2020

Living With Killing: The Lived Experiences of Young Black Men in South Chicago

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Walden University
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Abstract

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MPH, Saint Xavier University, 2008

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Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

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Abstract

Homicide is a serious public health crisis in the United States, and it has long-term health, psychological, economic, and social implications to society, including disproportionately impacting one group. Among young African American males between the ages 15–24, homicide is the leading cause of death,. Much has been written about this phenomenon, but the voices of the young men directly involved are rarely heard. The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to investigate youth violence and homicide through the lens of male African Americans aged 18-24 living in one low-income community in Chicago, with the objective of understanding why Black male youth and young men kill other young Black males. The socioecological model shaped the framework for this study. In-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted with a small sample of 5 participants and analyzed using Colaizzi's methods. The young men in this study were raised in unstable, mostly single-parent homes, and all grew up in a traumatizing culture of poverty and violence. They expressed feeling a lack of safety in their world, distressing educational experiences, and an early obligation to provide for their families. Since work opportunities are few, all were drawn into drug trafficking - the 'Hustle' - where strict codes of masculinity and 'respect' are observed and are often the immediate causes of gun violence. Given that the findings in this study are not immutable, a public health approach would likely require collaboration between schools, social service, and community health organizations to address the complex web of factors that lend support to this violence.

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my two sons, Thomas III and Cody Barnes, and my husband, Thomas Barnes, Jr. Thank you all for loving and supporting me, for lifting me when I was down, both physically and mentally. Your lives have inspired and enriched mine in ways that words cannot explain. I am encouraged by the hard work, dedication, and commitment that you all show every day in school, sports, work, fitness and being in service to others. Your commitments to excellence have served in large part as my motivation which lends to the framework for completing this dissertation. I love each of you more than you could ever know, and I dedicate this dissertation and my life's work to the three of you, the loves of my life, Thomas Jr., Thomas III and Cody Barnes.

Acknowledgments

Thank you to Dr. Michael Schwab, my dissertation chair. I cannot express my gratitude for the patience that you have shown and for your unwavering support. If I had a *thousand* tongues, I could not adequately express my appreciation for your guidance and wise counsel. I hope to make you proud because I am honored to have been your student. Likewise, thank you, Dr. Jacquie Fraser for calling me to high standards while being an excellent intellectual capital resource and a foundation of unconditional support.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Over the past few decades, there has been an increasingly prevalent homicide crisis in the United States, particularly among inner-city African American (AA) youth killing other Black youth (Holland et al., 2019; Kann et al., 2015; Teplin et al., 2015). Given the heightened public concern with the issue of AA youth homicide, and the increasingly easy ways in which juveniles can access firearms, this study draws on criminology and public health to investigate the main correlates that give rise to youth killing other youth. According to the American Public Health Association (2017), there is inadequate research on which to build evidence-based policies related to firearm-related morbidity and mortality. My research is designed to offer the perspective of AA youth on the contributing factors and the antecedents that lead to violent crime up to homicide. It is hoped that this increased understanding will lead to effective new policies and prevention techniques that will mitigate lethal violence among AA male youth, thereby giving rise to healthier communities. In the proposed study, my aim is to investigate youth homicide through the lenses of male AAs aged 18-24 living in Chicago's West Garfield Park community who are on probation resulting from a violence-related crime. In this chapter, I will briefly summarize the literature on homicide including the trends on the national and city-wide levels, youth homicide as a social, economic, and psychological problem and the significant role public health plays in addressing this phenomenon. Following this account is a description of the purpose of the proposed study, my theoretical framework, and other details of this work.

Background

Violence among youth is a complex issue. Among students of homicide, the genesis of violent behavior is often attributed to the personal experiences of the offenders (Baglivio, et al., 2016; Jennings & Reingle, 2012; Malvaso, Delfabbro, & Day, 2015; Singh & Ghandour, 2012). Youth involved in violent activities may have experienced harmful violent behaviors in several ways including: witnessing violence, being an offender, or being the victim of violence (Baglivio eta al., 2016; Malvaso, 2015). These experiences can happen very frequently and vary in violence intensity, from bullying which causes psychological or physical harm to homicide, the worst form of violence (Connell, Morris & Piquero, 2016; Smith, 2002).

Criminologists acknowledge that homicide is not always the intended result of a violent incident (Zeoli, Grady, Pizzaro & Melde, 2015). The only difference between an aggravated assault and a homicide may be the outcome of the violent act, which may be beyond the combatants' control (Jennings, Piquero, & Reingle, 2012). Violent acts range from simple assault, to aggravated assault, to homicide, thereby placing violent behavior on a progressive scale that warrants continuous investigation at each stage (APHA, 2015; Smith, 2002).

One area of public concern remains the disproportionate rates of criminal victimization and homicide offending in the United States. Decades of research have constantly upheld that adolescents and young adults exhibit higher rates for the perpetration of murders and becoming victims of it, than the rest of the U.S. population (CDC, 2015; Farrington, Loeber, Stallings, & Hornish, 2012; McCall, Land, Dollar, &

Parker, 2013; Walsh, 2015). Additionally, AA youth have the highest mortality rates due to homicide than any other American racial or ethnic group (APHA, 2019; CDC, 2017; Sheats, Irving, Mercy, Simon, Crosby, et al., 2018). This homicide mortality gap between AAs and their White counterparts has not only remained relatively stable over the last few decades, it has widened (Bloom, 2015, CDC, 2018). Some scholars attribute the widening of this gap to the fact that AA communities are encumbered with a level of social and economic inequality that is known to produce colossal disadvantages that contribute to the violence in those communities (Bloom 2015; Light & Turner, 2016). This inequality also contributes to the difference in youth homicide rates between Black and White communities, thus there is little overlap in the nature and in the number of homicide occurrences amongst the two (Black/White) racial groups (Light & Turner, 2016; Stansfield, 2017; Ulmer & Harris, 2013).

Gang membership is another contributing factor to youth homicide, though the conditions under which this relation holds need further clarification (Braga, Hureau & Papachristos, 2014). To understand street gangs and the extent to which involvement in these gangs leads to fatal violence, the perspective of gang members themselves is needed (Braga, et al., 2014; Zeoli, Grady, Pizarro, & Melde, 2015). Though there are myriad studies that shed light on the risk factors for homicide (Baily, Krieger, Agenor, Graves, Linos & Basset, 2017; Brown , 2008; Ferguson & Meehan, 2010; Howell, 2009; Mikulincer, 2011; O'Brien, Dafferen, Chu & Thomas; 2013; O'Dea, Chalman, Castro Bueno & Saucier, 2018;), there is a dearth of information that explains the dynamic nature of homicide in disadvantaged communities from the perspectives of the those who

have witnessed homicide up close (Zeoli et al., 2015). Instead, in much of the existing work, homicide is investigated exclusively from the perspective of a criminologist and the focus is on the desired outcome (arresting the perpetrator) rather than the process or progression of circumstances on both micro and macro levels that led to murder (Barnes, 2014; Carson & Gollinelli, 2013; Cooper & Smith, 2008; Smiley & Fakunle, 2016). Though arrests are an important part of the process, a public health approach would inquire into the behavioral and environmental factors that precipitate the killing, such as identifying the at-risk populations, identifying behavioral and environmental trends, and crafting primary and secondary prevention efforts accordingly (Branas, et al., 2017).

Other researchers have taken this approach. The seminal work of Huesmann (2001) proposed that identifying homicide risk factors is an important part of the multipronged approach necessary to decrease homicides, and several researchers who study this area have taken this public health approach (Berthelot, Brown, Thomas, & Burgason, 2016; Brookmeyer & Henrich, 2006; Farrington, Loeber, & Berg, 2012; Farrington, Loeber, Stallings, & Homish, 2012). However, he goes on to elucidate that research aimed at disrupting youth violence must also interrupt the changes in cognition and emotion that permit individuals to accept the perpetration of fatal violence as an alternative to conflict resolution. For these reasons, it has been suggested that future homicide research incorporate a psychological approach into the strategy of inquiry (Forsythe & Gaffney, 2012; Huesmann, 2011). In the proposed study, I plan to advance this suggestion by taking a more directly focused approach. I will explore the perceptions and lived experiences of young AA men most closely involved with violence up to and

including homicide. I will examine the impetus to kill as perceived through the lenses of the population most impacted by it, AA male youth aged 18-24. Involving those most closely involved in a problem is a standard practice in public health, and the experience of young Black men will hopefully contribute to understanding what has become an epidemic of zenith proportion, particularly within the inner city of Chicago. One contributing factor to this phenomenon is the easy availability of guns. According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics (2013), between the years 1993- 2011, approximately 80% of firearm homicides were committed with a handgun, and males, AAs, and individuals in the 18 to 24 age group had the highest rates of firearm homicide during this period.

Other contributing factors are economic. Twenty years ago, Sampson, & Jeglum-Bartusch (1998) suggested that fatal violence in the inner city communities was initially exacerbated in part by the disappearance of blue collar work opportunities; they explained that companies in this sector employed a significant amount of low-skilled AAs with relatively high-paying jobs, but when these opportunities faded and were replaced with computers and automation, an already disadvantaged group was left further behind economically. More recently, other researchers have confirmed that a lack of legitimate work opportunities promote illegal behavior including drug dealing, drug use, theft, and the concomitant increase in social disjointedness and disorder which leads to an increase in the number of homicides (Byrdsong, 2016; Berthelot, 2016; Stansfield, Williams, & Parker, 2017). Subsequently, residents living in such communities may have an increased propensity to adopt attitudes and perceptions that include a tolerance for deviant behaviors. As Sameroff (2010) points out, the macro-environment (i.e. the

economy, government) influences micro-environments such as the family, which in turn affects children, who in turn affect their peers. It is widely known that children are heavily influenced by the micro-factors closest to them such as friends and family (Boccio & Beaver, 2018; Bloom, 2015; Espelage, et al., 2018; Jennings & Reingle, 2012; Zagar, Grove, Busch, Hughes, & Arbit, 2009; Kilmartin, 2016). At the same time, the family is in turn influenced by more distal systems such as mass media and the political, cultural, and economic climates that exist in their experiences (Sameroff, 2010). These systems are dependent on each other since each influences the others and is influenced by them (Sameroff, 2010). Thus, a culture of violence, or non-violence for that matter, influences the communities and subcultures where the culture exists and is influenced by those communities, all of which heavily influences the lived experiences of the youth within the affected communities (Sameroff, 2010). The current study seeks to investigate these influences as perceived by those young people.

Problem Statement

National Prevalence of Youth Homicide

Crime patterns reveal that youth involvement in homicide remains a serious problem in this nation in the 21st century, with young people, especially AA males, being most at risk for committing and becoming victims of homicide (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2011; CDC, 2015; CDC, 2016; Cooper and Smith, 2011; Fagan & Novak, 2018; Farrington, Loeber, & Berg, 2012; Sheats, Irving, Mercy, Simon, Crosby, Ford, Merrick, Annor & Morgan, 2018). Prior to the late 1980s, homicide was

one of the 15 leading causes of death in America for youth ages 15-24. Now it is the leading cause of death for that population (APHA, 2019; CDC, 2017; MMWR, 2015 Sheats, et al., 2018). AA males die at rates disproportionately higher than that of their female counterparts or youth in any other ethnic group (CDC, 2017; Crime Lab, 2015; Sheats, et al., 2018). High rates of mortality due to violence also disproportionately affect America's population life expectancy since homicide victims tend to be younger than individuals who die from other issues and natural causes (APHA, 2019; Redelings, Lieb, & Sorvillo, 2010).

U.S. homicide data from the last 70 years reveal victims are getting younger and younger. In 1950, the highest homicide rate was amongst 25 to 34 year olds, the second highest rate was among 35 to 44-year olds, and the third highest rate among 45 to 54-year olds (CDC-National Center for Health Statistics, 2012). By 1970, again the group ages 25 to 34 had the highest homicide death rate and those 35 to 44 had the second highest, but the third highest rate was now among 15-24-year olds. By 1980, although the highest rate persisted among 25-34-year-olds, 15-24 years olds had emerged as the second highest rate, and by 1989-2008, 15-24-year olds held the highest homicide rates, and this remains the case today (APHA, 2019; CDC-National Center for Health Statistics, 2012; 2016). Many in the public health community maintain that violence in America runs the risk of not only severely compromising the youth population, as the average age of youth murderers and victims is becoming younger and younger, but also substantially increasing the nation's financial burden in an effort to address it (DeLisi, Hochstetler,

Jones-Johnson, Claudill & Marquart 2011; Fowler, Dahlberg, Haileyesus, Guiterrez & Bacon, 2017).

The issue of youth homicide has been publicized broadly in the U.S. media and in the literature since the early 1990s, and there is now a body of work showing that youth are killing more than in previous generations (CDC, 2017; Heide, Roe-Sepowitz, Solomon, & Chan, 2012; Zimring, 2013). However, there has not been an effective resolution. Additionally, much of this data lack important contextual information about the murder circumstances, thus illuminating the need for additional research approaches, a gap I plan to address in the current study. As noted, over the last seven decades, the ages of homicide victims have not only become younger and younger, but homicide has become more prevalent. The National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS, 2013) showed violent crime rate in the U.S. increased from 22.6 victims per 1,000 persons in 2011 to 26.1 in 2012. More recently, the FBI Uniform Crime Reporting data (UCR, 2016) showed the rate of violent crime in 2015 was 372.6 offenses per 100,000 inhabitants, a 3.1% increase compared to 2014 Thus, this issue remains of primary concern and a priority for public health investigations. In tandem with these killings, homicide arrests involving youth have risen every year (FBI, UCR, 2016) and the uptick in youth killings and the associated arrests continued along an even more aggressive trajectory in 2015 (BJS, 2016; CDC, 2017).

The effects of this epidemic of violence are well documented. Many youths who are incarcerated as a result of the perpetration of violent crimes suffer from the onset of psychological, and emotional problems due to confinement (Bryant, 2013; Forsythe &

Gaffney, 2012; Puzzanchera, 2009; Wood & Dennard, 2017), and this suffering is not exclusive to just the homicide perpetrators. The friends and family of the offenders as well as the victims are also at risk for psychological anguish as well as economic burdens that may result from the potential loss of income or the associated cost to bury their loved ones (Boyas & Sharpe, 2011; Connolly & Gordon, 2015; Kilmartin & McDermott, 2016 ; McDevitt-Murphy, Niemeyer, Burke, Williams, & Lawson, 2012; Sheats, et al., 2018). Youth victims and youth perpetrators of homicide have an increased propensity to suffer from mental illness, and other illnesses due to violence exposure such as depression, PTSD and suicidal ideations just to name a few (Chassin, Piquero, Losoya, Mansion, & Schubert, 2013; Fagan & Novak, 2017; Forsythe & Gaffney, 2012; Jennings & Reingle, 2012; McDevitt, Niemeyer, Williams, & Lawson, 2012; Sumner, Mercy, Dahlberg, Hill, Klevens & Houry, 2015;Theall, Shirtcliff, Dismukes, Wallace & Drury, 2017).

Finally, there is the huge financial burden to society and the criminal justice system charged with processing each young man who is taken into custody (DOJ, 2015). To emphasize the magnitude of this problem, in the United States, during 2007, 1,350 youth offenders were arrested on the charge of murder. In 2010, 784 individuals aged 18-24 were arrested for murder, and more than 800 youth under the age 18 were arrested in 2014 alone (CDC, 2013; DOJ, 2015), so the problem is clearly growing.

In 2013, the economic burden in this country due to fatal violence - including healthcare (everything from sheets to cover bodies, to rehab), also the loss of jobs, population and businesses -- was a colossal $214 billion (MMWR, 2015; University of Chicago Crime Lab, 2015). According to the University of Chicago's Crime Lab (2016),

violence costs the city of Chicago approximately $2.5B annually, a taxpayer expense that breaks down to around $2,500 per family. In other words, a single homicide has a deleterious impact on families and can impact the entire community in a number of ways.

Referencing the 2011 FBI U.S. data on homicides (U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2012), and focusing on the race of the perpetrator as well as the race of the victim, there were 2,640 AAs murdered during that year, of which in 2,447 of the cases, the perpetrator was also AA, and in 193 cases, the killer was White. That equated to 92.69% of all the murders in 2011 being classified as intraracial killings. The FBI U.S. homicide data also illustrated there were an estimated 17, 250 murders committed during 2016 of which 6,095 or 35% of the perpetrators were classified as Black or AA and 5,574 or 32% of the perpetrators race was unknown. In terms of the victims, 7,881 or 46% of the victims were classified as Black of which 86% of the number of victims were also male (FBI UCR, 2016). Importantly, the rate at which Black people are killing other Black people has informed the focus of the proposed research and guides the inclusion criteria of the study participant group.

Berg (2012) highlighted the effect of the unbalanced structure of socioeconomics on homicides. He maintained, the influence of Black people lacking what are considered to be the basic necessities required for living a dignified life in society (adequate housing and employment), on Black victim/Black offender killings is highly significant. Berg (2012) went on to predict that if Whites lived with the same structural and systemic racism and inequalities as Blacks, their intraracial homicide rates per capita would mirror that of Blacks. This suggests financial motives are strongly correlated to Black intraracial

killings. There are both past and more current researchers who agree with this assertion (Antunes & Ahlin, 2017; Branas, Fleischer, Formica, Galea, Hennig, Madanat, Park, Rosenthal & Ying, 2017; Kubrin & Wadsworth, 2003; Stansfield, Williams, & Parker, 2017) and also discussed the impact of financial and social scarcities in detail highlighting this correlation with fatal violence.

They argued that on the neighborhood level, concentrated disadvantage influences homicide by attenuating the larger cultural values thereby creating a climate where it is acceptable to participate in violence, and may even become a primary strategy for males to earn the respect and admiration of their peers and protect themselves as well as their possessions (Farrington, Loeber, & Berg, 2012; Kilmartin & McDermott, 2016; Sheats, et al., 2018). These actions likely increase the propensity for intentional as well as unintentional homicide while also increasing the levels of frustration and despair among the residents in the affected communities (Altheimer et al., 2012; Berthelot, et al., 2016; Bailey, 2017; Kubrin & Wadsworth, 2003; Wilson, 2009). To advance this work, the current study takes place in what is regarded to be one of Chicago's poorest and most socially paralyzed neighborhood, West Garfield Park.

For many in the urban male youth population, the conditions of their socioeconomic and overall health status are burdened with huge drawbacks and being at great risk for committing or succumbing to fatal violence are two of those drawbacks (APHA, 2019; Kelly Report, 2014; Smith, 2015). In one illustration, Walker et al. (2016) demonstrated that black people in Chicago are at a significantly higher risk for becoming homicide victims by way of firearms than their White counterparts, and this dynamic is

not exclusive to just residents in the city of Chicago. This was also found to be true for Blacks residing in the higher socioeconomic neighborhoods of Philadelphia. These Philadelphian residents were found to be at similar risks for homicide as Whites residing in low-income neighborhoods (Walker, McLone, Mason & Sheehan, 2016). Therefore, while different from the Chicago findings, the Philadelphia study highlights the fact that higher economic status is not necessarily associated with lower risk of death from gun shots for Blacks (Beard, Morrison, Jacoby, Dong, Smith, et al., 2017). In fact, it suggests a stronger correlation with race and homicide than economic deprivation and social disorganization.

It is also believed that Black males may be inherently more violent than their White counterparts. This assumption that Black males are inherently more violent and prone to kill more so than males of other ethnic groups is perpetuated in the literature by at least one scholar according to my research. This assumption can be traced to Barry Latzer (2016), a New York criminologist, at John Jay College in New York who authored a book entitled: The Rise and Fall of Violent Crime in America. Here he theorized that the migration of Black people from the South to northern cities in the mid-20th century was the reason for the rise in violent crime in America. Latzer (2016) believed that this group who he asserts, had historically been immersed in the violent culture of slavery, brought this culture to the urban landscape thereby changing a peaceful post World War II era. He also maintained the increase in fatal violence was exacerbated by the increase in Black males into the American population. However, there is no evidence for this position. At the time of this writing, nothing in the literature suggests that Blacks are

innately more violent than any other population group or shows a positive effect of migration – Black or otherwise - on crime (Akins, Rumbaut, & Stansfield, 2009; Desmond & Kubrin, 2009; Martinez, 2006; Wadsworth, 2010; Wang, 2012). In fact, some scholars argue immigration may have a crime-reducing effect (Stowell, Messner, McGeever, & Raffalovich, 2009; Wang, 2012), and this is applicable across races. Other scholars examining migration and homicide rates agreed (MacDonald, Hipp, & Gill, 2013; Martinez, Stowell, & Lee, 2010).

Chicago Prevalence of Problem

Although AAs made up only one third of the population in Chicago in the years 2015 and 2016, they accounted for nearly 80% of the homicide victims (University of Chicago Crime Lab, 2017). This account becomes more critical among AA males ages 15 to 34, who comprised over half of the city's homicide victims while accounting for only 4% of the city's population. Their White counterparts on the other hand, made up approximately 45% of the population yet accounted for only about 5% of the homicide victims during this same period (University of Chicago Crime Lab, 2017). Of the three biggest cities in the United States, Chicago far outpaces New York City and Los Angeles in the number of homicides and shooting victims in proportion to its size (University of Chicago Crime lab, 2015).

The 2016 FBI's Uniform Crime Report (U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2016) showed that in 2015, there were 1.2 million violent crimes committed across the United States. However, crime totals can be misleading. While it is widely conceivable that bigger cities will have higher violent crime rates per capita and

the smaller cities will have lower rates per capita, this is not necessarily true. Though, consistent with this claim, it is true that the five biggest cities in America — New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, Houston, and Philadelphia are also the five cities with the most violent crime (FBI, UCR, 2015). New York City (which has the largest population total) and Los Angeles (second largest population total), have lower total violent crime rates than Chicago despite the fact that Chicago has fewer people (Kelly Report, 2014). The FBI UCR 2016 report indicated the violent crime rate in Chicago in 2015 was 884.26 per 100,000 population, while New York City had a rate of 596.7 per 100,000 and Los Angeles had a rate of 490.71 per 100,000. Similarly, New York and Los Angeles have lower homicide rates combined than Chicago. For example, during 2015, Chicago had a murder rate of 15.09/100,000, New York had a rate of 3.93/100,000 and Los Angeles had a rate of 6.66/100,000 (FBI UCR, 2016).

According to Glaw (2015), it is more dangerous to reside in Chicago's worst neighborhoods, than to live in the world's most-murderous countries. For example, in Chicago's West Garfield Park neighborhood where the proposed study takes place, the population is approximately 18,000 and there were 21 murders in 2014 (Chicago Police Department, 2016) which makes for a homicide rate of 116 per 100,000 people. Honduras, the world's leader in murders, according to the United Nations (2015), had a homicide rate of only 90 per 100,000 during this same year. Similarly, following West Garfield Park in intentional fatal deaths is Chicago's West Englewood neighborhood, with a murder rate of 73.3/100,000, which was more than the world's second most violent country, Venezuela, with a rate of 53.7/100,000. Chicago's Chatham

neighborhood rate of 58/100,000 is higher than Belize's 44.7/100,000; Chicago's East Englewood community with a murder rate of 52.6/100,000 outdoes El Salvador's rate of 41/100,000; and South Chicago's 48/100,000 homicides tops Guatemala's 39.9/100,000 (Glaw, 2015). It is noteworthy to point out that all of the aforementioned neighborhoods in Chicago have a racial homogeneous population comprised of AAs who are classified in the lower socioeconomic stratum (University of Chicago Crime Lab, 2016).

According to the data from the University of Chicago's Crime Lab (2016), Chicago experienced 58% more homicides in 2015 when compared to the 2014 rate and 43% more nonfatal shootings during this same period. Similarly, there were 768 homicides committed in Chicago in 2016 which represented a nearly 60% increase from the homicide rates in 2015 (Crime Lab, 2016). The bulk of the homicide increases can be attributed to 5-6 of the city's poorest neighborhoods, with West Garfield Park - where the proposed study will take place - being one of them. Reportedly, 37% of Chicago's residents are living below the poverty line, and while only 8% of the residents live in these neighborhoods, they accounted for 32% of the city's homicides in 2015 (Crime Lab, 2016). Despite being the nation's third most populous city and despite the attention given to these increased shootings, the city had fewer incidents of shootings in 2015 than in 2016 (CPD, 2017). Law enforcement and public health officials remain puzzled at what is causing this sharp surge in gun violence. Investigators cannot attribute this to the warm weather, when violence spikes (University of Chicago Crime Lab, 2016) since the temperatures have remained average. Likewise, neither police activity nor city funds allocated to education and other social services, are associated with this increase (Crime

Lab, 2016). As of March 2017, there were 268 shootings in the city of Chicago. The Chicago Police Department plans to address this violence which has resulted in a nearly 13% increase in homicides when compared to the 2014 numbers, as well as a 13% rise in shooting victims by continuing to focus on increasing the number of arrests primarily from catching people with illegal guns (CPD, 2017). Again, while an important component to mitigating street killings, this approach does not seek to uncover and address the psychological, cultural, or environmental factors that give rise to murder as with the current study.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the lived experience and perceptions of violence and homicide through the lenses of AA male youth who witness and live with such violence in their daily lives. The overarching goal for conducting this study is to develop an in-depth understanding of why Black male youth may kill other Black male youth. It is important to learn from their perspectives what causes and/or justifies this type of violent behavior so that effective, culturally competent, and interdisciplinary prevention strategies can be applied in an effort to curb the inner-city youth homicide epidemic. The subjects sought for participation in this study will have an on-probation status as confirmation of up-close experiences with violence as these individuals are deemed most appropriate to advance the topic under study.

Research Questions

1. What is the lived experience of AA male youth who witness and live with violence in their daily lives, and are on probation for violent crimes, about the events and the emotions that led to interpersonal violence and homicide?
2. What is the lived experience of AA youth regarding the role of childhood and family in the high prevalence of homicide?
3. What is the lived experience of AA youth regarding the role of Chicago's inner-city social environment in the high prevalence of homicide?
4. What is the lived experience of AA youth regarding the role of education in the high prevalence of homicide?
5. What are the perceptions of AA youth regarding the resolution or prevention of conflict?

