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Hide or Seek? Paradigms of Publicized Police Killings and the Paradox of Police Calls

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Walden University
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Abstract

Hide or Seek? Paradigms of Publicized Police Killings and the Paradox of Police Calls

by

Ty Woods

J.D., Texas Southern University, 2017

M.S., South University, 2009

B.A., Georgia State University, 2008

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Criminal Justice

Walden University

August 2023

Abstract

Police departments and the 911 emergency call system were created for public safety

purposes. However, when a 911 call summoning police for assistance leads to another

911 call involving a deceased victim of a police encounter, public safety seems lacking.

Many citizens vicariously witness or view fatal police encounters through the lens of

extant media information, and how the public perceives media coverage can negate

citizen trust and confidence in law enforcement. The purpose of this phenomenological

study was to explore the influence of perceived media coverage of police-caused deaths

of unarmed Black men and its impact on the inclination of non-Black residents to report

crime or contact police for assistance. This study was guided by a synthesis of ideal

victim theory, cultivation theory, police legitimacy, and police cynicism. Qualitative data

were collected from eight adult participants who were non-Black residents of three

predominantly Black cities. Manual coding was used to organize and report codes and

themes. Themes were identified and described as positive or negative perceptions

regarding the phenomena, including perceptions of media, victims, law enforcement, and

societal impact. Better understanding of how citizens perceive publicity of officer-

involved deaths of unarmed Black men may aid in strengthening police–community

relations. Stronger police–community relations can reduce fear of law enforcement and

promote citizen trust and confidence in the police. Reduced fear and increased trust may

cause citizens to report crime, increasing crime reporting rates. This awareness can be

used by law enforcement agencies for positive social change to improve community-

oriented policing and to enhance public safety strategies and policing outcomes.

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to the loving memory of my dearly departed mother, Debra Denise. She made limitless sacrifices to ensure that happiness and love were the nucleus of our lives. Mom was the epitome of a mother who loved her children unconditionally. A woman of courage, resilience, and strength, she always said that her children were her "greatest accomplishment." Thank you for all the invaluable life lessons you have taught me and, more importantly, for making me a better compassion-filled human. Being your daughter is one of my most honorable titles and being able to shower my children with the love that you instilled in me is my "greatest accomplishment." I love you, Mother. I honor and celebrate you with yet another accolade. Along with your law degree, this dissertation is dedicated to you Mom.

I would also like to dedicate this dissertation to my brother from another father and mother: Brian Daniels, Sr. "Wiz." You and your corny jokes have been in my life for almost three decades. Our Spades battles will never be the same. Even through your illness, you were always there for us and content with planning the reunion. I will cherish our memories together and remember your infectious laugh. I know you will continue to watch over me and the clique—With Eternal Love, Chok.

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Foremost, I would like to give honor and thanks to God, as well as my ancestors, as none of this would be possible without you. A special thanks to my beautiful family for being supportive during all my endeavors. Thank you to my husband and children for exhibiting patience and understanding along this doctoral journey. There were restless nights and skipped meals, but Babe, you stepped in and made sure the kids were fine. To my chair, Dr. Grier and committee member, Dr. Cooper, thank you for the mentorship and guidance that transformed inquisition into a sound doctoral study. I appreciate your professionalism and level of expertise in feedback and oversight. Last, but not least, thank you to all who believed in me and who expressed any form of encouragement while attaining this level of distinction: family, friends, and faculty alike.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

Police violence continues to be a national issue in the United States and cause for global concern (Jackson et al., 2021). Widespread media coverage has spotlighted high-profile cases involving the deaths of unarmed African American men by the police, such as Elijah McClain, Daniel Prude, and George Floyd. According to Desmond et al. (2020), these publicized cases of police violence against unarmed Black men had a clear and significant impact on citizen crime reporting. Citizens rely on law enforcement to maintain order, to protect life and property, and to render emergency services when requested. As a result, in the effort to prevent, reduce, and investigate crime, law enforcement depends on crime reporting or cooperation from the public.

Gingerich and Oliveros (2018) concluded that diverse populations throughout the world have "presented evidence showing that perceived police competence, effectiveness, and fairness have a positive effect on the likelihood of crime reporting" (p. 81). However, to date, there is no empirical evidence regarding the perceptions of non-African American residents who reside in predominantly African American communities concerning the impact of media exposure of lethal police encounters with unarmed African American male victims. This study was conducted to gain more understanding of perceptions of publicity of officer-involved deaths of unarmed African American men and its influence on non-Black residents' likelihood to report crime or request police assistance.

Calls for police service and cooperation with law enforcement are contingent upon public confidence and attitudes of policing. Gingerich and Oliveros (2018) contended that incidents involving police brutality may erode collaboration between law enforcement and the public. Therefore, how citizens perceive publicized incidents of deadly police encounters may affect citizen crime reporting. Crime underreporting enables criminals to avoid prosecution and thwarts accuracy in crime statistics and crime estimates, which poses greater risks to public safety (Xie & Baumer, 2019). The purpose of this study was to investigate what influence media coverage of police-caused deaths involving unarmed Black men has on the inclination of non-Black residents to report crime or to contact police for assistance.

Potential social implications of this study encompass awareness of media influence on citizen perceptions in the aftermath of police-caused fatalities of unarmed Black men. Bor et al. (2018) found that police killings of unarmed Blacks have adverse effects on mental health among Black adults. Findings of the current study may illustrate what effects officer-involved fatalities of unarmed Black men may have on non-Black residents. As a result of this qualitative inquiry, law enforcement agencies and the public may be enlightened on the impact media reporting of police-inflicted fatalities of unarmed members of society has on citizens' inclination to contact law enforcement, which may aid in police reform. Insight gained from such enlightenment may increase police-related calls, improve community policing relationships and crime reporting, minimize civil unrest caused by rioting and unpeaceful protests, and reduce public

distrust and fear of police. As a result of this study, feasible social improvements can be applied in community settings and in society overall.

In Chapter 1, I illustrate an overview of the research, the problem statement, purpose of the study, research question, and theoretical framework. Chapter 1 also contains operational definitions, significance of the study, limitations, and delimitations relevant to the study. Subchapters highlight the basis of design and methodology in which the research was conducted. Understanding media-influenced perceptions of fatal police encounters of unarmed Black men and what influence those perceptions have on residents' inclination to contact police for assistance may also reduce mental health effects of police violence. Furthermore, this research may be a point of reference for criminal justice reform to improve crime reporting rates, public safety, and policing outcomes.

Background

Research relevant to this study topic is scarce. Moreover, there is inadequate literature on police violence and its impact on non-Black citizen crime reporting in Black communities. Desmond et al. (2016; 2020) demonstrated in studies that police brutality was associated with a reduction of 911 calls in Milwaukee, after a news story was made public involving an unarmed Black man who was beaten by White police officers. Zoorob (2020) refuted Desmond et al.'s (2016) conclusions that police killings hamper crime reporting, even though they have deleterious social consequences (p. 177). Despite conflicting conclusions, to date, no empirical research has focused on what influence media coverage of police-caused deaths of unarmed African American men has on non-

Black residents' inclination to report crime or to contact police for assistance in predominantly Black cities.

This study placed emphasis on the perceptions of non-Black residents who reside in areas where more than 50% of the population is Black that are geographically located in metropolitan statistical areas (MSAs). MSAs are collections of contiguous counties and urbanized areas of at least 50,000 people (Leyk et al., 2019; Schwartz & Jahn, 2020). In an effort to combat or reduce incidences of police-caused deaths of unarmed Black men, I sought to identify areas officer–citizen encounters are more likely to occur. Schwartz and Jahn (2020) demonstrated that many of the predominantly Black neighborhoods, where several high-profile cases of police violence have occurred, are situated in MSAs. Police killings of unarmed African American men occur throughout the United States, but Schwartz and Jahn (2020) concluded that across all MSAs, Blacks are 3.23 times more likely to be killed compared to their White counterparts. In addition, 90% of police-involved fatalities occurred in MSAs, which illustrated that "MSAs are a key geographic unit of analysis to identify areas where policy changes should be made to address fatal police violence" (Schwartz & Jahn, 2020, p. 2).

Hagan et al. (2018) asserted that police reports are heavily dependent on 911 callers and citizen reporting. Media coverage shapes public attitudes toward policing, encompassing both positive and negative perceptions, and "citizens and the news media have become more scrutinous of police actions" (Nix et al., 2018, p. 34). However, negative perceptions derived from widespread coverage of police-caused deaths of unarmed Black men can be detrimental and may signal feelings of distrust and fear of the

police, especially within predominantly Black cities; such feelings may adversely impact citizens' calls to law enforcement for assistance or for crime reporting purposes.

Law enforcement using deadly force on unarmed citizens, regardless of the race of the victim, is not only a public safety issue, but also cause for public health concern (Nix & Lozada, 2021). Media influence of publicized police killings determines whether protests, or even riots, will ensue. Williamson et al. (2018) found a relationship between local police-caused deaths of Blacks and the likelihood of protests. In what is considered the first viral video (Watson, 2019), the nation witnessed the Rodney King beating in 1991, in a video that "captures police beating King who shows no signs of resisting" (Brooks, 2022, p.73). According to Brooks (2022), "these scenes of witnessing produced a counter-spectacle that collectively pushed against the spectacle of Black death" (p. 76). The damaging effects of police brutality in the King case were publicized in the subsequent media coverage, in the protests-turned riots, and in the widespread civil unrest that followed.

The benefits of summoning law enforcement during an emergency should outweigh the risk or fear of being victimized by police officers. Based on how citizens perceive media coverage of publicized police killings, will they hide from law enforcement or seek assistance when help is needed? During emergencies, citizens may refrain from dialing 911 if they are apprehensive of imminent police violence or potential death, even during an emergency. On average, Black individuals may be inclined to view police encounters negatively, and negative experiences with the police are associated with a likelihood of decreased reporting (Lantz et al., 2022). Reporting victimization to

police reduces future victimization; hence, non-reporting of crime can pose serious threats to public safety. This study helps fill a gap in understanding regarding the influence media coverage of police-caused deaths of unarmed Black men has on non-Black residents' inclination to report crime or to contact police for assistance.

Problem Statement

Officer-involved fatalities of unarmed victims are frequently the result of a fatal encounter that results from police response to an emergency call, suspicious activity, or even "an ordinary traffic stop, which can be a gateway to extraordinary police violence" (Carbado, 2017, p.150). Once the victim is badly injured, non-responsive, exhibiting no vital signs, near death, or even deceased, another emergency call is made to transport the victim, usually by ambulance. Police departments and the 911 emergency call system were created for public safety purposes. It is paradoxical how one 911 call summoning police for assistance can lead to another 911 call involving an unarmed victim of a fatal police encounter, refuting purposes of public safety.

As in the instance of the Rodney King beating, viral videos of unarmed Black victims of police-caused tragedies may invoke social friction (Watson, 2019). The public derives perceptions from media coverage of fatal police encounters. Public perception relating to perceived "police procedural justice would appear to have both a direct impact and indirect effect on citizen cooperation, the latter by way of police legitimacy beliefs" (Bolger & Walters, 2019, p. 98). Consequently, public perception may heighten fear or distrust of the police and lower crime reporting and police legitimacy. Collectively, these factors may impact citizen inclination to contact police for assistance during emergencies.

Unarmed African American men dying by the hands or actions of law enforcement is problematic in the United States. Men of color face a non-trivial lifetime risk of being killed by police (Schwartz, 2020, p. 281). Report after report of high-profile cases of unarmed Black men being killed by police appear in the news. Video footage of fatal police encounters can shock the conscience of many viewers such as "excruciating bystander video pinning Mr. Floyd to the ground for more than nine minutes as he gasped for air" (Arango & Heyward, 2021, para, 8). Aurora, Colorado, is located within an MSA, an area which Schwartz and Jahn (2020) asserted have higher incidence of police violence against citizens.

In August 2019, the Aurora Police Department received a call from a 911 caller reporting a sketchy person wearing a ski mask who continued to walk after being told to stop and was thrown to the ground by three police officers (Appelbaum, 2022). Responding officers used a carotid chokehold to block the flow of blood to the suspect's brain, and within 30 minutes, Elijah McClain, an unarmed Black man, was unconscious (McCandless & Zavatarro, 2020). After crying out that he could not breathe and being transported by ambulance from the scene, McClain died days later.

On March 23, 2020, in Rochester, New York, another location within an MSA, Rochester Police received a call from a 911 caller reporting that his brother was having a psychotic episode (Paul, 2020). Officers from the Rochester Police Department were dispatched to the scene where they confronted a naked Black man exhibiting signs of psychotic behavior. The responding officers placed a hood over the suspect's head (Shadravan et al., 2021), which caused asphyxiation. Within 30 minutes, Daniel Prude,

another unarmed Black man, was in an ambulance after crying out that he could not breathe. Prude died days later after that police encounter.

In yet another escalating incident of a fatal police encounter of an unarmed African American man occurring in another MSA, Minneapolis, Minnesota, the George Floyd case incited global attention. On May 25, 2020, the Minneapolis Police Department received a call from a 911 caller, a store owner, reporting a suspect allegedly making a purchase with a "fake $20 bill" (Al-Hashimi, 2021, p. 34). A Minneapolis police officer kneeled on the suspect's neck and compressed it for approximately 9 minutes and 29 seconds (Yin, 2021), causing asphyxia and cardiopulmonary arrest. Within 30 minutes, George Floyd, another unarmed Black man, was in an ambulance after crying out that he could not breathe more than 20 times. Less than an hour later, Floyd was dead from that police encounter.

These 911 calls preceded the deaths of unarmed Black male victims; citizens called police for help but received or witnessed more detriment than benefit. Video footage, including police bodycam footage, of all three victims' fatal encounters with police officers were publicized and appeared across social media and the internet. Many citizens vicariously witness or view police killings through the lens of extant media information. How the public perceives the media coverage can negate citizen trust in law enforcement, and citizens may be reluctant to place an emergency call for personal service or to report a crime. For public safety and criminal justice system concerns, it is imperative to know what impact media exposure of unarmed Black male victims has on

citizens when making 911 calls and crime reports. I strived to proffer such insight with this study.

Purpose of the Study

The intent of this qualitative, phenomenological study was to explore what influence media coverage of police-caused deaths involving unarmed Black men has on non-Black residents' inclination to report crime or to contact police for assistance. Research on attitudes toward police reveal that citizen distrust rates are higher among Black citizens than White citizens (Cobbina-Dungy, 2021). To gain new cognizance from a non-saturated class, my research paradigm incorporated perceptions from respondents who identified as a different demographic than the Black victims of the police encounters described. The purpose of the study consisted of obtaining responses from subjects who reside in predominantly Black cities and who do not self-identify as Black or African American. Through this study, I aimed to gain and provide insight on non-Black perspectives of publicized police killings of unarmed African American men. I attempted to ascertain what impact, if any, these perspectives have on participants' decisions to report crime or request aid from law enforcement.

Research Question

The question that guided this research was: What influence does media coverage of police-caused deaths involving unarmed Black men have on the inclination of non-Black residents to report crime or contact police for assistance?

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

The theoretical framework for my phenomenological study embodied a synthesis of theories and concepts. Foremost, in reviewing literature, I extracted innumerable theories relevant to my research. However, the most relevant theories to guide my investigation and comprehension of perceptions of publicized police killings and how those perceptions affect whether a citizen will call 911 are ideal victim theory and cultivation theory. Additionally, I employed the concepts of police legitimacy and legal cynicism to effectuate an exhaustive study.

Theoretical Foundation

One of the main theories that grounded this study was Nil Christie's (1986) ideal victim theory. Christie (1986) theorized that the ideal victim consists of an individual or group of individuals who would be perceived as legitimate victims and assigned attributes to reinforce this concept. Prototypes for ideal victims include individuals who are: (a) weaker than the perpetrator, (b) acting during routine activities, (c) unable to blame for their victimization, (d) not personally associated with the perpetrator, and (e) physically or psychologically weaker than the perpetrator (Schwöbel-Patel, 2018). Ideal victim theory implies that an ideal victim is perceived as blameless by observers or the public. For example, if armed people were to attempt to rob a daycare and shoot toddlers in the process, the toddlers meet the criteria of being ideal victims. However, African American men involved in fatal police encounters may not appear as ideal victims. The "looming spectre of Black threat is dichotomous to the image of the 'ideal victim'" which "serves to produce Black bodies as suspects rather than victims and

shapes their encounters when they contact the police for assistance" (Long, 2021, p. 351). Nafstad (2019) argued that achieving both victim status and acknowledgment as an active agent within one's own culture is exceedingly difficult for minority victims (p. 3).

In my analysis of media influence, theoretical framing necessitated the inclusion of George Gerbner's (1969) cultivation theory. In cultivation theory, Gerbner (1998) postulated that long-term media exposure influences how people perceive the world, as well as how they respond to that perception. Hence, the theorist asserted that viewers engross similar meanings from what they view, an inclusion of an ongoing process comprised of a merger of messages and contexts (Gerbner, 1998), and many of these messages heighten the fear of crime. Viewers of news coverage watch stories of local violent crime, which instill fear and convey the message that Black people are responsible for violence against themselves and constructions of who is culpable can shift through ways news media presents roles of offender and victim (Shrikant & Sambaranju, 2021). Either law enforcement or Black victims can be viewed as blame-worthy, which may lead to viewer fear and distrust of officers or Black men. Fear of the police may produce reluctance to dial 911, and fear of crime may result in proneness to report crime or suspicious activity, especially when African American men are involved.

Progressing to conceptual framework, the most germane form of conceptualization for my investigation contained an integration of legal cynicism and police legitimacy. The public is overtly divided over their perceptions of the police (Sunshine & Tyler, 2003) and contingencies regarding the favorable or unfavorable position of these feelings determine the outcome of public cooperation with and trust in

law enforcement. Opposite in meaning, these two commingled concepts collaboratively explain public perception of, and attitudes toward, police officers. Legal cynicism is the negative perspective of law enforcement, while police legitimacy is the positive stance of law enforcement.

Expanding on anomie theory, Sampson and Bartusch's concept of legal cynicism suggested "that inner-city contexts of racial segregation and concentrated disadvantage, where inability to influence the structures of power that constrain lives is greatest, also breed cynicism and perceptions of legal injustice" (Sampson & Bartusch, p. 783). Elaborating on their predecessors' concept, Kirk and Papachristos (2011) described legal cynicism as "a cultural orientation in which the law and the agents of its enforcement are viewed as *illegitimate, unresponsive*, and *ill-equipped* to ensure public safety" (p. 1191). Citizen skepticism, coupled with viewing public safety agents as incompetent, is problematic.

Police cynicism creates a visual of police incompetency; nevertheless, such antipathies may be undermined through the concept of legitimacy. In the early 1800s, Sir Robert Peel explicated nine principles of policing referred to as *Peelian principles*; one of them flourished into *police legitimacy* (McComas et al., 2019). Police legitimacy encompasses citizens' perceptions of fairness in policing and the impact on citizens' willingness to cooperate with the police and comply with the law (Noppe et al., 2017). Legitimacy is achieved when public opinion adjudicates fairness in authorities or institutions, giving entitlement to be obeyed (Sunshine & Tyler, 2003), and is consequential in maintaining public order. Noppe et al. (2017) noted that in efforts to

increase police trust and confidence, police organizations can implement reforms and invest in police–community relations.

Hagan et al. (2018) found that cynicism has a direct effect on 911 calls by citizens seeking protection and prevention. Other studies have shown that cynical attitudes toward the police and perceptions of legal injustice are the greatest in neighborhoods where Blacks and residents from lower socioeconomic classes reside (Sampson & Bartusch, 1998). Research conducted by Desmond et al. (2016) revealed an abrupt decline in 911 calls in predominantly Black communities after a highly publicized police killing of an unarmed Black man. Sunshine and Tyler (2003) asserted that society is divided over their feelings for the police; however, if the public equates the exercise of authority to unfairness, it is reasonable to speculate that alienation, defiance, or noncooperation will ensue. Proffering clarity of the synthesis of both concepts, if the public judges that the police exercise their authority with fairness, the police will be deemed as legitimate. Perceptions of legitimacy may increase cooperation, crime reporting, or calls for police service.

Christie's ideal victim theory is logically connected to my study as it pertains to victimization. Christie (1986) posited that the ideal victim is "a sort of public status of the same type and level of abstraction" (p. 18) exempt from blame. Christie's theory provides clarity for subjectivity of media impression and of characterizing the perfect victims. In reference to examining how media influences perception, the public is generally more empathetic to ideal victims. Public opinion of injustices elicits strong viewpoints and

emotional responses as those of satisfaction in seeing a small, powerless child finally stand up to a powerful bully.

Unarmed victims of fatal police encounters can be adjudged as blame-worthy or, in the instance of an ideal victim, blameless. Christie's ideology can be applied to my research as it proffers a logical explanation as to how perceived media influence is subjective in nature and may affect citizens' decisions to call 911. If potential 911 callers, collectively, label unarmed victims as ideal victims of law enforcement, the officers are blamed. Inversely, if the victim is gauged as blameworthy, citizens may be indifferent to the officer's fatal actions and may even view them as just. Blame becomes a determinant of willingness or unwillingness to call for police assistance.

Gerbner's theory on cultivation is pragmatic to my research because it associates media influence with perception. Reverting to the notion of subjectivity, the audience controls how these messages are interpreted. In this research, I sought to explore how media coverage of police-caused killings of unarmed Black men is perceived by the public. The theory of cultivation provides an explanation as to why citizens may observe fatal police encounters in the media and consequently form fear and distrust of police officers. Fear and distrust of law enforcement may result in nonreporting of crime. Nonreporting of crime, in turn, leads to increased crime rates. Paradoxically, because media coverage contributes to a heightened fear of crime, citizens may report (if only suspicious activity) as a precaution for fear-derived crime prevention.

Both concepts are logically connected to my study as they identify and clarify favorable and unfavorable attitudes of public opinion congruent with my research quest.

As previously stated, the aim of my study was to obtain an in-depth comprehension of how non-Black residents who reside in predominantly Black cities, mainly situated in MSAs, perceive media coverage of unarmed victims of police-inflicted killings and how those perceptions influence decisions to call 911. Relevant to my study, cynicism and legitimacy aided in understanding perceptions of participants, who were purposefully sampled from areas where research has shown to exhibit the highest rates of police cynicism.

The conceptual framework assisted in questionnaire formation and in answering: How do residents perceive media coverage of police using deadly force on unarmed Black men? Police cynicism and legitimacy help to better understand how positive or negative feelings regarding the police are derived. Residents who are cynical of police officers may develop distrust, causing them to be uncooperative. Recent research illustrates that the boundary of police authority is a contested one, as residents are sensitive to being stopped and questioned, arrested, and jailed (Sunshine & Taylor, 2003, p. 518) if not paranoid altogether. Moreover, many residents are fearful of the propensity for a police encounter to become fatal, but more so if African American male suspects are involved. The concept of cynicism enhances understanding of why skeptic residents may decide that dialing 911 is not in their best interest or the best interest of a third party.

By contrast, the concept of legitimacy enhances understanding of why residents who trust the police may be cooperative and willing to report crime. Trust in law enforcement negates fear and police illegitimacy. These scenarios can affect whether a caller will choose to place a 911 call. En masse, the culmination of theories and concepts

aid in an improved understanding of the impact of perceptions on crime reporting and requests for police service.

