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African American Males' Perceptions of the Police

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Shawanda S. Moore

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2018

Abstract

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by

Shawanda S. Moore

MS, University of Phoenix, 2011

BS, Southern University at New Orleans, 2009

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

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Abstract

African American males are more likely than any of race of males to report unreasonable

and unnecessary negative experiences with law enforcement officers. They may describe

these experiences as unjustified due to the level of force used. In some cases, excessive

force used by police has resulted in the death of African American males. Due to

unresolved issues between African American males and police officers dating back to the

slavery era, there is a deep historical division between these groups. Among African

American males, the percentage of individuals who express distrust toward police

officers tends to be higher than in any other group. The purpose of this research study

was to explore African American males' perceptions of police officers in order to

understand this distrust. This study involved 16 males residing in a large southern city

who were selected to share their experiences with and perceptions of police officers.

Social relationship theory as defined by Weber was used as the theoretical framework for

this study. Participants were selected via snowball sampling to answer questions during

semistructured interviews. The data were analyzed and coded using modified van Kaam

analysis. The findings were that African American males distrust the police due to their

personal experiences during police encounters and police officers' biases toward them.

The findings of this study may help leaders, policymakers, administrative assistants, and

law enforcement agencies within the study city understand how to implement positive

social change that could assist law enforcements officers and African American males

with developing a positive relationship.

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my mother, Sharlene Moore, and my father, Stanley Moore, who passed away prior to me beginning this journey. Their love was always the foundation that kept me strong and determined to accomplish my goals. To my grandparents, Thelma and Lionel Foster, for raising me to always put forth my best efforts. To my aunt and uncle, Lynette and Michael Gray, for helping me understand the importance of higher education. I share this degree with each of you for giving me the support needed to be the woman I am.

I wish to dedicate this to my children in hopes that they each understand the importance of conquering their goals in life. Hopefully, they will view me as their role model as well as their mother. Finally, I share this degree with my husband, Kendall Armstrong, for being supportive throughout the entire process.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Distrust of police officers among African American men started a very long time ago. Racial profiling dates as far back as the 1700s (Rushing, 2013). Racial profiling has roots in White stereotypes and biases about Black people. European Americans targeted African Americans as criminals solely based upon their race, instead of viewing them as individuals. This was very unfair to African Americans and caused them to endure unreasonable and unnecessary maltreatment. The systematic racial profiling of African Americans perpetuated the continued mistreatment of an entire race of people. It led to the supervision of African Americans using slave patrols beginning in 1704. Slave patrols were used to keep the slaves on plantations in order. They were also used to assist slave owners with capturing runaway slaves and punishing them. Ultimately, this form of slave control led to the development of police departments in southern states and, eventually, throughout the country.

During the later years of the Trans-Atlantic slave trade, there was a debate over whether to continue or abolish slavery. This debate came to a head in the form of the American Civil War. African American males assisted in this war between northern and southern states that occurred between 1761 and 1765. At the end of the war, concessions were made, and both the southern and northern states agreed to the adoption of Jim Crow laws. Jim Crow laws were set in place to keep African Americans and European Americans separated. These laws were in effect from the 1880s to the 1960s and were considered a way of life. African Americans were banned from the use of certain public facilities such as bathrooms, water foundations, educational institutions, and public transportation. African Americans were treated as subhuman. They experienced both

physical and verbal harassment and abuse. The Jim Crow laws were the reason that many African Americans began fighting for equal rights. The Civil Rights Movement, which was led by several African American leaders, began in the 1950s. One of the most prominent African American leaders, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., led a nonviolent movement to obtain equal rights for all races and to assist with preventing African Americans from being unfairly and unequally treated. King played a significant role in assisting with the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which banned discrimination due to race, sex, or religion. Dr. King was assassinated at the age of 39 in 1968 while supporting a strike in Memphis, Tennessee.