Theoretical Framework

The socioecological model will be used to guide this study since the literature reveals that myriad factors contribute to youth homicide, and this model is commonly used to help understand the multiple determinants of violence within minority populations (CDC, 2015; Society for Public Health Education, 2006). Ecological models have a long history as they originally emerged from development in many other disciplines and fields (biology, education, psychology) and were later refined by Bronfenbrenner who extended the socioecological model to highlight the intricacies of how individuals develop within embedded environmental systems (Green, Richard, & Potvin, 1996). The socioecological model is a framework that takes into perspective the

multiple social, cultural, and environmental factors and intricacies that influence and shape individuals during their formative years as well as the life-long course of human development on the micro, meso, exo, and macro levels (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). Bronfenbrenner explains that in this model, each of the subsystems influence the individual and the other subsystems and were developed to increase the understanding surrounding how individuals, particularly youths' development and environmental, cultural, and social factors are interrelated (Bronfenbrenner, 1994).

According to the socioecological model, people encounter different environments throughout the different stages of their lives and these encounters are likely to influence and shape their behaviors in variable degrees (Stokols, 1996). This model will be used as a framework to glean the multiple factors that influence the study population's perceptions of the variables and environments that may contribute to homicide, thus guide their lived experiences. The CDC (2015) maintains this approach is more likely to sustain prevention efforts over time than any single intervention ever could.

Bronfenbrenner (1994) asserts a socioecological model is effective for examining many kinds of human behavior as it addresses the role of numerous factors on human actions on varying levels (community, organizational, interpersonal, individual, and public policy). He goes on describe, community-level factors encompass the relationships among residents, business leaders and their communities including how they interact with their built environments. Organizational and social institutions also play key roles in shaping human behavior. Interpersonal factors involve how social networks and support from family, friends, peers, and co-workers inform human behavior, and individual

influences refer to the factors that shape and effect behavior such as age, social economic status, attitudes, values, goals, expectations, literacy level and others (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). Policy factors affect the environment with the particular local, state and federal laws that individuals must adhere to including the impact on the allocation of resources, access to economic opportunities, fees, and taxes paid (Brookmeyer, Fanti & Henrich, 2006; CDC, 2014). This theoretical model is furthered reviewed in the following chapter.

Nature of the Study

This is a qualitative study using heuristic phenomenology, a design of choice when describing the lived experience of a phenomenon (Creswell, 2009). This approach will provide first-hand experience of the study participants, AA males ages 18-24 who are on either probation or parole resulting from the perpetration of a violent crime. The data will be analyzed to reveal relevant patterns, explanations and predictions pertaining to the experience of living with killing. I will collect data using open-ended interviews, and participant observations. The number of participants will be determined by saturation.

Definition of Terms

Youth: A broad concept that encompasses both juveniles and adolescents. For statistical purposes, youth is defined as those individuals ages 15-24 (United Nations, 2013).

Black-on-black crime: This term was popularized by the mainstream media to describe Black people killing other Black people (Bellair, McNulty, & Piquero, 2014), although it is also referred to in this context as intraracial homicide.

Homicide: A sudden and traumatic act of violence that results in death of one or more individuals and has devastating effects on the victims' surviving friends and family (McDevitt-Murphy, Niemeyer, Burke, Williams & Lawson, 2012).

Conflict: A situation of competition in which the parties are aware of the incompatibility of the other with an unwillingness to take a more favorable position (Boulding, 2018).

Racial Profiling: Intrusive policing practices where the subjects of policing is exclusively guided by race particularly of male Blacks and Hispanics (Chang, Williams, Sangji, Britt & Rogers, 2016).

Violence: an extreme form of aggression, which involves any behavior that has a purpose to harm another (Sheats et al., 2018).

Assumptions

There are three primary assumptions of this study. First, the select inclusion criteria are appropriate and the participants will have similar lived experiences, allowing some form of generalization. Second, it is assumed that the participants will be genuinely interested in participating in this research project because it speaks directly to their issues; a gift card will be a reward for their participation and not an incentive or the motivation for their participation. Finally, and importantly, all subjects in the study are expected to participate with the impartiality and honesty needed to draw meaningful conclusions from this investigation.

Scope, Delimitations and Limitations

Scope

The focus of this study is on exploring the perceptions of the circumstances and antecedents that may lead to homicide. The population sample is comprised of 5-12 AA male youth ages 18-24 who are on probation resulting from a violent offense and residing in Chicago's West Garfield Park neighborhood. This population was chosen because this group is significantly impacted by homicide as both the victims and the perpetrators. Further, West Garfield Park is amongst the neighborhoods in Chicago with the highest intraracial homicide rates. Participants will be recruited using a purposive sampling technique to exclusively include the characteristics under study.

Delimitations

The study is limited to a single gender and race. It is also limited to 3 city blocks. The residents on these blocks are known to the researcher, and this urban area also meets the inclusion criteria, thus the focus is limited to three relatively short streets. This research is expected to benefit AA male youth aged 18-24 and may not be beneficial to other demographic groups.

Limitations

This study should be interpreted with the following limitations in mind. The study is limited to a 4-month period, in one city neighborhood and a single group, so the results may not be generalizable to the larger population. There may be data limitations as well due to the small participant group thereby impeding a more in-depth investigation. However, this work is the genesis of what is hoped to be a growing research agenda.

Notwithstanding these limitations, the proposed study is expected to make critical contributions to the body of knowledge regarding Black male youth and intraracial homicides. Additional studies to accelerate knowledge in this area should employ a larger sample size over a longer period.

Significance

Beginning in the 1980s and still true in the 21st century, the population most vulnerable to criminal victimization and most likely to fatally offend is AA males ages 15-24 (Fagan & Novak, 2018; Kelly Report, 2014; Sheats, et al., 2018; Smith, 2015). Research has demonstrated that it is still dangerous to be young, male and Black in America (Berthelot & et al, 2016; Farrington et al, 2012; Sheats, et al., 2018; Teplin, Jakubowski, Abram, Olson, Stokes & Welty, 2014). Despite this awareness of Black male youth being disproportionately represented among homicide victims and perpetrators, the unequal burden by male Black youth as survivors remains understudied. While a major focus of public health and criminal justice practices regarding youth homicide centers on prevention, arrests and mass incarceration (Baaij, Liem & Nieuwbeerta, 2012; Bellin, 2012; Braga, 2014; Chang, Williams, Sangji, Britt, & Rogers, 2016 Barnes, 2014) it negates the possibility of investigating the factors at varying levels that may influence youth at risk for committing or becoming a victim of homicide (APHA, 2015). As such, investigating the issue from multiple levels as with the current study may provide a more comprehensive understanding of the lived experiences of homicide victimization and perpetration. This increased knowledge may contribute to new novel tactics aimed at curbing the homicide phenomenon and restoring family and

community cohesion since fatal youth violence has become more prevalent and with younger victims.

Summary

The social environment for many Black male youths not only leads to a lack of equity in America but also lends itself to the propensity for them to become engaged in violence as a means to secure financial equity (Drummond, Bolland, & Harris, 2011; Hay, Fortson, Hollist, Altheimer, & Schaible, 2007; Light & Ulmer, 2016; Kelly Report, 2014; Sheats, et.al., 2018; Smith 2015). This problem cannot be treated in isolation from the plethora of factors that play a role in intraracial homicide. The literature supports the claim that youth homicide is attributable to a variety of factors including racism, poor family structures, substandard education, systemic disadvantages, and an inferior built environment (Chassin, 2013; Collins, & Williams, 1999; da Silva, Rijo, & Salekin, 2012; Jennings & Reingle, 2012; Sheats, et al., 2018; Smiley & Fakunle, 2016; Smith, 2015; Stansfield; Williams; Parker, 2017; Theall, et al., 2017; Ulmer & Harris, 2013). As such, the current study focuses on the extent to which the socioecological factors influence the precursors that may lead to male Black youth killing other male Black youth. Individuals who are on probation for perpetrating a violent crime will be the participants because the objective is to secure the lived experiences of those closest to homicide. Historically, as well as today, youth homicide has devastating effects on society as evident in the above text and further elaborated on in the following chapter. In my study, I will investigate intraracial youth homicide in a direct manner with consideration for the individuals' environment, perceptions, and experiences, including their roles and ideas of masculinity,

culture and socioeconomics. A summary of the literature surrounding the factors that attenuate as well as increase the propensity for youth homicide follows.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

Homicide is the most serious form of violence and there is evidence that its roots often lie within social, economic, racial, and educational disparities (Bryant, 2011; Bryant, 2013; Byrd, Hawes, Loeber, Farrington, Loeber & Pardini, 2016; Sheats, et al., 2018; Stallings & Homish, 2012). AAs in the United States for decades have experienced higher mortality rates attributed to homicides compared to their White counterparts (APHA, 2019; Berthelot, Brown, Thomas, & Burgason, 2016; Byrdsong, Devan & Yamatani, 2016; Pridemore, 2003). Especially disproportionate are the youth homicide rates among AA males (victims and offenders) and the role this plays in community disorganization, family disruption, and residential instability (Smith, 2015; Theall, et al., 2017; Wilson, Foster, Anderson & Mance, 2009). However, comprehensive, and sustainable preventive solutions and protective alternatives are still being heavily sought (Cohen, Davis & Realini, 2016; Connell, Morris & Piquero, 2016; Hay, Meldrum, Widdowson & Piquero, 2017; Smith, 2015; University of Chicago Crime Lab, 2016). This chapter will include a description of homicide risk factors and the characteristics of youth offenders and victims.

Literature Search Strategy

For the purposes of this review, exhaustive English-language literature searches were completed by accessing criminal justice (ProQuest, Sage, and Oxford) and Psych INFO

databases through the Walden University and Loyola University libraries. Articles on youth violence and homicide published 1955-2020 were located, using the following key words; *African American, Black youth violence, minority male homicides, youth killings, murder, intraracial murders, inner-city homicides and inner-city killings*. Many of the references for the retrieved articles were hand searched to obtain additional articles not located in the databases. A review of the literature based upon historical and current research methods and theories, as well as a number of sociological, cultural, and public health aspects of youth violence are included.

Theoretical Foundation

Socioecological Models

Socioecology emerged in the 1970s as one of the primary models for understanding childhood adverse experiences and early relationships (Bronfenbrenner, 1977, 1979, 1986) and in later years included understanding the effects of childhood abuse and neglect (Mulder, Kulper, van der Put, Stams, & Assink, 2018; Zielinski & Bradshaw, 2006). More specifically, the primary factor that identifies a study as being ecologic is its focus on the dynamic interaction between individuals and their environments (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). Socioecology underscores the fact that childhood experiences occur within the context of relationships and each individuals' thoughts, emotions, and actions are permanently influenced by and in turn contribute to, the creation of the larger social microsystems- (e.g. families and peer relationships), exosystems- (e.g. communities) and macrosystems (e.g., societies and cultures) within which each person is a part of. Bronfenbrenner (1994) suggested using this multi-factor,

ecological approach for examining risk factors for violence. The socioecological perspective helps to understand social phenomena since considerable attention should be given to examining change, both individual and societal (APHA, 2015). Drawing from the socioecological model, it is insufficient to study only the effect of individual background or family characteristics on offending behavior or criminal victimization (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). In ecologic studies, the term environment includes physical features (i.e. housing, buildings, roads, etc.) and social features (neighbors, law enforcement agencies, community groups, etc.) (CDC, 2015). The socioecological model will be used to guide this study in recognition of the fact that there is not a single determinant for fatal aggression, but rather a multi-factorial web of contributing factors that should be evaluated.

Decades ago, investigators used the socioecological model to guide violence and delinquency research. Using this framework, Shaw and McKay (1942) conducted one of the earliest studies to examine the relationship between delinquency and the physical structure and social makeup of 21 American cities, and Chicago was one of them. Shaw and McKay (1942) analyzed the results of two decades of ecological research and determined youth criminal behavior is strongly associated with poverty, substandard housing, and a culture of violence. Their research also demonstrated that Black youth were disproportionately affected by this phenomenon due to the prevalence of the aforementioned factors being present in their lived experiences.

Other researchers used this socioecological framework to evaluate an approach to measuring the relational-socioecological context within which childhood maltreatment

occurred (Freisthler, Merritt & LaScala 2006; Frewen, Evan, Goodman, Halliday, Boylan, & Moran, 2013; Hines, McCoy-Holcomb, 2013 Mulder, Kulper, van der Put, Stans, & Assink, 2018). The primary objective of the study by Frewen et al. was to evaluate a new survey methodology for the assessment of the history of childhood trauma. The authors explained the impetus for the research was the absence of any socioecological frameworks to deepen our understanding of a person's response to childhood traumatic experiences, and in large part, this was due to the fact that many of the existing measures of maltreatment history did not consider the relational-socioecological circumstances within which instances of childhood abuse and neglect occurred (Frewen, et al., 2013). They went on to explain the retrospective structure of some of the popular tools used to measure childhood maltreatment history (i.e. Childhood Trauma Questionnaire, CTQ; Bernstein et al., 2003, Traumatic Antecedents Questionnaire (TAQ; Herman, Perry, & Van der Kolk, 1989) is restricted to requesting respondents to confirm survey statements such as ''I was physically abused''. However, these types of questions omit salient information about the victim's relationship to the perpetrator(s), the quality of the family environment supporting these victims, or their thoughts, feelings, and own actions in response to having been abused. Other frequently used maltreatment history questionnaires and interviews, including the Trauma History Questionnaire (Green, 1996; Hooper, Stockton, Krupnick, & Green, 2011), Traumatic Events Screening Instrument (reviewed by Ford, 2009), Computerized Assessment of Maltreatment Inventory (Dilillo et al., 2010) and Children's Experience of Violence Questionnaire (CEVQ; Tanaka et al., 2012; Walsh, MacMillan, Trocme, Jamieson, &

Boyle, 2008) do capture information about perpetrators directly involved in abuse, but also fail to describe other aspects of the relational-socioecological environment such as the presence versus absence of parent or peer support (Frewen, et al., 2013). In response to the shortfalls in the aforementioned measurement tools, these investigators created the Childhood Attachment and Relational Trauma Screen survey (CARTS) appropriate for adults. Over three hundred and fifty participants were recruited including 222 undergraduate students, 30 psychiatric outpatients and 123 internet samples. The study results indicated the use of this survey captured details the previous surveys negated pertaining to the overall safety and supportiveness of the family. The CARTS considered not only that adverse events occurred in the lives of the respondents but also in what relational-socioecological context (i.e. who did what). Additionally, this newly created survey assessed respondents' thoughts, feelings, and actions as a way of gleaning the overall experiences and quality of early relationships and what roles victims may have played in the co-creation of their family and social environments. Across the young adult, internet, and outpatient samples, both the internal and convergent validity of CARTS was supported, and the inclusion of CARTS ratings specific to parents, increasingly predicted a variance within conventional measures of childhood trauma and parental emotional availability beyond the general applicability of ratings across family members. These findings demonstrated the utility of assessing histories of childhood abuse and neglect within a socioecological-relational framework.

A literature review of articles published 2000-2014 conducted by Mancera, Dorgo, & Vasquez (2017) using the socioecological framework analyzed 24 different

studies that investigated the risk factors for male intimate partner violence (IPV) perpetration among Hispanic men. This literature review used four factors of the socioecological model to explore risk factors for intimate partner violence. The four factors included, individual (i.e. age, income, education, alcohol, or substance abuse), relationship (i.e. impact of family and social networks that influence behavior), community (i.e. schools, churches, neighborhoods and workplaces) and societal, (i.e. policies informing health practices, education, economic and social equity). The review of the literature revealed the most prevalent IPV risk factors present at the individual level were binge drinking, having witnessed violence or having been abused as a child, being in the low economic stratum, lack of resources and personality disorders. At the relationship level, poor conflict resolution skills; misplaced blame on partner for the relationship issues; strictly defined gender roles such as male dominance over female and the perceived imbalance of power within the relationship increased the risk for IPV perpetration. At the community level, living in poor, violent neighborhoods increased the risk for IPV. At the societal level, the stressors associated with blending cultures were reported to be a risk factors for male IPV perpetration amongst this demographic (Mancero, et al, 2017). The investigators noted that while illuminating the multiple factors and influences that inform behavior and put men at risk for perpetrating violence against their partners helped to accelerate the knowledge base for Hispanic men, more research is warranted to better understand the societal factors that permeates every ethnicity and put other men at risk for IPV as well (Mancero, et al., 2017).

McCall, Land, and Parker (2010) conducted a study to extend the findings of an earlier study by Land, et al. (1990). Using the data from various U.S. cities in 1990 and in 2000, these investigators sought to examine three major structural influences on homicide on three different levels: neighborhood/community, family/social interpersonal level and the individual level. The three factors evaluated included, poverty combined with low education, disruption of family structure, and racial composition. At the conclusion of the study, the investigators analyses revealed a robustly positive interplay between the aforementioned variables and homicides from a victim and perpetrator perspective across all data sets. And, many researchers conducting ecological studies corroborate these findings. In one example, (Lauritsen, Heimer & Lang, 2018) agreed that neighborhood disadvantage does in fact have an independent and strong influence on homicide as does racial composition. These researchers explained that unfortunately since it is uniquely typical for Blacks to live in areas of high disadvantage, and being poor is associated with increased risk taking, they are also at greatest risk for becoming victims and perpetrators of violence up to and including fatal violence. Similarly, on the individual/family personal levels, poverty is shown to be strongly associated with harsher and inconsistent discipline at the hands of parents (Hines, McCoy-Holcomb, 13; Simon, Kuei-Hsiu, Gordon, Brody, Murray, & Congar, 2014). The authors explained the increased exposure to violence and parental inattentiveness can leave youth vulnerable to hanging with aggressive peers who may influence their perceptions, making them favorable to violence (O'Brien, Daffern, Chu & Thomas, 2013; O'Dea, Chalman, Bueno & Saucier, 2018; Pierre, Burnside, Gaylord-Harden, 2020). As previously stated, environments with low

social order have the propensity for increased deviant behavior amongst its residents (Sing & Ghandour, 2012; Stansfield, 2017). Blacks are also exposed to higher levels of family disruption and instability at rates greater than other racial groups in largest part due to higher levels of incarceration and generations of unemployment (Smiley & Fakunle, 2016; Trulson, Caudill, Haerle & DeLisi, 2012; Ulmer & Harris, 2013; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2015).

As evidenced in the aforementioned literature, the causes of youth perpetration of violence, homicide offending and victimization are mediated by a mixture of risk factors including, cultural, sociological, environmental, behavioral, psychological and situational factors and are shown to have existed over many years (Mancero, 2017; Sheats, et al., 2018).

Literature Review

National Prevalence of Homicide

The U.S. rate of homicide - the intentional killing of one person by another - remains among the highest in Western civilization (APHA, 2015; Brydsong, et al., 2016; Brent, Miller, Loeber, Mulvey & Birmaher, 2013; Loeber and Farrington, 2011), and the primary instrument of these deaths is a firearm (APHA, 2015; Brent et al., 2013; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2017; Loeber and Farrington, 2011). Every year in the U.S., more than 100,000 people are shot, and up to 30,000 are killed (CDC, 2017; Kelly Report, 2014; Santilli, O'Connor-Duffany, Carroll-Scott, 2017). In fact, according to the CDC (2017) report, forever person murdered due to gun violence, another 2-3 are injured.

More than 4,800 youth and young adults aged 10-24 were murdered in the United States in 2016; this is approximately 13 young persons every day. Among the victims, 86% were male and 14% female (CDC, 2016). A review of data from 2012 to 2016, regarding fatal gun deaths revealed that guns are the third leading cause of deaths for children under the age of 17 (Fowler, Dahlberg, Haileyesus, Guieterrez & Bacon, 2017). In 2012 there were reportedly 14,000 homicides committed in the United States (CDC, 2014; Zeoli, Grady, Pizzaro, & Melde, 2015), and another 16,000 were murdered in 2014 (CDC, 2015). Further, the July 2016 U.S. Census data reported that Whites represented 61.3% of the population and AAs made up only13.3% of the U.S. population, but of the 15,070 homicides recorded in that year, more than half (7881) of the victims were AA. In fact, in 2015, 339 people reportedly died in mass shootings in this country, but in that same year, approximately 6,000 Black men were also murdered with guns (Gun Violence Archive, 2015). Cook and colleagues (2017) reviewed epidemiological data from the National In-patient Sample (NIS) 2004-2013 and discovered the majority of the gun-shot wound (GSW) hospitalizations resulted from assaults on young AA males. A single year of productivity losses due to GSW approaches $35 billion dollars. The annual cost of gun violence is projected to be $229 billion dollars or $700 per American citizen (Cook et al., 2017). Approximately 25% of homicides committed are by multiple culprits (Zeoli, et al., 2015), and this also has costly implications to society. DeLisi and colleagues (2010) explained that each murder on average costs society $17.25 million dollars in addition to the costs associated with the murderer which can swell to as much as $24 million. These societal costs include but are not limited to work loss for family members, the perpetrator

and the victim, medical and mental health care services, emergency transportation by first responders, police and the associated criminal justice activities including incarceration, insurance claims processing, employer costs, as well as an overall decreased quality of life for all involved. Additionally, for every child that is murdered, he or she never enters the workforce, thus cannot pay taxes, another very costly implication to society (DeLisi et al., 2010).

The peak period of homicide has been determined to be late adolescence and early adulthood (O'Connor-Duffany, Carroll-Scott, Thomas, et al., 2017; Teplin, Jakubowski, Abram, Olson, Stoke, et al., 2014; Sumner, et al., 2015; Santilli,). Violent and delinquent behavior typically increases during the teenage and early years of adulthood and tapers off with advancing age (Teplin et al., 2014). The literature reveals most homicide deaths are classified as 'street killings' meaning the murder of peers and strangers as opposed to family members (Brent et al., 2013). This number is significantly higher than the number of other killings such as the killing of friends and relatives (Brent et al., 2013; Loeber and Farrington, 2011).

The sharp increase in homicide rates in the late 1980s and early 1990s were relatively limited to young black men (Blumstein & Wallman, 2006). Young and adolescent AA males ages 15-24 have disproportionately higher rates of homicide offending and victimization even when compared to other ethnic groups that represent other marginalized populations such as Hispanics and members of the LGBQT community (Weinberger, Hoyt & Lawrence, 2015; Cook, Osler, Hasmer, Glance, Rogers et al., 2017; Sheats, et al., 2018). Data for 2002-2005 show AA males to be only 8% of

the youth population ages 14-19 years yet accounted for 44-49% of all homicides (NCHS, 2008). Similarly, accounting for the period 2012-2014, AA men made up only 6% of the population yet also made up greater than 50% of the firearm related deaths (Santilli, et al., 2017).

During the period 2002-2007, there was a 54% increase in the rate of gun homicides of AA youth, and a 47% increase in the number of AA homicide offenders (Fox & Swatt, 2008). The 2014 data from the American Public Health Association indicated, nationally, AAs are 7 times more likely to murder than their Caucasian counterparts, and while representing only approximately an eighth of the population, AAs, represented approximately one half of the murder victims in this year (APHA, 2015.). Consistent with the more recent data, the 2015 statistics indicated, AA males in the 10-24 age group have the highest homicide prevalence rate at 51.5 per 100,000 compared to 2.9 per 100,000 for European Americans (APHA, 2015; CDC, 2014). These young AA males are five times more likely to be killed by firearms than any other population (APHA, 2015).

While other population groups are also involved in gun violence, 93% of all youth murders were committed by minority youth in the years 2002-2007 (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2007). Moreover, the 2015 data showed, while the homicide rates for the total U.S. population were 5.7 deaths per 100,000, it was 20.9 for Blacks, 4.9 for Hispanics, and 2.6 for Whites (CDC, 2017). During this period and as reflected in the data, the rates of deaths from homicide was highest for Blacks, lowest for Whites and reflected a decline for Hispanics (CDC, 2017). Traditionally, AAs have led all other racial groups in

committing intraracial homicides, mostly with a firearm (APHA, 2015; DOJ, 2015; Miethe & Regoeczi, 2004; Sheats et al., 2018). In 2007, 11.6% of AA college students versus 2.4% of Caucasian students reported experiencing loss of a friend or family member due to homicide primarily by firearm and within the past 2 years (Currier, Holland, Neimeyer, 2008). Similarly, Black males in general are at disproportionate risk for experiencing the sudden and traumatic loss of a friend or family member due to homicide, thus must learn how to become survivors and still lead productive lives (Smith, 2015). This is demonstrated in one study conducted by Smith (2015), using a modified grounded theory approach to examine the impact, time and frequency of traumatic loss resulting from the death of peers, friends and family members due to homicide. Pursuant to the semi in-depth interviews of 40 Black men ages 18-24 residing in Baltimore, Maryland, the results indicated that on average, the participants knew 3 homicide victims who were primarily their peers. This disturbing loss of peer homicide was shown to be a significant turning point and disrupted the participants' social lives including their senses of social networks, consequently making them vulnerable to homicide both from victim and perpetrator perspectives.

Chicago Prevalence

Chicago is the third largest city in the nation and one of the leading cities for the number of homicides committed (Horton, 2007; Kelly Report, 2014; University of Chicago Crime Lab, 2017). Horton (2007) conducted a study using comprehensive data from the Chicago Police Department during the timeframe 1991-2004 to identify the patterns of murders that had persisted for more than a decade in the city, despite a

decrease in violent crime across the rest of the country. The study results indicated in the year 2004, there were 448 homicides, 75% of them with a firearm, and AA males were disproportionally represented as both victims and offenders, at 70% and 80% respectively. Horton (2007), also indicted during the period (1991-2004), that nearly 60% of all the offenders, and 45% of the victims, were between the ages 17-25.

Data for 2008 confirmed this picture. More than 500 people were murdered in Chicago in that year, with 80% of the victims being killed by gunfire and nearly half of them males ages 10-25 (Ander, Cook, Ludwig, & Pollack, 2009). Similarly, as illustrated by the data from the Chicago Police Department (CPD), in 2009, 465 homicides occurred, with 87% of the victims being killed by gunshot. Another 524 homicide deaths happened in the city of Chicago during 2012, and the majority of the killings were the intraracial killings of Black youth and Black men (CPD, 2013). However, by 2013 the number of homicides dropped to 443 (CPD, 2015), and this decline it attributed to CPD's Violence Reduction Initiative. Unfortunately, the decrease in homicide rates was short-lived. AA males ages 14-24 remained the principal perpetrators and victims of homicide in Chicago during the years 2015 and 2016 (Crime Lab, 2017; CPD, 2016). According to the Chicago Department of Public Health (2016), there were 492 homicides in Chicago during 2015. The Chicago Police Department (2016) maintained the 2015 murder rates represented an increase by approximately 72% from 2014 to 2015, and continuing along this trajectory, the shootings rose by more than 88% during the first three months of 2016 in comparison to this same period in 2015 (Chicago Police Department, 2016). These

staggering statistics underscore the need for continual research on criminally-involved youth in Chicago in an effort to reduce the death by homicide rates.