Nature of the Study

To address the research question in this qualitative study, the specific research design included a phenomenological approach. The phenomenological research method was the most appropriate design for my study as it enabled an exploration of perceptions. Groenewald (2018) emphasized that phenomenology necessitates an aim of a researcher to describe the phenomenon with as much accuracy as possible and reliance on the facts. I used this design with a semistructured interview protocol, which was distributed to non-Black residents who reside in Black MSAs in three predominantly Black cities in three different states: Atlanta, Georgia; Detroit Michigan; and New Orleans, Louisiana.

An interview protocol containing open-ended questions was used to help facilitate candor and elaboration to extract in-depth information on how the subjects perceive police-involved deaths of unarmed Black men. Subsequently, I gathered data on how media-influenced perceptions affect decision making when placing 911 calls with an aim to explore the influence media coverage of police-caused deaths of unarmed Black men has on the inclination of non-Black residents to report crime or contact police for assistance. I conducted qualitative analyses using thematic coding to gain insight of participants' perceptions of media coverage of police killings of unarmed Black men to improve the understanding of media-influenced perceptions and their impact on non-Black residents' inclinations to contact police for assistance.

Definitions

African American or *Black*: Used interchangeably or as synonyms that generally refer to a person with African ancestral origins who self identifies or is identified by others as African American or Black. The terms *African American* or *Black* may be used to describe participants in studies involving populations in the United States (Flanagin & Christiansen, 2021).

Law enforcement: Used interchangeably or as synonyms in conjunction with police, policemen, policewomen, and police officers and to describe the agencies and employees responsible for enforcing laws, maintaining public order, and managing public safety (U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2021).

Metropolitan statistical areas (MSAs): Geographical regions with a high population density in the core area having at least one urbanized area of 50,000 or more in population, plus adjacent territory that has a high degree of social and economic integration with the core (Bureau of Economic Analysis, 2008); collections of contiguous counties and urbanized areas of at least 50,000 people (Leyk et al., 2019; Shutters & Applegate, 2022).

Non-Black residents: Residents who do not self-identify as African American or Black and members of non-Black racial and ethnic groups (Flanagin & Christiansen, 2021).

Officer-involved deaths, police-caused deaths, fatal police encounters, fatal police violence, lethal police victimization, or *police use of deadly force:* Used interchangeably or as synonyms in conjunction with each other defined as force that a

law enforcement officer uses with the purpose of causing, or that the officer knows to

create a substantial risk of causing, death or serious bodily harm. For this study, these

encounters exceeded serious bodily harm and resulted in death of the victims (U.S.

Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2021).

Police cynicism, legal cynicism, or *police illegitimacy:* Interchangeable or

synonymous terms that describe a "cultural orientation in which the law and the agents of

its enforcement are viewed as *illegitimate, unresponsive*, and *ill-equipped* to ensure

public safety" (Kirk & Papachristos, 2011, p. 1191).

Police killings, police-inflicted deaths, or *police-caused deaths*: Cases where

someone dies as a result of being chased, beaten, arrested, restrained, shot, pepper

sprayed, tasered, or otherwise harmed by police officers, whether on-duty or off-duty,

intentional or accidental (Lee Smith & Robinson, 2019).

Police legitimacy or *legitimacy:* A public view when public opinion adjudicates

fairness in authorities or institutions giving entitlement to be obeyed (Sunshine & Tyler,

2003) and relating to citizens' perceptions of fairness in policing and the impact on

citizens' willingness to cooperate with the police and comply with the law (Noppe et al.,

2017).

<center>**Assumptions**</center>

Prior to constructing the approach to my inquiry, I assumed that police-caused

deaths of unarmed African American men are public safety issues and should be cause

for concern among all races and ethnicities in the United States. Police patrol Black and

other non-White neighborhoods more intensively and are thus more likely to initiate

contact with local residents once in those neighborhoods (Lee Smith & Robinson, 2019, p. 973). I assumed how the local residents related to or empathized with what they perceive from media coverage on police-caused deaths impacted their inclinations to call 911 for personal service or to report crime. However, relating to officer-involved fatalities of unarmed Black men, an inverse assumption was there may be little to no impact on deciding to call the police if the respondents viewed police in a positive manner or as trustworthy. At the core of my inquiry was an assumption that all participants would be truthful and open in their disclosure and responses.

In constructing techniques for my examination, I made several assumptions. The most consequential assumption was that my research participants would be candid in their responses. Vésteinsdóttir et al. (2019) asserted that self-reports on sensitive topics are prone to misreporting, mainly due to social desirability. Qualitative inquiry requires accurate response to effectively analyze data. I assumed that participants would be honest in responding despite the sensitive research topic. Another key assumption was that paradigms of publicized police killings of unarmed Black men invoke negative perceptions of law enforcement. Negative perceptions, such as fear and distrust of the police, may incite citizens to become hesitant or reluctant to call 911. Necessary in the context of the study, these assumptions were significant for research integrity purposes to aid in developing a protocol that would elicit the most honest and open responses possible.

Scope and Delimitations

In this study, I analyzed the influence of media coverage of police-caused deaths of unarmed Black men on the inclination of non-Black residents to report crime or contact police for assistance. The data may impact criminal justice and policy reform, community policing relationships, and the public safety sector. The study was limited in scope due to exclusion criteria and a small sample size. The targeted population was residents from predominantly Black-populated cities, also MSAs, in regions where police-caused deaths are more likely to occur (Schwartz & Jahn, 2020). Studies have shown that cynical attitudes toward the police and perceptions of legal injustice are the greatest in neighborhoods where Blacks and residents from lower socioeconomic classes reside (Sampson & Bartusch, 1998).

I used a small sample that included interviews with eight participants from three MSAs: Atlanta, Georgia; Detroit, Michigan; and New Orleans, Louisiana. Exclusion criteria, which ostracized participants who identified as African American or Black was another limitation. Per reiteration, 90% of officer-caused fatalities occur in MSAs, where Blacks are 3.23 times more likely to be killed than their White counterparts (Schwartz & Jahn, 2020). My focus was on perspectives from respondents who reside in neighborhoods where fatal police encounters of unarmed Black men have occurred or are likely to occur.

Exclusion criteria disqualified prospective subjects. Citizens who were potential subjects but who did not live in predominantly Black cities located within the targeted MSAs were excluded. Garza et al. (2017) contended that including racial and ethnic

minorities in research is critical for generalizability of results. Nevertheless, the findings of this study are likely to be transferable due to diverse demographics for potential participants. Prospective subjects who identified as White, American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander (Flanagin & Christiansen, 2021), and other non-Black races still met the inclusion criteria. The target population included five areas: Atlanta, Georgia; New Orleans, Louisiana; Baltimore, Maryland; Detroit, Michigan; and Memphis, Tennessee. The study population consisted of respondents in only three cities partly due to exclusions based on race non-eligibility. Despite the non-Black demographic and residential locality requisites, other research can be conducted, transferred, or applied in other regions with subjects located in any city or locality.

Limitations

There were various limitations in this study. Foremost, there is no empirical research on how publicity of an incident of law enforcement killing weaponless African American men is perceived by non-Black residents who reside in predominantly Black cities. There is no empirical research on what influence media coverage of unarmed Black men has on non-Black residents' willingness or unwillingness to report crime or contact law enforcement for assistance. This research was a study of first impression, so current literature was limited.

The sensitive nature of the research topic could have posed a constraint if respondents were reluctant to answer candidly due to social bias or desirability. Socially desirable responding refers to respondents making themselves appear in a highly

favorable light on self-report questionnaires (Vésteinsdóttir, 2019). The data collection process did not involve anonymous self-reporting, and participants may not have wanted to respond with candor due to fear of being judged for their responses. Some subjects may not have wanted to participate in research that delves into racial sensitivity or that recounts deaths of deceased victims. To overcome this potential threat, I reassured the subjects that I was there to collect data and not to judge. I encouraged honesty and informed participants that their information and responses would remain confidential. I also informed the subjects that they were free to stop or withdraw participation at any time.

The small sample size was also a limitation. After conducting a power analysis, I was confident I would attain saturation with eight participants. Only eight residents of the targeted areas were interviewed. Hennink and Kaiser (2022) clarified that small sample sizes are effective "because they are able to reach saturation, the long-held benchmark for an adequate sample size" and saturation "is the most common guiding principle for assessing purposive samples in qualitative research" (p. 8).

Potential barriers when collecting primary data include difficulty recruiting participants for interviews. Initially, I only used the social media platform Facebook. However, when there were not many participants expressing interest, I modified recruiting to include the Reddit platform. There were difficulties with scheduling Zoom interviews and some potential subjects did not attend their Zoom sessions. Limitations also occurred with recruitment issues due to solely recruiting non-Black respondents in the listed targeted predominantly Black cities. The participants were from limited

targeted areas and were residents of Atlanta, Georgia; New Orleans, Louisiana; and Detroit, Michigan.

The limitations that arose from trustworthiness in this study encompass issues with participant selection and sample size. One limitation was that the purpose of this qualitative study was intended to gain insight only from participants who did not identify as African American or Black. Participants were recruited from Atlanta, Georgia; New Orleans, Louisiana; Baltimore, Maryland; Detroit, Michigan; and Memphis, Tennessee. However, due to exclusion criteria, I was not able to interview willing participants from Baltimore, Maryland, or Memphis, Tennessee.

The findings of this study are not applicable to the African American or Black population, which reduced transferability of the general population. Despite these limitations, I was able to fulfill the study's purpose to gain in-depth insight with an aim to build a new theory to bridge a gap in literature (see Carminati, 2018). I was able to overcome these challenges, conduct a thorough study, and address the research problem while maintaining research integrity.

<div align="center">**Significance**</div>

This study fills a gap in understanding regarding media influence of police-caused deaths of unarmed Black men and the impact it has on the inclination of non-Black residents to report crime or contact police for assistance. Social implications include policy reform and changes in the private and public sector of the criminal justice system. This research may lead to positive social change by providing insight on citizen perceptions and public opinion of law enforcement, which may help build better police–

civilian relationships, increase police-related calls, minimize civil unrest, and reduce fear and public distrust of police locally and nationally. The study may be used to reduce incidences of unarmed African American victims of police encounters in areas where police-caused deaths are more likely to occur. Moreover, the results of this study could be used to reduce mental health effects of police violence, improve crime reporting policies and crime reporting rates, and aid in public safety and police reform nationwide.

Summary

High-profile cases of lethal police violence against unarmed Black men have been publicized in the media, inciting riots, protests, and general civil unrest. Policing and the 911 emergency call system were created for public safety. Police arrive at the scene in response to an emergency call but, in the instance of fatal police–citizen encounters, have done more detriment than benefit. These officer-caused fatalities refute public safety purposes. In recapitulation of this research, my aim was to explore citizens' perceptions derived from media coverage of police lethal victimization of unarmed African American men. In this exploration, I sought to investigate the influence media coverage of police-caused deaths of unarmed Black men has on the inclination of non-Black residents to report crime or contact police for assistance. How citizens perceive police deadly use of force on unarmed victims may affect citizen-crime reporting, consequently altering crime statistics and estimates.

Public perception, whether positive or negative, is consequential in crime fighting and crime reporting. When citizens view law enforcement favorably, they are more prone to cooperate or report crime (Bolger et al., 2019). However, if law enforcement is

perceived negatively, citizen fear and distrust in the police may circumvent calls for aid (Kirk & Papachristos, 2011). Crime reporting is essential to the criminal justice system as citizen reporting helps to combat and reduce future victimization, and excessive police violence influence citizen crime reporting. Positive police–citizen encounters not only promote public safety but officer safety as well.

In Chapter 2, I present an overview of pertinent literature that will guide the remainder of the research. Some of the topics covered include theoretical and conceptual foundations, relevant research studies, literature search strategy, and literature review related to key concepts, and summary and conclusion. In Chapter 2, current literature that establishes the relevance of the problem is presented. Collaboratively, the sections in the next chapter will assist in addressing how media perceptions of publicity of officer-involved demise of unarmed Black men affect non-Black residents' willingness or unwillingness to dial 911 when help is needed.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

High-profile cases of unarmed African American men who died from police deadly use of force have been heavily publicized throughout the United States (Porter et al., 2021). It is problematic when unarmed casualties die during encounters with law enforcement, considering the latter took oaths to protect and serve. Many citizens vicariously witness or view police-caused deaths through the lens of extant media. More recently, many citizens have viewed or have been able to view video footage or media coverage of officer-involved deaths of unarmed Black men, such as Elijah McClain, Daniel Prude, and George Floyd. Campbell and Valera (2020) concluded that witnessing publicized police killings of unarmed Black men has resulted in psychological trauma and leads to anxiety and fear for future police encounters. Media coverage transforms public opinion and shapes public attitudes toward policing, and negative perceptions could be detrimental to both public safety and officer safety. Police officers, citizens, or both may react with poor judgment based on preconceived notions of each other during police–citizen encounters.

Unfavorable opinions derived from media influence related to police killings of unarmed Black men can be damaging to communities and society overall. Ill perceptions may signal feelings of distrust and fear of the police. Subsequently, such feelings may impact citizens' decisions to call 911 for assistance or to report crime. Policing is generally retroactive, and police reports are heavily dependent on 911 callers and citizen reporting (Hagan et al., 2018). If citizens do not report crime, many crimes go unsolved,

and perpetrators are often free to reoffend. Moreover, nonreporting of crime negates crime statistics and estimates and endangers the welfare of the public. The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the influence media coverage of police-caused deaths of unarmed Black men has on the inclination of non-Black residents to report crime or contact police for assistance.

Recent research reveals that 911 calls originating from Black neighborhoods plummet after publicity of violent police–citizen encounters (Desmond et al., 2020). Desmond et al. (2020) indicated how crime-related 911 calls were much lower than expected in Milwaukee after news reports of police-caused violence received high viewings. Desmond et al. (2020) used the case of Frank Jude, Jr., an unarmed biracial man who was brutally beaten by Milwaukee police, to demonstrate the correlation of police brutality and a decline in citizen crime reporting. Current literature posits that high-profile cases of police violence may present a serious threat to public safety if they lower citizen crime reporting (Desmond et al., 2016). In Chapter 2, I present the literature search strategy as well as a theoretical and conceptual foundation and relevant literature. Chapter 2 concludes with a chapter summary and an introduction to Chapter 3, the basis for the study's methodology.

Literature Search Strategy

To effectuate an aggregate understanding to address the research problem, I sought to extract the most credible and relevant sources. I conducted a literature search using Google search engine, peer-reviewed academic journals and articles, and various databases. I used Thoreau, which collaborates resources from such databases as

Education Source/ EBSCO, Sage Journals, PubMed, JSTOR, as well as Google Scholar as the main points of reference. My preliminary review incorporated academic journals directly linked to the social sciences of sociology and criminology due to the close association to citizens and law enforcement. My multisearch strategy was initiated with the following key terms: *police violence*, *police killings*, *perception of police killings*, *media influence*, and *unarmed Black men*. Combinations of search terms and Boolean phrases used in my queries were *police violence* and *unarmed Black men*, *police violence* and *media*, *police killings* and *public perception*, *police killings of unarmed Black men* and *public perception*, *police killings* and *911 calls*, and *police killings* and *citizen crime reporting*.

Minimal research directly supports my topic, but there are recent studies that espouse pertinent elements of my quest. In identification of germane scholarship, such blended terms as *police violence* and *911 calls* were searched in Thoreau, limited to peer-reviewed scholarly journals only, with selected publication dates between 2016 and the present year. The custom range prompted an insertion of *2016–2021* for the years of selection, and I sorted by relevance. In Thoreau, I input the cited researchers' and authors' names into the search field and was able to supplement literature, which was most helpful in extracting seminal sources. The inchoate query displayed four journal articles, including one that I classified as inapplicable and subsequently disregarded. However, the non-excluded remaining three articles furnished copious information with reference to police violence and crime reporting, specifically via 911 calls.

To expand my results, I broadened the search by conducting a full-text probe and removed publication dates. The refined search displayed 18 articles, yet only three were relevant. Next, I performed a search of the researchers in the author field and added *police violence* in the joint-term search, yielding the same results, reaffirming my previous assumption that current research is scant in this area. Even so, citations and references used in the peer-reviewed articles generated other sources and newer articles that could be incorporated into my literature review.

Using the Google Scholar database, I selected *articles* and input *police killings* and *911 calls* in the search field. I selected the *sort by relevance* option. There were 20,500 results; there were only three unequivocal references pertaining to incidents of police violence and 911 police service calls. The aforementioned results were the same three sources, proffering seminal research from Desmond et al. (2016), Desmond et al. (2020), and Zoorob (2020). Although the search process was an iterative, producing little seminal and research reference, I was able to extract essential sources as a precursor to data needed for my study.

Theoretical Foundation

To elucidate potential public perceptions, I used a synthesis of theories and concepts in my phenomenological study's theoretical framework. Foremost, I wanted to illustrate how subjects perceived media coverage of incidence(s) of police-caused deaths of unarmed Black men. Thereafter, I wanted to explain how the perceptions could impact a subject's willingness or unwillingness to call 911. In formulating a theoretical approach, I felt it was more congruous to predict negative and positive perceptions that

may affect a citizen's decision to contact police for assistance. Providing clarity, I did not want to solely focus on crime reporting and combined requests for personal service, assistance for others, or crime reporting as a collective. Hence, I reflected on how citizens may not call for aid if a negative attitude is derived from media influence. In retrospect, they may call law enforcement if perceptions are deemed favorable.

Ideal Victim Theory and Cultivation Theory: Theoretical Premises

Ideal victim theory and cultivation theory are the two main theories that guided my research. Both theories relate to public perception and aid in bringing clarity to media-derived influences that may impact citizens' decisions to report or not report crime. Long (2021) contended that the perceived worth of the victim influences decisions to act upon a reported crime. In the former ideal victim theory, if society agrees with the actions of police or disagrees with the actions of the victims in police-caused deaths of unarmed Black men, it is less likely to produce noncooperation or nonreporting of crime.

In contrast, if the actions of the police are viewed as unjust and the victim is not deemed as blame-worthy, society may adjudge the officers as untrustworthy, which is more likely to result in antipathetic perceptions. In the latter cultivation theory, citizens may view an officer-involved death of an unarmed African American man in the media and formulate a positive or negative perspective. Victimization is a subjective and arbitrary phenomenon. The cop and the victim both have an equal chance of being considered negatively based on how viewers are influenced by media exposure of fatal police encounters.

If law enforcement is judged as being in the wrong, police officers can be characterized as bullies or abusers of their authority. The public is less likely to cooperate if they are fearful that their lives or the lives of their loved ones may be taken during a police encounter. Incongruously, if the public determines that the victim did something wrong and the police officers' actions were just, there is a likelihood that cooperation and crime reporting will not be significantly affected. Collaboratively, both theories render hypotheses of public perception of publicized police killings. Supporting literature aids in proffering explanation as to how perceptions, explained by these theories, may lead to societal decisions to contact, or refrain from contacting law enforcement. In the aftermath of reviewing public display of officer lethal use of force on unarmed Black men, insight can be beneficial or, alternately, detrimental to policing and the criminal justice system overall.

Ideal Victim Theory: Theoretical Propositions

One of the prime theories that grounded this study is Nil Christie's seminal ideal victim theory. The ideal victim consists of an individual or group of individuals who would be perceived as legitimate victims with assigned attributes (Long, 2021). Society sympathizes with victims possessing Christie's prescribed characteristics. Ideal victims are those who are weaker than the perpetrator, acting during routine activities, unable to blame for their victimization, not personally associated with the perpetrator, and physically or psychologically weaker than the perpetrator (Schwöbel-Patel, 2018). In many recent high-profile cases of police violence against African Americans, these attributes fit the description of the unarmed Black male victims and their situations. In its

simplest form, ideal victim theory asserts that the victim is weaker than the offender, and if the ideal victim status is obtained, the victim is categorized as having no blame by observers (Christie, 1986).

In a hypothetical scenario, a mother is boarding a commuter train with her 16-year-old son when the son is approached by an unknown passenger while exiting the train. The passenger, an adult man, grabs the teen and throws him onto the train tracks. Public opinion would undeniably regard the teenager son as an ideal victim. However, consider this change: The teen deliberately kicked the adult man in the face while boarding. In the new scenario, public opinion may not regard the teen as an ideal victim, resulting in a lack of public defense and even public blame for his own victimization.

Posing as a characterization of societal placement of blame on the offender or victim, Christie (1986) postulated that the public will agree with or defend the ideal victim. Nonetheless, a supplemental category of non-ideal victims (Long, 2021) emerges in which society assigns fault to those who are victimized. The suspect who attempts to run or who does not comply with instructions during a police encounter, and who consequently becomes victimized by police officers, may be assigned fault by society.

As a caveat to the ideal victim theory, any slight changes or deviations in circumstances can shift the perspective of observers. The noncompliant suspect transgresses into the ideal victim. To aid in clarity, I will revert to the Elijah McClain, Daniel Prude, and George Floyd cases. All three victims were unarmed Black men who died during officer-involved encounters after complaining of not being able to breathe. McClain refused to stop. The Aurora police officers threw McClain to the ground and

placed him in a carotid choke hold, and the dynamics of the encounter shifted. Prude was

spitting on the ground, but when the police officers placed a spit hood over his head

while he was restrained, a deviation occurred in the circumstances. Floyd refused to enter

the police car. The arresting officer placed his knee on Floyd's neck for a prolonged

period and the circumstances changed. Collectively, the deviation from following

protocol of law enforcement training, guidelines, and policies transformed all three

victims into ideal victims, precluding public perception of fault.

Irrespective of a blameless victim caveat, traditionally, Black men are included in

a class of ideal offenders rather than ideal victims (Long, 2021). Ideal victims need and

create ideal offenders, as the two are interdependent: The more ideal the victim, the more

ideal becomes the offender (Christie, 1986). In explanation of the notion of ideal

offender, a prime example is the Rodney King case. King resisted arrest initially, which

may have made him a non-ideal victim. Even so, the officers' unreasonable actions and

prolonged brutal beating transformed the officers into ideal offenders and King into an

ideal victim. The subsequent protests, rallies, and riots signaled public disagreement of

the LAPD's excessive use of force with King.

In fatal police encounters involving unarmed Black men, media coverage may

show police in an unfavorable light, whereas the victims are socially labeled as ideal, and

the police transform into the ideal offender. Hence, police officers may be negatively

perceived. Negative perceptions, such as feelings of misuse of authority or power, or

even comparisons to bully–victim relationships, may create public discord, fear, distrust,

and even lack of cooperation with law enforcement. Fear of the police and a

noncooperative disposition may create citizen unwillingness to report crime or dial 911.

Reduction in crime reporting or police service requests can place public welfare in

jeopardy.

Cultivation Theory: Theoretical Postulations

The supporting theory used to assist with my study is George Gerbner's (1969)

seminal cultivation theory (Gerbner et al., 1980), which was later expanded with the

assistance of colleagues in the 1970s. Television acts as an institution of general

enculturation and violence plays a pivotal role in television's portrayal of the social order

(Gerbner et al., 1980). Cultivation theory "argues greater consumption of mass media

increases likelihood of consumers assuming the worldviews they are exposed to by the

media" (Graziano & Gauthier, 2018, p. 593). If viewers are frequently exposed to violent

police–citizen encounters involving Black men in the news, they may develop phobias to

law enforcement or even Black men.

Culpability for fatal police–citizen encounters can be influenced by what is

viewed in the media, and viewers formulate their own opinions and attitudes to decipher

if the officer or the victim is liable. Cultivation theory "proposes that TV viewers can

form inaccurate views about crime and the criminal justice system from exposure to

erroneous messages and images given in the media" (Pollock et al., 2021, p. 43).

