

2023

A Qualitative Study of Urban Male Perception and Definition of Respect for Law Enforcement Officers

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College of Health Sciences and Public Policy

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Kyla Duckworth Lurry

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Walden University
2023

Abstract

A Qualitative Study of Urban Male Perception and Definition of Respect for Law

Enforcement Officers

by

Kyla Duckworth Lurry

MPH, Walden University, 2021

MS, Northeastern University, 2009

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

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Abstract

Among African American males, deaths are alarmingly high for reasons that cannot be completely pinpointed. The purpose of this study was to analyze the definition and perception of respect and law enforcement by an African American male and to determine if Goffman's dramaturgical model is sufficient to explain the social acceptance respect phenomena. Micro-sociological assessments of everyday social interactions are often based on dramaturgy, a sociological perspective. In a dramaturgical model, social interaction is analyzed as an actor's performance on stage. This study employed a qualitative design so that the research questions could be answered. Based on the findings of this study, the 15 African American participants believed the United States is still operating and participating in systems that perpetuate white supremacy. Systemic oppression holds Black males hostage and fails to provide adequate services. Participants held the same definition of respect: Respect is a mutual act often derived from commonalities and being human. It is an understanding, a connection, a common bond within. Social acceptance can be defined using the Goffman model. To meet the needs of marginalized communities within the community, policies, and standards in administrations need to be redesigned. The findings of this study serve as a starting point for reform. By focusing on rebuilding environments, policies, and administrations, society can proactively assist in positive social change by ensuring the transformation that is so desperately needed.

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Dedication

This study is dedicated to all the strange, quirky young women who aren't afraid to dream and do the unthinkable. Next, I'd like to dedicate this dissertation to the young Black boys that will eventually become grown Black kings. I salute you, see you, and have birthed two of you – you can and shall succeed. Never be defined by the world; you are your decisions, not your circumstances.

Acknowledgments

I would first like to thank God for allowing me to be here. Next, thank you to my wonderful husband, beautiful children, and close friends – you sacrificed, and I acknowledge and thank you for your support. To my parents, we made it, and you telling me I could have the world has landed me here. I'd also like to thank my committee for pushing me to finish strong, operate in excellence, and present such a delicate topic gracefully. Lastly, thanks to all the participants who volunteered to share their perceptions and experiences as part of this study. I am very grateful for their time and trust.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

Historically, policing in the United States has been plagued by prejudices and has remained a contentious issue. In its depiction and treatment of minorities, particularly Blacks, the law enforcement framework has a well-documented history of inhumanity and savagery. According to the Washington Post police shootings database (2021), although African Americans are less than 14% of the world population, they have accounted for 24% of over 6,000 fatal incidents since 2015. A study by the American Civil Liberties Union (2013) found that African Americans were 3.7 times more likely to be arrested for marijuana possession than whites, even though the rate of marijuana usage was comparable. In 2019, African Americans made up around 13% of the U.S. population but represented almost a third of the country's prison population at a little over 35%, even though white Americans commit more crimes (Federal Bureau of Investigation [FBI], 2016). These few statistics are but an invitation to begin dialoguing on the social aspect of how people of color are treated differently. Regardless of the system setup, African American males are falling through the cracks.

In 2019, a study from the University of Michigan, Rutgers University, and Washington University concluded that police use of force was among Black men's leading causes of death (Edwards, 2019). Excessive use of force is not just shooting; it can include any use of force that results in death, including beatings, choking, using tasers, or using chemical agents. Many researchers and community members strive to determine the root cause of homicides committed against African Americans. It is widely

accepted that law enforcement deaths occur for reasons that cannot be summarized as one issue. Understanding the experience and lifestyle of the population most impacted by law enforcement deaths will shed light on their thoughts and actions, which aids in a better plan for the community and future generations. The perception of law enforcement matters, especially in the Black community, as it could be the difference between life and death in interactions. Examining the inner thoughts and perceptions of the most impacted population requires understanding factors such as poverty, racism, education, and socioeconomics.

Background of the Study

An individual's self-esteem plays a crucial role in their choices and decisions, as it reinforces what they believe about themselves and what they value. As young children grow and interact with adults, they form their opinions and worldviews based on some interactions they have had (Agnew, 2005). Numerous factors, including self-esteem, likely shape those interactions. Much research has been conducted regarding the relationship between law enforcement, self-esteem, and male perspectives. Most of these studies are descriptive and conducted by law enforcement agencies or interest groups; however, no data have been collected from African American males who live with the reality that police frequently kill men who look like them (Alexander, 2012). Those realities for African American men and young adults speak to the mindset and perceptions African American men live with every day. These realities place them in an increased race to gain a sense of respect and stability in their community (Alexander, 2012). Conversing with these young men about obtaining and defining respect and how

that respect plays out concerning their interactions with law enforcement is worth a second look to determine if there is a disconnect.

Many social media and mainstream media, such as news outlets and music platforms, often portray the relationship between law enforcement and urban males as estranged and complex, specifically for African American males (Simmons, 2012). If more emphasis had been on problem-solving and de-escalating the situations without biases and fear, the outcome might have been different (Anderson, 2000). This is evident in the public media cases of Brianna Taylor in 2020, Daunte Wright in 2021, George Floyd in 2020, Botham Jean in 2018, and Eric Lurry in 2021. These are all public examples of law enforcement discrepancies, procedural errors, and the internal fears and biases of law enforcement that have ended in death (Anderson, 2000). The attitudes and perceptions between law enforcement and African American men raise questions regarding how relationships are portrayed and understood, and expressly, how Black men understand law enforcement through the lens of how they define respect within themselves. A deeper understanding of how they arrive at their understanding of respect is necessary to examine the factors in which they were born and raised.

Factors such as poverty, education, and socioeconomics raise questions about the systems contributing to this estranged relationship's deterioration. Due to the disproportionate number of Black people killed by police, the phrase "death by cop" has dire implications (Simmons, 2012). In media portrayals, statistics, and music genres, African American males have been portrayed as thugs, unruly, or irreverently disrespectful based on their environment, appearance, language, and assumptions

(Simmons, 2012). This perception makes them more vulnerable to death; the inundation of police violence has, in many ways, caused society to become desensitized to the reports of violence (Anderson, 2000).

As a result of adopting traits associated with the gangsta stereotype, many African American males have been socially marginalized and discriminated against (Alexander, 2012; Dyson, 1996; Morris, 2012). This stereotype has been partly influenced by the ever-growing hip-hop culture and how African American males identify with it. Moreover, this lifestyle is associated with gangsta rap and hip-hop genres that glorify violence, sex, and money (Asim, 2007). This perception can be widespread and can cause difficulty when law enforcement officers intervene and engage with citizens because they are unaware of subculture norms (Anthony, 2007).

Law enforcement engages with the population in a way that reinforces stereotypes and assumptions (Anthony, 2007). Stereotypes are perceived assumptions or secondhand knowledge of the population that prevent positive interactions. These assumptions often cause authority figures such as law enforcement to presume some African American males are criminals (Hutto & Green, 2016). Believing in the stereotypes prevents positive interventions, which can potentially cause law enforcement to perceive African American males upon interaction negatively. These interactions have caused African American males to view their interactions with law enforcement negatively.

A healthy dialogue or perspective must be presented to provide early intervention until a consensus on moving forward has been established. The significant concern is that law enforcement patrols arrive on a scene with a negative connotation of African

American males in a disadvantaged community (Burrell, 2010). This concern places the interaction in a precarious state before proper protocol or problems are identified.

Law enforcement and African American men react differently in these situations (King, 2013). The devastation caused by this presumption, especially for Black men, requires addressing these pigeonholes and their underlying causes.

Marginalized young Black males have limited access to resources that could improve their lives (Burrell, 2010). This results from stereotypes and perceptions associated with African American men, particularly those that stem from other intersections of their identities. This position is especially true if they cycled through the criminal justice system (Burrell, 2010). The bare necessities of a thriving individual include education, employment, and stable housing, all of which impact their ability to potentially better themselves (Kaufman et al., 2008; Martin et al., 2011; Venkatesh, 2008).

Some view most Black males as uneducated, and this lack is rooted in a historical construction of what it means to be Black and male (Anthony, 2007). These experiences are often guided by a less-than-flattering account of the academic potential, intellectual disposition, and social and cultural capital possessed by Black males (Reich, 2010). This perception places minimal expectations of success for Black boys and creates a rift in the community if Black boys break free of the cycle (Anthony, 2007). Black male attorneys, law enforcement officials, entrepreneurs, educators, designers, and engineers often go unnoticed by the larger society and media (Fleury & Fernet, 2012). Despite these examples of breaking the cycle, the reality that a disproportionate number of Black males

continue to experience varying degrees of disenfranchisement despite achieving varying degrees of social mobility and economic mobility cannot be ignored (Goffman, 1959).

Racism is a construct that effectively subjugates a segment of society politically and socially. In the case of oppressed people, it is natural for them to advocate for conformity with the dominant culture to obtain equal treatment (Hadden, 2001). This desire for conformity leads to the concept of respectability politics rooted in the idea that if Black people were more respectable, they would be less vulnerable to the ills of racism. For decades, this thread has persisted in African American scholarship and society. The politics of respectability have often been central to Black Theology (Garland, 2001). This centrality begins with W.E.B. DuBois' Talented Tenth in 1903 and ends with Bill Cosby's infamous Pound Cake Speech (2004) a century later. In the Black community, it is believed that masking one's true identity, assimilating, and "being twice as good" are necessary for success in the U.S.

Racism cannot be eliminated by exemplary behavior and proper attire. There is no dress code for discrimination (Swim et al., 2003). It is imperative to understand that respectability politics are coping mechanisms (Harrell et al., 2003). It affirms that Black culture is inferior and unattractive. As a result, implicit biases can make some Black people prefer whites over themselves. A relatively small number of studies have examined perceptions of and coping responses to intergroup racism from the perspective of targets compared to the well-established literature that examines the etiology of intergroup racism among perpetrators (Swim et al., 2003).

African American males are faced with trying to escape an environment where they are already perceived as a threat. They are disregarded before resources are made available for their aid (Rios, 2011). This disregard tends to exacerbate stereotypes in the belief that they are the only way to earn respect within their community. Law enforcement may perceive African American males negatively due to the broader public display of negative interactions with public figures and law enforcement (Rios, 2011). As a result, Black boys mistreated by law enforcement become Black men who may have negative perceptions of law enforcement. This perception can result in moods of hopelessness and a push towards rebellion, resulting in violence between law enforcement and, in some cases, the public (Sigelman & Welch, 1991).

Initially, the purpose of law enforcement was to protect and serve the community in which they are policing; however, it can be difficult to conceptualize this protection if law enforcement sees members of the communities they are supposed to protect as threats (Stewart, 2022). This perception may be the result of unfamiliarity with the community or a result of biases formed from stereotypes. These biases result in improper protection and negative interactions between law enforcement and the communities they serve. As African American men experience such treatment over time, they may feel compelled to provide even greater protection to their communities (Rios, 2011).

As African American men gain street credit through forms of community protection, stereotypes, and microaggressions continue to undermine their image and perception (Rios, 2011). These negative perceptions cause adverse reactions when Black men and law enforcement interact due to misconceptions about culture, customs, and

norms (Alexander, 2012). It may be difficult to understand any single interaction with law enforcement if we do not adequately understand the Black boys in the community. This complexity is due to a group's deeply rooted history of abuse (Alexander, 2012). By investigating and exposing some of the thoughts linked to the population's behavior, research can contribute to acknowledgment and dialogue regarding the perception of Black men within our society (Agnew, 2005).

By relying on raw data instead of a system not set up to protect all peoples, comprehensive investigations can occur, which yield actionable results; however, the data provide a picture without interpretation (Anderson, 2000). A great deal of information can be found in articles, opinions, studies, frameworks, theologies, and some studies that provide theory; however, understanding how this population interacts with others provides a better understanding of how this complex problem can be resolved (Garland, 2001). To help understand the strengths, needs, and quality of life of diverse groups in communities, as well as the differences and disparities among these groups, more information is needed than raw racial statistics. By disaggregating data carefully, it is possible to gain a more comprehensive understanding of a specific issue or question (Nicole, 2017).

Over half (56%) of Americans believe being Black inhibits one's ability to advance, according to a Pew Research Center study (2019). In a society perceived as colorblind, being a Black male adds a challenge to succeeding. According to 84% of Blacks and 54% of whites, racial discrimination is a significant reason Black people may have difficulty advancing in their careers. It has been observed that if the relationship of a

young male between his self-esteem, confidence, family structure, and educational background is examined, there will be a connection between these dynamics and relationships (Rowley, 2007). In the past, quantitative studies have found that attitudes and behaviors are inconsistent (Thomas, 2006). These statistics are essential to portray the perceptions of and biases between African American males and law enforcement. Various research studies have found that racial disparities in the criminal justice system are related to the location or stage of the adjudication process (Lundman, 1994).

It has been well documented how colorism, racism, and impoverished areas influenced cultural norms and societal injustices between the early 1900s and 2020 (Du Bois, 2003); however, little attention has been paid to how upbringing and neighborhood influence impulse reactions in African American males when interacting with the police. According to Goffman (1959), people play different roles for different people or audiences to fulfill a need. Social roles are played to gain the most significant value for the performers by gaining acceptance from the audiences before they are performed. While these statements may not apply to all African American males, recent research indicates that many young men have adopted this mindset (King, 2013). They are viewed within the community as symbols of respect, social acceptance, and power. In general, respect has multiple meanings or can be defined differently for each individual; respect commonly means high regard for something or someone (Bourgois, 2003).

It is not uncommon for males, primarily African American males, to embrace the concept of respect. This embrace comes from a desire to belong and feel included in their immediate peer group. There are a variety of factors that prevent young African

American males from acquiring social respect, including racial discrimination. African American men's difficulty finding a place in society can be attributed to several factors including mindsets, social status, social inclusion, and isolation. Due to a long history of disenfranchisement, African American males face extreme pressure to integrate into a world that makes it difficult. There are often microaggressions, racism, adversity, and a consciously inequitable system (Werkmeister, 2016). There is an injustice in the plight of African Americans. They spend their lives constructing and recreating behaviors, habits, patterns, and opportunities that will enable them to swim toward their goals rather than sink before obtaining them (Martin Rogers, 2018). Therefore, it is essential to understand and address the issue of self-confidence and respect.

Even though self-confidence and respect are only part of a larger puzzle, they have been critical foundational pieces throughout history. Several studies have examined racism, its history, and its impacts; however, this thoroughness has not extended to African American males' perceptions of respect. Many studies examine respect from a behavioral perspective; however, they have not yet examined how demographic and social factors, such as impoverished neighborhoods, educational disadvantages, and a lack of authoritative figures, may affect interactions with law enforcement (Massey Denton, 2019). Due to misinformation, biases, and stereotypes, African American men have historically had less favorable interactions with law enforcement.

Interactions among law enforcement officers can be consistent and have a broad impact, increasing the likelihood of a negative outcome (Garland, 2001).

The reasons for the adverse interactions between African American men and law enforcement across the country are not fully understood, aside from racial implications. There is a lack of data demonstrating a real correlation between African Americans' perceptions of self, respect, and relatable images of law enforcement. As a result, African American men in some regions of the world have difficulty understanding who they are and how to conduct themselves to resolve conflicts with law enforcement. Due to this uncertainty, authority figures and how they present themselves can sometimes pose a problem.

When African American males are conditioned to police their neighborhoods or districts, they have little respect for outside agencies (Ferguson, 2000). African American males' attitudes toward law enforcement may have shifted for various reasons, one of which may be the definition of self-respect they hold. Per the Oxford Dictionary (2022), respect is a feeling of admiration for someone or something based on their abilities, qualities, achievements, or being admired or respected. Considering these definitions, the following questions arise. How do African American males perceive themselves? What implications does this perception have for interactions between African American males and law enforcement? The desire for respect, deference, and the opportunity to be known is believed to be the most important motivation for African American male behavior (Anderson, 1999; Bourgois, 2003; Ferguson, 2000; Morris, 2012). These young men search for an identifying characteristic distinguishing them from their peers. They assert masculine dominance over others in response to authority figures and subordination to

their class (Connell, 2005). A lack of respect for African American males may result from their need for power, resulting in a rejection of weakness and violence.

A heavy police presence is now a staple of poor urban neighborhoods as an effort to control crime (Garland, 2001). The effects of these forms of surveillance have had a significant impact on how these young men maintain their self-esteem. Many urban developments are home to a large population of young adults subject to police interactions and arrests. For example, youth of color are more likely to engage in “hypermasculine” behavior when humiliated and emasculated by authorities (Rios, 2011). Research on the concept of “respect” indicates that it offers an incomplete explanation of how marginalized young men seek recognition in this larger context. Recent studies have suggested that analyzing dignity can provide a more nuanced portrait of the individual (Bourgois, 2003). On a fundamental level, dignity is more important than respect; however, dignity is usually associated with humanity.

Regarding punishment, dignity would likely be presumed, but we refer to respect and how these young men view themselves (Bourgois, 2003). Sennett and Cobb (1973) stated that establishing a sense of personal dignity is the most urgent matter in life. It is important to note that the concept of dignity is closely related to the concept of respect. As institutions nurture dignity, young men become disengaged from aggressively masculine behavior and status-seeking (Reich, 2010). However, the circumstances involved in many deaths of African American males indicate a preference for respect over dignity (Bourgois, 2003).

African American males are systematically excluded from the path to such success by teachers, potential employers, and the police (Alexander, 2012; Anderson, 1999; Rios, 2011). African American males desire respect from their peers in the community, and they seek to gain it the only way they believe is available. This respect is obtained by embracing the gangsta stereotype and forcing or demanding it from their peers, community, and close interactions that will yield the “feeling” of respect (Agnew, 2008; Alexander, 2012; Anderson, 1999; Rios, 2011). In assuming this stereotype, young African American males are often caught in vicious cycles of violence, discrimination, and self-defeat, causing a disconnect between authority figures and young men (Bonilla-Silva, 1997). The divide is not merely social or based on interaction (Blendon, 2017). Much of the divide is fueled by false narratives or perceptions from media, negative interactions with law enforcement, and poor perceptions of low-poverty areas (Blendon, 2017). When this happens, the law enforcement officers that police these areas may have negative perceptions of young males, who then receive adverse treatment and continue to amplify the extreme outcomes for potential criminals and are, therefore, ostracized from society (Alexander, 2012; Reiman & Leighton, 2009; Rios, 2011). This ostracism inhibits the development of healthy role models, self-esteem, confidence, and attitudes in the urban population, making it much more challenging to produce young males with a fresh perspective (Burrell, 2010; Martin et al., 2011; Pharo et al., 2011).

Based on the extensive literature on self-esteem, respect, and social acceptance, it is evident that marginalization negatively impacts the self-esteem of African Americans. A regulation or limitation of social standing is associated with marginalization in general.