Though large bodies of literature exist over the years on youth homicide, the killing of young people by other young people, there are still many unanswered questions surrounding the etiology of these events (Ander, et al., 2009; Cohen, Davis & Realini, 2016; Cooper, et al, 2011; Heide, 2003; Stansfield, 2017; Weinberger, et al., 2015; & Zimring, 2013). It is well documented that minority males are overrepresented as both victims and offenders of gun violence, and the levels of gun violence leading up to homicides are not evenly distributed in this country (Cook, et al., 2017; Crime Lab, 2015; Kelly Report, 2014; Spano & Bolland, 2016; Sheats et al., 2018; Stansfield et al., 2017). The literature suggests that homicide victims and offenders have shared characteristics (Berg, et al., 2012; DeLisi et al., 2016; Farrington et al; 2012; Heide 2003; Spano & Bolland, 2013). Investigations from the University of Chicago's Crime Lab (2009; 2015) lend support to this account. Using multiple sources, the University of Chicago's Crime Lab data revealed both homicide victims and offenders are disproportionately AA males from poor, single family homes, who live in Chicago's most disadvantaged and racially segregated neighborhoods.

Protective and Risk Factors for Homicide

Much of the extant literature focuses on the factors that increase the probability for violent and delinquent behavior (Boccio & Beaver, 2018; Borowsky & Ireland, 2004; Chassin, Piquero, Losoya, Mansion, & Schubert, 2013; DeLisi, Piquero & Cardwell, 2016; Farrington, Loeber, & Berg, 2012; Farrington, Loeber, Stallings, & Homish, 2012).

This type of research suggests that there are a variety of factors – some at an individual level and others at a social or environmental level – that increase the likelihood of violent and delinquent behavior. However, it is noteworthy to point out that the extant research has not always clearly distinguished the factors that are specifically associated with violent behavior from those factors associated with nonviolent behavior. Given the variability of the risk factors for those who commit homicide, there may be significant overlap in the factors that predict violent or delinquent behavior, but there may also be protective factors (Brown, 2008; Branas, Fleischer, Formica, Galea, et al., 2017; Cox, Kochol & Hedlund, 2018; Jennings & Reingle, 2012; McCall, Land, & Parker, 2011; Pierre, et al. 2020). For example, for many years witnessing violence has been strongly correlated with youth becoming offenders (Drummond, Bolland, & Harris, 2011; Cohen et al., 2016; DeLisi, 2016; Fagan & Novak, 2018; Jenkins & Bell, 1994; Miethe, et al, 2004), yet there is also research demonstrating that youth who embrace racial respect and racial socialization are often protected from becoming involved in carrying out violent acts, even when having witnessed violence (Brown, 2008; DeGruy, Kjellstrand, Briggs & Brennan, 2012). DeGruy and colleagues (2012) defined 'racial respect' as having a positive worldview despite pervasive challenges, with a high regard towards self and others, and 'racial socialization' is the capacity to transfer dignity, cultural knowledge, historical and racial pride from one generation to another. Apart from assuming that the factors predictive of violent behavior are similar to those predicting delinquent behavior, few researchers (DeLisi & Piquero, 2011; McCall, Land, Dollar & Parker, 2013; Smith, 2015) have tried to disaggregate the factors that are associated with life-course-persistent

offending from those factors associated with offending over a more limited period of time (e.g., exclusively during adolescence).

There is evidence that the factors associated with the onset of offending (either during childhood or adolescence) may be different from those associated with persistent offending (DeLisi et al., 2016; Farrington, 2003; Farrington, Loeber, Stallings, & Homish, 2012; Hay, et al., 2017). The developmental taxonomy developed by Moffit (1993) explains that life-course persistent offenders (LCP) suffer from inherent neurological shortages that impede them from healthy social behaviors thereby increasing the propensity for them to engage in progressively delinquent behaviors up to and including homicide. Some researchers (O'Dea, et al., 2018; Sampson, 2012; Singh & Ghandour, 2012; Yonas & Gielen, 2006) assert this phenomenon is exacerbated for individuals living and operating in crime-ridden environments. On the other hand, adolescent-limited offenders (AL) are regarded by Moffit's classification system as individuals who use deviance as a relatively short-term coping mechanism for dealing with the many changes associated with the development from childhood into adulthood (Mendez, 2010; Moffit, 1993). Mendez (2010) goes on to explain that adolescent limited offending is merely a healthy facet of adolescence and the associated deviance will subside once the adolescent reaches adulthood and is no longer faced with the challenges of how to cope during the maturation period. That said, early 'onset of offending' is not believed to play a significant role in shaping individuals into homicide offenders, while on the contrary, late onset offending is believed to be more of a neurological pattern which invokes greater concern due to the significant role it plays in homicide offending

(Delisi & Piquero, 2011; Farrington, Loeber, et al., 2012; McCall, Land, Dollar & Parker, 2013).

Macro-social Factors

Social Inequality. AAs have higher mortality rates than Caucasians in America, poorer health status, more adverse health behaviors, more limited access to quality care, and overwhelmingly belong in the lower socioeconomic stratum, and those are just some of the primary contributing factors to social disparity (Briggs, 2013; Bloom, 2015; Bolland, Lian & Formichella, 2005; Chamlin & Cochran, 2006; Chilton, Knowles & Bloom, 2017; Cohen, Davis, & Realini, 2016; Jemal, Ward, Murray & Thun, 2008). Social inequality has also been identified as a contributing factor to homicide offending. Murder is considered an outcome of youth discounting promise for their futures and the escalation of risk in social competition (Anderson & Mance, 2009; Bolland, et al, 2005; Chamlin & Cochran, 2006; Chilton, Knowles & Bloom; 2017; DeGruy et al., 2012; Kilmartin & McDermott, 2016; Light & Ulmer, 2016; Stansfield, et al., 2017; Wilson, Foster, Anderson, & Mance, 2009). This is especially true of homicide in urban parts of the United States, where a large majority of cases involve competition for status or resources among young men (DeGruy, 2012; Riley, Roy, Harari, Vashi, et al., 2017; Stansfield, 2017; Wilson, et al., 2009; Wood & Dennard, 2017).

Black youth's sensitivity to inequality also increases the chances for them to engage in risky criminal behavior that can lead to committing or becoming a victim of homicide (Light & Ulmer, 2016; Sumner et al, 2015; Stansfield, et al., 2017; Ulmer & Harris, 2013). This sensitivity is considered a byproduct of a mindset that adjusts risk

acceptance as we picture it, because those at the bottom may be incentivized to increase their tactics of social competition when it is clear that some of the "front-runners" are doing exceptionally well while the perception of expected payoffs from low risk tactics are not significantly beneficial (Anderson & Mance, 2009; DeGruy et al., 2012; Light & Ulmer, 2016; Stansfield, et. al., 2017; Wilson, et al., 2009; Wilson, 2009). This expectation is consistent with the position that Black male youth and elderly mortality is exacerbated by inequality itself, and for youth, beyond the compromising poverty effects in the traditional sense (e.g. poor nutrition, lack of access to medical care, living in depressed communities, attending substandard, under-resourced schools, and without other opportunities that promote overall health and well-being) (Bailey, Krieger, Agenor, Graves, et al., 2017; Barber, Hickson, Berton & Staab, 1996; Chilton, et al., 2017; Wang, Sims, et al., 2016; Wilson, 2009). There are myriad researchers that have demonstrated economic inequality predicts mortality in general (Bailey, et al., 2017; Bloom, 2015; Barber, et al., 2016; Bryant, 2011; DeGruy et al., 2012; Light et al., 2016; Stansfield et al., 2017; Wilson, 2009). Moreover, it is most strongly related to mortality affected by behavioral risk taking, especially homicide (DeGruy et al., 2012; Stansfield, et al., 2017). Ecologic characteristics such as neighborhood, median household income and racial segregation are also shown to contribute to racial mortality disparities (Jemal et al., 2008; Kreek, 2011; Lauritsen, Heimer & Lang, 2018). The literature suggests residing in a socioeconomically- disadvantaged community strongly correlates with poorer health outcomes and higher mortality (Byrdsong, et al., 2016; Ludwig et al., 2011; Massoglia, Firebaugh & Warner, 2014; Ouimet, Langlade & Chabot, 2018). Poor neighborhoods

also have an increased risk for creating unhealthy outcomes and lived experiences coupled with diminished opportunities for residents to engage in healthy behaviors (McCuish, Cale & Corrado, 2018; Ouimet, Langlade & Chabot, 2018). Residential segregation can also perpetuate substandard housing, overall unhealthy neighborhood environments and limited access to healthcare (APHA, 2015; Byrdsong, et al., 2016; Chung & Steinberg, 2006; Hay et al., 2007; Intravia, Stewart, Warren & Wolff, 2016). Social inequality is a critical problem that lends itself to increased racial death rate disparities.

Poverty. Poverty has long been identified as a risk factor for fatal violence (Berthelot, et al., 2016; Briggs, 2006; Centerwall, 1995; Chamlin, & Cochran, 2006; DeGruy, 2012; DeLisi, et al., 2016; Ouimet, et al., 2018; Sheats, et al., 2018; Wilson, 2009). Approximately 56% of people in the United States live in poverty and 60% of poor children live in single matriarch-led homes (Office of Minority Health, 2014). Female-led households in 2014 had a household food insecurity prevalence rate of 34.4%, and the households with young children under the age of 6 reportedly had a prevalence rate of 20.9% (U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service; 2014). It is noteworthy to point out, these rates were significantly higher than the national rate of 14.3% during this same year (U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service; 2014). Importantly, research indicates that food insecurity is associated with exposure to violence and adversity across the life span, including experiences with high levels of stress during childhood with multiple types of violence well into adulthood (Chilton, Knowles, Rabinowich & Arnold, 2015; Chilton, et al., 2017). Exposure to

violence has shown to be strongly associated with a significantly higher likelihood of engaging in behaviors known to contribute to chronic illnesses (i.e. smoking, substance abuse, decreased physical activity) and delinquent behaviors especially for youth who have been exposed to more than one type of interpersonal violence during childhood (Byrdsong & Devan, 2016; Fagan & Novak, 2018; Sheats et al., 2018). Since one out of five children in the United States lives in poverty, and one third of them are AA (Office of Minority Health, 2014), it is not surprising that Black teens are especially at risk. In fact, urban teenagers are particularly vulnerable to the impact of poverty. For example, when limited opportunities portend a bleak future, youth are more likely to engage in risky behaviors including progressive criminal activity that can lead to the perpetration of homicide (Berthelot, Brown, Thomas & Bergeson, 2016; Boccio & Beaver, 2018; Stansfield, et al., 2017; Lauritsen et al., 2018; DeGruy et al., 2012; Sampson & Lauristein, 1994; Ulmer & Harris, 2012; Wilson, 2009). The data also reveal that 90% of crime victims and perpetrators are of the same race (CDC, 2015). The lack of economic opportunities amongst those in minority ethnic groups is yet another risk factor contributing to homicide (APHA, 2015; Bloom, 2015; Bryant, 2011; DeGruy et al., 2012; Light et al., 2016; Stansfield et al., 2017; Wilson, 2009).

Being poor and the associated social disorder can also exacerbate the number of homicides within a community. Researchers (Berthelot, 2016; Bloom, 2015; Bryant, 2011; Cox, 2010; DeGruy et al., 2012; Light et al., 2016; Stansfield et al., 2017; Wilson, 2009; Wood & Dennard, 2017) suggest crime and illegal activity are more pronounced amongst youth in areas characterized by wide-spread and persistent poverty, with a

heterogeneous population which has the propensity to destroy a community's ability to maintain social control. Disadvantaged areas are also more likely to be deprived of the institutional resources necessary to mobilize crime control (Berthelot, et al., 2016; Briggs & McBeath, 2013). As such, families who suffer from economic deprivation are less likely to maintain social networks and less likely to participate in community organizations that contribute to organization and social control even to a small degree (Barber, Hickson, Wang, Sims, Nelson & Diez-Roux, 2016; Briggs & McBeath; 2013; Brown, 2008; DeGruy, 2012). Disorganization in poor communities promotes higher tolerance and the inability to collectively form action against criminal activity (Barber, et al., 2016; Berthelot, Brown, Thomas, & Burgason, 2016; Brown, 2008). As such, living in poverty leads to greater risk taking which includes an increased propensity to adopt deviant behavior including the involvement in criminal activities as a means to secure financial gain which may include perpetrating homicides intentionally or unintentionally (DeLisi, et al., 2016).

Racism. There is research that suggest racism is strongly related to homicide offending. In one study, Bryant (2011) sought to more clearly understand the tendency for AA male youth ages 14-19 to become violent using 224 participants from four different sites: a high school in Philadelphia, a youth detention center, an African-centered charter high school, and youth who were on probation or parole. The investigator hypothesized that higher levels of youth violence would be positively associated with higher levels of internalized racism above all of the other traditional risk factors including poverty, drug use, delinquent friends, impulsive behavior, weapon

carrying, etc. Bryant demonstrated that these risk factors as posited in much of the existing work, may not fully explain the overrepresentation of violence in this population engaging in youth violence. Another factor of internalized racism is some AAs view race as a hierarchy with themselves at the bottom, a view they accept and internalize (Bryant, 2011).

Bryant's (2011) results were consistent with the hypothesis that, of all other risk factors, internalized racism predicted the greatest level of aggressive behavior evidenced by the effect size. This was followed by impulsive behavior, delinquent friends, aggressive response to shame, and drug use. It is believed that the mindset of AA youth who possess negative concepts and characteristics that are innate to internalizing racism, can distort their developmental pathways, thereby predisposing themselves to self-destructive attitudes and behaviors which increase the tendency for them to engage in violence (Berthelot, et al., 2016; Brown, 2008; DeGruy, 2012; Wilson, Foster, Anderson & Mance, 2009). Bryant (2011) asserted further research was needed in this area to replicate the study findings by drawing participants from different sites and adding community-level risk factors which may impact the direction as well as the content of future prevention approaches aimed at mitigating fatal violence involving AA male youth.

Other scholars and criminologists for many years have also attributed racism, in part, to high rates of homicide within the AA community (Bailey, et al., 2017; Bloom, 2015; ; Bonilla-Silva, 2008; Briggs, et al., 2013; Brown, 2008; Bryant, 2011, 2013). Bonilla-Silva (2008) referred to this as structural racism, as manifested in, for example,

environmental and economic inequities, substandard educational and job opportunities; this is “racism without racists” because it impedes Blacks indirectly through access to fair housing, employment and other neighborhood resources, thereby contributing to the practices that are known to be the breathing grounds for criminal activity in the inner-cities, including homicide. In the seminal work of Sampson and Wilson (1995), it was shown that intentional systemic restrictions and concomitant deleterious economic conditions contributed to high rates of offending in the affected communities. Since then, other researchers (Berthelot, Brown, Thomas & Burgason, 2016) have found evidence to support this claim. These researchers agreed there is a direct and strong association between structural racism and homicide risk for Blacks. They explained their own research using a large nationally representative sample from NHIS-MCD linked files aimed at investigating the personal attributes of homicide perpetrators and victims, and potential influences on those attributes; in particular, family income was significantly and negatively associated with homicide risk, especially for the Black population (Berthelot, Brown, Thomas & Burgason, 2016). These results are not surprising since, according to the 2015 Income and Poverty Status report from the U.S. Census Bureau, more than 24% of Blacks were living below the poverty line representing more than double that of Whites living below the poverty line (U.S. Census Bureau, 2016). These findings lend support to the claim that structural racism exacerbates the levels of disadvantages which in turn increases homicide victimization risk since residents of racially segregated and oppressed communities are a greater risk for victimization than their more affluent counterparts (Berthelot, et al, 2016).

Low Educational Attainment. Studies over the years have shown that poor educational attainment is causally related to both crime and incarceration in the adult U.S. population (Brookmeyer, Fanti & Henrich, 2006; Holland, Hall, Wang, Gaylor, et al., 2019; Lochner & Moretti 2004; McCoy-Holcomb, 2013; Pierre et al., 2020; Shutay, Williams & Shutay, 2011), but may be significantly reduced by improving educational opportunities and outcomes (Zeoli, Pizarro, Grady & Melde, 2015; Ward, Williams, & van Ours, 2015). Investigators note, while delinquency typically begins while children are still in school, Youth typically become involved in criminal behavior between the ages of 13-15 and it peaks in the later teen years (Ward, Williams & van Ours, 2015). In the United States, the ages where youth typically leave school ranges from 16-18, which also means crimes are being committed by youth while they are still in school, as well as during the period when they are making important decisions about whether to drop out of school or further their education. This suggests that in addition to being a cause of crime, low educational attainment may also be a consequence of crime (Ward, Williams & van Ours, 2015).

Researchers investigating the effect of juvenile delinquency on levels of education attained concluded that youth who came in contact with law enforcement in terms of arrest, charge and conviction, had significantly lower levels of education than their counterparts without arrests or convictions (Aizer & Doyle, 2015; Hirschfield, 2018). There is also evidence in the literature that suggests 16-year-old delinquent youth have a higher probability of not completing high school because the expected returns from participating in criminal activity may make education seem less attractive, thus

increases the probability of early dropouts (Monahan, Steinberg & Piquero, 2015). Another factor that lends to the connection between education levels and crime is the fact that youth achieving low levels of education is in part due to the reduced time they spend in school and studying as a result of engaging in delinquent activities instead (Monahan, et al., 2015). Youth that exhibit poor academic performances and behavior while in school are typically excluded from the classroom or suspended more often than nondelinquents (Aizer & Doyle, 2015). As such, less time spent in school or studying on average leads to lower academic achievement and ultimately contributes to an early withdrawal from school (APHA, 2018; Ward, et al., 2015) Juvenile delinquency also impacts youths' level of education attainment through peer effects. For example, delinquency often involves a culture that discourages effort toward obtaining a quality or certain level of education (APHA, 2018).

Over the years, other researchers have investigated the significance of educational factors on health and homicide victimization (DeBaun & Roc, 2017; McCall, Land & Parker, 2011; Tcherni, 2011). In one study, Velis, Shaw, and Whiteman (2010) utilized a cross-sectional approach to examine homicide data across two different counties in Miami (Broward and Dade), which in 2004 showed the highest rates of violent crime in America. The investigators discovered not only was homicide on the rise in both counties; their analysis revealed an inverse relationship between education and the probability of becoming a homicide victim. As educational attainment increased, the risk of dying by homicide significantly decreased. Similarly, lower income revealed a higher risk of death by homicide. A substantial portion of the homicide victims in both counties

were reportedly male AA youth. Data from the Census Bureau showed, while only 19% of the population in these counties were AA, 56% of the homicide victims were from this group and 25% were under the age of 22 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). Velis et al. (2010) acknowledged that the sharp increase of death by gunshot among young Blacks and Hispanics living in these counties warranted further investigations with the hope of ultimately leading to successful prevention and intervention strategies. The classification of the victims' race and ethnicity in the medical examiner's database was restricted to either Black or White; consequently, the representation of these victims might contain errors. Unfortunately, according to the law enforcement data for the first quarter of 2016, while the homicide rates in Dade county have remained relatively the same, Broward county experienced an increase in the number of homicides (FBI, UCR, 2016).

In an earlier study, Tcherni (2011) compared the role of education, poverty and race on homicide in two different decades, 1950-60 and 1995-2005. This study defined low education in the 1950s as the percentage of individuals 25 and over with less than 5 years of education, in 1960 the measure was less than 4 years of education and in the 2000's low education was defined as having less than a 9th grade education. When further examined, the individuals in these groups were shown to be disproportionately impacted by homicide. The author explained counties in lieu of cities were chosen because counties are smaller and offer more homogenous units of analysis than states offer. U.S. Census and Vital Statistics data were used to record the homicide events and calculate the homicide rates in counties during the aforementioned periods. The results of this analysis revealed, the regression slopes were very similar for the two time periods.

Notwithstanding all of the social, political and economic changes that have occurred in the nearly 50 years difference between the two periods, the effect of the 3 factors under investigation on homicide remained stable and strongly correlated to the fatal violence epidemic (Tcherni, 2011). Given these results, it is clear that low educational attainment is associated with unemployment and underemployment, which leads to living in poverty, and poverty and homicide both perpetration and victimization are strongly correlated (APHA, 2018; Lauritsen, et al., 2018; Stansfield, et al., 2017; Tcherni, 2011).

Family Factors

Parenting Styles. The data show that adolescent male youth in high-crime neighborhoods are at the greatest risk for personal victimization and for exhibiting violent behavior due to myriad contributing factors and parenting structure is one of them (APHA, 2015; Baglivio, University of Chicago Crime Lab, 2015; Wolff, Piquero & Epps, 2015). For over twenty years parenting strategies often conceptualized as "supportive" or "controlling," have been strongly linked to delinquent behavior as well as decreases in youth violence (Loeber & Farrington, 1998; Streit, Gustavo, Ispa & Palermo; 2017; Lansford, Godwin, Bacchini, Chang, Deater-Deckard, et al., 2018). There is evidence in the literature that highlights the negative developmental consequences of physical punishment (Chung, & Steinberg, 2006; Freisthler, et al., 2006; Frewen et al., 2013; Gault-Sherman, 2012; Hay et al., 2017). One study demonstrated that spanking at age one was strongly correlated to children's aggressive behaviors an entire year later (Gershoff, Lansford, Sexton., Davis-Kean & Sameroff, 2012), and AA mothers

particularly from the lower socioeconomic stratum are found to be more likely to spank their children than European mothers (Gershoff, et al., 2012)

Fewer studies exist on how parenting strategies may moderate the relationship between victimization and violent behavior in urban, high-violence areas (Streit, et al., 2017). If victimization and violent behavior are distinct events, identifying which parental strategies are most closely associated with decreases in violent behavior for youth may prove helpful in forming delinquency prevention and intervention plans.

The literature suggests that different ethnic groups approach parenting in unique ways. Historically, AA homes have been identified with more controlling styles than Latino households (Forehand & Kotchick, 1996; Gonzales, Cauce, Friedman, & Mason, 1996; Kilburn & Lee, 2010). Scholars also acknowledge that parent behaviors and temperament inform children's development, antisocial and prosocial behaviors (Eisenberg, Spinrad & Knafo-Noam, 2015; Menting, Orobio & Matthys, 2013). Some researchers maintain that corporal punishment is longitudinally associated with children's aggressive behaviors (Gershoff et al, 2012; Streit, 2018). However, monitoring and non-physical discipline appear to be very good predictors of youth adjustment even in low-income areas, and supportive parenting practices, like positive reinforcement and affection, tend to show small independent effects on youth adjustment (Hines, & McCoy-Holcomb, 2013; ; Lansford, et al., 2018; Livingston & Nahimana, 2006; Porter & Purser, 2010). Research involving low-income, at-risk youth suggests that effective parenting incorporates control strategies like monitoring and non-violent disciplining practices.

Ceballo et al. (2003) found that children who reported more parental monitoring had significantly lower rates of personal victimization and witnessed violence.

Research for many years on parenting and youth violence have shown that parenting has a similar pattern of influence on youth violence as it does with general, nonviolent delinquency (Gorman-Smith, Tolan, Zelli, & Huesmann, 1998; Hines & McCoy-Holcomb, 2013; Porter & Purser, 2010; Tolan, Gorman-Smith, & Henry, 2003). Even in violent families, elevated levels of youth violence may derive from inadequate parenting rather than modeling (Tolan et al., 2003). Researchers suggested that previous research may have overemphasized the effects of witnessed violence on youth and underestimated the role of absent or unskilled parenting in promoting violent youth behavior (Van Niel, Pachter, Wade, Felitti & Stein, 2014).

Other researchers (Baglivio, Wolff, Piquero & Epps, N, 2015; Bloom, 2015; Farrington, et al., 2012; McCall, 2013; Porter & Purser, 2010; Zagar, et al.; 2009) agree with the seminal work of Gorman-Smith et al. (1996) who maintained that inner-city violent youth come from families that are low in discipline, cohesion, and overall involvement. Particularly for youth in the inner-city areas, supportive parenting may be an especially important protective factor because the environmental conditions that influence delinquency are increasingly present in the experiences of these affected youth (Baglivio, et al., 2015; Hines, McCoy-Holcomb, 2013). As such, parents using engaging and supportive parenting strategies may counter these influences and promote prosocial behaviors among their youth as an alternative to youth becoming involved in criminal behaviors (Eisenberg, et al., 2015; Walker, Maxson & Newcomb, 2007).

Walker and colleagues (2007) conducted a study to examine the relationship between parenting structure and violent behavior for minority youth in high-crime neighborhoods to determine whether parenting style is a risk factor for violent behavior. The investigators sought to ascertain if parenting and other control factors moderated the relationship between victimization and violent behavior using interviews with 349 urban Hispanic and AA youth. The results not only revealed that race moderates the relationship between parental involvement and violent behavior, but also that AA youth responded best to unilateral parent decision making, which corresponds to an authoritarian parenting style, applicable across all types of neighborhoods. Higher parental connection and support for youth was associated with lower violent behavior and the more recent literature provided evidence in support of this (Baglivio, 2015, 2016; Van Niel, Pachter, Wade, Felitti & Stein, 2014).

Absence of Fathers. Research has attributed social support as being one significant way to thwart minority male youth from committing homicides as well as becoming victims of it (Richardson, 2012; Sampson, 2012; Singh & Ghandour, 2012; Streit, et al., 2017; Wilson et al., 2009). Despite this awareness, the literature lacks substantive data on the relationships between what it means to be a man through the lenses of this population, as well as the factors that determine why the homicides occur (Cartwright & Henrikson, 2012; Richardson, 2012; Warley, 2011). The existing research that has attempted to investigate this area has examined the impact of the biological father being missing in the lives of AA male youth. Richardson (2009) highlights the AA uncle as an effective form of social support in the lives of young AA males, particularly

in single, female-led homes and laments the lack of research on the impact of a surrogate father. Richardson's (2009) research revealed that young AA males appropriately guided by surrogates, may be discouraged from delinquency including homicide. In this context, surrogates are being described as uncles, pastors, stepfathers, mentors, coaches and anyone else who has a willingness to stand in the patriarch gap for young, at risk, male youth (Richardson, 2009; 2012). To highlight this point, Richardson (2009) posits the meaning of having uncles in the lives of poor, inner-city, AA male youth residing in single matriarch-led homes through the accounts of several respondents. One 13-year-old interviewee in Jones's study explained the following:

> I could go to my mom with problems, but any boy would rather talk to their uncle or father about a problem or whatever… like getting into a beef (fight or argument on the street) or like girls, or whatever. There are just certain things you can't talk to your mom about. My uncle understands me more because I'm a boy. (Richardson, 2009, p1050).

