Role Interference and Moral Distress in the Subjective Experience of Deep Undercover Law Enforcement Operatives

Thomas E. Coghlan, Psy.D.
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My profound appreciation and respect goes out to the deep-undercover operatives who, in true esprit de corps, gave their trust, time and candor to this research. Without their willingness, fraternity, and their belief in the merits of this study, the potential benefits to management support of their insights, and thus to the well-being of future deep-cover operatives, could not be realized. Law enforcement in general breeds a sense of interpersonal hypervigilance and a tendency to resist personal disclosure; the deep-undercover experience even moreso. I thank this study’s participants for setting aside their reservations and contributing wholeheartedly.

My deepest respect and my sincere thanks go out to Dr. Carl Auerbach, my research advisor on this project. I cannot, with sufficient words, explain here how valued an advisor and a mentor Dr. Auerbach has been to me throughout my time at Ferkauf. More poignantly though, it has been my honor to find a true and trusted friend in Dr. Auerbach. His keen insights, warm and welcoming demeanor, clinical acumen, and willingness to relate to my experiences through my eyes have made my time at Ferkauf far less burdensome. I look forward to sharing more cigars, libations and laughs over dinner with Dr. Auerbach in the future as a valued colleague.

To Dr. Mike Gelles, I extend my thanks for his assistance in identifying research participants and for signing on to lend his years of clinical insight and investigative experience to this study. Dr. Gelles gave selflessly of his time and knowledge throughout, with only the satisfaction of having done so as his reward.

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ABSTRACT

ROLE INTERFERENCE AND MORAL DISTRESS
IN THE SUBJECTIVE EXPERIENCE OF
DEEP UNDERCOVER LAW ENFORCEMENT OPERATIVES

By

Thomas E. Coghlan, M.A.

The following is a qualitative study regarding the experiences of law enforcement operatives engaged in deep-undercover persona. There were four participants in this study, although in keeping with the study’s safeguards no demographic or other identifying information concerning those participants is provided. Face-to-face, semi-structured qualitative interviews were conducted with the participants. Those interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed, and redacted for de-identification purposes in keeping with safeguards. The transcribed interviews were then analyzed using a grounded theory procedure. Three theoretical constructs emerged from this study: 1. **A Pre-Persona Engagement Current, Coherent Meaning System**. This construct describes the participant deep-undercovers’ pre-existing worldview in which a concrete dichotomy existed between right and wrong. This dichotomy informed their expectations of their roles within law enforcement, not only for their own actions but also their expectations about the criminals they would investigate, the agencies that would be their support system, and their emotional responses to all of these elements. It also describes those aspects of the experience that provided role satisfaction for the participants. 2. **Breakdown of the Coherent**
Meaning System, which describes both emotional and cognitive appraisals of challenges to the assumptive worldviews contained in the pre-existing coherent meaning system, and the gradual breakdown of that system and, thus, the participant’s experienced role interference and moral distress. 3. Oudenos Chorion: The No-Man’s Land of Re-entry, Integration and Adjustment, which describes the feeling of disconnect from their roles and identities that participants experienced in the post-persona engagement phase after their return from the deep-undercover operation, and their attempts to make sense of, and mediate their conflicts. This construct reveals feelings of regret, self-doubt, guilt, and resentment toward the agency. Clinical implications, limitations, and suggestions for future research are discussed.
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CHAPTER I

Introduction

There exists in construct a social contract which defines the bidirectional expectations of citizen and state, and which has been written about in great philosophical depth (Plato, trans. 1999; Hobbes, 1998 / 1651; Locke, 2002 / 1690; Rousseau, 1960 / 1754, 1762; Paine, 1999 / 1791). Within the American social contract the people empower and entrust the government to maintain a force responsible to provide for their protection and security, and to enforce the law. In doing so, the people expect the enforcers of law to act to the ends of justice and to ensure their safety and well-being (Weisheit & Morn, 2004; Husak, 2005). In turn, the people are entrusted to abide by those laws and recognize the authority of its enforcers (May, 1997; Aiyar, 2000). A subpopulation of that force are entrusted and prosocially-empowered by the people to engage in investigative techniques typified by controlled deception and aggression in the name of identifying and apprehending antisocial agents. The present study seeks to understand the subjective experience of that subpopulation of deep-undercover operatives.

