

9-26-2024

Discovering Factors that Influence Young African American Males' (18-25) Satisfaction with and Trust in Northeast Ohio Police

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Walden University

College of Psychology and Community Services

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Timothy D. Finucan Jr.

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Walden University
2024

Abstract

Discovering Factors that Influence Young African American Males' (18–25) Satisfaction
with and Trust in Northeast Ohio Police

by

Timothy D. Finucan Jr.

MA, Walden University, 2018

BS, Cleveland State University, 2003

Proposal Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Public Policy and Administration – Criminal Justice

Walden University

August 2024

Abstract

Police officers have been known to use excessive force and abuse their powers during encounters with young African American males (ages 18 to 25), which may lead to lower perception levels of police. This study provides crucial information for criminal justice professionals about the psychological and demographic factors that influence young African American males' perceptions of police. The purpose of this study was to analyze these factors that influence how young African American males perceive law enforcement after having an encounter with the police and how to make future encounters more pleasurable. The research question in this study was used to focus on individual experiences of 20 young African American males and their perceptions of police. For this study, I conducted a qualitative phenomenological study that consisted of 20 online interviews, from young African Americans who encountered police. My study was based on conflict theory, which states that young African Americans are viewed as dangerous and need the immediate attention of police. I discovered through the software data analysis program Quirkos, that my participants had an overwhelming sense of fear, stress, anxiety, and anger during their encounters with police, while income, age, marital status, and where they lived played a role. I also discovered that my participants were mistreated and did not feel safe during their encounter with the police. I recommend in the future that one gathers future insight from different ages (25 and above) and from females as well. Implications for social change include informing law officers and police departments of the importance of treating everyone equally to promote a healthy relationship to provide enhanced cooperation and collaboration for everyone involved.

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April 2024

Acknowledgments

I would like to acknowledge and thank my chair committee member, Dr. Richard Worch Jr., and second chair member, Dr. Sean Grier, for their hard work in helping me complete my dissertation. I would also like to thank my mother, Debbie Finucan, and father, Timothy Finucan Sr. who just recently passed, for helping me along this journey.

I would also like to thank my brother, Michael Finucan, and sisters Tammy Finucan and Brandy Dehner for believing that I could achieve this goal. I would also like to give a shout out to all my friends, especially Scott Reik, Brad Powell, Stacy Powell, and Greg Crilow, for understanding the times I had to refuse getting together due to the work I was putting into my journey for dissertation approval.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

Law enforcement officers have been known to use extreme force against African American individuals, which may be why this racial group possesses lower perception levels of police officers than others (Oh et al., 2017). In this study, I gathered detailed information to criminal justice professionals in Northeast Ohio about the psychological and demographic factors that influence African American males' (ages 18 to 25) perceptions of law enforcement officers. The research question that I used to guide this study was: How do psychological and demographic factors from previous encounters with police officers influence African American males' (ages 18 to 25) perceptions of the police? I used the Advocacy Coalition framework (ACF) for the theoretical framework as this framework can be used to discover insight on ideological disagreement and conflicts in policies that are written (Weible & Sabatier, 2018, p. 126). I used a qualitative research method and gathered feedback from African American males (ages 18 to 25) by using interviews. Qualitative research is a significant source of data collection, as it allows participants to answer questions in their own words, providing longer and richer information than written answers would (Potter, 2018). The social implications of this study include individual bias toward law enforcement, as the encounters with one another are personal experiences that included police officers.

It is imperative that law enforcement officers treat all suspects in a similar manner, regardless of their race. Establishing a healthy relationship between officers and African American citizens is vital for both parties. Research has found that African

Americans have lower perception levels of police, especially if they have had a negative encounter with them in the past (Lim, 2015). Research has also shown that African Americans possess negative perceptions of law enforcement if they feel an officer behaved unprofessionally, treated them unfairly, or appeared not to want to solve their problem (Lee, 2017).

Minority races such as African Americans have lower perception levels of police due to years of mistreatment at the hands of law enforcement officers (Mcneeley & Grothoff, 2016). Research has proven that African Americans hold negative views toward police officers because they are stopped and arrested at rates disproportionate to other races (Circo et al, 2019). One suggested solution to this issue is community policing. Community-oriented policing (COP) includes police cooperating and collaborating with community members to solve issues within the community while police install authority in their community (Kamalu & Onyeozili, 2018). Stakeholders who play a role in African American lives include police officers, judges, prosecuting and defense attorneys, and probation officers.

The research problem is that police officers continue to use excessive force against or abused their power over young African American males, which may lower the latter's perception levels of law enforcement (Oh et al., 2017). I addressed the psychological and demographic factors following previous encounters with police officers that may influence African American males' (ages 18 to 25) perceptions of law enforcement. Police's excessive use of force against young African American males has been a major cultural issue in recent years. High-profile cases include the police killings

of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri in 2014 and of Terence Crutcher in Tulsa, Oklahoma in 2016 (Hafner, 2018). This problem needs to be addressed so the young African American male community can feel safe around law enforcement officers and not fear for their lives. In the past 5 years, nationally reported stories and videos depicting police using excessive force against young African American males have become increasingly common. I focused on discovering the psychological and demographic factors that influence African American males' perceptions of police based on previous encounters with them in Northeast Ohio. This study can be used to build a better relationship between young African American males and law enforcement officers.

In this study, I navigated the wider research problem of law enforcement and their use of excessive force against the African American community. I discovered the psychological and demographic factors that influence young African American males' perceptions of police to enhance the relationship between young African American males and law enforcement officers in Cleveland, Ohio. Discovering these psychological and demographic factors from my research question may enhance the cooperation and collaboration between law enforcement officers and young African American males during future encounters and generally improve the relationship between both police officers and young African American males.

The theory underlying my study and research question is called conflict theory. Conflict theory supports the idea that minority individuals such as African Americans are viewed as dangerous groups and thus request the immediate attention of law enforcement officers (Hayle et al., p. 325). Officers may focus most of their attention on the young

African American community precisely because that group has been labeled as dangerous and as a possible threat to society (Hayle, Wortley, & Tanner, 2016). This focus in turn leads officers to target these individuals even when they have committed no crime.

My goal was to discover young African American males' perceptions of police officers after they have had an encounter with one another. I used the qualitative method because I intended to discover personal experiences of police encounters. I used a phenomenological approach to gather feedback by conducting interviews, which can be given in greater length and richer detail than when gathering written answers (see Potter, 2018). Furthermore, a qualitative approach was appropriate for my study because it can be used to gather personal feedback about individual experiences with police. I collected data in this study by conducting interviews with young African American males who have had previous encounters with law enforcement. Subjects were located using integrated recruitment services or public records. I used the assistance of personal friends in professional settings as well as social media sites such as LinkedIn and Facebook to help find possible participants for my study. I analyzed the data through coding, which allowed me to understand a feeling to each personal situation (O'Sullivan et al. p. 336).

For the purposes of this study, I assumed that young African American males have lower perception levels of police officers in Northeast Ohio because police officers have been shown to habitually mistreat young African American males (Mcneeley & Grothoff, 2016). Additionally, I did not discover whether the arresting officers of my participants are in any way racist or if they faced any discipline if they were found to have used excessive force or made an illegal stop. These assumptions were necessary

because officers stop offenders who have committed a crime in the first place, regardless of an individual's race. It was also extremely difficult to know if a police officer is racist unless they were found to be guilty of committing a racist crime/illegal stop or if they openly acknowledged that they are, following which they would be relieved of their duties as an officer of the law.

In my study, I considered the experiences of my participants as they described them, not adding any of my own personal bias or opinions of law enforcement. I intended to interview 20 African American males aged 18 to 25, from Northeast Ohio to gather personal feedback about their perceptions of law enforcement from their previous encounter. The transferability of my study discovered findings like previous studies, which have shown that young African American males were treated unfairly by law enforcement officers in the United States.

I sought feedback about the African American male participants' perceptions of law enforcement based on their previous encounter. My study did not include women of any race nor Caucasian individuals of any gender, as I concentrated only on the African American race. I additionally excluded African American individuals of any gender who were aged 26 or older because stories about specifically young African American males' unfair treatment by police were being shared in the news across the United States.

The weakness of my study was that I only focused only on the specific population of African American males aged 18 to 25. I did not gather feedback from women or from any populations aged 26 or older. I refrained from any potential researcher bias and from including any personal experiences with law enforcement officers, as that could

negatively affect my study's outcome. I did not examine the personal experiences of police officers and their encounters with young African American males, though this could be examined by interviewing officers as well. The inherent problem with conducting a qualitative study and gathering personal experiences is that the results only contain individuals who have had a negative experience with law enforcement and possibly individuals who may have had a positive encounter with police as well.

My study filled in the gap in the current literature by discovering the psychological and demographic factors that influence young African American males' perceptions of Northeast Ohio police following their experiences with police officers. Law enforcement can benefit from this study by observing the perceptions of the young African American male community and considering how to create more positive experiences between both parties in the future. In relation to social change beyond my professional world, I discovered how encounters can be altered to make a more positive relationship between both parties, which can enhance cooperation and collaboration between the young African American population and law enforcement officers not only in Ohio but throughout the world.

This study was needed so that professionals in the field of criminal justice can receive personal feedback from specific individuals who have had experiences with law enforcement and understand the psychological and demographic factors that may have played a role during the encounter. This will allow law enforcement agencies to make any necessary adjustments to minimize police mistreatment of young African American males and promote equal and fair treatment of any individual who is stopped by the

police in the future, regardless of their race, to encourage a healthier relationship between both parties.

Research Problem

Police officers have been known to abuse their powers and use excessive force against young African American males aged 18 to 25, which may cause their lower perceptions of law enforcement officers (Oh et al., 2017). Prior research has shown that African Americans possess lower perception levels of police when they have had a negative encounter with them in the past (Lim, 2015).

In this study, I addressed how psychological and demographic factors from previous police encounters influence young African American males' perceptions of law enforcement officers. The larger problem I addressed was discovering who exactly the police are stopping, for what reasons they were pulling them over, and if those stops were legal, which included observing their citation to determine the officer's reason for pulling them over. Research has shown that these negative views toward police officers are likely the result of African American males being pulled over and arrested by police at rates disproportionate to other races (Circo et al., 2019).

One of the reasons young African American males are disproportionately targeted by law enforcement officers is racial profiling. Racial profiling research has found that African American males are more likely to be pulled over, searched, or arrested by police, and that they are at greater risk of having excessive force used against them by police during their encounters (Anthony et al., 2018). Indeed, African American individuals are often targeted for no legal reason at all; rather, they are targeted by police

officers engaging in racial profiling (Anthony et al., 2018). Racial profiling conducted by law enforcement officers may be a reason why African American males hold lower perceptions of law enforcement officers.

Another reason it may seem young African American males are being stopped by police officers often may be due to the phenomenon that is called “driving while Black.” Studies show that Black motorists are an overrepresented group for stopping performance (number of stops compared to the races of drivers stopped), and this over representation is called “driving while Black” (Smith et al., 2018). The number of stops conducted by law enforcement officers and the race of the driver show that African Americans are pulled over disproportionately to individuals of other races. Young African American males may feel they are being targeted by police in stops, which is another potential reason that they may hold lower perceptions of police officers.

This problem area should be addressed for several reasons. One is that police officers treat young African American males differently than other races when charging them for a crime (Mcneeley & Grothoff, 2016). Indeed, African American males are more likely to be charged with drug possession and drug dealing than Whites, who are instead charged with smaller crimes such as conducting illegal activity or stealing to provide for their drug usage (Rosenberg et al., 2017). African American males should be treated fairly by all police officers. Unequal treatment of African American males may play a role in their lower perceptions of police officers.

The problem area also needs to be addressed because the way that the U.S. criminal justice system unfairly treats young African American males likely lowers their

perceptions of law enforcement (Lee, 2017). These men lack confidence in the individuals who make decisions criminal justice system, including law enforcement officers, judges, prosecutors, correction officers, and probation officers (Chenane et al., 2017). The injustice that African American males have experienced at the hands of other decision makers in the criminal justice system may also attribute to their lower perceptions of police officers and other criminal justice actors as well.

I filled the gap in literature by uncovering the different demographic and psychological factors that play a role in young African American male perceptions of law enforcement officers in Northeast Ohio. To accomplish this, I specifically interviewed those who have had previous encounters with police. Discovering these different factors enhanced the relationship between young African American males and law enforcement officers. Promoting a better relationship between both parties may increase their cooperation and collaboration during future encounters. In turn, increasing positive feelings will improve future interactions, increasing the safety of all individuals involved due to mutual respect.

Not only will enhancing the relationship between both parties be beneficial for future interactions of both parties, but it will also promote positive social change in Ohio as well as in different areas throughout the United States. Officers around the world can examine the uncovered factors and change the way they conduct their jobs to enhance their relationship with young Black males in their communities as well. As positive interactions begin to occur between both these parties, so will positive social change across the world.

I navigated the problem of law enforcement officers using excessive force or abusing their powers during encounters with young African American males, which may explain their lower perceptions of law enforcement officers (Oh et al., 2017). Individuals should be treated equally and fairly by police officers during all interactions regardless of their race. I provided pertinent information for criminal justice professionals in Ohio by discovering the demographic and psychological factors that influence young African American males' perceptions of law enforcement officers in the state.

My research paradigm consisted of a phenomenological qualitative research design. I conducted a qualitative research study to gather personal information about my participants' interactions with law enforcement officers, using their own words to describe their feelings and experiences. Gathering personal information in respondents' own words can be more purposeful and richer in meaning than solely gathering written answers (Potter, 2018). For instance, written answers could be shortened and might not include the full detail of an experience that personal feedback can provide.

I discovered many important concepts from conducting this research. I explored the influencing demographic and psychological factors of young African American male perceptions of police in Northeast Ohio, and I described my participants' feelings and experiences following their police interactions. In addition, I discovered if those interactions between participants and police officers were either negative or positive, and for what reasons my participants felt that way. Furthermore, I uncovered what my participants may feel police officers can do to enhance their relationship. In general, I intended to help develop a more positive relationship between law enforcement officers

and young African American males so that future encounters can benefit both sides through cooperation and collaboration. In turn, this can promote positive social change in Northeast Ohio as well as the rest of the world.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of my study was to discover the psychological and demographic factors that influence young African American males' perceptions of law enforcement officers in Northeast Ohio. To achieve this goal, I only interviewed those who have had encounters with police in the past year. I also discovered potential changes that police agencies can enact to create a healthier relationship between both law enforcement officers and young African American males. My goal was to promote a healthier relationship between police officers and young African American males, improving cooperation and collaboration between both parties. Police officers can also become familiar with members of their communities on a personal level. While walking down the street or running into the store, initiating a brief conversation between law enforcement officers and young African American males could create a positive relationship between the two parties.

In this study, I discovered specific demographic and psychological factors that influence how young African American males feel about law enforcement officers in Northeast Ohio. I did this by conducting interviews with individuals who have already interacted with law enforcement and by gathering personal feedback from these participants about their experiences. These factors may produce positive or negative attitudes toward law enforcement officers depending on everyone's experience. Some

demographic factors that played a role in one's perceptions of police officers include but are not limited to age, sex, income, education, religion, occupation, and marital status. Some psychological factors that affected individuals' perceptions of police during a negative encounter include but are not limited to emotional and/or physical trauma, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), mental health issues, and substance abuse, panic attacks, and insomnia.

I created the following research question for this study: How do psychological and demographic factors from previous encounters with police officers influence African American males' (ages 18 to 25) perceptions of the police?

To answer the research question, I used a qualitative approach. By conducting a phenomenological qualitative research study, I was able to gather feedback from my participants as they described their experiences with law enforcement through interviews. In interviews, my participants were able to explain their experiences and answer my questions in their own words, a method that is often richer in meaning than the gathering of written answers (see Potter, 2018).

I intended to interview 20 African American males who have had previous encounters with law enforcement. Research has shown that sample size should depend on the amount of time the researcher has for data collection and analysis, beginning with a minimum of 12 and not exceeding a maximum of 20 (Baker et al., 2012). I interviewed 20 individuals from Northeast Ohio to gather their personal perceptions of law enforcement. Gathering feedback from individuals who reside in the Cleveland area will provide me with the data I need to discover police perceptions in that area.

Conflict Theory

My reasoning for this study was influenced by conflict theory. Conflict theory states that minority individuals such as young African American males are considered a dangerous group, which makes law enforcement officers focus their immediate attention on them (Hayle et al., p.325). Law enforcement officers who tend to target African Americans because they believe them to be a threat to society (Hayle et al., 2016). This belief likely plays a role in the lower perceptions young African American males may have of law enforcement.

Other theorists who have influenced my thinking include Hagan et al., (2005). They established comparative conflict theory, which consists of three hypotheses (Buckler et al., 2008). The first hypothesis states that Whites perceive injustice less strongly than individuals of other races, and that African Americans are more likely to see court-based injustice than Whites (Buckler et al., 2008). The second hypothesis states that African Americans perceive the most racially-based injustice, followed by Hispanics, and then Whites. This was confirmed in a study that found that African Americans perceive the most injustice, with Hispanics' and Whites' perceptions of injustice at a distant second and third, respectively (Buckler et al., 2008). The third hypothesis states that prior contact with the criminal justice system leads individuals to perceive more injustice than no prior contact.