Another study participant youth (age 13) explained the value of having an uncle stand in the gap for his absentee biological father and incarcerated older brothers. He acknowledged that his Uncle "Big Rich", recently released from prison, served as an invaluable support, protection, and social capitol for him, in part because he was considered a celebrity on the streets, which translated into protection for him and ultimately helped to steer him away from a life of victimization and crime (Richardson, 2009). The interviewee maintained that his uncle supported him and created positive pathways. From his account, this made the difference between him looking for validation in the streets and being grounded in support at home.

Richardson (2009) noted that more research was needed to explore the impact of positive male surrogates on the lives of AA male youth who are at risk. There are scholars who also highlight the challenges of the father being missing in the homes, particularly its association with youth homicide (Agnew, 2005; Cartwright & Henriksen, 2012; Riley et al., 2017; Shutay, Williams & Shutay, 2011). It is explained in this literature, that when a single mother is encumbered with being the primary or sole provider and caregiver, the physical, emotional and mental demands can become so great, it may attenuate the mothers' ability to properly supervise her children, thus putting the youth at an increased risk for becoming involved with delinquent peers and activities.

Adverse Childhood Experiences. In more recent years, researchers have begun to explore whether violent and delinquent behavior in adolescence is part of a general pattern of antisocial and aggressive behavior that appears during childhood or whether it is in fact the result of certain personal, situational, and environmental factors that occur in adolescence and young adulthood (Jennings & Reingle, 2012; Malvaso, Delfabbro & Day, 2015; McCall, Land, Dollar & Parker 2013). Some children may exhibit stubborn, defiant, and rebellious behavior at very young ages and these behaviors progress to more severe forms of aggression and delinquency by adolescence and young adulthood (Cohen, Davis & Realini, 2016; Farrington & Loeber, 2000). Other children either do not exhibit serious problem behavior until they reach adolescence or seem to outgrow aggressive behavior by the time they enter elementary school (Farrington, Loeber & Berg, 2012). A number of psychological, social, and environmental factors could be related to the continuity or change in violent and delinquent behavior over the life course.

A question of great interest to researchers remains the extent to which patterns of aggressive and antisocial behavior in childhood are predictive of violent and delinquent behavior at later ages (Chassin, Piquero, LoSoya, Mansion & Schubert, 2013; Farrington, Loeber & Berg, 2012; McCall, Land, & Parker, 2013; Wolff, Baglivio & Piquero, 2017). From the perspective of violence prevention, researchers are also interested in knowing which factors increase or mitigate the risk for violent and delinquent behaviors at different ages. Understanding continuity or change in behavior during different developmental periods is primary to identifying appropriate points to stage an intervention.

Researchers in the criminological field maintain there is a significant association between adverse childhood experiences (ACE) and delinquent behavior (Baglivio, Wolff, Piquero, & Epps, 2015; Cohen, Davis, & Realini, 2016) including the increased propensity for youth to become involved in serious, violent, and chronic (SVC) delinquency as evidenced in the literature (Fox, Perez, Cass, Baglivio, & Epps, 2015). Using data from over 64,000 de-identified youth in the Department of Juvenile Justice (FDJJ) system 2007-2012, investigators conducted a study aimed at investigating the mediating processes in an attempt to explain the relationship between a child's adverse experiences and SVC delinquency. The study sample consisted of mostly males (78%) of which 43% were AA, 38% white, 15% Hispanic and 4% were classified in the other racial and ethnic categories. The investigators used the Positive Achievement and Change Tool (PACT) which included a semi-structured interview

with a juvenile probation officer, appraisal of child abuse records and a case file examination. The tool had various different measures, emotional abuse, physical abuse, sexual abuse, neglect, witnessing household violence, household substance abuse, household mental illness and household member incarceration. Each factor was coded to represent (1) the presence of the measure or (0) the absence of the measure. An ACE score of 0 to 9 was used to represent the presence of each ACE factor. The researchers revealed the higher ACE scores significantly increased the likelihood of the youth under study being classified as SVC delinquents. The research results showed, AAs, Hispanics and males had an increased likelihood for SVC delinquency. These findings support the seminal work of Felitti and colleagues (1998).

An ACE study conducted by Felitti (1998) found that a strong relationship between the levels of exposure to abuse or dysfunction within the family household during childhood resulted in various risk factors in many of the leading causes of death in adults. For the purposes of this study, childhood experiences with abuse were defined as: psychological, physical, or sexual abuse; violence against mother; or living with household members who were substance abusers, mentally ill, suicidal, or ever imprisoned. Medical principal investigators in primary care settings sought to examine the associations between childhood abuse and adult health risky behaviors and disease. The researcher maintained these associations are significant because it has become clear that the leading causes of morbidity and mortality in the United States are directly related

to health behaviors and lifestyle factors which are referred to as the “actual” causes of death (Felitti, 1998). Further, the investigators in this study determined that abuse as well as other potentially damaging childhood experiences contributed significantly to the development of health risk factors. As such, these childhood exposures should be recognized as the basic causes of morbidity and mortality in adult life.

Modes of Masculinity. Certain characteristics such as aggression, physical strength, and competitiveness, can be closely aligned with masculinity and criminal behavior (DeLisi, Piquero, & Cardwell, 2011; Kilmartin & McDermott, 2016 p. 617). Prothrow-Stith (1995) attributes the propensity for youth to fatally offend in part to those who suffer from free-floating anger. This concept purports that free-floating anger lowers one threshold for violence and is caused primarily by feelings derived from being subjected to disrespect, racial prejudice, and living in poor, underserved and underrepresented communities, thus being afforded limited opportunities (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2011; Prothrow-Stith, 1995). From a sociological perspective, researchers (Bolland, et al., 2005; Black, et al.,2008; Kilmartin & McDermott, 2016 p. 617) note the important role cultural masculinity factors play on male youth who commit homicides. They explained the importance of the roles of thoughts, spectators, self-image, and cultural considerations on masculine homicide offending. In support of this ideology, Black (2008) highlighted the account from one study respondent referred to as 16-year-old Willie B who stated the following:

> He was in my face. That kind of made me think that I can’t let this man treat me like this in front of all these people. That’s the first thing I thought

> about. I don't want people picking on me. If they see him do it then they'll want to do it. Then my life is ruined because I can't get respect from nobody. (Black, et al., 2008).

This account coalesces with the long-established ideology that culture plays a role in the level of community violence and helps to determine how youth may respond in certain situations (Altunes & Ahlin, 2017; Baglivio, et al., 2015; Boccio & Beaver, 2018; Miethe & Regoeczi, 2004; Santilli, et al., 2017). For example, Wilkinson and Deanna (2003) conducted a study to provide insights into youth violence amongst AAs. They found that the most common scenario for the violent events studied surrounded circumstances in which the offender reported that he felt he was being disrespected or that his masculinity or status was being challenged (42%). Other situations included competition over a woman or incidents in which the assailant believed the victim had disrespected the assailant's girlfriend (31%). This trend of certain cultures embracing fighting prowess, aggression, and competitive traits to define masculinity is still relevant and has a deleterious impact on society as evidenced in the literature (Cook et al., 2017; Mancera, et al., 2017; O'Dea, et al., 2018).

Homicide Influences. A classification system of murder groups was developed nearly 3 decades ago by Block and Block (1992) and this classification is still relevant in the more recent literature (Chan, 2015). Block's outline included 6 different murder influences: expressive-meaning the primary objective of the offender was to kill and typically involves an acquaintance, instrumental-the main objective was monetary gain; rape-the primary goal was sexual assault; gang-related-the major goal was gang-related

activities that led to murder; and other and undefined-causation could not be determined. The literature shows similar murder typologies in the more recent years (Chan & Heide, 2016).

In the pioneering research conducted 1991-2004, Block et al. (2005) also found that homicide victims fell into two categories: those "with arrest history" and "without an arrest history" or more specifically, homicide involving recidivism in the criminal justice system and homicide with no prior exposure to the judicial system. The data also revealed offenders with a prior arrest history were more likely to murder victims with a past history of arrests as well. There was a significant decreasing trend in the percent of homicide victims who did not have an arrest history. This data from Block et al. (2005) indicated that the overwhelming circumstances that led to murder were gang-related, followed by undefined, and then instrumental. While the study results offered new insights into youth murderers and their victims during that time, the authors acknowledged that more studies were needed to take a more comprehensive approach, and not exclusively examine this problem through the lenses of those in the field of social work as with this study. The authors went on to recognize the need to increase the understanding of why homicide rates, victims and offenders are disproportionately higher for young Black males compared to Whites; thus, more studies were needed in an effort to accelerate knowledge in this area.

Building off the work of these researchers, other studies support the account of Block et al. (2005) by illustrating that most murders are committed by a relatively small number of ‘‘unusual individuals’’ and the motivations in many cases also aligned with

Block's classification of murders (Jennings, Piquero, & Reingle, 2012; Kates & Mauser, 2007; Loeber & Ahonen, 2013; McCuish, Cale, Corrado, 2018). Criminal homicides by previously non-criminal persons are very rare (Liem, 2013; Light & Ulmer, 2016). According to Branas and colleagues (2017), criminals acquire guns to intentionally facilitate criminal activity. However, some, including convicted felons, also use guns in acts that they deem to be self-protection and this perspective has been held for many years (Kates and Mauser, 2007), in one of the earliest attempts to investigate primary weapon use, Wright and Rossi (1986), conducted a study interview of convicted felons where 58% deemed self-protection to be the single most important reason for owning a gun, cited by 58, while 28 % acknowledged the need to use a gun in committing crimes as ‘‘very important." In the more recent literature, including the Pittsburgh Youth Study, the respondents indicated the primary motives for weapon use were retaliation, protection, robbery, or a drug deal gone wrong (Loeber & Ahonen, 2013; Teplin et al., 2014; Weinberger, Hoyt & Lawrence, 2015). Consistent with the prior research, the existing literature also demonstrate the motivation to kill stems from sex-related crime which is predominately perpetrated by males ages 18 and older (Chan et al., 2015). In fact, males commit approximately 19 out of every 20 forcible sex offenses of which many results in murder (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2014b). Khachatryan et al. (2016) also support Block's murder classification system by indicating the majority of the circumstances of homicides include instrumental, expressive, gang related, other and undetermined.

Also consistent with the explanation by Block and colleagues (2005), Ward (2015) explains that most homicide victims are also "criminals'' in the sense of having come in contact with law enforcement resulting in a record or being regularly engaged in illegal activity. One example of this is shown in a review of 112 homicide cases that took place in St. Louis in 2002. The St. Louis Police Department indicated that 90 % of suspects and 79 % of victims had a felony criminal history (Decker et al. 2005). Only a minority of the homicide victims were not criminals, as far as the authors were able to ascertain from the arrest records. Homicides by individuals that have not been involved in illegal activities leading to an arrest of other non-criminals, are relatively rare as most homicides are committed by criminals of other criminals (Farrington, Loeber & Berg, 2012; Ward, 2015).

Micro-Social Factors

Gang Affiliation. Research has consistently revealed that youth gangs disproportionately contribute to the level of violent crime (Braga, et al., 2014; Chu, Daffern, Klein & Maxson, 2006; Decker & Pyrooz, 2010; Thomas, & Lim, 2012;). There is overlap in the factors that predict youth committing violent crime and those that predict gang membership (O'Brien, et al., 2013). For example, heightened early aggression, low guilt, pro-violent attitudes, witnessing violence, living in poverty and in criminogenic neighborhoods, having a poor family structure, etc. are all risk factors for gang membership as well as youth offending (O'Brien, et al., 2013; Wood & Dennard, 2017). By most accounts, gangs are defined as self-initiated groups with a mutual interest amongst its members, desire to control a particular area, use hand signs to covertly

communicate and are collectively involved in delinquent activity (Decker & Pyrooz, 2010). More recent and narrowly focused descriptions of gangs include, street thugs or individuals engaged in immoral and illegal behaviors with an increased tendency to lead to early mortality, injury, or the imprisonment of all parties involved resulting from this conduct (Smiley & Fakunle, 2016). The National Gang Center defines a gang as a group having several or more members typically 12-24, who share an identity and other symbols including a name. Gang members view themselves as a family and are often involved in a heightened level of criminal activity (Wood and Dennard, 2017). The criminal activity data from the Chicago Police Department (2014) is consistent with the literature that reports an overrepresentation of youth gang members as young minority males living in the urban areas of large cities (University of Chicago Crime Lab, 2015). Most youth who identify as gang members typically remain in the gang for 4 years or less with the majority of the members lasting 2 years (Chu, et al., 2013). Gang membership peaks in mid to late adolescence and declines as youth transition into the early years of adulthood (O'Brien, et al., 2013). Data from scholars (Chin, 2011; Drury & DeLisi, 2011; Wood & Dennard, 2017) who have explored the relationship between gang involvement and violent crime reveal a strong positive correlation between the two. Youth affiliated with gangs commit far more violent crimes than non-gang members, especially weapon related and drug offenses (Braga et al., 2014; McCuish, Bouchard & Corrado, 2015). When compared to similar at-risk youth, gang members are found to be twenty times more likely to commit a drive-by shooting, ten times more likely to commit homicide and four times more likely to commit assault (Wood & Dennard, 2017). Extensive research

(Chin, 2011; Chu, et al., 2012; Farrington, Loeber, & Berg, 2012; Loeber, 2013; McCuish, et al., 2015; O'Brien et al., 2013; Trulson et al., 2015) using longitudinal, cross sectional and other approaches has led to the conclusion that gang affiliation has an independent contributing role in the onset of criminal behavior over and above other risk factors.

A Culture of Violence. The devastating impact of violence has long been known to extend beyond physical harm. Instead, violence has been linked to many negative psychological and behavioral outcomes over the years both internally and externally such as depression, suicide, attention deficits, difficulty adjusting in school, increased aggression, etc. (Barber, Hickson, Wang, Sims, Nelson & Diez-Roux, 2016; Boccio et al., 2018; Cohen, Davis, Realini, 2016; Pierre et al., 2020; Van-Niel, Patcher Wade, Felitti & Stein, 2014). High rates of violence also disrupt peace and cohesion by creating fear, stress, and uncertainty amongst members of the impacted communities (Theall, Shutcliff, & Dismukes, 2017). Research has demonstrated the impetus for a great number of youth to carry guns or join gangs is their fear of other youth who have a reputation for committing serious acts of violence including homicide (Byrdsong, et al., 2016; Chu et al., 2012; Connell, Morris & Piquero, 2016; Fagan & Wilkerson Ferguson & Meehan, 2010). Researchers over the years have asserted the behavior of youth is greatly influenced by perceived social benefits largely from their peers (Connell, et al., 2016; Chung & Steinberg, 2006; Chu et al., 2012; Decker & Pyrooz, 2010; Moffit 1993). As such, children operating in an environment that promotes aggression and violence as opposed to peaceful reconciliation can feel pressured to act in ways that they otherwise

would not (Byrdsong, Devan & Yamatani, 2016; Moffitt, 1993; Stretesky & Progrebin, 2014). In the study conducted by Stretesky and Progrebin, the researchers conducted in-depth interviews with inmates convicted of gang-related gun violence and gleaned that all 22 participants shared the worldview that the streets were extremely dangerous so it was better to be caught with a handgun by law enforcement, than to be caught by a peer where feuds can escalate and without the perceived and real power of a gun. One of the study respondents indicated, “I'd rather get caught with a gun than without” (p. 317). This response illuminates the attitudes adopted by some youth who feel their actions are driven by the potential actions and perceptions of their peers.

Cooley-Strickland et al. (2009) conducted a study that highlighted the effects of youth violence on urban communities and the impact it had on academic performance, drug usage, and behavior. In this prospective, longitudinal epidemiological study, the investigators used stress theory as the theoretical lens to examine and understand more clearly the public health impact that chronic violence exposure had on a large sample of youth. During the researchers’ investigations they confirmed that there was a significant correlation between the emotional, behavioral, academic, and mental health state of the study participants and their exposure to varying levels of violence. Youth with higher levels of exposure to community violence reported significantly higher levels of distress than those with lower exposure. This is consistent with the conclusions drawn by Cooley et al. (1995) emphasizing the consequences of chronic community violence is widespread among social groups and has a long-lasting devastating impact. This phenomenon impacts children’s’ behaviors from early childhood, to adolescence, and well into

adulthood (Cooler-Strickland et al., 2009). The researchers pointed out that much of the extant research and subsequent programs focused on the perpetrators of violence but failed to work on ways to curb violence while also treating the survivors of it. The authors noted that additional studies were needed to enhance the understanding of the risk and the associated variables of youth living in violent communities as too few of them at the time of this publication existed. Other scholars (Barnes, 2014; Bryant, 2013; Connolly & Gordon, 2015; Wacquant, 2009; Wood & Dennard, 2017) concurred that there are gaps in the literature that can bridge the knowledge gaps on that factors that contribute to the decision-making practices involved in the perpetration a homicide.

Social Disintegration. Social regulation and integration mediates deviance and crime, while social disintegration attenuates the quality and connectivity of communities and neighborhoods (Byrdsong, Devan & Yamatani, 2016; Riley, Roy, & Harari, 2017; Taylor & Covington, 1993; Timberlake, 2007; Ulmer & Harris, 2013). Community vitality suffers when social cohesion is under attack which essentially also poses an attack on the institutions of family, education and the economy (Brydsong et al., 2016; McCall, Land, Dollar & Parker, 2013; Singh & Ghandour, 2012). Singh and Ghandour (2012) went on explain this disintegration fosters an environment for increased exposure to lethal violence. As such, social and behavioral scientists continue to examine cases of youth killings in an effort to expand the literature by increasing our understanding of how criminality impacts an individual's social environment.

Baaij (2012), also noted that youth who are victimized subsequent to incarceration have higher violent behavior rates than those who are not victimized. In this context,

victimization means being injured by an attacker who has a weapon. This lends support to the theory that victimization may be a risk factor for future offending (Vries and Liem, 2011). Additionally, youth who involve themselves in dangerous situations (i.e. fights, hanging with a gang, selling or using drugs, etc.) have a higher propensity for both victimization and violent behavior (Berg, et al., 2012; Borowsky & Ireland, 2004; Chu et al.,2012, Intravia, Stewart, Warren & Wolff, 2016). The National Institute of Justice (2014) suggested that youth associating with those who have already offended are at an increased risk to commit violent crime including homicide. A review of many studies (approximately 5,000 inner city youth) showed that a minimum of 40% of the youth reported witnessing a shooting (Jenkins, 2001). Building on this work, multiple studies have found that AA youth are all too often exposed to severe and repeated community violence often involving their love ones and this can have devastating consequences (Byrdsong, et al., 2016; Cohen et al., 2016; Connolly & Gordon, 2015; Jenkins and Bell, 1994; Sheats, et al., 2018; Singh & Ghandour, 2012 & Smith, 2015). As such, public health must support research and prevention program initiatives that address this gun violence epidemic and its structural and socioeconomic determinants that disproportionately impacts AA male youth.

Recidivism Among Offenders. Recidivism plays a primary role in homicide offending. According to Heide, (2013) and Liem, Zahn and Tichavsky (2014), homicide offenders have a propensity to be recidivist offenders and this is not restricted to homicide reoffending, but overall delinquent recidivism. Liem et al. (2014) conducted a study to identify the recidivism patterns of paroled homicide offenders as well as

ascertain if recidivism differs by homicide type. Data from 1977-1983 was retrieved and reviewed from the Pennsylvania's Department of Corrections. The researchers noted, out of the 92 homicide parolees, 54% recidivated and 15% recidivated with a violent offense (Liem, Zahn, Tichavsky, 2014). Moreover, race and a prior conviction of a financially motivated homicide were found to be the strongest predictors for recidivism. Cox and colleagues (2018) agreed with this assertion and explained the increased propensity for many Blacks to recidivate can be attributed in large part to their returns into highly impoverished, racially segregated neighborhoods where criminal activity becomes an acceptable option and means to secure wealth. Other researchers maintain that being young when incarcerated and released has been found to be significant predictors of recidivism as well (Baaij Liem, Nieuwbeerta, 2012; Khachatryan, Heide, & Hummel, 2016; Vries & Liem, 2011). These investigators purport, the individuals who commit a homicide motivated by financial gain when young and at the early stages of their criminal careers may develop an acceptance for their violent actions as a means to an end and consequently reoffend more frequently immediately after release (Baaij, Liem, Nieuwbeerta, 2012; Khachatryan, Heide, & Hummel, 2016; Vries & Liem, 2011). Liam et al. (2014) and Byrd and colleagues 2016, acknowledged that while socioeconomic status, race, and a prior history of criminal behavior were shown to have a strong correlation to recidivist behavior, additional studies focusing on the factors associated with the motive(s) for the original homicide may prove highly beneficial. These conclusions emphasize the need for the proposed study.

Easy Access to Firearms. The level of gun violence and homicides across the globe appear to be influenced by gun access. Scholars maintain countries with easy access to firearms have far higher rates of gun related crimes (Brydsong & Devan, 2016; Cook et al 2017; Decker, et al., 2010). For example, Asian youth gang members in Asian countries, engage in less violent crime including assault, robbery, and extortion, whereas shootings, gun violence, homicide, and aggravated assaults are most common amongst American youth gangs (Chin, 2000; Chu, et al., 2012). Homicide in America predominately involves guns (Cook, et al., 2017). On average, during 2014, one young person under the age of 25 was killed every hour by gunshot (Kelly Report, 2014).

Cook and colleagues (2017) conducted an observational study on patients that were hospitalized for gunshot wounds (GSW) from 2004-2013 using the National Inpatient Sample (NIS) database. Their research was aimed at investigating mortality after admission with consideration for the victim's gender, race, age, intent, severity of injury and weapon type. The study results indicated approximately 30,000 patients were hospitalized for GSWs and 2500 died while in the hospital. Men were 9 times as likely to be hospitalized for GSWs as women but were less likely to die. Twice as many blacks were hospitalized for GSWs than non-Hispanic whites. More than half of the GSWs (63%) were the result of assaults which overwhelmingly involved blacks, and handguns were the most commonly used weapon reported, and Blacks had the highest mortality rate. The investigators also discovered during the study period, the annual rate of hospitalizations for GSWs remained stable at 80 per 100,000 hospital admissions, and the median hospital charges steadily increased by approximately 20% annually from $30,000

to $ 56,000 per hospitalization**.** The authors maintained the assaults on young black males have continued unabated over many years and with escalating costs, thus federally funded research is required to develop effective interventions. This research underscores the widespread threat to the public's health due to easy access to firearms.

Relative to other industrialized nations, the United States has higher rates of violent crime, both fatal and nonfatal, a larger private civilian gun stock, and a higher fraction of its violent acts committed with guns (Cool, et al., 2017; Kelly Report, 2014). Though America only accounts for roughly 5% of the world's population, approximately 40% of all civilian guns are owned by Americans (Kelly Report, 2014). This suggests that America's high rate of gun ownership is partially responsible for the nation's high rates of homicide (Cook, et al., 2017). The belief in a causal effect of gun levels on overall violence rates has inclined some researchers to conclude that limiting the availability of guns would substantially reduce homicide and other violent crime rates (Fowler. Dahlberg, Haileyesus, Guiterrez & Bacon, 2017).

DeLisi and colleagues (2016) conducted a study to determine the characteristics and risk factors that distinguish between youth who commit homicide and those who do not, using data from 1,354 youth offenders of which 18 had been charged with homicide. Of the 18 individuals charged with murder, 17 of them were male, 9 were Black, 4 were Hispanic, 2 were White and 2 from mixed racial groups, with an average age of 17. Only 1 individual from this group lived in a two-parent family home. The murder charges ranged from attempted murder, murder, and involuntary manslaughter. At the conclusion of the study, the investigators' analyses revealed that age and the presence of four

different risk factors significantly distinguished youth who were charged with murder as opposed to those who were not. The homicide offenders were slightly older (17 vs. 16) with a significantly lower IQ (79.27 vs. 84. 59), a greater exposure to violence, higher percentage of gun carrying (0.72 vs. 0.46) and reportedly, an increased perception for living in a neighborhood that had low social order. DeLisi et al. (2016) acknowledged their study should be interpreted as the catalyst for a growing body of research since there were challenges associated with the small sample size which imposed data limitations, thus leading to unexplored issues. As such, the authors explained future research in this area should contain a larger sample of both murderers and nonmurderers in an effort to develop a more valid and reliable profile for juvenile homicide risks.

Homicide interventions

While the proposed study is focused primarily on the homicide phenomenon and not interventions, a brief highlight of some the intervention strategies undertaken including some historical and more recent efforts in Chicago follows. It is now widely recognized that successful programs aimed at reducing youth homicide and violence require a strong partnership between public health, law enforcement, and the community (APHA, 2015; 2017). In recognition of this, there have been historical and more recent efforts between public health and law enforcement with varying levels of success, to increase public health and safety in large part by implementing practices to reduce youth violence including youth homicides (APHA, 2015; Weinberger, Hoyt & Lawrence, 2015).

