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Lived Experiences of College-Educated African American Males During Police Interactions in Central Kentucky

Lawrence Eric Charles
Walden University

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College of Psychology and Community Services

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Criminal Justice Faculty

Dr. Ali Banister, Committee Member,
Criminal Justice Faculty

Dr. Dianne Williams, University Reviewer,
Criminal Justice Faculty

Chief Academic Officer and Provost
Sue Subocz, Ph.D.

Walden University
2023

Abstract

Lived Experiences of College-Educated African American Males During Police
Interactions in Central Kentucky

by

Lawrence Eric Charles

MS, Walden University, 2021

BA, Columbia College, 2008

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
Criminal Justice

Walden University

February 2023

Abstract

Recent high-profile incidents involving police interaction with Black citizens have increased community outrage and racial divisions between police and African Americans. Despite previous research on relations between African Americans and police, little literature has focused on the lived experiences of college-educated African American males when interacting with police. In the study 12 participants were interviewed. The analytical approach was grounded theory, which identified seven themes that most of the men had in common. One shared lived experience expressed the need for collaborative and inclusive policies that prevent bias, police brutality, and wrongful arrest and detention of the African American community. A recommendation is that federal, state, and local governments allot funding and to police departments and communities to equip them with both training and financial resources that support reducing racial and implicit bias and promote collaboration of citizens and police that build trust and improve public safety. Findings may be used by police administrators for positive social change in improving the interactions between citizens and police.

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Dedication

This research is dedicated to my wife and soulmate Tracey and our children, Jorden, Carolan, Tayler, and Leilauni. They remind me every day that education is a lifelong journey. I have a heart full of gratitude and love for my Father, John Barry, who will be watching me walk the graduation stage from heaven. My battle-buddy and brother Major Don R. Davis, United States Army, whom I stood side by side through the fire. Rest in peace Don! Additional dedication to the brothers of my beloved Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity Incorporated, who continue to be stalwarts in the areas of brotherhood, academic excellence, service, and advocacy to humanity.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine lived experiences during interactions between college-educated African American males and police in Central Kentucky. High-profile incidents involving police use of force with Black citizens resulting in the deaths of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor sparked national outrage and tempered racial divisions between police and African Americans. (GBD, 2019) In the aftermath of both incidents, many people of African American ancestry provided a similar perspective that fear of interaction with police was consistent regardless of social or financial standing, much like the findings of Assari and Moghani Lankarani (2018). The social problem was the stigma related to fear of interaction with police and how communities can eliminate racial divisions.

I found little literature on college-educated minorities and police regarding race relations, racial bias, social status, and financial standing. The fear of interaction with police remained a consistent issue. Much of the previous research to legitimize race relations within law enforcement and the court system had focused on poor Black neighborhoods (Ortiz, 2020). Despite this, the general perception among Black people is that there was a greater probability of being targeted but a lack of being protected.

Prior research examining lived interactions with the African American community was commonly centered on inner cities and was not formalized to a specific educational subset within the culture. Following the riots in Ferguson, Missouri, more emphasis has been placed on the gap in race relations and trust regarding the police and African Americans (Hutto & Green, 2016). College-educated African American men are

among an emerging entity in the Kentucky. According to the Kentucky State Report Card (2021), while the rate of college educated African Americans is 25.3%, the attainment rate of growth is 8.3% reflecting a significant increase placing it in the top 15 of 41 states within the statistical grouping. The problem within this demographic was a lack of trust in police and a general sense that they pose a threat of intrusion to the civil rights of Black people (Kearns et al., 2019). According to Schwartz (2020), the death of George Floyd is just one more illustration of the overwhelming statistic that indicated the risk of excessive force or fatal shootings of Black Americans by police were much higher than any other demographic.

Chapter 1 provides an overview of (a) introduction of study, (b) background of study, (c) problem statement, (d) purpose of study, (e) nature of the study, (f) assumptions, (g) scope of delimitations, (h) limitations, (i) significance of study, and (j) definition of terms. The primary focus of the research was an exploration of lived experiences and interactions between college educated African Americans and police in Central Kentucky. The conclusion of Chapter 1 offers implications for possible social change and a summary review of the chapter.

Background of the Study

The term *lived experience*, as defined in the Oxford English Dictionary (2020), is personal knowledge of the world gained thru direct first-hand involvement in everyday events rather than representations constructed by others. With this research I intended to explore the rationale of lived experiences during interaction between college educated African American men and police in Central Kentucky. Prior research on police relations

with the African American community is centered around inner cities and was not formalized to a specific educational subset within the culture. Following the events of Ferguson, Missouri and other incidents of recent time, more emphasis has been placed on the gap in race relations and trust in reference to the police and African Americans. College-educated African American men represented an emerging entity in the United States. The background of this demographic has evidence of a lack of trust in police and a general sense that police pose a threat of intrusion to the civil rights of Black people (Kearns et al., 2019). As police and local governments queried solutions to the negative opinions, a large majority of African American citizens lacked a sense of trust in police. As a result, it was suitable to explore thoughts, processes, and logical ideas that would work towards historical trends, beliefs, values, and norms and elicit social change towards the idea of equal treatment (Gau & Paoline, 2020). A key gap in research existed that explored understanding policing aspects both personally and professionally as to whether they understand, recognize, and interpreted racial bias and how it may be a forgone conclusion by college educated African American males that police would treat them no differently even though as a subsection of society they were educated and majority law-abiding. This study was needed to combine key information received from college educated African American males and police to examine and interpret solutions that could lead to reducing incidents related to preconditioned negative assumptions when in day-to-day contact.

Problem Statement

Incidents of excessive force during interaction between police and African Americans had increased at alarming rates (Robinson & Chaney, 2019). The incidents were often not limited to low income, high crime areas. Even African Americans of middle- and upper-class financial and social statuses have vocalized a general sense of danger when coming into routine or nonroutine contact with police (Small & Pager, 2020). This was a contrast from White citizens of the United States who did not share the same sentiment in their own dealings with police. Presently, African Americans of all financial and social backgrounds were more likely to be victims of stop and frisk, police brutality, and excessive force by police (Kramer & Remster, 2018). This perception led to control mechanisms embedded in how they responded to police and lessons they shared more often within their daily communication. The United States had gained worldwide attention to human rights issues raised by organizations like the United Nations, Black Lives Matter, and the American Civil Liberties Union, heightening awareness of incidents involving police. More recently, protests had led to the fragmented proposal of defunding police departments as recommended changes to foster equality (Martin, 2021). The views of college-educated African American men represented the importance of implementing a cultural shift and sharing ideas on deescalating situations that had gained public interest.

Presently, police brutality, and elevated incidents of violence and death of African Americans living in the United States had become an elevated matter of public health (Strazewski, 2020). As police and local governments queried solutions to the negative

opinions, most African American citizens lacked trust in police. (Hutto & Green, 2016). As a result, it was necessary for more focused research exploring thoughts, processes, and ideas that work towards a significant understanding of phenomena related to historical trends, beliefs, values, and norms. It elicits social change towards equal treatment (Gau & Paoline, 2020).

Prior to the death of George Floyd, researchers from Stanford University, led by Pierson et al. (2020) released the following findings regarding racial disparity in police stops:

We found evidence that the bar for searching black and Hispanic drivers was lower than that for searching white drivers. Finally, we found that legalization of marijuana reduced the number of searches of white, black, and Hispanic drivers- but the bar for searching black and Hispanic drivers was still lower than white drivers' post-legalization. (p. 740)

A critical element of this research involved whether college educated African American males had witnessed and could interpret racial bias during interactions with police while in both routine and nonroutine contact, and if the bias was material and evident during the interaction. Vito et al. (2020) investigated whether college educated African American males believed police understood, recognized, and could interpret racial bias. The assumption of whether college-educated African American males believe that police would treat them differently because they were Black is a concern. Vito et al. (2020), identified some key feedback into the disparity of Black Americans during interactions with police. From a global perspective, the hope was that the problem can be transitioned

from the current state of autonomy to an advanced system of interdependence that can lead to accountability (Ray, 2020). College-educated African American men had typically attended higher education across the United States at historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs) and predominantly White institutions (PWIs) according to Johnson and Hollingsworth (2005).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to better interpret phenomena related to an exploration on lived experiences of college educated African American during police interactions. The group represented a critical element to improving relations within the Commonwealth of Kentucky, Central region. In this study I examined lived experiences within beliefs, values, and norms related to interaction. Additionally, extracting myths and experiences that may lead to progress could eliminate a gap in current research that exists. This could address building of a climate of mutual respect. The resulting outcome could create strong bonds toward reducing the likelihood of racial bias and incidents of violence. The issue of excessive force and its effect on the African American community is in a state of public health crisis (Strazenski, 2020). The need for an increased understanding of how police and college-educated African American men relate to improving lived experiences during interactions within Central Kentucky could lead to a positive change in thinking toward eliminating racial divisions.

Research Question

The term *lived experience*, as defined in the Oxford English Dictionary (2020), was personal knowledge of the world gained thru direct first-hand involvement in

everyday events rather than representations constructed by others. The experiences provoke thought and form opinion. The research question related to the research was “What are the lived experiences of college-educated African American Males during police interactions?”

Theoretical Framework

For this study’s theoretical framework, I used grounded theory intended to explore the intersecting and often misunderstood views of college-educated African American men. Grounded theory enabled me to analyze data and gain a better understanding of beliefs and assumptions. The focus group method would allow the group to gain depth while sharing beliefs and reflecting on building better outcomes (see Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Focus groups had proven to be an effective approach to build collaborative thought and in-depth understanding (Nyumba et al., 2018). It is an appropriate theoretical framework when engaging in dialogue that fostered improved interactions.

I conducted one focus group of college-educated African American men residing within Central Kentucky. Open-ended fact-finding questions were asked for data collection, analysis, and theory formulation. The focus was to see what key elements, both similar and dissimilar, led to effective interactions. It involved exploring a more modern idea of working interdependently in problem solving versus working autonomously to build a more solid community framework.

African Americans continue to face issues of police brutality and poor health outcomes when in contact with police (Alang et al., 2017). Many Black people have identified barriers to communication prevalent since their youth including prior

experience with judges, juvenile justice courts, and social services (Zane et al., 2021).

The juvenile justice aspect may have been the most formidable because it involved reaching at-risk youth and addressing issues prior to early adulthood. The young men and women within Central Kentucky represented the future growth and sustainment of the commonwealth. This research could shed light on if police and college-educated African American men can work together to build a foundational paradigm shift that facilitates change; this model could be assistive to social change.

This approach was based on the framework of Lazarsfeld and Merton, who used focus groups to explore both social and psychological phenomena related to mass communication (Corbin and Strauss, 1990). They formulated the idea that mass communication coupled with comprehensive analysis of interpretations of social mechanisms in a community could help people better understand their environment (Hynek, 2012). Therefore, the research questions would invoke verbal and nonverbal reactions from the participants that would be critical to evaluating how much their influence can contribute to better communication and improved interactions.

Nature of the Study

For this qualitative research study, I used grounded theory in the form of focus group interviews to examine an exploration of lived experiences of college educated African American males during interactions with police in Central Kentucky. The number of participants in the focus group was 10; Robson (2010) recommended that focus groups require a minimum number of 10 to make valid assertions regarding the phenomenon under study. The rationale of the study was significant because it brought

two key variables not commonly grouped to problem solving through effective interactions.

Focus groups as a form of communication theory was determined to be the most appropriate qualitative research method because of the perception of the participants regarding their experience involving lived interactions, bias, and myths involving lived experiences of college educated African American males during interactions with police. Analyzing the experience of the focus group participants gave me a better understanding of the essence of meanings that could have led to effective and collaborative goals. The face-to-face- interactions were accomplished through Zoom meeting, and individual surveys based on current COVID 19 restrictions.

Definitions

African American or Black: A person from America who is a member of people who have dark skin and whose ancestors came from Africa (English Oxford Living Dictionary, 2020).

Collaborative: The act of working with another person or group of people to create or produce something (Oxford English Dictionary, 2020).

Educated: Having had the type of education mentioned; having been to school, college or university mentioned (Cambridge English Dictionary, 2020).

Lived experiences: Personal knowledge of the world gained through direct, first-hand involvement in everyday events rather than representations constructed by others (Oxford Reference, n.d.).

Police brutality: Excessive or unjustified force used by a member of law enforcement.

Racial bias: The act of being prejudiced against people of color (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2021).

Assumptions

Assumptions must be valid or else the research is meaningless according to Leedy and Omrod (2010). Assumptions cannot be made true without some type of proof. In this research certain assumptions were applied:

- Participants would voluntarily participate in the focus group process.
- Participants would identify as college educated African American males residing in Central Kentucky.
- Participants would provide honest and accurate responses to focus group questions.
- Grounded theory was the appropriate theoretical framework for this study.
- The instrumentation would use open-ended questions to allow for in-depth responses.
- Data collection methods and analysis procedures would be used to accurately capture the data of the study.

Scope and Delimitations

Theofanidis and Fountouki (2020) stated delimitations require challenging the assumptions of researchers while openly exposing shortcomings that might be tackled. This research was limited to 10 participants in a focus group of college educated African

American males located in Central Kentucky. I had the potential to generalize the findings of a focus group of 10 college-educated African American males to the requisite population of college educated African American males residing in Central Kentucky. Excluded from the participation were (a) college educated African American males not residing in Central Kentucky; (b) African American males who had not attended or completed some form of postsecondary or trade school education; (c) individuals with whom I had a personal relationship, including family, friends, and professional associates. This was to prevent any bias or favoritism between me and the participants. I did not consider whether participants had graduated or earned a degree or certification from the college of university they attended. The findings of this research were based on a small sample group of participants located in the Central region of the Commonwealth of Kentucky.

A second delimitation was that the participants would primarily live in urban areas within the Central region of Kentucky. The U.S. Census Bureau 2020 defined *urban* as an area an area which is (a) characterized by housing structures in proximity, (b) part of a municipality, (c) had a population of at least 2,500 inhabitants (Census Bureau, 2020).

Limitations

The study was focused on participants perceptions regarding effective interactions and community growth through a collaborative effort of college educated African American males. The following limitations were identified:

- Participants had different perceptions based on prior experiences.

- Participants may not have responded to questions candidly because of embarrassment or fear of reprisal.
- Participants may not have responded to questions candidly due to the personal nature of prior experience with the content of the focus group/interview.
- The focus group was limited to 40-45 minutes.
- The study was limited to the participants in Central Kentucky.
- Participants would be limited to respondents identified as college-educated African American males residing in Central Kentucky.

Potential bias could have occurred if members of the focus group formed cohesive group dynamics (Corbin and Strauss, 1990). To prevent this, measures were taken to conduct the focus group online versus in-person to lower the probability of cliques or shared group dynamics. This control was effective in making focus group members rely more on their external self rather than each other when responding to prevent influence during the research.

Significance of the Study

This study helped fill an existing literature gap regarding understanding the effectiveness of the phenomena surrounding an exploration of lived experiences of college educated African American males during interactions with police in Central Kentucky. The research was unique because it synthesized lived experiences within a particular demographic and gender within the community to work towards eliminating bias and fostering collaborative growth. Presently, there was limited research on this subject area. It should be mentioned that among Peels 9 Principles of Policing is that the

police are the public, and the public are the police, (Williams, 2003). This research could provide valuable information for developing and implementing collaborative community-based initiatives that would improve racial relations and enhance policy makers ability to incorporate ideas that work to reduce racial bias, lower the possibility of incidents, and enhance public safety in Central Kentucky.

Summary and Transition

In this study, I focused on research participants' perceptions regarding the effectiveness of lived experiences and interactions. A qualitative approach was used to explore the participants' ideas and perceptions of lived experiences during interaction and how effective collaboration could improve relations. The research was comprised of college educated African American male participants within Central Kentucky. I identified and explored emerging and common themes among the participants, which allowed me to better understand their beliefs, values, norms, and perceptions. This study has implications for social change in both effective policy and practice. It gave future researchers information and knowledge about effective and collaborative interaction during routine and nonroutine contact. It also served as a benchmark for policy makers when extracting ideas by reviewing the collected information in the study when considering revision of laws, plans, and policy that support public safety for all citizens.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

The purpose of this qualitative study was to better interpret phenomena related to an exploration on lived experiences of college educated African American during police interactions. Incidents of excessive force during interaction between police and African Americans have increased at alarming rates, according to Robinson and Chaney, (2019). The incidents were often limited to low income, high crime areas. There was an evident literature gap that existed related to exploring lived experience between college educated African American males during interactions with police. This chapter provides an overview of the history of excessive force against African Americans from slavery to the present from the origins to social acceptance and civil rights. Other issues addressed include (a) literature search strategy, (b) theoretical foundation, (c) conceptual framework, (d) historical overview of police and the black community, (e) excessive force in Central Kentucky, (f) police officers and mental health, (g) disadvantages of defunding, and (h) the status of excessive force in Central Kentucky. Recent high-profile incidents that occurred involving police interaction with Black citizens such as the George Floyd and Breonna Taylor fatalities were notable as they sparked social outrage and increased racial divisions between police and African Americans within those communities (Iheme, 2020). In the wake of both incidents as prominent figures in the African American community provided similar perspectives, it was apparent that fear of interaction with police was consistent regardless of social, or financial standing. The social problem was the stigma related to fear of interaction with police and how communities can work to eliminate racial divisions.

Current literature related to the problem dates back to slavery, post-Civil War, Reconstruction to the dawn of the civil rights movement into the present era that correlates to the continued discussion as on solving racial division (Halloran, 2018). Both the summary of key events in United States history and correlation of relevant events and facts the research groundwork could be strategically assessed for effective ideas, lessons learned, and solutions that could lead to a change in thinking towards equality and safety for all citizens.

Literature Search Strategy

The search for current 2013-2020, peer reviewed articles was conducted via the online library. These databases included the Walden University Library resources, Criminal Justice Abstracts, FBI Uniform Crime Reporting, GaleOne File: Criminal Justice, JSTOR, and SAGE Journals. Google Scholar was also used to locate open access articles. The journal articles reviewed for this project range from several disciplines to include sociology, law, criminology, political science, criminal justice, and public health. The following key words were used to locate specific articles related to this research: *police brutality, mental health, public health, Black, African Americans, interactions, defunding, civil rights, lived experience, racial bias, and crime*. Variations of these terms were used to achieve expanded search results. Grounded theory was chosen for the theoretical framework for this study and is discussed in the following section.

Theoretical Foundation

The goal of grounded theory is to expand upon explanation of a phenomenon by identifying the key elements and categorizing the relationships of those elements with the

process of the experiment. Breckenridge and Jones (2009) observed that no theories can be built in a vacuum where researchers assume nothing about a concept. Instead, the existing frameworks work as a guide towards advanced theories. In this case, the findings were integrated into the traditional analysis of racial divisions and strained relationships between the law enforcement officers and the black community.

In this study, I intended to use the grounded theory method to develop an internal understanding of the relationships between the black communities during interactions with police in Central Kentucky. While these relationships had been comprehensively investigated in the United States and Kentucky, they left a wide gap that needs deeper exploration. I focused on Central Kentucky. In this case, grounded theory was appropriate because little or nothing was known about the phenomena related to lived interactions college educated African Americans and police. There has been limited progress in solving the issues related to incidents involving police when in routine and nonroutine contact with Black citizens. Despite the fact there was much material on the problems related to racial bias, excessive force, and the likelihood of violence toward police, a gap exists on the exploration lived experiences and interactions in a collaborative effort to foster improved relations. For effective and collaborative experiences and lived interactions to move beyond concept and serve as a starting point for increased studies, there should be dialogue on sharing and learning from perceptions, and narratives that lead to positive outcomes.

Conceptual Framework

Glaser and Strauss in their 1967 analysis of the use of grounded theory stated that: “Our position . . . does not at all imply that the generation of new theory should proceed in isolation from existing grounded theory” (p. 6). Over the years, various scholars have joined the bandwagon to support literature reviews, even in classic grounded theory instances. Ramalho (2006) suggested that knowledge needs an anchor to where it has been derived and can be applied. In this case, the primary objective was to examine lived experiences of African Americans during interactions with police. Without the preliminary literature review, the researchers and stakeholders knew that such a relationship exists and is worth further investigating. Failure to include literature review did not necessarily mean that clarity has been achieved; in some instances, it could have indicated an unwillingness to discuss the already existing conceptualization of the aspects under investigation. The denial did not guarantee clarity- it just failed to acknowledge bias in making meanings of the data collected.