The Civil Rights Movement was extremely significant for the African American community. However, the fight for equal rights is ongoing. African Americans are still being racially profiled and mistreated by some police officers. African American males who have witnessed or experienced unnecessary consequences during police encounters are less likely to cooperate with law enforcement officers in relation to reporting crime, problem solving, and abiding by the law due to lack of trust toward law enforcement officers (David, 2016). African American males are the only group of people in which a high percentage of individuals express distrust toward police officers (Nolan, 2014).

Recently, deaths during police apprehensions of unarmed African American males—ranging from teenagers to adults, including Eric Garner, Michael Brown, Walter Scott, Laquan McDonald, Philando Castile, Terrance Crutcher, and Jordan Edwards—have resulted in marches and protests against police and their tactics (Conlin, 2014). These events have led to great division between African American males and police officers. African American males experience a great deal of racial profiling when they are

being harassed in their neighborhoods or being pulled over for traffic stops (Cochran & Warren, 2012). Using Weber's social theory of 1910 in this phenomenological study, I examined the perceptions of African American males in relation to their distrust of police.

This study is significant because it addresses a controversial issue that affects African American males as it relates to trust issues involving law enforcement officers (David, 2016). The results of this study add to the body of knowledge and literature on issues associated with lack of trust toward police among African American males. Insights gained from this study could aid policy makers, communities, and law enforcement officers in understanding the issues underlying this phenomenon and their effects within the African American community. If both law enforcement officers and African American males are aware of these issues, it may be possible to develop a working solution to correct them. Mistrust of law enforcement officers by African American males is an ongoing problem that highlights some of the inequalities in U.S. society. Addressing this issue may assist in reducing or deterring criminal acts that occur within African American communities.

Background of the Study

To fully understand the distrust that exists between African Americans and law enforcement, one must fully understand the history between the groups. The distrust of police officers expressed by African American males started a very long time ago. One can even argue that the mistrust goes as far back as the enslavement of the African man. The history of the African man within the American nation has been marred with both trials and tribulations, spanning from slavery through segregation (Jim Crow) and

persisting in recent, seemingly constant reminders of police brutality. It is easy to wonder why and how one could mistrust law enforcement; however, after a look at history, one could just as easily ask how a person could not feel mistrust. Throughout this chapter, I explain the history of mistrust by revisiting influential events that shaped current issues dividing African American males and law enforcement.

Distrust of the police is a serious issue in the African American community due to the history between the two groups. It can be perceived that police officers lack legitimacy and lawfulness based on an individual's race. Research has shown that African Americans are more likely than Whites to distrust the police (Drake, 2015). African Americans have expressed that the police have no respect for them and treat them differently than people of other races (Drake, 2015). African American males are more likely to be pulled over in traffic stops due to racial profiling and are more likely to be arrested solely based on suspicion. It can appear that the law is not in place to protect African American males; therefore, African American males may not trust law enforcement officers.

Comprehending the distrust between African American males and the police starts with understanding the struggles associated with the African American man. *Male* is a word used to identify the gender of a man; therefore, man is defined as an individual that has the ability of strength and courage ("Male," n.d.). Men are usually viewed as the leaders of their families in relation to security and protection. A man can also be perceived as the head of a household from the perspective of the Bible. However, historically speaking, it has not always been a simple task for the African American male

to carry out the expectations of manhood (Griffith, Brinkley-Rubinstein, Bruce, Thorpe, & Metzl, 2015).

During slavery, many acts took place that made African American males feel less than men (Gabbidon, Higgins, & Potter, 2011). African American men were viewed as providers of security and protectors of their families, just as men of any other race were viewed. However, they were not allowed to protect their wives, children, and other family members in the same manner as men of other races. African American men were treated so harshly that they may have been viewed as embarrassments to their wives, children, and other family members (Gabbidon, Higgins, & Potter, 2011). At that time in history, it was nearly impossible for African American men to protect their loved ones when they could not protect themselves (Griffith et al., 2015).

