain a more detailed understanding of how Fusion Centers have impacted information sharing to date. The results may act as a guide to National Security and add to an emergent field of study as it relates to the sharing of information among law enforcers. Seeking to understand the impact Fusion Centers have on information sharing will fill a gap in the literature on the importance of interagency collaboration and effective information sharing. The consequences of poor information sharing practices between law enforcers and law makers were also highlighted.

The pros and cons of Fusion Centers were both highlighted to provide a balanced illustration of this strategy approach. My hope is that the results will be evaluated by lawmakers and administrators as a road map to better coordinate efforts in the criminal justice system.

Research Questions

The following questions were used to determine the impact of Fusion Centers on information sharing post 9/11:

RQ1: What procedure is utilized by Fusion Centers to rapidly disseminate information across to the various law enforcement agencies within a timely manner?

RQ2: How do fusions centers address barriers to the effective sharing of information between the Fusion Center and law enforcement agencies?

Theoretical Framework

Behavioral change theory was utilized as the framework for this study. The Social Cognitive Theory of Behavioral Change is based from the work of behaviorist psychologist Albert Bandera in the 1960s (Bandura, 1986).

The social theory of behavioral change is suitable for this research study as it is often used to examine the change in human behavior within the context of each unique situation (Catano & Gauger, 2017). The social behavioral theory was used to examine how the 9/11 terrorist attacks led to a change in the behavior of the United States government. According to Nalla and Crichlow (2017), the terrorist attack was an expression of a lack of comprehensive intelligence sharing. As a result, the Bush administration created the Department of Homeland Security and Fusion Centers to disseminate important criminal information between law enforcement and intelligence agencies (Carter et al. 2016). The creation of Fusion Centers to disseminate timely information across law enforcement agencies and between the Fusion Center and other law enforcement agencies is one example of behavioral change on part of the government in order to respond to that void.

Nature of Study

The impact of Fusion Centers on rapid information sharing was explored. The main purpose of the study is to understand the operating procedures used by Fusion

Centers to enhance National Security efforts and to identify opportunities for proposing modifications if needed.

The lived experiences were shared by the participants to help formulate a conclusion. Participants with at least 5 years of relevant work experience were randomly selected from the three sample sites: New York Intelligence Center, California State Threat Assessment Center and the Maryland Coordination and Analysis Center. These three primary Fusion Centers were used as sample sites because of their location in heavily populated cities with a high degree of threat.

According to Rubin & Rubin (2016), qualitative methodologies allow the participants to share their lived experiences through responding to open-ended questions in a semi-structured interview design. It is imperative to utilize the qualitative methodology to obtain more in-depth t information from participants. The two main foci include the impact of Fusion Centers on information sharing as well as barriers to information sharing between Fusion Centers and law enforcement agencies.

Definition of Key Terms

According to the National Foundation for Educational Research (2016), for readers to obtain maximum understanding of the topic being researched, it is imperative that key terms be defined. Therefore, the following key terms used in the study are defined as follows:

Fusion Center: As outlined in Global Justice Information Sharing Initiative, the DHS & Bureau of Justice Assistance (2008), a Fusion Center is defined as an organization that facilitates the collaboration of two or more agencies providing

expertise, resources and information with the goal of maximizing the ability to detect, prevent, investigate and respond to criminal and terrorist related activities.

Homeland Security: The US Department of Homeland Security (2010), responds to the intersection of evolving threats and hazards with traditional governmental and civic responsibilities for civil defense, law enforcement, emergency response, customs, border control and immigration.

Information Sharing: According to the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks (2004), information sharing is defined as the gathering, processing and dissemination of information for use by relevant stakeholders.

Interagency Collaboration: Interagency collaboration is defined as agencies jointly working together toward a common purpose or goal mainly to achieve more public value (Interagency Collaboration in Law Enforcement, 2017).

National Security: Premaratne (2016) defined National Security as safeguarding the sovereignty, citizenry, territorial integrity and socioeconomic functionality of a nation from an aggressor whose intent is to undermine a particular valued aspect of a nation through violent or unjust means.

Terrorism: McEntire (2009), defined terrorism as an act of violence or threat of violent action by an individual, group, or nation motivated by an ideological framework intending to intimidate or coerce a population, influence government policy and or disrupt the conduct of government.

Assumptions

According to Simon & Goes (2013), certain assumptions are significant to conducting a study. It is assumed that a five year' tenure will allow the participant to better interpret their experiences throughout their tenure. It was also assumed that participants were open and honest in their responses to questions on counter-terrorism efforts by Fusion Centers

Scope and Delimitations

The participants that were utilized in this study were intelligence analysts for at least five years and assigned to one of the three Fusion Centers under study. Responses from study participants were shared to improve counter-terrorism efforts by using both past and present experiences, success stories, failures and changes to date.

There were several delimitations within this study. The participants were randomly selected from a purposive sample of individuals with a minimum of five years' experience working as an intelligence analyst. Criterion was assumed to be important in order to assure the selection of individuals capable of providing accurate data. Employees who were not employed within the intelligence area of the Fusion Center were excluded from sample selection.

Limitations

According to Simon and Goes (2013), there are always certain limitations regarding the weaknesses of a study design or methodology. One such limitation is researcher bias that could impact how information is both collected and interpreted Other potential forms of bias is "social desirability bias" where participants answer

questions in a manner, they believe is more socially acceptable rather than being truthful. To address this, participants were reminded that their answers were strictly confidentiality, identities were kept anonymous, and responses were aggregate and could not be linked to a respondent.

Significance

This research on the impact of Fusion Centers on information sharing is an asset to the field of anti-terrorism as an aspect of criminal justice. The results will be used to enhance the current understanding of law enforcement information sharing in three selected centers located in New York City, Washington D.C and Los Angeles. According to The Constitution Project (2012), there was a need for more stringent counterterrorism efforts. Therefore, this study is valuable for contributing to information useful to policy makers implementing policies and practices at Fusion Centers.

Positive social change from this study can be achieved through increasing awareness regarding information sharing among the public and other key players in the criminal justice system. Results can be used to inform the development of counterterrorism strategies.

Summary

Evidence has demonstrated that the sharing of information between law enforcement and intelligence organizations in the United States was inadequate (The 9/11 Commission Report, 2004). Hence, the National Fusion Center System was established to help prevent similar terrorist attacks from reoccurring. To achieve the best performance,

interagency collaboration or collective efforts are needed to treat information as a national asset. Collaborative efforts also allow Network employees to work together, hold themselves accountable, and take charge of promoting the goals of the Fusion Centers national counter-terrorism efforts (The 9/11 Commission Report, 2004). The results are useful as the United States works to close gaps in information sharing and protecting the country from terrorism.

In Chapter 2 an in depth, historical and current review of the current Fusion Center System was provided. Published literature as well as stories regarding the successes and failures of Fusion Center performance and interagency collaboration counter-terrorism strategies post 9/11 were reviewed.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

To effectively understand the concept of Fusion Centers and their impact on information sharing, it is imperative to understand the vision and objectives surrounding the implementation these facilities. Fusion Centers are located throughout the United States and were implemented to effectively streamline information between law enforcement and intelligence agencies after it was found that a failure to effectively share information contributed to the 9/11 attacks (The Constitution Project, 2012). As a result, the U.S. government saw the need to establish Fusion Centers across the United States to improve information sharing and decrease domestic and international terrorist threats. This study focused on the three primary Fusion Centers locate in New York City, Los Angeles and Washington D.C. (State Fusion Centers, 2012).

Fusion Centers collaborate with the Joint Terrorism Task Force making the fight against counterterrorism and other crime related activities a unified one as their main aim is to protect the homeland (Henry, 2009). The Joint Terrorism Task Force and Fusion Centers also collaborate with the local authorities of each state to identify the first steps taken by the local police departments to identify terrorist activity (Freilich, Chermack, & Simone, 2009). Fusion Centers have a host of problems and critics who believe this effort is largely ineffective. Therefore, different perspectives and assessments concerning Fusion Center efficacy with information sharing will be addressed in this chapter. The theoretical foundation will be outlined and discussed within the context of themes relating to the topic of the study. Governmental justification for using Fusion Centers is reviewed. Next, stories of the various perspectives of the operations, implications,

information sharing, and other counter-terrorism strategies of the Fusion Center will be discussed.

Literature Research Strategy

A literature review mapping technique was used to identify the gap in literature. This was accomplished by organizing the different literature into broad categories then narrowing them down to their relevance and ability to meet search criteria.

The search and evaluation techniques utilized in the study were introduced by Booth, Colomb and Williams (2008) to assess and identify the most reliable sources. Searches were conducted on the Walden University databases, Google Scholar search engine, Sage Publications, Pro Quest and various local, state and federal law enforcement agencies websites including the FBI, CIA and DOJ. Publications and online references were required to be published or updated within the last seven years and written in the English language, peer reviewed, or produced and posted on an official department.

The keywords and phrases used included "Fusion Center, law enforcement information sharing, homeland security, 9/11 reports, counter-terrorism strategies, intelligence led policing, Fusion Center success stories, Fusion Center failures, terrorism, domestic threats, international threats, and national security". According to Bui (2014), more is achieved when broad topical terms are used first followed by smaller terms/words. These broader terms produced a total of thirty-five references in the initial literature search. After the inclusion criteria of language, publication date, nonreplicable, and relevance were applied, twenty-three references remained for use in the review.

Theoretical Framework Overview

Bandura's cognitive theory of behavioral change expresses that people are driven by external factors. Hence, human behaviors may be described as "reciprocal determinism" (Bandura, 1986). Bandura (1986) explained that environmental factors may include a particular situation as well as the environment where the particular behavior has occurred while personal factors describe the motivational forces/drive behind an individual's action.

According to Bandura (1986), human behaviors may be conditioned based on consequences, and there are several variables that tend to enhance behavioral change. These include self-efficacy, outcome expectations, self-control and reinforcements (Bandura, 1986). Bandura (1986) described self-efficacy as the judging of one's own ability to exhibit a behavior. Self-efficacy is shaped by environmental and personal factors. Outcome expectations are the anticipated consequences of one's behavior. Before a particular behavior is exhibited, the performer thinks of the consequences which may facilitate the successful completion of his behavior. Experiences tend to influence expectations and focuses on the importance of the outcome (Bandura, 1986). Selfcontrol is described as one's ability to control their behavior while reinforcements are described as both the internal and external responses of a person's positive or negative behaviors (Bandura, 1986). Therefore, reinforcements tend to increase or decrease the possibility that a behavior will continue or reoccur. The application of Bandura's behavioral change theory is evident in the context of change and prioritization by individuals, organizations, and departments to establish counter-terrorism policies and practices to deter attacks from reoccurring.

Application of the Framework

This social theory of behavioral change seeks to explain why behaviors change and is said to be attributed to either environmental or personal issues. The theory is applied within the study to illustrate how the behavior of human beings specifically the terrorists led to a destructive path and the strategies utilized by the government to avert terrorist activities. According to Nalla & Crichlow (2017), the 9/11 terrorist attacks against the United States on September 2001 expressed a lack of a national and comprehensive intelligence sharing. For example, information known by the CIA was not shared with other law enforcement organizations. As a result, President Bush created the Department of Homeland Security and the introduction of Fusion Centers to increase national security to fight against terrorism and protect the homeland through information sharing (Nalla & Crichlow, 2017; Carter et al. 2016).

The social theory of behavioral change is suitable for this research as it seeks to highlight the change in human behavior in response to situations (Catano & Gauger, 2017). Bandura (1986) also believed that experiences tends to influence expectations and focuses on the importance of the outcome. Social behavioral theory is therefore appropriate to explain how the behaviors of the government changed as a result of 9/11 (SOURCE). This led to the implementation of the Department of Homeland Security and the Fusion Center Network to facilitate information sharing and interagency collaboration reducing the vulnerability to future terrorist activities in the United States.

Relevance of Theoretical Framework to the Study

Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory of Behavior Change served as a guide and help to develop the core of this study. Social theory focuses on society, human behaviors and the social forces that influence an individual's life (Silvermann, 2000). Critics argue that social theories tend to focus on large scale societal problems or social trends which may not be easily proven (Berberoglu, 2005). It is assumed that this theoretical framework will be useful for explaining the phenomenon of changing governmental priorities and strategies pot 9/11.

