EXPLORING AFRICAN AMERICAN MALES' EXPERIENCES WITH POLICE IN

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY

by

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Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of

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ABSTRACT

Black males are treated unfairly and killed more by law enforcement than any other group. The current study sought to explore how Black males in San Bernardino County, CA, describe their lived experiences with law enforcement as framed by the tents of critical race theory. To achieve this aim, a phenomenological research study was conducted, using semistructured interviews with Black males. Qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis. The key themes identified included (a) centrality of bias in experiences negatively shaped regard of police, (b) as tools, body-worn cameras do little to increase security or legitimacy, (c) limited interactions-limited law enforcement leadership, and (d) relationships are at the center of improving fairness and equity. The interview data indicated that race is viewed as an inherent threat and that police demonstrate hypervigilance when dealing with Black males. Participants often reported traumatizing experiences, especially during traffic stops, and there was little optimism about fairness when Black males interacted with the police. It was also established that body-worn cameras, although a good idea in theory, fail in practice. The officers' behaviors do not seem to change, even when they know they are being monitored. Primary data concerning the experiences of Black males during interactions with the police confirmed all the tenets of critical race theory. The implications of this are that the readers of this study could change their personal beliefs and transfer this into their respective ecosystems. Given the limited number of qualitative studies on this subject, the findings of this study have played an important role in filling this gap and offering guidance for future research on this topic.

Keywords: critical race theory, Black males, body-worn cameras, law enforcement officers

Copyright Page

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to all the Black men who have been unjustly treated and killed by the police in the United States. Your voices and lives matter. You are assets to society and your communities.

Acknowledgments

I give praise and thanks to my Lord and Savior for giving me everything and everyone I needed to successfully complete this process. You have been my mother, father, and best friend. For in him we live and move and have our being … (Acts 17:28). I am nothing without you.

To Dr. Tuppince and Dr. Bryan, my dissertation committee: thank you for your support, time, and diligence throughout this process. I could not have completed this without the both of you. You have made me a better writer, researcher, and critical thinker. As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another (Proverbs 27:17).

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Critical Race Theory (CRT)

Institutional Review Board (IRB)

Body-Worn Cameras (BWCs)

People of Color (POC)

Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS)

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

In this study, interactions with police (i.e., an encounter or contact an individual has with law enforcement; Helsby et al., 2018) as perceived by Black males in San Bernardino County, Southern California were explored using a qualitative phenomenological approach. This topic is of relevance due to a large amount of publicity and concern regarding police violence toward Black males in the United States (Edwards et al., 2019; James, 2018; Jetelina et al., 2017; Kelly et al., 2020; Nicholson-Crotty et al., 2017). In this chapter, an overview of this research will be presented, including background to the study and the problem, purpose, and significance of this research. The situation to self, which reflects the role of this researcher in this study, will also be presented. In addition, the research question will be stated, and relevant terms will be defined. The chapter concludes with a summary.

Background

Policing practices today in the Black community are rooted in slavery, which is based on White supremacy (Robinson, 2017). Beginning in the 1700s, police were known as slave patrols and were permitted to use cruel means, including death, to punish African American slaves for what was perceived as unacceptable behavior (Robinson, 2017). Consequently, generational trauma from these events has resulted in a mistrust of law enforcement officers within the Black community (Robinson, 2017). To understand this trauma, critical race theory (CRT) emphasizes the institutional aspects of police interactions with Black males and focuses on the voices of those experiencing racism and discrimination by the police (Crenshaw et al., 1995). Accordingly, when Black males are treated fairly, police legitimacy will increase in the Black community (Thibaut & Walker, 1975). In general, tensions continue to center on Black men accusing police

of being overly rough and aggressive and police characterizing Black men as being

condescending, uncooperative, and threatening (Crow et al., 2017).

In 2019, the total population for San Bernardino County was 2,180,085, with Blacks

accounting for 9.4% (196,207.65) of the population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2019). According to

California's "Use of Force Incident Report" (2020), San Bernardino County had 84 incidents of

reported use of force by officers on civilians—the second-highest rate in the state. Of the 745

civilians who experienced the use of force by officers in California, 120 (16.10%) were Black

males; of the 12 civilians who died at the hands of law enforcement in San Bernardino County, 1

was a Black male.

The number of Black men being killed by law enforcement agencies continues to

increase even though Black males only comprise 19.9 million of the total population of 328.3

million in the United States (U.S. Census Bureau, 2019; Voight et al., 2017). Moreover, evidence

indicates the number of Black males being killed by law enforcement is increasing at an

alarming pace (Edwards et al., 2019; Hemenway et al., 2019; Shjarback et al., 2017). Recent

national statistics from the United States suggest that more than 300 Blacks are killed each year,

of which approximately 25% are unarmed (Bor et al., 2018). Researchers have highlighted the

disproportionate targeting of Blacks by the police and Black males are more likely to experience

police violence than White males (Edwards et al., 2019; James, 2018; Jetelina et al., 2017; Kelly

et al., 2020; Nicholson-Crotty et al., 2017). Police targeting and disproportionate violence toward

the Black community have led to feelings of mistrust and illegitimacy (i.e., the behavior of the

police is unlawful and not supported; Bell, 2017; Bor et al., 2018; Tyler et al., 2015), and experts

have called for additional research to understand and address this phenomenon (Edwards et al.,

2019; Oh et al., 2017). Therefore, the focus of this study is to explore Black males' lived experiences with police.

Situation to Self

In this study, I was responsible for all aspects of data collection and analysis. Data collection included first obtaining Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, identifying and recruiting participants, developing the interview protocol for the semistructured interviews, and conducting all participant interviews. I transcribed the data obtained from participant interviews and was responsible for data analysis, including identifying themes from this research. I became interested in this topic due to the increasing rates of police violence experienced by members of the Black community and the wide-reaching consequences of this type of traumatic experience.

Beyond describing the lived experiences of Black males in terms of their experiences with police, this researcher adopted an interpretive approach guided by the work of Van Mannen (1990) to ascribe meaning to these lived experiences. The purpose of using an interpretive phenomenological approach was to develop themes and meaning that may be useful for policy in addressing the issue of police violence against Black males and improving police legitimacy by understanding the experiences of Black males in San Bernardino County. This particular setting was selected due to the researcher's knowledge of the area, as she has been a resident of the county for 35 years, and because California is one of three states with the highest total number of killings of Black people by police officers (Haddad, 2020).

Problem Statement

The problem addressed in this qualitative study is the issue of mistrust Blacks have toward police officers in the United States. Specifically, the ongoing disproportionate targeting of and violence toward Blacks by police have led to a rising mistrust of police among Blacks

(Edwards et al., 2019; James, 2018; Jetelina et al., 2017; Kelly et al., 2020; Lipperman-Kreda et al., 2020; Nicholson-Crotty et al., 2017). This problem has been highlighted in recent highly publicized police-involved killings and violence toward Blacks (Edwards et al., 2019; Hemenway et al., 2019; Shjarback et al., 2017), which has led to public outcry and a call to equip police officers with body-worn cameras (BWCs) to increase police accountability.

Given this situation, a lack of police legitimacy exists (i.e., limited trust and support for law enforcement agencies) within Black communities (Bell, 2017; Bor et al., 2018; Tyler et al., 2015). Scholars and policymakers have noted a need for police reform to repair the relationship between law enforcement and communities, particularly regarding the issue of legitimacy (Bell, 2017; Harris & Amutah-Onukagha, 2019; Jetelina et al., 2017). Although these challenges have been the topic of recent discussions (Edwards et al., 2019; Oh et al., 2017), little research has been conducted from the perspective of Black males specifically on how to improve the relationship between law enforcement and the community and address police illegitimacy in Black communities (Bell, 2017; Robinson, 2017; Tyler et al., 2015). The findings of this study will help fill this identified gap in the literature in understanding interactions between law enforcement and civilians from the perspective and lived experiences of Black males using a qualitative phenomenological research approach.

Purpose Statement

This qualitative phenomenological study aimed to explore the lived experiences of Black males regarding their interactions with police. An additional focus of this study was to understand, from the perspectives of Black males, how to improve the relations between Black males and the police in San Bernardino County, Southern California. Accordingly, a sample of

10–20 Black males aged 18 to 45 years residing in San Bernardino County was recruited by the researcher to participate in semistructured interviews.

Significance of the Study

Despite the increased attention to police violence toward the Black community, limited empirical research exists describing the lived experiences of Black males. Similarly, few researchers have explored this issue within the context of San Bernardino County in Southern California. According to California's "Use of Force Incident Report" (2020), San Bernardino County had 84 incidents of reported use of force by officers on civilians—the second-highest rate in the state. This means many residents will have likely been directly or indirectly involved with police violence in San Bernardino County and increases the likelihood of reaching a sufficient number of potential participants to conduct the study.

The data collected from this qualitative phenomenological study will help describe and interpret Black males' lived experiences of interacting with police in this setting. Exploring the topic of police legitimacy within the climate of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic is also of importance given the increase in racial trauma among the Black community due to events of police violence (Kelly et al., 2020; Liu & Modir, 2020; Wakeel & Njoku, 2021). It is difficult to explore police violence within the Black community without considering how the recent global pandemic has further impacted an already disadvantaged group and further strained the relationship between residents and law enforcement.

By applying CRT to frame this study, the implications for structural inequalities in relations between Black males and police and the issue of police legitimacy were explored (see Chapter Two for an overview of the theoretical framework). Thus, law enforcement and criminal justice leaders may use the findings of this study to inform interventions and policies to improve

interactions with the community and Black males, in particular, in San Bernardino County, Southern California.

Research Question

The following research question was used to guide this study:

RQ1: How do Black males in San Bernardino County, CA, describe their lived experiences with law enforcement as framed by the tents of CRT?

Definitions of Terms

The following terms were used throughout this study and are defined below:

1. *Black* – In this study, Blacks, also referred to as African Americans, refer to individuals in the United States that identify as Black or African American and are of African descent.

2. *Body-Worn Cameras* – BWCs are portable audiovisual devices worn on an officer's chest that record what they hear and see in real time (Glasbeek et al., 2020).

3. *Police Legitimacy* – Police legitimacy is the belief that individuals generally defer to and voluntarily follow police orders and instructions when they respect and accept the police institution as an authority to make decisions (Jackson & Bradford, 2019).

4. *Microaggressions* – Microaggressions are regular racist events experienced by people of color (POC) that are mediated by institutional or structural racism (Pérez Huber & Solorzano, 2014). Microaggressions were important to consider in this study because they are experienced by POC in general and specifically by members of the Black community. The importance of institutional or structural racism is also relevant in this study given the use of CRT, which focuses on structural inequality and racism in the United States, particularly as experienced by Blacks.

5. *People of Color* – A person of color is an individual who does not belong to the dominant racial group within society (Pérez Huber & Solorzano, 2014). In the United States, the dominant racial group is White or Caucasian.

6. *Police Violence* – Police violence, also labeled police brutality, refers to police officers' excessive use of force against citizens (Aymer, 2016; Bryant-Davis et al., 2017).

7. *Racism* – Racism is a system of oppression whereby persons of a dominant racial group exert their power or privilege over nondominant racial groups (Acosta & Ackerman-Barger, 2017).

8. *Racial Trauma* – Racial trauma is the result of race-related stressors (Pérez Huber & Solorzano, 2014), such as racism, and is often experienced among POC. The psychological impacts of racial trauma include self-doubt, high blood pressure, depression, and anxiety (Bryant-Davis et al., 2017).

Summary

This study explored the ongoing issue of police violence toward Black males (Edwards et al., 2019; James, 2018; Jetelina et al., 2017; Kelly et al., 2020; Nicholson-Crotty et al., 2017) and police legitimacy (Bell, 2017; Bor et al., 2018; Tyler et al., 2015), particularly in the Black community. Due to limited empirical qualitative research on this topic, an in-depth understanding of the experiences of Black males as they relate to their experiences with police in San Bernardino County, Southern California, is lacking. This study used a qualitative phenomenological research approach with data from semistructured interviews to explore the lived experiences of Black males in one county in Southern California. The findings have implications for contributing to both research and policy, particularly in informing means to improve police legitimacy and the impact of BWCs in Black communities.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Over the last few decades, an upsurge in the rates of killings and violence against Blacks

has been connected to the police in the United States (Edwards et al., 2019), leading to increased

controversy and skepticism from the public. In an attempt to bring attention to this issue,

individuals have begun recording police encounters and sharing them through social media

channels. To understand this phenomenon, Moule et al. (2019) surveyed 702 American adults

and asked them about their motives to "copwatch" or record their encounters with the police. The

study revealed that legal cynicism (i.e., skepticism or wariness of the law and police; Sampson &

Bartusch, 1998) was positively and significantly correlated with watching and sharing police

recordings online. A one-unit increase in cynicism corresponded with a 21% increase in the odds

of visiting these websites. Moreover, the researchers discovered that being younger, male, and

residing in an urban neighborhood significantly increased the likelihood an individual would

watch these recordings online. These findings indicate that young males living in cities are

significantly more suspicious of the police. However, one major limitation of this study is the

authors did not consider how race may be a factor in these behaviors.

Similarly, Reyes and Houston (2019) examined whether the perceived level of force used

by law enforcement officers would be considered justifiable, moderate, or excessive based on the

presence of an audio track in a video. The results indicated that individuals perceived violence as

less severe when the audio track was removed from the video than when the video was present.

These findings suggest that the level of brutality used by police officers can be manipulated,

which can potentially influence the perceptions and judgments of observers and victims of police

brutality. This is an important factor to consider when exploring perceptions of police brutality by Black males.

The publicizing of negative police encounters, including recent shootings of Black men, such as Michael Brown in Missouri and Freddie Gray in Baltimore, have caught the public's attention and fueled national debate concerning the police force and their misconduct, especially toward minority communities (First et al., 2020). In response, current research has focused on the disproportionate racial disparities by the police toward the public. For instance, Pierson et al. (2020) analyzed state patrol stops between 2011 and 2015 and found police stopped Black drivers more often than White drivers relative to the driving-age population. At the same time, Hispanic drivers were stopped less frequently than White drivers. Their analysis indicated that both Black and Hispanic drivers were more likely to be searched, arrested, and ticketed by the police than White drivers regardless of driving ability.

Moule et al. (2019) focused on examining the link between police legitimacy and the public empowerment of police. Results from over 700 American adults from national data identified that police legitimacy directly influenced the public's police empowerment and, in turn, the public's perceptions of the police. In other words, the American public is more likely to trust and support the police if they believe the police are acting in accordance with the law. However, Moule (2020) argued that recent high-profile killings of Black men have led to a "war on police." According to White et al. (2019), the phrase *war on policing* was introduced to describe the increasing levels of hostility and violence, including death, recently faced by police officers in the United States. In their research, Moule et al. examined public perceptions of the police based on media consumption, institutional trust, and political orientations based on a national sample of American adults. They found that the perceptions of the war on policing

positively correlated with political conservatism and trust in the police. At the same time, television news consumption was the only form of media to influence whether the public perceives they can trust the police and believe that there is a war on police.

Also, of interest to researchers is the issue of increasing rates of police brutality in the United States. For instance, Koslicki et al. (2021) investigated the effect of police militarization (i.e., giving local law enforcement access to firearms) on the use of force by police. The researchers examined the association between police-caused fatalities and data from the 1033 Program (information on the firearm equipment carried by the police). The results indicated a positive relationship between the number of 1033 Program items obtained and fatal force used by the police. Moreover, the results indicated that Blacks who reside in high crime areas have a higher probability of being the victims of the fatal use of force. These findings help identify the potential reasons for growing police brutality, police cynicism, and disparities in the treatment of the Black population in the United States.

Police employment conditions in the United States have also been considered an antecedent to police behavior and their treatment of citizens. Peterson et al. (2019) examined the association between shift work characteristics and schedules and burnout as well as between sleep deprivation and burnout among a sample of police officers. The researchers identified factors such as long shifts, mandatory overtime, and short sleep cycles significantly increasing the risk of burnout among police. At the same time, a higher frequency of long shifts increased emotional exhaustion. A similar effect was observed with mandatory overtime and irregular schedules. These findings support the conclusion that the working conditions of police officers in the United States can have a significant effect on their mental health.

Building on previous findings regarding working conditions and mental health, Grant et al. (2019) examined the association between compassion fatigue (characterized as physical and emotional exhaustion leading to an inability to feel compassion for others) and burnout among urban police officers. Their findings indicated that not only was compassion fatigue common in their sample of police officers, but the officers also reported low levels of compassion satisfaction (i.e., satisfaction from helping others). This suggests that high levels of burnout could cause decreased compassion satisfaction and increased compassion fatigue in the police officers, which could be one reason for increased rates of police brutality and discrimination against ethnic minorities in the United States.

Theoretical Framework

The theory that guided this study is CRT, which is a key model for understanding structural and systemic racism (Kelly et al., 2020), and is, therefore, an appropriate theory for guiding an inquiry into the experiences of Black males in the United States. Notably, the tenets of CRT (outlined below) reflect the embeddedness of racism in society in the United States (Crenshaw et al., 1995; Kelly et al., 2020). Despite the claim that institutions, systems, policies, and practices within the United States are race-neutral, White supremacy is maintained within such structures to the disadvantage of POC (Crenshaw et al., 1995).

The five tents of CRT are (a) racism is ordinary and pervasive, rather than an anomaly, (b) racism is difficult to remedy because claims of objectivity and neutrality camouflage the power and privilege of White people, (c) race is socially constructed and manipulated, (d) the experiential knowledge of racism by Black people (and by extension, POC) is legitimate, and (e) critical race theorists should seek social justice (Brown, 2003). Another important component of CRT is that harm to minorities, particularly Black people, has been caused by presenting

Whiteness as normalcy while placing Black people in a place of inferiority within race-based hierarchies in American society (Crenshaw et al., 1995).