As slaves, there was not much that African American men could do to defend their families or themselves. Slave owners had advantages over them. They had to either follow the directives given, regardless of being humiliated, or be beaten, which could lead to death. Male slaves were unable to protect their loved ones due to restrictions forced on Black families by their slave masters. (Williams, n.d.). It is insulting to a man and affects his pride not to be able to carry out his role.

The Slave Trade

The Atlantic slave trade was a system that made it legal for Europeans to purchase African men, women, and children to be used as slaves. Once enslaved, these people lost all personal rights and liberties. They were pulled away from their families and sent to other countries. This caused family separations as husbands and wives, brothers and sisters, and other relatives were prevented from being together (Williams, n.d.) One of

the ways in which slavery damaged the African American family was by eliminating African American males' ability to protect loved ones. Therefore, they had to protect themselves (Williams, n.d.).

During slavery, the first form of policing evolved, which was known as the *slave patrol*. The slave patrols were mainly set in place to monitor the behaviors of slaves and to punish them if deemed it necessary. Each slave patrol consisted of about 10 members. The members of the slave patrol were White men who were not required to serve in the military (Kappeler, 2014). Slave owners were also allowed to serve on the slave patrol, which made it possible for them to avoid having to serve in the military. Slave patrols had very specific roles when performing their duties. Slave patrols were used to capture runaway slaves and return them to their owners. Sometimes, the members of a slave patrol would beat slaves or kill them once captured. Reasons for punishment included disrespect toward slave owners or refusing to follow orders as given (Kappeler, 2014). As time went on, slave patrols transitioned into modern-day policing, which involves controlling the behaviors of minorities, with a high focus on Black males.

Jim Crow Laws

The Jim Crow laws were a system of laws that were set in place between the 1880s and 1960s to maintain control of Blacks. During this time, Blacks were treated as second-class citizens and did not receive treatment equal to that given to Whites. Blacks were not allowed to engage in the same activities as Whites due to separatism in a racial divide. Blacks were not allowed to attend the same schools, share the same restrooms, sit in the same areas on buses, or drink from the same water fountains as Whites. Many restrictions were set in place that prevented Blacks from being treated fairly. Policing

targeted Blacks because they were viewed as criminals and were expected to display criminal behaviors (Hanson, 2011). Any Black person who violated a law as simple as drinking from a water fountain labeled "White Only could possibly be lynched or beaten to death as punishment (Hanson, 2011). Violent behavior toward Blacks were considered a way to control them during the Jim Crow era. The criminal justice system during this period supported the act of lynching if Blacks violated any of the Jim Crow Laws. Whites originally used lynching in a threating manner to maintain control over Blacks and convince them to abide by laws set in place. Blacks were lynched if they refused to follow the laws, complained about not being treated fairly, applied for employment that was considered for Whites, looked at White women, or acted against social control in any way (Nelson, 2015). Lynching Blacks, in many cases, was used as a form of entertainment for Whites, and it assisted in displaying White dominance during that time (Hanson, 2011).

The Civil Rights Movement

The Civil Rights Movement took place during the 1950s and 1960s. It was an attempt by African Americans to declare equal rights and demand fairness. African Americans protested to end racial discrimination in schools, poor housing, unequal treatment by police, and unequal voting rights. Police brutality increased during the Civil Rights Movement in response to protesting and rioting by Blacks in pursuit of equal rights (Taylor, 2014). African American activists were mistreated and abused by police officers. In 1964, a civil rights activist was murdered by a White police officer as he prepared to lead a march to protest for the equal rights of African Americans. This was a very tough time for Blacks, as they had to face continuation of unfair treatment in society

by police officers and members of other races (Taylor, 2014). Dr. Martin Luther King played a very important role during this time as he became known as a civil rights leader. Dr. King also faced police harassment and brutality during peaceful protests as he tried to stop police brutality, lynching, and the murders of innocent African Americans (Learning Network, 2012).