Moreover, a literature review helped me to identify biases integrated into the study and avoid them. For instance, the preliminary study on the relationships between law enforcement and the Black community in the United States indicates that most Black scholars had experienced excessive force and are thus were likely to be biased (Corbin and Strauss, 1990). Since the grounded theory was based on statistical inquiry and social processes, I needed to highlight biases and develop certified ways to avoid them.

The literature review acted as a starting point. While it is vital to allow the grounded study to develop its data, it was vital to focus on the critical aspects of the

inquiry-based on previous exploratory studies. Even then, I used the literature judiciously to allow the emergence of new knowledge. Without any form of literature review, the findings of the grounded theory could replicate the existing theories. Gubrium and Holstein (1998) suggested that no scientific study can be justified without a justifiable research gap. Therefore, even without its application in the in-depth statistical inquiry, literature review helped to identify these gaps and guide the grounded inquiry.

Historical Overview of Police and the Black Community

Since the advent of slave patrols in 1704, African Americans have had a consensus of distrust in police. Slavery was viewed not only for the bondage it involved but additionally because of its horrific outcomes, which left Black people beaten, murdered, raped, and brutalized by their captors (Unmeyer and Gabbidon, 2011). As characterized by Unmeyer and Gabbidon (2011), they were exposed only to poverty with the ability to watch higher social classes while in positions of servitude. Because slavery existed long before the American Revolution, the freedoms enjoyed by the nation in its infancy were not bestowed upon African Americans (Hinton, Cook, 2015). Slavery continued long after independence, despite the African Americans playing one of the most vital roles in the nation's birth and construction.

Although emancipated by the 13th Amendment, African Americans were far from freedom of oppression and violence (Robinson, 2017). Recent historical record by Robinson (2017), inferred that slave patrols would eventually expand to hate groups like the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, who would continue lynching, burnings, shootings, and other criminal acts well into the present day. From the origins of police, they did little to

nothing to shield Black people from crime and often ignored the African American community as a lost cause regarding the public safety of its residents. Segregation was separate but equal; however, the basic human needs afforded for African Americans were well below the standards afforded their White counterparts (Robinson, 2017). It was a mainstay throughout the Civil War Reconstruction period and continued during two world wars, the Korean conflict, and Vietnam. African Americans served proudly despite being devoid of basic human rights. According to Onkst (1998), most of the over 1 million Black service members who fought in World War II were denied the G.I. Bill benefits, which provided education and housing relief for veterans returning to their communities. For most of the 20th century, African Americans were prevented entrance to Predominantly White institutions of higher learning, limiting the ability to obtain a quality education that would help them contribute to society equally, provide for their families, and strengthen their communities, until the advent of HBCUs Shuler et al. (2022).

Presently 12.1% of police officers in the United States are Black. (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2016). Blacks in law enforcement represent the second highest minority demographic among uniformed officers, according to the Bureau of Justice Statistics (2016). Currently of the 50 largest cities in the United States, 26 large municipalities are lead and managed by Black police chiefs (Davis, 2022). Organizations like the International Association of Chiefs of Police are committed to breaking the stigma of bias in policing (Davis, 2022). One of the most principal strategies was recruiting a diverse police force that mirrors the public. The emergence of the diverse police force and

increases of police recruits of color was earlier identified by Sklansky (2006) as a key element of change. In the larger cities this could be a successful mechanism to build trust in the community and place officers near small business owners and residents to ease the burden of communicating issues within the community related to crime. The American system of policing, as mentioned by Blumberget al. (2019) was the most advanced and complex arm of public safety because sworn officers put their lives in harm's way, and are many times counted on to protect the peace of a public that does not understand policing as a system. Police by majority are one of the most efficient organizations with a day-to-day safety, and proficiency record much higher than other vocations. This was due to a combination of training, experience and afteraction reporting that must maintain an elevated level of efficiency, while ensuring law enforcement officers are armed, and equipped, due to the constant advent and rate of crimes in the United States.

History of Excessive Force Against Black Americans

Excessive force and racial violence are a sensitive topic in America today due to police officers' recent killings of African Americans. Various movements such as Black Lives Matter (BLM) were formed due to the increased aggression of police on Black Americans and have gained support and popularity across the world (Strazewski, 2020) . Similar massive protests against brutality have erupted before, but the existing structures to hold police officers accountable for their murders have significantly been ineffective. According to recent studies in population structures, African Americans constituted only 13%of the total population of the United States (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020). Presently, African Americans account for 24% of people killed by police (Bureau of Justice

Statistics, 2021). I explored the history of police violence against African Americans and various reforms that had been put in place to curb it.

Police brutality has agitated the Black American communities for generations (Reichel, 1988). The first formal police department in America was instituted in 1838 in Boston (Reichel, 1988). During this time, northern cities decided to control the rapidly growing populations by imposing harsh restrictions on recent immigrants, especially Black Americans fleeing the wrath of Jim Crow in the South (Hutto & Green, 2016). They became the immediate victims of cruel policing in the northern states' cities, where they retreated to seek harborage. A survey conducted by Illinois Association for Criminal Justice in 1929 revealed that the police initiated most conflicts between police and Black citizens (Illinois Crime Survey, 1929). According to Walker (2013), as the realities of excessive force became evident, President Hoover made up a National Commission on Law Observance and Enforcement in 1929 to explore police aggressions.

Before this, in the 18th century, White volunteers formed powerful and influential slave patrols in all states where slavery was legal. These patrols were responsible for quashing slave rebellions, policing and disciplining African American slaves (Reichel, 1988). As the first government-funded armed legal force, the patrols controlled the movements of slaves who had gained freedom. Black code rules were put in place to confine the rights of Black Americans in the South. In the 1880s, major states in the United States had police and legal departments in their cities, and these departments were fragrantly brutal and notoriously corrupt (Hutto & Green, 2016).

Industrialization and urbanization increased after the civil war and were accompanied by organized labor movements and workers' unions. Most of the laborers in these unions were African Americans (Cassedy, 1997). In these cases of organized union actions such as strikes, which the police classified as riots, police would break the riots through extreme violence or mass arrests. These arrests led to the significantly overwhelming number of African Americans in the U.S. prisons (Cassedy, 1997).

By the end of the 19th century, state governments and local governments started to pass Jim Crow regulations that severely enforced racial separation and isolation in restaurants, schools, hospitals, and other publicly used social amenities (Reynolds, 2018). In this era, mob murders and lynchings of African Americans were on a steep rise. A portion of the lynching was done by police officers enforcing the Jim Crow laws, according to the Equal Justice Initiative (2017). For instance, the torturing of Isaac Woodward in South Carolina in 1946 is just one of the very few noted and reported cases, as most of these atrocities were never recorded (Fredrickson, 1997). Several riots marked this period in response to police violence against African Americans, such as the Harlem riot of 1964 and the Philadelphia race riot. To challenge police brutality in 1966, the African American community formed Black Panther Party (BPP; Street, 2009). Conflict erupted within the BPP and the police department and resulted in chaos that claimed the lives of over 30 affiliates of the BPP.

In 1956, the FBI constituted a program labeled COINTELPRO and would use secret police and agents to cause disarray within movements and groups such as the Organization of Afro-American Unity and the BPP (Mullgardt, 2020). The FBI

investigation led to the killing Black Panther Party leaders Hampton and his counterpart, Clark, in 1969 at a raid in Chicago's Hampton apartment, also according to (Mullgardt, 2020). Despite excessive force against African Americans becoming a significant concern in many cities by the mid-20th century, most Whites became aware of it in the mid-1960s because city newspapers did not consider racial-based police brutality newsworthy (Taylor, 2019). In contrast, the Black press covered incidences of excessive force frequently and regularly in front-page articles (Perloff, 2000).

For numerous reasons, cases of excessive force against African Americans increased massively after the Second World War. As Black Americans started demanding their respect and asserting their legal rights and liberties, tendencies of White police officers to brutalize Blacks in the name of protecting the White communities increased (Reynolds, 2018). With the rapid growth of African American populations, the Blacks started moving into the formerly restricted white areas. According to Taylor, (2013), it appeared threatening to White police officers, who quickly justified their use of extralegal tactics to control the mobility of Black Americans and limit their use of public spaces.

A FBI (2020) crime statistics showed that African Americans constitute over 40% of the violent and felonious acts that have led to officer deaths and serious injuries in the line of duty. In the last 20 years, more than any time in history, law enforcement officers have been either ambushed or attacked by Black people who were in most cases engaging in criminal conduct or the accessory to the crime (FBI, 2020) . Research is unclear on why a demographic that makes up 13% of the United States Census has such a high rate

of infliction of death toward police officers (FBI, 2020). This coupled with the current existence of high rates of Black-on-Black crime create an issue for police and the general safety of the public at-large. Black on Black crime has increased at a rate of seven to eight times higher than the next closest demographic (White), whereas in recent years the gap in poverty rate continues to decrease the rate of Black-on-Black crime, primarily in inner cities is what police spend most of their time investigating. Many Black citizens in low-income areas have fallen victim to the “snitch” mentality, while being afraid to report criminals to authorities at the risks of their own life and the safety of their loved ones while, as Anjuli (2017) characterized, citizens not being cooperative with the police attempt to bring violent offenders to justice. There is also a tendency of residents of these low-income communities to see officer deaths as retribution of perceptions of police responsibility for the stagnation, poverty, and attempted destruction of their community and people, while on the contrary police are trying to provide public safety (Anjuli, 2017).

According to the data and results presented by Campaign Zero, African Americans remain the most targeted group by police, accounting for approximately 28 percent of the police homicides. Yet, they only make up 13 percent of the total US population according to the FBI (2020). Historically, violence and police brutality dated back to slavery; very few reforms were enacted in the past. Today, due to the modern technology in the media, tweets, Facebook posts, and live streaming videos of incidences of police brutalizing Black Americans have gone viral. For instance, Diamond Reynolds, Philando Castile's fiancée, blasted the incidents into the mainstream media as she covered

the video of officers shooting Philando. She streamed it using Facebook Live and summarized by Tibbs, D.F., (2016). It allowed several communities, including white communities, to notice these kinds of extreme violations.

Following the recent uproars and riots, transformational changes had been put forward to reduce the excessive use of force by the police. The United States Congress, attempted to enact a law limiting the use of extreme force, the kind that killed George Floyd, Hutto & Green (2016), and identified how several states have started training police officers to address their racial biases. Police shoot black people at disproportionate rates, a 2006 report from the United States Department of Justice established. Other reforms such as managing mental health wellness through mental health counseling had been mandated in most states. Community policing and changing police culture to protect police and civilians within the local municipalities had significantly altered the perception of police officers viewing themselves as detached community members.

Another proposed failed strategy was to demilitarize the police. There was evidence that the increasing use of sophisticated firepower contributes to police overreliance on violence to solve problems. For instance, one study found that US police departments supplied with the 1033 program had a higher tendency towards violence than those without such assistance according to Delehanty, C., et al (2017). Most recently, following the death of George Floyd, the police had been given the duty to report, intervene and render medical aid in cases of illegal force application by their fellow police officers. Over eight states started a duty to render medical assistance to people in police custody. The argument to demilitarize the police would fail because the greater

issue was the illegal guns that are in the hands of criminals throughout the United States, as well as the ease of access to own and possess firearms by most United States citizens. Taking fire power from the police would only put innocent lives at more risk. Because of this, the lives of police across the country are inherently at risk daily.

As Black American communities continued to mobilize a fundamental restructuring of the police system, state reforms should be accompanied by more effective and impactful strategies. Currently, the African American communities are forming community-led violence prevention programs to allow their members to actively address violent crimes without depending on police to incarcerate problems away (Hutto & Green, 2016).

Contrary to issues related to excessive force, Black communities had higher rates of crime and violence than any other demographic. Although Black people make up 13% of the United States population according to the US Census (2020), they are responsible for highest per capita rate of violent offenses. Murder, rape, robbery, and aggravated assault represent the top tier of estimated arrests in the United States, and Black Americans were the most frequent offenders according to the Federal Bureau of Investigations Uniform Crime Report, Violent Crimes Index (2019). In cities like Chicago, Seattle, Baltimore, and Detroit, Black on Black murder is primarily related to poverty and lack of resources according to Quillan & Pager (2001). The City of Louisville was due to eclipse historical numbers in murders and violent crime and a majority of this happens in Black neighborhoods. The spike in violence mirrored that of the City of Milwaukee Wisconsin, and has major similarities discussed previously by

Wilson, W., (2015), as Black citizens being twenty times more likely to be involved in violent crime. Community activists in most cases were quick to call for police reform; however, they were less active in anti-gang, drugs, and human -trafficking prevention within the inner cities, and consistent with the Police Research & Reform report (2010). Police utilized community forums to ask for citizens' assistance with crime reduction with little or no assistance most of the time. Regardless of the current call for reform, less attention had been given to the fact that more police officers were shot and killed by blacks than any demographic in the United States. Even in communities that are demographically diverse, Black and Hispanics had higher rates of committing crime.

Slavery Era to Now

The growth of excessive force against African American men in the United States can be traced into two phases; the pre and post-slavery phases. During the slavery phase, the country joined in the scramble for Africa alongside other European countries. Although the European countries were Africa's main and direct colonizers, they liaised with American farmers and the corporate moguls to engage in the slave trade termed the transatlantic trade (Higgs, R., 1977). The slaves obtained from Africa would provide labor in cotton farming, thus advancing the economy. This phase in American history also coincided with global debates on human rights and general morality. Most scholars at the time focused on the need for basic human dignity, where supporters of the slave trade and exploitations of Africans endorsed the Great Man Theory (Kulikoff, 2012). To keep the slave trade going, the media and the shareholders in the slave trade had to create a negative narrative about Africans and their capabilities.

Africans became a victim of a single story where the media and the travelers' omitted details of political and social organizations across the African region. Including such details could have validated Africans as a civilization, which meant they needed to be extended the basic human rights enjoyed by other races according to Jones, L., (2011). The traditional definition of the Africans and the deliberate presentation of them as mentally inferior and intellectually underdeveloped shaped the traditional social perception of modern African Americans in the west. Subsequently, before the debate moved to America, the perceptions of African Americans had been documented by early travelers such as David Livingstone (Waller 1875). In some recovered letters directed to the queen of England, the scholars and political explorers had advised the Monarchy to disregard any forms of government by the African people. The monarchy had to make them believe that Western life was better than the African ways to colonize Africans. This early attempt to assimilate Africa and disregard its traditional forms of religions, social and political power became the central pillar of the molarity of the slave trade.

Notwithstanding, dating as far back as the 1500's one of the most frequent groups directly involved in slave trade were Africans themselves. Historical evidence by Elliot & Hughes (2019), discussed how Africans in many cases negotiated slave trade with European nations just as common as selling and trading goods across the entire continent. Many of the very slaves that were transported across the ocean to America were lured, captured, and sold by their Black brethren. For over four hundred years, and even following the emancipation of American slaves, Africa engaged as frequently, if not more than any other continent in the bondage of slavery. Africans would commonly catch, and

sale both enemies and neighbors, thus kidnapping men, woman, and children for monetary gain. This was a primary enabler of the over 12.5 million men (about twice the population of Arizona), women and children who were victims of the Trans-Atlantic slave trade to the Western Hemisphere.

The end of slavery did not indicate a change in the single-story that endorsed victimization and demeaning of Africans. Instead, according to Payne & Vuletich (2019), abolishing slavery was an appropriate political action by the European and American governments rather than endorsing racial equality. The modern racial discrimination in America suggested that abolishing slavery was motivated by the need for a national face, peace, and political stability. Quarles (2012) reported that the American Revolution was based on equal rights and representation. It would thus have been political hypocrisy to demand freedom from the British government and maintain the oppressive slave trade. Even then, it took over 91 years for Americans to agree to free slaves after they received their independence from the British monarchy. It shows the deep-lying moral and ethical conflicts regarding the role of minorities in the United States. Major changes followed the abolishment of the slave trade in the Civil Rights Movement.

Tracking the Origin of Modern Excessive Force in the United States

The current racial inequality and excessive force against African Americans can be traced right after abolishing slavery. While this abolishment offered equal rights to all Americans and gradually included the former slave into social and political systems, it did not seek to change African Americans' already disadvantaged social, economic, and political positions. First, before the abolishment of slavery, as Unmeyer & Gabbidon

(2011), recalled that no slaves had any basic rights. This meant there was no remorse, their families were broken, and they did not have any form of formal education. Secondly, slaves did not own any property, which meant their freedom was just a mirage. Immediately after abolishing slavery and slave trade, the United States government created metropolitan cities to host slaves.

As expected, these regions stagnated behind in economic, social, and political development. The racial tension between the whites and blacks pushed the white investors even further from these towns. Groves (2004) observed that the lack of social order, cultural connections, and formal education among slaves made it difficult to develop effective social systems to maintain the metropolitan cities. With time, most slaves returned to their former masters to work for minimum wages. The decision was socially and economically sensible, since slaves had no production or other skills than manual laborers. However, the post-slavery interactions between former slaves and the owners of farms, especially in the south, differed from those witnessed during active slavery (Klas, R, 2020).

In pre-slavery, minimum wage interactions, slaves felt more empowered. At the same time, they were protected by the Constitution and had basic rights to life and due process of the law. Although these systems were rarely followed in white-dominated cities, they affected the former slaves' mentality towards their rights and economic position according to Minoff, E., (2020). The change in mentality led to increasing revolts, demand for higher wages, and even brutal murder of white farm owners. This phase, which lasted between the early and late 1900s, was the beginning of documented

police brutality. In the attempts to continue enjoying the low-priced slave labor and protect their lives and properties, white farmers started liaising with the police. The widespread notion was to use police to avoid any legal complications. Since all law enforcement officers were whites, their responses were often based on racial division rather than due process. The police force created a mentality that former slaves, the current African Americans, were troublemakers and often sought violence over due process (Higgs, 1977). From a social perspective, this position had been maintained by corruption and poor representation of people of color in the United States. Often, African Americans will avoid the criminal justice system and look for other alternatives in full awareness that the system is traditionally biased against them.

The opinion that African Americans were unruly and are more likely to respond to violence than logic, can also be traced back to crime prevalence in African American communities. As Lipsitz (2006) observed, social functionalism helped explain the high crime rate in African American towns. Immediately after abolishing slavery, former slaves found themselves isolated from the American society without political, social, economic, and cultural power. To survive, they had to create their own culture drawn from the different African cultures. Recently Halloran, M.J., (2019), discussed how some of that culture clash still exists in present society. The population also had to achieve this within extreme cases of scarcity. Crime thus became a predominant trend in metropolitan cities, as a means of survival rather than a racial connotation. Nevertheless, American Law enforcement and the high crime index in African American cities indicated a racial

preference rather than unfavorable socioeconomic conditions. Thus, early crime data about race helped to shape the flawed mentality about race and crime.

It is vital to note that the ongoing police use of excessive force in the United States is also associated with social themes such as power, struggle, equality, and fairness. The American law enforcement units were created to protect the country's sovereignty, human rights, and property. Most of these units were initiated at a time when racial discrimination was openly allowed (James, L., 2017). This means that traditionally, the American law enforcement system is flawed against black Americans. Despite the tremendous changes across all American political and criminal justice systems, these traditional notions persist in eliminating racial inequality. Moreover, traditionally, African Americans are never the primary owner of wealth and factors of production. Smith et al. (2014) observed that while the American criminal justice system claimed to protect property, most standard clauses were designed to protect the rich from the poor and to control overall economic mobility. The mentality eventually created a long-lasting impression that the whites deserved protection from the blacks.