CRT has been used to apply critical psychological approaches to understand race and racism (Salter & Haugen, 2017). Researchers have used CRT as a theoretical underpinning to understand how forms of racism, such as microaggressions, emerge in the day-to-day experiences of POC (Pérez Huber & Solorzano, 2014). For example, due to the rise in police killings in recent years, Kelly et al. (2020) applied CRT to explore the phenomenon of police killings during the COVID-19 pandemic. Exploring the role of the treatment of Blacks using CRT, Kelly et al. (2020) described the impacts of racism on Black families as being rooted in historical context and racism. Kelly et al. also highlighted that racism and the rise in police killings of Blacks negatively impact the Black community.

<div align="center">**Related Literature**</div>

Police Perceptions of Communities of Color

As the current study focused specifically on law enforcement in California, it was important to consider research involving issues around policing in this state, especially racial/ethnic discrimination by police. It is important to consider police perceptions of crime and violence in California. Most recently, Carlson (2020) interviewed police chiefs in Arizona, California, and Michigan to understand their perceptions of race, masculinity, and policing. The findings indicated that police chiefs identified two racially distinct styles of police masculinity, mainly the guardian and the warrior. The warrior was characterized by aggressive enforcement toward perpetrators of color, whereas the guardian style was characterized by assertive protection toward White victims. Notably, both categories highlight a racial divide in police perceptions of protection and aggression. Carlson's work is important as it helps us to understand

further the unfair treatment of Black individuals across the United States, particularly in California. The next section will provide an overview of research concerning the criminality of Black males in the United States.

In response to increased attention on racism and police brutality, police officers have had to consider how their behaviors may be perceived by the public. In one study, police officers' concerns about appearing racist or appearing racially insensitive were explored. Specifically, Trinkner et al. (2019) examined how being stereotyped as a violent threat by the public undermines police officers' legitimacy. The researchers discovered that officers who felt they were being stereotyped reported lower self-legitimacy, which meant that police officers were less likely to restrict their use of force. Moreover, an elevated stereotype threat was found to be associated with greater approval of unreasonable force and unfair policing practices by officers. These findings suggest that when police officers feel they are characterized negatively, they are more likely to act in accordance with these stereotypes, which results in increased incidents of police brutality. These behaviors have a damaging effect on public trust and further disadvantage minority groups, in particular Blacks.

Community Perceptions of Police

To understand the attitudes of California residents toward law enforcement, Graziano and Gauthier (2019) examined whether a racial-ethnic hierarchy existed in the public's perceptions of police. They found Black individuals exhibited mostly negative attitudes toward the police, whereas White individuals' attitudes were mostly positive. The findings indicated the existence of a racial/ethnic hierarchy, as Hispanic and Asian participants displayed intermediate views toward the police as opposed to the more polarized views of Whites and Blacks. These results

are in line with previous research on law enforcement in California, where a clear pattern of discrimination toward Blacks was observed (Haddad, 2020; Shjarback & Nix, 2020).

In other research exploring perceptions of police legitimacy in California, Fine et al. (2020) explored youths' perceptions and their exposure to police legitimacy. The researchers identified that youths' perceptions of police were the most positive during late childhood and declined as they moved closer to adulthood. Moreover, Black adolescents reported the most negative perceptions toward police out of all races, and their perceptions became increasingly negative with each year of life.

Graham et al. (2020) studied feelings of fear and worry among Blacks regarding the likelihood of experiencing police brutality. The researchers controlled the results for state-level factors, such as residential segregation, educational attainment, economic indicators, employment status, and incarceration rates, and discovered these factors were significant predictors of the Black–White disparity in police shootings. The study also revealed a racial divide regarding worrying about experiencing police brutality, as Black respondents reported being fearful of being targeted by the police more than five times the rate reported by White respondents.

Kravitz-Wirtz et al. (2021) surveyed 2,870 adults in California regarding their concerns about increased violence (including police violence), unfair treatment, and changes to firearm storage practices during the COVID-19 pandemic. The researchers discovered that individuals reported worrying more about being the victims of violent crimes including police violence as a result of the pandemic. Moreover, the results indicated that those in possession of a firearm were more likely to store it in their house, and those without a firearm were more likely to obtain one in response to the pandemic. Findings further suggest that participants feared police violence in

California as a result of the efforts to lessen the virus spread, increased firearm sales, and pandemic-related loss. Overall, the respondents reported a 2.8 to 5.6 percentage-point increase in levels of fear during the pandemic.

Oh et al. (2017) explained that seeing a police officer's behavior (either in person or recorded) results in different emotions and reactions from individuals in the United States, especially among minorities. One's views toward police tend to be based on one's race or ethnicity. Among Blacks, the killings of Blacks by police officers depicted in the media have led to a sense of shared distrust. Public concern about police interactions with ethnic and racial minorities has increased due to police officers' excessive use of force against POC, particularly Black males. The researchers explained a growing awareness among health practitioners, policymakers, and other stakeholders that police mistreatment must be addressed as a public health problem. The study found that Blacks who experience at least one incident of police mistreatment or abuse suffered a major psychiatric disorder over the past year and suicidal behavior at some point in their life.

Police Brutality

Although police violence is high in the United States overall, Blacks, in particular, are more likely to experience both criminal justice contacts and police-involved harm when compared to Whites (Desmond et al., 2016; Edwards et al., 2019; Edwards et al., 2018; Kramer & Remster, 2018; Mooney et al., 2018). Bryant-Davis and colleagues (2017) explored police violence toward racial and ethnic minorities, particularly concerning the trauma associated with such violence. Notably, they determined a need to explore further the impact and trauma associated with police violence, particularly among those with intersecting identities due to the relationship between violence and trauma within minority populations. Attention to police

violence and brutality is needed, particularly in understanding the causes and potential solutions to police violence as an ongoing problem (Aymer, 2016).

Edwards et al. (2019) studied police-involved deaths to estimate the risk of being killed by police use of force based on social groups, namely race and sex. The researchers found that Black men and women, Native American men and women, and Latino men have a higher lifetime risk of being killed by police than their White peers. In particular, the risk of being killed by police was highest among Black men, who have an approximately 1 in 1,000 chance of being killed by police over their lifetime. In comparison, the average odds of being killed by police among men is 1 in 2,000 and approximately 1 in 33,000 among women. The risk of being killed by police peaks among all groups between the ages of 20 and 35 years. Among all young men of color, police use of force is one of the leading causes of death.

As the topic of the present study focused on the experiences of Black males with law enforcement, it is important to understand the backgrounds, and exposure to crime, of Blacks in the United States. Pierson et al. (2020) examined the role of the school as a protective factor against community violence exposure in Black male adolescents. The researchers discovered that low levels of school belongingness and exposure to community violence were positively correlated. Moreover, both of these factors predicted adverse psychological outcomes. This also suggests poor Black are more likely than other racial groups to have contact with police (Slocum, 2018).

Recently, Shjarback and Nix (2020) examined the racial and ethnic disparities in police-caused shootings and police violence in California and Texas. The researchers compared cases between White, Black, and Hispanic victims of fatal and injurious shootings. Their results indicated that Black individuals were more likely than White individuals to be fatally shot or

injured by police in California but not in Texas. Building on these findings, further research on police violence in California explored the effect of witnessing a fatal police encounter by pregnant women. Goin et al. (2021) examined whether a woman's exposure increased her risk of preterm delivery and whether any effect would be observed across different races. The results indicated that exposure to police violence in California increased preterm birth delivery. Moreover, this effect was more often observed in Black pregnant females than in any other race. Thus, these findings indicate that Black individuals both directly and indirectly suffer consequences related to police violence in California.

In terms of violent crimes among Blacks, Jones-Eversley et al. (2020) indicated that most victims of homicide were young Blacks between 15 and 24 years of age. Moreover, Sharkey and Friedson (2019) reported that most homicide victims aged 15 to 34 years were Black males, specifically. The researchers argued that victims of homicide could be significantly predicted by their age, gender, and education level. According to the Federal Bureau of Investigation of Investigations (2018), Blacks comprise 13% of the U.S. population and 33% of persons arrested for nonfatal violent crimes, which include aggravated assault, rape, robbery, and other assaults. Black people also comprised 36% of those arrested for serious nonfatal violent crimes.

Research regarding encounters between the police and community has yielded disparities in the types of outcomes (e.g., arrest vs. warnings) and the forms of treatment for different racial groups. Minorities are more likely to be treated badly by the police, searched, and stopped for no valid reason (Hannon, 2017). The majority of the violence that has transpired against the public has been against the Black community (DeVylder et al., 2017). Pryce and Chenane (2021) found for the police to earn the trust of Blacks, they must be respectful, invest in community policing, and behave equitably.

        Notably, California was the highest state for killings when considering all killings (Figure

1) as well as when the victim was unarmed (Figure 2). Similarly, Lawson (2018) reported Black

women living in low-economic cities and under-served neighborhoods were at a higher risk of

sexual assault or murder by the police without any legal consequences. Taken together, these

results indicate Black men and women are more likely to be victims of police brutality in

California, and this reality results in increased anxiety and perceptions of police illegitimacy.

Figure 1

Police Killings by State of Black Citizens
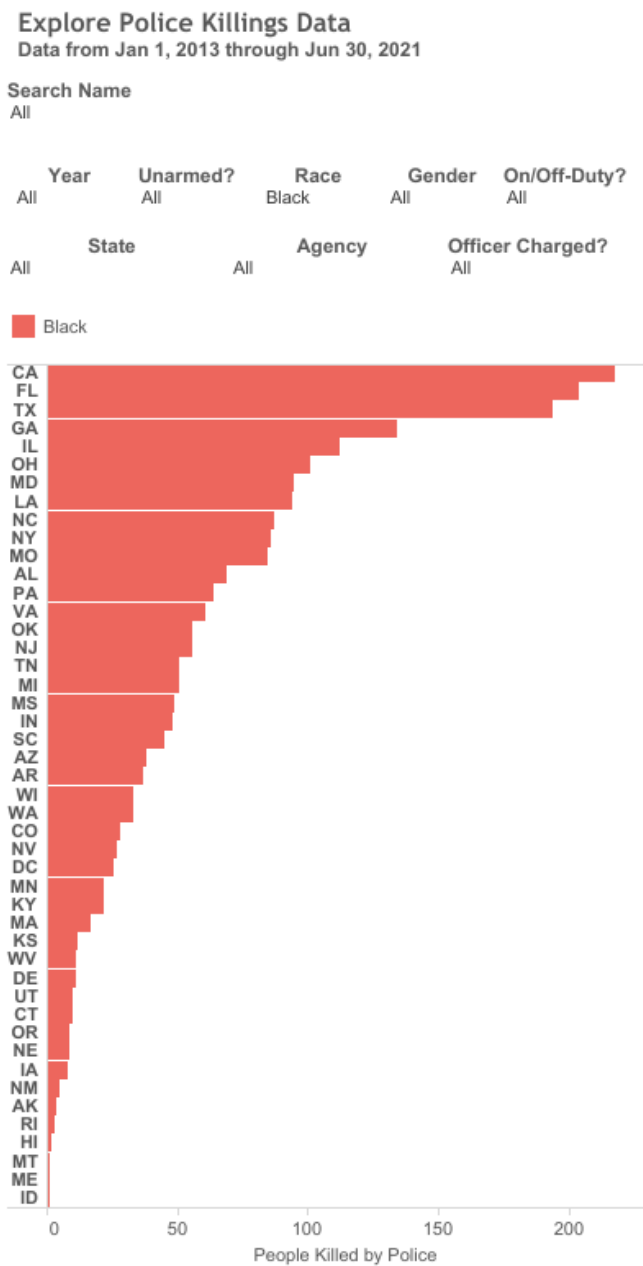
Figure 2

Police Killings by State of Unarmed Black Citizens

Explore Police Killings Data
Data from Jan 1, 2013 through Jun 30, 2021
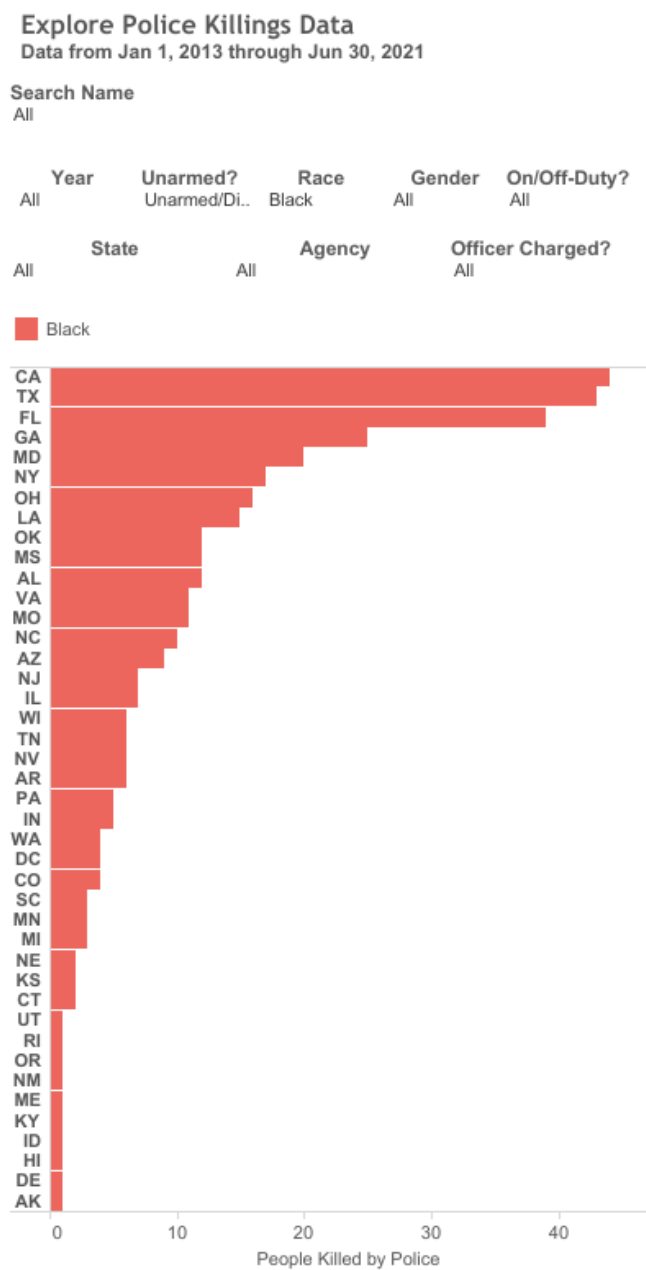
Note. Figures can be found at mappingpoliceviolence.org

Excessive Force

Two primary factors are considered when examining the standards for determining the excessive use of force by police: laws and use of force policies (Murray, 2021; Nemeth, 2019; Obasogie, 2020; Obasogie & Newman, 2019). The U.S. Constitution's Fourth Amendment governs the use of force policies in law enforcement agencies (Murray, 2021). Under the Fourth Amendment, officers are held to an objectively reasonable standard that provides great latitude in interpretation and application (490 U.S. at 388). The vagueness of the law makes it challenging to convict officers for the use of excessive force (Obasogie, 2020). While the police have a responsibility to use force to advance government interests, they often use it in excess and with premeditation (Stoughton, 2014). Obasogie and Newman (2019) reviewed the use of force policies and constitutional litigation for 75 of the largest cities and found that federal courts frequently relied on the meaning of excessive force created by police departments in their use of force documents, and every law enforcement agency in the United States has its own use of force policy. The use of excessive force has disproportionally impacted Blacks. Blacks account for 15% of the population in the United States but comprise 40% of people shot and killed by the police (Scott et al., 2017).

Between 2005 and 2018, only 85 officers in the United States have been criminally charged in relation to a shooting, and only 32 have been convicted (Berman & Lowery, 2018; Murray, 2021). Most victims of excessive force seek redress through civil suits because criminal prosecution is rare. Lawsuits can be filed against individual officers and the departments they are employed with (Nemeth, 2019). A common perception exists that law enforcement officers work a dangerous job, and based on this, courts have historically protected police officers; however, many people feel this perception is exaggerated (Nemeth, 2019). According to the Federal

Bureau of Investigations (2016), more officers die at work accidentally than due to felonious activity.

California passed a law in 2019 requiring officers only to use deadly force when it is a necessity. This law was passed to address the ineffective reasonableness standard (California Penal Code 835). California is the first state to create more stringent standards regarding the excessive use of force. While the state has made a positive step in creating the law, it may not lead to success as the word necessary is subject to interpretation, just like reasonableness (Murray, 2021). To effectively address the excessive use of force, changes must occur in the courts' interpretation of the law, use of force policies must be rewritten, and officers must be held accountable for their actions (Berman & Lowery, 2018; Murray, 2021; Nemeth, 2019; Obasogie, 2020; Obasogie & Newman, 2019).