Many African Americans are marginalized by being referred to as low-class (Seaton, 2010). On an individual level, this contributes to individuals' exclusion and prevents them from participating in social activities. Two primary factors contribute to marginalization today: class and legislation (Jackson & Henderson, 2006). A low self-esteem issue can be exacerbated if one cannot rid themselves of the emotional turmoil associated with being excluded and marginalized, as well as the feelings of frustration, anger, and confusion accompanying feeling inferior. Many Black males struggle or attempt to cope with being perceived as low-valued men based on stereotypes (Anthony et al., 2007; Bergsieker et al., 2010; Blumer, 1958; Bynum & Kotchick, 2006; Gaylord-Harden et al., 2007; Goffman, 1959; Jackson & Henderson, 2006; Kaufman et al., 2008; Ralphs et al., 2009; Seaton, 2010; Seaton & Yip, 2009).

Respect can be derived from a variety of sources in the African American community. Research has been conducted on the importance of respect among young African American men living in disadvantaged, low-income, or poverty-stricken neighborhoods (Alexander, 2012; Anderson, 1999; Rios, 2011). These studies have established that racial discrimination is a stressor that can hinder progression. When combined with other stressors, these factors lead to psychosocial difficulties and low self-esteem, and multiple studies have identified a link between depressive behavior and internalized systems (Anderson, 1999).

Children, youth, and adults experience different realities based on skin color. There is abundant literature describing racial disparities, expectations with law enforcement, and embedded and systematic racism; however, this literature has failed to

describe how African American males view themselves, respect others and the population, and the impact of these concepts on interactions with and perceptions of law enforcement. In literature, racial pride has been demonstrated as a positive coping skill African American youths use to resist marginalization (Harris-Britt et al., 2007; Mandara et al., 2009; Phillips, 2010; Prelow et al., 2006). There has been limited research on how that self-respect relates to the perception of law enforcement.

The available literature fails to provide a detailed description of how this population conceptualizes and interprets respect and self-esteem concerning law enforcement. Therefore, it was worthwhile to investigate this group's understanding of respect and self-esteem. Accordingly, it would be prudent to investigate the population's understanding of the term and act of respect. In addition, it would be worthwhile to investigate how these terms influence African American males' interactions or perceptions of law enforcement. Thus, the current study focused on the different adverse effects of interactions, racial disparities in self-esteem, labeling, disenfranchisement, and education that influence African American men's perceptions of themselves and their perception of law enforcement.

Problem Statement

Many younger African American males are forgoing the need for dignity and demanding respect. Today, African American males are adopting more and more gangster mannerisms and ideals associated with gangsta rap to earn and maintain respect or social status among their peers (Alexander, 2012; Anderson, 1999; Asim, 2007; Rios, 2011). It has resulted in increased deaths in the African American community and

interactions with law enforcement. Such adoptions have increased the likelihood of interactions with law enforcement becoming deadly for African American men. Young men have seemingly mastered the art of getting respect from their peers by adopting this persona; however, they would appear to have done the opposite with authority figures. How young African American men view themselves has changed their perception and interactions with law enforcement, making them more susceptible to committing crimes and preventing the acquisition of the necessary components needed to develop social status (Oyserman et al., 2011).

In a society that views African American males as problematic, African American males have become less likely to succeed due to the adoption of gangster mannerisms. Consequently, they are more likely to end up in the criminal justice system, which can affect family cycles and increase the number of homicides. These depictions of young males may lead to a negative perception of African American males. Thus, they are more likely to experience negative interactions with law enforcement. Due to these interactions, authority figures such as educators, employers, and law enforcement officers react negatively to African American males, creating further stereotypes and negative perceptions, which have increased deaths from these interactions with law enforcement at an alarming rate (Alexander, 2012; Anderson, 1999; Rios, 2011).

Further research is required regarding how African American males define respect and how this definition affects interactions with law enforcement. This research is necessary as a continuous cycle of marginalization, disenfranchisement, and labeling has affected many law enforcement interactions. This research is necessary to determine

potential methods to improve African American interactions with law enforcement and the engagement of the police. Despite the abundance of literature describing the disruption of African American men's lifestyles caused by racial profiling and systematic racism, there is little evidence regarding perceptions of respect and interactions with law enforcement. According to Alexander (2012), the current literature does not address a gap in understanding how African American males interpret and incorporate their concept of respect and how that understanding has influenced their perceptions of law enforcement as components of their social status in their communities indicated a need for this study.

Purpose of the Study

Perceptions of respect can determine how individuals view themselves and affect how they interact with others, and these perceptions also affect how others may view the individual and, consequently, engage. This study explored African American males' perceptions of respect, as well as how these perceptions affect interactions with law enforcement in Memphis, Tennessee.

Research Questions

RQ1: How do African American males aged 21 to 25 in Memphis, Tennessee, define the concept of respect, and does that definition shape their view of law enforcement?

RQ2: Is Goffman's dramaturgical model sufficient to describe the phenomena of respect among the studied population concerning social acceptance?

Theoretical Framework of the Study

Erving Goffman (1959) developed the dramaturgical model of social interaction, which essentially defines individual roles in life. According to this model, everyone plays a particular social role while interacting with others. In addition to a distinct set of societal rules associated with each social role, each has its own set of behaviors and “a distinctive moral character” (Goffman, 1959, p. 13). A person who plays a social role assumes that role for a specific audience at a particular time. These different social roles are performed to gain the audience’s respect and acceptance. Goffman’s dramaturgical model serves as the contextual lens for this study. The way African American males define respect plays a significant role in their perception of law enforcement and their role in those interactions. A better understanding of law enforcement officers’ roles in those perceptions could potentially lead to more effective interactions. This could allow researchers to investigate the relationship between police perceptions and people’s perceptions of them. In addition to many theories on perception, law enforcement, racism, and roles, these interactions within the Black community appear situational based on circumstance.

Another approach is to examine attitudes toward law enforcement through interactions. Griffiths and Winfree (1982) and Winfree and Griffiths (1977) examined positive and negative police-citizen interactions to establish attitudes toward law enforcement while controlling for racial, gender, socioeconomic, and geographical factors. Males generally reported that the police have been repressive rather than facilitative in their own lives and those of their friends and family members (Griffiths &

Winfree, 1977). As a result of direct and indirect police contact, attitude formation is a complex process. In a second study, a sample of the general population was used, and it was found that positive contact led to a more positive attitude toward the police (Winfree & Griffiths, 1982).

Berger and Lockman (1966) introduced the social sciences to “social construction.” The philosophical investigation of knowledge is not usually of interest to sociologists. Nevertheless, sociology is concerned with the social factors that influence the creation and distribution of knowledge. According to Karl Marx (1859/1978a), “it is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but rather their social being that determines their consciousness” (p. 4). Specifically, Marx (1932/1978b) emphasizes the oppressive and class-based nature of knowledge as follows: “The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas: that is, the class that controls society’s material force is also its ruling intellectual force” (p. 172). It is important to note that Marx links knowledge (ideas) with material interests, and knowledge and thought are intrinsically linked to class position. In addition, he observed that the elite in any society exerts disproportionate control over the acceptance of specific ideas as truths (Marx 1932, 1978b). Therefore, from a sociological perspective, class politics influence and utilize knowledge.

Individuals who come from more affluent backgrounds are generally better equipped to distinguish between social interactions and are less concerned about their social status. Berger and Luckman (1966) believed that people and groups interacted in

social systems and created mental representations of each other's actions over time. This theory suggests that human interactions may influence law enforcement perceptions.

Intragroup race relationships are believed to develop very early in life (Harrell & Taliaferro, 2003). People tend to surround themselves with individuals who are similar to themselves. Individuals usually interact with others for the first time in their families (parents, siblings) or extended families, most of whom share various similarities, including biological ones. As a result of social experiences, an individual becomes aware of the value and meaning they possess within groups of like-minded individuals and other groups (Burrell, 2010). Race, socioeconomic status, age, and other socially significant factors may contribute to forming such social classifications (Harrell & Taliaferro, 2003). In a well-served community, authoritarian figures, such as law enforcement, are often viewed positively. In an underserved community, law enforcement may be perceived negatively due to interactions within the community.

The strain theory, developed in 1938 by Robert K. Merton, states that society attempts to force individuals to achieve socially acceptable goals through a lack of resources. A counterargument can be found in the idea of the American dream; however, the interpretation of these theories is subjective and dependent on the individual. It is common for African American men to be characterized as bad apples or determined based on past behavior rather than present actions (Klinger, 1997). Interactions serve as a stage where African American males feel they have to fit the role, perform, or act a certain way to fit in, feel respected by their peers, or feel secure in themselves. This interpretation also aligns with Goffman's model for social roles and acceptance.

The exchange of ideas between African American men and law enforcement could serve as a bridge between local community members and law enforcement. This dialogue could foster positive interactions while helping create a roadmap that will assist officials with governing those areas. As part of this analysis, data must be collected using online survey tools and social media platforms from persons living or currently residing in disadvantaged neighborhoods. They must also have experienced some form of marginalization from authority figures, specifically law enforcement. To develop an accurate recommendation to address gaps and perceptions, one must immerse oneself in the community to determine how various topics have affected the perception of law enforcement.

This immersion is also necessary to determine whether lowered self-esteem or lack of confidence may influence fear-altering thoughts or if it could result in a disconnect between the individual and law enforcement. It may be discovered that these men have embraced the stereotype of gangstas to develop their self-esteem and respect (Dyson, 1996). Therefore, they will gain social acceptance from their peers, giving them the legitimacy they seek from their local peers rather than law enforcement. Because of low self-confidence, being socially accepted and ruled by peers' opinions or feelings may result in a negative interaction with an authority figure, specifically law enforcement, which could be fatal.

Nature of the Study

This qualitative study used 15 participants, 21 to 25-year-old African American males, living in disadvantaged neighborhoods in the downtown Memphis area,

specifically 25 miles from Shelby Forest-Frayser in Memphis, Tennessee. According to the Federal Bureau of Investigation (2020), Memphis, Tennessee's downtown metro area, has one of the highest violent crime rates in the South and the United States; Tennessee is third in the country for violence. According to Memphis.org (2020), there are approximately 1904 violent crimes per 100,000 residents in the Memphis metro area. In order to find out how African American males defined their lifestyle, respect, and economics, interviews were conducted with members of the priority population. As a result of this information, concepts of respect and self-esteem will be examined using several cases to illustrate the concepts of Goffman's model.

Potential participants were screened using screener questions to see if they qualified. I then contacted each potential participant via email to confirm interest and arrange a virtual interview via Google meet. Following this, I interviewed participants and transcribed their responses until the desired number of participants was achieved, 10-15, or until saturation was achieved. To ensure confidentiality and ethical considerations were covered and the data were not manipulated, I used transcription software via Google Meet that allowed for video, closed captioning, and recording. I ensured the proper consent documents were provided via Google Form, and the screener questions ensured they were of age and understood the purpose of the study. To verify the validity and accuracy of the information obtained from the participants, I included the research questions in the appendix to the study, and I also verified their address was within the specified mileage area.

This study aimed to discover African American males' perceptions of respect and determine how these perceptions affect interactions with law enforcement. Discussion of the findings will address their economic and personal beliefs that may contribute to their understanding of respect through interview discussions. After the study is completed, the findings will provide insights into how African American males understand "respect," how it is defined, and how or if it has impacted their perception of law enforcement and their lived experiences.

It is hoped that the results of this study will provide insight that can be used to help public administrators and community leaders develop comprehensive policies or train law enforcement agencies on how to relate to African American males, particularly those living in high-risk areas. In the future, data from this study will likely assist in guiding community guidelines for youth and potential programs for young adults. It may be possible to enhance positive outcomes of interactions and decrease local incidents of police brutality through policies and training. It could increase morale and community within the area. These policies can also provide crime reduction opportunities and improved relationships with law enforcement. Further, these policies can also improve the use of city funds and increase household stability.

Definition of Terms

For the purpose of this study, the following terms were defined as follows.

Disadvantaged neighborhood: A region of a city or town, the population of which consists of families and individuals with annual incomes of \$30,000 or less (Gaylord-

Harris et al., 2007; Harris Britt et al., 2007; Mandara et al., 2009; Stewart & Simons, 2006; U.S. Census Bureau, 2012b).

Gangsta: A male who values and engages in delinquent behaviors, such as violence and theft, to get what he wants. He possesses an air of cockiness to prove he is tough (Anderson, 1999; Alexander, 2012).

Hood: A neighborhood, especially an urban neighborhood, inhabited predominantly by African Americans of low socioeconomic status (Dictionary, 2022).

Interpersonal perception: Process whereby one forms an impression of another based on beliefs, inferences, and attributions one makes about others based on various perceived similarities and differences (Huston & Levinger, 1978).

Intragroup racism: Also known as racialism, this refers to processes of racism directed at racial group members with whom the perceiver identifies (Cokley, 2002).

Mainstream American society: The conventional majority of middle and upper-class American families with an annual income of \$45,000 or higher (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012a; U.S. Census Bureau, 2013).

Respect: The receipt of proper treatment and deference; not being anyone's victim, physically or verbally. It is a tangible asset that gangstas strive to achieve and maintain at all costs, sometimes even at the cost of their own life (Anderson, 1999; Papachristos, 2009; Rios, 2011).

Socioeconomic status (SES): The level of income and wealth owned by an American family (Barak et al., 2010). The higher the level of income or wealth, the

higher the SES. Families with an annual income of \$30,000 or lower are considered low SES (Harris-Britt et al., 2007; U.S. Census Bureau, 2022).

White privilege: An invisible and often overlooked condition that has helped to reinforce distancing between Black and white groups (Hays & Chang, 2003).

Limitations and Assumptions

In this study, there were a few limitations. To begin with, most social scientists spend one to three years in the field with their research participants. This time enables the researcher to provide details in field notes and data analysis (Yin, 2013). Due to academic and economic constraints, I could not devote that much time to fieldwork. I did, however, expand my research using technology, gaining more participants and conversing with them independently for a maximum of 30 minutes. While I could not gather sufficient information in the field, I did bridge the gap via technology. Also, another limitation was ensuring I did not locate participants that may have had a criminal record; to minimize that threat, I asked the screener questions (see appendix C).

Threats to external and internal validity primarily determine research limitations (Campbell & Stanley, 1963). The external validity of a study refers to the extent to which its results can be generalized beyond the specific participants. An unbiased sampling of the target population can be used to increase external validity. To achieve this, only those interested in participating in the study were included in this sample. Another limitation or consideration is that participants may have felt the need to perform or give me the answers they think I want to hear due to social desirability, which also aligns with Goffman's theory. To address this, I ensured the participants of the transparency of the

study. Hence, they understood it was to advance the community and begin conversations with public administration agencies. I also limited recruitment. Recruitment was limited to the community and targeted residents within a radius of the study site. Only males were eligible to participate to ensure that the characteristics of the participants were similar as possible.

Regarding personal bias, there was no personal or emotional connection between this population and myself, and I had no personal assumptions. Another researcher that is not from the same ethnicity may face an obstacle or barrier in relatability, thus altering the natural communication. As an African -American woman raising males of my own, I hypothesized that the participants would be more receptive to dialogue as I was more relatable; however, this could be an assumption. It is with great pride that I state that I come from an upper-middle-class family in the state of Illinois. As I pursued my undergraduate degree in Criminal Justice and started my first year of law school, I realized the adverse institutional systems in place in society. Furthermore, I am researching these factors as some of my family members have died untimely because of some of these factors.

Scope and Delimitations

The specific focus of this study was to examine how this population defines and understands respect. It also looks to see if that definition impacts participants' perception and understanding of respect and how it impacts their perception of law enforcement. This study also explored how that concept of respect has affected their perception of law enforcement in Memphis, Tennessee. To maximize transferability and accuracy, I

concentrated on interview-based discussions. In this way, I gained a comprehensive understanding of how factors such as socioeconomic factors influence their definition and perception of the law. Any mental illness or substance abuse issues in this population were beyond the scope of this study. Also beyond the scope of this study were any promising intervention models and counseling techniques for this population. Given these delimitations, young African American men receiving mental illness or substance abuse treatment were excluded from participating in this study.

Significance

Little research has been conducted on the perception of respect among young African American men living in disadvantaged neighborhoods as it relates to law enforcement. Furthermore, little research has been conducted on how their perception affects their behavior. It will therefore be worthwhile to gain an understanding of the lived experiences of this population. A key element of successful multicultural counseling is the counselor's understanding of the client's cultural background and social context (Sue & Sue, 2008). By acquiring this knowledge, helping professionals will be able to provide more beneficial assistance to individuals in this population. According to social science research, if marginalized populations embrace self-defeating behavior due to their marginalization, then public policy administration members may be compelled to reevaluate the assessment standards currently used to assist marginalized populations (Sue & Sue, 2008).

Summary

Using Goffman's Dramaturgical Model of Social Interaction, this study illustrated the issue of respect within a qualitative context. This study was necessary because a significant portion of this population is marginalized by mainstream American society. Due to this, these young men cannot live a healthy lifestyle that would reduce their risk of trauma (Hutto & Green, 2017). Social scientists need to understand this concept more deeply to expand their knowledge about this population, which may lead to developing culturally appropriate interventions for working with this population.

Chapter Two includes a review of the literature on Goffman's Dramaturgical Model of Social Interactions, various social factors, and their effects on African American males' perceptions of respect and law enforcement interactions. The third chapter includes a detailed description of the methodology used to answer the above research questions. From there, Chapter Four includes an outline of the qualitative study results and answers to the research question. Lastly, Chapter Five outlines the study's conclusions, recommendations, and implications.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Introduction

Younger African American males increasingly disregard the need for dignity and, instead, demand respect. African American males increasingly adopt gangster mannerisms and ideals associated with gangsta rap to gain and maintain respect and social status among their peers (Alexander, 2012; Anderson, 1999; Asim, 2007; Rios, 2011). This adoption has resulted in increased deaths in the African American community and increased interactions with law enforcement. In many cases, young men feel compelled to adopt gangster personas in which they demand respect from others, even from authorities. As a result of their defined respect and perceptions, interactions with law enforcement conclude in a breakdown that has increasingly resulted in death (Oyserman et al., 2011).

The quality of life of African American males has been adversely affected by factors such as racial discrimination, poverty, and single motherhood. Ultimately, these factors have resulted in negative perceptions within themselves and among law enforcement officials (Gyimah-Brempong, 2007/2008; Kaufman et al., 2008; Prelow et al., 2006; Shutay et al., 2011). Research has concluded that discrimination, stereotypical behavior, labeling, and negative interactions negatively affect the self-esteem of young African Americans, particularly if they lack racial pride and a well-balanced family structure (Gaylord-Harden et al., 2007; Harris-Britt et al., 2007). This results in an adverse perception of law enforcement and a culture that influences the need for social acceptance.

After defining my literature search strategy, I reviewed the literature related to Goffman's Dramaturgical Model of Social Interaction. The literature included studies on marginalization and the history of law enforcement interactions with African American males. Furthermore, I noted how previous scientific ideologies could produce a different understanding of respect and worldview due to interactions and socioeconomic factors. Lastly, I examined the literature on the counterculture that arose in response to the ostracism experienced by this population. To earn respect, this counterculture promotes violence, criminal activity, and risky sexual behavior (Anderson, 1999; Burrell, 2010; Fleury & Fernet, 2011).

