

2022

Social Workers' Perceptions on Partnering with Police to Address Violent Police Encounters towards African Americans

Adrian Springfield
Walden University

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Walden University

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Adrian Springfield

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Walden University
2022

Abstract

Social Workers' Perceptions on Partnering with Police to Address Violent Police

Encounters towards African Americans

by

Adrian Springfield

MSW, University of Akron, 2011

BS, Kent State University, 2007

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Social Work

Walden University

May 2022

Abstract

Research documents the pervasiveness of violent police encounters towards African Americans in the United States and importance of a multidisciplinary approach between social workers and police to prevent police violence. However, little is known about social workers perceptions and experiences on partnering with police to address violent police encounters towards African Americans. Informed by Tuckman's group formation theory and Bell's critical race theory, the purpose of this generic qualitative inquiry study was to explore social workers in the United States perceptions and experiences on partnering with police to address violent police encounters toward African Americans. Using semistructured interviews, data was collected from 15 licensed social workers in the United States who were currently practicing in social work, held a degree of social work from an accredited university, and had professional roles, responsibilities, or expertise intersect with police. Research questions that guided this study addressed social workers perceptions and experiences on partnering with police to address violent police encounters towards African Americans. Data were analyzed and stored in qualitative software NVivo and transcribed using the transcription and translation application Otter.ai. The findings showed race as a factor in violent police encounters affecting African Americans, and while social workers believe partnering with police can lead to a reduction in violent police encounters, social workers face challenges such as opposition to partnering with police. In addition to incorporating culturally relevant social work content and practices, the findings may create ways to foster safer police encounters for African Americans.

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Dedication

I thank God for keeping me throughout this journey. Many times, I wanted to quit but thank God, I made it.

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my supportive husband and amazing son for their encouragement, continued support, faith in me, and sacrifice. Thank you for allowing time and space throughout this journey. I cannot thank you enough.

Acknowledgments

Special thanks to my chair, Dr. Curtis Davis for creating a safe and supportive learning environment that allowed me to be myself. Thank you also to second member, Dr. Juanita White and University Research Reviewer, Dr. Debra Wilson for their guidance throughout this dissertation.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

In this study, I aimed to learn the perceptions and experiences of social workers on partnering with police. Specific consideration was given to violent police encounters with African Americans. Compared to other ethnic groups, African Americans face the highest risk of being killed by police during their lifetime (Edwards et al., 2019). Specifically, African American men face a one in 1,000 chances of being killed by police during their lifetime (Edwards et al., 2019). Also, compared to women in other ethnic groups, African American women are the most vulnerable to face intersectional discrimination through their encounters with police due to their race, gender, sexuality, and class (Smith, 2016). Considering that the literature illustrates the occurrence of violent police encounters with African Americans, it is important to improve police encounters with African Americans.

While police violence is an injustice, social work as a profession has a long tradition of challenging social injustice, helping those in need, and addressing social problems (Hadden et al., 2016; Moore et al., 2016). Drawing upon a commitment to engage in practice that is grounded in social justice, social workers are not only adept in advocating for much needed reforms but also in bringing attention to critical issues such as violent police encounters towards African Americans (Jones & Norwood, 2020; Patterson & Swan, 2019). Also, given the wide range expertise of social workers and considering that social workers and police roles often overlap, social workers are well suited to collaborate with police to deescalate and prevent community members from violent encounters (Fedina et al., 2018; Jones & Norwood, 2020; Trombadore, 2016).

Yet, despite the literature demonstrating that social work and police partnerships promote safer police engagements, there has been a decrease in social workers and police working together due to the uncertainty of social worker's effectiveness (Patterson & Swan, 2019; Teasley et al., 2018). Therefore, it is beneficial to explore social workers in the United States perceptions and experiences on partnering with police to address violent encounters towards African Americans.

Recognizing the pervasiveness of violent police encounters towards African Americans not only illustrates the struggle to protect African Americans in their contact with police but reflects the need to explore social workers perceptions and experiences on partnering with police. Therefore, by exploring the perceptions and experiences of social workers in the United States on partnering with police to address violent encounters towards African Americans, this study can foster safer encounters and inform effective change to produce positive social justice outcomes (see Giwa, 2018; Lamin & Teboh, 2016; Varghese, 2016). Furthermore, to equally elevate and value African Americans in the movement for social justice, it is beneficial for social workers and police to work together to combat police violence (Adedoyin et al., 2019; Smith, 2016). The benefits of social work and police partnership is detailed in later sections.

In addition to the study's introduction, Chapter 1 presents the background, problem statement, and purpose of the study. Also provided are the research questions, theoretical framework for the analysis, nature of the study, definitions of key concepts, and assumptions. Furthermore, the scope, delimitations, limitations, and potential

contributions of the study (significance) are provided before summarizing the main points of the chapter (summary) and transitioning to the next chapter (Chapter 2).

Background

Literature Related to the Study

Such as reflected in the literature, police encounters can take various forms and meanings, depending on the type and severity of the encounter. For example, the Bureau of Justice Statistics (n.d.-a) identified police encounters as police or public initiated contact resulting from a traffic stop, arrest, crime, suspicion, or nonemergency. However, as Bowleg et al. (2020) identified, the contact between police and the public can range from harassment, intimidation, verbal abuse, arrests, racial profiling to nonlethal and lethal contact. Similarly, Volpe (2019) proposed that police encounters are when police come into physical contact with an individual, including an attempt to gain physical control using coercive, actual (physical), and constructive (verbal and nonverbal) force.

In view of what the literature says about police encounters, in this study, I defined police encounters as physical contact between police and the public. However, considering the topic of the study and how police encounters are described in the literature with an emphasis on physical contact, I defined violent police encounters as unreasonable and excessive physical force and actions used by police resulting in the harassment, intimidation, dehumanization, and death of African Americans (see Bowleg et al., 2020; Volpe, 2019).

While the literature reflects the occurrence of violent police encounters towards African Americans and the importance of a multidisciplinary approach between social

workers and police to prevent police violence, the literature also indicates that additional research is needed to explore social workers perceptions and experiences on partnering with police to address violent encounters towards African Americans. For example, Edwards et al. (2019) conducted a study to examine how the risk of being killed by police use of force in the United States varies across social groups. Specifically, the authors examined the lifetime and age-specific risks of being killed by police by race and sex and the proportion of deaths accounted for by police use of force. In the study, African American men and women, American Indian/Alaska Native men and women, and Latino men faced a higher lifetime risk of being killed by police than their European American counterparts. However, among these groups, the risk was the highest for African American men. Overall, for age-specific risks, police use of force was among the leading causes of death for young men of color.

As the findings of Edwards et al. (2019) provided evidence that people of color, especially African Americans, are at greater risk for experiencing law enforcement contact, the authors did not reflect the perceptions and experiences of social workers on partnering with police to address violent police encounters towards African Americans. Therefore, there is a need to explore social workers perceptions and experiences on partnering with police to combat such violence.

Additionally, Lamin and Teboh (2016) conducted a case study design methodology to explore whether police departments in Minnesota provide social work services to crime victims, witnesses, and residents seeking services in nonemergency situations. The authors also explored the strategies for hiring social workers within police

departments to enhance collaboration during mental health and domestic violence crises. Their findings indicated a need for social work and police partnerships due to social workers offering an array of skills that are beneficial to victims of crime and nonemergency situations (Lamin & Teboh, 2016).

Although the findings of Lamin and Teboh (2016) demonstrated that there is an established need for social workers in police departments, the authors did not discuss how social workers foster partnerships with police to address violent police encounters towards African Americans. Thus, it is important to build on the need to explore social workers perceptions and experiences on partnering with police to address the alarming rates of violent police encounters and suffering among African Americans.

Furthermore, to address a gap in the social work literature, Teasley et al. (2018) conducted a study to examine the effects of racial profiling on police violence towards African American males. Also, provided were social work research and practice implications aimed at increasing the social work knowledge base on racial profiling towards African American males. The findings indicated that racial profiling continues to be a significant factor that often stigmatizes African American men as criminals, which makes them vulnerable to police violence. However, the findings recommended that efforts based on social work research and practice advocacy are needed to reduce social injustice and marginalization. The findings of the study are essential to exploring social workers' perceptions and experiences on partnering with police because it provides a lens to understand the impact of racial oppression in the lives of African Americans.

Gap in Knowledge

As reflected above, the knowledge base contains a plethora of information on the occurrence of violent police encounters, excessive and unjustified use of force, and biased perceptions and experiences against African American people. Nevertheless, more knowledge can be gained from exploring social workers' perceptions and experiences on partnering with police to address violent police encounters toward African Americans. By exploring the perceptions and experiences of social workers on the topic, one gains insight into impactful social work ideas. My study further reflected the needed connection between the two disciplines while generating a safer and equitable police encounter experience for African Americans.

The Need for the Study

There is a need to explore social workers' perceptions and experiences on partnering with police to address violent police encounters toward African Americans to increase positive results and safe police encounters. Reflected in the literature, police are responsible for creating and maintaining security in the community (Mummolo, 2017). As suggested by De Soto (2018), the role of police is to preserve life, safeguard the freedom, and protect the rights and respect of others. In this study, I defined safe police encounters as physical contact between police and the public that does not result in physical harm or deadly force (see Peeples, 2020). However, with the literature demonstrating that violent encounters between police and African Americans are prevalent and pervasive, there is a need to foster a safer and equitable police encounter experience which can be obtainable through exploring the perceptions and experiences of

social workers on partnering with police to address violent police towards African Americans (Giwa, 2018; Jones & Phillips, 2016; Tealsey et al., 2018). Furthermore, conducting this study not only provides meaningful findings for gaining insight into African Americans encounters with police and the outcomes that it brings, but the findings justify the need to add to the literature on social workers and police working together to decrease police violence (see Jacobs et al., 2021; Patterson & Swan, 2019; Varghese, 2016).

Problem Statement

Research on police encounters with African Americans illustrates that African Americans experience a greater frequency of police violence. Data collected in 2001 from the U.S. Department of Justice indicated that police are approximately five times more likely to use force on African American men than on men from other ethnic groups (Scott et al., 2017). However, disparities are not limited to African American men. African American women also experience violent police encounters. Data compiled by Fatal Encounters, which documents deaths involving police, revealed that African American women have a median mortality risk of 0.12 for being killed by police while women from other ethnic groups have a median mortality risk of 0.07 (Edwards et al., 2019). Also, when examining the Bureau of Justice Statistics 2018 Police Public Contact Survey, African American women are more likely (5%) than women from other ethnic groups (2%) to experience nonfatal force during their encounters with police (Bureau of Justice Statistics, n.d-b.).

While the literature demonstrates that police and African Americans' relationship is rooted in discriminatory practices associated with inequalities and violence, there is limited information exploring social workers perceptions and experiences on partnering with police to address such encounters. For example, the literature suggests that a multidisciplinary approach between social workers and police is essential to preventing police violence (Patterson & Swan, 2019). Yet, the role of social work in policing has diminished due to the uncertainty of social worker's effectiveness (Patterson & Swan, 2019; Teasley et al., 2018). Nevertheless, social work is necessary in policing due to the responsibility of social workers in advocacy and social change.

Social work in policing includes, without limitation, advocacy, outreach, and empathy (Lamin & Teboh, 2016). Also, with social work being a profession that focuses on the dignity and well-being of vulnerable populations, exploring social workers perceptions and experiences on police partnership to address violent police encounters toward African Americans can assist with acknowledging and discussing challenges within African American communities, transparency, accountability in police, reducing bias, and improving cultural competency (Moore et al., 2018; National Association of Social Workers, 2020; Patterson & Swan, 2019; Teasley et al., 2018). Furthermore, as the literature suggests that the social work academic content has failed to prepare social work practitioners with a knowledge base to alleviate the social problem of violent police encounters, I justified the need to add to the knowledge base to improve police responses to violent encounters towards African Americans (see Giwa, 2018; Lamin & Teboh,

2016; Moore et al., 2018; Patterson & Swan, 2019; Tolliver, 2016; Wilson & Wolfer, 2020).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this generic qualitative inquiry study was to explore social workers in the United States perceptions and experiences on partnering with police to address violent police encounters toward African Americans. The attempt to explore social workers in the United States perceptions and experiences on partnering with police stemmed from the literature showing that violent police encounters towards African Americans are pervasive, and although there is a need for social work and police collaboration to address violent police encounters, the role of social work in policing has decreased (see Patterson & Swan, 2019; Teasley et al., 2018). Also, due to the complexity of police encounters with African Americans, efforts to explore social workers in the United States perceptions and experiences on partnering with police is vital to challenging social injustice and implementing strategies that specifically address the problem. Further, as there is a dearth of literature from the perspective of social workers on partnering with police to address violent police encounters, this study provides information and recommendations on social work practice, multidisciplinary collaboration between social work and police, and community engagement to foster safer police encounters for African Americans (see Teboh, 2016).

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

RQ1. What are the perceptions of social workers in the United States on partnering with police to address violent police encounters towards African Americans?

RQ2. What experiences do social workers in the United States have with partnering with police to address violent police encounters towards African Americans?

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for the study consisted of group formation and critical race theory. Developed in 1965 by Tuckman, group formation theory explains how healthy groups form over time. Tuckman proposed five stages that are necessary and inevitable for groups to grow, tackle challenges, identify solutions, and deliver results (Ferguson, 2016; Gencer, 2019; Keene, 2020; Waiel, 2020). Identified by Tuckman, the stages through which groups progress are forming, storming, norming, performing, and adjourning (Gencer, 2019; Keene, 2020; Ravi & Sumathi, 2016).

As groups move through each stage, they transition from individuals with separate agendas into high performing groups that work together to accomplish a common goal (Keene, 2020; Zhen, 2017). Thus, Tuckman's theory is particularly relevant to this study and research questions because it demonstrates how groups tackle a task from the initial formation through to completing the task. Furthermore, Tuckman's theory is noteworthy in that it understands that groups do not begin functioning and forming as a group. Identified by Keene (2020), groups grow through clearly defined stages, from their creation as groups of individuals to cohesive, task focused teams. Therefore, Tuckman's theory is a helpful tool to explore social worker's perceptions and experiences on partnering with police to address violent police encounters towards African Americans.

More details about the propositions and stages of group formation theory are in Chapter 2.

Surfaced in the late 1970s upon the works of early critical race scholars Bell, Crenshaw, and Delgado, critical race theory considers the relationships between race, law, power, and racism (Bracey, 2015; Lawson-Boarders, 2019; Quinn & Grumbach, 2015). As critical race theory questions the foundations of the liberal order, through its core tenets (primacy of racism, interest convergence, intersectionality, Whiteness as property, race is a social construct, critique of liberalism, committed to social justice, the centrality of experiential knowledge, and multidisciplinary perspective), it is recognized that systemic racism is part of the United States and challenges the beliefs that allow it to flourish (Daftary, 2020; Forset-Bank, 2016). Therefore, critical race theory relates to this study and research questions as it is an essential framework that social workers can use to change power dynamics and reinforce racial disparity (see Campbell, 2018). Furthermore, since social workers should interrogate how race and racism shape every aspect of society, critical race theory is a vital tool to advance understanding of how race, racism, and power impact social work practice (Daftary, 2020; Forset-Bank, 2016; Jeffers, 2019). More details about the propositions critical race theory are in Chapter 2.

Nature of the Study

Although other qualitative studies, such as Moye (2019), used a generic qualitative inquiry design to explore the perceptions and experiences of African American men about police, there are no known generic qualitative inquiry studies that have recruited or asked questions like this study. For example, I found no generic

qualitative inquiry studies that explored the perceptions and experiences of social workers on partnering with police to address violent police encounters towards African Americans. Therefore, I used a generic qualitative inquiry design for this study.

As stated in the literature, generic qualitative inquiry is best suited for studies that draw on the descriptions of what people experience, thus, seeking to understand the participants' perspective (Kahlke, 2014; Liu, 2016; Percy et al., 2015). Considering that generic qualitative inquiry allows participants to develop and explain their views and thoughts, using a generic qualitative inquiry approach is essential to exploring social workers perceptions and experiences on partnering with police to address violent police encounters towards African Americans (Kahlke, 2014; Liu, 2016; Percy et al., 2015). Furthermore, as generic qualitative inquiry draws from the strengths of other qualitative approaches, it provides a personal and flexible research structure that offers greater opportunities to engage with participants and learn from their experiences (Babbie, 2017; Kennedy, 2016; Percy et al., 2015).

Using purposeful sampling, data was collected from 15 licensed social workers in the United States who were currently practicing in social work, held a degree of social work from an accredited university, and had professional roles, responsibilities, or expertise intersect with police. I recruited social workers through their membership of the National Organization of Forensic Social Work (NOFSW) or the National Association of Social Workers (NASW). Specifically, the NOFSW posted an invitation to participate in this study in their newsletter, and I posted a study invitation on the NASW's social media pages, LinkedIn and MyNASW. Further, following instructions, participants responded to

the invitation by calling (via telephone) or emailing me to discuss interest and review criteria.

I collected data using semistructured interviews, containing open ended questions about how social workers perceived and experienced partnering with police to address violent police encounters towards African Americans. With the combination of structure and flexibility in questioning, semistructured interviews allow researchers to probe and explore hidden meanings and understanding (Burkholder et al., 2016). Additionally, the interview was audio recorded and lasted 32 to 52 minutes. However, due to the approaches that maintain social distancing in the context of COVID-19, I conducted interviews using remote research methods such as video chat, Zoom, or telephone. Furthermore, in preparation for the data analysis, I transcribed data using a transcription and translation application named Otter.ai. Also, I analyzed and stored data in a qualitative software named NVivo.

Definitions

African Americans: When it comes to African Americans, there are various terms such as Black, African American, and people of color used to identify people from the African American community. However, for this study, the term African American refers to any individual who self identifies as Black or African American.

Deadly force: Force used by police to cause or create death or bodily harm (Bureau of Justice Statistics, n.d.-b).

Excessive use of force: Lawful use of force in several separate incidents (Bureau of Justice Statistics, n.d.-b).

Nondeadly or less-lethal force: A level of force used to get compliance; however, the force is not intended to create serious harm or death (Bureau of Justice Statistics, n.d.-b).

Partnerships: The mutual collaboration and benefit of social workers and police working together to address violent police encounters.

Police: An individual who is a member of a police agency and sworn and commission in the United States to uphold and enforce the law, investigate crimes, and make arrests.

Police Encounters: Any physical contact between police and the public.

Safe Police Encounters: Physical contact between police and the public that does not result in harm or deadly force (Peeples, 2020).

Social Worker: Licensed social workers in the United States who are currently practicing in the field of social work, hold a degree of social work from an accredited university, and professional roles, responsibilities, or expertise intersect with police.

Use of excessive force: Force that is used beyond what is necessary to gain compliance (Bureau of Justice Statistics, n.d.-b).

Use of force: The amount of force required by police to get compliance from an unwilling party (Bureau of Justice Statistics, n.d.-b).

Violent Police Encounters: Unreasonable and excessive physical force and actions used by police resulting in the harassment, intimidation, dehumanization, and death of African Americans (Bowleg et al., 2020; Volpe, 2019).

Assumptions

Considering that the purpose was to explore social workers' perceptions and experiences on partnering with police to address violent police encounters, I assumed that the study participants were most appropriate to answer the questions of the study. For example, I assumed that including social workers who were currently practicing in the field of social work, held a degree of social work from an accredited university, and had professional roles, responsibilities, or expertise intersect with police would provide many forms of truth, diversity, and flexibility to exploring social workers perceptions and experiences on partnering with police to address violent police encounters towards African Americans. Therefore, I assumed that participants would base their perceptions and experiences on partnering with police subjectively and with multiple realities (see Burkholder et al., 2016). Also, considering that this study used purposeful sampling, I assumed that participants would provide accurate, honest, and in-depth expressions of their experiences on partnering with police in retrospect (see Joubert, 2020). Furthermore, given that a generic qualitative design relies on participants subjective beliefs, attitudes, opinions, and experiences about a particular issue, I assumed that using a generic qualitative design would provide greater opportunities to engage with participants and learn from their experiences (see Babbie, 2017; Kennedy, 2016; Liu, 2016; Percy et al., 2015).

Scope and Delimitations

The focus of the study was social workers perceptions and experiences on partnering with police to address violent police encounters towards African Americans.

Considering that I could not cover every aspect of the topic, I narrowed the scope to practicing licensed social workers in the United States who held a degree of social work from an accredited university and had professional roles, responsibilities, or expertise intersect with police. Also, due to the literature showing that the role of social work in policing has diminished, social workers were recruited through their membership of the NOFSW or NASW.

To ensure that participants met the highest national standards of skills, professional development, and experience, participants had a professional license and hold a degree in social work from an accredited university. Also, to ensure that participants reflect on their experiences, participants were currently practicing in the field of social work, and have a role, responsibility, or expertise intersect with police.

Further, without diminishing the experiences of youth and other ethnic groups, I limited the study to violent police encounters to adult African American men and women. The research focused on adult African American men and women compared to youth and other ethnic groups. The literature has demonstrated that African American men and women are the most vulnerable group to face intersectional discrimination through their encounters with police (Jones & Norwood, 2017; Smith, 2016).