I chose conflict theory (see Hayle et al., 2016) as the logic behind my study because it demonstrates that officers focus more of their attention on certain individuals because they view them as more dangerous than other individuals. I used this theory to

form my research question as my goal was to gather African American males' perceptions of police.

I used the advocacy coalition framework to gain insight into possible ideological disagreement and conflicts in policies (see Weible & Sabatier, 2018). This framework allowed me to discover if law enforcement agencies should implement types of programs other than cultural awareness training to ensure that all police officers are trained on multiple cultures in their jurisdictions. Other programs police agencies can implement include cultural sensitivity and ethnicity training, which will help officers understand different ethnicities and beliefs and how those differ from their own.

To conduct this study, I used a phenomenological approach to interview individuals who have had previous encounters with law enforcement and discover the demographic and psychological factors that influence their perceptions of police. Overall, my goal was to discover the demographic and psychological factors that influence young African American males' perceptions of police after previous encounters with them. I was able to gather personal feedback in my participants' own words to understand the way they personally experienced interactions with law enforcement. Some experiences may have been positive, while other experiences may have been negative.

Using the phenomenological qualitative research method, I discovered if any participants felt they had been mistreated by police because they are Black and if that led to their lower perceptions of police. Through interviews, I discovered if my participants have had positive or negative interactions with law enforcement and which demographic and psychological factors play a role in their perceptions of police. In addition, I

uncovered why they felt that way and what they believed can be done to enhance the relationship between law enforcement officers and young African American males to promote positive future interactions with one another.

Research Design

As previously stated, my research took a qualitative phenomenological approach by gathering my data from participants. Conducting phenomenological investigation allows researchers to comprehend how certain individuals understand a shared interaction (Greyshield et al., 2015). Interviews will also uniquely allow me to note important information when collecting written answers, such as personal experiences and feelings. These cues may signal that my participant felt strongly toward the topic on which they were speaking, which would provide important feedback for my study.

I also used categories for data collection and interpretation. Specifically, I implemented a base on personal experiences and the feelings of my participants once during their traffic stop and another based on their feelings toward law enforcement after their encounter had ended. I discovered different feelings from my participants as most of them had a negative experience with law enforcement while a few participants had a neutral perception of law enforcement as their experience may not have been as negative as the other participants' experiences.

For my study, I used a qualitative research design and took a phenomenological approach. I chose the qualitative design because it allowed me to gather personal feedback from my participants through interviews in which they described their experiences with law enforcement officers. Gathering personal feedback about their

experiences also allows my participants to explain how those experiences have affected them individually (Rudestam & Newton, 2015, p.43). Individuals in my study may have different perceptions of police officers, so it is important that they be able to describe their personal interactions with and perceptions of officers in their own words.

I took the phenomenological approach because it allowed me to gather personal feedback from individuals and understand how they comprehended their interactions with law enforcement (Greyshield et al., 2015). The existential phenomenological approach allowed me collect data on how different individuals in my study understand their past interactions with law enforcement and how well they can describe them (Rudestam & Newton, 2015, p. 43). These designs are optimal for my study because I sought feedback about personal experiences between young African American males and their encounters with law enforcement. I also intended to determine how young African American males perceive police after their encounters with them. When discussing police, I am talking about the individuals who are police officers that are patrolling the streets, not their departments in which they work for. The qualitative research design and phenomenological approach are perfect to use when aiming to discover personal experiences and perceptions.

As the researcher, I collected and analyzed the data for my study. This entailed conducting interviews to gather feedback from my participants as they described their interactions with law enforcement. My participants were young African American males (18–25) who reside in the Cleveland Metropolitan area and have had a previous interaction with law enforcement officers. I interviewed 20 such participants and gathered

feedback from them. Previous research has suggested that a researcher can conduct anywhere between 12 and 20 interviews when performing the research for their project (Baker et al., 2012).

After collecting data, I analyzed the data using holistic and emotion coding. Coding allows researchers to discover a certain feeling to each studied variable (O'Sullivan et al., 2017 p. 336). Coding provided me a better understanding of how young African American males perceive police officers. I also used holistic and emotion coding to gather personal experiences and their personal feelings toward law enforcement after their encounter with one another. Conducting both emotion and holistic coding is beneficial for researchers but ultimately, however, it is the responsibility of the researcher to analyze the data on their own (Patton, 2015, p. 529).

Operational Definitions

Young African American males: this term refers to African American males who are aged 18–25 years only.

Demographic Factors: this refers to characteristics such as age, sex, income, education, religion, occupation, and marital status.

Psychological Factors: this refers to different factors such as emotional/physical trauma, PTSD, mental health issues, substance abuse, panic attacks, and insomnia.

Conflict Theory: a theory stating that minority individuals are considered a “dangerous group” and should be monitored closely by law enforcement officers.

Phenomenological Design: a qualitative research design that allows researchers to gather personal feedback from individuals and through which they can openly discuss personal experiences.

Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF): a framework approach that can provide insight into ideological disagreement or conflicts within policies.

Cultural Awareness: the ability to recognize that people belong to cultures other than one's own.

Cultural Sensitivity : when an individual understands there are multiple cultures in society but also comprehends that one culture is not better than another culture.

Ethnicity Training: the training of individuals in other cultures and ethnicities to other individuals that explains one's nationality and/or language, such as in German, Spanish or Chinese.

Criminal Justice Professional: relates to any individual working within the criminal justice field, such as researchers, officers, judges, attorneys, stakeholders, and policy writers.

Assumptions

One item that this study assumed to be true but that I will not independently verify is that law enforcement officers target young African American males and are more likely to be pulled over by police (Anthony et al., 2018). Research has shown that police use excessive force against African American males. High-profile instances of this include the police killings of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri in 2014 and of Terence Crutcher in Tulsa, Oklahoma in 2016 (Hafner, 2018). Furthermore, I did not

verify if any of the officers who interacted with my participants were racially motivated when pulling over the individuals in my study or if they were punished for abusing their power over them. Additionally, I did not check whether the officers who interacted with my participants remained on active duty .

Moreover, I assumed that my population size speaks for the African American community that resides here in Northeast Ohio. I sampled 20 individuals from the Northeast Ohio area, which is not an appropriate representation of the entire local African American population. Another assumption this study ascribed to is that the African American community is racially profiled by law enforcement. In addition, every individual in my study will share their perceptions of law enforcement, and these opinions are likely to differ.

My study also carried limitations. For instance, I included only African American males aged 18–25 and did not assume that police officers treat African American women differently than men and assumed that African American males older than 26 have the same perceptions of law enforcement officers as my participants and assumed that young African American males are targeted by police and mistreated by them based on their race.

These assumptions were necessary for many reasons. For one, although the individuals in my study will likely have different perceptions of police, I cannot assume that all young African American males have the same perceptions of law enforcement officers. For another, all police officers are different and treat individuals differently. One

officer may use harsher language during a normal traffic stop while another officer may be extremely polite.

Furthermore, these assumptions were useful because police officers are meant to target anyone who was suspected of committing a crime regardless of their race. It is up to the criminal justice professionals to decide if a suspect is guilty of committing that crime—not the officer. The criminal justice system itself allows both the officer and the potential suspect to state their cases in court, so both sides can be heard equally.

The specific aspect of the research problem my study considered was that police officers abuse their power over or use excessive force against African American males (Oh et al., 2017). My study investigated which demographic and psychological factors impact young African American males' perceptions of law enforcement officers. I chose this specific focus to gather feedback about the personal experiences that young African American males have had with police officers. Several highly publicized media stories of mistreated young African American males in America have captured my attention—even one incident in my hometown of Cleveland, though I will not discuss that situation because the victim was a minor. My study did not attempt to discover if law enforcement officers are guilty of mistreating young African American males but rather to ascertain certain individuals' perceptions of police after interacting with them.

Participants and Requirements

My study included 20 young African American male participants aged between 18 –25 years and living in the Northeastern Ohio area. The participants in my study were not older than 25 years old, be of any race other than African American, and must be of

the male gender. All my participants will need to have had at least one prior interaction with law enforcement officers in the past year and be able to describe their experience of the encounter. In other words, they must be able to state whether it was a positive experience or negative experience and why they feel that way. The participants will also be asked to describe their perceptions of police officers after those encounters.

Transferability refers to the possibility that a researcher's findings from their study are like the results found by future researchers (Nichols, 2015). The study I conducted has a high percentage of transferability in the criminal justice field. Future researchers can also analyze data and attain similar results from individuals who meet the same specific criteria for their studies about encounters with law enforcement officers. Researchers could discover similar findings from those individuals about their perceptions of law enforcement officers.

My study contained participants who must meet specific criteria to participate in interviews. I only sought data from African American males and nobody else. This study also focused only on individuals who ranged from 18–25 years of age. I looked to discover feedback from individuals at this age because they are younger but not minors and have only been driving for a short period of time.

In summary, then, my research focused only on young African American males aged 18-25 who have had an encounter with law enforcement within the past year and who would like to give feedback about and describe their perceptions of law enforcement after encountering them.

The Conflict theory is the theory that is most related to my study. Conflict theory states that African Americans are viewed as more ‘dangerous’ than individuals of other races, and therefore law enforcement officers should focus more of their attention toward these individuals than individuals of other races (Hayle et al., 2016, p.325). Officers who focus more of their attention toward these individuals may create other ethical issues within their organization. Officers may start to racially profile these individuals simply because they are African American, and this can affect the perception levels of police officers by the African American community.

Weaknesses, Bias, and Limitations

One weakness of my study was its focus on such a specific population, in this case young African American males aged 18–25. This study excluded individuals from any other race, the female gender, and people who are 26 years and older. Minors, or individuals under the age of 18, were also not going to be represented in my study. This is because my study focused on the perceptions of police by these specific individuals, meaning that specific criteria must be met.

A weakness in the transferability of my study was the specific population of people from whom I will be gathering data. Research has shown that feedback from individuals who have committed crimes can be untrustworthy (Bamford & Benton, 2015), and that elderly populations are satisfied with the police when they feel safe and when their communities support each other (Li & Sun, 2015). My study also had a weakness of dependability. Dependability refers to the degree to which a study can be re-created with similar results from a similar situation over time (Stokes et al., 2018). Over

time, young African American males' perceptions of law enforcement offices could change if they are treated fairly in future encounters.

Researcher bias could also influence this study's outcome. I cannot allow any of my own experiences with law enforcement to influence my study. Additionally, I have a personal relationship with the chief of police in my city; he is my roommate's brother, and I have known him for nearly a decade. Researcher bias can also occur based on how that researcher was raised. Some people are raised to treat others with respect. Personal experiences and values taught in childhood could affect researcher bias in this or any study.

As a professional researcher, it is my duty to avoid instances of personal bias, focus solely on participant feedback, and not allow personal experiences with law enforcement to influence any outcome of my study. I proceeded with my study under the belief that I have never had any personal experience or interaction with law enforcement to ensure objectivity.

I took several steps to reduce the impact of this study's limitations. For one, I planned on collecting my data and providing a thorough analysis of the data using my participant's feedback. For another, I planned on focusing my attention on participants in the Northeastern Ohio area, wherein I conducted my interviews. This helped me focus my attention on my participants rather than gathering data from all 20 individuals in one focus group meeting. Providing my participants individual attention was intended to show these individuals that I am interested in their feedback and opinions of police, and

that their personal experiences with law enforcement are important to me and the data that my study uncovered.

When I conducted my interviews, I recorded the information from their online interviews and read their responses individually. This meant that I could maintain focus on each participant's answers by reviewing what they wrote and how they described how they felt during their encounter with Northeast Ohio police. I was able to understand how all 20 participants felt about their encounter with police and how they felt about law enforcement after their encounter with one another.

One problem of my research methodology was that I conducted a qualitative study instead of a quantitative study. I conducted a qualitative study so I could gather feedback on my participant's perceptions of law enforcement, and I could discover their opinions of police officers based on their personal experiences with them. A quantitative method would discover certain statistics or numbers of the research problem at hand, so my study did not discover certain statistics about that or any other issue.

The selection process of finding participants who were willing to partake in my study was very difficult as well. To combat that issue, I planned on issuing a monetary gift card to a store or gas station for each participant. Financial incentives may help a researcher discover more individuals who are willing to participate in their study, while also establishing rapport between the researcher and their participants (Mitchell, 2018). Giving my participants an incentive will help show that I am appreciative of them for participating in my study and spending their time with me discussing their perceptions of law enforcement based on their previous encounters with police officers.

My study added new knowledge to the present literature about the topic I was studying. The problem of my study was that young African American males have been mistreated by police, whether police abuse their powers or use excessive force, and this can lead to lower perceptions of police officers by these individuals (Oh et al., 2017). My study filled the gap by discovering psychological and demographic factors that influence young African American males' perceptions of law enforcement officers who have had a previous encounter with one another during the past year. My study aimed to discover those psychological and demographic factors from individuals who have had a negative experience with law enforcement during their encounter with one another. As a researcher I coded and analyzed their experiences with the law enforcement officers based on their interaction with police and allowed them to discuss their perceptions of police following their encounter with one another.

Benefits and Social Change

The criminal justice field can possibly benefit from the study that I conducted. My study aimed to discover the psychological and demographic factors that influence young African American males' perceptions of police who have had a previous experience with law enforcement officers within the past year. My study also promoted that all individuals should be treated fairly by police, regardless of one's race. My study discovered the perceptions young African American males' have of police once they had an interaction with one another. Performing this study can help police agencies discover if they need to change or add to their policies to help ensure fair treatment of all

individuals. This may include the installation of cultural awareness and sensitivity training within their policies of becoming a law enforcement officer.

My study will make an impact beyond my professional world to help impact the larger world in relation to social change. My study aimed to discover the psychological and demographic factors that influence young African American males' perceptions of police following an interaction in which my participants had a negative encounter with. My study aimed to learn about those personal experiences my participants had with police officers. This study also provided data for other law enforcement agencies in which those agencies can review my findings and make the necessary changes to improve their policies as well. I chose to do this study since minorities, such as young African American males, hold negative views and lower perception levels of law enforcement officers due to their mistreatment by police (Mcneeley & Grothoff, 2016). There have been stories in the news of African Americans protesting the police due to their or another individual's mistreatment by police officers due to their race.

My study will not only help social change on the local level, but it can affect the state, national, and even world-wide level. There is research being conducted on law enforcement all around the world as researchers investigate factors that influence citizen satisfaction. A research study conducted in a foreign sovereignty can also help us here in America regarding policy and procedures. My research study may also help those around the world as well. Some agencies in another country may benefit from reading my study and may change their policy as well that may enhance the relationship between their police officers and members of their community. Enhancing the relationship between

both parties may also create a better relationship which can increase the cooperation and collaboration between community members and police officers. Creating a healthier relationship between community members and police can help promote social change at the local, state, federal, and even global levels.

Summary and Transition

My study focused its key points around the research question that I have developed. My research question states, “How do psychological and demographic factors from previous encounters with police influence African American males (18-25) perceptions of police?” Research has shown that African Americans who experienced a negative encounter with police have lower perception levels of law enforcement officers (Lim, 2015). African Americans also possess negative perceptions of police if an officer treats them unfairly or is unprofessional and shows no real sign of wanting to help them (Lee, 2017).

My study was a qualitative study that used the phenomenological approach. I conducted interviews with 20 participants who reside in the Northeast Ohio area to gather feedback about their personal experiences with police and how they perceive police after their interaction with one another. I collected and analyzed my data through coding the experiences that my participants had with police officers. My study focused on the Conflict theory which is the theory that influences the thinking for my study.

There will be more detailed information regarding my study in the following four chapters. Coming in Chapter 2 will be a review of the problem and purpose of my study, my Literature Search Strategy, Theoretical Framework Literature Review, Content

Literature Review, Methodology Literature Review, and Conclusion. Following Chapter 2 will be Chapter 3, which is the Research Design and Methodology section. Following Chapter 3 will be Chapter 4, which is the Summary of Findings and Data Analysis section. After Chapter 4 will be Chapter 5, which is the conclusion to my research question with the limitations and recommendations of my study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

Law enforcement officers have been known to use excessive force against or abuse their powers when interacting with young African American males. This may lead to the latter's decreased perception levels of police officers (Oh et al., 2017). In my study, I focused on the issue of police treatment against young African American males while simultaneously discovering the demographic and psychological factors that impact that group's perceptions of law enforcement.

In this chapter, I discuss three different types of literature reviews. First, I included the literature on conflict theory, which states that African Americans are viewed as a dangerous group, meaning that law enforcement should focus more of their attention on them (Hayle et al., 2016, p. 325). Second, the literature I reviewed to determine the gap that I filled includes discussion of the excessive force police have wielded against young African American males and the psychological and demographic factors that influence their perceptions of law enforcement. Third, the literature I reviewed to determine the methodology of my study includes a discussion of the existential phenomenological research design, which researchers use to discover information on how specific individuals perceive and describe a specific life event (see Rudestam & Newton, 2015, p. 43).