Messages and images can be construed or misconstrued, whereas either officers or

victims can be criminalized.

Graziano and Gauthier (2018) argued that citizens have no direct experience with

law enforcement, and attain their understanding of what policing entails, through the

news. From the officer's spectrum, Pollock et al. (2021) expressed that contact with police is shaped by media exposure, which may have a significant impact on viewers' perceptions of law enforcement. When individuals perceive police-caused deaths of African American men as normal occurrences to protect the public, an assumption is made that law enforcement is doing its job and criminals are being punished (McGowen & Wiley, 2020). Howbeit, if citizens repeatedly watch new stories which display law enforcement victimizing unarmed African American men, viewpoints may change, and the officers may be looked upon as the criminals. Cultivation theory culminates labeling and stereotyping for both officers, and citizens.

Many studies have shown that news programs misrepresent crime and depict people of color as the cause of rising crime rates (Pollock et al., 2021). Kumah-Abiwu (2020) asserted that "killings of unarmed Black men could arguably be some of the outcomes of their persistent negative portrayals and linkage to 'criminality'" (p. 72). In new stories which feature Blacks, nearly 70% are about crime (Bjornstrom et al., 2010). A huge portion of the media landscape and TV news overrepresent criminality in Blacks, reinforcing a cognitive association between Black people and crime (Pollock et al., 2021).

The labelling effect portrayed in news media frequently advances evil and crazy stigmatizing labels of Black men (Pollock et al., 2021). Violence displayed in the media, defers inadvertent stigmata, in reference to African American men. A Black man walking in a predominantly White neighborhood with his White friends may not be perceived as a threat, until he later walks back through the same neighborhood alone. Alas, stereotype

threat provides a framework linking race and excessive force by police (Fagan &
Campbell, 2020, p. 974).

During the George Floyd incident, many viewers were able to vicariously witness
a White police officer with his knee on George Floyd's neck for over 9 minutes until Mr.
Floyd was unresponsive. Yet, many debated over the reasoning for Floyd's arrest, as
opposed to the officer's conscience-shocking actions. Mr. Floyd, an unarmed Black
man's alleged use of a counterfeit $20 bill, appeared to conjure more of a racialized threat
than physical threat to the multiple responding officers. If stereotype threat is racialized,
it is likely there will be a simultaneous rise in the use of force against Blacks and other
racial minorities during police encounters (Fagan & Campbell, 2020). Reinforcement of
associating African American men with lawbreaking can easily be perpetuated from
seeing repeated imagery of mugshots, or the frequency of Black suspects being shown or
arrested in the news.

Fear of law enforcement or Black male suspects in general, can ensue from media
portrayals of deadly police–citizen confrontations. Although citizens may be afraid of
police officers, it is more likely that Black men will be perceived as a greater threat, due
to criminalized depictions in the news. Not only does the overt publicity of African
American suspects being displayed in the media molds public opinion, but it also impels
actions of officers during suspect encounters. Fagan and Campbell (2020) conferred that
there lies an underlying, contentious debate in the empirical literature, encompassing the
prospect of police bias in the use of deadly force, and whether such force is
disproportionately used against Blacks. Cultivation theory assists in explicating how an

African American outlook of police violence and aggression towards Blacks can evolve

from media coverage. Seemingly, if any class of citizens form perspectives that they may

be nemeses of law enforcement, cooperation may be precluded, and calls for police

service may be negated.

Conceptual Framework

To effectuate a scrupulous exposition, I incorporated the concepts of police

legitimacy and police cynicism as a reinforcement to the theoretical foundation. Police

cynicism, also referred to as legal cynicism, is a belief-based concept introduced by

American sociologist and former police officer, Arthur Niederhoffer in 1967 (Mignone,

2005). As it relates to both idealism and anomie, the term was coined by key theorists,

Sampson and Bartusch (Moule et al., 2019). The concept of police cynicism expresses

cynical attitudes in reference to police competency and trustworthiness, and often results

in public dissatisfaction with police (Sampson & Bartusch, 1998). Citizens may display

unwillingness to cooperate with law enforcement if they do not trust the legal institution,

especially in high-crime or lower-income neighborhoods.

Police Cynicism

Cynical attitudes towards the police and perceptions of legal injustice have been

found to be greater in neighborhoods where Blacks and residents from lower socio-

economic classes reside (Sampson & Bartusch, 1998). In predominantly Black cities,

Sampson and Bartusch (1998) concluded that "[n]ormative orientations toward law and

deviance are rooted more in experiential differences associated with neighborhood

context than a racially induced subcultural system" (p. 801). I would argue that there lies

a reciprocal distrust, which leads to unfavorable police–citizen interactions. Whereas citizens are cynical of law enforcement, law enforcement mutually exhibits mistrust in citizens, which in turns veers the outcome of police–citizen encounters. Community perception and history of police excessive use of force, coupled with racial composition and socio-economic status of a neighborhood, may escalate confrontation during policing. Subsequently, these confrontations may become fatal if either or both actors become the aggressor(s).

Seminal researchers, Kirk and Papachristos (2011) used the terms "illegitimate, unresponsive, and ill equipped to ensure public safety" (p. 1191), to describe how the legal system and the law may be negatively perceived upon public scrutiny. If community members negatively perceive acts of law enforcement, such as police-caused deaths of unarmed African American victims, unwillingness to cooperate or contact police in Black neighborhoods may be imminent. For instance, studies conducted by key researchers Desmond et al. (2016) revealed an abrupt decline in 911 calls in predominantly Black communities after a highly publicized police killing of an unarmed Black man. Reduced emergency calls lead to lowered crime reporting, which is an endangerment to public welfare. Hence, if criminal activity increases because crime reporting decreases, crime-fighting and crime prevention efforts are thwarted.

Police Legitimacy

Outlined as a necessity for public cooperation and trust in policing, police legitimacy is the contrapositive of police cynicism and transpires when citizens perceive that the police treated them fairly, even when intervention outcomes are negative (Noppe

et al., 2017). In the early 1800s, seminal researcher, Sir Robert Peel, explicated nine principles of policing, referred to as the Peelian principles, one of which flourished into police legitimacy (Noppe et al., 2017). According to key theorists, legitimacy is achieved when public opinion adjudicates fairness in authorities or institutions, giving entitlement to be obeyed (Sunshine & Tyler, 2003) and is consequential in maintaining public order.

Contrary to the negative attitudes of police cynicism, police legitimacy is the favorable perspective of law enforcement. Moule et al., (2019) described this concept as "[p]erceptions that police are procedurally just" and belief that laws and "the norms undergirding the justice system, are appropriate and meaningful" (para. 7). Therefore, when laws and enforcement of those laws are regarded as just, police legitimacy may lead to citizen compliance. Hence, reporting crime and requesting police service calls within communities are usually reactionary indicators of residents who, for the most part, perceive law enforcement as legitimate.

Moule et al., (2019) asserted there is a renewed interest in the antecedents and criminal consequences of belief in subcultural norms. Contemporary interest may seem to drive research, which includes legal cynicism and legitimacy, to examine the correlation of street codes and how these norms influence individuals' subjective understandings of situations and constrain choices within those situations (Moule et al., 2019). Community-oriented policing was designed to reduce police cynicism and increase police legitimacy (Peyton et al., 2019), yet little research reflects that such policing leads to attitudinal changes towards the police. Positive contact with police by means of brief door-to-door

nonenforcement community policing visits, substantially improved residents' perceptions of police legitimacy (Peyton et al., 2019), as well as community inclination to cooperate.

Police cynicism and police legitimacy are both significant concepts that highly contributed to the current study. The concepts of legal cynicism and legitimacy aided in framing my research question. In aspects of understanding possible attitudes toward officers who are involved in police-caused deaths of unarmed African American male victims, the concepts assisted in identifying potential themes that emerged during data analysis. By using this conceptual framework, I predicted that I could better assess my subjects to ascertain whether there was a negative or positive influence on how non-Blacks respond to media coverage of police officers killing unarmed Black men. In relation to response from a police-caused death of an unarmed victim who is male and African American, if the respondents are cynical of the police, they may be reluctant to contact 911 in their predominantly Black neighborhoods, unless out of necessity. If the respondents view police officers as legitimate, they may be more prone to contact 911 for assistance.

Literature Review Related to Key Variables and/or Concepts

To comprehend a particular classification of a victim, it is necessary to understand the meaning of victim, one who has suffered harm, including physical, mental, or emotional injury, which results from a criminal offense (Long, 2021). In ideal victim theory, Christie (1986) purported that society has varying perceptions of offenders, as well as their victims-the ones who receive the most empathy. In a crime victim context, children are frequently perceived as ideal victims, the weak and blameless class in society

(Alexius, 2020). Ideal victim theory has been previously applied in the social science fields through studies on victimization, and in many instances, to investigate experiences of those who witness crime.

In the criminal justice field, it is consequential to understand factors that increase an individual's chances of becoming a victim. Crime policy, as well as victim policy studies, have benefitted from the inclusion of theories of the ideal victim, particularly in studies on bullying, peer relationships, sex crimes (including those against children), human trafficking, domestic violence, elderly abuse, and even in labor exploitation studies (Alexius, 2020; Loyens & Paraciani, 2021). Victimology is a useful tool in the scrutiny of occurrences concerning children (Alexius, 2020) and victim-centered studies continue to explore how victimization impacts society.

Christie's theory of the ideal victim highly contributes to social science research, especially in the fields of criminology and victimology. Criminology focuses more on crime and criminals, while victimology places emphasis on victims and the psychological effects that linger. Walklate et al. (2019) referenced how victimology "has long critiqued idealized conceptions of innocence underpinning determinations of who is and is not recognized as a victim" (p. 202). Yet, even with the beneficial contribution of studies grounded on victimization, crime will remain a daily occurrence. Individuals will continue to become victims because "[p]eople are suitable targets to the extent they spend time in the proximity of motivated offenders" (Savard et al., 2020) and crime is an incidence of opportunity.

Media coverage of fatal police encounters involving unarmed Black men has renewed interest in victimization studies. Long (2021) noted "research finds that the (un)victim experiences racial re-victimization and develops an altered perception of the police as a trusted body" (para. 5). Studies on victimization have made immense contributions to our understanding of how victim and case-related variables influence general decision-making patterns (Corrigan & Shdaimah, 2016). Thus, ideal victim theory relates to the current study by illuminating perceptions of police after publicized police killings of unarmed civilians. Moreover, even if only influenced by the media, the relevant theory highlights factors which may influence citizens' inclination to report or not report crime, in the wake of police-caused deaths.

Christie's ideal victim theory has been authoritative and Nafstad (2019) expressed its "theoretical underpinnings are indeed still valuable for the understanding of contemporary justice policies, harm, and victimhood…" (p.4). In relation to media studies, George Gerbner's cultivation theory is authoritative and has been widely used in studies on violence, perceptions of the media, and consumption of television news (Gauthier & Graziano, 2018). Previous application of cultivation theory used in social science research includes studies on communication, consumer behavior and consumer-related research, and media studies (Gauthier & Graziano, 2018). Research has shown that racial minorities are overrepresented as criminals or perpetrators compared with their White counterparts in the media; media bias promotes public hostility toward those groups; and "when racial minorities are depicted as victims, they are often dehumanized, demonized, and criminalized" (Pollock et al., 2021, p. 44).

Cultivation theory relates to the present study as it better explains how the media can influence public perception of police-caused deaths of unarmed Black men and illustrates how viewing violence in the media may create perceived fear of officers and victims. Pollock et al. (2021) contended "the process of news viewing contributes to a stereotype of officers" (p. 43). In contrast, this perceived stereotype also applies to victims and adopted attitudes may influence whether potential 911 callers contact law enforcement. Additionally, perceived fear of seeing Black criminal offenders in new stories may influence whether residents will contact police to report a suspicious activity or suspicious person in their neighborhoods.

Ideal victim theory and cultivation theory impart important assumptions I used to assist with delineating perceptions, which may affect community members' tendency to report crime or place 911 calls. In a layman's explanation, neighbors may empathize with an unarmed Black victim that a cop gunned down without any apparent reasonableness. In turn, neighbors may side with the same officer who used deadly force on an unarmed Black man because he resisted arrest or attempted to run. Media gatekeeping, a process where numerous messages are reduced or filtered into few messages for public transmission (Kumah-Abiwu, 2019), may act as a catalyst in the intemperate and violent portrayals of Black men in the media. Such depictions may be misleading, causing non-Black residents to fear the presence of Black men in their non-Black neighborhoods. By contrast, even Black residents may fear the presence of African American men within their own Black communities due to over-criminalization presented through media gatekeeping.

Summary and Conclusions

Countless empirical research reveals that law enforcement heavily police Black neighborhoods, and Blacks who live in Black communities often exhibit fear and mistrust of the police (Harris & Amutah-Onukagha, 2019). Yet, there is little research on how such fear may affect the propensity to contact 911 or report crime amongst the fearful. Blacks fearing police officers, popularly dates to the Rodney King era, where several Los Angeles Police Department officers were captured on video brutally beating an unarmed African American man (to near death) for several minutes.

In what is considered the first viral video, the nation witnessed the Rodney King beating in 1992, the damaging effects of police brutality, and the subsequent media coverage, trials, and riots (Watson, 2019). In addition to rioting, looting took place, and civil unrest and mayhem occurred over a period of several days. Breaking through the media's usual reporting of official interpretations of police use of force, footage of the Rodney King beating generated widespread outrage and triggered the onset of communities and the media focusing on what the police were doing and how they were doing it (Jones, 2020). A growing body of research reveals that perceived legitimacy of the police plays an important role in promoting citizens' compliance with law enforcement, cooperation and collaboration with police, and crime-reporting practices (Fagan & Campbell, 2020).

To date, research which focuses on media-influenced perception of police-caused killings of unarmed Black men and the influence that public perception has on police-related calls, is scant. The present study addressed this gap by exploring attitudes of non-

Black residents, a subject demographic rarely visited on this topic. This study was

significant in that it filled a gap in understanding how non-Black residents perceived

publicity of officer-involved deaths of unarmed Black men and how their perceptions

influenced their willingness to report crime or contact police for assistance.

Policy reform and changes in the private and public sector of the criminal justice

system are a few potential social improvements and benefits of this study. This research

may lead to positive social change by offering insight on public perception and public

opinion of law enforcement, which may reduce police cynicism and increase police

legitimacy. Reduction of fear and civil unrest, coupled with simultaneous increase of

police-related calls, are possible positive outcomes of this study. Moreover, the results of

this investigation could be used to reduce mental health effects of police violence,

improve crime reporting policies and crime reporting rates, and aid in public safety

nationwide.

Research has shown that 911 calls were reduced after high-profile cases of police

violence (Desmond et al., 2016). Several of the highly publicized accounts of recent

police-caused deaths in the United States are mainly comprised of Black victims. I

wanted to take a different approach to my research. My focus in this study was to gain

insight on how non-Black residents who reside in predominantly Black cities,

internalized what they gathered from the incidence of officer-involved deaths of unarmed

Black men in the media. Will non-Black residents fear for the lives of their fellow

community members or fear the police and avoid reporting crime? Or will they be fearful

of their Black neighbors and become more prone to place suspicious activity or

suspicious person calls when they see men of color in their community? Will citizens, in general, want to cooperate with law enforcement after revelation of renowned police killings of unarmed African American men? Answering questions of this nature, and many more, was my intent with the onset of my exploration.

Groenewald (2018) emphasized that phenomenological inquiry necessitates an aim of the researcher to describe phenomena as accurately as possible. To explore the feelings and attitudes of what subjects would express after viewing or recollecting publicity of police-caused deaths of victims, a phenomenological approach was required to increase accuracy of gathered descriptions. Congruent with the aim of phenomenological studies, one of my goals in this research was to examine whether residents' decisions to report to police are related to individuals' media-influenced perceptions of police effectiveness or police legitimacy. A phenomenological design was appropriate for gathering and understanding information-rich data from a smaller number of participants, which enables researchers to develop patterns and meanings of relationships (Creswell, 2018).

Through a semistructured interview protocol, including a questionnaire distributed to non-Black residents who reside in the targeted predominantly Black cities, I addressed the research question. In Chapter 3, I exhaustively demonstrate the research methods which were utilized in my analyses. Upon completion of my qualitative inquiry, I aimed to gain a better understanding of how subjects perceived police-caused fatalities of unarmed Black men in the media. Improving my understanding of how media-

influenced perceptions impact respondents' inclinations or decisions to make police-

related calls was the guiding objective during my probe.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the impact of media coverage involving police-caused deaths of unarmed Black men. Specifically, I explored the influence such media coverage has on citizens' inclinations to report crime or contact law enforcement for assistance. The purpose of my qualitative query was to increase knowledge related to the potential perspectives of non-Black citizens associated with publicity of certain fatal police encounters. In Chapter 3, I illustrate the research design used as well as the rationale for using the selected design. The role of the researcher, the study methodology, and issues of trustworthiness are also discussed. Prior to the chapter's conclusion, I provide a thorough overview of the selection process with recruitment of subjects, as well as data collection and analysis techniques. Chapter 3 concludes with ethical considerations and procedures used to ensure Institutional Review Board (IRB) compliance.

Research Design and Rationale

Qualitative studies are of an interpretative nature and involve exploration for understanding of meanings to social problems ascribed by individuals or groups (Creswell, 2018). In this qualitative investigation, I sought to interpret the meaning of data as I aimed to address the following research question:

RQ: What influence does media coverage of police-caused deaths involving unarmed Black men have on the inclination of non-Black residents to report crime or contact police for assistance?

Based on the research question, a two-part phenomenon was studied: the experiences and perceptions of respondents who are informed of police-caused deaths of unarmed African American men through the media and how those perceptions influence the likelihood or decisions to report crime or contact the police. Patton (2015) expressed, "Qualitative inquiry is especially valuable for identifying unintended consequences and side effects" (p. 10). Attitudes regarding police killings of unarmed Black men have unintended consequences, and various interpretative paradigms are necessary to address the phenomena.

To effectively approach the research question, I used a phenomenological research design. Phenomenology presents a description of the experiences of several individuals and their common experiences with the phenomenon (Creswell, 2018). A phenomenological research approach was the most appropriate mechanism of ascertaining and assessing participants' experiences and feelings. Collecting the views of participants and how they perceive the publicity of police-caused deaths through semistructured interviews afforded the opportunity to explore the mindsets of individuals up close and personal and enabled me to identify various themes when analyzing data.

Role of the Researcher

In qualitative studies, the researcher is the primary data collection instrument (Creswell, 2018). There is not one single role the researcher assumes in a qualitative study as data are collected and analyzed. As a phenomenological qualitative researcher, my objective was to seek understanding of the essence and structure of the participants' lived experiences (see Merriam & Grenier, 2019). In this capacity, I structured an

appropriate interview method to elicit perceptions from subjects. Merriam and Grenier

(2019) referenced "a now widely used, three-part method of phenomenological

interviewing": the first interview establishes the context of the participants' experience,

the second focuses on participants' reconstructing details of their experience within the

context, and the final interview asks participants to reflect on the meaning they associate

with the experience (p. 88). I used this three-part interview method to aid in ascertaining

the respondents' feelings.

 In qualitative inquiry, one of the researcher's obligations entails making an

assessment to minimize bias. Bias refers to any influence that provides a distortion in the

results of a study (Galdas, 2017). Prior to interviewing others, phenomenological

researchers usually explore their own experiences to become aware of their own

prejudices, viewpoints, and assumptions, which are then bracketed or set aside to prevent

influence or intervention during data collection (Merriam & Grenier, 2019). Researcher

bias can occur consciously or subconsciously due to a researcher having direct

involvement with participants, which may thwart the data collection process, or the data

collected (Mwita, 2022). As the sole data collector, I was responsible for identifying any

personal values and biases that may have affected any phase of my research.

 The role of the researcher as the primary data collection instrument requires

identification of personal values and assumptions, and although my previous recruiting

skills aided in selection of participants, my professional and personal experiences could

have potentially created biases. My professional experience includes legal training that

has educated me on ethics, civil rights, human rights, constitutional rights, and legal

rights. To me, a police officer causing the death of any unarmed Black man is wrong ethically, civilly, humanely, constitutionally, but more consequentially, legally. There lies a predisposed assumption that agents of law enforcement cannot enforce laws justly if they break laws themselves. Policing should never require policing of the police, and as public servants who took oaths to protect and serve, officers do society great disservice when causing deaths of unarmed citizens.

To aid in clarity of researcher bias as emphasized by Creswell (2018), due to my professional and personal experiences regarding unwarranted actions of law enforcement, I did not want to construct positions or interview questions biased for my personal convictions or prejudiced against police officers. I did not want the way I interpreted previous law enforcement encounters to influence participants nor the way I collected or analyzed data obtained in this qualitative inquiry. It was consequential to my study, as well as my subjects' participation, to identify and assess the most effective means to reduce any partiality. To avoid bias, my goal included maintaining rationality, independence, and objectivity by critically examining my own role and influence during formulation of the research questions and data collection (see Galdas, 2017). Collectively, I used these strategies to control bias through epoché to ensure objectivity.

Researchers face ethical challenges throughout the entire research process and, when planning my research design, I took ethical concerns, such as informed consent, confidentiality, and potential impact on the respondents, into consideration (see Ross, 2019). Informed consent, often regarded as the cornerstone of research, is a voluntary choice based on sufficient information and adequate understanding of both the proposed

research and the implications of participation (Xu et al., 2020). I explained my study to participants and obtained their voluntary consent. Because my topic was of a sensitive nature, I wanted subjects to know that if they felt uncomfortable or decided not to continue, they could stop participation at their convenience. Additionally, subjects were informed that their identities and data would remain confidential. Overall, I followed IRB guidelines to ensure subjects and data were protected.

Methodology

While exploring the phenomenon in this qualitative study, I employed a phenomenological approach throughout the research process. The target population for my investigation consisted of a convenience sample of non-Black individuals who reside in targeted predominantly Black cities. Semistructured interviews were used to ascertain in-depth information from subjects. During my investigation, I incorporated a study population consisting of residents who did not identify as Black or African American. The targeted study population was composed of residents from these designated cities: Atlanta, Georgia; New Orleans, Louisiana; Baltimore, Maryland; Detroit, Michigan; and Memphis, Tennessee.

Hennink and Kaiser (2022) clarified that small sample sizes are effective "because they are able to reach saturation, the long-held benchmark for an adequate sample size," and saturation "is the most common guiding principle for assessing purposive samples in qualitative research" (p. 8). Rather than focus on quantity, I selected participants who could better respond relevant to the research question. I conducted qualitative interviews with eight respondents and obtained information-rich data.

Participant Selection Logic

To best help gain personal understanding to the problem and the research question in my qualitative investigation, I purposefully selected participants (see Creswell, 2018). Purposive sampling includes a selection of participants based on a researcher's judgment about which subjects will be the most informative participants for the study (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). Participants who lived in the targeted cities and who experienced the phenomenon (had seen video or news coverage of at least one of three specific high-profile cases of publicized fatal police encounters involving an unarmed Black or African American male victim) were selected to explain their perceptions of the phenomenon.

Although selection of participants incorporated some predetermined criteria of importance, convenience sampling was used. In convenience sampling, members of the target population are selected based on meeting certain practical criteria and are selected because they are easily available (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). The user-oriented accessibility of selecting subjects on Facebook was indicative of convenience sampling. I selected accessible subjects using a social media platform, reverting to purposeful sampling for the interview portion, as participants already experienced the phenomenon prior to participation. Inclusion and exclusion criteria were used for purposes of recruitment.