Literature Search Strategy

During my search, I used keywords such as *African Americans*, *race theory*, *criminal justice*, *respect*, *self-esteem*, *gangs*, *social roles*, *broken theory*, *prison to pipeline*, *social interactions*, *African American perceptions*, and *African American perspectives*. Using these terms, I then searched the Criminal Justice Periodicals and SocINDEX for sources pertaining to law enforcement, self-esteem, respect, social interactions, and criminal behavior. As a result of snowball sampling, I located references to other sources in one particular source. To conduct this study, I consulted over 85 peer-reviewed sources. This chapter only focuses on the most relevant articles about this study's purpose.

Theoretical Framework

Through human interactions, individuals shape and are shaped by society. Interactionism is a theoretical perspective in micro-sociology that views social behavior

as a product of individuals and their circumstances (Baumeister et al., 2001). Therefore, interactionists assert that individuals are active and conscious players in social contexts rather than merely passive objects (Millová et al., 2015). As our interactions unfold, meanings associated with the self, with others with whom we interact, and with the situations in which we interact change. As such, interactionism may differ from studies of socialization in that individuals are viewed as influencing groups, at least as much as groups are viewed as influencing individuals (Hodapp, 1999).

As an advocate of pragmatism and the subjectivity of social reality, George Herbert Mead is largely credited as one of the pioneers of interactionism. Blumer (1959) further developed Mead's work by coining the term symbolic interactionism.

Interactionism is a micro-sociological perspective that holds that meaning is created through interpersonal interactions (Blumber, 1959). During social interaction, actions, reactions, and mutual adaptations occur face-to-face between two or more people.

Language (including body language) and mannerisms are part of those interactions.

Throughout his work, Goffman (1986) stressed the importance of control in interactions: one must attempt to control the other's behavior to obtain the information one seeks and control the perception of one's own image. During interactions, Goffman further emphasizes the importance of controlling the other's behavior to attain the information one seeks and shape one's perception of oneself (1986). There are several key concepts in interactionism, such as the "social role" and Goffman's "presentation of self." Interactionists are particularly interested in how individuals perceive themselves and behave in social settings.

Dramaturgy is a sociological perspective commonly used in micro-sociological assessments of everyday social interactions (Ritzer, 2007). In dramaturgical sociology, human interactions are influenced by time, place, and audience. The self, for Goffman, is an awareness of who one is, arising from the immediate situation (Ritzer, 2007). How one presents one's self to another is based on cultural values, norms, and beliefs. Performances can be disrupted (actors are aware of this), but most are successful. If the actor succeeds in presenting themselves in this way, the audience will see the actor as they desire to be seen (Goffman, 1980).

Dramaturgical theory suggests that a person's identity is not a stable and independent psychological entity, but rather, it is constantly remade as they interact with others. Based on the dramaturgical model, social interaction is analyzed regarding how individuals live as actors performing on stage (Macionis et al., 2010). These theories and approaches provide a solid foundation for addressing this study's research questions. Utilizing the framework of the dramaturgical theory, this study aimed to determine if African American males' perceptions of respect affect how they present themselves in interactions with law enforcement, which could then affect outcomes.

Definition of Interactions

Interactions must be defined to draw a more precise conclusion from this study. Social interaction is defined by the American Psychological Association (2022) as any relationship between two or more individuals. This definition means that social structures influence social interactions. It is more practical to view it as an exchange between two or more individuals that results in an interaction. As humans interact, they perform roles and

decide how to govern the interactions they have just encountered. Interactions provide humans with the ability to live and coincide with one another. As a result, these interactions lead to the development of rules, institutions, and systems, which are then built and implemented. As a result, people operate according to these rules or perceptions and relate to one another accordingly.

Although social interactions can take many forms, such as competition, conflict, cooperation, or accommodation, the exchanges between two people are mostly considered interactions. This consideration is particularly significant to outline since interactions between law enforcement and young Black men warrant timely discussion, remediation, and action. This conversation is also historically relevant as racism, segregation, oppression, and other adversities have plagued Black people since the early 1800s.

Compared to other communities, the Black community faces a variety of issues at a significantly higher rate. It is possible to interpret this culture based on assumptions and perceptions from history and the media; however, a more precise conclusion can be developed by examining the group of individuals most affected by these conditions. Understating the conditions this population faces throughout youth and young adolescence, such as racism, socioeconomic factors, and law enforcement bias, could shed light on this population's need for social acceptance (Alexander, 2012; Anderson, 1999; Rios, 2011).

Statistics

Finding research, data, and statistics that paint a dismal picture of interactions between law enforcement and African American men is not difficult. In all parts of the world, African American men are targeted at a higher rate and more likely to have an incident with law enforcement than in other cultures (Tyler, 2021). According to the Washington Post police shootings database (2015), African American men account for more than 24% of roughly 6,000 fatal shootings by police since 2015. Since 2015, police have killed approximately 1,000 people in the U.S. yearly. Moreover, research has shown that Black people are more than three times more likely to be fatally shot by police in the U.S. than whites. Recent studies have also found that Black people are more likely to be pulled over by police during traffic stops and questioned more aggressively than those who are not Black. A study by Stanford University in 2020, where police departments across the United States analyzed over 100 million traffic stops, revealed that Black drivers were roughly 20% more likely to be stopped than white drivers. Additionally, the study revealed that Black drivers were searched up to two times more frequently than white drivers, even though Black drivers are less likely to possess illegal items.

The number of African Americans arrested for drug abuse in 2018 was approximately 750 out of every 100,000, compared to 350 out of every 100,000 white Americans. The results of previous national drug surveys indicate that white people use drugs at similar rates. Still, African Americans are arrested more frequently and punished harshly for comparable crimes. For example, the American Civil Liberties Union (2020) found that African Americans were 3.7 times more likely to be arrested for marijuana

possession than whites, even though their marijuana consumption was similar. According to the U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics (2021), African Americans comprised approximately 13% of the country's population but almost one-third of the prison population in 2019. More than 60% of the U.S. population comprises white Americans, yet they comprise approximately 30% of the prison population. This statistic means that African Americans are imprisoned at disproportionately high rates. More than 1,000 African Americans are in prison for every 100,000 Black residents, compared to 200 white inmates for every 100,000 white residents. A Black individual is five times more likely to be sent to prison for drug possession than a white individual. High statistics such as these raise concerns that need to be addressed and demonstrate an estranged relationship between African American males and law enforcement.

African Americans & Law Enforcement: Perceptions of Interactions

African Americans and brown people have been killed by police more frequently, eroding community trust in law enforcement. In 2019, a PEW research study found that 84% of Black adults who interacted with police felt they were treated less fairly than 63% of white adults (Horowitz et al., 2021). The criminal justice system in the United States treats Black people less fairly than whites regarding rehabilitation and services to reduce recidivism. These services are often based on a person's history, location, and age. In the same survey, Black adults were approximately five times more likely than white adults to have been unfairly stopped by police (44% vs. 9%). In addition, 59% of Black men believe they have been unfairly stopped, compared to 31% of African-American women

(Weisburd & Majmundar, 2018). These statistics demonstrate the strained relationship between African Americans and law enforcement.

According to the United States Census Bureau, African American men make up approximately 14% of the population. The Bureau of Prisons (BOP) (2022) reports that approximately 38% of prisoners are African American. Analysis and measurements of these statistics have sparked a nationwide outcry causing activists, leaders, and citizens have come together to highlight disparities in Black and Brown communities and demand changes. In July 2013, Black Lives Matter launched a movement and organization dedicated to fighting injustices, securing freedom, and empowering people of color. Among the issues highlighted are intra- and inter-community issues being addressed locally and globally. In recent years, Black people have gathered nationwide to combat several issues, including police brutality, gun violence, violent neighborhoods, and inflated prison terms. These issues have perpetuated the cycle of poverty within Black communities. These conditions often make young African American males feel unsafe because they don't have all the privileges associated with the American dream ideal. As racism takes many forms, it is imperative to understand how it operates within the community it is directed towards and within the systems that are supposed to help those in need (Bonilla-Silva, 1997).

In 1997, Dr. Adolph Brown, who had been studying this particular concept for over 30 years, stated

When law enforcement gets behind anyone's car, whether the person is Black or white, everyone initially has a physiological spike, which is a natural or

normalized reaction. What occurred in African American males was that the spike continued to rise. It wasn't just law enforcement being behind them; it became, 'Am I going to survive this encounter?' (p. 64)

The study was groundbreaking because it nearly ended due to the physiological harm it was causing to the participants. Brown (1997) explained that the participants in the study spiked off the charts, "Consequently, I had to intervene in order to prevent possible harm from occurring to the participants when this occurred. In addition, relaxation imagery was required at the end of the study" (p. 68).

Often, young children face the prospect that one day, they may be stopped by law enforcement, and the interaction may not go as planned. The issue is not as simple as law enforcement stopping to protect or to serve. The disproportionate statistics of African American men should provoke psychological responses with facts that can support and shape mindsets both before and after the event—significantly impacting future generations. Even though the research has been conducted and provides statistics, other opinions within the law enforcement community do not view this as a collective discrepancy.

Law Enforcement Perceptions of Interactions

Law enforcement officers often perceive African American incidents as isolated between two groups of people instead of viewing them as part of a more significant issue (Sue & Sue, 2008). Public opinion about public law enforcement interactions varies greatly between police officers and the general public (Worden, 1989). A white police officer may view excessive force as an isolated incident, whereas an African American

police officer may regard it as a more significant issue. The line between politics and antics and law and policy in law enforcement agencies can be muddled and misinterpreted (Simmons, 2012). More than 8,000 police officers from departments with more than 100 officers surveyed in 2016 believed that nearly two-thirds of the incidents involving Black people were isolated events rather than signs of a broader problem (Spillers, 2003). In a companion survey of more than 4,600 U.S. adults, over 57 percent of African American police officers agreed that such incidents are indicative of a broader problem (Sigelman, 1994). Despite this, only 27% of white and 26% of Hispanic officers shared the same opinion. In 2016, approximately two-thirds of police officers (68%) believed that demonstrations over the deaths of Black people during encounters with law enforcement were primarily motivated by anti-police sentiment (Reiman & Leighton, 2015). In contrast, only 10% of respondents indicated that protesters were primarily motivated by a desire to hold police accountable. Police officers' views differ according to race here as well. Only approximately one-quarter of white officers (27%) compared to around six-in-ten Black officers (57%) said they were motivated to some extent by a genuine desire to hold police accountable (Tyler, 2020).

Statistics such as these are crucial in depicting the perceptions of and biases in the relationship between African American males and law enforcement. Though racism has been the subject of research since the early 1800s, it is essential to realize that disparity within the legal system is determined by the individual who renders the decision on the day in question (Worden, 1989). Being Black in the United States in 1960 was to be 'smeared with the stigma of "racial inferiority"' (Haywood, 1948, p. 138). It is important

to consider the context when interpreting and explaining racism, and these differences play a considerable role in allowing us to differentiate between contextual and systematic racism.

Contextual vs. Systemic Racism

Racial discrimination is a social construct that affects many people and is interpreted differently by each individual. According to Webster (2022), racism is the belief that different races possess distinct characteristics, abilities, or qualities which make them inferior or superior to one another. Research evidence indicates that racial disparities in the criminal justice system depend on the location or stage of the adjudication process (Serial Citation). In other words, such disparities are contextualized. This perspective holds that the criminal justice system is not racist, even though some contexts may be widespread (Crank, 2003). The cumulative effects of racial-based decisions lead to systemic racist practices due to the racial disparities in the criminal justice system (Crank, 2003). A study by the United States sentencing commission found that Black male offenders received longer sentences than white male offenders. Black offenders receive a 19.1% longer sentence than white male offenders. From 2012 to 2016, no changes were observed in the sentence differences.

To correct systematic racism, one must apply a deeper level of thinking to and by diverse people to fix it. "Systematic racism" refers to practices that inherently discriminate based on race. The systematic part of racism is infused with racism in the way it is practiced. Black people, Indigenous people, and other people of color are systematically and pervasively disadvantaged within society due to systemic racism.

Discrimination often stems from deliberate acts of discrimination in the past, such as laws mandating racial segregation in housing. It should be noted that systemic racism can often be self-perpetuating, with persistent adverse effects on health even after the explicit discriminatory measures have been removed (Williams & Sternthal, 2010).

The terms systemic, structural, and institutional racism, or concepts related to them, were first used by social scientists. There is a strong connection between the key concepts developed by social scientists who trace these concepts back to W.E.B. Du Bois. Du Bois (1900) wrote that racism had become institutionalized within many sectors of society and was self-perpetuating (Feagin & Ducey, 2018). Douglas Massey and Nancy Denton (1993) noted the institutionalization of racial discrimination within large sectors of American society, including the labor market, education system, welfare bureaucracy, and racial segregation.

A complex array of anti-Black practices, unjustly acquired political-economic power by whites, continued economic and other resource inequalities along racial lines, and white racist attitudes are all part of systemic racism, according to Joe Feagin and Kimberley Ducey (2018). In this case, “systemic” refers to how racism has manifested in society’s major institutions: the economy, politics, education, religion, and the family, reflecting the fundamental reality of systemic racism. As Edmundo Bonilla-Silva (1997) pointed out, persistent racial inequality reflects society’s continuing existence of a racial structure. According to Bonilla-Silva (1997), contemporary racial oppression is increasingly covert, embedded in everyday operations of institutions, avoids direct racial terminology, and is invisible to most whites.

Racial Disparities in the Criminal Justice System

There is a critical need to understand the difference between systematic and institutionalized racism, as these two types of racism have different impacts on different communities. There are many forms of racism in today's society. Systematic racism, for example, manifests itself in numerous industries and fields, resulting in considerable inequalities. In this context, it refers to policies and practices that produce outcomes that chronically favor and disadvantage a particular racial group (Swim et al., 2003).

In the criminal justice system, progress and reduction coincide, and this duality often results in laws that gradually undermine the root purpose of the criminal justice system. Racial disparities in the criminal justice system alone do not explain trends in arrest proportions for criminal offenses (Petersilia, 1983). In that same article, however, numerous examples of localized racial bias varied according to the location and the situation. The bias provides evidence of contextual racism rather than systemic racism. Thus, discrimination patterns in one place are not necessarily present in another because the context in which they occur differs (Crank, 2003).

In a review of the literature, Chiricos and Crawford (1995) found that several contextual factors influenced the relationship between race and sentencing in U.S. criminal courts. The factors considered included the jurisdiction in which the sentence was imposed, the unemployment rate in that jurisdiction, and the offender's prior criminal record. The authors of this article emphasize the importance of examining the structural contexts in which Black people find themselves in the criminal justice system, as well as the specific economic environments in which these agencies operate. The

effects of this could be profound on the lives of African American men and their perception of law enforcement as a whole.

A review of the research literature on discrimination in the administration of justice by Crank (2003) indicates that research has shown both substantive and no effects, depending on which aspect of the justice system is examined and which level of aggregation is employed (individual level, municipality, state, or nation). To identify racial disparities in the delivery of justice, Crank (2003) argues that the correct contexts must be identified. Law enforcement officers must understand the demographic makeup and environment to serve a community effectively. Racism within or by the criminal justice system is manifested by its disparate impact on those disproportionately represented (Hutto & Green, 2016).

Overrepresentation is a venue for how systemic racism spreads, impacts communities, and results from over-policing and under-policing. The lives of African American males are damaged and restricted by a lack of access and capacity. This perception reinforces the idea that Black and brown people do not deserve the same rehabilitation other cultures would receive based on the likelihood of their use or ability to utilize the services provided. Due to the inherent racial biases in the criminal justice system, there are disparities based on racial identity at every decision point that result in adverse outcomes for people of color (Goff et al., 2016). Research must consider how racist policies and implicit biases interact within different aspects of the system, with particular consideration for neighborhoods and smaller communities that lack access to resources that other communities might have.

Ecological Context and Racial Profiling

Researchers have found that police behavior differs depending on the ecological or neighborhood context (Klinger, 1997). Based on their ability to assess a person based on their age, color, background, body language, and reactions, it is evident that each officer's interaction is based on their history, experience, knowledge, and perceptions of the people. Suppose an officer's perceptions or ideas about the system and its actors have been shaped by the environment in which they grew up. In that case, disparate treatment of minorities may not simply be a function of their race (Alpert & Dunham, 2010). A neighborhood's racial and class composition can considerably impact police behavior and the perception of police behavior held by neighborhood residents (Smith et al., 1991; Weitzer, 2000). It has been consistently observed that minorities view law enforcement with suspicion and distrust. It is often because of the racial makeup of the communities in which law enforcement operates.

There is a "race and place" dimension to racial profiling, as reported by Meehan and Ponder (2002). According to these authors, the efficacy of police action is highly dependent and related to officers having discretion or flexibility in making decisions related to police action and traffic stops. When there is a poor relationship between the community and law enforcement, effective policing is undermined. Despite the need for officers to exercise discretion, a breakdown in trust between law enforcement and the public may result in a less desirable interaction between community members and law enforcement (Alpert & Dunham, 2010). When African Americans drove through white areas of the community, they were subjected to disproportionate surveillance and stopped

by the police, especially when officers noticed that the vehicle on display was unfamiliar. As a result of increased racial profiling by the police, Black drivers moved from “stereotypical” Black communities to wealthier white neighborhoods. In addition, several researchers have noted the importance of addressing whether racial groups differ in their rates and degree of law-violating behavior (Ekstrand, 2000; Zingraff et al., 2000). Evidence suggests that crime rates in a given neighborhood area may contribute to disparities in rates of arrests or contact. Sampson and Lauritsen (1997) reviewed research findings on race at various stages. They concluded that racial differences in arrests for street crimes could partially be explained by the involvement of Black people in criminal activity.

Harris (2005) defended racial profiling based on statistical evidence, citing empirically that individuals from particular race groups commit a disproportionate number of crimes in certain jurisdictions. This perspective considers a long history of discriminatory practices and policing strategies that are overly aggressive and associated with racial disparities by location. There are no easy solutions to resolve the complex rift between the police and minority communities (Hutto & Green, 2013). Evidence suggests that some policies and practices might improve police–minority community relations and enhance police effectiveness. However, they do not provide an equitable solution without dismantling a national system.

Law Enforcement Attitudes and Perceptions

When looking at perspectives regarding law enforcement, numerous studies indicate factors that affect police officer decisions and their encounters with African

American males. Most quantitative studies have reported weak relationships between officers' attitudes and behavior (Worden, 1989). According to Mastrofski et al. (1994), officers' attitudes, including their individual enforcement priorities, were weakly correlated with their enforcement patterns. The findings of this study are consistent with the large body of social-psychological research, indicating that the estimated relationships between attitudes and behavior are small (Schuman & Johnson, 1976).

According to the strain theory developed by Robert K. Merton in 1938, society pressures individuals to achieve socially acceptable goals despite a lack of resources. Individuals may be compelled to commit crimes by social structures because they lack the means to do so (financial resources). As a result, individuals may commit crimes such as selling drugs or engaging in criminal activities that jeopardize their financial security. Nevertheless, this theory may not be appropriate for exploring the perceptions of African American males of law enforcement through their eyes since the "American Dream" is subject to interpretation. According to Merton (1938), the American dream consists of meritocratic principles that ensure equal opportunity for everyone regardless of class, gender, or ethnicity. Some certain strains or stressors can increase the likelihood of crime.