Literature Search Strategy

For my literature search, I used keywords, different search engines, and ensured that the literature I found was recent (within the past 5 years). Some of the databases I

used to search for literature include Sage Journals, Thoreau Multi-Database Search, Psychology Database Combined Search, and ProQuest Central. To find information on conflict theory, I used terms such as *conflict theory in law enforcement* and *conflict theory with African Americans*. To determine the gap in the literature, I used terms such as *Psychological/Demographic factors with law enforcement and African Americans*. In addition, I added *police abuse of power* as well. For my methodology, I used the term *Existential-Phenomenological* to search for information relating to my approach method.

Using similar terms widened the scope of my literature search. For example, I searched with the term *African American* as well as *Black* and *minority*. Additionally, I exchanged the word *police* with *law enforcement* and/or *officers*. By doing this, I retrieved additional information from peer-reviewed articles that had used those words in their titles to convey the same meanings.

Theoretical Framework Literature Review

The theory on which I based my study is conflict theory. Conflict theory states that African Americans are believed to be a dangerous group of individuals, so law enforcement officers should focus more attention on them because they believe them to be a greater threat to society (Hayle et al., 2016, p.325).

Conflict theory was originally proposed by Karl Marx in 1848. Marx (1848) considered crime to be the result of a drop in social class and described that criminals were placed in different groups, which created conflicts resulting from a lack of resources, especially power, leading to violent conflict between criminals and other individuals from the different groups (Zembrowski, 2011).

The major hypothesis of conflict theory is that African Americans are more dangerous than other races, meaning that law enforcement officers should place more focus on these individuals because they pose a greater threat to society than individuals of other races (Hayle et al., 2016, p.325). This applies to Marx (1848)'s belief that individuals are placed into groups, creating conflict with other groups that fight for resources, especially power (Zembrowski, 2011).

I chose this theory due to American law enforcement's current treatment of young African American males. I felt that this theory fits my study accordingly, as I interviewed African American males who have had an encounter with a police officer within the past year to determine the psychological and demographic factors that impact their perceptions of police.

Conflict theory relates to my study because I asked young African American males to use their own words to describe how they were treated during their encounters with law enforcement. I built upon conflict theory by discovering the psychological and demographic factors that impact my participants' perceptions of police.

The 2016 article titled "Race, Street Life, and Policing: Implications for Racial Profiling" by Hayle et al., is one literature and research-based example of how conflict theory has been applied in a way like this study. The researchers found that African Americans are eight times more likely to be pulled over by police officers than individuals of other races (Hayle et al., p. 325). The authors also noted that African American males gather the highest attention from police officers, making conflict theory

an optimal framework for conceiving of and describing that phenomenon (Hayle et al., p. 342).

Another article related to my study's theoretical framework was written by Ramirez (2015). Ramirez (2015) found that employees of the U.S. criminal justice system continue to discriminate against African American individuals, including law enforcement officers, guards, and probation/parole officers (Ramirez, 2015, p. 423). Ramirez (2015) also uncovered that police officers treat African Americans unfairly, which makes them perceive our justice system as discriminatory.

Goldman et al., (2019) published another paper related to my theoretical framework. Their research found that, of men born in 2001, 11.3% will serve prison time, but 28% of those spending prison time are African American (Goldman et al., 2019). The researchers noted that, following a background check, African American males with a felony conviction are far less desired for a job than European American males with a felony (Goldman et al., 2019). The authors also used a version of conflict theory known as realistic group conflict theory, discovering that European American males perceive African American males with a felony as displaying poorer character than European American males with a felony (Goldman et al., 2019).

Similarly, Buckler et al., (2008) researched race in connection with the criminal justice system. The researchers uncovered that African Americans witness court-based injustice more than any other race (Buckler et al., 2008). The researchers also noted that African Americans perceive the most injustice, followed by Hispanics and then Whites (Buckler et al., 2008).

Simon (2016) also investigated conflict theory's intersection with law enforcement. The researcher noted that conflict theory leads individuals to believe that society is composed only of winners and losers (Simon, 2016). They further found that, due to social conflicts, people behave at their worst when in a position to punish, humiliate, exploit, or even kill because of these conflicts (Simon, 2016). In addition, the article highlighted that the law gives police officers a certain amount of power over citizens, but that if a police officer abuses their power against an individual, that person can take legal action against that officer and/or agency (Simon, 2016).

Another article related this study's theoretical framework was written by Moye et al., (2015). These researchers found that racial schemas portray the Black male as a criminal and as a danger to society, and this influences how people react to Black individuals (Moye et al, 2015). The authors noted that when Black individuals begin moving into neighborhoods consisting of mostly White individuals, the rate of hate crimes in those areas increases (Moye et al., (2015). Additionally, the paper found that, when Black people violate the social space of White people by moving into their neighborhoods, the White citizens and local police officers begin to harass and attack those Black individuals (Moye et al., 2015).

Anthony et al., (2018) researched race and traffic stops. They found that African Americans are pulled over by law enforcement due to racial profiling (Anthony et al., 2018). The authors noted that officers are more likely to pull over, search, arrest, and use excessive force against African Americans than other races (Anthony et al., 2018). In

addition, the article highlighted, when police pull African Americans over, there is often no legal reason for it (Anthony et al., 2018).

An article by Smith et al., (2017) discussed the phenomenon called “driving while Black.” “Driving while Black” refers to how motorists are disproportionately pulled over by law enforcement officers (Smith et al., 2017). The article emphasized that African Americans feel targeted by police officers simply for being Black and are therefore pulled over more often than individuals of other races (Smith et al., 2017).

Mcneeley and Grothoff (2016) also discussed Black Americans’ perceptions of the criminal justice system. The researchers noted that police have habitually mistreated young African American males during encounters for several years (Mcneeley & Grothoff, 2016). In addition, when charged with a crime, this study found that African Americans feel police officers and other members of the criminal justice system treat them differently than individuals of other races in the same circumstances (Mcneeley & Grothoff, 2016).

Review of Related Research

In my review of the current literature, I established the relevance of the problem that I addressed in my study, which is that law enforcement officers often use excessive force against or abuse their powers as officers of the law over young African American males during encounters with them (see Oh et al., 2017). This can include pulling over an individual simply because they are Black and treating the individual differently during a stop because of their race. Police officers should treat everyone equally and with respect regardless of the crime committed by a potential suspect or the individual’s race. This not

only includes police officers but encompasses all the professionals in our criminal justice system, such as judges, prosecuting and defense attorneys, probation officers, and parole officers.

The review of related research directly relates to the problem statement as expressed in my research question. In my problem statement, I described that law enforcement officers have been known to abuse their powers as police officers or use excessive force during encounters with young African American males, which may cause their lower perception levels of police officers (Oh et al., 2017). Some examples of this include officers pulling the potential suspect over when a crime has not been committed and police using excessive force against the suspect when that force was not necessary. This may occur during the handcuffing of a suspect or even when placing them in a patrol car.

My goal for this study was to discover psychological and demographic factors that influence young African American males' (ages 18 to 25) perceptions of law enforcement after a previous encounter with a police officer. These perceptions may be lower due to police's abuse of power over or excessive force against young African American males. Encounters between both parties can be either negative or positive, as everyone has different experiences when they encounter police officers.

I will discuss five themes/trends in this literature review:

1. Abuse of power
2. Use of excessive force
3. Perceptions/attitudes of police

4. Psychological factors
5. Demographic factors

I begin by discussing the abuse of power that law enforcement officers enact during encounters with potential suspects. For example, police officers can abuse their power by providing false testimony during a court trial, intimidating a suspect, conducting a false arrest, tampering with evidence, or conducting unlawful searches or surveillance. The second theme is police officers' excessive use of force against potential suspects. For instance, an officer can use excessive force by aggressively apprehending a suspect or placing them in custody or by causing any physical/psychological harm to a suspect during the arrest or court process.

The third theme is potential suspects' and community citizens' perceptions of and attitudes toward law enforcement officers, detail perceptions or attitudes African Americans have about police officers. The fourth theme encompasses potential psychological factors that influence a suspect's perceptions of police after encountering them. Psychological factors may include but are not limited to anxiety, depression, and hatred toward a person or group of people and may occur due to any physical or emotional abuse. The fifth theme is potential demographic factors that influence the suspect's perception levels of police. Demographic factors include but are not limited to age, sex, education level, income level, and religion.

Literature Annotations

Theme 1

Oh et al., (2017) investigated whether there is a correlation between law enforcement officers and their treatment of members of the African American community. The authors discovered that law enforcement officers do abuse their power over or use excessive force against African American individuals, and that this does influence African Americans' low perception levels of law enforcement officers. The potential theme is that officers abuse their powers during interactions with African American individuals. I found the psychological and demographic factors present following previous encounters with police. These factors in turn influence African American males' perceptions of law enforcement.

Circoot et al., (2019) studied African Americans' views on members of law enforcement. They found that African Americans possess negative views of law enforcement officers because officers stop and arrest them disproportionately to individuals of other races. This exemplifies police officers abusing their power by stopping and arresting African Americans more often than individuals of other races. Police officers target these individuals by conducting unlawful surveillance of members of the African American community.

Smith et al., (2017) discussed a phenomenon called "driving while Black". The researchers concluded that African American motorists are an overrepresented group when it comes to stopping performance (which is the number of stops made by police officers compared to the races of the drivers stopped) and this over representation is

called “Driving While Black”. The authors also noted that African Americans feel that they are being targeted and singled out by police officers therefore they hold lower perceptions toward law enforcement officers. This relates toward the theme of how police officers abuse their powers by targeting certain members of a community due to their race and conducting unlawful searches/surveillance.

Lee (2017) investigated African Americans’ views on members of law enforcement. African Americans in their study reported feeling that police had mistreated them, that an officer had behaved unprofessionally during their encounter, or that an officer had appeared uninterested in assisting them in solving their problem because of their race. Collectively, these circumstances showed to influence the African American participants’ negative perceptions of law enforcement officers. Providing unprofessional service or intimidating someone who needs their help is a form of police abuse of power.

Rosenberg et al., (2017) researched how African Americans feel about being charged with a crime. The authors discovered that African Americans are more likely to be charged with drug possession and trafficking than White individuals, who are often charged with smaller crimes like stealing to provide for their drug addictions. If an officer tampers with evidence to increase the severity of a crime or charges an individual with a higher crime because of an individual’s race, the officer is knowingly abusing their power. African Americans hold lower perceptions levels of police officers when such offenses have been committed against them.

Anthony et al., (2018) studied African American perceptions of law enforcement officers. They discovered that African Americans are more likely to be pulled over by

police due to racial profiling. The authors also noted that African Americans are more likely to be stopped, searched, and have excessive force used against them. Furthermore, the study showed that African Americans feel they are stopped for no reason at all. The theme of police abuse of power applies when officers of the law focus on a certain race of people and pull someone over more frequently due to their race.

Mcneeley and Grothoff (2016) investigated how police treat African Americans when on duty, uncovering that African Americans have been mistreated by police officers for several decades. The authors also noted that African Americans feel that they are treated differently by members of the criminal justice system (police officers, judges, prosecutors, and probation/parole officers) when committing the same crimes as individuals of other races. When criminal justice decision makers treat a potential suspect differently based on race, they are abusing their power in that situation; this behavior is included in the theme of police officers abusing their power.

Moye et al., (2015) also examined how police treat African Americans, but specifically in predominately White neighborhoods. Their results showed that police officers are more likely to harass African American individuals in predominately White neighborhoods. The authors also uncovered that law enforcement officers begin to commit more violence against African Americans when they move into a predominately White neighborhood. Law enforcement officers harassing or committing violence against African Americans are abuses of power.

Boateng et al., (2016) gathered citizens' levels of confidence in police in both the United States and South Korea. They found that an individual becoming a victim of a

crime and police harassment negatively influences their confidence in police. The researchers also concluded that America's war on drugs has purposefully had police officers target minority communities such as those inhabited by African Americans. Such targeting based on race by police constitutes an abuse of power.

Chenane et al., (2017) researched how African and non-African individuals perceive police and our criminal justice system, concluding that African Americans feel they receive inadequate treatment by police. As a result, the study found that they have less satisfaction with law enforcement officers. This dissatisfaction extends not only to police officers but to judges and parole and probation officers as well. This fits into the current theme because, when members of our criminal justice system provide unfair treatment to an individual because they are African American, they are abusing their power.

Theme 2

Trinkner et al., (2019) researched the threat to support police using violence. Older officers were found to be less supportive of using unreasonable force. The researchers also discovered that officers consider their job to be dangerous, so they believe that some encounters require greater force than what is mandated by their department. When an officer goes above what is needed to physically restrain their suspect, that is using excessive force.

Baker and Bacharach (2017) examined whether participants feel an officer used excessive force in a video-recorded encounter. They discovered that Black participants were more likely to believe the officer had used excessive force than the White

participants. Informing the participants about police-civilian interaction codes before showing the video had no influence on their decisions about the use of excessive force. Physical force enacted to subdue a suspect is excessive force.

Salerno and Sanchez (2020) analyzed individual perceptions of police using excessive force, finding that individuals have negative reactions when officers use force. The authors also noted no difference in favoring the use of force based on whether the officer was Black or White. Officers can use excessive force by simply physically handling a potential suspect to place handcuffs on them.

Zamoff (2019) researched law enforcement's use of body cams and the outcomes of cases where officers have used excessive force. The authors concluded that defendants have more successful trial outcomes when the video captures the entire incident. If the video only partially captures the incident or if there was no video evidence at all, the study found that defendants are less successful. Body cams can capture the actions of the officer, showing whether they have enacted excessive force against a defendant.

Porter and Prenzler (2017) researched whether an officer's gender play a role in their use of excessive force. Female officers were found to use excessive force significantly less often than their male counterparts. The researchers also discovered that female officers may use excessive force to fit in with their male colleagues. Indeed, unnecessarily pushing a suspect into the back of a patrol car is considered unnecessary force.

Lopez-Segoviano (2019) specifically analyzed officers' use of excessive force against African Americans. They uncovered a significant racial disparity wherein a law

enforcement officer is more likely to kill an African American than someone of another race. Police officers perceive African Americans as a threat and are consequently more likely to kill African American males than European American males. The article also highlighted that criminal charges are rarely filed against officers following an alleged misconduct encounter. Indeed, it is excessive force for a police officer to shoot a potential suspect without affording them the chance to obey orders.

Relatedly, Gross (2016) investigated the use of deadly force in police departments. They noted that the Supreme Court has provided no guidance on instances wherein the use of deadly force is warranted and does not limit the number of times a department can use deadly force. To add to this discussion, Gross observed that the number of suspects killed is wildly disproportionate to the number of officers killed by suspects, showcasing those officers use deadly force before any threat to their own safety occurs. Committing deadly force by killing a suspect is another example of excessive force.

Sierra-Arevalo (2019) examined police officers' views on the taser and their use of excessive force, discovering that individual's distrust and fear law enforcement officers who use excessive force. The paper outlined how the taser allows officers to avoid using lethal force and still mitigate a potential threat. An officer can, however, use excessive force by deploying the taser multiple times when a suspect is on the ground. My literature review will discuss the demographic and psychological factors that play a role in the perceptions of law enforcement by young African American males after they have interacted with officers.

Ouellet et al., (2019) studied whether an officer's peers influence their use of excessive force. They found that officers with colleagues who have a history of using force are more likely to use excessive force in future encounters. In addition, their study uncovered that older and more experienced officers are less likely to be caught in an excessive force complaint.

Alang et al., (2017) also investigated police misconduct, but they specifically analyzed the correlation between police brutality and African American males. Police were found to use more excessive force against African American males than European American males. The study also found that African American males are significantly more likely to experience injury during a police encounter than European American males. The researchers also noted that such police brutality against African American males confirms that racism exists in everyday life. Police officers who physically injure a suspect during apprehension constitutes excessive force.

Theme 3

Maguire et al., (2017) researched citizens' perceptions of police using positive, negative, and neutral police behavior. They uncovered those individuals who experience positive police behavior obey orders and have more trust and confidence in police. In contrast, negative police behavior showed to engender less trust and confidence in police, making people unwilling to obey any orders given by an officer.

Sahin et al., (2017) analyzed whether police making fair decisions and respecting members of their community would make them legitimate authorities. Their research showed that, if police officers follow procedural justice (make fair decisions and be

respectful), they can help shape individuals' trust and confidence in law enforcement.

The authors noted that people's perceptions are influenced by how police conduct their authority, and that individuals experience procedurally just traffic stops increased their perceptions of law enforcement. An officer who exhibits more professional behavior can enhance people's perceptions of police officers.

Harris and Jones (2020) discussed police stops and individuals' perceptions of law enforcement officers, discovering that young African Americans possess the lowest attitudes toward and perceptions of law enforcement officials. Noting that negative interactions with police officers have a greater impact than positive interactions, some of their participants remarked that the police simply creating contact was enough to establish negative perceptions of law enforcement. People hold negative opinions of police officers if they are treated poorly and have positive opinions toward police if they are treated well and are respected.

McCandless (2018) examined how certain strategies, such as ethnic training and community policing, can influence individual perceptions of law enforcement. Their study found that when citizens were involved in community policing, their perceptions of law enforcement increased. If the individuals were ignored, they had negative perceptions of law enforcement and police officers. Moreover, officers with more ethics training displayed more positive behavior and became more respectful. When officers become more respectful, their community's citizens' perceptions of police officers become more positive.

