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Assessing African American Perceptions of Racial Discrimination by Law Enforcement in Rural South Georgia

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Walden University
2023

Abstract

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MPhil, Walden University, 2021

MA, Georgia Southern University, 2015

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Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

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Abstract

African Americans make up a very small percentage of our nation's population. However, studies have shown that they are treated unfairly by law enforcement at higher rates than their white counterparts. The purpose of this qualitative study was to utilize a phenomenological approach to assess the perceptions of the lived experience of African Americans who claim to have been the recipients of racial discrimination by police. The study specifically focused on targeted rural areas in South Georgia to determine if "rural" life would alter how recipients perceived the overall legitimacy of policing after encountering a racially discriminatory interaction with police. Equity theory was used as the theoretical foundation, which examines how individuals alter their attitudes and behavior when they perceive themselves to be in a situation that is unfair or imbalanced. This theoretical approach helped explain why the nine participants altered how they viewed police legitimacy after being treated unfairly by police to restore their perceived imbalance. The overall focus of the study was aimed at answering how residing in rural areas influences the way the recipients of racially discriminatory acts by police view the overall legitimacy of law enforcement. Findings suggested that in some instances, the recipients of racial discrimination were able to look past the isolated event. However, most of the findings suggested that the negative encounter with police deteriorated the concept of police legitimacy due to a lack of trust. Understanding where the potential opportunities are by examining the beforementioned perceptions allows specific recommendations to prevail promoting positive social change.

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Dedication

I would like to dedicate this study to those who have ever experienced an unwarranted negative interaction with law enforcement. There are thousands who wear the badge proudly and would lay down their life without question for those they have sworn to protect. Those officers are heroes and should be praised for their commitment, sacrifices, and honor. Unfortunately, many of us have had that positive first impression stolen by negative interactions with police, which not only discredits all the positive things law enforcement provides but also creates a negative perception that otherwise wouldn't exist.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank God and my wife for all the encouragement over the past few years as I traveled down this doctoral journey. I understand that the past couple of years have been emotionally, financially, and mentally difficult for my family and I greatly appreciate their commitment to my dreams. I will never be able to express in words how much their patience and support means to me; I can only prove my appreciation by moving forward and making a difference in this world through positive social change.

To everyone who has helped me make this dream come true, thank you. I love you all and want every one of you to know that you all have a special place in my heart. I would also like to give a special acknowledgment to all the professors who have stood behind me and ensured that I crossed the finish line even though I may have quit numerous times along the way.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

The current study examined how the perception of racial discrimination in policing affected the overall perception of police legitimacy among African Americans. Specifically focusing on the rural areas of South Georgia, I sought to determine whether these perceived negative interactions with law enforcement influenced how those affected perceived other officers and their overall legitimacy. I recruited willing African American volunteers who fit predetermined requirements and who claimed that they have encountered a racially discriminating interaction with law enforcement to access how that perceived negative encounter affected their overall view on the legitimacy of law enforcement. These results of this study have the potential to create a positive social change by providing specific recommendations suggesting that local authorities consider how perception, as it pertains to racially discriminatory acts by police, may be reduced or eliminated while preserving the overall perception of police legitimacy. Highlighting themes correlated with the various negative perceptions of the police encounter provided insights into critical areas where recommendations may be highly beneficial. In some scenarios, the negative police encounter did not produce a significant negative impact towards the overall perception of police legitimacy. However, each circumstance provided valuable insight into potential future recommendations for local authorities.

Throughout this qualitative study, I utilized a phenomenological approach to assess the perceptions of African Americans who have identified as being victims of racial discrimination by law enforcement to determine if this negative perception affects, the way they view the overall legitimacy of policing. The results indicated that even

though some participants were able to maintain a positive perception towards policing,

many admittedly voiced concerns regarding police legitimacy and trust. Collectively,

these concerns allowed me to highlight specific themes in the areas of concern that may

benefit from recommendations suggesting more attention to officer training or post-

training is warranted. The study was grounded in equity theory to demonstrate how and

why people act in a certain way when they feel they are being mistreated or treated

unfairly compared to others, which ultimately did shed light on individual reasons for

their loss of perceived police legitimacy. The study relied on national and state data to

represent variables such as population and arrest demographics, which were critical in

demonstrating how police mistreatment may be occurring in disproportionate volumes to

specific groups of individuals.

In 2020, the population of the United States had reached nearly 332 million;

Caucasians represented 76% of this total, but African Americans—when represented as

one race—only represented 13% of the total population, a number which decreased when

African Americans were analyzed as being interracial (United States Census Bureau,

2020, Table P1/Race). The Federal Bureau of Investigation (2020) released data for 2020

demonstrating that Caucasians were arrested across the nation in larger volumes than

African Americans or other minorities(Slide 5, Table 3). Nationwide, males were arrested

significantly more than females, while the age of arrest ranged between 25 and 39

(Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2020, Slide 5, Table 2).

According to the Georgia Bureau of Investigation (2017) summary report,

minorities or non-white individuals were arrested at higher volumes for most index

crimes (pg. 13). In addition, the summary report revealed that males were also arrested at higher volumes than females, with the overall age of arrest between 17 and 39 years of age (Georgia Bureau of Investigation, 2017, pg.11). In addition, the Federal Bureau of Investigation released data from 2020 that suggests, when analyzing the race of arrestees in Georgia for "All Crimes", that Caucasians were arrested at slightly lower rates than African Americans (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2020, Slide 5, Table 3). Males were arrested at nearly double the volume of females, with the age range also between the years of 25 and 39.

Therefore, analysis of the above data reveals that the American citizen who fits the description of being a middle-aged White male would have the most encounters with law enforcement allowing for the most opportunities to be discriminated against by law enforcement. However, according to Jacques (2017) and Bleich et al. (2019), anywhere from 37% to 60% of African Americans surveyed have reported discrimination of some fashion by law enforcement, compared to significantly lower levels reported by White participants.

Background

Historically, the United States has demonstrated numerous examples of racial discrimination from the financialization of banks, capital punishment sentences, and specifically as it relates to citizen interaction with law enforcement (Adams, 2021; Murphy, 2021; Ralph, 2019; Rigby & Seguin, 2021). These discriminatory acts, aimed at many different groups of minorities, have significantly impacted, and continue to impact the African American community in various forms (Adams, 2021; Bloom & Labovich

2021; Henry & Franklin, 2019; Masullo et al., 2020; Ocha & Toman, 2020). The significant impact experienced by African Americans from these discriminatory interactions with law enforcement may have had a similar negative impact on the overall perception of police legitimacy.

According to Gruber (2021), the concept of "policing" within our nation was solely created to serve the current economic, political, and social priorities of the current era's empowered group. Throughout history, these policing priorities have consisted of but are not limited to the oppressing of immigrant workers in Northern industrialized areas and the imposition of slavery on African Americans throughout the Southern states (Gruber, 2021). America's first modern police force was created by a perceived need to control and prevent slave revolts, which established slave patrols (Brucato, 2021). As the purpose of past and current policing, crime reduction is still an arguable concept as acts of racial discrimination unfold throughout the United States (Gruber, 2021). Events, such as the deaths of George Floyd and many other minority individuals at the hands of law enforcement throughout the years, may suggest that this discrimination is embedded at an institutional and structural level, not just on an individual officer basis (Gruber, 2021).

Howard (2019) described just one of the thousands of similar events where an unarmed African American was shot and killed by a police officer. In this example, Botham Jean, an unarmed African American man, was shot and killed in his apartment by an off-duty White female officer in Texas, who assumed Jean was an intruder in her apartment building, which she claimed was enough justification for utilizing deadly force (Howard, 2019). According to Howard (2019), when statistically analyzed, it is much

more common to be at a higher risk of being killed by a police officer if you reside in areas with high concentrations of racial or ethnic minorities.

Jacques (2017) highlighted findings from a national study that 37% of African Americans reported being discriminated against by police compared to 1% of their participating Caucasian counterparts. This study also found that officers are more likely to stop, investigate, and arrest African Americans than Caucasians when controlling for criminal involvement. However, it is also mentioned that the validity of reporting may vary depending on circumstance, location, and how common practice the individuals believe negative police encounters have become regardless of whether the individual is African American or Caucasian.

According to Kearns et al. (2020), when discussing how police legitimacy is conceptualized, we must understand that individuals may view this concept differently. However, their study did produce results suggesting that race and other factors, such as demographics, play a role in how legitimacy is defined among different people. Kearns et al. (2020) suggested that minorities focus more on the outcome instead of the process. In contrast, Caucasian respondents focused more on the legality of police actions to determine if they believed they would be treated well. African Americans were statistically found to have less trust in law enforcement because they did not perceive law enforcement as an entity that would attempt to protect them (Kearns et al., 2020).

As the media portrays a national police force that appears to produce daily racially discriminatory acts towards the minority population of American citizens, the overall loss of police legitimacy may be the unfortunate byproduct. The current study was

an attempt to fill the gap in the current literature by assessing how racially discriminatory acts by police affect the overall perception of law enforcement in the rural areas of South Georgia to help better understand the problem at hand in order to potentially warrant recommendations that may provide a remedy for future interactions.

Problem Statement

Currently, there is a problem in the United States with racial discrimination by police despite training, policies, and laws (Harris, 2021; McClurg, 2019; Zuckert, 2019). Many African Americans have experienced or have been exposed to discriminatory acts by law enforcement. According to Bleich et al. (2019), 60% of Black adults reported unfair treatment by police (pg.1&7, Table 2). According to English et al. (2017) and Gibbons et al. (2020), this problem has not only negatively impacted African Americans in physiological and psychological ways, including increased illegal behavior, but it has also jeopardized the legitimacy of law enforcement. Kearns et al. (2020) described police legitimacy as the willingness of citizens to obey law enforcement freely and without coercive force. Therefore, a study that utilizes a qualitative approach, which explores the lived experiences of those who self-identify as having been racially discriminated against by police, may highlight the rationale for the proposed loss of overall police legitimacy.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative study was to better understand the perceptions of African Americans who identify as having experienced racial discrimination by police in the rural communities in South Georgia. This study also increased the understanding of how or whether those perceived experiences affected the overall perception of police

legitimacy by those who identified as being discriminated against. This assessment may also produce many byproducts that may be utilized in future studies when examining the similarities and differences of these lived experiences and any provided participant opinions of how their encounter could have been handled more professionally by police, which may produce recommendations for increased or different departmental training courses.

Research Questions

RQ1. What are the perceptions of African Americans who self-identify as having experienced racial discrimination by law enforcement officers in rural South Georgia?

RQ2. What impact do these perceptions of racial discrimination by police towards African Americans have on their overall perceptions of legitimacy towards law enforcement?

RQ3. How do these perceived discriminatory experiences by police shape how African Americans live their daily lives?

Theoretical Framework

According to Anfara (2008), a theoretical framework can provide focus to a study while simultaneously revealing or concealing its meaning and presenting possible strengths and weaknesses. Huttunen and Kukkori (2020) discussed that qualitative research is a method of establishing truth and a method of opening a new way of seeing or thinking about a specific topic. Liberman (2017) suggested that phenomenology is indispensable in qualitative studies if the researcher desires to explore lived experiences and perceptions. Therefore, in this qualitative study, I used a phenomenological approach

to explore the perceptions of African Americans in rural South Georgia who self-identify as having been the recipients of racial discrimination by law enforcement. Data was collected through semistructured interviews. Equity theory, an explanation as to why humans modify their behavior when they perceive a lack of fairness, even if the consequences have an apparent negative outcome (Ryan, 2016), significantly benefitted the current study as an explanation of how racial discrimination by police may alter the behavior of the recipient. In addition, Equity theory has been used to explain how police may act in corrupt ways such as embezzlement, extortion, favoritism, and nepotism if they perceive an imbalance in the inputs and outputs (Ezeh et al., 2018). Equity theory has also been repeatedly utilized as a foundational theory in various types of research approaches, as demonstrated in Ryan (2016) regarding Emiratization in the national workforce, utilizing equity theory is a valid approach to explaining how people may alter their perceptions based on how they perceive inputs and outputs. Therefore, this theory was indeed successful in demonstrating a more thorough insight into the importance of fairness when assessing the participants perceived racially discriminatory encounters with law enforcement. Equity theory was able to clarify why some recipients of racial discrimination by police changed or modified their behavior towards law enforcement by reducing their overall perception of police legitimacy. The results conclude that it is safe to assume that the perception of having a lack of balance in in

puts and outputs has an effect for many on how officer legitimacy is viewed in racially discriminatory encounters, regardless of geographical location.