A review of the real estate demographics also indicated a deliberate racial separation instigated by the majority white population. Gotham (2000) report indicated that, between 1900 and the 1990s, the property value in white neighborhoods was almost three times as similar property in black neighborhoods. The deep-lying belief informed the spread of property value that the white was superior, and the African Americans were unruly. Even to date, police officers in the United States are more likely to brutalize an African American visiting a white neighborhood. The residents of these neighborhoods

also seek to keep Blacks away to maintain the value of their properties. Traditionally, based on the highlighted lack of opportunities, African Americans have often been viewed as threats to society. Many Black Americans in any neighborhood are likely to cause tension among the white majorities even when they do not pose any threat.

On the contrary, many Black communities perpetuate and normalize criminal behavior. As previously discussed by Johnson & Chopik (2018), in many inner cities like Chicago, New York, Los Angeles, and St. Louis Black neighborhoods there are cauldrons of gang activity as well as narcotics and illegal activities. The rate of crime by Blacks in these cities is many times greater than any other demographic. During the riots that ensued following the Mike Brown protest in St. Louis, millions of dollars were lost by Black and minority merchants at the hands of rioters who looted, burned, and vandalized a substantial portion of the City of Ferguson resulting in permanent damage to a community that continues to struggle economically due to continued rising rates of crime, gun violence, and theft according to Gershenson & Hayes (2016). As indicated by Cho & Ho (2018), white citizens who live in these communities culturally dominated by Black citizens have little or no confidence in the police due to the high rates of crime and victimization within.

Moreover, in addition to these emergent cultures, African Americans also sought to fight against police brutality. Most shootings in the United States involve African Americans and police (Mesic et al., 2018). The trend also encouraged the emergence of the black culture associated to standing up against excessive force. In the end, police approached African Americans from the defensive side while the African Americans are

willing to do whatever was necessary to remain free of the oppression. At some point, both parties act out of responsibility and fear.

Social Acceptance of Excessive Force

Before the 1990s, excessive force against African Americans was morally and socially accepted. Neal, E., (2021), discussed how police officers found it their duty to protect the wealthy white from the rising black communities. The social perception of black inferiority and the need to keep racial distances encouraged white police officers to brutalize African Americans. The trend was high based on the low representation of African Americans in all government and social structures. According to Higgs, (1977), by the late 19th century, local and state governments started to embrace the Jim Crow Laws that called for racial segregation in schools, parks, restaurants, real estate, and other public spaces. American politics popularized the idea that racial interaction would reduce white peoples social, economic, and political power. The social acceptance of racial discrimination saw a rise in mob justice and lynching cases strictly directed toward black communities. According to Walsh (2020), when Darnella Frazier, a 17-year-old teen used her phone to document the excessive force used by police officers while apprehending George Floyd, the incident ignited international attention to the longstanding and present issue of excessive force rendered by police toward black citizens in the United States.

Professionalization of the Police in the United States

In 1919, the United States federal government passed the Volstead Act, also known as the National Prohibition Act. The law was named Minnesota Rep Andrew Volstead and sought to prevent the sale of illegal alcoholic drinks. However, from a

social perception, the law was designed to give a platform for law enforcement agencies to develop subjective approaches to uphold the law. Since most African Americans were still underrepresented, they became the primary victim of the law according to Walton & Taylor (1971). During the prohibition era (1919-1933), vices in the police force increased, including corruption, violence, and killings. The era also saw vast growth in crime syndicates in major cities like Chicago, New York, and Philadelphia (Cordner, & Shain, 2011). Again, most illegal brews were owned by white cartels that employed police officers to intimidate and brutalize rivals. Police officers stopped seeing themselves as representatives of law, but instead became personal soldiers meeting social and personal needs. By the end of the Hoover administration, lawlessness across the country's law enforcement agencies became a national concern, leading to the National Committee of Law Observation and Enforcement. The primary objective of this committee was to differentiate between illegal and rightful use of police power. The resulting report, dubbed the Report on Lawlessness in Law Enforcement (1931), indicated rampant use of force, threats, physical brutality, and other forms of torture to acquire forced confessions. The report led to several landmark cases, such as *Brown v. Mississippi*, which promoted due process by the police officers. The United States criminal justice system declared criminal proceedings to all law enforcement officers who failed to follow due process.

The outcome was a new era of law enforcement to reform and professionalize the agencies. The first reform was the separation of the police precincts from the political wards. Anderson and Killingray (1992) stated that the separation of due process from

political dogma was necessary since police agencies were often under political leaders' influence, undermining some factions of society, such as minority races. The reforms also sought to make the police agencies more bureaucratic with a central chain of command. It meant that investigative committees could hold leaders of specific precincts accountable if their areas indicated higher levels of excessive force. With the heightened bureaucracy in the agencies, all police officers were required to fill formal paperwork of their conduct in every arrest. The intent of these reforms was to promote racial equality and reduce excessive force. Over the years, there has been a reduction and the complete elimination of stop and frisk, and aggressive behavior during routine and non-routine stops. In recent years, the occurrence or probability of illegal arrests has decreased in modern society. Despite these strides, it was recently noted by Ray (2020), that Black adults are 3.5 times more likely to be killed by police, and Black teens are twenty-one times more likely to be killed by police than white teens.

Police in many cases lack the fiduciary support needed from their local governments to be well equipped to fight crime and protect its citizens (O'Neil Hayes, T., 2020). The budget constraint, as well as many communities' reliability in small or medium sized police units to strategically police the city limits, tends to be a pathway to disaster as crime rates increase and criminals tend to prey on parts of the community that lack police presence. These facts were summarized by the Police Executive Research Forum (2020), on a national level. This domino effect can permeate through a community and in the case of Louisville Kentucky, for instance property crimes, assaults, and violent offenses are becoming common-place in middle, and upper-class communities due to the

migration of criminals to previously crime-free, or low-crime communities. This coupled with the fact that police have a higher risk of mortality than the rate of mortality in low-income communities. Whereas local governments are quick to lean towards political pressures related to police brutality towards citizens, they traditionally do less to promote the safety of the police officers in the very same community.

Civil Rights Movement Era

The growth of Civil Rights Movement also became a target of opinions on police brutality. For instance, during the 1963-1964 Birmingham Campaign and the Selma to Montgomery Marches of 1965, police attacked the protestors leading to a few deaths and dozens of injuries. The excessive force led to public outcry and sympathy for the demonstrators leading to a national wide growth of the civil rights movement according to McWhorter, (2001). At the same time, some notable personalities, such as Martin Luther King, criticized police excessive force and other forms of racial victimization. The trend led to dozens of demonstrations in the USA, including the Harlem riot of 1964, Philadelphia Race riot of 1964, Watts riots of 1965, Division streets riot of 1966, and the Detroit riot in the same year (Hinton, 2015). There was also the establishment of civil rights movements such as the Black Panther Party of 1966 formed by Huey Newton to challenge police brutality against minorities. For the next two years, the conflict between the Black Panther Party and the police resulted in the death of over forty-nine people, including 15 police officers. Although such movements did not help much to achieve the desired racial equality, they helped to prioritize excessive force as a core civil rights issue

in American society. These early movements shaped the modern fight against police use of excessive force against African American communities.

The 1950s-1980s was an antagonistic era between the minority races and police departments. In 1968, Dennis Banks, Clyde Bellecourt, Vernon Bellecourt, and Russell Means founded the American Indian movement in Minnesota. The primary objective of the movement was to protect Native Americans from discrimination and oppression by the police. The development of this movement marks documented evidence that the United States government used its law enforcement agencies to push its political agendas. For instance, the FBI targeted the American Indian Movement, Socialist Workers' Party, and Black Panther Party in its counterintelligence (COINTELPRO) program according to Davis, J.K, (1992). Under this program, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) would use national resources to go undercover and create tension, chaos, and terror among political organizations. This helped the government to create a certain notion of political groupings. Some law enforcement agencies perpetuated chaos to harm political parties by divide and rule and assassinations. For instance, the leaders of the Black Panther Party Fred Hampton and Mark Clark were killed during an FBI raid in Chicago (Mullgardt, 2020). Over the years, the US government has continued to use similar tactics, thus heightening police brutality against minorities. In response, the minorities have responded with demonstrations, while the criminal justice system historically bent the law to acquit police officers that abused their powers. For instance, in 1991, according to Jeffries & Beckham (2020), a civilian recorded the brutal beating of Rodney King by the Los Angeles Police Department. The national broadcast of the beating and later acquittal

of the police officer, led to the 1992 Los Angeles Riots. The trend had been persistent, where a failure of the criminal justice system to protect people of color from excessive use of force leads to mass revolts and riots.

The background information examined indicated that historically, African Americans have been primary targets of police brutality. The current state of excessive force in the United States follows historical racial inequalities according to Mesic et al (2018). Over the years, the country has developed socioeconomic and political systems that tend to marginalize black communities. As a result, the black community has also formed a dislike for law enforcement, which strains the civilian-police relationship in black communities. For the last decade, the black communities have produced mass actions such as a demonstration to challenge police brutality. The 2020 George Floyd demonstration was the recent and largest international demonstration for racial equality according to Weine et al, (2020).

African Americans by statistic are more likely than any other demographic to commit violence or crime in the community, and towards police. The 2020 FBI Uniformed Crime Index data release indicated that 59% of all homicides were committed by African Americans compared to 41% by whites. Despite only making up 13% of the United States population, Blacks are the primary offenders by statistic of the top twelve crime indexes within the report. This would indicate that if police and other law enforcement agencies are following the data and trends that of African Americans, by a wide range, are more likely to commit violent offenses. This also represents a concern for most police officers, regardless of race, when conducting their routine duties across any

authority within the United States. Black people are also more likely unwilling to contact police according to Socia K.M, et al (2021), which makes investigating crimes within the community harder because of bias related to communicating with law enforcement.

Community policing is one extremely effective imitative taking form across many parts of the country. Within inner cities it has become an effective way for police to make vital connections with the community at-large. Both police and citizens gain momentum to work together not only to lower the crime rate, but to also engage in community growth and betterment in many other ways. According to Jones & Romaine (2021), effective community policing leads to economic and social advances and ensures that police and the community share a clarity of communication as to what makes the community crime-free. This is more attractive, not only to expanding the community from a diversity stand-point, but also to investors that assist in closing financial and social gaps. This is an attractive strategic and civil rights initiative in both urban and suburban areas. Community policing continues to be extremely successful because it enables police and citizens to engage in both regular contact, and dialogue while collaborating to promote public safety; the effect is a higher level of trust and confidence in both entities and a mutual respect.

The way forward is positive. A combination of improved police understanding regarding lived experiences and interactions coupled with self-reliance on accountability could be a great step forward. In recent years body cameras and patrol car videos have assisted police during apprehension as well as highlighted the disparity related to police stops and the barriers of communication and failure to follow procedures by the public. In

most cases, escalation is directed at and not by police officers. Police will face the attitude and anger of citizens daily. Citizens, to include Black citizens, are more commonly negative toward police, but tend to call them when danger, or an emergency persist. Despite police implementing controls and working to reduce trends of bias there has been little to no change in the African American community when it comes to trust. Furthermore, despite pleas from the police, the government, and local communities, violence within Black communities continues to rise, with most violent crimes being against Black victims at the hands of Black perpetrators according to Braga & Brunson (2015).

Racial Bias

Racial bias and implicit bias continue to have a significant effect on communities in the United States (James, L, 2017). Specifically, in the black community, racial bias is a combination of stereotypes and beliefs that African Americans are by nature poor, uneducated, and lack the basic abilities to achieve even the fundamental hierarchies of life. However, racial and implicit bias is not just centered alone on the black community. Still, it is also a shared internal stereotype that White Americans enjoy privileges regarding the very same aspects of what defines bias.

Racial and implicit bias can be magnified when incidents occur and contribute to verbal abuse, violence, and stagnating community growth. Historically, racial discrimination and violence have contributed to the African American community (Setchell, Frits & Glasgow, 2017). When incidents occur, the media often engages in adversarial dialogue based on the current community racial climate and politics. During

the incidents surrounding protest following the Breonna Taylor and George Floyd deaths, communities clashed internally and with police based on differences of opinion and that infuriated the public. Some of it resulted in the loss of lives and millions of dollars in damage to infrastructure through damaged roads, road signs, vandalism of houses, buildings, vehicles, and fire and water damage. It could be asserted that incidents like this are caused by institutionalized discrimination, which leads to structural violence (Hoofnagle et al., 2020). The Louisville Police Department was placed within the centrifuge. Many of its members faced elongated stress about maintaining riot control, crowd control, and police emergency service functions while shorthanded and under duress. The immediate results proved negative as the department is currently experiencing issues related to attrition and a current shortage of over two hundred uniformed officers.

Despite the efforts by the federal government to ensure racial equality, there remain major social, economic, and cultural inequalities that run deeper than policy-based solutions. For instance, it would violate one's culture to force a belief in racial equality (Klinkner & Smith, 1999). Therefore, the policy-based solutions focus on equality of opportunities rather than the equality of outcomes. When explained, this means that the ongoing racial bias in the United States is justifiable since all races have the same opportunities for social, economic, and even political mobility. Thus, contrary reports have indicated that the structural racial inequality that maintains the racial status quo prevents the minority races from enjoying policy-based opportunities. Just as seen with the extremist groups such as KKK that sought to protect the white supremacist from

Black mobility, the black communities have also produced formal and informal approaches to the structural inequalities. The outcome is a further racial bias where the whites believe African Americans are inferior for their failure to achieve economic mobility. On the other hand, a black community that believes the proclaimed equality of opportunities is a mirage since the mainstream white civil servants develop these policies and frustrate their application.

Historically, racial bias is a consistent social vice. Since most modern societies are based on social functionalism structures, every member must play a specific role in social and political stability. In America, White people believed that the interactions with the Africans, since the era of slavery were meant to promote the global position of the Whites. Intrinsically, most whites still hold this notion of racial supremacy against other minority races according to Smalls & Pager (2020). The black community's social, cultural, economic, and political position, coupled with the traditional stereotypes, has continued to fuel racial discrimination in the United States. Some white people hold the belief that segregating themselves from the Blacks protects their racial supremacy. Since there are legal consequences of open discrimination against any race in the country, some in White society use legal jargon to discriminate against the blacks. A study by Assari et al. (2018) indicated that in 2019, 45% of African Americans faced racial discrimination when looking for a place to rent, while 18% of Asian Americans have faced discrimination when interacting with the police. The study further revealed that 1 in 5 Latinos avoided mental healthcare services for fear of discrimination, and 34% of LGBTQ people have been verbally harassed in social places. At the same time, 41% of

women reported workplace and domestic discrimination in 2019. The trend shows that discrimination in the USA follows a certain power hierarchy and commonality of beliefs. For instance, since most people, including women, support the traditional patriarchy system, women become victims of discrimination.

Similarly, since most people in the country believe in traditional heterosexual relationships, the LGBTQ groups become the victim of sexual discrimination (Miller, C., 2018). The trend helps to explain the current police excessive force against African Americans. Inherently, most police officers feel obligated to protect the traditional American structure mostly dominated by Whites, thus making Blacks and other minority races victims of discrimination.

Excessive Force in Central Kentucky

Central Kentucky is a growing and ethnically diverse region in the Commonwealth of Kentucky. Three of the largest cities in Kentucky; Louisville, Lexington and Frankfurt, the State Capitol are all located in the Central region. According to the US Census Bureau, Louisville, and Lexington are the two most populated cities and key financial hubs within the Commonwealth. During a one-month period from March to April 2022, Kentucky had an increase of 2,625 jobs in the Commonwealth according to statistics provided by the Education and Workforce Development Cabinet (2022). The Central Region has an additional 5,000 jobs projected due to the recent decision of Ford Motor Company to move its Blue Oval SK Battery Park to Hardin County, which is also in Central Kentucky according to a Ford's Media

Center (2021). Most African Americans in the Commonwealth reside in Central Kentucky primarily in the cities of Louisville and Lexington.

According to the World Population Review (2022), Kentucky is rated the sixth poorest state in the United States with a median household income of \$70,144. A contributing factor to poverty in Central Kentucky was the 2016 departure of multiple military units assigned to Fort Knox, Kentucky based on Coomes, P, Kelly, J., et al, (2016,) and the Commission Report on Military Affairs by the University of Louisville. The immediate economic impact caused some businesses to fall and an increase in foreclosures and repossessions. Current community leaders have been focused on a recovery plan. Still, the impending departure of over seven thousand soldiers and family members affected small businesses, banks, and the real estate market. COVID19 further detracted the rebound of the economy, causing stagnation in the socioeconomic outlook.

According to Baradaran (2017), Black capitalism was deemed the solution to ending large scale poverty in the Black community while eliminating the need for impoverished black citizens of relying on the government. Currently black businesses only comprise 2.5% of Kentucky's private sector. The challenges related to business ownership and poverty are compounded by the challenges of racial profiling and police use of excessive force. The racial composition of the two most populace cities are Louisville, 69% white, 23% African American, 2.6% Asian American, and Lexington, 74% White, 14.6 % Black, 3.75% according to of the US Census data (2021). A review of civilian police interactions in the largest city Louisville indicated higher levels of excessive force when compared to the Kentucky average in 2018 (Statistical Atlas, 2020).

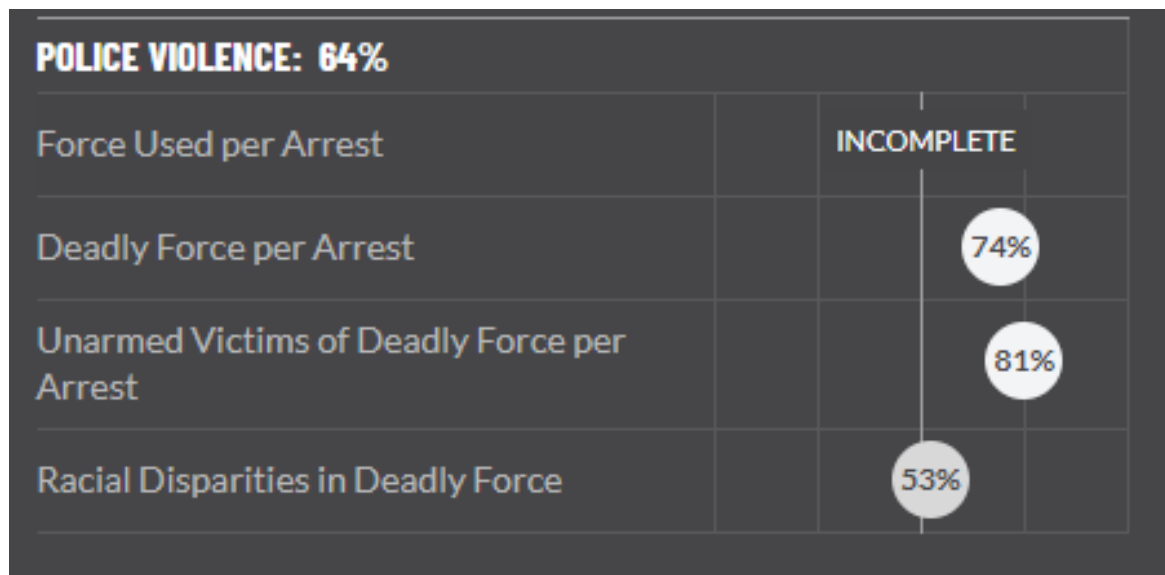
Figure 1*Police Violence in Central Kentucky*

Figure 1, derived from Kentucky Police Scorecard (2021), indicated that police use deadly force in 74% of their arrests, was 81% of the deadly force victims were often unarmed. This showed the social acceptability of excessive force across police units in Kentucky and its counties. There was also a 53% racial disparity in the use of deadly force, with the African Americans being the primary victims, based on the above Statistical Atlas (2020). The analysis further reviewed that despite African Americans making 19% of the total population in Central Kentucky, and 16% statewide population overall, they make 43% and 58% of all arrests, respectively. This data indicated that most police officers in Kentucky are more likely to arrest African Americans than any other demographic.

In 2017, Bryant-Davis et al. conducted a qualitative study to determine the underlying cause of police excessive force against African Americans. The study

indicated that most police officers had an unpleasant experience when arresting African Americans, a trend that changed their approach to African American criminals. On the other hand, an interview with 100 inmates arrested using excessive force indicated initial fear of the police and sought to run instead of cooperating. The criminals believed that their lives were already in danger even before the due process. Thirty-seven percent of the interviewees claimed that the evidence that led to their incarceration was planted after their arrest.