Historical Views on Terrorism in the United States

The American Heritage Dictionary (2000) defines terrorism as the systematic or threatened use of violence in order to create a general climate of fear to intimidate a population or government and thereby effect political, religious or ideological change. Terrorism, in the United States has occurred throughout history. One of the earliest examples of terror in the United States is the 1782 Gnadenhutten massacre in which Pennsylvania militia round up and executed 96 unarmed pacifist Christian Delaware Indians, including 69 women and children as an expression of general animosity towards all Native Americans (Wellenreuther, 2008).

Terrorists continue to seek innovative ways to launch their attacks. In a quantitative study by Quinn (2016) the occurrences of terrorism in the United States after 9/11 have declined significantly. According to a 2017 report by the U.S. Government Accountability Office, "of the 85 violent extremist incidents that resulted in death since

September 12, 2001, violent extremist groups (domestic) were responsible for 62 (73%) while radical Islamist extremists (international) were responsible for 23 (27%). The decline in international terrorism could be attributed to the implementation of numerous counter-terrorism strategies.

As stated by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (2010) protecting the homeland begins with hometown security and working collaboratively with federal, state, local and other private entities improves communication and information sharing. Enhancing the quality and quantity of resources, funding, training, and analytics, strengthens the capabilities to better identify new and emerging threats.

Historical Views on Counter Terrorism

Throughout the years, various organizations including the FBI and CIA have been making strides to reduce terrorism. However, studies demonstrate that these two departments were working independently with restricted legal mandates, funding, and information sharing and governmental outreach. Differences in organizational culture have made it further difficult to effectively fight against terrorism (Gardner, 2014).

According to Lowenthawl (2012), the FBI had a history of questionable practices. According to German & Stanley (2007), an inquiry conducted in the 1970s highlighted that the counter intelligence program operated by the FBI breached individuals' privacy protection. Hence, the FBI came under scrutiny with backlash from various public, private and oversight bodies which caused the FBI to stop sharing information with various external national security agencies and within their own organization. A typical example of the lack of information sharing by the FBI was noted by Shenon (2008) in

which it was noted that in 2001, Zacarias Moussaoui was arrested by the FBI yet this information was not shared with outside agencies or within the same department although he was believed to be associated with terrorist related activities (Shenon, 2008).

In the late 1970's the government attempted to centralize counterterrorism efforts and stated that the Department of State is responsible for international terrorism, while the Department of Justice is responsible for domestic terrorism. While this strategy worked in the past, a spike in terrorist related activities post 9/11 forced the U.S. government to reconsider their strategy to separate oversight. This led to counterterrorism efforts being placed under one single body; the National Security Council. However, this decision met resistance by the FBI and the CIA (Morton, 2012).

According to Sims & Gerber (2005), funding was another major issue affecting counter-terrorism efforts in the 1990s. The CIA had to withdraw coverage from low priority embassies which negatively impacted the fight against terrorism internationally. As stated in the 9/11 Commission Report (2004), the lack of information sharing and interagency collaboration was a major issue which gave the terrorists the opportunities needed to launch their attacks, forcing a changed behavior embracing interagency collaboration.

Implications of 9/11 on Counter Terrorism

The Department of Homeland Security

The 9/11 attack on the United States of America has caused many changes to the country as it relates to security and the protection of its people from both domestic and

international threats. Forming the Department of Homeland Security was established to protect the security of the country on many different levels. According to the 9/11 Commission Report (2004), the 9/11 attacks caused the death of over three thousand people in the United States of America and trillions of dollars in property damages. It was no surprise that immediately after the attacks, the government sought to remedy the situation. The government announced the formation of the Department of Homeland Security under the direction of Governor Tom Ridge (Bullock, 2016). The Homeland Security Act of 2002 granted the Department of Homeland Security the power to protect the United States of America from terrorism and minimize damages from potential terrorist organizations and natural disasters. In amid to maintain security the government of the United States had to restructure its national security guidelines and realign current government agencies in one single body (Bullock, 2016).

The United States PATRIOT Act

Another implication of the 9/11 attack was the drafting of the United States PATRIOT Act. The main purpose of the PATRIOT Act was to deter, decrease and punish terrorists who attack citizens of the United States and to give law enforcers a greater opportunity in the tracking and intercepting of conversations or communications that may lead up to terrorist related attacks or other major crimes. (Scheeres, 2002). The act also requires players in the financial industry to report potential money laundering and to implement and strengthen strategies to prevent the United States financial system from personal gain by corrupt foreign officials (Scheeres, 2002).

The expedient passing of the PATRIOT act gave little or no room for debate. In the after math, it was highlighted by critics that there are sections in the act that are

deemed unconstitutional (Fagan, 2006). The framers of the act were criticized that the individual rights of citizens were not considered (Carter, 2009). However, according to President Bush, enough evidence has shown that there was indeed a reason for the PATRIOT act to protect the Nation is more important than an individual right (Carter, 2009). Bush further argued that 9/11 not only affected citizens of the United States, but in fact has affected numerous countries (Carter, 2009). Hence, it is the responsibility of the U.S. government to put effective and efficient measures in place to protect the country and its citizens at the expense of the violation of individual rights (Carter, 2009; Scheeres, 2002).

The National Strategy for Counterterrorism

The National Strategy for Counterterrorism is another counter-terrorism strategy implemented as a result of the 9/11 attacks. It highlights the approaches the Obama administration used to prevent any further terrorist attacks on the United States. The strategy seeks to address security, prosperity and respect for universal values and cooperation to meet global challenges (National Strategy for Counter Terrorism, 2010).

The National Strategy for counter-terrorism highlights specific goals to defeat Al-Qaida such as; protecting the homeland by constantly reducing vulnerabilities and adapting and updating defenses, disabling Al-Qaida and their affiliates from acquiring weapons of mass destructions, and opportunities to train, plot and launch attacks (National Strategy for Counter Terrorism, 2010). To achieve such goals, the core principles were also highlighted and include; upholding core American values such as the rule of law, civil rights and liberties to all Americans. Another principle is harnessing

every tool as needed to include military, homeland security, intelligence and law enforcement. Building partnership with international organizations as different levels of threats will demand different resources a (National Strategy for Counter Terrorism, 2010).

Fusion Centers

The implementation of Fusion Centers to promote information sharing was another major change resulting from 9/11. The executive order titled "Strengthening the Sharing of Terrorism to Protect Americans" was formed to address information sharing issues and interagency collaboration between the various law enforcement and intelligence agencies in the United States (Executive Order No. 13356, 20014). The introduction of the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act, 2004, promoted information sharing and made some amendments to the aforementioned executive order which saw the birth of the National Fusion Center System (Justice Information Sharing, 2013).

Fusion Centers were introduced to address the major issues surrounding information sharing while promoting interagency collaboration and integration to decrease the possibility of another attack on the United States. According to Harbisher (2005), Fusion Centers were imperative to provide early warnings of forth coming attacks by identifying the indicators and possible attackers with the aim of neutralizing such threat before it takes effect. Fusion Centers were implemented through state laws responsible for the protection of their entire state. Some urban areas with a focus on metropolitan areas were created their own Fusion Centers while working closely with the

state Fusion Centers. The Network of Fusion Centers was funded and supported by the federal government with overall supervision and guidance by the Department of Homeland Security and the Bureau of Justice (Harbisher (2005). The main objectives of Fusion Centers are; collecting, analyzing and disseminating crime related information across various spectrums to other Fusion Centers and law enforcement and intelligence agencies. Fusion Centers place major emphasis on terrorist related activities. However, according to Chermak (2013), not only do Fusion Centers fight against terrorism, but they facilitate intelligence led policing by assisting in other public safety issues through local law enforcement.

Fusion Center Success Stories

According to the Bureau of Justice (2015), the effective sharing of information between law enforcement and intelligence agencies makes it easier for law enforcers to solve a puzzle or stop a threat. This was evident in October 2010 when the effective sharing of information between Fusion Centers and local police departments helped in the investigation of a suspicious trailer and its driver. According to (Fusion Center Success Stories, 2010), it started when the New York Police Department received information about a suspicious trailer that was headed for Times Square in exchange for compensation.

As a result, the New York Police Department sent out an advisory to the New York State Intelligence Center/Fusion Center who then passed on the information to other Fusion Centers. The Rhode Island Fusion Center soon uncovered information that pointed to the owner of the truck living in California. The information was then passed

on to the Northern California Fusion Center then did an antecedent on the owner of the truck. Within a couple of hours, the information received from the New York Police Department and all three Fusion Centers assisted the Connecticut State Police Department in locating and searching the said trailer before it reaches Time Square, New York City. This is an example of a success story of rapid and effective sharing of information between local law enforcers and Fusion Centers in less than four hours to assist in resolving a possible threat to the homeland.

Another example where Fusion Centers and other departments worked to stop a possible threat was the attempted bombing of Times Square by Faisal Shahzad. According to Fusion Center Success Stories (2010), Fusion Centers across the United States worked collaboratively, and shared information directly linked to Faisal Shahzad. An employee of the American Automobile Association filed a suspicious activity report with the New York State Fusion Center regarding a call they received on May 2, 2010. The caller was requesting assistance as his keys were locked inside his vehicle. However, on the same day Shahzad was arrested. The same vehicle was found at the airport with a firearm inside. This information was then passed on to the FBI to assist in their investigation. The Florida Fusion Center also assisted in the investigation by reporting that Shahzad was associated with two previous residents of Florida. This information was also passed on to the JTTF and the FBI to aid in their investigation.

According to former NYPD Police Commissioner Raymond Kelly there are at least sixteen foiled terrorism plots between 2002 and 2013. This can be attributed to the

effective counter-terrorism strategies initiated by the department as well as other federal and state organizations post 9/11 (The NYPD Post 9/11 Counterterrorism Program, 2016). These plots included plans to detonate explosives on the New York City subway, Times Square, John F. Kennedy Airport, local synagogues, and on the Brooklyn Bridge. Also, in September 2016, Police Commissioner O'Neil applauded federal, state and local law enforcers for a collaborative and quick response in apprehending a suspect who planted a makeshift bomb in Chelsea Manhattan (NYPD Counterterrorism, 2017).

Critical Views of the Fusion Center Network

There are several studies, committees and organizations that critically analyze the importance of Fusion Centers since their establishment post September 2001. Most existing studies tend to focus on the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of the Network. But they do not specifically focus on their impact on information sharing. This study attempts to fill that gap. Therefore, in order to determine the impact Fusion Center has on information sharing it is imperative to refer to previous studies and critical views about the Network.

The Heritage Foundation (2013) outlined that the government needs to reduce the number of Fusion Centers and concentrate funding on those areas that are prime targets. Other studies support the notion that Fusion Centers are inefficient and there are not able to effectively analyze intelligence related to terrorism. One study conducted by Dr. Don Lauder (2012) highlighted the positive impact of centers on information sharing since the 9/11 attacks.

Fusion Centers tend to be more reactive than proactive because they are still not privy to high end information which prompts more strategic decisions. The author

further argued that many Fusion Centers are still lacking the support federal agencies are able to provide in investigation proceedings. Dr. Lauder also stated that a lack of federal guidelines to operate Fusion Centers causes chaos and confusion. The American Civil Liberty Union (ACLU) also had some critical views of Fusion Centers. According to the ACLU, Fusion Centers seek to collect information at the expense of privacy and civil liberty violations of American citizens (German & Stanley, 2007).

The ACLU stipulates that the essence of fusing information between federal, state and local authorities allows for no transparency regarding lines of authority and oversight (German & Stanley, 2007). The government is granting security clearances to state employees obtain certain information allowed to be used only by federal agencies. Because Fusion Centers work closely with private entities, the ACLU found this ambiguous. There is a great possibility that private organizations may feed federal agencies with personal information about their customers and employees which is a violation of civil rights and personal liberties (German & Stanley, 2007).