Nature of the Study

The current study was suited for a qualitative exploration utilizing phenomenology as a methodological approach to assess the perceptions of those who self-identify as having been racially discriminated against by law enforcement in rural South Georgia. I used purposive and snowball sampling to recruit willing participants interested in participating in semistructured interviews either in person or virtually via Skype or Zoom, through the usage of low-pressure flyers. The results of the current study provided valuable insights as to why a perceived racially discriminatory encounter by police, in many cases, reduced the overall perceived legitimacy of police by the participants. As a result, specific recommendations for law enforcement training, public perception, and societal trust-building activities can be constructed to preserve the overall perception of police legitimacy in the future while reducing negative police encounters.

Definitions

African American: Roberts et al. (2021) explained that individuals with an occupational perception, such as that of a biologist or sociologist, may view the term African American differently due to their belief of whether or not ancestry or experiences determine race. However, for the purpose of this study, the term African American will be utilized to categorize those who self-identify as being "Black" (Roberts et al., 2021).

Legitimate: For the purpose of this study, Fine et al. (2022) described the term "police legitimacy" as officers who are perceived as fair, just, and honest.

Discrimination: For the purpose of this study, as cited in Shakur and Phillips (2022), it is explained that discrimination can be perceived as an unjust decision being

made that is based on social identity, such as group membership or what the decision

maker believes they know about the target, or the overall perception of intent behind the

decision. In addition, discrimination is sometimes generally defined as unequal or

disadvantageous treatment (Petitfour et al., 2022).

Rural areas: Rural areas are not easily defined in one manner; depending on

context, areas could be labeled as rural based on their landscape or if the number of

people residing within that specific area is under 50,000, which is the threshold that the

U.S. Census Bureau uses to define urban areas (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020, pg. 1&3).

However, for the purpose of this study, rural areas are defined as an area not urban and

consisting of fewer than 50,000 residents but may contain clusters of 2,500 or more.

Possible Types of Sources and Data

This study initially attempted to collect data from 12–15 semistructured

interviews conducted either in person or virtually. However, data saturation was met after

the ninth in-person interview with no interest in virtual interviews by the participants.

According to past studies, when utilizing a phenomenological approach in qualitative

research or attempting to establish themes, 6 to 15 interviews were found to be sufficient

(Galvin, 2015; Guest et al., 2006; Starks & Trinidad, 2007). Willing participants were

eventually recruited through the usage of purposive sampling and snowballing from

targeted rural areas of South Georgia. Initially, permission to recruit through the usage of

low-pressure flyers was requested at local probation and parole offices. The second

attempt that became necessary involved attempting to recruit willing participants at local

NAACP chapters. The third approach to obtain a sufficient number of willing participants

involved visiting unorganized events in the targeted areas. Finally, the fourth and final approach consisted of visiting the target areas once again and utilizing purposive sampling to recruit participants. In sum, recruitment efforts focused on African American adults over the age of 21, which eliminated potential recollections of status offenses and avoided a vulnerable population.

Additionally, I derived statistical data from government websites to be used as a foundation for representing population and demographic statistics.

Assumptions

Personal experiences, community interactions, and academic research have prompted me to make several assumptions about this study. The foundation of this study was centered around the assumption that the willing participants would only present truthful information and recollections. To my knowledge, every interview was creditable and did not pose any reason to doubt the recollection. Another assumption of this study was that the participants might be very cautious about participating in such a study that may place officers in a negative light, especially in the small rural areas utilized for the study. However, the cohort who volunteered for the study did not appear timid or hesitant to share their story. Therefore, there is no reason to assume their recollections are not valid or complete. This assumption may in fact be valid for those who did not choose to participate. Furthermore, I assumed that those willing to participate without any hesitation might exaggerate the extent of their negative police encounter. However, those who did participate did not present their stories to gain sympathy or empathy. Therefore, it is safe to assume their recollections were parallel with reality. I also assumed that most

of those who had had racially discriminatory encounters with law enforcement would

have lost an overall sense of legitimacy for policing, which I found to be completely

accurate among all of the participants. In addition, an assumption was made that the

younger participants closer to the surveys minimum age of 21 and those who have

recently encountered racially insensitive interactions with law enforcement would most

likely have a negative perception of police legitimacy compared to the older participants

who may have had more time to build stake in the community or those who have not had

a recent racially discriminatory encounter. This assumption regarding age cannot be

determined because the participants were very close in age and vastly different in the

reasons why they viewed the situation negatively or in a positive light. Lastly, I believe

that the current phenomenological approach was the most efficient method to obtain

honest recollections of those lived experiences. This approach indeed allowed the

participants to speak freely without the fear of retaliation allowing for themes to emerge,

which may be utilized to help prevent future similar events from occurring to help

preserve future police legitimacy.

Scope and Delimitations

The scope of this study consisted of a sample of male and female African

American adults over the age of 21 in the rural areas of South Georgia who self-identify

as having some type of racially discriminatory encounter with police. This study did not

include anyone under the age of 21 for several reasons. First, this ensured that the

participants interviewed were not expressing frustration because of recent status offenses,

and it ensured that the youthful vulnerable population would remain protected. The

willing participants were not promised anything and did not receive any form of compensation or reward for their participation. Their participation was solely based on their personal choice to volunteer without coercion, and at no point did they receive anything for their participation. In addition, the study specifically focused on specific geographical areas in the rural areas of South Georgia.

Limitations

This qualitative study has several different notable weaknesses. First, the failure of the first three approaches deemed a fourth approach to become necessary that consisted of purposive and snowball sampling. These approaches may be viewed as weakness due to their recruiting structure. Secondly, I did not ask the participants to provide any form of verification to confirm residency or any type of evidence to validate that the racially discriminatory act occurred and relied solely on the creditably of the participants' word, which may also be a limiting factor towards validity. In addition, there is always a chance that the presentation of the participants' recollections may have been altered in a fashion to pacify my inquiries. Lastly, but not exclusively, the study only focused on a small geographical area, which limited potential participants.

According to Maxfield and Babbie (2018), weakness can be exhibited through external and internal issues that may jeopardize validity. Internal validity can be viewed as the observed relationship between variables as not causal due to interference from an outside factor. External validity determines if the current findings can be reproduced in other studies (Maxfied & Babbie, 2018). Rudestam and Newton (2015) explained that a study may be considered reliable if it can be repeated continuously and produces similar

results. Also, research integrity may be violated if data are entered incorrectly on the researcher's part, which ultimately decreases the study's validity and credibility (Rudestam & Newton, 2015).

As discussed earlier, one limitation of the study was the sample collection process. To ensure that the willing participants had some type of encounter with law enforcement and were over the age of 21, probation and parole offices were the primary recruitment source. This attempt ultimately failed to produce enough participants and made a second but less effective approach necessary. Requesting permission at local NAACP chapters also failed to produce enough willing participants, forcing me to embark on a third approach. The third approach entailed me visiting unorganized events in the targeted rural areas, which was not successful in recruiting willing participants. The last approved approach involved visiting the targeted rural areas and recruiting through purposive and snowball sampling. Each change in approach presented additional limitations that could have potentially deteriorated the study's value.

In addition, semistructured interviews were offered as being available both in-person or virtually, dependent upon the participant's preference but only in-person interviews were chosen. In the era of a post-coronavirus pandemic, this may have hindered some from being completely comfortable while participating in the study even though this is the option they chose.

Potentially, one critical limitation was rapport. The participants appeared to be very comfortable in their chosen setting, but this perception is impossible to validate. In the current study, African America men and women were asked to speak freely and

honestly about their perceived racially discriminatory encounter with local law enforcement. The fact that I am a middle-aged Caucasian male, which may closely resemble many of the small-town rural officers, does pose a considerable concern pertaining to the strength of rapport I gained and maintained during the duration of the interview.

Significance

This research study helps fill the gap in the current literature by providing a better understanding of how or whether the perception of racial discriminatory acts by police affects the overall perception of police legitimacy by those who perceive that they were discriminated against. In addition, the results provided insight into why certain people or situations reduce the perception of police legitimacy while similar circumstances had lesser of an effect on how the participants view the overall legitimacy of law enforcement. This specific study uniquely focused on African American adults over the age of 21 to eliminate status offense interactions in the rural areas of South Georgia to determine whether or why the citizen–police interaction impacts perceptions of police legitimacy. In addition, the current study uniquely focused on those who reside in the rural communities of South Georgia, where the population has remained low for centuries, and interactions with local law enforcement may occur on a regular basis through professional and informal settings, such as extracurricular or recreational activities. However, the results suggest that residency in rural areas does not necessarily mitigate individual responses to discriminatory interaction with law enforcement.

Summary

African Americans have historically been the target minority group and have experienced many discriminatory acts by law enforcement officials in many verifiable instances throughout U.S. history. Although the United States continues to actively present an abundance of scenarios that may be perceived as racial discrimination by law enforcement, there is still the question of how or whether those isolated acts can change or have changed the overall perception of the legitimacy of law enforcement. The potential loss of perceived legitimacy of law enforcement may directly affect other law enforcement endeavors, such as community efforts, funding, careers, educational opportunities, and many other current and future positive efforts. Therefore, if recommendations are able to be made, the future of police legitimacy may be preserved allowing for more positive contributions.

This study targeted a group of willing participants who self-identified as having experienced racial discrimination by law enforcement officers and, through semistructured in-person interviews, attempted to determine whether those discriminatory acts affected the way the participants perceive the overall legitimacy of law enforcement. By determining what specific experiences the participants encountered, how those experiences affected their daily lives, and whether those encounters altered their overall perception of law enforcement, an attempt can be made to construct recommendations that may help direct more concentrated focus on specific officer training, which may help prevent the perception of negative interactions with law enforcement in the future.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

According to Cheeks et al. (2020) and Stock et al. (2017), racially discriminatory acts can negatively affect the direct lives of the individual recipients and others indirectly through various mechanisms that encompass physical and psychological ramifications.

Throughout American history, numerous verifiable acts and events can be labeled as racially discriminatory, having detrimental effects on the lives of the recipient. From attempting to eradicate the Native Americans to African Americans bound in slavery until the current day, where police are accused of allegedly treating citizens differently based on their skin tone, this nation appears to have never been immune to the concept of differential treatment. In an attempt to examine how racially discriminatory acts by police affect the recipients' overall perception of police legitimacy, the scope of the relevant terms mentioned below must first be understood. The following literature review examines perception, discrimination, racial discrimination, racial discrimination by police, legitimacy, the importance of legitimacy, and police legitimacy. Using equity theory as a foundation, discrimination, legitimacy, and policing will be examined to demonstrate their historical and current presence and relevance to the present study.

Literature Search Strategy

Various resources were utilized for the current study, which included the Walden University Library, EBSCOhost, Criminal Justice Database, JSTOR, Google Scholar, and the Georgia Southern University Library (GALILEO). The foundation of the search strategy was to find articles published within the last 5 years pertaining to legitimacy, police legitimacy, discrimination, racial discrimination, racial discrimination in policing,

minorities, equity theory, and African Americans as a general topic. The same search

terms were used to find articles explicitly focusing on the state of Georgia, which is the

state of choice and focus for the current study. Some older studies beyond 5 years were

also used to demonstrate a foundational aspect of the research topic at hand.

Theoretical Framework

The current study used equity theory as a theoretical framework. Theoretical

frameworks may be viewed as placing the study into a specific view based on resources

and a signaling theory which helps the researcher to clearly identify the theoretical gap in

the literature being explored (Barczak, 2014). A theoretical framework is also critical in

explaining why specific constructs are used and the relationships between them,

including their purpose for the current study, while explaining the theoretical implications

of the current study (Barczak, 2014). As an example, Sewell et al. (2016) explained how

a theoretical framework can inform human services on the specific targets they should

focus on when attempting to decrease discrimination and improve the relationships

between African Americans and law enforcement.

Equity theory, coined by John Stacey Adams in 1963, was an attempt by

behavioral psychologists to focus on job motivation (Hoffman-Miller, 2022). Initially, the

theory focused on inputs and outputs, or the perceptions of fairness and balance

compared to the inputs and output of other workers (Hoffman-Miller, 2022). Therefore,

when individuals notice or perceive a difference in fairness or balance, they attempt to

resolve the problem by changing jobs, reducing their performance, or other approaches

such as seeking a change in pay, which they cognitively believe may balance the scenario

(Hoffman-Miller, 2022). Adams (2005) explained that this equity theory can also be referred to as a theory of inequities because an inequity of some sort must take place to put the theory in motion. When these perceived inequities occur, tensions proportionate to the magnitude of the inequity builds, the tension creates the motivation to reduce it, and overall, most people will react to the tension in an attempt to reduce the negativity (Adams, 2005). Additionally, and relevant to the current study, the individuals who perceive this difference in fairness or balance may also seek behavioral or attitudinal changes to rectify the perceived lack of fairness (Hoffman-Miller, 2022).

Researchers have long acknowledged that equity theory is a critical method to explain different perceptions of multiple workplace matters (Gates & Reinsch, 2022). However, this study's central argument is that equity theory, viewed through a social justice lens, is applicable to other forms of negative perceptions that include the lack of fairness found in discriminatory acts by law enforcement targeted at African Americans. As explained in equity theory, the lack of balance between the inputs and outcomes motivates some to alter behaviors to create what they perceive as a balance of some sort (Gates & Reinsch, 2022).