Whether these claims, by the police and by African American community, are true or not, they indicated a deep-lying mistrust between the police and African Americans according to Marshburn, C.K., et al, 2021. The various models adopted within the United States and Kentucky government to ensure police-civilians' collaborations have not yielded many results, with police brutality stagnating between 2005 and 2018. Moreover, the percentage of African Americans arrested and incarcerated in the state remains high compared to the racial demographics in the state. The overall observation from the data is that the Kentucky police departments are willing to use deadly force in their arrests. Prpic and Peacock (n.d.) suggest that the widespread acceptance of excessive use of force bleeds grounds for police misconduct. In 2017, Johnson et al. conducted a study to examine the police willingness to consider deadly force as the first option during an arrest in Kentucky. The study indicated that 71% of police officers had used deadly force where the suspect did not resist an arrest. Lastly, 33% of the officers who took part in the study indicated suffering from trauma in the line of duty, which they believe changed their perception towards excessive use of force. The fascinating finding

of the study is that African Americans suffer excessive force at the hands of both white and black officers. The trend suggested indoctrination into a police officer versus black community dogma. A further inquiry on African American officers working in the Kentucky police force indicated that even police officers are racially profiled within the division. The outright tendency to view African American communities as instant threats to peace can be seen as a sign of conformity for the police of color. Once African Americans gain access to work within civil service, police force, and even military, they face the same racial profiling directed to the civilians.

This begs whether the traditional and historically endorsed racial bias and profiling also affect the operations of American police departments. If evidence from other civil service careers is reliable, then the claim might be true. Overall, African Americans working in civil positions face longer promotional times, lower comparative payments, and are often assimilated to the mainstream culture, including the stereotypes about their race and culture. Juric (2021) observed that the only predominant trend in racial bias and discrimination is the deliberate disregard for the African American culture. The tactic has been used for centuries. The origins of power disregard the African culture and views and often indoctrinate African American elites to work against their values and beliefs. For instance, 17% of all police brutality complaints in Kentucky in 2019 were filed against African American officers. However, 91% of these incidents occurred in the presence of a white supervisor (Juric, 2021). Although the data derived from Kentucky Score Card and provided by Campaign Zero is inconclusive, it could suggest that African American police officers are rarely free to make decisions based on

their own experience, beliefs, and understanding of racial and cultural aspects. Instead, they are expected to uphold the traditional approach to justice, which is deeply rooted in the traditional stereotyping of races.

Police Officers and Mental Health

There was a close correlation between police mental health and incidents of excessive force. A study by Corthésy-Blondin et al. (2021) indicates that regular therapy sessions for police departments significantly reduced the use of excessive force during arrests. A similar study by Velazquez and Hernandez (2019) sought to examine the role played by therapy in managing post-traumatic stress for police officers in the line of duty. Police officers who did not get intervention for their PTSD showed higher levels of aggression in the line of duty when compared to those who undertook a four-week therapy session after a shooting. This begs whether police departments at national and state levels are equipped to deal with the frightening realities of their job. The recurring interaction with danger and loss of colleagues can lead to a ‘shoot-first’ mentality among the officers, which might lead to the death of innocents. A stable mental state also allows police officers to decode the danger levels and act effectively and responsibly (Dulin, A., Dulin L., 2020). Depression, anxiety, and Post Traumatic Distress Disorder continue to lead to higher rates of suicide in police officers. Police mental health and well-being is commonly overlooked, despite the fact it is prevalent in the day-to-day stressors associated with the burden of the safety, and security of the personal lives, their fellow officers, and their family and social structure. Research by Dr. John Volanti (2020) indicated that approximately 15% of police officers suffer from some form of PTSD.

With the ongoing political discussion to consider defunding of the police departments across most of the country, including Kentucky, it was unlikely that the police will start receiving the necessary mental health interventions to conduct their duties without excessive force. The analysis of the social and mental status of the police officer in Kentucky indicates that officers use is normalized through inter-level analysis of social dynamics, stereotypes, and organizational culture within the police department, much like norms throughout Western culture, and a common consideration within the defunding debate (Cummins, I., 2022). It is unfortunate that African Americans are often seen as the primary threats and thus the primary victim of the negative trends in police-civilian interactions.

College-Educated African American Males in Central Kentucky

College-educated African American males were a slowly emerging demographic in Central Kentucky (edtrust.org). They were active, despite being underrepresented in small business and are employed in the federal, state, and local governments as well as the banking, medical and Industrial block. They were not well represented in the board of education and law enforcement/emergency services. Many of these men are casualties of the wealth gap that continues to exist in the United States of America (Chamber of Commerce Report, 2021). When incidents involving police and African Americans occurred; Black men ages 18-24 were disproportionately involved according to Smith-Lee & Robinson (2019). Figure 2.0 shows the race and gender distribution of police officers in Louisville, Kentucky.

Figure 2

LMPD Demographics Report September 2021

	White Male	White Female	Black Male	Black Female	Asian Male	Asian Female	Hispanic Male	Hispanic Female	Native American Male	Native American Female	Other Male	Other Female	Total Sworn Members
Chief	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		1,025
Colonel	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		
Lt. Colonel	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		
Major	10	2	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		
Lieutenant	45	5	0	0	1	0	2	0	0	0	0		
Sergeant	117	19	13	1	4	0	3	0	0	0	0		
Officer	534	85	90	18	7	2	16	5	2	0	2		
Recruit	22	2	4	3	0	0	1	0	0	0	0		
Special Police	1	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Total by Race/Sex	731	114	111	24	12	2	22	5	2	0	2	0	
Percentage by Race/Sex	71.32%	11.12%	10.83%	2.34%	1.17%	0.20%	2.15%	0.49%	0.20%	0.00%	0.20%	0.00%	
Total by Race only	845		135		14		27		2		2		
Percentage by Race only	82.44%		13.17%		1.37%		2.63%		0.20%		0.20%		
	Males	Females											
Total by Sex	880	145											
Percentage by Sex	85.85%	14.15%											

The data revealed that Whites were dominant in all levels of the police force and form approximately 83% of the total police officers. The data also showed the poor representation of women. Casey et al. (2019) observed that while the poor representation of women in the countries police force does not indicate discrimination of people of color, it helped explain the traditional notions of power, gender, and race in the United States. In Louisville, there were only 145 female police officers compared to 880 male officers. It showed that the country still respected the traditional patriarchy system that endorses police work as gender sensitive. Looking into historical evidence, this could also mean that the country still promotes traditional racial bias. Although there have been

various models to promote the social position of the African American community, these models are enacted within a traditionally biased society, which affects their efficiency. A similar trend is witnessed in women where despite various national and state programs, women remain socially, economically, and politically underrepresented.

Disadvantages of Defunding

Residents of Central Kentucky, like many other locations in the United States, have faced the idea of defunding the police or reallocating resources within the local municipalities to alternate programs versus police. For cities in Central Kentucky, much like many other cities nationwide, this could cause many issues that could damage community trust. Defunding is a political strategy more so than a solution that could create adverse effects on the public's expectation according to Lum, C. et al 2021. Adapting more modern approaches to community policing has proved to be more effective in recent years following the Mike Brown incident in Ferguson, Missouri (Peyton, 2019). Issues like domestic violence, for example, are situations better equipped for police versus social workers due to the nature related to the dangers involved (Pinchevsky, Nix, 2017).

Defunding of the police units would not likely reduce the increasing incidents of police use of excessive force (Lum, C. et al, 2021). While the initial motive of the defunding campaign is to enhance duty specialization and liaison between various law enforcement agencies, it also carries with it heavy political connotations. Historically, any policy made from political motivation in the USA tends to fail due to politicking, selfish interests, and cultural bias in political spheres. A sustainable solution would be

community-based interventions where the locals can liaise with the police to ensure collaboration in law enforcement. Moreover, these community-based interventions could also educate the locals on their rights and realize when police officers violate them.

In 2020, Andy Beshear, the governor of Kentucky, aired his skepticism on the defunding of police to increase the quality of services. While he agreed that the police officers are often overworked and underpaid, which leads to fatigue, poor decisions in the line of duty, and even corruption, he disregarded funding as the most appropriate approach to these challenges. According to Stogner (2020), most American police forces are underfunded, with Kentucky receiving an average of \$228 per citizen per year (Campaign Zero, 2021). The lack of sufficient funding to drive the criminal justice system begs where the proposed funds for reallocation will originate. While police departments in Kentucky are ineffective, reallocation of resources will create more ineffective support units for several reasons. Firstly, there is no additional funding by the national government to support the reallocation. Despite the current defunding drive, no national fiscal and planning policies have been deployed to ensure sufficient resources for the support departments. For instance, moving domestic cases from police jurisdiction to social services will increase the funding of social services. The additional services delivered by social services will include arresting domestic abusers and initiating a criminal case against them. Without proper funding, the social services are more likely to perform substandard versus Kentucky police in this regard (Vermeer, M et al, 2020).

This is coupled with a shortage of police officers in Louisville, Kentucky's largest municipality. The current shortage of police and similarly corrections officers within the

penal system has been a key element of stress for an already overworked police force, (Gardner, D., 2021), and the recent three-year spike in gun violence related primarily to gang and narcotic infiltration within low-income areas primarily represented by African Americans. According to the National Institute for Criminal Justice Reform (2021), the last three years have seen a rise in the deaths of innocent citizens caught in the middle of gang, narcotic and domestic disputes that turn violent. The misallocation of resources to focus on defunding could further hamper law abiding citizens of the pursuit of a peaceful, crime free environment.

Better pay and benefits for police continue to be a more present focus of local governments. With most starting salaries being below median income levels, based on the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2021), there is a higher propensity for police officers to choose a different career path that will provide a higher level of income, as well as health benefits and lower risk. The Kentucky State Police recently became a major focus as the Kentucky State Senate attempted to raise the starting salary of officers to a more attractive level, to lower attrition and become a more attractive career choice of citizens of the Commonwealth (DOCJT, 2021). This coupled with more attention geared towards providing better, medical, dental, retirement/pension benefits are long overdue and should be considered for annual review and improvement to increase retention and recruiting leading to long-term success. Kentucky's proposed legislation and its long-term effects could be a model for community development while leading to more attention to other areas of public safety in cities large and small.

Moreover, the defunding process continues to ignore the underlying challenges of racial bias, which has led to lower police-civilian collaborations. For instance, the preliminary research indicated that most police officers in the United States to include Kentucky suffer from mental instability in the line of duty (Jetelina, K.K. et al, 2020). There was no adequate healthcare to create a proper intervention. It was expected that putting social services employees in the line of fire or any other department created to reallocate police responsibilities would also suffer from the same mental issues. Newell, C.J., et al (2021) asserts that without a proper system to reverse these trends, police officers would continue to suffer from PTSD and other mental illnesses regardless of the departments they served.

Status of Excessive Force in Kentucky

The preliminary study conducted on this topic indicated that although African Americans continue to be well represented in the police force based on the LMPD Demographics Report, (2021), they remain the primary victims of police brutality according to the most recent Kentucky Police Scorecard (2021). Some of the contributing factors to these trends include the stereotyping of the African American communities. These trends started during the slavery era and still control most of the racial dynamics in the country. As previously discussed by Neal, E., (2021) there is also a well-documented historical racial bias that prevents African Americans from enjoying socioeconomic opportunities. Although the American constitution is included, multiple structural inequalities ensure African Americans remain on the lower social strata. This trend has

reduced African Americans' trust in the system, reducing the community's willingness to collaborate with government agencies.

Some of the proposed solutions to this challenge include more funding for the police agencies in nation and Kentucky, police-community-based interventions, and enhancing mental health for police officers according to the recent Louisville Metro Alternative Responder Modern Research and Planning Final Report (2021). Other preliminary studies indicated that despite law enforcement agencies being severely underfunded, there is a drive to defund these units and reallocate services to perceive appropriate social service agencies, Lum C., et al (2021). Without more funding, this approach is likely to create more challenges than solutions. The federal government should liaise with the key stakeholders (states governments, criminal justice systems, police officers, and communities) to create a reliable pool of resources for systematic quality improvement. The community-based approach will help solve negative issues such as racially instigated excessive use of force. Similarly, investing more in police offering healthcare, payment, recognition, and proper hierarchy will enhance their commitments to serve the community. Other proposed methods include targeted promotions to ensure equality, speed prosecution of police officers, and hefty fines, and increased incarceration for suspects who do not cooperate with police arrests and investigations.

Summary

The literature review helped to identify biases integrated into the study and avoid them. For instance, the preliminary study on the relationships between law enforcement

and the black community in the United States indicated that most black scholars have undergone some form excessive force and are thus likely to be biased. Since the grounded theory was based on statistical inquiry and social processes, the researcher needs to highlight biases and develop certified ways to avoid them.

Moreover, the literature review acted as a starting point. While it was vital to allow the grounded study to develop its data, it was vital to focus on the critical aspects of the inquiry-based on previous exploratory studies. Even then, literature must be used judiciously to allow the emergence of new knowledge. Without any form of literature review, the findings of the grounded theory could replicate the existing theories. Gubrium and Holstein (1998) suggested that no scientific study can be justified without a justifiable research gap. Therefore, even without its application in the in-depth statistical inquiry, literature review helps to identify these gaps and guide the grounded inquiry.

Chapter 3: Research Method

In this study, I aimed to identify lived experiences of college educated African American males during interactions with police in Central Kentucky. I focused on the Central region of the Commonwealth of Kentucky. I adopted a qualitative approach and used focus group discussions to collect data in order to achieve this objective. The focus group consisted of college educated African American males residing in Central Kentucky.

This chapter includes an overview of procedures for data collection and data analysis methods. The current chapter describes (a) a selection for research methodology design and rationale, (b) the role of the researcher, (c) the selection of participants, (d) the instrument used in the study, (e) recruitment participation, (f) the data collection and analysis procedures, and (g) issues of trustworthiness and ethical procedures.

While multiple studies like Peyton, et al. (2019) have examined these relationships, these theories are mostly based on national demographics. Therefore, they are insufficient to offer regional interventions to increase police-public partnership. My goal is that the findings of this study will lay the groundwork for regional-specific interventions to promote police-public relationships. Moreover, this study may create the groundwork and theoretical framework to guide subsequent studies in different regions.

Following the grounded theory, I collected data using the following methods:

- One focus group of 10 college educated African American males
- Undertaking constant data analysis to produce clear theories and them constitutes

- Allowing the data to guide the knowledge-generating process from the start to the end

Research Design and Rationale

The primary goal of this research study was to answer the following question:

RQ: What are the lived experiences of college-educated African American Males during police interactions?

As Strauss (1992) observed in support of the Straussian grounded theory, the qualitative approach was the most appropriate to grounded theory and statistical inquiries. Firstly, qualitative analysis created the basis for pure knowledge. Unlike a quantitative study, which measures predetermined aspects of the central concept, a qualitative study allowed for uninterrupted observation. From these observations, a researcher can develop independent theories in line with the elements of grounded theory.

Moreover, the qualitative approach allowed the respondents to offer an unedited opinion on the topic of investigations. In this case, the focus group discussions would be a viable way to collect data and even generate nonexisting blocks of knowledge. Walsh (2015) observed that while quantitative methods had proven to be more scientific than qualitative methods, they were bound by the levels of measurements and do not engage data outside these confines. For instance, while using quantitative data to examine the nature of police relationships with the Black community in Central Kentucky, the study would be confined within the measurable elements such as the number of times the police have victimized Black people, the number of cases against police, level of education

among other rigid elements. While these aspects might offer more reliable data, they prevented me from creating other data points to formulate new theories.

Even without the academic justification of the qualitative approach for grounded study, qualitative study qualifies due to the nature of the topic under investigation. Police excessive use of force against black communities was an extremely sensitive and highly dynamic topic. For instance, a study by Iheme (2020) indicated a rise in police brutality cases against African American males working in financial institutions. The trend was informed by several factors, including the locality, the physical size of the victims, the banking choice of the police officers, and the make of cars driven by these African American males. A quantitative study would be insufficient to examine this trend since most constituents are based on known and measurable factors.

On the contrary, a qualitative study would be sufficient to examine this aspect by creating reliable data points connecting police excessive use of force alongside the mentioned variables. My study had the same effect where police officers and educated African American males offer their experiences, opinions, and explanations through open-ended questions. The open-ended questions ensure that the participants can discuss variables not mentioned in the guiding questions.

Role of the Researcher

The role of the researcher in this study was to gather and analyze data and publish findings to aid new research (see Sutton & Austin, 2015). The primary assumption of qualitative design was that although the physical world exists and is separate from perception, the reality was social factor and was evident in the language used to refer to

the elements of the world, including people, processes, experiences, and ideas. In another world, the physical world's existence is embedded in the actors' perception and can influence key social processes. Individual perception of reality, including the respondents and the researcher, helps create patterns and trends investigated in any scientific inquiry (Creswell, 1994). Creswell (1994) noted that "Qualitative research is interpretative research" (p. 147). Therefore, the data process is guided not only by the raw data but also by the language, point of reference, tone of the participants, memos, and opinions of all parties involved. When integrated, these elements had a major theoretical implication. This assumption helped qualitative designs to justify their use of narratives and subjective observations to build raw data into meanings. In grounded theory, the application of qualitative processes thus allowed independent collection, review, coding, and interpretation of the data through inductive processes (Creswell, 1994).

Additionally, the qualitative study values personal preferences such as sitting areas, willingness to participate, tone, and even responses to specific questions (Sutton and Austin, 2015). The approach also recognized the phenomena of emergence, including contemporary trends, patterns, meanings, and theories not included in the preliminary analysis of the topic under investigation. For instance, the interview evolved based on the questions asked. A respondent who was willing to discuss the discrimination of the Black community in the criminal justice system might change their moods when discussing police excessive use of force during prior interactions. The qualitative design assumed that these changes in moods and preferences were based on factual trends and could be synthesized into valid datasets. Therefore, a qualitative researcher interacts with the topic

of inquiry, the process, and the respondents to create a narrative roadmap to theoretical evidence (Creswell, 1994).

Other key assumptions included the following

- The researcher could work as a participant-observer in the study and maintain recommended levels of integrity. The researcher would not impose their interests and try to force the data into preconceptualized categories.
- The primary narratives given by participants are sufficient to help the researcher make meanings.
- Constant and repetitive comparison of the answers by the participants gave the researcher a better insight into good data categories and general concepts.
- Ideas, concepts, categories, and meanings acquired during a small, focused study could be used for major collaborating studies.
- The researcher could resonate between subjective understanding of his subjects and objective analysis and categorization of the data collected.
- The researcher could engage in close collaborative conversations and take the roles of the other to undertake constant comparative analysis.

Methodology

Participant Selection

Participant selection started following the approval granted by Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval#: 10-05-22-0893119. Due to the nature of the racial bias phenomenon between African Americans during interactions with police the

selected participants in the study were of the legal age of 18n or older. Participants in the interview process met the following criteria:

- They were college educated African American males.
- They resided within the Central region of the Commonwealth of Kentucky.

All potential individuals participating in the focus group were asked if they met all the criteria within the recruitment email before being formally invited to participate in the study.

The grounded theory approach selected for this study was chosen so data could be systematically collected and analyzed according to. According to Wimpenny and Gass (2001), grounded theory is a form of study that focuses on a generation of theories. In most cases, this approach is not guided by a preliminary study or literature review but focuses on integrating raw elements into a valid and universal theory. In special inquiry, like my study, grounded theory can be guided by existing theories to develop a more valid, reliable, and up-to-date theory to explain a specific aspect of police brutality against Black people in Kentucky. The preliminary analysis on this case helped to create the basis for a grounded analysis. While there are multiple data sources on police brutality, none explains these concepts' dynamics in Kentucky. The grounded theory included a primary data collection and analysis session to focus on Central Kentucky. While the findings of these studies were grounded on the existing literature, they may create a new, region-specific theory that explains lived experiences of college-educated African American males during police interactions.

Population

For the effective application of grounded theory, researchers should examine its independent elements, which guide its application (Corbin and Strauss, 2008). The critical analysis of grounded theory elements also helps readers follow the flow of research and understand the outcomes.