Limitations

Since I used purposeful sampling, there are possible external validity concerns. Due to targeting licensed social workers whose professional roles intersect with police, the findings may not generalize to other professions or social workers whose roles or responsibilities lie outside of police social work. Also, focusing on African Americans,

with no attention on the impact of police violence on other ethnic or social groups is another potential limitation. Furthermore, given that I used a generic qualitative inquiry design, there are possible limitations regarding the design's foundation, validity, and reliability as a qualitative method (see Kennedy, 2016). For example, in qualitative research, primary foundational methods often discussed and used are phenomenology, ethnography, grounded theory, and case study (Kahlke, 2014). Generic qualitative inquiry designs are less defined and established, questioning whether newer methods rigor is preserved outside of an established methodology (Kahlke, 2014; Percy et al., 2015). Further, since generic qualitative inquiry design relies on participants subjective beliefs, attitudes, opinions, and experiences about a particular issue, trustworthiness, authenticity, and credibility attention was needed in determining whether the findings were accurate from the standpoint of the researcher and participant (see Percy et al., 2015). For example, consideration was needed whether there was misinterpretation of participants' meaning and reality.

Significance

This study is significant in that by focusing specifically on social workers' perceptions and experiences on partnering with police to address violent police encounters towards African Americans, the findings can further inform thoughtful approaches on how the two groups form effective partnerships. From a multidisciplinary (social work and police partnership) approach, social workers can strategically collaborate with police to inform preventive and intervention practices and policies to improve legitimacy among vulnerable groups and build police trust (Moore et al., 2018).

For example, my study can assist in facilitating community engagement between the African American community and police regarding police violence. Furthermore, with support from the NASW to bring about police reform and promote social work and community policing, the knowledge gained from this study contributes to positive social change by creating ways to bridge the racial divide to incorporate culturally relevant social work content and practices (see Giwa, 2018; Patterson & Swan, 2019; Smith, 2016; NASW, 2020).

Summary

Along with introducing the topic of the study, Chapter 1 provided a brief overview of the background, problem, purpose statement, theoretical framework, nature of the study, definitions, assumptions, scope and delimitations, limitations, and significance. As reflected in the chapter, this study considers the significance of violent police encounters towards African Americans and explores social workers perceptions and experiences on partnering with police to address violent police encounters towards African Americans. Considering the topic, problem, purpose, and background, the literature demonstrates that the content of race and racism is vital for social work practice. Thus, social workers perceptions and experiences on partnering with police should be explored to combat violence and understand race and racism. More importantly, the significance of the study builds on the need to address the alarming rates of violent police encounters and suffering among African Americans.

As Chapter 1 provided a brief description of the theoretical framework (group formation and critical race theory), Chapter 2 provides more details regarding the study's

theoretical framework. Also, Chapter 2 includes an exhaustive review of the current literature on violent police encounters towards African Americans and social work collaborations as it relates to partnerships with police to address violent police encounters.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The murders of unarmed African Americans at the hands of police have been an increasing social problem for African Americans in the United States due to the pervasiveness of police violence towards African Americans (Amuchie, 2016; Borda & Marshall, 2020; English et al., 2017). For example, Edwards et al. (2019) examined the risks of being killed by police and found that African Americans face a higher lifetime risk of being killed by police than their European American counterparts (Edwards et al., 2019). Although George Floyd and Breonna Taylor are not the first unarmed African Americans killed by police, their deaths sparked a powerful movement (Borda & Marshall, 2020). Given that the literature on violent police encounters provides evidence that African Americans are at greater risk for police violence and social work and police partnerships are vital to preventing police violence, there is an established need to explore social workers perceptions and experiences on partnering with police to address violent police encounters towards African Americans to improve police and African American relationships.

Recognizing the pervasiveness of violent police encounters towards African Americans supports placing them at the forefront of the social work agenda (Moore et al., 2016; Wilson & Wolfer, 2020). As there is a dearth of literature from the perspective of social workers on partnering with police to address violent police encounters towards African Americans, I explored social workers perceptions and experiences on partnering with police to address violent police encounters towards African Americans (see Adedoyin et al., 2019; Ogden et al., 2020; Wilson & Wolfer, 2020). By capturing the

anecdotes of social workers' experiences, one gains information on how social workers perceive partnering with police to combat violence and improve police responses to violent encounters with African Americans (Lamin & Teboh, 2016; Teasley et al., 2018). Further, as it is recommended that efforts based on social work and police partnerships are needed to reduce social injustice and marginalization, this study builds on the need to explore social work partnerships with the police to address the alarming rates of violent police encounters and suffering among African Americans (see Hadden et al., 2016).

As Chapter 2 examines the literature on violent police encounters towards African Americans and social work collaborations as it relates to partnering with police to address violent police encounters, the literature review begins with the literature search strategy, which describes the iterative search process (key terms, databases, and search engines). Also, consisting of the theoretical foundation, which explains the origin, propositions, rationale, analysis, and relation of theories, the literature review provides an exhaustive review of the current literature that includes the historical context of police relations to African Americans, dehumanization of African Americans, the role of police to protect and serve, the relationship between race and policing, police encounters with African Americans, the outcry for change, social work as a discipline, history of police social work, social work and police partnerships, and social work interventions. In closing, the literature review summarizes the sections of this chapter and provides a brief preview of Chapter 3, methodology.

Literature Search Criteria

To provide a concise synopsis of the current literature that establishes the relevance of violent police encounters towards African Americans and social workers and police partnerships, the databases I used included SocIndex (which contains full-text journal articles, books, and conference papers on family studies, sociology, criminal justice, and social work) and Social Work Abstracts (which provides indexing and abstracts for journals on all aspects of the social work field; Walden University, 2020). The Bureau of Justice Statistics database was also used to provide information regarding the United States criminal justice statistics. Furthermore, the Political Science Complete and Nexis Uni database provide full text for economic, political, law journals, legal news, and legislative information (Walden University, 2020).

The key and combination of search terms used to locate scholarly literature on police encounters with African Americans and social work and police partnerships included *disparities, violence, use of force, law enforcement, policing, police, cop, gendered experiences, marginalization, race, ethnicity, racial profiling, African Americans, Blacks, laws, criminal justice system, social work, NASW, advocacy, police brutality, police contact, violence, safety, community policing, police social work, diversity, collaboration, partnership, teamwork, group formation theory, and critical race theory.*

Although an effort was made to include literature published in the last 5 years, it is worth noting that literature on the history of police social work and social work as a discipline is limited. Due to the limitation, older studies were included to reference the

history of police social work and social work as a discipline. Thus, the key terms for this study built upon the literature and provides a compelling argument for the current state of police encounters with African Americans and social work and police partnerships.

Although the literature on police social work, let alone social work and police partnering to address violent police encounters, was limited, I used wildcard and proximity operators to refine and expand the search. In addition to the noted databases, a thesaurus and previous literature to obtain additional sources were used to achieve an advanced search. Further, a literature matrix was used to outline the study's critical components by focusing on each source's research design, research questions, method, analysis, findings, and recommendations.

Theoretical Foundation

The theoretical framework for the study consisted of group formation and critical race theory. In this section the origin of group formation and critical race theory is discussed, along with the theories major propositions. Furthermore, a literature analysis of how group formation and critical race theory has been applied in previously ways similar to this study, the rationale for the choice of the theories, and how group formation and critical race theory relate to the study is also discussed.

Group Formation Theory

There are several definitions of group in the literature. Gencer (2019) defined a group as a formation of two or more people who come together for a defined purpose, communicating with and dependent on one another to achieve a common goal. Similarly, Ferguson (2019) defined a group as two or more individuals who emerge spontaneously

or deliberately for an established purpose. However, Natvig and Stark (2016), defined a group as a formal team made up of more than a group of people drawn together to accomplish a specified task. Natvig and Stark noted that a group has certain characteristics that contribute to a group's success as it develops over time. For example, as a group evolves, individual group members' performance is enhanced as they work together to solve a common problem (Natvig & Stark, 2016). Further, in examining the literature on group formation, it is revealed that there is a wide range of frameworks concerning its development process.

Beckhard's Goals, Roles, Processes, Interpersonal Relationships model was developed in 1972 to outline four interrelated components of effective group work: goals, roles, processes, and interpersonal relationships (Ravi & Sumathi, 2016). Beckhard's model is often used in group formation to solve problems in group work and development (Ravi & Sumathi, 2016). Also, Lencioni developed a group model in 2005 to outline five common problems groups experience that impact their effectiveness: lack of trust, fear of conflict, lack of commitment, avoidance of accountability, and inattention to results (Ravi & Sumathi, 2016). In his model, Lencioni proposed that all groups are dysfunctional. However, understanding the level and type of dysfunction can help improve group work (Ravi & Sumathi, 2016). Although a review of the literature on group formation reveals differences concerning the number of stages and their names, the most effective approach to group formation regarding its impact is Tuckman's theory on group formation (Gencer, 2019).

In 1965, Tuckman developed the theory of group formation to describe the stages that groups follow as they come together to work on tasks (Keene, 2020; Ungvarsky, 2020). At that time, Tuckman's theory only included four stages. The initial four-stage model (forming, storming, norming, and performing) evolved out of Tuckman's observations of group behavior in a variety of settings. Specifically, on behalf of his work with a team of psychologists in the U.S. Navy, Tuckman studied small group behavior and noticed two common features to small groups: interpersonal and task group activities (Ravi & Sumathi, 2016; Zhen, 2017). Based on his studies, Tuckman assumed that the group development process consisted of four stages (forming, storming, norming, and performing) for effective team building. However, after a review of the initial four stages of group formation, in 1977, Tuckman proposed an update to the model. Along with Jensen, Tuckman added a fifth stage, adjourning to mark the end of a group's journey (Ravi & Sumathi, 2016). Thus, without such groundwork, Tuckman recognizes that groups cannot successfully achieve goals.

Tuckman's theory recognizes that as groups go through stages of development, the group's effectiveness is enhanced by a group's commitment to ongoing evaluation and understanding of their development as a group (Treethong et al., 2021; Waiel, 2020). Thus, I used Tuckman's group formation theory to conceptualize social workers perceptions and experiences on partnering with police to address violent police encounters towards African Americans. Specifically, Tuckman's group formation theory can explain the stages that social workers and police need to accomplish to better serve the community.

Tuckman suggested that all groups go through various stages to work together effectively, overcome challenges, and accomplish work (Natvig & Stark, 2016). Although many groups process through the stages in the order in which they are identified, the process is somewhat fluid, and group formation is not always linear (Keene, 2020). Each stage has unique identifying characteristics and should be managed according to its features (Ferguson, 2016; Gencer, 2019; Keene, 2020). Thus, it is worth noting that some groups may return to previous stages throughout their work together, specifically if the group is facing challenges (Largent, 2016).

Forming is the first stage in Tuckman's group formation theory (Gencer, 2019). During the forming stage, group members are learning about each other and the task at hand (Keene, 2020). Characteristics of this stage consist of unclear objectives, low morale, hidden feelings, and lack of involvement and commitment as group members are wondering how they will fit in and work together (Zhen, 2017). However, this stage can also include feelings of excitement and positivity for what the group will accomplish (Keene, 2020; Treethong et al., 2021; Waiel, 2020). Although little work is completed during this stage, this stage is essential for learning to work together. Keene (2020) noted that to be successful in this stage, group members should establish clear roles and goals. Clarifying the roles and goals of the group creates trust (Gencer, 2019).

Storming is the second stage in Tuckman's group formation theory (Zhen, 2017). During the storming stage, the group encounters its first conflict. As group members work together, they will have conflict about the structure and dynamics of the group, which can lead to a lack of unity, failure, anger, hidden agendas, resistance, and

interpersonal issues (Keene, 2020; Ravi & Sumathi, 2016; Zhen, 2017). As this stage fosters disagreements among members, it presents an opportunity to test group members' maturity and ability to manage conflict and compromise with others' ideas (Gencer, 2019). Thus, if the group can move past the conflict, it promotes greater clarification of tasks and goals required to achieve goals (Keene, 2020).

The third stage, norming, represents the successful resolution of the storming stage (Keene, 2020; Zhen, 2017). This stage is characterized by openness, ingroup feelings (togetherness), and cohesiveness as new roles and standards evolve (Keene, 2020). As members move through the conflict and clarify roles and standards, group members can value different perspectives and opinions (Gencer, 2019; Waiel, 2020). Further, as group members are open to sharing their ideas and asking for help from other members in the group, this stage marks the beginning of productivity (Largent, 2016; Zhen, 2017).

The fourth stage of Tuckman's group formation theory is performing. In this stage, the group has matured (Gencer, 2019). As members recognize the strengths and weaknesses of the group, there is a sense of satisfaction with the group's accomplishments and their process of resolving issues (Keene, 2020; Ravi & Sumathi, 2016; Zhen, 2017). Thus, as members conclude and implement a solution to the identified task, there is high morale, success, and cohesion (Largent, 2016). According to Keene (2020), this cohesion among members significantly impacts their task performance; performance is developed through members working effectively together.

In the final stage, adjourning, the group comes to an end and disbands (Zhen, 2017). Reflecting on the period after the group successfully reaches its objective, members feel a sense of accomplishment while also feeling sad that they have come to an end (Keene, 2020). Due to the disbandment of the group, this stage is marked by a decrease in productivity. However, before the group ultimately comes to an end, members will complete any remaining work, evaluate their work together, identify challenges they overcame, and lessons learned to apply to group work in the future (Keene, 2020; Largent, 2016; Ravi & Sumathi, 2016).

Although Tuckman's group formation theory has not explicitly explained social workers and police partnerships, this theory is well known for its work in group development, teamwork, and interprofessional collaboration (Keene, 2020; Ungvarsky, 2020). As Tuckman's group formation theory has been researched, expanded, and adopted by several disciplines to understand group dynamics and ways to facilitate effective group formation, this theory provides the basis for most theories on the life cycles of groups (Ungvarsky, 2020).

To analyze the effectiveness of team process in developing a workload management system for a nursing program, Natvig and Stark (2016) used Tuckman's group model. The study results revealed that Tuckman's model was an effective tool in guiding the team to be a productive group. Specifically, the use of Tuckman's model provided structure for the development of a team contract, information management, and alignment with organizational priorities (Natvig & Stark, 2016). It was further discovered

that using a contract was vital in helping the team progress through stages and served as a blueprint to accomplished goals (Natvig & Stark, 2016).

Using a mixed method approach to understand obstacles and challenges facing teams in healthcare organizations, Waiel (2020) applied Tuckman's group formation model. Based on Tuckman's model, Waiel identified challenges facing team members during the five stages of group formation. The study's findings indicated five challenges that were manifest during the stages of group: selection criteria, communication, personal characteristics, cross-functionality, and task distribution. Notably, it was discovered that the storming and norming stages were the most critical as they involved the most challenges (personal characteristics, task distribution, and communication) (Waiel, 2020). Thus, Tuckman's group formation theory application is a means for studying and describing group dynamics between social workers and police (Jones, 2019). To explore the perceptions and experiences of social workers on partnering with police, it is beneficial to understand the stages that social workers and police need to go through to work together effectively.

I selected Tuckman's group formation theory as a framework for this study because it is widely known for developing and monitoring group work (see Largent, 2016). Also, Roy (2019) noted that to examine a team approach to professional development and accountability, Tuckman's group formation theory provides a useful approach to explain how individuals interact in group situations. For example, Tuckman's theory illustrates the normalcy for groups to go through stages as they develop (Roy, 2019; Zoltan & Vancea, 2016). Further, Tuckman's group formation

theory recognize that groups develop through different stages, from forming to adjourning, which provided a valuable understanding of different group requirements (Pryse et al., 2020). As groups develop, they go through stages, analyzing the positive and negative aspects of group processes and cycling through stages again if needed due to changes in goals and group structure (Natvig & Stark, 2016; Roy, 2019). Thus, Tuckman's group formation theory is an effective framework for exploring social workers' perceptions and experiences on partnering with police to address violent police encounters towards African Americans. Furthermore, Tuckman's group formation theory can empower social work and police partnerships to understand which stage they are in and identify actions needed to help their partnership perform better (Largent, 2016).

Tuckman's group formation theory relates to this study because it provides a framework for understanding the stages of development a group goes through to achieve outcomes and success. For example, for groups to be influential, members of the group must work together to collectively contribute to outcomes (Natvig & Stark, 2016). However, group cohesiveness does not happen automatically; it develops as the group works together. While ineffective collaboration can hinder a group's process, Tuckman's group formation theory shows how a group can become successful. Therefore, the study's research questions build upon Tuckman's group formation model to facilitate an analysis of group behavior and develop behavior patterns and traits needed for success (see Largent, 2016; Pryse et al., 2020). Furthermore, Tuckman's group formation is an effective framework for assisting social workers to see the progress being made and how to proceed in future collaborations (Zoltan & Vancea, 2016).

Critical Race Theory

Built upon the works of activists, lawyers, and legal scholars Bell, Crenshaw, and Delgado, critical race theory considers the disparaging effects that law and institutions have on people of color through oppression and subjugation (Bracey, 2015; Lawson-Borders, 2019; Quinn & Grumbach, 2015). As a legal scholarship movement, critical race theory challenges the idea that a person's racial identity no longer influences their social status (Bracey, 2015). Therefore, critical race theory was initially designed to emphasize the ways color-blind laws allowed racial inequality and oppression to continue despite the prohibition of segregation (Adedoyin et al., 2019; Lawson-Borders, 2019). However, as critical race theory continues to be influential in legal and academic literature, it has increased its reach and expanded into ethnic, political, education, and American studies. According to Adedoyin et al. (2019) and Lee and Robinson (2019), critical race theory has transformed the relationship between power, racism, and race for gender identity, sexual orientation, and critical European Americanness. Furthermore, as critical race theory becomes more influential across various subfields, it continues to stand as a defining theory working towards the oppressed liberation (Bracey, 2015).

As noted by Daftary (2020), there are no agreed upon set of critical race theory tenets. However, the literature on critical race theory reflects common themes regarding the following core tenets of critical race theory:

- Primacy of racism
- Interest convergence
- Intersectionality

- Whiteness as property
- Race is a social construct
- Critique of liberalism
- Commitment to social justice
- Centrality of experiential knowledge
- Multidisciplinary perspective

Critical race theory asserts that racism is a core component in the United States (Lawson-Borders, 2019). According to critical race theorists, racism is not an isolated act; it is engrained in society and is an expected experience for people of color in the United States (Jeffers, 2019; Moore et al., 2018). Thus, racism is a permanent aspect of people of color's experiences which influences social, economic, legal, and political practices and structures of the United States society (Adedoyin et al., 2019; Daftary, 2020; Forset-Bank, 2016; Moore et al., 2018).

Interest convergence acknowledges that racial equality is only attainable when it corresponds with the interests of those in power (typically White, heterosexual, able-bodied males; Daftary, 2020; Hiraldo, 2019). Thus, people of color in the United States make progress socially, economically, legally, and politically when their interests align with those interests served to benefit both groups (Adedoyin et al., 2019; Hiraldo, 2019; Moore et al., 2018).

Critical race theorists acknowledge that social identities are not isolated elements, but rather interconnected components that interact within the oppressive system of the United States (e.g., intersectionality; Crichlow, 2015; Daftary, 2020). Thus, critical race

theorists work to understand how racism and race intersect with overlapping traits and interests such as class, sexuality, and gender to influence people of color experiences (Daftary, 2020; Forset-Bank, 2016; Jeffers, 2019).

Critical race theorists posit that Whiteness is based on White dominance and the subordination of people of color, presenting the idea of Whiteness as property (Daftary, 2020). For example, the privileges and benefits associated with identifying as White are valuable assets that people protect. Thus, the concept of Whiteness is a property interest because those identified as White have social advantages (Campbell, 2018).

According to Jeffers (2019), in critical race theory, race is seen as a social concept based on categories invited by society, rather than biology or scientific truth. For example, this tenet denotes that race is a product of social thought, rather than a biological difference (Adedoyin et al., 2019; Daftary, 2020). Thus, critical race theorists hold that race is a social invention that constantly changes and is manipulated based on the needs of the White dominant group in the United States (Daftary, 2020; Hiraldo, 2019; Jeffers, 2019).

Critical race theory challenges the ideas of colorblindness, neutrality of the law, and equal opportunity for all (Ashley & Paez, 2015). According to this tenet, colorblindness is a mechanism that allows people to ignore systems that perpetuate social inequity (Daftary, 2020). Add an example and explanation to fully develop this paragraph.

Critical race theory is committed to a social justice agenda to eliminate and eradicate racism and other forms of oppression (Hadden et al., 2016). Critical race theorists assert that the experiential knowledge of people of color is legitimate and instrumental to analyzing and understating racial inequality (Campbell, 2018; Daftary, 2020; Hadden et al, 2016). For example, the lived experiences of people of color are vital in understanding how and to what extent race and racism mediate their life.