Recent studies demonstrate that equity theory has been used to explain many aspects of perceptions related to African Americans, policing, and other types of discriminatory events. Rades (2022) found that when evaluating police officers and the reasonings behind leaving the profession, lack of job satisfaction was a contributing factor for many during exit interviews. Adams (2019) demonstrated that equity theory can also be unitized to explain how police officers feel and react to their jobs based on

the recent media portrayal of racially discriminatory events by law enforcement. Officers

claim that, in the aftermath of the Ferguson events and others, some of them live in fear

of performing their jobs without hesitation due to the concern of public backlash (Adams,

2019). In addition, equity theory demonstrates how, when events of this nature occur,

morals and judgment decrease due to a constant attempt to gain the public's trust back

when they perceive the officers as being oppressive and their overall perception of

legitimacy has decreased, which may increase the potential for officer mistakes (Adams,

2019). Hilal and Litsey (2020) used equity theory to demonstrate that police turnover

may exhibit high rates when the officers perceive their career as lacking or a result of

organization commitment, career satisfaction, ethical climate, and available

developmental feedback. Dan-Jumbo and Amah (2018) found that when using equity

theory to examine ethic-based discrimination, the act of discriminating against someone

due to their ethic grouping caused attitudes to deteriorate, decreased the sense of

involvement among those discriminated against, and created higher rates of incivility.

Equity theory has also been the theoretical framework of choice when examining

nepotism or the corrupt act of showing favoritism while discriminating against others

who are not viewed as relatives, which creates negative perceptions and the need to alter

them (Chinoperekweyi, 2019). When specifically focusing on African American

perception, equity theory has been used to explain how African American view

relationships with those who are clinically diagnosed with bipolar disorder and highlights

the numerous coping mechanisms African Americans exhibit to face these struggles in

their relationships (Johnson, 2019). Therefore, the above-mentioned studies demonstrate

that equity theory has been a successful tool in explaining many different aspects of perceptions, discrimination, and policing and is very well suited for the current study.

Throughout this current study, the abovementioned inputs will be synonymous with the perceptions of the participants prior to the racially discriminatory encounter with law enforcement regarding their right and perception to be treated fairly compared to others, while the outputs will be synonymous with their actions and perceptions after the discriminatory treatment by law enforcement. The potential behavioral change proposed in equity theory may provide insight into the overall loss of perceived legitimacy towards law enforcement after the racially discriminatory encounter by those recipients. On the contrary, it may disclose what inspired the recipient to maintain their general positive perception of law enforcement even after the negative encounter.

Reviewed Literature

The following examination of the current literature is purposely aimed at assessing, examining, and presenting relevant and timely information regarding how discriminatory acts by police may reduce the overall perception of legitimacy for law enforcement. As explained earlier in the study, African Americans have lower volumes of arrests in some scenarios but higher numbers of reported discriminatory encounters with police compared to their Caucasian counterparts, which is worth analyzing since recent data shows African Americans encompass less than 15% of the overall population (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2020, Slide 5, Table 3; U.S. Census Bureau, 2020, Table P1/Race).

Perceptions

For the purposes of this study, as explained by Taylor and Wilcox (2021), when focusing on systemic racism in American, perception can be described as how someone views the actions of an authority figure such has how police treat African Americans. Therefore, it may be suitable to view perception in two distinct models: positive and negative. To successfully explain the importance of both, it is critical to understand the difference and how they may be applicable to the current study by demonstrating their existence in past studies. To better explain positive perception, in a medical study regarding how patients view their sickness, it was reinforced that having a positive perception of one's own illness could potentially have the ability to aid in a positive recovery (Eads et al., 2021). Choi and Lee (2021) suggested that when police achieve a positive perception, it may enable short- and long-term benefits. The short-term benefits may include citizens being less willing to defy police or act aggressively towards them, promoting the long-term benefits of citizens acting lawfully even when not in the presence of law enforcement (Choi & Lee, 2021).

However, negative police perceptions may have the exact opposite effect and encourage citizens to defy police and not behave lawfully regardless of police presence (Choi & Lee, 2021). According to Watson et al. (2018), even police officers are not immune to the power of negative perception within their profession. When officers perceive that their resources are insufficient, successful execution of their duties becomes nearly unreachable.

Relevant to the current study, research conducted in Los Angeles, California, found that just the mere perception of a diverse police force may improve the level of trust residents have towards police in racially/ethnically diverse communities. Egharevba (2018) suggested that anyone's encounter with police, especially minorities, is influenced by that person's personal beliefs and opinions about police which are shaped by experiences regarding unfair treatment, trust, and lack of respect. Therefore, if residents have a negative or poor perception of police, they may be less likely to comply with officer orders or cooperate with local law enforcement. According to Miles-Johnson and Picering (2018), when officers experience individuals who do not comply or cooperate with orders or officer requests, it creates a negative perception among the officers in how they view those residents, which may lead to different approaches in how they handle interactions with specific citizens. These negative interactions mentioned above between both the citizens and officers may stem from each side creating their negative perceptions towards each other based on past negative experiences, which may help explain why some officers and citizens in the current study fail to treat each other with the utmost respect during their encounters contributing to the promotion of racially discriminatory acts and the loss of overall perceived police legitimacy.

Discrimination

As stated earlier, in a research study focusing on gender, discrimination is generally defined as unequal or disadvantageous treatment (Petitfour et al., 2022). Brabeck et al. (2022) described discrimination as a mental and physical stressor found in higher capacities among minority groups that can significantly impact an individual's

mental and physical health, which has also been found to vary depending on gender. Muskens et al. (2019) explained that discriminatory acts may even be found in academic settings when examining the mismatching of low-socioeconomic students with proper educational institutions.

Unfortunately, discriminatory acts are not exclusive to those actions purposely intended to treat individuals differently than others. Unintended negative consequences arise from unconscious acts of discrimination. According to Maskayan (2017), unconscious acts of discrimination can result from attempting to address conscious discrimination. To explain, many governmental programs are designed to help those in need or those who desire to be treated fairly when applying for employment, such as Title VII, which may help eliminate conscious discrimination but does not aid in reducing and may even promote unconscious discrimination.

According to Wang and Xie (2021), a study examining how children respond to perceived personal discrimination (PPD) suggests that PPD could predict how a child alters their behavior in kind, which could also mediate or alleviate the negative impacts of the discrimination dependent upon by the child's level of emotional intelligence. Bastos et al. (2015) found that discrimination was associated with physical and mental health outcomes and behaviors. Individuals experiencing discrimination also experienced stress, lack of control, feeling powerless, alcoholism, and depression, which were all amplified if the individual had these conditions prior to the discriminatory encounter.

Therefore, as demonstrated by the provided studies and relevant to the current study, discrimination can easily be found throughout numerous ranges, scopes, and

scenarios leaving no situation or circumstance entirely immune from the potential of becoming discriminatory in some intended or unintended fashion. In addition, discrimination has negative effects on the mind and body when experienced on a broad spectrum. As mentioned below, discrimination also has detrimental effects when aimed explicitly at targeted groups or the intersectionality of certain individuals.

Racial Discrimination

According to Rudolph and Adams (2021), the term *racial discrimination* may encompass many forms or acts such as those found throughout our nation's history, including but not limited to discrimination against the Native Americans, slavery, restrictions on the Chinese, land lease restrictions on the Japanese, and many more. In addition, racial discrimination is not solely located within the borders of one continent, nor can it be found solely in one occupation, social class, or ethnicity, and is prevalent during every era of human existence. According to Greenfield et al. (2021), racial discrimination can even be found in a very intertwined scenario, such as analyzing health inequities in American Indian and Alaskan Native college students residing in a large city.

Acts of racial discrimination may also be linked to the creation, implementation, and analysis of coping mechanisms. According to Romero et al. (2022), a study that examined Mexican-origin adolescents and their parents found that due to the potential mental severity of racial discrimination, at times, individuals were able to cope on an individual level, but during other more traumatizing events, the family element was a requirement in order to work together to promote the coping process successfully.

Specific to the current study, African Americans throughout American history have experienced a tremendous number of discriminatory events, which have existed in many different capacities, which can still be found current day. African Americans have experienced discrimination in fundamental human rights violations, such as freedom, inequalities in healthcare, governmental funding, employment, education, and so forth. For example, Daniels et al. (2020) found that racial discrimination is linked to increased preterm labor in African American women. Pertaining to governmental funding and educational discrimination, Robert (2022) suggested that increased funding results in higher test scores, graduation rates, and adult earnings; however, predominantly White school districts have historically received significantly more funding than predominantly minority districts that have been much larger in many scenarios. Tynes et al. (2020) suggested that racial discrimination may decrease psychological functions among African American adolescents depending on the age and time spent online. When examining the daily psychological effects of racial discrimination and how it affects the healthy emotional development of African American youth, data have suggested that even in the presence of positive socialization regarding race, racial discrimination may still have a negative effect on their daily lives (Cheeks et al., 2020)

Racial Discrimination by Police

As demonstrated above, African Americans have experienced racial discrimination in many different areas of life; relevant to the current study, policing has also presented many events throughout our nation where racial discrimination against African Americans has actively prevailed.

Historically. Brucato (2020) explained how the first American modern police force was designed and utilized for racially discriminatory purposes, such as slave patrols. Slave patrols were a method to ensure African Americans did not escape slavery or promote any revolution (Brucato, 2020). As cited in Lemieux et al. (2020), in addition to slave patrols, night watchers, Black codes, and police-incited lynchings were a means to discriminate against the African American population. As time prevailed beyond the slave patrols, Americans experienced the racially discriminatory acts produced during the eras of the Jim Crow, Martin Luther King Jr, Rosa Parks, Selma, Alabama, and Nixon's War on Drugs.

The implementation of Jim Crow Laws is suggested to be rooted in the events following the abolishment of slavery by the 13th Amendment, which continued until it was arguably abolished in the mid to late 1960s. As cited in Hswen et al. (2020), Jim Crow laws were a method to legally allow racial discrimination throughout the United States in many areas through the usage of segregation. Through legal segregation, African Americans experienced many challenges that included high rates on loans, differential treatments in education, differential treatment in facilities, and unequal and targeted treatment by law enforcement (Hswen et al., 2020). Martin Luther King Jr, a Baptist minister who led peaceful protest during the Civil Rights Movement, advocated many efforts to establish legal equality for all, participated in many protests such as the Montgomery Bus Boycott and the 1963 March on Washington. As discussed by Mazzone and Rushin (2017), during the March in Selma, Alabama, local and state authorities were

dispatched to utilize violent means to intimidate the predominantly African American protesters while attempting to deny them the opportunity to vote.

As the years progressed, President Nixon has been credited for establishing Americas War on Drugs in the early 1970s. During Americas unsuccessful attempt to control the drug market from the illicit transnational drug trade, law enforcement focused many of its efforts towards disadvantaged communities, which housed predominantly large volumes of the minority community (Eremin & Petovich-Belkin, 2019; Wells, 2022). During the War on Drug's crack pandemic, legal disparities found in law and sentencing prevailed during this era with the 100 to 1 cocaine to crack ratio, which sentenced many minorities and others who resided in economically disadvantaged areas to extended sentences (Eremin & Petovich-Belkin, 2019; Wells, 2022).

Modern. Gibbons et al. (2020) suggest that perceived racial discrimination, such as police hassling African American kids, promotes illegal or delinquent behaviors. Zeiders et al. (2021) found that police discrimination was more prevalent among youth of color and that Black and Latino youths reported more hassling by police than their white counterparts, with many minority participants reporting multiple instances of racial discrimination.

As explained in Masullo et al. (2020) and Bloom and Labovich (2021), the more recent racially discriminatory events, such as the unfortunate incidents that occurred to the following black men at the hands of law enforcement: Trayvon Martin, Michael Brown, Sterling, Castile, and George Floyd, have led to the creation of movements such as Black Lives Matter and the need for systematic structure renovations within the

criminal justice system including greater power to oversight bodies during neutral review processes to hold officers accountable properly.

Legitimacy and its Importance

For the purpose of this study, Warner (2021) described legitimacy as power that does not exceed established rules, its implementation is validated through socially accepted beliefs, and is recognized and acknowledged through appropriate acts. Szczucki (2018), when examining criminal law, suggests that legitimacy should be viewed in two ways: primary and secondary methods. The primary meaning is to adhere to ethical principles, which shape what is perceived as right or wrong, and the secondary meaning is to repose the validity of decisions to authorized personnel (Szczucki, 2018). Authorized personnel, meaning that someone may determine the validity or legitimacy of an action based on how they perceive what makes an action valid or who they perceive as valid in their decision-making process.