Housing Policies (Efforts to Improve Social Equality)

In an early intervention strategy to reduce violence in Chicago, public housing units - which had traditionally served as the foundation for increased gang, drug and violence activities (Sampson, Raudenbush, Earls, 1997) were demolished beginning in 1998 through 2007. The high-rise housing units (often referred to as "housing projects") were replaced with garden or duplex apartments with the goal of inspiring a residential population from mixed socioeconomic stratums (Crime Lab, 2012). The last of the Chicago housing projects known as Cabrini Green were demolished in March 2011 and has since been replaced with upscale high-rise buildings and row houses to incentivize mixed-income residency (Crime Lab, 2012). Researchers early on examined the social processes that explain why focused disadvantage and residential instability precipitated high rates of violence (Sampson, Raudenbush, Earls, 1997). The study results indicated the effects of concentrated disadvantage and residential instability on neighborhood violence were largely mediated by the residents' unwillingness to intervene to prevent teen malingering, confront those disturbing the peace, or to work together in a concerted effort to solve community problems. Researchers in the extant literature agree with this account (Brydsong et al., 2016; Stretesky & Progrebin, 2014). According to account of Sampson, et al. (1997), if community residents were willing to increase their collective efficacy efforts by two standard deviations, the community could likely experience a 40% drop in the homicide rates. While structural conditions like high unemployment and high levels of poverty impede collective efficacy within a community (Centerwall, 1984; Chamlin & Cochran, 2006; Intravia et al., 2016; Sampson, Raudenbush, Earls, 1997),

The authors also noted one effective way to effectively address these conditions is through housing policies that mitigate poverty, thus the impetus to rid depressed communities of public housing. Berthelot et al., (2016) also acknowledged the impact of living in an economically deprived environment and how this can promote and encourage tolerance for criminogenic behaviors. An intervention was tested in Baltimore a few years later. Participants were given vouchers which required and allowed them to find private housing in areas where only 10% of the residents were classified as poor, and a control group that did not receive any vouchers or assistance to place them in better areas. Using data from the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), the study found that juvenile arrests in families that moved to lower poverty neighborhoods were significantly lower than the families that moved to high poverty neighborhoods. During the follow-up period, arrests for youth violence in the experimental group were about half that of youth in the control group (Ludwig, Duncan, & Hirschfield, 2001). Follow-up data collected 4-7 years later showed a 15% decline in violent crime arrests among youth in the experimental group when matched to the control group.

The work of Chetty and colleagues (2016), support the conclusions that violence is a likely behavior when confronted with certain neighborhood challenges. These investigators reported on the results of surveys pursuant to town hall meetings focused on eradicating the erosion of Pittsburgh neighborhoods of high incidents of violence due to the structural disadvantage that lends itself to violence (plummeting economic and overall business activities, devaluing properties and reduced public safety). More than 200 eastern residents including, community service providers, academicians,

youth groups, and public officials participated in the town hall meetings as well as completed a survey for a preliminary assessment on gun violence and victimization. The survey results revealed approximately, 82.6% of the respondents experienced a shooting incident in their communities. The primary conclusions drawn from the meetings and the survey were, crime is a preventable social disease with both environmental risk and protective factors that either promote or attenuate the likelihood that a person will engage in violence. The respondents also felt the criminal justice system exclusive of resident assistance would not reduce the epidemic of interpersonal violence. As such, the community needed to implement a comprehensive public health strategy focused on an improved quality of life for residents of all ages, thus the authors suggested changes to the residents' built environments. The following steps were deemed appropriate to help accomplish these objectives: mass and continual community cleanup, the management of vacant buildings and enhanced landlord responsibilities, patronization and facilitation of community-driven business investments and economic development initiatives, the implementation of community-wide social and recreational activities and the decriminalization of AA youth and young adults. The findings from the aforementioned lend support to the roles of fair housing and the ability to reside in communities with less poverty and more social support as key mechanisms to reduce violent crime and homicides.

Programs to Reduce Adverse Childhood Experiences

A popular initiative called the Chicago Parent Program was supported by several studies and funded by the National Institutes of Health from 2009-14 with investigations

carried out by researchers at Chicago's Rush University in collaboration with investigators from the University of Illinois at Chicago and the University of Maryland. The program was administered to 500 AA and Latino families in low income communities who had preschool children ages 2-5 years old. Two groups were established to form the experiment and control groups. Intervention parents were given intense counseling sessions and given parenting tools (Gross, Breitenstein, Eisbach, Hoppe, & Harrison, 2014). The results one year later indicated the Parent Program group had significantly improved self-efficacy and more consistent discipline while negating to use corporal punishment when compared to the controls. When assessed by teachers, improvements were also evident for intervention parents in both racial/ethnic groups (Gross et al., 2014). Latino parents reported significant improvements in their children's behavior as well as parenting self-efficacy. Similarly, the study results for AA parents who participated in the intervention group revealed greater improvement in their children's behavior evidenced by classroom reports and their own observations at home (Gross et al., 2014). This study lends support to the effect of efficacious parenting practices as a way to mitigate children witnessing or experiencing violent encounters, thus reducing the chances for the onset of violent behaviors in later years.

Efforts to Mitigate the Culture of Violence

One program in New York City, a "Stop and Frisk" initiative intended to deter unlawful gun-carrying that could result in violent acts including homicide, appears to have been relatively successful. The firearm fatality rate in NYC declined from 5.4/100,000 in 2000 to 3.6/100,000 in 2011 at a time when the national rate declined

from 3.8 to 3.6/100,000. However, causation has not been determined, and the initiative was subsequently ruled to be unconstitutional because it violated the fourth amendment (Bellin, 2012). More recently, the National Medical Association (NMA), which is comprised of a group of AA doctors with a vested interest in creating health equity and eradicating health disparities including addressing the violence epidemic in the AA communities, has taken a position against gun violence (Frazer, Mitchell, Nesbitt, Williams, Mitchell, Williams, & Browne, 2018). This group has also addressed the excessive and unnecessary use of force by police officers in response to the increased killings of unarmed AA men. Through the advocacy efforts of NMA, a resolution was passed by the House of Delegates (Frazer, et al., 2018). This resolution demanded law enforcement to end all excessive force practices on unarmed suspects. Further, in the summer of 2016, the NMA further established the Working Group on Gun Violence and Police Use of Force, which was charged with advocating for a public health approach in addressing the broad topic of gun violence as well as confronting the ongoing problem of excessive and unnecessary use of force by police officers within communities of color (Frazer, et al., 2018). To facilitate these efforts, the NMA joined the Movement towards violence as a Health Issue and endorsed their recently released Framework for Action (Frazer, et al, 2018).

Programs to Promote Social Connectedness

There have been public health approaches to address violence using different strategies. Active primary strategies include confronting the behavioral factors that

contribute to youth violence (e.g. anti-bullying and drug campaigns), violence prevention education in the classroom and through mass media messaging, peer leadership, and community-based training programs as well as promoting initiatives that support the reduction of gun access (APHA, 2015). These practices are being exercised in Chicago as well. For example, the Chicago Bullying Prevention Workgroup is a network comprised of approximately 20 agencies partnering to provide services aimed at addressing bullying. Bullying as defined by this workgroup is behavior that is aggressive and intentionally causes harm to another individual (teasing, taunting, threatening, hitting, pushing, etc.), is repeatedly carried out over time, and occurs within a relationship that has an imbalance of power. The services that Chicago Bullying provide include but are not limited to sharing information broadly in the communities on bullying principles and strategies to thwart it, promoting the inclusion of populations most at risk (i.e. members of the LGBT community) and working with partners such as Healthy Chicago to specifically address bullying within the schools for middle and high school students (IDPH, 2015).

There are also existing secondary approaches aimed at promoting social connectedness and directed at those who are at greater risk for violence through mentoring/nurturing programs, individual and group counseling, and group programs for youth who have witnessed violence. The Becoming A Man (B.A.M.)—program was implemented in Chicago and in other parts of Illinois in 2009 and is still in practice as of 2018. The B.A.M. program reached as many as 300 adolescent boys in its inaugural (2009/2010) academic year in 14 different Chicago Public Schools (Crime Lab, 2009). This program's mission is to transform the lives of at risk and economically dis-

advantaged male youth by helping the young men believe in their self-worth through intensive counseling, strengthening their connection to and success in school via tutoring and mentoring, first offender programs, and providing the overall support to help youth to reach their full potentials. This youth guidance program is active throughout Chicago.

Together with the Mayor of Chicago, Rahm Emmanuel, then Superintendent, Gary McCarthy, implemented the violence Reduction Initiative (VRI) in 2012 and it ended in late 2016. This Violence Reduction Strategy used frontline community intelligence coupled with increased patrols via off-duty Chicago Police Officers to work (for over-time pay) in the city's toughest neighborhoods deemed to be the south and west sides. These residents are determined to be at highest risk for violent victimization or offending as evidenced in the crime data (CPD, 2015). As such, this prevention focus was designed to serve as a disincentive for criminals to initiate criminal activity by increasing the number of arrests as well as creating an opportunity for Chicago Police Officers to foster better relationships with the affected communities (CPD, 2012). In 2016 this program was cancelled citing the need to make better use of the city's resources as the city had exhausted approximately, $116m in over-time pay (CPD, 2016).

The Experience of Homicide

Living with killing has a devastating impact on more than just the victims and perpetrators; there are indirect victims as well. In each murder, an average of seven to ten family members are left to grieve and manage the loss (Zinzow et al., 2009) Researchers have documented how these "co-victims" may also have to deal with a loss of income, feelings of guilt, responsibility, stigmatization, revenge and anxiety, as well as intrusion

from the media, all of which are stressors that can lead to PTSD and other illnesses (Boyas & Sharpe, 2011; Connolly & Gordon, 2015; McDevitt-Murphy, et al., 2012; Wood & Dennard, 2017; Zinzow et al., 2009). While it is important to gain a greater understanding of how homicide impacts the youth population, there is a dearth of research that examines the perceptions, prevalence and lived experience of those who survive homicide and how this experience is related to internal problems as well as the externalizing issues that may contribute to heightened aggression, thus the increased propensity to offend, re-offend, or become a victim (Connolly & Gordon, 2015; O'Dea et al., 2018; Zinzow et. al., 2009). Whether violence takes the form of gang membership, intimate partner, domestic, child abuse or excessive force at the hands of the police, it can cause devastating and deadly injuries for the individual as well as long-lasting adverse effects on the community (Felson & Paul-Philippe, 2010; O'Dea, et al, 2018; Ouimet, et al., 2018). Violent behavior is akin to the transmission, spread and cluster of a disease of epidemic proportion due to exposure (Kelly Report, 2014). Thus, the presence of violence in a community not only exacerbates the potential number of victims and family members, it also increases the number of culprits likely to perpetrate this violence (Davis & Tsao, 2014). This phenomenon fosters a continuous cycle of violence in the communities affected by this issue.

In one study, researchers examined the impact of neighborhood social conditions including social cohesion and violence and noted, poor neighborhood economic and social conditions contributed to an increased risk of cardiovascular disease among AA women (Barber, Hickson, Wang, Sims, Nelson, & Diez-Roux, 2016).

Similarly, other, investigators found that the conditions that affect blacks disproportionately compared with other groups such as poor living conditions, racism and stressful events such as the traumatic loss of a sibling, all have severe consequences for health. (Thames, Irwin, Breen & Cole, 2019). The conclusions drawn from the aforementioned studies, emphasize the overtly harmful impact of violence that extends beyond the victims as well as the perpetrators including long-term health consequences and an overall threat to public health.

Currier et al. (2007) explained that violent death, especially homicide and suicide, puts an indelible mark on many grievers, significantly more grief than with a nonviolent death. Grief due to homicide has been referred to as 'complicated grief' (CG) or 'prolonged grief disorder' (Currier, Holland, Coleman, & Neimeyer, 2007; McDevitt-Murphy et al., 2012; Santilli, et al., 2017). This reaction is often extremely severe and when protracted, can be life-threatening (Barber, et al., 2016; Fox, et al., 2015). In light of this, and other associated factors, public health officials began to increase the discussions in a national debate on their duties to help reduce murder, particularly within AA communities (APHA, 2015). This included proposals for broad-based, focused, and synergistic preventions aimed at improving population-wide health and safety (Bailey et al., 2017; Byrdsong et al., 2016; Forsythe & Gaffney, 2008; Hay et al., 2018) work that is still very much in progress.

Summary and Conclusions

Decades of research have consistently upheld that poverty and related social disadvantage are key factors promoting criminality. Further, the literature on male Black

youth homicide offending and the roles of gangs, race, economics, social, cultural, and family structure measures have demonstrated significant correlation results as well. Youth violence is a major public health problem since youth are more likely than adults to become the victims and perpetrators of deadly violence and males are significantly more likely to be involved than females. Modest effort has been expended in public health research to understanding the perceptions of the perpetrators of violent crime and those at risk of becoming perpetrators on the socioecological factors and circumstances that give rise to violent behavior. This points to the gap in the literature that I propose to fill. The purpose of this study is to explore the perceptions of AA male youth on probation about the circumstances that give rise to violent behavior that may lead to homicide. Other studies referenced on youth violence did not explore acts of violence from the perspective of the perpetrators or those most at risk of becoming perpetrators or victims. It is important that we learn from their perspectives what causes this type of violent behavior, so that can we apply effective, culturally competent, and comprehensive, interdisciplinary strategies to addressing the youth homicide epidemic. It is hoped that the results will assist policymakers, law enforcement officials, public health professionals and other stakeholders broaden their understanding of the factors that contribute to homicide and assist with the development of culturally sensitive policies and prevention strategies. This will likely include support for the creation of new programs and practices that foster a built environment conducive to the healthy development of productive, socially conscious adults as an alternative to death and incarceration. Despite growing public concern about homicide and decades of

scientific and law enforcement analysis, current understanding of the minority male youth homicide epidemic remains inadequate. The following chapter outlines the approach to accomplish the proposed study aims.

Chapter 3: Research Methods

Introduction

The purpose of this exploratory study is to investigate the meaning and causes of intraracial homicide as perceived by AA male youth who are on probation and living in a high crime community. Despite the documented awareness on how Black males are disproportionately represented among homicide victims, Black male youth living in depressed communities remain an understudied area. In this study, I will explore the extent to which the socioecological characteristics of Chicago's neighborhoods influence the study participants' experiences and perception of violent crime including homicides. Additionally, it is hoped that this investigation will identify the specific phenomena, as perceived by the study participants that lead to murder in given situations. It is hoped this knowledge may assist public health care professionals in developing culturally appropriate and efficacious interventions. In this chapter, I will describe and provide a rationale for my research method, including sampling, recruitment, data collection, and analysis and the measures taken to ensure ethical conduct in the research.

Research Design and Rationale

Research questions

1. What is the lived experience of AA male youth who are on probation about the events and the emotions that lead to interpersonal violence including homicide?

2. What are the lived experiences of AA youth regarding the role of childhood and family in the high prevalence of homicide.

3. What is the lived experience of AA youth regarding the role of Chicago's inner-city social environment in the high prevalence of homicide?

4. What is the lived experience of AA youth regarding the role of education in the high prevalence homicide?

5. What are the perceptions of AA youth regarding the resolution or prevention of conflict?

Role of the Researcher

I will serve as the sole data collector and operate in a participant-observer role. Being of the same racial group as the participants and a former resident of an inner-city, depressed, and crime-ridden community, I expect to foster a safe environment resulting in the collection of rich data. My childhood experience was the impetus for conducting this research study. I am very familiar with this community (West Garfield Park) since doing volunteer work here with Jack and Jill of America Inc., an organization whose mission is oriented to cultivating young, passionate, servant-leaders through volunteerism in underserved and underrepresented communities (Jack and Jill of America, n.d.). For over two years, we have been providing children's books, backpacks, coats, Thanksgiving food baskets, blankets etc. and, as a result, many of the residents are on a first name basis with me.

Further, having experienced the loss of a nephew due to gun violence, and having spent considerable time in the neighborhood, I have a level of understanding and relatability to the topic under investigation that is likely to increase likeability and trustworthiness between the researcher and the subjects. I am aware that my shared

experience with these young men could be expected to invoke researcher bias, which could potentially influence my findings, and for this reason I will be applying a rigorous form of bracketing, documenting my personal attitudes and feelings in a research journal. Finally, I am in contact with the Purpose over Pain organization, which is comprised of a group of parents whose children were murdered. This association has opened an additional perspective into the circumstances that surround these murders, and the pain that these parents are forced to live and cope with every day.

Methodology

The proposed study takes a qualitative approach using heuristic phenomenology. A qualitative approach was decided because as Sweatt (2002) suggests, research involving violence is typically investigated through a quantitative lens. By using a qualitative research approach, I will be able to take a deeper dive into understanding the perceptions and motivations of the phenomenon under study (Creswell, 2009). Further, the reason for selecting heuristic phenomenology is this strategy of inquiry allows the researcher to best identify the essence of human experiences using a small number of subjects on the phenomenon under study and as described by the participants. Phenomenology also fosters an environment that is open to facilitating the emergence of patterns and concepts resulting from the collected data.

Sample and Recruitment

A small purposive sample of AA male youth ages 18-24, who self-report that they are on probation resulting from being convicted of a violent crime, will be recruited for inclusion in this study, using recruitment fliers (Appendix A). The goal is to develop an

in-depth understanding of why Black male youth may kill or perpetrate violence on other Black male youth. With the identified recruitment criteria, it is hoped the participants will have the personal lived experiences to significantly advance this understanding. The total number of participants that will be recruited is not known in advance since this will be determined by saturation, when the data no longer yield new information. However, in reviewing the qualitative literature, the sample sizes have ranged from approximately 5 to 30 research participants (Bansal & Corley, 2011; Krieger, 2016). The sample will be recruited from Chicago's West Garfield Park neighborhood, which was selected because of its extremely high rates of violent crime, homicides, and the racially homogeneous population.

The literature reveals the difficulty in recruiting AAs in research studies (Bonevski, Randell, Paul, Chapman, Twyman, & Bryant, 2014). To overcome this challenge, I chose a neighborhood that I know extremely well in light of the previous volunteer work and the relationships established resulting from that work. Recruitment flyers (Appendix A) will be distributed throughout the neighborhood in which people meeting the inclusion criteria may live; the flyer will include my cell phone number and email address. Additionally, a snowballing technique will be used to recruit people who satisfy the inclusion criteria. Potential participants who respond to the recruitment material, or are identified through snowballing, will be screened to confirm the inclusion criteria are met (Appendix B). For those meeting the inclusion criteria, I will explain the purpose of the study and the process for conducting the interviews. The setting for interviews will be selected according to each participant's preference and may include

public neighborhood locations (i.e. churches, park field houses, libraries, etc.) that will allow a level of privacy and facilitate audiotaping.

Instrumentation

For the screening, I will use the demographic section of the CDC's Behavioral Risk Factor System Survey (BRFSS) instrument, established in 1984 (the Adverse Childhood Experiences model) (Appendix B). This instrument has a category of demographic questions that will be used to confirm the inclusion requirements are satisfied. Though this tool is regarded as the gold standard for gathering behavioral surveillance data (CDC, 2012), I will only use the category that captures participant demographic data for the purposes previously outlined. For the interviews, a semi-structured interview guide (Appendix D) has been designed to prompt and encourage the study participants to talk freely and generate rich data. This document was crafted around the research questions and the theoretical model to gain insight into the topic under study and is designed to maximize depth of meaning and perception. A digital audio-recording device will be used to ensure accuracy; the data will later be transcribed verbatim using the FTW Transcriber transcription software and double checked manually to ensure accuracy. Field notes will be taken to capture observations involving participants' non-verbal body language, intonations, and facial expressions.

Data Collection

At the time of the meeting, I will explain the procedure for the face-to-face interview and that the interview will be audiotaped. Pursuant to this explanation, the study participants will be provided with an informed consent form (Appendix C). All

participants will be recruited in a non-coercive manner and requested to read, acknowledge, and sign the informed consent prior to the initiation of any interviews. For those in which a face-to-face meeting is not feasible or for those participants who are unwilling to be audiotaped, they will not be permitted to participate in this study.

Subsequent to getting informed consent I will use the semi structured interview guide to begin the interview dialogue. First, participants will be asked questions related to their childhood and family experiences. Next, the interview will progress to gleaning the educational and neighborhood experiences as the data show an inverse relationship between educational levels and criminal activity, as well as the roles of childhood experiences, the lived environment and family structures on criminal activity, as these questions are germane to the topic under study. The interview also sought to uncover information regarding the roles of gang affiliations and/or experiences with gangs, cultural norms and practices and any experiences with racism as the literature reveals these are all risk factors for delinquent and criminal activity up to and including the perpetration and becoming a victim of homicide. I then gave participants the opportunity to ask questions.

As a next step, participants were shown extracts from a popular television series called “The Wire”, in which urban behavior is seen to lead to violence and in some cases homicide. The participants were engaged in a one on one discussion in response to the 218 second video clip from the TV series ‘The Wire’. This show was a popular TV series and all participants had seen before. The scene took place in Baltimore, a city very similar to Southside Chicago with robust drug dealing and the associated violence. As a

first step, I set the clip up by reminding the participants about the episode and the events surrounding the battle amongst the show's two biggest stars and opposing drug lords. The battle resulted from several factors including: the killing of a female friend by drug lord, Mario Little; the theft of hundreds of thousand dollars from the other, even bigger drug lord, Stringer Bell; and the orchestrated "hits" (murders) between the two opposing gangs in retaliation for the aforementioned acts. Mario Little is a notorious "stick up" man who robs drug dealers and is feared by many because of his threatening appearance, primarily due to the large scar on his face, and the fact that he always carries a large hand or a shot gun and known for not being afraid to use them. Stringer Bell is the top drug kingpin in Baltimore, always well dressed in suits and by far the wealthiest. Though he participates in the hustle, he is also enrolled in college to study economics and accounting in an effort to legitimize his business and separate himself from the violence and corruption associated with drug trafficking. In the clip, there is a gang battle that ends with Stringer Bell and his bodyguard being murdered by Mario Little. The 218 second video clip began with a gruesome murder of Stringer Bell's female friend via a gunshot wound directly to her face and Mario Little was the perpetrator. After showing no remorse, leaving her to die with blood splatter everywhere, he leaves with a fellow gang member to find Stringer. He has been alerted to his location. Meanwhile, Stringer Bell is with his bodyguard on a construction site, he's very upset, using expletives to admonish and threaten a contractor accusing him of mismanaging his funds and not sticking to their "agreement". Their conversation is surrounded in an illegitimate tone. The contractor, a middle aged, heavy set, White man is visibly shaken up and trying to calm him down, explaining the progress

and claiming there hasn't been any intentional mismanagement of his money, so there must be some sort of mistake. At that point, Mario Little explodes into the room of the construction site armed with a sawed off shotgun and blows down Stringer Bell's bodyguard to his death. Stringer proclaims "Oh sh*t"! and takes off running. The contractor falls to his knees, putting his arms around his face cowering and begging for his life. After watching him plead for his life for a few seconds, surprisingly, Mario Little walks away leaving him unharmed and in hot pursuit of Stringer.

Stringer can be seen running down several dark stairwells unsuccessfully looking for a safe exit when he runs directly into Mario Little's gang member who points a gun at his face. Stringer abruptly stops and yell, "I ain't strapped"! Mario Little comes up behind and around him pointing a shotgun. Stringer begins to plead for his life, hands in the air claiming he no longer wants to be a part of the gangster life and the hustle. He asked them if they wanted money, territory, or how can he bargain, emphasizing he can be a better ally in life than in death. Stringer stated how he is no longer interested in being the opponent. Mario Little wasn't open to anything he was saying, and Stringer Bell realized that. His last statement, "I can't change your mind, so handle your business". To that end, the clip ends with Mario Little unloading and firing many shots into Stringers body, watching him drop to the ground and to his death.

Participants were engaged in a dialogue to invoke their perceptions of the extract and how they might have acted if in a similar real-life situation. Questions were asked to invoke perceptions of what causes conflict, what factors mitigate the propensity for

conflict to escalate, the art of conflict resolution from their perspectives, and what prevents conflict resolution. This approach was discussed with the Walden IRB.

The scripted interview was enhanced with probes to clarify issues which allowed me to gain a greater nuanced understanding of the participants' experiences and perspectives. Participants were invited to tell me anything that they wished to share that was not covered in the semi-structured interview. Individual interviews was conducted face-to-face with each participant. The semi-structured interview questions elicited data on: a) their childhood, backgrounds and important life experiences; b) significant relationships (family, significant other and friends); c) educational experiences d) cultural and neighborhood experiences; e) gang affiliations and/or encounters with gangs; f) encounters with police and experiences with racism; g) the resolution or prevention of conflict; h) and anything else they would like to share. In addition, there were questions and conversation as previously mentioned in response to the video clip. Data were collected utilizing an audio tape to ensure accuracy and to minimize the distraction of note-taking.

All observations from the field notes were recorded by the researcher after the interviews. Audio data was collected by using an .mp3 for data analysis. Subsequent to transcription of all participant interview data, respondents were allowed via phone, in-person or Skype to review the summary of their statements for accuracy as well as to allow them the opportunity to elaborate on their stories/responses and clarify any responses as needed in an effort to ensure accurate representation of the interviews. This

also allowed me to elaborate on the participants' responses and ask additional clarifying questions as needed.

The length of the interviews varied according to participants' availability and their openness. However, it was anticipated that the length of interviews would range between 60 to 90 minutes. The brief notes taken during the interviews were to solely capture the research setting, non-verbal body language and intonations. Any field notes taken were transcribed and synchronized with each participant's interview. The audiotapes will be backed and submitted for verbatim transcription. Participants will receive a $25 gift card for their time and participation ideally at the conclusion of the interviews. However, if the participants decide to withdraw from the study prior to completion, they will still receive the gift card.