Instrumentation

Creswell (2018) declared that the researcher is the primary instrument in data collection. Although posing as the primary instrument, I collected, organized, and analyzed data using other mechanisms. This study incorporated an interview protocol

comprised of qualitative semistructured interview questions. Semistructured interviews are designed to ascertain subjective responses regarding an experienced phenomenon. Characterized by open-ended questions and the use of an interview guide, semistructured interviews define the broad areas of interest including sub-questions (Busetto et al., 2020). As part of rigorous data collection, I provided detailed information about the actual survey instrument to be used in the study, which will yield the same findings when repeatedly administered on the same subject (see Creswell, 2018). The specific survey instrument used to collect data consisted of a researcher-produced 20-item questionnaire of qualitative open-ended questions. The questionnaire was used to gather perceptions of media influence of officer-involved deaths of unarmed Black men and to highlight impact on the propensity of non-Black residents to report crime or contact police for assistance.

Researcher-Developed Instruments

I designed the questionnaires to answer the call of the inquiry i.e.: "How has seeing media coverage of police killings of unarmed Black men affected your willingness to contact the police?" The questionnaire was designed to elicit responses that can be interpreted to reflect the respondents' perceptions. Validity is used to assess the quality of a study and is present when individual themes or methods accurately reflect what was intended to be tested or measured (Nowell et al., 2017). The questionnaire was designed to ensure content validity, whereas the items measured the content that they were intended to measure (Creswell, 2018). Hence, the researcher-designed instruments were constructed to ascertain how the participants felt about media exposure regarding the

deaths of unarmed Black men by law enforcement, as well as how their perceptions affect their willingness or unwillingness to contact 911 for assistance.

I conducted personal interviews and used the Zoom platform as a data collection method in effort to form and maintain rapport which included visual communication and ability to respond to nonverbal cues (Archibald et al., 2019). As a mechanism to reduce potential loss of information, I designed the research instrument with open-ended questions that enabled as much in-depth data collection during the interviewing process as possible. Only audio was captured during the interviews via the Zoom platform.

Procedures For Pilot Studies

In my qualitative investigation, I commenced a pilot study prior to proceeding to the main study. A pilot test is a trial procedure in which a researcher can make changes based on a small group of participants who provide feedback to evaluate the instrument for correction or improvement (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The pilot test assisted in determining if there were flaws, limitations, or other weaknesses within the interview design, and enabled me to make any necessary adjustments with the research or interview questions, prior to conducting the main study. Due to Walden University's IRB stipulations requiring prior approval to use strangers in pilot testing, I recruited friends and colleagues to partake in the pilot study.

Creswell and Poth (2018) recommended that pilot tests should be conducted with participants that have similar interests as those that will participate in the implemented study. I constructed a three-respondent panel, with subjects who share similar criteria as those who are in the main study. Residents who did not identify as Black and who

resided in a predominantly Black city, Tuskegee, Alabama, responded to a 10-item qualitative questionnaire to gather perceptions of media influence from police-caused deaths of unarmed Black men. Since IRB stipulations advised against it, I did not use data collected during the pilot study as data in my main study.

After gaining IRB approval with approval number 12-01-22-1003517, I began the pilot testing, analyzed the collected data, and made any necessary revisions or refinements. During piloting, I took detailed notes on how participants reacted to the questionnaire (both the general format of the instrument and the specific questions). Subsequently, I commenced with the main study. To recapitulate, participant selection began with social media recruiting. Potential participants were screened for eligibility, and after selection, the selected subjects gave consent. Written and informed consent was obtained via Google Form, and involved information disclosure, understanding, and voluntary decisions (Xu et al., 2020). The interview protocol was presented from the researcher-designed questionnaire and was recited to respondents during private and individual Zoom meeting sessions.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

After gaining approval from the University's Institutional Review Board (IRB), I commenced with subject recruiting. As a basis for seeking prospective participants, I applied passive recruitment via the Facebook and Reddit platforms. In this method of recruiting, recruitment materials (posts) were distributed in Facebook and Reddit groups "with the aim of attracting potential participants" (Gelinas et al., 2017, p.3). Profiles were created for the sole purpose of research recruiting, with a self-descriptive title i.e., Social

Science Researcher. Study invitations were placed in location-based groups. For instance, Detroiters is a Detroit-based group on Facebook, which has over 3.9k members. I located the location-based groups by using a search of the designated cities and added residents i.e., Atlanta residents, Baltimore residents, Detroit residents, Memphis residents, and New Orleans residents. The research advertisements, in the form of social media posts, were distributed via Facebook and Reddit, with placement in targeted groups. The title of the posts: Research Participants Needed for Qualitative Criminal Justice Research Study, along with the researcher's contact information and email address were posted. The recruitment flyers included eligibility requirements (inclusion criteria) for people interested in participating in the study.

I developed criteria to determine eligibility for subject participation and used purposive sampling to identify those who could provide data for the study. The established criteria for the study's inclusion: (a) an adult at least 18 years of age; (b) a resident of one of the targeted cities (Atlanta, Georgia; Baltimore, Maryland; Detroit, Michigan; New Orleans, Louisiana or Memphis, Tennessee); (c) a non-Black resident (does not identify as Black or African American); (d) must have seen video or news coverage of at least one of three specific high-profile cases of publicized fatal police encounters involving an unarmed African American or Black male victim: Elijah McClain, Daniel Prude, or George Floyd; and (e) must speak, read, and write fluent English. Those who did not meet the above criteria were excluded from this study.

I wanted to gather perceptions of non-Black residents who reside within Black cities as an attempt to minimize bias in my qualitative inquiry. Predominantly Black

cities or majority-Black cities are American cities in which Blacks constitute majority of the population (Perry et al., 2018). According to QuickFacts at census.gov, a government website which provides statistics and demographics on U.S. cities and social indicators from the U.S. Census Bureau, the targeted cities have more than 50% of African American population or are cities in which African Americans comprise the largest ethnic group. Instead of placing emphasis on responses from Black citizens, I wanted to ascertain perceptions from those who did not identify as the same race as the victims discussed in this study. Ideally, I aimed to collect as much impartial or neutral data from the respondents as possible.

Snowball sampling is a sampling in which researchers request assistance or referrals to obtain research participants (Creswell, 2018). Although this sampling method may appear convenient, I was skeptical of referrals that may not meet the inclusion criteria, which may hamper time efficiency. Hence, I did not use snowball sampling as a recruiting strategy. Adult subjects who were at least 18 years old; who were residents of the targeted cities (Atlanta, Georgia; Baltimore, Maryland; Detroit, Michigan; Memphis, Tennessee; or New Orleans, Louisiana); who did not identify as African American or Black; who had seen video or news coverage of at least one of the specified publicized fatal police encounters involving an unarmed African American or Black man; and who could speak, read, and write fluent English were recruited for purposes of this study. In anticipation of research, I created a private email address, which was included in the contact information in the recruitment ad (Facebook and Reddit post). I also created a temporary confidential Google Voice number, which I used as a contact phone number in

the ad. Recruitment only occurred by posting study invitation ads to social media platforms, Facebook and Reddit (see Appendix A).

I created a confidential Facebook and Reddit profile, specifically for purposes of data collection and used the discreet title, Criminal Justice Researcher. I posted the recruitment ad in various groups directly related to research such as Criminology and Criminal Justice Research Community, and in various geographically or location-based groups i.e. Welcome to Atlanta. Welcome to Atlanta was a public Facebook group, in which at the time of recruiting, had a membership of 77k members. I continued to post the recruitment flyer to groups related to all targeted cities and to research-based groups within both social media platforms, Facebook and Reddit.

Although the nature of this research topic was sensitive, it was necessary to include pertinent inclusion criteria relating to the phenomena in the study invitation such as the requisite of having seen video or news coverage of at least one of three high-profile cases of a police-caused death of an unarmed Black man (Elijah McClain, Daniel Prude, or George Floyd). Upon receipt of contact, I conducted a pre-screening of respondents via a questionnaire to confirm that eligibility criteria were met (see Appendix B). Respondents were required to list the city in which they resided to ensure residents lived within the targeted communities. I conducted a verification to confirm eligibility based on the pre-screening responses and if all criteria were met, participants were selected.

A general description of the purpose of the research was provided to participants. In qualitative research, "[s]ample sizes are guided by data adequacy, so an effective sample size is less about numbers (n's) and more about the ability of data to provide a

rich and nuanced account of the phenomenon studied" (Hennink & Kaiser, 2022, p. 9). My strategy was to screen and interview any eligible participant until the required number of participants necessary to achieve saturation was attained.

Hennink and Kaiser (2022) purported that data "saturation is obtained at the point in which little or no relevant new codes and/or categories were found in data, when issues begin to be repeated with no further understanding or contribution to the study phenomenon, its dimensions, nuances, or variability" (p.3). In short, data saturation occurs when issues begin to be repeated and further data collection presents futility. For this generic qualitative study, I employed the code meaning approach to assess saturation, which involved reviewing an interview and noting each issue, then identifying any new aspects or dimensions in subsequent interviews until nothing new could be identified (Hennink & Kaiser, 2022). In my qualitative query, participants comprised an adequate sample size to analyze respondents' perceptions of media coverage of police-caused deaths of unarmed African American men and to gather what influence those perceptions had on respondents' inclinations to report crime or dial 911. I predicted that the relationship between the sample size and data saturation in this study met the requisites to attain data saturation. My prediction held true.

Data Collection

Prior to collecting any data, I used preparation and data management strategies to construct a data collection protocol (Saldaña, 2014). Initially, I planned to allow participants to view the questions as I read them during the interviews. However, due to technical issues, the questionnaire was not displayed via screen sharing for visibility. All

questions were orally presented to respondents and were repeated when necessary. The average interview session lasted approximately 26 minutes. Automatic live captions proffered a supplemental transcript of the participants' audio-recorded interviews, which posed as raw qualitative data. I reviewed and listened to the recordings repeatedly to extract interview data.

The data collection process continued for over a span of several weeks. I was prepared to continue for as long as it took participants to respond and complete the 20-item questionnaire interview process and when any clarity needed, had been provided. I allotted 30 minutes to 2 hours for each interview. However, the longest interview session only lasted 33 minutes and 54 seconds. Subjects were encouraged to add any additional comments or indicate any concerns near the closing of the interviews. Once the interviews were complete, the data collection process ended, and participants were asked to review their responses for accuracy in an informal member checking at the close of the interviews.

Creswell and Poth (2018) recommended member checking to build credibility as participants can review or validate interpretations to ensure that the researcher's interpretations accurately reflect their responses. The subjects were debriefed on, and thanked for their participation, reassured that their private information would remain confidential, and informed of any post-interview or follow-up procedures. However, there were no follow-up procedures until later in the analysis phase, after interpretations and during the final member checking.

Data Analysis Plan

Data analysis is the most crucial aspect of qualitative research, and the researcher is the primary instrument of data analysis (Merriam & Grenier, 2019). The interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) method was coupled with thematic analysis in this study. IPA is a participant-oriented qualitative research approach, which is constructed to understand and examine people's lived experiences (Alase, 2017). Thematic analysis is a method of "identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018, p. 808). Coding helps to analyze and organize textual data and because thematic analysis produces a substantial amount of textual data, software programs, such as Microsoft Excel and Access can be as effective as NVivo (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018). Due to unfavorable coding experiences with using electronic coding and software in previous instances, Microsoft Word macros was my preferred method of data analysis, and was used to retrieve, code, and sort interview data.

In this study, after interview content was transcribed into transcripts, data analyses were conducted using Microsoft Word. Coding involves organizing the material into chunks or segments of text, gathering collected text into categories, and labeling those categories, in an (in vivo) term based in the actual language of the participant (Creswell, 2018). Text was transferred to a Microsoft Word document and a word-based search and color coding was used to highlight the participants' responses to formulate themes and patterns.

To fully elaborate, this study was guided by inductive analysis. Inductive analysis refers to approaches that mainly emerge from raw data (disassembled or coded) to derive

concepts and themes, which were converted into a summary (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018). Creswell and Poth (2018) emphasized that researchers build their patterns, categories, and themes from the bottom up in qualitative studies, to seek patterns of codes and links between objective and findings. For instance, in the question, "How do you feel about police officer presence in your community?", my aim was to extract patterns of perceptions and emerging themes. As I organized data, I continued the inductive process until I established a comprehensive set of themes. Theme development aided in the presentation and framework of the research findings.

Issues of Trustworthiness

As a researcher, my aim in this qualitive exploration was to ensure that my analyses and interpretations were an accurate depiction of the data collected, and that there was confidence in the findings I interpreted and reported. To ensure my aim was met, I increased trustworthiness to improve the validity and reliability of the study. Rose and Johnson (2020) conveyed that trustworthiness is the rigor of qualitative research and entails the "credibility of the researcher, the believability of the findings, and applicability of the research methods" (p. 434). Trustworthiness reflects the degree of trust and confidence in the study's data, interpretations, and findings and when formulating an impression of research, a reader will be able to critique whether the conclusions are trustworthy (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). In lieu of validity and reliability indicators, there are four key indicators of trustworthiness that a qualitative researcher should establish: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Nowell et al., 2017).

Specific criteria aid in evaluating trustworthiness in qualitative research and one key criterion is credibility (Nowell et al., 2017). Credibility is the level of confidence in the truth of the study and "establishes whether the research findings represent plausible information drawn from the participants' original data and is a correct interpretation of the participants' original views" (Korstjens & Moser, 2018, p. 121). Due to the consequential element of truthfulness, I would argue that credibility is the most important aspect regarding trustworthiness. To establish credibility in my study, my strategy was to include an in-depth view of the respondents' perceptions, ensure there was saturation by collecting a surplus of data and continue data collection, until there was no new information available. Lastly, I enlisted member checks during the interview process.

Member checking is allowing data, analytical categories, interpretations, and conclusions to be reviewed by the respondents, which strengthens the truth value of the data because of the exchange of interpretations between the researcher and subjects (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). After the interview process was complete, I performed a preliminary transcription of the responses with detailed interpretation. I briefly discussed my notes of the interview data to the participants to enable review and feedback. Allowing participants to review their responses promoted clarity, elaboration, and correction. I ensured that any new information was notated, and that changes or corrections were made. Member checks increased trustworthiness of the research by enabling subjects to verify that their perceptions were accurately reflected.

When research findings are transferable, similar findings should result, when repeated. Transferability is the "degree to which the results of qualitative research can be

transferred to other contexts or settings with other respondents" (Korstjens & Moser, 2018, p.121). To avoid a threat due to insufficient sample size, I enhanced transferability of my study by selecting a diverse demographic as my study population. The population derived from both Southern and Northern states in the U.S. The sample size consisted of non-Black residents, over the age of 18 years old, from three different cities in three different states (without exclusions based on the sex of participants), all of which are characteristics that promote generalizability. Although my study focused on respondents who resided in predominantly Black cities, I am confident that if my findings are subsequently replicated using subjects who reside in non-Black cities, future researchers will have the ability to apply the case to another situation. Hence, despite the smaller population, results can be transferred to subjects in other regions.

Dependability, which describes consistency, refers to the stability of findings over time (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Nowell et al. (2017) recommended researchers "ensure the research process is logical, traceable, and clearly documented" to achieve dependability (p.3). As the qualitative researcher, I intended to improve the dependability of this study, foremost, by ensuring research procedures were detailed and well-documented with audit trails (Nowell et al., 2017). In addition to my research design, I maintained a research journal and provided a step-by-step account of the various phases and processes from the study's inception to completion. According to Annink (2017) "[r]eflection by solo researchers is often done in written forms such as journals" (p.3), which may contain: "(1) data obtained by observation, interviews, and informal conversations; (2) additional items such as photographs and letters; (3) contextual

information; (4) reflections; and (5) ideas and plans for subsequent research steps" (p. 5).

I maintained a digital journal in Microsoft Word and used a spreadsheet created with

Google Sheets to chart the participants' interview progress throughout the study's

initiation, completion, and feedback phases.

Confirmability relates to the degree to which the research findings can be

confirmed by other researchers and establishes that interpretations are derived from the

data collected (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). When credibility, transferability, and

dependability are all achieved, confirmability is formulated (Nowell et al., 2017). To

achieve confirmability in the present inquiry, I pursued objectivity (Stahl & King, 2020),

and demonstrated that the results afforded transparency and are linked to the conclusions

in a way that can be followed and replicated. Moreover, I generated an audit trail

outlining theoretical and methodological issues to provide readers with evidence of the

decisions and choices I made during the study (Nowell et al., 2017). My final strategy

regarding confirmability encompassed being reflexive throughout the investigative

process. Reflexivity projects awareness of the researcher's own presence, with the goal of

improving research quality (Annink, 2017). I felt that because of using these strategies

involving credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability, I had less issues

with trustworthiness overall.

Ethical Procedures

Ethical procedures are highly consequential to research involving human subjects.

Human participants must fully understand the anticipated risks and benefits prior to

participating in research. The National Research Act of 1974 required organizations

conducting research to establish committees called Institutional Review Boards (IRBs),

which regulate the IRB process to assess potential risks and harm to participants (Ross,

2019). As the researcher, I was required to obtain approval from Walden University's

Institutional Review Board (IRB) prior to recruiting, screening, selecting, and

interviewing participants. I reviewed Walden University's Research Ethics Approval

Checklist, Research Ethics FAQs on the IRB website, and read the Tools and Guides on

research ethics, all of which provided useful information in reference to adhering to IRB

and ethical guidelines.

Ethical compliance entailed gaining IRB approval. Necessary actions were taken

to complete the IRB application and the Research Ethics Approval Form A. Final

approval status was gained from the IRB with approval number: 12-01-22-1003517.

Upon approval, the recruitment and selection phases subsequently began. The

participants that were chosen for the study were provided with informed consent forms.

Consent forms included an acknowledgment that participants' rights would be protected

during data collection and which included such elements as: the sponsoring institution,

indication of how the participants were selected, identification of the purpose of the

research, guarantee of confidentiality to the participant, assurance that participants could

withdraw at any time, and a notice that respondents were able to review responses for

accuracy upon completion of the study.

Technology and electronic communication aided in organizing data collection. An

email address was created to aid in corresponding with the subjects and orchestrating

interview times. Consent forms were constructed using Google Forms, which included all

necessary elements for consent. As an extra precaution, participants were asked to indicate consent by typing their email address in the field on the Google Form which was used as the consent form (see Appendix C). Once there was written consent, I assigned the respondents research pseudonyms using alpha characters as identifiers to indicate each participant i.e., RP-A (Research Participant A), in effort to keep the respondents' identities private. Participants were asked to provide a date and time, at their convenience, and interviews were scheduled via email. Subjects were advised that the interview process would take approximately 30 minutes to 2 hours to complete. I was prepared to send password-protected emails to the participant for higher-security if any confidential correspondence needed to be sent. However, I did not need to use this extra precaution.

Institutional Review Board guidelines require retention of dataset(s) in a confidential, secure manner for 5 years beyond CAO approval, unless otherwise indicated (Walden University, n.d.). To ensure safe and secure data storage, I encrypted all electronic files, password-protected Word-files, and transferred data to a USB flash drive. After all research-related data were transferred to the flash drive, I erased any data-related information or files. The flash drive will be stored in a secure file cabinet for safekeeping. After the time for dataset storage requirements has expired, I plan to sanitize the flash drive and erase and destroy research-related files. I will use a hammer to physically destroy the flash drive for data disposal purposes.

When developing the research question for this study, the initial and sole purpose was to explore citizen-perception of media influence of police-caused deaths of unarmed

Black men, as well as determine how those perceptions affect respondents' inclinations to contact police for assistance. However, throughout the planning and development phases of methodology, I gained three additional purposes to: (1) ensure confirmability is established; (2) ensure that the participants' rights and privacy concerns are protected, (3) and to ensure IRB compliance. Moreover, I wanted to take the necessary precautions to avoid any emotional distress to the respondents, if applicable. The research question of this qualitative scope was based on a highly sensitive topic and taking that into consideration during planning, I wanted to aid in comfort and safety of the respondents. Thus, qualitative interviews via Zoom seemed to be the most appropriate data collection method for my research objectives.

<div align="center">**Summary**</div>

In this chapter, I discussed the research design, the rationale for using the selected design, and the research methodology. "As technology advances, so has the qualitative research community" (Gray et al., 2020, p. 1293). Literature indicates that qualitative interviews conducted via Zoom interviewing are of benefit to qualitative research because it is cost-effective, requires less time, yet in-depth information can still be obtained (Gray et al., 2020). Archibald et al. (2019) asserted that users of Zoom possess advantages to enhance potential research utility, including the ability to securely record and store sessions without recourse to third-party software. Research revealed there was agreement among researchers and participants regarding Zoom being a useful method for conducting qualitative interviews, and over (69%) of research participants identified Zoom as a preferred method compared to in-person interviews, telephone, or other

videoconferencing platforms (Archibald et al., 2019). During my data collection process, the Zoom platform afforded an opportunity for convenience, promoted candor and openness in response, reduced researcher influence, and enabled documentation of the interview process with recorded audio. Thus, trustworthiness was increased by enabling review of recorded audio by documenting methods used for data collection.

In anticipation of potential anxiety or emotional distress, participants were reassured that they could withdraw participation at any time. The purpose of my study transgressed into an all-inclusive aim to collect data, reflect data as accurately as possible, present confirmable findings, answer the research question, and promote positive social change, all while safeguarding the rights of study participants. Protecting the rights and privacy of the subjects seemed to be an additional role as researcher, which will not be relinquished until data dissemination. At the close of the data analysis process, participants who made themselves available were informed of the study's findings. In Chapter 4, I provide a brief overview of the pilot study and a more detailed illustration of the data collection and data analysis processes, evidence of trustworthiness, and results of the study.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

Unarmed African American men dying by the hands or actions of law enforcement is problematic in the United States, and men of color face a nontrivial lifetime risk of being killed by police (Schwartz, 2020, p. 281). Many citizens vicariously witness or view police killings through the lens of extant media information, and how the public perceives the media coverage can negate citizen trust in law enforcement. The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to investigate the influence media coverage of police-caused deaths involving unarmed Black men has on the inclination of non-Black residents to report crime or to contact police for assistance. In this qualitative exploration, my quest was to interpret the meaning of data as I addressed the following research question: What influence does media coverage of police-caused deaths involving unarmed Black men have on the inclination of non-Black residents to report crime or contact police for assistance? In this chapter, I present information from the pilot study and its influence on the main study, as well as discuss the study setting and demographics of the participants, provide a description of the data collection and data analysis processes and provide evidence of trustworthiness. Additionally, I detail the results of the study and illustrate the chapter summary.

Pilot Study

Prior to beginning the main study, I conducted a pilot study using three friends as participants. I wanted to assimilate the study criteria and targeted participants who would resemble actual participants in the main study as much as possible. I enlisted participants

who were over 18 and who did not self-identify as African American or Black. All three residents had seen media coverage on all three of the relevant high-profile cases—Daniel Prude, Elijah McClain, and George Floyd. Participants spoke, read, and wrote fluent English, and all three participants of the pilot study were non-Black residents of Tuskegee, Alabama. Although Tuskegee, Alabama, was not a targeted location for my research study, Tuskegee is a predominantly Black city. The pilot study consisted of an interview protocol and a semistructured interview. The interview consisted of 10 qualitative interview questions, none of which were used in the main study. The interviews in the pilot study were also conducted via Zoom, in which only audio was captured.