Of interest to this study is the inner experience of those operatives who, to the end of meeting their prosocial obligation, engage in means which at times skirt ethical or moral borders in the judgment of the society they strive to protect. Consider Grossman’s (2004) metaphor in which the general populace is envisioned as “sheep” in need of protection from the antisocial “wolves” by the prosocially aggressive “sheepdogs.” The present study explores the experience of Grossman’s sheepdog immersed among the wolves; donning the wolf’s hide and fur, and blending in among their pack. Readers interested in further exploration of the philosophical and theoretical underpinnings of the present study are directed to the attached literature review.
(Appendix F) entitled *Living a Noble Lie: The Experience of Law Enforcement Officers Assigned to Undercover Persona*.


The law enforcement officer assigned to undercover work is subjected to the additional stressors of role conflict and identity interference which may produce identity confusion, divided loyalties, the management of multiple identities and mediating integration, as well as ethical, moral or religious dilemmas (Manning & Redlinger, 1978; Marx, 1982, 1992; Farkas, 1986; Miller, 1987; Pogrebin, & Poole, 1993; Jacobs, 1993; Macleod, 1995; Band & Sheehan, 1999; Girodo, 1985, 1991a, 1991b, 1991c; Girodo, Deck, & Campbell, 2002; Girodo, Deck, & Morrison, 2002; Arter, 2005; Librett, 2005; Hilton, 2007). It has been suggested that the individual’s need to self-affirm is satisfied through an internal match of beliefs and behavior, morals and actions. This self-affirmation theory (Steele, 1988) is relevant to the undercover in that negative affect such as anxiety, depression and anger can result from the sort of self-discrepancy and damaged self-appraisal which the undercover may experience when their sense of positive personal identity becomes threatened (Heatherton & Polivy, 1991; Higgins, 1987). Additionally, the process of return from persona assignment and reintroduction into both
personal and professional identities, the struggle to re-establish abandoned pre-personal relationships, and the need to integrate dystonic experiences into the new Self can converge into a difficult and disjointed reentry experience (Girodo, 1984; Miller, 1987).

Role interference arises when an individual with multiple roles experiences the demands inherent to those roles to be in opposition to each other (van Sell, Brief, & Schuler, 1981; Settles, 2002; Settles, 2004). Such interference may result in negative physical or psychological outcomes. This can be particularly true when the interference threatens a sense of the self governed by multiple central identities (Thoits, 1991). Whether actual or perceived, the inner conflict arising from such interference is thought to be a source of stress to the individual (Girodo, 1991b; Goode, 1960).

Role accumulation is the possession of multiple role demands, but without any associated conflict or interference. Whether or not role accumulation produces positive or negative outcomes on well-being seems attributable to individual variation vis-à-vis stress perception (Sieber, 1974; Marks, 1977; Thoits, 1983, 1986; Settles, 2004). It has been suggested that multiple identities, resulting from a variety of internalized roles, can lead to greater life satisfaction (Sieber, 1974; Settles, 2004). Identity interference however, which results when the demands of one identity interfere with the demands of another, is suggested to be associated with reduced life satisfaction by way of negative psychological and physical outcomes (Gerson, 1985; O’Driscoll, Ilgen, & Hildreth, 1992).

It has been proposed that certain aspects of self-concept are defined by beliefs or attitudes which comprise moral identification, and that variance in individual saliency and commitment to these moral identifiers influences behavior (Aquino & Reed, 2002). Commitment to moral identification can be influenced not only by internal drive, but also by dedication to some
external referent comparison such as an abstract concept (i.e., religious tenet or ideal), group membership (i.e., registered political party), respected or revered but unfamiliar and personally distant role model (i.e., Mahatma Ghandi), or known other (i.e., mentor) (Merton, 1938, 1968; Aquino & Reed, 2002).

Key to understanding the undercover question seems to be insight into moral identification on both individual and social levels, in that social stigma (Goffman, 1963: Thoits, 1992) and the greater social context seem to influence outcomes depending on individual commitment to society and the prosocial cause. The influence on the individual of controlled immorality (i.e., deception, lying, betrayal, antisocial acts) toward a greater social good is of thematic concern to not only the undercover, but to society as well. This phenomenon of the double effect has received attention in the literature (Hauser, Cushman, Young, Jin & Mikhail, 2007; Mikhail, Sorrentino & Spelke, 1998; Mikhail, 2000; Thomson, 1970). In sum, the double effect is the idea that it may be considered morally acceptable for one individual to do harm to another for a greater cause if the harm done is a foreseen side effect as opposed to the necessary means itself. In the present study, conflict with the double effect arose as a theme as undercover operatives made efforts to integrate the harmful effects of their deceptions into their post-persona understandings of themselves as having striven toward a greater good and, despite this harm, still seeing themselves as good.