Data Analysis

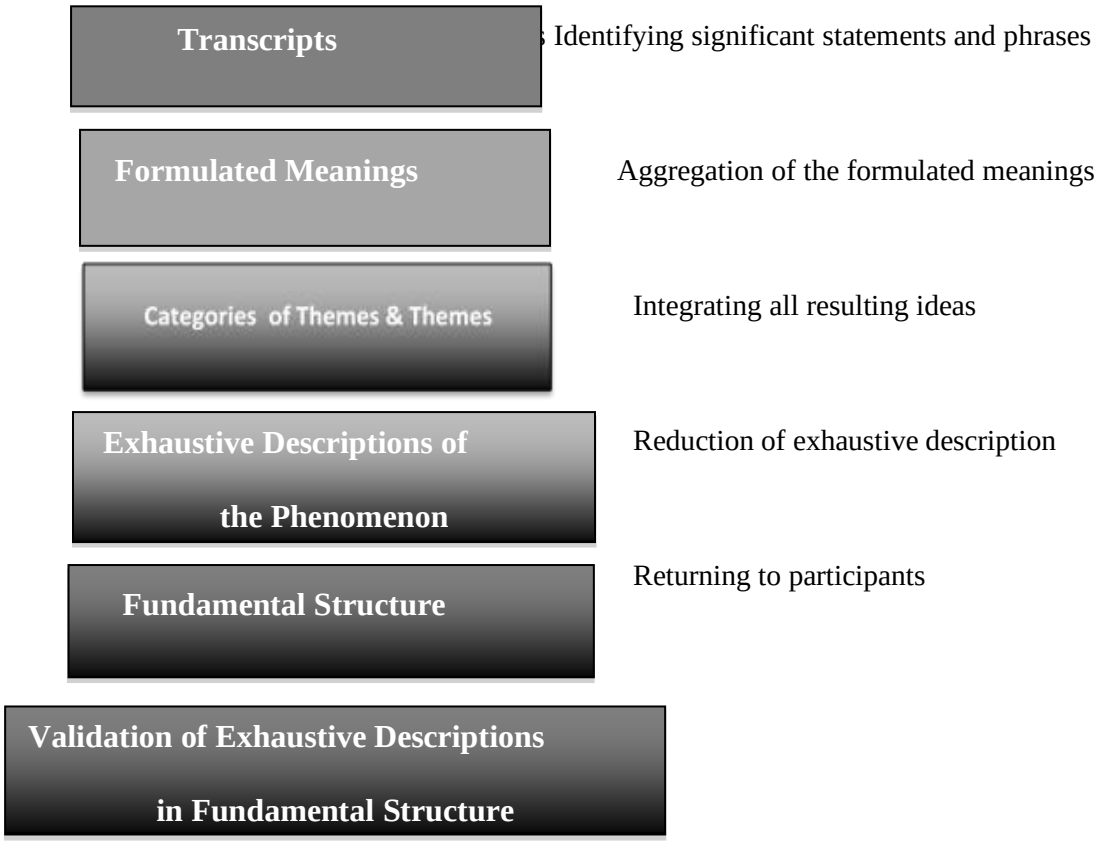
The data were analyzed using the methods of Colaizzi (1978). The transcripts were analyzed repeatedly to ensure the researcher's understanding of the material that was being captured and to extract and record the important parts of the participants' statements and phrases that lent to the researcher's understanding of the meaning behind the statements. Again, I employed the use of bracketing to ensure only the experiences of the subjects were captured sans any of my personal experiences or biases. All extracted statements and phrases were recorded separately highlighting the recording date, time and/or page numbers and paragraph line where the information was retrieved. At this stage, significant statements were classified as anything that explains in-depth feelings,

emotions, coping strategies, triggers, risk, and protective factors of the phenomenon under study.

Next, as the meanings from the significant statements began to formulate, they were categorized into themes according to the meanings derived. For example, all comprehensive descriptions regarding situations that led to fatal violence were organized together, as well as the factors identified by this group that may lead to fatal violence, experiences with racism, perceptions on the role of the participants' social environment on fatal violence, gang affiliations, or experiences with gangs, the roles of family and culture on the topic under study, the role of education on the topic under study and the resolution or prevention of conflict. Formulated meanings were juxtaposed with the original meanings to keep all descriptions consistent and subsequently grouped into clusters of themes and coded accordingly. At this stage of the analysis, groups of clusters of themes that reflect a particular idea, were combined to form a distinctive concept of theme. The objective was for each formulated meaning to fall in a single theme cluster that is unique in meaning from other structures, thus forming an accurate thematic map (Mason, 2002). Following this step, themes that emerge will be well-defined into an exhaustive description. Following the development of all study themes, the phenomenon under study "What are the perceptions and lived experiences of AA male youth who are on probation about the events and the emotions that lead to interpersonal violence?" were extracted. The findings were then reviewed for completeness and richness to provide adequate descriptions and to confirm the descriptions reflected the perceptions of the participant group.

As a next step, redundant or ambiguous material were removed to emphasize the fundamental structure and generate clear relationships between clusters of themes and their extracted themes. The final step was to validate the study findings using member checking. This technique was used to seek the participants' views and approval of the results via phone, Skype, or in-person. Once participants confirmed the results reflect their perceptions and experiences the results were considered valid. For the purposes of confidentiality, all data w encrypted with numeric and alphabetic identifiers and kept in a locked file cabinet accessible to the researcher only.

***Figure 1*. Process of Descriptive Phenomenological Data Analysis by Colaizzi (1978).**



Trustworthiness

Creswell (2009) explains that internal validity is only relevant in studies that try to establish a causal relationship, and as such, is not relevant to this study. However, to ensure credibility and dependability, the investigator engaged multiple data collection methods to ensure that the data are rich and thick. These included observations, interviews, brief notes, and participant checks. I anticipated this produce would produce sufficient triangulation on the participants' realities. The members checks especially, increased the rigor of the study. I also practiced 'bracketing' to reduce any researcher bias that might have influenced the interpretation of the data or the outcome of the study results.

Ethical Procedures

In this qualitative study, adverse events may have occurred since the study involved collecting sensitive data from the participants as well as asking them to view violent excerpts from a TV series which may have invoked reliving or recalling painful experiences. To address these potential issues, I took and passed the online Citi Protecting Human Research Participants training course which also reviews the Belmont Principles. Additionally, I took the necessary actions to protect the privacy of the participants by using pseudonyms when recording responses. Participants were assigned pseudonyms to assure confidentiality. All taped interviews were stored in a secure location and only available to the investigator. Social workers at the Greater Grand Mid-

South Mental Health Clinic offer free counseling sessions to any individual experiencing emotional and behavioral issues and was located less than one mile from the city blocks where the research study took place. All research data will be kept for five years following completion of the study and then discarded using a shredder immediately afterwards.

Summary

In this chapter, I have described the proposed methods of the study, based on the purpose of the inquiry and the research questions. The proposed research was expected to be a suitable effort to address the gap in the literature based on the more nascent youth homicide research. Based on the theoretical framework of this study, there is a direct relationship between the environmental interactions that youth encounter and who they become as adults was predicted. The socioecological model maintains there are influences on the individual, community, and societal levels that put individuals at risk for violence or insulates them from it (Dahlberg, 1998). Given this framework, I expected the data would be sufficient to generate a deeper understanding on why male Black youth are killing other male Black youth and increase our knowledge for the range of factors that motivate or permit an individual to kill another, particularly an individual of their own race and gender. The results are presented in the following chapter.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

This chapter contains the results of a phenomenological study designed to answer the following research questions:

RQ 1: What is the lived experience of AA male youth who witness and live with violence in their daily lives, and are on probation for violent crimes, about the events and the emotions that lead to interpersonal violence and homicide?

RQ 2: What is lived experience of AA youth regarding the role of childhood and family in the high prevalence of homicide?

RQ 3: What is the lived experience of AA youth regarding the role of Chicago's inner-city social environment in the high prevalence of homicide?

RQ 4: What is the lived experience of AA youth regarding the role of education in the high prevalence of homicide?

RQ 5: What are the perceptions of AA youth regarding the resolution or prevention of conflict?

The chapter presents the results of five interviews with AA youth to answer these questions. The Colaizzi method was used to analyze the data. Additionally, the process used to analyze transcripts from the 5 participant interviews to reveal common themes is described in this chapter. There were seven steps of analysis: (a) reviews of participant data, (b) identifying significant statements, (c) formulating meanings, (d) clustering meanings into themes, (e) developing an exhaustive description, (f) producing the fundamental structure, and (g) seeking verification of the fundamental structure.

Setting

All interviews took place in the participants' local neighborhood in public settings that allowed for a level of privacy and were conducive to having an open dialogue on sensitive topics. The participants seemed comfortable and open to participating in this process. As I grew up in a similar environment which may have contributed to the participants' comfort. Two of the interviews took place on a weekday, during late afternoons in a park fieldhouse, another two took place in the community room of a local library on a Saturday also late afternoon, and the last one was at an Applebee's restaurant during the week, close to closing, in a private area where no one else was seated and with very few people in the restaurant. This and all meeting locations were agreed upon because it was important to operate in familiar environments that could lend to the participants' comfort and openness. All participants preferred not to meet during the morning hours due to rest and in one case work schedules. Every attempt was made to accommodate all participants to incentivize attendance and full participation.

Demographics

Five participants were interviewed for this study. All participants disclosed their race and gender identifying as non-Hispanic, AA males. Each participant self-reported contact with the judicial system due to committing a violent crime. Two individuals reported participating in drug trafficking which led to violence; two reported being a part of gang activity, hence therefore drug trafficking and the concomitant violence; and one had become involved in violence over an altercation due to a relationship with someone else's significant other. All were aged 22-24 years old, and all were on probation, one

with an ankle monitor. None of the participants were married and several had minor children all under the age of nine; the youngest participant at 22 had the oldest child, who was 9 years of age, meaning he fathered a child at 13. Four participants were unemployed with one individual being employed in the blue-collar sector as an unlicensed contractor. The educational level attained for the participants ranged from one individual completing nearly a year in college, and four dropping out of high school - one after freshman year, one during freshman year and two after their sophomore years in high school. All participants lived in Chicago's West Garfield Park Neighborhood either with a relative or girlfriend.

Table 1.1

Participant Demographics

Participants	Age	Employ-ment	Parental status	Marital status	Length of Interview	HS Grad	Circumstance that led to violent crime
Participant John	22	N	1 child (9)	S	78 minutes	N	Gangs/drug trafficking
Participant James	24	Y	0 children	S	84 minutes	Y	Drug trafficking
Participant Jacob	24	N	1 child (4)	S	56 minutes	N	Gang activity
Participant Josh	23	N	0 children	S	80 minutes	N	Gangs/drug trafficking
Participant Jimmy	24	N	2 children 6 mths, 2)	S	73 minutes	N	Altercation over a female

Data Collection and Analysis

Each interview was based on the interview questions in Appendix D, and a viewing of the same 218-second excerpt from the TV series 'The Wire'. This series depicts intraracial violence and urban life in Baltimore including the war on drugs as shown from the perspectives of law enforcement, gangs, and drug traffickers.

The excerpt shown was from a season three episode of the Wire subtitled *Middle Ground*. This episode depicts an epic violent face-off between two of the main characters and drug lords, Stringer Bell and Omar Little. The video clip was chosen because it portrays many of the characteristics being investigated in this study including the population and the physical and social conditions present in an environment plagued with intraracial violence, drug activity, masculinity, personality problems, insecurity, and excessive interactions with law enforcement. Each interview started with confirmation of eligibility under the inclusion criteria and signing of the consent form (Appendix C). All meetings were conducted one-on-one with me and each participant. The participants remained anonymous to one another to protect their privacy and identities as agreed upon during the informed consent process as a condition for their participation. The data were collected using an audio .mp3 recorder coupled with notes to capture any body language and expressions an audio recorder could not. The data were collected over a 5-week consecutive period, and the interviews lasted between 56-84 minutes, varying based on the participants' verbosity. Following each interview, all digital recordings were immediately downloaded to my laptop on the hard drive and desktop. The field notes taken were immediately typed and paired with the associated audio interview. Each interview file (audio + field notes) was transcribed verbatim and backed up on a flash drive. Each participant received a $25 Target gift card at the conclusion of the interview.

Follow up meetings were scheduled with each respondent to review the transcripts for accuracy and to provide an opportunity to clarify and change any of the responses as deemed appropriate. This step proved to be more challenging and took

longer than initially anticipated. Nonetheless, over another 8½ -week period, each participant eventually participated, three remotely using the iPhone FaceTime feature. The other two participants were willing to meet at the previous interview locations to confirm the veracity of their statements. Following a careful verbal and visual review of each question and individual responses, and pursuant to the need to add a few clarifying statements, all interview responses were verified and confirmed for accuracy evidenced by the participants reviewing the edited responses. All clarifying statements were made directly onto the transcripts in real time to mitigate the propensity to mischaracterize any of the participants' statements.

As a next step, I reviewed all participant accounts at least three times each, to glean the statements that directly illuminated the experiences of each participant growing up in their families, living in the West Garfield Park neighborhood with violence, attending school, cultural influences to violent behavior, conflict resolution factors, gang affiliations, and their overall perceptions of intra-racial male youth violence up to and including homicide. Five main topics emerged: drug trafficking, family, culture, gang affiliation, and modes of masculinity. The statements or phrases in each interview that described perspectives, experiences, risks, coping strategies, and the suppression and triggers of intraracial male violence were isolated, stored separately with the participants' pseudonym, interview date and time, and line in the transcript.

In an effort to suspend any presuppositions or researcher judgment, thus allowing a clear and unbiased understanding of the data to emerge for interpretation, bracketing was applied in a most rigorous form.

To accomplish this task, as part of my reflexive journaling throughout the data collection process, I deeply explored what I considered to be the phenomenon under study-AA male youth intra-racial violence. I recorded all the different ideas, questions and terms that immediately came to my mind from this central topic and in consideration of the literature reviewed. This exercise helped me reflect on a deeper level about my biases. For example, I jotted down phrases that I conjectured were the root causes of the phenomenon under study and in consideration of my own experiences, systemic and environmental racism, lack of social programming, parent training and accountability, employment and educational opportunities, mental health, etc. In this way I believe I was intentionally able to avoid the transmission of bias or any preconceptions and theories.

Applying Colaizzi's seven steps, I clustered a set of significant statements into 10 theme categories followed by the development of exhaustive, inclusive descriptions of the lived experience of the phenomenon under study. They are presented below by research question.

Table 1.2

Themes associated with the perception and experiences of AA male youth on violence & homicide

Theme	***Exhaustive Description***
Theme 1	These Young Men are Immersed in a Culture of Violence.
Theme 2	All Young Men in This Environment are Exposed to Trauma
Theme 3	Unstable, Single Parent Homes are Normal
Theme 4	Instability at Home Leads to Insecurity, Fear and Lack of Confidence
Theme 5	There is Anger at Absent Fathers and an Obligation to Provide
Theme 6	Modes of Masculinity and Respect
Theme 7	Poverty Is the Norm, And It Drives Young Men Turn to The Hustle
Theme 8	Persistence, Resilience and Humor

Theme 9	All Participants Reported a Distressing Educational Experience
Theme 10	The Best Way to Prevent Violence is to Avoid Altercation

Results

Research Question 1 – Living with Violence

What is the lived experience of AA male youth who witness and live with violence in their daily lives, and are on probation for violent crimes, about the events and the emotions that lead to interpersonal violence and homicide?

Theme 1: These Young Men are Immersed in a Culture of Violence.

A common theme among all participants was the violence they experienced in every facet of their lives including socialization with peers, within their family structures to include domestic violence, witnessing interpersonal violence as defined by the cultural principles of masculinity that were projected on to them. The participants maintained that living in a regular culture of violence particularly in their neighborhoods and families resulted in a natural progression into many of the same behaviors that they witnessed, nearly on a daily basis. They attributed most violent acts to disrespect, either disrespect for oneself, another man, or his property (see theme 8). Participant Josh summed up the tone of the overall comments from the participants this way:

> Living in a neighborhood where violence and hustling was everywhere, it felt like the norm. It was all you saw, so it's what you did. Things can get ugly, but it's either you eat or get eaten, you know what I mean?

Participant Jacob described how men are raised to be violent in order to survive:

> I mean.. if, if you're growing up with all this sh*t around you, it's just what it is (the norm). Ain't nobody gone be on that MLK (Martin Luther King) peace stuff, cause that don't work on a aggressive n*gga, plus you don't really see that. You gotta….you gotta speak the same language as everybody else to exist in this environment or you won't make it. I mean, I was always taught that if someone hit you, you go for broke (expend all physical efforts to overtake an opponent) and hit harder, if someone try to get you in any way, you betta get them first. If you got jumped (fought by multiple individuals all at once) or something, I was taught you betta f*ck at least one of 'em up to show everybody else what it was. All my homies (friends) are taught the same thing, I mean...that's the way it's gone be all around you, so you just got raised to be that way, or be a pussy (punk).

It is clear that growing up in a culture of violence increases the chances for individuals to become perpetrators of violence. The participants unequivocally attributed living in an environment encumbered with structural violence as a primary contributor to the continuous cycle of violence, primarily in the name of self-defense and survival. Though these statements underscore the fact that youth witnessing violence and living in constant violence are more likely to become perpetrators or victims of violence, the data also reveal a level of resilience, strength, and humor even in the face of residential instability, neighborhood disorder and inequality. This is addressed more fully under theme 8 below.

Theme 2: All Young Men in This Environment are Exposed to Trauma

Living in an environment like this is to be continually exposed to traumatic events like the following experience of participant Jimmy. He recalled his older brother being a

street hustler who used delinquent activity (drug dealing and retail thefts) as a means to provide for the family. He also maintained this brother introduced him to the "street game" and actually succumbed to an early death at the age of twenty-two resulting from and intraracial altercation in broad daylight where he was murdered and actually found by their mother. He shared his belief that this traumatic experience was the catalyst to his mother's sobriety.

> I heard her scream in a way that I've never heard anyone scream before. When I ran outside, I saw her rocking my brother screaming. " My baby! my baby! my baby!" with her head pointed to the sky. There was blood everywhere. All over him and all over her. She was screaming to the top of her lungs asking God, why? I remember being paralyzed with grief I guess; cause I couldn't move. I felt like a thousand pounds was resting on my chest or somethin, and I could barely breathe. They said I fainted or some sh*t. Yeah- she ain't been high since that day. That's the one good thing that came from his death. They say what don't kill you makes you stronger, right? Moms got stronger.

By all accounts one could argue that his brother was not the only victim, Participant Jimmy was a co-victim due to the mental and emotional trauma he suffered as a result of this tragedy. However, despite this horrific experience, Jimmy demonstrated a relatively positive outlook about an incredibly grim situation and viewed himself as a survivor in lieu of a victim. Another example of trauma was James's description of what

it was like growing up around his parent's intimate partner violence and witnessing his drunken father punching his mother.

> I remember my father and my mom fighting all the time. This time my father wanted to leave. Like I said, he was a alcoholic. He had slept off his alcohol or his drunkenness, So, he's ready to go get it again, start all over, and my mother wouldn't give him the keys to the car, so they got into a fight. And she was sitting on a chair or a couch or something. And I remember him grabbing her by her chest, the dress of her chest and pulling her up. And when he did that, I jumped in, a little kid. And I was like, Let go my momma! And, I was just punching like that (arms flailing). And I began to ... I bit his pants, trying to bite him, and the ... his pocket went in my mouth. And I began to throw up, and that's what stopped the fight, because they was trying to see what's wrong with me.

Though a minor participant witnessing domestic violence is a fearful experience and can be psychologically damaging, Participant James defending his mother was a noble gesture and signaled he understood the poor judgment in striking a woman, especially one that is your wife and mother of your children. Two years after his father's punch to his mother in the chest, she had a heart attack and died, and Participant James became convinced that his father had killed her.

> And to piggyback off that, when she died, she got a heart attack about 2-years later. But in my mind as a kid, because after the fight she showed us her chest, she's like, "You made my, you made my chest bruise," or whatever.

> It was red or whatever. And I related a red chest to her heart. And I told my father one day, I said, "You killed my mama!" And he was shocked, and he said, "What are you talking about?" I said, "You killed my mama!" I said, "Because when you grabbed her in her chest and her chest was red, you caused that" As a kid, I related that-to her death. It was deep for me.

I could tell by observing his body language how recalling this story created a wealth of emotions for Participant James, so I wanted to provide him with the appropriate time and space to discuss this sensitive topic only to the extent he felt comfortable sharing. When he abruptly switched topics, ending this portion of our discussion, I supported him by not attempting to explore the subject further, since it was noticeably difficult for him.

The participants also described the trauma of being marginalized by police as constant potential suspects instead of civilians and branded as thieves by neighborhood storekeepers, both treatments driven by the fact that they live in a lower socioeconomic environment. Participant John expressed his frustrations from being subjected to constant negative preconceived notions about he and his friends whenever they entered a store as patrons:

> Man, we was shorties but just because we lived here, every time we entered one of these stores, they following you around, looking at you all crazy, some would even ask "What you want? You got money"? Now, why the f*ck would we be in the store if we ain't got no money? They automatically thought we were in there to steal. I guess cause you know, you Black, ain't got the best sh*t on, but we was shorties man, trying to buy candy or chips or somethin. Even to this day, though

> not as bad cause they know you can deal with ‘em differently, they try to look down on us but not all of us rob or steal. Not all of us. So, I’m like….why are you over here if you despise us so much? Why set up shop here when you look down on us over here like we less then (than) and think we all thieves? Why take our Black dollah? I swear I hate them Arabian mutha f*ckas for that.

Racial profiling is common for this community and is viewed as another form of trauma. All my participants reported being unjustly profiled simply because they were poor, male, and Black, which led to multiple unpleasant encounters with the police, which invoked considerable rage. Respondent John shared the chasm between the community and the police:

> Police supposed to serve and protect, but they ain’t sh*t! Not to mention they f*cking with you all the time for no apparent reason other than who you is. It’s what I’ve come to expect from their dirty ass. To them, Black lives don’t matter. To most people, Black lives don’t matter.

For the youth in this study, internalizing such negativity contributed to feelings of anger, frustration and defiance resulting in the onset of a litany of risky behaviors including the perpetration of violence.

Research Question 2 - Role of Childhood and Family

What is the lived experience of AA youth regarding the role of childhood and family in the high prevalence of homicide? Three major themes emerged in response to this question.

Theme 3: Unstable, Single Parent Homes are Normal

Important family factors common to all participants were that they grew up in violence-ridden neighborhoods, extremely poor, food insecure, and experienced a lot of chaos in their upbringing that impacted their psychological and emotional health, thus influenced their decisions and ultimately their paths. The participants shared similar circumstances in their lived experiences. Three (John, Jacob, Josh) grew up in single matriarch-led homes and either never had a relationship with or knew their biological fathers. James grew up in a patriarch-led home following his mother's death due to a heart attack when he was almost nine. Participant Jimmy essentially grew up with his other siblings without any parental supervision due to drug addiction and imprisonment. His mother was an addict during his pre-adolescence and most of his teen years, now clean for the last 6 years. His father has been incarcerated most of his life, so they have never gotten the opportunity to get to know one another or foster a relationship, although they have recently begun to connect. He explained he and his three brothers, two older and one younger, kept their living conditions private from school administrators and other adults to avoid being split up and going into the foster system, another example of resilience. All participants acknowledged their childhood experiences were attenuated due to the absence of a parent and in at least one case, both parents.

When asked to describe childhood and family experiences, Participant John maintained that family disruption resulting from incarceration or abandonment and the associated instability in his life as well as his friends' lives while unfortunate, was normal. He shared his perspective,

> Ain't nobody have a father at the crib (home), so it wasn't unusual. I mean if yo pops wasn't in the pen (jail), he wasn't around anyway because he had moved on to his next bitch, and when that happens the kids get lost in the drama cause he don't want to deal with yo momma anymore, so you got caught up too. Mom stay pissed cause he den (then) got with a new chick (girlfriend) and fathered some mo (more) kids or playing daddy to kids that ain't even his, and ain't even taking care of the ones he already got. It's unfortunate that the kids get caught up in the drama, but as a man now, I get it.

Lack of family support was a common pattern. All participants reported a lack of structure and support from their parents, either because the parents were not home a lot, or because family support was not made a priority. This created many challenges that directly influenced the decisions that set these young men on the path to criminality, including not having any rules or supervision to prevent bad behavior. Participant Josh described his experience this way:

> My mom was gone most of the time. She worked midnights in the only job she had. So, you got an older brother and sister looking after me, I got a chance to do pretty much anything I wanted to do, so there was not a whole lot of structure there. Pretty much anything I wanted to do I did and that led me to hanging in the wrong crowd. It was just no structure, just no structure at all, there was nothing.

Participant Jimmy responded to this question in a similar fashion when he described his experiences with his siblings:

> It was us against everybody-- the world. My mother wasn't there, pops (father) wasn't there, aunt and uncles got their own kids they tryin to support, so we made it do what it do (work a deviant plan to one's advantage).

A third respondent, John, lamented how the absence of his mother lead to missed opportunity:

> If she was there, maybe I would have got better grades. Maybe I would've went to college, maybe I would have stayed in school, maybe I wouldn't went to jail, maybe I'd be more successful now. Jacob noted, "I could've turned out a lot differently if someone was there to oversee my daily actions. I might have took (taken) a different path or something."

Theme 4: Instability at Home Leads to Insecurity, Fear and Lack of Confidence

At the personal level, unstable family structures commonly resulted in feelings of fear and low confidence. In four out of five cases, there was no dad in the home to protect and affirm; and though Respondent James had a father in the house, he reported that it still felt like he didn't have a father. Feelings of insecurity emerged, and not being safe was an important part of all of these young men's lived experiences. For example, Participant James explained:

> I had my sister who, she was my only sister, so she supported me, but what can a female do to provide protection? And, she was trying to help me you know, but she was only maybe a couple of years older than me? So, it

> wasn't a whole lot that she could do. My father didn't know how to be a father or a man, so he couldn't show me how to be one. He didn't know how to support me, provide for me or make me feel safe just in general. Hell, he didn't know how to support and keep his self-safe, and I've made peace with it.

Theme 5: There is Anger at Absent Fathers and an Obligation to Provide

All these young men were angry, especially at their fathers. Participant John expressed his feelings of anger and resentment toward not having a father present to protect and provide when growing up.

> It wasn't fair. I had to grow up too quickly, you know? My pops wasn't sh*t! I saw and did a lot because someone had to protect and provide for the fam (family). Someone had to let n*ggas (slang pronunciation of the n-word) know what it was in case they wanted to try something (cause harm). I hate when people act like feeling safe is just granted. Maybe for the Cosby kids, but definitely not around here. I had to carve out my own way, for me and the fam, but that shouldn't have been *my* job. I didn't have a dad at the crib, so I had to create the safety net, help put food on the table cause we wasn't eating 3 meals a day, you know?

This young man went on to explain how stepping into the role of provider and protector in the absence of his father led him to crime:

> And that pushed me….pushed me in a direction that….honestly I don't know I would choose all over again if I could. I mean don't nobody want to be locked up and treated like an animal, but I didn't have no one who was

> going to feed and protect me from the wolves out here in these streets but me and later on my guys (gang members). At the end of the day, I got caught up because I was tryin to be better than him and provide and protect for me and later on my son. I mean.. that's kind of where it all started. I don't regret my son or nothin like that, but I'm just sayin, I probably would've took another route, if he was there, man to man, to show me the way, to protect me, provide, teach me. I protect and provide for mine at all cost (my family) because I know what that feels like not to have that from a man, a father.