In phenomenological studies, pilot studies allow researchers to bracket personal bias and maintain the centrality of epoché (Cook et al., 2019). There is a potential for the wording of interview questions to lead and unduly influence, or bias, the interviewee's responses (Cairns-Lee et al., 2022). Because there was a potential for bias, I made sure to use subjects and questions that were not going to be used in the main study; however, to control any bias in the pilot study and in preparation of the main study, I was able to integrate reflexivity when constructing interview questions. Cairns-Lee et al. (2022) explained that reflexivity draws attention to the interviewer's role in the research process in respect of the potential influence of their questions and can contribute to methodological transparency. Prior to interviewing others, phenomenological researchers usually explore their own experiences to become aware of their own prejudices,

viewpoints, and assumptions, which are then bracketed or set aside to prevent influence or intervention during data collection (Merriam & Grenier, 2019).

The pilot study encouraged changes in my interviewing technique overall. I was able to practice conducting interviews via Zoom. Because this was my first-time using Zoom to conduct recorded qualitative interviews, technical preparation was needed. Prior to the second interview, I became proficient in adjusting volume levels, and I learned how to record the interviews without jeopardizing privacy and confidentiality. There were minor technical difficulties during the Zoom interviews, such as participants not knowing how to turn on their audio and my failure to disable video prior to the onset of the first interview.

Archibald et al. (2019) noted that "by default, Zoom does not record individual sessions unless the user has previously enabled the setting for automatic recording within their user profile" (p. 6). I learned how to configure the setting to record to my computer instead of the cloud. Initially, I was not aware of Zoom features such as enabling or disabling audio and video. Since my interviews were audio recorded, this was significant, and video recording settings and other audio challenges surfaced. However, by the third and final interview during the pilot study, I was able to overcome technical challenges and configure and enable the proper settings, and I was prepared to conduct the main study interviews with confidence and proficiency in Zoom.

Additional influences from the pilot study encompassed rehearsing the protocol for the semistructured in-depth interviews. Using the semistructured in-depth method of interviewing typically consists of a dialogue between researcher and participant guided

by a flexible interview protocol and supplemented by follow-up questions, probes, and comments (Dejonckheere & Vaughn, 2019). I was able to collect open-ended data, explore participant thoughts, feelings, and beliefs about my research topic, and I was able to delve deeply into sensitive issues (see Dejonckheere & Vaughn, 2019). The pilot study also enabled rehearsal of the interview guide and practice of voice control. I was able to review the recordings and noticed that I overemphasized some questions more than others.

To circumvent participants from feeling guided or as if I were biased toward a particular response, I was able to make a correction in how I asked the interview questions and adapted a monotonous tone. On two of the pilot study questions, the verbiage was confusing as indicated by all three participants asking for clarity or repetition when asked. Subsequently, I made instrumentation changes after reviewing and discarding several interview questions I thought would appear ambiguous or would elicit similar requests for clarity during the interview process of the actual participants. Initially, I did not want to conduct a pilot study, but I am grateful I did as it alleviated many potential issues that would have surfaced during the data collection process, especially the issues with recording with Zoom.

Setting

During this qualitative exploration, there were no partner organizations involved. All research participants were interviewed with the use of videoconferencing. As the researcher whose main form of data collection was in-depth semistructured qualitative interviews conducted via Zoom, the research setting was my small home office. Small,

but private, I was able to set up my laptop, research journal, and pen, and I used wireless

earbuds to prevent others from overhearing responses from the participants. I could

decipher by background noises, e.g., children playing and laughing, that some of the

subjects were at home while others were at school or work during their interviews. I

enabled a waiting room in the Zoom software, in which the subjects entered until I

admitted them into the actual Zoom session. Once the subjects entered the Zoom

meeting, I immediately started to audio-record. I introduced myself and gave thanks for

their participation, provided reassurance of privacy and confidentiality measures, recited

the interview protocol, and began the data collection process. Semistructured interviews

were used to gather perceptions and data from participants. The research instrument used

was an interview questionnaire composed of 20 open-ended questions (see Appendix D).

Demographics

In this qualitative study, there were 18 potential participants who responded to the

recruitment ads placed on social media platforms Facebook and Reddit. Of the 18

potential participants who expressed interest and completed screening forms, only eight

participated in the research study. All eight participants were over age 18; the youngest

respondent was 22, and the oldest respondent was 51. Three potential subjects identified

as Black or African American, and all three were excluded due to their race being an

exclusion criterion. Seven respondents identified as White, and all seven were selected,

but only five participated in the interview: two White men and three White women. Six

respondents identified as other, in which all six were selected but only three participated

in the actual study: one other man and two other women. Two respondents identified as

Asian, in which one respondent did not speak, read, or write fluent English and was excluded due to language being an exclusion criterion. One potential Asian subject was selected but did not participate in the interview. In total, there were three male and five female adult participants. Table 1 illustrates pertinent information of participants' demographics.

Table 1

Participant Demographics

Participant	Residence	Race	Sex	Age
RP-A	Roswell (Atlanta), Georgia	White	Male	25
RP-B	Detroit, Michigan	White	Female	30
RP-C	Marietta (Atlanta), Georgia	White	Female	41
RP-D	New Orleans, Louisiana	Other	Male	51
RP-E	New Orleans, Louisiana	Other	Female	49
RP-F	Detroit, Michigan	Other	Female	36
RP-G	New Orleans, Louisiana	White	Male	27
RP-H	Atlanta, Georgia	White	Female	22

Note. Respondents were asked to self-identify their race. *Other* race classification was not specified by respondents but was not within the listed race classifications: American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, Black or African American, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, or White (see Flanagin et al., 2021). Participants' ethnicity (Hispanic or non-Hispanic) was not requested or specified.

Actual research participants consisted of eight non-Black respondents, all over the age of 18 and who resided in a designated predominantly Black cities or MSAs. All participants were residents of Atlanta, Georgia; Detroit, Michigan; or New Orleans, Louisiana, or the respective cities' metropolitan areas. Marietta, Georgia, and Roswell, Georgia are both metropolitan areas of Atlanta, Georgia. All participants had seen video or news coverage of at least one of the three high-profile cases of a police-caused death

of an unarmed Black man (Daniel Prude, Elijah McClain, or George Floyd), and all participants confirmed they could speak, read, and write fluent English. Research participants were not asked about their professions; however, two volunteered information and reported they were an office manager and an attorney.

Data Collection

On December 1, 2022, I received approval from the IRB and immediately began to post my research recruitment ad / study invitation to the social media platform, Facebook. However, due to recruitment challenges in posting as a Facebook page and being misperceived as spam, I submitted a request for change in procedures to post my study invitation to my personal page in addition to designated Facebook groups. The request was submitted to the IRB on December 8, 2022. The IRB approved the requested change on December 12, 2022. However, after only receiving a few responses from Facebook users and other recruitment challenges, I again submitted an IRB request for change in procedures on January 1, 2023. On this request, I sought approval to post the study invitation on another online platform, Reddit. Again, my IRB change of request was reviewed and approved on January 3, 3023.

During a recruitment period which spanned over several weeks, I responded to inquiries, reviewed participant screening and consent forms, contacted potential participants via email, and began scheduling interviews. Six potential participants either had scheduling conflicts or stopped responding to scheduling requests. I scheduled a total of 14 interviews but was only able to conduct a total of eight semistructured interviews with respondents who were recruited via social media platforms, Facebook and Reddit.

Semistructured in-depth interviews are commonly used in qualitative research and are a frequent qualitative data source (Dejonckheere & Vaughn, 2019). As the researcher, I interviewed study participants during a recorded interview via Zoom, in conjunction with a self-designed interview protocol. Participants responded to a multiple-item questionnaire, comprised of open-ended qualitative questions containing background information and viewpoints of perceptions of media influence from publicity of police-caused deaths involving unarmed Black or African American male victims. Each interview duration was estimated to last 30 minutes to 2 hours.

During this study, data collection occurred over a span of 42 days. I began conducting interviews via Zoom software / platform in December 2022. The first subject's interview (RP-A) commenced on December 5, 2022. Each respondent participated in an individual audio-recorded qualitative interview, in which audio was captured and recorded within the Zoom platform. The shortest interview session lasted 18 minutes and 17 seconds while the longest interview lasted 33 minutes and 54 seconds. The average duration for the interviews was approximately 26 minutes. No new themes occurred, and data saturation was attained with the eighth interview with participant (RP-H) on January 16, 2023, which concluded the last of the interviews.

There were no technical difficulties or unusual circumstances that took place during any of the Zoom interviews. Each subject entered the Zoom waiting room using a unique Zoom-generated link, which was emailed immediately after scheduling interviews with the subjects. To enter the meeting from the waiting room, I gave access to participants and admitted each participant into the private meeting session. Video was

automatically disabled prior to the meeting using the Zoom features and settings, and only audio was recorded. The subjects joined with audio from their respective devices and once it was confirmed that we could hear each other on our devices, I initiated the interviews by reciting the introduction then proceeded with the interview protocol. For confidentiality purposes, none of the participants' names were obtained and all identities were anonymized.

There were no variations in data collection from the plan presented in Chapter 3. I was able to practice interviewing subjects beforehand during piloting. Hence, I was able to adjust how I vocalized the questions while reciting the interview questions during data collection. Poor data can be produced if interviewers are not sufficiently trained to understand the effects of their approach, questions, tone, and responsiveness within the interview (Rutakumwa et al., 2020). Interview responses were audible and clear throughout the recordings. The Zoom interviews were saved to my personal laptop's hard drive using a corresponding masked title of each participant's pseudonym i.e., RP-A interview. The laptop was in my exclusive possession, and I am the only person able to access the files using my pin to log in.

Data Analysis

To perform data analysis, I used a general inductive approach to condense extensive and varied raw text data into a brief, summary format and established clear links between the research objectives and the summary findings (Thomas, 2006). Audio from the interview sessions was captured via Zoom recordings. Due to privacy concerns, respondents' interviews were recorded to my personal laptop via Zoom instead of the

cloud. Each audio file of each Zoom-recorded interview posed as qualitative raw data, which was manually transcribed into a transcript. I listened to each Zoom audio file and conducted manual transcription on Microsoft Word. After transcribing the interviews, I read, reread, and reviewed the transcripts to ensure accuracy and to become familiar with the raw data. Transcripts were saved on my password-protected laptop.

The first saved qualitative interview file, RP-A Interview Transcript, was opened and subsequently, through Microsoft Word, I retrieved and opened each transcribed interview document until all eight interview files were open. Eight windows and files of the transcribed interviews were opened simultaneously, and I created a new Word document which posed as a master file to combine the responses and initiate coding. I saved the new Word document as coded interviews, inserted all 20 qualitative interview questions, and then copied all the responses from each respondent's interview and pasted them in chronological / alphabetical order (from first to last interview), and placed the responses under each interview question. Next, I color-coded each interview question and response with a distinct highlighted color throughout the coded interviews document.

Interview questions were highlighted in green, and *R* indicated *researcher*. *RP* represented *research participant* and the alpha character indicated the masked pseudonym of each subject and the order of each conducted respondent's interview. To explicate, alpha characters A–H indicated the pseudonymized participant's order in the interview process. For example, RP-A was the first initial interviewee, RP-B was the second subject interviewed, and lastly, RP-H was the final participant interviewed. RP-A's responses were reflected by the color turquoise, RP-B in fuchsia, RP-C in blue, RP-D

in red, RP-E in teal, RP-F in dark yellow, RP-G in gray, and RP-H in yellow. Figure 1 is an illustrated example of this.

Figure 1

Data Color Coding Example

Q1: R: What is your personal experience with police officers and / or police interaction?

  RP-A: (response)

  RP-B: (response)

  RP-C: (response)

  RP-D: (response)

  RP-E: (response)

  RP-F: (response)

  RP-G: (response)

  RP-H: (response)

  I extracted a lot of rich and thick data, so I used color coding of the transcripts to easily identify each respondent's interview response. After all questions and responses were color-coded and there was a table for each qualitative question, I formulated codes (words, short phrases) which symbolically assign a summative, salient portion for language-based or visual data (Saldaña, 2011). Direct quotes from the subjects were also used as codes. Saldaña (2011) emphasized that coding is adding meaning to individual sections of data, in which codes function as a way of patterning, classifying, and later reorganizing each datum into emergent categories to later analyze.

  Once all responses were in the document, I created a table under each question with the Insert Table feature and drew a table consisting of eight rows and four columns to identify and organize patterns. I made columns to categorize textual data from the

transcribed interviews and labeled them as RP (A-H), Positive, Negative, and Direct

Quotes, respectively. Next, I utilized in vivo coding to extract summary points from each

subject's experiences and placed excerpts of verbatim text into the latter category.

Neutral responses from the subjects were also grouped into the Direct Quotes column. To

clarify, positive responses were deemed as favorable perceptions of the police, media,

victims, or phenomena while the negative responses were deemed as unfavorable

perceptions of the police, media, victims, or phenomena. If there were no positive or

negative answers, an X was placed in the appropriate field. Figure 2 is an example of this.

Figure 2

Example of Table for Participant Responses and Direct Quotes

R: What is your personal experience with police officers and / or police interaction?			
	Positive	Negative	Direct Quotes
RP-A	Response	X	"response"
RP-B	Response	Response	"response"
RP-C	Response	Response	"response"
RP-D	X	Response	"response"
RP-E	Response	Response	"response"
RP-F	Response	X	"response"
RP-G	X	Response	"response"
RP-H	Response	Response	"response"

A synthesis of Creswell (2014) and Braun and Clarke (2006) posed as references

for thematic analysis. Braun and Clarke (2006) expressed thematic analysis as a method

for identifying, analyzing, and reporting recurring patterns (themes) within data, which

encompasses minimally organizing and describing the data that is being used in depth.

The manual coding was a lengthy process; however, I was able to identify, analyze,

organize, describe, and report codes and patterns within a data set (Nowell et al., 2017).

First stage coding produced 514 codes.

The preliminary phase of coding revealed 514 codes which resulted from eight participants and 20 interview questions. In the first stage, my primary tool of analyzing the qualitative raw data from the participants' responses incorporated in vivo coding. Khamung et al. (2022) emphasized, "[i]n vivo coding is often used in the first stage of qualitative analysis, deriving codes and data from the writing of participants and the vocabulary used" (p.170). Codes were primarily generated from statements and direct quotes of participants i.e., when participants were asked how they felt about police presence in their community, one respondent stated, "It makes me feel safe." Another respondent and uttered, "You don't know if they are there to help or to hurt someone." Respectively, the comments were coded as *police presence makes feel safe* and *unsure of police intent to help or hurt*.

The research question was the core guiding element used during coding to ascertain what influence media coverage of police-caused deaths involving unarmed Black men has on the inclination of non-Black residents to report crime or contact police for assistance. Responses were grouped according to the call of the question. If responses were in favor of the subject of the question i.e., law enforcement, policing, or media coverage of police-caused deaths involving unarmed Black men, or even the victims, the codes were grouped into the Positive column. Contrastingly, if responses were not in favor of the subjects of the question, codes were grouped into the Negative column.

Neutral and indifferent responses were columnized in the Direct Quotes column. Codes resulted in identification of themes and patterns from at least 160 responses. For each interview question, I created a chart with the subjects' remarks. It was tedious to

create 23 individual charts to correspond with 23 qualitative interview questions. However, charting the responses afforded convenient visible detection of similar words and phrases from all respondents concurrently. Some respondents described favorable experiences, while some described unfavorable experiences, and some described both favorable and unfavorable experiences simultaneously.

Patterns were noticeable as repetition was visible in the charts. Within the tables, I numbered codes during the first cycle and numbered and highlighted codes during the second cycle in each individualized response chart. Various codes emerged from each open-ended question. Refer to selected codes generated in the first interview question:

Q1: What is your personal experience with police officers and / or police interaction?

Code1: Police are there to support. (Positive)

Code 2: Police intend to help. (Positive)

Code 3: Police nor laws are perfect. (Positive)

Code 4: Use caution during police interaction. (Negative)

Code 5: Police racially profile. (Negative)

Code 6: Police misuse authority. (Negative)

The illustrative example indicates that respondents expressed both positive and negative perceptions regarding their experiences and or interactions with police officers. The interview protocol consisted of 20 qualitative open-ended questions (three of which were two-pronged) that were used in both the preliminary and secondary coding framework.

The preliminary coding produced 514 codes from 20 qualitative questions (Question 4, Question 7, and Question 20 were two-pronged questions, which technically makes the responses based on 23 qualitative open-ended questions. A Microsoft Word Table was constructed in the coded interviews document for each question. There were 23 tables created for coding purposes. Each table consisted of four columns: Column One listed the Participants i.e., RP-A; Column Two listed Positive responses; Column Three listed Negative responses; and Column Four listed Direct Quotes from the respondents. To clarify, any responses that were favorable to the subject of the question i.e., police officers, victims, or media coverage, were deemed as positive responses and were placed in the Positive column. Contrary comments that were unfavorable to the subject in the call of the question, were deemed as negative responses and placed in the Negative column.

Based on excerpts and codes of raw data derived from responses from the subjects' interviews, I numbered codes starting with the first participant's responses in each table and numbered them in reading order (left to right). I continued this method for all 23 tables. 514 codes were extracted from the responses of eight participants. I made notes and directly quoted statements and remarks in which the respondents vocalized and adamantly expressed. Some of the expressions were positive attitudes regarding the police and their roles, the victims, the media, and society's relation to the phenomena, overall. Other responses were negative perceptions.

In the second cycle of coding, I used the same tables used for the first cycle of coding and eliminated codes that were not beneficial to answering the research question:

What influence does media coverage of police-caused deaths involving unarmed Black men have on the inclination of non-Black residents to report crime or contact police for assistance? Hence, if the codes were not congruent with perceptions, attitudes, or direct responses which could help understand or answer the research question, they were removed. Second cycle codes were notated with a yellow highlighted alpha-numerical indication i.e., C1 (yellow). I also combined similar and repetitious codes and omitted many direct quotes during this coding cycle review. In the second cycle of coding, I filtered out responses that were not provided by at least two respondents and further narrowed the 514 codes down to 119 codes.

The subjects reacted similarly in their discussions regarding perceptions of media coverage, as well as for the slain victims of the phenomena. Out of 514 first-cycle codes, 216 were unfavorable responses and second-cycle coding resulted in 82 negative responses from 119 codes. Forty-two themes emerged from 119 codes. One-half of the themes (21) were positive and one-half (21) were negative. I clustered emergent themes into seven broad categories based on: (1) perceptions of police, (2) perceptions of media coverage, (3) perceptions of victims, (4) perceptions of justification of the phenomena, (5) perceptions of society and the phenomena, (6) willingness / unwillingness to report crime or contact police for assistance, and (7) proposed solutions to the phenomena.

From the broad category of codes, 42 themes emerged and an additional 14 sub-themes. Due to the substantial amount of qualitative raw data that was collected, I took an approach to consolidate themes, then categorized them with a positive or negative description. The first emergent theme reflected respondents' perceptions of police

officers. The final emergent theme encompassed participants' proposed solutions to the

phenomena. There were two central themes that were relevant to the purpose of the

study: one positive theme which indicated that media influence had little impact on

willingness to report crime or contact police for assistance as residents would contact the

police for community and self-safety. One positive subtheme reflected that respondents

would not hesitate to call 911. Conversely, the second central theme indicated that media

influence had significant impact on willingness to report crime or contact police for

assistance as residents would not contact police due to fear of police and due to potential

of police causing more detriment than benefit, and fear of self-safety. In reference to the

two central themes, one positive theme, one positive subtheme, one negative theme, and

three negative subthemes emerged. Table 2 reflects the emerging themes and their

respective categorical placement.

Table 2

Emergent Themes

Respondents' perceptions	Positive/favorable codes	Negative/unfavorable codes	Emergent themes

Respondents' perceptions	Positive/favorable codes	Negative/unfavorable codes	Emergent themes

Respondents' perceptions of police	(1) Carry out their jobs
	   (a) Protect and serve
	   (b) Provide safety and security
	   (c) Respond to calls
	(2) Needed in the community
		Police
		(1) Abuse authority
		(2) Code of blue–stick together
		(3) Ill-equipped and incompetent
		   (a) lack skills
		(4) Break laws they attempt to enforce
		(5) Disparate treatment based on race-harass Blacks
		   (a) no de-escalation intent
		   (b) no use of nonlethal strategies
		(6) Untrustworthy
		(7) Instill fear
			2 positive themes
			3 positive subthemes
			7 negative themes
			3 negative subthemes

Respondents' perceptions of media coverage	(1) Public awareness of police fatalities of Black men (2) Sheds light on police abuse (3) Helps police accountability (4) Promotes public and community union	(1) Vilifies victims and police (2) Excessive coverage of Black suspects (3) Produce fear of Black men (4) Produce fear of police (5) Normalize/desensitize police killings (6) Emotionally disturbing to watch	4 positive themes 6 negative themes 10 themes regarding perceptions of media coverage

Respondents' perceptions of victims	Victims
	(1) Empathy for family, friends, and children left behind
	(2) Helpless and defenseless
	(3) Cannot prevent police harassment, brutality, or fatalities
	(4) Should not be responsible for mitigating police interaction or engagement
	   (a) blameless
	(5) Valued humans
	(6) Nothing justifies deadly force against unarmed civilians
	(7) Pose no threat and still lose life
		(1) Do not comply
		   (a) Do not keep their hands visible
		   (b) Threatening or overpowering
		   (c) Attempt to run during encounter
			7 positive themes
			1 positive subtheme
			1 negative theme
			3 negative subthemes

Respondents' perceptions of justification of police killing unarmed Black men	(1) Police true self-defense, not alleged (2) Police endangered by victim (3) Victim physically attacks officer (armed or unarmed)	(1) No justification (2) Officer fear of victim is insufficient	3 positive themes 2 negative themes

Table continues

Respondents' perceptions	Positive/favorable codes	Negative/unfavorable codes	Emergent themes
Respondents' perceptions of society and the phenomena	(1) Awareness of social problem of Black men murdered by police	(1) White privilege (2) Enables system which protects police (3) Feel sympathy for police mistreatment and harassment of Blacks and people of color (4) Awareness of police not doing their job	1 positive theme 4 negative themes
Respondents' perceptions of crime reporting/contacting police for assistance	(1) Will contact the police for community or self-safety (a) Would not hesitate to contact police	(1) Will not contact police (a) Due to fear of police (b) Due to possible detriment than benefit to others (c) Due to fear for self-safety	1 positive theme 1 positive subtheme 1 negative theme 3 negative subthemes
Respondents' proposed solutions to the phenomena	(1) Police reform (a) implement universal and equal treatment strategies for all police encounters regardless of race or color, i.e., discretion to not use deadly force (b) police accountability (arrest and conviction) (c) proper training (cultural, de-escalation, and communication (d) police use of non-deadly force strategies and alternatives (e) police departments weed out bad officers with history of racially motivated complaints or actions (f) psychological evaluations (2) Eliminate unnecessary police calls (3) Victim compliance (a) Cooperate (b) No sudden movements (c) Visibility of hands	X	3 positive themes 9 positive subthemes

Note. 42 themes emerged based on seven categories of respondents' perceptions and

labeled *positive* or *negative*.