Critical race theory draws from many fields to construct its theoretical premise (Hadden et al, 2016). For example, knowledge and methodological bases of sociology, history, law, and women's studies were used to create a powerful framework for engaging with race and racism (Ashley & Paez, 2015). Thus, a multidisciplinary perspective is important to the research process because it offers an array of methods to consider capturing and understanding the experiences of marginalized communities (Adedoyin et al., 2019; Daftary, 2020; Forset-Bank, 2016; Jeffers, 2019; Moore et al., 2018).

As critical race theorists propose that race plays a significant role in the United States and challenge beliefs about racism, particularly the idea that color blindness can erase racism, critical race theory is a relevant theoretical framework for this study (see Burrell-Craft, 2020; Hadden et al., 2016). Resting on the assumption that racism is a vital part of the United States, which cannot be corrected if not acknowledged, critical race theory considers that racism is structurally built into culture, institutions (such as police), and systems which increases the likelihood for unequal treatment of marginalized groups (such as African Americans); Bracey, 2015; Lee & Robinson, 2019; Siegel, 2020). As

critical race theory challenges the social construction of race, it offers a foundation for understanding the historical racialized experiences of African Americans and how violent police encounters towards African Americans are persistent (Aymer, 2016; Bracey, 2015; Lawson-Borders, 2019).

I used critical race theory to guide my study as it provided a lens for recognizing how race serves as a risk factor to the oppressive experiences of African Americans and the role it plays in shaping their experiences. Additionally, the focus on social justice aligned with social work ethics to facilitate dignity by challenging and addressing social injustice (Sule, 2020). Thus, in terms of the significance of violent police encounters towards African Americans and the perceptions and experiences of social workers on partnering with police to address these encounters, critical race theory is a theoretical perspective that encourages social workers to be mindful of structural roots of social problems (Daftary, 2020).

Drawing from a multidisciplinary perspective, critical race theory is well suited for many disciplines and social problems. Critical race theory has been used to examine how historical racism and inequality have manifest in various areas such as healthcare, employment, education, housing, politics, the criminal justice system, among other areas (Hadden et al., 2016). However, when examining the literature on policing of African Americans, critical race theory has been applied to better understand the outcomes, effects, and repercussions of police violence with African Americans (Adedoyin et al., 2019; Chaney & Robertson, 2015; Lee & Robinson, 2019; Quinn & Grumbach, 2015). Also, when examining critical race theory's application to the field of social work,

critical race theory has been used to advance social work's understanding of social and economic injustice for oppressed populations (Sule, 2020).

The diversity of views and lens within critical race theory allows for a more holistic view of a problem and potential solutions. Thus, critical race theory promotes a much-needed dialogue between social workers and police to work together to understand oppressions African Americans face and seek ways to dismantle them (Burrell-Craft, 2020; Christian et al., 2019; Hadden et al., 2016). Further, the social justice implications of violent police encounters towards African Americans not only demonstrates how racism continues to be a pervasive component of police interactions with African Americans, but it also situates social workers with a responsibility for a new form of policing that is fair and equal for all, especially African Americans.

I selected critical race theory as the theoretical foundation for this study because it is an effective framework for explaining the social inequality of African Americans encounters with police and advancing social justice in the social work profession. In exploring social workers perceptions and experiences on partnering with police to address violent police encounters, critical race theory not only demonstrates how the role of race and power continues to be a pervasive component of police encounters with African Americans, but it also emphasizes the ways to change the existing systems and bring African Americans to the forefront of dialogues (Ogden et al., 2020). Furthermore, critical race theory provides an opportunity to extend social workers existing knowledge into developing strategies for action and change. Thus, critical race theory provides an important framework that social workers can use to analyze, recognize, and change

power dynamics that reinforces racial and institutional inequality (Adedoyin et al., 2019; Chaney & Robertson, 2015; Hadden et al., 2016).

Critical race theory relates to the study because it builds to theorize the relationship between race, policing, and social work. As a profession charged with upholding social norms and creating social justice-oriented change, critical race theory allows social workers to serve as agents of social change and control to address institutionalized forms of oppression (Burrell-Craft, 2020; Christian et al., 2019). Further, as critical race theory promotes a much-needed conversation about violent police encounters towards African Americans, it is an effective tool for enriching social worker's ability to recognize and address institutional racism while promoting a need to work together to address violent police encounters. Thus, the research questions for this study builds upon critical race theory to provide an anti-oppressive social work analysis of situations that require social work's attention (see Ogden et al., 2020). Critical race theory is essential for social workers to fulfill their ethical responsibilities to challenge structures that reproduce oppression.

Literature Review

In this section, I provide an exhaustive review of the current literature related to social workers partnerships with police and violent police encounters towards African Americans.

Historical Context: Police Relations with African Americans

Racialized police encounters are a recurring issue in the United States. As reflected in the literature, the history of racial injustices in policing goes back to

enslavement and Jim Crow laws (Reinka & Leach, 2017; Wilson & Wolfer, 2020). Therefore, to better understand the current relationship between police and African Americans, it is necessary to begin with, the origin of policing in the United States and how it has evolved to its current state.

Giwa (2018) and Hassett-Walker (2021) proposed that police origins in the United States are traced back to their English policing roots. However, Brown (2019) and Durr (2015) suggest that policing in the United States is interwoven with the history of discrimination against African Americans. For example, as police in the Northern regions modeled policing established in London, England through the Metropolitan Police Act of 1829, the development of policing in Southern regions are traced to the historical institution of slavery and the control of African Americans (Brown, 2019; Durr, 2015; Giwa, 2018; Hassett-Walker, 2021).

Considering Brown (2019) and Durr (2015) regarding the history of policing, policing in southern states was rooted in slave patrols, also known as night watchers and paddy rollers. Composing of adult European American males, slave patrols were an organized government force with the function of capturing, instilling fear, and maintaining discipline for slaves (Brown, 2019; Hassett-Walker, 2021; Moore et al., 2018; Wilson & Wolfer, 2020). As the first slave patrol was founded in South Carolina in the early 1700s, slave patrols and sanctioned state laws quickly spread throughout America. For example, in 1705, a Virginia statute allowed slaveholders to punish slaves by whipping and mutilation (Adedoyin et al., 2019). In 1723, a law in Maryland allowed African Americans to be punished by having their ear cut off (Adedoyin et al., 2019).

Further, without warning, slave patrols entered the homes of anyone suspected of providing shelter to escaped slaves (Reinka & Leach, 2017). These acts show that slave patrols could operate without accountability, resulting in violent acts to accomplish their goals.

As slave patrols disband after the passage of constitutional amendments outlawing slavery, slave patrols developed into southern police departments, which continued to preserve African Americans' control (Brown, 2019; Durr, 2015; Wilson & Wolfer, 2020). With Black Codes and Jim Crow laws articulating African Americans' rights and responsibilities, the mission of southern police departments was to strike fear and keep African Americans powerless. Hassett-Walker (2021) reflected that Black Codes were laws that restricted and specified when, how, and where African Americans could work, travel, and vote. However, although police did not create the Black Codes and Jim Crow laws, African Americans who broke racial norms during this period faced violence at the police's hands (Moore et al., 2018). This history shows how policing perpetuated African Americans' oppression.

Despite technology, laws, and advancements related to policing, African Americans continue to experience organized police violence, reinforcing injustice and racial segregation. For example, unarmed African American men are seven times more likely to be harmed by police than European American men (Reinka & Leach, 2017). Further, when examining the impact of race in police encounters, data on disparities in police stops and the use of force show that when police stop African American men, even when there is no evidence of a crime, police prolong the encounter instead of

discontinuing the encounter (Carbado & Rock, 2016). Along with the police killings of Freddie Gray, Michael Brown, Tamir Rice, Sandra Bland, and most recent George Floyd and Breonna Taylor, it is evident that due to the roots of policing in the United States, police violence against African Americans continues, showing how far the United States has to go (Amuchie, 2016).

Not Fully Human: Dehumanization of African Americans

In exploring social workers perceptions and experiences on partnering with police to address violent police encounters towards African Americans, it is inevitable that the root cause of racial injustice, the dehumanization of African Americans is addressed (Smith, 2016). As reflected by Anderson et al. (2018), Moore et al. (2016), and Tolliver et al. (2016), dehumanization is the practice of treating an individual or group as unequal, depriving attributes, civility, rights, warmth, compassion, and individuality. However, Grills et al. (2016) state that dehumanization is the unconscious biases against African Americans, which has historically and continues to lead to discrimination afflicted upon them in every area of their life, including violent police encounters. Further, Grills et al. (2016) state that it is the dehumanization of African Americans that cause emotional and psychological harm, deflecting attention away from social justice and distorting perceptions of cultural norms, goals, and aspirations.

Considering Grills et al. (2016) stance on the dehumanization of African Americans, African Americans have been dehumanized in the United States through the history of slavery, the pursuit of civil rights, segregation, inequality, oppression, and racism. Beginning with the acts of slavery, African Americans were objectified and

commodified through the stripping of their identity, which branded them as inferior and reduced them to property (Adedoyin et al., 2019; Brown, 2019; Hassett-Walker, 2021). For example, African Americans were deemed primitive, which characterized them as uncivilized, unworthy of equal rights, and in need of supervision controlled by the superior European American race (Adedoyin et al., 2019; Smith, 2016). This is also true when examining the three-fifths clause of the constitution. The three-fifths clause did not recognize African Americans as a full person, rather African Americans were counted as three-fifths of a person (Mekawi et al., 2019). Furthermore, African Americans were dehumanized through the history of animalistic and objectification pathways, equating them to apes and sexualized beings to legitimize the racial discrimination and violence that was inflicted upon them (Albarello et al., 2018; Anderson et al., 2018; Brown, 2019; Hassett-Walker, 2021; Mekawi et al., 2019).

As reflected by Albarello et al. (2018), Anderson et al. (2018), and Mekawi et al. (2019), the ape metaphor and sexualized stereotype that was imposed on African Americans during slavery is a justification that has been used throughout history to alter society's judgment about violence against African Americans, particularly condoning police violence. This representation further demonstrates the racial taxonomies used to excuse African Americans' enslavement, creating harsher punishment and treatment, and more significant social exclusion. Though these classifications are no longer used to justify African Americans' humanity legally, African Americans' dehumanization has remained unchallenged and continues through criminalization and the disproportionate

killings of African Americans by police (Amuchie, 2016; Anderson et al., 2018; Smith, 2016).

Through the killings of unarmed African Americans at the hands of police, African Americans are not only seen as less than, but it is a reminder of the brutality, perception, discrimination, oppression, and bondage of African Americans (Adedoyin et al., 2019; Adedoyin et al., 2018). More importantly, as the history of slavery continues to influence African Americans' position in the United States, exploring social workers perceptions and experiences on partnering with police to address violent police encounters is vital to addressing African Americans historical devaluation (Adedoyin et al., 2019, Mekawi et al., 2019; Smith, 2016).

Protect and Serve

In the United States, the role of police is to enforce the law and maintain order, safety, and justice (Peeples, 2020; Sherraden, 2020). Due to their training and capacity, police are authorized to use force (ranging from a verbal command to a weapon) to enforce the law (Anderson et al., 2016). Also, in maintaining order, safety, and justice, police protect the public by preventing and detecting crime and improving the quality of life for all (Volpe, 2019). However, De Soto (2018) proposed that the United States has two separate policing systems influenced by racial bias. For example, De Soto (2018) argues that police treat European Americans with respect while treating African Americans as instruments that need to be controlled. In a study analyzing the respectfulness of police toward European and African Americans during traffic stop encounters, it was revealed that police treated African Americans with less respect than

European Americans (Vogit et al., 2017). More significantly, Moore et al. (2018) proposed that although African Americans have the same constitutional rights as other citizens, their rights are often violated and denied.

Consider Eric Garner, a 43-year-old African American man who died after being wrestled to the ground and placed in a chokehold by police, or Tanisha Anderson, an African American woman who died in police custody while suffering a mental health crisis (Adedoyin et al., 2019; Fedina et al., 2018; Jones & Norwood, 2020). The killings of these individuals among many other African Americans demonstrate the struggle to protect African Americans from police contact. Additionally, as policing in the United States has a long history of discriminatory practices that are aggressively associated with racial disparities, exploring social workers perceptions and experiences on partnering with police is beneficial to improving how police respond and interact with African Americans.

Baraga et al. (2019) suggest that police need public trust and support to enhance police effectiveness and improve police and African American relationships. Thus, social workers are well suited to de-escalate situations, respond to people's needs, and partner with communities to shift police practices away from violent interactions (Teasley et al., 2018; Tolliver et al., 2016; Ward-Lasher et al., 2017). Furthermore, considering what the literature shows about police's interaction with African Americans, exploring social workers perceptions and experiences on partnering with police to address violent police encounters towards African Americans will not only bridge a gap between social work and police, it will also effect change by fighting for the rights of others and providing a

voice for those who do not have a voice (Hadden et al., 2016; Lamin & Teboh, 2016; Moore et al., 2016; Obasogie & Newman, 2017; Patterson & Swan, 2019).

Race and Policing

The historical treatment of African Americans in the United States is well documented. However, in exploring social workers perceptions and experiences on partnering with police to address violent police encounters towards African Americans, it is important to consider the relationship between race and policing. It is vital to analyze the relationship between race and policing because in the United States, deaths of African Americans at the hands of police have not improved (Nordberg & Meshesha, 2018). Also, with the literature showing that African Americans are disproportionately exposed to violent police encounters, race cannot be separated when exploring social workers and police partnerships to address such violence (Bowleg et al., 2020; Lemieux et al., 2020; Moore et al., 2018).

Beginning with prevalence, African Americans make up 13% of the total population in the United States, however, they account for 32% of unarmed people killed by police (Otuyelu et al., 2016). Also, reflected by the Bureau of Justice Statistics 2018 Police Public Contact Survey, European Americans initiate more contact with police, however, African Americans and other minority groups experience more violence (Bureau of Justice Statistics, n.d.). For example, compared to European Americans (2%), African Americans (5%) and Hispanics (3%) are more likely to have force or threats used against them (Bureau of Justice Statistics, n.d.). Also, when examining police

surveillance, there are notably differences in the breadth and depth of police encounters between African Americans and other ethnic groups.

According to Bowleg et al. (2020), compared to European Americans, African Americans are more prone to hyper surveillance which is an aggressive form of policing characterized by intensive and extensive police surveillance. As reflected by Bowleg et al. (2020), African Americans are more prone to hyper surveillance due to the noticing and labeling of African Americans as criminals. However, even when unarmed, African Americans are still more likely to be harmed by police (Garrett & Slobogin, 2020; Hetey & Eberhardt, 2018; Jones, 2017). Further, violent police encounters are not limited to a person's status or occupation as the literature displays that even African American police are subjected to violent police encounters.

When examining the risks of violence for off-duty police, it was revealed that African American off-duty police (not wearing their uniforms) were 52 times more likely to be fatally shot than European American off-duty police (Jones, 2017). Also, when considering race and police perceptions of African Americans during traffic stops, when engaging in similar criminal activity, African Americans are considered more threatening and criminal than European Americans due to police's perceptions of African Americans as noncompliant or verbally abusive (Kramer & Remster, 2018; Vito et al., 2020). Further, a study investigating how racial bias produces violent police encounters, revealed that even in the absence of aggressiveness and behaving in a threatening manner, African Americans are more likely to attract the attention of police due to the stereotypes linking them with a threat (Carbado & Rock, 2016; Scott et al., 2017).

Considering the above statistics on differences in police encounters, the literature shows that race continues to influence how police treat African Americans in the United States. Despite efforts to eradicate disparities in policing, it has not become a reality for African Americans. African Americans are still faced with discriminatory police practices, racial profiling, over patrolling, violent tactics, and hyper surveillance (Miller & Vittrup, 2020; Morrow & Shjarback, 2019; Price & Payton, 2017). These practices not only confirm the constrained relationship between African Americans and police, but it has resulted in acts of violence and challenges for African Americans. Therefore, exploring social workers perceptions and experiences regarding partnering with police to address violent police encounters towards African Americans takes it a step further by acknowledging that the friction between African Americans and police should be addressed (Bowleg et al., 2020; Giwa, 2018; Grills et al., 2016; Hadden et al., 2016; Lemieux et al., 2020; Moore et al., 2018).

Pervasiveness

As reflected by Pierson et al. (2020), in the United States, approximately 20 million people interact with police each year. However, police engage in differential treatment of African Americans in these interactions than individuals from other ethnic groups (Kovera, 2019). A study examining racial disparities in investigatory police stops demonstrated that police disproportionately stopped, questioned, and searched African Americans (Epp et al., 2017). Specifically, in a similar study investigating traffic stops, it was revealed that police stopped European Americans for standard procedures such as speeding violations; however, when police stopped African Americans, they were not

provided a reason for the stop (Kovera, 2019). Further, when examining traffic stops, it was found that police were more likely to search African Americans compared to other ethnic groups despite lower rates of contraband (Kovera, 2019; Hint et al., 2018). Particularly of those searched, European Americans were more likely to possess contraband than African Americans (Kovera, 2019).

Considering the findings of these studies, differences in police encounters of African Americans are not supported by the outcomes of traffic stops and search outcomes (Hint et al., 2018; Kovera, 2019). However, the findings point to the need for social work and police interventions to mitigate these differences (Pierson et al., 2020). Given the importance of remedying differences in police encounters with African Americans, it is necessary to enact on a larger scale. Thus, exploring the perceptions and experiences of social workers on partnering with police to address violent police encounters towards African Americans is beneficial to improving the dispensation of justice (Price & Payton, 2017).

African American Men

The literature on police encounters with African Americans suggests that individual biases contribute to disproportionately violent police encounters for African Americans (Epp et al., 2017; Hinton et al., 2018; James, 2018; Morrow & Shjarback, 2019). For example, in a study examining police perceptions of crime, it was found that police linked African Americans to crime (Hinton et al., 2018). Specifically, when primed to think about crimes linked to a series of pictures of people from all ethnic

groups, it was found that police only remembered faces of stereotypically African Americans such as thick lips, dark skin tone, and broad nose (Hinton et al., 2018).

As unarmed African American men (14.8%) are more likely to be killed by police than unarmed men in other ethnic groups (9.4%), the literature shows that stereotypes associating African American men as criminal, dangerous, menacing, violent, and threatening are characteristics that explain police violence against them (DeGue et al., 2016; Hetey & Eberhardt, 2018; Hester & Gray, 2018; Kahn & Davies, 2017; Kramer & Remster, 2018; Moore et al., 2018; Taylor et al., 2019). For example, a study exploring the historical context that situates police violence against African American men suggests that although police disproportionately kill African American men, African American men's aggressiveness, and threatening manner support police violence (Jones, 2017).

A notable example is the Michael Brown incident in which the police officer, Darren Wilson, justified his use of force by describing Mr. Brown as "Hulk Hogan" (Kramer & Remster, 2018, p. 968; Moore et al., 2018; Willingham, 2018). Another example is the death of Trayvon Martin, an unarmed African American teenager who was fatally shot by a Hispanic American man (Jones, 2017). After the death of Martin, many Americans, especially African Americans, took a stand by wearing a hoodie to symbolize assumptions in the United States, however, with the desire to overturn these assumptions (Jones, 2017). Nevertheless, Jones (2017) suggests that the hoodie is a trigger for police and indicated that the person wearing it is dangerous. Similar to this paradigm, Kahn and Davies (2017) conducted a study on the influences of shooter bias which revealed that specific clothing and threatening environments (low-income neighborhoods) associated

with African Americans increases violent police encounters, whereas, in safer environments and stereotypical clothing associated with European American, police violence is minor.

Whether it is clothing or environments, stereotypical characteristics used to justify violent police encounters towards African American men maintain a societal perception of African Americans and contribute to their denial of equality (Battle, 2016; Grills et al., 2016; Taylor et al., 2019). Without exploring social workers' perceptions and experiences on partnering with police, African Americans will continue to be erased from social justice. Thus, attention should be on social workers working together with police to improve police encounters with African Americans.

African American Women

Although African American women are not killed at the same rate as African American men by police, they account for 20% of violent police encounters of unarmed African American victims (Gross & Hicks, 2015; Jacobs, 2017; Sood, 2018). The literature suggests that beliefs about African American women being lazy, irrational, angry, thieves, poor, criminals, and drug users promote discrimination and influence judgments that justify violent police encounters (Amuchie, 2016; Brown, 2019; Ijoma, 2018). For example, a historical stereotype used to control African American women's image is sapphire, which has also been used interchangeably with today's angry Black woman trope (Sood, 2018).

The sapphire and angry Black woman stereotype describe African American women as argumentative, aggressive, masculine, difficult, and always ready to fight

(Amuchie, 2016). However, when stereotyping African American women as violent, emasculating, domineering, and tough, they are unable to tell their story, leaving them to suffer in silence. For example, the angry Black woman stereotype has been used in domestic violence situations with police to question African American women's credibility, suggesting that they are overreacting and should move on (Jones & Norwood, 2017; Simmons, 2020). Also, considering Alexia Christian, an African American woman who was fatally shot while handcuffed in the back of a police car, and Sandra Bland, a 28-year-old African American woman who died in a Texas jail cell, three days after a violent arrest stemming from a traffic stop (Shaw, 2018) the killings of these women, among many other African American women demonstrates the struggle to protect African Americans in their contact with police (Fedina et al., 2018; Jones & Norwood, 2020; Trombadore, 2016). Thus, exploring social workers' perceptions and experiences on partnering with police to address violent police encounters towards African Americans is essential to minimizing and dismissing the recurring theme (violence, injustice, oppression) in African Americans' lives.