Contrary to the various views implying that Fusion Centers are ineffective and will not last, there are still many people who believes otherwise and supports the notion that they have indeed been efficient in preventing large-scale attacks on the United States since 9/11. According to Budinger and Smith (2011), I information sharing may be risky if not shared appropriately or if information is accessed by the wrong people. Mr. Ronald Brooks, the former director of the Northern California Regional Intelligence Center/Fusion Center, stated that “before the 9/11 attacks on the United States there was no effective means of sharing information between the states, local and federal

authorities. Therefore, Fusion Centers are assets as they relate to the fight against terrorism and the protection of the Homeland" (Brooks, 2011).

According to Sir Joe Lieberman, former Homeland Security and Government Affairs Committee Chair "without Fusion Centers, we would not be able to connect the dots. Fusion Centers have been essential to breaking down the information silos and communication barriers that kept the government from detecting the most horrific attack on the United States even though federal, state and local officials each held valuable pieces of the puzzle" (Fusion Centers Add Value to Federal Government Counterterrorism Efforts, 2012).

Counterterrorism (2017), highlighted that within New York City, the fight against terrorism is a constant activity and is positively enhanced by the state's Fusion Center in collaboration with the local police departments to prevent a reoccurrence of the 9/11 attacks. As stated by New York Police Department Chief James Waters, the NYPD's counter-terrorism bureau is the city's main response to any act of terror. They review and take special precautions on areas that may be deemed a target, develops preventative measures, policies and procedures to guard against attacks while working assiduously with the FBI and other state, local and federal agencies to prevent and detect any acts of terror (Counterterrorism, 2017).

Some new departments that were formulated by the NYPD post 9/11 pay special focus on counter-terrorism and work closely with the New York State Fusion Center are; the Critical Response Command staffed with highly trained and competent officers who are the first line of defense against a terrorist attack in New York City, the

Counterterrorism Division. The Joint Terrorist Task Force incorporates NYPD detectives and FBI agents who investigates and share classified intelligence, the Microsoft Domain Awareness System tool used to display alerts from 911 calls and extract information from several sources such as license plates.

The Terrorism Threat Analysis Group analyzes and disseminates intelligence throughout the Department as well as to other law enforcers and the New York Fusion Center. Irrespective of the varying perspectives outlined from different studies and individuals, the federal, state and local governments continue to support counterterrorism efforts by continuing to fund the Fusion Center initiative. Fusion Centers continue to be the central intelligence center in each state, working assiduously with local, state and federal agencies sharing information to effectively detect potential threats of terror to protect the Homeland.

Summary

This study closes the gap on an informative and important review of perspectives and accounts of counter-terrorism in the United States. The current literature was reviewed and integrates different views from researchers, government and private entities as well as advocacy groups to bring awareness of the Fusion Centers. The continuous repetition of themes highlighted throughout the literature suggested saturation due to the repeating of themes and topics.

Policy analysis, principles of governance, statutes, interagency collaboration and constitutional rights and liberties related to the implementation of Fusion Centers were all discussed to obtain a more detailed understanding on its impact on information sharing.

The direction the literature took did address the research through appropriately engaging and highlighting previous studies done that are imperative to this study, as well as perusing the various statutes, committee reports, success stories and critical views of the topic at hand.

The methodological portion of this study will be addressed in the upcoming chapter. Chapter 3 includes an outline of the data collection procedures, the population, sampling techniques, data analysis, and ethical considerations.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

Chapters 1 and 2, highlight existing research on the topic of Fusion Centers and the efficacy of the centers in averting terrorism. There is a lack of research specifically on the impact the Fusion Center Network on information sharing focusing on three major cities New York, California and Washington. Therefore, this study will focus on the exploration of perceptions regarding the capacity for information sharing between agencies. The study combined previous evidence-based studies with primary data to effectively address the problem statement and respond to the research questions regarding the role of Fusion Centers in carrying out counter-terrorism strategies and national security efforts in the United States. The study also promotes Walden's mission of social change by more clearly understanding how the Fusion Center Network can be used as a tool to safeguard the Homeland.

The methodology utilized is outlined in Chapter 2. The rationale behind the chosen methodologies was also justified. Chapter 3 will contain the purpose of the study, explanation of the central phenomenon, and the research problem. Next, techniques utilized to manage and mitigate biases, and respond to ethical standards. The procedures for data collection, analysis and research tool verifications were also explained.

Research Design and Rationale

As referenced in Chapters 1 and 2, a phenomenological design was utilized. This qualitative approach was chosen to allow a personal expression of Fusion Center policies

and practices. According to Creswell (2003) qualitative research methods generate meaning and understanding of the phenomenon being studied. Open-ended questions allow the researcher to generate meaning from the collected data (Creswell, 2003). Qualitative research methods are also useful where the goal is to explore, interpret and describe a situation. The interview process (a) provides a detailed perspective of the respondents, (b) allow the voices of participants to be heard, (c) allows the context of participants to be understood, (d) build views of participants, and (e) create a story. This type of study is limited in generalizability (Creswell, 2003).

To address the phenomenon of inter-agency communication, two main research questions were explored. Interviews were conducted with employees of one of the three Fusion Centers selected for this study.

Research Questions

RQ1- What procedure is utilized by Fusion Centers to rapidly disseminate information across to the various law enforcement agencies within a timely manner?

RQ2- How do Fusion Centers address barriers to the effective sharing of information between the Fusion Center and law enforcement agencies?

Research Design

Phenomenological research refers to researching how an individual perceives the meaning of an event (Rubin and Rubin, 2016). Perceptions and perspectives are analyzed and used to create an understanding of the experience. This type of design allows value to be found in focusing research on how people perceive an event or phenomena.

Phenomenological research can provide profound, detailed understanding of a single phenomenon. A limitation of phenomenological research is that it's challenging to establish reliability and validity, and researcher-induced bias can influence the interpretation of the data (Rubin and Rubin, 2016). According to Gill (2014), qualitative methods are used to extract rich data for a study to better explain the research topic and overall purpose of the phenomena. Rubin and Rubin (2016) explained that the data collection methodology utilized within a qualitative study allows participants to share their experiences and allow responds to open-ended questions to be described in a story format. Semi-structured telephone interviews were conducted with N=9 respondents. This data collection procedure was necessary based on the limited amount of information available and it is important to note that observation whether directly or indirectly in its natural environment is not allowed because the day to day operations of the Fusion Center Network is considered top security and supervised by the federal government in the interest of National Security.

Central Phenomenon

Patton (2015), argues that phenomenological approaches oriented toward an organizations' aim to capture the essence of a program participant's experience. Therefore, the researcher's goal was to effectively capture the work experiences and beliefs regarding the impact of Fusion Centers on information sharing post 9/11 form participant with the use of semi-structured interview questions. Perceptions of the operational process and efficacy of information sharing within the Fusion Center Network was the central phenomenon explored. Fusion Center

Role of the Researcher

The researcher identified the respondents, performed the interview and collect participant data. Completion of all phases of the study was the responsibility of the researcher.

Personal and Professional Relationships (Reflexivity)

Patton (2015) stated that reflexivity is the disclosure of personal information about the researcher of a study to increase credibility through transparency. Reflexivity is necessary in a study to promote trustworthiness and credibility of the researcher by disclosing any background information that may be influential to the study as well as any association the researcher may have with the central topics of the inquiry.

The researcher's professional responsibility as a law enforcement officer in the City of New York can be considered problematic in the context of bias. It is possible that some participants may have worked with the researcher in some capacity although not directly. However, in response to this, I was mindful not to allow previous work to influence the outcome of this study. Furthermore, I have never held any influential positions in National Security, nor have I been affiliated with anyone with formal authority over Global and Homeland Security.

I am currently employed by the New York City police force was shared with participants in order to assure transparency. Participants were informed that that their involvement in the study was voluntary and that they could withdraw from the study at any time without consequence to their employment or income. Participants were also

informed that there was no compensation in exchange for their involvement and in the study.

Management of Bias and Ethical Issues

All steps were taken to refrain from allowing bias to influence the study's findings. It was noted that I never had any personal involvement with the Fusion Center Network or any influential persons in any state or federal departments. Transparency and credibility were practiced throughout the study in accordance with federal research and Walden university ethical guidelines.

Interview data were applied to the theoretical framework and the literature review. Interview questions were asked in an open-ended format to allow participants to elaborate. the accuracy of data received were validated using member checking procedures where participants were given the opportunity to review the data collected to ensure accuracy of responses. Upon concluding, members were thanked for their voluntary involvement.

Methodology

Population

According to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS, 2016b), federal, state, and local governments, non-government organizations (NGO's) and other private entities work directly and indirectly with the Fusion Center Network in their support of averting terrorism. Individuals working within or collaborating with the Fusion Center Network are of varying backgrounds, and expertise in public safety, immigration, public health,

intelligence, military, and emergency management (DHS, 2016b). According to DHS (2016b), most of these employees work for law enforcement organization and less than one percent are employed by the private sector. At least 20% are employed in an investigative capacity and approximately 38% are analysts (DHS, 2016b). The Network staff is widely diverse, which has proven to be an asset for fulfilling the mandate of the Fusion Centers (DHS, 2016b).

Participant Selection

Duan, Bhaumik, Palinkas, & Hoagwood (2015) stated that effectively utilizing the purposive sampling technique can result in participants of high value relaying rich information to the study. The purposive sampling technique will allow the researcher to choose participants who are best able to provide rich and useful information based on the objective of the study.

Participants were required to meet a few criteria including (1) current employment at one of three Fusion Center cites selected for the study and (2) at least five years of experience working as an intelligence analyst with the Fusion Center. The researcher intends to be bounded by these characteristics because she believes that to deliver useful information for this study, participants need to be experienced and involved in various aspects of the intelligence department to include analysis, investigations, collection and dissemination of information.

Recruitment

Assistance with recruiting was sought from the New York City Police

Department's Office of Management Analysis and Planning to gain access to supervisors working with the New York State Fusion Center. Conversations were initiated through emails and telephones regarding whether the center would be able to assist in the study and how to seek permission appropriately. Accessing participants for the study through existing relationships increased the efficiency of the study through the effective utilization and maximization of resources to identify potentially useful participants (Illenberger & Flotterod, 2012). Fusion Center Fusion Center

Selection Criteria

There was an interest in recruiting employees at all grade levels with at least five years of experience as an intelligence analyst with the Fusion Center Network. These employees were better equipped with intelligence led information which could better speak on the impact Fusion Centers have on information sharing post 9/11 because of their experiences. In administering the interview questions, I focused on the procedures utilized by Fusion Centers to rapidly disseminate information/intelligence across to various law enforcement agencies and efforts to identify and address barriers to the effective information sharing between Fusion Centers and other agencies.

A sample of N=8 was large enough to an effectively describe the phenomenon, address the research questions and ascertain saturation (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). According to Creswell (1998), a sample of five to twenty-five participants is adequate to obtain data saturation. Morse (1994) also suggested that six participants are enough in a phenomenological qualitative study. Data saturation was established when no new information is obtained in data analysis causing a redundancy (Leung, 2015). To reach

saturation, three participants recruited were recruited from each of three sites for a total of N=9. No preferences were made for demographics (gender, race, and age).

Instrumentation

The interview protocol was produced by the researcher and adhered to Walden's University interview guidelines. The interview questions were based on information obtained through literature sources. The researcher developed a semi-structured telephone interview lasting approximately 45 minutes to obtain the relevant data from participants. The researcher conducted and recorded the interviews. The recorded interviews were then transcribed. The interviewees had the choice of location for the interview in order to maximize their comfort and privacy.

A member check was performed to assure the accuracy, credibility, validity, and transferability of the interview data. The interpretation and report of a portion of the outcomes as given to members of the sample in order to check the authenticity of responses and check on validity of the content and the viability of the interpretation. To review the interview questions, see Appendix C.

Data Collection

To manage data, the researcher stored interview data in a password protected computer device while also creating a contingency plan in case of data loss by storing an additional copy of data in an encrypted format on a password protected USB Flash drive. Interview recordings and field notes were transcribed. Data will be kept for at least five years as proposed by Walden University's Research Ethics guidelines to secure data integrity and lifecycle to facilitate a quality research.

Participants were reminded that they were free to withdraw their participation at any time. Those who did participate had their identities kept anonymous and their answers kept confidential. No answers were recorded in a way that could identify the respondents, and outcomes were reported in the aggregate.