Table 3

Emergent Themes

Perceptions of police 2 positive themes 7 negative themes 3 negative subthemes	Perceptions of media coverage 4 positive themes 6 negative themes
Perceptions of victims 7 positive themes 1 positive subtheme 1 negative theme 3 negative subthemes	Justification of police killing unarmed Black men 3 positive themes 2 negative themes
Perceptions of society and the phenomena 1 positive theme 4 negative themes	Responses on crime reporting/contacting police for assistance 1 positive
Theme 3 positive subthemes 1 negative theme 3 negative subthemes	Proposed solutions to the phenomena 3 positive themes 9 positive subthemes
Total of 42 themes 21 positive themes 21 negative themes	Total of 2 central themes (directly related to the research question): 1 positive theme 1 positive subtheme 1 negative theme 3 negative subthemes
Total of 14 subthemes 5 positive subthemes 9 negative subthemes	

Emergent Themes

Out of 119 codes that were reduced and categorized, 42 themes: 21 positive themes and 21 negative themes and 14 sub-themes: 5 positive Subthemes and 9 negative subthemes emerged. Within the 42 themes, and 14 subthemes, any codes which did not have at least two similar responses or had no direct relation to the research question, were eliminated. Meaningfulness played a significant role in identifying themes that were relevant to answering the research question, and with regards to the responses, the issues being addressed were of utmost importance (Byrne, 2022). There were exactly 21 themes

(one-half) that were positive. There were 21 remaining negative themes that were reflected. Since this is a study of first impression, there were no discrepant cases or unexpected findings. All data analyzed supported both positive and negative influence of media coverage of police-caused deaths of unarmed Black men. I noted respondents' viewpoints and their inclination to report crime or contact police for assistance.

Theme I: Perceptions of Police

Positive Perceptions of Police. During their interviews, most respondents expressed how police were essential to societal law and order. The majority stated that police generally carry out their jobs and responsibilities to: (a) protect and serve, (b) provide safety and security, and (c) respond to 911 calls or requests for police assistance. When asked about feelings regarding police presence in the community, one of the participants stated, "It makes me feel safe." RP-B stated, "[G]enerally speaking the majority of police officers are good people with good intentions." Police presence being needed in communities was a recurring theme.

Negative Perceptions of Police. Respondents emphasized they had negative attitudes regarding the police as well. Some subjects were consistent in presenting the pros and cons in their expressions. In reference to negative perceptions of law enforcement, several participants discussed how police: (1) abuse their authority, (2) follow "a code of blue" to protect and defend their peers, (3) are ill-equipped and incompetent, (4) do not follow the same laws they enforce, (5) display disparate treatment and harass Blacks, (6) are untrustworthy, and (7) instill fear in citizens and communities. Several respondents believed there were racial components involved with

aggression and a predetermination to use lethal force during encounters with Black men.

Regarding perceived police officers' abuse of authority, RP-H euphemized, "I do just feel

like they use authority to the max just because they have that leeway to do that."

Subthemes which developed from participants views of officers' incompetence included:

(1) lack of skills (including cultural and human interaction), and (2) failure to use de-

escalation and nonlethal techniques as opposed to deadly force. RP-B stated,

> They're escalating the situation to a really dangerous position and overexerting
>
> authority. … When I see those things I think that they're ill-equipped and
>
> sometimes the other party is less equipped because of whatever mindset—state of
>
> mind, etc., but they're not the ones with the responsibilities that the officers hold
>
> in that situation with the power and authority that they have, and also it's their job
>
> to deescalate those situations—you know? So I put more responsibility on the
>
> officers than I do even on the men who were behaving in some criminal activity. I
>
> don't think that that—that does not negate the officers' responsibility and the
>
> part—the huge part—that they have in murdering and killing and harming people.

Theme 2: Perceptions of Media Coverage in Relation to the Phenomena

Positive Views of Media Coverage in Relation to the Phenomena. In relation

to media coverage and incidences of police-caused deaths of unarmed Black men,

majority of the participants indicated media coverage is beneficial as it: (1) brings public

awareness of police fatalities of Black men, (2) sheds light on police abuse, (3) aids in

police accountability, and (4) promotes public and community union. RP-H conveyed, "I

think that media coverage is really great and it's a great way to alert people in some form

of fashion that this is going on." This respondent also elaborated that media coverage not only informs the public, but also provides visual information that action is being taken through televised marches. Although the following viewpoint shared in this excerpt did not have ample response to produce a theme, I would categorize it as a positive perspective of media coverage in relation to the phenomena. RP-C said, "I think that it's more pervasive than I was aware of based on the media coverage that significant police reform is umm necessary…" From this respondent's comment, I interpreted that another positive aspect regarding media coverage of police-caused deaths of unarmed Black men is that it enlightens the public that social reform, more specifically, police reform is needed.

      Negative Views of Media Coverage in Relation to the Phenomena. In reference to negative attitudes or feelings of media coverage in relation to the phenomena, all eight subjects shared a negative aspect of their feelings of media coverage pertaining to police-caused deaths of unarmed Black men. Respondents expressed the media informs the public and desensitizes killings of unarmed Black men simultaneously. RP-G expressed,

> Ummm-my first experience, I was pretty devastated. Ummmm, I feel like after a while if you keep seeing those things repeatedly, you don't, I wouldn't say you get numb to it, but uhhh it's kind of sad that you just see it so often now.

I constructed five questions associated with media coverage in the interview protocol because of media coverage's importance in answering the research question: What influence does media coverage of police-caused deaths involving unarmed Black men

have on the inclination of non-Black residents to report crime or contact police for assistance? The five questions regarding media coverage were:

Question 5: How has your attitude regarding the police changed from viewing a publicized and police-caused death of an unarmed Black man?

Question 8: How would you describe your reactions to seeing video or media coverage displaying a fatal police encounter involving an unarmed Black man?

Question 9: How does viewing media of police-caused deaths of unarmed African American men affect your willingness or unwillingness to report crime and why?

Question 13: How have your views on calling the police changed since watching media coverage of fatal police encounters involving unarmed Black men?

Question 14: What message do you gather from media coverage of deadly police encounters involving unarmed Black men?

Negative themes that resulted from responses pertaining to media coverage revealed subjects believed the media: (1) vilifies both police and victims, (2) displays excessive coverage of Black suspects, (3) produces fear of both police and Black men, (4) normalizes and desensitizes police killings of unarmed Black men, and (5) is emotionally disturbing to watch. RP-C detailed perspectives in response to Question 5.

Ummm I think that I became aware of the issue prior to the media kind of storm that came about in 2020 so but when I started to be to to be aware of that issue it was just compounding when I saw it in the media I was happy to see that police I mean that the public was finally seeing what is a massive problem in the United States ummm that police are making judgments and murdering Black men for no

other reason than that they're Black. Ummm so on the one hand as an attorney for

you know legal reasons it was incredibly distressing to me because I think it's uh

antithetical to what our justice system is founded on. As a human being it was

infuriating to me that we are now in 2022 and this is an issue that people just

started to realize because it is an issue that has been going on for you know,

forever.

The excerpt displays the participant's expression of various negative perspectives,

including racial connotations, in one response, however, several of those negative

contentions did not emerge into themes.

Theme 3: Perceptions of Victims

Positive Perceptions of Victims. Unarmed Black male victims who met their

demise during fatal police encounters elicited empathy from all eight respondents. Some

respondents gave contradictory statements blaming the police officers while also blaming

the victims for actions that may have caused law enforcement to use lethal force. Several

respondents solely blamed law enforcement for police-caused deaths of unarmed citizens.

All subjects gave favorable descriptions of victims and or their victim statuses during

fatal police encounters by describing unarmed Black male victims as: (1) valued humans,

(2) helpless and defenseless, (3) unable to have prevented their demise, (4) should not

have been responsible for mitigating police engagement, and (5) posing no threat to

officers yet still losing their lives. Three out of eight participants expressed empathy for

the family and friends of slain victims of police-caused deaths. RP-A stated,

First of all I feel sorry to their families, first of all their friends, their colleagues and ummmnm it's sad to see harassment and intimidation so yeah against the Blacks a lot and the Black communities feel bad and think it is very bad, this thing occurred.

RP-B stated,

Mmmm-I would describe them as victims and as valued humans that lost their lives because people in leadership are not doing enough and taking it seriously. Umm I just feel so sorry for them, and their families, and their neighbors and their friends.

The main subtheme communicated from respondents is that unarmed victims of police-caused deaths are blameless. RP-C emotionalized, "Black men have become victims by no fault of their own." Regarding responsibility, not all agreed that victims were not blameworthy, however, other respondents conveyed similar feelings of how they felt unarmed Black men were not to blame for their roles in police-caused deaths.

Negative Perceptions of Victims. Several respondents retorted that generally victims of police-caused deaths die during police encounters due to their own actions. There was only one negative theme, victim noncompliance and there were three subthemes expanding on thoughts of noncompliance and placing responsibility on the victims. Participants who believed that victims were noncompliant emphasized that during police engagement, victims often: do not keep their hands visible, threaten or overpower law enforcement, or attempt to run during police detainment or encounters. However, all respondents who thought victims were partly at fault agreed that in the

Elijah McClain case, that McClain did not do anything they perceived as wrong. In reference to Elijah McClain, RP-C narrated,

> I think that significant police reform is umm necessary especially when the victims are Black men like Elijah McClain who appears to have had you know, I-I can't recall if he was on the spectrum or something, but he had specific needs that police should be trained to deal with because he was not a threat to those officers. He was somebody that maybe was unable to ummm you know verbalize as well as somebody who didn't have those struggles and instead of recognizing that the police took it -you know as him being a criminal which was the farthest thing from the truth.

Theme 4: Perceptions of Justification of Police Killing Unarmed Black Men

Positive Perceptions of Justification of Police Killing Unarmed Black Men. During their interviews, participants shared thoughts on justifying incidences of police using deadly force on unarmed Black male victims. Positive themes developed from participants' beliefs that police were justified in using deadly force on victims: (1) in true self-defense, (2) when police were endangered by the victim(s), or (3) if the victim(s) attacked an officer regardless of being armed or unarmed. Question 16 asked: What could justify a police officer using deadly force on an unarmed Black man? One subject adamantly exclaimed, "If the unarmed Black man did something that even though they're unarmed that put the police officer's life at risk." Yet another subject responded, "But only in the case of self-defense, in true self defense but not ummm-but you know the sense of the way that they have said 'Oh, I felt afraid'…" The respondent clarified that

"true" self-defense was associated with an officer defending oneself, and not merely alleging defense or fear of the victim(s).

Negative Perceptions of Justification of Police Killing Unarmed Black Men. Majority of respondents asserted there was no justification for police killing unarmed Black men or unarmed citizens, in general. Two negative themes emerged: (1) no justification for police-caused deaths of unarmed Black men and (2) officer fear of victims was deemed inexcusable. In Question 16, I asked: "What could justify a police officer using deadly force on an unarmed Black man?" One respondent proclaimed, "Fear for their own life, but a legitimate fear. Not a fear because somebody's acting different or is Black." In both, negative and positive perceptions of efforts to justify police-caused deaths of unarmed Black men, legitimacy of police being endangered were key topics of discussion for most of the participants.

Theme 5: Perceptions of Society and the Phenomena

Perceptions of Society and the Phenomena. Reflecting on subjects' views on society when it comes to the phenomena, the positive theme made in consensus is awareness that Black men being murdered by police is an ongoing social problem. Several respondents recognized police-caused deaths of unarmed Black men as problematic, yet their defensive stance is that police are regular people who also make mistakes. RP-B shared, "Ummm my experience is that generally police officers intend to help ummm but that the laws-like-the laws aren't perfect and neither are the human beings in uniforms."

Inversely, negative themes emerged regarding acknowledgement of what some subjects explained as White privilege; a system which protects and enables law enforcement's misuse of authority; sympathy for police maltreatment and harassment of Blacks; and awareness of police incompetence. In Question 4, I asked respondents to describe unarmed Black men who die in fatal police encounters. I encircled in my notes as RP-B shared that

> I think that they're victims of murder ummm by those police officers and that it's not just those police officers that are guilty but also a systemic problem within police departments and society as a whole that they did not until 2020 when a lot of those cases came to the forefront of media attention. But that they were not given the -the respect and consequences that would have likely been given if the person had been a privileged White White person."

RP-G said, "Ummm. I think (pause) that the majority probably comes from police calls- the deaths come from police calls that were unnecessary." RP-E shared the following:

> Just for instance, the the call that I did witness-the incident that I did witness of George Floyd that was something about counterfeit money so the police called being called-called for having counterfeit money shouldn't have resulted to a death sentence.

Most respondents were cognizant of the existence of the phenomena but shared feelings which mentioned that the police are not solely at fault for the incidences of fatalities of unarmed Black men, but a system collectively.

Theme 6: Perceptions of Crime Reporting/Contacting Police for Assistance

Using the research question as a guide to develop themes, a major element of this qualitative inquiry related to respondents' willingness or unwillingness to report crime or contact police for assistance. More than half the respondents articulated they would still call 911 or contact the police to report a crime for self and community safety. Few respondents admitted that they would report crime, but would be selective in contacting the police, depending on the crime and the suspects. In Question 9, I asked participants: How does viewing media of police-caused deaths of unarmed African American men affect your willingness or unwillingness to report crime and why? RP-A stated, "I will not call the police." RP-B admitted,

> It has decreased my willingness to report insignifi-what I would deem as
> insignificant crime umm due to less trust in their ability to resolve it in
> appropriate manners. So in other words, I would be less likely to call to engage
> the police in something if it was minimal if it was like something like petty theft
> for example I'm a manager at a sports complex-we have kids steal from the
> vending machines from time to time. I would be less likely to engage them in-in a
> situation like that even with a grown adult because I feel more able to resolve and
> make something right than trusting it in their hands.

RP-C said, "Umm-I don't think it changed it all because I would have reported the crime before before the media coverage." RP-D stated,

> Umm, because it's I-I wouldn't feel safe uh reporting it or or involving myself in
> it uh if I'm not directly involved uh because I don't I don't. I wouldn't feel safe

you know as far as the consequences of that you know cause you know in my

opinion, they stick together uh at all cost so I wouldn't -I wouldn't put myself in

in harm's way or the situation.

RP-E asserted, "The media-umm-showing of that-it wouldn't affect me still-I still would

contact the police to report a crime if. If I needed to call the police, I still would call the

police." RP-F expressed,

I don't think I'd be-willing to-to report a crime. Because like I said, I don't know

if they there to protect or they there to hurt the person and I definitely don't want

that to fall on my guilty conscience that this man has lost his life nall instead of

being just handcuffed.

RP-G responded, "I'm more unwilling uhhh just because things can escalate to that."

RP-H stated,

Uhhh-it yeah-it does affect it because it makes me monitor the situations in which

I would call the police simply because they're they're- I try to see how they

would look at a situation and they might come with aggression on a higher level

than it needs to be and that can just turn everything into something else. So their

aggression and their force is very fearful and in some situations it can just make

everything worse. So it is monitored when to call them.

In Question 10, participants were asked: How does viewing media of police-caused

deaths of unarmed African American men affect your willingness or unwillingness to

request police assistance and why? RP-A answered, "If the call is for assistance, a crime

attempt, I will not be able to call the police because sometimes it can be bad to the community." RP-B responded,

> I would call. I have called and I would call for police assistance for myself. Umm I do feel slightly less at risk because I'm a White female. Umm and- like I recognize that there's that- I think there is a slight privilege there where I get-I feel more safe calling them for help than I would imagine any Black person would. Umm so yeah-if I felt threatened, I would- I mean I wouldn't hesitate to call them. I called them when I when-my daughter was missing once and they helped me find her and you know that was a-It was a meaningful experience for me. Yeah. For sure.

RP-C expressed,

> Uhh I think it made me uh more cautious to request police assistance. If it was a Black man that was involved, I would look at where I was. If the police there had a history of crimes against Black men umm being an attorney though I feel like I'm in a position where if I saw a Black man Black men umm in trouble and that was in need of protection since we do live in a country where you call the police when they're supposed to protect you-I would- and I am a white female with privilege. I would call the police knowing that because of my privilege I would be in a position to hopefully make sure that the police did what they're suppose to do and help the person ummm instead of treating a Black man who's a victim as a perpetrator. But it would make me cautious.

RP-D said,

Cause I don't feel that they have my best interest at heart so I wouldn't report it

uh I wouldn't do- I wouldn't do anything uh because like I said, I wouldn't feel

safe to do it. But viewing it is just-it does hit close to home and so it it affects me

uh deeply so. It's frightening-it's scary actually.

RP-E stated, "It wouldn't affect it-if I-if I still needed to contact the police." RP-F

expressed,

Umm, I really don't know if I would call the police if I needed assistance either.

(giggling) I would be too afraid that instead of ummm deescalating the situation,

they might make the situation even worse than what it really is. So I don't want

anybody to lose their life just because we are trying to deescalate a situation and

the police come out to make it even worse so.

RP-G shared,

Uhhhh-I-I just don't want things to escalate with a unarmed Black man or anyone

in that matter uhhh for no reason so instead of uhhhh calling them whenever-I-I'm

just more unwilling to call them unless I actually see uh a real crime being

committed.

RP-H said,

Uhhhh-it's kind of the same as well because they're-I-I really feel like I will only

call someone if I am like I would only call someone if I am dying-if I am on my

last breath. I wouldn't really call for anything really like-other than that because

I'm not sure what what they're going to do or how it's going to turn out. That

incorporating them is it's -it's a risk-it's not -it's not what you think it was or

what it used to be or whatever the case. It's just not to that standard anymore. So

it's-it's hard to trust them in a situation.

The subtheme expanded on the premise that residents would not hesitate to contact law enforcement if assistance was needed. One respondent affirmed, "Umm so yeah-if I felt threatened, I would- I mean I wouldn't hesitate to call them."

However, those who gave negative responses stated that after publicity of officer-involved fatalities of unarmed Black men, they would not contact the police at all due to: (1) fear of the police, (2) possible detriment than benefit to others or (3) risk of self-endangerment. Reverting to RP-C's response, "Uhh I think it made me uh more cautious to request police assistance if it was a Black man that was involved." Again referencing RP-D's utterance, "I don't feel that they have my best interest at heart so I wouldn't report it uh I wouldn't do- I wouldn't do anything uh because like I said, I wouldn't feel safe to do it." Several respondents elaborated they did not want to be responsible for someone dying because of dialing 911.

Theme 7: Proposed Solutions to the Phenomena

When asked what can be done to reduce or avoid the occurrence(s) of the phenomena, respondents proposed: (1) police reform; (2) eliminating unnecessary calls for police service; and (3) victim compliance. Police reform produced six sub-themes and was suggested to occur with: (1) implementation of universal and equal treatment strategies for all police encounters; (2) police accountability (arrest and convict police officers for crimes committed); (3) proper training (cultural sensitivity, de-escalation, and communication); (4) mandates to use non-deadly force and alternate strategies; (5)

weeding out "bad" officers with history of racially motivated complaints or actions; and (6) mandatory psychological evaluations for officers.

In response to Question 17: How can law enforcement avoid the use of deadly force during encounters with unarmed Black men? RP-D communicated,

> What would be great would be proper training for one and for two to have like supervisors or seniority for those type of situations. Before they make a deadly force call, they can use rubber bullets, mace, the taser even…

With regards to eliminating wrongful actions of law enforcement, one subject proposed, "I think for one-they could search for different ways of handling situations. The ones that come through the academy that can throw up red flags, weed out all of the ones that are causing these events…" Although all participants offered solutions to reduce or avoid the incidence of police-caused deaths of unarmed Black men, the major theme was police reform.

Most respondents recommended filtering or eliminating "unnecessary" police calls: RP-G clarified, "I feel like the number one way is to stop calling the police when it's not needed ummmm because a lot of those calls can escalate for no reason because of the poor training on the officers' behalf." RP-H explained,

> Someone can call and make the police panic before they get to a situation that's not even -you know-on that level and that's where the trickiness come in for having to call them in the first situation. Police calls are-they do make a difference because they can -they can affect a situation and make it greater than

what it needs to be. For any situation-a fight a misunderstanding anything.

Someone else can misinterpret the energy and it can all go wrong.

Several respondents believed that majority of high-profile cases of police-caused deaths of unarmed Black men were aggravated by unnecessary police calls.

Most respondents offered victim compliance as a proposed solution to reduce the occurrence(s) of unarmed Black men being killed during officer-involved deaths. Six of eight respondents proposed to reduce the incidence of fatalities of unarmed Black men, citizens or suspects would need to comply during police encounters. Several respondents explained that compliance entailed cooperating, being cordial or respectful, and following the directives of law enforcement. To corroborate compliance, subjects made statements, in which three subthemes developed: (1) cooperation, (2) no sudden movements, and (3) visibility of hands. RP-F suggested,

> In some situations, I think it's-they really can't get out of it. But come out with
>
> your hands up. Let the police see your hands. Let em know that you're not armed.
>
> Lay on the ground if you have to.

Other respondents felt that victims who attempted to run during police encounters worsened the situation and one participant even warned, "Sadly to say but comply. Comply to the fullest and and just comply."

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Credibility

Credible qualitative research encompasses believability of the findings and applicability of utilized research methods (Rose & Johnson, 2020). To provide evidence

of trustworthiness, I implemented member checking during the interview process in all eight interviews. Since there were 20 interview questions, I adjusted my credibility strategies stated in Chapter 3. To recapitulate, my initial strategy to demonstrate trustworthiness was to include an in-depth view of the respondents' perceptions, as provided, ensure there was data saturation, and lastly, to enlist member checks during the interview process. Additionally, I intended to perform a preliminary transcription of the responses with detailed interpretation during the interview process. However, I realized that was not a feasible or convenient strategy.

I did, however, adhere to my strategy by obtaining a flux of information with 20 qualitative open-ended questions. I collected rich and thick data, attained data saturation before ceasing data collection, and I enlisted member checks during the interviews. Research participants were encouraged to exemplify points, expand on answers, and introduce any concerns (Zahle, 2021). All respondents seemed very open in their discussions and many subjects elaborated without my questioning in many instances. Based on many emotion-filled answers, both favorable and unfavorable, I am confident that I built rapport with the participants, and I felt that their responses were genuinely authentic.

Adjustments were made to my initial member checking strategy. As a means of establishing credibility, I reviewed responses with several participants during their interviews. There were some instances in which I had to gain clarity immediately after a response was given, as opposed to waiting until the end of the interview process. My rationale for the adjustment is because of 20-question protocol, I found it more efficient

to ask for clarity when needed to confirm the subjects' statements before proceeding to the next question. Also, I was not able to member check with all participants at the conclusion of the study as some participants did not respond to the follow up email extending an invitation to discuss the study findings. My initial intent as stated in Chapter 3 was to ensure I accurately reflected what the participants meant in their responses with a follow-up. Nonetheless, my transcription still conveyed the in-depth thoughts and perceptions of the respondents.

Transferability

Providing sufficient information regarding the sample, data collection, and data analysis processes enables readers to critically evaluate if the findings may be applicable to similar contexts (Makel et al., 2022). When research findings are transferable, similar findings should result, when repeated or transferred to another context. Makel et al. (2022) asserted transferability rests on the ability of readers to critically assess contexts, samples, and scenarios and poses as a roadmap for replication. In Chapter 3, I emphasized I would enhance transferability of my study by selecting a diverse demographic for my study population to avoid a threat due to insufficient sample size. I implemented my transferability strategy by recruiting participants from different regions (cities and states) to ensure that similar participants from different regions would proffer similar findings if used in future research.

Initially, my target participants were residents from: Atlanta, Georgia; New Orleans, Louisiana; Baltimore, Maryland; Detroit, Michigan; and Memphis, Tennessee. However, I was not able to conduct interviews with residents from Baltimore or Memphis

and proceeded with interviews with actual participants who were residents from Atlanta, Georgia; New Orleans, Louisiana; and Detroit, Michigan. In reference to transferability aims, I revised my strategy by adding thick description of the research setting, participants, and demographics, and described methods and procedures used during data collection in detail. Utilizing thick description also entails providing a brief portrayal of what happened as it appeared immediately to the observers of the occurrences involved (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Additionally, I referenced notes I took during the interviews, which highlighted the respondents' emphases and recounted expressed emotions and changes in voice tone as much as possible. Thick descriptions were used with the aim of enabling readers to: understand respondents' expressed perspectives, relate significance of perceptions to the research question, and to enable generalizability of research findings (even for future mixed-methods studies) that can be applied to other populations using different demographics or respondents from different regions (Patton, 2002).