In keeping with other research and literature (Corley, Elswick, Gorman & Clor, 2000; Jameton, 1984), this conflict is operationalized herein as moral distress. Regarding the present study, moral distress as defined by Jameton (1984) is the emotional conflict that occurs when organizational restrictions constrain the deep-undercover from behaving in a way that they believe to be more morally responsible than they must in order to satisfy the demands of their
roles. This is the moral role interference of the deep-undercover. It is characterized by a loss of autonomy as in-persona decision making is experienced as being under siege and held hostage to various authorities (i.e., role demands vis-à-vis the agency, duress under potentially hostile situations leading to fear of personal safety, the needs of the investigation, etc.) Forced by role demands to at times behave in ways that are incompatible with the understanding of the moral Self (that is, in a manner that is morally ego-dystonic), the undercover finds his or her commitment to identity under threats that are both imminent and organizationally dictated.

The internal drives which lead individuals to maintain stasis between self-concept and the environment (operationalized as commitment), and the likelihood that an individual will reliably behave across contexts according to their self-concept (operationalized as saliency) are both key to understanding the intensity of role interference impact upon the self (Marcussen, Ritter & Safron, 2004; Burke & Reitzes, 1981; Stryker & Serpe, 1982; Stryker, 1981). Movement along continuums of commitment and saliency can explain the variance of psychological outcomes in the experience of role interference.

There exists a dearth of literature regarding the deep-undercover experience. While some literature exists regarding the experiences of shallow- or light-cover operatives, little light has been shed on understanding the subjective experience of deep-undercover operatives. This study seeks to gain a greater understanding of these subjective experiences of those who “engage in deception and subterfuge while moving in and out of alternative identities” (Librett, 2005, p. 76).

It is the author’s hope that this study will contribute to the clinical understanding of identity formation, mediation and post-experience integration specific to deep-undercover operatives. Furthermore it is the ultimate goal of this study to aid deep-undercover management support in monitoring, preventing and treating negative physical and psychological outcomes.
associated with the work, designing effective post-engagement debriefing, and better understanding the subjective experiences of deep-undercover operatives so that they can be best tended to during their time spent in in-persona engagement.
CHAPTER II

Methodology

The Grounded Theory / Qualitative Research Paradigm:

The researcher employed a grounded theory approach for conducting qualitative research as developed by Strauss and Corbin (1990). This method of collecting and analyzing qualitative research is chosen to formulate, refine and test theory (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003). The aim of grounded theory research is to produce theory, which is derived from analyzing how people structure and organize their reality. It attempts to listen to individual voices and make references to people’s own subjective experience. The rationale for grounded theory is justified by a phenomenological view of the world, which argues that our knowledge of the world is based upon our direct experience. This method allows for the researcher to utilize the participant’s direct experience and make an interpretation of that experience.

A qualitative research design was selected for this study for the following reasons. The goal of grounded theory approach is to generate hypotheses. It is therefore considered ideal for investigating areas where little theory has been established (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003). Understanding the experience of being a deep-undercover operative is one such research area. Furthermore, inherent to qualitative research is the ability to capture the complex and rich perspectives into, as well as the subtle nuances of an experience that would be otherwise not accessed in a quantitative design. A qualitative design produces a detailed narrative that illuminates the true subjective experience of participants. In an area as complex as identity conflict, gaining a broad and complete perspective of experience is critical in capturing an accurate depiction of the conflict. Finally, since the qualitative design is hypothesis generating, in order to thoroughly analyze the possibilities for new constructs in an area where few have
been developed, it is beneficial to use a design that enhances and deepens an understanding of participants’ subjective experience.

**Research Participants:**

An understanding of the nature of the present study is augmented by insight into the difficulties inherent to recruiting deep-undercover participants. A combination of both individual (i.e., a resistance toward disclosure on the operative’s part) and organizational (i.e., agencies’ tendencies to restrict access to deep-undercover populations as a protective stance against liability) variables makes access to the population a daunting task. This parallels to some degree the experience of the undercover; daunted by a combination of matters on both an agency and a personal level that combine to create conflict. Initially, attempts were made to establish a formal, collaborative effort with a federal agency (Appendix D). This attempt was, however, rejected by the agency’s Institutional Review Board (IRB) (Appendix E).