Outcry for Change

As violence towards unarmed African Americans at the hands of police reflects a pattern of how African Americans have been targets of police violence, it has fueled a public outcry across the nation, which has increased urgency for change. Practices such as reforms, policy development, and implementation, training, and advocacy are strategies that have been used to improve violent police encounters with the public (Mummolo, 2017; Paoline et al., 2016). For example, to effectively address police

violence, the City of Council of Minneapolis dismantled its police department and replaced it with community safety and violence prevention department (Audate, 2021). Also, concerning policy development and training, a frequent tactic to resolve violent police encounters is de-escalation policies and training.

While de-escalation training and techniques are highly recommended and supported by police due to its less severe and frequent use of force, there are concerns about the usefulness and safety of such strategies (Engle et al., 2020). For example, when examining the best practices and experiences in police reform, the literature demonstrates that little is known about the impact and delivery of de-escalation training (Engle et al., 2020; Mummolo, 2017). Also, while body-worn cameras are reflected in the literature as one of the more accessible techniques to increase transparency and accountability due to its rapid use, there are inconsistent findings regarding the use and impact of body-worn cameras with the public, particularly encounters with African Americans (Engel et al., 2020; Lum et al., 2019; Peeples, 2020). For example, several experimental studies revealed that police who wore body-worn cameras used less force than police who did not wear cameras (Engel et al., 2020). However, other studies using quasi-experimental designs indicated no differences between police who wear cameras and those who do not wear cameras (Engel et al., 2020).

More significantly, social media has become a platform for protesting and exposing the flaws of policing. As issues turned into hashtags have forced society to notice violent police encounters, the Black Lives Matter, and #SayHerName movement has profoundly impacted how society responds to police violence. While remembering

and saying the names of unarmed African Americans whom police have killed is a good start, it is not enough. It is time to include social work in the conversation.

As the Black Lives Matter and #SayHerName movement amplify the narratives of African Americans who have been victims of police violence, these movements demonstrate the importance of exploring social workers' perceptions and experiences on partnering with police to address violent police encounters towards African Americans. Without exploring the perceptions and experiences of social workers on partnering with police, it is quite challenging to move forward and improve how police respond to African Americans (Adedoyin et al., 2018; Adedoyin et al., 2019; Shaw, 2018). Therefore, to improve how police respond to African Americans, focus should be on social workers' perceptions and experiences on partnering with police.

Social Work Discipline

Shaped by the founding values, beliefs, and early United States institutions, social work is a human rights profession that espouses cohesion, empowerment, and social change for people and communities (Adedoyin et al., 2019; Allen et al., 2015; Stuart, 2019). Since the birth of the profession in the 1900s, social work has assisted individuals and families to improve their psychosocial functioning through clinical practice and casework (Gonzalez & Gelman, 2015; Varghese, 2016). For example, in examining the evolution and implications of social work in the United States, Maschi and Killian (2011) noted that from the earliest works of notable social work pioneers, Adams and Richmond to more recent pioneers, Gbowee and Williams, social workers are an instrumental force to advocate for social and political change. Particularly Maschi and Killian (2011) noted

that due to the examples of Adams and Richmond, who played an instrumental role in developing casework services and societal level interventions for the poor and needy, social work's success is illustrated in facilitating change at the individual and social level. Additionally, with social work's history of combating unjust and unfair societal conditions through addressing the needs of marginalized and oppressed groups, it is beneficial for social workers to work together with police to address social justice issues, such as violent police encounters.

In Sweifach's (2015) study to explore the challenges faced and opportunities offered for social workers in interprofessional settings, it was found that the literature on interprofessional social work practice centers on hospitals, schools, and hospice; other settings such as substance use, community-based, and police are limited. Although the literature on the professional relationship between social work and police is sparse, it does not take away from the importance and need for social workers to partner with police to alleviate violent police encounters. According to Giwa (2018), social workers are trained to understand people in their environment. Specifically, social workers possess skills and talents that encompass communities, organizations, and diverse groups, and through this training, social workers work with people from different cultural and racial groups (Giwa, 2018).

As reflected by the NASW (2020) response to social work recommendations on police reforms, the social work ethics mandates that social workers value social justice, including skills related to racial diversity and oppression. Thus, making social workers a vital asset and resource for police partnerships to address violent police encounters. With

the broad spectrum of skills (competency to advance human rights and economic justice), social workers remain an enduring force to facilitate transformative change and stand on social justice issues that affect those served (Maschi & Killian, 2011).

Policing and Social Work

The social work profession is diverse, allowing social workers to work in specified practice areas. According to the NASW (n.d.), specialized areas that social workers can work in include administration, gerontology, substance use, child welfare, healthcare, behavioral health, social and economic justice, and the legal system. However, focusing on social workers whose roles intersect with the legal system, this section will provide an overview of the development, benefit, and need for social work and police partnerships.

The history of police social work is intertwined with women providing social services to women and children in police departments (Roberts, 1976). Beginning in 1919 with Vollmer's speech and introduction of the concept, police social work, social workers were employed in police departments across the United States (Patterson & Swan, 2019; Walker, 2006). In the 1900s, men working as police officers were responsible for patrolling and other traditional duties associated with police work (Patterson & Swan, 2019; Roberts, 1976; Walker, 2006). However, women working as police officers were assigned to perform social work functions. According to Roberts (1976), early police social work required policewomen to have social work training and backgrounds before being hired by police departments. As several scholars consider Wells the first policewomen hired in a police department in the United States, Wells, along with other

policewomen, embraced the concept of police social work and developed it into a social work specialty (Patterson & Swan, 2019; Roberts, 1976).

Identified by many as the father of modern policing, Vollmer is credited for his advocacy in solidifying social work in policing (Patterson & Swan, 2019; Roberts, 1976; Walker, 2006). For example, in a systematic review conducted by Patterson and Swan (2019), it was noted that several police organizations showed an interest and bought into the concept of police social work due to the work of Vollmer. For example, in the 1970s, a police social work partnership program was implemented in a police department in Wheaton, IL (Patterson & Swan, 2019). Similar to Wheaton, IL, another police partnership was implemented during the 1970s in Madison, WI, in which social workers worked with police to address mental health crises (Patterson & Swan, 2019). In these partnerships, social workers conducted assessments, counseling, crisis interventions, and consultation with police (Patterson & Swan, 2019).

Although there is no evidence in the literature of the effectiveness of police social work during its infancy stage (the 1900s), it is well reflected in the literature of social work and police's role in preventing and responding to social problems (Giwa, 2018; Lamin & Teboh, 2016; Patterson & Swan, 2019; Teasley et al., 2018). For example, social workers and police respond to violence, human trafficking, substance use, and mental health crises, which require a joint response. However, the role of police social work has faded over the years due to misconceptions of social workers' effectiveness and role in police departments (Moore et al., 2016; Teasley et al., 2018; Tolliver et al., 2016). Even more with a growing body of literature reflecting that there is a decrease in crime

rates but an increase in social problems, such as violent police encounters, it stands to reason that social workers and police work together to break the cycle of violent police encounters and develop solutions for improving police relationships with African Americans (Giwa, 2018; Glowatski et al., 2017; Lamin & Teboh, 2016).

Partnerships

A partnership can be defined in many ways. However, from a collaborative practice perspective, Verdon et al. (2016) suggest that true partnerships draw from the combined knowledge, resources, and skills of people working together to attain the same goal. Similarly, Jones and Phillips (2016) describe partnerships as an effective collaborative process between professionals working together to facilitate goals that cannot be accomplished when individually acted upon. Given that social work and police roles often overlap as each profession serve and respond to similar populations and situations (domestic violence, mental health crisis, substance use, and child welfare) when it comes to addressing violent police encounters, this is a matter that social work and police cannot do alone (Droubie, 2020; Patterson & Swan, 2019; Vanhanen & Heikkilä, 2017).

Working collaboratively with other disciplines is fundamental to the social work profession. The literature suggests that the most effective strategy to address social problems in policing is through social service partnerships and problem-solving (Patterson & Swan, 2019; Ward-Lasher et al., 2017). While the functions of police (maintain order, safety, and protection) are different from social work (meeting the needs of others and promoting their well-being), approaching social problems such as violent

police encounters from collaborative social work, and police standpoint is essential to public safety (Droubie, 2020; Jacobs et al., 2021; Patterson & Swan, 2019). Thus, it is beneficial for social workers and police to develop positive partnerships to build enduring solutions and improve the outcomes of police encounters, making them less dangerous for African Americans (Jacobs et al., 2021; Ward-Lasher et al., 2017). This study adds to the knowledge base to improve police responses to violent encounters with African Americans (Horspool et al., 2016).

Benefits

While developing and maintaining partnerships can be challenging, the benefits of effective partnerships outweigh the costs (Keene, 2020). Not only are social work and police partnerships vital to combating social problems, but when social work and police partner, they leverage each other's strengths and become more effective. In analyzing the multi-professional partnership between social work and police, Vanhanen and Heikkilä (2017) found that social work and police partnerships are not only necessary in addressing social problems but are also effective in emerging disciplines, exchanging information, and ultimately developing strategies for an active and coexistent partnership. Thus, as social workers are often sought for their expertise and empathy, their skills bring a unique perspective that cannot be leveraged outside conventional parameters (Jacobs et al., 2021; Jones & Phillips, 2016).

Additionally, as trust is one of the core principles of social work and police partnerships, social workers can help lessen the gap in police and African American relationships if partnered. Giwa (2018) identified that having a skilled nonuniformed

social worker partner with police can lessen suspicion and promote conversations that benefit both police and the African American community. More importantly, with skills related to racial diversity, oppression, and cultural humility, the expansion of social work in policing creates ways to bridge the racial divide, incorporate culturally relevant practices, and increase awareness in the historical experience and biases toward African Americans (Giwa, 2018; Patterson & Swan, 2019; Smith, 2016).

Interventions

While able to facilitate action and collaboratively work toward effecting change, social workers play a pivotal role in partnering with police to improve their encounters with African Americans. With the literature suggesting that community dialogue and engagement are essential in improving police encounters with the community, social workers can work with police to create open communication with the African American community regarding concerns (Giwa, 2018). Further, with the literature suggesting that police are dealing with more social service issues (domestic violence, mental health, substance use, homelessness), however, are not appropriately trained nor have the time to address such problems, social workers can partner with police to provide training (Hadden et al., 2016; Solensten & Willits, 2019).

Considering the interventions above, there is value in social work and police partnerships. As reflected by Giwa (2018), in addition to voicing concerns, community dialogue is essential to police and community relationships because it empowers impacted communities and provides police with information to effect change. Also, given that social workers are knowledgeable in diversity and oppression, they can provide

training to police to reduce violent encounters (Ward-Lasher et al., 2017). For example, Price and Payton (2017) suggest that reducing violent police encounters toward African Americans requires appropriate police training. While social workers may not fulfill the role of police and vice versa, the partnership between social work and police is essential to promoting social justice, building trust, and public safety (Solensten & Willits, 2019).

Summary and Conclusions

The literature review consists of the literature search strategy, theoretical foundation (group formation and critical race theory), and an exhaustive review of the literature on police encounters with African Americans and social work and police partnerships. Common themes in the literature on police encounters are violent police encounters towards African Americans are a reminder of the historical legacies of policing and slavery for African Americans. It was also noted that African Americans have distinctly different encounters with police than other ethnic groups (Adedoyin et al., 2019; Adedoyin et al., 2018; Lamin & Teboh, 2016; Moore et al., 2016). Concerning social work and police partnerships, common themes in the literature are social work and police's history of working together, overlapping of roles between social work and police, and partnerships are significant when solving problems; however, the role of social work has diminished in policing (Giwa, 2018; Keene, 2020; Teasley et al., 2018).

It is evident in the literature that the origin of policing in the Southern regions began with slavery, which created unequal and deprived African Americans' civil rights (Adedoyin et al., 2019; Brown, 2019; Hassett-Walker, 2021). As African Americans were subjected to every violence imaginable during slavery, the history of slavery has created a

narrative about African Americans' experience with violence (Carbado & Rock, 2016). Hence, the violence inflicted upon African Americans during slavery manifests through African Americans' silence and invisibility to police violence.

As the literature seems to show disparities in police encounters with African Americans, the literature appears to validate that the killings of unarmed African Americans at the hands of police have intensified the need for change and justified the need to explore social workers' perceptions and experiences on partnering with police. With social workers and police working with individuals from the same populations and communities who face the same kinds of challenges, the act of change begins with social work and police collaboration (Jacobs et al., 2021; Lamin & Teboh, 2016). However, reducing social work in policing has led to a lack of response in the literature about social workers and police partnerships, particularly addressing violent police encounters towards African Americans. Thus, this study fills a gap in the literature and extend knowledge by infusing the diverse frameworks that guide social work practice.

With the social work profession missing the opportunity to explore social workers perceptions and experiences on partnering with police to address violent police encounters, this study informs social work practitioners and policymakers about resources that may serve as protective factors to help reduce the impact of police violence. Given that partnerships are relevant to problem-solving, operating together, social workers and police can work together to cultivate a foundation of trust and understanding to tackle violent police encounters (Moore et al., 2016; Santiago & Ivery, 2020). Therefore, it was vital to use a qualitative inquiry design to explore how social

workers make meaning of partnering with police to address violent police encounters towards African Americans. Further details regarding this study's method approach are outlined in Chapter 3.

Chapter 3: Research Method

As reflected in the literature, violent police encounters toward African Americans are significant (Adedoyin et al., 2019; Moore et al., 2016; Ogden et al., 2020; Wilson & Wolfer, 2020). The literature demonstrates the history of social work and police partnerships in addressing social problems and the need for social work and police partnering to address violent police encounters. However, a review of the current literature revealed the dearth of information exploring social workers perceptions and experiences on partnering with police to address violent police encounters towards African Americans. (Hadden et al., 2016; Patterson & Swan, 2019; Teasley et al., 2018). Thus, the purpose of this generic qualitative inquiry study was to explore social workers in the United States perceptions and experiences on partnering with police to address violent police encounters toward African Americans.

As the preceding chapter reviewed an exhaustive review of the literature on violent police encounters towards African Americans and social work and police partnerships, Chapter 3 demonstrates the research method. Specifically, the research design and rationale for the chosen design are discussed, along with the role of the researcher. Following is the participant selection logic, which includes sampling measures and data collection analysis procedures. Further, trustworthiness issues (credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability) along with ethical procedures precede the chapter.

Research Design

Given that this study is qualitative, the study's research questions are exploratory and focus on exploring the experience of a phenomenon (Babbie, 2017). The following research questions guided the study:

RQ1: What are the perceptions of social workers in the United States on partnering with police to address violent police encounters towards African Americans?

RQ2: What experiences do social workers in the United States have with partnering with police to address violent police encounters towards African Americans?

The central concepts that remained consistent throughout the study were violent police encounters and a need to understand how partnerships are nurtured. Violent police encounters are a dominant theme noted in the African American communities (Adedoyin et al., 2018; Lamin & Teboh, 2016; Moore et al., 2016). Concerning the study, violent police encounters encompassed a broad range of interactions with police that range in severity and lethality. As reflected by the Bureau of Justice Statistics (n.d.-a), police encounters are identified as police-initiated contact, which police initiate due to a crime, traffic stop, or arrest. Public initiate contact is when the public contacts police to report a possible crime, suspicion, or nonemergency. As the nature and extent of contact between police and the public vary, encounters between police and the public can include deadly force, excessive use of force, nondeadly/less lethal use of force, use of excessive force, and use of force. Considering the various types of encounters between the police and the public, for this study, violent police encounters are defined as unreasonable and excessive

physical force and actions used by police resulting in the harassment, intimidation, dehumanization, and death of African Americans (see Bowleg et al., 2020; Volpe, 2019).

As reflected in Chapter 2, partnerships can take several forms. However, for this study, partnerships were identified as the joint relationship between social workers and police working together for a common goal. According to the literature, regardless of the form, partnerships consist of joint decision-making, information sharing, and coordinated intervention (Parker et al., 2018; Vanhanen & Heikkilä, 2017). Similar, partnerships take on a shared understanding approach that reflects joined thinking and promotion of merging expertise and resources to understand a problem and arrive at solutions (Jones & Phillips, 2016). Thus, for this study, partnerships reflect the mutual collaboration and benefit of social workers and police working together to address violent police encounters.

Research Tradition

The research design for the study was qualitative. As an established approach, qualitative research is multimethod in focus, attempting to understand, capture, and make meaning of people's experiences, opinions, thoughts, feelings, and actions (Aspers & Corte, 2019; Rahman, 2017). There are many approaches to conducting qualitative research focusing on human behavior, perception, and sensemaking (Lanka et al., 2021). A review of the literature identified phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography, and case study as traditional qualitative approaches. However, for this study, a generic qualitative inquiry design was applied. Considering that the study is not focusing on the lived experiences of a phenomenon (phenomenological), creating a theory (grounded

theory), the network of social gatherings and customs (ethnography), or in-depth investigations of a specific environment, situation, or organization (case study), a generic qualitative inquiry approach was most appropriate (see Percy et al., 2015).

As one of the less common qualitative research traditions, generic qualitative inquiry is a growing trend in qualitative scholarship. According to Liu (2016), although it has not been discussed extensively in the literature, there has been a growth in qualitative studies using nontraditional qualitative methods such as a generic approach. Even so, as generic qualitative inquiry is not bound by the rules of other established qualitative approaches such as phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography, or case study, it can stand alone as a researcher's articulated approach (Bellamy et al., 2016; Percy et al., 2015).

Drawing upon established qualitative approaches, generic qualitative inquiry blends the techniques and tools from established qualitative approaches to offer a path that is exploratory and flexible (Bellamy et al., 2016). For example, as generic qualitative inquiry seeks to understand how people interpret, construct, and make meaning from their experiences, the flexibility of this approach provides a rich description of social workers perceptions and experiences on partnering with police to address violent police encounters towards African Americans (Kahlke, 2018; Liu, 2016; Percy et al., 2015). With its flexibility, I used a generic qualitative inquiry approach to understand and engaged how social workers interpret their experiences with partnering with police (see Babbie, 2017). Thus, by using a generic qualitative inquiry approach, it provided greater

opportunities to engage with participants and learn from their subjective meanings and experiences (see Babbie, 2017; Kennedy, 2016; Liu, 2016; Percy et al., 2015).

Rationale

Given that generic qualitative inquiry research examines how people make meaning of experiences or processes, this approach is rooted in constructivism (Kahlke, 2016; Kennedy, 2016; Liu, 2016). As the philosophical orientation of the study, constructivism posits that there are multiple social realities and truths; knowledge and meaning are created by living out that reality (Kennedy, 2016). For example, people construct their understanding and knowledge of the world by experiencing and reflecting on those experiences (Kennedy, 2016).

Additionally, as the focus of this study is external, centering on subjective opinion, generic qualitative inquiry allows participants to describe subjective meanings of their experiences, leading the researcher to create knowledge through subjective analysis of the participants (Kahlke, 2018; Kennedy, 2016; Liu, 2016). However, beyond its orientation and subjective position, generic qualitative inquiry is suitable for the study because it demonstrates the need for innovation and adaptation in methods to fit the study. As generic qualitative inquiry offers a space to explore approaches that do not fit neatly into established methods, it provides freedom to describe the phenomenon as it is, not as it should be (Percy et al., 2015). Thus, a generic qualitative inquiry approach was best for the study because as I targeted specific group of participants, a generic qualitative inquiry approach allows for participants to share firsthand their perceptions

and experiences towards partnering with police to address violent police encounters towards African Americans.

Role of Researcher

The researcher's role in qualitative research is an integral part of the data as the researcher is the primary source for collecting data and implementing the analysis (Sutton & Austin, 2015). However, the degree to which the researcher involves themselves in research varies. For example, researchers' participation can be positioned along a continuum that ranges from no participation to full participation (Johnson et al., 2019; Parkin, 2017). Thus, making a difference in how data is collected.

As qualitative research contains many types of researcher participation, among the vast array of these stances, Parker (2017) noted that the most common are complete observer (the researcher is hidden from participants to minimize observer effects), observer as participant (the researcher participates as desired, however their engagement with participants in the field is limited; the researcher's main role is to collect data), participant as observer (the researcher fully participates in the field setting being observed with participants), and complete participant (the researcher participates in all aspects of the field setting and processes being observed; the researcher takes on the same role and involvement as the participants being observed).