It was clear from the participants' perspectives that in large part, one of the triggers for the perpetration of violence is engaging in risky behaviors including gang activity in an attempt to provide, and these actions can also lead to having to use violence to protect oneself, family, and friends. While showing gallant behavior as a protector, these very actions perpetuate the cycle of violence that plague the communities in which they reside and increase the number of violent injuries up to and including homicide. It is also noteworthy to point out, despite the struggles inherent with not having a father and male role model in their lives, an analysis of the participants' responses revealed a desire to break the cycle of being an absentee father including the forgiveness and acceptance of their own fathers' absences and shortcomings. There were expressions for wanting to be better and present in the lives of their own children in order to offer the financial resources and protection they so desperately craved but did not receive as children. Participant John reflected on not wanting to recidivate and relapse into criminal activity

which could mean incarceration and having to leave his child again, without a father, "Naw (no), I can't leave mine ever again, and I ain't no mo (more). I've got to be there to take care of lil (little) dude (term of affection for son) and I will."

Theme 6: Modes of Masculinity and Respect

'Respect' and 'masculinity' are hugely important in the lives of these young men. Any breach of proper respect is considered justification for harming another male, and violence is sometimes a way to earn respect and discourage potential attacks. When describing the role of manhood, and how it factors into violence, including homicide, four of the respondents described an intolerance for disrespect. Participant John was especially clear about it:

> There's a code of respect on the streets and if you violate it, then you gotta be ready to deal with whatever comes to you, and that could mean the difference between yo (your) life and death, and that's real talk (sincerely speaking). A man can't stand for no disrespect from another man.

Respondent James pointed out how disrespect is often a trigger for violence:

> Things only escalate if one man don't respect another man including his family and hustle, and it doesn't have to be that way. I was never looking to disrespect, ever.

Participant Jacob nearly agreed verbatim, "We all can get along and nobody get hurt for the most part, as long you respect the next man's hustle, belongings and his family". Participant Jimmy expressed his views on what causes one to become violent:

> There won't be no smoke (trouble), but you can't allow disrespect from another man without repercussions. He's forced your hand. A coward dies of a thousand deaths, but a man dies of one. I ain't going for no disrespect, period.

These responses paint a lucid picture of the value the participants put on respect and protecting their families. Throughout this process, I learned from their perspectives the social construction of their male identities was largely defined by toughness, being fearless and a person that garnered and demanded respect from others. I also discovered in each interview the respondents underscored the importance of keeping their families' safe by any means necessary and that included gang affiliation in an effort to add an extra layer of protection. However, it is clear the approaches to acquire respect and insulate their family and themselves from harm contribute significantly to the continual cycle of intra-racial violence up to and including homicide.

Research Question 3 - Inner-city Social Environment

What is the lived experience of AA youth regarding the role of Chicago's inner-city social environment in the high prevalence of homicide?

Participants were asked a series of questions to glean their perspectives on the role of their social experiences while living in Chicago's West Garfield Park neighborhood with its high prevalence of intra-racial homicides. Two major themes emerged from their responses, poverty, and persistence.

Theme 7: Poverty Is the Norm, Young Men Turn to the Hustle to Earn Money Quickly

An important micro-social factor in the lives of these young men was their impoverished environment, and the role of this in promoting crime. All the interviewees recalled suffering from the effects of poverty and its limiting impact on their social experiences including how it influenced their criminal trajectories. Respondent Josh recalled:

> More money takes you out of the situation that you're in. If you're making money, maybe you don't have to stay in the neighborhood that you stay in and have the challenges you have. It's easier to have money to go places and do positive things versus not having any and wanting to do something you can't, so you surrounded by things that aren't on the up and up (illegal). I mean, do you deserve less because you're from the hood? Because that's how it felt when I was younger, so what was the quickest way to earn some good money? And so, that's what n*ggas did, but when you enter the hustle, it comes with a lot.

Participant Jimmy acknowledged how his socioeconomic status denied him access to better and equal opportunities, thus shifting him in the wrong direction:

> When you're a shorty (child or adolescent) in the hood, you don't have resources. All you can do is just hangout all day, ain't no camps or none of that sh*t. It's just hanging out with your homies (friends) and that can lead to getting into a lot of mischief…yup a lot of mischief (laughter) then next thing you know one thing den (then) led to another.

Participant Josh described the impact of his built environment on his experiences.

> When you're born in this environment, you're automatically put in harm's way. Your zip code even at the age of what 2, 3, 4, 5, put you at harm because of all the violence you live, see and hear in and outside of your house. Even if you are minding your own business, a bullet ain't got no name on it, see what I mean? I learned how to get down when I heard gunshots on a regular basis when I was a shorty (young kid), I remember, I had to be bout (about) what 4 or 5? My momma used to yell "Get down! Get down!" so, you already know what that means, and you know what, looking back, that probably did something to me, to my mind, to how I processed fear and stuff. I mean you get used to gunfire so it ain't as scary as it might be for a kid growing up in the burbs (suburbs). For a long time, I used to think everybody lived like this (laughter).

Participant James explained how deeply rooted and complex the problems are when living in what is akin to a war zone without the financial means to escape it.

> People don't understand what it's like living in a poor neighborhood with no real way out. I mean you don't really know it's poor until you grow up cause everybody around you living the same way, see what I mean? You got abandoned buildings, a whole bunch of slum lords, whole families crammed in one apartment, ain't nobody got no car to really even go out like that, you got Folks (name of a Chicago gang) and well…..let's just say other gangs on every other few block. It's a recipe for disaster! And.. that's exactly what you get! Disaster! Ain't nobody got the means to

> move, so you learn how to deal, you know? And, sometimes this means doing stuff with people you don't want to f*ck with in the first place! At least that's how it was for me. I was a good kid, and I ain't mean harm to nobody, but I got caught up, all in the name of trying to get money to escape my circumstances. I mean you do get tired of the bullets spraying, not targeting you, but they can find you. A bullet ain't got no name on it, see what I mean? You gotta stay away from certain blocks and all that stuff and……yeah, cause living in the hood ain't for sissies (laughter). The one good thing though, you don't really know no betta when you're younger cause it's all you been shown.

This quote really illuminates the salience of the built environment to this vulnerable group. Having an awareness of the influence it has on the topic under study is critical to our understanding in furtherance of identifying and applying potential solutions.

Theme 8: Persistence, Resilience and Humor

The one trait of many that did not go unnoticed during the data collection process was the upbeat spirit of all the participants, for example, Participant Jimmy. Notwithstanding the many seemingly insurmountable challenges that he had encountered growing up, he had a positive outlook regarding the situations. He demonstrated a level of gratitude for his mother's sobriety and made peace with his brother's death, unarguably a testament to his strength and positivity. Hearing the participants' accounts, I was reminded how the inner city feels like a war zone for those who live there. It can test your mettle and can

bring out the worst in you, but also the best. The murder of Participant Jimmy's brother in the street, and Participant Josh recalling regular exposure to gunshots as early as he could remember as a young child, or Participant James constantly having to dodge bullets as well as certain areas due to heightened violence are certainly events experienced in a war zone. Notwithstanding the many challenges the participants encountered, good qualities still emerged in the face of the oppressive conditions in which they lived. The participants were able to exemplify in their responses a sense of community and cohesion amidst all the chaos, and this is exemplified in Participant James's statement. He explained:

> Wherever you live at is home. Good or bad, it's home. So, when you ask me to describe my experiences in my neighborhood environment. My neighborhood is home. Is there violence? Yes, there's violence. Is there drugs sales? Yep, drug sales. But it's home and wherever home is you get used to it and it's the norm.

Participant Josh described neighborhood relationships built on trust and reliance on one another.

> We don't call no police because we take care of each other. The lady next door to me, she knows if I'm out there, she know ain't nothing going to happen to her babies. So, you think she going to call the police on me because I done went upside somebody head (assaulted someone)? No. Ain't nobody…. man please, we protect each other. We are the cavalry. No cavalry's coming.

Respondent Jimmy expressed his thoughts this way:

> Many people might consider this the ghetto, but it doesn't mean we're bad people, and it doesn't mean we don't have good hearts and care about one another cause we do. For the most part, we look out for the shorties and women especially. We're in it together.

Research Question 4- Educational Attainment

What is the lived experience of AA youth regarding the role of education in the high prevalence of homicide?

Theme 9: All Participants Reported a Distressing Educational Experience

A common theme during the interviews was the frustrating and sometimes humiliating experience of going to school as a child. All participants reported attending under-resourced schools where they felt they were treated poorly by faculty and administrators, and four out of five of the interviewees attributed this prejudicial treatment to not performing well, as well as belonging to the lowest socioeconomic stratum. Participant Jacob stated,

> I don't know if it's my guilty conscience thinking that they looking down on me because I'm performing a certain way originally, or they really felt like that. But I just, I felt like just no one was really there to genuinely help me. They didn't care, so I didn't. They was just there because they had to be, getting paid. Security were there because they probably, you know, needed a job. Teachers there because they had to be, because they need to get paid. It's nothing. It was just a big cycle of nothing. I felt like nothing, so I just left.

Another individual shared what he felt was an unwarranted reaction from an AA male teacher when he (Josh) was cracking jokes during class: Dude (teacher) pulled out a $100 bill and said, “See this, look at it now, because you will never be able to earn this”. He said, “You will never amount to anything, so you may as well dropout now”.

This and other stories about the participants’ educational experiences with teachers and administrators demonstrate how these encounters influenced their educational trajectories. Participant James reminisced how a grade school teacher forced him to participate in a classroom grab bag despite him requesting not to participate because he knew he and his sister never received gifts so it was very unlikely his father would purchase a gift on his behalf for a classmate:

> I told her I didn’t want to be a part of it, and she said, “You’re being in the grab bag, you’re being in the grab bag”. So, I did my best to find one of my toys that were in good condition. I found some old wrapping paper and I wrapped it the best I knew how. Well, the student that got my gift noticed it was chipped and wasn’t new, she yelled out in front of the whole class, “Ugh, this is old and chipped! I don’t want this! I want my gift back!” Now, mind you, it was only a pair of socks that she had gave me, but I was so embarrassed, I tried to quickly give her the socks, but the teacher punished my a_ _ for bringing an old toy. I couldn’t believe it when I told that lady I didn’t want to participate, but she didn’t care. They treated us a certain way because we were poor, I think. I wasn’t a bad student, but you know what? For some kids the way they treated us turned

> them off from going to school. For me, it made me think to myself, I'mma (I'm going to) show you. I'm going to go all the way and end up making more money than your dumb ass (laughter).

Four of the participants made no association between educational attainment and criminality but James unequivocally felt that education and delinquency were strongly related. He shared that his plan had always been to attend college and secure a good job as a means to create a better life than his childhood circumstances afforded. In fact, he was a relatively high performing student, but he was incarcerated shortly after beginning his studies at a four-year college in Illinois.

Most of these participants also reported that their family members, friends, and acquaintances never completed high school, so there wasn't any motivation or expectation for them to complete it either. All but one participant maintained there wasn't a lot of emphasis put on education, so it simply wasn't a part of their lived experiences. Again, as indicated in theme 7, the desire to earn money quickly to escape poor circumstances was mentioned.

Participant Josh described it like this:

> If I wanted to go to school, I did and if I didn't I didn't. Mom didn't trip and no one's mom did. Nobody saw that as the way to go make money. You talking what…20 years before you see a chance to make money compared to 20 days? And, sometime less than that! Come on na (now).

In economically disadvantaged neighborhoods, it is not uncommon to find heightened desires to make fast money, residents have low levels of educational

attainment, and West Garfield is no different. Further, when the participants in this study were students, not having parents and in some cases, teachers hold them accountable for academic achievement, didn't lend to their valuing a good education, and this had a deleterious effect on their lives.

Research Question 5 - Prevention of Conflict

What are the perceptions of AA youth regarding the resolution or prevention of conflict? Two major themes emerged in response to this question. Participants unanimously stated avoiding known areas where opponents hang, and carrying a gun helps to avoid conflicts.

Theme 10: The Best Way to Prevent Violence is to Avoid Altercation

All those interviewed felt the best way to prevent conflict was to try to avoid it by not hanging in the areas and around people they did not like which could likely result in arguments that could escalate to physical acts. The participants repeatedly described this strategy indicating it was showing respect to their opponents to avoid the areas where they resided or hung out. Participant John summed up this perspective:

> The best way to avoid conflict is not going in the areas where you know you've got beef (disagreements) with someone. That's the best way to keep the peace. We all know what it is, if it's on sight (immediate altercation when opponents see each other) you stay in your lane and don't disrespect with your presence, no disrespect should come your way, and that's how I feel about it.

Carrying a handgun emerged as another way to avoid conflict. Though the participants acknowledged violence begets violence, the overall consensus was, when others know you are "carrying" that serves as a deterrent for aggressors. Participant Jimmy stated, "I don't start no fights, but it is always been well known that I can handle myself, so I'll leave it at that". Respondent Josh stated, "Carrying a gun is a way to avoid conflict because when it is known that you can protect yourself, don't nobody want no smoke (trouble)".

Research Questions Relating to Video Clip from 'The Wire'.

Participants were asked the following questions to glean their perspectives on fatal violence:

- What was the overall perception of the clip?
- Was the perpetrated violence warranted in your opinion?
- If you had to choose, who do you most identify with and why?
- From your perspective, could the victim or perpetrator have avoided the situation?

In light of the similarities between the lived experiences of the participants and these fictional characters, the participants took the questions about the video clip seriously and were very engaged. In response to the question, if you had to choose, who do you most identify with and why? Four out of five respondents stated Stringer Bell. The fifth participant reported neither.

Participant James especially identified with Stringer Bell in this clip because Stringer was trying to get out of the hustle, and this respondent explained he was never cut out for

the hustling life, and doesn't think anyone is, but often felt forced into it as a means of survival. To his regret, it was the beginning to the end of his life of being a non-felon and non-violent offender. In response to the question, what is your overall perception of the clip?, the themes of respect and escaping poverty through illegal activities emerged again. The participants consistently pointed out that the violent behaviors in the video were largely driven by engaging in activities in efforts to make money quickly and break the status quo, as well as the goal to prevent anyone from disrespecting or affronting them, characteristics they felt aligned them with the fictional character, Stringer Bell.

When asked if the participants felt the violence up to and including murder in the clip was justified including that of the main character, Stringer Bell, four out of the five participants responded yes, but felt the character, Mario Little erred in judgment because he disrespected the street game by savagely killing a woman in retaliation against an opposing drug lord. Respondent Jimmy explained,

> When you live in the hood and you're hustling, there's still a code. It ain't just anything goes, and that code got broke when Mario killed a female. I mean he shot her in the face! You do something like that, it should be on (war). All bets (agreements for peace) gotta be off if you disrespect another man and someone he cares about in that way; you don't shoot no woman period, whether she's outta pocket (displaying disrespectful or aggressive behavior) or whatever. Naw, he broke the code. Whether he wanted to or not, a man's *gotta* respond.. It just comes with the territory.

This response again underscored the value the participants put on respect as it pertains to the "hustle" and manhood. Participants were asked if they felt the victim or perpetrator in the clip could have avoided the situation and all participants agreed this altercation was unavoidable. Participant Josh explained,

> It's impossible to live this life and avoid conflict. If that's what you want, you're in the wrong profession (laughter). Mo (more) money, mo problems, so you gotta be prepared to nip it in the bud--by any means necessary.

By the conclusion of all those interviewed, it became very evident that respect and making fast money were worth dying or killing over.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Credibility

I used specific strategies to promote trustworthiness in this study as proposed in Chapter 3. Multiple data collection methods were used to ensure the collection of accurate and rich data. First, the study was designed to explore the phenomena under study from the participants' perspectives, so they were uniquely qualified to determine credibility. The participant interviews, together with the researcher's observations recorded as brief notes and subsequently transcribed and paired with each interview was followed by the verification of all accounts for accuracy using participant checks. Each participant reviewed their statements to validate the accuracy of the information captured in the interviews. This step confirmed that my interpretations of the participants'

responses accurately captured the essence of their experiences, which supported the integrity of the data collection process, thus ensured credibility.

Transferability

Next, maintaining a high code of ethics throughout this process was incredibly important to me. I made very intentional efforts to remove my own experiences of growing up in a poor, high-crime inner city environment, and I accomplished this by operating exclusively through the lens of a researcher. I listened attentively to the participants and understood their perspectives without interjecting any of my own perspectives. Though my personal experiences lend support to my knowledge and understanding of this topic, utilizing the bracketing technique assisted in mitigating the propensity for any qualitative researcher bias or unintended influence that might skew the interpretation of the data and ultimately the outcome of the study results including recommendations for next steps. I used thick rich descriptions as a strategy to illuminate the participants' perspectives and experiences in detail. This technique aimed to support the evaluation and transferability of the data to other settings and times.

Dependability

I have provided a lucid description of the steps taken throughout the process of this study through completion to provide a model for other investigators to repeat this work, thus ensuring the dependability part of trustworthiness. Additionally, providing an in-depth account of all steps taken, allow readers to evaluate the proper research practices implemented to arrive at the results and to interpret the findings.

Confirmability

The data in this study emanated from following strict data collection practices, and again followed by member checks of the data. Taking these steps including outlining the operational aspects of the data collection process were essential to creating confidence in the accuracy of the study findings, and therefore confirmability.

Summary

The results of this study demonstrated how growing up poor, in unstable, single-parent homes with a lack of support, and living in culture of violence, with regular exposure to trauma, are the primary risk factors that directly put young, inner-city African-American men on the path to criminality, particularly drug dealing and gang activities. Further, modes of masculinity and the role of 'respect' emerged as significant proximal factors in the perpetration of intra-racial male youth violence up to and including homicide. In this study, the lead justification from the participants' perspectives for intra-racial killings was showing a lack of respect for another male, his family or possessions. Another commonality found in all participants was the self-reported high levels of psychological distress resulting from living in poverty and exposure to trauma. The participants, though individually reporting, all agreed that gang affiliation - but not necessarily membership - and weapon carrying were major deterrents to avoid conflict, along with avoidance of certain areas. Chapter 5 will discuss the implications of this research as well as recommendations for future studies.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusion, Recommendations

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine the lived experience and perceptions of homicide from the perspectives of AA male youth who witness and live with such violence in their daily lives. The study was conducted using a purposive sample of male Black youth ages 18-24, residing in the West Garfield Park neighborhood and who self-report being on probation as a result of committing a violent crime. Data analysis unveiled several important facts. First, there was a strong cultural influence that defined the role of manhood and the salience of demanding respect from others without exception, and the pressure of this worldview lent to violence. Secondly, the participants felt in certain scenarios, violence up to and including homicide was justified, particularly in the instance of being disrespected. Third, attempts to escape poverty quickly was at the epicenter of criminal delinquency for four of the participants, and all in the group reported poverty as being a part of their lived experiences as the relationship between poverty and violent crime was emphasized in all responses. Finally, normalizing a culture of violence including homicide in the name of trying to escape impoverished living conditions, absent the realization that this philosophy contributed to violence, was a reoccurring theme gleaned throughout the analysis process.

Interpretation

This study was designed to glean the impact of living in a perpetual culture of violence within a depressed community, on the perspectives of violence up to and including homicide on those most impacted as both victims and perpetrators, AA male

youth. In this chapter, the results of the study are discussed for each of the five research questions addressed in this study and the 10 themes presented in chapter 4. I also discussed my use of the socioecological model for this study, which helped elucidate how, during the formative years, myriad factors guide and shape individuals on the social, cultural, and environmental levels (Boccio & Beaver, 2018; Bronfenbrenner, 1994; Bryant, 2011).

Discussion of Themes

Culture of violence (Theme 1)

Consistent with the literature (Cohen et al., 2016; Connolly et al., 2015; Yonas et al., 2099; Zagar, et al., 2009; Zimring, 2013), the existence of both micro and macro level risk and protective factors to becoming a victim or perpetrator of intra-racial violence were observed in the current study. The participants' experiences with witnessing violence on a daily basis in their neighborhoods and in their families significantly influenced their trajectories into criminality including the perpetration of violence. This finding highlighted the pathology. The interdependence of the participants' personal, family, and social values perpetuated the normalization of a violent culture in all of their lived experiences, making it easy to participate.

Trauma Exposure (Theme 2)

Using a purposive sample informed the age, race, gender, neighborhood, and probation status and were predictors for ACE, including experiences with racial profiling and the perpetration of violence. The study results uncovered all participants had some

sort of exposure to trauma on a regular basis whether it was within their families, with peers, in their school experiences, or in their neighborhoods.

In the current study, I was able to investigate the role of exposure to trauma in the causation of posttraumatic stress symptoms. The level of constant exposure to violence coupled with living in repressive communities led to feelings of anxiety, stress, poor decision making and heightened aggression. This finding aligns with findings by Cohen et al. (2016). During the participants' formative years, a critical period for physical, psychological, and cognitive growth, the repeated exposure to trauma can contribute to the onset of myriad behavioral and mental health disorders, thus suppress the development of self-regulation skills, and lead to increased aggression.

Single Parent Homes and Lack of Support (Theme 3)

The literature (Cartwright & Henriksen, 2012; Hunt et al., 2017; Piquero, et al., 2009; Resnick & Borowsky, 2004) posits the different challenges associated with being raised within a single parent family structure such as, an increased propensity to live in poverty, the development of antisocial behaviors, and lack of academic achievement just to name a few. An analysis of the participants' statements found consistency with these findings and supported the account of Bloom and colleagues (2015). The findings in this study demonstrated that residing in a single parent home, particularly those that lacked parental supervision and support, increased the propensity for the participants to live in poverty along with the associated poor living conditions including living in violence-filled neighborhoods and participation in juvenile crime and delinquency. This finding suggests family structure created direct pathways to becoming involved with the wrong

crowd and activities, a factor the literature maintains is a risk to becoming a victim or perpetrator of violence (Hay, Meldrum, Widdowson & Piquero, 2017; Lansford, Godwin, Bacchini, Chang, et al., 2018).

The findings also suggest high quality supervision and parental support may aid the development of adequate emotional coping skills and mitigate aggression, thus disengagement in juvenile crime including hanging with delinquent peers. Many researchers have drawn similar conclusions over the years (Baglivio, Byrd, Hawes, Loeber, & Pardini, 2016; Bloom, 2015; Chamlin & Cochran, 2006; Gershoff, Lansford, Sexton, Davis-Kean & Sameroff, 2012; Hay, Meldrum; Piquero, Farrington, Welsh, Tremblay, & Jennings, 2009; Hay, et al., 2017; Matthys, 2013; Menting, Orobio de Castro, & Piquero, 2013; Sampson & Laub, 1993; Widdowson & Piquero, 2017; Wolff, Piquero & Epps, 2015). The participants in the current study had no one present in their lives to exemplify and promote prosocial behaviors, influences the socioecological model notes contribute to offending behavior.

Insecurity, Fear and Lack of Confidence (Theme 4)

Findings of insecurity being consistently mentioned throughout the participants' responses during the interview phase, depart from my findings in the literature as a known risk factor for the perpetration of violence. The literature primarily references insecurity as it pertains to poverty (food and housing) as an associated risk factor for the perpetration of violence (Berthelot, 2016; Chilton, 2015; Chilton, 2017). However, my analysis uncovered feelings of desperation to survive, insecurity as in longing for feelings of safety, thus the participation in a gang and aggressive acts as a way to discourage

anyone who may want to cause them harm. This finding may be attributed to the participants' identities being anonymous and the participants' comfort with the researcher, who was less concerned with perceptions of their virility. Alternatively, this factor may have been under-reported because of how the interview questions were framed in previous studies. These results suggested, that in part, the aggression the participants displayed was used to combat feelings of insecurity and powerlessness (Bolland et al., 2005; Connell, Morris & Piquero, 2016; Chu, Daffern, Thomas & Lim, 2012). The fact that they did not have the financial means to escape many of their circumstances including the violence that posed threats to their safety, nor the power to heal their broken families, nor the ability to change the implicit bias or negative perceptions of them as seen through the lens of individuals with authority, overwhelmingly contributed to their desire to take control of their lives. Aggression is how these young men treat each other and often times it leads to free floating anger causing them to lash out due to diminished conflict resolution skills.

Providing in the Absence of a Father (Theme 5)

The finding related to the participants having feelings of an obligation to provide financially for themselves as well as their siblings in the absence of a father somewhat departs from the literature. To the best of my knowledge, the primary focus highlighted in the literature in this regard is the benefit of a male figure as a protective factor from homicide victimization and perpetration (Richardson, 2009; Richardson, 2012; Sheats et al., 2018). However, this finding suggests the lack of financial support from a father served as an incentive and pressure to become a "man" and therefore the acceptance of

the potential wealth promises offered through criminal activity including the perpetration of violence. This demonstrated an escalation of risk taking in the name of survival and in an effort to protect the family against the experiences that accompany financial hardship.

Poverty Stricken & Racially Profiled (Theme 6)

Consistent with the wealth of literature highlighting the correlation between crime and poverty (Berthelot, 2016; Bloom, 2015; Chamlin & Cochran, 2006; Chilton, et al; 2015; Stansfield, et al., 2017), the study findings showed a causal link between poverty and criminality as well. It is well documented how Blacks are disproportionately exposed to concentrated, limited occupational opportunities and the overall economic disadvantages that lend to violence (Antunes & Ahlin, 2017; Bell, 2012; Stansfield, et al., 2017; Sumner, Mercy, Dahlberg, Hills, Klevens & Houry, 2105; Wilson, 2012), and the participants' lived experiences run parallel with the literature. For four of the participants, trying to escape poverty was the catalyst for becoming involved in criminal activity, and all participants reported being poor with a desire to escape their living conditions. This finding suggests that being poor attenuated the ability to seek legitimate ways to earn money considering it is a longer process and earning potential is tied to skill level. This perspective is highlighted when Participants James and Jimmy shared their accounts in relation to using the "hustle" to escape poverty. Notwithstanding the socialization component to delinquency, the results suggested the structural component predominately `put the participants at risks for succumbing to the risky lifestyles they led in alignment with the previous studies in the literature (Bailey, et. al., 2017; Barber, et al., 2016;

Chamlin & Cochran, 2006; Chung & Steinberg, 2006; Frazer, et al., 2018; Stansfield, et al., 2017; Wood & Dennard, 2017).

An analysis of the respondents' statements also revealed that poverty was seen as a form of deviance and negatively impacted the way individuals in the lower socioeconomic bracket viewed themselves and were viewed and treated by other members of society especially those who hold power such as law enforcement officials, politicians, and business owners. Feelings of being marginalized and profiled by authority figures solely based on race and economic status contributed to overwhelming anger and aggression. These findings are supported in the literature (Brown, 2008; Bryant, 2011; Bryant, 2013; Berthelot, 2016; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2011; Newman, 2010; Prothrow-Stith, 1995) and provides support for the theoretical framework used to guide this study.