In a population-based, quasi-experimental study, Bor et al. (2018) combined data on police killings with individual-level data from the nationally representative 2013–2015 U.S. Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) to estimate the relationship between police killings of unarmed Black Americans on the self-reported mental health of other Black American adults in the U.S. general population. The researchers considered primary exposure as the number of police killings of unarmed Black Americans occurring in the 3 months before the BRFSS interview within the same state. The study's findings were that 993 of 103,710 Black American respondents were exposed to one or more police killings of unarmed Black Americans in their state of residence in the 3 months before the survey. Each additional police killing of unarmed Black Americans was statistically significantly associated with poor mental health days (95% CI [0.07–0.22]; $p < .000$) among Black American respondents. The largest effects on mental health occurred in the 1–2 months after exposure to the police killings. However, mental

health impacts were not observed among White respondents and were identified only from police killings of unarmed Black Americans (not unarmed White Americans or armed Black Americans). The authors concluded that police killings have adverse effects on the mental health of Black American adults in the United States. The researchers also noted the need to implement public health programs to decrease the frequency of police killings and mitigate the adverse mental health spillover effects associated with the killings of unarmed Black Americans.

The response to police brutality has been referred to as a manifestation of racism toward ethnic and minority groups (Aymer 2016; Bryant-Davis et al., 2017; Boykin et al., 2020). As such, the increased public response has drawn attention to the issue, particularly in media outlets and political campaigns (Aymer 2016; Bryant-Davis et al., 2017). Specifically, the high number of Black males being killed by the police has resulted in Black mothers actively having to think about preparing their sons for law enforcement encounters (Rickford, 2016). In one study, Harris and Amutah-Onukagha (2019) explored the experiences of Black mothers and the preparation they provide their sons for interactions with the police. They found that the mothers believed stereotypes would define their sons; therefore, the mothers had to ensure their sons self-policed their identities and behaviors to limit contact with the police to ensure their safety (i.e., staying under the radar). The mothers also used harsh realities to deter their sons from engaging in criminal behavior. However, the mothers also reported teaching their sons that there are good cops despite negative experiences. Overall, the mothers said they focused on teaching their sons to be respectful and cooperate with the police.

One of the most pertinent issues surrounding police violence against Blacks is the lack of police discipline (Benns, 2019; Benjamin, 2020). Across the United States, officers are rarely disciplined for their misconduct, and when they are, it is minimal (Rushin, 2019). Across the

state of California, different police departments have varied contracts, disciplinary processes, officer rights, and unions, which all present obstacles to discipline (Fegley, 2020). In general, disciplinary processes are also lengthy, cumbersome, and involve the right to several appeals (Bies, 2017). According to Levine (2019), the disciplinary process is arbitrary and does not have time limits.

In addition, police unions are powerful and protect officers at all costs with no concern for justice (Fegley, 2020). The code of silence is also a challenge to disciplining officer misconduct, as police culture discourages officers from reporting misconduct (Ivkovic et al., 2018). Jurisdictions throughout the United States are paying settlements to resolve claims involving police officer misconduct, which has reduced public trust due to a lack of accountability for misconduct (Feldman, 2019). According to California Penal Code Section 832.7, officers' personnel records are confidential, except through discovery in court proceedings. This protects officers from being adversely affected by discipline and complaints, including termination, and allows officers who are terminated by one agency to go work for another (Bies, 2017).

Use of Body-Worn Cameras in Policing

Although the use of BWCs may be new technology, cameras in policing are not new. Once the technology became widely available and affordable, police departments adopted the closed-circuit television surveillance system, which typically included interrogation room cameras and dashboard-mounted police vehicle cameras. According to Bang et al. (2018), 25 states (49%) in the United States currently mandate police officers to record custodial interrogations under certain circumstances. Hawaii and Rhode Island have established statewide recordings of some custodial interrogations without being mandated by court ruling or law. A

shift to the use of BWCs came in the United States in 2014 when the Obama Administration

provided a $263 million subsidy to purchase BWCs for local law enforcement agencies (Kim,

2021). According to Hyland (2018), as of 2016, BWCs have been deployed by 60% of local

police departments and 49% of sheriff departments.

Nowacki and Willits (2018) found that in certain jurisdictions, such as Boston, the use of

BWCs is a mandatory issue in collective bargaining because they alter officers' working

environments. Officers are concerned that such video can be used to charge them criminally and

end their employment. According to Wasserman (2017), using BWCs offers three advantages:

the footage provides clear and objective evidence, it decreases complaints by citizens and

reduces the cost associated with litigation, and it encourages citizens and officers to conduct

themselves appropriately. However, White (2014) asserted that despite the various benefits

connected to the use of BWCs, only some are based on empirical evidence.

Overall, the use of BWCs is believed to reduce the use of force by police officers on

public members (Peterson & Lawrence, 2020). Research performed by Ariel et al. (2015) with

the Rialto Police Department in California tested the hypothesis that if the public were aware that

BWCs were in use, it would lead to a reduction in the use of force by both the police officers and

the public as well as the number of the complaints filed against the police. To have a more

objective measure, their criterion was whether force was used in an incident rather than the

amount of force used. Their review also focused on the number of complaints filed against the

police during the year-long study. The authors distributed BWCs to officers during shifts instead

of to specific officers, which allowed all officers in the department to be able to use the cameras

at some point during the study. This method of distribution also lessened the effect that an

officer's partner might have on their behavior because officers had different partners during the

study and, at times, patrolled alone during different shifts. A comparison of the data from the study with data from 2106-2019 was made. In the year-long study, 25 use of force incidents were reported, of which 17 occurred when a police officer was not wearing a body camera. In addition, three complaints were filed in comparison with 24 complaints filed the previous year.

Henstock and Ariel (2017) conducted a 6-month randomized controlled trial to assess the effect of BWCs on police use of force by British police officers. Their findings revealed a 50% reduction in the odds of force used when BWCs are present compared with control conditions. It was concluded that BWCs lead officers, offenders, or both to exhibit complaint behavior. Another advantage of BWCs includes the ability to provide a more accurate account of events. Many suspected misconduct cases were left unresolved due to conflicting testimony from the parties involved (Peterson & Lawrence, 2020). Information collected from BWCs offers an objective account of the incident recorded in real time and is, therefore, more reliable than recording witness or victim statements or injuries (The Constitution Project Committee, 2015). This capability is functional, specifically in incidents when officers discharged their firearms and determinations need to be made regarding whether the use of force was justified (The Constitution Project Committee, 2015).

Miller and Toliver (2014) surveyed 500 U.S. police agencies and found the number one reason many agencies decide to deploy BWCs was to provide more accurate documentation of police encounters with the public. The agencies noted decreases in complaints from citizens and faster resolutions when allegations were made. White (2014) also argued that video evidence alone has been known to lead to the resolution of citizen complaints and a reduction in civil suits. White asserted that value can be derived from the recorded data through officers' action reviews and behavior while approaching critical incidents or citizen contacts. White stated video

evidence is a valuable training tool for communications, tactics, and identifying internal weaknesses. In addition, Wasserman (2015) determined that officers will be reluctant to take risks and may become less forceful and invasive when wearing BWCs.

Although many researchers agree that cameras could increase legitimacy, transparency, and enhanced training, insufficient research exists to confirm these claims. Among the baseline experiments used to highlight the advantages of BWCs were studies based in Rialto, California (Farrar, 2013), Mesa, Arizona (Mesa Police Department, 2013), and Phoenix, Arizona (White, 2013, as cited in White, 2014). According to reviewers of these reports (James, 2018; Wasserman, 2015; White, 2014), the initial reports lack the necessary research standards to confirm the value of BWCs. Specifically, White (2014) posited the studies being relied upon to promote and finance the use of BWCs had limitations in methodology and that others were flawed. Some of the specific limitations White noted were a lack of comparison groups, the study was conducted internally by the law enforcement agency deploying the BWCs, and several of the studies relied primarily on officer surveys that inquire about perceptions rather than measuring behavior. Overall, the reviewers cautioned against the use of the studies, arguing that the active claims were untested.

Ray et al. (2017) used data on residents of Prince George's County, Maryland to explore racial differences in views about police treatment and the effectiveness of BWCs. The study reported respondents who were not White had a greater fear of mistreatment by the police than the Whites. Regarding BWCs, the study found that respondents are either supporters or skeptics, with respondents on the one hand either believing that BWCs would illuminate the difficulties of policing (police supporters) or create more transparency to hold officers more accountable for

their actions (citizens' supporters). The study concluded that BWCs might operate to improve

interactions between citizens and the police but not necessarily alter power relations.

More recently, Demir and Ahmet (2020) investigated the effect of BWCs on citizens'

satisfaction and general perceptions of the police during traffic stops using a post-test-only two-

group quasi-randomized experimental design. The sample consisted of 624 citizens who were

stopped for traffic-related reasons. Drivers in the control group were not notified they were being

filmed, whereas drivers in the experimental group were notified. The researchers concluded that

both multi- and bivariate group analyses revealed that BWCs significantly increased citizens'

satisfaction and general perceptions of the police during a traffic stop encounter.

Wooditch et al. (2020) examined results from two waves of officer surveys administered

before and after the deployment of BWCs in two divisions within the Los Angeles Police

Department. The researchers used a fixed-sample survey containing 52 questions designed to

measure officer perceptions of BWCs across various domains. The study results revealed

variation in the two divisions: Mission officers became more critical of BWCs and Newton

officers became slightly more supportive of BWCs over time. The differences and similarities in

officer perceptions before and after deployment were viewed as having implications for practice

and policy and highlighted the importance of obtaining organizational support and officer buy-in.

Likewise, a study by Phillips et al. (2020) examined whether the influence of negative or

concerning policing attitudes toward body cameras was mediated by other variables such as

outlooks of officers toward law enforcement, perceptions of officers on citizen cooperation, or

their public opinions. The findings indicated that the relationship between experience and

concerning perceptions of body cameras was mediated by trust in citizens and the perceived

cooperation of civilians. It also revealed no direct effect on officers' outlook regarding aggressive law enforcement tactics concerning perceptions of body cameras.

According to Koen et al. (2021), another potential problem is that BWCs can impose a significant administrative burden on a police department. For example, the New Orleans Police Department's plan to deploy 350 BWCs was anticipated to cost $1.5 million over 5 years, with most of the cost being attributed to data storage (Miller & Toliver, 2014). BWCs produce a large amount of video that must be processed, stored, maintained, accessed, and secured, which greatly adds to the cost of introducing this type of technology (Koen et al., 2021). In addition, BWCs and the equipment for processing and storing videos must be maintained, updated, and replaced. Therefore, the time and resources necessary to use BWCs tend to increase over time, and it is frequently challenging to implement BWCs in a police department and obtain officer compliance with departmental regulations concerning BWCs. This made police departments resistant to acquiring and maintaining BWCs (Koen et al., 2021).

Leadership Styles

Experts have highlighted that culture change within police departments must begin with encouraging and ensuring effective leadership (Northouse, 2019). Leadership is essential to the success of all organizations (Kouzes & Posner, 2017), as leaders provide employees with guidance, vision, inspiration, and support (Northouse, 2019). Leaders set the tone for subordinates, but they must also model the behavior they expect from their subordinates and give them respect (Kouzes & Posner, 2017; Northouse, 2019). In law enforcement, leaders are expected to possess traditional leadership qualities in addition to skills specific to law enforcement agencies (Park & Hassan, 2018). Law enforcement agencies are predominantly led under an authoritarian leadership style, which corresponds with low solidarity between

management and line staff (Kelly & MacDonald, 2019). According to Wang et al. (2016), leaders who are excessively dominant and critical stifle workers and adversely impact their confidence. However, research suggests that a shift from an authoritarian style to a transformational leadership style will improve organizational outcomes, employee satisfaction, and community relations (Pyle & Cangemi, 2019).

Authoritarian Leadership

According to Aston et al. (2019), authoritarian leaders maintain control and do not involve subordinates in the decision-making process. According to Torres-Vega et al. (2021), authoritarian leaders maintain clear boundaries that create distance between them and their subordinates to maintain absolute power. This structure prevents creativity and innovation within organizations (Guo et al., 2018). Research indicates authoritarian leaders correspond with adverse employee outcomes (Bai et al., 2018).

According to Pyc et al. (2017), authoritarian leaders have four personality characteristics—interpersonal conflict, leadership/dominance, achievement-oriented, and verbal hostility—that result in negative organizational outcomes, reduced work performance, and higher levels of depression and anxiety among workers. Luthans and Youssef-Morgan (2017) explained that authoritarian leaders influence subordinates' performance negatively, and (Gu et al., 2018) posited that people-control-oriented authoritarian leaders cannot truly motivate employees. Moreover, authoritarian leaders are more likely to cause subordinates to have feelings of anxiety, distrust, anger, anxiety fear, and uncertainty (Guo et al., 2018). In addition, authoritarian leaders have problems managing their emotions and demonstrate abusive behaviors in the workplace (Ertureten et al., 2013). Followers under this style of leadership reported feeling helpless and having poor performance (Luthans & Yousseff-Morgan, 2017). Similarly, Kanwal et al. (2019)

found that the authoritarian leadership style corresponds with ostracism among frontline employees.

Catalino and Marnane (2020) stressed leadership behaviors that are most successful in dealing with future problems do not include control, corrective action, or individualistic decision-making—these behaviors are a part of the authoritative style of leadership. However, the authoritarian style is often reflected in the command-and-control structure in police departments—when subordinates do not obey authoritarian leaders, consequences are given (Du et al., 2020). This leadership style has created the culture within police departments and influences how officers behave and interact with the community (Aston et al., 2019). Historically, the slave patrols beginning in the 1700s under this leadership style were the first publicly funded organizations that exercised brutality against slaves who did not comply with their owners, congregated, and escaped (Hadden, 2021). Such a culture has since created a sense of distrust both of and within the organization, which leads to public skepticism and low morale and high turnover rates among employees (Thomas & Cangemi, 2021). In particular, Zheng et al. (2019) found that authoritarian leadership is negatively related to employees being vocal about unethical issues in the workplace. Specifically, officers felt they could not speak out against unethical behavior based on high levels of uncertainty under the authoritarian leadership style (Zheng et al., 2019).

Pyle and Cangemi (2019) found that follower-oriented practices persist in law enforcement and prevent the use of community-oriented policing. This adversely impacts public relations, and the authors stressed change cannot occur in policing until this type of leadership is abandoned. Organizational success is the primary goal of any organization (Kouzes & Posner, 2017), and success is imperative in police departments due to their success or failure impacting

the communities they serve (Thomas & Cangemi, 2021). As many researchers have argued, the authoritative leadership style does not promote the trust of employees, and this translates into mistrust of officers by the public and poor treatment of the public (Thomas & Cangemi, 2021). Regardless of the issues related to authoritarian leadership, not only is this style the most used, but it is also the preferred style in law enforcement by those in charge (Zheng et al., 2019).

Transformational Leadership

The transformational leadership style is the most studied in the leadership literature (Brown et al., 2020). According to Bass (1985), transformational leadership takes place when leaders broaden and consider their employees' interests, stimulate their consciousness and approval of the mission and purpose of the group, and lead their employees to see past their interests for the benefit of the group. Transformational leaders increase commitment to organizational goals and empower employees to achieve objectives by shedding light on the importance of task outcomes, positioning employees to perform beyond organizational standards, tapping into an intrinsic necessity, and increasing employee empowerment and decreasing dependence (Bass, 1985; O'Reilly & Chatman, 2020). Transformational leadership has four dimensions—intellectual stimulation, individual consideration, inspirational motivation, and idealized influence (charisma)—and all are essential for transformational leaders to be successful (Bass, 1985; Shafi et al., 2020). Intellectual stimulation requires leaders to have the skill set to expand employees' consciousness of challenges and position employees to see problems from different perspectives (Bass, 1985). Individual consideration involves leaders mentoring and actively coaching employees (Bass, 1985). Inspirational motivation is the leader's ability to produce an organizational vision (Bass, 1985). Idealized influence (charisma) is a leader's capacity to be respected and admired by employees (Bass, 1985).

To be successful, transformational leaders are required to be bold, confident, and focused (Tatman, 2020). Transformational leaders have high standards, assign purposeful tasks, and inspire optimism in their subordinates (Brown et al., 2020). Swid (2014) examined the influence of transformational and transactional leaders on organizational commitment and officers' satisfaction with a military setting. The results indicated that transformational leadership had a stronger relationship with organizational commitment than transactional leadership. According to Russell (2017), policing can benefit from a leadership style that incorporates setting a vision, inspiring and motivating others, and contingent rewards. According to Castle et al. (2019) leaders in policing are essential in shaping organizational context and outcomes in police departments, as the tone set by leadership throughout the department plays an important role.

Dung and Van Hai (2020) reviewed the correlation between transformational leadership style, job satisfaction, and workers' commitment to organizational change. Findings suggest that transformational leadership positively influences job satisfaction and commitment to organizational change. The authors also found that high job satisfaction corresponds to followers' commitment to organizational change. Hyunin et al. (2018) also found that transformational leadership corresponds to organizational commitment. Higher organizational commitment results in higher organizational performance (Kouzes & Posner, 2017).

In contrast, historically, police departments have been led by authoritative/transactional leaders in a paramilitary structure (Pyle & Cangemi, 2019). This structure and leadership style has resulted in poor organizational outcomes, high turnover, burnout, poor public relations, and extensive public scrutiny. Their literature review also revealed that a shift to transformational leadership is necessary to implement community policing effectively. However, limited research exists examining how transformational leadership impacts law enforcement agencies.

Eterno et al. (2020) examined police leadership in the New York Police Department. The study found that moving from a CompStat performance management system to transformational leadership would lead to innovation, organizational success, improved employee commitment, and better partnerships with communities. According to Haake et al. (2017), the top-down leadership style found in most police departments must be changed to transformational or a leadership style that will not preserve or perpetuate traditional police culture. Transformational leadership in police departments has been successful in changing police culture and improving the commitment of officers (Baek et al., 2018; Rigaux & Barton, 2019). However, transformational leaders must possess charisma (Kouzes & Posner, 2017). Sadulski (2018) examined undesirable behaviors such as corruption, misconduct, abuse of power, and discrimination among officers. The study revealed that the behaviors originated from the leaders in three Midwest police departments.