Where the grounded theory relies on primary data, it does not carry a specific hypothesis to test (Corbin and Strauss, 2008). Instead, the collected primary data is seen as a new building block towards a new theory. An open hypothesis has been, however, included for this study to determine whether it was sufficient. Once the data collection process begins, the researcher monitors key data indicators relevant to the topic under investigation. (Corbin and Strauss, 2008) For instance, the primary objective of this study was to identify the relationship between police officers and the Black community in Kentucky. Despite using grounded theory, existing literature helped guide the inquiry process (see Dunne, 2011). In this case, the data focused on key aspects such as level of education, social status, and the number of times harassed by a police officer. However, the residual data, which include minor aspects such as age, locality, and even career, was relevant to guide subsequent steps of data collection. The alliance between the newly collected data, existing data, and the identified data process become an integral part of grounded theory.

As observed by Andrew (2006), grounded theory takes the form of exploratory and explanatory studies. On the one hand, the process assumes no existing theories to explain a specific phenomenon. Therefore, new theories can be freely drawn from

primary observations. On the other hand, applying these processes must uphold the validity of our findings by correlating them with general theories. In this case, the inquiry on the relationships between law enforcement officers and the Black community in Kentucky relied on the known trends on the relationship between law enforcement officers and black communities in the United States, the locality of general theories (Kearns et al., 2019). A historical fact checking also created a correlation between Kentucky and other states that share racial history, thus facilitating the identification of data processes.

Unlike in statistical data analysis, where preidentified codes are used to measure the data and create meanings, these codes come from the data in grounded theory. (Corbin and Strauss, 2008) The design ensured that the study is free from the pre-existing conceptualization of specific topics. While there are evident relationships between police officers and the Black community in Kentucky, the primary data collection and analysis ignored these conceptualizations and develop codes from the primary data. This approach maintains theoretical sensitivity. Orland-Barak (2002) defined theoretical sensitivity as the researcher's ability to give meanings to data without prior bias. Reliance on the existing concepts denies a researcher this ability, which eventually affects the quality of grounded theory conclusions. For instance, although there is known police brutality against African American males, these elements could not be used for basic coding in data analysis since they would compromise my perception of both data subjects. Instead, I conducted a primary data collection and allows common factors to generate the necessary coding for analysis.

Sampling

Theoretical sampling is an integral part of grounded theory studies. Draucker et al. (2007) defined theoretical sampling as the process of generating theories from data through category reclassification. The researcher collects data, codes it, and analyzes it. In the subsequent stages, the researcher must decide on aspects of data that need further analysis and examination. In this case, the data focused on surveys and focus groups for members of the Black community. In examining known aspects such as police brutality, I noted some anomalies in how the Black community used lawyers and the due process of the law in general. I then focused on the role played in Black community's use or lack of legal representation. The newly found concepts help to generate new categories from the previous analysis. The approach ensures continuous development of knowledge throughout data collection, analysis, and identification of data processes.

There are two primary methods of reasoning, namely inductive and deductive reasoning. (Corbin and Strauss, 2008) Inductive reasoning is a body of observation, or a combination of observations synthesized to form a singular principle. Grounded theory adopts inductive reasoning to be able to produce its theories. Instead of fitting patterns into a standard principle, the inductive approach observes the patterns and seeks to create a standard principle they adhere to. In application to the topic, the study does not focus on the known trends in relationships between the Black community and police in the United States and Kentucky. Instead, the primary data collection models are designed to observe the nature of law enforcement and the nature of black communities in Kentucky and produce standard data that logically explains these observations.

Although the grounded theory is an open observation and development approach, it seeks to create data meanings within specific social settings. Coyne (1997) observed that one of the core advantages of grounded theory is generating theories within specific social environments. While the process focuses on producing new theories, it does so by focusing on specific conditions where these theories would hold. For instance, when examining the relationships between the Black community and law enforcement, I was at liberty to identify social processes such as family size, education, and even gender, and relate them to the investigated concepts. The flexibility of the grounded theory ensures that the final principles identified to explain a concept have considered all the possible scenarios and offered the most solid explanation.

The grounded theory also relies on analytical memos between the coding and writing of the findings (Corbin and Strauss, 2008). In the initial stages of data collection, the researcher uses the data to create categories and coding. Since these categories are still invalidated, they are supported by logical analysis such as statistical evidence, history, or general knowledge. When writing down the findings, the researcher must rely on two-point analytics that connects the final data to the initial coding. These ensure that if there are any preconceptualizations (not advisable) used in the grounded theory, they are maintained throughout the study process, thus safeguarding the study's validity.

The last step in grounded theory is to integrate the identified categories into an existing framework. Breckenridge and Jones (2009) observed that no theories can be built in a vacuum where researchers assume nothing about a concept. Instead, the existing frameworks work as a guide towards advanced theories. In this case, the findings will be

integrated into the traditional analysis of racial divisions and strained relationships between the law enforcement officers and the Black community.

In this study, the grounded theory applied met all these elements and helped me develop an internal understanding of the relationships between police officers and the Black community in Kentucky. While these relationships have been comprehensively investigated in the United States and Kentucky, they left a wide gap that needs deeper exploration. The primary study was strategically focused on Kentucky and, specifically, Central Kentucky. Throughout the data collection, coding, encoding, identification of data process, and analysis, the researcher progressively develops a theory to explain these relationships by giving situational meanings to the datasets.

Instrumentation

I used 11 interview questions to help identify how college educated African American males could influence lived experiences during interactions with police. I developed the questions based on my past professional experience within the criminal justice field and my experience dealing with police during routine and nonroutine contact. Participants were advised that their participation was voluntary and that they could terminate involvement at any time without repercussion or reprisal. Participants were allowed time to address issues concerns or gain clarification prior to the start of the focus groups. Participants were given identical focus group questions to allow them to expand appropriately with responses.

I developed the interview questions to be thought and response provoking for participants to identify lived experiences. Based on research protocols there was no bias

introduced into the study. To prevent incident of loss of data the focus groups/interviews were recorded using the digital medium.

Recruitment and Participation

The participant recruitment and data collection began after approval from Walden University IRB. Recruitment was conducted with two methods. I solicited participation from college educated African American males by contacting multiple local college graduate fraternities within the Central Region of Kentucky by both mail and flyer. The flyer was posted within community blogs and sent to Chapter leadership of the organizations following all legal guidelines. The multiple methods of distributing announcements gave participants two weeks to make contact, and they were given my email address and phone number as additional information. After contacting the participants of both methods, I confirmed that they met criteria for participation in the focus group/interview as well as insuring focus group/interview times were feasible, and they could attend.

Data Collection

It is vital to undertake rigorous data collection and analysis in a qualitative study. Since the data collection tools are not designed to measure specific aspects, some of the data collected will be invalid or redundant, thus encouraging a high volume of participants.

Before settling on a focus group, the researcher reviewed the applicability of the common qualitative data collection methods, including questionnaires and interviews. The questionnaires looked at the natural selection for this form of study. However, this

method was disqualified due to its reliance on literature review. Even in open-ended questions, the researcher seeks to acquire specific data categories. Adopting such data collection methods for this study would have increased the risk of relying on an already existing conceptualization of the topic under investigation. The interviews were also disqualified due to the low interactions of data during the build-up. As confirmed by El Hussein et al. (2014), one of the critical aspects of grounded theory is its ability to undertake data collection and analysis simultaneously. Interviews involve isolated participants who are likely to offer different answers without anchoring criteria to give meaning to the data. It forces the researcher first to conduct the data collection phase and later engage in data analysis. Focus group discussions seemed the most effective choice for this study.

I settled for focus groups as the primary data collection methods for three major reasons. Data check-points- In focus groups, participants are asked to give answers in the presence of all other participants. It means that multiple parties judge the quality of data given. The process ensures that participants strive to give the most appropriate answers while safeguarding their ideologies. Moreover, since it is an open forum, participants are allowed to discredit some opinions and experiences of other participants, thus creating natural data check points that increase reliability.

The success of a grounded theory inquiry is based on the researcher's ability to follow the narratives and create data categories. Therefore, the quality of the narratives offered by the participants determines the overall quality of the data gathered and the theories generated. Therefore, it is vital to produce data collection methods that

encourage raw data generation. Focus groups encourage the members to engage with each other, and the researcher to sufficiently answer the guiding questions.

The primary objective is to identify the impacts of excessive force against African American educated males on the quality of relationships between police and the rest of the black community in Central Kentucky. The focus group offers an effective platform for these two groups to interact freely and show their most innate relationship with one another.

The researcher would conduct focus group discussions with ten participants (10 college educated African American males residing in Central Kentucky). The primary objective was to have the focus groups in two phases (10 educated African American males residing in Central Kentucky). However, after the initial contact, the researcher realized that most college educated African American males worked different schedules. To solve this challenge, the researcher offered multiple focus group dates and times to facilitate maximum participation.

The focus group was comprised of ten participants. As observed by Schneider, Vuckovic, and DeBar (2003), participants are more likely to participate in a study when it does not compromise their daily lives or become a liability. For instance, asking college educated African American males to be available to attend a common focus group in a different township would reduce their willingness to participate. Moreover, ensuring that the participants were settled and within their schedules during the focus groups allowed them to be fully engaged with the task at hand and offer quality answers. To facilitate

participation and due to the current COVID-19 pandemic and related health restrictions the focus groups were conducted via Zoom conference.

Verbal or written answers were the primary indicators of data. As will be observed seen in Appendix, every question will seek to unearth specific variables related to the research question: To what extent does the lived experience college-educated African American males and police influence interactions?

In addition to verbal answers, the researcher also examined communication cues that helped create meaning throughout the data collection process. For instance, as shown in coding, anger, and frustration during the focus group would indicate unshared, elevated level, negative opinion towards past interactions with police at the same time, silence or outbursts could indicate an unwillingness to continue with the discussion for personal reasons. All these cues were synthesized to complement the data received through verbal communications.

The focus group setting will be participative, with the researcher serving as primary facilitator. The researcher will encourage participation of the entire group. It gives the participants a sign of equality and control. McCallin (2003) observes that this design, which endorses independence, value, and control, effectively allows people to engage in open-minded discussions. It also reduces the possibility of respondents falling into the trap of guided answers. When the researcher becomes the focal point of a focus group, some participants might start to coin their answers to meet their perception of the researcher and his preferences. The inclusive setting reduces this risk.

As observed by Urquhart (2001), there is a need to establish a philosophy behind a focus group, especially when using grounded theory. Unlike other methods of inquiry, the grounded theory seeks to integrate the findings and produce a subjective theory. Therefore, understanding the values and direction of the research is critical to ensure accuracy and objectivity.

The recent rise of COVID19 cases related currently to the Omicron, and BA2 variant may place distraction and limits to focus group participation. Based on safety protocols and health concerns the researcher will prepare individual surveys to focus group participants to facilitate data collection. Accordingly, all principals related to qualitative data coding will be used to extract the needed information to conduct formal translation and interpretation of responses collected. In this case, the researcher will submit surveys to achieve competent research saturation through survey of participants.

The preliminary study before the data collection indicated that excessive force is a racial debate. Traditionally, African Americans feel targeted by the police. On the other hand, the police believe that African Americans are more likely to be criminals. This notion informs biases in data collection. First, African Americans are more likely to give data that implicates police brutality even when it did not occur. White et al. (2012) highlights 'expected position' as one of the most common flaws in focus group data collection. Since African Americans share the same notion of oppression, they are likely to give expected answers in a show of solidarity. When put together, they will create a common narrative that echoes the evident police brutality against them. While most of the data might be true, there is a high likelihood that they will control the discussions and

take their traditional position as victims of police brutality. Therefore, during the focus group, the researcher will exercise informed objectivity to track down reliable answers and sieve fabricated responses that seek to meet the expected positions of the respondents.

Data Analysis Plan

It is expected that the respondents would form social groups within the focus group based on their gender, race, and professions. A study by Vaportzis et al. (2017) indicates that respondents tend to create social interactions once the focus group discussions begin, resulting in affiliations. These affiliations could drive some respondents to offer suggestive answers. To avoid this bias, the researcher asked specific follow-up questions to gauge the answers' trustworthiness. For instance, two doctors who have been victims of police brutality in Central Kentucky might seek to synchronize their stories to give them more statistical value; for example, two focus group participants who had been victims of excessive force are likely to present police as naturally biased to validate their actions. Follow-up questions that seek to identify individual experience with the police, community, and even careers will help to eliminate these biases.

One of the major challenges when using focus groups is differentiating the truthful answers and the predetermined answers. For instance, many African Americans have been victims of excessive force of disparate treatment or have witnessed family members and colleagues being victims. Therefore, even without the firsthand experience of being victimized, they are more likely to offer answers that highlight the common police brutality. These respondents might believe that giving truthful answers might

undermine the rampant trends in society even when they are not the primary victims. Again, the researcher will adapt follow-up questions and break up internal affiliation during discussions to identify truthful answers from socially directed responses. Understanding these biases is critical in grounded study, which does not rely on established theorems or concepts but seeks to develop a theory from the ground up.

During the focus group or alternate survey's respondents may experience trauma related to prior experiences which could cause adverse mental and social disorder based on the nature of the event. This is a relevant factor for police and college-educated African American males. Accordingly, this concern will require the researcher to provide referral outlets for behavioral/mental health services within the local community and telephonically. Examples include walking in at the local emergency room, or behavioral health services, or contacting the National Suicide Prevention Helpline at 800-273-8255.

Issue of Trustworthiness

Throughout the study, the researcher will strive to maintain elevated levels of trustworthiness required by ethical guidelines. According to Amankwaa (2016), trustworthiness is extremely essential to supporting findings when engaging in qualitative research. However, without contradicting the ethical policies, the researcher is at liberty to withhold some sensitive information during the group debriefing. For instance, if one question led to conflict in the last group, it was the researcher's duty to evaluate this information and decide whether to reveal it to the next group or withhold it. As observed by Hennink et al. (2019), revealing negative information of the outcomes of past discussions can create bias and increase the quality of the study depending on how they

are applied. The study integrates this notion to the debriefing and the comparative analysis of the study.

Dependability

Dependability ensures that the process of qualitative research is reliable. Additionally, it confirms that the process mimicked within the same methods, with identical participation, will have similar findings in the research. To facilitate this, I ensured all decisions made within the scope of this study were transparent. This would suffice the probability of another researcher arriving at similar findings or conclusions as myself according to Noble & Smith (2015). Because of this I used procedures to systematically annotate decisions, and methods used within the scope of the study for audit trail purpose.

Credibility

The most efficient way to achieve credibility is strict attention to detail and protocols of the focus group process. Transcripts were reviewed numerous times to ensure the collected information was accurate (Shenton, 2004). Purpose sampling was used to prevent bias from study participants. Questions were asked with caution to respondents' feedback being untruthful. My prior experience in investigative questioning enabled me to evaluate my responses based on both experienced gained from prior experience working with law enforcement and conducting investigations that involved violations of integrity or falsification of a response or document. Reflexivity according to McGee et al. (2007) enables the researcher to interpret findings throughout the course of the study by journaling throughout the research process.

Transferability

Transferability involves the process of ensuring the findings are suitable for future research on the subject according to Elu et al (2014). It involves ensuring the findings are descriptive, and mirror the collected data from participants, and inquiry of their role within the methods of the study. From this process readers of the research can ascertain their own independent opinion concerning the suitability of the findings related to the research. The success of transferability is within the process of the thorough review of findings to ensure the applicability for future research (Amwankwaa, 2016).

Confirmability

Confirmability ensures research findings (a) measure a level of neutrality and b) do not reflect the theories and bias of the individual researcher (Eli, S. et al, 2014). Confirmability is best described as strict attention to the principles of protocol. To establish confirmability, I recorded each focus group/interview and upon completion of each session reviewed it to ensure the focus groups were guarded against individual researcher bias.

Ethical Procedures

Glaser and Strauss developed the grounded theory as a new form of qualitative inquiry in a paper they worked on in 1960. However, as the theory expanded, other scholars offered inputs and critics, leading to the separation of the theory into two principal pillars, namely the Straussian grounded theory and classic grounded theory (Kenny & Fourie, 2015). The major difference between the two approaches is their use of literature review. Glaser's approach, which has come to be known as the classic grounded

theory, insists on the total omission of literature review when using the grounded approach. On the other hand, the Straussian theory insists that while the primary objective of the process is to produce new theories, there is a need to examine the existing literature to produce benchmarks to ensure validity. Based on the sensitivity of the topic at hand, I chose to use the Straussian grounded theory to enable a comprehensive review of the topics. However, although there is a literature review section, the study omits a pre-conceptualization and focuses on creating meanings from the raw data created. The literature review helps the researcher to make better data meanings during the process.

Glaser's classic grounded theory is adamant on the need to avoid literature review. The primary argument is that reliance on literature review might include preconceived ideas on a certain topic. When this happens, the newly generated theories extend the existing theories from a unique perspective. The greatest fear expressed by Glaser is that once a researcher engages in too much literary analysis, they form a subconscious perception of the concepts under investigation. It thus becomes hard for these researchers to offer independent input when making sense of the data collected. Other reasons identified by Alammar (2019) for avoiding literature review in grounded theory include:

The researcher as a tool- In data collection, it is vital to undertake an equipment test to ensure that the tools used in data collection and analysis are not compromised. Since the researcher is trusted to make meanings of the data, they become a part of the

data collection and analysis. It is thus in the best interest of the study to keep them from contamination by previous theories.

Clarity of Thoughts- in a Grounded study, the researcher should focus purely on the data generated by his primary set-up instead of secondary data on the same topic. Yarwood-Ross and Jack (2015) observe that critical examination of literature when using grounded theory lowers mental clarity for the researcher, which leads to lower efficiency. For instance, when examining the relationship between the black community and police, a researcher who analyzes these issues must have clouded mind due to the various viewpoints explaining these concepts. In the end, the findings of the grounded theory are more likely to make meanings of the learned perceptive rather than meanings of the primary data collected.

Avoid Assumptions- Walsh (2014) observed that people form assumptions based on their experiences and exposure. In this case, critical examination of the relationship between law enforcement officers and the black community might result in assumptions, especially where the researcher is from the same community. For instance, it is easier to assume that law enforcement officers are always biased against black males based on their experience and opinions in secondary studies. Such an assumption would reduce the study's validity since the researcher's ability to give independent meanings to data has already been compromised.

Since the primary objective of grounded theory is to generate a new theory, these elements must be considered at every step of the process. Suddaby (2006) gives an example of failed grounded theory where the initial literature review controls the study's

outcomes, leading to replication of theories using different datasets. Glaser and Strauss insisted that the most logical approach is first to ignore the existence of the literature review. Although they differ on whether it should be inappropriate at one part of the study, they agree that its use should not be the central determinant of the flow of concepts within the study. Once the researcher starts collecting data, they should rely on the new data categories and make meanings of them. In assigning meanings to data, using Strauss's theory, it is permissible to borrow from the literature review to fill in the identified gap to make comprehensive and valid meanings in the study.

Glaser and Strauss left some room for the grounded theory. In their 1967 analysis of the use of grounded theory, they stated that: "Our position . . . does not at all imply that the generation of new theory should proceed in isolation from existing grounded theory" (p. 6). Over the years, various scholars have joined the bandwagon to support literature reviews, even in classic grounded theory instances. Ramalho (2006) suggested that knowledge needs an anchor to where it has been derived and can be applied. In this case, the primary objective is to examine the relationship between the police and the law enforcement officers. Without the preliminary literature review, the researchers and stakeholders know that such a relationship exists and is worth further investigation. Failure to include literature review does not necessarily mean that clarity has been achieved; in some instances, it can indicate an unwillingness to discuss the already existing conceptualization of the aspects under investigation. The denial does not guarantee clarity- it just fails to acknowledge bias in making meanings of the data collected.

A literature review helps to identify biases integrated into the study and avoid them. For instance, the preliminary study on the relationships between the black community and police in the United States indicates that most black scholars have undergone police brutality and are thus likely to be biased. Since the grounded theory is based on statistical inquiry and social processes, the researcher needs to highlight biases and develop certified ways to avoid them.