Data Analysis

Data collected throughout this study will be thoroughly analyzed, interpreted and coded to ascertain patterns and themes. During the initial coding, information will be grouped in broad headings which will be derived from reviewing interview transcripts, recordings and field notes. During the second cycle of coding, the same information will be refined and placed in smaller and definite groups/categories (Miles et al., 2014). The researcher manually coded the information collected to better able to relate and understand the information.

In the first cycle of coding, the researcher utilized descriptive coding while integrating vivo and evaluation coding techniques. Utilizing this method allowed the researcher to later purify the codes initially identified and incorporated them with other identified codes. According to Miles (2014), this technique is important as it applies the codes through the summarization of data by basic response topics for indexing, identifying key phrases or word usage, and by merit, worth, and or significance respectively.

Themes were generated through employing selective coding to establish response patterns. Selective coding was utilized to examine the relationship between the codes to further evaluate whether they could be further broken down or categorized. A

comparative analysis technique was used to compare previously collected data to newly acquired ones which will then be analyzed for any relation and relevance to the research questions. This process assisted r to recognize if additional participants were needed for the study. The codes and themes developed were analyzed for association as well as relevance to the research questions.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness for this study was achieved through the lens of credibility, transferability, conformability and dependability. This was important for maintaining high integrity and value in order to that the study could be deemed viable. To achieve and maintain trustworthiness of the study, any issues that would challenge transparency were identified. Other mitigation strategies were put in effect to avoid any potential or correct any threats regarding the accuracy of research findings.

Credibility/Validity (Internal)

Validity in qualitative studies is most often threatened by researcher bias and individual participations (Leung, 2015). The researcher's intentions to gain participants with similarities in job description; tenure and organization could raise the possibility of bias. The fact that the researcher is professionally associated with law enforcement could lead to potential bias based on preconceived notions already implied through work experiences. Therefore, I disclosed my professional background and personal experiences too increase and maintain reflexivity. I also utilized negative case analysis to assure validity by discussing elements of the study that do not seem to contradict or support explanations deriving from data analysis. Member-checking was utilized to

improve the credibility, validity and transferability of the study as well as rich data through highlighting the complexities and the richness of the topic being studied (Leung, 2015). enhance

Transferability/Validity (External)

According to O'Leary (2004), transferability may be described as the findings within a study which is important and can be used in other contexts beyond the original research. Transferability is gained with the use of rich data (Maxwell, 2013). Collection of rich data was achieved through appropriately outlining and thoroughly describing the research problem, confirm applications utilized by previous theories and study replication and effectively choosing participants that are acquainted to the field of study. Transferability was gained by ensuring the results of the study are credible and can be used in other areas in Criminal Justice and related fields.

Dependability/Reliability

Reliability is defined as obtaining research results that are somewhat alike through the replication of a study (Leung, 2005). However, according to Leung (2005) qualitative studies often do not achieve the same level of reliability as that of quantitative studies. Therefore, the reliability of this study may not be high because the data collected were derived from participant's perspectives. However, the use of multiple data collection instruments and member checking increased reliability and dependability in this study. Data collection methods such as field notes, electronic audio recording devices, reflective notes and memos were used in the interview phase to allow for enhance cross-validation of the data collected.

Timing may also influence reliability in this study because participant's opinions maybe influenced through the passage of time. If terrorism is deemed to be on the rise or below norm, this is an environmental factor that could also influence reliability but not much can be done to avoid this.

Confirmability/Objectivity

Objectivity is the belief that participants' perceptions are accurately represented in a study (Sheperis, Young, & Daniels, 2010). To support objectivity in this study peer review and consultation were employed to identify any areas of potential researcher bias or misrepresentation of data. The researcher was mindful about prior experiences and how they could affect the interpretation of data. Also, were applicable, data could be sent to external sources for audit and research purposes supporting the guidelines of Walden's Institutional Review Board. Data were will be maintained for at least 5 years to allow to allow for potential reanalysis by others (Miles, 2014).

Ethical Procedures and Participant Protections

Ethical concerns tend to be associated with the data collection phase Creswell (2013). However, ethical considerations should be practiced throughout the research at every stage (Creswell, 2013). This is imperative as ethical procedures and the protection of participants are important aspects of research to promote reliability and enhance validity of the study. I followed all ethical guidelines by ensuring participant's safety through confidentiality of participant's pertinent information. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study, the procedures and their rights to withdraw at any time without any consequence.

Participants

To uphold ethical integrity and reliability of this study, participants were given an overview about the rationale for the study, how the information will be protected and used. They were also be informed about the researcher's professional background, their expectations as participants, and were asked to send an email confirming their acceptance of being a study participant. Informed consent forms approved by Walden University's Institutional Review Board were issued to participants to reinforce their individual rights and privacy protection.

Prior to the interview, ethical guidelines for qualitative studies were adhered to. Participants were asked about any concerns they may have regarding the study and will be reminded that it is a voluntary process and the right to stop at any time. Confidentiality assurances included concealing all pertinent information of participants to the highest degree possible. Also, the Fusion Centers were not disclosed in the study's findings or manuscripts to protect any association with respondents.

Janesick's (2011) ethical guidelines regarding qualitative study were illustrated before and throughout the interview. According to Janesicks (2011) "conducting an effective qualitative study involves intensively preparing a schedule of questions that addresses varying aspects of the research topic and an openness to work with whatever actions or signals given by the participants. However, this can only be achieved through extensive preparation so that immediate responses during an interview remain grounded and guided by what have learnt and internalized".

At the end of an interview, participants were given the opportunity to review the drafts of their interviews to promote member checking procedures thereby having their own personal evaluation of the data collected by the researcher to identify any recording or interpretation errors. Corrections were made where necessary.

Summary

Law enforcement information sharing has been a major issue for many decades which has resulted in the implementation of the Fusion Center Network. This study focused on the impact of the Fusion Center Network on information sharing after the 9/11 attacks. The study highlighted deficiencies in the current system which will be helpful to National Security in the protection of the Homeland and to fill the gap in earlier literature regarding the use of Fusion Centers for information sharing. A qualitative design with a phenomenological approach was utilized to collect interview data from N=8 respondents regarding their experiences and perspectives regarding information sharing between law enforcement and non-government agencies for averting domestic and international terrorism. This study design was chosen to ensure alignment with the research questions, theoretical framework, goals, and objectives of the study.

Chapter 4.the results of the study were outlined. Patterns and themes were identified and discussed as well as any discrepancies or ambiguities found within the study. The findings were described using charts and tables where necessary in order to facilitate understanding for the reader.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

This qualitative study focused on the impact of Fusion Centers on information sharing post the 9/11 terrorist attacks in New York City. Prior research tends to be limited in focus. This study sought to fill the gap in literature by focusing on how information sharing has been impacted thus far since the implementation of Fusion Centers.

In Chapter 4, the researcher detailed the results of the study while highlighting patterns and themes. Descriptions of participant demographics, data collection and analysis, research settings, and other evidence of trustworthiness were also illustrated.

The data collected in this study focused on employee's perceptions regarding information sharing with an in-depth view on interagency collaboration, how information is collected, disseminated and prioritized as well as the United States National Security Strategy. Participants were recruited from three primary operated Fusion Centers. One test site declined to participate which resulted in the inclusion of two test sites and eight study participants in total. I collected data through telephone interviews of participants that had worked in the National Fusion Center Network for at least five years in an intelligence analyst position. The two core questions were used to guide the collection and analysis of meaningful information responsive to the purpose and problem statement of the study.

The two core questions included:

RQ1- What procedure is utilized by Fusion Centers to rapidly disseminate information across to the various law enforcement agencies within a timely manner?

RQ2- How do Fusion Centers address barriers to the effective sharing of information between the Fusion Center and law enforcement agencies?

Setting Challenges and Potential Influences

The main challenge experienced during this study was also echoed by other researchers who conducted studies on the Fusion Center Network (Gardner, 2017). One main challenge was that participants saw certain information on Fusion Center operation sensitive since their work involves law enforcement investigations. As a result, sensitive information regarding any investigations required approval by Fusion Center superior management. Some participants appeared nervous about sharing information. However, as the interview progressed, the participants started to relax, answering questions with more fluidity. The sensitivity of Fusion Center operations also caused one Fusion Center to decline participation in the study. This may also be attributed to the many criticisms regarding the effectiveness of Fusion Centers. Fusion Center As result, the researcher had to reinforce that the research was solely for academic purposes and that Walden University's IRB could be contacted to confirm compliance with research ethics regulations. Participants were also reminded that they will not be directly quoted, and their names would not be mentioned in the study. A copy of the interview questions was sent to potential participants to inspect before accepting the invitation to participate.

Appendix A outlines a copy of the letter which was sent to the Fusion Center's management team to gain consent to utilize the Fusion Center as a test site in the study. Most participants consented after reviewing the invitation letter and the interview questions.

Demographics

Prior to data being collected, permission was sought from the participating Fusion Centers through the issuance of an invitation letter outlining the overall purpose of the study. Two centers accepted the invitation and one Fusion Center denied the invitation. Upon receiving acceptance of participation from the Fusion Centers, the letters of cooperation were then sent to Walden's Internal Review Board for approval to begin collecting data. Individual invitation letters were then sent by email to employees of the participating Fusion Centers who matched the inclusion criteria of the study. The invitation letters outlined the overall purpose and background of the study as well as contact information.

All participants replied to the email with "I consent" confirming their agreement to participate in the study. Inclusion was confirmed with three questions. The inclusion criteria for participants to be in the study asked that employees be working in the Fusion Center Network for at least five years in the capacity of an intelligence analyst. Network

Participants represented two Fusion Centers, which will be referred to as Fusion Center A and Fusion Center B for illustration purposes. Both centers have overall responsibility for the state in which they operate. Table 1 gives a brief description of each Fusion Center.

Table 1

Characteristics of the Fusion Centers

Characteristics	Fusion Center A	Fusion Center B
Been in Existence	10+	10+
Focus Areas	All Crimes	All Crimes
Type of Center	Primary	Primary
Collaborating Agencies	Law Enforcement, Emergency Management and Fire	Law Enforcement, Military, Emergency Management, Fire

Note. The Fusion Centers do collaborate with other agencies externally. However, the agencies mentioned in the table are housed within the Fusion Center Building. As described by Table 1 above, the participants in the study all described their Fusion Center in a similar manner with all centers focus on crimes in general, emergency management and antiterrorism strategies. Both Fusion Centers represented in the study had similar staffing composed of law enforcers, fire and emergency management personnel. Fusion Center B however also has military intelligence personnel. While participants made it clear that they all work collaboratively internally, sharing information efficiently to enhance productivity, external stakeholders also play a vital role in the Fusion Center Network as they are relied on heavily to obtain information. Participants from both Fusion Centers also agreed that information is gained through various sources to include; media coverage, telephone calls, interviews and from other external stake holders.

Ultimately, all participants believe the Fusion Center Network has been effective with the Mission of the United States National Security Strategies. Network However,

they all think there is still room for improvement as it relates to the operations of the Network. According to participants, the Network can improve in different ways if various things are addressed such as providing better salaries and staffing with more intelligence personnel rather than law enforcers since the activities of the center is mostly surrounding intelligence collection, analyzing and sharing. They all think issues such as these will help to not only retain employees but to enhance efficiency in the system.

Initially the researcher targeted three Fusion Centers with the aim of utilizing three participants from each center. However, since one Fusion Center denied participating in the study, additional participants were subsequently recruited from the remaining two centers to ensure multiple position levels were represented throughout the study as well as enough participants

Table 2

Participants Position, Tenure and Job Functions

General Position	Tenure	Job Functions
Intelligence Supervisor	5 years	Manages a team of strategic analysts, lead intelligence related projects and investigations, conduct trainings, policy development

Senior Intelligence Analyst	8- 15 years	Lead intelligence related projects and investigations, conduct trainings
Intelligence Analyst / Intelligence Program Associate	8-14 years	Counter Terrorism and Intelligence threat Investigations

Note. All times provided by participants were approximates.