The majority of empirical studies concerning racial behavioral issues involve searches and seizures; however, there are many instances of violations of rights and privacy occurring. Engel et al. (2002) stated that "Differences in aggregate rates tell only that differences exist, but researchers have not attempted to determine "why" the differences exist." (p. 249). It is necessary to measure officers' attitudes, perspectives, and social influences mediating the relationship between attitudes and behavior to

determine whether the differences arise from individuals' attributes or as a result of collective attributes. To accomplish this, it would be necessary to collect data from officers or surveys of officers regarding their behavior and the perspectives of those they serve. Evidence suggests that this may not be the best approach due to officers' apprehension of revealing the truth about their work in fear of retaliation (Glasser 1992). Researchers have not collected this type of data due to fear that the "Blue wall of silence" will skew data, making it incorrect.

Impact of Law Enforcement Biases

This section focuses on the social dynamics in the interactions between police officers and African American males. It would be powerful if researchers could understand how African American men view police officers based on social or economic inhibitions after a stop has been made. This analysis could be based on an exchange between the two groups. The higher arrest rates among certain groups, such as young Black males, may be attributed to their demeanor toward law enforcement, which prompts a police response. Perhaps these interactions could be more positive if law enforcement understood how these particular men in those communities saw themselves and their needs.

There has been substantial research on the influence of suspect demeanor on police behavior (Lundman, 1994, 1996; Son et al., 1998; Worden & Shepard, 1996). Other situational factors have also been significant predictors of police behavior. A few of these include 1) factors associated with the suspect, for example, gender, age, and whether he is impaired by drugs or alcohol, 2) factors associated with the encounter

between the police and the citizen, such as the time of day, location, the presence of bystanders, the presence of other officers, and the presence of the complainant, and 3) legal factors associated with the encounter, such as the severity of the suspected offense and the strength of the evidence (Riksheim & Chermak, 1993). These attributes may be related to a suspect's racial or ethnic background, contributing to disproportionate contact rates with law enforcement and police decisions made in situations involving young Black males. A police officer's discretion in any given encounter may be restricted by several factors, such as disenfranchisement, poverty, unemployment, education, social acceptance, respect, and the gangster love cherished by African American men (Garland, 2001).

In the literature, gaps are discussed with racism, profiling, and institutional racism; however, there is also a gap in attitudes, behavior, and social norms between African American males and law enforcement. Despite the literature's focus on racism, colorism, impoverished areas, and how these factors affect social norms, it does not address how upbringing and neighborhood directly affect African American males' impulse reactions when they encounter law enforcement officers. The ability to comprehend factors that can affect interactions between African American males and law enforcement officers requires in-depth knowledge of factors that affect their social and economic mobility. This analysis would not be complete without a concurrent analysis of how these factors affect how law enforcement perceives African American males (Sennett et al., 1973).

Cycle of Lack

African American men are often victims of an incomprehensible lack and are deprived of dignity compared to men from other cultures. Under-resourced schools, mass incarceration, and family breakdown all contribute to the cycle of Black poverty.

Historically, Black men and boys have suffered from various adverse outcomes. In a recent paper from the Equality of Opportunity Project (2022), “Gender is a big part of the story as well.” A recent study found that Black men are disproportionately affected by race gaps in intergenerational mobility (Chetty et al., 2018). This report is another contribution to the growing body of literature demonstrating the importance of race gaps in the intergenerational persistence of poverty primarily results in poor outcomes for Black men (Davis et al., 2018). Specifically, Chetty et al. (2018) demonstrate that Black men born to low-income parents are significantly more likely to end up with a low individual income than Black women, white women, and particularly white men.

Davis et al. (2018) summed up this relationship clearly:

We conclude based on the preceding analysis that the Black-white intergenerational gap in individual income is substantial for men, but quite small for women. It is important to note, however, that this finding does not imply that the Black-white gap in women’s individual incomes will vanish with time. This is because Black women continue to have substantially lower levels of household income than white women, both because they are less likely to be married and because Black men earn less than white men. (p. 23)

The economic circumstances in which Black and white children are born are very different. Nearly half of Black boys and girls live in households in the bottom fifth of the income distribution, compared to just over one in ten white children.

Family Structure

As a buffer against some of the adverse effects of structural and institutional racism, the family plays a vital role for the Black family. The number of single-family households without parental structure tends to increase in high-crime areas. A sense of structure provides security and control to children in a world that seems filled with uncertainty (Ferguson, 2000). Many factors contribute to this situation, including Black women raising Black children alone for various reasons, such as mass incarceration, homicide within the local community, and high usage of drug paraphernalia. The single-parent issue has been prevalent since 1880 (Reich, 2010). Data from U.S. Census reports indicate that between 1880 and 1960, married households with two parents were the most prevalent family type.

A 2011 report shows 72% of Black children are born to unmarried mothers. According to the American Community Survey (2015), 77.3% of Black Americans gave birth outside marriage. Based on research conducted by KidsCount (2015), it is estimated that a single parent raised 66% of African American children. As Black males are often stereotyped, the lack of a father figure can exacerbate the desire to find their identity healthily, causing them to desire emotional acceptance (Garland, 2000). Because Black males are incarcerated at a rate six times the rate of white males, disproportionate incarceration rates are detrimental to Black males, families, and communities. Growing

up in a single-parent home can also negatively affect educational attainment and academic trajectory.

From 1960 to 2013, the number of African American children living in single-parent homes doubled from 22% to 55%. According to the same study, the number of white children living in single-parent households tripled from 7% to 22%. While this is also an increase, it is still lower than the percentage of single-parentage in Black families. Black families have been portrayed as predominantly single-parent households in which the Black mother takes on a matriarchal role perpetuating the narrative of a fragmented household (Ferguson, 2000).

Poverty

Research has found that family structure and marital status are not significant factors in poverty, as African American women are high earners. It would be more appropriate to focus on the issue of poverty and successful family structures as a whole rather than just those who live in single-family households. Poverty is often attributed to poor behavior, crime, and low educational achievement. America has a high poverty rate, but this number magnifies when examining African American households, which are about 24% (Reiman & Leighton, 2009). This rate is even higher for African American women households, which is 34%. It has led to a division of the family structure and the emergence of multigenerational poverty. Accordingly, one in six households suffers from poverty for the third generation, compared to one in a hundred white households. Research suggests that single-parent households may not always be responsible for the increase in poverty in the African American community. Numerous studies have been

conducted on parental stress, practices, and decisions that impact the income levels of these families and their success (Reiman & Leighton, 2009).

As a result of under-resourced communities, mass incarcerations, and the school-to-prison pipeline, the cycle of Black poverty persists. These factors contribute to disparities in social capital, currency, and self-esteem. Research indicates that the negative perceptions of African American males may be overcome if they are not inherently viewed negatively but provided with individual consideration of the factors that may affect their behavior (Harris-Britt et al., 2007).

Adverse Effects of Stereotypes

There is a long history of stereotyping in the United States, with African American males among the country's most visibly stereotyped racial groups (Harpalnai, 2017). The stereotyping of African Americans dates back to the early 19th century with Blackface minstrel shows. A gradual evolution emerged in how African Americans were represented as "shufflers and drawlers, crackers and dancers, wisecrackers and high-stepping buffoons" (Engle, 1978, p. xiv). African American actors began to play these roles on stage and in movies by acting in a self-effacing manner. As a result of these fixed impressions of the shared attributes of a group of people, society frequently used them to make sense of social settings, situations, and interactions with others (Larnell et al., 2014; Nasir, 2012). Several studies have linked stereotypes to bias, prejudice, and systemic discrimination, as Larnell et al. (2014) demonstrated. Early cinema portrayed stereotypes, and often, current media does as well. With the emergence of early silent films such as "The Wooing and Wedding of a Coon" in 1904, "The Slave" in 1905, and

“The Sambo Series” in 1921, old stereotypical views related to African Americans began to be portrayed on broader stages. Prominent white individuals such as Abraham Lincoln, Andrew Johnson, and Thomas Jefferson believed Black people were mentally inferior, physically unevolved, and visually apelike (Plous & Williams, 1995). During his presidency, Theodore Roosevelt publicly stated that “the Negroes are altogether inferior to whites” (Plous & Williams, 1995, p. 796).

Stereotypes significantly impact educational outcomes, employment opportunities, incarceration rates, and brutal treatment (Hadden, 2001), contributing to the breakdown of the African American family and, more specifically, the Black male family. Many African Americans, particularly men, have been stereotyped as dumb, violent, and dangerous criminals (Werkmeister, 2016). Stereotypes have the disadvantage of limiting opportunities for specific groups. Unfortunately, stereotypes perpetuated against African American males are often associated with oppression, which is correlated with poverty, among other negative outcomes and cycles that African American men face compared to their white counterparts. These stereotypes may affect how African American men are treated if they are believed to be accurate. Addressing this critical human rights issue is essential to practice social work effectively.

The National Association of Social Workers Code of Ethics Preamble (2017) states, “The primary mission of social workers is to enhance human welfare and help meet the basic human needs of all people, especially those who are marginalized, oppressed, and living in poverty” (Preamble). Social justice is a core value of the social work profession, which aligns with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR).

Therefore, social workers should practice from a human rights perspective to ensure that African American males receive basic human rights identified in the UDHR and address these problems by advocating on their behalf. Even though this benefits the social work system, it may leave out a group of people who do not fall within the system, negatively impacting local families and communities. Plous and Williams (1995) sought to determine if whites still held racial stereotypes formed during the days of “American Slavery.” However, they noted a lack of current data on this issue. Although national public opinion surveys do not measure racial stereotypes, some research indicates that stereotypes have decreased steadily over the past few years. The study found that 58.9 percent of Black and white participants agreed that there was at least one stereotypical difference in inborn abilities.

The discrimination and stereotyping of African Americans in contemporary progressive society must be accurately assessed to intervene effectively in these areas (Plous & Williams, 1995). Society must acknowledge that stereotypes and oppression still exist today, which may impact the esteem of men and boys.

Racial Disparities in Esteem

According to research, self-esteem and belonging are basic human needs (Pharo et al., 2011). Whether it be peer acceptance, authority figures, or parental acceptance, all humans desire some form of acceptance from others. To meet these needs, Goffman (1959) suggested that people play different roles for different groups or audiences. A social role is played to gain social acceptance by the audience to which it is presented, which is the audience the performer holds most dear to them. Similarly, Goffman (1959)

asserted that each social role had certain behaviors and “a distinctive moral character” associated with it (p. 13). Depending on their audiences, these moral characteristics and behaviors should be reflected in how the individual portraying the persona in question is treated. Using his dramaturgical model, Goffman’s explained how people adopt different roles to gain social acceptance.

Social Acceptance and Social Capital

At the very least, human beings must have self-esteem and desire to be respected by their peers, particularly if they have not been raised in a positive environment. This requirement is often the case with members of one’s race (Harris, 2007; Pharo et al., 2011). As Pharo et al. (2011) noted, being ostracized by the community negatively impacts self-esteem, particularly in adolescents and young adults. It is possible to argue that associating with individuals of the same race fulfills the desire for social acceptance. Based on these statements, it can be concluded that young Black males will do whatever is necessary to gain social acceptance and avoid ostracism from their peers (Phillips, 2010). Therefore, if this is true, a young African American male will do whatever is deemed acceptable by his peers to earn and maintain social acceptance, even if it is illegal or dangerous. An evaluation conducted by Briggs (2010) of a program aimed at increasing self-esteem among minority youth in London confirmed Goffman’s theory. When participating in that program, many young adult men reported feeling like they had to perform on the streets (Briggs, 2010). Moreover, the finding supports Anderson’s (1999) notion of profiling, in which a young man brags about himself to gain and retain respect within his community.

Harris (2007) noted that juvenile offenders associated with members of their racial group sought social acceptance while in a facility. According to Anthony's (2007) doctoral thesis, interpersonal value can be viewed as a social-role model. The author found that individuals with low self-esteem were more responsive to compliments related to their social commodities. According to this argument, young men with low self-esteem and loose definitions of respect are likely to join gangs, especially if gang members entice or promise them social acceptance, family, love, and support. Despite knowing the dangers of gang membership, the young men are willing to take the risk to avoid ostracism and feel complete. As a result of this finding, Anthony (2007) argues that people need social acceptance, as they are willing to risk harm to be accepted or validated by their peers. Particularly, acceptance from others was found to be a means of validation for individuals with low self-esteem (Mandara et al., 2009).

Respect in Untraditional Forms

Although these statements do not apply to all African Americans, young men have adopted a specific mindset. They are feared within the community as symbols of respect, social acceptance, or power. This reputation is their way of demanding respect from their peers, and they will use whatever means necessary to maintain that respect (Wilson, 1995). African American men, often stereotyped as gangsters, hail from impoverished communities and are expected to fail by society's standards. Discussing disenfranchisement in this context means being deprived of the privileges that a Black male might experience in a two-parent family. Many of these young men are believed to be forced to seek dignity, honor, and respect the only way they know how, which is

usually on the streets or in their communities. They begin crafting their gangster persona to demand respect from the hood, better known as their community, as this social acceptance may lead to greater fulfillment (Dyson, 1996). As a result of their origins or perceptions of their neighborhoods, these young men continue to be stereotyped and disenfranchised from mainstream American society through violence, theft, or gang affiliation. In addition to causing significant shame, their neighborhoods of origin can place them at risk for disease, incarceration, death, and perpetuated cycles for the youth watching them (Papachristos, 2009). While their definitions of and methods of acquiring respect may not be traditional, these avenues indicate the environments they have grown up in.

Discrimination and Justice

It is difficult to identify a substantial body of scholarly literature on police decision-making, police-minority relations, or an independent body of theory of police practice relevant to this study. It should be noted that the studies conducted to date do not meet the criteria for scientific inquiry. They cannot be used to inform the literature on racial disenfranchisement and how it has negatively impacted people's self-esteem and self-confidence (Worden & Shepard, 1996). A necessary requirement is that the studies attempt to explain the source of any disparities between whites and minorities in aggregate rates of police contact in the United States.

A search of the literature did not yield much information regarding the root causes of the disparities beyond racial analysis. According to Crank (2003), issues of race bring out the most complex methodological, theoretical, and ethical issues in today's justice

system, as well as the clash of competing notions of social morality. Aside from those who oppose fairness, some believe justice should be administered regardless of repercussions for minority groups. Justice is an essential quality in that it is rational and straightforward. On the other hand, some are concerned about racial equality and the high number of minorities convicted (Williams & Sternthal, 2010). The rationality of law and its application are not the primary issues from this perspective. From these contrasting perspectives, it can be concluded that the debate revolves around racism and racial profiling rather than how African American men perceive law enforcement due to their defined respect terms and social acceptance.

Walker et al. (2000) argue that the justice-minority nexus is situated on a continuum of discrimination. The concept of “justice” implies no discrimination in the practice of justice; however, “systemic discrimination” implies that there is always discrimination in the criminal justice system at all levels (Routledge, 2018). Several scholars have concluded that there is an intermediate model of discrimination in the United States’ justice system based on a large body of research evidence (Williams & Sternthal, 2010). Furthermore, racial minorities are treated differently than whites at certain stages of the criminal justice process, such as the decision to seek or impose the death penalty, but not at other stages, such as jury selection. Minorities are treated more harshly than whites in some regions and jurisdictions but no more harshly than whites in others (Walker et al., 2000). These discrepancies further disenfranchise African American men and disparage their perceptions of law enforcement and the criminal justice system.

Disenfranchisement

Everyone is equal, regardless of age, gender, sex, or ethnic background. If that were entirely true, it would not be prudent to seek an understanding of why racial divides and social injustices exist regarding African American men. As a society, Americans desire to believe that every person is created equally and will be judged as such. Social justice and norms indicate that every American has the same opportunity for education, social structure, and the opportunity for financial gain through career development. However, a history of slavery and state-sanctioned racism served as a basis for the American financial system, consistently creating divisions and wage gaps that are only getting larger (Desmond, 2019). These increases lead to further disenfranchisement for African American males feeding a cycle of despair and lack.

Current Status

African American men are forced to fit into a culture that does not seem to favor them. Affirming their status as underdogs, African American males have had to stand out regarding their appearance and less stereotypical perceptions of race (Alexander, 2012; Massey, 2007). Approximately half (56%) of Americans said being Black impeded their ability to succeed at least a little (Pew Research Center, 2019). Racial discrimination and limited access to good schools and high-paying jobs are primary reasons Black people in the United States have more difficulty achieving social and economic mobility than their white counterparts. In addition, respondents indicated that they were not motivated to work hard, lacked role models in the family, and were unstable in their homes. Several of these issues are contentious between Black and white people. Concerning the respondents

who believe being Black negatively affects people's ability to succeed, 84% of Black respondents versus 54% of white respondents attribute this to racial discrimination.

America is colorblind to racial differences (Alexander, 2012; Sue & Sue, 2008). There is, however, a pronounced racial disparity between Caucasians and African Americans in this country (Massey, 2007).

Racial Pride

It has been documented that racial pride has served as a positive coping skill in response to perceived and internalized disenfranchisement that has existed for a long time (Phillips, 2010; Prelow et al., 2006). However, that may only apply to men living a middle-class lifestyle. African American men constitute an entire demographic that suffers due to existing systems. In essence, racial pride aims to overcome disenfranchisement and increase the self-esteem of African Americans (Harris-Britt et al., 2007; Prelow et al., 2006). Parents of African American children strive to instill racial pride in their children and prepare them for the disenfranchisement that today's society engenders.

Disenfranchised children need to be more prepared to succeed in communities with means. In turn, these children exhibit low self-esteem and self-respect despite the preparation they receive as children. When a child grows up in a single-family home, their idea of success is marginalized, and their worldview can be impacted as a result (Harris-Britt et al., 2007; Prelow et al., 2006). This research indicates that children's perceptions can affect their well-being and have long-lasting implications that affect how they socialize and interact with others.

Diversity and Implications of Lack

Researchers Stevenson and Arrington (2012) found that a student's expression of racial identity was negatively related to the racial diversity of the neighborhood in which they live. Students in predominantly African American neighborhoods expressed their racial pride more openly than those in predominantly Caucasian neighborhoods. Children's experiences with parental education and social environments have a powerful impact on how they perceive their racial identity and how they perceive themselves regarding respect and self-esteem (Morris, 2012). The importance of cultural competence in social awareness cannot be overstated.

Children benefit from positive interactions with other racially and culturally diverse individuals when they have a positive representation of themselves. Children living in a diverse environment are more likely to be exposed to different cultures, languages, social norms, and new habits, thus reducing racial prejudice and increasing cultural awareness. It is equally important for adults and children to understand better their surroundings and how others can perceive them through their experiences (Stevenson & Arrington, 2012). Most Black and brown children attend schools where at least 75% or more of the students are minorities. Comparatively, only 5% of white children attend schools with much racial diversity. Interactions in formative years can have long-lasting implications for future interactions warranting further consideration.