Moreover, literature review acts as a starting point. While it is vital to allow the grounded study to develop its data, it is vital to focus on the critical aspects of the inquiry-based on previous exploratory studies. Even then, literature must be used judiciously to allow the emergence of new knowledge. Without any form of literature review, the findings of the grounded theory can replicate the existing theories. Gubrium and Holstein (1998) suggested that no scientific study can be justified without a justifiable research gap. Therefore, even without its application in the in-depth statistical inquiry, literature review helps to identify these gaps and guide the grounded inquiry.

Reflexivity

As McGee et al. (2007) explained, reading, and analyzing literature reviews is critical of grounded theory research. They observe that the researcher's reflexivity can help solve some of the bias problems found in grounded theory studies. They wrote, "Use of literature or any other existing knowledge should not prevent a grounded theory arising from the inductive– deductive interplay which is at the heart of this method" (p. 334). They defined reflexivity as the progressive, conscious reflection that endorses openness of the inductive process based on the literature review. The concept of

reflexivity specifically focuses on the role of the researcher in the research process and should be included in the study and potentially shared with the readers. Glaser (1992) has also extensively written about the conflict between allowing theories and concepts to emerge within the grounded study process or forcing the primary data to fit into the preconceived theories. In this inquiry, he observed that a balanced position is necessary to allow the two concepts to co-exist while maintaining the integrity of the grounded process and allowing the emergence of new theories and hypotheses.

Corbid and Strauss (1990) also encouraged preliminary literature in the preliminary stages of grounded theory to stimulate theoretical sensitivity. They suggested that while literature review might not be an integral part of developing new theories, it is useful in raising questions, examining secondary data, and preparing the researcher to limit the scope of the inquiry. Moreover, in the initial stages of the study, literature review helps create guiding frameworks for theoretical sampling and initiate social processes within which the inquiry occurs. Further, the review boards require an early summation of the gaps of the research and the intended outcomes. Since grounded theory seeks to develop new theories, it cannot fully justify the viability of the study once concluded. The application of early literature review solves this problem by putting the study into a standard context for justification. This observation highlights the need for a literature review in examining the topic at hand.

Summary

The chapter provided an overview of the methodology used to conduct this study. This chapter also included instructions for selection of participants, recruitment

strategies, data analysis processes, data collection processes, the role of the researcher and the instrumentation. The study will adopt ethical consideration and the researcher's reflexivity to maintain objectivity. It is expected that the researcher might develop subjective opinions about the participants or the topic of inquiry during the study. While traditional conceptualization can be controlled during the study's design, the researcher must use data controls to ensure they remain objective. The process maintains the integrity and openness of the study. To achieve this, the study relied on Haverkamp's cornerstone for successful qualitative research. The cornerstones include:

Foundation of Ethical Principles- Throughout the study, the researchers must maintain the ethical principles that guide scientific inquiry. For instance, the study must maintain anonymity and confidentiality while focusing on technical aspects such as reliability and validity. In other words, a scientific study must ensure that it does not harm the participants or secondary parties through inaccurate conclusions.

Virtuous Character- Every qualitative study must consider the virtuous character that is the basis of its data sets. In this case, the researcher identified participants who strived to use their experiences and intellectual capacity to help the research. These participants also happen to be conversant with social skills and strive to eliminate any bias in their answers. In areas of ambiguity, answers from these characters outweigh answers from other participants. The design of the focus groups is done to ensure that each group has the same potential to have at least one virtuous character. In other cases, the researcher guided the questions and the team's interactions to remain within the confines of virtuous character as understood in qualitative research.

Conscious in Application of Care- This concept ensures that each study understands its role, the needs of the participants, and their rights. While getting accurate data is necessary for any qualitative research, it must do so when caring for its participants. The researcher omitted or cut brief questions during the study that led to heightened emotions, distress, and discomfort. The approach also aligns with the principle of expected positions where answers given during heightened emotions tend to the participants' mainstream or extreme firsthand experiences rather than objective positions working towards knowledge buildup.

There is an underlying need for the research investigators to bracket their expectations before engaging in a study. The concept also insists on the need for the researcher to own up to their perspectives even before engaging in the study. The study highlighted two expectations. One, it could be perceived that the researchers' perceptions influenced the nature of the data collected. Therefore, in line with the grounded theory, the researcher will minimize these biases by examining racial differences, ideologies, religions, experiences, and personalities.

Additionally, during and after the data collection, the researcher as coder will examine the reflexivity and the possible subjectivity and use the bracketed expectations to eliminate the evident biases. This will help to increase the quality of data collected and the conclusion derived from the study.

Chapter 4: Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine an explanation of lived experiences of college-educated African American males during police interactions in Central Kentucky. The research question in this study was “What are the lived experiences of college-educated African American Males during police interactions?”

Research Setting

There were no personal or organizational conditions that influenced participants’ involvement in the research. There were no instances where participants experienced personal or professional issues that would influence the interpretation of the research results. Research setting is more modernly defined as a social, physical, or cultural location where research studies are conducted (Given, 2008). The setting was facilitated via private telephonic interviews between the researcher and the participant. I used a personal office space that provided privacy, and confidentiality and research participants were encouraged and complied by ensuring their setting provided both privacy and confidentiality during the telephonic interview. To assist participants in the study, upon consent I encouraged participants to the importance of protecting their privacy when providing responses to the telephonic interview. Interviews were scheduled during periods that did not interfere with the participants’ employment or professional and personal obligations.

Demographics

The term demographics can be defined as age, gender, ethnicity, social class (Webber, 2018). It can represent a sample of the population or characteristics of a specific

group within the population (Salkind, 2010). The participants in this study had to meet the following criteria for inclusion:

- They were college educated African American males.
- They resided within the Central region of the Commonwealth of Kentucky.

Twelve adult males volunteered and completed interviews. Each of the 12 participants was a college-educated African American male who resided in the Central region of the Commonwealth of Kentucky.

This section shows that the model participants were college educated African American males ranging in age from 18-59 years old (Table 1). The participants for this study ranged in age from 20-56 years old and age groups were formed to mask the specific ages for their protection.

Table 1

Demographic Characteristics of College Educated African American Males

ID	Interview	Age	Education Level	Career	Marital status	Employment type	Enrollment status
P1	1	35	College Degree	Business	Married	Full time	Graduated
P2	2	22	College Student	Sports management	Single	Unemployed	Enrolled
P3	3	36	College Degree	Computer science	Single	Full time	Enrolled
P4	4	38	Associate Degree	It	Married	Full time	Enrolled
P5	5	20	College Student	Mass communications	Single	Unemployed	Enrolled
P6	6	37	College Degree	Public health	Married	Full time	Graduated
P7	7	29	College Degree	Administration	Married	Full time	Graduated
P8	8	53	Master's Degree	Self employed	Married	Full time	Graduated
P9	9	56	College Degree	Juvenile justice	Divorced	Retired	Graduated
P10	10	39	College Degree	Business	Married	Full Time	Graduated
P11	11	39	Master's Degree	Business	Married	Full Time	Graduated

P12	12	28	College Degree	Administrator	Single	Full Time	Graduated
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Data Collection

Recorded audio data was collected from the college-educated African American men during the telephonic interview process. Nine interviews were conducted in October of 2022, and three interviews were conducted in November of 2022, based on the availability of participants. The participants were labeled accordingly with an uppercase “P” and a case number to denote to delineate participation (example P1, P2, P3, etc.). Interviews were conducted with standard protocol, with a greeting, and thanking the participant for their participation and their value to the research. I immediately provided toll free numbers for assistance if the participants experienced any emotional, behavioral, or stress related outcomes at any time during the telephonic interview. Participants were also informed they had the right at any time to terminate the interview if they felt uncomfortable. They were reminded that the interview was recorded and that it was the sole responsibility of the researcher to both safeguard the information and maintain privacy and confidentiality of audio records and any data related to the telephonic interview.

To maintain consistency during the interview, I read each interview question to each participant. Interviews were recorded using two digitally encrypted recording devices. I strictly adhered to the data collection protocols mentioned in Chapter 3 with no occurrence of deviation.

The interviews lasted around 25 minutes. I used probing for the purpose of attaining clarification of research question responses from participants in order to gain additional detail on a particular matter. This was accomplished by asking follow-up questions when needed (example; "Please explain what you mean?"). Participants were allowed to completely answer questions in the entirety without response from me. Only after the participants completed the question and after a short pause did I continue with the next question. Although the interviews were telephonic, I was able to record and document verbal cues by the participants to include deep breaths, long-pauses, and emotional sensitivity based on the circumstances either good or bad during their interactions with police officers in Central Kentucky and past experiences with police in general. The dialogue of the personal experiences was supportive to the format of open-ended, fact-finding questions and responses were often informative as well as detailed. I avoided the use of prompts and used paraphrasing to provide clarity for the participants during telephonic interviews.

There was a variation in data collection. In Chapter 3 it was asserted that data would be collected through the use of the focus group method; however, after consultation with the Walden IRB, the more suitable research method was to conduct telephonic interviews versus focus groups primarily to protect the privacy and confidentiality of research participants. There were no unusual circumstances encountered during data collection.

Data Analysis

Data analysis involved reviewing each interview and using a Mac iOS transcription device called “Voice Dictation” to carefully transcribe recorded interviews to a Microsoft Word document before using the NVivo software application to code the qualitative data for further transcription. During the transcription process interviews were compared in order to synthesize the data for evidence of similarities and possible differences in gathered evidence. Accordingly, data was examined to identify codes that could generate evidence to support perceptions, beliefs, norms, and create themes. The second step of the process incorporated further iteration to identify more common phrases and expressions and statements until saturation was attained. There was a noticeably longer pause when participants provided responses to their own personal experiences versus experiences of family members, friends, or second-hand knowledge of interactions with police. The openness of sharing their experience more frequently identified evidence of bias by police as being a consistent theme throughout the interviews.

Sampling

Theoretical sampling is often defined as deciding the type of data an individual can collect as they jointly collect, analyze, or code. (Scott and Medaugh, 2017). Interview processes based on facts collection can feature the preliminary selections of an interview object created on the question or issue without applying a theoretical framework. Additionally, coding an investigation commenced throughout the data assortment session, and the data needs also guided different sampling selections. However, Holstien and Gubrium (1995) stated that the next stages are likely to appear in the investigators

acknowledgement of the multiple gaps realized in emerging philosophy or a call for additional data about detailed research interrogations. Holstien and Gubrium corresponded that sampling is often a continuous process when looking at active interview practices. The activity of designating respondents is a tentative spontaneous and provisional issue.

The context of theoretical sensitivity is a controlled process of emerging theory, which also requires the individual to engender impressions and philosophy as they are realized from statistics. (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) The stated skill exploits the investigator's proposal predispositions and temperament, united with the hypothetical perceptions and abilities to use such understandings. Corbin and Strauss (2008) also stated that the researcher involvement and history are an integral part in generating the theory. Similarly Glaser and Strauss (1967) objected to hypothetical and arithmetical sampling when analyzing their determination. Statistical analysis is also concentrated on the issue of obtaining a real piece of evidence on distributions and making verifications as theoretical is also looking into the problems of discovering categories, properties, and their relations to other concepts. With the academic selection, there are assumptions on the persistence that the theory formulated for one individual will undoubtedly hold for another under similar settings.

Glaser and Straus (1967) stated that the triumph of imaginary sampling was heavily affiliated with theoretical saturation. It is further connected to the point where no additional information exists to empower the researcher to create different properties. The

repeated instances of exact details show that a saturation point has been attained and collected information in that zone can easily be halted.

I was able to examine and summarize descriptions from participants that formalized themes based on the lived experiences of college educated African American males during police interactions in Central Kentucky. The emergent themes included (a) socially accepted discrimination, (b) illegal search and seizures, (c) low representation, (d), not enough racial collaboration, and (e) need for inclusive and collaborative policies and efforts. Throughout the interview process participants were able to provide descriptions and relate experiences based on the phenomenon. The participants's verbatim experiences provided a composite structure which enabled me to better identify key aspects good and bad of the lived experience of college educated African American males during police interactions in Central Kentucky.

Bracketing

There is an underlying need for researchers to bracket their expectations before engaging in a study. The concept also insists the need for the researcher to own up to their perspectives even before engaging in the study (Glaser, 1978). The study highlighted two possible expectations. One, it was inevitable my perceptions influenced the nature of data collected. Therefore in line with grounded theory, I minimized these biases by examining racial differences, ideologies, religions, experiences, and personalities. Additionally, during and after data collection, I examined the reflexivity and the possible subjectivity and used bracketed expectations to eliminate evidence biases. This helped increase the quality of data collected and the conclusion derived from

the study. Having no prior experience with a personal incident of racial bias with police helped me maintain objectivity. I also tracked down the possibility of past experiences that could have led to racial bias.

Memo Writing

During the data collection, I engaged in memo writing to accumulate similar ideas and concepts as shared by the participants (see Stoker, & Close, 2013). The primary objective of this process was to follow the evolution of data, opinions and track possible bias. For instance, if a participant changed their tone and body language after the counterargument, I noted the possible withholding of information due to immediate social, psychological, and physical environments. The memo also helped to clarify the meanings by recording narratives of follow-up questions (see Glaser, 1978). A sample memo written at the beginning of the study appears in Appendix X

Table 2 shows the coding process I took to determine the thematic findings.

Table 2

Selective, Axial, and Open Coding

Selective coding	Axial coding	Open coding
1. Inequality	1. Traditional Inequality since Slavery	1. African Americans are natural disadvantaged 2. The traditional models encourages inequality 3. Police feel the duty to protect themselves from African American economic mobility 4. Corporate America discriminates against African Americans

- | | | |
|--|--------------------------------|---|
| | | 5. African Americans are more likely to go without jobs despite having the same levels of qualifications. |
| 2. Lack of Equal Opportunities | | 6. African Americans are underrepresented in law enforcement agencies. |
| | | 7. United States government is reluctant to endorse equality policies |
| 3. Lack of Progressive Equality Policies | | 8. African Americans are structurally discriminated against, and the old policies remain |
| | | 9. African Americans are underrepresented in political systems in charge of policy changes |
| | | 10. The criminal justice system believes African Americans are more likely to be criminals |
| 4. Unfair Criminal Justice System | | 11. There is a higher recidivism index Among African Americans |
| | | 12. African Americans are underrepresented as leaders in the criminal justice system |
| | | 10. African Americans are more likely to be arrested |
| 2. Police Brutality | 5. Forceful Arrests | 11. African Americans are guilty until proven innocent |
| | | 12. White police officers are likely to arrest African Americans without probable cause |
| | | 13. Most African Americans have been arrested and searched without warrants |
| | 6. Illegal Search and Seizures | 14. Police officers fear African Americans during arrests, thus using excessive force |
| | | 15. Police are more likely to search vehicles of African American males when compared to other races. |
| | | 16. The racial conflicts in the United States date to the slavery era |

	7. Started during slavery	17. Nothing much has changed, and the white majority view African Americans as inferior despite their qualifications
		18. African Americans still suffer from traditional racial conflicts
3. Racial Conflicts	8. Karen's	19. African Americans are the primary victim of entitled white women who use state resources for racially motivated agendas. 20. Police officers support the Karen's without evidence 21. Police are more likely to be called against African Americans even when no crime has taken place
		22. Police officers accept racism by failing to prosecute Karen's
	9. Socially Accepted Discrimination	23. The American society endorses racism through its public space interactions
		24. The criminal justice system also endorses racism by jailing African Americans without proper proceedings
		25. No effective government programs to end racial conflicts
	10. No government programs	26. Marginalized African Americans are not included in equality policies
4. Lack of Incentives	11. Racially controlled social aspects	27. The marginalization makes African Americans more likely to be involved in a crime
		28. African Americans are more likely to lack employment opportunities
	12. Low Representation	29. African American males have lower career mobility 30. The white majority controls most public aspects 31. By design, American society underrepresents minorities 32. African American males are more likely to lack employment and business capital

		33. The white majorities control the policies for equality
		34. Despite the rampant inequality, there are little or no policies
	13. Not enough	to reverse the trend
	racial collaboration	35. There are no sufficient funds to reverse the trend
		36. Most police officers do not acknowledge racial inequalities
5.	14. Need for	37. Increase the funding for equality incentives
Collaborati	inclusive policies	39. Create laws and policies to reduce bias
ve Efforts		
	15. Inclusion policy	41. Create new policies for fines and social works for racial
	and enforcement	discrimination
		42. Include racial equality in the modern American education
		system.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Throughout the study, I strove to maintain high levels of trustworthiness which was required by ethical guidelines. However, without contradicting the ethical policies, I was at liberty to withhold some sensitive information. For instance, if one question led to conflict with the individual, it was my duty to evaluate this information and decide whether to use the information or withhold it. As observed by Hennink et al. (2019), revealing negative information of the outcomes of past discussions can create bias and increase the quality of the study depending on how they are applied. The study integrates this notion to the debriefing and the comparative analysis of the study.

Credibility

I maintained credibility through theoretical sampling ensuring that the interviewing strategy involved asking open-ended fact-finding questions and evoking thought-provoking responses from the participants. It involves collecting data and analyzing the data to decide which data to collect next (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Theoretical sampling can avoid bias when interview questions are open-ended and properly worded to ensure participants are able to reply with their own honest responses. Bracketing during the interview portion enabled me to better facilitate whether bias in the narrative data existed while cataloging the interview of record.

Transferability

To achieve transferability, I reviewed the detailed transcription of the interviews to ensure each participant's personal experience correlated with the views associated with the lived experiences of college educated African American males during police

interactions. The ability to extract details and experiences from a contextual standpoint enabled the researcher to better apply the individual context to the findings which was consistent with Glaser and Strauss (1967).

Dependability

I maintained dependability by creating eleven research questions that related directly to the topic of the study. I additionally made every attempt to ensure future researchers engaging in a study of this type could use similar structure to conduct a study under similar methods and criteria according to Glaser and Strauss, 1967. I additionally sought the assistance of a peer-review from a fellow doctoral student that enabled me to better comprehend the designs and processes and provided clear, constructive and consistent feedback to assist in the important aspect of clarity in research.

Confirmability

The importance of confirmability enabled me to record detailed information and make analytic decisions based on the methodology versus predisposition. From the onset of the research, I did not make assumptions on what I would expect. I did however choose to record, transcribe, code and analyze the data so that the results were stand-alone versus skewed by personal bias. By eliminating subjective opinion, I incorporated reflexivity to maintain an objective approach according to McGhee et al, 2007. This greatly enhanced the openness and integrity of the study.

Results

The research question was what are the lived experiences of college-educated African American males during police interactions in Central Kentucky? Seven themes emerged from the findings.

Theme 1: Traditional Inequality Since Slavery

Theme 1 is summarized by the following interview question:

Do you think African American males are naturally disadvantaged in modern American society?

Theme 1 set the tone. Most of the college educated African American males felt that inequality in America had existed since the era of slavery. The personal stories given by participants indicate that racism has continued from their grandfathers, fathers, and current generation. The general belief was that these generational inequalities have led to lower opportunities despite education qualifications. It was indicated that college educated African American males found it difficult to get promotion opportunities despite having the same qualifications as their white counterparts. The data harmonized from the first set of questions also indicated that college educated African American males believed that police and most of white America generally believe that they were lazy and uncompetitive when competing against Caucasians for employment and equal treatment.

The participants believed that the lack of equal opportunities is what leads to social vices such as drugs and crime. Therefore, while it is true that African Americans are more likely to be arrested and jailed, this trend is most associated with lack of

opportunities rather than the nature of African Americans. Since Emancipation they felt most white people as the majority felt the right to protect their dominant racial status. The notion was evident across the data sets that even some college educated African American males believed equality at a national level is an illusion. Some even quoted historical facts that identified long-standing inequalities that had existed even during periods of war when their ancestors and even they had failed to achieve the same level of representation as their white counterparts.

Theme 2: Lack of Equal Opportunities:

Theme 2 is a summary based on the following interview question:

Do you think American society still struggles with racism?