Henry and Franklin (2019) also investigated citizens' perceptions of law enforcement officers, finding that citizens who view police as a legitimate authority tend to comply, obey, and cooperate with police officers. Like other results, this study reported that African Americans are more likely to experience a police encounter that is different from individuals who are White. The researchers noted that minorities such as African Americans view police as unfair, discriminatory, and disrespectful. Acting unfairly toward and disrespecting individuals proved to lower such individuals' perceptions of police officers.

Kahn et al., (2019) studied residents' opinions of law enforcement officers as well. They discovered that community engagement patrols (CEPs), such as courtesy checks, talking with kids, and meet and greets, promote positive police encounters. Individuals also reported more positive contacts during community engagement patrols, although community perceptions of law enforcement recorded no change. Officers performing community engagement patrols can interact with individuals from their communities and help increase community perceptions of police.

Crow et al., (2017) analyzed the perceptions of residents as well, specifically examining the use of body-worn cameras on police officers. The study showed that officers wearing body-worn cameras significantly reduces police use of excessive force. Indeed, body-worn cameras were shown to improve police and residents' behaviors, though younger adults and minorities reported feeling that body-worn cameras are less beneficial for them. Wearing a body worn camera may help officers to conduct positive behavior, which may in turn enhance their perception levels of police.

Harris and Amutah-Onukagha (2019) explored the experiences of African American mothers preparing their male children for a police interaction. The researchers discovered that police are more likely to kill African American males before the age of 21 than they are European American males. The study found that mothers use two strategies when preparing their children for police encounters: 1) creating a distance between themselves and Blackness and 2) educating their sons about racism. The mothers reported providing harsh examples and displaying “tough love” to prevent their sons from becoming involved with police. The authors noted that the mothers also tell their sons to “stay under the radar” to avoid drawing attention to themselves, to be cautious about negative perceptions good cops do exist, and to use support groups such as family and friends. Educating children may help them experience a positive police interaction in their future, which can help enhance their perceptions of police officers.

McManus et al., (2019) found that law enforcement officers are perceived to portray racial bias due to poor policing tactics such as illegal stops and searches in which African American males are harassed. The researchers discovered that most African American males feel that the United States remains a racist country under the Trump administration, feel as if officers display more hatred toward them and other minorities, and feel that the levels of hate have increased. The study also noted that the Trump presidency would not improve the relationship between African American males and law enforcement. Officers who conduct illegal searches or display hatred toward an individual will make it difficult for those individuals to have high levels of trust in law enforcement officers.

Barthelemy et al., (2016) discovered that individuals who have more confidence in law enforcement tend to have higher perception levels of police officers. African American males were found to possess lower perception levels of law enforcement based on their own personal experiences with police officers. The African American participants also reported that if police officers were more compassionate and if trust levels between both parties increased, the groups perceptions of police would improve. Police officers showing compassion toward other individuals may help create higher levels of trust between the two parties.

Theme 4

Clevenger et al., (2018) explored the association of fear of negative evaluation (FNE) between individuals of different races when in the presence of police officers. They defined FNE as when individuals feel threatened more easily by others, especially when they are police officers. The authors noted that race and FNE have been greatly associated with feelings of safety when in the presence of a police officer. The researchers discovered that African American males feel they are in danger or are more threatened when interacting with police. The authors also concluded that young African American males reported the lowest levels of safety around police officers of any race. Individuals must feel safe around police officers so that trust can be established between both parties.

Bor et al., (2018) investigated whether there are any spillover effects from the police murders of unarmed African Americans on the mental health of other African Americans in the United States. In the general U.S. population, they found an association

between African American males and mental health issues arising from the police killings of unarmed African Americans. The authors also discovered that the mental health burden of African American males engendered by the killing of an unarmed African American male by police is nearly as great as the mental health burden of African American males dealing with diabetes. In addition, the study concluded that African American males in other states may endure a mental health spillover due to the national coverage of a police officer killing of an unarmed African American male. Police killings of unarmed African American males could affect other African American males in a negative way, which may contribute to the group's negative perception levels of police officers.

Similarly, Bowleg et al., (2020) examined if negative police encounters create any symptoms of depression in African American males in the United States and if avoiding the police helped them. The study found illegal stops by police and fatal encounters between police and African American males led those individuals to avoid the police. In addition, excessive encounters, especially unfair stops, led to increased levels of trauma and anxiety within by African American males. The authors concluded that negative encounters between police and African American males created symptoms of depression among the latter, who were also shown to avoid the police as well. Police officers who make unjust stops, especially excessively, can create symptoms of depression in those individuals as well as others in different communities.

Graham et al., (2020) explored the extent to which African American males fear police brutality in the United States. The researchers stated that African American males

worry about police violence over five times more than European American males do. This supports their racial/ethnic divide hypothesis, which states that African American males and other minorities have more fear of experiencing police brutality than European American males. The researchers concluded that African American males fear becoming victims of police brutality, which acts as an emotional injury to their mental health. Remaining in a constant state of fear of police brutality can create emotional trauma.

McFarland et al.,(2018) also researched African American males' perceptions of police, specifically examining whether they are more likely to report unfair treatment by police (UTBP) than European American males—which they discovered to be true. Unfair treatment by police was found to be traumatic and degrading for African American males, at times creating extreme amounts of stress and leading to premature cellular aging. The authors noted that African American males view racial prejudice as more stressful than simple unfair treatment. The researchers concluded that, when African American males are treated unfairly by police, their levels of anxiety, anger, and stress increase. Police officers who degrade individuals seeking help may create high levels of stress for those individuals, which in turn could lower their perception levels of police.

Smith Lee and Robinson (2019) studied the types of traumas African American males experience from police violence. Like other studies, this one found that African American males experience poor mental health issues when exposed to killings by law enforcement officers. Furthermore, though, this study added that specifically young African American males' (18–24) exposure to media coverage of police officer killings

creates fear in those individuals, making them feel less safe in the presence of law enforcement officers. The researchers concluded that African American males being frisked, threatened, or verbally accosted with racial slurs is associated with increased chances of developing PTSD. Police officers who treat individuals unfairly may cause them to develop poor mental health issues.

Jäggi et al., (2016)'s approach to analyzing Black people's mental health issues because of police brutality entailed examining the correlation between trauma, PTSD, arrest history and the incarceration of African Americans. The researchers found that African Americans who witness a traumatic experience by police may display hypervigilance, anger, and nightmares. The authors also stated that African American males with certain PTSD symptoms, such as nightmares and using illicit drugs to cope, are more likely to be arrested and incarcerated. The researchers concluded that African American males who experience trauma may become hostile, which increases their chances of being arrested and incarcerated. Police brutality against African American males can cause serious health issues such as the nightmares and PTSD.

Bryant et al., (2017) discovered a correlation between police violence and minorities, including African American males. They found that African American males can experience psychological trauma following police violence, and this trauma can include PTSD, depression, distrust, panic, substance abuse, and shame. The authors noted that African American males who experience police brutality may also experience nightmares, run from the police, and remain on guard so they can protect themselves from police abuse. The researchers concluded that police brutality can cause complex

trauma, which occurs when an individual suffers traumatic shock due to unjustified police violence, racial profiling, harassment, and even death. Police brutality can cause emotional distress in African Americans and other individuals as well

Oh et al., (2016) examined the association between police discrimination and lifetime psychotic experiences. The researchers stated that severe incidents such as police abuse can implicate communities and hurt an African American male's access to financial and educational resources. Furthermore, police abuse was found to be the most significant racial discrimination event with the highest increase in psychotic experiences, including an increased risk for suicide. Police abuse can not only create mental health issues such as anger and anxiety but can create lifetime psychotic experiences for African American males.

Heard (2020) researched whether police brutality in African American communities is associated with any health inequities. They explained that police violence in African American areas ignites health inequities because police violence affects the death rates and individual injuries. Indeed, police violence was shown to escalate health issues such as anxiety, psychotic experiences, depression, and suicidal thoughts and tendencies. Moreover, the study proved that African Americans with mental illness suffer distress and are often fatally injured by police rather than being offered the medical treatment they need. Police brutality can cause extreme mental health issues for African American males, especially those who already have an underlying mental illness.

Theme 5

Adedoyin et al., (2019) explored the topics of police oppression and the killings of African American males by police. The researchers stated that young African American males have a high risk of being killed by law enforcement officers, noting African American males are perceived as criminals who commit violence and should therefore be feared by others. The researchers concluded that the police's use of excessive force can be due to racial bias, especially if the police are assigned to a predominantly minority community. Police officers who are racially biased can make life difficult for young African American males in a predominately African American neighborhood.

Frazer et al., (2018) discussed the need to treat police violence as a public health issue and analyzed violence in African American communities. The researcher stated that gang violence occurs in African American communities and that some of the risk factors for this include poverty, peer pressure, and poor community conditions. In addition, gang members were found to possess increased levels of anxiety and psychosis, which also increases their risk of attempting suicide. The researchers concluded that fear of violence in African American communities may lead to the excessive use of force by law enforcement. Officers may feel more threatened in areas with gangs and feel the need to use excessive force to protect themselves.

Haden et al., (2016) investigated the perceptions of police violence against African American males as well as the relationship between race and racism. They observed that the police use excessive force against African American males in African

American neighborhoods that are both low-income and middle-class. Despite being granted citizenship in America in 1866, African American males lack the entitlements citizen status gives them, which includes fair and equal treatment by law enforcement agents. Police officers should treat everyone equally, regardless of an individual's race or area of residence.

Johnson et al., (2019) showed that death by legal interactions is experienced by African Americans, which is in turn influenced by the locations in which African American males encounter law enforcement officers. The study found that observers with racial bias view African American males as a threat to the social order. The authors noted that racial disparities between shootings by police officers occur more frequently in areas of great financial inequality. Furthermore, African American males were found to be less likely to be involved in a fatal encounter with police when in a neighborhood with a low percentage of African American residents, and that mixed neighborhoods can help protect African American males from police killings. African Americans should not fear of being a victim of police violence based on the area in which they live in.

Edwards et al., (2019) assessed the risk of being killed by police using excessive force across different social groups. Their research showed that sex, age, and race are extremely related to an individual's likelihood of entering the criminal justice system. The researchers stated that African American males have higher lifetime risks of being killed by a law enforcement officer, noting as well that African American males have a much greater chance of being killed by police than females, and the largest risk occurs between 20 and 35 years of age.

Feldman et al., (2019) performed a similar analysis, examining the rates of police killings and neighborhood segregation across race, income, or both parameters. The study found police killings to occur most often in low-income neighborhoods and in the residencies of African American males. The researchers concluded that African American males have the highest rates of police killings in neighborhoods with a higher concentration of European American males than in neighborhoods with a higher concentration of African American males. An individual should not fear for their life because they live in a low-income neighborhood and not a middle or upper-class neighborhood.

Nadal et al., (2017) investigated individual perceptions toward law enforcement and their experiences when they felt they were unlawfully stopped. They found that African American males possess less favorable perceptions of police than European American males. The authors noted that race and gender had no significant influence on perceptions of police violence. The researchers concluded that the majority of African American males stopped by police on multiple occasions reported to be in distress, angry, or fearful, which are normal responses to racism in African Americans. Individuals who feel they are harassed by police and who have been stopped multiple times for no discernible reason likely lowered their perceptions of law enforcement officers.

Hines and Gudzone (2020) tested the stress and blood pressure levels among two low-income communities in Baltimore following the police killing of Freddie Gray. The researchers observed that civil unrest can increase stress levels, triggering other symptoms as well, such as depression or elevated blood pressure. They found a strong

presence of depression in the individuals residing in the neighborhood closest to the epicenter but no elevated levels of blood pressure. Civil unrest from the killing of an African American male can cause either emotional and/or psychological mental health issues to African American males of that community as well as around the nation.

Aymer (2016) explored the killings of unarmed African American males by police officers, examining their association with race and racism and the psychological effects that racial profiling by police officers can have on African American males. Police who racially profile African American males can create race-based traumatic stress for individuals, which can lead to symptoms such as anxiety, stress, and fear. The author noted that Eric Garner, an unarmed African American male, said, "I can't breathe" while police choked him to death, which led to the creation of the Black Lives Matter organization. The researcher concluded that the bodies of African American males are at times left in the street for hours after a police officer kills them, which is reminiscent of the era of lynching of African American males. The killings of African American males somehow appear lawful in the eyes of some criminal justice professionals. Police officers who racially profile can create extreme amounts of mental health issues in members of the African American community.

Sewell et al.,(2016) researched the interactions between African American males and the effects of unjustified shootings on African American communities. They found that the over patrolling and surveillance of African American males can lead to multiple severe health issues and can strain the relationship between African American males and law enforcement. Indeed, African American males who experience negative encounters

with police and racism may contract disorders such as anxiety, PTSD, depression, and personality disorders. The researchers concluded that disorder from poor policing tactics can lead families to move out of their neighborhoods and abandon potential business investments, which in turn can lead to an increase a neighborhood's crime rate average crime severity. Over patrolling neighborhoods can place strain on African American males, their families, and their neighborhoods.

Non-Peer Reviewed Article

Hafner (2018) aimed to show that law enforcement officers often use excessive force against young African American males, and that these encounters sometimes end with officers. Such stories have been circulating through the national media in recent years. The article named some African American males who have been unjustly killed by law enforcement officers in the past several years, including the following: Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri in 2014; Tamir Rice in Cleveland, Ohio in 2014; Freddie Gray in Baltimore, Maryland in 2015; and Terence Crutcher in Tulsa, Oklahoma in 2016.

Current Literature Research-Based Description

When conducting my literature review, I discovered a significant number of peer-reviewed articles based on my themes/trends. For example, for theme/ trend one, which focuses on police's abuse of power when encountering African American males. Many of the articles agreed that African American males are pulled over, unlawfully stopped, harassed, and treated unfairly by the police. For theme/trend two, based on police's use of excessive force against African American males, many of the journals stated that African American males have lower perceptions of police if they had used excessive force against

them. The research agreed that police are more likely to brutalize and kill African American males than males of other races.

Research related to theme/trend three, based on African American males' perceptions of law enforcement, revealed a consensus that African American males who report positive police behavior have higher perceptions of law enforcement, and that those who have had negative experiences have less confidence and trust in law enforcement. Theme/trend four was based on the psychological factors that influence African American males' perceptions of law enforcement based on their interactions with them. Research showed that unfair treatment by police and experience of forms of police brutality can lead to serious mental health issues for African American males. Psychological symptoms most associated with police brutality proved to be anxiety, stress, PTSD, anger, and fear. Research surrounding theme/trend five, based on the demographic factors that influence African American males' perceptions of law enforcement, showed that low-income neighborhoods contain high rates of police brutality, and that police are more likely to commit violence against African American males than against females or males of other races.

My review of the research related to my study's key concepts shows revealed a considerable amount of knowledge about my topic. It is clear, for instance, that African American males are over-patrolled, unlawfully stopped, and racially profiled; moreover, police are more likely to brutalize and kill them than any other gender or race. African American males suffer from multiple mental health issues stemming from police brutality and abuse of power, including stress, fear, anger, PTSD, and anxiety. Research shows

that police officers can be racist or have racist tendencies when patrolling their neighborhoods, which can make it extremely difficult for African American males to safely navigate their own neighborhoods.

One controversial topic I discovered in my research concerns neighborhood races and managing police brutality. One article mentioned that African American males experience higher levels of police brutality in neighborhoods consisting predominately of African American individuals, while another study found that African American males face higher levels of police brutality when existing in European American neighborhoods. This disparity could be due to the specific researchers' regions of study rather than a finding generalizable throughout the United States. What remains to be studied is police officers who have been found to display racism and abuse their power or exert excessive force—what happened to those officers, whether they sought any forms of treatment before returning to the force, and whether the training helped to change their behavior once back on the force.

The studies that I reviewed found very similar results. If an African American male witnessed positive police behaviors, they had more trust and higher perceptions of law enforcement. If an individual felt harassed, had been stopped unjustly just for being African American, or witnessed racism or other negative police behaviors such as police brutality, those individuals had lower levels of trust and lower perception levels of law enforcement. My research question seeks to discover the psychological and demographic factors that influence young African American males' perceptions of police.

The approach I selected is meaningful, as it allowed me to gather personal feedback from African American males and their personal experiences of encounters with law enforcement. The news has reported widely on cases of police abuse of power over, brutality toward, and killings of unarmed African American males. Though a police brutality crime can be committed anywhere or at any time—even if it occurs on the opposite side of the nation from an African American’s residence—some African American males can suffer from multiple mental health issues. African American males may try to avoid the police altogether to protect themselves from harm.

Several significant findings contribute to the justification for my study. One is that African American males are most likely to be victims of police abuse of power, police use of excessive force, and police killings than any other race or gender of individuals. Another concept is that African American males may develop severe mental health issues after witnessing or being involved with racist cops who treat them unjustly or who racially profile them. These individuals may become fearful of police, become anxious around police, display anger, become stressful, or display PTSD symptoms.