Transactional Leadership

Transactional leadership is defined by control, structure, and planning, and leaders who adopt this style utilize a system of rewards and punishment to motivate subordinates (Kouzes & Posener, 2017). Hariyanti et al. (2020) explored employees' perspectives regarding the ideal leadership of police hospitals in a transition period. The qualitative study found that employees believed a combination of transformational and transactional leadership styles would be most effective in making organizational change. Participants believed the two styles would benefit the organization through the mission, vision, and the reward and punishment system. Participants expressed leaders must communicate and transfer knowledge to employees and build trust. Both leadership styles were found to be necessary for organizational success.

Organizational Goals

According to Northouse (2019), collaboration and teamwork are essential to achieving organizational goals. Burmeister et al. (2020) studied the impact of transformational leadership on team knowledge exchange. The study revealed that establishing high-performance standards inspire teams to participate in knowledge-based, goal-oriented behaviors but transformational leaders require training to facilitate reflecting and setting goals. Tatman (2020) also found that training is required to develop transformational leaders, as leaders must demonstrate and communicate the need for team knowledge to their employees for it to be effective in contributing to organizational change. Leaders must also create a work environment that is conducive to sharing resources and information. In terms of law enforcement, Tombul (2011) examined officers' willingness to exert extra effort for providing better service through knowledge sharing. Transformational leadership was found to correspond with officers' willingness to exert extra effort and engage in knowledge sharing with their peers and superiors. Police departments must have a culture of knowledge sharing to serve the public effectively.

Leadership Summary

Effective leadership has been identified as being essential to stopping the disproportionate killing of Black males in the United States (Shadravan et al., 2021). Historically, police departments have followed a paramilitary structure that has been associated with aggressive and abusive behavior toward officers and the public (Chen, 2020). This leadership style is grounded in slavery and the use of slave patrols who were allowed to use unlimited and unregulated violence against Blacks, who were viewed as property at the time (Hadden, 2021). Transitioning police departments to transformational leadership can improve organizational performance and relations with the public (Tombul, 2011). Transformational

leadership results in improved morale among the workforce, improved performance, higher organizational commitment, and decreased turnover (Kouzes & Posener, 2017). These attributes within police departments can reduce the violence experienced by Black males at the hands of police officers (Wu, 2021).

Summary

The literature review provides evidence that police forces have a negative reputation in the United States. In particular, researchers have identified differences in police treatment of different races, especially discrepancies between the treatment of Whites and Blacks. This disparity in treatment has prevailed regardless of the cited benefits of the increased use of BWCs, including improving police transparency, limiting the use of force, and strengthening the often-fractured relationship with the minority communities they serve. Police brutality impacts Black males in several ways, including loss of life, posttraumatic stress disorder, anxiety, depression, suicidal ideations, diabetes, obesity, and poor health in general (Bor et al., 2018; Haddad, 2020; Sewell, 2017). Unfortunately, limited research exists on BWCs and more extensive research on how the public views police action is required.

Of interest to this study, the problem of violence and crime within Black neighborhoods could be contributing to police violence and racial profiling against the minority community in California. Notably, Black males are more likely to be exposed to poverty and crime, engage in violent crimes, and suffer from poor mental health and education. One of the studies offered a possible explanation for the discrepancy: Officers required to wear and turn on their cameras used force less frequently than those given more discretion. One impact the cameras have is a reduction in the number of citizen complaints. The vast majority of the studies reviewed show that officers wearing BWCs receive fewer complaints against them than those not being

recorded. However, the reasons for this remain unclear. One possibility is officers may change their behavior when they know they are being monitored, leading to fewer complaints. Also, officers have suggested that citizens are less likely to file unfounded complaints when they know incidents are recorded. It was also noticed that regardless of the main objective of introducing BWCs to provide evidence in criminal investigations and anticipation that camera footage would lead to more prosecutions of police misconduct, they are instead being used more often to prove appropriate use of force against citizens.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

This qualitative phenomenological study addressed police legitimacy as perceived by Black males in San Bernardino County, Southern California. In the past decade, a rise has been seen in police violence toward Black males (Edwards, 2019; Kelly et al., 2020; James, 2018; Jetelina et al., 2017; Nicholson-Crotty et al., 2017). As a result, there is a further need to understand the experiences of Black males in terms of police legitimacy. In this chapter, the researcher presents the design and methodology chosen to address the purpose of this study. The researcher will also address sampling, recruitment, and the instrumentation methods for data collection. Details will also be provided regarding the data analysis procedures, issues of trustworthiness, and ethical considerations.

Design

For this study, the researcher chose a qualitative methodology. The qualitative methodology was considered appropriate for this study because it provides an exploratory framework to examine the participants' reflections on police legitimacy. A qualitative methodology explores participants' opinions, lived experiences, and perceptions of a social phenomenon (Merriam, 2002). In this study, the researcher employed qualitative methodology to analyze textual information that represented participants' reflections and lived experiences regarding the phenomenon of police legitimacy. In contrast, a quantitative methodology involves gathering numerical data to test a hypothesis and is applied to an explorable measurable phenomenon (Maxwell, 2008). Since the addressed phenomenon for this study is not measurable but exploratory and qualitative in nature, the use of a qualitative methodology was most appropriate.

Different qualitative research designs were considered for this study. The first was a descriptive qualitative approach, which requires the gathering of data to describe a phenomenon and participants' reflections on the phenomenon (Merriam, 2002). However, for this study, the aim was not simply to describe participants' reflections but to explore their construction of meaning in police legitimacy. As a result, the descriptive design was not chosen. The second design consideration was a case study, which is often used for examining a phenomenon that is bounded by context or time (Yin, 2017). For example, the case study is often used for assessing a social phenomenon within specific organizations. The case study design was not chosen for this study, as the purpose was not to examine police legitimacy within a context of time or place but instead to explore lived experiences, which are not bounded by time.

The design considered most appropriate for this study was a phenomenological approach. Such approaches were developed to explore the lived experiences of participants in terms of a social phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). In the phenomenological approach, the researcher examines lived experiences and considers how participants construct meaning and reflect these experiences (Moustakas, 1994). In this study, the phenomenological approach would enable the researcher to explore the lived experiences of Black males toward police legitimacy, as it provides an opportunity to examine lived experiences through a qualitative lens and assess the construction of meaning toward police legitimacy based upon Black males' previous experiences with police. Specifically, the phenomenological approach offers the opportunity to examine rich data and present these findings thematically to address the purpose of the study and the guiding research question (Moustakas, 1994).

Research Question

The following research question guided this study:

RQ1: How do Black males in San Bernardino County, CA, describe their lived

experiences with law enforcement as framed by the tenets of CRT?

Setting

Since the qualitative phenomenological approach is not delimited to a specific site or

organization, the focus of this study was within the geographic context of San Bernardino

County, Southern California. This setting was chosen due to the documented complexity of

factors that affect the relationship between Black males and the police, especially concerning

brutality and legitimacy (Graham et al., 2020; Kravitz-Writz et al., 2021; Lawson, 2018).

Participants

The participants for this study were Black males who were willing to discuss their

previous interactions with the police and what can be done to improve relations between Black

males and the police. Participants met the following inclusion criteria: (a) must be a Black male,

(b) must be between the ages of 18 to 45 years, (c) must be residing in San Bernardino County,

Southern California, and (d) must be willing to discuss their experiences and perceptions of

police legitimacy and approaches to improve relationships between police and Black males.

When considering the sample size, the number of participants desired for this study was 10–20

individuals. In a phenomenological study, a minimum of five participants is suggested for

sample saturation with a sample size of 15 to 20 participants suggested as ideal (Maxwell, 2008;

Moustakas, 1994). Therefore, the researcher chose the desired sample size to align with

recommendations in the literature.

Procedures

The first step of the study was to obtain IRB approval from Liberty University (Appendix A), after which the researcher commenced the recruitment and data collection procedures. For recruitment, the researcher distributed a recruitment flyer (Appendix B) both online and through physical locations. The physical distribution of the flyer occurred at community colleges, higher education facilities, faith-based organizations, and community centers. The researcher also distributed an electronic recruitment flyer through social media websites, including Facebook, Study Ads, and LinkedIn. Participants interested in completing the study were asked to contact the researcher through the information provided on the recruitment flyer.

Participants interested in joining the study were asked to provide preliminary information based on the inclusion criteria to ensure that they were eligible to participate in the study. The researcher did not require additional verification of the eligibility requirements beyond the statements of the participants. If eligible participants expressed interest in participating in the study, the researcher emailed them an informed consent form (Appendix C) to sign through DocuSign, which is a program that provides a verifiable date, time, and signature. The researcher stored signed informed consent forms within a password-protected USB drive. Next, the researcher arranged interviews based on mutually convenient times and dates. All interviews were conducted online through Zoom to follow the IRB recommendations for social distancing measures.

Interviews lasted approximately 60 to 90 minutes and were recorded through Zoom and a backup audio-recorder device employed by the researcher. After an interview was completed, a transcription of the interview from Zoom was downloaded. The researcher reviewed the accuracy of the transcription and made appropriate editing for spelling/punctuation errors. The

researcher then returned a summary of the transcript to each participant for member checking. In member checking, the researcher returns a summary of the participant's reflections for review before data analysis to ensure the credibility of the results (Maxwell, 2008; Merriam, 2002). Data is provided to participants so they may check for accuracy and remove or add information for clarification (Merriam, 2002; Maxwell, 2008). Member checking is an important process of qualitative research that increases the validity and confirmability of the findings (Merriam, 2002). For this study, participants were asked to review the transcripts and return them within 3–5 days to the researcher with corrections or comments. All transcripts were returned. After member checking, the researcher commenced data analysis following Braun and Clark's (2019) six-step guide to thematic analysis. In the following sections, the researcher provides an overview of the data collection methods for this study and a detailed discussion of the data analysis procedure.

The Researcher's Role

In qualitative studies, the researcher serves a critical role in collecting and analyzing data (Patton, 2015). For this study, my role was to collect data, recruit participants, and analyze and present the findings through thematic analysis. As the researcher, I must acknowledge my own bias. It is important to note that I believe police brutality is a significant and traumatic issue that has impacted Blacks across the United States. I believe a critical need exists to address strategies to support the relationship between the Black community and the police. I also strongly argue for the creation of interventions designed to decrease harmful and violent strategies documented by police across the United States. Although researcher bias cannot be fully eliminated from research, strategies exist to mitigate and document researcher bias while conducting a study (Merriam, 2002; Tracy, 2019). For this purpose, I employed bracketing, which is a reflective

journaling approach used throughout the data collection and analysis processes to detail the

researcher's opinions, perceptions, and biases (Tracy, 2019).

The use of bracketing aided in the identification of bias and was useful in ensuring that

my bias did not affect the findings of the study (Maxwell, 2008). Throughout this study, I was

the sole person collecting and analyzing the data. I used detailed strategies to ensure that the

findings were accurately represented, and the strategies for mitigating my bias included clear

documentation of the research strategies and processes used to present findings throughout the

study. I also provide an audit trail, which details all study procedures and the development of

code categories and themes (Appendix D). In reporting the findings, I use direct participant

quotes to demonstrate the relationship of participants' experiences in terms of the identified

themes.

Data Collection

The main form of data collection for this study was semistructured interviews. The

process of data collection was based on an interview guide developed by the researcher. The

process of data collection was initiated with the introduction of the researcher to the participant.

At this time, the researcher informed the participants they can voluntarily leave the study at any

point. The interviews lasted 60–90 minutes and were audio-recorded. All interviews were

conducted using Zoom to ensure safety distancing measures were followed per IRB regulations.

The following section provides an overview of the interview questions asked to each participant

in this study.

Standardized Open-Ended Interview Questions

1. Tell me about your experience with law enforcement.

2. In what ways was racial bias involved in your experiences?

3. How did these encounters influence your perception of policing in your community?

4. Do you believe law enforcement officers have treated you fairly during your interactions?

5. In your experiences with law enforcement, have law enforcement officers worn body-worn cameras?

6. How does your experience with officers wearing body-worn cameras impact your perception of your interaction with law enforcement?

b) How do you think officers not wearing body-worn cameras would impact your experience?

7. How has the increased use of body-worn cameras by law enforcement changed your views of law enforcement, including trust, fairness, and support?

8. How does the use of body-worn cameras shift your views surrounding policing legitimacy in your community?

9. How does law enforcement officers acting fair impact your interactions with them?

10. Have you had interactions with law enforcement leadership?

11. What are your perceptions of police leadership and their work around creating fair and equitable policing in your community?

12. Have you made a complaint to law enforcement leadership regarding how officers have treated you?

b) What was your experience?

13. In what ways do you think law enforcement leadership can improve fair and equitable community relations?

14. Thank you so much for your time today. Is there anything else that you would like to add in reflection on our conversation?

Questions 1–5 were designed to provide a general understanding of participants' reflections in terms of experiences with police in San Bernardino County, Southern California. These questions were important to establish each participant's previous experiences and their general regard for the police within San Bernardino County. These questions were also designed to understand how Black males described their lived experiences with law enforcement. These questions were derived from the empirical literature regarding the general police mistrust demonstrated by Black communities based on previous concerns over legitimacy, violence, and brutality (Thibaut & Walker, 1975; Tyler et al., 2015).

Questions 6 and 7 explored the perspectives of Black males in San Bernardino County, Southern California toward improving law enforcement interactions with the community. Such information can provide insight into how changes can be made based on lived experiences of these participants. Although experts recommend including Black males' experiences and perceptions in research, these remain absent in the empirical literature (Harris & Amutah-Onukagha, 2019; Henstock & Ariel, 2017; The Constitution Project Committee, 2015).

Question 8 investigated the extent to which police BWCs provide adequate security for the Black male population in San Bernardino County. This question was developed based on the reviewed literature regarding BWCs as a means of benefiting citizens and meeting concerns from the Black community regarding brutality and police misconduct (Harris & Amutah-Onukagha, 2019; Henstock & Ariel, 2017; The Constitution Project Committee, 2015).

Questions 9 and 10 explored how Black males in San Bernardino County, Southern California described their lived experiences with law enforcement leadership. The impetus for

these questions was based on literature indicating that Black males are often subjected to

misconduct at the hands of police leadership (Koslicki et al., 2021). Researchers also indicated a

need exists to further understand legitimacy from the perspective of Black males (Shjarback &

Nix, 2020). In this regard, it is important to understand participants' perception of leadership

among the police force, as this is directly related to their views of police legitimacy.

The final question provided a conclusion to the interview. The researcher asked if any

final concerns, comments, or thoughts arose during the interview. The researcher also informed

participants they could contact her with any additional concerns or thoughts that arose after the

interview. This concluding approach was recommended by previous researchers, as it ensures

participants are offered an opportunity to give inside information that is comfortable within the

perceptions of their own stories (Patton, 2015).

Data Analysis

The researcher employed Braun and Clarke's (2019) six-step guide to thematic analysis

for this study. The process of the thematic analysis includes the identification of codes,

categories, and themes. The researcher searched for emergent themes through consideration of

analogous textual data across all participant interviews. For this study, the researcher used

NVivo 12 (QSR International) software to organize and analyze the data. This organizational

software is useful for novice researchers and ensures that information is clearly tagged and

organized (Merriam, 2002).

The researcher employed inductive coding to develop the data for this study based on the

participants' perceptions reported in the interviews. For this purpose, the researcher searched for

analogous codes across each transcript (Maxwell, 2008). In the inductive process, the researcher

identifies codes based on text similarity instead of predefined codes (Merriam, 2002). The

researcher also employed axial coding, which means data were first coded in small sections and later grouped to form categories (Braun & Clark, 2019). This process first involved delineating codes that were then grouped to form broad categories and, finally, overarching themes. The inductive method and axial coding procedure are ideal for developing emergent themes based on the data gathered from participants (Braun & Clark, 2019). The six-step guideline for thematic analysis followed by the researcher is presented in the preceding subsections.

Phase One: Gaining Familiarity with the Data

The first step of thematic analysis involved familiarization with the transcript data by the researcher. For this process, the researcher read and reread the textual data to ensure the researcher was grounded within the textual data (Braun & Clark, 2019). The researcher repeated this process several times to ensure she was familiar with the collected data.

Phase Two: Identifying Initial Codes

The second step of thematic analysis involved the creation of initial codes (Braun & Clark, 2019). Codes are the building blocks of thematic analysis and include similarities across all participants' reflections. For this purpose, the researcher reviewed each transcript and highlighted similarities across all open-ended interview responses from the participants (Braun & Clark, 2019). These similarities and text were tagged as codes in NVivo 12 and used to develop categories within the second phase of the thematic analysis procedures.

Phase Three: Searching for Emergent Categories

In the third phase, the researcher assessed categories based on the initial codes developed. Categories consist of similarities that are evident within the grouped codes (Braun & Clark, 2019). The researcher identified similarities and codes and grouped these into categories. The

researcher reviewed this process with the dissertation committee to ensure the validity and rigor of the thematic analysis procedure (Braun & Clark, 2019).

Phase Four: Identifying Emergent Themes

In the fourth phase, the researcher developed initial themes based on the categories identified. For this process, the researcher examined the categories developed in the previous phase and assessed emergent themes based on these grouped categories (Braun & Clark, 2019). The researcher reviewed this process with the dissertation committee to ensure that the themes reviewed were relevant based on the identified categories and codes.