It seems, upon review of the agency’s IRB concerns that the primary issues were of liability concerns (i.e., agency embarrassment or legal liability should a participant reveal criminal complicity while engaged in alternate persona, agency liability should a correlation be established between the deep-undercover experience and negative outcomes, etc.) While such concerns coming from within a bureaucracy are understood and expected, it was unfortunate that the agency was unable to recognize that the liability concerns were largely unwarranted as the focus of the present study is not at all on case- or investigative-specific information, but rather on the inner experience of the participants in response to their work. Great lengths have been taken to ensure participants’ personal and professional security. No case-specific information will be presented herein, and no sample transcript will be presented.
Unfortunately, time restrictions made attempts to address the agency’s IRB’s concerns impractical, leading to considerations of alternate sample gathering. Ideally, the author hopes that the present study will serve as a pilot study for future research conducted in formal collaboration with an agency.

A combination of the author’s status as a law enforcement officer as well as co-investigator Dr. Michael Gelles’ deep-undercover contacts provided entrée into the population. A convenience sample was selected via both pre-existing contacts and word of mouth. The criterion for participation was that each research participant had operated in a long term deep-undercover enforcement operation of at least six months duration. During this operation, the participant must have fully adopted an alternate persona on a full-time basis for the purpose of gathering information and interacting with case targets toward a conviction. That is, potential participants who performed “shallow” or “light”-cover operations were excluded from participation. In “shallow-” and “light”-cover operations, law enforcement operatives may adopt a part-time cover story for the purpose of a short-term enforcement goal (i.e., making a drug buy), but their engagement in such a limited persona is short-lived and they return to their true identities and their normal lives at the end of their work shift.

In all, thirteen potential participants from a number of agencies who met participation criterion were contacted. Some who met the criterion opted not to participate in the research for a variety of reasons (i.e., resistance to being audio-taped or meeting face-to-face). Ultimately, there were a total of four research participants.

In keeping with personal identity security safeguards that were implemented for this research, no demographic data is being reported. These safeguards included:
• An oral informed consent agreement (Appendix B) was used, so that no participant signatures would be captured.

• No participant names were recorded at any point during the research.

• A Certificate of Confidentiality (Appendix A) was obtained through the National Institute of Mental Health. This certificate ensures that the researcher would not have to disclose the identities of the participants, and that the participants could not be compelled to reveal their identities to any court or investigating bodies.

• Audio recordings were destroyed following transcription. Only the author had access to the audio recordings.

• All transcription was conducted solely by the author. Transcripts were redacted to remove all identifying information.

• Gender pronouns of transcription excerpts have been altered in the present document. It should not be assumed that gender pronouns used herein are correctly referring to the gender of the participant.

Procedures:

Participants were solicited via word-of-mouth. Dependent upon the participant’s preference, contact with the author was initially made via either email or phone. Participants met with the author at various venues including business suite hotel rooms, a law enforcement agency office, and a coffee shop. Individual interviews were conducted and digitally audio-taped by the author, and lasted between one and two hours. Participants were presented with a copy of the oral informed consent agreement (Appendix B), and their verbal agreement to participate was made a part of the audio-recording and thus the permanent transcript.
The author used a qualitative questionnaire (Appendix C) that asked about the participant’s early experiences in law enforcement, their pre-persona belief systems, their experiences in-persona, and their post-persona integration of these experiences. The questions in the interview were designed to access aspects of the deep-undercover experience that appeared salient following a review of literature in regard to deep-undercover work and both identity and moral theories, as well as a review of mass-market first-person accounts of the experience. The interview, although semi-structured, allowed the participants to freely explore various aspects of the deep-undercover experience. Throughout the interview, the author directed the semi-structured interview to focus on areas relevant to the research concern. The author then transcribed the audio-recordings, and the transcribed interviews formed the text for the data analysis. The author destroyed the audio-recordings, and redacted the transcripts to remove all identifying information. Only the author had access to the transcripts prior to redaction.

In order to satisfy safeguards regarding identity security and investigation integrity, no sample transcripts are attached to this study as an appendix. To have done so would potentially jeopardize not only the investigations discussed therein, but the personal and professional security of the research participants.