Another finding is that police are more likely to display unjust tactics in certain neighborhoods, such as low-income neighborhoods and neighborhoods that consist predominately of African American males. Another key finding is the perceptions of law enforcement held by African American males. African American males who have witnessed or experience a positive police encounter and have been treated fairly and equally by police have more trust and higher perceptions of law enforcement. In contrast,

individuals who have been treated unjustly or witness or who have had a negative experience with police hold lesser perception levels and less trust in law enforcement.

The discipline in which my study is situated understands that African American males have less favorable encounters with law enforcement officers than any other race in the United States, and that these individuals may suffer emotional and psychological issues from just one negative police encounter. Furthermore, police are more likely to kill, brutalize, and unjustly and unfairly treat African American males than males of another race.

What remains unknown about my topic is what happens to officers found to be racist or to have abused their power against African American males. Did that officer receive any additional training, such as cultural awareness training? Additionally, once that officer was disciplined for their actions, did they return to the force with altered actions and attitudes toward African American males? What is the cutoff line in the number of offenses from which one can return as an officer?

This study filled the gap in literature by allowing researchers to understand how certain psychological and demographic factors play a role in young African American males' perceptions of police following at least one police encounter. The research understands that an individual's gender and race play a significant role when encountering police, and that the mental health issues some African American males experience following a negative encounter with police include stress, anxiety, fear, depression, and PTSD. Some African American individuals have reported positive accounts of police interactions, while some individuals report negative accounts of

experiences with law enforcement. This study will allow me to gather feedback from these individuals themselves, collecting their personal feedback based on their own experiences or encounters with law enforcement personnel.

Methodology Literature Review

Jones-Web et al., (2018) performed a qualitative study to discover African American males' perceptions of law enforcement officers and develop programs that deter youth violence and strengthen the relationship between African Americans and police. The authors used interview questions to gather personal feedback from young African American males and police officers and found that young African American males believe that law enforcement officers must become more involved in their communities. The researchers concluded that, although there were programs in place to prevent youth violence, there was little awareness of programs installed to prevent violence between law enforcement officers and young African American males who reside within the communities the police officers serve.

Nordberg and Meshesha (2019) conducted a qualitative study using a phenomenological design consisting of open-ended interviews that were recorded and coded to discover African American males' perceptions of and experiences with police. The researchers discovered that African American males are more likely to be victims of crime, receive lower courteous and rapid police response times, and are most targeted for traffic stops and arrests. The authors noted that their participants expressed both anger toward and fear of law enforcement officers. The study concluded that older participants were happier with police than younger participants, but both agreed that police violence

against African American males is related to larger systemic issues including education levels, poverty, poor housing conditions, wealth, and unequal healthcare and services.

Calvert et al., (2020) conducted a qualitative study using semi-structured interviews for key stakeholders, including young African American males, parents, teachers, and police officers, to discover causes of violent encounters between young African American males and the police who commit violence toward these men. The researchers discovered that every stakeholder group besides police believes that violent encounters between police officers and young African American males occur due to the police's lack of a strong connection with the communities they serve. The authors noted that the youth fear police based on stories they have hearing about or witnessed wherein the police acted violently toward a African American individual. In turn, the police were shown to fear youth due to the ease of obtaining a firearm and memories of previous assaults on police officers. The researchers concluded that many stakeholders believe that police racism and prejudice are strong factors in the violence that occurs between law enforcement officers and young African American males.

Brooms and Perry (2016) conducted a qualitative study, interviewing participants to discover participants self-conceptions of race, police profiling, and stereotyping. The researchers discovered that young African American male's self-conceptions are affected by their own personal experiences, that and being in public is difficult because they are stereotyped and profiled by law enforcement officers. Many of their participants felt that simply being a African American male, this subjects them to prejudices and assumptions that label them as threats. Moreover, when discussing the recent killings of African

American males, their participants showed signs of being hurt, sad, frustrated, and disbelieving; they also appeared to realize that those deaths could have happened to any other African American male.

Nordberg et al., (2016) conducted a qualitative study to help understand the experiences African American youth have with law enforcement. The researchers defined youth as individuals 24 years of age or younger, and that African American youth have the most involuntary encounters with law enforcement. The authors identified four themes when investigating African American youth's experiences with police: controlling, prejudiced, threatening, and ineffective. The researchers stated that their participant experiences consist of harassment, unequal treatment, and physical assaults. Furthermore, their participants described police as controlling, forcibly removing them from their neighborhoods and taking them to unfamiliar and distant neighborhoods to forced them to find their own way home. Respondents additionally described police officers as prejudiced, especially against African American youth who reside in predominantly African American neighborhoods, reporting that police had used foul language and racial slurs during their encounters with them.

Miller and Vittrup (2020) conducted a qualitative study, using interviews to discover African Americans' personal experiences of police racial bias based on their previous encounters with law enforcement. Many of their participants experienced racial bias and racial profiling by police, and some of their experiences included being unlawfully searched, physically or verbally assaulted, and falsely arrested. The authors noted that participants experienced mental health issues following encounters with police.

These include fear, stress, and anger. In addition, participants discussed how their encounters with police led them to feel worthless and as if no one cared for their well-being. Participants reported finding strength through their family and faith after experiencing police racial bias.

Literature-Based Methodology Description

The six literature reviews were all based on qualitative studies using the phenomenological approach, which I will also utilize in my study. I chose the qualitative method because it allowed me as a researcher to discover personal feedback from participants to determine how their personal experiences affected them individually. Furthermore, qualitative research is the best design to use for personal feedback, experiences, and perceptions (Rudestam & Newton, 2015, p. 43). When I collected my data, I gathered personal feedback from participants about their previous encounters with law enforcement and their perceptions of police after such encounters. I also utilized interviews from participants to gather feedback about their experiences with police.

As in previous qualitative studies, I used purposive sampling. My participants must meet certain criteria to be eligible to be interviewed for my study. Specifically, they must be African American, male, and between the ages of 18 and 25; they must also have had a prior encounter with law enforcement.

Conclusion to the Literature Review

The major themes in my study include police abuse of power, police use of excessive force, perceptions of law enforcement held by African American males, and the psychological and demographic factors that influence those perceptions. A significant

finding was that African American males hold lower perceptions of police officers than any other race and are also at the highest risk of being killed by a police officer. The surveillance and over-patrolling of African American males as well as racial profiling can leave African American males with severe mental health issues, such as depression, anxiety, PTSD, fear, stress, and psychotic disorders that can even lead to suicide. African American males are over patrolled in both low-income and middle-class neighborhoods. Officers who display racism can create fear in African American males, causing them to evade police officers at all costs so they can protect themselves and avoid the ensuing emotional distress or other mental health disorders.

It is widely known that African American males are over patrolled, are unjustly surveilled by police officers, and are the most likely group to be killed by a police officer. For African American males, police brutality and racism can lead to severe mental health disorders. What remains unknown about this topic is how the police officer who breaks the law is punished, what extra training have been given—such as cultural awareness training—and whether they have returned to their police department. For instance, is that officer under more surveillance after returning to the force? What happens if they display unacceptable behavior again? If a police officer was racist and sentenced to additional training for poor policing, has that training helped that officer become aware of the African American community, or do their beliefs remain unchanged?

The present study filled the gap in this topic of interest by discovering the psychological and demographic factors that influence the perceptions that young African American males have of police after encountering them. This will help other criminal

justice professionals understand the relationship between and experiences of African American males and law enforcement officers as well as the issues that arise when their relationship is strained due to racism, over surveillance, and police brutality.

My study was quantitative in nature and used a phenomenological approach to discover my participants' personal experiences with and perceptions of police officers. I gathered data from my participants using the purposive sampling method. I chose this method because my participants must meet specific criteria to participate in my study—namely, they must be male, African American, and between the ages of 18 and 25.

Heading into Chapter Three, I will discuss the methodology section of my study. This will include data collection procedure, analysis, role of the researcher, and sampling methods just to name a few key concepts.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

In Chapter 3, I discuss the purpose of my study along with specific categories included in the chapter. I also discuss law enforcement and their use of excessive force against and abuses of power during encounters with young African American males in Cleveland, Ohio. My goal for this study was to discover the demographic and psychological factors that influence young African American males' perceptions of law enforcement. My goal was to increase the cooperation and collaboration between law enforcement officers and young African American males in the Cleveland community, as well as other communities in the United States. This would in turn enhance the relationship between the two parties and foster healthier encounters between both law enforcement officers and young African American males in the future.

Chapter 3 includes many concepts for the methodology of my study. I discuss the information related to my problem statement, my qualitative design, the role of the researcher, and the setting and sample for the study. This chapter also includes my data collection procedures, the trustworthiness of my study, and the protection of the rights of my participants.

The qualitative research design was the most suitable for my study based on my problem statement. My goal for this study was to collect personal feedback from my participants as they discuss their personal experiences with law enforcement officers in Northeast Ohio.

I used a qualitative design to conduct a phenomenological study in which I performed interviews with participants. Conducting interviews can provide feedback in greater length and increased details than written answers alone (Potter, 2018). As the researcher of my study, I became familiar with my participants on an individual basis, collected their data about their interactions with police, and analyzed my findings (Karagiozis, 2018).

My study included 20 young African American males (ages 18 to 25) who have had a previous encounter with law enforcement officers in Northeast Ohio. I conducted my interviews in a place of mutual agreement between my participants and myself, which could be a library, residence, or coffee shop. The location depended on the participant, prioritizing a place in which we both felt safe conducting the interview, which ended up being online.

I collected my data by conducting personal interviews with all 20 of my participants, using a notepad to write down brief pieces of important information. I did not want to miss any information given by my participants, so I recorded and saved all my interviews after I coded my data using the qualitative data analysis program called Quirkos.

I then analyzed my data, coding the information that I received from all my participants during their interviews. I saved all my interviews and analyzed them separately gathering perspectives from all participants.

The trustworthiness of a researcher's study is crucial for providing significant data from their findings. Trustworthiness encompasses four dimensions, which include dependability, credibility, transferability, and confirmability (Patton, 2015, p. 685).

Researchers must conduct their studies ethically, and this includes protecting their participants. The researcher must attain informed consent from participants, give the participants as much information about the study they can, let them know they can leave the study at any time without penalty, and that the researcher must not cause any emotional or physical harm to their participants.

Following data analysis, I will present my results. They will derive from personal descriptions given by participants in their own words regarding their personal experiences with law enforcement about their encounter with one another.

Research Design Derived from the Problem Statement

I investigated one research question for this study: How do psychological and demographic factors from previous encounters with police officers influence African American males' (ages 18 to 25) perceptions of the police? My goal was to discover the perceptions young African American males about law enforcement officers. This is because African American males tend to possess lower perceptions of law enforcement officers, who indeed do mistreat them (Mcnealey & Grothoff, 2016). Moreover, law enforcement officers have been known to use excessive force against minorities, which also may lead to lower perception levels of law enforcement. My participants described how they perceive Northeast Ohio police following their interactions with each other.

I began with young African American males' experiences with law enforcement officers. My goal was to use the qualitative, phenomenological approach to explain how these young African American males perceive law enforcement after their interaction with one another.

I considered other methods for use in this study. I did not conduct a case study because the sensitive material of each interaction with police warrants interviewing each participant separately. It would be confusing to have 20 participants in the same room describing their experience with law enforcement because some might have positive and others negative perceptions of law enforcement officers. An ethnography would also have been challenging because I am unable to sit and record a traffic stop, and the visual and audio outputs of watching such encounters from a distance would be poorer than simply seeking individuals' experiences in their own words conducted through a phenomenological study.

A phenomenological qualitative study was the best method for this research. I used this method to gather personal feedback about individuals' opinions on their encounters with law enforcement and allows participants to describe the perceptions they have of law enforcement based on those encounters. This method was best because I wanted to discover an individual's personal experience with police and how their levels of perception of police altered after that encounter. Conducting a quantitative study would not have yield the same results because I sought personal descriptions of experiences from my participants about their encounters with law enforcement rather than searching for numerical answers or statistics in relation to my research question.

Role of the Researcher

My role as a researcher was observer-participant. This is because I observed my participants feedback after conducting interviews and attempted to note any pertinent information that they gave me about their experience with police. I participated by asking my participants the designated interview questions about their personal experiences with law enforcement and by requesting that they describe their perceptions of law enforcement after such encounters.

My role as a researcher was to gather feedback from my participants after I interviewed them. I took notes of pertinent information while conducting my interviews as well as reviewing their feedback multiple times in case I missed some important information. This way, I could analyze each interview multiple times to attain optimal feedback from my participants.

The researcher must maintain a professional relationship with their participants. The instructor does have power over the participants, but it is important that they let each participant know they can leave the study at any time and for any reason without penalty. The researcher must not allow any personal feelings between the researcher and participant to affect the data collection process, especially if they know each other previously.

The researcher must not allow any personal bias when conducting their interviews. A researcher has not collected the correct data if they have included personal bias in their study. I personally have a relationship with the chief of police in my city and have known both him and his family for years. As a researcher, I had to set my own

attitudes and perceptions toward law enforcement aside and listen only to the feedback that my participants provided, remaining careful to avoid instilling any personal bias in my study.

Other ethical issues that possibly could have occurred included conducting a study in one's own work environment. This may lead to multiple distractions for the researcher because they can be interrupted by coworkers at any time. If this occurs during the interview process, this might annoy my participants, and they could lose their trains of thought and forget what they are talking about. For their participation, I gave my participants a \$25 gift card of their choice, which were all Amazon. This could have included stores, restaurants, or gas and was chosen by my participants. I made sure I had their incentive at the time of conducting the interview and would give them their incentive after concluding their interview. I felt that a small incentive is nice because the participants are taking time out of their day to conduct their interviews and are discussing personal information about their encounters with law enforcement officers.

Setting and Sample

I found participants through both purposive and snowballing sampling. Through purposive sampling, a researcher can strategically select the participants who meet the specific criteria for their study (Patton, 2015, p. 265). I used snowball sampling to find other possible participants for my study through a participant that I had previously selected. They had to have known each other, as both participants had an encounter with law enforcement that can be used in my study.

As previously stated, I interviewed 20 young African American males between the ages of 18 and 25 who have had an encounter with police in the past year. My participants were not older than 25, or of any gender other than male, and had to be African American rather than any other race. The participants of my study were able to describe their encounters with law enforcement, determined whether it was positive or negative, and explained why they feel that way. My participants also described how they perceive law enforcement after encountering them.

The sample size for my research study was 20 participants. Having 20 participants provided me with generalizable results with which I could answer my research question. Because I used this number of participants, I was able to achieve data saturation. Data saturation occurs when a researcher provides an adequate sample size in their study, when enough data has been collected to cover the interest of a researcher's study, and when any additional data collected would provide different results or significant information (Fofana et al., 2020).

My participants were identified through public information and outsourced by myself through social media platforms such as LinkedIn and Facebook as well as other social media sites. I also contacted local police agencies in Northeast Ohio to discover possible organizations in this area that may be able to help me find potential participants that met the criteria and may be able to participate in my study. Then, I asked possible participants if they knew of any other individuals who met the same criteria and would be willing to participate in my study. These potential participants were contacted via

telephone calls, texts, and e-mails. I recruited all individuals who met all my criteria and were willing to volunteer to participate in my research study.

Data Collection Procedures

For my research study, I used a single interview guide for each participant. This would ensure consistency in the data collection process and keep me from forgetting a specific question that would nullify the results for my study. As a researcher, I did not review what my participants wrote word for word; rather, I made sure I noted all the pertinent information from participants. I also used a specific interview document consisting of 12 questions. This was useful to me as I coded and analyzed my data because I was able to review each interview multiple times to understand the most important information that my participants gave me and not omit any pertinent feedback from my participants.

I also used the interview guide to track all the important questions I asked my participants. By using an interview guided questionnaire I was able to understand each of my participants specifically and comprehend information that was given that was important to both my participant and my study.

I created my own interview questionnaire before I interviewed my participants and will not use one that has already been published. My interview questionnaire was an appropriate instrument for my study. This was because I conducted a qualitative phenomenological study to gather feedback about my participant's experiences with law enforcement and their perceptions of law enforcement. This ensured that I asked every

participant the same questions so I could gather consistent feedback about their experiences and perceptions.

The content validity of my interview questionnaire was established when I created my questionnaire at the appropriate time. As a researcher, I collected my data from those participating in my study by recording their questionnaire and analyzing their feedback. Content validity occurs when a researcher's questionnaire provides answers from participants that were created by asking specific interview questions related to current literature and expert opinions (Baserer et al., 2016). As a researcher, I must ask questions that will answer my research question by asking my participants their perceptions of law enforcement after encountering them. Crucially, I also asked them to describe to me their experience about their encounter with law enforcement.

When I created my interview questionnaire, I considered culture-specific issues. I created my questionnaire using proper language to avoid upsetting any of my participants in my study. I was also aware to avoid referencing specific cultural beliefs, religious questions, holidays, specific foods, clothing, and housing. I treated all my participants with the utmost respect and equality no matter how they explained their answers to my questions. I collected my data from individuals who participated in my study and provided me with feedback about their encounters with Northeast Ohio police officers.