Phase Five: Defining and Naming Themes

In the fifth phase, the researcher reviewed and defined the themes from the previous phase (Braun & Clark, 2019). The researcher developed a definition for each identified theme and provided thorough descriptions of the themes in relation to the research question (Braun & Clark, 2019). The researcher relied upon the support of the dissertation committee to continually review the themes identified at this phase (Braun & Clark, 2019).

Phase Six: Presenting Results

In the sixth phase, the researcher presented the results of the thematic analysis. For this dissertation, the researcher will present the results thematically in Chapter Four. The themes will be presented in alignment with the guiding research question. Direct quotes from participants were employed to increase the conformability of the findings (Braun & Clark, 2019). The presentation of the findings will continue in Chapter Five, as the researcher will discuss the developed themes in terms of congruent literature, practical recommendations, and research implications.

Trustworthiness

In this section, the researcher will discuss and define the issues of trustworthiness that were central to the rigor and validity of this study. The issues of trustworthiness include credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability. Each of these variables was addressed by the researcher through specific data collection and analysis procedures to ensure the trustworthiness, rigor, and validity of the research procedures and findings. In the following section, the researcher discusses credibility and the strategies used to ensure risks to study validity were addressed.

Credibility

Credibility refers to the process of ensuring that the participants' reflections gathered in the research study accurately reflect their experiences (Tracy, 2019). A researcher can use multiple strategies to ensure that credibility is presented throughout the study (Merriam, 2002). The first step employed in this study to address credibility was the use of a detailed data collection procedure that future researchers can replicate. Throughout this chapter, the researcher will detail the methods used for data collection to ensure that future researchers can evaluate the validity and rigor of the study and replicate the study design if so desired. The second method used in this study was member checking, and the third was addressing researcher bias. Researcher bias arises in all qualitative studies (Merriam, 2002). Researchers must address their biases to ensure these do not affect the findings of the study. As described, the researcher used bracketing to document her personal beliefs and biases and mitigate researcher bias throughout the study.

Dependability

The second variable and issue of trustworthiness is dependability, which refers to the process in which the methods used by the researcher for data collection and data analysis are credible and valid (Merriam, 2002). The first process used to increase dependability in the study was an audit trail, which refers to the documentation of the entire data collection and data analysis process. The researcher also included details concerning the codes, categories, and themes used to demonstrate the findings of the study. The audit trail can be found in Appendix D. The researcher further addresses dependability by thoroughly describing the methods for data analysis and collection procedures throughout this chapter (Maxwell, 2008).

Transferability

The third construct of issues of trustworthiness is transferability (Maxwell, 2008). Transferability refers to the process in which the findings of the study are generalized beyond the target population (Merriam, 2002). In a qualitative study, the generalizability of findings is limited due to the unique experiences expressed by participants based on their own lived experiences in the construction of reality. The first method used by the researcher was to employ thick descriptions when presenting the findings in Chapter Four as a means of increasing the transferability of the findings (Tracy, 2019). Thick description is a qualitative technique in which the researcher details the participants' experiences through descriptions, quotes, and discussion regarding their relationship with the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). Second, these findings will be discussed in relation to previous research in Chapter Five to place the findings in a broader context.

Confirmability

The final issue of trustworthiness is confirmability, which refers to ensuring the objectivity of the findings through a clear demonstration of the methods used to analyze participants' perceptions (Merriam, 2002). For this study, the researcher first used a clear audit trail to discuss how codes were developed into categories, which were then used to identify emergent themes. Moreover, the researcher provides direct quotes from participants, with names and personal identifiers removed, to increase the confirmability of the study findings. Finally, bracketing will also be used to reflexively document the researcher's personal opinions and perceptions concerning the findings of the study (Merriam, 2002).

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations are important variables when discussing the qualitative methods used by the researcher. For this study, the first ethical concern was obtaining IRB approval before any form of data collection was initiated. This approval was based on considerations of the Belmont Report of 1978, which include the three ethical variables of persons, beneficence, and justice. The report was written by the National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research and summarizes the ethical principles that researchers should follow to protect participants in clinical trials and research studies.

The ethical treatment of persons refers to insurance that the researcher will protect each participant's personal information and identification throughout the study. For this purpose, the researcher provided informed consent forms to each participant before collecting any data. Specifically, the forms outlined their right to withdraw at any point during the study without consequence, the intended benefits of the study findings to participants, and the protection of their identity through the use of pseudonyms when reporting data.

The next term is beneficence, which refers to protecting participants from harm and ensuring that any unavoidable harm is not unequally distributed. In this study, personal reflections on the topics of police brutality and violence may be difficult for participants. To address this concern, the researcher provided a list of community interventions and mental health resources to all participants. The researcher also informed participants they could choose not to answer questions and withdraw from the study at any point without any consequences.

Finally, the term justice refers to ensuring participants are equally provided access to the findings and benefits of this study. The justice principle requires the fair treatment of all participants and fair dissemination of the risks and benefits of the research (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical Research, 1978). Participants were recruited through a variety of methods voluntarily to ensure as many within the population as possible were aware of the study and their eligibility to participate. Those who were interested were asked to contact the researcher. Concerning access to the findings, all participants will be provided a copy of the dissertation after publication free of charge.

Ethical insurances also included consideration of data management and protection procedures (Tracy, 2019). In this study, the researcher stored all data on a password-protected USB drive, which only the researcher will have access to. The researcher only accessed data on the USB drive through a password-protected personal computer in a locked or private office. As per IRB regulations, after 3 years, the researcher will destroy all information permanently through a professional shredding service, such as Shred-IT.

Summary

This study aimed to address the perceptions of Black males in terms of police legitimacy. In this chapter, the researcher presented the rationale for using a qualitative methodology, which

is ideal for gaining the perceptions and lived experiences of participants. The researcher also provided a rationale for the phenomenological approach, which focuses on meaning constructed through participants' lived experiences (Moustakas, 1994). Next, the setting for this study was introduced, which is San Bernardino County, Southern California. Participants for this study included Black males between 18 to 45 years of age residing in San Bernardino County, Southern California. Data were collected through semistructured interviews following an established interview guide developed based on relevant literature. The data analysis procedures followed Braun and Clark's (2019) six-step guide to thematic analysis. In the following chapter, the researcher will present the findings of this study based on a thematic representation.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

The current study aimed to explore the lived experiences of Black males regarding their interactions with police and, by doing this, understand, from the perspectives of Black males, how to improve the relations between Black males and the police in San Bernardino County Southern California. Data were collected from 12 participants and analyzed into themes. This chapter presents the data thematically according to four main themes: (a) BWCs do little to increase security or legitimacy, (b) centrality of bias in experiences negatively shaped regard of police, (c) limited interactions-limited law enforcement leadership, and (d) relationships are at the center of improving fairness and equity.

In this chapter, the results are presented and analyzed. Quotes from the study participants support each theme, and a summary of the results is also provided. Braun and Clarke's (2019) six-step guide to thematic analysis was used for this study beginning with familiarizing with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing the themes, defining the themes, and finally discussing the results.

Participants

The current study had 12 participants, and all the participants were Black males aged 18 to 45 years. The participants were from San Bernardino County, California. This is a sensitive topic, and as such, confidentiality and the anonymity of the participants are important. The researcher, therefore, ensured no personally identifiable information about the participants was reported and that only pseudonyms were used.

Results

CRT is a movement that challenges the ability of traditional legal strategies to deliver

social and economic justice. It specifically calls for legal approaches that consider race a nexus

of life (Brown, 2003). The basic tenets of CRT are based on the belief that racism is a key part of

American society, not simply an aberration that is corrected by law. Any given society or culture

tends to construct its social reality to serve its self-interest. In the context of the United States,

this means that the culture of minorities or their interests is subservient to the self-interest of the

dominant system (i.e., the majority/Whites). As Delgado and Stefancic (2017) explained, the

current system in the United States has been built by the White elites. As such, this system tends

to tolerate and encourage racial progress or improvement for minorities because it promotes the

self-interest of the majority.

In this chapter, the interview data are analyzed through the theoretical lenses of CRT,

which has expanded beyond its foundations in legal studies into other fields, such as education,

political science, ethnic studies, and American studies. As this chapter examines the data to

understand the American Black males' experience with the police, the researcher sought to

answer the overarching research questions using the tenets of CRT. This means examining the

data in the context of this theory and how the theory helps in interpreting the meaning of the

knowledge derived from the analysis.

Theme 1: Centrality of Bias in Experiences Negatively Shaped Regard of Police

Police interactions with POC, especially Black people, are often marred with bias, which

has thus far been demonstrated in previous research. For instance, Smith and Alpert (2007) found

that police treat members of a particular minority group differently compared to Caucasians in

discretionary incidences involving the invocation of police authority. Multiple studies have also

shown that Hispanics and Blacks hold the largest percentage of those involved in stops (e.g.,

Pierson et al., 2020; Shjarback & Nix, 2020). Moreover, escalatory interactions are more

common when traffic stops involve non-Whites. Evidence suggests that once stopped, Hispanics

and Blacks are more likely than any other group to be searched or arrested or, at times, more

likely to be handled with excessive force or cited due to the stop (Hannon, 2017). This theme

extends these findings and focuses on the centrality of bias.

The data collected concerning the experiences of Black males indicates that race is

viewed as an inherent threat and that "being remembered" by police could fuel the prejudice

even further and increase the chances of a violent encounter. Police generally demonstrate

hypervigilance when dealing with Black males, characterized by the determination to find

problems with a suspect. Black males also reported increased traffic stops, often ending with

traumatizing experiences. Most Black males that interact with police officers, as demonstrated in

the experiences of the participants of this study, believed that fairness was unlikely and that

when you are Black in the United States, you are always in the wrong when interacting with

police officers.

As stated, this theme was analyzed through the theoretical lenses of CRT. Table 1 below

outlines the codes and subcodes identified while analyzing the data for this theme. The following

paragraphs examine the data based on the various tenets of the theory and its relevance to the

context of this theme.

Table 1

Theme 1 Codes and Subcodes

Theme Code *Subcode*	Files	References
The centrality of bias in experiences negatively shaped regard for police	12	95
bias central in police interactions	12	52
being remembered is not a good thing	1	1
experience changing over time	1	1
experiencing bias-race as an inherent threat	8	10
hypervigilance- giving no excuse	5	7
looking for problems	5	7
observing inequal treatment	3	3
overwhelming numbers	1	1
parental warnings	2	2
positive experiences	2	2
racial profiling	5	8
traffic stops	3	3
traumatizing experiences	5	7
encounter influence on perceptions	10	14
cultural ignorance	1	1
failure to serve and protect	3	4
forced awareness of own behavior	1	1
more threat to sons	1	1
no matter what's said, it is wrong	1	1
positive engagement as an outlier	2	2
pervasive anxiety	3	3
types of people drawn to law enforcement	1	1
fairness is reassuring but not expected	12	29
fairness doesn't increase engagement	1	1

Theme Code *Subcode*	Files	References
fairness through de-escalation	2	2
fairness uncommon-not expected	4	5
just doing their job	2	2
reassured by fair treatment	6	6
recognized authority	1	1
unreliable odds	7	12

Under this theme, the participants indicated that they experienced bias when their race was perceived as an inherent threat. One participant reported that the police immediately assumed he and his friend had a criminal record simply because of their race. The participant believed that even though there is a common notion that most police officers are good and only a few are corrupt and/or racist, the problem might be much larger than that. The participant believed that the problem is more likely systemic. He described his experience as follows:

I also had another experience at the movie theater in Barstow, where actually there was a fight that had occurred outside of the movie theater with a group of young women. And the officers that showed up came probably about 20 minutes late while my friend and I, we were still waiting for our ride; I believe I was in high school at the time. And one of the officers pulled around, shines a light at me, or shines light at us, and he just randomly says, "Are you still on probation?" And we looked at each other confused like, "What is he talking about?" And he reiterated addressing me specifically and said, "I'm talking to you. Are you still on probation?" And I said, "No, sir, I've never been on probation." He said, "Really? What's your name?" So, I gave him my name. He looked; I'm assuming he looked my name up in the system and didn't find anything. And he didn't apologize; he

didn't really say anything; he just drove away. Because clearly, the altercation had already concluded, and there was no reason for them to be there at that point.

There are a few different stories that I could share. All in all, I do believe that it's not just a few bad apples as some say; it is systemic. We recognize that looking at the history of law enforcement that it traces back to what were called slave catchers or slave patrol. And that's the history of our law enforcement. And truthfully, the structure really hasn't changed; the systemic structure of our law enforcement hasn't changed. And so, ultimately, I don't want to share too much on one question, but I do believe that there are systemic changes that need to be made to root out systemic racism and bias and help to rectify and remedy the issues that are impacting Black men disproportionately.

According to CRT, racism is structural and systemic. The police officer in the above quote, apart from being biased, appears to be working within a system that allows them to make such assumptions. The police officer does not seem to see the need to apologize to the participant even after realizing they had wrongly stereotyped the participant. To understand this experience more clearly, CRT emphasizes the institutional aspects of police interactions with Black males. It focuses on the voices of those experiencing racism and discrimination by the police, as noted by Crenshaw et al. (1995). The authors reiterated that understanding the inherent bias of the police can only be achieved by analyzing the interactions through the eyes of the victims. In general, tensions continue to center on Black men accusing police of being overly rough and aggressive and police characterizing Black men as being condescending, uncooperative, and threatening (Crow et al., 2017). As demonstrated in the literature, both police and Black males tend to have an accusatory justification of why the other party is to blame for the eventual aggression that often follows their interactions.

The color of one's skin is an important predictor of how an interaction with a police

officer is likely to transpire, especially if the police officer is White and the victim is non-White,

especially Black. A plethora of previous research examined in this study also demonstrated the

inherent bias law enforcement officers have against POC, especially Black males. Carlson

(2020), for example, investigated the perceptions of race, masculinity, and policing of police

officers and found that police chiefs identified two racially distinct styles of police masculinity,

mainly the guardian and the warrior. The warrior was characterized by aggressive enforcement

toward perpetrators of color, whereas the guardian style was characterized by proactive

protection toward White victims. In other words, the approaches by police in otherwise identical

situations would change depending on the victim's race. These approaches highlight a racial

divide in police perceptions of protection and aggression. Based on Carlson's work, among other

similar research cited in this study, it is now possible to understand further the unfair treatment

of Black individuals across the United States. The excerpt below by one of the participants

demonstrates the trauma and the negative experiences Black males go through every time they

interact with law enforcement:

> I think because of the color of my skin. When I think it is always a White officer, I think
>
> when all the encounters I had with police, it's always been a White officer. It's not an
>
> officer that looks like me or even a Latino officer. It has always been a White officer. I
>
> don't know if it's an inferior complex that they have. Because I think it is always ... And it
>
> goes back to Dr. Martin Luther King, like, don't judge me by the color of my skin, but the
>
> content of my character. Because what I have, it don't come off.
>
> I think being Black is what makes me great in these lived experiences that I've gone
>
> through. Sometimes I say it's not fair, but I think it prepared me for where I am at the end

of the day. But I think it's always racist bias, encounters with police, you don't never see on the TV that it's White police pulling over a White guy or arresting, it's always a White cop with a Black person. So, I think that is very harmful, is an issue, and for me, I'm just thankful I don't have a Black son because I know I will be scared every day.

When a Black male is involved, there is almost always a situation of hypervigilance in which the police officer appears to be constantly assessing for potential threats around his target, which is often a result of the preexisting bias and prejudice against POC.

For the most part, even if there was some nefarious reason for a pull-over, I feel like I made sure I kept it de-escalated by my interaction, and I was very conscious of that, even when I knew I probably shouldn't have been pulled over and there was no reason for them questioning me at all and being educated. I do understand my rights, but also I know how it works because I've seen how it works, and I understand that in that moment, anyway, none of that stuff matters, and so I'm very conscious of making sure I did my part to make sure everything in that interaction went as smoothly as possible because I knew no matter what I was going to lose if it went another way.

The participants indicated that fairness, although reassuring, is not expected because it is uncommon that a Black suspect will be treated fairly. Participants stated, "I'm confident in saying the majority of my experiences have felt like I was treated unfairly" and "If they're acting fair, it gives us a bit more trust in them than when they don't know when we do interact with them, that they'll do the right thing. If they're acting fair," which demonstrates the little faith they have in being treated fairly by law enforcement. Most of the participants believed that their encounters with the police could have been better, considering most were either children or had not committed any crime. This is shown in the excerpts below:

When I was about, I want to say, 14 or 15. I was a kid, and I was playing ding-dong ditch on some houses. I knocked on a door and ran, and then a police officer pulled up. But then three cars pulled up again, so I always see them in multiples. Then, right when an officer came, he had me and two of my friends sit down on the curb, and he said, "I ought to kick you in the face."

I would think it would positively impact if they're acting fair. The overall view of Black people not being a threat. I think it'd be a positive impact on my view of police officers if they acted fair most of the time. Not that all of them don't act fair. I think it'd be a more positive impact if the majority of them acted fair. It'd be a positive view and positive impact.

Previous research by Kravitz-Wirtz et al. (2021), for example, also suggested that Black males reported worrying more about being the victims of violent crimes, including police violence, especially during the pandemic. The participants indicated that they feared police violence because they felt that the likelihood of being targeted as a person of color is much higher than the majority population. CRT plays out in this case, where being a person of color comes with the disadvantages of being perceived as guilty or a threat before due process, and this, sometimes, ends with violent encounters between the police and Black males.