Considering the various participant observer typologies, of the four, the role that aligns with my position in the study is that of the observer as participant. Not only does the literature identify the observer as participant role as the most ethical approach to observation, but it states that the observer participant role is the role that researchers

should aim for when conducting research (Johnson et al., 2019; Parker, 2017). Also, considering that in qualitative research, the researcher is the primary instrument in collecting and analyzing data, the focus is on collecting data, rather than assuming the same intent and role as participants. Thus, my role as an observer-participant allowed me to capture the perspectives and understandings of social workers on partnering with police to address violent police encounters (see Sutton & Austin, 2015).

Researcher Relationships and Biases

Considering my position in researching social workers' perceptions and experiences on partnering with police to address violent police encounters towards African Americans, it was necessary to recognize my position as an African American, licensed social worker, and spouse of a police officer.

As an African American who not only identifies with but recognizes the significance of violent police encounters towards African Americans, it was necessary to understand how my biases, background, and experiences shape the research process. As reflected by Aspers and Corte (2019), Case (2017), and Johnson et al. (2019), awareness is essential in qualitative research as it helps researchers understand how such identities shape conditions and inform perspectives. Also, understanding one's worldview helps researchers be more aware of how their position intersects with or diverge from participants (Woods, 2019). For example, my professional experience as a licensed social worker positioned me as an insider researcher, someone with a similar background and common characteristics as participants. However, being a police officer's spouse

positioned me as an outsider, someone who does not share similar experiences with participants.

As noted by Chhabra (2020), researchers with insider status could benefit from securing access to collecting data, while outsiders may have difficulty with accessing participants and building rapport. Also, from an insider perspective, researchers have sensitivity, understanding, and empathy of the matter, which may not be apparent to an outsider (Bruskin, 2019). However, the literature also notes that the familiarity between the researcher and participant can lead to more significant bias, directing the research to what is important to the researcher, while an outsider researcher may be more objective and critical within the situation (Hayfield & Huxley, 2015).

Taking into consideration my professional experience as a licensed social worker, issues that may occur are biases or sympathy for the profession. For example, I may favor information that supports my beliefs or devalue information to validate my views. However, as a licensed social worker studying social workers' perceptions and experiences on partnering with police to address violent police encounters towards African Americans, I did not position myself as an expert with predetermined solutions to address violent police encounters (see Thurairajah, 2019; Maharaj, 2016). Instead, my role was to understand the participant's perspectives, thoughts, and experiences without evaluating or judging. Thus, my role was to represent the perception and understanding of participants authentically. Despite my positionality as a licensed social worker who is ethically responsible for upholding the values of NASW, I am obligated to respect individual differences, working for the interests of others (see NASW, 2021). To

maintain reflectivity, I kept a journal to record thoughts throughout the research process. Through self-reflection, I was able to guard my assumptions, beliefs, and biases, grasping the experience and process of the study through the lens of participants (Amin et al., 2019).

Other Ethical Issues

Although incentives were not used for participating in the study, ethics is a fundamental aspect of research. Considering my professional role as a licensed social worker interested in researching social workers' perceptions and experiences on partnering with police to address violent police encounters towards African Americans, an ethical issue that could arise is conflict of interest between my responsibilities as a researcher and social worker. Romain (2015) identified a conflict of research interest when the researcher has two or more competing interests in which the interests create bias or poor judgment. For example, the conflict between my position as a researcher and social worker could promote an inability to bring an external perspective to the process and the unwillingness to reveal sensitive information. However, as conflict of interest poses a problem for integrity in research and could lead to potentially biased judgment, such interests should be discussed early in research (Navalta et al., 2019).

Effective means for managing conflicts are essential in successfully achieving the goals of research (Romain, 2015). Strategies to address conflict of research interest include disclosure (disclosing interests to one's institution, ethics committee, and peer reviewers), comply with regulations (adhere to institutional and governmental requirements for managing conflicts of interest), avoid and minimize conflict (take steps

to nullify or mitigate conflicts), and educate on the design and regulation of the research process (seek out information to comply with the regulations; Navalta et al., 2019; Romain, 2015). As further efforts for identifying conflict of research interests may be needed to manage conflicts effectively, strategies should demonstrate the capacity to promote quality research, public trust, and protection of participants (Mecca et al., 2015). Thus, I followed the basics of responsibility, mortality, selflessness, and objectivity, leading to openness and honesty about the purpose and content of the research.

Methodology

Participant Selection Logic

The population for this study was licensed social workers in the United States. Specifically, participants were licensed social workers who (a) were currently practicing in the field of social work (b) held a degree of social work from an accredited university, and (c) had professional roles, responsibilities, or expertise intersect with police. Since social workers can practice in various settings, possible professional roles, responsibilities, or expertise that meet eligibility requirements were social workers who perform community safety or offender assessments (community-based social workers); forensic evaluations (forensic social workers), mediation, or parent coordination (child-welfare social workers), crisis social workers, or work in the areas of corrections, law enforcement, or probation/parole (see NASW, n.d.).

The aim of qualitative research is not to generalize results. Thus, sampling strategies in qualitative research focuses on securing relevant participants who are key informants and add information to the research (Bellamy et al., 2016; Bunita, 2015;

Fofana et al., 2020). For example, qualitative research centers on individual human experiences and perceptions. Thus, sampling techniques for qualitative research lie on the applicability of participants providing qualitative information rather than the number of participants (Lanka, et al., 2021).

As a commonly used sampling strategy in qualitative research, this study's sample was assembled using purposeful sampling. Purposeful sampling is a type of nonprobability sampling which considers selecting participants based on the purpose and nature of the study (Burkholder et al., 2016; Liu, 2016). For example, the purpose of the study was to explore social workers in the United States perceptions and experiences on partnering with police to address violent police encounters towards African Americans. Therefore, participants were selected accordingly to predetermined criteria relevant to the study's purpose.

Although purposeful sampling was the selected sampling strategy to identify and recruit participants for the study, there are various types of purposeful samples. According to Hammarberg et al. (2016), the most common forms of purposeful sampling are extreme (or deviant), criterion, and maximum variant sampling. Extreme (or deviant) sampling highlights notable outcomes, failures, or successes of a phenomenon under investigation (Bunita, 2015). Criterion sampling aims to select participants who meet predetermined criteria (Bellamy et al., 2016; Hammarberg et al., 2016). However, in contrast to criterion sample, the aim of maximum variation sampling is heterogeneity. For example, maximum variation sampling captures a wide range of perspectives related to the phenomenon under study (Bellamy et al., 2016; Hammarberg et al., 2016).

Considering the various forms of purposeful sampling, I used criterion sampling to select participants because the participants have knowledge and experience with the phenomenon of interest and, therefore, could provide in-depth information.

As reflected in the population section, participants met the following criteria: licensed social workers in the United States who (a) were currently practicing in the field of social work (b) held a degree of social work from an accredited university, and (c) had professional roles, responsibilities, or expertise intersect with police. The justification for requiring participants to have a professional license and hold a degree in social work from an accredited university ensured that participants met the highest national standards of skills, professional development, and experience (see Shdaimah & Strier, 2020).

According to Donaldson et al. (2016), professional licensing, accreditation, and credentialing ensure that licensed social workers adhere to a code of ethics and professional conduct. Also, the justification for requiring participants to be currently practicing in social work and whose role, responsibility, or expertise intersect with police ensures that participants reflect on their experiences in retrospect (Joubert, 2020).

For validity purposes, researchers must define the criteria when conducting a study and identify how participants are known to meet the criteria (Patino & Ferreira, 2018). Therefore, before conducting interviews, participants verified that they had a professional social work license, actively practice in the social work field, and professional roles that intersect with police.

Sample size in qualitative research is not straightforward. According to Bunita (2015), the sample size in qualitative research is ambiguous. Hence, strategies such as

sampling to the point of redundancy should be considered when determining sample size. As this study used a generic qualitative inquiry design that typically aims for a more significant representation of the population, small, nonrepresentative samples can also provide rich and accurate data (Lanka et al., 2021). For example, in a study to examine the sufficiency of small qualitative samples, it was revealed that data saturation occurred in qualitative studies after yielding six individual interviews (Young & Casey, 2018). Specifically, theme and code development of six interviews yielded as much data as 12 to 24 interviews (Young & Casey, 2018). Therefore, to determine the study participants' number, I considered previous literature that used similar research designs, sampling methods, and subject matter.

Moye (2019) conducted a generic qualitative inquiry study using purposeful sampling to explore the learned perceptions that African American men have of police. Through purposeful sampling, eight participants were used to collect data. Also, shared in generic inquiry research, a rigorous inductive thematic analysis was conducted to assist in developing themes to understand better the learned perceptions of African American men have on police (Moye, 2019).

Another study using generic inquiry design and purposeful sampling was conducted by McTurk (2019) to explore the perceptions of mobile forensic professionals regarding the lack of standardization when producing forensic reports for U.S. court cases. Utilizing purposeful sampling, data was collected from 16 participants. Also, data were analyzed using a thematic analysis process, which identified themes consisting of

the need to ensure data is reputable and challenges of gathering data from mobile devices (McTurk, 2019).

Considering previous literature and anticipation of data and thematic saturation being reached early on, the target sample size for this study was a minimum of six and a maximum of 25 participants (Bellamy et al., 2016; Hammarberg et al., 2016; Lanka et al., 202; Young & Casey, 2018). However, data collection conclude at 15 participants before the maximum number of participants were interviewed.

Social workers were recruited through their membership of the NOFSW or the NASW. The NOFSW was established in 1982 to provide advancement of education and social justice through human service and legal professionals (NOFSW, 2020). Founded in 1955, the NASW is a professional organization in the United States that enhances the professional development of social workers by creating, maintaining, and advancing standards and policies for the social work profession (NASW, 2021).

The justification for using two social work professional organizations to recruit participants was due to the diminished role of social work in policing (Patterson & Swan, 2019; Teasley et al., 2018). The NOFSW and NASW was used to maximize the possibility of identifying social work participants whose professional experiences intersect with police. Further, the study recruited participants from the NOFSW or NASW to include a purposefully selected diverse sample in terms of regions, professional settings and level, and experiences with police.

I coordinated with the selected social work professional organizations (NOFSW and NASW) to ask permission to conduct the study. After authorization was secured, an

invitation to participate in this study was displayed in the NOFSW's newsletter and NASW's social media pages, LinkedIn and MyNASW. Posting of the study invitation for NOFSW was done by the organization. I posted the study invitation on the NASW's social media pages. However, before recruitment and data collection, the institutional review board (IRB) approval was received. After IRB approval was received, participants were asked to respond to the invitation by calling (via telephone) or emailing me to discuss interest, review criteria, and set the interview date and time. Each participant was asked to sign the consent form indicating their agreement to be part of the study by replying to the email "I Consent". I also provided contact information for the participants to contact me for questions, clarifications, or withdrawal requests.

Although there are no standard rules for sample size in qualitative research, saturation is often used to make decisions about sample size (Bunita, 2015; Fusch & Ness, 2015; Hammarberg et al., 2016). As there are various methods to operationalize saturation, saturation is used in qualitative research as a criterion for discontinuing data collection (Liu, 2016; Saunders et al., 2018; Sutton & Austin, 2015). According to Fofana et al. (2020), saturation is a core concept in qualitative research and occurs when adding more participants to the study does not result in additional perspectives; therefore, data collection ends. For this study, data collection ceased when no new information was discovered in data analysis, showing that I collected enough data to achieve the study's purpose.

Instrumentation

There are many types of qualitative research tools to collect, measure, and analyze data. However, the main instrument for data collection in qualitative research is the researcher who collects data through notetaking, focus groups, questionnaires, observation, and interviews (Hammarberg et al., 2016; Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Among these qualitative data collecting instruments, interviews are used the most (Burkholder et al., 2016). As one of the primary data collection methods of qualitative research, interviews are essential to the research process, providing rich, in-depth, individualized, and contextual data (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). For example, interviews allow researchers to gain insight (deep understanding) into participants' beliefs, understandings, and experiences of a given phenomenon (Bellamy et al., 2016; Hammarberg et al., 2016). Thus, as interviews seek to understand individual subjectivity, it promotes mutual engagement, trust, and reciprocity (Burkholder et al., 2016; Lui, 2016; Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

Researcher Developed Instruments

Being one of the leading data collection instruments of qualitative research, this study conducted one on one individual interviews with participants. However, depending on the philosophical orientation and context, individual interviews are structured, semistructured, or unstructured (Bellamy et al., 2016; Bunita, 2015; Burkholder et al., 2016; Lui, 2016). Considering that I engaged in a formal interview with participants and used an interview guide with open-ended questions, the interviews were semistructured. DeJonckheere and Vaughn (2019) stated that semistructured interviews are essential in

qualitative research because it allows researchers to probe and explore hidden meanings and understanding while also having a set agenda. Therefore, semistructured interviews allowed me to explore how social workers conceptualize partnering with police to address violent police encounters towards African Americans.

While individual interviews are typically conducted face to face, telephone, email, and internet interviews are increasingly being used in qualitative research (Burkholder et al., 2016; Rahman, 2017; Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Due to the approaches that maintain social distancing in the context of COVID-19, interviews were conducted using remote research methods such as video conference (Zoom) or telephone.

Zoom is an innovative video conferencing platform that provides secure collaborative access to online meetings and group messaging services (Archibald et al., 2019). As a data collection tool, due to its secure recording, cost-effectiveness, ease of use, and data management features, Zoom is a recommended online platform (Archibald et al., 2019; Radu et al., 2020).

In addition to online platforms such as Zoom, telephone interviews provide a faster, easier way to approach research (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). For example, telephone interviews are beneficial for reaching a higher number of people over a broader geographic scope. Also, conducting interviews using Zoom or telephone may facilitate individuals who would not volunteer for in-person interviews. However, it is essential to note that using an online platform and telephone interviewing include potential issues with electronic devices and the limitation of observing body language clues (Burkholder

et al., 2016). Thus, pending participants' desire and ability, they got a choice to use Zoom or telephone to conduct their interview.

Interview Guide

Interview guides act as a prompt, reminding the researcher of important topics to ask and areas to probe (DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019; Young et al., 2018). An interview guide was prepared before the interview to ensure that crucial information was in the interview sessions; however, I added relevant follow-up questions based on participants' responses. As interview protocols address the study's problem and purpose, the interview was audio recorded and last for approximately 32 to 52 minutes. Due to recording the interview, a consent form was provided before the start of the interview. A good interview guide consists of interview questions that seek to understand various realms of people's experiences (Young et al., 2018). Therefore, based on highlights from the literature review, I developed the interview guide. The interview guide included (but not limited to) questions regarding the participants professional experience and educational level as a social worker, perceptions, and experience on partnering with police to address violent police encounters towards African Americans: "what is your title and licensure level," "tell me about your experiences in partnering with police," "what are some challenges you have come across with partnering with police." Together, these questions assured that the overall topic was covered, including the need for detail, richness, and depth. Further details regarding the interview questions are included in the appendix section.

Data Collection, Recruitment, Participation, and Follow-Up

Data include responses to participants' interview questions regarding their perceptions and experiences on partnering with police to address violent police encounters towards African Americans. For each data collection instrument and research question, all data was handled, stored, and shared so that information obtained from and about participants was secured (Babbie, 2017). For example, to maintain confidentiality, protocols were designed to minimize the need to collect and maintain identifiable information. However, if identifiable information was needed, identifiers were removed and destroyed securely to minimize risk from disclosure (Burkholder et al., 2016). Further, all interview data was transcribed by me using a transcription and translation application named Otter.ai.

Data was stored in a qualitative software named NVivo. NVivo is a valuable tool that aids researchers in storing and organizing qualitative data collected from participants (Liu, 2016; Saldaña, 2016). Therefore, all data sources were loaded in the software, making coding more consistent and systematic. Further, as the primary qualitative data analysis approach is content-based, line-by-line and thematic coding take place to find repeated patterns of meanings.

The plan was to recruit social workers through their membership of the NOFSW or NASW. I coordinated with the selected social work professional organizations to ask permission to conduct the study. After authorization was secured, an invitation to participate in this study was displayed in the NOFSW's newsletter and NASW's social media pages, LinkedIn and MyNASW. Posting of the study invitation for NOFSW was

done by the organization. I posted the study invitation on the NASW's social media pages. Participants were asked to respond to the invitation by calling (via telephone) or emailing me to set the interview date and time. Each participant was asked to sign informed consent forms indicating their agreement to be part of the study. I also provided contact information for the participants to contact me for questions, clarifications, or withdrawal requests.

Debriefing is a procedure that occurs after collecting data (McMahon & Winch, 2018). At the outset of data collection and after recognizing and thanking participants for their contribution to the study, I discussed details of the research with participants. As identified by McMahon and Winch (2018), debriefing in research ensures that participants are informed of details that may not have been known to them prior to participating in the study and provided with appropriate resources and contact information. Thus, I asked participants if they had any questions that pertained to the study. After answering any questions that participants had regarding the study, I provided clear and informative information regarding the rationale for the study, methods used, confidentiality, and contact information for later questions. Although, participants' names were not recorded in the research records, I requested that participants provide their contact information (email address or telephone number, depending on participants preference) to receive a copy of the transcript of their interview and final report of the study (summary of findings) to check for accuracy if desired.

Besides debriefing with participants directly after their interview and providing participants with a copy of the transcript of their interview to respond to any clarifications

or corrections (member check), there were no follow-up procedures to return for follow-up interviews. The goal was to conduct interviews in one setting. However, supposed there was a need to comply with the IRB protocol or ascertain additional information from the original research. In that case, all participants would be contacted by me, requesting the need for further information. I would inform participants that follow-up is voluntary.

Issues of Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness

Due to its subjective nature and origin in single contexts, many uncertainties arise about the reliability and validity of qualitative research (Cypress, 2017; Sutton & Austin, 2015). However, unlike statistical tests used in quantitative research to check reliability and validity, trustworthiness is used in qualitative research to establish confidence in the findings (Ghafouri & Ofoghi, 2016; Sutton & Austin, 2015). Proposed by Lincoln and Guba, trustworthiness is a permanent standard to evaluate the rigor, authenticity, truthfulness, confidence, and quality of qualitative research (Cypress, 2017). As trustworthiness ensures that the research process was carried out correctly, Lincoln and Guba established four criteria of trustworthiness (credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability) as benchmarks for quality consistency, applicability, truth value, and neutrality (Korstjens & Moser, 2018; Nowell et al., 2017).

Credibility is equivalent to internal validity in quantitative research. However, due to quantitative structure and rigid design, credibility is used in qualitative research to evaluate the accuracy and trustfulness of research findings (Cypress, 2017; Korstjens &

Moser, 2018). For example, in this study, credibility shows whether research findings are accurate and honest, representing the original data (Nowell et al., 2017). According to Korstjens and Moser (2018), strategies to enhance credibility include prolonged engagement, persistent observations, triangulation, and member checks. However, to ensure that this study is credible, member checks, persistent observation, and prolonged engagement were conducted.

Identified by Ghafouri and Ofoghi (2016) and Korstjens and Moser (2018), member checking is a technique for establishing the credibility of a study. For example, member checking occurs when researchers share findings with participants, allowing them to analyze the findings critically. As member checks provide participants with a chance to verify their statements and fill in any gaps, the greatest benefit of conducting member checks is that it allows the researcher the opportunity to verify the accuracy and completeness of the findings, which then helps to improve the validity of the study (Cypress, 2017; Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Therefore, before ending each interview, participants were asked if they would like to clarify their responses or provide further information. Further, participants provided their contact information to receive a copy of the transcript of their interview. Participants were also requested to verify and respond to the copy of the transcript with any clarifications or corrections.

In addition to member checks, persistent observation will ensure credibility. As reflected by Amin et al. (2019) and Korstjens & Moser (2018), persistent observation in qualitative research ensures depth and understanding by identifying characteristics or aspects relevant to the phenomena studied. To be persistent, Johnson et al. (2020)

suggests focusing on the phenomena under study in detail to know what is important and irrelevant, concentrating on the most relevant aspects. Thus, I developed codes to examine the characteristics of the data. Further, I studied the data to provide a depth of insight. To provide an intended depth of insight, I reread, theorized, analyzed data, revised, recoded, and relabeled codes (Cruz & Tantia, 2017).

Prolonged engagement is another strategy that is used in qualitative research to obtain credibility. Prolonged engagement consists of investing time in collecting data to have an in-depth understanding of the targeted phenomena and to ensure saturation is reached (Cruz & Tantia, 2017; Nowell et al., 2017). Thus, I spent sufficient time learning and understanding the scope of the target phenomena. For example, I asked several questions (including follow-up questions) regarding the participants' perceptions and experiences on partnering with police to address violent police encounters towards African Americans. Also, to test for misinformation or misinterpretation, participants were encouraged to provide examples to support their statements.

Transferability is equivalent to external validity in quantitative research. According to Ravitch and Carl (2016), transferability shows that the findings are applicable, meaning that the findings can apply to other situations and contexts. Although qualitative research aims not to generalize findings, this study obtained transferability by providing a thick description of the research process and participants so that readers can assess whether the findings are transferable to other settings. Thus, in my attempt to enhance transferability in the study, I provided a detailed account of the context in which

the research was processed, such as its setting, sample, criteria, sample size, interview procedures (Amin et al., 2019; Korstjens & Moser, 2018).