Racial Profiling

Racial profiling is defined as the use of gender, race, ethnicity, national origin, or religions by law enforcement officers to determine whom they will investigate, detain, or arrest (Rushing, 2013). Racial profiling evolved during the 1700s for people of African descent. Those who engage in racial profiling assume that some people are less than others, and they display behaviors that relate to racism and stereotypes (Rushing, 2013). Blacks have been mistreated by police officers during traffic stops and other encounters. They have been viewed as criminals and have been treated as such by police officers. In many cases, African American males have been targeted by police officers solely based on their race and gender.

War on Drugs

African American men have consistently been targeted in the War on Drugs. African American males constitute 62% of drug convictions, even though African Americans only represent 12% of the U.S. population (Kain, 2011). African American men are more likely to be arrested and sentenced on drug charges than men of any other race. Police offers tend to target drug transactions among Blacks far more often than among Whites. According to Human Rights Watch, Black men suffer disparities because they are sentenced to prison at a rate 57 times greater than White men (Kain, 2011).

There have been more than 25.4 million Americans arrested due to drug charges since 1980, and the Black population represents one third of those arrests. Throughout the United States, this disproportionality can be seen in state prisons. As Kain (2011) reported, in many states, the percentage of the prison population that is African American is highly disproportionate with the percentage of the overall population that is African American. For example, Kain noted the following discrepancies in African American representation in the incarcerated population versus the general population:

- 68% of the prison population vs. 20% of the overall population in Virginia

- 54% of the prison population vs. 22% of the overall population in North Carolina

- 69% of the prison population vs. 30% of the overall population in South Carolina

- 36% of the prison population vs. 7% of the overall population in Kentucky

- 63% of the prison population vs. 16% of the overall population in Tennessee

- 65% of the prison population vs. 26% of the overall population in Alabama

- 75% of the prison population vs. 36% of the overall population in Mississippi

- 76% of the prison population vs. 33% of the overall population in Louisiana

Part of the reason that the War on Drugs has affected the African American community disproportionately is that police officers target Blacks to a greater extent than Whites for drug offenses (Crutchfield & Weeks, 2015). The War on Drugs has destroyed Black families as single parenting has become the norm (McWhorter, 2011). Children have been raised fatherless while their fathers are in prison, serving long sentences for

drug charges. Some Blacks view drug dealing as an easy way to make decent money to support their families because drugs are expensive due to being illegal (McWhorter, 2011). The people who engage in these types of crimes do so because they pay more than regular jobs. Although Black men are not the only race of men who sell drugs or make drug transactions, they are the race most targeted by police (Campbell, 2013).

Mass Incarceration

Mass incarceration is referred to as the drastic increase of individuals being arrested and sentenced to prison. Over time, the prison population throughout the United States has grown as large numbers of individuals have been sentenced. As noted previously, African American males make up a large percentage of the prison population in almost every state. Many factors in the disproportionate incarceration of poor people of have existed since the early 1980s (Crutchfield & Weeks, 2015). The War on Drugs has played a major role in increased incarceration rates for African American men. The street enforcement of drug laws became aggressive and involved harsher sentencing for those that sold drugs during the 1980s. The large proportion of new admissions of drug offenses, along with lengthier mandatory sentences, resulted in an increased number of Black prisoners during the 1980s (Roberts, 2004; Rosenberg, Groves &Blankenship, 2017). Even though there was a decline in crimes being committed during that time, drug laws became the focus of policing. Mass incarceration continued to increase even as crime rates continued to drop. Felony crime rates dropped about 50%. However, the percentage of African American males who were incarcerated continued to increase. The majority of African American males' sentences were due to drug offenses and drug-related charges. Even though Whites were also known to use drugs and were involved in

drug-related incidents, they were less likely to be sentenced for these offenses (Roberts, 2004; Rosenberg, Groves, & Blankenship, 2017).