The state of being legitimate is essential to the topic of the current study and is critical to nearly all aspects of life. Takeuchi (2020) explained the importance of speaker legitimacy when emphasizing how communication is vital when presenting material for educational purposes. Harris (2021) described the importance of ensuring legitimacy in verbiage when discussing specific topics from software clusters to industry emergence, ensuring that terms that can be synonymous and those that are not interchangeable are kept separate. Warner's (2021) explanation of legitimacy pertains to validated and accepted power, which is critical to the current study because in many cases police

officers are viewed as "street level bureaucrats" who have much discretion of their interpretation of law and how they chose to enforce their interpretations.

Relevant to the current topic, legitimacy may be seen as synonymous with trustworthiness, with the significant ability to sway perceptions if lacking. In a democratic country, those in authority who work outside their constitutional limits lose their perception of being considered legitimate by its citizens, regardless of if the action was temporarily blessed, according to Ferrara (2020). Therefore, when officers of the law act in manners that do not support their overall mission or goals to serve and protect, the perception of legitimacy plummets, and feelings of disbelief or distrust may arise among the communities' members under their care, disabling the officers to conduct their official business in an effective manner, which in some cases they reply in kind and the unfortunate circular negative cycle continues.

Importance of Law Enforcement Legitimacy

According to Aguirre and Leco (2020), maintaining high levels of legitimacy is critical for police to carry out their operations properly. As cited in Henry and Franklin (2019), authorities may be considered legitimate when people believe that the rules and decisions enacted by that authority are the proper course of action and should be followed. Legitimacy can be determined by the reactions of those citizens when the rules and decisions are enacted (Henry & Franklin, 2019). The acceptance and approval of police legitimacy enable officers to work with the citizens in a more productive manner if they are willing to comply and cooperate as a result of the higher levels of established trust (Henry & Franklin, 2019). Similar results were replicated in a study performed by

Ochao and Toman (2020) who also found that the level of legitimacy policing requires to execute the job function properly depends on the view of the current citizens and different organizations' restraints on officers that may hinder or manipulate their duties. The conclusion of their study mirrored similar studies that suggest legitimacy is a fundamental process in enabling police to properly execute their operations (Ochao & Toman, 2020). According to Ochoa and Toman, legitimacy in policing is also essential for allowing police to utilize actions such as the "use of force," an institution's application of the law, and applying current legal norms. In a study conducted in Australia regarding hate crimes, it was found that victims are more likely to report hate-related crimes if there is a positive perception of police legitimacy and cooperation (Wiedlitzka et al., 2018). In multiple studies regarding police legitimacy, procedural justice is a concept that, if executed properly, has the ability to increase the perceptions citizens have of policing in a positive manner. Henry and Franklin (2019) and Nix et al. (2017) explain that the results of multiple studies suggest that when officers are perceived as treating everyone fairly and impartial, regardless of individual differences or attitudes, they are more successful as being seen as legitimacy versus differential treatment among race or gender, which diminishes legitimacy.

Therefore, it is safe to assume, according to current research, that the more individuals have a favorable view of police, the more they may potentially trust or have increased faith in law enforcement and their decisions.

Summary

In conclusion, this chapter consists of the research strategies that derived the abovementioned relevant articles to the study by utilizing databases such as but not limited to Galileo, Walden Library, EBSCOhost, and JSTOR. Search terms such as but limited to discrimination, legitimacy, policing, racial discrimination, and minorities allowed me to find a multitude of relevant material to explain how racially discriminatory acts by law enforcement may have had a contributing effect on the loss of police legitimacy by those who have been discriminated against along with others. Through the utilization of equity theory, the actions of both the participant and the officer can be examined to analyze the potential for the loss of perceived legitimacy while producing many byproducts such as recommendations to everyone in order to reduce these situations in the future.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine the perceptions of African Americans who identified as being the recipients of racially discriminatory acts during encounters with law enforcement. The examination focused on determining whether this perceived negative encounter altered their perception of law enforcement's overall legitimacy. Themes arose during the examination that may potentially justify recommending specific suggestions to local agencies to help reduce or eliminate this negative perception, which may also help preserve police legitimacy in the future.

Recruitment efforts initially focused on local probation and parole offices within the targeted rural areas of South Georgia. Since that effort failed, the second approach consisted of contacting local NAACP chapters to request permission to recruit among their members. The third approach was necessary after the first two attempts proved to be unproductive, which required me to visit the targeted areas and in-directly recruit at non-organized events. As a result of the first three attempts being unsuccessful, I sought and gained permission from the university's institutional review board (IRB) and utilized a fourth approach that consisted of my visiting the targeted areas and recruiting in-person through in-direct techniques.

For this study, nine willing participants who identified as African American adults over the age of 21 and the recipients of what they perceived to have been a racially discriminatory encounter with police were utilized for the study. These participants were willing to participate in audio-recorded semistructured in-person interviews as their

method of choice. The interviews consisted of open-ended questions that allowed the participants to express their recollections freely.

Research Design and Rationale

The following questions prompted the current study:

RQ1. What are the perceptions of African Americans who self-identify as having experienced racial discrimination by law enforcement officers in rural South Georgia?

RQ2. What impact do these perceptions of African Americans have on their perceptions towards the overall legitimacy of law enforcement?

RQ3. How do these perceived discriminatory experiences by police shape how African Americans live their daily lives?

According to Maculan and Gil (2020), in criminal law, the main rationale is to protect legal interests and social order elements. In an article regarding peace and education, Snauwaert (2020) described rationale as a duty and justification for actions or beliefs. By keeping an open mind, a researcher must be willing to understand and acknowledge the purpose behind their research to justify its existence and protect the positive social change it may bring forth. Overall, African Americans only represent a small proportion of the national population but report having a much larger volume of negative encounters with law enforcement. In some studies, statistics demonstrate that up to 60% of African Americans have reported being mistreated by police compared to Caucasian participants (Bleich et al., 2019, pg. 1&7, Table 2). A qualitative phenomenological approach was chosen for the current study to obtain a deeper understanding of this phenomenon by assessing the lived experiences of African

Americans who have reported being racially mistreated by law enforcement. Gupta (2021) explained that phenomenological studies allow the researcher to become more intimate with the research and express personal connections, which may influence the examination if not adequately addressed. Therefore, assessing the participants' lived experiences and allowing them to express their recollections of events freely after establishing rapport will allow for a more intimate connection to the study, ensuring justification and protection of the data and results from a rationalized viewpoint.

Role of the Researcher

According to Karagiozis (2018), in qualitative studies, the researcher must understand that subjectivity can shape or influence the methodology, analysis, and treatment of the participants and data. Researchers should exhibit the value of sensitivity, non-judgment, respect, and acknowledgment of context to the participants (Karagiozis, 2018). Simply understanding and accepting that I am an imperfect human being, I was better prepared to acknowledge and eliminate biases that may influence the current study.

The prominent role that I assumed during this study was that of rapport building, which is a critical aspect in gaining honest recollections of the perceived racially discriminatory encounters. In a study regarding suspect interviewing, the researchers found that building rapport may be viewed in two fashions: relationship-based and procedural-based (Huang & Teoh, 2019). According to Huang and Teoh (2019), the different approaches achieved different results; some were powerful enough to secure confusion of guilt to crimes. Therefore, ensuring the participant is comfortable and thoroughly understands the study's intent will be crucial for the success of the research.

Establishing trust and reassurance that the questions asked during the interview were and would always remain confidential was critical in building rapport in small rural areas where the contact with local law enforcement may happen several times on any given day through various mechanisms such as recreational and private activities.

To ensure that I obtained the necessary rapport desired, I thoroughly explained my purpose behind the current study. This in-depth explanation helped reduce fear, concern, suspicion, and doubt about the true intention of the interview. The forthcoming nature of the approach increased comfortability and the chance of obtaining an honest recollection of their encounter with law enforcement. This honest forthcoming encouraged participation by establishing a foundational belief that everyone, regardless of race, gender, education, sexual orientation, or residing local, deserves to be treated in a fair and impartial manner. The level of rapport achieved created validity in the purpose of the study, which was to bring awareness to racially discriminatory scenarios in order to provide recommendations for a future remedy.

Additionally, I embarked on numerous additional roles to ensure my study was conducted efficiently. Understanding that not everyone would be as dedicated to the study as I was, I assumed the role as a proactive coordinator to ensure interviews were scheduled and conducted, and data saturation was met in a timely fashion. Therefore, I engaged in leadership and took ownership of all forms of coordination, communication, data transmission, and unfortunate setbacks.

Methodology

Setting

This study was conducted in the rural areas of South Georgia, where the county

population in most cases had not exceeded 46,000, and the local cities had maintained

around 2,500 residents as of the year 2021 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2021, Table 1). The

counties selected for the current study had a demographic makeup similar to 65%–78%

Caucasian and 32%–16% African American (U.S. Census Bureau, 2021, Table 1).

Participant Selection

The current study utilized purposeful sampling, low-pressure flyers, and

snowballing to reach data saturation. Initially, permission to recruit using low-pressure

flyers at local probation and parole offices was denied. Since consent was not granted, I

attempted to recruit willing participants from local NAACP chapters using low-pressure

flyers, which was denied. The third approach consisted of my visiting the targeted areas

and leaving behind the same low-pressure flyers at non-organized events, which also

failed to produce any sufficient number of willing participants. Therefore, I obtained

permission from the university's IRB to implement a fourth approach, which consisted of

visiting the targeted areas and through the usage of purposive sampling and low-pressure

flyers, approaching potential participants to discuss the study without any direct

recruitment.

Sample Size and Eligibility Criteria

Initially, the desired participant selection for the current study consisted of 12–15

African American men or women who had encountered racially discriminatory

interactions with police, which has found to be a sufficient number in phenomenological

and interview studies (Galvin, 2015; Guest et al., 2006; Starks & Trinidad, 2007).

However, under the direction of the dissertation committee chair, it was agreed that data

saturation was met after the ninth interview and the decision was made to proceed with

the analysis. According to works cited in Mwita (2022), data saturation may be met when

interview responses become repetitious during the first nine to seventeen interviews.

Eligibility was dependent upon the willingness of the participant to participate in

the study either in person or virtually with the clear understanding that they would not

receive any form of compensation or reward for their participation. In addition, the

participants had to be over the age of 21 to ensure that the most recent interactions with

police were not status offense related. Also, the participants had to reside in the targeted

rural areas and have had the racially discriminatory event occur within those targeted

rural areas. The validity of the eligibility requirement did not consist of requiring age

verification, residency verification, or verification that the racially discriminatory act

actually occurred and relied solely on the creditably of the participant's word, which may

have influenced the recollection of the encounter.

Instrumentation

As the researcher, I served as the sole instrumentation for collecting data for the

study. Conducting semistructured in-person interviews, I collected, analyzed, transcribed,

and reported the generated data for the present study, without any other participating

source. I conducted these interviews in an open-ended fashion without providing any

form of steering, suggestion, or overall tone to the interview, allowing the participants to respond freely and of their own accord.

Data Collection

Using a phenomenological approach for the current qualitative study enabled the analysis of participants' individual perceptions. Semistructured in-person interviews were at the sole discretion of the willing participant. I presented the same 12 questions (see Appendix A) to each participant with similar probing questions depending on the specific tone of each interview. The interviews were audio recorded and transcribed solely by me utilizing NVivo to highlight any possible themes, similarities, or differences.

Participant Recruitment

I initially attempted to recruit 12–15 African American men or women from the selected rural areas of South Georgia who have self-identified as being the recipient of what they perceived to have been a racially discriminating encounter by police. After attempts to recruit at local probation offices, parole offices, local NAACP chapters, and local non-organized events failed, I gained permission from the university IRB to initiate a fourth approach, which involved visiting the targeted areas and through the usage of low-pressure flyers and purposive sampling, approaching potential participants to discuss the study without directly recruiting to reduce coercion. The initial attempt to recruit at local probation and parole offices failed due to a lack of participation in fear of potentially violating a vulnerable population. According to Juneja et al. (2019), vulnerable populations include those whose may be compelled to participate due to restricted rights to self-govern, such as prisoners, pregnant women, or subordinate

employees whose availability falls within the settings of the current research. Andrews and Davies (2022) also described vulnerable populations as those who have reduced autonomy or those with higher susceptibility to coercion. Therefore, the decision makers at these local offices decided their probationers or parolees would fall within the definition of restricted autonomy or higher susceptibility of coercion. Regardless of the safeguards in place, clearly stating that the choice to participate would be entirely of free-will and that they would be protected at all costs, a lack of participation prevailed. The original desire to use this specific population was only to validate that the participants literally had encounters with law enforcement to reduce fabrication, their offender status was irrelevant. Local NAACP chapters failed to respond to any form of communication regarding the study, and the third approach, involving my visiting the local targeted areas to leave low-pressure flyers documenting all qualifiers and providing the researchers contact information at non-organized events, was unproductive as well.