A total of eight participants were interviewed. All participants were informed that their participation was voluntary, and they could stop at any time during the process. However, they all went through with the interview process and answered all the interview questions. All participants worked in the intelligence field for over five years. Three participants were senior intelligence analysts, two were intelligence supervisors, and three were intelligence analysts/associates in the intelligence department.

Participant job functions overlapped and consist of managing, analyzing and sharing information, conducting interviews and investigations, managing Fusion Center programs/initiatives, briefings and de-briefings, trainings and policy developments. Participants' years of experience as an intelligence analyst within the Fusion Center Network ranged between 5 years and 15 years. Hence, they were able to provide firsthand information to clarify and describe the operations of the Fusion Center Network on information sharing, intelligence gathering, analysis, and interagency collaboration. Insight of seasoned professionals to helped to clarify the impact Fusion Centers have on information sharing post 9/11.

Data Collection

Due to potential deterrents such as geographic distance, time, and resource constraints, the data for this study were collected through telephone interviews between May 23rd and July 2nd, 2019. Participants agreed to have the interviews audio recorded and transcribed. The audio recording App "Tami" was utilized to record interviews and were later transcribe into print format. The audio recording allowed for the accurate and effective thematic analysis of response data. Notes of key themes reported by participants. The time and location of the interviews were chosen by the participants so they could be comfortable during the process. Participants were aware that other employees within their Fusion Center and other representatives from other Fusion Centers were also participating in the study. However, the identification of other participants was not revealed to other participants.

Based on my assessments the participants had no concerns or reservations being a participant in the study and very comfortable throughout the interview process. I assumed this based on conversations we had through email prior to conducting the interview. No concerns regarding professionalism, confidentiality, fear of reprisal or conflict of interest were brought up by any participants. However, I did remind the participants that they could refuse to participate or stop at any time during the process without any repercussions, and that their identity would never be revealed or linked to responses. Participants agreed to the terms of the consent.

All participants provided a written email consenting to be a part of the study before data collection began. As part of member checking procedures, participants were

also offered the opportunity to review the interview transcripts, but they all declined the offer. The interviews ranged from approximately 11 minutes to 24 minutes in length. The interview recordings were electronically transcribed by the "Temi App" and saved on a password protected computer. All participants were asked the same questions as part of a semi-structures interview (See Appendix C).

The first three questions in the interview helped to determine whether the participant was indeed qualified to be a part of the study as the inclusion criteria stipulated that participants had to be working in the Fusion Center Network for five years or more in an intelligence capacity. These questions asked about participant's job description and years of service working with the Fusion Center Network. Questions 4 to 9 focused on Fusion Center demographics. These questions enquired about Fusion Center daily operations and standard operating procedures. They describe the organization and highlight areas relating to interagency collaboration, information sharing, addressing barriers as well as compare the information sharing age now versus the years before the 9/11 attacks. The final three questions (10-12) were geared toward participants' opinions regarding their perceptions of program effectiveness and suggestions for improvement.

Data Analysis

The data elements of this study were captured during the interviews by a digital recording app "Tami". The audio was then transcribed and saved on a password protected computer. Participant names were replaced with an alphanumeric reference number to protect identity prior to initial coding. The information collected was later analyzed to

identify themes and patterns in the data collected. First cycle coding was conducted by reviewing the information collected to assist with generating initial codes. As a result, patterns were identified after which a more in-depth review of the participants' responses were done. This resulted in the identification of more concrete themes. A combination of Nvivo and evaluative coding techniques was then applied to further analyze the data.

To begin the coding process, the researcher reviewed and compared participant answers individually. Specific words were then identified that were recurring in participants' answers. Words such as "stakeholders, information sharing, and investigations" were all common when participants were describing their Fusion Center operations. As a result, these common terms were then evaluated for significance during the coding process based on how frequent they were utilized by the participants. No doubt, the frequency ratings did help to identify initial codes due to participants sharing similar concepts. However, groupings and the evaluation of participants phrases themselves were found to be more valuable because after careful analysis it was concluded that for some participants' repetition of a word indicated how important the word was in the day to day operations of the Fusion Center but for other participants repeating the word just appeared to be a chain of thought that the participant relied on.

Continuing in the coding process, patterns and themes were later identified by grouping related questions. The questions were grouped by their relevance to each of the research questions in the study. While themes and concepts were identified throughout the process, isolated comments and responses were also highlighted. These unique

responses were outlined in order to highlight the different perspectives of the participants which may in fact represent the views of many and maybe represented in a similar study.

To better illustrate how the themes were identified in this study, an overview of the responses from participants will be described next in this chapter.

Fusion Center Description

Interview Question # 4 asked participants to describe the Fusion Center and its day to day operations. Participant responses were similar. In describing their Fusion Center, the term "information sharing" was common among all. Another term that was often mentioned when explaining the operations of the Fusion Center was "interagency collaboration". All participants summarized that their Fusion Center works collaboratively with other agencies both internally and externally.

Obtaining Information from Outside Sources

Interview question # 5 asked participants how the Fusion Center obtains information from outside sources. In general, answers for participants at each site were consistent and the term "interagency collaboration" was evident. This is so as participants reply that Fusion Centers receive information from various internal and external sources to include; the news media, social media, emails, law enforcement organizations, other federal and local intelligence partners, fire fighters, witnesses and other civilians and stake holders. There are also Terrorism Tip Hotlines with the slogan "See something, Say something". These hotlines are manned by investigators. Received information is scanned for authenticity then passed on to the Federal Bureau of

Investigations who also conduct their own investigations. If the case is accepted by the FBI, the Fusion Center shares the information with the local police department. Sometimes there are special collection efforts based on the threat and information that is passed on to the Field Intelligence Officers. There are also Apps that allow civilians to take pictures of suspicious activities to send to the Fusion Centers directly. One participant also stated that they have access to internal databases of other stakeholders which they also use to source information.

Prioritization of Information

Interview Question #6 asked participants how the Fusion Center prioritizes information and operations when received. Most participants stated that there is not a set protocol outlining what comes first or what should be given priority. They all agree that the biggest threats facing the United States are dealt with urgently, so in fact it is based on the threat level. One participant stated that their Fusion Center attempted to formulize a threat prioritization plan where they worked with partners across US as well as other Fusion Centers. Their aim was to put the biggest threats facing their state first and the not so imminent threats after.

They attempted to prioritize based on the threat level. That attempt was not formally initiated since sometimes more information is available for lower level threats, so they go back to complete those cases. Another participant stated that their Fusion Center tries to work on prioritizing information by conducting a Strategic Analysis Meeting every year and discuss structured analytical techniques to better address incoming threats. This is important because if certain key intelligence questions and

threat issues are dealt with imminently the public can be better informed and the homeland protected.

Dissemination of Information to Outside Sources

Interview Question# 7 asked participants how long it normally takes information to be disseminated from the Fusion Centers to other agencies and why. Participants all agree that there are no standard procedures as to the time frame that information should be disseminated. They all agreed that it really depends on the urgency of the situation, how strategic the information is and what exactly needs to be done with the information. One participant noted that for the most part information received from their intelligence partners are already written up so to disseminate it can take anywhere between one to two hours.

Another participant responded that it may take several weeks to complete an analysis and then obtain approval through the chain of command before certain information can be disseminated. This has to do with highly sensitive matters, so again the time frame in which the information is disseminated depends on the type of information and the urgency of the situation. One participant agreed that the nature of the situation determines the time it is distributed. Additionally, it was stated that Fusion Centers deal with a wide range of products inclusive of situational awareness products, officer safety bulletins, amber alerts, as well as other situations that are highly time sensitive. Therefore, it really depends on the type of information received, how much investigation needs to be done, clarified and vetted before distribution.

Addressing Barriers to Effectively Share Information

Table 3

Addressing Barriers to Effectively Share Information

Description	Fusion Center A	Fusion Center B
Flyers/Circulars	**X**	**X**
Field Intelligence Officer Program		**X**
Outreach Programs	**X**	
National Network of Fusion Centers Program	**X**	**X**

As outlined in Table 3 above, participants do believe their Fusion Centers works assiduously to address any barriers to effectively share information between stakeholders. Both Fusion Centers utilize some common approaches to effectively address the barriers. However, there are also some differences in approach. Both Fusion Centers utilize flyers and circulars to get information across effectively both internally and externally. Participants further stated that the circulars are written at the lowest level possible so it can be understood by the intended audience. Both Fusion Centers also uses the National Network of Fusion Centers System to address barriers internally. This system brings together various Fusion Centers to coordinate and discuss concerns to ensure there is some standardization across all platforms since all Fusion Centers has its own rules. Participants from Fusion Center B stated that their Fusion Center participates in a Field

Intelligence Officer program to help address any barriers to effectively share information. This is where Intelligence Officers become a point of contact for various law enforcement agencies across the United States. Therefore, whenever certain sensitive information needs to be disseminated to an agency the Field Intelligence Officer will contact the liaison in that agency.

Fusion Center A does not participate in this program. However, participants from Fusion Center A stated that their Fusion Center participates in other outreach programs utilized to address barriers to share information. These outreach programs focus on critical infrastructure partners, cyber units and other law enforcement partners. This is done to maintain a good relationship with the various stakeholders, so communication is easier.

The Fusion Center Network and the US National Security Strategy

Table 4

Opinions on Fusion Centers Collaboration with the National Security Strategy

Position	Effectively Collaborating	Needs Improvement
Supervisors	1	1
Senior Intelligence Analysts	2	1
Intelligence Analysts	3	

As outlined in table four (4) above, participants were asked whether they think the Fusion Center Network is effectively collaborating with the United States National Security Strategy. Six participants inclusive of one supervisor, two senior intelligence analysts and three intelligence analysts agreed that their Fusion Center is in fact effectively collaborating with the strategy. One senior intelligence analyst stated that the Fusion Center Network has a very good system where they streamline and disseminate the most credible information to its local and federal partners and that's what the National Security Strategy wants.

The strategy wants the Fusion Centers to work collaboratively with different partners to protect the Homeland by being force multipliers, making sure people have the information they need for public safety to prevent any acts of terror. An intelligence analyst stated that the National Security Strategy gave them a structured mechanism which makes it easier for them to reach any part of the country at any intelligence, or criminal related level to effectively share information to diffuse any threat level. However, one supervisor and one senior intelligence analyst believes like everything else there is always room for improvement. Both stated that for the most part their Fusion Center is collaborating with the National Security Strategy but still thinks the system needs improvement.

Proposed Changes to the Fusion Center Network

Table 5

Opinions on Ways to Improve the Fusion Center Network

Description	Supervisor	Senior Intelligence Analysts	Intelligence Analysts
Salary	1		2
Training	1	2	
Unified Intranet System		1	1

As explained in table five (5) above, participants were asked if they were to make any changes to effectively enhance the Fusion Center Network what would that be and why. They were also asked to comment on anything they deemed important about the system that we have not mentioned throughout the interview. Two participants inclusive of one senior intelligence analyst and one intelligence analyst stated that they would love to see the Fusion Center Network initiate an intranet system where all Fusion Centers work from a common system and they can all log into this system and conduct researches on cases that other Networks are working on.

They want a system where all intelligence products are stored in one location. The intelligence analyst further stated that it would make life much easier when conducting researches as well as to coordinate with analysts from different centers. Three participants inclusive of two senior intelligence analyst and one supervisor made mention about the training curriculum. They believe there needs to be improvement in training specifically for analysts. They want all analysts in the Network receive the same trainings, so they are on the same page. This way they will better understand each other and will be able to

coordinate effectively. According to the supervisor, presently there is a good training module. However, it is not standardized which poses a problem as every Fusion Center is trained differently. He also believes the Fusion Center Network needs to stop leaning toward having a law enforcement base as most of their leaders are pervious law enforcers. But, should instead focus more on intelligence because that's really what the Fusion Center Network should be about. One senior intelligence analyst stated that trainings are necessary and not all Fusion Centers have the same kind of staffing and resources which makes it harder for some centers to operate. So there needs to be some sort of consistency in the system in order to enhance productivity and remain efficient. Three participants inclusive of one supervisor and two intelligence analysts mentioned salary. According to these respondents, Fusion Center employees get paid differently based on location and this is the reason why some centers are understaffed because employees prefer to work in different areas where they get paid better.