Labeling Effects: Poverty and Unemployment

Within the African American community, poverty is one of the most significant effects of marginalization. As Kwabena Gyimah-Brempong (2007, 2008) noted, more

than 20% of Black Americans lived in poverty in 2007. As of 2022, according to the United States Census report, African Americans are 19.4% of the poverty level, which hasn't changed much since 2019 (U.S. Census, 2021). A poverty fact sheet indicates that 26.1% of Memphis and Shelby County African Americans lived within the poverty level in 2021. Over 20% of African Americans nationwide have experienced poverty at some point during their lives. Similarly, the average male age 25 and older earn an annual salary of \$44,850 and can earn as low as \$30,791 (Gyimah-Brempong, 2007, 2008). According to the census report, this is the average poverty level for a family of four or five. There is a discrepancy between earning and purchasing potential or a significant disparity within the African American community. In Tennessee, according to the Annual Homeless Assessment Report (AHAR) (2020), 64% of Caucasian families owned their homes, compared to 41.7% of African American families. Based on these statistics, White households still earn more than their Black counterparts by 1.35 times. These statistics suggest that African American males are more likely to commit crimes than Caucasian males, as poverty is strongly correlated with crime (Agnew, 2005; Alexander, 2012; Burrell, 2010; Gyimah-Brempong, 2007, 2008; Massey, 2007).

Criminality Implications

While conducting studies about crime trends, Barak et al. (2010) determined vast differences between African Americans and other races in employment quality, stating, "African Americans were more likely than Caucasians or other minority groups to live in adverse and toxic physical working environments" (p. 109). These circumstances may be all they can see themselves inhabiting or all they may be able to obtain with the

systematic racism challenges they often encounter (Sampson & Lauritsen, 1997). The emotional, physical, and mental effects on African American males may affect their quality of life. If an African American male, 25 years or younger, does not make the necessary income to thrive, this may increase their chances of living in an area that is not conducive to their success.

Local communities and areas that include waste disposal areas, landfills, and high smog and polluted areas will ultimately contribute to the high mortality rate of African Americans that are already experiencing a lower quality of life (Barak et al., 2010; Gyimah-Brempong, 2007, 2008). In high-traffic areas, increased chances of drug circling through the environment and the potential of gang affiliation make it much harder for young males to thrive without engaging in criminal activity. This increased risk may cause an issue of perception from authority figures within the area. Additionally, African American men may wonder if they can escape negative perceptions associated with their neighborhoods.

Broken Dreams

Reiman and Leighton (2009) enumerated the perspective perpetuated by the American elite: “the poor are morally defective, and thus their poverty is their fault, not a symptom of social or economic injustice” (p. 175). This perspective indicates that the wealthy can cut forms of government assistance to individuals they deem not in need or are not attempting to improve their situation. Where humans reside often correlates with self-image and self-worth. It provides a sense of stability and safety. A system that does not consider monumental personal factors such as home life, education, access, and

background will fail and has honestly been failing. This failure is evident in injustices in the jail systems, significantly reducing the opportunity afforded to African American men by keeping them in poverty and unemployed. Unemployment is a problem for many African American males (Agnew, 2005; Alexander, 2012), even those with significant qualifications, because of the systematic and institutionalized policies that restrict mobility upward for Black and brown people.

As of 2017, the national unemployment rate for adults aged 25 years and older was nearly 3.8%. The unemployment rate for African American men in that age group was almost 9%, more than double the national average, whereas, in 2022, the average is at 11.8%. Black men have the highest unemployment rate and the lowest labor participation per the Bureau of Statistics (2020). Even now, with the pandemic and economic disadvantages it has caused, Black men are still underemployed and underpaid. History repeats itself as globalization was a significant factor concerning the high unemployment rate of African Americans in the 1970s and 80s (Smith & Duong, 2021).

Many organizations were sent to third-world countries, and the same proves true today with outsourcing jobs. This outsourcing leaves greater room for unemployment for those that may not have higher education or higher skill. This contributes to higher rates of unemployed laborers, primarily African Americans (Alexander, 2012; Anderson, 1999). Many jobs that require higher education target specific industries that African American laborers who live in the urban inner-cities can not readily access. Additionally, African American males struggle with transportation, and those in poverty must utilize

public transportation. This system proved expensive and unreliable, resulting in a lack of employment (Anderson, 1999).

Education

School segregation and student performance have been examined in the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), one of the country's most comprehensive studies of educational outcomes. Based on these data reports, only one in eight white students (12.9%) attends a school where most are Black, Hispanic, Asian, or American Indian. The number of Black children attending such schools is nearly seven out of ten (69.2%). Additionally, Black students attend economically segregated schools (Sigelman & Welch, 1991). The number of white students attending a high-poverty school is less than one in three (31.3%), while the number of Black students attending a high-poverty school is more than seven in ten (72.4%). Because white students have better resources, they have greater education opportunities.

In contrast to their peers, Black students often experience microaggressions and censorship. This phenomenon can be attributed to several factors, including test bias, poverty, inadequate general education tactics, and a lack of professional development. This could discourage African American males from entering the education system that could help them.

Experiences in Schooling

In response to globalization in the 1970s and 1980s, mainstream Americans began teaching their children that poverty was unacceptable and that education or a skill (trade) was the key to success. By acquiring new skills required for employment in the labor

market, they may be able to avoid poverty. A Black child will likely end up in a school in which most of their classmates are poor and students of color in the current educational system. African American men can experience difficulty acquiring the skills necessary to succeed in inner-city public schools, which leaves them significantly behind (Burrell, 2010; National Assessment of Educational Progress, 2011a, 2011b). In addition to being a consequence of poverty, educational deficiencies contribute significantly to African Americans' unemployment and poverty (Agnew, 2005; Reiman & Leighton, 2009).

Based on Agnew's (2005) findings:

Upon review, I discovered that juveniles are more likely to have negative school experiences when they are in a school that is a non-college ready curriculum, they are in large classes and schools, their teachers spend little time on academic tasks, there are periodic evaluations of student performance, other students in the school discourage academic pursuits, the school sets low academic goals for its students, school disciplinary practices are poor, and there is little community involvement in the school. (p. 146)

This negative perception highlights the primary concern of the current educational system. U.S. inner-city public schools are growing increasingly overcrowded and underfunded. Furthermore, many African American students are placed in special education classes at higher rates than their white peers because they suffer from learning disabilities such as dyslexia, slow processing, and attention deficit disorders (Shutay et al., 2011). As a result, African American students are behind Caucasian students in reading and math achievement (National Assessment of Educational Progress, 2016a,

2016b). These statistics result from African American children growing up in poverty-stricken areas.

These factors also contribute to the dropout rate for African American students aged 16 years and older being nearly twice that of the dropout rate for Caucasian students (National Center for Education Statistics, 2012). The national dropout rate decreased to 6.4% but remained higher than the national dropout rate of 4.2% for white students. Suppose African American men experience discrimination at an early age. In that case, they may experience stress responses similar to those associated with post-traumatic stress disorder (Jackson et al., 1996). It has been shown that Black males who are oppressed early on, especially by authority figures such as teachers, are more likely to have negative attitudes about school and lower academic motivation and performance, resulting in increased school dropout rates.

Racial Profiling in Schools

Several studies have shown that teachers' racial biases lead them to shame students who fit the typical criminal stereotypes. Young African American men with negative attitudes, baggy pants, and slang are often perceived as thugs or gangstas due to their demeanors. In their delivery and behavior, these educators convey implicit and explicit messages that their students will end up as drug dealers, in prison, or dead (Rios, 2011). Public school educators often ignore students who fit this stereotype. This selective ignorance is because they concentrate on those they think they can help, thus ignoring the students who require assistance. As a result, students develop a negative image of themselves and feel inadequate in the presence of authority figures. In this

manner, they may lose interest in the educational system, deterring their academic success and ultimately directing them toward social acceptance and peer pressure (Fischer & Shaw, 1999).

Consequently, they are left with significant educational and mental gaps. Often, they are unnoticed because failure is expected. Likely, learning disabilities and process issues are often ignored or misdiagnosed and, as a result, not recognized until much later. This treatment causes them to be left behind or misplaced (Swim et al., 2003). In response to this feeling of ostracizing, individuals feel ashamed and apprehensive about asking for help. In later life, these same students will likely develop resentment against teachers and the education system. This development will create distrust in the community. In addition, while other students observe signs of similar treatment, they will also become distrustful of the system. The community absorbs negative energy, resulting in less appreciation and interest in the educational system. Although the American public sector may have an interest in educating Black people, it would appear that the purpose of dismantling the system or the freedoms within it requires considerable revision. (Steward, 2022).

Negative Effects of Labeling

Academically disadvantaged students are deemed at-risk by the education system. Fear of being different or bullied prevents students from submitting their assignments and participating in class. Their disinterest in school has resulted in suspensions or police removals because they are easily distracted, bored, and disruptive in class. Disruptive children will be blamed for various acts of misconduct, regardless of their responsibility.

Because the narrative about them does not change, they often act out and misbehave because they are used to being blamed. Consequently, they receive more attention. In turn, they may act more socially acceptable.

Students diagnosed with a learning disability, such as ADHD, are more likely to be bullied and may experience low self-esteem and emotional difficulties (Bergsieker et al., 2010). They become the cool person in the neighborhood and gain street credit. Young people are frequently suspended, arrested, and told they would fail (Rios, 2011). Failure to complete assignments and participate in class may result in academic failure and the need to repeat the course. In such a situation, students are not prepared for college and often do not consider college as an option (Alexander, 2012; Burrell, 2010; Rios, 2011). Generally, they remain in school until they are 18 and do not receive a high school diploma or GED. As a result, they turn to the streets.

This is a perfect example of a pipeline to prison theory when school discipline policies and practices prevent students from participating in academics. In this method, students are removed from school and placed in jail. The system thrusts children into poverty and low-development areas. Juvenile crime rates are declining, and incarceration rates have declined 41 percent since 1995. Disciplinary policies at schools are reversing. Out-of-school suspensions have increased by about 10 percent since 2000 and more than doubled since the 1970s. According to the Education Department's Office for Civil Rights (2015), it is not racially balanced. Students of color are three times more likely to be suspended or expelled. Researchers found that suspended students are more likely to drop out or be held back a grade.

Sullivan and Evans (2006) investigated the sense of self-efficacy of African American teenagers in urban projects. Teenagers who believed themselves brilliant were unconcerned about their grades if they believed they were brilliant. This result could be interpreted as supporting Anderson's (1999) street code. Street kids are less concerned about academics when they can earn a living through other activities. Grades are meaningless and do not lead to long-term financial gain (Fischer & Shaw, 1999). Anderson (1999) discusses the lack of school concern among African American males in ghettos. Street kids saw no need for school; for anyone interested in it, they were viewed as "acting white" (Anderson, 1999, p. 97). Street kids were more concerned with earning money than earning a degree.

The focus was on earning money rather than returning to school because it was believed that the money earned equated to acceptance or more respect. Many of them dropped out of school in their teens (Anderson, 1999) since they were already deemed rotten apples. About 40% of dropouts say that school is boring and that they lack the academic skills to succeed. They do not consider that getting a degree could lead to gainful employment and more income in the future or stability. Additionally, they believe that the school system has failed them when educators have given up on them. Furthermore, students may be unaware of alternate methods to achieve their academic goals, particularly if they have been through the criminal justice system.

Unlike Anderson (1999), Fields and Abrams (2010) found that most juvenile offenders interviewed wanted to graduate from high school or earn a General Education Diploma. These offenders are handicapped by their ignorance and experience difficulties

achieving their goals. In addition, Fields and Abrams (2010) found that the boys they interviewed had lower educational expectations than girls in the same age bracket. They also expressed a keen desire to engage in illegal activities, especially if these activities brought them income. Black men who live in poverty, in neighborhoods, and in households with lower educational expectations are often in positions where their lives are filled with dysfunction and chaos. They often lack the resources and means to change environments (Sigelman & Welch, 1991).

In some cases, parents have lived with their families throughout their lifetime. It is sometimes possible for a parent to help their child by living with them to break the cycle of dysfunction in the family for decades. The generational cycle could also be disrupted if parents become more strict, less lenient with rules, or more engaged with their children, disrupting those generational negative physical, mental, and cognitive health outcomes (Hahn & Truman, 2015). This lack can make breaking cycles of poverty and lack difficult, and men are not equipped to teach younger generations because they may not have been taught themselves. This ignorance of legal means of social and economic capital can lead to the desire to achieve social acceptance in other ways.

Goffman's Dramaturgical Model of Social Interaction

Goffman's dramaturgical model of social interactions (1959) can be applied to several issues and interactions that African American males experience. Instead of using a formal scientific method, Goffman used simple observation to gather his data. In understanding society's ideas, values, and beliefs through the behavior of individuals, Goffman's research is fundamental, and situational behavior can be better understood

through his findings. According to literature research (Anderson,1999), disenfranchisement adversely affects African American males. They are affected differently than their peers due to their values system, worldview, and lifestyle. The findings of this study will provide insight into how young males perceive law enforcement framed by their definition of respect. It is necessary to compare the data with their experiences, feelings, and desires to understand how they function within the systems we know (Rios, 2011). Respect may require common understanding for Black men (Rios, 2011). Individuals understand respect differently. Our perceptions and roles change with each interaction, according to Goffman (1959). Since Black men are mistreated early, their views of who deserves respect may differ depending on their position (Anderson,1999). Each interaction they have leads them to be someone else. They may need to adjust their responses or actions to achieve the end goal. Goffman (1963) argues three distinct identities: personal, social, and self-identity. Based on these identities, each person has a unique set of characteristics that make them unique. This theory examines how individual behavior changes in response to the social environment.

According to Goffman's Dramaturgical model (1959), human beings perform in a series of performances to gain acceptance. Humans will adjust their performance depending on the audience, requiring adopting assumed personas. Therefore, each interaction, setting, and context is a stage. Personal attributes such as worldview, time, and place will also shape our interactions with others. According to Goffman (1959), two or more people will attempt to influence one another in social situations. Based on this model, an African American male desires to be perceived or understood. Thus, he will

adapt to the situation and perform or become something or someone else to prove their point.

Further, they will have to learn how to perform their assigned roles, even if this is not their natural disposition. To feel accepted, Black males may need to act, impress, or persuade those around them (Anthony, 2007). It is possible to argue that respect varies according to an individual's environment, morals, and values. Mastery could also be considered part of impression management if these males believe they can gain more respect or street credit from the act or its appearance. Goffman's extensive model covers many areas; however, this study's approach falls under Impression Management, specifically Expressions and Impressions and Front Stage and Back Stage.

Goffman's dramaturgical model asserts that life consists of performances directed toward others. In his view, impression management implies that social situations, especially those involving two or more people, will involve attempts to persuade one another of the ideal situation. There is a desire on the part of each individual to communicate their viewpoint. In situations where social acceptance is required and gaining that acceptance requires a spark of emotion, the individual can impact the audience. In the case of gang activity, these same suppositions can be applied. Within gangs, there are different activity levels and positions to be held. The sole purpose of the operation is to generate profits, but that is not the only objective.

As gangs operate and deal in illegal activities, they often thrive in poverty-stricken environments. Members often gain trust and earn loyalty by looking out for those in need, whether financial or security-related. Pursuing respect drives gang life, and

gaining respect by any means necessary could mean the difference between life and death for gang members. Individuals involved in gangs are influenced by the connections that lead them. They attempt to convince the younger youth that they cannot do life without this “family” or protection and that they must have an organization to protect, advise, and give them street credit - which entails giving them a higher level of respect.

Front Stage/Back Stage

In addition to impression management, Goffman’s model (1959) breaks down the front and backstage theory. He further elaborates on this approach as it discusses the need for performances and speaks to the impressions managed within context. Goffman’s ideology is that the front stage happens when people interact with others, whether professional or private. In the case of African American men being accepted and socialized, those who engage in front-stage behavior reflect those internal norms and those expectations. These expectations are defined by various factors, including the setting, the role played, and the individual’s physical appearance. The term “front stage” can be unpacked into many elements that would require someone to adjust their performance, such as sex, actions, age, hairstyle, appearance, and possibly environment (Merkl-Davies & Brennan, 2011).

It would make sense to alter their actions to suit a situation that could benefit them. If they act in an environment where they want to be socially accepted and gain respect, the game has to change. This concept applies in all environments. When applied to current research, younger males in high-traffic or gang activity-driven areas may desire to dress more urban or say specific language or slang to fit in with the private scene. This

phenomenon has been observed in natural environments where younger youth follow in the footsteps of older adolescents or young adults. The example above aligns with Goffman's notion of situated identities, which is also a profound approach. Analyzing an individual's role at a given moment makes it possible to identify situated identities. To engage in meaningful interaction, individuals must first be able to recognize their identities and then place those identities within a context (Merkl-Davies & Brennan, 2011).

Individuals are prone to making excuses or justifying their negative perceptions or behaviors if unresolved. African American males' perception of law enforcement may ultimately change due to environmental factors or the idea that they may feel the need to be someone else. This pressure to be someone else is because their identity may not be authentic. This can cause friction in interactions between African American males and law enforcement because they may be pretending to be someone they are not. Still, law enforcement may believe it to be an authentic portrayal. In addition to showing how vulnerable African American males are within a culture, these perceptions and vulnerabilities can also show if they have adversely affected them, their community, and law enforcement.

Goffman's Model and Social Acceptance

The desire for social acceptance also affects how African American males interact with other cultures. Disenfranchisement, as previously stated, encourages violence, criminal activity, and "at-risk" behavior (Anderson, 1999; Burrell, 2010; Fleury & Fernet, 2011). In particular, African American research participants desired to

demonstrate competence when interacting with Caucasians (Bergsieker et al., 2010).

Based on statistical analysis, the authors concluded that African American research participants believed their Caucasian colleagues regarded them as incompetent and unrespectable. Based on this finding, Blumer (1958) argued that prejudice is based on the feelings of superiority of the dominant group over the minority group. The group deemed inferior may close ranks utilizing Goffman's concept of a team: "a team must be able to keep its secrets" (Goffman, 1959, p. 114). The model describes secret signals as keeping secrets between team members. These private tools can be interpreted as gang symbols and graffiti, meaning that gang members communicate about the gang's activities and can affect law enforcement perceptions of African American males. The need for social desirability and creating social norms and teams to avoid disenfranchisement can cause negative perceptions to develop in those who are not a part of the culture, such as law enforcement officers.

Gangsta Love

Research showed that many African Americans in disadvantaged neighborhoods harbor contempt for mainstream American society (Alexander, 2012; Anderson, 1999; Asim, 2007; Burrell, 2010; Rios, 2011; Venkatesh, 2008). African American males are believed to be viewed as criminals from a very young age; based on their neighborhood or their position within the community. Labeled as such, African American males begin to embody negative characteristics. According to the labeling theory by Howard Becker (1963), people become accustomed to labels over time, which shapes their behavior.