College educated African American males indicated it was difficult to obtain opportunities in the in American because of their race. Sixty percent of participants interviewed had been a direct victim of discrimination in the workplace. Forty percent indicated that they felt frustrated and often reviewed other ways of moving up the corporate ladder. The interaction indicated that African Americans were also capable of social vices as a result of frustrations. The lack of opportunities further contributed to the lower social, economic, and political mobility, affecting African Americans quality of life in general. Traditionally, African Americans have relied on education for social mobility; however, discrimination at the corporate level ensures that such a model is no longer sufficient to ensure mobility. Although most college educated African American males did not implicate themselves on social vices like crime, they claimed to understand the

high crime among African Americans. Despite the lack of equal opportunities, 40% of participants indicated they have never been part of special programs to reverse the trend.

Forty percent of African Americans in the study indicated instances where they were eliminated for promotions based on their color. This is despite most of their places of employment claiming to have effective measures and racially balanced promotion strategies. They insisted this issue was compounded by most of the decisions makers on equal opportunity policies within their places of employment who were majority white employees.

In answering the first research question, the study indicated that college educated African American males suffer much the same as the rest of the African American community at-large. It is likely that they suffer more because they are more often in white-dominated spaces.

Theme 3: Unfair Criminal Justice System

Theme 3 is a summary of the following research question:

What is your general opinion about the relationship between African American males and law enforcement officers in Central Kentucky?

Eighty percent of college educated African American males believed that the high rate of incarceration among African Americans was based on traditional biased data seemingly identifying African Americans as the primary victims of inequality who would be arrested without cause. They believed that police officers inherently based the likelihood of crime by African Americans and their subsequent arrests on these traditional statistics.

Participant 8 commented on the conflict between law enforcement and African Americans:

“Police seem to treat us differently by nature. It is always evident even out and about. They are very choppy when talking to us, and sometimes it’s noticeable. I was at a sandwich shop and the policemen that was in the place talked to everyone but me. Even my white co-worker noticed when she went to the counter to grab our lunch; he spoke to her and smiled, but never really acknowledged me. These nonverbal cues are pure evidence. I have a classmate who was harassed after being stopped for a broken headlight. He was asked if he had drugs, or a gun, and he told me the police were pressing him for no apparent reason. If my taillight broke, I got you, give me a ticket and move on, why you are asking me about drugs and guns, that’s not my character. They shouldn’t be allowed to do stuff like that, but it is happening, it’s happening right now. The racism starts there and ends up with us behind bars where things get worse.”

Forty percent of participants believed that as African Americans they were not likely to get legal assistance and representation if arrested. That same 40% indicated that they knew a family member or friend who was arrested and processed without due process. The belief was generally that the lack of representation is based on discrimination across the criminal justice system, stereotyping, and poverty among African Americans who generally rely on legally appointed public defenders for representation which creates further conflict.

Theme 4: Forceful Arrests

Theme 4 is a summary of the following interview questions:

Have you or a family member ever been directly involved in a conflict between the two groups (police and African Americans)?

Do you think African American males are naturally violent and a threat to general peace?

What do you consider the most probable cause of conflict between law enforcement and African American males?

Thirty-three percent of the participants in the study had a family member or friend who was forcefully arrested by police. Participant 7 gave a personal account about a family member who suffered permanent physical and mental scars from a forceful arrest by police. The study further indicated that forceful arrests created tensions between police and the African American community, thus reducing the opportunity for collaborative interaction. Ninety percent of the participants in the study had never been arrested, charged, cited, held, or detained; however they indicated a deep dislike for police use of excessive force on black suspects and were thus unlikely to assist police officers in making an arrest. They believed that African Americans were more likely to be implicated in a crime they did not commit. They attributed part of this to the inherent belief that white America tends to believe that African American males are naturally violent. There is thus a social responsibility to protect these individuals from police. Most participants therefore opined that law enforcements preconceived belief that African Americans were dangerous was the primary cause of conflict. One participant recalled an

instance where in the aftermath of a protest in the city they witnessed an African American suspect fleeing on foot from police and the participant not alerting or assisting police out of fear that the suspect may be a victim of excessive force.

Table 3

Personal and Family Member Conflict with Police

ID	Personal Experience	Family Member Experience
P1		
P2		
P3		
P4		X
P5		
P6		
P7		X
P8		
P9	X	
P10		
P11		X
P12		

Theme 5: Karens

Theme 5 is summarized by the following interview question:

Do you think American society still struggles with racism?

Can you comment on the open bias from law enforcement when dealing with college educated African American males?

How do law enforcement relationships with college educated African American males affect law enforcement and the rest of the African American community?

Forty percent of participants indicated the role played by Karen's in African Americans relationship with police officers as detrimental. Karen's are generally defined as a group of middle-aged white women who feel entitled to make unreasonable demands in public places. These women often represent majority white ideologies and are not afraid to call the police on often innocent African American males. The general feedback from the participants indicated that police were more likely to answer calls by these women and arrest or detain African Americans before realizing the call was racially motivated. Six of twelve participants indicated that college educated African American males are more likely to be implicated because they work in white dominated spaces. They also indicated that Karen's are a contributor to the probable cause of recent conflicts. Participant 5 stated that he avoided police harassment by "shopping in majority black neighborhoods", as he felt like an easy target in a white neighborhood.

P1 the police reaction to Karen's:

I straight feel police, and the justice system don't do trash to stop false reporting. These women make false accusations sometimes of being beaten or threatened and contribute to a stigma we as black men try to prevent with police. We are not violent and abusive by majority but unfortunately our best defense is a cell phone or a random person with theirs. A cell phone was the only source of evidence for George Floyd, and the same goes for us when we run into a mad racist woman. Honestly, it's deep seeded racism because we have something they don't want us to have. Maybe we should have body cameras, like police, because those body cameras seem to protect police more than us."

Theme 6: No Government Programs

Theme 6 is summarized by the following interview question:

How can law enforcement and police officers work together to better relationships?

I asked college educated African American males what aspects can modern society change to create better interactions between them and law enforcement. Fifty percent responded that they believed there should be more government programs targeted to reduce racism. Only 25% of those same college educated African American males surveyed indicated that had been part of programs; however, those programs were controlled by non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Forty percent of those surveyed participated and maintained a solid interest in NGOs but discontinued participation due to lack of social support or funding. There is a clear indication from this that community funded organizations that seek to improve racial relations would be a welcomed addition to their community.

Participant 3 commented on better relations between African Americans and police:

“We always seem to have the right ideas, but the wrong people in charge. Black Lives Matter is much the same as any other organization and there is more interest in the money and notoriety and less in true essence of a message or mission. When all the marching and lawsuits are done it comes down to the community coming together with the police and solving problems. In Louisville, I think the police chief, don’t remember her name, yeah Shields knows how to fix stuff but there is a division between the police, activist, and bureaucracy, and they can’t get

things done until they listen to each other. We have great leaders in this city, but it comes down to the people not the leaders to get things done.”

Eighty percent of respondents believed that the relationship between college educated African American males during police interactions was a replica of the relationship between law enforcement and the rest of the African American community. However, most college educated African American males believed they were better positioned to initiate and manage such programs due to their higher education levels and exploration. This could indicate that African Americans are more inclined to a better and equitable society and willing to work towards that progressively.

Theme 7: Collaborative and Inclusive Policies

Theme 7 was summarized by the following interview questions:

What aspects can modern society change to create better relationships between law enforcement and college educated African American males?

When asked about aspects of modern society participants believed law enforcement and police officers in general could work together with the African American community to improve interactions. All participants indicated that they had white friends, colleagues and neighbors who they shared a healthy personal relationship with. They felt that the similar things that nurtured their personal relationships with the majority white demographic should be no different with police. Sixteen percent of participants, (P4, & P11) indicated that they had neighbors who were police officers and that those individuals generally hung out within their own law enforcement social circle. Forty percent of African American males interviewed indicated that despite this fact they

would be committed to engaging in open dialogue with local police on ways to reduce bias and racism. The general belief was that the reduction of informal separations between racial demographics could only be improved with more collaborative efforts. Participant P9 mentioned that the most important aspect of building relationships was training.

Participant P9 stated, “Police officers need to get to know people in their community. Collaboration could be improved if police interacted with the community by getting out of their cars and get back to walking beats, thus building better relationships. I recall Canton vs. Harris where a police officer attempted to apprehend a woman who was staggering and appeared intoxicated, but had been having an epileptic seizure. Training needs to include mental health, understanding signs and symptoms of illness, and extensive training on building therapeutic working relationships, training and recertification” for police in these aspects should be yearly and could bring great benefit to the overall relationship between law enforcement and the African American community as a whole.”

All participants indicated that inequality in modern society would not just disappear. They expressed the need for government agencies and stakeholders to come together to better cultivate inclusive policies. All participants interviewed believed that policies of this type should include all African Americans regardless of socioeconomic or educational background.

Summary

The purpose of this research was (a) an exploration of the lived experience of college educated African American males during police interactions (b) identify key aspects in order to gauge the current climate of race relations, (c) obtain insight from interviews to identify key themes and messages to lead to social change by improving the lived experiences of college educated African American males during interactions with police. Participants were 12 college educated African American males who lived in the Central region of Kentucky who agreed to be interviewed. The model participant was a college educated African American male 18-60 years old who lived, worked, and resided in Central Kentucky.

The analytical approach was grounded theory, which identified several lived experiences that most of the men had in common. One shared lived experience expressed the need for collaborative and inclusive policies that prevent bias, police brutality, and wrongful arrest and detention of the African American community. The men who participated freely engaged in dialogue but openly expressed doubt, anger, and extreme concern in the current state of relations with police. Their language at times amplified the need for immediate communication and collaboration to improve racial tensions in the United States.

The research question was *what are the lived experiences of college educated African American males during police interactions in Central Kentucky?* The research question feedback and shared experiences were grouped into seven themes gained from responses from the twelve participants. Theme 1: Traditional Inequality Since Slavery:

The realization of the unfortunate reality that the racism that has existed in the United States for centuries continues to contribute to a negative social dynamic and perception of African Americans. All the men participating shared this lived experience. Theme 2: Lack of equal Opportunity. Over half of the participant men in the study experienced some form of racial discrimination in their workplace. The general belief was that the current level of discrimination in the workplace stagnated mobility of all African Americans. Theme 3: Unfair Criminal Justice System. Which they believed contributed to high rates of incarceration of African Americans due to police making higher than normal arrests without probable cause. Theme 4: Forceful Arrest: Was evidenced by three subthemes. Subtheme 1 was that African Americans are guilty until proven innocent. Subtheme 2 was that white police officers are likely to arrests African Americans without probable cause. Subtheme 3 was that most African Americans who have been cited have been searched and arrested without warrants or probable cause. Theme 5: Karen's. Some participants believed that middle-aged white women (Karen's), who make unreasonable demands in public places cause great dissent between police and African Americans and despite the rise of their false reports many times go unpunished by the criminal justice system. Theme 6: No Government Programs. Most participants opined that the lived experiences of college educated African American males during police interactions mirrored similarity to the relationship between police and the entire African American community. However, they also believed that college educated African American males were highly qualified and first to lead progressive movements that promote equality within communities. Theme 7: Collaborative and Inclusive Policies---

Included participants acknowledging that interactions with police could improve if there were more positive interactions with police and black citizens. They additionally stressed the importance of training to help police better understand important issues in the African American community like mental health and disabilities.

After extensive literature and using grounded theory and interviews as data collection tools, the study concluded that there is no direct relationship between college-educated African

Regarding American males and the police, the study confirmed worsening developments during interactions between law enforcement agencies and the entire African American community with emphasis on male members. In most cases, police officers engage in conflict with college-educated African American males without asking for their level of education thus making their race as the only determinant factor. It is thus objective to conclude that the interactions between college-educated African American males are dependent on the nature and quality of law enforcement agencies and the entire African American community. In a different environment, the African American males can work together to increase involvement in collaborative efforts to improve lived experiences. However, since education level is not the core determining factor of police-black relations, the desired programs should be led by an inclusive community and from a local, state or national level rather than based on the education of a sub-group of African American community. Additionally, most participants identified the need for more training for police that identifies more modern stigmas to include mental health and other disabilities and can use a community policing effort as a bridge of communication

to promote collaboration between police and African Americans during daily interactions.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions and Recommendation

The purpose of this qualitative research study was to explore lived experience of college educated African American males during police interactions in Central Kentucky. Using grounded theory in the form of interview questions, I investigated the lived experiences of 12 college educated African American males to examine whether they could engage in a collaborative effort with police to improve the current dynamic involving community relations. Grounded theory enabled individuals to relate personal experience and feedback on their human experience that could create data and better interpret phenomenon (Glaser and Strauss, 2008).

The findings revealed that the current lived experiences can provide a critical resource to police and local governments to problem solve and adapt effective solutions to current issues related to racial division and equality that have long existed in American culture. Nevertheless, there was a general opinion that police needed more extensive training in understanding the culture of the African American community and discontinue the longstanding bias against Black people that has existed since the era of slavery.

Additionally, the African American males felt that effective training as well as effective inclusion polices are critical to changing the current dynamic. A critical understanding of diversity and police training in the areas of mental health, and the effectiveness of community policing could bridge the racial gap and foster equality. Many of the participants felt that discrimination will continue to exist, despite the current policies in place but stressed the importance of inclusion as a way to effectively reduce bias, not just in their work places but also in law enforcement and the criminal justice

system. They agreed that for policies to be effective there needed to be a continual emergence of the minority demographic. Accordingly, college educated African American males believed that although they had elevated educational backgrounds, the leaders within the community could range from all socioeconomic and educational settings. These findings provided insight into not only lived experiences but observations from college educated African American males on their own personal dynamic and how they are treated no differently continue to face racial bias and discrimination in their daily lives.

This chapter provides a review of the themes, messages, and interpretations of the exploration of lived experiences with emphasis on the theoretical and practical implications of those experiences of college educated African American males during police interactions in Central Kentucky. The chapter will first focus on the interpretation of the findings in terms of how they either confirm or expand the empirical research already relates to this topic. The limitations of the findings will be discussed as well as recommendations for future research. The final sections of the chapter will focus on a review of implications of the findings and how they could work to improve the current climate of equality and racial divisions within the community. Lastly, I will provide concluding thoughts.

Interpretation of Findings

Seven critical themes emerged from the participants perceptions on the lived experiences of college educated African American males during police interactions. The first theme identified the continued presence of traditional inequality that has existed in

the United States since slavery. Most participants felt that the generational racism and inequality have led to the deprivation of present-day African Americans and continues to be a barrier to better opportunities and even lower opportunities for college educated African Americans despite meeting educational qualifications. As mentioned in Chapter 2, abolishing slavery was more a political action than an endorsement of equality (see Payne & Vultetich, 2019). Most of the participants believed that traditional inequality has led to social vices that have stagnated the optimism of many in the Black community and has contributed to higher rates of incarceration. This is in line with previous research findings that have indicated that racism continues to be a key component in stagnating opportunities for the Black community (Minhoff, 2020). The continued occurrence of denying promotion and advancement in the workplace has a critical effect on African Americans ability to meaningfully support their families (Minhoff, 2020). Although many of the traits of discriminatory practice can be identified in previous research, little to nothing has been done vice identifying and describing the tools used to discriminate versus providing solutions to prevent it (Small & Pager, 2020).

The second theme emerged the participants perceptions regarding lack of equal opportunities the participants who worked identified the presence of overt discriminatory practices in their places of employment that prevented them from attaining promotions and advancement within the public and private sector. Participants inferred that police much like their employers who were majority White Americans believe that they were lazy and uncompetitive when competing against Whites for employment and equal treatment. Thus, most of the participants had been victims of discriminatory behavior in

the community. Most also agreed that the constitution effectively promotes equality, but it is reinforced by people who still endorse inequality. The general belief was that the lack of social and political mobility prevented them from gaining the basic principles outlined in the Bill of Rights thus being eliminated from regular opportunities that everyday citizens enjoy. As mentioned in the literature review, blacks were historically deemed violent and nonconforming to due process according to Higgs (1977). Some of the participants indicated that policies to prevent discrimination and enforce equal opportunity and equal employment opportunity were written, but not enforced in their places of work, and community settings. The study indicated that college educated African American males suffer with racial bias much the same as the rest of the African American community. Sometimes even more so because in their jobs in the public and private sector, they are more likely to work in White-dominated spaces. Previous research supports the premise that even with policies and controls implemented within the public and private sector implicit bias continues to be a contributing factor to the structural inequalities that remain (see Payne, et al, 2019).

The third theme identified the issues related to negative interactions with police and the unfair criminal justice system. Most of the participants agreed that the high rates of incarceration representative of the Black community existed primarily because of inequality and racial and implicit bias that was rooted in police practices. They believed that in many instances members of the Black community were cited and arrested at elevated levels that contributed to higher victimology within the African American community.

College educated African Americans indicated that they are not likely to get legal representation in an arrest. Some participants indicated that they knew a friend or a family member who was arrested and processed without legal assistance. The lack of legal representation is based on discrimination across the criminal justice systems, stereotyping, and poverty among the African Americans who rely on state appointed attorneys for legal representation. One participant discussed how even in his work setting police officers treated him differently often displaying verbal and nonverbal cues that were perceived to be racial bias. According to Small and Pager (2020), the consequences related to disenfranchisement within the criminal justice system remains an issue that has crossed over generations of American history and continues to contribute to the institutional racism prevalent in the current criminal justice system in the United States.

The fourth theme identified forceful arrest being a continuing problem viewed as persistent throughout the African American community. According to Neal (2021), historical recounts reflect that violence and excessive force against African Americans was previously morally and socially accepted. Participants indicated that their close family members or friends had been victims of unfair treatment by police and lost items during search and seizure. The belief of participants is that this trend contributes to African Americans fleeing to avoid search and seizure since the police control the process. This is supported by previous research that indicates Blacks are more likely to be disproportionately stopped searched, arrested, and interrogated by police and that police more frequently applied excessive force and experienced higher levels of instances of police brutality against African Americans than other races (see Smith Lee and Robinson,

2019). This represents a greater problem for the African American community in that there is the presence of fear versus trust in police which represents a great barrier to collaborating to build community trust. The result is a continuing cycle of fear, pain along with marginalization being the prevailing lived experience causing African Americans to not recognize equal legal and criminal sentencing guidelines and mimicking similar bias when other demographics are accused of crimes (Burge & Johnson, 2018). One participant who took part in the study knew someone forcefully arrested by the police. Some participants also agreed that police officers seem to be more defensive when pursuing African American criminals who are perceived to be aggressive. The study further indicated that forceful arrests create tension between African Americans and the police, thus reducing the possibility of collaboration between the two parties. While the police had not arrested most of African Americans in the study, they indicated deep disdain for officers who use excessive force over Black suspects and are less likely to help police officers make arrests. Their opinion was African Americans are more likely to be implicated in crimes they did not even commit. There is thus a cultural and social responsibility to protect these individuals from the police. Some college educated African American participants indicated that they witnessed African American suspects hiding from the police and not raising the alarm. The participants viewed the Floyd case with disdain and indicated the violence was uncalled for since the suspect had already surrendered and was in handcuffs. The fear of social victimization being on the world stage or becoming a human rights issue was the primary motivation they felt the police were prosecuted.

The fifth theme identified a new and emerging subject that has advanced to national exposure. Participants in the research indicated the role played by Karens, or White women, generally middle aged, who file false reports against African Americans resulting in conflict with police. On occasion these women represent majority White ideologies and express them towards minorities and most times call the police or file false reports against innocent bystanders. Racial bias is a combination of beliefs and stereotypes that African Americans are by nature poor, uneducated, and lack basic abilities to achieve even fundamental hierarchies (James, 2017). Participants believed that police officers were more likely to question or detain African Americans during these instances versus realizing the call was racially motivated. Half of the participants in the survey believed they were more likely to be victims of Karens due to their places of employment and some of their neighborhood dwellings being in White dominated spaces. Nevertheless, most participants believed that this type of incident could be greatly reduced if police and the justice system implemented laws that enforced stricter penalties and consequences for this type of behavior. Participants believed that their cell phone camera or a media recording device was the only evidence in most cases and that police failed to prosecute Karens despite the fact video evidence was at times clear and overwhelming proof of racial bias. Previous research indicates that the action of Karen's is related to white privilege and imposing one's demand upon another person's ability to occupy a shared space by amplifying anger or discourse while making false accusations of harm or danger according (see Negra, & Leyda, 2020). These incidents have recently received heightened public awareness through social media.