The content validity of my interview questionnaire was established alongside the creation of my questionnaire. Content validity occurs when a researcher's questionnaire provides answers from participants after asking specific interview questions. This is related to current literature and contains expert opinions (Baserer et al., 2016). As a

researcher, I asked questions intended to answer my research question by asking my participants their perceptions of law enforcement. My questions engaged my participants to explain their encounters with Northeast Ohio police based on their personal experiences with that encounter.

I collected a significant amount of information from each of my research questions and from my data collection instruments being a questionnaire. My data was collected from my participants' responses at a mutually agreed upon location, which ended up being on-line. The location had to have been a quiet place with access to a restroom if needed and where both my participants and I felt comfortable.

I recorded my participants' responses to my interview questions during the data collection process. My data collection events occurred when my participants were available for completing their questionnaire. This occurred during the day or night or on a weekday or weekend. Each participant was available at different times or on different days. I intended to complete data collection within two or three months. As I conducted interviews with 20 different individuals, this would be somewhat time-consuming because of obligations relating to work, personal life, and COVID-19.

I recorded any data collected on a questionnaire and wrote any additional information in a notepad after conducting the interviews. The notepad and questionnaires would be crucial tools for my data collection as they enabled me to review the responses as many times as I needed to. Furthermore, I used the questionnaire to code my data and analyze my results. I also used a notepad after conducting my interviews so that I could

make brief notes of pertinent information that I observed when reading my participants feedback.

My study might have attained fewer participants than I anticipated. If that occurred, I would further ask other possible individuals to participate in my study if they met the right criteria to gain the necessary information. I also considered asking friends if they happen to know of any individuals who fit the study criteria. In addition, I considered using use social media platforms such as LinkedIn and posting flyers around the city of Cleveland to assist me in gathering the appropriate number of participants.

I also attempted to motivate my participants to participate in my study by providing an incentive. Individuals are more likely to participate in a researcher's study if they feel some personal connection with the researcher and receive an incentive (Rubin & Rubin, 2012, p. 77). It is important that I become familiar with my participants on a personal level before I conduct the interview. As a researcher, I also built trust with my participants. Sharing a common background with my participants will help build trust and a sense of honesty and acceptance in my participants (Rubin & Rubin, 2012, p. 79). After I finished the interview process, I informed my participants that any information they provide me will remain confidential. I intended to build trust and a strong rapport with all my participants, letting them know that I appreciated their interest in participating in my study and am grateful for their feedback about their police interactions. I then provided the small incentive that I promised them to participate, such as a gift card to their favorite store. I also asked each participant if they would like a copy of my dissertation when it was finished. To conclude my interview process, I asked them if they have any further

questions for me, thanked them for their participation in my study, and let them know they have now completed the interview process. After that, I asked each one if they would like me to follow up with them after I completed the study.

The follow-up procedures for my study may have differed for every participant. As a researcher, I asked certain individuals probing questions to help them continue talking about a specific theme or to clarify an issue (Rubin & Rubin, 2012, p. 118). Other participants may require follow-up questions, which I could address while I am conducting the interview or in a second interview with that participant. However, if I ask a probing question, I must make sure to do so immediately (Rubin & Rubin, 2012, p. 120). Follow-up questions are a great way to attain deeper responses from my participants during the interview process. Follow-up questions are useful for interviewees when they provide feedback related to the research problem that requires further explanation or when they present an idea that the researcher has not anticipated (Rubin & Rubin, 2012, p. 119). One reason I may ask to follow up on some questions is potential inconsistencies in responses from my participants, which may occur because my participant does not remember exactly what happened, or that, over the course of completing the questionnaire, their answers became deeper and more meaningful (Rubin & Rubin, 2012, p. 120).

Data Analysis

The data I collected from my interviewees would be related to the research question of my study. My research question stated, “How do psychological and demographic factors from previous encounters with police officers influence African

American males' (18–25) perceptions of the police?" The information they provided me would relate to their encounters with law enforcement within Northeast Ohio. I would also ask questions in the beginning of the questionnaire process to help me get to know my participants better, and to ease into the interview process by building trust and a rapport with participants. It was important as a researcher to learn about each participant, so it did not feel as if I am jumping into the interview process with a stranger (Rubin & Rubin, 2012, p. 83).

My research included a significant amount of data from my participants. After collecting all my data, I proceeded with the coding process and then analyzed the data. As a qualitative researcher, it is important that I seek similar themes and issues about my research question that my participants could provide me through their responses to my questions. Coding and analyzing my data would demonstrate young African American males' perceptions of law enforcement.

After I collected the feedback from my participants, I then coded the data that was given to me. A code can be a word or short phrase that assigns meaning to visual data, including interview transcripts, field notes, journals, drawings, and graphs (Saldana, 2016, p.4). Coding helps researchers discover patterns, which is defined as a repetitive occurrence of data that observed more than twice in the findings (Saldana, 2016, p. 5). Coding helps researchers discover underlying themes and categories for their findings.

The coding framework I used is called Quirkos. This is a qualitative data analysis program that assists the researcher in coding their data. The program helps the researcher

in discovering different codes and themes when analyzing their data that was given to them by their participants.

It is ultimately up to the researcher to decide whether to code their data by hand or to use qualitative analysis data software. Qualitative data analysis software provides researchers with tools that assist transcription analysis, content and discourse analysis, coding and text interpretation, and recursive abstraction (Boston University, n.d.). Researchers can choose from multiple qualitative analysis data software packages, including NVivo, Atlas.ti, Annotations, Ravens Eye, and Quirkos for example. These can assist researchers in coding their data, allowing them to examine the meaning of their participants' responses, and establish further categories and underlying themes more deeply. The main function that these software packages cannot perform is coding all data for the researcher; it is ultimately the researcher's responsibility to code their own data. For my study, I chose to utilize the software program called Quirkos.

A researcher may encounter discrepant cases when coding their data. Some codes may appear more frequently than other codes, and data software packages can inform the researcher of certain codes and frequencies as they undergo the data coding process (Saldana, 2016, p. 23). A researcher can have numerous participants to interview and collect data from. A researcher should finish coding one participant's data before moving to the next participant. This is because the second data set may influence a researcher's future recoding of the data set (Saldana, 2016, p. 23). Coding one participant completely before interviewing the next participant can help the researcher avoid collecting discrepant cases when they collect, code, and analyze their data.

Trustworthiness

Researchers must attempt to establish trustworthiness to improve the credibility of their findings. Credibility refers to the researcher's ability to present their respondents' views in the exact way that the respondents described them (Patton, 2015, p. 685). One strategy for increasing credibility is to use triangulated findings. This includes several data collection methods, sources, and perspectives (Patton, 2015, p. 685). Researchers can also use peer-reviewed studies to enhance credibility. Peer-reviewed articles are a great tool because they facilitate the viewing of findings that other researchers have discovered about a certain topic, which can increase the credibility of a study's findings.

Researchers must also understand transferability to help determine the trustworthiness of their data. Transferability occurs when one researcher provides others with a significant amount of information so that they can compare their case to another case with similar results (Patton, 2015, p. 685). Transferability is present when the same variables are measured in a way similar way to another study's and when both studies attain similar findings. As a researcher, I can provide a detailed description of my results, which could increase the transferability of my findings and can help future researchers conduct their own studies based on a similar topic.

Researchers must comprehend dependability (the qualitative counterpart to reliability) to help increase the trustworthiness of their findings. Dependability refers to a researcher's process, determining if their process was rational, insightful, and well documented (Patton, 2015, p. 685). Researchers conduct audit trails to help increase the dependability of their findings. Audit trails demonstrate that a researcher's results were

based on their participant's answers and include clear descriptions of how the researcher collected and analyzed their data.

Researchers must also understand confirmability to increase the trustworthiness of their findings. Confirmability means that the data and findings from a researcher's study were not fabricated by the researcher and were instead based on participant feedback (Patton, 2015, p. 685). One strategy I could use as a researcher to increase confirmability is conducting reflexivity. Through this process, I examine my own beliefs and practices to ensure that I have not allowed them to alter my findings. I must set aside how I feel about my topic and ensure that my results are based solely on the feedback from my participants. It is imperative that I not allow any researcher bias to alter the results of my study.

Researchers must also comprehend intra and intercoder reliability to increase trustworthiness. Intercoder reliability occurs when a minimum of two researchers are independently coding their data concerning a specific topic, and intracoder reliability occurs when one researcher codes their data on their topic. Intercoder (reproducibility) and Intracoder (stability) can strengthen a study's reliability (Jacinto, Santos, Guedes Soares, & Silva, 2016). Intracoder reliability is the extent to which the findings of a study are derived from additional coding conducted after some time has passed (Jacinto, Santos, Guedes Soares, & Silva, 2016). Using Intracoder reliability will allow me to interpret the data from my participants after time has passed since the participants' interactions with law enforcement. I used intracoder reliability, as I was the only

researcher coding the data for my study. Additionally, any future researcher who performs a similar study should attain similar results.

Protection of the Participants' Rights/Ethical Procedures

All research involving human participants requires researchers to follow certain steps to ensure their rights to privacy and to protect them from physical and emotional harm. One main ethical issue of having human participants is that the researcher must ensure their participants leave the study unharmed (Rudestam & Newton, 2015, p. 314). A researcher must not harm their participants in any way. Furthermore, the participants and their feedback must remain confidential and anonymous throughout the process.

Confidentiality is also imperative; researchers must organize and present their data so that individual participants cannot be identified (Rudestam & Newton, 2015, p. 319). A participant who can be identified may face criticism from others and/or could lose a job, car, or house because of what they discussed with the researcher. All participants' information should remain confidential and private. Researchers should also consider using language that does not upset their participants to avoid causing them emotional harm.

During the proposal stage, a researcher's chair must first approve the proposal. After the main chairperson approves, then the second chair committee must approve the proposal. Then, the student must pass an oral defense of their study. Following that step, the student seeks IRB approval before beginning chapter 4 and interviewing their participants. After completing the last two chapters of a dissertation, both chair members

are required to approve the dissertation as well as the IRB, and then the researcher must pass their final oral defense and gain CAO approval to complete the dissertation process.

A researcher recruits individuals for a study based on the criteria they themselves set. A researcher must communicate inclusion and exclusion criteria to the participants who are not chosen to participate in the study (Rudestam & Newton, 2015, p. 317). As previously stated, participants will be African American males between the ages of 18 and 25 who have had an encounter with Cleveland Police within the last year. I will investigate their experiences during and perceptions of police following that encounter.

There are times when a researcher's participant may withdraw from the study. It is imperative that a researcher explain to every participant that their participation is voluntary, and that anyone can leave the study at any time and for any reason at all (Rudestam & Newton, 2015, p. 318). For my study, I interviewed 20 individuals who met my criteria. It would be ideal to find a pool of 25 individuals to draw from if one or more individuals dropped out of my study at any point in the questionnaire process.

Gathering informed consent from all participants is a requirement for all research studies using human subjects. Every participant should sign an "informed consent form," with one copy remaining with the researcher and another remaining with the participant (Rudestam & Newton, 2015, p. 319). In the appendix of this chapter, after the reference section, I included a copy of a consent form I used when I conducted my questionnaires. All my participants will have the right to leave or withdraw from participation at any time; they will not be required to provide a reason for doing so and would experience no negative impact for their decision.

Additionally, researchers must always keep participant data confidential.

Researchers can use pseudonyms, numbers, or codes to facilitate this (Rudestam & Newton, 2015, p. 327). Researchers must also store their data securely and delete their data in a timely manner. For my study, I saved my data on a specific USB port, used pseudonyms and different names/numbers for them, and will delete the data after receiving COA approval and successfully completing my dissertation.

I stored my data on a USB port that I received from Walden University during my residency. I would be the only person with access to my data unless otherwise stipulated by a chair or faculty member of Walden University. All my notes, questionnaires, and data on the USB port will be destroyed in a timely manner after I successfully complete my dissertation at Walden University.

Other ethical issues may also arise during a researcher's study, including conflict of interest and justification for use of incentives. As previously stated, I must not allow personal bias to affect my study in any way. My roommate's brother is the chief of Police for Eastlake, Ohio, and their department has been extremely helpful during my graduate coursework. I personally know some of the officers at the Eastlake Police department, and it is crucial that I do not allow our friendship to affect my findings in any way, as I will examine my participants' personal experiences with Cleveland police. Although many researchers do not use incentives for their study, I did for mine in the form of a small gift card to the participants' vendor of choice, which was Amazon. This was a small gesture I made to thank my participants for taking the time and effort to share their experiences to help me with my study.

I did not conduct a pilot study for my research; therefore, no new information was learned about this topic. Indeed, conducting a pilot study can take extra time, effort, and resources that a researcher might not have (Khai Truong, 2017). I expended such efforts into my dissertation rather than a pilot study. Another reason I did not conduct a pilot study is I would not be able to use the data collected therein in my actual study. A pilot study produces data that may not be adequate to be published or reported (Khai Truong, 2017). It is difficult to conduct a separate study where results are not transferrable to my actual study at hand.

The results from my study came from my participants when I conducted my questionnaire process in Chapter 4 of my dissertation. I included descriptions about the experiences my participants have had with Northeast Ohio police. I also implemented a chart based on personal experiences whether they were positive or negative experiences to help display my results. After completing my questionnaires, I displayed the findings that I discovered in a chart based on the factors that influenced my participants' perceptions of law enforcement officers after they have experienced an encounter with one another. I also included a graph from Quirkos which assisted me in coding my data and discover psychological and demographic factors that influence young African American males' perceptions of law enforcement.

Summary

The main points of Chapter 3 encompass many different topics. My study aimed to discover the psychological and demographic factors that play a role in young African American males' perceptions of law enforcement; specifically, I interviewed African

American males who have had at least one previous interaction with police. Another main point is that I used a qualitative study with a phenomenological design because I am investigating the experiences my participants have had with police in Northeast Ohio. I was also an observer/participant, noting the responses from my participants and participating by asking my them questions about their experience with law enforcement. I also used both holistic and emotion coding when I coded the data from my participants. There were also ethical/participant rights a researcher must know before they conduct their interviews. All the information collected should be kept safe, confidential, and be destroyed in a timely manner. Researchers must gain every participant's "informed consent," meaning that participants can leave the study at any time and for any reason—and no participant shall be harmed in any way for participating in this study.

Chapter 4 of my study discusses many topics. I will begin by reviewing my research question and discussing the main points of my methodology section, explaining how it may play a role in the findings I received from my participants. Then, I will discuss my data collection including the participants and location and how I conducted the questionnaires online; provide my results from the study; discuss my data analysis, including codes, themes, and charts; describe the trustworthiness of my study; and then summarize and conclude Chapter 4.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of my study was to discover psychological and demographic factors that influence young African American males' (ages 18 to 25) perceptions of Northeast Ohio law enforcement officers after they have had an encounter with one another.

The research method for my study was more difficult than I had expected. Finding the participants for my study took longer than I had anticipated by going through social media sites and passing out invitational fliers. Once I posted about my study on LinkedIn, I started to receive multiple questions from possible participants about partaking in my study. The snowball effect worked perfectly for my study as one participant referred other participants, and some of those participants referred others as well, and so on.

I also had a hard time ordering the incentives for my participants as Amazon sent out e-mails containing \$25 e-gift cards to my participants, but some were declined and had no balance. I tried to resolve the issue with Amazon, as I called them multiple times as well as sent an e-mail to a specific department in Amazon who deals with e-gift cards more than twice, but never was replied to. I did my best to make sure the ones who received a bad card got a physical card instead, as I went to a local grocery store and bought the physical cards myself and sent that information to my participant's email.

One research method that occurred differently than anticipated was that all my participants preferred to take the questionnaire online. I had two or three participants admit to me that they could meet in person but preferred not to. I wanted to make this process as easy as possible for my participants, so I conducted them all online through e-

mail. One of the main reasons I found out as to why almost everyone wanted to do this online when I asked them was because they were scared for their safety and felt more secure conducting the questionnaire online and being in the privacy of their own home. The second main reason I found out why all of them wanted to do them online was due to the possible exposure of the COVID-19 virus, and many did not want to leave their home unless they had to.

Overview

For my study, I did not create or use a pilot study. The reason I did not use a study is because research shows PhD students may have a difficult time conducting pilot studies as they are not professionally trained to or they are not part of a research group with a knowledgeable supervisor leading that pilot study (Malmqvist et al., 2019). Another factor why I did not conduct a pilot study was due to the global pandemic COVID-19, as I had a difficult time recruiting participants to partake in my study as it was, plus I did not have extra money for incentives.

Originally, I wanted to conduct my interviews face-to-face at a local library, at whatever library my participant would like to meet at. Ultimately, I ended up conducting my interviews for my study through e-mails. Many of my participants did not want to meet face to face as they explained to me, they wanted to feel safe and conduct the interviews at their own homes for their own well-being and due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The demographics for my study included participants who had an encounter with law enforcement personnel in Northeast Ohio. Northeast Ohio contains many counties,

which include but are not limited to: Ashtabula, Cuyahoga, Geauga, Lake, and Medina counties. The participants needed to have an encounter with any police departments that are in those counties, which are considered Northeast Ohio.

The data collection I used for my study was that I conducted online e-mail interviews with my participants. I had my participants answer 12 research questions regarding their encounter with police that assisted me in discovering data relating to the research question of my study.