Therefore, a standardized, competitive salary irrespective of location will help to enhance productivity and retain employees.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Research studies are measured based on their ability to demonstrate academic rigor and trustworthiness. It is often said that qualitative studies are of low quality and lack rigor due to the usage of unstructured data that requires interpretation. Because of

this preconceived notion, the researcher took every possible step to provide the greatest level of trustworthiness in this study.

Several actions were taken to promote validity and credibility in this study. One such action was the implementation of the member checking procedures where upon concluding the interview each member was given the opportunity to review the transcripts, make comments, clarifications or corrections where necessary. Also, to clarify statements made by participants the researcher restated what was said to ensure understandability after which field notes were also corrected. The Triangulation technique was also utilized during the analysis phase and when multiple participants gives similar responses it helped to generate codes, themes and patterns.

Credibility was also illustrated through data saturation and many responses from participants reflected concepts seen in similar researches. This highlighted the significance and relevance of the data being collected and made it easy to generate themes and identify patterns. Through the collection of in-depth, rich data transferability was obtained. Participants gave detailed accounts of their perceptions and gave thorough and relevant answers to each question. Cross validation of information received was done to promote dependability within the study. As a result, varying collection instruments such as audio recordings and field notes were utilized during the interviews.

Also, member checking procedures helped to promote dependability for this study as members were sure what they said was interpreted correctly.

The possibility exists that researcher bias could cause risks for objectivity. As a result, the researcher constantly reminded herself how important it is to remain objective throughout the study, while also not allowing her professional experiences to shape the overall outcome of the study. The researcher also kept notes of the data collection process to better explain the rationale behind the research findings and confirmability. This helped to diffuse potential bias actions throughout the study. The researcher also employed peer review/consultation technique where a friend/classmate who has experience in qualitative studies was used to read and analyze the information to ensure researcher bias was not evident**.**

Results

In this section of the chapter, the main findings of the study will be highlighted. This study sought to understand the effects Fusion Centers have on information sharing post 9/11 by answering two main research questions. The research questions that emerged from Chapter 2 became a guide to develop the interview questions for the participants. Appendix C provides a detailed listing of the interview questions which are in relation to the central research questions for the study.

The research questions were the foundation that helped to establish the themes throughout the study. Therefore, data obtained from the interview questions applied directly to both research questions.

RQ1- What procedure is utilized by Fusion Centers to rapidly disseminate information across to the various law enforcement agencies within a timely manner? Associated interview questions to research question #1 are question numbers 4, 6, 7, 8, and 10

RQ2- How do Fusion Centers address barriers to the effective sharing of information between the Fusion Center and law enforcement agencies? Associated interview questions to research question #2 are question numbers 4, 5, 9 and 10.

Research Question 1

To answer Research Question 1 an understanding of how information is received, and the standard operating procedures used to share information both internally and externally was necessary. Upon analyzing participants' responses and evaluation of codes, two underlying themes emerged. These themes were emerged based on similar responses given by more than 75% of the study participants. The first theme concerned perceptions of issues surrounding records management that needs to be addressed so information can be accessed easily by employees within the Network. The second theme surrounds issues relating to the prioritization of information when received.

As was previously mentioned, some participants believe that having an internal records management system where all Fusion Centers can login and access information to cases being worked on, tips and other important information would enhance productivity and make information easier as things would be readily available. There was strong consensus from the participants that a unanimous system would be an effort they support. However, the participant's feedback on the current system's effectiveness was not a thriving issue for concern.

Regarding the prioritization of information, most participants agreed that there is not a standard system in place which tells them what to work on or what sequence to follow. Most participants stated that in choosing what needs to be dealt with they are guided by whatever is of national interest or the "hot topic" at the time. One participant stated that on an annual basis their Fusion Center conducts a training on structured analytical techniques. During this training, they try to develop and understand techniques to identify different levels of threats which helps them to better prioritize information when received. However, there is no standard procedure used to prioritize information. Another participant stated that their center has a team of analysts who analyze emerging threats and try to prioritize them. However, it is not a continuous thing so there is no standard way used to prioritize information when received.

Research Question 2

Many overlapping concepts were identified during the data collection and interpretation phase of this study. Research question 2 asked participants about addressing barriers to effectively communicate with other agencies. Two significant themes were identified.

The first theme was centered on effective advertisement/marketing strategies and the second theme surrounded interagency collaboration and the sharing of resources. Again, these themes were identified based on similar responses from over 75% of the participants.

Theme one (1) reflected on the various marketing strategies used by Fusion

Centers to correspond effectively with outside partners. Many participants stated that to effectively address the barriers associated with communicating with outside sources their center uses flyers, outreach programs where they visit different organizations, conduct trainings, send group emails, tele-conferencing and even video calling to ensure outside partners are fully aware and understand whatever information is being disseminated. Other participants stated that their center's executive staff first assess the information internally before it is sent out to ensure that their external partners will fully understand what is being relayed. This is done to improve, maintain and build positive relationships with external sources.

In addressing the second theme concerning interagency collaboration participants stated that the introduction of the Field Intelligence Officers program was a big way in which their center sought to address barriers to communicate with external sources. The Field Intelligence Officers act as a liaison between the Fusion Center and other external partners, making it easier for information to be shared and understood. The Field Intelligence Officers have direct contact to employees within the outside agencies. So, information is relayed directly to specific employees who then pass it on to the necessary personnel within their organization. The Fusion Center Network conducts training with other agencies. This is important to ensure everyone is on the same page in case of an emergency and to build positive rapport and encourage team building. During these meetings available resources from each agency is identified so everyone is aware of who is able to do what if a certain situation arises.

Summary

Chapter 4 outlined the overall execution of this research. It gave an in-depth explanation regarding data collection and analysis. Participant's demographics and Fusion Center operations were all discussed to highlight the background of the study. The data collection process was also explained to expound on the factors supporting the evaluation of the study. Tables were utilized to illustrate certain aspects of the data collected and evidence of trustworthiness was provided for readers to assess and ensure it was applicable to the study.

The results section in this chapter sought to further refine and explain the data collected which was subsequently presented in the data analysis section. Data were also analyzed for relevance to the central research questions of the study. Research question 1 sought to identify the procedures used by Fusion Centers to rapidly disseminate information across to law enforcement organizations within a timely manner. Based on the data collected there is not a standard time that information needs to get out to law enforcement organizations, neither is there a standard outlining what takes precedence or what should be handled first. It relies on the nature of the situation such as level of danger, the type of information to be disseminated, and the authenticity of the information received.

Research question 2 was angled around techniques used by the Fusion Center Network to address barriers affecting the effective sharing of information to law enforcement organizations. Various techniques were mentioned to include interagency

trainings, the formation of the Field Officer Intelligence Training Program, site visits, handing out of flyers and video conference calls. All these techniques were said to enhance team building and enhance productivity.

Chapter 5 included the interpretation of the outcomes and organized them within the context of the research questions in order to make conclusions and recommendations.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

The tragedy of the 9/11 terrorist attack of 9/11 prompted the establishment of a National Fusion Center Network (Klem, 2016). The main purpose of the Fusion Center Network was to enhance information sharing and security amongst the various law enforcement, intelligence and emergency management agencies in the United States (DHS, 2016b). The Network Commission Report outlined that a lack of information sharing between the various law enforcement agencies gave Al-Qaeda the opportunity to launch one of the most devastating attacks on the United States (National Commission on Terrorist Attacks, 2004). As a result, each state was mandated to formulate a Fusion Center which is the central location where information concerning National Security will be received, analyzed and distributed. Currently there are 79 Fusion Centers consisting of different federal and local partners, collectively working to protect the Homeland (Fusion Centers Location and Contact Information, 2018).

Since the inception of the Fusion Center Network there have been quite a few studies criticizing its operations and its effectiveness. One main critique comes from the fact that even though the Fusion Center Network is federally operated, each Fusion Center has its own rules and regulations, so no two Fusion Center operate the same way. Utilizing a phenomenological approach, this qualitative study seeks to find out the impact Fusion Centers have on information sharing since they were implemented. In analyzing the research topic, barriers to effective information sharing was also addressed as an essential component of interagency collaboration within the Network.

Discussion

The primary focus of this phenomenological qualitative research is to discover how the implementation of the Fusion Center Network has impacted Information Sharing. This study aimed to close the gap on present scholarly content relating to the Fusion Center Network and Law Enforcement Information Sharing by focusing on the perspectives of Fusion Center employees. The final chapter addressed the major findings, recommendations and conclusion of the study. The theoretical framework that links the study, limitations of the study, future research areas, and a summary were also be included.

Law enforcement information sharing has been a major topic since the 9/11 attacks on the United States. As a result, the Fusion Center Network has been implemented to address the deficiencies in the system. This research provides a more detailed account of the standard operating procedures governing the Fusion Center Network and how it has impacted Information Sharing thus far using the following two research questions:

RQ1- What procedure is utilized by Fusion Centers to rapidly disseminate information across to the various law enforcement agencies within a timely manner?

RQ2- How do Fusion Centers address barriers to the effective sharing of information between the Fusion Center and law enforcement agencies?

Interpretation of the Findings

Within this study, the researcher sought to identify how the Fusion Center Network have impacted information sharing since implementation after 9/11. A semi structured telephone interview was conducted with a sample of employees of the National Fusion Center Network. The findings from this study confirmed some of the findings made in prior scholarly work while refuting a few. The results also provided insight to some new concepts that were not identified in prior studies.

During the interviews, participants described their Fusion Center and its day-today operations in a similar manner. They all confirmed that the main purpose of their center was to share information effectively among the various Law Enforcement agencies in the United States. As a result, they work closely with other external agencies to effectively fight against terrorism and other criminal activities. Fusion Centers receive information from various internal and external sources, including: the news media, social media, emails, law enforcement organizations, other federal and local intelligence partners, fire fighters, witnesses, and other civilians and stake holders. Terrorism hotlines are available to the public that are manned by investigators who scan information received for authenticity then send it on to the Federal Bureau of Investigations. There are also apps that allow civilians to take pictures of suspicious activities and send it in to the Fusion Centers directly.

In order have a better understanding as to how Fusion Centers have been impacting information sharing thus far, it is imperative that one understands how the

Fusion Center Network prioritize information when received. According to the study participants, there is not a set protocol outlining what cases should be worked on first or what should be given priority. However, the biggest threats facing the United States are dealt with urgently. Therefore, order of prioritization may be based on threat level. One participant stated that their Fusion Center attempted to formulize a threat prioritization plan where they worked with partners across the United States as well as other Fusion Centers. The aim of the threat prioritization plan was to prioritize information based on the threat level. However, that attempt was not formally initiated since sometimes more information is available for lower level threats, so they go back to complete those cases. Some Fusion Centers conduct a strategic analysis meeting every year and discuss structured analytical techniques to better address incoming threats and prioritization techniques. This is important because if certain key intelligence questions and threat issues are dealt with immediately, the public can be better informed, and the Homeland protected. However, to date there is still no formal procedure outlining how information received should be prioritized. No doubt, this can be a major challenge for the Fusion Center Network because if information is not disseminated within a timely manner it gives terrorists the opportunity to strike again.

Participants were asked about the time frame it normally takes information to be disseminated from the Fusion Centers to other agencies and why. According to the participants, there are no standard procedures as to the time frame that information should be disseminated. Therefore, it depends on the urgency of the situation, how strategic the information is and what exactly needs to be done with the information. All information received needs to be written up then distributed it will take longer and make even go into

weeks. Participants further went on to explain that disseminating information can take several weeks since sometimes an analysis of the information received may be long and then to obtain approval through the chain of command may take some time too. Therefore, the time frame in which the information is disseminated depends on the type of information and the urgency of the situation.

Study participants did report believing that their Fusion Centers works assiduously to address any barriers to effectively share information between stakeholders. Various practices have been implemented by different Fusion Centers depending on what barriers they are facing. One Fusion Center introduced a system called the National Network of Fusion Centers where different Centers coordinate and discuss concerns to ensure there is some standardization across all platforms since each Fusion Center follows its own set of rules. Other Fusion Centers use circulars, flyers or any other documents written in the lowest level possible so it can be understood by the intended audience. Programs such as the Field Intelligence Officer Program was also introduced to help with addressing barriers. Within this program, some Fusion Center employees are placed as the point of contact for various law enforcement agencies across the United States. Whenever certain information needs to be disseminated to an agency the Field Intelligence Officer is contacted and informed and they will contact a liaison within the external agency. Other programs utilized to address barriers are the outreach programs that focus on critical infrastructure partners, cyber units, and other law enforcement partners.