African American males are consistently portrayed negatively in the media and mainstream news. They are isolated from other cultures by components of American society and considered a threat because they lack access to valuable resources such as education, safe living environments, and viable employment opportunities (Simmons, 2012). Simmons explained that local news programs are more concerned with high ratings than network news programs. Therefore, they tend to cover stories that are more sensationalized, particularly shootings and homicides that occur in disadvantaged neighborhoods. Simmons' (2012) study indicated a positive correlation between people watching their local news and believing that crime rates have increased. African Americans occupy the majority of these disadvantaged neighborhoods. Therefore, media portrayal is a direct cause of the general public believing that Black neighborhoods have high crime rates and large amounts of people engaged in criminal activity. Moreover, media portrayals often strengthen the stereotype of the "Typical Criminal" as a young, poor Black male between the ages of 14 and 19 (Reiman & Leighton, 2009, p. 63).

According to Reiman and Leighton (2009), the media is controlled by the wealthy elite. As a result, African American males remained marginalized from mainstream American society through local news, reality television shows, and crime dramas because the wealthy elite wished to perpetuate the ideological image of the African American criminal. As Alexander (2012) argues, American media continue to perpetuate the "Us vs. Them" mentality established at our country's inception. Most people associate crime and criminals with African American men (Alexander, 2012), and this belief is also commonly held by African Americans (Burrell, 2010).

In many instances, African American men are considered problematic or inferior. A false sense of self-respect or pride is created by microaggressions in which one has to fight for acceptance. People stigmatized as criminals or misfits lose established relationships and are forced to associate with other criminals. Consequently, Black men may be forced to join gangs or affiliations when they should not (Barak et al., 2010; Dyson, 1996; Reiman & Leighton, 2009). The gangsta role has become increasingly popular among African American males to boost their self-esteem and integrate into mainstream society since they are disenfranchised by mainstream society. (Alexander, 2012; Anderson, 1999; Goffman, 1959). When these young adults are viewed as gangsters, they're feared and do not have to go through much hassle to obtain what they were previously denied. Through this process, they can believe that they are respected and accepted by force. It is believed that by acting like gangsters, this population is trying to reclaim their sense of self-worth and identity. In the view of Alexander (2012) view the concept of gangsta love as a new form of racial pride. By adopting this stereotype, African American males are essentially rebelling against and denouncing mainstream American culture to redefine what it means to be an African American in the world (Alexander, 2012; Anderson, 1999; Rios, 2011).

In the Philadelphia ghettos, Anderson (1999) notes that there are two types of people: non-street people and street people. Non-street people are generally law-abiding citizens with solid values and a sense of morality. Most of the time, they do not engage in activities that compromise their freedom. Education and financial stability are essential in

encouraging their children to succeed academically. In general, non-street parents have strict parenting styles and wish to protect their children from the dangers of the street.

In contrast, street people may have a good work ethic and seek to earn money honestly. They have more exposure to mainstream American society, usually through employment or education (Anderson, 1999). Street people may engage in delinquent behaviors such as theft, vandalism, and graffiti (Anderson, 1999; Lombard, 2013). They may glorify violence and denigrate academic achievement. Instead of working at tax-paying jobs, they earn their living through hustles. All things are hustles to be played, and all people are targets to be exploited (Anderson, 1999; X & Haley, 1966). The lack of skills may increase the likelihood of criminal behavior or more ostracism in a society that encourages entrepreneurship.

It is common for street families to have limited financial resources, which are often misappropriated. Furthermore, they usually lead chaotic lives due to a limited understanding of priorities and consequences (Anderson, 1999). They are often viewed as “loud, boisterous, proud, crude, and uncouth” (Anderson, 1999, p. 47). Gangsters have a distinct cultural element and tend to refer to themselves in a derogatory manner and speak in a language understood only by their peers (Asim, 2007). More specifically, they use the “N” word to refer to themselves and each other. It is important to note that non-street people refer to the “N” word as an insult, whereas street people refer to it as a relatable or bonding tool. Conversely, street people insult non-street people by calling them “Uncle Tom.” This blatant accusation implies that non-street people “act white” (Anderson, 1999; Burrell, 2010; Rios, 2011). This causes contention in intracommunity interactions.

Imitating street behavior manifests negativity by engaging in physical violence and acting with a sense of entitlement. This behavior supports Goffman's model of social roles in that these young males are playing a role that instructs their audience on how they expect to be treated. Several television, movies, rap videos, and video games have contributed to African American males' adoption of the code, resulting in a lack of access for these communities. These types of entertainment teach African American children that respect is vital to survival and success on the streets. To gain respect, they are advised that they have the advantage and need to behave like gangstas, but they do not correctly identify what respect is and how it should be conveyed to themselves and others. Understandably, African American youth with low self-esteem would value respect above all else because African American children watch more television than any other ethnic or racial group (Ward, 2004).

Respect

A three-year ethnographic study by Mike King (2013) revealed that African American and Latino adolescent males in Oakland, California, were subjected to "pathological shaming." Teachers, counselors, and police officers perpetrated most of the shaming. These boys are criminalized from a very young age and see no other way to obtain what they desire respect. They perpetuate stereotypes and acknowledge, "If you think I am a criminal, I will be the worst criminal you have ever seen!" King (2013) established that the social control these youths were subject to led them to rebel against the youth control complex. In the last century, there has been a growing recognition that their peers' perceptions of them greatly influence human beings. Labeling theory

provides an excellent explanation for this phenomenon. Shaming youths is counterproductive and has more negative effects than positive outcomes.

In 1938, Tannenbaum argued that the best policy for interacting with juvenile delinquents was not to dramatize or draw attention to them. By stigmatizing and excluding these young boys, institutions in the community mark them as risks for noncriminal deviant behavior, and they are denied affirmations and significant respectable treatment as a result. In response, these young Black men seek dignity in a world that often fails to acknowledge them as humans (Mandara et al., 2009).

Respect is one of the most valuable assets a Black man can possess. Individuals are considered respected when receiving the “right” treatment (Anderson, 1999, p. 33). Although “the right treatment” is often subjective, it is highly sought after. Street respect is generally defined as not being “messed with,” verbally or physically (Anderson, 1999; Rios, 2011). Respect is treated as a tangible asset that is hard to obtain and easy to lose, and it should be protected by any means necessary. It is so important to Black men that they will risk their lives to obtain and maintain respect (Anderson, 1999; Burrell, 2010; Papachristos, 2009).

In disadvantaged neighborhoods, defining respect is a means of coping with the pathological stigma Black men face from institutions and authority figures they encounter daily (Alexander, 2012; Rios, 2011). There is a shameful culture where teachers and police officers shame children living in poverty in inner-city schools. As they grow older, they are exposed to greater levels of shaming and harassment (Hirschfield, 2008; Martin et al., 2011). Despite increasing harassment and discrimination, these youths increasingly

engage in delinquent activities (Martin et al., 2011). As a means of gaining the respect and acceptance of their peers, the children rebel against the youth control complex. As they grow into adult men, they believe that gangsta representation is the only means of gaining respect, earning high esteem, and achieving social success (Alexander, 2012; Anderson, 1999; Burrell, 2010; Rios, 2011).

In impoverished neighborhoods, there are several ways to earn respect. In the community, social acceptance is based on visual perception. The first step is to obtain suitable material goods or clothing, such as jeans, shoes, jewelry, and grooming products. Being able to afford the most expensive material items is one way to gain the respect of one's peers since it signifies financial success. In the case of young African American males, owning certain items contributes to their self-esteem and gives them a sense of belonging (Anderson, 1999). As a result of their lack of access to these materials, many African Americans, especially those that live in inner-city neighborhoods, are obsessed with living well and possessing the best material items (Burrell, 2010). The goal is to achieve this with the best cars, assets, and all without relying on educational and labor systems. These youths wear specific costumes to gain social acceptance, supporting Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical model. Furthermore, this study confirms Anthony's (2007) theory that people with low self-esteem are more receptive to compliments that validate their social commodities than those with high self-esteem. In their view, such compliments are a sign of social acceptance.

In addition, disrespecting others is another way to earn respect. A large part of this counterculture is denigrating others to raise self-esteem. It can be argued that youth

who aspire to gain respect is “representing” both who they are and [their ‘set’]” (Anderson, 1999, p. 77). The act of “representing” is indicative of overconfidence and disrespect demonstrated by a young adult male. It intends to convey to other males that he is not to be challenged. Nevertheless, the young man who represents this is actively daring other youths to test him to obtain a reaction from him. A third way to earn respect is to engage in physical violence when one accepts the challenge of a youth who is “representing.”

Successfully proving that one can defend themselves earns respect (Anderson, 1999; Rios, 2011). Darwin’s theory of natural selection is equated with the code of the hood: survival of the fittest. Young men are frequently encouraged to demonstrate their strength through “force or stealth” (Anderson, 1999, p. 125). In the inner city, children become aware of street rules from an early age, as evidenced by their “ritual play-fighting” (Anderson, 1999, p. 25). These kids copy the actions they observe among the older kids in the neighborhood and act them out whenever they are allowed to; such play-fighting can include punches, starring, and sizing each other up. In committing these acts of violence, a youth indicates that his peers do not challenge him. Street youth call respect what mainstream Americans call fear (Alexander, 2012; Rios, 2011; Venkatesh, 2008)

Summary

A vicious cycle of disenfranchisement and self-sabotage is perpetuating among young African American men that they may not be aware of. Per the research, children in disadvantaged neighborhoods grow below the poverty line, impacting their decision-

making skills, social skills, and the tools necessary to achieve stability research shows are essential for every individual (Agnew, 2005; Rios, 2011). Single mothers or grandmothers often raise these young men since their fathers are rarely involved in their lives, and this combination is detrimental to their long-term success. It has been shown in several studies that criminal activity increases when fathers are absent from the home (Anderson et al., 1999; Beaty, 1995; Biller & Baum, 1971; Harper & McLanahan, 1999).

Poverty-stricken and living in high-crime neighborhoods, young men are potentially witnessing crimes and being victimized, impacting their perception of interactions due to trauma. The result is that they become desensitized to society and become stereotyped thoughts based on perceptions that have not yet been tested. Even though local law enforcement is present in many areas of their neighborhoods, there is a possibility that their trust is misplaced and misdirected. It is essential to understand that what may appear as protection, support, and reinforcement may look very different and can significantly impact how they interact and approach the stage, in this case, law enforcement. To gain acceptance within themselves and their peers, each interaction they encounter must reinforce who they are (Merkl-Davies & Brennan, 2011).

This concept is critical to understanding interactions between African American males and law enforcement. Historical context, implicit bias, systematic racism, stereotypes, and pressures to conform to cultural norms have caused these interactions to be contentious at best and deadly at worst. African American men play roles on stage. While these activities that contribute to their roles are happening in the “hood,” there may not be many officers stopping to engage with these young men for community building or

to better the experience with law enforcement. Due to their view of this system as flawed, African American men may approach interactions with law enforcement agents with apprehension, anticipating poor outcomes. Additionally, law enforcement agents may approach these interactions with apprehension due to stereotypes and confirmation biases. The apprehension on both sides leads to unfavorable outcomes.

Respect is connected to a person's identity and demonstrated in each interaction an individual has. Social acceptance produces respect. With respect comes increased self-esteem (Anthony, 2007; Anthony et al., 2007). To maintain respect and self-esteem, a man must remain physically aggressive and openly defy mainstream American authority, sometimes including law enforcement (Alexander, 2012; Anderson, 1999; Briggs, 2010; Goffman, 1959; Rios, 2011). These ways of maintaining respect also support the marginalization from mainstream American society (Alexander, 2012; Asim, 2007; Massey, 2007).

The current literature does not examine how African American men perceive and define respect and how this affects their interactions with law enforcement. Much research discusses an increase in homicide, racial profiling, systematic racism, and elevated incarceration rates for African American men, but very little about the root issues. Without understanding this population's perceptions, social scientists cannot precisely pinpoint how these perceptions might play a role in their behaviors and perceptions when interacting with law enforcement. The goal was to understand the lived experiences of young African American men to gain a clearer understanding of their

perceptions of law enforcement through a frame of respect. From there, the goal is to create programs and trainings for both groups that lead to more positive interactions.

Goffman (1963) argues that social identities are not properties of individuals but rather emerge from interactions between social actors and become a part of them. Unlike Bourdieu, his account of stigma as a relational classification excludes questions of how power structures societal relations. Regarding stigma, Goffman admits that stigmatization is historically specific in its forms and notes that “shifts have occurred in the kinds of shame that arouse concern” and implicitly acknowledges that stigma functions as a method of formal social control (p. 139). African American men play roles on a stage that is set with stigma. Systematic racism, poverty, criminality, and low socioeconomic status all feed the stigma that encourages African American males to engage in the roles they perform to gain social desirability. While Goffman’s understanding of stigma is based on a relational approach, his understanding of normal–stigma relations is separated from power relations, macro-level structural power relations such as capitalism or patriarchy, and micro-aggressions resulting from everyday interactions. Rather than developing a “concrete and historically determinate” understanding, Goffman aims to develop abstractions that hold for various social situations (Jameson, 1976, p. 129).

It was unknown how African American males defined and perceived respect or even how that perception affected their perception of and interactions with law enforcement. African American male perceptions of law enforcement can be influenced by factors such as education, poverty, respect, and ideals surrounding gangsta personas. Further, it is unclear how these populations’ understanding of respect influences their

behavior and responses to law enforcement, indicating the need for this study.

Specifically, this study examined how the African American male population understood respect, how that definition influences their perception of law enforcement interactions, and whether those factors related to social roles altered their perceptions based on Goffman's model. Chapter Three describes the research methodology utilized in this study.

Chapter Three: Research Method

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore African American males' perceptions of respect. It also aimed to explore how that concept of respect affected their perception of law enforcement in Memphis, Tennessee. Additionally, while the study explored the perceptions of African American males, it also determined whether their understanding or concept of respect affects how they view law enforcement. This chapter will present the research methodology and the study's rationale. The study's methodology included participation selection, instrumentation, procedures, and the data analysis plan. I also elaborate on my role as the researcher in this study. Finally, I address issues of the study's trustworthiness and any ethical concerns.

Research Design and Rationale

Goffman (1986) emphasized control throughout his work, arguing that one must attempt to control the other's behavior to obtain information and control one's perception. Following interactionism, meaning is derived from the interactions between individuals. When interacting with others, meanings associated with self, the others with whom we interact, and the situations in which we interact change. Consequently, interactionist theory differs from socialization studies by emphasizing that individuals influence groups at least as much as groups influence individuals (Hodapp, 1999). Dramaturgy is a sociological perspective commonly employed in micro-sociological assessments of everyday social interactions. Dramaturgical sociology argues that human interactions are influenced by time, place, and audience. According to Goffman, the self

is an awareness of one's identity from immediate circumstances (Ritzer, 2007). Based on cultural values, norms, and beliefs, one defines how one presents oneself to another. The dramaturgy theory of identity holds that a person's identity is not a stable and independent psychological entity but is constantly remade as they interact with others. A dramaturgical model analyzes social interaction as an actor's performance on stage. The research questions for this study were as follows:

RQ1: How do African American males, aged 21 to 25 in Memphis, Tennessee, define the concept of respect, and does that definition shape their view of law enforcement?

RQ2: Is Goffman's dramaturgical model sufficient to describe the phenomena of respect among the studied population concerning social acceptance?

Research Methodology

This study utilized a qualitative design. This design was appropriate to answer the research questions posed in this study, as qualitative studies allow participants to verbalize their own experiences, thus providing researchers with valuable insights (Yin, 2013). I recruited a maximum of fifteen young African American males via social media who lived in or within 25 miles of an economically disadvantaged neighborhood. The platform allowed me to pick my population, location, age, etc. Once participants were confirmed via social media, I conducted interviews. Over 14 days, I spent 30 to 45 minutes with each of these young men conducting semi-structured interviews and holding informal conversations based on the structured interview questions. The interviews allowed me to understand these young men's lived experiences better and determine the

root cause of the contention between law enforcement and African American men in this age bracket.

Members of the priority population participated in individual interviews with structured interview questions (see Appendix C). Participants will be asked structured interview questions that will allow them to describe their experiences growing up in a disadvantaged neighborhood and dealing with local law enforcement agencies. As a social scientist, this study also helped me comprehend how these young men formed their understanding of respect.

Sample Size and Data Collection

Purposive sampling was used for recruitment. The participants had to be African American males aged 21 to 25, living in or have lived in the downtown Memphis, Tennessee area, or within a 25-mile radius of Shelby Forest Frayser. At the time of data collection, young men who had been undergoing mental health or substance abuse counseling were excluded. Creswell (2007) found that a minimum sample size of 12 is required to achieve data saturation. Accordingly, a sample size of 15 was determined to be adequate for qualitative analysis in this study. A larger sample size could weaken data analysis (Creswell, 2007; Yin, 2013).

Additionally, I asked participants for demographic information to ensure proper fit for the study per the Facebook ad, which allowed me to screen my participants for inclusion. Transcribing, codifying, and analyzing the descriptive data was the next step. I broke down the questions and developed a codebook as themes emerged as the interviews

were analyzed. Informed consent was obtained before potential participants underwent the interview protocol, and all guidelines were followed per CITI guidelines.

Instrumentation & Role of Researcher

I was the primary data collector and used interviews as my method of data collection (Yin, 2013). Participants were interviewed with structured questions so that conversations stayed on track. Most initial data collection was conducted with online social media technology via semistructured interview questions with research participants (see Appendix B). Finding participants who have lived in Memphis or moved away from Memphis and then returned allowed the researcher to establish norms that may not have been familiar to them due to a lack of community. Taking notes during sessions reduced the risk of recall bias and allowed for note-taking on behaviors, mannerisms, and general expressions to be linked during data analysis. The mandatory questions that were asked of all research participants are listed in Appendix B. I focused on details, body language, language, family dynamics, clothes, and habits of my participants, which was important while discussing such sensitive topics. Through these details, I was able to provide a thick, rich description of the context and social interactions of my research participants (Murchison, 2013; Yin, 2013).

Procedures

Once I had approval from Walden's Institutional Review Board, I began posting on social media to recruit research participants. The interview questions are prepared (see Appendix C); thus, recruitment began via social media posting and research ads for the priority population to show interest on the Facebook platform. The Facebook application

allowed me to filter the population by age, gender, and location. This drove traffic to the Facebook page, which had a link for participants to engage and have them volunteer for the study. Through the use of screener & eligibility questions, it was easy to eliminate participants who were not eligible for participation in the study due to exclusion factors such as location and age. Those who qualified for the study were contacted via email and text message on the phone number they provided to schedule an interview. Calendly was used to track and allow participants to schedule an interview based on my availability via email and or Microsoft Teams phone. I informed the participants that they could expect to spend 30 to 45 minutes on the Microsoft Teams phone call. Once the transcription had been completed, I asked the participants if they would like a copy of the transcript for their records. This data was stored on a password-protected external hard drive, and all guidelines were aligned to ensure the data was kept confidential and accurate,

Data Analysis

Microsoft Excel was used to analyze this descriptive data for central measures such as mean, mode, and median for the codes or themes defined in the codebook. This allowed me to keep track of the participants' mannerisms, behaviors, and patterns while dialoguing based on the notes in the interviews. The themes were developed as the interviews were transcribed and discussed in chapter four. I looked for commonalities between participants to determine themes. However, the participants were categorized into three categories to analyze and group feedback together.