An encounter with a law enforcement officer is uncertain, especially for Black males. The participants of this study indicated that their interactions with law enforcement had unreliable odds of having a good interaction. Even though some participants acknowledged that not all law enforcement officers are bad, and certainly not all are good, the odds are always against a person of color, especially a Black male when they interact with the police. Some of the experiences are described in the excerpt below:

It's a 50/50. Again, I'm not here to say that all law enforcement is bad, and I'm definitely not saying all law enforcement is good. I think it just depends on who shows up; that could be. And that's sad; depending on who would show up would determine the level of fairness. And I mean by if it's a Black law enforcement officer or a minority law enforcement officer, I would feel more comfortable per se if it was somebody of color versus two officers who were White or you have a White officer and the minority's in the background or kind of playing it back. So as far as fairness, I would say it just depends. But personal experience, I would say it's 50/50.

I'll have some okay moments, but then I'll have some bad moments. I never got in trouble. I've never been in jail or anything, been arrested, been detained once, but that was it. My relationship with law enforcement has been like up and down. It's been inconsistent.

Theme 2: As Tools, Body-Worn Cameras do Little to Increase Security or Legitimacy

Table 2 summarizes the codes and subcodes of the theme that focuses on the role played by BWCs in increasing legitimacy and security. The subcodes below show that the respondents acknowledged that BWCs are a good idea but fail in application. The officers' behavior does not seem to change, even when they know they are wearing body cameras. This is perhaps because there is generally limited accountability for what is captured on the cameras in the event of an incident. The pessimism associated with the effectiveness of cameras is clear in the responses, as the respondents implied that the police are still the oppressor in this context and, therefore, body cameras are used for their benefit. In other words, the cameras are tools of the oppressor and are unlikely to work in the victim's interest.

Table 2

Theme 2 Codes and Subcodes

Theme Code *Subcode*	Files	References
As tools, BWCs do little to increase security or legitimacy	12	65
BWCs do not increase police legitimacy	12	14
a good idea that fails in application	4	4
BWCs don't address the root of the problem	3	3
increases awareness of violence and corruption	1	2
a small measure of accountability	5	5
BWCs have little influence perception of policing	12	39
cameras as tools of the oppressor	3	3
no cameras mean even less accountability	11	11
no impact-not experienced	2	2
officer behavior doesn't change	3	3
officers using as a tool to shape the narrative	2	3
power over use-turning off	2	2
question of accountability remains	3	4
supposed to offer protection through accountability	3	4
trust and safety not increased	7	7
minimal encounters with BWCs	12	12
low awareness of BWCs	2	2
never seen	3	3
a small percentage of encounters	5	5
unsure what to look for—if active	2	2

The participants indicated that the idea of using BWCs is a good one, mainly because it should work to protect both the officer and the victim. However, BWCs have been misused, and as some participants noted, these cameras are often switched off, blocked, or deliberately blocking audio when in a situation. This means that despite the nobility of the idea of cameras, the implementation has been poor, and the officers who switch their cameras off or tamper with the footage hardly get punished for it. Nowacki and Willits (2018) emphasized that it is mandatory in most jurisdictions to have BWCs even though researchers, such as White (2014), have argued that BWCs have not been effective, especially because police believe that they sabotage their work in some circumstances or expose them to criminal prosecution. Nevertheless, many studies continue to highlight the advantages of BWCs. For example, Wasserman (2017) argued that using BWCs offers three advantages: the footage provides clear and objective evidence, decreases complaints by citizens and reduces the cost associated with litigation, and encourages citizens and officers to conduct themselves appropriately.

Overall, the use of BWCs is believed to reduce the use of force by police officers on public members, as Peterson and Lawrence (2020) argued, and this is consistent with the findings of Ariel et al. (2015). The authors asserted that if the public was aware that BWCs were in use, it would reduce the use of force by both the police officers and the public and the number of the complaints filed against the police. The mixed results on the effectiveness of BWCs as far as increasing the legitimacy and security were clarified by primary research, where one respondent indicated that even though BWCs are a good idea, they have generally failed because police feel that they expose them. This is summarized in the excerpt below:

> I think the idea is a good one, but from a practical standpoint, I just keep mentioning the
>
> ones ... Let me say it the right way, the idea of accountability, the idea of everybody's

watching is a good idea, I really do think so, on both sides. I think it should protect the officers because they do put themselves in harm's way, but what concerns me is how it's been used. And so again, I've seen cameras being turned off and covered up and audio intentionally inserted and that kind of stuff. So, I think the idea is a good one, but I don't think the practical application is doing what it intended for it to do overall.

BWCs, as much as they might be a good idea, are believed to do nothing to address the cause of the problem. In some cases, they show inconclusive pictures or videos and end up doing little as far as accountability is concerned. Although this is shown in the excerpt below, these findings seem to contradict empirical literature by Wasserman (2017), who established that BWCs improve legitimacy by enhancing police effectiveness in crime management and the ability of the department to hold offenders accountable. Wasserman's findings imply that when the police know that their actions are being recorded on camera, they significantly reduce aggression. This is supported by other studies, such as Henstock and Ariel (2017), who found BWCs led to a 50% reduction in the use of excessive force compared to when they were absent. Overall, BWCs encourage offenders, officers, or both to exhibit compliant behavior.

> I think it is a step; it's an effort to remedy some concerns. But again, I think it's more of a band-aid type of situation; try and put, as they say, put a band-aid over an ax wound, but in this case, it's much more significant than an ax wound. And at the end of the day, BWCs don't address the root of the issue. All they really do is pacify the concern of something happening that no one is able to see or have proof of. Aside from that, it's not stopping anything from happening.

Other participants added, "I think body cameras are for accountability after they make a mistake already," and "no cameras means even less accountability." These statements also

demonstrate that the participants believed that BWCs might do little in terms of preventing violence or a problem from occurring; rather, they only help in holding the police officers or any other party involved in the interaction accountable. Generally, however, BWCs ensure the accuracy of evidence, as information collected provides an objective account of the incidences captured in real time, making it more reliable in resolving cases than recording victim or witness injuries or statements. BWCs help illuminate policing difficulties or leads to transparency to hold officers more accountable for their actions. Overall, they improve the interactions between the police force and citizens but do not change the power relations.

Some participants indicated that BWCs have played an important role in exposing Black people's fears at the hands of law enforcement. They indicate that BWCs have brought to light the biases and prejudices that Black people have suffered at the hands of the police, some of which are shown in the excerpt below:

It's just shown me; I think it made me aware of the relevance of how, especially in my particular demographic of people, young Black men have been treated unfairly. And it has just brought it to light a greater reality of the improper techniques and the ... What should I say? These killings were murders of Black men. Just seeing that firsthand has just brought my heart into it, my emotions into it. And it's made me see law enforcement in a different light, the negative, more negative light. Just understanding the fears that people, the biases that people have, the racism that people have toward Black people or even certain people groups.

Over these last 5 years, 5, 6 years, since we've started to see them being worn more and more by different officers, we're starting to become more aware of their negative actions. And so, it's diminished even the little bit of support that I felt like I could give most

officers or my thoughts of what an encounter with them would be. I believe it's created

fear because the cameras show us and add validation to some of the things that we were

only able to hear through other people's stories.

This analysis touches on key tenets of the CRT. As stated, the five tenets of CRT are (a)

racism is ordinary and pervasive, rather than an anomaly, (b) racism is difficult to remedy

because claims of objectivity and neutrality camouflage the power and privilege of White people,

(c) race is socially constructed and manipulated, (d) the experiential knowledge of racism by

Black people (and by extension, POC) is legitimate, and (e) critical race theorists should seek

social justice (Brown, 2003). Another important component of CRT is that harm to minorities,

particularly Black people, has been caused by presenting Whiteness as normal while placing

Black people in a place of inferiority within race-based hierarchies in American society

(Crenshaw et al., 1995). The analysis of this theme thus far has touched on almost all the tenets.

For example, it has been clear that racism is generally difficult to remedy, as it is a socially

constructed phenomenon. Racism is also sometimes explicit and sometimes implicit. This means

it could range from outright racist expressions to subtle and subconscious discriminatory actions,

especially against POC. The descriptions of Black males in this study demonstrate that their

experiences with law enforcement are legitimate. A general bias exists that most Black people

have to deal with every time they come into contact with law enforcement.

The fact that most participants believe that the officers' behaviors and attitudes toward

POC have not changed even with the cameras has made most of them believe that the cameras

have had no impact. A belief exists that these cameras are only used to shape the narrative rather

than ensure accountability and safety for officers and clients. Additionally, the fact that the

officers have the power to switch these cameras off means that the cameras cannot work as they should because they can only capture as much as the officers allow them to.

The participants indicated they have had minimal encounters with officers wearing body cameras, perhaps because fewer police officers are using them. This was evident in statements such as "small percentage of encounters," "I've consciously visibly noticed them maybe one time, but for the most part, I would say no," and "From my experience, I would say about 30% of interactions wore body cameras." These statements indicate that even though BWCs have achieved some success, they are generally not ubiquitous in law enforcement, which also means that there is still little accountability. One of the possible reasons BWCs have not been effective could be that most police officers do not wear them, and this could mean that some crimes go unnoticed and that there is no accountability in such situations. This is demonstrated in the excerpt below:

> I can only point to one and not because that's all I remember, but I only saw one camera probably at this point in my life, 50 to 60 encounters with police officers, I've only seen one. And I distinctly remember it because of a light that was right near it to show me that it was active.

Theme 3: Limited Interactions—Limited Law Enforcement Leadership

Leadership is fundamental in every institution, and previous research in this study suggested that law enforcement leadership directly impacts law enforcement outcomes. For instance, Catalino and Marnane (2020) suggested that leadership behaviors that are most successful in dealing with future problems do not include control, corrective action, or individualistic decision-making—these behaviors are a part of the authoritative leadership style. The authors implied that quality leadership styles are often inclusive and participatory. However,

as Wu (2021) explained, different leadership styles have strengths and weaknesses, and their applications vary among organizations. For example, the most preferred leadership style in law enforcement is the authoritarian style, which is often reflected in the command-and-control structure in police departments, as junior officers are expected to obey commands and orders from senior police officers or ranking officers. This type of leadership style is deemed more appropriate in the police force and many disciplined forces. Other researchers have argued that this leadership style has created the culture within police departments and influences how officers behave and interact with the community (Aston et al., 2019). This is a style inherited from the slave patrols beginning in the 1700s. Such a culture has since created a sense of distrust within the organization, leading to public skepticism, low morale, and high turnover rates among employees (Thomas & Cangemi, 2021). In particular, Zheng et al. (2019) found that authoritarian leadership is negatively related to employees being vocal about unethical issues in the workplace. Specifically, officers felt they could not speak out against unethical behavior based on high levels of uncertainty under the authoritarian leadership style (Zheng et al., 2019). However, the question remains whether leadership styles have influenced the corruption and discrimination that has been evident among law enforcement in the United States.

The respondents in this study indicated that they hardly interact with law enforcement leadership and that any interactions are often political rather than genuine interactions. They indicated that since there were minimal interactions between the public and police leadership, it might be difficult to improve the relationship between the police and minority communities, especially the Black community. Table 3 summarizes the codes and the subcodes for this theme.

Table 3

Theme 3 Codes and Subcodes

Theme Code *Subcode*	Files	References
Limited interactions—limited law enforcement leadership	12	38
limited leadership interactions	12	13
no interaction	4	4
political rather than genuine interactions	3	3
routine filing of a report	1	1
seeking mentorship	3	3
traumatic ordeal	1	2
making complaints	12	15
no-why bother	9	10
yes, with some resolution	2	4
yes-to no avail	1	1
perceptions police work more equitable	10	10
minimal work motivated by political pressure	4	4
much more needs to be done	4	4
work-efforts not in touch with the community	2	2

The participants indicated that the interactions between themselves and law enforcement leadership are almost nonexistent. As one participant stated, "I've never had interactions with law enforcement leadership, even though I've requested." Moreover, even though some indicated that they have interacted with police leadership, they do not believe these interactions were genuine as shown in the excerpt below:

Yes. I know the chief of police here in San Bernardino, but the relationship is political; it's not genuine from what I've received as of yet. It's not a genuine concern for the

community. It's not a genuine concern for what I can do to really change this community. It's political. I understand that is a seat; I have to do community service. I have to get into the community so that way the people feel safe. But as of now, I haven't experienced someone in law enforcement leadership with integrity to really keep their word and make sure that they're here for the community. I haven't experienced that personally.

Some participants, however, indicated that their interactions with law enforcement leadership could only be described as a traumatic ordeal. Participants felt that law enforcement officers generally lacked integrity. Their actions are often thought to be motivated by self-interest at the expense of minority community well-being, partly because police officers are not efficient when called to respond to a situation within communities of color, especially Black communities. Participants, especially in Black communities, claim that when police are called for an emergency, they will take longer, even up to 2 hours, to arrive at the scene. This is often different when they are called to a White neighborhood. As shown in the excerpt below, police failed to show basic empathy to a man trying to take his injured son to the emergency room by stopping him and requiring him to stay outside his car. While acknowledging the civilian's offense by having an unregistered car, standard practice would have allowed the sick person to access medical care before taking legal action.

> I've had one interaction at a checkpoint with, I believe, a Lieutenant or, or Sergeant, I forgot. He was like the head of the whole checkpoint, so he was out there. I was taking my son to the emergency room because he had a gash-like on his eye, and we didn't know if it damaged his eye or anything. And on my way to the emergency room, I'm across the street from the hospital and I got stopped at the checkpoint, and they pulled me over. Now, the car that we were driving, it wasn't registered, but it was an emergency. We

normally never really drove that car, and because of the emergency and we didn't have
any other transportation, it was probably like 12:00, like almost midnight. We got in the
car and took him down there to the emergency. And before even allowing us to get my
son to the hospital to see if everything was okay like he still had blood dripping from his
eye, it's like swollen shut.

And before they even, we're across the street before they even let me go, they made me
stand outside the car. I was staying out there for about an hour and a half with them. And
then they ended up taking my car. And so, I didn't even get my son to the hospital till like
1 AM.

Honestly, I feel like it was one of the worst experiences that I've ever had with the police
because of the situation, my son, just seeing him in that situation and having my whole
family in the car, my wife, who was pregnant, then I had my daughter and my son and
having him see that, and they're making me get out of the car and pulling me to the side
and telling me that they're taking the car, didn't even give me a chance to go back and sit
in the car with my family. I had to stay separated until the person who was picking us up
came, which ended up taking us about an hour. It was just a traumatic experience. It was
actually the last experience that I had with law enforcement. I feel like that did some
damage for me, definitely.

The nature of relationships between the police and communities of color, especially
Black communities, created distrust in law enforcement. When the researcher sought to find out
if the participants made complaints about their bad experiences when they interacted with law
enforcement, most of them did not see the reason for making complaints because they believed it
was unlikely that they would be acted upon. When asked if they have complained about their

experiences, some of the responses included "No, I never have. I never really thought it would change much, to be honest" and "Haven't made any complaints, appeals, or anything. That's probably why because I believe they won't do anything of beneficial toward it." CRT posits that the structures and the system are not designed to benefit the minorities, and this perhaps explains why law enforcement officers do not find it necessary to respond to an emergency in a Black community as quickly as they could have elsewhere, as shown in the excerpt below:

I grew up in a neighborhood where if you called the police for an emergency, say, someone broke into your home, and this is a true story, someone broke into my home. We called the police; they showed up 2 hours later and addressed us as if we were the criminals. And so, what trust is there in filing a complaint in a system that inherently sees you as a criminal?

Theme 4: Relationships are at the Center of Improving Fairness and Equity

Fairness and equity are important steps toward mending law enforcement's relationship with minority communities, especially the Black community. To improve fairness and equity in the relationship between law enforcement and the Black community, the participants recommended that there is a need to gain education and emotional intelligence. This would be key in de-escalation of situations when police interact with Black males. The participants also recommended having diversity in police departments and ensuring that leadership is accompanied by accountability. If law enforcement would be willing to listen to the Black community's issues, a synergistic relationship could be forged for the benefit of both parties. Law enforcement officers should also attempt to live in the communities they serve to understand these communities better. Understanding the communities better will improve the

relationship between the police and the community, dramatically reducing violent interactions.

Table 4 summarizes the codes and subcodes for this theme.

Table 4

Theme 4 Codes and Subcodes

Theme Code *Subcode*	Files	References
Relationships at the center of improving fairness and equity	12	27
gaining education and emotional intelligence skills	3	4
having higher standards	1	1
increasing diversity in departments	1	2
leadership leading with accountability	2	2
leadership truly listening to community voices	4	5
practicing introspection	1	1
relationships-living in the community they serve	9	12

To achieve fairness and equity in policing and minimize conflict with communities of color, the respondents in this study recommended that law enforcement take time to have casual interactions with the communities they serve. This will help in building relationships and understanding the people they serve better. There is also a need for bias training and cultural competency training to help law enforcement officers understand the people and their ways of doing things. This is shown in the excerpts below:

I spoke a little bit too before about making genuine efforts to build relationships as people who live in the community, going to different engagements when they're off duty, and really just being a part of the community genuinely. I think another effort is, partnering with social service organizations and gaining legitimate training and skills and

awareness and competence in engaging with people. And I use that word specifically, engaging with people, rather than ... because I think what a lot of law enforcement agents do instead is deal with people.

And for me to advocate for bias training and culture competency training before you can even put on a badge. You should understand what community you are policing.