While transferability shows that the findings are applicable, dependability demonstrates that the findings are consistent and replicable. Identified by Amin et al. (2019), dependability is the stability of data over time. For example, dependability determines if the findings would be the same if the study were replicated with the same or similar participants in the same context. Therefore, to attain dependability in the study, I maintained careful documentation and an audit trail. For example, I prepared a complete set of notes that were rich with descriptions of what transpired during the research process (including reflective thoughts, research materials, data management, and the emergence of the findings) (Korstjens & Moser, 2018; Nowell et al., 2017). Further, I provided a decision trail that demonstrated the researcher's decisions for categorizing data and making analytic inferences.

Confirmability in qualitative research refers to objectivity, the extent to which participants' interpretations shape the findings, not researcher bias (Cypress, 2017; Korstjens & Moser, 2018). For confirmability to be achieved in the study, I evaluated my effect on collecting, interpreting, and analyzing data. For example, to maintain reflectivity, I kept a journal to record thoughts throughout the research process. Through self-reflection, I was able to guard my assumptions, beliefs, and biases, grasping the experience and process of the study through the lens of participants (Amin et al., 2019).

In qualitative research, intra-rater reliability refers to the consistency of how data is recorded by the same coder on more than one occasion (Scheel et al., 2018). Thus, I

maintained intra-rater reliability by keeping consistency throughout the methodology procedures. For example, the same coding, data collection, sampling, and analysis process was used with all participants.

Ethical Procedures

Researchers are obligated to make practical and ethical judgments. For example, researchers are to consider the needs and want of the participants while also generating knowledge to effect social change (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). However, due to qualitative research, ethical considerations must be considered throughout the research process. Ethical concerns that should be considered are informed consent, confidentiality, and anonymity (Reid et al., 2018). Also, as the relationship between the researcher and participants is established, qualitative researchers can face ethical dilemmas such as establishing open and honest interactions, respecting privacy, and misrepresentations. Thus, while carrying out the study, I evaluated research benefits against the risks and costs involved (Arifin, 2018).

Walden University IRB approval (11-15-21-1000231) was received. After IRB approval was received, I began the research, observing any restrictions and all regulations throughout the process. The procedures and regulations regarding IRB were closely followed.

Permission to recruit licensed social workers through their membership of the NOFSW and NASW was obtained by coordinating with the selected social work professional organizations membership services department. After authorization was secured, IRB-approved recruitment advertisements such as study invitations were sent to

the contact person at NOFSW to post the study invitation in their organization's newsletter, and I posted the study invitation to the NASW's social media page(s), inviting eligible participants to participate in the study. The study invitation contained the purpose of the research, inclusion criteria, and the researcher's contact information for participants to contact the researcher for further details about the study and set the interview date and time.

Treatment of Participants

Researchers are responsible for protecting all participants from harmful consequences that may be a result of their participation. Therefore, recruitment of research participants must involve presenting potential participants with information that clearly and accurately represent the research (Gelinas et al., 2017). Providing potential participants with information about the research before the study is not only beneficial in assessing participants' willingness and interest, but it will ensure that the recruitment process is handled ethically (Arifin, 2018). Thus, to enhance the ethical recruitment of participants, information shared with participants were presented, aligning with the research. Also, information was introduced to allow participants to consider their participation in the study freely.

Informed consent is an integral part of ethics in research. To incorporate the rights and autonomy of individuals through self-determination, informed consent should inform participants of different aspects of the research (Reid et al., 2018). For example, informed consent should include the nature of the research, participants' role, the research's objective, the researcher's identity, and how the findings will be used and published

(Arifin, 2018; Facca et al., 2020). Also, informed consent should consider the individual's ability to understand presented information (Reid et al., 2018). Thus, information should be presented in a comprehensive language that participants understand. Furthermore, an individual's consent should be given voluntarily and withdrawn at any time upon request should they chose during the research process (Facca et al., 2020).

To ensure that participants are ethically informed about the research, consent was obtained from participants who understood what was being asked and were competent to consent. As I adequately informed participants about the research, participants needed to comprehend the information and have the power of freedom of choice to participate or decline (Facca et al., 2020; Reid et al., 2018). Only after a thorough explanation of the research process was explained and those who reported interest in participating in the research were required to provide informed consent.

I sent a consent form to each participant via email. Interested parties were encouraged to contact me via email or phone if they had any questions. The interested party was required to reply in the form via email by stating, "I Consent."

In addition to participants being well informed about the research process, participants were asked to provide consent to audio record the interview. Participants were also informed of any risks involved with measures to take to alleviate risks. Further, an explanation of their right to withdraw from the research was provided to participants at any time.

Proper safeguards were taken to collect data. As data was collected through telephone or Zoom, each interview was conducted individually in a private and quiet room without access to outsiders. I am the only person who can match the identity of participants and voice recordings.

Treatment of Data

Confidentiality and anonymity are often misunderstood in research. However, the two terms are critical to protecting participants' privacy. While confidentiality refers to researchers taking steps to protect participants' identities, anonymity is a condition in which the identity of participants is unknown to researchers (Arifin, 2018; Gelinas et al., 2017). For the research, several measures were taken to ensure the protection of private information and the identity of participants. Foremost, the confidentiality of participants was preserved by not revealing the identities of participants in the data collection, analysis, and reporting of findings. Further, as privacy and confidentiality of the interview process was managed thoroughly, data collection was managed to not link participants' responses with identifying information (using a code-only known to the researcher).

Managing data in research has to do with protecting data against unintentional and unauthorized access, theft, or disclosure (Facca et al., 2020). As Arifin (2018) suggested and Gelinas et al. (2017), there are several safeguard practices to safeguard data, such as securing data storage and technology, removing identifier components, and encryption.

As researchers are responsible for protecting participants from harmful consequences such as breach of confidentiality, records were secured using password-

protected files, and encryption was used when sending information over the internet. Further, data transcribing was conducted in a private room using earphones to avoid the possibility of recordings being heard by other people. Participants' identities were also removed during transcribing; thus, participants are referred to by their "code" name when presenting the findings. Additionally, any document that contained the participants' personal information was kept in a locked cabinet or drawer with access to no one other than the researcher for at least five years, as required by the university. After five years, data will be disposed by shredding any paper documents using a shredder and disposing in a secure paper shredded bin. For electronic, audio, and video data, data will be destroyed by deleting files or media so that the information cannot be read or reconstructed.

Other Ethical Concerns

Although the study did not encounter any ethical issues about power differentials or incentives, researchers should consider the potential impact they may have on the participants and vice versa. Thus, I respect the shared experiences of participants involved in the research. However, a potential ethical concern of respecting the shared experience of others is not understanding the participants' perspectives, thoughts, and experiences (Tajir, 2018). For example, researchers may ask questions or react to participants' responses in ways that could make participants feel judge. Therefore, I sought to explore, learn, and understand what participants thought and felt without evaluating or judging. Further, respecting the shared experience of others means

respecting participants' autonomy, judgment and ensuring that the participant is free to participate in the study without any interference.

Summary

Chapter 3 provided an overview of the research design and rationale, the role of the researcher, methodology, instrument, issues of trustworthiness, and ethical procedures. Notably, it was noted in the chapter that the research design for the study is generic qualitative inquiry. A generic qualitative inquiry design is most appropriate for the research because of its flexibility. Thus, providing freedom to explore social workers' perceptions and experiences on partnering with police to address violent police encounters towards African Americans. Further, reflecting on instrument procedures, it was noted that the researcher is the main instrument in qualitative research. Therefore, to collect data, semistructured interviews will be used. Semiinstruments are beneficial in probing and exploring hidden meanings and understanding. Aside from thoroughly explaining issues of trustworthiness and strategies to enhance credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability, and intracoder reliability, Chapter 3 concluded with ethical procedures. While researchers generate knowledge to effect social change, they are also obligated to evaluate research benefits against the risks and costs involved (Arifin, 2018; Ravitch & Carl, 2016). For example, researchers should consider how to collect data while protecting participants' privacy. Thus, secured data storage and technology will protect participants' information when collecting data. Furthermore, as Chapter 3 focused on the research design and methodology, Chapter 4 presents the data analysis and results.

Chapter 4: Results

In this generic qualitative inquiry study, I explored how social workers in the United States perceive and experience partnering with police to address violent police encounters toward African Americans. To explore those perceptions and experiences, the following research questions guided this study:

RQ1: What are the perceptions of social workers in the United States on partnering with police to address violent police encounters towards African Americans?

RQ2: What experiences do social workers in the United States have with partnering with police to address violent police encounters towards African Americans?

Chapter 4 presents the research setting, participant demographics relevant to the study, data collection and analysis, trustworthiness of the study, and an overview of study results which concludes with a summary and transition to Chapter 5.

Research Setting

I conducted semistructured interviews in single settings with 15 participants. Specifically, participants were licensed social workers in the United States currently practicing in social work, held a degree of social work from an accredited university, and had a professional roles, responsibilities, or expertise intersect with police. All participants were notified of the invitation to participate in the study through the NOFSW's newsletter and NASW's social media pages, LinkedIn and MyNASW. The organization posted the study invitation for NOFSW. I posted the study invitation on the NASW's social media pages. Participants responded to the invitation by calling via telephone or emailing me to express their interest in the study. Participants were provided

a copy of the consent form with additional information about the study to review. After participants reviewed the consent form, participants were provided the opportunity to ask questions before proceeding by emailing or calling (via telephone) me. Those who declined to participate in the study chose to when they learned they did not meet the study's criteria. However, participants who indicated their agreement to be part of the study signed the consent form by replying to the email, "I Consent".

Due to the approaches that maintain social distancing in the context of COVID-19, interviews were conducted using remote research methods such as Zoom or telephone. At participants' convenience and privacy, participants chose how they wanted to conduct their interview (Zoom or telephone) and set their interview date and time. Also, after interviews were complete, participants were invited to review a copy of the transcript of their interview for accuracy. Each participant was provided a copy of the transcript of their interview via email to review. If corrections or clarifications were needed, participants sent corrections back to me. Out of the 15 participants, three participants responded to corrections.

Proper safeguards were taken to collect data. As data was collected through telephone or Zoom interviews, each interview was conducted individually in a private and quiet room without access to outsiders. No personal or organizational conditions occurred through the data collection process.

Demographics

Race was not a determined factor for participants. Participants were selected based on the study's criteria. Per the study's criteria, each participant was a licensed

social worker in the United States, currently practicing social work, held a degree of social work from an accredited university, and had a professional roles, responsibilities, or expertise intersect with police. However, participants were diverse in their licensure and educational level and years of experience in their professional role as a licensed social worker.

Participants professional experience as licensed social workers ranged from 2 to 30 years. Regarding licensure level, participants' licenses ranged from a licensed social worker, licensed master social worker, licensed independent social worker, and licensed clinical social worker, pending on the participant's practicing state. Participants reported education levels ranging from a bachelor's to a doctoral degree in social work. Although participants reported that their professional roles intersect with police through mental health or crisis services, participants reported a variety of job titles. The following job titles were reported by participants: court investigator, behavioral health specialist consultant and trainer, counseling therapist, suicide prevention coordinator, forensic social worker, crisis worker, corresponded, substance use and homeless program coordinator, juvenile court supervisor, family court supervisor, and medical social worker. For confidentiality, participants were identified as PT 1 to PT 15 to represent Participant 1 to Participant 15.

Data Collection

Walden University IRB approval (11-15-21-1000231) was received. The procedures and regulations regarding IRB were closely followed. There were no

variations in data collection from the plan presented in Chapter 3. There were also no unusual circumstances encountered in data collection.

After IRB approval was received, the research process began with recruitment, observing any restrictions and all regulations throughout the process. I reached out to the contact person at NOFSW to provide the study invitation for NOFSW to post the study invitation in their organization's newsletter. I posted the study invitation to the NASW's social media page(s), inviting eligible participants to participate in the study. The study invitation contained the purpose of the research, inclusion criteria, and my contact information for participants to contact me for further details about the study and to set an interview date and time.

Those who reported interest in participating in the research was provided the consent form with additional information via email to review. In addition to participants being well informed about the research process, participants were asked to provide consent to audio record the interview. Participants were also informed of any potential risks involved with measures to take to alleviate risks. Further, an explanation of their right to withdraw from the research was provided to participants.

Participants who indicated their agreement to be part of the study signed the consent form by replying to the email, "I Consent" and scheduled an interview time by providing me with their time, day, and contact (Zoom or telephone) preference. Once interviews were scheduled, semistructured interviews containing open-ended questions about how social workers perceived and experienced partnering with police to address violent police encounters towards African Americans were conducted with 15 licensed

social workers in the United States. Out of 15 participants, one participant conducted their interview via telephone, while the other 14 participants conducted their interview via Zoom.

Proper safeguards were taken to collect data and data collection concluded when saturation was reached. As data was collected through telephone or Zoom interviews, each interview was conducted individually in a private and quiet room without access to outsiders. I am the only person who matched the identity of participants and voice recordings. The interview process lasted approximately 32 to 52 minutes. Each participant was interviewed once. During each interview I took notes and used a portable audio recorder to ensure that responses were recorded accurately. After completing the interviews, I transcribed each audio recorded interview using a transcription and translation application named Otter.ai. Otter.ai is a transcription application that transcribes conversations.

According to Clark et al (2017), transcription is foundational in maintaining and assuring data quality, accuracy, and validity in the transformation of interviews into transcripts. After interviews were transcribed using Otter.ai, I personally read through, line-by-line each interview and compared the transcription to the audio recording. If needed, I personally corrected any errors or missing segments during the transcription. Also, after transcribing interviews, I performed member checking by providing participants with a copy of a transcript of their interview for accuracy. If corrections or clarifications were needed, participants sent back corrections to me. Each participant was given one week to review the transcript and contact me for any corrections. Out of 15

participants, three participants sent back corrections. In addition to transcribing data in preparation for the data analysis, data was analyzed and stored in a qualitative software named NVivo.

Data Analysis

According to Nowell et al (2017), thematic analysis is a foundational method for qualitative analysis due to its flexibility and ability to produce rich and detailed data. As data was stored in NVivo, various techniques were used to analyze interview data and find repeated patterns of meanings. The first technique used to analyze data consisted of the researcher gathering and reading each transcribed interview line by line to become familiar with the data. As I read each interview, I took notes to reflect any information noticed or surprising. After reading each interview I began the initial coding process by highlighting and comparing sections (sentences, paragraphs, and phrases) in each interview. After personally highlighting and coding sections of each interview, I used tools such as text and word count frequency, tree map, word cloud, and automated coding in NVivo to assess for repeated patterns of meanings (themes).

While using the text frequency, word count, and automated coding I was able to group segments of all the highlighted sections for further coding to create new codes that encapsulate potential themes. In creating new codes, I reviewed all the codes and explored any similarities, differences, relationships, or contradictions to see if it uncovered underlying themes. While doing so, some of the codes were set aside and new codes were created that lead to three themes (feeling fearful and race, police control and training, and reduction in violent encounters) emerging from RQ1, social workers

perceptions on partnering with police to address violent police encounters towards African Americans. Five themes (a focus on mental health and crisis, comprehension about each other's roles, opposition, race play a role, and lack of certainty) emerged from RQ2, social workers experiences on partnering with police to address violent police encounters towards African Americans. See Table 1 and 2 for specific codes and themes that emerged from the data.

Table 1

Data Analysis Questions, Codes, Themes, Sources RQ1

RQ1	Interview Questions	Codes	Themes and Sources
What are the perceptions of social workers in the United States on partnering with police to address violent police encounters towards African Americans?	When violent police encounters are mentioned, what comes to mind and whom do you think are the most impacted?	Black people Increased heart rate Increased anxiety Sobering reflection Reinforced behavior Doing something to a Black person We're criminalized Die by police Want safety White officer Tamir Rice Eric Garner George Floyd Brianna Taylor Victims that did nothing wrong Just being black Cover ups	Feeling Fearful and Race (PT 2, PT 4, PT 6, PT 7, PT 10, PT 14, PT 15)
	What recommendations do you have on how social workers and police can improve partnerships in addressing violent police encounters?	Top-down approach Hiring practices Commitment at top Leadership Driven by law enforcement Cultural competency training Sensitivity training Critical thinking training Different way of training	Police Control (PT 1, PT 3, PT 9, PT 12, PT 14) and Training (PT 2, PT 6, PT 7, PT 8, PT 9, PT 11, PT 13, PT14, PT 15)
	What benefits, if any, would arise after partnering with police to address violent police encounters?	Reduce violent encounters Goals See a decrease Hope Comfort Nonviolence Violent police encounters go away	Reduction in Violent Encounters (PT 2, PT 5, PT 7, PT 8, PT 9, PT 11, PT 15)

Table 2*Data Analysis Questions, Codes, Themes, Sources RQ2*

RQ2	Interview Questions	Codes	Themes and Sources
What experiences do social workers in the United States have with partnering with police to address violent police encounters towards African Americans?	Tell me about an experience in your line of work where you have partner with police?	Mental professional Mental health services Mental health crisis Crisis hotlines Crisis Intervention Crisis response	A Focus on Mental Health Crisis (PT 3, PT 8, PT 9, PT 11, PT 12, PT 13 PT 14, PT 15)
	What does a healthy relationship between police and social workers look like?	Mutual respect Positive communication Cooperation Understanding Working relationship Helpful relationship Healthy relationship Sharing information Recognizing each other Expertise Same mission Holistic view	Comprehension About Each Other's Role (PT 2, PT 3, PT 5, PT 7, PT 10, PT 12, PT 14, PT 15)
	What are some challenges that you have identified in your work with partnering with police?	I'm the enemy Lacking respect Opposite sides Mocking social work Devaluing social work Unequal Partnership Inconsistent Inappropriate Lack of support	Opposition (PT 3, PT 7, PT 8, PT 9, PT 15)
	From your experiences, would you assess race as a factor when violent police encounters are mentioned?	Race and understanding Black Americans Enslaved Africans Heavily policed Neighborhoods Black male Humanize Tamir Black men Race is a huge factor Predominantly affecting, Black people Don't look at Black people as being a human Murder of an unarmed Black man by a White officer Structural violence A difference between African American defendants and White Race play a role	Predominantly Affecting Black People (PT 2, PT 3, PT 5, PT 7, PT 8, PT 14, PT 15)
	What strategies or interventions do you use as a social worker in partnership with police to address violent police encounters?	I'm unsure Not a specific goal Speculate on what to do Limited strategies Not my primary objective Nothing I've actively done Haven't had those experiences	Lack of Certainty (PT 2, PT 3, PT 4, PT 6, PT 7, PT 10, PT 15)

Evidence of Trustworthiness

From the perspective of trustworthiness, credibility was established by ensuring that those participating in the study were identified and described accurately (Nowell et al., 2017). For example, after transcribing each interview I conducted member checking with every participant by sending a copy of the participant's transcribed interview to them for review and verification. Participants were given one week to respond to the copy of the transcript with any clarifications or corrections. Out of 15 participants, three participants sent back corrections. In addition to sending a copy of the transcribed interview to participants to verify the completeness and accuracy, prior to ending every interview, each participant was asked if they wanted to clarify their responses or provide further information to ensure the transcript truthfully reflected the meaning and intent of their contribution.

To further demonstrate credibility, persistent observation occurred. Persistent observation is vital in establishing credibility as it ensures depth and understanding of a phenomenon by focusing on the phenomena under study in detail (Johnson et al, 2020). To demonstrate persistent observation, I focused on the characteristics and aspects of the data that were relevant to the phenomena being studied. For example, I studied the data to provide a depth insight by developing codes and themes to examine the characteristics of the data. Further, I reread, theorize, analyzed data, revised, recoded, and relabeled codes and themes to ensure that no new codes or themes emerged (Cruz & Tantia, 2017).

Prolonged engagement is another strategy that was used to obtain credibility. Credibility was maintained in establishing prolonged engagement by spending sufficient

time learning, understanding, and interviewing participants to gain an in depth understanding of the phenomenon being studied. For example, I invested time in data collection through asking several questions (including follow-up questions) regarding the participants' perception and experience on partnering with police to address violent police encounters towards African Americans. Further, to test for misinformation or misinterpretation, participants were encouraged to provide examples to support their statements. No adjustments to credibility strategies stated in Chapter 3 were made.

Though qualitative research does not aim to generalize to a larger population, transferability was established in the study through my attempt to provide a thick description of the research process and participants. In my attempt to assess whether the findings are useful and transferable to other settings, I provided a detailed description of the research process, such as the setting, criteria, sample size, interview procedures, and findings (Amin et al., 2019; Korstjens & Moser, 2018). No adjustments to transferability strategies stated in Chapter 3 were made.

Dependability demonstrates the reliability of data over time (Amin et al., 2019). To demonstrate dependability in the study, I provided a transparent description of the steps taken in the research from the development to the findings. For example, I maintained careful documentation of the raw data collection and analysis process, including a clear rationale for such decisions and if any adjustments were made. Further to establish dependability, a complete set of notes rich with descriptions of what transpired during the research process were obtained so that other researchers have

adequate information and can clearly follow the decision trail. No adjustments to dependability strategies stated in Chapter 3 were made

Confirmability is concerned with objectivity; the data representing the participants voice, not researcher bias (Cypress, 2017; Korstjens & Moser, 2018).