Modes of Masculinity and Respect (Theme 7)

Findings gleaned from the results highlighting the role of culture in defining masculinity through the perpetration of violence run parallel with the literature (DeLisi et al., 2011; Kilmartin et al, 2016; Klein, 2006). My analysis unveiled very similar outcomes as the 2016 study conducted by O'Dea et al. in response to how to handle threat and provocation, allowing me to draw an important conclusion. As explained in the previous bodies of work, the culture in which the participants live, approves of, and supports the propagation of violence as a way to define masculinity and as a means to establish manhood and a "safe" existence. However, unfortunately, such actions de facto

contribute to an increasingly violent culture and heightened neighborhood instability, the exact situations they report trying to escape.

This unambiguous truth was emphasized most in the participants' responses video clip shown of the TV series, the Wire, when describing their views on masculinity. The results showed that rising to the level of king drug lord as the fictional character, Stringer Bell did, means you've put in significant hard work, taken over many opponents, thus garnering a certain level of admiration and respect, which insulates an individual from many of the challenges associated with the hustling lifestyle including physical threats and poverty.

When asked questions to deepen my understanding of the overall perspectives of violence and homicide using the circumstances shown in the clip, particularly as it pertained to respect and masculinity, I was able to tap very organic responses and draw meaningful conclusions. The findings suggested the destructive culture of street hustling outweighed the risks to reap the potential benefits. I found it interesting that drug trafficking activities and the concomitant violence were perceived as something as benign as working a 9 to 5 job to provide for themselves and their families, and if anyone threatened that, that justified the onset of violence up to and including homicide. This philosophy is where the participants resonated most with the characters and the scenario in the video clip. Given the value all study participants put on respect as it pertains to the hustling lifestyle in particular, made it possible for me to understand the onset of aggressive and violent behavior in certain scenarios. Prior research has largely focused on the role of masculinity and how it lends to violence (O'Dea et al., 2018; Rich & Grey,

2005). However, the findings in this study contribute to the literature by revealing more specifically focused perspectives on the role of respect or lack thereof as it pertains to adherence to the "code on the street" and the potential consequences of it being violated, including the onset of violence. The data results revealed in unequivocal terms, participation in illicit activities subscribes to codes of behavior as with anything else, and if violated, such actions cannot go unpunished. I gleaned from the participants' statements the actions that were frowned upon included violence against women, mothers and children, theft of another man's possessions, causing harm to a man's family, or encroaching on another man's territory. The participants primarily referred to territory as it pertains to gang affiliation and areas to sell street narcotics. Territory was also referred to as a relationship with a female companion. All were considered offenses that warranted punishment with violence.

Persistence, Resilience and Humor (Theme 8)

Although largely absent from the recent ACE literature (Fagan & Novak, 2018; Sheats et al., 2018; Cohen et al., 2016), I would be remiss not to highlight the findings illustrating the existence of the good qualities that all participants possessed despite their parole status or the myriad challenges experienced in their childhood and presently as youth. It was remarkable to see their abilities to laugh or accentuate the positives when discussing events that would be unconscionable to most, including witnessing the slain body of a sibling, growing up without any parents because one is on drugs and the other is incarcerated, consistently not knowing if you're going to have adequate meals or shelter, or feeling unsafe with the need to seek cover because hearing gunshots are an

everyday part of life. The socioecological model provided the framework to understand the deleterious effects of ACE on healthy development, and though there is a wealth of literature that outlines the chronic mental and emotional problems including PTSD which are known to impair judgement and allow free-floating anger to fester (Cohen et al., 2016; Pierre, et al., 2020; Sheats, et al., 2018), few studies align with the findings in the current study. Rutter (2012) suggests that Blacks may be better positioned than Whites to manage childhood adversities in what he refers to as "steeling effects." He explains in this concept, frequent and early exposure to trauma and adversity provide opportunities to learn how to positively respond to stressful situations, thus later exposure may be less harmful. Hunt et al. (2017) agree. Hunt and colleagues maintain that relative deprivation lends explanation to why Whites may be more susceptible to the negative effects of ACEs compared to Blacks. That is, Blacks in this country have a much higher propensity to suffer from more adversity in general compared to Whites, including economic deprivation, racism, racial profiling and living in high-crime neighborhoods. As such, additional adversities may not have as great an impact on Blacks as for Whites (Hunt, Slack, & Berger, 2017). This fact coalesces well and support the findings in the current study.

All of the study participants would place at the very top of the ACE scale, provided this was a measurement in the study. Notwithstanding experiencing and witnessing intentional violence, all these young men had a level of resilience that is deserving of a culturally-attuned, and trauma informed response in support of their advancement and healing. Reflecting on the findings in this study, one could argue that

being poor, born into a violence-filled reality, and the related onset of behavioral disorders were criminalized and not treated in the participants' experiences. It is also important to note the innate qualities the participants possessed to be supportive and protective fathers present in the lives of their children despite not having a paternal reference point in their own experiences. They also exhibited an understanding that domestic violence including homicide perpetrated against a woman whether it was a wife or a female character from the Wire is wrong. Paradoxical to the literature, it is unusual not to imitate acts that are repeatedly part of individuals' lived experiences particularly during the formative years. As such, the desire to break this cycle of violence and enhance their family structures are recognized as positive and resilient traits.

Distressing Educational Experiences (Theme 9)

In this study, there was a relationship between negative self-image, learning, and being successful students . This is especially harmful because we know the opportunities to earn a good, honest living is directly tied to the level of education attained. The prejudicial maltreatment recalled by the study participants is a widely recognized experience for AA youth living in the most marginalized communities were violence is prevalent and often times affect what they believe they are capable of accomplishing. The seminal and existing literature (Aizer and Doyle, 2015; DeBaun, 2017; Gaylord-Harden & Cunningham, 2009; Hirschfield, 2018; Tcherni, 2011;Velis, 2010) supports this finding as we know education and violence have an inverse relationship. In unambiguous terms, these studies explain as educational attainment increases, violence decreases. Consistent with this truth, the study results demonstrated

all young men with the exception of one, did not complete high school and none of them held college degrees, putting them at increased risk for violence.

Other scholars have also demonstrated the link between education and its mediating effect on crime (Pierre et al., 2020; Tcherni et al., 2011). The findings also demonstrated how participants in this study did not view education as a way out of their circumstances. The study results showed that it was a natural progression to drop out high school and progress into criminality instead, suggesting family and friend concordance of being a high school dropout as shown through their actions not to complete school themselves made it an easy action to imitate.

Altercation Avoidance (Theme 10)

An important goal in this study was to learn the factors that led to conflict resolution from the perspective of this demographic. It is noteworthy to point out, the factors that one might conjecture would be mentioned such as better educational and job opportunities that would support the ability to make legal, more ethical choices, thus mitigating social and environmental disparities, went unmentioned in most of the interviews. The result identifying enemy avoidance as an approach to resolve conflict suggested the participants were unable to look through a panoramic lens and picture their lives any differently than they had experienced thus far. The sentiment that they had to operate in environments with enemies underscored the potential long-term effects of living in a culture of violence, a disconnection for hope or any expectations for a peaceful existence.

Carrying a gun emerged as another strategy to avoid an altercation and to resolve conflict. The respondents felt it was requisite to carry a weapon not only for protection but to make a statement to dissuade the threats that accompany living in a depressed community that resembles a war zone. This finding suggests carrying a handgun is a relatively easy thing to do and serves as a major deterrent to anyone that may consider launching an attack. It is clear how one could adopt a "survival of the fittest" mentality when confronted with such daunting challenges in what is supposed to be considered the safest place, your home. The 2013 High School Youth Risk Behavior Survey illuminated the reasons for teens carrying a gun or knife to school were to discourage threats and assaults (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2014), the exact influences reported by the participants in the current study.

Discussion of Theoretical Framework

The socioecological model provided an excellent guide to understand the multiple factors that influence the development, decision making and the overall lived experiences of the study participants. It is recognized in this study as well as in the literature, there are variables on many levels that shape and influence human behavior. Using this model allowed me to examine the participants' perceptions and experiences on the social, cultural, environmental, family, and individual levels. I was also able to determine how these factors work together to shape individuals during their years of development. Finally, this approach allowed me to measure the predominate factors that lend to maladaptive behaviors including the perpetration of violence and homicide.

Limitations of the Study

There were a couple of limitations associated with this study. Though the sample size was sufficient to glean feelings and perspectives of homicide from those most impacted by it, and variables that could be used in a further study, this study could not provide generalizable findings. For this, studies using a larger sample size would be needed to continue learning in this area.

Secondly, threats to validity resulting from researcher bias may be of concern when using the phenomenological approach. I was born and raised in a similar neighborhood to the one explored in this study, which allowed me to interact closely with participants and focus on understanding how their experiences shaped their perspectives. However, being so close to the study, I had to be very intentional about hearing their voices and remain vigilant about not projecting any form of bias into the data collection and analyses processes that might skew interpretation of the study for others to read.

Thirdly, in my analysis, it would be helpful to work with a second researcher to go through the practices of coding the transcripts and developing the themes. A triangulation method like this would enable future researchers to discuss any differences in the two resulting set of codes and agree on all themes derived as another way to confirm the research findings.

Recommendations for Further Research

I propose a portfolio of next steps. First, further investigation of insecurity or lack of safety as a factor that put Black male inner-city youth at risk for violence perpetration is warranted. Though the research literature highlighted myriad risk and protective

factors, feeling unsafe with low self-confidence and this association with the perpetration of violence were absent from the literature. Future research in this area may hold considerable promise in ameliorating knowledge on the effect of these factors in relationship to violence and lead to the creation of appropriate intervention strategies.

Second, additional investigations to help us identify and understand more in depth the role of trying to acquire wealth quickly as reported in this study, and its relationship to violence and homicides are encouraged since this factor was a primary trigger for violence above most all other factors in this study. The current study focused on a highly selected sample (Black male youths aged 18-24 years who were on probation and from West Garfield Park in Chicago). Additional studies within other groups and neighborhoods where there is a high prevalence of violent crime is encouraged to deepen our understanding of this relationship.

Third, more research is needed on the social construction of masculinity and respect, and its association to intraracial male youth violence. Since my study unveiled 'respect' as a major reoccurring theme in the perpetration of violence, respect should be investigated as a stand-alone correlate to violence and homicide.

Social Change Implications

This study demonstrates the principles of elements of any program designed to reduce the incarceration, morbidity, and mortality rates of AA male youth resulting from intra-racial violence and homicide. Applying comprehensive, trauma responsive practices early in the lives of young men who witness and live with violence in their daily lives may interrupt the transmission of this violence, thereby increasing the quality of life for

this vulnerable population while also reducing the financial encumbrance on taxpayers that is estimated by the American Public Health Association to be approximately $229 billion dollars annually (APHA, 2019).

Conclusions and Recommendations for Action

The aim of this study was to develop an in-depth understanding of why Black male youth may kill other Black male youth, in order to clarify, and potentially disrupt, the factors that give rise to this phenomenon. Though the results highlight multiple contributing factors – including a childhood spent in poverty, unstable homes with inadequate parenting and lack of support, routine trauma at home and in the community, poor experiences with education, and feelings of lack of confidence and lack of safety – two factors predominated in the experience of these young men about the actual killing of young Black males by young Black males. The first factor was a childhood spent in a culture of violence, fortified by strict modes of masculinity and respect that require a willingness to kill. Another predominant factor was economic; the effort to escape poverty as quickly as possible through the only available route - drug trafficking, Insecurity and feelings of lack of safety, an impetus for gang affiliation to mitigate these feelings.

A public health approach to this complex problem would be to develop a comprehensive, multi-level intervention, which aims to address the multiple inter-related factors simultaneously. In this study, like others before, confirms the importance of the early years of development and, since schools have the greatest number of touch points over the greatest number of children, they might be central to effective intervention.

However, collaboration would be required with many others, notably in mental health, social service, law enforcement and local government. Collaboration and cooperation could lead to the creation and execution of programs aimed at supporting healthy development and addressing developmental behavioral, and mental health issues, as well as broader pub

There is a great need for psychosocial treatment and prevention services, particularly in high crime neighborhoods where mental health resources are scarce. Pediatricians and other healthcare providers could help teach parents and caregivers the importance of positive modeling, and the need for emotional support in healthy development and as a protective factor against violence. Healthcare and public health providers could be more involved in advocating for children, by guiding and advising on parenting skills at the earliest point in the child's life which we now know are critical to good emotional health and development. This approach may facilitate better treatment of the whole child and not simply the disease or condition.

Similarly, establishing positive experiences and relationships with the police and the judicial system is needed, through career shadowing, neighborhood outreach, and fair policing as informed by cultural competency training. Historically, these relationships have been very strained. Children living in depressed communities are consistently exposed to a variety of violence including poor treatment from law enforcement, thus do not have the opportunity to develop healthy expectations, worldviews, experiences, self-regulation, and decision-making skills. We know from the current study as well the literature this can lead to myriad adverse outcomes.

In light of the findings in the current study that emphasized the impact of inadequate parenting and lack of support on the lives of these young men during their formative years, there is a belated need for psychosocial treatment and prevention facilities particularly in high crime neighborhoods where mental health resources are scarce. Further, as it is explained in the socioecological model, the strongest influences on development are the systems closest to the individual such as family and friends. To that end, pediatricians and other providers may be potential resources to help teach and emphasize to parents and caregivers the importance of positive modeling and support in the role of healthy development and as protective factors against violence victimization and perpetration. Akin to how physicians work with parents to address the physical needs of their children, providers need to become more involved and adept in advocating for children by guiding and advising on parenting skills at the earliest point in the child's life which we now know are critical to good emotional health and development. This approach may facilitate better treatment of the whole child and not simply the disease or condition. To support this suggestion, I will make every attempt to use the platforms at my disposal to make poster or oral presentations regarding this study's findings.

Similarly, establishing positive experiences and relationships with the police and the judicial system through consistent programming - including career shadowing, neighborhood outreach, and fair policing as informed by cultural competency training - may be mutually beneficially and assist with reducing violent crime, thus incarceration rates. Historically, these relationships have been very strained. Children living in depressed communities are consistently exposed to a variety of violence including poor

treatment from law enforcement, thus do not have the opportunity to develop healthy expectations, worldviews, experiences, self-regulation, and decision-making skills. We know from the current study as well the literature this can lead to myriad adverse outcomes.

One encouraging finding of this study was the capability of these young men to remain resilient in the face of trauma. This finding is deserving of programs, activities, and practices aimed at cultivating such qualities in the promotion of prosocial behaviors and to replace harmful 'masculinity' and 'respect' ideologies that are deeply rooted within the culture. Collective action from myriad interdisciplinary professionals designed to promote culturally appropriate, trauma-informed care and programs in the school, and in other local settings, could also support the stabilizing of affected neighborhoods, thus provide opportunities to maximize the likelihood for children to have the best possible social and academic outcomes well into adulthood. This should be regarded as a fundamental right for every child and could also lead to a tremendous benefit to society. It would save taxpayers from the healthcare, policing and incarceration costs related to treating violence and homicide; it would give a helping hand to communities struggling with violence and poverty; and most of all, it would be acknowledge that the lives of young Black men in America also matter.

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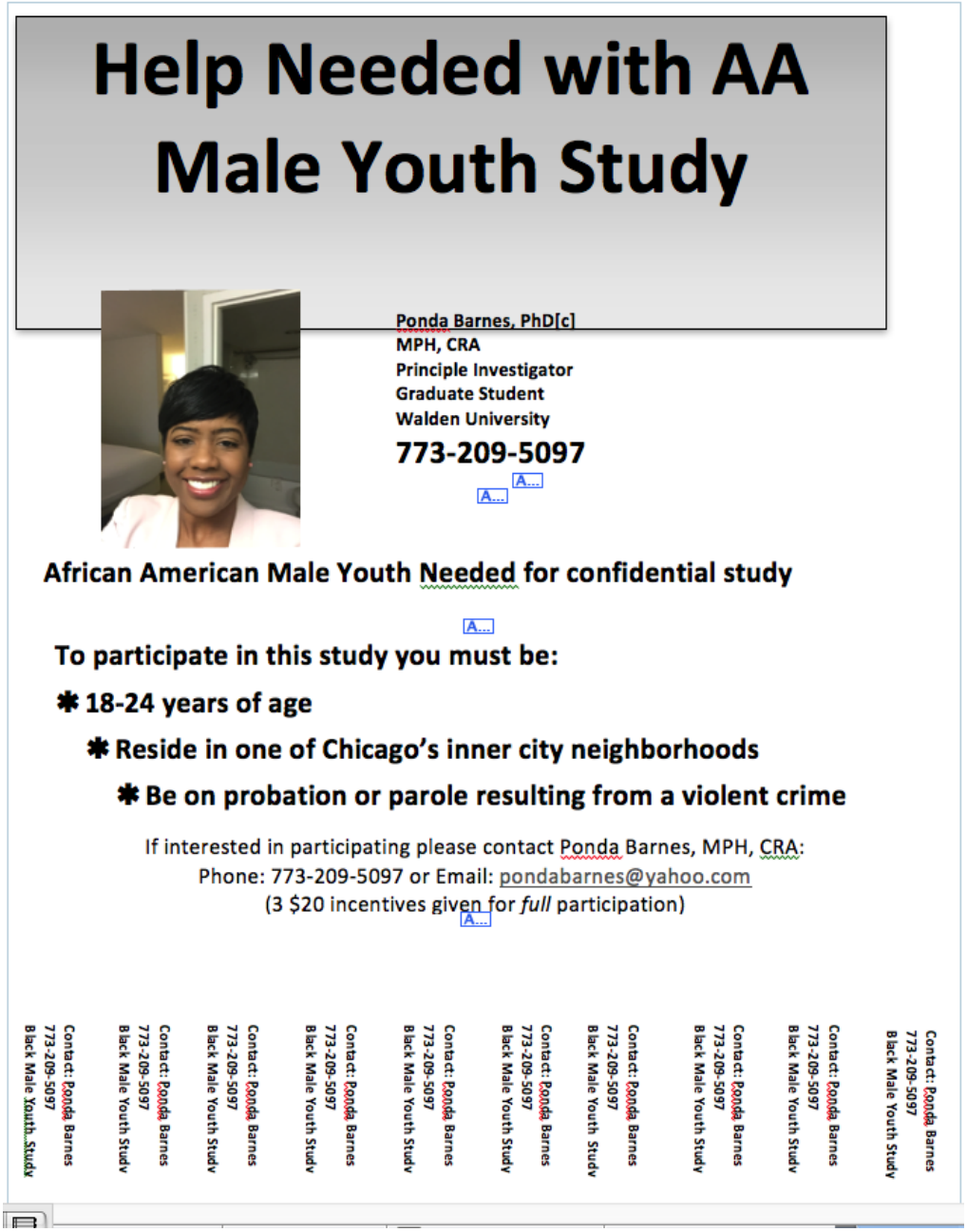
Appendix A: Recruitment



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Appendix B Screening Interview

(Demographic Questions Adopted from BRFSS, 2009)

Please answer the following questions:

1. How old are you?

2. What is your racial background?

a. Black or African American

b. More than one race: _____

c. Other: Please describe: _____

3. What is your ethnic background?

a. Not Hispanic or Latino

b. Hispanic or Latino

c. neither?

4. Do you live in West Garfield Park in Chicago?

a. Yes

b. No

5. What is your current status?

a. Probation Other?

Appendix C Informed Consent

Title of Research Study: Living with Killing

Introduction:

I am Ponda Barnes, a doctoral student in the School of Health Sciences at Walden University. Your feedback is being solicited since you satisfy the criteria of being a Black male between the ages of 18-24 who is on probation resulting from a violent crime including homicide. You are also a resident in the West Garfield Park neighborhood. In this study, I am examining the factors that may influence the causes of violence particularly homicide by Black male youth perpetrated against other Black males. I would like to explore the extent to which the characteristics of your neighborhood may have influenced this kind of violence. I hope that the results of this research will help the world understand better what's going down here in West Garfield Park, and how to make a better life here. This is what you should know about being in a research study:

- Whether or not you take part is completely up to you.
- You can choose not to take part.
- You can also agree to take part and later change your mind.
- Your decision will not be held against you.
- You can ask all the questions you want before you decide.

Here is who you can talk to:

If you have questions, concerns, or complaints, or think the research has caused you harm, you can call me, Ponda Barnes, at (773) 209-5097. This research has been reviewed and approved by an Institutional Review Board ("IRB"). You may talk to them at (800) 925-3368 or irb@mail.waldenu.edu if:

- Your questions, concerns, or complaints are not being answered by me.
- You cannot reach me.
- You want to talk to someone besides me.
- You have questions about your rights as a research participant.
- You want to get information or provide input about this research.

This is why the research is being done:

The purpose of this study is to investigate youth homicide through the views of African American male youth ages 18-24 living in Chicago's West Garfield Park community who are on probation resulting from a violent crime, including looking at the individual and neighborhood factors that can influence how someone feels about homicide. Your feedback is being solicited since the data show you are amongst the most "at risk" population for committing or becoming a victim of homicide-living in the inner city and where the burden of homicide is most severe. I do not have any conflicts with this study since I will not derive any personal benefits from this research, though the research findings may benefit this community. If we can shed light on some of the factors that cause violence, perhaps the decision-makers can craft solutions to make things better for you and the residents in this community.

If you say that "Yes, you want to be in this research," here is what will happen: I will conduct one face-to-face interview with you lasting between 60-90 minutes. The interview will be scheduled based on your and my availability. The interview will be a loosely structured to collect open and honest responses. There isn't a right or wrong way to answer any of the questions.

During the interview, I will ask you questions about your life experiences. I will also ask you to view extracts from the TV series, the Wire, and give me your perspective on the events viewed. This interview will be audio-recorded so that I may later transcribe the interview. Audio-recording is mandatory to participation. If you would prefer not to be audio-recorded, then you cannot participate in this research study. I will immediately destroy all audio recordings after my dissertation defense. If you say that you do not want to be in this research, nothing will happen it will not be held against you. You can say 'Yes' or 'No' but change your mind later.

Also, you can end the interview or leave the research at any time and it will not be held against you and you will not suffer any consequences. Just let me know if you want to do this. I will ask you if any data collected up until that point may be used in the research. There is a chance that some questions might be too sensitive for you to answer. Though you're free to skip any questions you do not wish to answer or ask to end the interview at any point. I have confirmed counselors from the Greater Grand Mid-South Mental Health Clinic are available 24-hours to speak with you via phone if you wish. Or you can make an in-person appointment if you feel you require additional support and want to talk to someone, and I would assist you in that process.

This is what will happen to the information collected for this research, all efforts will be made to keep your name confidential. Only I and my research supervisors at Walden University will have access to this information. No information that identifies you will be disclosed to anyone outside of this study. I will not use your real name in any of the records. If you agree to take part in this research study, I will give you a $25gift card at the conclusion of the interview to cover any expenses you had in getting to the interview, and to thank you for your time. You will still receive this compensation even if you choose to end the interview early. You will also receive a signed copy of this form. Do you wish to participate?

Record participant's response: Yes No

_____

Place an X on the above line to consent to taking part in this study

_____ _____

Signature of person obtaining consent Date

IRB Approval # 07-25-19-0173330
Expires 7/24/2020

Appendix D Interview Guide

The aims of this study are to explore the lived experiences of African American male youth who are on probation from violent crimes on the events and the emotions that led to interpersonal violence including homicide.

Personal/Family (SEM)

First, I would like to ask you questions related to childhood and family.

1. As you think back to when you were growing up, what were some of the challenges?

2. Tell me about your family structure growing up.

3. How do you think this structure contributed to the challenges in your life today?

4. What would you have liked your family to do differently?

Education – an established risk factor (RQ)

Let's talk about your educational experiences.

5. Can you describe these?

6. Where did you go to school?

7. How did you do in school?

8. How were (are) you treated by teachers and administrators?

9. How were you treated by police officers in your school?

10. What factors contributed to decisions to leave or stay in school?

Psycho-Social Environment (SEM)

Tell me about your neighborhood now.

11. Please describe the neighborhood, in your own words.

12. Do you feel any threats there?

13. In what ways do you think these threats can be reduced or removed?

14. From your perspective is there an acceptance for a culture of violence or tolerance and why?

Gangs - an established risk factor (RQ)

Let's talk about a violent crime risk factor.

15. Tell me about any experiences with gangs that contributed to your arrest.

16. Have you ever encountered or belonged to a gang?

17. If so, what motivated you to join?

18. What motivated you to leave?

Cultural Environment (SEM)

Let's talk about cultural norms.

19. What are some of the practices that are deemed as "common" in your experience amongst family and friends (e.g. witnessing or experiencing violent police behavior, walking away from a fight, initiating a fight)?

20. Describe how these factors are typically handled and how each of these experiences make/made you feel.

Cultural Environment (SEM)

Let's talk about racism.

21. Tell me about any personal experiences you've had with racism.

22. What happened and how did it make you feel?

23. Describe your experience with law enforcement in your neighborhood

24. Describe any experience you've had with racial profiling

25. How did these experiences affect you and shape your perspectives? your coping skills?

Perception of homicide situation (RQ)

Now I'm going to ask you some questions after you view clips from the TV series, the Wire.

26. What do think about what you just viewed?

27. Was the perpetrated violence warranted in your opinion?

28. What are your thoughts about the characters in the clip?

29. If you had to choose, who do you most identify with and why?

30. Who could you be friends with and why?

31. Who couldn't you be friends with and why?

32. From your perspective, could the victim or perpetrator have avoided the situation?

33. Please explain your answer to the previous question.

34. Why do you think the Wire characters chose this 'street' life?

35. What could have deterred or protected them from taking this criminal/violent path?

Perceptions of conflict prevention & resolution (RQ)

Finally, I want to ask you a few questions about preventing conflict

36. What is 'conflict resolution' and what are your views on it?

37. What do you view as the greatest barriers to peacefully resolving conflict?

38. Are there any factors that assist in resolving conflict in your experience and how so?

39. Describe the situation involving your arrest. Would you say you initiated or tried to avoid conflict with the other person(s).

40. What were your feelings during that event?

41. Outside of self-defense or defense of a loved one, what events most lead to murder in West Garfield Park from your perspective?

42. Is there anything else you'd like to tell me?