Interview

Initially, those who chose to willingly participate in the study had to contact me by email, which was the only point of contact that was listed on the flyers along with the other participant qualifications. For safety reasons, phone numbers would only be disclosed if the participant was limited in their ability or desire to communicate and requested a phone number.

The nine interviews conducted before data saturation was met were all conducted in person at the request of the interviewee. Initially, to ensure comfortability, the participants were all given options to conduct their 30- to 45-minute interviews in a

public area that provided security and privacy. The preferred and suggested location of

choice was the local public library. However, the participants chose an array of locations

to meet where they felt the most comfortable such as their homes, public cafeteria,

recreation room, and secluded offices. More publicly secure areas, such as local coffee

shops, were suggested but failed to pique any interest. There was also no interest in

conducting the interviews virtually. The semistructured interviews consisted of about 12

main open-ended questions in addition to a few probing questions that allowed the

participant to express their recollections freely. The interviews were projected to last no

longer than 45 minutes per participant, which would not hinder the participant's

livelihood or potentially deter them from the interview. However, the actual duration of

the interviews varied between 10 and 24 minutes. I used an audio recorder during the

interview, which made transcribing more feasible. The abovementioned interviews were

conducted on the first attempt and there was no need to stop, postpone, restart, or

reschedule at a later date.

Informed Consent

To ensure that the participants felt as comfortable as possible and to highlight the

validity of the current study, full disclosure forms were presented and recorded verbally

prior to the interview. It was explained that the participants may request a copy of the

form if they desire to keep one on file, which would provide the participants with a more

secure feeling about the validly of the study's purpose, along with a time line for

completion. Since the study remained completely confidential, the participants were

allowed to state "I consent" on the audio recorded after I read the consent form aloud in

its entirety. The consent form explained the purpose of the study and timeline for

completion, and provided information for free or low-cost resources if they became

distressed during or after the interview, which did not occur. In addition, the consent

form provided information on how the data from the study would be collected, stored,

and destroyed to ensure their identities were protected and not linked to their responses.

Specifically, the consent form explained that willing participants would participate in the

study of their own free will, would not be compensated, data would be stored under lock

and key or password protected for 5 years then destroyed, and that they would be referred

to as Participant 1, Participant 2, and so forth in the study to maintain confidentiality.

Potential Risks and Benefits

There will always be the potential for risks and benefits during any form of study

that includes interviews during the research process. A safeguard that may have

potentially helped reduce any emotional distress during the studies interviews consisted

of asking participants if any questions or aspects regarding this interaction was off limits

prior to starting the interview. Also, suggesting that the participant use a signal word or

sign that indicated they became uncomfortable speaking about something specifically

would allow me to cease questioning or change focus.

It was anticipated that some of the participants may become emotional during the

interview. At that point, if necessary, the interview would stop and only continue at the

interviewee's request, or the interview could be rescheduled for a later date. If any

specific question seemed to be giving the participants distress or any form of unnecessary

discomfort, the question or questions would have been removed from the current and

future interviews or have their wording altered. However, in some circumstances, complete emotional harm may not be avoided entirely; therefore, the risk–benefit ratio may be considered. In sum, as the researcher, I had to take every opportunity possible to ensure the safety of the interviewee but also make sure the participant understood all the potential benefits of the study, such as helping create potential recommendations to local police departments that might reduce racially discriminatory instances in the future. The willing participants interviewed in this study were comfortable speaking freely and did not use any form of safeguard nor display any form of emotional distress.

Data Analysis Plan

To properly analyze the data retrieved from the nine interviews, I ensured that all paperwork, storage drives, and contact information was securely stored in a locked file cabinet at my home and password locked on a private computer where it will remain for the required 5 years. NVivo, a transcription application, ensured that my lack of transcribing expertise did not hinder the interview from being appropriately transcribed. Once the interviews were transcribed, I attempted to discover themes that indicated what contributed to the overall loss of police legitimacy from the perception of the participant. In the scenarios where more themes suggested that these isolated discriminatory encounters did not lead to an overall loss of police legitimacy, the focus turned to attempting to determine what was the difference during the interactions. Overall, in the analysis, I was looking for specific patterns that led to specific outcomes regardless of what those outcomes might be to determine some type of correlation.

Issues of Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is a concept that all researchers and studies of this nature must be considered to reassure the validity of the study has the utmost protection. Anney (2014) explains that through credibility, transferability, confirmability, and dependability, the accuracy and adequacy of the inquiry may be validated. Strategies such as triangulation, following ethical guidelines, and probing may be considered to ensure that the abovementioned concepts are protected.

The willing participants did not portray, suggest, or display any form of concerning demeanors that would otherwise indicate that their recollections were unworthy of trust.

Credibility

Credibility, for the purpose of this study, can be viewed as the validity and legitimacy of what is being told to the researcher during the interview process (Fleming et al., 2021). Anney (2014) described credibility as the amount of confidence researchers are able to apply towards the truth of the findings. In qualitative research, there are many instances where the participant may choose to exaggerate or fabricate the details of their story, and this may be the case if they feel the result will achieve their or the researcher's desires. According to Haven and Grootel (2019), qualitative research is an in-depth dive into the "how", "what", and "why" questions of a specific event when revealing the perspectives of interview participants. Embracing subjectivity, qualitative research is projected through the lens of how the researcher interpreted the information retrieved from the interviewees (Haven & Grootel, 2019).

Therefore, in qualitative research, understanding that creditability for a researcher is the belief in the interpretations and data retrieved from the participants. To help ensure credibility is sustained, I shared some of my research-relevant experiences with the participants prior to recording to demonstrate that the survey is not looking for lavishing stories but honest recollections of events regardless of how monotonous they may seem.

The participants shared heart filled recollections of their negative experiences and how it affected their lives afterwards. These recollections did not give any reason to doubt the integrity of their story's credibility.

Transferability

Transferability, for the purpose of this study, can be viewed as the studies ability to be replicated and its findings generalized to other circumstances (Tuval-Mashiach, 2021). Therefore, in qualitative research, this would suggest that the current study should have the ability to be conducted in additional locals or other similar settings (Amankwaa, 2016). It is vital that the research is very transparent and straightforward with every step of the research process to ensure that transferability is not jeopardized in future attempts to duplicate the study.

Transparency will ensure that every possible aspect of this study is available for transferability purposes in the event other researchers desire to implement the study or a similar focused study in other rural areas. Unfortunately, mirroring the exact locational demographics, participant encounters with law enforcement, and other additional dissimilarities may hinder the study from being replicated precisely.

Confirmability

Confirmability can be considered the degree to which the results can be validated by others (Anney, 2014). Amankwaa (2016) suggested that the researcher should demonstrate that the results are derived from the findings of the study and not from self-interest or biases. The structure of the findings is presented in a manner that are easy to follow and their inferential capabilities suggest that others will conclude very similar conclusions.

Dependability

Dependability, for the purpose of this study, can be viewed as the stability of the study's findings over time (Anney, 2014). In qualitative research, dependability is synonymous with repeatability, or other researchers' ability to conduct the same research and obtain similar results (Amankwaa, 2016). As I progressed through the research process, I ensured transparency and clarity were of the foremost importance as I documented the progression of the study. Therefore, if future researchers attempt to duplicate my analysis, the totality of the process, including all trials and tribulations, is visible for interpretation.

Exact dependability and repeatability may be challenging for others due to the nature of conducting personable interviews. However, the overall concept regarding African Americans who have experienced racially discriminatory encounters with police in rural areas and how that encounter effected how they viewed the overall legitimacy of policing may be confirmed and replicated.

Ethical Concerns and Procedures

In a study examining ethical concerns in social research, Kazmierska (2020) suggests that researchers should be aware of their sensitivities towards their study but should not allow daunting restrictions intended to protect ethical concerns to limit their studies' ability to properly collect data and produce results.

Therefore, understanding that I cannot allow any harm to the participants as a direct or indirect result of the study, all necessary precautions were taken to ensure their safety and comfort. In addition, I did not attempt to deter the participants from including any aspects of their recollections from the questions asked and only utilize probing questions if short, non-informational answers are given. All attempts were made to ensure participant comfortability.

To conclude, willing participants participated of their own free will, consented to a disclosure form, only audio recording were conducted, and the participants' names were not used, all data is and will be properly stored for the required five years, and the participants were classified as participant 1, participant 2, etc. to ensure that their identifications will always be kept confidential.

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Summary

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The current qualitative study utilized a phenomenological approach to gain insight into the lived experiences of the willing participants regarding racial discrimination by police and perception. Nine interviews were conducted that produced repetitious outcomes leading to data saturation. Transcribing technology provided the ability to produce accurate transcriptions used to develop themes pertaining to similarities and

differences of the participants perceptions of the overall legitimacy of law enforcement. The nature of the interviews remained trustworthy, confirmable, dependable, transferrable, and creditable and the results may hopefully be utilized to recommend suggestions to local agencies in efforts to reduce negative police experiences while preserving police legitimacy in the future.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this study was to assess the perceptions of African Americans who identify as being the recipients of racial discrimination by police in the rural areas of South Georgia. Using a qualitative method with a phenomenological approach, this assessment was aimed at determining whether the perception of a racially discriminating encounter with police alters how the rural area recipients view the overall legitimacy of law enforcement. The following research questions were the focus of the study:

- RQ1. What are the perceptions of African Americans who self-identify as having experienced racial discrimination by law enforcement officers in rural South Georgia?

- RQ2. What impact do these perceptions of racial discrimination by police towards African Americans have on their overall perceptions of legitimacy towards law enforcement?

- RQ3. How do these perceived discriminatory experiences by police shape how African Americans live their daily lives?

Qualitative semistructured interviews were used to gain the necessary insight pertaining to the research questions.

Setting

This study was conducted in the rural areas of South Georgia. The willing candidates were given the option to conduct the interviews either in person or virtually, which they all chose the in-person option. After I obtained permission from the university's IRB (approval number 03-31-23-0978719), data saturation was met through

purposive sampling and snowballing. Regardless of suggested options, the participants

chose to conduct these interviews in person and in various locations due to their

convenience and comfortability, such as their homes, public-work cafeterias, recreational

rooms, and secluded offices.

Demographics

All nine participants identified as African American, over the age of 21, and

residing or having resided in the rural areas of South Georgia during their negative police

encounter. Four participants identified as female and five identified as male. One female

participant identified as being in her 60s, whereas one male participant identified as being

in his 50s. Two male and one female participant identified as being in their 40s, and two

male and two female participants identified as being in their 30s (see Table 1).

Table 1

Participant Demographics

Age	Male	Female	Total
30s	2	2	4
40s	2	1	3
50s	1		1
60s		1	1
Total	5	4	9

Data Collection

After obtaining IRB permission, I used university-approved low-pressure flyers to

recruit participants. The interview process took a total of 13 weeks from when the first

interview was conducted. The first attempt to recruit willing participants at local

probation and parole officers through the usage of low-pressure flyers failed to produce a

sufficient number of participants, the second approach to recruit at local NAACP

chapters did not produce successful results either, the third approach to visit the targeted

areas and recruit at non-organized gatherings by handing out the low-pressure flyers

failed as well. After gaining permission to attempt a fourth approach, I used purposive

sampling and snowballing to meet data saturation. Data saturation can be considered met

when the interviewee responses become repetitious in nature, which is usually found

between 9 and 17 interviews (Mwita, 2022). The fourth approach, which ultimately

allowed for data saturation to be met, consisted of me visiting the targeted areas and,

through purposive sampling, approaching those individuals who may fit the search

criteria. I then explained the research to the potential candidates and provided them with

a low-pressure flyer containing contact information if they were interested in

participating in the study or if they knew anyone who met the criteria who may wish to

participate. I was only successful in finding two different individuals, through the use of

purposive sampling, who were actually interested in hearing about the study. The

remaining willing participants were gained through snowballing after my interaction with

the first two interviewees. Each participant requested that their interview be conducted in

person for various reasons at various locals. All interviews were audio recorded by me on

the first try and none were rescheduled.

Interview locations were at the discretion of the willing participant. I gave

suggestions that the interview would be more private if it was conducted at the local

library or if comfortability dictated a more social setting, local coffee shops provide a

secluded back room for reading purposes. Three of the willing participants preferred to

conduct their interviews in secluded offices, where they felt the most comfortable. Two of the participants chose to conduct their interviews at home. The remaining four requested to conduct their interviews through various recreational settings.

After conversing with the committee chair, I deemed that more interviews would most likely not produce any different responses. It was agreed that data saturation was met after the ninth interview and the analysis process needed to begin. The interviews were uploaded to NVivo for transcription purposes. NVivo was able to transcribe five of the nine interviews. Therefore, I had to transcribe the remining four interviews by hand. After the remining four interviews were transcribed, they were also uploaded to NVivo for coding purposes.

There were no variations in the data collection plan mentioned above.