Participant data suggests that the centers are doing a good job addressing barriers. Each center may face different barriers depending on their location and the types of

threats being dealt with. Hence, creating an individualized plan as to how to deal with the issues as they arise is key to addressing a barrier facing California Fusion Center may not be the best way to address a barrier facing another Fusion Center elsewhere.

The United States National Security Strategy plays a big role in the Fusion Center Network. This is so because the overall purpose of the Network is helping to protect the Homeland. One participant described the Fusion Center Network as a very good system where they streamline and disseminate the most credible information to its local and federal partners. The Fusion Centers work collaboratively with different partners to protect the Homeland by being force multipliers, making sure people have the information they need for public safety to prevent any acts of terror. Participants believe the National Security Strategy gave them a structured mechanism that makes it easier for them to reach any part of the country at any intelligence or criminal-related level to effectively share information to diffuse any threat level.

Although participants made it clear that their Fusion Center is collaborating effectively with the National Security Strategy, they believe there is still room for improvement. The researcher agrees with this as she thinks having a standardized Fusion Center Network where all trainings are under one umbrella, the computer system is unified and access to cases being worked on by the various centers are accessible will allow for information to be shared more easily and effectively maintaining the mission of the National security Strategy.

Participants were asked if they were to make any changes to effectively enhance the Fusion Center Network. One participant stated that she would love to see the Fusion

Center Network initiate an intranet system where all Fusion Centers work from a common system and they can all log into this system and conduct researches on cases that other Networks are working on. She believes the system should store all intelligence products in one location. She thinks it would make life much easier when conducting researches as well as to coordinate with analysts from different centers. Another, participant made mention of the training curriculum. He believes there needs to be improvement in training specifically for analysts. He would ensure all analysts in the Network receive the same trainings, so they are on the same page. This way they will better understand each other and will be able to coordinate effectively. He says presently there is a good training module, however it is not standardized which poses a problem as every Fusion Center is trained differently. He also believes the Fusion Center Network needs to stop leaning toward having a law enforcement base as most of their leaders are pervious law enforcers. But should instead focus more on intelligence because that's really what the Fusion Center Network should be about. Another participant stated that not all Fusion Centers have the same kind of staffing and resources.

Differences between centers make it harder for some centers to operate. There needs to be some sort of consistency in the system in order to enhance productivity and remain efficient. He thinks being an intelligence analyst is a great job because one plays a great role in protecting the country. Other participants made mention of salary. According to them, Fusion Center employees get paid differently based on location and this is the reason why some centers are understaffed because employees prefer to work in different areas where they get paid better. Other employees stated that the constant upgrading of

technology is essential to effectively enhance the Network, ensuring that they are always ahead of the game.

Confirming Concepts

Perceptions from participants regarding the day to day operations of Fusion Centers tend to be positive and relevant. These views corroborate the findings of other studies that highlighted that the Fusion Center Network is an important factor in Law Enforcement Information Sharing and has been enhancing productivity against various terrorist and criminal related activities. However, this finding also refuted many negative perceptions about the Network as prior works have described that the Network was irrelevant and carrying out tasks in a manner that was unlawful and without proper oversight (Price, 2013).

Another confirming concept related to the findings of this study is that that even though the Fusion Center Network was formulated as a result of the 2001 Terrorist Attacks on the United States they are not only focused on obtaining and sharing information about terrorism but is also orientated on preventing and detected other areas of crime. As a result, they obtain information through various sources to include the media, telephone calls, other agencies, out-reach and other training programs. Coffey (2015), also confirmed that the Network engaged in operations related to traditional law enforcement issues and not only Terrorism. Regan and Monahan (2013), also confirmed this and further stated that that the idea of not only focusing on Terrorism may be related to the volume and types of information received by Fusion Centers. The study participants also confirmed this migration away from terrorism into all areas of crime.

Disconfirming Concepts

Gosz's (2015) study of Fusion Centers suggested that different management structures and leadership practices have caused integration issues as well as issues relating to prioritizing information when received. However, participants in this study stated that there was a high level of integration between Fusion Centers to include joint production of intelligence products, collaboration of trainings, partnership on crime strategies, and other routine communication. Participants also stated that the difference in management structures have not affected how information is shared even though there is not a standard procedure on what information is shared first or how fast. It must be noted however; that emerging threats takes priority and are tackled immediately.

Original Concepts

The original concepts presented in this study outlined reasons provided by other researchers that were used to determine the effectiveness of the National Fusion Center Network. Perceptions relating to existing policies and issues with the Network have been identified in other studies such as Kingdon (2003) who wrote extensively on policy agenda within the Fusion Center Network. However, the researcher was unable to find scholarly research on the Network that presented any findings related to how the Network has impacted Information Sharing thus far while also focusing on addressing barriers to the effective sharing of information between the Network and external.

In chapter 4 it is documented where all participants believe that the Fusion Center Network is effectively collaborating with the United States National Security Strategy

and has proven to stop many terrorist related attempts in the United States. As a result, the researcher believes this may be an influential factor as to the reason why despite criticisms about the legal aspects of the Network the government finds it necessary to continue its operations.

Relevance of Bandura's Cognitive Theory of Behavioral Change to the Study

The main framework supporting this research is The Social Cognitive Theory of Behavioral Change by Albert Bandura. The theory illustrated how the behavior of human beings led to a destructive path and the strategies utilized to correct the issues. Future researchers conducting studies on Fusion Centers and Information Sharing within the United States could also use the works of Albert Bandura Cognitive Theory of Behavioral Change as the elements within this theory collaborates well with the concept of the Fusion Center Network.

The elements identified in both RQ1 and RQ2 portion of the results section supports the elements outlined in Bandura's Theory of Behavioral Change. RQ1 focused on the procedures utilized by Fusion Centers to rapidly disseminate information across to the various law enforcement agencies within a timely manner. This is imperative to the overall concept of the Fusion Center Network as the main reason why the government formed the Network was to address the issue of information not being shared effectively. Therefore, the Fusion Center Network aligns with Bandura's Theory of Behavioral Change, because as a result of the 9/11 attacks the government formulated the Fusion Center Network to correct the issues surrounding Information Sharing which was highlighted in the 9/11 Commission Report.

RQ2 results included measures used by Fusion Centers to address barriers to the effective sharing of information between the Fusion Center and other law enforcement agencies. Some of the measures identified includes a collaboration of training programs, outreach programs, circulars, flyers and meetings. According to Silvermann (2000), Bandura's Theory of Behavioral Change focuses on society, human behaviors and the social forces that influence an individual's life. Therefore, the results obtained from RQ2 does align with Bandura's Theory of Behavioral Change as the measures used to address the barriers does focus on society and the social forces used by the Fusion Center Network to improve the lives of human beings.

The relevance of Bandura's Theory of Behavioral Change to this study is clear as the theory seeks to explain that human behaviors tend to change as per a situation (Catano & Gauger, 2017). Therefore, the driving force behind the government forming the Fusion Center Network was to effectively target the inefficiencies in Information Sharing after the terrorist attacks on the United States in 2001 so as not to have a reoccurrence.

Limitations of the Study

Within this study, the researcher attempted to expand knowledge regarding the implementation of the Fusion Center Network, Information Sharing, Terrorism and National Security. Several limitations were identified during both the planning and execution phases of this research. The limitations included issues surrounding the sample size as well as other variables regarding obtaining participants and finding a time conducive to both parties to conduct the interviews.

The study focused on obtaining participant's perception about the impact of Fusion Centers on Information Sharing. The participants represented only two Fusion Centers from the entire Network. On its face, this may seem somewhat like a limited representation of the Network. While I assessed that data saturation for this study was achieved, eight (8) individuals should not be considered an amount that can be generalized across all Fusion Centers of almost three thousand (3,000) employees as the possibility exist that other perceptions and experiences were likely not represented in this study. However, according to Creswell (1998), when conducting a phenomenological study five to twenty-five participants serve to be enough to ascertain data saturation. Morse (1994) also suggested that six participants are enough in a phenomenological qualitative study. As a result, the total number of participants the researcher utilized sufficed and data saturation was achieved. There was no preference on gender when choosing participants. This was important in order to obtain a wide perspective of opinions regarding Fusion Center operations.

The sampling techniques utilized in this study relied on referrals from management for potential participants. This technique presented some risks because the potential participants they provided may not have represented all relevant individuals that may have had different experiences in the Network. Researcher bias and past experiences could also be viewed as having an influence on the study's findings and analysis. However, all attempts were made to mitigate such biases.

The main contributing factor that impacted the limitation of this research concerned the data collection methods. Even though, participants were given the opportunity to choose three dates and times that they would be available to conduct the

telephone interviews, many factors still challenged this accomplishment and rescheduling was even harder. Telephone interviews could also be viewed as presenting other challenges for the researcher by putting a limitation on the researcher's observational queues to include body languages of the participants. Never the less, due to financial and other resource constraints, telephone interviews were still the best choice. To enhance data reliability and credibility member checking procedures and back-briefs were used to effectively interpret the data collected.

Recommendations

The focal point of this study aimed to determine the impact of Fusion Centers on Information Sharing since the implementation of the Network post 9/11. The findings from the study conceptualized several factors that were retrieved from participant's responses during the interview process. The interview questions were formulated to ascertain participants' perceptions on how the Fusion Center Network has impacted Information Sharing since its implementation. Based on the findings several relevant elements were identified which helped to give a better understanding of how Fusion Centers have been impacting Information Sharing thus far. As a result of the findings, several recommendations were developed. These recommendations are geared toward the Fusion Center Network, law/policy-makers, and other federal, state, local and private agencies involved in the fight against terrorism and national security responsibilities.

It is imperative that Fusion Center employees effectively assess information when received in order to determine matters of an eminent nature. As a result, the development of a National Strategic Plan for all Fusion Centers to prioritize threats/information when received is the first recommendation the researcher wants to highlight. This

recommendation came as a result of participant responses discussed in Chapter 4 to the question “how does the Fusion Center prioritize information when received”? Many respondents stated that there is not a strategic way developed by the Network which helps them to prioritize information and rank them in order of importance. It is more based on the hot topic of the day on the news or whatever cases they have more information on they may proceed with that one first. No doubt, respondents’ answers highlighted the lack of effectiveness in the current system as it regards to prioritizing threats. However, with a standardized strategic procedure on how threats should be prioritized, it can be solved.

The researcher previously recommends for the development of a National Strategic Plan where all Fusion Centers will learn how to prioritize threats/information when received. It is also recommended that a standardized training module be implemented along with the National Strategic Plan for all Fusion Centers across the United States. A more robust and standardized training program will allow employees to better liaison with each other as they are trained and educated on the same things and in the same way. Some of these training courses should also include other stakeholders. This would enhance interagency collaboration and effectiveness, making it easier for communicating whenever a threat arises against National Security. Prior to developing standardized training modules and a standardized strategic plan to prioritize threats/ information when received, it is recommended that policy makers amend certain statutes to ensure that the Fusion Center Network operates like a Federal Organization rather than just a state operated organization. An overall Standard Operating Procedure should be established allowing all Fusion Centers irrespective of location to operate in a similar

manner, getting the same salary, same trainings, same evaluation systems and having access to the same information.

Question five (5) from the interview questions asked participants “how do the Fusion Center obtains information from outside sources”? The replies from participants were consistent. They all replied that information is obtained through emails, telephone calls, fax and the media. However, it was also established that the public at large lacks education regarding the Fusion Center Network, what it does and how to contact them. As a result, it is recommended that a Public Relations team be established with a focus on educating the public on Fusion Center operations and how the Network currently supports the fight against Terrorism and other crimes. It is also important to provide an explanation on how Fusion Centers work closely with other Law Enforcement organizations but has a different portfolio. This Public Relations team should be a main component of the Network that works continuously, highlighting success stories and sensitizing the public as to benefits of the Network.