Three-Strikes Laws

Three-strikes laws were originally set in place to address the perception that offenders repeat criminal behaviors after being released from prison because they are not prepared to reintegrate into society. The initial intent of these laws was to protect the public from violent offenders and deter offenders from becoming repeat offenders (Patterson, 2015; Starks & Gundy, n.d.). Murder, rape, extortion, manslaughter, serious drug offenses, and a few other crimes are categorized as three-strikes crimes (Patterson, 2015; Starks & Gundy, n.d.). One criticism of three-strikes laws is that they disproportionately affect minorities. Blacks have been incarcerated at higher rates and for longer periods of time as unintended impacts of three-strikes laws. Incarceration rates under three-strikes laws are 10 times higher for Blacks than for Whites (Patterson, 2015). In Georgia, the vast majority of those sentenced under the three-strikes law are Black. National studies state that prosecutors are more likely to file charges against Blacks than Whites using three-strikes laws. In 1996, 37% of almost 16,000 defendants who were imprisoned due to three-strikes laws were African Americans (Krikorian, 1996; Patterson, 2015). Three-strikes laws have not separated violent and nonviolent offenses that take place after an individual commits a first violent offense. Some critics have contended that the biggest flaw in these laws is that they count nonviolent offenses as second or third strikes, resulting in offenders receiving harsher punishments than they would receive for a violent offense (Krikorian, 1996).

Officer-Involved Shootings

The incidence of officer-involved shootings of unarmed African American males continues to increase, leading to public debates about policing in America (Weitzer, 2015). In recent years, numerous incidents involving fatal shootings of unarmed African American males have created tension for police departments across the nation (Weitzer, 2015). Although African American males make up a small percentage of the U.S. population, they represent a large percentage of unarmed individuals shot by police. Compared to White males who are shot by the police, Black males are more likely to be unarmed during an officer-involved shooting (Duster, 2017). Some believe that racial bias exists within the criminal justice system for African American males (Duster, 2017). Recent high-profile cases of fatal officer-involved shootings of unarmed African American males include those of Michael Brown, Eric Garner, Walter Scott, Freddie Gray, Philando Castile, and Jordan Edwards. These cases serve as evidence that racial profiling and excessive use of force still exist within law enforcement agencies. African American males are 3 times more likely to be killed than European Americans during police encounters (Sinyangwe, 2016). Most police encounters begin with a traffic stop. Police may stop African American males in their communities in the hope of finding drugs, weapons, or signs of crimes that have been committed (Weitzer, 2015). These incidents may result in the killing of unarmed males due to distrust between African American males and police (Weitzer, 2015). In many of these cases, the officers are not held responsible for their actions, which creates tension within the African American community. These events have increased distrust of police among African Americans and expanded the division between police and African American communities.

Michael "Mike" Brown (Ferguson). On August 9, 2014, an unarmed African American male was shot and killed by a White officer in Ferguson, Missouri. The unarmed 18-year-old male was identified as Michael Brown. The officer involved in the shooting stated that Michael Brown was suspected of stealing cigars from a nearby store prior to the deadly encounter. Many people did not believe that Michael was stealing cigars from a store and contended that if he was, the theft was not an offense to be murdered for. Many in the Black community in Ferguson argued that the officer involved made the statement about stealing just to discredit Michael and paint a picture of him as a criminal. Law enforcement officers are known to use racial profiling when encountering African American males; therefore, it was not a surprise that the officer made a statement about stealing cigars to justify the killing of the young man (Olorunnipa, 2014).

The death of this teenager created tension in the city of Ferguson, which created a deeper divide between the African American community and law enforcement officers. When a poll by the Pew Research Center took place about the incident, nearly 65% of the Black people polled stated that there had been abuse of force by the police officer. One-third of White respondents expressed the situation was handled correctly by the officer involved (Gordon, 2014).