According to the participants of this study, listening to the communities and getting to understand them can build relationships, and this can make law enforcement easier, according to the participants of this study. Having police officers from the communities they serve is also one of the ways of ensuring better relationships between the police and the communities, and this is demonstrated in the excerpts below:

Hearing more of the people. Actually, going out of their way to listen to what people have to say, not just from law enforcement, not just from a certain part of the community, but everyone, whether it be Black, Brown, White, whatever. Getting everybody's perception, getting everybody's opinion.

I think if they were actually in the community and not just, we're hosting an event or the city's hosting an event, and they're there shaking hands and kissing babies and stuff, that's great, but I don't think that's the best way to build a relationship. I know from my interaction with the community, in general, that's just the way actual relationship, actual interaction with the community outside of those tense moments where a 911 call is responded to and someone...

I think if law enforcement agencies take the time to really build relationships with their communities to help them know who they are as people who also live in that community,

that can be an effort that goes far in showing your investment in truly serving and

protecting and being part of your community.

I think maybe if they hired more police officers that are from that community. I think a

lot of times hiring police officers that are from, for example, in San Bernardino, if you

hire a police officer who never lived in San Bernardino, doesn't understand the people,

doesn't understand the demographic, what's aggressive to that police officer may be a

normal day in the normal resident of the city of San Bernardino. It's rough around here.

So sometimes, when they hire police officers and ship them to these areas, to these urban

areas and have them start their career, sometimes it's hard for them and hard for the

community because our normal here is not normal to them.

Research Question Responses

The research question in this study sought to investigate how Black males in San

Bernardino County, CA, describe their lived experiences with law enforcement as framed by the

tenets of CRT. The themes identified, which included (a) BWCs do little to increase security or

legitimacy, (b) centrality of bias in experiences negatively shaped regard of police, (c) limited

interactions—limited law enforcement leadership, and (d) relationships are at the center of

improving fairness and equity, all confirm CRT. The experiences of Black males during

interactions with law enforcement confirmed all five tenets of CRT. It was established that

racism appears everywhere and that implicit and explicit racial biases when police interact with

Black males, in particular, demonstrate the ubiquity of racism. It was also established that racism

is structural and systemic in the United States, which is why it is difficult to remedy racist

attitudes and actions by law enforcement. The ideology or concept of race is that it is socially

constructed. This study demonstrated that it is a human-invented classification system invented

to define physical differences between people. Race has, however, been a tool of oppression and violence against Black people in the United States.

Summary

The key themes identified from this research included (a) centrality of bias in experiences negatively shaped regard of police, (b) as tools, BWCs do little to increase security or legitimacy, (c) limited interactions—limited law enforcement leadership, and (d) relationships are at the center of improving fairness and equity. Concerning the theme of the centrality of bias, it was established that race is viewed as an inherent threat and that "being remembered" by the police could fuel the prejudice even further and increase the chances of a violent encounter. It was also established that police demonstrated hypervigilance when dealing with Black males. Black males often reported traumatizing experiences, especially during traffic stops, and there was little optimism about fairness when Black males interacted with the police. Concerning fairness and equity, the findings suggested a need to gain education and emotional intelligence to improve the relationships and the interactions between law enforcement and the Black community. The findings also suggested that having diversity in police departments and ensuring that leadership is accompanied by accountability effectively achieved fairness and equity in police interactions. The findings also suggested that law enforcement officers should attempt to live in the communities they serve to understand these communities better, as this will improve the relationship between the police and the community, dramatically reducing violent interactions.

Concerning BWCs, the findings indicated that BWCs are a good idea but fail in application. The officers' behavior does not seem to change, even when they know they are wearing body cameras. This is perhaps because there is generally limited accountability for what is captured on the cameras in the event of an incident. The number of officers wearing BWCs is

low, which means that they cannot be effective if only a few officers are using them. Generally, the findings showed a pessimistic view of the effectiveness of BWCs, which is partly because Black males believe that cameras are tools of the oppressor and are unlikely to work in the victim's interest.

Regarding the theme of limited interactions with law enforcement leadership, the findings suggested that Black males hardly interact with law enforcement leadership and that any interactions are often political rather than genuine. These minimal interactions between the public and police leadership make it difficult to improve the relationship between the police and minority communities, especially the Black community.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Overview

The purpose of this study was to explore the lived experiences of Black males regarding their interactions with police. An additional focus of this study was to understand how to improve the relations between Black males and the police in San Bernardino County, Southern California, from the perspectives of Black males. This chapter includes a summary of the findings, a discussion of the findings and the implications in light of the relevant literature and CRT, implications, an outline of the study delimitations and limitations, and recommendations for future research.

Summary of Findings

The main research question in this study was as follows: How do Black males in San Bernardino County, CA, describe their lived experiences with law enforcement as framed by the tenets of CRT? The key tenets of the CRT, as analyzed in this study, are (a) racism is ordinary and pervasive rather than an anomaly, (b) racism is difficult to remedy because claims of objectivity and neutrality camouflage the power and privilege of White people, (c) race is socially constructed and manipulated, (d) the experiential knowledge of racism by Black people (and by extension, POC) is legitimate, and (e) critical race theorists should seek social justice. Each of these tenets has been demonstrated in Black males' experiences as they interacted with law enforcement.

Regarding the first tenet of CRT, racism appears everywhere. The implicit and explicit racial biases when police interact with Black males, in particular, demonstrate the ubiquity of racism in the United States, especially when people of color are involved. For the second tenet of CRT, the findings have demonstrated that racism is structural and systemic in the United States,

and because racism has been weaved into law enforcement's otherwise standard procedures, it becomes difficult to remedy racist attitudes and actions by law enforcement. For the third tenet, race is socially constructed since it has been demonstrated in this study that it is a human-invented classification system and was invented to be used to define physical differences between people. However, as seen in the experience of Black males in the United States, race has been used as a tool of oppression and violence, which confirms the fourth tenet of CRT. Concerning the fifth tenet, CRT can play a critical role in creating public awareness on key issues such as housing segregation and criminal justice policy.

Discussion

This section discusses the findings of the analysis and examines how the findings relate to the current body of knowledge. According to Peeples (2020), the murders of Rayshard Brooks, George Floyd, and Breonna Taylor have changed how the public views law enforcement officers. This change in perception has also been linked to recent demonstrations to demand racial justice. Those protesting believe that racial justice is a fundamental step toward improving policing. At the same time, it is critical to acknowledge that police brutality has been a recurring theme in Southern California and the entire United States. However, victimization of different ethnic groups has resulted in an intersection between police violence and social injustices. This has resulted in individuals from the African American communities initiating different strategies to curb this challenge. Although some of the key police departments have adopted BWCs to improve the legitimacy and security of their interactions, the findings of this study have suggested this has hardly been effective. For members of African American communities, submission and compliance have been the main strategy to avoid encounters with the police. The goal is often to de-escalate the situation as fast as possible, although de-escalation has, in most

cases, also not been successful. Such limited success creates the need to examine the effectiveness of different measures in reducing cases of police brutality in the region. The discussion of the findings and comparison to findings from previous research is organized thematically.

Theme 1: Centrality of Bias in Experiences Negatively Shaped Regard of Police

Based on the analysis, the centrality of bias in experiences shaped the regard for police. Bias is a key issue during police interactions, which has shaped the inherent threat of bias based on race. Individuals claimed that a large percentage of discrimination was due to the victim's skin color. Participants claim that systemic racism and bias affected Black men disproportionately. In agreement with these findings, Smith and Alpert (2007) claimed that police treat members of a particular minority group differently than Caucasians in discretionary incidences that involve the invocation of police authority. Hispanics and Blacks hold the largest percentage of those involved in stops compared to the selected population of such groups. Evidence suggests that once stopped, Hispanics and Blacks are more likely than any other group to be searched or arrested or, at times, more likely to be handled with excessive force or cited due to the stop. Differential treatment of minorities by the police is common across states and law enforcement departments of different sizes and types. Such disparities are attributed to the higher offending rates among Hispanics and Blacks, leading to increased stop, search, and arrest. These groups commit disproportionately more crimes or at least crimes recorded in the national crime data.

However, during stops, police officers remain hypervigilant and may not provide a reason for the stop. Participants often remain cautious and attempt to de-escalate encounters even when they should not have been pulled over. Despite their rights, Black males are not expected to

exercise them, which might heighten the situation, leading to excessive use of force. Black males are often racially profiled and perceived as a threat upon their interaction with law enforcement, which leads to searching to find something to incriminate them. The lack of fairness and harsh treatment translates to trauma among the affected individuals. This might affect the psychological and overall well-being of the wrongly accused.

Theme 2: Body-Worn Cameras and Legitimacy

Analyses show that BWCs as tools do little to enhance security or legitimacy, as they have failed to address the problem of increasing awareness of violence and corruption. Findings indicate that BWCs have less impact on how policing cameras are perceived as oppressors' tools. Cameras do not enhance accountability, as they do not change the officer's behavior when using BWCs to shape the narrative power. Thus, instead of reinforcing protection through increased accountability, trust, and safety, encounters with BWCs have led to reduced awareness. In general, BWCs are associated with a small measure of accountability as the officers can turn it off at any time when committing certain acts. Many participants think BWCs are a good idea that has failed in practice, as they are not doing what they are intended to do and not stopping brutal acts from happening.

In contrast, Wasserman's (2017) study findings showed that BWCs improve legitimacy by enhancing police effectiveness in crime management and the ability of a department to hold offenders accountable. BWCs reduce the use of excessive force by police officers on civilians. In agreement with this finding, Henstock and Ariel (2017) indicated a 50% reduction in the use of excessive force when BWCs are present compared to when they are absent. These tools ensure the accuracy of evidence, as information collected provides an objective account of the

incidences captured in real time, making it more reliable in resolving cases than recording victim or witness injuries or statements.

The findings of the current study, however, indicate that BWCs have not improved the interaction between police and Black males. In line with the current study, some past studies found that has BWCs have less impact on police accountability and legitimacy. Braga et al. (2018) argued that high enforcement activities might undermine the legitimacy of police if civilians see increased arrests and citations harming their community. Civilians' appraisal of police significantly impacted the policing strategies employed in their communities. Policing styles related to high investigative stops, misdemeanor arrests, and criminal summonses across jurisdictions have been associated with racial disparities (Pierson et al., 2020). They are believed to increase the incarceration of young Black males. In the highly vulnerable communities, high enforcement activities associated with the employment of BWCs are likely to minimize bias by the police, creating reduced complaints and use of excessive force (Miller & Toliver, 2014; Nowacki & Willits, 2018).

According to Maskaly et al. (2017), the primary use of BWCs was to enhance the security and legitimacy of police action. Despite the set objectives, the application of BWCs has yet to achieve that. Specifically, the analysis shows that BWCs do not improve security or enhance the legitimacy of policing. This finding contradicts the analysis provided by Maskaly et al. (2017), who found most police officers have supported the adoption of BWCs as security tools. This support stems from the practical application in improving police encounters with civilians. At the same time, the provided BWCs could easily improve policing conduct. While Maskaly et al. (2017) provided critical insights into the adoption of BWCs by law enforcement, it does not account for civilian perceptions and experiences with law enforcement officers.

Additionally, the analysis fails to account for underlying ethnicity issues when analyzing police encounters and the application of BWCs.

Smykla et al. (2018) examined the role of BWCs from a leadership perspective. In this case, the authors argued that leadership attitudes are critical in determining the application of BWCs in law enforcement. The perceptual findings show that BWCs are likely to affect the action of police officers in different situations. Specifically, their decision to use force in encounters will be limited unless there is a legitimate danger. This implies that the continuous application of BWCs is likely to improve the legitimacy of the data provided by these cameras. This analysis contrasts with the finding that BWCs do not improve the legitimacy of police actions. This is due to the belief that it fails to address the root problems of police legitimacy and offers little accountability. This observation was supported by Graham et al.'s (2020) analysis, which showed that leaders often fail to acknowledge the impacts of police brutality. This is mainly indicated by their reporting mechanism, where resulting deaths from police brutality are reported as "unknown" (Graham et al., 2020). Therefore, it is essential to devise strategies that will enhance the legitimacy and effectiveness of BWCs.

The lack of legitimacy concerning BWCs can be linked to several factors, for instance, poor interaction and lack of public knowledge. However, those are not the only themes in analyzing ethical experiences in relation to law enforcement. The analysis showed that biases in experiences have significantly shaped the perception of the police. Specifically, the results showed that racial biases inherently threaten this perception. At the same time, parental warnings, racial profiling, and traumatizing experiences form a significant bias that affects the reputation of police officers. This analysis aligns with that of the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (2018), which acknowledged that inherent racial biases

create disparities in proactive policing. This is primarily aided by increased traumatic experiences, such as police shootings and the use of excessive force, when dealing with POC. The situational risk factor associated with racially biased behavior also plays a key role in influencing the experiences of African Americans with law enforcement (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2018).

However, the findings reported here contradict those of Son et al. (1998), who found that police conduct and their perception of misconduct may vary across situations. However, while the variation exists, it cannot be fully linked to ethnicity. Contrarily, police officers perceive all forms of misconduct as serious regardless of ethnicity. Evidence shows that police attitudes and perceptions are often guided by underlying factors, such as suspect demeanor. In the case of African American males, they have a tendency to be uncooperative, which is likely to warrant more force. Despite this observation, Son et al. acknowledged the role of past experiences in shaping a civilian's demeanor. A suspect or otherwise, African American people do not trust law enforcement officers due to past expertness. Such mistrust levels tend to create some form of resistance, especially when there is legitimate detention, but this does not warrant excessive force when interacting with a civilian. Therefore, Son et al. recommended the need to improve the interaction and convince African American males that they are not racially biased. At the same time, it is critical to devise a strict code of conduct that eliminates the use of excessive force when dealing with unarmed civilians, regardless of their ethnicity.

Leadership is a key component in establishing trust between civilians and law enforcement agencies. Some law enforcement agencies have adopted law enforcement officer leadership while increasing their interaction. However, this is yet to be fully adopted by the police in Southern California. Evidence shows that their interaction with leadership and civilians

is often within political contexts, despite some genuine concerns. At the same time, African Americans file few complaints, although some often file complaints with some resolution. The data shows that limited leadership interaction is often directed toward mentorship and traumatic ordeals. Wu (2021) concurred with this analysis by stating police violence against African American males cannot be classified as misconduct or bias but envelopes a wider range of factors, including limited interaction with leadership. This limitation has existed for decades; hence, Wu (2021) linked police violence to failed leadership within law enforcement.

As African American males find ways to avoid interaction with the police, it is critical to acknowledge the sensitivity of the subject, which stems from the involvement of ethnicity and various forms of social injustices. At the same time, the escalation underlies the relationship between law enforcement and civilians. This calls for stakeholders to make efforts to mend the relationship by improving equity and fairness. The analysis highlights numerous strategies that are likely to help improve this relationship. These stages include gaining education and emotional intelligence, setting standards for law enforcers, creating accountability and leadership, and developing relationships within the community. Several studies have also recommended these strategies. For instance, Baylis (2022) acknowledged the role of underlying mental health issues in increasing police violence. As a result, the author recommended developing and implementing regular psychiatric evaluations for all officers to ensure their emotional stability. Moreover, these evaluations should be accompanied by counseling and therapy to ensure offices fully understand their state of mental health and find mechanisms to enhance their emotional stability (Baylis, 2022).

Although the recommendations provided by Baylis (2022) cannot fully solve the challenge of excessive force against African American citizens in the United States, they are a

step in the right direction. Greater effort is needed to unite law enforcement and the communities they serve. According to Kent (2015), it is critical to recognize the need for and importance of community–police interaction. This interaction should be based on mutual benefit and understanding of different needs. This approach may require training officers to be comfortable with residents of varying racial backgrounds. At the same time, it is vital to reinforce leadership within the law enforcement system. Specifically, it is important to adopt a proactive approach to policing. The approach should focus on serving communities instead of focusing on political agendas. Further, it is important for law enforcers to ensure individuals' safety and adhere to the set standards and protocols. This strategy requires law enforcement to ensure the proper filing of reports, especially those that concern the use of excessive force. Proper reporting of incidents is also a crucial step toward improved access to social justice (Kent, 2015).

Theme 3: Limited Interactions with Law Enforcement Leadership

Participants indicated having limited leadership interactions with the police. They reported having little to no interaction with law enforcement, even in their requested cases. In the cases where they had interactions, findings show that the relationship was purely political rather than genuine. Law enforcement officers are perceived to lack integrity, and their actions are often thought to be motivated by self-interest at the expense of community well-being. Moreover, police officers are not efficient when called in case of an occurrence (First et al., 2020). Participants, especially in Black communities, claim that when police are called for an emergency, they will take longer, even up to 2 hours, to arrive at the scene. As such, they see no need to call them and have lost trust in the system, which inherently perceives them as criminals. This is consistent with the findings of Trinkner et al. (2019). Law enforcement actions are less equitable and often embrace authoritarian leadership that involves maintaining control while

neglecting the key factors, such as citizens' decision-making. For decades, police officers

maintained clear boundaries that created distance between them and Black communities to

maintain absolute power. Such leadership interactions have a negative impact on how Black

males conduct themselves due to feelings of distrust, anxiety, anger, uncertainty, and fear (Oh et

al., 2017). Consistently, such a leadership style makes it more difficult for officers to manage

their emotions. As a result, they may exhibit abusive behaviors at the workplace, such as

excessive use of power.

Evidence suggests that police departments use the command-and-control structure

approach, where subordinates get punished when they fail to obey leaders (Du et al., 2020). Such

a style has generated a certain culture within law enforcement departments and defines the

behavior and interactions of the officers with the community. Officers employ authoritarian

leadership in the field, where police shoot or use excessive force against young minority males

when they feel threatened or not respected. Despite being limited, such interactions are adversely

related to citizens raising their voices about unethical and unlawful issues in the workplace.