The sixth theme discussed the lack of government programs and how this issue prevents police and college educated African American males from working together to foster improved relations. Half of the participants interviewed believed that funded government programs could greatly contribute to the reduction of racism and violence and assists with creating a positive climate of collaboration. They identified the fact that many nongovernmental organizations attempt to implement programs, but are limited by funding and unable to maintain long term presence in communities that want to improve race relations. One participant highlighted the fact that this is compounded by having, “The right ideas, but the wrong people in charge,” while highlighting the mismanagement of funds by nongovernmental organizations and there being no checks and balances on those organizations meeting community milestones. The general belief of participants was that there was a possibility of success if programs were implemented equitably with government funding and oversight. More recently, African American communities have been more open to forming community led violence prevention programs to reduce crime and violence (Hutto & Green, 2016). Previous research on NGOs indicates mismanagement of resources, funds, and misconduct being the prevalent reason why these organizations have come under criminal complaint or increased oversight (Gibelman & Gelman, 2004).

The Seventh and final theme was a focus on collaborative and inclusive policies that could improve interactions between police and college educated African American males. Participants indicated that they had a very close relationship with their Caucasian counterparts in their work and home life. They felt they held very close and respectful

relationships with the majority white demographic and that this relationship should be no different with the police. Two participants indicated they had neighbors who were police officers or members of law enforcement and that those neighbors generally congregated with other police officers or the law enforcement professional circle. Thus, almost half of participants interviewed said that they felt compelled to engage in open dialogue with local police on working together to reduce bias and build community trust. The participants firmly believed that the effort to reduce bias was a collaborative one that required community members to be energized and open to listening to new ideas. Additionally, participants stressed the importance of better training for police on issues of mental health, and people with disabilities as well as engaging in a collaborative community policing effort that placed police officers in regular day to day exposure to the citizens and their patrol areas. It should be noted that police in many cases lack fiduciary support from local governments to fight crime and protect citizens according to O’Niell & Hayes, 2020. Half of the participants believed that the training for police officers on identifying mental health disorders and disabilities should be annually targeted as part of their recertification process. Participants believed that more day-to-day interaction through community policing could be a critical element to building trust and reducing bias, while making citizens in the community more active in crime prevention and public safety.

Limitations of the Study

This study has been helpful in bridging a significant gap in research literature that previously existed, but not without limitations. This qualitative study used a

representative sample size of 12 participants which prevented the ability of more complex analysis of college educated African American males and their perceptions on lived experiences during interactions with police. Participants were limited in scope to college educated African American males residing in the Central region of Kentucky versus a more representative sample size within the United States. The sample size may not project the true perception of lived experiences regarding African American males during interactions with police.

The second limitation involved the possibility of participants not responding candidly because of embarrassment or fear of reprisal. Despite the implementation of informed consent and protection of privacy it was evident that a few participants were still not completely comfortable openly expressing their personal experiences and attitudes or opinions about police and racial within the interview process format. This caused some of the participants to be less open to the idea of sharing more direct feedback on prior experiences during interactions due to their job, enrollment status in college, or standing in the community.

The third and final limitation involved participants also not responding candidly due to the nature of a prior experience during lived interaction that caused the participant to provide less information due to the trauma, or stress that the prior event or lived experience during police interactions created. As an experienced researcher, I did not pressure the participants into responses and instead utilized open-ended fact-finding questions during the interview portion with follow-up questions to facilitate clarity in responses.

During the IRB process of the research proposal recommendation was made for the research method to change from a focus group to individual interviews. Grounded theory was maintained, however some of the limitations related to the study from the outset as a focus group were not evident as the methodology changed to interviews. Despite these changes, the limitations of this qualitative study the findings further identified the understanding of the lived experience of college educated African American males during police interactions.

Recommendations

One recommendation for future research is to replicate the study of lived experiences during police interactions to other demographics to conduct comparative analysis of results to better understand both the similarities in the functional mindset of both the specific research participant and their individual lived experience with police. Expanded research could identify and infer key aspects within individual dynamics that could assist with better interpreting if, when, and why bias occurs, or does not occur under similar circumstances. According to Gau and Paoline, 2020, research of this type could be useful to law enforcement better understanding the issues of impartiality related to racial and implicit bias during interactions. Such a study could be key in determining what role effective implicit bias training could reduce the likelihood of negative interaction and better shape the perception of the general public that the actions of police were equitable as it applies to the entire general public, regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, or socioeconomic setting.

Another recommendation is that federal, state, and local governments allot funding and to police departments and communities to equip them with both training and financial resources that support reducing racial and implicit bias and promote collaboration of citizens and police that build trust and improve public safety. Currently most of what is done to bridge the gap is by non-governmental organizations that tend to struggle with long term success due to lack of funding and resources, diminished oversight or mismanagement. The combination of committed funding and resources, as well as linking the police to citizens to conduct needs assessments on solutions to critical public safety issues would be a collaborative line of effort that increases manpower and resources and promotes crime reduction.

In this study college educated African American males overwhelmingly felt that they, as well as members of the black community, regardless of educational background would be committed to supporting positive change. They felt compelled to participate if governments dedicated and appropriated funding that promoted collaboration versus defunding. Previous research indicated that this is further proof African American communities, if granted resources would support forming community led violence prevention programs (Hutto & Green, 2016). While police departments faced challenges with staffing, and policing communities large and small, a combined effort that promoted group contribution from stakeholders, police and citizens equitably could be assistive toward resolving minor and major issues that cause racial division.

A further avenue of future research involves implementing laws and policies that not only support equal and fair opportunity and treatment of others, but also following

through with implementing initiatives that not only deter racial, and implicit bias, but also hold those responsible for violations accountable to stricter penalties, fines, and registration. College educated African American males identified multiple issues that require immediate attention to include forceful arrest, illegal search and seizure, and being victims of false reporting based on stereotypes and beliefs that African Americans are by nature poor, uneducated and more likely to commit crime. As multiple participants in the research indicated, Karen's, who engage in unwarranted verbal and sometimes physical attacks on minorities, do not often face any legal penalties. It appears victims have done more to educate the general public of the issue, more often by posting cell phone video footage to social media that shows police diffusing the situation rather than making an arrest for false reporting. A review of the success of current policies related to sex offender registration and the effect on prevention through public awareness may be helpful to promoting active deterrence within communities while reducing offending behavior

Implications for Social Change and Practice

There are multiple positive change implications associated with the findings of this research study. The findings indicated how the lived experience of college educated African American males during police interactions could be a useful tool at reducing the historical trend of racism and bias while identifying key aspects of how communities could collaborate to build equity for all.

Understanding the Need for Policy that Supports Solutions to Long-Standing Issues

Policymakers have worked to implement policy, but have fallen short in providing solutions to racism and bias. Accordingly, incidents of racism and bias have continued at higher rates because there is not a dedicated system of accountability that deters a decision to engage in it. There are policies, but individuals can by choice engage in unethical practices with little or no consequence. Most, if not all the policies that are in place to deter racist behavior are premised on sensitivity versus culpability unlike penal codes that are more based on criminal culpability as the focus of rehabilitation. On many occasions police officers, for example Derek Chauvin, who have engaged in numerous prior incidents of racial, and or implicit bias are in many cases returned to duty on the streets because policies reinforce educating the policy-breaker to the shortcomings of their unethical conduct versus holding them accountable or removing them for repeat violations and unethical practices. Consequently, Chauvin was able to train and mentor other police officers is an indictment of the very principles that the 14th Amendment of the Constitution intended for equal treatment and status.

Building Collaborative Inclusive Programs That Place Police and Citizens as More Direct Agents Of Change

This study can offer local governments a glimpse at the personal account of citizens desire to be involved directly in changing a troubling issue. First-hand accounts of a lived experience can be the bridge to open dialogue between key stakeholders, but most importantly the police and the affected demographic regardless of race, ethnicity, socioeconomic standing. Modern town hall meetings as an example tend to identify

issues that result in a majority decision that may not reflect the entire community. Whereas this study sought to unlock phenomenon to lived experiences of college educated African American males it could serve as a critical benchmark for an entire community. Collaboration involves balancing both sides of an issue and two or more entities working together in unison to stimulate growth. Training and education, and a strong commitment from governments are critical. Involving citizens along with police in solutions could prevent racial divisions while encouraging participative synergy that promotes crime prevention and equal treatment for all citizens. Collaborations are better served when programs and initiatives are balanced and equally operated by all parties involved. Expansion of community policing practices creates a starting point for citizens and law enforcement to close the gap that separates them. This implication amplifies mutual respect, promotes recognizing and understanding similarities and differences while celebrating diversity.

Conclusion

This qualitative research study served as a glimpse into the lived experience of college educated African American males during police interactions. The information used in this research was largely like previous research that identified historical and present trends in society in regard to racism, racial divisions, and implicit bias. Recent events of forceful arrest, excessive force and violence require the criminal justice system to work to implement useful and effective tools of intervention to change the current flaws associated with the social dynamic. The study has positive implications on social change to include the recommendation to enhance police training to better understand and

interpret diversity and cultural norms. This type of training should be collaborative and involve attendance of local citizens and law enforcement working in cohesion. Further, understanding other critical aspects within the community to include mental health and persons with disabilities that law enforcement may encounter in day-to-day activities is essential. While past controls have been implemented through laws and policies, there is additional attention needed on building a system of collaboration to reduce the impact of racism and implicit bias. However, the lack of information on whether the success collaborative policies could be effective cannot be contextually measured due to the current division that exists between police and the black community that continues to expand due longstanding historical social vices. Although it was encouraging to observe the lived experience, observations and ideas of all participants involved, the greater issue is the systemic practices that contribute to the problem versus the solution. There exists a critical need to continue to query all demographics to explore cross-sectional perceptions across the landscape of equal treatment and consideration of others and continued discussion in the United States.

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Appendix A: Interview Questions

Interview Questions

RQ: What are the lived experiences of college-educated African American Males during police interactions?

The following questions guided the focus groups discussions

1. What is your general opinion about the relationship between African American males and Law Enforcement Officers in Central Kentucky?
2. Have you or a close family member ever been directly involved in a conflict between these two groups? If yes, what was the reason?
3. What do you consider the most probable cause of conflict between law enforcement and African Americans?
4. Do you think African American males are naturally disadvantaged in modern American society?
5. Do you think American society still struggles with racism?
6. Can you comment on the open bias from law enforcement when dealing with college-educated African Americans males?
7. Do you think African American males are naturally violent and are a threat to general peace?
8. What aspects can modern society change to create better relations between law enforcement and college-educated African Americans?
9. How do law enforcement relationships with college-educated African Americans affect law enforcement and the rest of the African American community?

10. Do you think the criminal justice system upholds the same level of equality when dealing with college-educated African Americans as witnessed when dealing with college-educated Caucasian males?
11. How can law enforcement and police officers work together to better these relationships?

Appendix B: Interview Protocol

Interviewer:

Welcome to today's interview. The primary objective is to understand lived experience college-educated African American males during interactions with police. We hope that these studies' findings will help create and foster a safer climate in Central Kentucky, its townships, and beyond.

Before continuing, I would like to remind you that there is no right or wrong answer for this interview. Everyone is thus encouraged to give their most honest answers to the question. The study also follows all the ethical requirements, which include anonymity in publications. Every individual is required to sign a confidentiality form confirming that they will not discuss the findings of this forum outside this set-up or use the answers for any social engagements rather than for this study.

Through these guidelines, we will have a productive interview that will continue to build the future of our community. Feel free to talk to me or my recorder and discontinue the session in case of an emergency or personal need. The session is expected to take at least 20-30 minutes. If the questions are overwhelming or exceed the half hour expected time, we will discontinue and resume after a break. Any questions before we continue?

Introductory questions help streamline the study's objectives and help the participants settle into their new environments.

Guidelines

- There are no wrong answers

- There is 100% confidentiality, and every participant interviewed is encouraged not to share details with others.
- The researcher will not use the information gathered in this study for any other use rather than the one stipulated in the study
- The questions will be open-ended- Which means that participants will be required to give subjective answers on how they understand the nature of the lived experiences during interactions with police.
- The interviewer will guide every question, and the participant will have time to complete responses in their entirety.

The study adopted a theoretical sampling technique where sampling continued throughout the data collection and analysis periods. The development of a diverse sample, which considered the participants' ethnicity, age, gender, career, and education, occurred through criterion-based selection. The research also adopts professional listservs in recruiting and maintaining participants. The first step of the sampling was a general invitation that required qualified participants to volunteer for the study. The invitations were shared with local message boards and higher learning education such as colleges.. The inclusion criteria were the willingness and ability to discuss the nature of the lived experience of college-educated African American males during police interactions in Central Kentucky.

One of the major concerns of the study was the inaccuracy of data and bias, which could arise in a one-sided interview. Therefore, the researchers sought to have open-ended fact-finding questions. To achieve this, the theoretical sampling ensured that the

interview sessions were balanced. For accuracy and overall effective analysis of the data acquired, the researcher will conduct individual interviews of participants.

The researcher achieved a balanced interview pool through theoretical sampling with the following demographics: twelve college-educated African American Males residing in Central Kentucky the demographics were achieved through continuous sampling that focused on feedback from the twelve participants.

The interviews were set based on availability and locality of the respondents although this information will not be shared with the participants. The rule of thumb is to conduct interviews across a two week calendar that does not interfere with the participants personal and professional requirements. Therefore, I attempted to canvass Central Kentucky to ensure prior acquaintance of interview participants was limited.

The interviews proceeded with a call to the participant at a selected time agreed upon with response to the informed consent approval. The interviews were recorded. The researcher opened and welcomed the interviewer and ensured the participants did not have any technical issues with the communication function. Accordingly, the researcher understood that a discussion of this nature could stimulate behavioral or social stigma issues to the participants. Thus, the additional control implemented was to contact services for mental health assistance if needed.

The study utilized two tools for the data collection: Semi-structured, open-ended questions and a participant's survey. The participant's survey was filled before the actual focus group discussions and helped shape the design. Singer and Couper (2017) observed that open-ended questions are necessary for focus groups as they help the participants

offer details that would have been omitted in closed questions. In this case, the open-ended questions helped the participants to:

1. Explain their lived experiences during interactions with police- The study aims at exploring the lived experiences of college-educated African American males during police interactions in Central Kentucky. The guide questions allowed the participants to explain their experiences from a subjective point of view.
2. Project the future trends- The study's second objective is to predict the relationship between police officers and college-educated African American males in Central Kentucky. The future of these relationships is based on the current attitudes. Since the study seeks to create a blueprint for the future, it is vital to allow the participants to express their subjective opinion. Moreover, in this section, the participants showed a higher affinity for offering advice on improving the situation.
3. Express Attitudes- During interview discussion, attitudes are a critical source of data when properly coded. Centuries of attitudes helped by the two groups control the current relationships between college-educated African American males during police interactions in Central Kentucky. Therefore, understanding these attitudes can offer insights into lived experiences during interactions between African Americans and police officers.
4. Show Bias- As observed by Bergen and Labonté (2020), there are high bias levels in interview discussions due to personal predispositions. In this case, some answers include forced observations to meet the expected outcomes. It thus

becomes critical to note these levels of bias and eliminate them during data analysis. Open-ended questions offer the participants an opportunity to be biased. It is easy to determine which participants are biased throughout the study by controlling the questions with expected answers.

Unlike the scientific methods of inquiry, grounded theory was built on a narrative supported by statistical evidence as revealed during data analysis. Although the study was not based on existing theories, the researcher must produce data control points, which differentiates between accurate and manipulated datasets. The flexibility of this method, which makes it effective in social sciences, also creates multiple instances of bias. To eliminate the bias, it was vital to produce specific analysis stages. In this case, the researcher identified the following stages in data collection, analysis, and presentation: Ground the Theory in provided data- Rieger (2019) argued that grounded theory does not build on a vacuum. This means that despite its ability to build theories from scratch, the method still requires reliance on exploratory studies. In data collection, guided by the interview questions, the researcher strived to ground the data sets into the identified aspects of the study, such as racial bias, police brutality, and expected positions for all participants.

Comparative Approach- Comparative approach was an integral part of grounded theory. The method constantly compared answers, actions, reactions, and participants' body language to edit the available data. Unlike surveys and other quantitative data collection approaches, there were no specific questions and answers in focus group discussions.

Instead, the researchers followed the data build-up and work to produce objective conclusions.

Write a memo- Throughout the study, the researcher maintained an objective memo to record all the participants' answers, reactions, experiences, attitudes, and body language, Chun et al. (2019) observed that participants might feel the urge to conceal some attitudes and observations when dealing with sensitive topics such as police brutality and racism. For instance, in America, the slavery topic is highly dreaded by both whites and African Americans. It is also considered the greatest human tragedy in modern civilization. Naturally, people avoid the topic to avoid being offensive. However, when a topic is in this sense, it is difficult for people to conceal their emotions and attitudes, often indicated in their tones and body language. For instance, declining to speak about police brutality could mean the participants did not have any meaningful experience to share but could also indicate overwhelming feelings about the topic. A well-detailed memo will assist the researcher in accumulating these findings and integrate them into the final data analysis.

Theoretical Sampling- As explained before, the data collection relied on theoretical sampling. In this sampling method, the researcher followed a theoretical design to determine the most relevant data, code it, and collect the following data. The method was suitable for both focus group discussion and grounded theory.

As observed by Natow (2020), triangulation is a critical part of grounded theory. The method involved the use of different data sources and analyzing them to find common ground. The approved finding is then used to evaluate primary data and determine their credibility. This process was especially vital in a focus group where data

can be diverse and have statistical value. Throughout the study, the researcher used triangulation among other scientific methods to collect and analyze the data.

In data collection, triangulation is used for intergroup data verification. Moreover, data triangulation also assists in debriefing participants to increase the quality of the data collected.

Appendix C:

Analytical Memo

The following are excerpts from interviews that were conducted from to .

The interview questions were centered around the research question; what are the lived experiences of African American males during police interactions in Central Kentucky?

“Police seem to treat us differently by nature. It is always evident even out and about. They are very choppy when talking to us, and sometimes it’s noticeable. I was at a sandwich shop and the policemen that was in the place talked to everyone but me. Even my white co-worker noticed when she went to the counter to grab our lunch; he spoke to her and smiled, but never really acknowledged me. These nonverbal cues are pure evidence. I have a classmate who was harassed after being stopped for a broken headlight. He was asked if he had drugs, or a gun, and he told me the police were pressing him for no apparent reason. If my taillight broke, I got you, give me a ticket and move on, why you are asking me about drugs and guns, that’s not my character. They shouldn’t be allowed to do stuff like that, but it is happening, it’s happening right now. The racism starts there and ends up with us behind bars where things get worse.” (P8)

I straight feel police, and the justice system don’t do trash to stop false reporting. These women make false accusations sometimes of being beaten or threatened and contribute to a stigma we as black men try to prevent with police. We are not violent and abusive by majority but unfortunately our best defense is a cell phone or a random person with theirs. A cell phone was the only source of evidence for

George Floyd, and the same goes for us when we run into a mad racist woman. Honestly, it's deep seeded racism because we have something they don't want us to have. Maybe we should have body cameras, like police, because those body cameras seem to protect police more than us." (P1).

The common theme here would seem to be the disparity in the criminal justice system and additionally how in some settings there are outside influences that could contribute to the bias related to police treatment of college educated African American males by other influences within both professional and personal spaces they share within the population. The use of grounded theory was assistive in the coding of data to enrich themes and messages related to the core concepts of the study.

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Appendix D: Recruitment Flyer

YOU HAVE A STORY TO TELL
Do you meet the following criteria:

1. You are a College Educated African American/Black Male at least 18 years of age or older
2. You reside, or attend college (community, trade, four -year university) in Central Kentucky

10-12 Participants needed for Doctoral Research Interview

I would like to invite you to take part in a telephonic interview on (insert date, time) for discussion on the Lived Experiences of College Educated African American Males During Police Interactions in **Central Kentucky**. The interview should last no longer than 20-30 minutes. Please contact John A. Doe (111)-111-1111, or email johndoe@waldenu.edu if interested.