Dependability

In qualitative research, dependability describes consistency of the study and refers to the stability of findings over time (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). My strategies for consistency as discussed in Chapter 3 were implemented by documenting the steps and methods taken from the beginning of my inquiry until the conclusion of reporting the findings. I ensured research procedures were detailed in description and my research path was well-documented with traceable audit trails (Nowell et al., 2017). Additionally, creating notes, and maintaining an electronic journal enabled step-by-step accounts of what occurred during my investigation. Adjustments to Chapter 3 strategies regarding

dependability included extracting substantial qualitative raw data from the transcripts. I conducted rigorous data collection techniques, reported pilot study procedures, and provided in-depth description of the coding process.

Confirmability

When research credibility, transferability, and dependability are all achieved, confirmability, the degree in which the research findings can be confirmed by other researchers, is formulated (Nowell et al., 2017). In Chapter 3, I discussed confirmability initiatives to remain objective and reflexive. Taking notes during the interviews and directly quoting the respondents when transcribing the interview transcripts allowed me to stay on track with objectivity goals. I implemented objectivity by generating both positive and negative perceptions of the respondents and progressed those feelings in generating favorable and unfavorable themes. I did not initially plan to perform extensive coding with both positive and negative themes. However, for the study findings to reflect the respondents' feelings without perceived biases, I felt it was essential to formulate both themes to accurately reflect the most significant elements derived from coding. Reflexivity was implemented by referencing notes and research journals on my personal feelings regarding my personal experience with phenomena. These precautions were taken to ensure I did not project any personal attitudes or feelings during any phase of the research. Lastly, I ensured the research inquiry was guided by the research question and that findings reflected accurate data.

Results

In illustration of the data analysis process, many of the study results were previously detailed through thick description of emergent themes. The research question which guided this qualitative query: What influence does media coverage of police-caused deaths involving unarmed Black men have on the inclination of non-Black residents to report crime or contact police for assistance? In efforts to answer the research question, it was first necessary to ascertain how media coverage impacted the subjects' perspectives and how the phenomena were perceived, and then lastly, how those perceptions influenced willingness or unwillingness to report crime or make police service calls. I wanted transparency regarding the most pertinent information to help answer the research question. Table 3 depicts raw data extracted during data collection from the qualitative interviews and reported responses for questions regarding perceptions of media coverage on the phenomena and its influence on residents' decision-making when choosing to call or not to call 911.

Table 4

Raw Interview Data, Question 8

Subject	Positive	Negative	Interview responses
RP-A	X	Empathize with family and friends, saddened by victim demise, deem a bad occurrence	"First of all I feel sorry to their families, first of all their friends, their colleagues and ummmnm it's sad to see harassment and intimidation so yeah against the Blacks a lot and the Black communities feel bad and think it is very bad this thing occurred. But umm, I think the future will change if ummm, they continue sending the message."
RP-B	X	Hurt, saddened, cried, empathize with family and friends	"Umm. It hurt. I cried. It made me really sad and just I feel pain for their families and for their friends and their loved ones and just for Black people in general. Umm and for every person that feels a little less safe because of it. You know. It's just-For me, it's just overwhelming sadness-that's the feeling."
RP-C	X	Sickened, outraged, wanted to take action, aware of problem, aware of White privilege	"Umm. It made me sick. It made me sick. It made me outraged. It broke my heart as a mother when I heard George Floyd calling for his mother. Ummm it made me want to do something. It made me want to raise awareness. It caused me to have discussions with even family members that you know weren't aware of this and didn't realize their own privilege. That even though they were not you know prejudiced, bigoted or racist themselves, that virtue of their privilege, they were contributing to the problem. I wanted to help."
RP-D	X	Angered, saddened, aware that only Blacks are involved, public awareness	"Uhh. It makes me angry-it makes me sad. It makes me uh wonder about the system and how it's set up and how only a certain people get the you know-get mostly are the ones that are at the wrong end of these scenarios. Just to see them put this type of stuff on t.v. but really they don't put enough on it as far as uh Black people are concerned in my opinion because it should be a lot uh more to awaken the public of what's really going on."
RP-E	X	Disturbing to see one lose life	"Uhh. It was very-very-very disturbing ummm to watching you know another human being losing his life. Uhhhh. It was very disturbing to me.
RP-F	Skipped question	Skipped question	Skipped question
RP-G	X	Devastated, numbing, repeated occurrence	"Ummm-my first experience, I was pretty devastated. Ummmm, I feel like after a while if you keep seeing those things repeatedly, you don't I wouldn't say you get numb to it, but uhhh it's kind of sad that you just see it so often now. So."
RP-H	X	Scared, shocked, awareness	"Really scared-shocked that this is what-this is what's going on and this is what's okay and this is really what's happening now. This.. I mean I know his been happening-it wasn't- I didn't see it or I didn't know about it but now that I am able to see, I can't believe that this is what's really going on. It's very shocking."

Table 5

Raw Interview Data, Question 9

Subject	Positive	Negative	Interview Responses
RP-A	X	Will not call	"I will not call the police."
RP-B	Will engage if a particular threat	Decreased willingness to contact for petty crimes, decreased trust, decreased willingness to engage police if Blacks and doubting about Whites too	"Umm-it has decreased my willingness to report insignifi- what I would deem as insignificant crime umm due to less trust in their ability to resolve it in appropriate manners. So in other words, I would be less likely to call to engage the police in something if it was minimal if it was like something like petty theft for example I'm a manager at a sports complex-we have kids steal from the vending machines from time to time. I would be less likely to engage them in-in a situation like that even with a grown adult because I feel more able to resolve and make something right than trusting it in their hands. Umm not that I wouldn't -I would engage the police if I felt that there was a certain level of threat. Ummm, but for like what I- what I would consider like something not very harmful not very threatening, I- I'm not gonna engage them-especially if it's a person of color. I don't. Yeah-Yeah. No-I don't think I would do it for a White person anymore to be honest. I was like yeah."
RP-C	Will still report-no change	X	"Umm-I don't think it changed it all because I would have reported the crime -before before the media coverage."
RP-D	X	Scared to report, don't feel safe to repor,; scared of police	"Umm, because it's I-I wouldn't feel safe uh reporting it or or involving myself in it uh if I'm not directly involved uh because I don't I don't. I wouldn't feel safe you know as far as the consequences of that you know cause you know in my opinion, they stick together uh at all cost so I wouldn't -I wouldn't put myself in in harm's way or the situation."
RP-E	Will still contact the police to report-no change	X	"Ummm, media-the media-umm-showing of that-it wouldn't affect me still-I still would contact the police to report a crime if. If I needed to call the police, I still would call the police."
RP-F	X	Not willing to report, don't want a victim's death to be on conscience for reporting	"Ummm-I don't think I'd be-willing to-to report a crime. Because like I said, I don't know if they there to protect or they there to hurt the person and I definitely don't want that to fall on my guilty conscience that this man has lost his life nall instead of being just handcuffed."
RP-G	X	Now unwilling due to risk of escalating to death	"Uhhh-I'm more unwilling uhhh just because things can escalate to that."
RP-H	Would monitor situations in which to contact	Fearful of police, fearful of force used	Uhhh-it yeah-it does affect it because it makes me monitor the situations in which I would call the police simply because they're they're I try to see how they would look at a situation and they might come with aggression on a higher level than it needs to be and that can just turn everything into something else. So their aggression and their force is very fearful and in some situations it can just make everything worse. So it is monitored when to call them."

Table 6

Raw Interview Data, Question 10

Subject	Positive	Negative	Interview Responses
RP-A	X	Won't call due to threat to community	"If the call is for assistance, a crime attempt, I will not be able to call the police because sometimes it can be bad to the community."
RP-B	Would call for police assistance; wouldn't hesitate to call; Feel less threat because of White privilege;	X	"Umm. I would call. I have called and I would call for police assistance for myself. Umm I do feel slightly less at risk because I'm a White female. Umm and-like I recognize that there's that- I think there is a slight privilege there where I get-I feel more safe calling them for help than I would imagine any Black person would. Umm so yeah-if I felt threatened, I would- I mean I wouldn't hesitate to call them. I called them when I when-my daughter was missing once and they helped me find her and you know that was a-It was a meaningful experience for me. Yeah. For sure."
RP-C	Feel less threat because of White privilege	More cautious to request police assistance if a Black man was involved; would call and hope position would prevent treating victim as perpetrator	"Uhh I think it made me uh more cautious to request police assistance if it was a Black man that was involved, I would look at where I was. If the police there had a history of crimes against Black men umm being an attorney though I feel like I'm in a position where if I saw a Black man Black men umm in trouble and that was in need of protection since we do live in a country where you call the police when they're supposed to protect you-I would- and I am a white female with privilege. I would call the police knowing that because of my privilege I would be in a position to hopefully make sure that the police did what they're suppose to do and help the person ummm instead of treating a Black man who's a victim as a perpetrator. But it would make me cautious."
RP-D	X	Scared to contact; police don't have best interest at heart; wouldn't feel safe; viewing deeply affects	"Cause I don't feel that they have my best interest at heart so I wouldn't report it uh I wouldn't do- I wouldn't do anything uh because like I said, I wouldn't feel safe to do it. But viewing it is just-it does hit close to home and so it it affects me uh deeply so. It's frightening-it's scary actually."
RP-E	Would still contact if need	X	"It wouldn't affect it-if I-if I still needed to contact the police."
RP-F	X	Scared to contact; police won't deescalate; police worsen situation; fear of others losing their life if police is contacted	"Umm, I really don't know if I would call the police if I needed assistance either. (giggling) I would be too afraid that instead of ummm deescalating the situation, they might make the situation even worse than what it really is. So I don't want anybody to lose their life just because we are trying to deescalate a situation and the police come out to make it even worse so."
RP-G	X	More unwilling to call unless witnessing an actual crime; fear police will escalate with unarmed Black men or others	"Uhhhh-I-I just don't want things to escalate with a unarmed Black man or anyone in that matter uhhh for no reason so instead of uhhhh calling them whenever-I-I'm just more unwilling to call them unless I actually see uh a real crime being committed."
RP-H	X	Would not call unless last resort; would not call unless dying situation-"last breath"	"Uhhhh-it's kind of the same as well because they're-I-I really feel like I will only call someone if I am like I would only call someone if I am dying-if I am on my last breath. I wouldn't really call for anything really like-other than that because I'm not sure what what they're going to do or how it's going to turn out. That incorporating them is it's -it's a risk-it's not -it's not what you think it was or what it used to be or whatever the case. It's just not to that standard anymore. So it's-it's hard to trust them in a situation."

Table 7

Raw Interview Data, Question 13

Subject	Positive	Negative	Interview Responses
RP-A	X	Views changed; police bad response	"I think ummm my views only calling the police have changed a lot. I think of them ummm with a bad response especially when they commit a crime so that is why I will not call."
RP-B	X	Don't want to engage police especially when people of color; nervous to engage police; question whether police are there for safety or harm	I mean-I'm just-I'm just more nervous ummm about engaging the police and especially their engagement with people of color. I live in a very diverse neighborhood which I love about my neighborhood and I would like to think that my neighborhood is a safe place you know so-I don't like the feeling of questioning whether or not the police are a part of that safety or a part of that harm or threat and I don't know the answers because I don't know what police officers are doing. So I wish I was better informed. I wish they were informing the public. But I'm also someone who doesn't really watch the news so I'm not prone to being informed if that makes sense."
RP-C	X	Changed from positive perspective of helping to negative perspective of endangering; awareness of differential treatment of Blacks compared to White privilege	It changed my perspective from growing up thinking that you call the police when you're in trouble to understanding that a large portion of the American public feared police justifiably so because when they were called for help they instead treated Black people as perpetrators instead of victims which is completely different than how police would treat me as a White woman if I called for help."
RP-D	X	Uncomfortable around police; gotten worse	Uh-it's changed uh through the years because like I said I grew up always uncomfortable around the police but it's gotten worse the older I get as far -you know-when I see these things happen it makes me more uncomfortable as the years go by.
RP-E	Views haven't changed	X	My views haven't changed.
RP-F	X	Views have changed; more cautious and careful; wouldn't call 911	Oh they have definitely changed. Definitely. Like you really have to be careful. If you-If I really want to call 911, I really have to be careful about what I'm calling about. But other than that, I truly don't believe I would call 911.
RP-G	X	Don't call the police; haven't called in years; mind own business unless witnessing an actual crime	I -I don't call. Uhh I haven't called the police in a few years now. When it comes to other people, I tend to mind my business more unless it's a real crime being committed in my eyes.
RP-H	Bringing social & community union; public awareness	Marches and movements against the police;	Ummm-I like how everyone has come together-you know the celebrities are more involved with Black movements-and and-movements against the police and brands are following the movement as well. I like how people can see marches and join that it-it it has it makes people aware and it's-people are taking action on it so I think that media coverage is really great and it's a great way to alert people in some form of fashion that this is going on.

Table 8

Raw Interview Data, Question 14

Subject	Positive	Negative	Interview Responses
RP-A	X	Harmful effects on the community-especially the Black community; takes time to heal	"I think umm it's harmful and going to take some time-especially for them and the Black community."
RP-B	X	Police don't know how to engage or deescalate; lack the skills and tools to help; play huge part in murdering and killing people; "ill-equipped"; officer is responsible and accountable as they hold power and authority	"I think that my-they're-like crying for help- ummm a lot of the people that I've seen being harmed are crying out for help and obviously it just seems so apparent that the officers do not have the skills-do not have the tools to help those people. They don't know how to engage them. They don't know how to deescalate them. They're escalating the situation to a really dangerous position and overexerting authority. So Ummm- I just-when I see those things I think that they're "ill-equipped" and sometimes the other party is less equipped, because of whatever mindset- state of mind, etcetera ummm but they're not the ones with the responsibilities that the officers hold in that situation with the power and authority that they have and also it's their job to deescalate those situations-you know? So I put more responsibility on the officers than I do even on the men who were behaving in some criminal activity. I don't think that that-that does not negate the officers' responsibility and the part-the huge part-that they have in murdering and killing and harming people."
RP-C	X	Troubling; massive problem; police abuse authority & power; racism; police arrive with aggressive & prejudiced predetermined outlook; police reform is necessary	"That there's a massive problem with police ummm exercising abuses of power based on their own racism and uhh I-to me it's -it's -it's-you have to look at the individuals involved. It's-it's troubling-beyond troubling that uh a man-forget that they're a police officer would arrive at the scene when they're supposed to help- see a human being in need or just somebody that somebody called in a suspic-suspicious tip instead of giving that person the benefit of the doubt or treating them as they would me-a White woman that they appro.. that they arrive at the scene with an aggressive and prejudiced viewpoint and a predetermined outlook that they need to treat this person as a suspect or a criminal and I think that it's more pervasive than I was aware of based on the media coverage and I think that significant police reform is umm necessary especially when

Subject	Positive	Negative	Interview Responses
			the victims are Black men like Elijah McClain who appears to have had you know, I-I can't recall if he was on the spectrum or something, but he had specific needs that police should be trained to deal with because he was not a threat to those officers. He was somebody that maybe was unable to ummm you know verbalize as well as somebody who didn't have those struggles and instead of recognizing that the police took it -you know as him being a criminal which was the farthest thing from the truth."
RP-D	X	Police side with police; protect each other; all connected	"I think they side towards the side of the police without even knowing the full story or anything I just think they are all together in this type of situation-the media and the police. I think they are connected in a way."
RP-E	X	Don't witness occurrences happen to any other race of people; police should use the same restraints as they use for other races	"The message that I'm-that I'm saying-that I'm-I'm not witnessing uhhh this happen to any other race of people so there must be restraints and some type of ummm compliance when handling other races and just why is it uhhh unarmed Black men that it has to be a fatal death sentence?"
RP-F	X	Police are fearful; cowards; misuse of power; unfair treatment	"Umm, they definitely not treated as fair as ummm those of non-color sooo and like I said I feel like it's about power-they're scared-they're cowards, and this is happening a lot."
RP-G	X	Police don't take it seriously; police gets off easily; no accountability or liability; recurring problem	"Ummm.. I feel like they don't take it serious at all because after one incident happens, another one happens and the officer usually gets off pretty easy. It just happens all over again."
RP-H	X	Arrest the police; hold police accountable; sentence police the same-especially if victims are defenseless; stop normalizing police killing victims	"Arrest the police. Sentence them-Don't they-just because they have a badge, do not let them get off because okay you killed someone you know that happens in life but you can't- that can't be excused because you decided to be a officer of the law. That's just not okay. We can't excuse that. Especially if the victim is defenseless, that's just not right. So that's the message that I-I don't really-I-get the Black Lives Matter message too. But arrest the police is the main one that I get. Sentence them just the same."

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore what influence media coverage of police-caused deaths of unarmed Black men has on the inclination of non-Black residents to report crime or contact police for assistance. To aid in reporting the findings of this study, I constructed tables with interview questions that were most relevant to the call of the research question. I gathered perceptions of the respondents' reactions and feelings of media coverage of police-caused deaths of unarmed Black men and used raw data from interview responses to aid in understanding what influence media coverage of police-caused deaths involving unarmed Black men has on subjects' willingness or unwillingness to contact police for assistance. Additionally, I wanted to explore how what was seen or heard in the media regarding the incidence of police killing unarmed African American men, would shape respondents' perceptions of the phenomena, law enforcement, and even the victims of these fatal encounters.

The findings reflected a consensus that media coverage enlightened the public and enabled awareness that the phenomena are a social problem. Almost all subjects mentioned how they were emotionally or negatively affected after viewing media coverage of deadly force situations involving unarmed Black men. Several of the participants expressed sadness and all discussed having empathy for the family and friends of victims of police-caused deaths.

Summary

The results revealed that respondents had mixed perceptions of both police officers and victims after publicity of officer-involved deaths of unarmed Black men. When questioned about perceptions of police, some respondents felt that the police

generally carry out their job responsibilities to protect and serve and are needed in the community. Few participants communicated that they would still contact the police for assistance if they needed to. Most participants believed that the victims were defenseless and therefore, blameless. Some respondents thought the victims shared the blame by not complying while other respondents placed the responsibility on the poorly trained officer as opposed to the unarmed citizen. All respondents expressed sympathy for the families and friends of the victims.

Findings reflected that majority of participants who negatively perceived media coverage of fatal police encounters of unarmed Black men were unwilling or reluctant to report crime or contact 911. The findings also illustrated that out of those who were willing to report, phenomena-induced media influence, caused several respondents to place stipulations on what type of incidences or crimes would warrant calling 911. Perceived media coverage of the phenomena impacted most of the subjects' willingness to contact police for assistance. Conversely, more than half respondents expressed that they regarded media coverage of fatal police encounters contradictory to police officers' duties of being public servants and conveyed thoughts of police officers abusing their power and authority, instilling fear in the community, and lacking adequate training. Most respondents shared they lacked trust in law enforcement and would not call for police assistance. In Chapter 5, I present an interpretation of the findings, limitations of the study, recommendations, implications, and the chapter's conclusion.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the influence of perceived media coverage of police-caused deaths of unarmed Black men and its impact on the inclination of non-Black residents to report crime or contact police for assistance. For this study, I used an interview protocol and semistructured interviews consisting of 20 open-ended questions, three of which were two-pronged. Interviews were conducted with non-Black residents who were exposed to media coverage of at least one specified high-profile case of an officer-involved death of an unarmed Black man (Elijah McClain, Daniel Prude, or George Floyd). Participants were residents of Atlanta, Georgia; New Orleans, Louisiana; and Detroit, Michigan. The study was structured to obtain in-depth information from respondents regarding whether their likelihood of dialing 911 to report crime or request police assistance was affected by how they perceived publicity of police-caused deaths of unarmed Black men.

Using an inductive approach for data analysis, I established links between research objectives and summary findings. Key findings derived from analyses of respondents reflected emergent themes that I clustered into seven broad categories: (a) perceptions of police, (b) perceptions of media coverage, (c) perceptions of victims, (d) perceptions of justification of the phenomena, (e) perceptions of society and the phenomena, (f) willingness or unwillingness to report crime or contact police for assistance, and (g) proposed solutions to the phenomena. Residents who negatively perceived media coverage of police-caused deaths of unarmed Black men do not trust and

fear law enforcement. Several participants believed that police officers are ill-equipped and need proper training. Most respondents were not willing or were reluctant to report crime or contact police for assistance after publicity of police-caused deaths of unarmed Black men. Other key findings were congruent with the belief that victims need to comply, and law enforcement have good intentions but used poor judgment or made human error during encounters with unarmed Black men. In this chapter, I provide an interpretation of the findings, limitations of the study, recommendations, implications, and the study's conclusion.

Interpretation of the Findings

Results of the study illustrate that most of the participants are unwilling to report crime or contact police for assistance after viewing media coverage of police-caused deaths of unarmed Black men. Nonetheless, several respondents emphasized that for their personal safety and security, they were willing to call 911 if they need assistance. Research findings of the current study confirm and extend knowledge in the discipline. Current literature posits high-profile cases of police violence lower citizen crime reporting. Desmond et al. (2016; 2020) demonstrated that police brutality was associated with a reduction of 911 calls in Milwaukee after a news story was made public involving an unarmed Black man who was beaten by White police officers.

In this study, a reduction of potential 911 calls was associated with perceived influence of publicity of police-caused deaths of unarmed Black men. Findings confirm knowledge in the discipline as discussed in Chapter 2. When asked how viewing media on the phenomena affected willingness or unwillingness to report crime, four of eight

participants voiced they are unwilling to report crime, two of eight experienced a decrease in willingness to report crime (including one who admitted contingency in certain situations to report), and two of eight reported having no changes. In reference to contacting police for assistance, three participants shared they would contact, two participants would not contact, one participant would only contact police in a life-and-death situation, one participant would only contact if witnessing a crime, and one participant is undecided. Congruent to the findings in current literature, most citizens were reluctant and unwilling to report crime after publicity of police violence (Desmond et al., 2016; 2020).

Findings also disconfirm research that contradicts existing literature regarding publicized officer-involved killings and citizen crime reporting. Zoorob (2020) refuted Desmond et al.'s (2016; 2020) conclusions that police killings hamper crime reporting even though they "have deleterious social consequences" (p. 177). According to the findings in this study, (a) fear of law enforcement, (b) lack of trust in law enforcement, (c) noncooperation with police, and (d) as one participant stated, "societal trauma" has resulted, which can be characterized as "deleterious social consequences" as Zoorob (2020) asserted. However, Zoorob's (2020) claim that police killings did not hamper crime reporting was disconfirmed in the present study as subjects expressed not wanting to report crime due to their perceptions of media coverage of police-caused deaths of unarmed Black men.

My phenomenological study embodied a synthesis of theories and concepts: ideal victim theory, cultivation theory, police legitimacy, and legal cynicism. Nil Christie's

(1986) ideal victim theory implies that an ideal victim is perceived as blameless by observers or the public if viewed as a legitimate victim. Expanding on Christie's assertions, Schwöbel-Patel (2018) described legitimate victims as those who are: weaker than the perpetrator, acting during routine activities, unable to blame for their victimization, not personally associated with the perpetrator, and physically or psychologically weaker than the perpetrator. Findings of this study support that respondents felt that unarmed Black men who met their demise by law enforcement, particularly in the referenced high-profile cases (Elijah McClain, Daniel Prude, and or George Floyd), were legitimate victims and were blameless for their deaths.