Using technology, participants' narratives were transcribed, codified, and analyzed for themes. Transcripts of all interviews were saved, analyzed, and kept within

CITI guidelines. A code list was created from recurrent themes, and these codes will be used to codify data. As I transcribed the data, I used inductive coding to identify themes or patterns (Boyatzis 1998; Corbin & Strauss 1990; Thomas 2006). Themes organized responses to assist with analysis and interpretation. I created a codebook identifying the categories to link the research questions to phrases and behaviors to analyze the data. Triangulation was not used in the study as data from interviews was the sole data source. The results of this qualitative study may lend themselves to formulating a theory that can assist in developing training and outreach programs to improve relationships and interactions between African American males and law enforcement.

Issues of Trustworthiness & Ethical Concerns

Ethical Procedures

As with any study involving human participants, ethical considerations must be considered. A letter of informed consent was provided to every potential research participant. The letter will be explained to them in accessible English that anyone with a fifth grade reading level could understand. The letter of consent contained a detailed explanation of the study and what participation in the study entails. The letter told potential participants they would be recorded during their interviews.

Additionally, the letter informed all potential participants that their participation was entirely voluntary. Participants were advised that their participation may be terminated at any research stage without reprimanding or retaliating. Participants were also informed that they had the right not to be recorded during the research study. The

letter had all complete contact information so that participants could contact me at any time if they had questions.

Lastly, I informed my participants that I referred to them in my writing using code names to protect their anonymity. I assigned them a number to cross-reference any patterns or themes I noticed from the interviews. The code names were created and committed to memory; by doing so, there was no risk of the list of code names being discovered using a simple number system such as 1, number 2, number 3, etc. I also informed them of the circumstances under which I am legally and ethically bound to violate their confidentiality, namely if I believed they were to harm themselves or others. Additionally, I must contact the appropriate authorities whenever I suspect a child, older adult, or disabled person has been abused. Also, I informed them that I had completed the CITI training to understand how to treat, store, and analyze data properly.

Primary ethical concerns that I needed to consider would be the power differences between myself and the research participants, making them timid or less open to dialogue. I did this by empowering and educating the research participants on the study and the end goal. This allowed them to participate from a stance of building the community and allowing them to operate freely in discussion with no repercussions or fear. While I anticipated participants to operate freely in their discussion as they volunteer for the study, I developed plans to strengthen the study's credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability as data is analyzed and elaborated on findings in Chapter Four. I elaborated on the themes and patterns and provided an extensive breakdown of the codebook that can be reviewed in Appendix C.

Chapter Four: Results

Introduction

This study examined African American males' definition of respect and whether or not that definition significantly impacted their perception of law enforcement in Memphis, Tennessee. While the focus of this study was to define and explore perceptions, the results address social acceptance and socioeconomics that have played a determining factor in the African American males' worldview. Throughout this chapter, I summarize the results of my research data. A chart delineates three major themes that emerged during the analysis. I also discuss the tools and methods for gathering and analyzing the data. The study's setting, the participants' demographics, and the reliability or trustworthiness are addressed here. In Chapter Five, the results of the study are discussed, along with the interpretation of the findings, limitations, implications, future recommendations, and a summarized answer to the research question.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study.

RQ1: How do African American males aged 21 to 25 in Memphis, TENNESSEE, define the concept of respect, and does that definition shape their view of law enforcement?

RQ2: Is Goffman's dramaturgical model sufficient to describe the phenomena of respect among the studied population concerning social acceptance?

Setting

The research study was conducted using a qualitative methodology. Purposive sampling was used for recruitment. The participants had to be African American males, aged 21 to 25, living in or have lived in the downtown Memphis, Tennessee area, or within a 25-mile radius of Shelby Forest Frayser. Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval was received on December 7, 2022. My Walden IRB approval number was 12-07-22-0464137. Following IRB approval, I began collecting data online via social media on December 11, 2022. By running the approved ads on social media, I was able to target the desired population. The research study was comprised of 15 participants. All participants met via Google Meet for a better user experience; for those with mobile devices and computer equipment, the link worked for compatibility. The Google Meet platform worked better than Microsoft Teams, as participants needed an account to access the links and the option to view closed caption transcription. Since the change of a platform did not impact how the study was conducted or how the information was collected, per IRB, I moved forward with using this platform.

Based on the screener questions, the participants consented to be recorded via Google Forms. Participants were informed that participation was voluntary and that they could stop anytime. Research participants were assigned pseudonyms to protect their confidentiality during coding. Coding makes locating patterns and themes in the data easier to locate and reference (Creswell, 2013).

Demographics

A total of 15 males qualified for the interview based on the screening questions. There was no further analysis of the data for the 15. The group was fairly educated, with 56.9% attending college and 56.3% graduating high school. All of them identified themselves as African American males. Sixty-eight percent of the sample lived in downtown Memphis, and 67.5% of the males had not been convicted (12.5% were previously convicted). None of the research participants participated in any mental health or substance abuse counseling during the time prior to or during the data collection period. No participants were incarcerated during the time of data collection. Each research participant was given ample opportunity to ask the researcher questions during the interview and at its conclusion. As the researcher, I allowed participants to govern the conversation once questions were asked.

Further demographic information is provided in Figure 1 and Table 1.

Figure 1
Responses to Demographic Questions Regarding Year of Birth

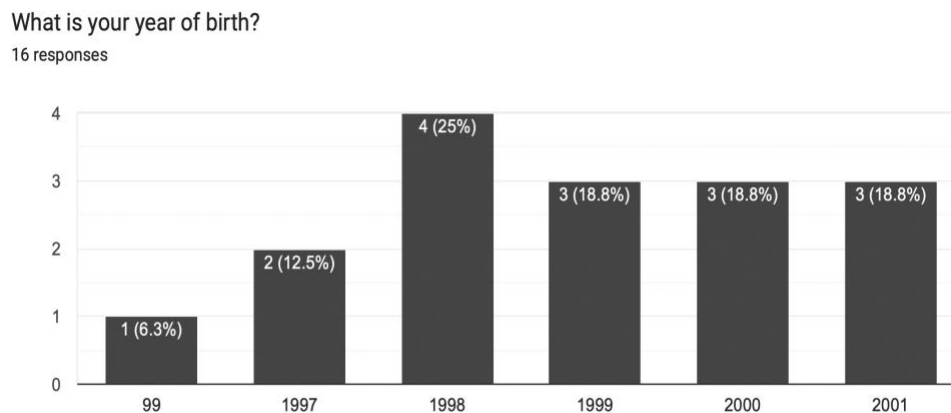


Table 1
Responses to Demographic Questions (N=16)

Question	Yes	No
Do you identify as Black or African American?	100%	0%
In the past 12 months, have you lived within 25 miles of Downtown Memphis?	68.8%	31.3%
Are you or have you ever been convicted of a felony?	87.5%	12.5%
Have you interacted with law enforcement in the last 3-5 years?	100%	0%
Are you or have you been to college in the last 3-5 years?	56.3%	43.8%
Did you graduate?	50.0%	50.0%

Data Collection

Although the original plan was to collect all the data in one session within 14-30 days, this became impractical because I had initially had difficulty finding enough people to participate. I shared the flyer manually for 14 days on Facebook prior to running ads. Once ads began, I reached 1,086 people across Memphis daily for \$16.44 per week. After three weeks, I had my first participant interview on January 15th. By running ads, creating the consent form via Google Form, and connecting it to the Facebook page, participants could click through it, read the screener questions, and agree to consent if interested in the study. After a few adjustments to the ads to alter the time of day and interest of the ads, I was able to recruit 16 participants. I reached out to research participants to schedule interviews at their convenience. The interviews were conducted during the week between 11 am and 3:30 pm. Most participants were eager to be interviewed and were advised the

interview could last up to 45 minutes. When interviews commenced, I was able to send the participants Google links on the scheduled interview date and time, begin captions, and begin the audio recording session on Google Meet. Once the interviews were complete, I collected and reviewed each transcribed interview to understand perceptions and expressed experiences. I used closed captions and transcripts to aid me.

Data Analysis

In reviewing the transcripts, I identified and grouped themes and patterns as they emerged (Creswell, 2013). The data were analyzed by first grouping each participant's common responses to questions in each of the sections. Then I began to identify any themes and patterns as they emerged. At this point, I utilized notes collected during the interviews to ensure participants' responses to the questions were accurate in the transcription (Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 2008).

Using the audio recording of each participant's interview, I reviewed each note I took based on the interview questions to identify words, behaviors, mannerisms, and certain slogans, captions, and key words that captured the participants' expressed experiences and perceptions of law enforcement and respect. I used a number system to break up and match the answers to the research questions. I divided up the coding to identify areas that addressed the research question. The coded section established its importance or relevance to the study, making locating relevant sections possible. Coding also made locating patterns and themes in the data easier to locate and reference (Creswell, 2013).

The audio recordings of each interview were listened to multiple times to identify how many times I heard the words, slogans, or keywords for respect and perceptions. I began to number them based on the categories I had for coding. Coding was broken down into personal, professional, and impressions to ensure I spoke to the research questions and Goffman's social acceptance theory. These notes helped identify broad themes for coding and the identification of patterns, mannerisms, and key words. I repeated each translated document's review twice, first to ensure I had clear responses and then again looking to ensure common themes or patterns were identified. Closed captioning was used to ensure accurate wording was captured. Data were also shared with my chair using a Google Drive account. In this way, it was possible to share data without affecting participants. To maintain consistency, participants were asked structured interview questions, but they were encouraged to express themselves freely.

Next, using the Microsoft Word document I had for interview questions for the participant, I coded the participants' responses by the coding number group that each participant's response went with per the section and question that emerged among the participants' responses. The coding process was completed manually by reviewing each interview and documenting the responses, and I used Microsoft Word to group like patterns. During this process, themes and patterns initially identified were merged, and ultimately, the data was reduced into three primary themes highlighted in this chapter.

Trustworthiness and Credibility

Representing and interpreting the meaning of data as intended by the participants is important; to do this, the researcher must ensure that dependability, conformability,

transferability, and credibility are met and defined to aid in the interpretation of the results and the trustworthiness of the study. To ensure the trustworthiness and credibility of the study, the data collection and data analysis plan and process outlined in Chapter 3 were strictly followed per the procedures mentioned. I worked to ensure accurate results clearly and that the coding was closely reviewed and examined to ensure there were no technical errors identified in the data or coding, thus ensuring the study's credibility.

Dependability, Conformability, and Transferability

Transferability refers to the ability to transfer the results of this study so that others may be able to advance the study of this topic and gain a deeper understanding of it. This study was made more transferrable by accurately capturing participants' perceptions of their experiences (Yin, 2013). It is important to ensure that another researcher can make the connection between this study and their field of work, thus allowing a link to existing research on perceptions and social acceptance. To share the richness of the participants' perspectives, direct quotes from their responses were crucial to the research. Additionally, this provided context, details, and verbatim quotes, which establishes and confirms conformability.

I turned on closed captioning to allow me to clearly understand and interpret dialogue and accurately decipher word terminology between myself and the research participants. To further expand, I compiled themes that emerged from the participants' expressed experiences or perceptions, as outlined in my IRB research procedures, and to establish dependability by making the data very consistent and specific to the research participants' culture. Sparkes and Smith (2013) emphasize the importance of consistency

in data over time when establishing dependability. To ensure the research was dependable and conformable, I went back and listened to the audio recordings multiple times, taking notes to make a note of mannerisms, body language changes, and tone adjustments. I also asked follow-up questions and obtained clarifying details from the participants to ensure their voices would be heard and their experiences were captured without bias.

Results

The purpose of this study was to examine and define an African American male's definition of respect and their perception of law enforcement. Lastly, I looked to see if Goffman's dramaturgical model was sufficient to describe the phenomena of respect concerning social acceptance. Three major themes emerged from the data as I identified their responses: (a) the definition of respect and how it is maintained and understood for African American males; (b) communication patterns within the community that shifted their perspective towards law enforcement; and (c) assessment of whether Goffman's model sufficiently describes social acceptance and respect. These were the most notable themes and resounded the experiences African American males have and have had throughout time.

Throughout each interview, I listened to the audio multiple times to identify how many times I heard the words, slogans, and keywords about respect and perceptions. Based on my coding categories, I numbered them. My coding was divided into three categories: personal, professional, and impressions, in order to ensure that I addressed the research questions and Goffman's theory of social acceptance. Personal

categories referred to the defined terms of respect that the self has determined. This included statements related to different personas, dialogues, or peer conversations related to law enforcement. Impressions referred to projections made on self towards self or presented due to upbringings or social interactions/society projections. These notes helped identify broad themes for coding and the identification of patterns, mannerisms, and key words, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2
Themes

Category	Descriptions	Examples of words, phrases, behaviors etc.
Personal (Defined Concept)	This code refers to defined terms of respect that the self has determined.	“I feel” I think” “I developed” “Over time” confident, direct, sure/certainty.
Professional (Work/Colleagues Convo – Front Stage/Back Stage)	This code includes both statements related to different personas, or different dialogues or peer conversations as it relates to law enforcement	“Can’t be myself” Must present myself” “We don’t talk” “Relating to one another” “Being hesitate, reluctant, anxious or reserved. Having to code switch.
Social, Feelings, Acceptance (Perception Worldview)	This code refers to projections made on self towards self or presented due to upbringings or social interactions/society projections.	“Growing Up” In my neighborhood” My parents, friends” “For us” “As a Black male/person” Fear, Anger, lack of understanding. Authority conflict

The translated documents were reviewed twice, first for clarity and then for common themes or patterns. Afterward, I ranked the participants' responses by assigning a numerical value (1-3) to the interview questions corresponding to the categories (personal, professional, and social) that emerged among the responses. This led me to my numbers. During the coding process, each interview was reviewed and documented. Using Microsoft Word to group like patterns, theme, and pattern identifiers were merged in the coding process. Ultimately, three primary themes emerged from the

data, which are highlighted in this chapter. I elaborated on each theme based on the table.

(see Table 3).

Table 3
Summary of Findings

Themes	Statements
<p>Theme 1: Definition of respect and how it is maintained and understood for African American males.</p> <p>Give respect to get respect from individuals, mutual, earned, and maintained through commonality, actions, and dialogue.</p>	<p>Participant 2 stated, "Respect is defined and interpreted in the approach, conversation, and actions demonstrated toward one another.</p> <p>Participant 5 stated, "Respect is a mutual expressed action. It is assumed and given until it is clear that it will not be reciprocated."</p> <p>Participant 4 stated, "Respect is defined in the commonality of being human, being Black, and by being from a similar area, yields a baseline of respect."</p> <p>Participant 8 stated, "Respect comes in the form of keeping themselves up to par externally and how they treat themselves internally and this can be demonstrated in how one dresses."</p>
<p>Theme 2: Communication patterns within the community that shifted the perspective toward law enforcement.</p> <p>Life conversations had to prepare for law enforcement obstacles by family, watching and hearing policy activity.</p>	<p>Participant 10 stated that growing up in their household with constant communication about law enforcement shaped their perspectives and how they believed they should act around law enforcement. For example, participant 10 stated, "When the police come, do as they say and don't ask no questions."</p> <p>Participant 3 stated, "I have police in my family and am still always told that it just depends on what cop you get that day."</p> <p>Participant 12 stated, "Police has never been about us and they have never been for us, we have to handle our affairs because if they show you, you might die."</p> <p>Participant 7 stated, "Sometimes, even if the police do not respect us, we must communicate respectfully. Even though they are on our block, our home, they don't speak to us like we're not suspicious when they approach us."</p>
<p>Theme 3: Assessing of whether Goffman's model sufficiently describes social acceptance and respect.</p>	<p>Participant 1 stated, "I felt that what's the point of trying to be something if the police are just looking for reasons to take me out?"</p> <p>Participant 13 stated, "For me, I've been a problem all my life in school. My teachers did not have the knowledge to know my home was not right. They don't see us and think help, they see us and think pity."</p> <p>Participant 16 stated, "Folks made it seem as though there was no point in dedicating myself to the education system."</p> <p>Participant 2's comment led me to believe that they had experienced intergenerational trauma, as indicated by the statement, "We've had an issue in this country since we were chained to the boats.". Without acceptance from us, how could anyone else accept us?"</p> <p>Participant 14's statement, "Respect should be mutual, but it is not. Truthfully, I don't know if anyone accepts a Black man."</p>

Theme 1

Theme 1: *Definition of respect equals self-esteem, confidence, and equality relates to codes from the data for giving respect to get respect from individuals, mutual, earned, and maintained by commonality, actions, and dialogue.* The research participants were very clear that respect, while it can be expressed in a mirage of ways, must be earned and is not to be taken lightly. Many research participants described respect as an action more than a thought. Participant #2 stated that respect is defined and interpreted in the approach, conversation, and actions demonstrated toward one another. Participant #5 stated, “Respect is a mutual expressed action. It is assumed and given until it is clear that it will not be reciprocated.” Participant 4 stated, “Respect is defined in the commonality of being human, being Black, and by being from a similar area, yields a baseline of respect.”

It is understood that Black men share a common trait that seemingly makes their struggle harder. Therefore, most often, brotherhood is necessary. However, because respect can be earned and demonstrated in a variety of ways, research participants agreed that a portion of respect can only be given if the person respects themselves and their surroundings. Participant 8 stated that respect comes in the form of keeping themselves up to par externally and how they treat themselves internally, which can be demonstrated in how one dresses. Choice of clothing and dress style were two specific strategies used as symbolic representation to demonstrate the young men’s sense of self. Generally, respect has multiple meanings or can be defined differently for each individual.

Respect commonly means high regard for something or someone (Bourgois, 2003). It is not uncommon for males, primarily African American males, to embrace the concept of respect. Participants in the study stated that they liked name brands because it made them appear more attractive. As Anthony (2007) points out, low self-esteem individuals seek social approval through their possessions rather than their personal characteristics. It supports Goffman's (1959) perspective on the presentation of self as a strategy for gaining social acceptance. These research participants must dress appropriately for their social audience and community. Their loyalty to certain garments, possessions, and a sense of esteem for material items show their desire to appear financially stable and is rooted in who they are rather than where they come from. Regardless of whether some of these men were graduates, the idea remained the same. According to the idea, a man is responsible for providing for himself and those around him.

Connections can be made or broken based on how one is presented. Respect starts the moment a Black man enters the world as a figure. The concept of respect is not uncommon among males, particularly African American males. Embracing their immediate peers is motivated by belonging and being included. To fulfill a need, people play different roles for different people or audiences, according to Goffman (1959). The performers play social roles in order to gain the greatest acceptance from the audiences in which they perform. Recent research indicates that many young African American males have adopted this mindset, although it may not apply to all of them. Their status within the community is viewed as a symbol of respect, social acceptance, and power.