During my data analysis, I found that my participants had an overwhelming sense of fear, anxiety, stress, nervousness, and anger during their encounter with law enforcement in Northeast Ohio. I also discovered that my participants thought they were mistreated by police and would not feel safe if they had another police encounter in the future.

The trustworthiness of my study is based on the quality of criteria pertaining to the results that I discovered, including credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability, and reflexivity (Korstjens & Moser, 2018) that my data collection discovered after I conducted my study.

The results of my study revealed that there were demographic and psychological factors that influenced their perceptions of Northeast Ohio police. I discovered that my participants, due to their young age and race, were not treated fairly during their encounter with police. My participants also admitted to being scared, angry, nervous, and stressed out during their encounter with law enforcement, did not fully trust law

enforcement personnel, and would still be afraid if they had another encounter with law enforcement in the future.

Setting

For most of my participants who volunteered to be a part of my study, there were no specific conditions that may have influenced their experience or that could have influenced the interpretation of the study results. For only one participant, there was a sign of trauma that they experienced. For that specific participant, what may have influenced the study results was that he was in an auto accident during the process. I was not told the severity of the accident by the said participant, but I maintained contact with him. I let him know that he could take his time to feel better, and then he could participate in my study as his health was of the utmost importance.

This participant volunteered to take part in my study, and then I sent the consent form to him. I had no response from him, but after 10 days, I e-mailed him back, and that's when he told me he was in an auto accident. He stated that he still wanted to participate in my study, and he returned the consent form to me. After I received his consent form, I sent him the 12 questions via email the following day and told him to take all the time he needed, as there was no rush to send his feedback back to me. I received his feedback 5 days after sending him the questions. His being in an auto accident may have influenced his experience while participating in my study.

Demographics

The participant demographics and characteristics for my study included four specific criteria. The participants for my study had to be between the ages of 18 to 25

years old during their encounter with law enforcement. My participants had to have been African-American and not of any other race. The participants also must have been male, as no other gender could volunteer to participate in my study. Lastly, all participants must have had an encounter with any law enforcement officer from any division in Northeast Ohio within the past year.

Data Collection

There were 20 participants that I collected data from who participated in my study. After I received their consent form, I sent an e-mail to all of them with the 12 research questions that explained their experience during their encounter with law enforcement, and this pertained to answering my research question.

The data collection instrument used for my study consisted of an online interview in which they were sent an email from my home with the 12 research questions in which they described their encounter with law enforcement. I sent my online interview to 20 participants who volunteered to take part in my study and met all the necessary criteria. Once I was able to find participants who wanted to take part in my study, the duration of data collection took roughly 8 weeks. This included the time for me to send them the consent form, review and fill it out, send them the online interviews, receive their responses, and code the data.

The data for my study was recorded from the responses they sent to me regarding their encounter with law enforcement, which included their answers to the 12 research questions that pertained to my study. All their responses were recorded from the online interview that I conducted with all my participants who took part in my study.

There were a couple things I had to change regarding data collection that were originally presented in Chapter 3. I had to make a few adjustments to my IRB form to allow the changes that I needed to make to help me find participants for my study. The first thing that I changed was the incentive payout to participants who took part in my study. I originally had the payout at \$15 but was having no luck finding anyone. I realized that this incentive may be too low, so I changed the payout from \$15 to \$25 for taking part in my study.

The second thing I had to change was the way that I was going to conduct my interviews. I originally planned to conduct them face-to-face. I was still having a hard time finding participants, so I wanted to add other ways to conduct them. After approval from the IRB, I added that I can conduct my interviews face-to-face, over the phone, or online. This allowed for the interview to be conducted in a variety of ways, but it was up to whatever approach my participants felt was best for them to conduct their interview.

One unusual circumstance that I encountered while collecting data was that all my participants wanted to take the interview online. Some of my participants volunteered to take the interview but preferred to take it online due to wanting to feel safe and because of the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic. I wanted them to feel comfortable, so I let every individual participant choose how they wanted to conduct the interviews. All of them chose to conduct them through e-mails.

Another unusual circumstance that I had during data collection was the difficulty I had with purchasing Amazon e-gift cards as an incentive for my participants to participate in my study. There were five participants who let me know that their e-gift

card was invalid and had an error code. I talked to representatives from Amazon and received an email to discuss the matter. I tried twice, but no one ever got back to me to help resolve the issue. I took the \$125 loss and went to the store and bought physical gift cards. I then sent the information from those cards to my participants for the incentive payout for participating in my study.

Findings of the Interview

My goal for this study was to discover psychological and demographic factors that influence young African American males' (ages 18 to 25) perceptions of Northeast Ohio law enforcement after an encounter with one another. Participant 1 felt like a criminal when he was stopped by police. He felt tense and scared as the cops had their guns pulled out on him during the stop. After the encounter with police, the participant stated that "he felt spooked for weeks after his encounter with police." The participant has mixed feelings toward law enforcement officers because he was mistreated by police, but his uncle was a police officer as well. The participant feels uneasy toward law enforcement, and there will always be racism in the criminal justice system. The participant stated that for future encounters with police, he "will always feel uneasy around cops, especially if the police officer is not a minority."

Participant 2 felt like he was not treated with respect by the police during his encounter with them and felt negative energy coming from the officers. The participant was dissatisfied and disgusted by the way he was treated by the police, as he was disappointed in the racial discrimination the officers had. The participant felt very optimistic about future encounters with police, but he noted that "discrimination in law

enforcement is very alarming.” The participant also stated that he “feels really uncomfortable with every move police officers make, especially if they are white.”

Participant 3 felt nervous during his encounter with the police. When the officer came to his window and saw his face, he was asked immediately to exit his vehicle. The participant was scared and angry, as there was no reason for him to exit his vehicle. The participant stated that “you can’t trust police” and he would be fearful of future encounters with police. The participant said, “I would be very angry with police if I am stopped by police in the future, especially if I am stopped without violating any laws.”

Participant 4 felt unsettled and confused as to why he was pulled over but remained calm to avoid any type of agitation. The participant handed over his license and registration but was told to exit his car, and he was thoroughly searched, which “made me feel like a felon.” The participant felt embarrassed and disappointed with law enforcement after his encounter with them. The participant also stated that “for a nation that advocates freedom and equality, law enforcement is pretty racist.”

Participant 5 was dissatisfied with his encounter with the police, and he had no idea why he was pulled over. The participant felt there was injustice during his encounter with police because one of the officers said, “you look like someone who was arrested for disobeying a traffic rule in the past” but the participant did not have any previous traffic offenses. The participant felt like he wanted to file a case in court against the city of Cleveland and the police department for filing false charges against him, using excessive force, and conducting an illegal search. The participant said, “some officers are corrupt

with racial discrimination.” The participant felt he would always have issues with trust and cooperation with the police, especially if he was wrongfully stopped by the police.

Participant 6 felt angry and scared during his encounter with police, especially since his encounter with police occurred late at night. The participant was scared when the officers pulled out their guns on him and made him exit his car. He was immediately pinned and searched. The participant felt shaky, and he needed to take several breaths before leaving the encounter. The participant stated, “I am glad I had my ID, or I could have been beaten and detained by the police.” He also stated that “law enforcement is the worst, especially in Cleveland.” The participant feels that he would fear any future encounters with police, especially not knowing why he was stopped in the first place.

Participant 7 felt irritated during his encounter with police because he has been pulled over numerous times for no reason. The participant felt embarrassed because he was searched like a criminal. The participant stated that he was “disgusted by the way police treat black men.” He felt like law enforcement treats blacks with dissatisfaction compared to people of other races. The participant noted that “In future encounters with police I will remain patient as police want you to do or say something that can be used against you in court.”

Participant 8 felt disrespected and humiliated during his encounter with police and felt fear as the officer became violent in his speech and body language. The participant felt he was searched for and treated like a criminal, and his encounter was handled with disrespect. The participant stated that he was “super scared and terrified which brought up a stage of PTSD from which I am still not fully recovered.” He feels unsafe around

law enforcement but knows that not all police are bad. He stated, “I feel safer being around a dog than I do around the police.”

Participant 9 felt scared during his encounter with law enforcement and could not shake that feeling off during his encounter with police. When the encounter ended and he was told to go, he finally felt at ease. The participant stated that “I’m still scared of cops, both white and black ones, but especially the white ones.” He felt like blacks are treated differently than whites are by the police. He noted “Police see every black folk as a suspect and that is not fair.” The participant remains scared of police as he does not want to be killed, but he stated that “ I can never feel free around a cop.”

Participant Ten felt bad during his encounter with the police, as he was treated cruelly by the police. He was taken out of the restaurant he was in, and the other officer did not even know why he was taken out. The participant stated that he “will always feel uncomfortable around police because they sometimes act in a wrong way, and I know I am a law abiding citizen.”

Participant Eleven felt destroyed during his encounter with the police because they abused their power. The participant felt he was treated poorly as someone he did not know put a stolen phone in his bag. The participant stated, “I will always have an unpleasant feeling around cops, but they are there to do their job.” He will always have an uncomfortable feeling toward law enforcement during future encounters because of the way his last encounter with police happened.

Participant Twelve was freaked out during his encounter with the police. The participant told the police he had a gun and handed them his identification and gun

license, but he was told to step out of his car, place his hands behind his back, and had tasers pointed at him, which made him feel very infuriated by their treatment of him. The participant stated that he “hates police because of the way I was treated, and that police abuse their powers.” He concluded that “police are ruthless people who want to tase or shoot you dead and they use their feelings instead of logic and law.”

Participant Thirteen was pulled over by police, and he felt okay with it, but his mother was traveling with him, and she felt very bad. The participant stated that the officer, who was black, treated them badly, but when his mother started to cry, his attitude changed. The participant explained that the police need to take a human relations class to better their encounters with citizens. The participant stated that he has a “negative feelings toward law enforcement and if he encounters them again hopefully, they learned how to deal with people in a positive way.”

Participant Fourteen was pulled over by police but felt relaxed because he knew he did nothing wrong. He explained that he was treated fairly by the police during their encounter. The participant noted that he feels police are explosive by nature, but they try to do good service toward the community. The participant explained that he has a “neutral feeling toward law enforcement” as it may be uncomfortable at times or normal as the encounter plays out.

Participant Fifteen described that his encounter with the police was normal and that there was no violence that occurred. The participant stated that “I respect the police and I admire their work.” The participant explained that he would not feel well if stopped

by law enforcement again in the future, as he obeys the laws. He also noted that he has both positive and negative perceptions of law enforcement officers.

Participant Sixteen explained that he was stopped by the police, but everyone remained calm, and the matter was resolved peacefully. He explained that he was very happy at the end of his encounter with the police. When asked about how he felt about police, the participant stated, "I think they do their job, and they all work differently." The participant discussed that he has no general feelings toward law enforcement, but if he were pulled over again in the future, he may feel uncomfortable.

Participant Seventeen was stopped by police and felt bad because he was treated cruelly, and the officer did not know what was going on in the situation at hand. The participant explained that he was happy after the encounter ended. When asked about how he feels about police, the participant stated, "Something uncomfortable because they sometimes act in the wrong way." The participant explained that he would feel uncomfortable if stopped by police in the future as he believes he is a citizen who respects the laws.

Participant Eighteen explained that he felt bad when he was stopped by police because they treated him unfairly and he felt he was the victim. The participant noted that he felt calmer after the encounter ended because he had never been stopped by the police previously, as this was his first time. When asked about how he felt about police, the participant stated, "I feel they do their job to the best of their ability." The participant explained how bad he would feel if stopped by the police again, as that was the worst experience he had with law enforcement, although that was his first encounter with them.

Participant Nineteen felt angry when he was stopped by police, and they did not do their job very well. The participant explained that he was detained by police in the park because a lady was robbed, and the police thought he was the suspect. After his encounter with the police ended, he described how the police acted like animals toward him. The participant stated, “My feelings are totally negative toward the police.”

Participant Twenty had feelings of anger when he was arrested by the police. The participant explained that the police treated him very badly as he was detained outside his school for no reason. The participant described that he felt very angry as the police did not do their job as they should. The participant noted that “All my feelings and thoughts are totally negative” when he was asked to describe his feelings toward law enforcement today.

Results

For my study, I did not discover any discrepant cases, as the snowballing method worked great for my study after discovering willing participants from LinkedIn to participate in my study. There was also no non-confirming data that I discovered while completing the interviews for my study. The first picture below comes from the qualitative data analysis program Quirkos which assisted me in finding the demographic and psychological factors, as well as some coping mechanisms my participants utilized to help them cope with their situation after their encounter with law enforcement and consists of the most popular words from the feedback by my participants. The second picture is a graph that helps display the perceptions of police my participants had when they were stopped, after they were stopped, and their feelings if they were to be stopped

again by police, that I created to help express their perceptions of law enforcement officers.

Participant Feelings about Traffic Stops

Number of participants	Feelings when stopped	Feelings after stop	Feelings of next stop
Participant 1	Tense, Scared	Spooked	Uneasy
Participant 2	Treated poorly	Dissatisfied, disappointment	Uncomfortable
Participant 3	Nervous	Scared, angry	Angry if stopped wrongly
Participant 4	Unsettled, confused	Embarrassed, disappointed	Scared, police are racist
Participant 5	Dissatisfied	Angry, false charges and illegal search	Scared, lack of trust in police
Participant 6	Angry, scared	Shaky, needed to catch breath.	Scared, traumatizing
Participant 7	Irritated	Embarrassed	Will be patient
Participant 8	Disrespected, humiliated, fear	Scared and terrified, PTSD	Safer around a dog than police.
Participant 9	Scared	Felt at ease	Cannot feel free around the police
Participant 10	Bad, treated cruelly	Uncomfortable	Uncomfortable
Participant 11	Destroyed	Treated poorly	Always uncomfortable
Participant 12	Freaked out	Infuriated by treatment	Always will hate police because they are ruthless
Participant 13	Felt Okay	Police need to take a human relations class	Negative, but hopefully police can deal with people positively
Participant 14	Relaxed	Treated fairly	Neutral feeling, may be a normal or uncomfortable stop next time
Participant 15	Normal, no violence	Has both positive and negative feelings towards police	Would not feel well if stopped by police again.
Participant 16	Calm, matter resolved	Very happy with police.	No general feelings towards police, but may feel uncomfortable
Participant 17	Felt bad, treated cruelly	Somewhat uncomfortable	Would feel uncomfortable
Participant 18	Bad, treated unfairly	Calmer after encounter ended, it was his first with police	Would feel bad due to his first encounter
Participant 19	Angry, police did poor job	Totally negative feelings towards police	Police acted like animals so angry, scared
Participant 20	Anger, treated badly	Feelings and thoughts are totally negative towards police	Angry

Figure 2

Data Analysis

Previously stating I was going to use a qualitative data software analysis program to help code my data, I ultimately chose to use the software program called Quirkos. For my study to discover the psychological and demographic factors that influence my participants perceptions of police, I used the data software analysis program Quirkos. Using qualitative data analysis software helps researchers formulate data coding, comparing, and storage but at the end of the day it is the researcher who analyzes the data (Patton, 2015, p. 529). From the interviews gathered from my participants, their feedback and with using Quirkos helped me answer my research question regarding psychological and demographic factors that influence young African American males' perceptions of police. many responses were like the findings from my data. I also created a graph describing my participants' encounters with the police. My research question aims to discover the psychological and demographic factors that influence young African American males (18-25) perceptions of NE Ohio police after their encounter with one another.

When analyzing my data using Quirkos, I discovered a few categories that would help me answer my research question. The categories I discovered are psychological factors, demographic factors, and Perceptions of Police. The first category I would like to discuss after I analyzed my data is psychological factors. The main psychological factors I discovered that influence the perceptions of police my participants have towards law enforcement was coded as feeling anxious, nervousness, stress, embarrassed, feeling scared, feelings of anger, and traumatic experiences including having PTSD and seeing a

professional for help to cope with their experience with law enforcement. Some participants explained they were nervous during their encounter with police, and some were also stressed out after their encounter and needed to find ways to help them cope with that stress.

Another code under psychological factors I discovered was coping stressors that my participants used to help them cope with the stress they had after their encounter with police. Participants explained to me that they would walk through the park to help clear their minds, go work out at the gym to help alleviate stress, go on bike rides with friends, talk to family and friends, and also meditate as one person explained that the professional they were seeing recommended they mediate to help reduce the stress they had and to help them with their PTSD that they had ever since their encounter with law enforcement.

The next category I would like to discuss after reviewing my data is demographic factors. There were many different factors discovered that can be coded under this category. One code was household income, as some participants explained having a low paying job made it difficult for them to pay their fines and court costs. Another code I discovered was that of age. Some participants explained they were pulled over by police for being a young aged African American male. Another code I discovered using Quirkos was motivation. A participant explained he wanted to become a cop but after their encounter it might be hard to get into that profession now. Another code as a demographic factor was area as they lived in Cleveland. Some participants explained

Cleveland cops are tough on young African American males and another explained Cleveland cops are the worst and do not feel comfortable around them.

I also created a table with three rows that would help answer my research question. One row describes their feelings when they were stopped by police, another row describes how they felt toward law enforcement after their encounter with police, and a third describes how they would feel if pulled over again in the future.