Data Analysis

Using NVivo, a professional transcription service, I was able to highlight themes from the nine interviews. The primary themes pertained to answering my three research questions. At that point, I read each interview several times, line by line, and then paragraph by paragraph to determine what the provided information truly meant. This allowed me to highlight 21 codes. The primary theme (see Table 2) that emerged from RQ1 was racial discrimination by police - perceptions of African American recipients. From this theme, 11 codes emerged (a) improper procedure, (b) location, (c) lies, (d) law-abiding, (d) unprofessionalism, (e) unfair-inconsistent treatment, (f) uncomfortable situation, (g) time of day, (h) targeted, (i) officers need more training, and (j) proper procedure. The second primary theme (see Table 3) emerged from RQ2: the impact of

racial discrimination on the overall legitimacy of police. From this theme, eight codes emerged: (a) desires officer relationship, (b) friends are officers, (c) officers trying to do good, (d) poor officer legitimacy, (e) poor-no officer relationship, (f) professional police, (g) scared for our kids, and (h) understanding of officer actions. The third and final primary theme (see Table 4) emerged from RQ3: how racial discrimination by police shapes daily lives. From this theme, two codes emerged (a) emotional damage and (b) physical damage. This information was utilized to create a hierarchal chart of codes, which are represented in the provided code book (see Appendix B).

Evidence of Trustworthiness

In a qualitative study, trustworthiness is critical. The trustworthiness of the study depends on the credibility of the interview recollections and the transferability of the study is highly dependent upon the study's ability to be replicated. If the study is to be deemed to have dependability, its results must be able to remain valid over time. In addition, the study must have the ability to be validated by others through the concept of confirmability.

Credibility

The credibility of this study can always be challenged due to the study having no formal method of verifying the participants recollections, age, residence, or any other aspect of the interview. However, by following ethical guidelines, asking specific questions with minor probing questions, and communicating that the participants would not benefit from the study financially or otherwise, I was able to safely assume that their recollections were accurate and valid to the best of their knowledge.

Transferability

   The transferability, or the ability of this study to be replicated in other locations and its results utilized to generalize to other populations, is possible. The study documented each step of the progress to include its initial recruiting failures. The ability to generalize the results in other locations may prove to be problematic since every situation is different and when examining individual perceptions, results may change depending on their current life experiences.

Dependability

   An exact replication would prove to be very problematic due to the confidential nature of the interviewees' identities, timing, and overall situational atmosphere of the specific interview. The willing participants may not have the same emotional connection to the situation as time progresses or their emotional connection may intensify depending upon any recent negative interactions with police. However, replication of the study itself is possible since every step, including the failures, were properly documented.

Confirmability

   The ability of a study to be validated by others is crucial. I have provided vivid details of how the study was conducted. However, a qualitative study that is dependent upon the perceptions of those who at one time experienced a negative encounter will always be at the mercy of timing. In many cases, the attitudes and opinions of people may change due to recent life experiences or lack thereof; therefore, the study may be validated by others, but the results may vary due to various factors.

Results

To conduct data analysis for this study, I used the professional transcription and coding software NVivo 14. After NVivo transcribed the downloaded interviews, I uploaded the additional transcribed interviews into the software, NVivo was used for coding purposes. Each line of the transcriptions was read in a singular fashion and then each paragraph was read to determine what theme or codes the provided information was providing. In the following subsections, I present the themes and codes that emerged from the data analysis.

Racial Discrimination by Police—Perceptions of African American Recipients

RQ1. What are the perceptions of African Americans who self-identify as having experienced racial discrimination by law enforcement officers in rural South Georgia?

During the analysis of the interview process, 11 themes appeared to help explain how the participants perceived their negative encounter with police as racially discriminating (see Table 2). During the data collection process, the concepts of improper procedure, law abiding, lies, location, officers need more training, proper procedure, targeted, time of day, uncomfortable situation, unfair-inconsistent treatment, and unprofessionalism appeared to be central focal points of the linkage between their encounter with police and its perception of being racially discriminatory.

Table 2

Racial Discrimination by Police—Perceptions of African American Recipients

Theme	Code	Participants	References
Improper procedure	Anything the officer did that was perceived as not following procedure.	7	17
Law-abiding	The actions of the participant perceived as following the law.	4	9
Lies	Anything said by the officer during the encounter that was perceived as not true.	5	5
Location	Description of where the incident took place.	9	12
Officers need more training	What the recipient believes could possibly reduce the negative encounter from happening again in the future.	6	8
Proper procedure	The participant believes that the officer was doing his or her job correctly.	1	1
Targeted	The participant believes they were specifically chosen by police to be recipients of the interaction.	6	15
Time of day	The time-frame or specific status of the day (night or day) when the encounter occurred.	7	9
Uncomfortable situation	The recipient expresses that the encounter in some fashion made them feal uncomfortable, unsafe, or very concerned regarding the legitimacy of the encounter.	8	19
Unfair-inconsistent treatment	The recipient expresses that the encounter would not have been conducted in the same manner if they looked different or where someone different.	6	13
Unprofessionalism	The recipient expresses that the officer acted in a manner that was unnecessary and unprofessional for their specific position.	5	18

Improper Procedure

The participants discussed the different aspects of their encounters that did not seem to follow what they believed to be considered proper procedure. In general, the participants discussed how they were pulled over for instances that could not be valid due to the time of the day, the method in which they were pulled over, and the actions of the officer during the encounter. Participant 1 described how he believed that being unjustly pulled over for not slowing down or altering lanes for an emergency vehicle, along with the officer spitting and laughing at him was highly and unprofessional and not perceived as proper procedure. Participant 5 explained how he experienced the police constantly stopping him and continuously questioning him for crimes he played no part in, which he perceived as obviously harassment and improper procedure and use of authority. Participant 5 stated,

> they took the pocket knife said it was a weapon, handcuffed me, threw me in the car, drove me twelve miles from my neighborhood to the police district, to the precent and when we got inside, they all laughed and they joking at me one guy pulls out a machete and says this is the weapon he had and then they laughed about it and talked about called me all kinds of different names and then they finally said get the hell out.

Participant 7 suggested that her encounter was blatantly a violation of proper procedure because the officer was loud and belligerent blaming her for something that wasn't her fault. Participant 7 stated, "like loud and belligerent if that is a description loud and belligerent as to like blaming me for something that wasn't my fault".

Participant 4 explained how her encounter took the form of improper procedure when she was directed to pull over by the flashing lights and due to her being scared, she turned on her emergency flashers and coasted to a well-lit area to pull over. This is where she was greeted by six patrol cars and officers with guns drawn because she did not pull over immediately. Participant 9 stated,

> The other person in cuffs because he said they were being mouthy but all she said was "wow", and he threw her in cuffs, and I was like dang. Why, what's going on, I was confused, and I didn't know what was going on at all.

Participant 9 expressed her concern that the officer was acting in an improper fashion because of a minor comment her friend made and that the officer's reaction to the comment was in violation of proper procedure.

Participant 6 discussed his event as being a violation of proper procedure because they actually called the police to come help with their situation, and instead of the officer arriving and asking questions, the officer's first response was you raise his standard issue weapon, order everyone to the ground, and eventually macing many of the people who initially called for the officers' help.

Law-Abiding

Many of the participants were persistent in proclaiming their alleged actions that led to their encounters with police were law-abiding behaviors and did not warrant the encounter. Participant 1 claimed that he was driving home at the correct speed when he approached an emergency vehicle on the side of the road. He stated that he slowed down well below the speed limit because he was unable to move over at the moment. Once the

officer turned on his flashing lights, Participant 1 put on his turning indicators and pulled over on the side of the road.

Participant 1 stated,

I was pulled over after seeing an officer on the side, I was within the speed limit, I lowered my speed before approaching the officer or driving past the officer. I noticed I was 10 miles under the speed limit, and I was still decreasing my speed and then afterward I was trialed by an officer I did what I was supposed to do. I put my indicator on, turned my hood light on, took my windows down, took my hands on steering wheel and wait for officer to speak.

Participant 3 related that he was taking one of his peers home from work early one morning and was pulled over by officers regarding the tint of his windows. He did not recollect anything that would have led to that officer feeling the need to pull him over other than his type of car and the neighborhood he is leaving.

Participant 3 stated,

Um. So, basically, I was taking a guy home from work that didn't have a ride um and the car that I was driving was my car but it was like, if you looked at the car you would think it was like a maybe like a drug dealer type car.

Participant 9 stated that they were pulled over for allegedly speeding, but the car they were using at the moment was not running properly and could not go above 50 miles per hour. Therefore, the officer who pulled them over, and eventually put her friend in handcuffs, inaccurately or purposely stated it was for speeding regardless of the reality the car could not reach levels above 50 miles per hour.

Lies

More than half of the participants suggested that their negative encounter with police consisted of many lies on the officer's behalf. Participant 1 suggests that the officer lied about the reasoning he was pulled over by using the excuse he didn't slow down or move over for an emergency vehicle on the side of the road.

Participant 3 suggested that the officer that pulled him over argued it was for his tint. However, at 3 o'clock in the morning, it is not possible to visually determine if someone's tint is too dark due to the darkness of the time frame.

Participant 5 stated that in the events he discussed during the interview, the officers stated he always fit the description of the suspect they were looking for regardless that one encounter he was wearing a bright neon green outfit for his job, which is not a common outfit among youth.

Location

During the interview process, Participants 1, 3, 4, 7, 8, 9, and 2 stated their encounter happened on a county maintained "back road".

Participant 6 stated his encounter was in a parking lot and Participant 5 stated his encounters happen in what he considers the more urban aspect of his residential area.

Officers Need More Training

Another common theme that many of the participants discussed was that the officers they encountered and possible officers in general need more training. Participant 1 suggested that just having more interaction with the community would help prevent future discriminatory events from occurring. Participant 1 stated, "I think they need to

have a more widespread interaction with the community at large not just a certain ethic

groups or anything but try to focus on all age groups and all ethnic groups."

Participant 5 suggested that this type of negative police encounters is more of a

cultural and leadership issue that can be resolved.

Participant 5 stated, "It was a cultural thing with leadership thing I think the aw

the environment during that time".

Participant 7 stated,

So, you're getting around getting to know the people in the neighbored or going

to a gas station in that neighborhood and getting to know the local people so that

they feel safe around you because their always has to a trust of the people".

Targeted. Many of the participants were concerned at the fact they felt as if they

were being targeted by police for some reason, which led to their negative

encounter.

Participant 1 stated he was trailed for at least 15 miles before the officer actually

decided to pull him over.

Participant 3 explained.

There was no way for the officer to make a legitimate claim his tint was too dark

due to the time of day. He suggests that he was pulled over because his car looked

like what some may consider to be a "drug-dealer car" and he was coming from a

specific type of neighbored.

Participant 5 reported feeling as if he was being targeted because of the way he

was approached by officers with their guns drawn and supposedly fitting the description

of a suspect regardless of the unpopular choice of clothing he was wearing for work at the time. Lastly, Participant 9 felt as if they were targeted because the excuse the officer gave them regarding speeding was an impossibility due to the "broken" car that would not actually go over 50 miles an hour at the time.

Time of Day

An interesting aspect of the data collection process was that four of the participants specifically stated that it was dark outside during their encounter, two stated it was in the morning hours and one suggested it was later in the day, and one of these participants suggesting their encounter was on the weekend during a holiday. Uncomfortable Situation. Many of the participants have stated that they perceived their encounter to be racially discriminating due to various reasons. The participants also state that their encounter with law enforcement made them feel very uncomfortable either during or after the encounter, which affects the way in which they view law enforcement.

Participant 1 stated he does not feel comfortable around the local police because the situation that he experienced just does not "sit right with me" and he views the encounter as very unpleasant.

Participant 3 suggested that even though he has friends that are cops and at times he may understand why they act in the manner they do, he still does not feel comfortable being around police.

Participant 3 stated, "I feel like the police stop is the worse place to be at because not just the fact that you know and then even knowing your rights".

Participant 7 stated, "I took make me feel more comfortable I called somebody to make sure someone was on the phone so if something did happen to me that someone would be aware of where I was".

Participant 7 expressed that her encounter was so uncomfortable that she felt the need to call someone just to have another person on the phone so that someone knew she was being stopped by police. Participant 4 suggested that the uncomfortable feeling she received from the six officers stopping her and rushing her car with guns drawn still affects her today.

Participant 4 stated, "Uneasy, completely uneasy? Yeah. It is still to this day and that was years ago".

Unfair-Inconsistent Treatment

During the data collection process, it was evident that the majority of the participants believed their encounters consisted of unfair and inconsistent treatment. Participant 1 believed that he was treated unfairly because he has seen numerous people refuse to slow down or move over for emergency vehicles on the side of the road and they are never pulled over. Participant 5 believed that if he didn't comply with every aspect of the officer's request during his negative encounters, he would have most likely lost his life unlike his Caucasian counterparts.