Officers cannot vocalize such concerns due to higher uncertainty levels under these leadership

interactions. As such, trust among officers and citizens is reduced, while mistrust levels are

increased due to the perception of poor treatment of the public by the law enforcement officers

(Du et al., 2020). Thus, much needs to be done to minimize the consequences of authoritarian

interactions and improve the efficiency of the policing force. Placement of officers that

understand the community culture and individuals might reduce prejudice as the officers relate

with people. Moreover, having systematic intentionality can provide an international way of

being accountable. Similarly, prior studies have shown that accountability can be achieved

through transformational leadership interactions, which encourage innovation, officer

commitment, and better relations with the community (Feldman, 2019). The approach is successful in changing police culture and improving the commitment of officers.

Theme 4: Relationships are at the Center of Improving Fairness and Equity

Relationships are integral in improving and ensuring fairness and equity during the encounter between law enforcement officers and young Black males. Education and emotional intelligence are central to establishing critical connections between officers and individuals and eliminating the issue of bias. Additionally, partnering with social service organizations and acquiring skills, knowledge, awareness, and competence in relating to others influences the strength of relationships. The results of this study revealed that advocating for bias training and cultural competency training prior to being deployed into the field will positively impact the officer's decision-making and treatment of people from different ethnicities. Moreover, adopting transformational leadership, which encourages listening to the voices of the community, will minimize cases of prejudice and racism. Including and understanding everyone's perceptions, not only from a law enforcement perspective, will promote peace and positive relationships in the community. Accordingly, hiring more police officers from the community would be beneficial, as they understand the community and individuals well.

Perceptions of Law Enforcement

Rawlinson's (2016) phenomenological explored a study group composed of nine Black American males to understand the perception and their experiences with local law enforcement agents and campus police at two universities in Southern California. The researcher used semistructured interviews in combination with photos for data collection. Results from data analysis indicated similar perceptions by participants of the law enforcement agents and officers who harassed, racially profiled, and stereotyped them regardless of their race or gender identities.

This study also indicated that Black males' deaths caused by police officers through excessive force changed the attitudes of the participants toward the local police in Southern California. Most of the college student participants in the study claimed that being in college had no relation to their life experiences with the police, with their race, class, gender, and religion affecting their encounters adversely. The study group suggested that to strengthen the relationship between the police and Black educated men, the justice system and higher education systems needed stronger accountability concerning biased policing. The researchers also received recommendations that student affairs executives and counselors needed to conduct regular assessments of students' opinions of campus and local police who interacted with college and university students and finally offer Black men advocacy and programs on their civic rights.

According to Hall (2016), large-scale turmoil was brought about by a series of publicized brutal police killings of unarmed African American males in the United States. Hall used media reports of contextualized police brutalities to understand the result of interaction between Black males and police officers in Southern California. Focus groups with 36 Black male students, including from the University of California, identified two themes. First, anti-Black stereotyping and marginality among students cause high surveillance and control among the Black males. Second, these students also reported experiencing racial aggression with higher surveillance by the community and local law enforcement authorities. Study focus groups reported psychological stress in an attempt to battle the racism effects, including feelings of hopelessness, fear, anxiety, and frustration when dealing with police officers. Overall, Hall's study showed that this hostility was higher among African American male students as compared to other races.

Posttraumatic Stress Induced by Police of Shooting Unarmed Black Males

Lipscomb et al. (2019) conducted a phenomenological research study to explore the experiences of Black males in Southern California who either heard, read, or witnessed the fatal shooting of Stephon Clark, a Black male, by the state police department. This study employed in-depth interviews of 62 Black males to understand their grief and experiences on the matter. Study results showed that 95% of the respondents reported having experienced posttraumatic stress symptoms from witnessing, reading, or hearing of the fatal shooting, fearing for their own lives, and being hypervigilant. The researchers categorized the respondents' reactions into emotional feelings of sadness and anger, psychophysiological signs and symptoms of avoidance, hypervigilant and public dissociation, and injustice against Black males being targets. These findings suggested that the state of Southern California should engulf in cultural sensitivity practices interventions to understand and access the secondary trauma experienced by Black men on hearing or witnessing other traumatic events involving Black males and state police.

How do Black Males Cope with Invisibility?

Dowden (2014) conducted a phenomenological study to explore Black males' experiences with racism and understand how these Black African American males coped with invisibility experiences in Southern California. The researcher based their study on a classical novel named *Invisible Man*—a story about a Black male who explored the philosophical and psychological world to escape from his invisibility in Southern California. This novel demonstrated that racism and police brutality could cause major harm to the mental well-being of Black males living in America.

Franklin (1999) defined invisibility as a struggle from inside, someone feeling that their talents, abilities, and worth are not being recognized or valued because of racism and prejudice.

Findings from Franklin's study revealed similar experiences among Black men living in Southern California. This causes African American males to struggle to fight the skepticism experienced mainly by police departments, giving them some sense of self and visibility. The researcher highlighted that this process of seeking validation, dignity, and respect from the law enforcers without success might cause identity erosion—identity confusion, alienation, and invisibility among the Black males. Franklin concluded by stating Black males must be cautious when seeking validation, as it could be disastrous and cause greater distress when confronting the police departments, especially when the validation itself is disaffirming and dehumanizing. Parham (1999) warned that African Americans living in Southern California might turn to high-risk behaviors when the police do not meet personal affirmations and sense of self due to racism.

Implications

Theoretical Implications

Evidence obtained from this study has shown that racism is deeply ingrained in American society, and this problem is especially evident when Black males interact with law enforcement. CRT is a much-debated topic in the United States. However, in this case, the question was whether the findings of the current study support the guiding theory. The analysis of primary data collected as the experiences of Black males in the hands of the police confirmed all the tenets of CRT, and the implications of this are that the readers of this study could change their personal beliefs and transfer this into their respective ecosystems. Understanding the tenets of CRT based on the findings of this study is key to learning and understanding privilege, racism, and the various inequalities and discrimination that Black males face in American society. Black males are recipients of racist behavior in most cases, and for the police officers, the subtle forms of racism that they perpetuate could be reduced significantly as they become more aware of the

recipients of racist actions. Reading the findings of this study, especially by the police officers, could demonstrate to them that CRT tenets are real, and this could be an important first step in changing some personal beliefs about CRT, ultimately eliminating both subtle and evident forms of racism.

Practical Implications

Accepting or rejecting CRT could have some consequences in the United States. The current study demonstrates that CRT tenets have been supported based on the experiences of Black males in the United States. The current study also reveals several implications for the Black community and the police force or law enforcement.

Implications for the Black Community

The findings of this study suggested that Black males are often victims of explicit and implicit biases against them, and as such, have to be aware that their interaction with law enforcement will likely be characterized by these biases. The findings of this study inform Black males that recent deaths that have occurred after the interaction with law enforcement could have been a consequence of the biases that law enforcement already hold against the Black community. This suggests that encounters of Black males with law enforcement are generally dangerous because of an existing bias. The consequence of this is excessive force and the possibility of fatalities. The current study recommends that the Black community must lobby policymakers to access valid and reliable data, especially data that disaggregates homicides by police across the region. More reliable and comprehensive data about killings by police would be fundamental in making policy-oriented decisions, especially on how to safeguard Black communities more equitably. This will be key in preventing mental as well as physical trauma among Black communities, especially Black males.

Policy Implications

A large amount of literature, including the findings of this study, indicate that police are hypervigilant and are likely to treat Black males as a threat. Therefore, policymakers must consider this when making police regulations and reforms. Based on the findings of this study, stop-and-frisk laws should be repealed. The reevaluation of such laws will ensure that interactions between Black males and law enforcement are reduced significantly, and by extension, unnecessary shootings will be reduced.

Implications for Law Enforcement

Police officers must be made aware of existing biases against Black males and how systemic and structural racism has formed the basis upon which they interact with Black males before the situation can be improved. Although the findings of this study suggested that BWCs are generally not effective in improving the interactions between Black males and the police, one of the main reasons was that few police officers actually wore BWCs. This study, therefore, recommends that police should be mandated to use and not turn off BWCs as a means of documenting all incidents with the general public. If every police officer wore BWCs, more audio and video of violent incidents would be captured, thereby increasing accountability and prosecution.

Delimitations and Limitations

The researcher ensured that all the participants of this study were of the majority age (18 years and above) and consented to participate in the study. All the participants confirmed they had no mental health issues that would affect their ability to provide voluntary information based on their lived experiences. One of the key limitations of this study is that the sample included only Black males from one region. A more generalizable sample could include different races

across the United States. Since the study is only delimited to Black males in San Bernardino County, California, the results are only generalizable to Black males in this area. The interview process also did not involve many follow-up questions. Given that follow-up questions provide clarifications and extra information, the researcher possibly missed key information regarding Black males' interactions with police. Last, the researcher had limited access to Black males who were willing to participate in the study due to the sensitive nature of the topic. This also could have impacted the findings of the study.

Recommendations for Future Research

The current study recommends that future research on this topic obtain more inclusive samples. This means that, in addition to Black males, the samples should include law enforcement officers to understand their experiences. The conclusion to accept or reject CRT can then be made based on comprehensive findings from an inclusive sample, even though the police are viewed as oppressors in these interactions. Future research should especially include an exploration of the experiences of Black males with police in the states of Texas and Florida given the high rates of police brutality and death of Black men at the hands of the police in these regions.

Future research should also focus on the interactions between police and other minorities in the United States apart from Black males. With more inclusive samples, it would be possible to test the tenets of CRT to determine whether these tenets are widely supported by the data that is collected. It would also be beneficial to explore the effects of police bias on different populations, as these findings could further assist with informing police policy and practice.

Summary

This study sought to explore the experiences of Black males in San Bernardino County, California with police. A phenomenological study was undertaken and qualitative data were collected and analyzed. The results indicate that CRT can be used to understand the experiences of Black males in the United States and highlights the challenges they face when interacting with police.

The findings present various implications. One of the implications is the existence of inherent bias when Black males interact with law enforcement. Often, race is viewed as a threat and results in higher stops, arrests, brutality, and deaths by police against minorities. Tentatively, some of the deaths experienced following interactions with law enforcement could be prevented by recognizing and addressing racial bias.

Another interesting implication is the existence of systematic and structural bias based on the suggestions of CRT. The findings of the study indicate that racial bias is built into policing and the criminal justice system as a whole. Police departments on a national scale need to take responsibility for the culture they have created and adopt an effective leadership style that cultivates a new generation of motivated and committed officers to begin to address issues such as racial profiling and excessive use of force.

This study also examined the use of BWCs as a tool to increase accountability and provide objective evidence of police encounters. The participants expressed that although cameras are good in theory, they fail in practice because not all police officers wear them in the field. This issue exists even though higher use of BWCs would translate into extensive recordings that could lead to a higher number of arrests and prosecutions of the perpetrators, thereby benefitting the efforts of the police department. Further uptake of BWCs could increase

officer accountability as well as provide real-time evidence involving incidences of excessive

force involving the police. Such accountability would be the first step in improving the

relationships between law enforcement officers and members of the communities they serve,

especially communities of color and Black males in particular.

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APPENDIX A

IRB Approval Letter

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY.
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

December 10, 2021

Barbara Ray
Eva Johnson

Re: IRB Approval –IRB–FY21–22–297 Exploring African American Males Experiences With Police In Southern California: A Phenomenological Study

Dear Barbara Ray, Eva Johnson,

We are pleased to inform you that your study has been approved by the Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB). This approval is extended to you for one year from the following date: December 10, 2021. If you need to make changes to the methodology as it pertains to human subjects, you must submit a modification to the IRB. Modifications can be completed through your Cayuse IRB account.

Your study falls under the expedited review category (45 CFR 46.110), which is applicable to specific, minimal risk studies and minor changes to approved studies for the following reason(s):

7. Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.

Your stamped consent form and final versions of your study documents can be found under the Attachments tab within the Submission Details section of your study on Cayuse IRB. Your stamped consent form should be copied and used to gain the consent of your research participants. If you plan to provide your consent information electronically, the contents of the attached consent document should be made available without alteration.

Thank you for your cooperation with the IRB, and we wish you well with your research project.

Sincerely,

G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP
Administrative Chair of Institutional Research
Research Ethics Office

APPENDIX B

Recruitment Flyer

Research Participants Needed

Liberty University IRB – 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515

APPENDIX C

Informed Consent

Title of the Project: Exploring African American Males Experiences with Police in Southern
California: A Phenomenological Study
Principal Investigator: Barbara Ray, Ph.D. student at Liberty University

Invitation to be Part of a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study. To participate, you must be 18 to 45 years old, an African American male, reside in San Bernardino County, Southern California, and willing to discuss your experiences and perceptions of police legitimacy and approaches to improve relationships between police and African American males. Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this research.

What is the study about and why is it being done?

The purpose of the study is to address police legitimacy as perceived by African American males in Southern California.

What will happen if you take part in this study?

If you agree to be in this study, I will ask you to do the following things:
1. Participate in an audio-recorded, semistructured Zoom interview session (60-90 minutes) 2. Validate your transcribed interview responses (30 minutes)

How could you or others benefit from this study?

Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study.

Benefits to society include providing an understanding on police legitimacy as perceived by African American males in Southern California.

What risks might you experience from being in this study?

The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

How will personal information be protected?

The records of this study will be kept private. Published reports will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records. Data collected from you may be shared for use in future research studies or with other researchers. If data collected from you is shared, any information that could identify you, if applicable, will be removed before the data is shared.

• Participant responses will be kept confidential through the use of pseudonyms. Interviews will be conducted in a private location where others will not easily overhear the conversation.

• Data will be stored on a password-locked computer and may be used in future presentations. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted.

• Interviews will be audio-recorded and transcribed. Recordings will be stored on a password-locked computer for three years and then erased. Only the researcher will have access to these recordings.

Is study participation voluntary?

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

What should you do if you decide to withdraw from the study?

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study.

Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?

The researcher conducting this study is Barbara Ray. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact her at *****You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, Eva Johnson, at *******.

Whom do you contact if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at irb@liberty.edu.

Disclaimer: The Institutional Review Board (IRB) is tasked with ensuring that human subjects research will be conducted in an ethical manner as defined and required by federal regulations. The topics covered and viewpoints expressed or alluded to by student and faculty researchers are those of the researchers and do not necessarily reflect the official policies or positions of Liberty University.

Your Consent

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The researcher will keep a copy with the study records. If you have any questions about the study after you sign this document, you can contact the study team using the information provided above.

I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

☐ The researcher has my permission to audio-record me as part of my participation in this study.

_____

Printed Subject Name   Signature & Date

APPENDIX D

Audit Trail of Codes

Name	Description	Files	References
As tools BWCs do little to increase security or legitimacy		12	65
BWCs do not increase police legitimacy		12	14
a good idea that fails in application		4	4
BWCs don't address root of problem		3	3
increases awareness of violence and corruption		1	2
small measure of accountability		5	5
BWCs have little influence perception of policing		12	39
cameras as tools of the oppressor		3	3
no cameras means even less accountability		11	11
no impact-not experienced		2	2
officer behavior doesn't change		3	3
officers using as tool to shaping narrative		2	3

Name	Description	Files	References
power over use-turning off		2	2
question of accountability remains		3	4
supposed to offer protection through accountability		3	4
trust and safety not increased		7	7
minimal encounters with BWCs		12	12
low awareness of BWCs		2	2
never seen		3	3
small percentage of encounters		5	5
unsure what to look for - if active		2	2
Centrality of bias in experiences negatively shaped regard of police		12	95
bias central in police interactions		12	52
being remembered not a good thing		1	1
experience changing over time		1	1
experiencing bias-race as inherent threat		8	10

Name	Description	Files	References
hypervigilance-giving no excuse		5	7
looking for problems		5	7
observing inequal treatment		3	3
overwhelming numbers		1	1
parental warnings		2	2
positive experiences		2	2
racial profiling		5	8
traffic stops		3	3
traumatizing experiences		5	7
encounter influence on perceptions		10	14
cultural ignorance		1	1
failure to serve and protect		3	4
forced awareness of own behavior		1	1
more threat to sons		1	1
no matter what's said its wrong		1	1
positive engagement as outlier		2	2

Name	Description	Files	References
pervasive anxiety		3	3
types of people drawn to law enforcement		1	1
fairness is reassuring but not expected		12	29
fairness doesn't increase engagement		1	1
fairness through de-escalation		2	2
fairness uncommon-not expected		4	5
just doing their job		2	2
reassured by fair treatment		6	6
recognized authority		1	1
unreliable odds		7	12
Limited interactions–limited law enforcement officer leadership		12	38
limited leadership interactions		12	13
no interaction		4	4
political rather than genuine interactions		3	3
routine filing of report		1	1

Name	Description	Files	References
seeking mentorship		3	3
traumatic ordeal		1	2
making complaints		12	15
no-why bother		9	10
yes with some resolution		2	4
yes-to no avail		1	1
perceptions police work more equitable		10	10
minimal work motivated by political pressure		4	4
much more needs to be done		4	4
work-efforts not in touch with community		2	2
Relationships at the center of improving fairness and equity		12	27
gaining education and emotional intelligence skills		3	4
having higher standards		1	1
increasing diversity in departments		1	2
leadership leading with accountability		2	2

Name	Description	Files	References
leadership truly listening to community voices		4	5
practicing introspection		1	1
relationships-living in the community they serve		9	12