After reviewing the feedback from my participants and reviewing the charts that I created, there were codes, categories, and themes that emerged in my findings. Through the first twelve participants, I almost felt like I reached data saturation, but I did not. Participants 13-16 had different outcomes and feelings toward law enforcement officers than the other participants.

Some of the codes I discovered from my participants were feelings of anger, disrespect, fear, and embarrassment. The categories I discovered included mistreatment by the police or being treated badly by the officers. The overall themes I got from my feedback were being scared or frightened and feeling uncomfortable around police officers. One participant, who was participant eight in my study, stated that “I feel safer around a dog, than I do around police”. Participant nine even stated “I can never feel free around a cop”. These statements show how scared some participants were and how they would feel uncomfortable around the police if they had a future encounter with one another.

There were no discrepant cases in my study, as the snowballing method worked fine for conducting my study and the interviews that provided the feedback from my

participants. If this is referring to the individuals who were calm, the matter was resolved, and they had a positive experience, unlike most of my participants, please let me know, and I'll review and change what is needed.

Evidence and Trustworthiness

The credibility or trustworthiness strategy is very pertinent to a researcher's study. For my study, credibility was obtained. Credibility assists researchers in discovering that their findings from their data are believable, and using interviews is seen by professionals as the best way for a researcher to obtain credibility (DeCino & Waalkes, 2019). All the feedback from my participants about their encounter with the police was in their own exact words. This made it easier for me as a researcher when I coded my data and discovered the findings from reviewing my interviews.

Transferability is also important in qualitative research. Transferability occurs when a researcher's findings can be transferred to other researchers' findings on a similar topic, and the findings from both studies would be like one another (Tuval-Mashiach, 2021). My study showed that most of my participants had an unpleasant experience with the police during their encounter with one another, although a few did have a positive experience with the police. I believe that my findings would be like another researcher's findings if they did a study on 20 African American males and their perceptions of police after their encounter with one another. If my findings discovered that all my participants had a negative experience or held negative perceptions toward law enforcement, then the transferability of my study would not be high and would be like another researcher's findings.

The strategy of dependability is also important to a researcher's findings in a qualitative study. Dependability refers to the process by which a researcher collects their data and whether it is rational and documented to the best of their ability (Patton, 2015, p. 685). As a researcher, I collected my data from the 20 online interviews I sent to my participants. All the answers were in their own words, so I did not have to transcribe any data. I created the graph listed above based on my participant's responses that I felt were best for answering my research question. So, I collected my data from my participants, and the results of their answers were placed in the graph to the best of my ability, which provides dependability for the data that I discovered and analyzed.

Confirmability is also crucial to the findings of a researcher conducting a qualitative study. Confirmability refers to the data a researcher collected and discovered from their study that was not created by the researcher themselves or included any researcher bias but was established from the feedback from the participants themselves (Patton, 2015, p. 685). All the data I collected was based on my participant's feedback. I did not influence or persuade any participants in any way to provide me with certain feedback. I also did not place any personal biased information into the findings that I discovered from the data I received from my participants. Everything was established with their own exact words, which gives my study a strong confirmability strategy.

Summary

My research question aims to discover the demographic and psychological factors that influence young African American male's perceptions of law enforcement officers after a previous encounter with one another. Some demographic factors that influenced

my participants perceptions of police included their age, their low household income, motivations, living area, and marriage status. Some psychological factors included being anxious, feelings of nervousness and anger, PTSD, and stress. I also discovered some coping mechanisms for stress such as walking, bike riding, working out, and meditating. After I collected and analyzed the data provided to me by my participants, there were some findings that I discovered. I found out that most of my participants were scared and afraid when they were pulled over by the law enforcement officer, and many did not know why or were given an explanation as to why they were pulled over. Also, most of my participants hold negative feelings or perceptions of law enforcement because they were treated poorly during their encounter. A couple of my participants felt okay when they were pulled over, knowing they did nothing wrong, but they still held neutral perceptions toward law enforcement and would still feel uncomfortable if they were pulled over by law enforcement in the future. One participant even described having a form of PTSD because of the way he was treated by the police, and he has not fully recovered from his encounter as he is still afraid of law enforcement personnel. A couple of my participants believe that police officers, especially in Cleveland, are the worst and cannot be trusted. Feelings of anger, humility, and being scared during their encounter with police in Northeast Ohio were very dominant, as well as not trusting the police and having negative perceptions of police. Only a couple participants felt okay during their encounter with police and felt they were treated fairly, but they still possess neutral feelings toward police officers in Northeast Ohio.

Conclusion

Finishing up this chapter has allowed me to discover the results of the feedback from my participants who participated in my study. The consistency that I discovered was that most of my participants felt angry and scared when they were pulled over by law enforcement, and they believed that they were mistreated or treated poorly by the police. Most of them would also feel uncomfortable if they were ever pulled over by police again in the future.

One thing that surprised me was that one participant experienced PTSD from his encounter with the police. His experience was so bad that he feared the police for months after his encounter with them, and he mentioned that he has still not fully recovered from his encounter with law enforcement. His direct quote of “I feel safer around a dog than police” surprised me. Another participant noted that “I cannot feel free around the police” also caught my attention, which helped me understand how truly bad their encounter with the police was.

Another one that surprised me was that one participant felt relaxed when he was pulled over. This was because he knew he had done nothing wrong. He mentioned that everything went okay, and he was treated fairly by the police. The one thing that surprised me about this was that he mentioned he would still feel uncomfortable if he was pulled over in the future. This made me realize that even though that encounter went smoothly for that individual, young African American males still fear the police.

Every encounter can be different for the same individual if they are pulled over again. Hearing stories on the news about how police officers are hurting or killing

African American males is not helping the relationship between these two parties. This is putting fear into their eyes when they are pulled over by law enforcement, knowing that that encounter may not end well or be a pleasant experience for them.

Next, we will be moving ahead into Chapter 5. In Chapter 5, I will discuss the summary of the findings of my study. I will then conclude my study after discussing the summary. Following that, I will discuss any recommendations that I would make as the researcher of this study that pertain to my study or future similar studies for the next researchers specializing in this specific field.

Chapter 5: Findings

Introduction

The purpose of my study was to discover the psychological and demographic factors that influence young African American males' (ages 18 to 25) perceptions of Northeast Ohio police after they have experienced an encounter with one another. I conducted interviews with my participants and received their feedback about their experiences in their own words, which provided me with detailed information about their encounters with law enforcement (see Potter, 2018). Law enforcement officers have been shown to use excessive force against individuals of the African American race, which may play a role in why those individuals have lower perceptions of police than other individuals (Oh et al., 2017).

I conducted my study to gather insight on how law enforcement officers treat young African American males during their encounter with one another and receive feedback from those individuals about that encounter in their own words. I wanted to discover the psychological and demographic factors that influence the perceptions of these individuals toward law enforcement officers after they have had an encounter with one another. I conducted my phenomenological qualitative study by providing 20 individuals with 12 interview questions about their encounters with police. I designed the first two questions to get to know my participants more personally, and the remaining eight were questions about their encounter with the police. My participants described to me in their own words how they felt once pulled over by police, how they felt after that

encounter ended and their perceptions toward police officers, and how they would feel if they were to be pulled over again by law enforcement in the future.

By asking these interview questions, I gathered significant feedback from my participants. My participants explained their encounter with law enforcement and provided me with important feedback about their encounter and their perceptions toward law enforcement, as well as what demographic and psychological factors help influence their perceptions of law enforcement.

I discovered pertinent information about how psychological and demographic factors influence young African American males (18-25) perceive law enforcement officers after having an encounter with one another. I discovered that most of my participants felt psychologically angered, anxious, nervous, stressed out, and having PTSD since their encounter with police. The demographic factors that stood out included household income whether it was because of being single or married with a child, being of a young age of 18-25, living in the city of Cleveland, and motivations as one participant would like to become a police officer in the future. I discovered that most of my participants felt angered and scared once they were pulled over by police. Many participants did not know why they were even pulled over, and they thought the police used excessive force toward them during their encounter with one another. One participant described his experience as Cleveland being the worst city when it comes to police interactions between young African American males and police officers, and he does not feel safe around police at all and cannot trust Cleveland police. One individual even concluded that he experienced a form of PTSD after his encounter with police, as he

cannot breathe normally once he sees the police because it reminds him of his negative encounter with police and is petrified to have to go through that once again in the future.

The Interpretation of the Findings

Many of my participants described feelings of anger, fear, disappointment, embarrassment, being uncomfortable and mistreated by police, and holding negative perceptions toward law enforcement. A couple of my participants did not have a negative experience and held neutral perceptions toward police after their encounter with them, but they would still be afraid if they were to encounter one another again in the future. One participant experienced a form of PTSD, as he still cannot get over his previous experience with law enforcement.

As the peer-reviewed literature I read confirms, many young African American males hold low perceptions toward law enforcement due to the way they were treated by the police during their encounter with one another. This could be from the police using excessive force during their encounter, the police abusing their power, or just mistreating African Americans or showing no concern in assisting these individuals solve their problems during their encounters with one another. This may not just be true for young African American males but may also extend knowledge in regard to females and elderly African Americans and their encounters with the police as well.

The theoretical framework on which I based my study was conflict theory. This theory states that young African American males are perceived as a dangerous group therefore law enforcement should focus on and give strict attention to these individuals (Hayle et al., 2016, p. 325). This theory pertains to my study, as some of my participants

explained to me that they did not know why or were even told by the police why they were pulled over. This would explain why some law enforcement officers are focusing their attention on the population of young African American males. One of my participants explained to me that he was forcibly removed from his vehicle without any explanation and before he could even provide the officer with his identification. Another participant was taken out of his vehicle for answering their question and admitting he had a firearm in his car, but he was not even given the chance to show his permit to the officer before being yanked from his vehicle.

Limitations

There were limitations to trustworthiness that arose in this study. The trustworthiness of one's study consists of four different dimensions, which include dependability, credibility, transferability, and confirmability (Patton, 2015, p. 685). For dependability, I had to make sure the process I conducted was rational and well documented, and I made sure that my data was collected in a clear manner and my results were based on the feedback from my participants. For credibility, I used triangulated findings, which included utilizing different resources, such as peer-reviewed articles, to gather insight into my topic and gather information from multiple sources and participants to get their feedback. For the transferability of my study, I did extensive research on my topic and discovered what many other researchers discovered about it, and my research will add to that information for future researchers as well. For confirmability, I made sure as a researcher that all my findings were based on the feedback from my participants about their perceptions of law enforcement based on their

experiences with police officers, and no findings for my study were altered due to any personal researcher bias.

Recommendations

I recommend that future researchers expand their study by not limiting their resources to a singular gender and age group. I conducted my study on males only, with participants being between the ages of 18 and 25. Future researchers can gather feedback from African American females, and they may have significant feedback to provide a researcher. They may have been treated differently by the police because they were female and not male. Also, researchers can investigate African Americans older than 25.

It may also be beneficial to find participants by not limiting them to a specific age group. African Americans between the ages of 25 and 70, for example, may have had multiple encounters with police, which can provide pertinent information to a researcher. Also, not limiting their encounter with police to within 1 or 2 years may help researchers. Some individuals may have had multiple encounters over their adult lifetime with police, and some may have had a negative experience, a positive experience, or perhaps even both. This can provide greater feedback if a researcher would like to discover how African Americans perceive police after they have had an encounter with one another.

For future research, there are many individuals who should pay attention to the results of these studies. Law enforcement agencies and police officers should pay attention to them. If an officer is known to overstep their power or use excessive force, an agency may want to implement programs that could help officers and their treatment of African Americans, such as cultural awareness and/or sensitivity training, or provide

ethical training classes. Other individuals that should pay attention to the results are those in the criminal justice system, such as lawyers and judges. Everyone deserves a fair trial if they go to court, and one's race or age should not play a role in one's prosecution or determine in court how long one is sentenced to jail or prison. City council members could also benefit from looking at the results of these types of studies. The council members would want cooperation and collaboration between all members of their community and the police officers that are sworn in to protect them.

Implications for Social Change

The criminal justice field will benefit from the results of my study and from reading the results of similar studies as well. Agencies can use the information from this study to implement new policies or change their existing policies to make sure that all individuals are treated the same regardless of race, age, or gender. This may include, but is not limited to, cultural awareness training, cultural sensitivity training, or ethical training classes for the police officers in that city or jurisdiction.

My study and those like it may not affect agencies at the local level, but they may affect agencies at the state, national, or even global levels. There are studies being conducted all around the world about the satisfaction of individuals in a community and the law enforcement officers in that area. Agencies in another country may look at these studies and perhaps take advantage of some of the recommendations some researchers make. They may be able to better comprehend what can be done to improve the relationship between the police agencies in their community and the individuals who live there.

It is important that police officers treat all individuals the same, regardless of their age, race, or gender. This will promote a healthy relationship between law enforcement officers and the individuals living in the same community. Promoting a healthy relationship between African American males and police officers is crucial to the satisfaction of members of the same community. Having a healthy relationship between these two parties can help promote a good relationship between everyone in the community. By doing so, it can foster successful cooperation and collaboration between each other during their encounters with one another. This may also help raise the perception levels and satisfaction that young African American males have of law enforcement officers in their community.

Conducting this phenomenological qualitative study in relation to conflict theory may have had implications that relate to positive social change. I conducted my study with African American males ages 18 to 25. I did not gather feedback from any African American women or individuals over the age of 25 so to promote social change, it may take more information gathered from those individuals about their experiences with law enforcement officers to help promote social change. I also did not have any participants that had a positive interaction with the police during their encounter with one another. Therefore, I was not able to gather their feedback about their positive experience, so I am not able to share that information in my study and discuss how their positive experience would help bring positive social change between African Americans and law enforcement officers.

My recommendations for the practice of positive social change in relation to my study are that I recommend all individuals in the criminal justice field read my study as well as other studies that are like my topic. There can always be improvement in police agencies, and there needs to be better relationships between law enforcement officers and young African American males. I urge that any agency that is having issues with their police officers investigate the root of the problem and try to figure out what may be best to better enhance the relationship between these two parties. This may include implementing mandatory training classes, a superior's supervision over all the officers in their department, and, if all else fails, releasing the individual or individuals who are repeatedly violating their agency's policies by abusing their powers or using excessive force against the individuals in their communities. It is important that all individuals feel safe in their community around officers, as police officers are sworn in to protect all the individuals in their community regardless of one's race, age, or gender.

Reflection of the Researcher

After completing my study, I reflected on what I have learned as a researcher on this topic. As a researcher, I did not allow my personal perceptions of police to influence any of the findings of my study. Everything I discovered was based on the information that was given to me by my participants, which was given in their own words. I personally have a good relationship with my local police department. The Eastlake police department has been assisting me with anything I needed when I was taking my master's and PhD courses. I had one detective take time out of his day to conduct an online

questionnaire for one of my master's courses, which I was very grateful for and found very helpful for my coursework.

Another possible personal bias I know of is that I personally know the police chief in my city. My roommate is the brother of the active police chief in the city we live in. I know him as chief and as an acquaintance because I have been roommates with his brother for the past 16 years. My roommate has told me about his training as a cop as well as his SWAT training in Quantico before he became police chief. I also know and have met their mother and father, and my roommate and his brother have a board game night on a weekly basis. I always tell my roommate to say hello. Every week, he visits his mother or goes to his brother's house (police chief) to play games. It feels like we are all part of our own little family as we stay in touch with each other whenever possible.

Personally, I did not have any effect on my participants, as I never discussed with them my personal relationship with my local police department or my personal perceptions of law enforcement. My participants completed their interviews online and only discussed the 10 interview questions, which were all based on getting to know my participants better on a personal level and their experiences with law enforcement officers during their encounters with one another. All that feedback was given to me in their own words about their own individual experiences with the police.

Conclusion

Law enforcement officers have been known to treat males of the African American race with extreme force, and this may explain why African Americans hold low perceptions and satisfaction levels toward law enforcement officers (Oh et al., 2017).

I conducted a phenomenological qualitative study based on conflict theory to gather feedback for my study. I interviewed 20 young African American males (ages 18 to 25) about their encounter with police in northeast Ohio by conducting online interviews to gather their feedback about their experience in their own words. My goal was to discover how psychological and demographic factors from previous encounters with police influence young African American males' (ages 18 to 25) perceptions of police. All the participants in my study received a \$25 Amazon gift card as an incentive for participating in my study.

After receiving feedback from my participants, I used the software data analysis program called Quirkos. I discovered that most of my participants felt psychological factors play a role in their perceptions of police that include being anxious, nervous, stressed out, anger, fear, disappointment, embarrassment, PTSD, and felt they were mistreated by police due to the use of excessive force during their encounter with one another. Some demographic factors that play a role in my participants perceptions towards law enforcement include their age, living in Cleveland, being married or single, and their household income. All my participants acknowledged that they would feel scared if they were to have another encounter with the police in the future.

It is imperative to have a healthy relationship between African American males and police officers that may help maintain cooperation and collaboration between both parties during future encounters. Doing so may help increase the perception and satisfaction levels young African Americans have toward law enforcement officers in their community. It is crucial that both parties try to do their best during an encounter

with one another to provide the best service and to create a better opportunity if they were to meet again in another encounter in the future.

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