Participant 5 stated,

You know um like white was right um they had all the power we were low life people and they really didn't want us there and if had we did something could have got shot could have died and there would of been no justice". Participant 8

believes that her encounter was unjust because the officers in that specific areas seem to only pull over certain people at certain times. Overall, she believed they are racist and would follow her around more and let others who didn't look like her go about freely doing as they wished.

Participant 8 states, "No, because in this certain area they seem to pull certain people over at certain times. Yes. I guess it's their way of doing things. feel like they would follow me more and you know, tell me where I am. They would probably let you go about freely doing what you want to do. But they would look at me as if well maybe she gona something she should do".

Participant 9 also claimed that she has experienced officers allowing Caucasian people to do things but stop African Americans for doing the same thing.

Participant 9 stated, "I feel like if it was, you know a Caucasian person, they definitely would let them went by, didn't say nothing because I've experienced that". Participant 4 believed that it is the fear of the unknown as to why some officers treat some people differently.

Unprofessionalism

A theme that arose during the interview analysis process was unprofessionalism. Some of the participants believed that even if the officer did everything correctly their demeanor or approach to the encounter was very unprofessional and could have been handled much better. Participant 1 explained that the officer during his encounter "spit" at his window and would not allow him to fully speak along with laughter while he was awaiting his citation.

Participant 1 stated,

On his approach he came to window and first thing he did is spit after I

said good night officer he came to window and he spit and I wasn't event given

the chance to speak and I heard laughter for getting my ticket". "He was back

there for a while, twelve minutes average then afterwards I heard laughter then he

took my license back to me with a citation saying I have this for you. This was my

first ticket, so for me I think I did everything I needed to do.

Participant 3, 4, and 6 both referenced how unprofessional it is for officers to

automatically place their hand on their gun or draw their guns without assessing the

situation first to determine the weapon is warranted. Participant 7disucsses how her

encounter was unprofessional due to the preferred language the officer used during is

"loud and belligerent" behavior.

Participant 7 stated, "like loud and belligerent if that is a description loud and

belligerent as to like blaming me for something that wasn't my fault which um the

cursing and the like rudeness coming up on".

The Impact of Racial Discrimination on the Overall Legitimacy of Police

RQ2. What impact do these perceptions of racial discrimination by police towards

African Americans have on their overall perceptions of legitimacy towards law

enforcement?

During the data collection process, the participants expressed how their negative

encounters with police impacted the way they perceive the legitimacy of law enforcement

in general. During this data collection process, some concepts such as desires officer

relationships, friends are officers, officers trying to do good, poor officer legitimacy, poor-no officer relationship, professional police, scared for our kids, and an understanding of police actions emerged as the participants were recollecting their encounters (see Table 3).

Table 3

The Impact of Racial Discrimination on the Overall Legitimacy of Police

Theme	Code	Participants	References
Desires officer relationship	Regardless of this isolated negative event, the recipient still desires a positive relationship with police.	4	4
Friends are officers	The participant referred to as being or having friends who are officers.	3	3
Officers trying to do good	Regardless of this isolated negative event, the recipient believes the officers were trying to do the right thing.	1	1
Poor officer legitimacy	The recipient indicates that they do not trust police, have no faith in them, have no confidence in them, or believes their intentions are less than legitimate.	6	10
Poor–no officer relationship	The recipient indicates they have a poor relationship with police or they indicate that they do not have nor have any desire to build a relationship with police.	6	7
Professional police	The recipient indicates that regardless of having a negative encounter with police, they still trust them enough to call them if needed, believe they are doing the right thing overall, or perceive law enforcement as a whole in a positive light.	6	10
Scared for our kids	The participant indicates that they are scared for their children to interact with police due to the lack of trust, confidence, and faith they have in the police to act professional and in a fair consistent manner.	4	6
Understanding of police actions	The participant indicates that regardless of the negative encounter, they understand why the officer acted in the manner they did.	1	3

Desires Officer Relationships

During the interview process, several of the participants expressed that regardless of their negative encounter they still desired to have a better relationship with the local law enforcement.

Participant 1 stated, "I would appreciate a stronger relationship because at end of day if I'm supposed to go through a community, live in that community, engage in anyway, the law enforcement got to be supportive of the entire community".

Participant 7 stated, "I would because I would want to be able to trust people that if I call"

Participant 9 suggested that she desires a stronger relationship with officers because she feels that it would be nice to feel protected regardless of who you are or how different you are perceived to be compared to others.

Friends Are Officers

Three of the participants stated that even though they experienced what they perceived as a negative police encounter based on racial discriminatory factors, they still maintained friendships with local police.

Participant 3 stated that one of his good friends is an officer in the same location where the discriminatory event occurred and he still talks to his friend without any form of resentment.

Participant 6 suggested that he still maintain great relationship with the officers in his local area because he grew up with some of them and that friendship cannot be influence by isolated events.

Participant 6 stated, "Have a great relationship. Um, I know some. I knew some of them. I grew up with some of them".

Officers Trying to Do Good

Statistically insignificant but noteworthy, participant 3 suggested that he believes the officers in these targeted rural areas are genuinely not just looking for situations to escalate like they were back home up north.

Poor Officer Legitimacy

The majority of the participants expressed that the negative experience they encountered with law enforcement impacted their overall view in a negative manner. Participant 1 suggests he does not trust the law enforcement enough to call them even in an emergency without an audience present.

Participant 1 stated,

> Based off of that encounter, if something happened and I needed to call police I would rather go to the station where I know I have somebody else there as a witness. The only reason I would call them and would not think twice if it was a large group of people and I actually got an audience.

Participants 5, 7, 8, 9 all concurred that if a situation occurred that required them to call the police in their local areas, they either would not call at all or if they did call it would be in the presence of an audience of sort to ensure the authenticity and integrity of the encounter.

Poor-No Officer Relationship

Even though some of the participants suggested they did indeed desire a better relationship with police, the majority of the participants felt otherwise.

Participant 5 suggested that he does not want a stronger relationship and would appreciate it if law enforcement just left him alone and that he would not call upon them for any type of help.

Participant 5 stated, "No, I want to be I wouldn't want no stronger relationship I would want them to leave me alone and I would leave them alone to go about my business relationship I wouldn't call for anything"

Participants 7, 4, 9, and 2 were very blunt and straightforward that they either do not have a relationship with police, do not want a relationship with police, or do not trust them enough to embark on any attempt to create a relationship with law enforcement in their local areas.

Professional Police

Some of the participants indicated that they did feel as if the police during their encounter or in general do act in a professional manner. Participant 3 viewed the police in a somewhat professional manner because they do not go out of their way to "mess with you". Participant 7 stated that even though she would be hesitant to call based on her personal experience she would put enough trust in their abilities and professionalism to call if she needed the police. Participant 4 suggested that she believes the police in her rural area treats everyone the same regardless of the manner they pulled her over that night in full force and guns drawn.

Scared for our Kids

One theme that constantly was at the forefront of many of the participants' minds was their children. In many of the interviews it was evident that even though they may be able to look past the event on a personal level, the interviews were still unsettled by the event because they have children that may one day experience the same situation.

Participant 3 suggested that it is sad he has to teach his children how to be pulled over by the police so that they do not unknowingly do something that escalates the situation.

Participant 5 stateed,

I tell my kids do I tell my children hey when you drive be careful sit up straight place your hands up so if you get pulled over place your hands on the steering wheel where they can see your hand don't make no sudden movement is its at night turn you lights on so the guy can see inside the car do I think that every race has to do that well I tell my son I practice it to this very day.

Participant 7 explained that even going through the process of teaching your children how to handle encounters with law enforcement proves to be a problematic task because even if you give them all the proper knowledge things can still go wrong.

Participant 7 stated, "Things like having to explain that to a seven-year-old that thing having to tell them ok when your pulled over by police make sure you do everything the right way and sometimes when you do the right things the right way things go wrong"

Participant 6 expressed how much he fears the fact that if officers ever pull over his son they may be intimidated by his look. He explains that his son has many tattoos and dreadlocks down to his lower back, he may be perceived as a threat.

Participant 6 stated, "My son is a college major. Ah never use drugs. Never drank. Never smoked a cigarette. But because of how he looks, these are a group of a black male, African male, and he has dreads down to his back and tattoos all over his arm. My fear is there, they look at him and think that he's a threat and not knowing his story"

Understanding of Police Actions

Statistically insignificant but noteworthy, participant 3 explained that he has friends that are officers in his local area and he can understand why they act the way they do in certain situations. The officers indeed do have a dangerous job and the unknown for them may be a legitimate factor in how and why they treat some individuals different than others.

How Racial Discrimination by Police Shapes Daily Lives

RQ3. How do these perceived discriminatory experiences by police shape how African Americans live their daily lives?

During the data collection process, the participants revealed how their negative encounters with police affected them or still affects them today in different fashions. During the data collection process two concepts arose, emotional damage and physical damage (see Table 4).

Table 4

How Racial Discrimination by Police Shapes Daily Lives

Theme	Code	Participants	References
Emotional damage	Any emotional negativity regarding the encounter	8	14
Physical damage	Any physical negativity regarding the encounter	4	5

Emotional Damage

The majority of the participants expressed emotional damage as the main factor in how this encounter shaped or still shapes their daily lives. Participant 1 expressed that after his encounter he no longer feels as if he can go about his daily business without having to be conscious to the fact law enforcement may be near and there is a possibility, he could be hassled without proper justification.

Participant 1 stated, "The effect it has on me is at that moment I could be gong about doing my daily chores or taking care of business within the law and then every time I see someone in my head it's like I could be prepared to be hassled or be giving a ticket or arrested or anything with that nature even while I haven't done anything so that expectation every time I see an officer now, I be like yea prepare for it".

Participant 5 suggested that the multiple negative encounters he experienced with police directly influenced his decisions over the years to run or hide every time he saw law enforcement to prevent any type of unwarranted interaction.

Participant 7 stated that the unknown and not knowing how her encounter with the officer would end scared for a few weeks after the encounter concluded.

Participant 7 stated, "I was stopped I took make me feel more comfortable I called somebody to make sure someone was on the phone so if something did happen to me that someone would be aware of where I was Um hum the unknown scared me a little bit for like a couple of weeks".

Participant 4 stated that during her encounter that involved six patrol officers following her to where she eventually decided to pull over in a well-lit area, made here fell as her life was over when the officers rushed her car with guns drawn.

Physical Damage

Only four of the nine participants referred to the event in a manner that would suggest that they may have suffered not only emotional damage as a result from the encounter but some form of arguable physical damage.

Participant 7 stated that she still has involuntary episodes of fear and anxiety when she sees flashing police lights and that forces here to be on constant alert for potential police encounters.

Participant 7 stated, "My head is always on a swivel now especially in the dark um like it wasn't a really big trigger but flashing lights kinda sorta because it was dark and I didn't know"

Participant nine suggested that during that specific encounter she felt the need to physically look over her shoulder since the officer literally followed them to the nearby gas station even after the conclusion of the encounter.

Summary

To conclude, this chapter outlined the data collection process used to conduct the current study. Data were collected through the nine semistructured interviews that contained open ended questions. The interviews were uploaded to a professional transcription software and the transcribed data, to include the interviews that were hand transcribed by the researcher, were coded to determine themes that could answer the research questions. There was a total of three primary themes accompanied by numerous subthemes or codes.

In addition to providing tables and figures that represented the results from the current study, I included direct quotes from the participants to ensure the validity and the context of the discussion was considered. The participants explained that they believed their encounter to be racially discriminatory based on the events and specific details that took place during their encounter with police. Many of the participants stated they felt as if they were being targeted due to the uncomfortable nature, the perception of improper procedures, and the overall unprofessionalism of the encounters.

In Chapter 5, I will provide an explicit interpretation of the findings, detailed limitations of the study, and provided suggestions and recommendations for future research. In addition, I will provide an overall conclusion to the study.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of using a phenomenological approach for this qualitative study was to gain a better understanding of the perceptions of African Americans who claim to have been the recipients of racial discrimination by police in the rural areas of South Georgia and how it has affected or impacted their lives. This research study was also an attempt to determine whether these negative encounters altered the manner in which the recipients viewed the overall legitimacy of law enforcement. In addition, the study was attempting to determine whether living in small rural areas influenced how the recipients of racial discrimination by police viewed the overall legitimacy of police.

The findings vividly provided insight into the participants' lived experiences, which explained how these negative interactions with police played an impactful role in how the recipient views law enforcement and the effects it had on the recipient's life.

Interpretation of the Findings

The data collected from this qualitive study provided an explicit explanation of the recipients' perceptions regarding their lived experiences of racially discriminating police encounters. The phenomenological approach provided a better understanding as to why the perceptions were formulated by the recipients as they were. Despite the negative encounters and the lasting effects, some of the participants still desired a different relationship with police and displayed signs of trust by proclaiming that they would still call the local law enforcement if they needed their help. However, the overall consensus from the participants' interviews seems to point in the direction that the racially

discriminatory acts by law enforcement negatively altered how the recipient viewed the overall legitimacy of law enforcement.