Data Analysis:

Auerbach and Silverstein’s (2003) guidelines for coding qualitative data were followed for data analysis. Raw text was organized into categories of relevant text, and then further categorized into recurring themes and theoretical constructs. A theme is an implicit concept which is mutual to a group of repeating ideas (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003). Titles were chosen for each group of repeating ideas that framed a theme.
In this way, a top-down and bottom-up analysis was utilized where the bottom level is the raw text and the top level characterizes larger theoretical constructs. Repeating ideas were identified and subsequently analyzed in the context of the theoretical constructs. These constructs were refined throughout the process in order to incorporate all the relevant ideas and themes that emerged. Due to the nature of qualitative research as exploring an issue or a population that has not been sufficiently studied as of yet, the process of data collection is conducted with a theoretical framework in mind. To avoid influencing data collection with the interviewer’s pre-existing thoughts about the participant’s experiences, and to respect the participant’s position as the expert of their experiences, data analysis is conducted in an effort to stay as close as possible to the participants’ description. The ultimate goal of this analysis is the construction of a theoretical narrative based on the transcripts as they reflect the participants’ phenomenological experience.

Transcripts were reviewed bearing in mind the research question and theoretical framework. Passages that seemed to reflect central ideas to the participants were identified and highlighted. The author then grouped these key passages into different categories if they occurred across transcripts. These are identified in this study as “Repeating Ideas.” These different “Repeating Ideas” were then grouped together into broader Themes that run throughout the different narratives. Ultimately, these themes were collected into Theoretical Constructs. The overall synthesis and interpretation of these Theoretical Constructs represent the results and discussion sections of this study. “Repeating Ideas” are represented in quotation marks, Themes in bold text, and Theoretical Constructs in bold, underlined text (Table 1).

The author worked independently in gathering the data and was supervised by Dr. Carl Auerbach. The redacted transcriptions and subsequent data analyses were reviewed by Dr.
Auerbach who met with the researcher on a regular basis in order to provide inter-rater reliability in the process of selecting relevant text.

The ultimate goal of this process is to construct a theoretical narrative based on the descriptions of the participants’ phenomenological experience. The aim of this theoretical narrative is to integrate the identified themes and constructs into a more abstract and coherent story which describes the participants’ experiences in theoretical terms. This narrative captures the participants’ experience utilizing their own language to portray their thoughts and feelings. The purpose of this narrative was to answer the original research question regarding the subjective experience of negotiating conflict between the undercover’s understanding of self and conflict vis-à-vis role interference and moral distress.
CHAPTER III

Results

Table 1 presents the data analysis of repeating ideas, themes, and the theoretical constructs that were derived from the interviews. Each theme and theoretical construct will be described in the following section.

Table 1.

*** Theoretical Constructs are indicated in bold, underlined text.
** Themes are indicated in bold text.
* “Repeating Ideas” are indicated in quotation marks.
The number in parenthesis near each Theme represents the percentages of participants in agreement with that Theme.
The number in parenthesis near each Repeating Idea represents the proportion of research participants, who endorsed that Repeating Idea.

Theoretical Constructs, Themes, and Repeating Ideas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I. A Pre-Persona Engagement Current, Coherent Meaning System***</th>
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<td>A worldview containing a commitment to a right / wrong dichotomy ** (100%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>1. “...when I started law enforcement I’d see the bad guy or the bad girl... it was very clear cut. What’s right and what’s wrong.” * (4/4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. “...basically look into law enforcement side and saying hey that’s what I wanna do and really seeing the good you could do out of that.” (3/4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. “…to make sure the right thing happened for the victims... I felt very passionate about that.” (3/4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction within the role identity (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. “…a lot of [my targets] after the fact would come back and say you know I was really headed down a terrible path... so, I found that to be rewarding.” (3/4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. “...I would be able to help people...I worked with rape victims and child abuse, did some narcotic work,” and so that kind of stuff I felt was worthwhile.” (2/4)</td>
</tr>
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<td>3. “...my reward came from knowing that I did a good job on the case.” (2/4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. “...it was rewarding for me because you would find a guy that... would have jobs that were fairly important, like (redacted), you don’t really want someone who’s high (redacted).” (3/4)</td>
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II. Breakdown of the Coherent Meaning System

The right / wrong dichotomy is challenged, questioned and breaks down (100%)