In order to effectively enhance productivity within the Fusion Center Network an increase in Federal Funding is recommended. An increase in federal funding would likely result in a more operative Network as a lack of resources and funding were noted by some participants as creating a barrier to a more effective system. A lack of funding resulted in employees not being on the same salary scale and was paid not based on their position within the Network but based on their geographical location. As a result, some centers are understaffed and boast a high turn-over rate as employees move to other centers that are paying better rates for the same position. Also, the inequality in resources

and lack of funding causes some centers to be better trained than others. Over the years, many Fusion Centers utilized federal funding in the form of homeland security grant allocations. However, there has been a decrease in such funding which has caused many centers to seek funding elsewhere. Because of the decrease in dependence on federal dollars many centers are no longer able to remain operational as they can no longer afford to do what is necessary such as retaining its staff and provide proper training opportunities.

Another recommendation by the researcher is the implementation of a National Law Enforcement Information Sharing Portal. This portal would store relevant data on present and past cases being worked on by all Fusion Centers, criminal history of all individuals being investigated for any acts of terrorism or other federal related crimes, judicial actions and decision of federal convicts and a watch lists of known and suspected terrorists. This system should be available to all Fusion Center locations, and Federal Law Enforcement Organizations to facilitate a more flexible and easier way to access and share information with each other. The implementation of a National Law Enforcement Information Sharing Portal would be conducive and effective as it will facilitate a unified interface which will deliver a more comprehensive search functionality and data retrieval system to investigators and other players in the Criminal Justice System.

The researcher spent countless hours pursuing this study to get a better understanding of how the Fusion Center Network has been impacting Information Sharing. Based on the findings, the Fusion Center Network does have a positive impact on Information Sharing thus far but like any other organization there still needs to be some improvements to the system. The findings of this study have given me assurance

and confidence to acknowledge that this study is a step in the right direction toward positive social change. Therefore, the above-mentioned recommendations maybe considered as a strategic planning process to aid in the building of a more consensus and effective Fusion Center Network to continue impacting Information Sharing positively. The researcher has no doubt, this process would produce a better alignment of the Fusion Center Network with the other players within the Criminal Justice System, thereby giving a positive impact on Information Sharing.

Implications for Positive Social Change

The ultimate desire of this study was to research a topic that would have a positive impact on social change. As a result, the elements of this study were assessed, and enough evidence has shown that the underlying concepts within the study does support Walden University's vision to support positive social change. The tenets concerning positive social change were assessed to have been achieved through the study's findings which supported improvements in Law Enforcement Information Sharing, Counter Terrorism Efforts, National Security Strategies, Interagency Collaboration, Public/program Awareness and the overall protection of the Homeland. This study provided an increase in knowledge which may be useful to both policy makers and the public at large. This new knowledge is imperative and will enhance positive results whether through realignment or forming new concepts/ policies toward the current system because knowledge is power. The results will be useful toward the strategic planning of both old and new policies and statutes concerning Homeland Security, Intelligence, Information Sharing and public awareness. Policies in these realms are important as they

support the overall mission on the Fusion Center Network promoting Law Enforcement Information Sharing.

Recommendations for Future Research

The foundation of this research highlights how the Fusion Center Network impacted Information Sharing since its implementation after the 9/11 attacks on the United States. The studies done on the Fusion Center Network thus far covers various angles. However, there is still room for future research in the field, whether new topic areas, related or an extension of this study.

During this study, several limitations were identified. Even though each Fusion Center was unique but operated similar, one main limitation of this study was the sample size being eight (8) participants taken from two primary Fusion Centers. A qualitative study like this one or even an extension to this study could be done utilizing a larger sample size representing more Fusion Centers within the Network. Other distinctive features could also be used to identify Fusion Centers such as Fusion Centers that focus solely on terrorism or municipal operated Fusion Centers rather than state operated.

Future researches related to this topic could also use different study approaches such as a case study. This may produce an even more in-depth understanding of the impact of Fusion Centers on information sharing thus far looking into Fusion Center locations, and even culture groups. A sample consisting of participants from different partner agencies of a chosen Fusion Center could also be used to obtain useful information on the Fusion Center Network. This would provide a more comprehensive

view on Fusion Center operations both internally and externally which would be beneficial to policy makers and other external stakeholders to improve the current system.

Conclusions

The implementation of the Fusion Center Network was the result of a mass Terrorist related attack on the United States in 2001. The Network was established to strengthen Law Enforcement Information Sharing thereby protecting the Homeland against magnitudes of threats. After the 9/11 Commission Report was established, it was discovered that there are numerous gaps within the National Security system that needs to be addressed, the main one being Information Sharing. The report outlined the disconnection between the various law enforcement agencies within the United States.

This qualitative research was formulated using a phenomenological approach. It sought to understand the impact the Fusion Center Network has on Information Sharing since implementation. Two primary research questions were utilized, to better understand the overall impact the Network has on Information Sharing. Participants representing two Fusion Centers with varying levels of positions were used in the study. The

responses obtained from the participants yielded various overreaching concepts explaining how Fusion Centers have been impacting Information Sharing. The study's findings made it clear that the Fusion Center Network does a positive impact on Information Sharing. This expanded the field of knowledge regarding the Fusion Center Network and made room for future researchers to expound on. Recommendations offered

by this study are geared toward assisting policy makers, partner organizations and the public at large to make better decisions toward protecting the entire Homeland.

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Appendix A: Message to the Organization

Sir/Madam,

My name is Racquel Palmer, I am currently enrolled in the PhD Public Policy program at

Walden University. I am conducting a dissertation research concerning the National Fusion Network in partial fulfillment of my degree requirements. I am currently an employee of the New York City Police Department where I perform the duties of a police officer and has been working in the field of Law Enforcement for over ten years. I am the sole researcher in this study. Hence, I would like to talk with you further regarding the study as I am seeking organizational approval to enquire from some of your staff if they would be willing to conduct a 45-minutes interview focusing on the impact of the fusion center network on information sharing post 9/11. Below I will give a more in-depth understanding of my research highlighting the purpose and intent of the study. This research is not associated with any official or professional tasking or responsibilities.

The overall purpose of this study is to discover and understand how the fusion center network has impacted information sharing since its implementation post 9/11. This research intends to explore the operating procedures used by the network to rapidly disseminate information across to the various law enforcement agencies. The research also seeks to understand how the network address barriers to the effective sharing of information. The information obtained from this study could be beneficial to National Security in the implementation of other counter terrorism strategies or to make adjustments to the current policy if needed. Fusion center names, specific locations, participant information or any personal identifying information will not be published in the final draft of this study or disclosed to third parties.

The researcher aims to interview employees from multiple federally operated primary fusion centers. Individuals who agree to participate in the study will be asked a few questions about their professional background to include position and tenure to ensure they are qualified to be a participant of the study. They will then be asked about the operating procedures of the fusion center as it regards to disseminating information and how barriers to the effective sharing of information is addressed. Participants will then be asked about their perceptions of the overall impact the fusion center has on information sharing since implementation. At the end of the interview, participants will be given the opportunity to review their answers to ensure accuracy of information collected.

The goal of the study is to obtain a more detailed understanding as to how Fusion Centers have impacted information sharing thus far. The results may act as a guide to National Security and add to an emergent field of study as it relates to the sharing of information among law enforcers. Seeking to understand the impact fusion centers have on information sharing will incorporate the importance of interagency collaboration through effective information sharing. Eventually, this study will lead to published findings that may assist policy makers in implementing future policies or amending current ones in amid to effectively boost the efficiency of the fusion center network. This study is for academic purposes in support of my personal degree requirements and is no way sponsored formally by any agency to include your organization. Participation in the study is not tied to any actual or implied favors, compensation, and/or release from any past official obligations. There are absolutely no negative consequences for a decision not to participate.

If your organization is interested to participate in this study, please contact me at Racquel.palmer@waldenu.edu or on my cell phone at 646-267-5902. If you contact me whether to participate or just to ask a few questions, all information, questions and correspondences will be kept confidential.

Thanks in advance for your consideration, your favorable response is anticipated.

Racquel Palmer

Appendix B: Invitation/Consent to Participate in Doctoral Research

Dear Fusion Center Member,
My name is Racquel Palmer; I am currently enrolled in the PhD Public Policy program at Walden University. I am conducting a dissertation research concerning the National Fusion Center Network in partial fulfillment of my degree requirements. As the sole

researcher for this study, I am respectfully requesting that you consider allowing me to interview you over the phone about your perceptions regarding your fusion center's operations as it relates to information sharing. I obtained your name and contact information via management associated with the National Fusion Center Network. In order to become a participant in the study one must be employed to the Fusion Center Network for at least five years in the capacity of an Intelligence Analyst. This interview will last for approximately 45 minutes and can be conducted at a location, date and time convenient to you with minimal distractions to maintain privacy.

Data will be collected only once for this study and will be kept for a period of five years as required by the university. Privacy of data collected will be maintained by storing data on a password protected computer and a second copy stored on a password protected thumb drive. Currently, I am an employee of the New York City Police Department where I perform the duties of a police officer and has been working in the field of Law Enforcement for over ten years. However, this study is in no way affiliated with any official or professional tasking or responsibilities.

The overall purpose of this study is to discover and understand how the fusion center network has impacted information sharing since its implementation post 9/11. The study will involve minimal risks as the research intends to explore the operating procedures used by the network to rapidly disseminate information across to the various law enforcement agencies. The research also seeks to understand how the network address barriers to the effective sharing of information.
The information obtained from this study could be beneficial to National Security in the implementation of other counter terrorism strategies or to make adjustments to the current policy if needed. Fusion center names, specific locations, participant's information or any personal identifying information will not be published in the final draft of this study or disclosed to third parties in amid to maintain privacy.

The aim is to interview employees from multiple federally operated primary fusion centers. If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked a few questions about your professional background to include position and tenure to ensure you are qualified to be a participant of the study. You will then be asked about the operating procedures of the fusion center as it regards to disseminating information and how barriers to the effective sharing of information is addressed. Then, you will be asked about your perceptions regarding the overall impact the fusion center has on information sharing since implementation. At the end of the interview, you will be given the opportunity to review your answers to ensure accuracy of the information collected.

The goal of the study is to obtain a more detailed understanding as to how Fusion Centers have impacted information sharing thus far. The results may act as a guide to National Security and add to an emergent field of study as it relates to the sharing of information

among law enforcers. Eventually, this study will lead to published findings that may assist policy-makers' in implementing future policies or amending current ones in amid to effectively boost the efficiency of the fusion center network. This study is for academic purposes in support of my personal degree requirements and is no way sponsored formally by any agency to include your organization. Participation in the study is voluntary and is not tied to any actual or implied favors, compensation, and/or release from any past official obligations. Participants has the right to decline or discontinue participation at any time. There are absolutely no negative consequences for a decision not to participate. Walden University's approval number for this study is 04-18190663521 and it expires on April 17th, 2020.

If you wish to participate in this study, please indicate your consent by replying to this email with the words "I consent" at Racquel.palmer@waldenu.edu. If you wish to ask a few questions to clarify any ambiguities, please call me at 646-267-5902. Questions about your rights as a participant may be directed to Walden's University IRB at irb@mail.waldenu.edu. All information, questions and correspondences will be kept confidential. Please print or save this consent form for your records.

Thanks in advance for your consideration.

Racquel Palmer
Appendix C:
Interview
Questions

To effectively categorize data, assess individual participants and explore the research questions the following questions will be utilized:

1. What is your occupation?
2. How long have you been working within the Fusion Center Network?
3. How would you describe your position with the fusion center?
4. How would you describe the fusion center and its day to day operations?
5. How does the fusion center obtain information from outside sources?
6. How does the fusion center prioritize information and operations when received?

7. How long does it normally take information to be disseminated from the fusion center to other agencies and why?
8. How do external forces impact the time in which information is investigated and disseminated?
9. How do the fusion center address barriers to effectively share information between internal and external sources?
10. Do you believe the fusion center network is effectively collaborating with the mission of the United States National Security Strategy and why?
11. If you were to make any changes within the fusion center network to effectively boost the networks' mission what would that be and why?
12. Is there anything we have not discussed that you would like to add about fusion centers in general?