Racial Discrimination by Police—Perceptions of African American Recipients

The findings suggest that the participants viewed their encounters as racially discriminating due to the manner in which the situation was handled by the officer or officers involved. Many of the participants felt as if they were being targeted by police since they believed they were abiding by the current laws but still fell victim to a negative police interaction. The majority of the participants suggested that the officers proceeded to conduct the encounter in an improper fashion that did not seem fair and consistent to what they had witnessed for others. The unprofessional nature of the encounter, which including spitting, loud and belligerent behaviors, unwarranted restraints, and cursing only portrayed the event as lacking legitimacy and created a very uncomfortable situation for many of the participants. The uneasy and uncomfortable atmosphere was only aggravated by the fact most of these encounters occurred on back country roads after dark or early in the mornings before many residents were traveling on the roadways. The findings suggest that having these racially discriminating encounters with police are not mitigated by the nature of living in the rural areas of South Georgia and appear to be direct contributor to the diminishing integrity of officer legitimacy.

The Impact of Racial Discrimination on the Overall Legitimacy of Police

The overall consensus of the findings suggests that the perception of a negative police encounter, regardless of local, is not conducive to promoting a positive outlook on overall police legitimacy. A few of the participants indicated that they were able to look

past the negative encounter with police and desired a positive relationship with officers in their local areas. Some of the participants claimed that they understood, to some degree, why the officers may approach and reacted in undesirable fashions when they are dealing with the unknown. However, very few participants referred to the officers' actions during their encounter as "professional." The majority of the participants responded in a negative manner regarding how they were treated during the encounter. One main concern that ultimately led to a deterioration in the perceptions in the overall legitimacy of law enforcement was that the majority of the encounters were very negative and racially focused in the eyes of the recipients and that fear was extrapolated from their scenario and applied to potential future scenarios involving their children. Therefore, the results suggest that even though some individuals residing in the rural areas of South Georgia may be able to look past an isolated negative event with police, the majority of the participants cannot, which is a result of diminished trust.

How Racial Discrimination by Police Shapes Daily Lives

The majority of the participants indicated that their negative encounters with police had devastating emotional effects on them well beyond the actual encounter. These effects included the fear of encountering law enforcement, anxiety at the sight of flashing lights, and a fear of being alone with law enforcement. In a physical sense, some of the participants indicated that after their encounter they are constantly looking over their shoulder to maintain awareness of any officers nearby to possibly prevent being harassed. Also, one of the participants described her reaction as not only emotional but physically traumatizing in a manner that she experiences anxiety at the sight of flashing patrol car

lights. Therefore, the findings suggest that the overall negative encounters with law enforcement negatively influences the participants' daily lives.

Limitations of the Study

The limitations of the study include a limited geographical location, lack of participation, and inability to validate recollections, residency, age, and location of event. Originally, I attempted to find 12 to 15 willing volunteers, but data saturation was met after the ninth interview. Those who did chose to participate in the interview process claimed to reside in the targeted rural areas, encountered the negative event in the same rural areas, are all over the age of 21, and that their recollections of the events are valid. Educational level was not considered for this study and may have played a role in the participants' ability to comprehend the questions being asked during the interview. The interviewees did not display any signals that indicated any type of misunderstanding; however, various educational levels may correlate with various abilities to comprehend similarly. Another limitation may include rapport building with the participants; they may not have fully entrusted me with every aspect of their recollections and potentially left out crucial details. The purpose of the voluntary research study was explained to them before the study and during the audio recording of the interviews as I read the consent form aloud.

Recommendations

For this research study, I focused on the perceptions of those who claimed to have been the recipients of racially discriminatory encounters with law enforcement in the rural areas of South Georgia. This study also explored how these encounters impacted

their perceptions regarding the overall legitimacy of law enforcement and how it shaped

the lives of the recipients. The study was limited in its ability to include numerous

geographical rural locations, limited in participation, and lacked the means to validate

any of the criteria required for the study.

Future research should include wider geographical boundaries to encompass more

rural areas in South Georgia. The inclusion of more rural areas may help determine

whether the findings indicate any sort of pattern such as specific districts or specific

years, which may indicate different resident perception based on current police

leadership. Increased participation should allow future research to gain a much more

thorough insight into numerous negative police encounters in different southern rural

areas throughout the state. If possible, future research should explore options to verity

police encounters to eliminate any form of falsifying or misrepresentation during the

participants recollections. Utilizing researcher diversity may prove to be a valid approach

in future studies when considering building rapport with willing participants.

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

Practical Implications

The usage of a qualitative study and a phenomenological approach was

appropriate for this specific study. It provided the opportunity to assess the recipients'

perceptions of their lived experiences regarding their negative encounters with police. It

is crucial to understand that how someone perceives an event is most likely how they will

respond to and remember that event. It is also important to understand what influences

how individuals perceive certain events if the goal is to change that perception. The

concept of assessing how individuals view human interactions and what factors need to be present in order to change that perception is nothing new and can be extrapolated for use in various components of the criminal justice system and non-criminal justice related encounters.

Theoretical Implications

The study founded its theoretical framework on the works of John Stacey Adams in 1963. Equity theory has been utilized in numerous studies throughout various capacities to explain motivation, balance of inputs and outputs, changes to restore perceived fairness and balances, and attitudinal and behavioral changes (Hoffman-Miller, 2022). In addition, Adams (2005) explained that equity theory suggests that tensions create motivation to reduce imbalances. Equity theory has also been utilized to explain discriminatory acts against African Americans by police, ethnic-based discrimination, why officers leave the profession, how officer react to media portrayals of discriminatory events (Adams, 2019; Dan-Jumbo & Amah, 2018; Gates & Reinsch, 2022; Rades, 2022).

The theoretical implications for this specific study would suggest the tenets of equity theory are valid. The results of the study demonstrated that the recipients perceived the encounter to be racially discriminating through various imbalances such as targeting, improper procedure, unprofessionalism, lies, and in an effort to restore the fairness or balance of the inputs and outputs, they rationalized the event by reducing the overall legitimacy of law enforcement explaining the reasoning for inconsistent and unfair treatment.

Conclusion

The U.S. population has reached well over 330 million people; less than 3 years ago Caucasians represented 76% of this total, but African Americans, when represented as one race, only represented 13% of the total population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020, Table P1/Race). According to Federal data, Caucasians were arrested in larger volumes nationwide than African Americans (The Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2020, Slide 5, Table 3).

Relevant to the current study, Federal data also suggest that, when analyzing arrestees for "All Crimes" in Georgia, Caucasians were arrested at slightly lower rates than African Americans (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2020, Slide 5, Table 3). However, when examining specific categories of crimes, such as index crimes, the state of Georgia stated that minorities were arrested in much higher volumes for most index crimes (Georgia Bureau of Investigation, 2020: pg. 13).

If Caucasians represent similar arrest rates as their African American counterparts, examination of treatment should provide many more encounters from Caucasians due to an abundance of possible negative interactions. Therefore, if police treatment is fair and consistent, the overall consensus of treatment would most likely skew very little regardless of race or gender. However, according to Jacques (2017) and Bleich et al. (2019), anywhere from 37% to 60% of African Americans surveyed have reported discrimination of some fashion by law enforcement compared to significantly lower levels reported by Caucasian participants (pg.1 & pg.1&7, Table 2).

In conclusion of the current study, rural life in South Georgia does not seem to be an influential factor in restoring or maintaining a positive perception towards the overall perception of police legitimacy. It appears that once the individual becomes a recipient of that negative experience, the rationalizing process enacts the person's ability to cognitively balance the unfair situation by reducing the legitimacy and creditability of the perpetrator.

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Appendix A: Interview Questions

RQ1. What are the lived experiences of African Americans who self-identify as having experienced racial discrimination by law enforcement officers in rural South Georgia?
- How you would self-identify in regards to age, gender, race, and ethnicity? Please explain.
- How would you describe the community where you were racially insensitive act by police occurred? Please explain.
- You indicated that you've previously had an encounter with law enforcement, how would you describe your encounter?

Probing Questions
- Was it verbal, physical, or both?
- What was the general setting like? Day, night, a holiday, etc.?
- Was this an isolated event or has it happened before?
- Do you perceive this area as rural, urban, suburbs, etc.?

RQ2. What impact did these experiences have on the perceptions of the overall legitimacy of law enforcement?
- Do you believe that the officers in this rural area treat everyone the same? Please explain.
- Are you comfortable encountering the police in this rural area? Please explain.
- If a situation occurred that required you to call the police for help, would you actually call the officers in this rural area? Please explain.
- How would you describe your relationship with the officers in this rural area? Please Explain.
- Do you want a stronger relationship with the officers in this rural area of South Ga? Please explain.
- How do you perceive the officers in this small rural area of South Ga? Please explain.
- How can your relationship with the officers of this rural area of South Ga improve? Please explain.
- What changes do you believe need to be made in policing for this rural area? Please explain.

RQ3. How did these discriminatory experiences with police shape how African Americans live their daily lives?
- What are some physical/emotional challenges you now face after this negative encounter with law enforcement in this rural area of South Ga? Please explain.

Probing Question
- o Are there any challenges that pertain to the simple daily activities in a small rural town, such as visiting the grocery story, recreation centers, school functions?

- What challenges do you perceive that African Americans face in small rural communities that differ from challenges other racial/ethnic groups? Please explain.

Appendix B: Flyer

Research Volunteers Wanted

- **Confidential** interviews in -person or virtual
- 30-45 mins – Audio recorded – No names will be used
- How does racial discrimination by police affect how their legitimacy is viewed?
- Qualifiers
  - You must have experienced racial discrimination by law enforcement in at least one of the following Georgia counties (Bryan, Liberty, Evans, Bulloch, Candler, or Screven) .
  - African American Male or Female
  - Must reside in the rural areas of South Georgia (Bryan, Liberty, Evans, Bulloch, Candler, or Screven)
  - Must be over 21 years of age
- 12-15 African American Males or Females Needed
- Time Frame – Starting Now and Completed by May 2023
- No Compensation
- Volunteer Only – Participation or lack of participation **Does Not** effect your job, community status, or supervision status.
- Contact Joseph Bacot at **********

Appendix C: Codebook

Name	Description
How racial discrimination by police shapes daily lives.	How has the perceived negative interaction with police influenced the recipient after the encounter?
Emotional Damage	Any emotional negativity regarding the encounter.
Physical Damage	Any physical negativity regarding the encounter.
Racial discrimination by Police - Perceptions of African American recipients.	How the event was perceived by the recipient as being racially discriminating.
Improper Procedure	Anything the officer did that was perceived as not following procedure.
Law-Abiding	The actions of the participant perceived as following the law.
Lies	Anything said by the officer during the encounter that was perceived as not true.
Location	Description of where the incident took place.
Officers Need More Training	What the recipient believes could possibly reduce the negative encounter from happening again in the future.
Proper Procedure	The participant believes that the officer was doing his or her job correctly.
Targeted	The participant believes they were specifically chosen by police to be recipients of the interaction.
Time of Day	The time-frame or specific status of the day (night or day) when the encounter occurred.

Name	Description
Uncomfortable Situation	The recipient expresses that the encounter in some fashion made them feal uncomfortable, unsafe, or very concerned regarding the legitimacy of the encounter.
Unfair-Inconsistent Treatment	The recipient expresses that the encounter would not have been conducted in the same manner if they looked different or where someone different.
Unprofessionalism	The recipient expresses that the officer acted in a manner that was unnecessary and unprofessional for their specific position.
The impact of racial discrimination on the overall legitimacy of police.	How does this negative encounter alter how the recipient views the overall legitimacy of police.
Desires Officer Relationship	Regardless of this isolated negative event, the recipient still desires a positive relationship with police.
Friends are Officers	The participant referred to as being or having friends who are officers.
Officers Trying to Do Good	Regardless of this isolated negative event, the recipient believe the officers were trying to do the right thing.
Poor Officer Legitimacy	The recipient indicates that they do not trust police, have no faith in them, have no confidence in them, or believes their intentions are less than legitimate.
Poor-No Officer Relationship	The recipient indicates they have a poor relationship with police or they indicate that they do not have nor have any desire to build a relationship with police.
Professional Police	The recipient indicates that regardless of having a negative encounter with police, they still trust them enough to call them if needed, believe they are doing the right thing overall, or perceive law enforcement as a whole in a positive light.
Scared for our kids	The participant indicates that they are scared for their children to interact with police due to the lack of trust, confidence, and

Name	Description
	faith they have in the police to act professional and in a fair consistent manner.
Understanding of Officer Actions	The participant indicates that regardless of the negative encounter, they understand why the officer acted in the manner they did.