1. “...in your mind, it’s not a black and white, it’s shades of dark grey.” (4/4)
2. “...being undercover definitely changed, you know, you see people more as people than as the crime.” (4/4)
3. “...someone that I work with... my safety should have been their number one concern... yet it felt often times like it was more of a concern to the bad guys that I spent so much time lying to.” (3/4)
4. “...I’m gonna find your one damn good redeeming quality... with some people it was harder, with other people it was exceptionally easy because they were legitimately just nice, good people.” (4/4)
5. “...if I... had to know about a child being abused... it would be harder for me probably to stay in role than if we’re, you know, passing fraudulent documents or you know buying plane tickets with government money.” (4/4)

Moral distress (100%)

1. “I’ve done nothing but spend every moment that I’m with them ensuring that they trust me... so that in the end I can use every thing that they’ve said and done against them... when you think of yourself as a good person... that kind of goes against that.” (4/4)
2. “...I look back and I genuinely feel bad about that.” (3/4)
3. “...I would’ve like to have [said] I don’t want to put you in jail. But you can’t do that... in the role as you are. That’s not what you’re supposed to be doing. But you’re seeing a guy go down the drain.” (4/4)

III. Oudenes Chorion: The No-Man’s Land of Re-entry, Integration and Adjustment

Guilt and Self-doubt (75%)

1. “...maybe I’m one of those sociopath serial-killer people with like no feelings and no regard for anyone else.” (2/4)
2. “...didn’t have a clue of how out of touch I was with my emotions.” (2/4)
3. “...I felt like I was going crazy.” (3/4)

Confusion within the post-persona identity (100%)

1. “...my reminder that this is not me.” (4/4)
2. “...the person that I left was not the same one that had come back.” (2/4)
3. “...you lose sight of what the rules are.” (2/4)
Themes:

A worldview containing a commitment to a right / wrong dichotomy

An assumptive worldview (Janoff-Bulman; 1985, 1989) is an internal working model of the world, self, and others that is based on past outcomes and relationships and which informs our expectations of experiences. All of the participants (100%) indicated that an aspect of their identity contained a commitment to an assumptive worldview that assumed a stark right versus wrong dichotomy. This worldview assumes that behavior can be objectively identified as ‘right’ or ‘wrong’, despite contributing circumstances. The undercover’s assumptive worldview informed their expectations about law enforcement on entry, and was an integral part of their assumptions about crime, criminals, and their expectations of both on entry into alternate persona engagement.

“...when I started law enforcement I’d see the bad guy or the bad girl... it was very clear cut. What’s right and what’s wrong.”

All of the participants (4/4) expressed a firmly entrenched assumptive view that the delineation between right and wrong actions is clearly marked. For example, participants explained this assumption in the following ways; “the division between good and evil was set early, as was doing the right thing”, “I came on this job because... I wanted the black and the white, the good guy bad guy...”, “…locking up criminals, locking up bad guys... that was right and wrong”, “you go stick up a couple businesses, you know, and you, that’s wrong... I don’t know why you would get out of jail later.” Other participants echoed the above statement regarding these values being set “early on” in life, and being a stable aspect of their understanding of Self. For example, a participant whose family background included a long history of military and law enforcement background (about which he expressed pride and satisfaction) stated that “it’s all I’ve known... I didn’t know nothing different than law
enforcement.” All of the participants then, understood the world and their roles within it as a place where right and wrong is easily discernable and not at all confused.

“...basically look into law enforcement side and saying hey that’s what I wanna do and really seeing the good you could do out of that.”

Three participants (75%) reported that their choice of law enforcement as a career involved an extension of seeing themselves as being mechanisms for good within the right versus wrong dichotomy. Their belief that law enforcement was equated with good was an appealing aspect in their decision. For example, one participant stated that on entry into law enforcement she believed that it would be good to know that she was “having families see that their loved ones didn’t die and no one got punished for it.” These participants reported that they understood the role law enforcement, and its agents, to be a vehicle for righteousness or goodness within society.

Interestingly, one participant (25%) stated that his decision to join law enforcement was characterized by his belief that “it wasn’t going to be a humdrum job... it was a challenge.” While all participants (4/4) echoed similar beliefs and feelings in regard, only one participant did not attach a belief in helping others or being an active agent of good or right as primary in choosing law enforcement. This unique quality of this participant will be addressed again below in regard to emotional outcomes.

The other three participants (75%) who also stated that the excitement of law enforcement was an aspect of their decision to choose it as a career, but for whom such an aspect was secondary to its aspect as being a mechanism for right, revealed the following; “there were some unexpected things, like you go through training... kicking in doors... the more adrenaline side of law enforcement was really fun... driving fast, that was fun”, “there’s excitement and