Most participants indicated that police officers who caused deaths of unarmed Black men are at fault and lethal use of force should have been avoided. In relation to ideal victim theory, the unarmed victims were perceived as blameless and defenseless due to their law enforcement counterparts being armed and not using nonlethal alternatives during the fatal encounters. However, some participants suggested that victims should comply to reduce the risk of being killed during interactions with police. Relative to Christie's (1986) inference, in the instance of these findings, citizens did not place blame on the decedent victims as they described the victims as defenseless and physically weaker than their police officer counterparts.

Gerbner (1998) reasoned that long-term media exposure influences how people perceive the world as well as how they respond to that perception in cultivation theory. Gerbner (1998) rationalized that, in cultivation theory, viewers engross similar meanings from what they view, an inclusion of an ongoing process comprised of a merger of

messages and contexts, and many of these messages heighten the fear of crime. Cultivation theory is conceptualized as media's power to "define social reality" affecting "how we act in the social world" and social realities are likely influenced or conditioned by media to some extent (Rzicznek, 2023, p. 247). During their interviews, all eight participants gave unfavorable responses when asked how they felt about police officers involved in fatal encounters involving unarmed Black men. Several respondents said they are unwilling or reluctant to report crime or contact police for assistance because of fear of the police or belief that police would not help in a situation, after media coverage of fatal encounters involving law enforcement and unarmed Black men.

In the context of cultivation theory and its relation to the current study, research findings reflect participants gathered mixed messages from publicity of police-caused deaths of unarmed Black men. Most respondents perceived police officers as threatening, and congruent to the premise of cultivation theory, most participants expressed fear of law enforcement after media exposure of officer-involved killings of unarmed Black men. Moreover, most subjects felt that media coverage on the phenomena (a) vilifies police officers and victims, (b) displays excessive coverage of Black suspects, and (c) produces fear of both police and Black men. Consistent with Gerbner's theory, crime reporting may be influenced by how media coverage of police-caused deaths of unarmed Black men is perceived as law enforcement or Black men may appear as dangerous or frightening.

Police legitimacy and police cynicism both aid in understanding how such positive or negative feelings regarding the police are derived. Police legitimacy is a

favorable perspective of police officers, based on trust or perceived competence in law enforcement and policing. In contrast, police cynicism is the unfavorable perspective of police officers, based on distrust or perceived incompetence in law enforcement and policing. Legitimacy in the police is achieved when public opinion adjudicates fairness in authorities or institutions, giving entitlement to be obeyed (Sunshine & Tyler, 2003). The concept of legal cynicism expresses cynical attitudes in reference to police competency and trustworthiness, and often results in public dissatisfaction with police (Sampson & Bartusch, 1998). Sunshine & Tyler (2003) asserted that society is divided over its feelings for the police, however, if the public equates the exercise of authority to unfairness, it is reasonable to speculate that alienation, defiance, or noncooperation will ensue.

Results in this study corroborated Sunshine & Tyler (2003) assertion regarding society's mixed perceptions of police officers. Some respondents felt that the police were good, some felt police officers did more damage than good, and some shared both favorable and unfavorable feelings regarding the police simultaneously. The participants in this investigation were all residents of predominantly Black cities. Cynical attitudes towards the police and perceptions of legal injustice were the greatest in neighborhoods where Blacks and residents from lower socio-economic classes reside (Sampson & Bartusch, 1998). In relation to the context of study results, most subjects displayed cynical attitudes towards police officers. Several respondents felt police officers abuse their authority. McCarthy et al. (2020) analyzed measures of legal cynicism and found

that persistent complaints of police misconduct, like the current study's findings, also involved expressions against police abuse of power.

Most subjects did not express personal unfavorable views of law enforcement per se. However, six of eight participants gave negative responses when asked to describe police officers who engaged in fatal encounters with unarmed Black men and to be more specific: "against Blacks", "criminals", "guilty", "cowards", "monsters", and "crazy" were descriptions used by respondents. Two of eight participants expressed that because of media coverage of officer-involved deaths of unarmed Black men, their trust in police officers had decreased. Several participants conveyed that police officers were incompetent, and as RP-B stated, "ill-equipped." Yet, other participants expressed that some police officers are good, and some are bad.

RP-A discussed good interactions with law enforcement and felt that police, in general, support the community well. RP-H described officers as "regular people" and to caveat, RP-E communicated that police officers who used lethal force on unarmed Black men made human error and failed to use "good judgment." Gingerich and Oliveros (2018) concluded that diverse populations throughout the world have "presented evidence showing that perceived police competence, effectiveness, and fairness have a positive effect on the likelihood of crime reporting" (p.81). Collectively, these views highlighted both cynical and optimistic attitudes regarding policemen. Yet, even with favorable and unfavorable positions, most respondents were unwilling to engage law enforcement in future encounters.

Limitations of the Study

As the sole researcher, my aim in this qualitive exploration was to ensure that my analyses and interpretations were an accurate depiction of the data collected, and there was confidence in what I reported and presented. Lincoln and Guba (1986) emphasized that one of the most consequential elements in qualitative research is establishing trustworthiness. The main limitations that arose from trustworthiness in this study encompassed issues with scare literature, participant selection, and sample size. A major limitation of the study is that this research is a study of first impression. There were limited research studies that provided theoretical foundations to assist with answering my research question. I relied on current literature in topic-related studies to aid in developing my research typology.

One limitation is that the purpose of this qualitative study included an intent to gain insight from participants who did not identify as African American or Black. The exclusion of African American and Black respondents placed limitations on this study. Due to exclusion criteria, the findings are not applicable to any members of the African American or Black population, which reduces transferability of the general population.

Another limitation in this study was the small sample size. Participants were residents from Atlanta, Georgia, New Orleans, Louisiana, and Detroit, Michigan. Only eight residents of the targeted areas were interviewed. Hennink and Kaiser (2022) clarified that small sample sizes are effective "because they are able to reach saturation, the long-held benchmark for an adequate sample size" and saturation "is the most common guiding principle for assessing purposive samples in qualitative research" (p. 8).

Lastly, the participants were from limited targeted areas and were residents of Atlanta, Georgia; Detroit, Michigan; and New Orleans, Louisiana. Despite several limitations, I am confident that I was able to fulfill the study's purpose while simultaneously building a new theory to bridge a gap in the literature (see Carminati, 2018). More significantly, I maintained research integrity throughout this study.

Recommendations

Findings of this qualitative study suggest that future research on this phenomenon may benefit the criminal justice system and society overall. Garza et al. (2017) contended that including racial and ethnic minorities in research is critical for generalizability of results. Future research using an increased sample size, from all races in the general population, can assist in investigating citizens' perceptions of publicity of police-caused deaths of unarmed Black men and its influence on citizen crime reporting or placing 911 calls. I would also recommend future exploration of perceived media influence from police-caused deaths involving unarmed Black people, in general (both men and women victims), and its impact on citizen crime reporting. Findings of this study can also be expanded by exploring perception from citizens who are residents from localities throughout the United States.

Implications

This phenomenological inquiry aimed to investigate what influence media coverage of police-caused deaths involving unarmed Black men has on the inclination of non-Black residents to report crime or to contact police for assistance. The findings of this research study implicate that citizens have mixed perceptions (both favorable and

unfavorable) of media of police-caused deaths of unarmed Black men. The propensity to report crime and call police for assistance is influenced by the respondents' perceptions of the media. The potential impact for positive social change may be applied to various levels of interest: individual, familial, organizational, and societal.

Individual Implications

Researchers have broadly documented perceptions of police among racial / ethnic minorities in which Black individuals were more likely to view the police less favorably than White and Latino respondents (Jackson et al., 2021). Results of this study reflected that non-Black participants had mixed perceptions of the police and perceptions of the police can impact a citizen's willingness to report crime or contact law enforcement for assistance. In this research, although there were favorable perceptions of the police, results indicated most of the respondents (non-Black residents) disclosed unfavorable attitudes of the police based on their feelings of publicized fatal encounters of unarmed Black men with law enforcement. These findings can bring awareness to potential prejudices or biases that may cause obstruction of contacting the police or reporting crime.

Research findings of this study have the potential to promote positive social change at the individual level. Results reflected that how respondents viewed media coverage or publicity of police-caused deaths of unarmed Black men influenced their attitudes towards policing, law enforcement, victims of fatal police encounters, crime reporting, and contacting the police for assistance. Foremost, police officers may be able to gain insight on ill perceptions from residents, which may cause changes in their

individual behavior or actions during encounters with citizens. Perception is subjective and occurs on an individual level. Several participants of this study expressed a newfound awareness of their own media-derived biases during the interviews. As a result of these findings, citizens may realize the significance of crime reporting and may shift any perceptions which may hinder them from contacting police for assistance. An introspective revelation may promote positive social change by inducing a willingness to report crime or may positively influence views on reporting crime, regardless of media influence or perception of the police.

Familial Implications

As several respondents reported, the interview process made them conscious of their own positions (favorable and unfavorable) of reporting crime resulting from their reactions to media coverage of officer-involved deaths of unarmed Black men. One participant who previously did not want to report crime based on assessment of media, reconsidered reporting crime mid-interview. Tösten et al. (2017) asserted that individuals who are in constant interaction with the environment are affected mostly by families. Research findings of this study have the potential impact to promote positive social change at the family level.

Respondents may share their realizations or views of reporting crime with their children and other family members. In reference to family influence, "academic studies of police–minority community relations have underscored the importance of learning of family members' and friends' police interactions for collectively shaping citizen perceptions of police legitimacy" (Brunson, 2015, p. 509). In the instance of parenting,

parental attitudes have been shown to have a significant impact on the child's behaviors (Tösten et al., 2017). Favorable attitudes towards reporting crime or contacting police for assistance can be shared with family members, especially impressionable children.

Organizational Implications

This research may lead to positive social change on an organizational level by providing insight on citizen–perception and public opinion of law enforcement, which police departments and law enforcement agencies can use in policy reform and police reform efforts. Desmond et al. (2016) claimed that police misconduct can powerfully suppress one of the most basic forms of civic engagement: calling 911 for matters of personal and public safety. Law enforcement agencies can use this research as a guide to improve and / or implement police–community relations. Effective community policing strategies can foster better police–civilian relationships, increase police-related calls, and reduce fear and public distrust of police.

Societal Implications

Social implications may also include policy reform and changes in the private and public sector of the criminal justice system, which also may minimize civil unrest and increase citizen cooperation with the police, including crime reporting. The results of this study illustrate that respondents, no matter how favorable or unfavorable they viewed police, described negative (physical and emotional) reactions and disagreed with deadly force being used on unarmed Black men. One participant in the current study regarded the incidence of police-caused deaths of unarmed Black men as an "ongoing trauma" and "a societal trauma." Police violence has been recognized as a public health issue,

generating calls for increased research and systematic data collection (Jackson et al., 2021).

Bor et al. (2018) demonstrated in studies that "police killings of unarmed [B]lack Americans have adverse effects on mental health among [B]lack Americans in the general population" (p. 309). This study may also be used to help reduce the psychological aftermath of citizens' deaths resulting from encounters with law enforcement. Desmond et al. (2016) claimed that police violence thwarts the suppression of lawbreaking and obstructs the application of justice. If citizens do not report crime, offenders are left in society, unpunished, and have access to reoffend. The results of this study could also be used to improve crime reporting policies and crime reporting rates, and aid in public safety and police reform nationwide.

Theoretical Implications

Desmond et al. (2016) emphasized that calling 911 to report a crime is the most basic act of reliance on the legal system in contemporary society and theorized that publicized cases of police violence against unarmed Black men have a clear and significant impact on citizen crime reporting. The findings of this study are congruent with Desmond et al. (2016; 2020) conclusions that publicity of police violence against unarmed Black men significantly impacts citizen crime reporting. Hagan et al. (2018) found that cynicism has a direct effect on 911 calls by citizens seeking protection and prevention. The findings of the current study depicted that most respondents were unwilling to report crime or dial 911, largely due to perception of law enforcement derived from media influence of officer-involved deaths of unarmed Black men. The

study outcomes have the potential to positively impact public safety by increasing 911 calls, the first and among the most important acts of cooperation with the police, who in many cases can respond to criminal activity only if it is reported (Desmond et al., 2016). I would recommend that law enforcement agencies utilize these findings to mitigate instances of excessive use of force, especially deadly force inflicted upon unarmed citizens. Moreover, agencies should implement training and preventative measures to reduce and or avoid incidences of police-caused deaths of unarmed Black men, employ non-lethal measures during encounters, and strive to improve trust and citizen satisfaction with the police.

Conclusion

In summary, there is little research on how crime-related 911 calls originating from Black neighborhoods are impacted by publicity of violent police-citizen encounters. Recent research revealed that 911 calls originating from Black neighborhoods plummeted after publicity of violent police-citizen encounters (Desmond et al., 2020). However, until this study, there was no research on how media-influenced perception of police-caused deaths involving unarmed Black men affects the likelihood of non-Black residents to report crime or contact police for assistance. The present study addressed this gap by exploring attitudes of non-Black residents who reside in predominantly-Black cities, a subject demographic never visited on this topic until now.

This study of first impression was initiated due to the flux of recurring media coverage of high-profile cases of unarmed Black men killed by police officers. When this research began, Elijah McClain, a non-violent Black man walking home from a

convenience store, was the most recent high-profile case of an officer-involved death of an unarmed Black man. In the McClain case, three police officers unlawfully stopped him, which led to the placement of a carotid chokehold and Mr. McClain's demise. Officer-worn body camera footage later revealed that Elijah McClain did nothing wrong and even apologized before he lost consciousness for vomiting resulting from the carotid chokehold (McCandless & Zavatarro, 2020). Months later, Daniel Prude, an unarmed Black man experienced a psychotic episode and was killed because of police violence. Officers placed a bag over Prude's head, which caused asphyxia.

From the onset of this examination, breaking news highlighted story after story of incidences of police-caused deaths of unarmed Black men and then the pivotal George Floyd tragedy happened. Seeing George Floyd cry out for his "Mama" on television before he lost consciousness shocked the conscience of many viewers. This research investigation did not focus on the race of police officers involved in deaths of unarmed Black men as police officers come from various racial backgrounds and compositions. In general, minorities have been found to hold negative opinions of police (Levan & Stevenson, 2019). Instead of obtaining perspectives from Blacks or African Americans, I chose a different approach in this exploration. Rather, the focus of this study was the non-Black voice-to ascertain how other races (different from the victims' race) perceived media of officer-involved killings, and how those perceptions influenced their willingness to report crime or contact 911 for assistance.

Although my qualitative inquiry was circumscribed to high-profile cases, Desmond et al. (2018) purported that it does not take a major or local event to reduce

crime reporting. In analyses of gathered data, I found positive and negative community perceptions of law enforcement and realized there is no objectivity in perception. Yet, there is objectivity in realizing the need for change when citizens report that they do not want to call 911. In reference to unarmed citizens dying by the hands of police officers, public welfare and public safety necessitates police reform, especially when citizens are made to call the police on the police. Brunson (2015) asserted that police–community relations tend to be most strained and characterized by deeply rooted mutual suspicion. Inherently, there appears to be a reciprocated societal fear: some citizens fear police officers just as some police officers fear citizens.

The findings of this study confirmed that citizens of other races, outside of Blacks and African Americans, also exhibit adverse effects, such as fear, from publicity of fatal officer–citizen encounters. Campbell and Valera (2020) concluded that witnessing publicized police killings of unarmed Black men has resulted in psychological trauma and leads to anxiety and fear for future police encounters. Calling 911 is paradoxical as many residents report negative experiences with police but look to them to prevent crime and protect them from it (Hagan et al., 2018). In this study, respondents who did not have a direct fear of future encounters, reported a vicarious fear for what could happen to unarmed Black men in future police encounters, which also caused an unwillingness or reluctance to report crime. Nonetheless, avoidance of reporting misconduct is still a compromised component of public safety.

This research was needed because police killings affect many stakeholders. The most consequential stakeholders are citizens. Public safety encompasses a collaborative

effort between both law enforcement and citizens. Residents of inner cities are more likely to distrust or fear police officers (Levan & Stevenson, 2019). The findings of this study indicated that most participants reported lack of trust and unwillingness or reluctance to interact with police (including reporting crime or contacting police for assistance) because of perceived media influence of police-caused deaths of unarmed Black men.

The most significant takeaway message I gathered from this qualitative inquiry is that improved police-community relations are needed. Citizens should have enough trust and confidence in the police to report crime. Citizens fear crime, in general, regardless of the perpetrator or any title the perpetrator may hold. Fear affects crime reporting intentions, especially when police officers are the fearmongers. Strengthened police-community relations may change citizens' attitudes by improving relationships between residents and officers, which may reduce fear of law enforcement. When read and reviewed, this research may offer valuable insight to aid in improving police-community relations, implementing public safety strategies, and improving policing outcomes. Consequently, police reform is needed so that when police officers respond to requests to protect lives, they are not the ones taking lives.

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Appendix A: Study Invitation

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED FOR RESEARCH PARTICIPATION
For Research Study on perceptions of media coverage of police-caused deaths involving unarmed African American male victims

How do you feel after seeing footage of fatal police encounters involving unarmed Black men?
If you are at least 18 years old and would like to share your thoughts of media influence from fatal police encounters with unarmed African American men and would like to discuss how your thoughts affect your willingness or unwillingness to call 911, this study may be for you.

Participants must:

- **Be at least 18 years of age**
- **Be a resident of Atlanta, Georgia; Baltimore, Maryland; Detroit, Michigan; Memphis, Tennessee; or New Orleans, Louisiana**
- **Not identify as "Black" or "African American"**
- **Have seen video or news coverage of at least 1 of these 3 high-profile cases of a police-caused death (Daniel Prude, Elijah McClain, or George Floyd)**
- **Speak, read, and write fluent English**

Those Interested will be asked to:
- **Complete a pre-participation research participant screening form**

If selected, Participants will be asked to:
- **Participate in a Zoom interview for 30 minutes to 2 hours (scheduled within 2 weeks from selection date)**
- **Participate in a 15-minute follow-up session upon study completion**

If you meet the above criteria and are interested in volunteering for participation in this study, please click on the following link or copy and paste into browser:
https://forms.gle/TZSBfbQKSyag38QW7
For any questions regarding the study or participation, please email:
[REDACTED]
and place "Research Participation" in the subject field
or call [REDACTED].
For confidentiality purposes, please do not respond to ad on social media.

Appendix B: Research Preparticipation Screening Form

Research Pre-Participation Screening Form

Thank you for your interest in participating in this research study!
This form is used for screening purposes to determine eligibility to participate as a research subject in a study on perceived media influence of publicity of police-caused deaths of unarmed Black or African American men.

* Required

1. **What is your current age?** *

    _____

2. **What is your current city and state of residence?** *

    _____

3. **What is your race?** *

    Mark only one oval.

    ◯ White

    ◯ Black or African American

    ◯ American Indian or Alaska Native

    ◯ Asian

    ◯ Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander

    ◯ Other

4. **Have you seen video or news coverage on the police-caused death of Daniel** * **Prude, Elijah McClain, or George Floyd? If so, please indicate which incident you have seen media coverage of.**

Mark only one oval.

◯ No, I have not seen video or news coverage on either of these incidents.

◯ Yes, I have seen video or news coverage on at least one of these incidents.

◯ Yes, I have seen video or news coverage on at least two of these incidents.

◯ Yes, I have seen video or news coverage on all three of these incidents.

5. Do you speak, read, and write fluent English? *

Mark only one oval.

◯ Yes

◯ No

6. If you would like to volunteer to participate in this study, please continue to this link **Consent to Participate in Research Form**
DO NOT ENTER TEXT INTO THIS FIELD

Appendix C: Interview Protocol

Researcher Introduction
Hello! Foremost, thank you for volunteering to participate in this interview and research study. Your time is greatly appreciated. I am Ty Woods, a doctoral student at Walden University, pursuing a PhD in Criminal Justice.

I am examining perceptions of non-Black residents who reside in predominantly Black cities. I am seeking understanding on perceptions of publicized police killings of unarmed African American men. The purpose of this study is to examine what influence media coverage of police-caused deaths involving unarmed Black men has on the inclination of non-Black residents to report crime or to contact police for assistance. In short, I am investigating how your views of media coverage on fatal police encounters of unarmed Black men affects your motivation to call or not call 911 to report crime or to request police assistance.

This is a judgement-free zone and I encourage you to be as open as possible. Your name will be masked using a coding system consisting of an alpha character pseudonym, such as "Research Participant A" that I will assign to your interview, and any data collected from your participation in this study for confidentiality purposes. During this interview session, audio will be recorded. You are encouraged to withdraw your participation from this interview or from this study at any time without any negative consequences. If you feel uncomfortable or choose to stop at any time, just let me know and I will stop the interview and discard any data collected. You are encouraged to ask any questions throughout this interview, even if you must interrupt.

If you need to take a break at any time during this interview, just let me know. Again, Thank you for your participation. Now let's proceed to the interview.

Participants Background Information
Please keep in mind that any reference to "Black" represents race: "Black" or "African American" indicates the same racial reference.

The following questions will be used for background information:
1. What is your current city and state of residence? How long have you lived there?
2. What is your association to employment in the criminal justice field or law enforcement?
3. What kind of relationship or interaction do you have with your neighbors?
4. How would you react if you saw an unfamiliar Black man jogging through your neighborhood? Why?
5. How do you feel about the overall safety of your community? Why do you feel this way?

Thank you for your responses. Now, we will proceed to the main interview, which is the Interview Questionnaire.

INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE
Interview Questions (1-10)

1. What is your personal experience with police officers and / or police interaction?

2. What are your views of police officers and why?

3. How do you feel about police officer presence in your community?

4. How would you describe police officers who are involved in fatal encounters involving unarmed Black men? How would you describe the unarmed Black men who die in fatal police encounters?

5. How has your attitude regarding the police changed from viewing a publicized and police-caused death of an unarmed Black man?

6. How has your attitude regarding Black men changed from viewing a publicized and police-caused death of an unarmed Black man?

7. How would you respond if you saw an unfamiliar man walking through your neighborhood? What if the unfamiliar man was Black?

8. How would you describe your reactions to seeing video or media coverage displaying a fatal police encounter involving an unarmed Black man?

9. How does viewing media of police-caused deaths of unarmed African American men affect your willingness or unwillingness to report crime and why?

10. How does viewing media of police-caused deaths of unarmed African American men affect your willingness or unwillingness to request police assistance and why?

11. What is your personal experience with dialing 911?

12. How do you associate police calls with police-caused deaths of unarmed Black men?

13. How have your views on calling the police changed since watching media coverage of fatal police encounters involving unarmed Black men?

14. What message do you gather from media coverage of deadly police encounters involving unarmed Black men?

15. What causes some police encounters involving unarmed Black men to end deadly?

16. What could justify a police officer using deadly force on an unarmed Black man?

17. How can law enforcement avoid the use of deadly force during encounters with unarmed Black men?

18. What can Black men who do not carry weapons do to avoid the risk of death during police encounters?

19. What can be done to reduce and / or avoid the occurrence(s) of police killings of unarmed Black men? Please explain.

20. How does publicity of police killings of unarmed Black men affect your life or quality of living? How does it affect your decision to reside in a predominantly Black city?