Confirmability was achieved in the study by maintaining reflectivity. I kept a journal to record my thoughts throughout the research process. For example, after interviewing each participant, I recorded my thoughts of the interview to guard my assumptions, beliefs, and biases. No adjustments to confirmability strategies stated in Chapter 3 were made.

Results

The following research questions guided the study:

RQ1: What are the perceptions of social workers in the United States on partnering with police to address violent police encounters towards African Americans?

RQ2: What experiences do social workers in the United States have with partnering with police to address violent police encounters towards African Americans?

To answer the research questions, the findings of the study were structured around the interview questions. Excluding demographic and closing questions, the interview consisted of 14 questions broken down into two sections, perceptions, and professional experience. The participants responses to the interview questions solidified themes. For RQ1 that aimed to explore social workers in the United States perceptions on partnering with police to address violent police encounters towards African Americans, three themes (feeling fearful and race, police control and training, and reduction in violent encounters) emerged. RQ2 focused on social workers experiences on partnering with police to

address violent police encounters towards African Americans. Five themes (a focus on mental health and crisis, comprehension about each other's roles, opposition, predominantly affecting Black people, and lack of certainty) emerged from RQ2.

The identified themes that emerged from the interviews are further detailed below. Also, identified below are selected participants responses to support the themes. However, while the goal was to maintain participant's words and intent, some participant's responses were edited to enhance clarity. Together, the themes address the aim of the study by providing an insight into social workers perceptions and experiences on partnering with police to address violent police encounters towards African Americans.

RQ1

What are the perceptions of social workers in the United States on partnering with police to address violent police encounters towards African Americans?

Theme 1: Feeling Fearful and Race

The study involved interviews from 15 participants. The first emerging theme for RQ1 was feeling fearful and race. The theme emerged in asking participants, "What comes to mind and whom do they think are most impacted when violent police encounter are mentioned?" In response, several participants indicated that when violent police encounters are mentioned, what comes to mind are something being done to a Black person, anxiety, increased heart rate, "just being black", reinforced behavior, and being criminalized. Participants also indicated that what comes to mind when violent police encounters are mentioned are "death by police", "a Black male that was a victim",

“victims that did nothing wrong but who had their lives taken from them”, images and names of victims of violent police encounters, and safety concerns. Further, when violent police encounters are mentioned, participants indicated that those who are most impacted are people of color, preferably African Americans.

Participants responses to support the theme:

PT 2 shared “I believe that the most impacted groups are communities of color, preferably African Americans being shot. Just like you know, Jim Crow, slavery”.

PT 4 shared “Well, when Black children see that Black people are going to die by police, they know that police are not safe people, and we want police to be safe people. People should be able to feel like I'm in a situation in which I have to call the police and know that they're going to get help instead of something making the situation worse. I've never had to tell my White daughter to think before she calls the police. I've never had to do that. My parents never had to tell me exactly what to do. I didn't have to be trained to not die in an encounter. It's not a thing that I have to deal with”.

PT 6 shared “I always assume it's a White cop doing something to a Black person. I think growing up in America, the media has put that in the forefront. They don't highlight you know, the White cop that plays basketball with the Black kids in a bad neighborhood or the Black cop that helps a White person do something. They always sensationalize the White cop killed the Black kid or the White cop killed the Black man. And that's what you see”.

PT 7 shared “I think that when I hear about violent encounters, I think about Black men. Black men are most impacted. I do think that Black women are also

impacted. But usually, I am worried about you know, my friends or partners that I just am always thinking that something could happen”.

PT 10 shared “I do think things like Tamir Rice, Eric Garner, and George Floyd. I mean it's like Breonna Taylor, the victims that literally did nothing wrong and had their lives taken from them. Just by being black. I mean, Eric Garner was fined for a lose cigarette like, no one cares. People are like, well, he was breaking a law, but some states adultery is against the law, but we're not arresting people for that. Like there's people picking and choosing when to assert their power. I think it's police that are uncomfortable with dealing with minorities because I think law enforcement as majority are White male, conservative, and then they get all their news sources from the same tunnel vision and then they see bad, bad, bad and when that's all your brain see, that's what your brain is going to associate things with. But yeah, for me when I think of police violence, I think of cover ups. Just like the history of systemic racism and violence”.

PT 14 shared “I have a son, a Black son, he's seven, and I have brothers and I always worry about their safety, you know. When I've been pulled over by the police or had a police officer behind me for different reasons, not doing anything wrong, my heart rate increases. I always, my anxiety picks up and I've had thoughts about this could be the end. I'm going to get killed, which is, I think for me, just really a sobering reflection of my own perception of the police. I know that not every police officer out there wants to hurt me because I'm Black. But you know, I think that there is a precedence in there, there are systems in place that reinforce behavior. Patterns, in negative ways of police, law enforcement, sort of responding to Black Americans, Black and Brown Americans

and it goes all the way down to the justice system and how we're criminalized in a way for certain things”.

PT 15 shared “I think that what comes to my mind, you know, probably first would be, you know, all the various images and names that we've heard over the last, you know, years of people that were, you know, attacked, and killed by police. So that's probably the very first thing that would come into my mind is like, oh my gosh, there's another one of these incidents just like Breonna Taylor. I would probably, if I didn't have an image or nothing was said, you know, I think I would assume that it was a White officer, White male officer and a Black male person, who was a victim. That would be my first assumption”.

Theme 2: Police Control and Training

The second emerging theme for RQ1 was police control and training. In answering, “What recommendations do you have on how social workers and police can improve partnerships in addressing violent police encounters?”, several participants indicated that commitment and support from police leadership is vital in improving partnerships between social workers and police. In response, participants implied that the level of engagement from police leadership forms the foundation for success and drives the effectiveness of public safety and partnerships.

Police Control

Participants responses to support the theme:

PT 1 shared “It's essential that you have commitment at the top of your department. You need to have the leadership committed to and in favor of what you're

doing. And additionally, you need what I always call the champion. Somebody pushing these initiatives forward and making sure other people use them and value them.”

PT 3 shared “I’ve talked to the director of the program, and I will say since I talked to him, I have not seen nearly the number of people arrested for commitments, aggression at the time. It still does happen; it’s just not happening as often”.

PT 9 shared “It’s a top-down approach. You need the leaders, managers over the people who come up with a schema of the police organization, they need to say this is what we’re going to do. It comes from the top-down; it doesn’t come from the bottom up. Police officers are not going to change on their own. They may want to, but they need the support from above”.

PT 12 shared “Police management, like at the top. The more that I’ve worked with the Chief, the head, there’s another level of care. He doesn’t want people to fall through the cracks. That is important that we need to go above and beyond for these people. So, he cares, like really, truly cares”.

PT 14 shared “I think a top approach because the leadership can reinforce and change behaviors”.

Training

In addition to police control, participants indicated that training was vital in improving partnership between social workers and police. Regarding training, participants implied that police training needs improvement to implement strategies to prevent violent encounters. In response, participants shared that as police training is relooked, training should include social workers, continue throughout the career, and

center around empathy, de-escalation, crisis intervention, cultural competency, sensitivity, critical thinking, and mental health.

PT 2 shared “If there was one thing that I would say, I would think that social workers would be able to help in a way that they are helping police officers on the front end, even before they become police officers or during their process of being a social worker. Being able to impede cultural bias with cultural competencies, things that social workers know. We know that we must be culturally, you know, culturally competent. So, training such as DEI, diversity, equity, inclusion in the workplace, being able to have social workers if we were to do that, we be able to have social workers on a macro level to institute those into the police departments and trainings to understand and role playing with them on different scenarios, how they can better serve communities of color”.

PT 6 shared “I don't know what kind of empathy training they teach in the academy. I don't know how academies are broken up as other semesters. I think one of the semesters should be, you know, based on empathy and maybe even a little psychology, sociology, something that triggers their brain to think just a little bit differently in a crisis”.

PT 7 shared “There has to be a different way of training and they have to be willing to divert funding to other resources. Like if there were more teams of crisis, mental health people, then the police officers would not have to respond to stuff like that. So, if police departments are willing to like, give a little bit of their budget away, and maybe change the way that they do training, we'll see less of those encounters”.

PT 8 shared “I feel like police officers need to be trained better. For example, I did a weekend training, well, that's a good start, but you don't have the skills to de-escalate someone who's in the middle of a psychotic break. They may not have the skills to adequately de-escalate without use of force. Even if there's, you know, some sort of tragic outcome, that very often can result in the use of force just because the other trainees, people who come from a police or public background”.

PT 9 shared “I want to see more training. De-escalation training, mental health training, training about being more sensitive to implicit biases, and understanding one's own biases and knowing how they can really influence your own actions and behaviors as well as participating in more community outreach so they can feel more of a connection to their community and kind of working together as a partnership to look for more of a healthier solution. You know, and just incarcerating people doesn't really solve anything. We basically have moved mental health care to incarceration or jails, and you know that's not a place of healing”.

PT 11 shared “We need to continue training. It's not a one day, two day, or three-day workshop and then out you go. We need to have continuing training in service and dialoguing with other police and law enforcement in our nation and see what they're doing and learning about cultural competency. Cultural sensitivity would help, especially in dealing with individuals especially if they have problems, you know, they have emotional problems learning from one another so different cultural stuff”.

PT 13 shared “Police training has to be relooked at, how are they trained. They need training like the army, you know, they need that training, but they also need social

work training. Well, first, they're going to need some critical thinking processes so that they can decide between do they move forward with, you know, armed. Or do they move forward with social work and how you make that decision. So, the critical thinking and then social work skills, the basics of listening and then the skills of understanding mental illness”.

PT 14 shared “I think that the training needs to start from when they come into their role. They need to be trained to identify certain basic Mental Health First Aid stuff when they see clients and need mental health services. Respond in this situation, instead of acting how they are trained to act in every sort of situation where they feel like there's aggression which, like I said, sometimes mental health breakdown and health crises people can kind of look like they're acting in bizarre and aggressive ways, but there's a different need a different need for a more compassionate mental health-based response”.

PT 15 shared “But I do think that social workers could be involved in you know, promoting the implementation of more CIT and having it be more robust and having it be just more engaged with it that way. I just think CIT is a model that's already there, and it's already known, and if it can be done well. It's not like you're creating something new. You're just using a model that already exists, but you might be making it better. And then it also gives law enforcement a way to interact and social work a way to interact with law enforcement and kind of, you know, putting those together”.

PT 15 further discussed the importance of implementing CIT training for police.

PT 15 shared “Things such as supporting mobile response teams, Crisis Response Teams, helping them to have better connections with law enforcement, you know,

building relationships and helping to develop mutual respect and understanding of each person's role and what we can bring to the table. You know, that, in turn, reduces violent encounters because police are not responding to some of these situations on their own or they feel like they have more resources or options available. And they can reach out and feel supported and feel like they know where to go. But ultimately, CIT is really designed to give officers better tools and training so that they are not, you know, violently responding to the people that they encounter”.

Theme 3: Reduction in Violent Encounters

The third emerging theme for RQ1 was reduction in violent encounters. The theme emerged in asking participants, “What benefits, if any, would arise after partnering with police to address violent police encounters?” In response, several participants indicated that there is a benefit to social workers partnering with police to address violent police encounters. In collaborating with police, participants were hopeful for a decrease in violent police encounters and believed that change is beginning to occur through partnering and having conversations with police. Further, through their partnership with police, participants believed that if attention and awareness is brought to violent police encounters, there is hope for community comfort and an outcome of nonviolent encounters.

Participants responses to support the theme:

PT 2 shared “I’m hopeful. I must be. I must be hopeful. I believe that we can combat this. I believe that if we bring attention to it, doing studies like this to bring awareness and hearing people. One of the principles in critical race theory is counter

narratives and being able to tell their own story. When we can tell our own stories as African Americans, I believe, and I think we're starting to do that. And we're able to tell our own stories and hear what we think, and what we're saying, then I think that yes, we can combat all these barriers and unconscious biases and the lack of communication. We have police officers that are willing to work with this or are willing to understand”.

PT 5 shared “We hope it would be a decrease in violent police encounters”.

PT 7 shared “I think people are talking about it more, like more folks are noticing the disparities. And then also people in those neighborhoods where there's a lot of violence are tired of suffering with the threat of that violence”.

PT 8 shared “hopefully we’ll see a decrease”.

PT 9 shared “Well, hopefully we will see violent police encounters go away. In an ideal world and I mean, we have seen this in other countries where they have completely nonviolent, not completely nonviolent, but nonviolent, you know, nonlethal interventions that allow the better support of their community. We need to see that. We need to see people who can feel comfortable and safer to de-escalate, are educated on how to de-escalate a situation without reaching for a weapon”.

PT 11 shared “I think it would be that the community will feel more comfortable. That means they will feel more at ease. Violent police encounters will not happen to some individuals”.

PT 15 shared “I think, obviously, one of the goals would be to reduce violent encounters. So hopefully that would be an outcome”.

RQ2

What experiences do social workers in the United States have with partnering with police to address violent police encounters towards African Americans?

Theme 1: A Focus on Mental Health Crisis

The first emerging theme for RQ2 was a focus on mental health crisis. The theme emerged in asking participants, “Tell me about an experience in your line of work where you have partner with police?” Although participants reported various professional roles such as a court investigator, behavioral health specialist consulting and trainer, counseling therapist, suicide prevention coordinator, forensic social worker, crisis worker, co-responder, substance use and homeless program coordinator, juvenile court supervisor, family court supervisor, and medical social worker, it was evident in the data that participants roles intersected with police through mental health or crisis services. For example, participants reported collaborating with police in crisis hotlines, suicide prevention, court mental health assessments, and outpatient and inpatient mental health services.

Participants responses to support the theme:

PT 3 shared “Well, we have a mobile crisis team who utilize the police to go out for the mobile crisis, worker's protection.

PT 8 shared “When I served as co responder I partnered very closely with police. During that time, I had been assigned to an officer where we worked out a patrol car. So that would be, even if they're doing emergency mental health assessments in the community”.

PT 9 shared “We call them when we need them to come into our sites to help us. We have a client who's endangering themselves or endangering others and we sometimes have an involuntary detainment order out and in the past they have helped. They would have help us to call the designated crisis response team to come in and to help the team”.

PT 11 shared “Well one of my jobs back in 2006. Prior to that, I worked at a state hospital. That is a mental health inpatient facility which is the state agency here. I worked there for 30 years at the state hospital as a clinical social worker. My last three years I was the lead social worker and the unit director for the psychiatric forensic unit. A unit I guess you would call it the criminally insane, those hospitalized in this area and through the criminal justice system”.

PT 12 shared “So our primary thing is crisis response. So, 911 calls that have to do with someone who's actively suicidal mental health, any kind of mental health component. People will call and say their family member is bipolar or schizophrenic, that's usually the term that comes out and then we will go respond”.

PT 13 shared “I worked for the crisis service that covered a number of towns. At first it was just phone calls, but it became a mobile activity that I went out between 5 and 10 in the evening and meet the police at crises”.

PT 14 shared “I've worked as a clinical social worker, lots of experience working with individuals with varying sort of degrees and types of mental illness from severe to mild forms of mental, different mental illness, mental health diagnosis. And, at times, I've had to contact the police to do a well check for individuals that are suicidal. It was a concern for safety. I'd reach out to the police”.

PT 15 shared “I work with a population that has mental health issues and is determined to be at very high risk for suicide. I often work with crisis hotlines, and things of that nature. But I also work with something called crisis intervention training or CIT”.

Theme 2: Comprehension About Each Other’s Role

The second emerging theme for RQ2 was comprehension about each other’s role. The theme emerged in asking participants, “What does a healthy relationship between police and social workers look like?” In response, several participants indicated that a healthy relationship between police and social workers consist of working together, positive dialogue, cooperation, and mutual respect. In addition to having a working relationship, participants also implied that a healthy relationship between police and social workers entailed a holistic approach, collaborative information, common goals, and recognizing each other’s expertise.

Participants responses to support the theme:

PT 2 shared “I would say a healthy relationship would look like collaboration, like understanding both disciplines. Because a lot of times, we talk different languages. We have the same mission, but we might do it in a different way. It's really understanding how just connecting with each other being there, for each other in a different role. Sometimes police they have a different scope of lens that they look at, versus social workers. We're looking at things from a holistic view and being able to understand both sides”.

PT 3 shared “I think it looks like the social worker needs to understand where the officers coming from and where the defendant is. And I think the social workers job is to

mediate between the officer and the defendant to try to help them come to a healthy resolution on whatever the conflict area is”.

PT 5 shared “Obviously cooperation and communication and some understanding of the limitations of what a policeman or person can do, and what a social worker does. So, you know, I think understanding the needs of both service providers is what's necessary to make it work”.

PT 10 shared “I think it's respecting each other's roles and what we have to do. Law enforcement they're going to investigate crimes and send us referrals on that. So, respecting what their role is in that process. And then likewise, respecting our decision once we get that referral, and we make our decision and tell them that yeah, we think it needs to go to court”.

PT 12 shared “I would say, respect and a lot of communication. I feel mental health here is respected. I feel respected within law enforcement, but I think that comes from the higher ups. I think because of that, I feel respected here and my voice and mental health is taken serious because of that”.

PT 14 shared “I think it looks like a relationship, sort of mutual respect for each other's profession and sort of what each of us are bringing sort of to the table, our expertise”.

PT 15 shared “My first gut reaction to that question is that both recognize each other's particular role and expertise and you know, work together sharing information, and, you know, just collaborating but in a way that recognizes you know, what each

person brings to the table, and that each of our roles has strengths and challenges and limitations and that we need the other to, you know, make up the overall society”.

Although several participants identified what they considered a healthy relationship between police and social workers, some participants implied that they have not witnessed a healthy relationship within their professional experience with police. Participants who shared that they have not witnessed a healthy relationship with police in their professional role are indicated below.

Participants responses:

PT 7 shared “No. I have to be honest; I have not seen it but heard it's happening in other cities.

PT 14 shared “I haven't. I read up on it and I've seen it in different states and counties where police and social workers are hired to work together but I haven't witnessed that in action”.

PT 15 shared “Not always. They sort of patronize or talk down to me rather than valuing what I'm actually doing”.

Theme 3: Opposition

The third emerging theme for RQ2 was opposition. The theme emerged in asking participants, “What are some challenges that you have identified in your work with partnering with police?” In response, several participants indicated that some of the challenges faced in partnering with police was lack of respect and support from police. Also, participants reported that the field of social work was mocked and devalued by police in which left them feeling like they were in an unequal partnership. Further,

participants felt that in some of their efforts to partner with police they felt like the enemy and on opposite sides.

Participants responses to support the theme:

PT 3 shared “Um, I think the police officers think I'm the enemy. I think they think I'm getting everybody off. I'm not but I think that's how they perceive what I do”.

PT 7 shared “Often we're on opposing sides. We're on opposite sides because usually, they are the reason the client is being charged and we're the people who are defending against the charge”.

PT 8 shared “I mean, it just felt like it was a very unequal partnership most of the time. If there was an issue with something that didn't go to someone who was a behavioral health staff member, even if it was an issue with whatever it went to the police. There was no review from behavioral health”.

PT 9 shared “Sometimes there's a little bit of a mocking or like a devaluing of social work. Like I mentioned, I worked in jails and prisons, and certainly among corrections officers, there's always like a lot of teasing that goes on about social workers, you know, calling us a hug-a-thug and things like that. And that's not healthy. That's just, it's insulting, and it doesn't value what we use to bring to the table. I would not devalue their role because they often kept me safe. But at the same time, you know, I don't want to be devalued either because I also have specific purposes within a system, and I can help them, and they can help me and we can together help the people that we're serving to have a better healthier community”.

PT 15 shared “Officers at times would respond sometimes inconsistently and inappropriately. As of late of this past year, they literally have not been supporting us at all. They will act overly aggressive or overly disrespectful and exacerbate the situation. Sometimes they make everything worse. They're like, shut up, telling us to be quiet. Telling us to get away when we're in our own building. You know, yelling, yelling at our clients, being sometimes overly physical. A little bit too much of a show of force. It's like, oh my gosh, we're just trying to support our community here. We're looking to you. Sometimes they act in a way that can be determined to be racist, genderist, and sexist”.

Theme 4: Predominantly Affecting Black people

The fourth emerging theme for RQ2 was predominantly affecting Black people. The theme emerged in asking participants, “From your experiences, would you assess race as a factor when violent police encounters are mentioned?” In response to the question, several participants reported that race is a factor when violent police encounters are mentioned. Specifically, participants indicated that from their experiences, race is a huge factor as violent police encounters are predominantly affecting African Americans. As one participant shared their experience about how they noticed a difference in treatment between African Americans and White defendants, another participant used the incident of Tamir Rice to reflect how African Americans are not see as human.