It is generally accepted that respect has multiple meanings or can be defined differently for each individual. In light of Black men's early mistreatment, their views of who deserves respect vary based on their position (Anderson, 1999). Based on the participants' responses and the literature, respect is not just one thing, but many things have been shaped over time by African American males. Respect looks different in different cultures, which aligns with the themes.

Theme 2

Theme 2: Communication patterns within the community that shifted the perspective towards law enforcement relates to codes from the data for Life conversations that had to prepare them for law enforcement obstacles by family, watching, and hearing policy activity within the community.

This theme emerged as I talked to research participants about their social interactions and upbringing with law enforcement. Participant 10 stated, "Growing up in their household with constant communication about law enforcement shaped their perspectives and how they believed they should act around law enforcement." Young males today are certain to feel uneasy about law enforcement even if they are not subject to poverty or patrol in their neighborhood. Even if it was not discussed at home when they were growing up, the uneasy feeling is a certainty. Over 50% of the research participants in their early twenties described growing up in a time when adults denigrated law enforcement under the guise of judging African American males by mentioning injustices such as Rodney King and George Floyd.

At least 50% of research participants mentioned that a family member had a bad experience with law enforcement. Participant 3 stated, “I have police in my family and am still always told that it just depends on what cop you get that day.” Inevitably, these family members cited that Black men exuded some form of intimidation that often law enforcement and others believed might be harmful. In order to avoid being combative, assertive, rude, and disrespectful, they were taught how to reframe. Participant 12 stated, “Police has never been about us and they have never been for us, we have to handle our affairs because if they show you, you might die.” This was considered an invaluable piece of communication.

At least 50% of participants said that either their mother or the men in their family had “the talk” with them. This talk consisted of prominent advice on how to interact with law enforcement officers to stay alive. Eighty percent of research participants felt afraid when they saw or heard law enforcement. Additionally, participants were advised to make eye contact, don’t run, don’t fidget, and always keep their ID handy to hand it over to law enforcement. Research participant 7 stated, “Sometimes, even if the police do not respect us, we must communicate respectfully. Even though they are on our block, our home, they don’t speak to us like we’re not suspicious when they approach us.” The talk demonstrates a warning to research participants about how they will suffer disrespect from law enforcement officers but are not allowed to reciprocate without fear of death or excessive discipline. Moreover, it outlines how research participants are to demonstrate respect for authority figures. Within their community, methods of respecting authority figures demonstrate the participants’ understanding of respect.

By demonstrating respect, the research participants maintain their level of social acceptance among the community authority figures. This is in line with Goffman's model. Social roles are played to gain the greatest impact for the performers to gain acceptance from the audiences in which they are performing, which would be those in authority in close proximity. Recent research indicates that many young African American men adopt this mindset, despite these statements not applying to all of them. Symbols of respect, social acceptance, and power are associated with them within the community. Each individual may define respect differently or have multiple meanings in general. Bourgois (2003) defines respect as high regard for something or someone.

Theme 3

Theme 3: Assessing whether Goffman's model sufficiently describes social acceptance and respect. Interviews with research participants revealed a common theme.

Participants all referred to law enforcement discussions that their parents had when they were growing up, knowing they would be treated differently due to their skin and gender. Participants discussed the impact these conversations had on them, African Americans, as young men. Participant 1 stated, "I felt that what's the point of trying to be something if the police are just looking for reasons to take me out? Research participants 2, 4, 8, 10, 12, and 15 have experiences and memories that they claimed caused them to experience marginalization in mainstream American society beginning as early as elementary school. Participants indicated they could recall feeling rejected and outcasted by some authority figures. Participant 13 said, "For me, I've been a problem all my life in

school. My teachers did not have the knowledge to know my home was not right. They don't see us and think, help. They see us and think pity." This statement speaks to the treatment African American men have received and displayed since an early age.

It has been well-documented how colorism, racism, and impoverished areas influenced cultural norms and societal injustices between the early 1900s and 2020 (Du Bois, 2003). Participant 16 stated, "Folks made it seem as though there was no point in dedicating myself to the education system," despite knowing that he would eventually need to pay attention to schooling if they wanted to succeed in America as a Black man. Participant 11 reported, "Being singled out as a troublemaker, ignored, and bullied while at school impacted his peer relationships." After making complaints to the administration with no results, participant 11 began to lose hope in traditional schooling. Moreover, the marginalization was enacted by authority figures in their community. Participant 11 went on to state, "a complex had been created in me," that authority figures did not, nor would ever, respect them because they were Black. Participant 2 stated, "Without acceptance from us, how could anyone else accept us?" Participant 14 stated, "Respect should be mutual, but it is not." Based on the conversations with the participants, they remain hopeful that reform is possible, but are heartbroken that they're still enduring oppression.

Truthfully, I don't know if anyone accepts a Black man. In response to the lack of respect they perceive from authority figures, participants expressed and exhibited sadness and anger.

Summary of the Analysis

Neither the main effects for defining respect, perceptions of law enforcement, nor Goffman's model differed significantly in evaluations of the candidates. The themes analysis indicates the participants' perceptions regarding respect, law enforcement, and social acceptance. Goffman's model is sufficient to answer and elaborate on social acceptance based on the participants' answers. In Chapter Five, I discuss the key interpretations, findings, recommendations, and implications in more detail.

Chapter Five: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore African American males' perceptions of respect, as well as examine how that concept of respect affected their perception of law enforcement in Memphis, Tennessee. The qualitative research questions led to invaluable conversations with young African American males living in or having previously lived in disadvantaged neighborhoods. The findings reported in Chapter Four presented a greater understanding of the problem statement. Having acquired this understanding, innovative, evidence-based techniques can be developed to assist administrations with programs, policies, and changes to assist and bridge the gap between law enforcement and the communities they serve.

Interpretation of Findings

Themes capture important relationships and patterns in relation to the research purpose. The key themes of this study were as follows: (a) the definition of respect, and how it is maintained and understood for African American males; (b) communication patterns within the community that shifted their perspective towards law enforcement; and (c) assessing if Goffman's model sufficiently describes social acceptance and respect. Based on the data analyzed, participants held the same definition of respect: Respect is a mutual act often derived from commonalities and being human. It is an understanding, a connection, a common bond within. Social acceptance can be defined using the Goffman model.

According to the research participants, respect is a mutual act that is often derived from commonalities and being human. The importance of social acceptance and respect for these men cannot be overstated. There is hope for change over time, even though they believe they will always be excluded from mainstream society. Families warned them at an early age that law enforcement would be a challenge due to their environment.

Using Goffman's dramaturgical model of social interactions (1959), several aspects of African American male social lives can be explained based on the interview data. Instead of using a formal scientific methodology, Goffman collected his data through simple observation. In Goffman's research, individual behaviors were used to explain society's ideas, values, and beliefs, which resulted in a better understanding of situational behavior. According to a literature review, disenfranchisement has adverse effects on African American males (Anderson, 1999). An individual's values system, worldview, and lifestyle affect them differently than their peers.

For different people or audiences, people play different roles to fulfill different needs, according to Goffman (1959). Performers play social roles in order to gain the most acceptance from the audiences in which they perform. Some African American males may not adopt these perspectives, but recent research suggests they are common among young men. A social situation involves two or more people trying to influence one another, according to Goffman (1959).

The African American male seeks understanding and perception based on this model. He will adapt to the situation and perform or become something or someone else to prove their point. According to Goffman's dramaturgical model, life can be

characterized by performances intended to reach others. His view was that impression management involves trying to persuade one another of the ideal situation in social situations. Expectations are not assumed but hoped for. As a result of interactions with law enforcement officers, feelings of disrespect in racial relations, and marginalization within mainstream American society, participants gained insight and knowledge. These experiences have taught these young men that law enforcement does not respect their community implicitly or explicitly.

Mainstream American society's disrespect of law enforcement has greatly impacted research participants' attitudes and disdain for law enforcement. Due to their fear of law enforcement officers, they tend to avoid them whenever possible. The African American male feels more like an outsider when he is rejected by his community, supporting Pharo et al.'s (2011) finding that marginalization negatively impacts self-esteem. Furthermore, it is consistent with the assertions of Alexander (2012), Boothe (2012), and Burrell (2010) that African Americans tend to suffer from low self-esteem because of intergenerational trauma.

Several participants reported and believe that their purpose as African American men is to confront oppression, systems, etc., that continually deprive African American men of that aid. According to my conversations with the participants, African American males will always feel like a stranger in their own land. Especially when it comes to law enforcement, these Black men believe they provide respect but often do not receive it. Law enforcement has become a source of fear and contempt for these research participants. As a result, they feel they cannot have cordial interactions with law

enforcement because of their lack of respect. For a long time, African American men have been subjected to racism in this country. There has been a history of law enforcement prep talks where the complexities of law enforcement have been left unaddressed, per Participant 5.

Hearing Participant 14 state they were taught to submit when they encountered law enforcement, so they had to do whatever it took to survive, was disheartening. Goffman's (1959) concept of dramaturgical roles for social acceptance is supported by the notion that a person will adjust their behavior and performance to be accepted. Participants 1 and 7 viewed social acceptance as safety regarding authority figures. The point of the performance is in hopes of having a nonviolent law enforcement interaction. The role can be played in any way that is needed for survival.

Further, the findings confirm what researchers Alexander (2012) and Rios (2011) have discussed about the effects of pathological shame from teachers and law enforcement on young African American men. A young African American man receiving explicit and implicit messages from teachers, prospective employers, and law enforcement officers is less likely to be combative regarding law enforcement interactions (Tyler, 2020). Law enforcement officers have instigated a fear in African American men that is not only directed towards a system that mistreats minorities, but it has initiated a fear for the very law enforcement officers sent to protect and serve the community. According to Goffman (1959), these participants play the role of social interaction with law enforcement officers, and they do this to ensure that these interactions do not result in death.

Limitations of the Study

A few limitations were found in this study. The average social scientist spends one to three years in the field with their research participants. Field notes and data analysis can be detailed due to this method (Yin, 2013). Because of academic and economic constraints, I could not devote that much time to fieldwork. Through the use of technology, I was able to gain more participants and converse with them independently. The result was that I was not able to gather sufficient information in the field, but I was able to bridge the gap through technology. Through direct interaction with the most impacted community, I was able to gain insight. Participants conveyed that they have a general distrust for the system but were genuinely proud to see an African American woman doing and making an attempt to do the field work.

Research limitations to outside validity and internal validity are primarily determined by threats (Campbell & Stanley, 1963). External validity refers to the extent to which a study's results can be generalized beyond the specific participants. In order to increase the external validity of the study, an unbiased sampling of the target population was used. The sample included only those who were interested in participating in the study.

Another limitation or concern I had prior to data collection was that participants might have felt compelled to perform or give me the answers they thought I would want to hear. Goffman's theory also aligns with this. The purpose of the study and overall goal was explained at the beginning of the study to address this concern. As a result, participants understood that the purpose of the meeting was to advance the Black male

community and begin communication with government agencies to enhance law enforcement interactions. Once engaged, the participants seemed eager to participate because I, as an African American women, identified with them and wanted to hear them as Black men speak. Participants were eager to be apart of measures for change – from the data I had gathered. It is safe to conclude that this population had been submerged in an environment with heavier police activity, fewer resources than other populations, and death with perceptions and noticeable change in the treatment from authority figures within their communities and lives.

Recommendations

During socialization, I noticed a distinct separation of genders. Therefore, I recommend future qualitative studies of gender roles in this region. I strongly suspect that I would have been able to get more research participants if I had sought out young African American women. In the future, I recommend that a male researcher replicate my study. There may also be value to having this study completed by a male researcher and comparing the responses of both genders. Furthermore, it may be easier for a male researcher to recruit male participants with this population and gain more insight and transparency. Also, this study should be replicated in other geographic locations in the United States, both urban and rural. These replications would determine if the results from my study are generalizable.

African Americans may experience different contexts and shaping effects in urban, suburban, and rural settings. Since the African American family can be diverse,

others in different economic classes have varying experiences from childhood to present that can add value and insight into the experiences with local administrations.

Implications on Positive Social Change

In 2005, I was blessed with my first son; in 2017, I was blessed with my last. I began collecting data for this study in December 2022. On January 7th, 2023, Tyre Nicols suffered an untimely death at the hands of law enforcement in Memphis, Tennessee. Another tragedy in the Black community and another blemish on law enforcement interactions with African American males, regardless of ethnicity. At first glance, I did not understand what it would take to raise a Black boy, but I learned as I went along. In a world that does not love her son as she does, what does it take for a mother to raise a child truly? I experienced feelings that I couldn't properly address due to my ignorance of the culture, even as a Black mother raising a Black son in a two-parent household with a middle-class income and a mother with high accolades.

Every day, I witnessed oppressive systems unprepared for what I knew. Despite living and being African American, African Americans do not automatically understand the struggle. As a result of cultural blindness and the assumption that mental health services are not necessary for treating everyone, I have realized that African Americans underutilize mental health services (Sue & Sue, 2008). Cultural blindness is very prevalent for minorities. Often, cultural blindness refers to providers and people who assert that race and culture make no difference in how services are provided and how persons are handled. This is a dangerous fallacy because it assumes that persons are treated equally in a world that continues to confirm its divisiveness towards minorities.

Strain theory suggests that the American Dream is subject to interpretation as one life isn't identical to the next. In order to truly assist this population constructively requires eliminating this fallacy. The current standards of assessment need to be redesigned in order to meet the needs of marginalized populations. The first steps toward this reform can be found in these findings. Hearing out the population most impacted with the emphasis and focus on rebuilding environments, policies, and administrations may proactively aid in the transformation that is so desperately needed.

Conclusion

Cultural background and needs have layers and levels, but truth and accountability must be shared to begin a proper dialogue that effects actual change. The first step in demonstrating to a marginalized community the importance of righting the wrong is to take action to build rapport within the community and with administrators. Besides intentional dialogue, the African American male community must see practical action. Cultural racism has been embedded in American education, mass media, and religion, perpetuating the divide and the stigma associated with a marginalized population (Oliver 2001). There is still debate over reproductive rights, slavery, property, etc., but this study reveals that "all men are not created equal." Human services fields must be redesigned, and the narrative needs to shift. All administrations and systems should have multicultural diversity programs, and law enforcement should collaborate with other fields that can help hold them accountable.

The United States continues to operate and participate in most major systems with white supremacy embedded in them. African American males often suffer from poverty,

underemployment, and inadequate service and are held hostage by systems designed to harm them (Agnew, 2005; Alexander, 2012; Anderson, 1999; Bell, 1973; Burrell, 2010). Racial discrimination is a daily reality for African Americans. In contrast, other ethnicities are free to live without the difficulties associated with being Black, an outcome that can't be controlled. A Black person's life shouldn't be a struggle just because they're Black. Other cultures must respect, love, and listen to our culture. Rather than being indigenous to this land, we are beings who have cultivated a great deal that other cultures have benefited from. A complete overhaul of the criminal justice system is unquestionably needed. As Oliver (2001) stated:

This should begin at the police academy. Police violence against African Americans has historically served the function of maintaining an American racial hierarchy in which the criminal justice system as an institution is used to perpetuate white dominance and Black subordination The generalized societal disrespect for African Americans and internalization of antiBlack stereotypes are often imported into the police occupational role from larger society. Thus encounters with African Americans are substantially influenced by racially biased socialization experiences which predate the assumption of the police officer role police violence against African Americans may be motivated by a conscious desire to reinforce the racial status quo [and teach] the victim a lesson about the importance of knowing and staying in his place. (pp. 14-18)

How much evil could be eliminated if our fights weren't governed by capital but rather by compassion and decency towards people, especially African Americans who have fought just to be seen as human?

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Appendix A: Facebook Social Media Ad

**** Respect, Social Acceptance & Law Enforcement!**

I NEED & WANT your thoughts!

What does respect mean to a Black man? How do you perceive law enforcement?

I WANT to know!

Volunteers needed for a time sensitive research study on respect & social acceptance.

REQUIREMENTS: Must be an African American male, between the ages 21-25.

Researcher will reach out to you via email & phone to schedule an interview.

Serious Inquires only!

Appendix B: Interview Protocol & Codebook

 Screener Questions for Facebook Volunteer Research Form

- a. What is your name?
- b. Are you between 21 to 25?
- c. Is your date of birth between 1997- 2001?
- d. What is your year of birth?
- e. Do you identify as Black or African American?
- f. Were you born and or raised in Memphis, TENNESSEE?
- g. In the past 12 months, have you lived within 25 miles of Downtown Memphis?
- h. Did you or anyone you associate with live within 25 miles of Shelby Forest Frayser?
- i. Are you or have you ever been convicted of a felony?
- j. Have you participated in a mental or alcohol abuse program within the last 12 months?
- k. Have you interacted with law enforcement in the past 3-5 years?
- l. What is your current work title and industry?
- m. Are you or have you been to college in the last 3-5 years?
- n. Did you graduate? (Yes or No)

Question	RQs	Goffman Elements	Agnew Strain Elements	Category
How do you define, earn, and maintain respect?		Front Stage actions are visible to the audience and are part of the performance.	The existence of harmful impulses.	Personal (Defined Concept)
		Back stage behavior, which are actions that people engage in when no audience is present.	The removal of positive impulses	Professional (work)
		Impression/Expression Management		Social, Feelings, Acceptance (Worldview)
What personal experiences have shaped your perception of law enforcement?	1			1
How would you describe your youth & home environment as it relates to law enforcement?	1 & 2			1
When you hear the term police or see a police officer, what is the first thing that comes to mind? How does it make you feel?	2			3
How do you think your upbringing influences your perception of law enforcement?	1			1
When it comes to law enforcement, do you feel that your persona differs from what you present to your friends, family, and colleagues?	2			2
What type of conversations do you have with your peers concerning law enforcement and Black male interactions?	2			2
Do you feel more accepted when agreeing with law enforcement biases within your community?	2			3
How do you behave around law enforcement? Were you taught this at home, school, or society?	1 & 2			1 & 2
Do you think culture (i.e., music, tv, media news) today plays a part in the perception of law enforcement? What type of music do you prefer? If yes/no, why?	2			3
When you were a child, did you observe heavy law enforcement activity in your neighborhood?	1 & 2			1
Do you think your appearance has an impact on how you're treated by law enforcement?	2			3
Does your perception of law enforcement have any bearing on your personal life or relationships?	1 & 2			3

Coding & Themes

Category	Descriptions	Examples of words, phrases, behaviors etc.
Personal (Defined Concept)	This code refers to defined terms of respect that have been determined by self.	"I feel" "I think" "I developed" "Over time" confident, direct, sure/certainty.
Professional (Work/Colleagues Convo – Front Stage/Back Stage)	This code includes both statements related to different personas, or different dialogues or peer conversations as it relates to law enforcement.	"Can't be myself" "Must present myself" "We don't talk" "Relating to one another" "Being hesitate, reluctant, anxious or reserved. Having to code switch.
Social, Feelings, Acceptance (Perception Worldview)	This code refers to projections made on self towards self or presented due to upbringings or social interactions/society projections.	"Growing Up" "In my neighborhood" "My parents, friends" "For us" "As a Black male/person" "Fear, Anger, lack of understanding. Authority conflict