Participants responses to support the theme:

PT 2 shared “Yes, I believe race is a huge, huge factor. If you look at Tamir Rice, he was a child and he had a plastic toy gun. So, the difference between those things is they did not humanize Tamir Rice. They didn't look at him as a human. And that's the

thing they don't do is they don't look at Black people. And this is a society thing. It's a systemic thing. They don't look at Black people as being a human. They look at us as being aggressive. They look at us as being, you know, all these other horrible things. Instead of we as Black people. We look at Tamir Rice. That was a baby. That was a child. That was a child, but they don't look at that. And so, until they start looking at us as human beings, none of this is going to stop”.

PT 3 shared “Yes, I have perceived that there is a difference between African American defendants and White. Well, all I can speak from is my experience. The African American defendants tend to get longer sentences and more serious sentences than the White defendant with similar charges”.

PT 5 shared “Yes, I mean, I don't think you can have the kind of structural violence that we have in our system and not have it acted out on a personal level. It's like it trickles down. And so, I've learned that you know, there aren't a lot of angels and devils but if you plug anybody into a system that's already biased, you're going to end up with bias and that's hard to push back”.

PT 7 shared “Yes. So, in 2016, there was a murder of an unarmed Black man by a White officer. He was walking to his mom's house and an officer chased him down and shot him. He was actually on his mom's doorstep walking home from a friend's house. The officer still has not gone on trial. They've been pushing to trial for the last five years now. There have been others”.

PT 8 shared “I think that in my experience, it was something where race played a role. I think it's difficult to say whether it was the predominant role. Some officers are not

trained well on how to defuse situations and things, but I mean, I think that race plays a really large role on both sides, right on the side of the police and on the side of the person who's facing a police officer”.

PT 14 shared “Oh, yeah, definitely. You know, I'm always seeing Black men being shot down or Black and brown people being shot down, brutalized by the police. I have a different understanding of race that I think my mom always told me. Police officers, you know, was established to serve as like modern day overseers to Black people after you know, slavery ended after emancipation. So, from the beginning, they were put in place to sort of police, Black Americans and that came with them being brutal and aggressive and sort of acting in ways that they think an overseer was acting with enslaved Africans”.

PT 15 shared “I think if you look at the reports that are coming in from the media and social media, you can see that the interactions are predominantly affecting, you know, Black people and people of color much more so than White people. But in the 15 incidents that happened in my community in two years or whatever, one of them about a White male, and the other 14 involves a Black male or a Black female or maybe a Hispanic person or something like that. And I'll tell you, my community is not 1 to 14, you know, difference of White and Black in terms of residents. We're talking about 20%, 18 -20% Black population to 80% White population. So, why are the people dying in jail or dying by police shootings, you know, 90% Black”.

Theme 5: Lack of Certainty

The fifth emerging theme for RQ2 was lack of certainty. The theme emerged in asking participants, “What strategies or interventions do you use as a social worker in partnership with police to address violent police encounters?” In response to the question, participants were uncertain about the strategies and interventions they use in partnership with police to address violent police encounters. However, in the participants responses, it was clear that although the participants have partnered with police in their professional roles, they have not partnered with police to address violent police encounters towards African Americans. For example, participants reported that it was not a primary objective or a specific goal to address violent police encounters in their professional role. Further, in the uncertainty, participants speculated on strategies or interventions they could use to partner with police to address violent police encounters towards African Americans.

Participants responses to support the theme:

PT 2 shared “Well, personally, I haven't, but if I had an idea of how this would look like, just as I would say, first, stepping into their community. I mean, I'm sorry, stepping into law enforcement agencies at the beginning, before they start going to the academy, and helping them to identify those biases, those micro and macro aggressions that they have implemented”.

PT 3 shared “You know, I don't. There is nothing that I've actively done to do that”.

PT 4 shared “I don't work with them like that. I can speculate on what I think I would do. But that's a totally very, very powerful tool of arms”.

PT 6 shared “I've never worked with the police directly on a violent police encounter”.

PT 7 shared “I'm not so sure I do much in the way of specifically violent police encounters”.

PT 10 shared “So I haven't had a ton of those experiences. I'm very thankful that I hadn't had to address it, hopefully I don't have to”.

PT 15 shared “In my job description, or in my specific role, it's not my primary objective to reduce violent police encounters. That's not like a specific goal of my position. But I felt like it's a secondary outcome”.

Summary

Chapter 4 presented the findings of the data from the interviews. For RQ1 that aimed to explore social workers in the United States perceptions on partnering with police to address violent police encounters towards African Americans, several participants believed that fear and race play a role in violent police encounters, specifically when stating what comes to mind and who is most impacted when violent police encounters are mentioned. Fear and race was evident in the response of participants as they identified feelings of anxiety, safety, worry, criminalization, dying by the police, reinforced behavior, and African Americans. The findings of the study also revealed that several participants believed to improve partnerships between social workers and police, police control and training is recommended. In terms of police control and training, participants believe that commitment and support from police leadership and continuing training implemented with social workers is key to driving the

effectiveness of public safety and partnerships. Further, in partnering with police to address violent police encounters, several participants were hopeful and believed that a benefit to partnering with police is a reduction in violent police encounters.

RQ2 focused on social workers experiences on partnering with police to address violent police encounters towards African Americans. As reflected in the data and findings, participants do not have experience in partnering with police to address violent police encounters towards African Americans. Participants' experience in partnering with police rest in mental health and crisis settings. Also, while participants were able to describe what a healthy relationship looks like between social workers and police (comprehension about each other's role), several participants reported that opposition was a challenge in their experience with partnering with police. For example, several participants stated that they felt like they were on opposite sides or in an unequal partnership with police. Additionally, while participants did not have experience in partnering with police to address violent police encounters towards African Americans, in assessing race as a factor when violent police encounters are mentioned, several participants reported that from their experience, race is a factor in violent police encounters and affects African Americans. Furthermore, in exploring the experiences of social workers with partnering with police to address violent police encounters towards African Americans, participants were unable to identify strategies and interventions used to partner with police to address violent police encounters towards African Americans.

Chapter 5 explores the interpretations of the findings which includes the analyzation of the finding in the context of the theoretical framework. Additionally,

Chapter 5 describes the limitations of the study, recommendations for future research, and implications to positive social change. Further, Chapter 5 concludes with a “take home” message that captures the key essence of the study.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Using semistructured interviews, I conducted interviews with 15 licensed social workers in the United States who were currently practicing in social work, held a degree of social work from an accredited university, and had a professional role, responsibility, or expertise intersect with police. The purpose of this generic qualitative inquiry study was to explore social workers in the United States' perceptions and experiences on partnering with police to address violent police encounters toward African Americans. The attempt to explore social workers in the United States perceptions and experiences on partnering with police stemmed from the literature showing that violent police encounters towards African Americans are pervasive, and although there is a need for social work and police collaboration to address violent police encounters, the role of social work in policing has decreased (see Patterson & Swan, 2019; Teasley et al., 2018). Conducting this study provided meaningful findings for gaining insight into African Americans encounters with police and the outcomes that it brings add to the literature on social workers and police working together to decrease police violence (see Jacobs et al., 2021; Patterson & Swan, 2019; Varghese, 2016).

Exploring social workers in the United States perceptions on partnering with police to address violent police encounters towards African Americans, granted the following key findings:

- Fear and race play a role in violent police encounters.
- Police control and training is recommended to improve partnerships between social workers and police.

- A benefit to partnering with police is a reduction in violent police encounters.

Exploring social workers in the United States experiences on partnering with police to address violent police encounters towards African Americans, provided the following key findings:

- Social workers do not have experience in partnering with police to address violent police encounters towards African Americans. Social workers experience in partnering with police is in mental health and crisis settings.
- A healthy relationship between social workers and police entails comprehension about each other's role.
- Opposition is a challenge in social workers experience with partnering with police.
- From social workers experiences, race is a factor in violent police encounters, affecting African Americans.
- Social workers lack certainty about strategies and interventions used to partner with police to address violent police encounters towards African Americans.

In summary, social workers who participated in the study believe that race serves as a factor in why violent police encounters occur, and while social workers are hopeful that partnering with police can lead to a reduction in violent police encounters, social workers face challenges such as opposition to partner with police. Additionally, the findings of the study revealed that while social workers have experience in partnering with police in mental health and crisis settings, social workers do not have experience

and lack strategies in partnering with police to address violent police encounters towards African Americans. Further, while social workers can describe what a healthy relationship looks like between social workers and police, they have yet to witness it in their partnership with police. For example, participants reported that the field of social work is mocked and devalued by police in which they feel like they are in an unhealthy partnership.

Interpretation of Findings

This section describes how the findings confirm, disconfirm, or extend knowledge in the discipline. Also, this section analyzes and interprets the findings in the context of the theoretical framework.

Literature Interpretation

Exploring social workers in the United States perceptions and experiences on partnering with police to address violent police encounters towards African Americans revealed several insights that confirms African Americans encounters with police and extends knowledge to the social work profession. First, regarding social workers perceptions and experiences on partnering with police to address violent police encounters towards African Americans, the findings of fear and race playing a factor, predominately affecting African Americans support previous research that suggest that African Americans are at greater risk for experiencing violent police encounters. For example, Tolliver et al. (2016) conducted a study to explore police killings of unarmed African Americans. The study revealed that the killings of unarmed African Americans by police continues to be at the forefront. Similarly, Edwards et al. (2019) conducted a

study to examine how the risk of being killed by police use of force in the United States varies across social groups. The study revealed that African American men and women faced higher lifetime risk of being killed by police than other ethnic groups. Also, in supporting previous research, the findings of this study confirm the importance of police and social work partnerships to reduce violent police encounters.

As the literature suggested that social work and police partnerships promote safer police engagements, the findings of my study indicated that a benefit to partnering with police to address violent police encounters will lead to a reduction in violent encounters (see Patterson & Swan, 2019; Teasley et al., 2018). Additionally, as the findings of this study support previous research in revealing that African Americans are more likely to be stopped by police, the findings of the study confirmed the need of a safer and equitable police encounter experience which can be obtainable through social work and police partnership.

While the findings of this study confirmed the needed connection between the two disciplines, the findings also extend new knowledge to the social work profession. Considering that previous social work research lacks content regarding collaboration between social work and police, suggesting that social workers are unprepared to address issues that incorporate the roles played by race in violent police encounters towards African Americans, the findings offer new insight into social workers experiences in partnering with police to address violent police encounters (see Teasley et al., 2018; Tolliver, 2016). For example, the findings of my study revealed that social workers lack certainty about strategies and interventions used to address such encounters. Also, social

workers reported that in their experience with partnering with police they felt that the field of social work was mocked and devalued by police in which left them feeling like they were in an unequal partnership.

Further, as the findings of this study revealed that social workers lack strategies, interventions, and experience with partnering with police to address violent police encounters towards African Americans. The findings offer new insight on previous research suggesting that the reduction of social work and police partnerships has decreased due to the to the uncertainty of social worker's effectiveness (see Patterson & Swan, 2019; Teasley et al., 2018). Also, with previous research suggesting that a multidisciplinary approach with police and social workers can foster activism and justice, this study provides meaningful findings for gaining insight on how social workers and police can improve partnerships (see Moore et al., 2018). For example, the findings of this study revealed that to improve partnerships between social workers and police, police control and training is recommended. Also, in partnering with police to address violent police encounters, the findings of this study revealed that a benefit to partnering with police is a reduction in violent police encounters. Thus, this study builds on the need to explore social work perceptions and experiences on partnerships with police to combat violence and improve police responses to violent encounters with African Americans.

Theoretical Interpretation

The theoretical framework for the study consisted of group formation and critical race theory. Even though social workers are hopeful for improvement and believe that social work and police partnership can reduce violent police encounters, social workers

have yet to master effective partnerships with police. In reference to the findings of the study, social workers face challenges in partnering with police. For example, challenges social workers face in partnering with police include a lack of respect and support from police in which social workers feel like they are in an unequal partnership or on opposite sides. Further, while social workers believe that a healthy relationship between social workers and police entails comprehension about each other's role, they have not witnessed this within their professional experience with police.

Considering the findings of this study, group formation theory is applicable to the study because it describes the stages that groups follow as they come together to work on tasks (see Keene, 2020; Ungvarsky, 2020). For example, group formation theory suggests that all groups go through various stages to work together effectively, overcome challenges, and accomplish work (Natvig & Stark, 2016). Further, group formation theory proposes that overcoming challenges is a normal part of group development and is essential for learning to work together (Zhen, 2017). Additionally, group formation theory suggests that group cohesiveness does not happen automatically, it develops as the group works together. Thus, the findings of this study align with group formation theory's assumptions that for groups to be influential, members of the group should work together and establish clear roles and goals to contribute to outcomes (see Natvig & Stark, 2016).

One of the theoretical assumptions of critical race theory is that race is a social construct and racism is a vital part of the United States, which cannot be corrected if not acknowledged (Burrell-Craft, 2020; Hadden et al., 2016). As critical race theory

challenges the social construction of race and considers that racism is structurally built into institutions and systems which increases the likelihood for unequal treatment of marginalized groups such as African Americans, the participant's statements highlight the tenet. (Aymer, 2016; Bracey, 2015; Lawson-Borders, 2019).

This theoretical framework was supported by the data. Evidence from this study indicate that from social workers perceptions and experiences of partnering with police to address violent police encounters towards African Americans, race is a factor, affecting African Americans. Further, as the findings of the study recognize the significance of violent police encounters towards African Americans, it demonstrates how race continues to be a pervasive component of police interactions with African Americans.

Limitations

This qualitative inquiry study explored social workers in the United States perceptions and experiences on partnering with police to address violent police encounters towards African Americans. While saturation was reached by identifying themes, nonprobability sampling (purposeful) was used to collect data from 15 licensed social workers in the United States. Considering that I used purposeful sampling, the findings are not generalizable to professions outside the experiences of the sample. For example, this study targeted licensed social workers in the United States who were currently practicing in social work, held a degree of social work from an accredited university, and had professional roles, responsibilities, or expertise intersect with police, disregarding valuable viewpoints related to the topic. Likewise, the frame of this study only focused on African Americans, with no attention on the impact of police violence on

other ethnic or social groups. Furthermore, although it was not an inclusion criterion, the experiences of the participants revealed that they did not have experience in partnering with police on addressing violent police encounters towards African Americans. Further research could offer more insight into partnerships and violent police encounters. The noted limitations of this study are an opportunity for future research.

Recommendations

This was a qualitative inquiry study, aiming to explore social workers in the United States perceptions and experiences on partnering with police to address violent police encounters towards African Americans. The recommendations for future research are based on the limitations, strengths, and findings of the study. Considering that this research is from the drawings of qualitative, future researchers should employ a quantitative approach. Utilizing a quantitative approach could achieve more generalizable results. In addition to employing a quantitative approach, it is valuable to conduct research with different populations, communities, and social groups beyond African Americans. Conducting research with other social groups would provide a more diverse view of the outcome of police encounters. In addition to conducting research with other social groups, conducting research with other professions or licensed social workers whose professional experience extends beyond mental health or crisis settings is recommended. Further, due to the limitation of the scope of analysis, the findings of this study suggest that there is a need for further research on this topic. It is hoped that further research on this topic would deepen the understandings of social workers partnerships with police and violent police encounters towards African Americans.

Implications

In addition to contributing to the field of social work by highlighting a phenomenon through anecdotes and lived experiences of those who practice, the findings of the study provide valuable insights, positive change, and recommendations for social work practice.

The findings of the study revealed that social workers believe that violent police encounters are associated with African Americans. Considering that race plays a role in violent police encounters, affecting African Americans, the information gained from this study promotes advocacy for change on behalf of vulnerable groups. Given that social work is a profession of helping others and advocating for those in need, this study fosters positive social change to inform and influence policies, practices, and legislative outcomes. For example, social workers can collaborate with policymakers to create policies that puts attention toward safer police encounters.

Additionally, the findings revealed that social workers do not have experience in partnering with police to address violent police encounters towards African Americans. Per the findings of the study, social worker's experience in partnering with police rest in mental health and crisis settings. The findings confirm that further research is needed to bridge the gap between research and practice. Further, as social workers and police continue to work in similar settings and with the same populations, the findings of this study foster new insights and understanding to help improve partnerships between the two professions and inform effective change to produce positive outcomes. For example,

as social workers and police learn how to form partnerships, the knowledge gained can lead to reduction in violent police encounters.

As well, the findings of the study highlight the challenges that arise when social workers and police collaborate. For example, the findings revealed that social workers face challenges such as opposition and lack strategies and interventions in partnering with police. These challenges point to the need for further research and social work training to ensure that social workers have the skills and competencies to partner with police to address violent police encounters. This will further strengthen the needed connection between the two disciplines while generating knowledge on how to foster a safer and equitable police encounter experience. Further, in anticipating future social work practice, it is vital that the social work academic content stay cognizant of issues related to police encounters and African Americans to alleviate the social problem of violent police encounters.

Moreover, the findings of the study revealed that social workers believe that partnering with police can reduce violent police encounters and police control and training is recommended to improve partnerships between social workers and police. Considering social workers beliefs and recommendations, this study can influence positive social change by incorporating culturally relevant social work content and practices and advancing understanding of social and economic injustice for oppressed populations in the context of police interactions (Giwa, 2018; Patterson & Swan, 2019; Smith, 2016; NASW, 2020). By doing so, one gains information and recommendations on social work practice and community engagement ideas that foster a more safe and

equitable law enforcement encounter experience. Further, it is hopeful that the findings of the study lead to multidisciplinary collaboration between social work and police, and community engagement to foster safer police encounters for African Americans (Teboh, 2016).

Conclusion

As there is a plethora of information on the occurrence of violent police encounters against African Americans, there is limited information on social work and police partnerships from the perspective of social workers on addressing such encounters. Thus, this study promotes a much-needed dialogue between social workers and police to work together to understand oppressions African Americans face and seek ways to dismantle them.

The purpose of this study was to explore social workers in the United States perceptions and experiences on partnering with police to address violent police encounters towards African Americans. Among the data collected from the participants, the findings of this study suggest that race is a factor in violent police encounters, affecting African Americans. While social workers are hopeful and believe that partnering with police can lead to a reduction in violent police encounters, social workers face challenges such as opposition to partner with police. Additionally, the findings of the study revealed that while social workers have experience in partnering with police in mental health and crisis settings, social workers do not have experience and lack strategies in partnering with police to address violent police encounters towards African Americans. Further, while social workers can describe what a healthy relationship looks

like between social workers and police, they have yet to witness it in their partnership with police. For example, participants reported that the field of social work is mocked and devalued, and they feel like they are in an unhealthy partnership.

Based on the findings, this research indicates a need for additional exploration in social work and police partnerships and violent encounters, along with an exploration of how police encounters impact other professions and social groups.

Fundamental to the core of social work is helping others and advocacy for vulnerable and underserved populations. As this study concludes, it is with hope that the knowledge gained from this research will be used to promote positive social change to improve social work and police partnerships and safer police encounters with African Americans.

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Appendix A: Instrument

Interview Questionnaire

Demographic Questions

1. What is your highest level of education?
2. Regarding your social work license, what state are you actively practicing and what is your licensure level?
3. What is your job title?

Perceptions

1. When violent police encounters are mentioned, what comes to mind and whom do you think are the most impacted?
2. Would you consider yourself to be an advocate for persons involved in violent police encounters? If so, say more.
3. What do you want to see done differently when it comes to violent police encounters?
4. What recommendations do you have on how social workers and police can improve partnerships in addressing violent police encounters?
5. What benefits, if any, would arise after partnering with police to address violent police encounters?
6. Would you assess these benefits as equal across race?

Professional Experience

1. Tell me about an experience in your line of work where you have partner with police?
2. What does a healthy relationship between police and social workers look like?
3. Based on that explanation, have you witnessed this in your career as a social worker?
4. What are some challenges that you have identified in your work with partnering with police?
5. Would you assess that communities of different racial composition may present different challenges to strategies and interventions?
6. Can you ever see an improvement being made to solve these challenges? If so, say more?
7. From your experiences, would you assess race as a factor when violent police encounters are mentioned?
8. What strategies or interventions do you use as a social worker in partnership with police to address violent police encounters?

Closing

1. Is there something that I did not ask that you would like to add?
2. Can I contact you in the future if I have follow-up questions?

Appendix B: Recruitment Study Invitation

Study Title: Social Workers' Perceptions on Partnering with Police to Address Violent Police Encounters towards African Americans

My name is Adrian Springfield, and I am a doctoral candidate in Walden University's Social Work program. I am interested in exploring social workers in the United States perceptions and experiences on partnering with police to address violent police encounters toward African Americans.

With your participation in the study, I aim to answer the following questions: 1. What are the perceptions of social workers in the United States on partnering with police to address violent police encounters towards African Americans? 2. What experiences do social workers in the United States have with partnering with police to address violent police encounters towards African Americans?

Participation in this study is completely voluntary and upon agreeance of participation, you will be provided with a full description of the research purpose, personnel, procedures, risks, benefits, and a reiteration that your participation is completely voluntary. Should you be interested in participating in this study, you can contact the researcher, Adrian Springfield at [REDACTED] to set the date and time of the interview. You can also contact Dr. Curtis Davis at [REDACTED] as he serves as my chair for the study. Would you be interested in reviewing the materials and participating?