Many in the African American community believe that tensions between Black males and law enforcement officers will never improve because officers are not being held accountable for their excessive force when encountering Black males. Witnesses of the actual shooting incident between the officer and Michael Brown stated that, prior to being shot several times by the officer, Brown had his hands in the air. However, the officer stated that Brown attacked him and tried to disarm his weapon prior to him firing

shots (Olorunnipa, 2014). The conflicting stories about what happened as expressed by the Ferguson Police Department and witnesses of the incident caused many African Americans to begin nationwide protests as an outcry for justice.

The Department of Justice (2015) used all evidence from the crime scene and the autopsy report to examine the case. Investigators did not find fault in Officer Wilson's decision to fire his weapon due to inconsistency in witnesses' stories as they related to the physical and forensic evidence (Department of Justice, 2015). The Grand Jury decided that Officer Wilson was acting in self-defense against Michael Brown and that therefore he did not commit any criminal acts (K. Davis, 2014; Peralta & Chappell, 2014). The Grand Jury's decision not to indict Officer Wilson due to lack of probable cause led to looting, protests, and marches throughout the city of Ferguson (K. Davis, 2014; Peralta & Chappell, 2014).

Eric Garner. Eric Garner, an unarmed African American male, died during an encounter with police on July 17, 2014. The officers involved in the incident threw Garner to the ground and put him in a chokehold during the attempt to handcuff him (Gross, 2017). The officers stated that Garner had committed a crime by selling untaxed cigarettes. Witnesses recorded this tragic incident on their cellular phones as the officers continued choking Garner. Garner's last words were "I can't breathe." He repeated this statement 11 times, but the officers did not release him from the chokehold (Gross, 2017). The officer who choked Garner failed to mention in his report that he done so while conducting the arrest. Cell phone recordings revealed that the officer had his arm wrapped around Garner's neck, which is not an acceptable practice within the New York City's Police Department.

Garner was considered a threat because of his size and weight, but he was not violent toward the law enforcement officers (Gross, 2017). Garner was handcuffed and motionless as he was laid on the ground. He did not receive any immediate medical attention from responders (Gross, 2017). This incident became a major issue in African American communities because Garner tried to inform the officers that he could not breathe. Members of the African American community began protesting using Garner's last words as their rallying phrase (Carney, 2016 & Gross, 2017).

The coroner's report stated that Garner's death was a homicide. However, the Grand Jury did not indict Officer Pantaleo due to lack of probable cause (Gross, 2017). Officer Pantaleo stated in court that he did not use a chokehold when apprehending Eric Garner. The Grand Jury's decision not to indict the officer caused an outcry for justice within African American communities.

Statement of the Problem

According to a study conducted by Gallup, 71% of African American males expressed distrust in law enforcement officers (Newport, 2016). In several studies that have been conducted over the years, there has not been any increase in the percentage of African American males who trust law enforcement officers. Race and gender have powerful roles in how individuals view law enforcement officers (David, 2016). Studies have indicated that African American males are less satisfied with law enforcers than any other demographic group (Nolan, 2014). Newport (2016) stated that in a survey conducted in 2014, 29% of African Americans reported confidence and trust in police officers, compared to 58% of Whites. The lack of trust displayed by African American males toward law enforcement officers prevents community policing policies from being

effective (David, 2016). Community policing was set in place to help establish positive working relationships between law enforcement agencies and the community. However, it is difficult to carry out community policing in a community populated by African American males who have consistently low levels of trust in the police. African American males are less likely to cooperate with law enforcement officers in relation to reporting crime, problem solving, abiding by the law, and so forth due to lack of trust toward law enforcement officers (David, 2016). This study contributes to the body of literature by providing insight into why African American males have high rates of distrust in the police. The research findings may be provided to policymakers to inform new policies to improve community outreach programs and establish working relationships between law enforcement officers and African American males.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study is to examine the reasons that African American males have less confidence in the police than any other demographic group. These research findings could assist with understanding where this distrust comes from. This information could lead to the development of programs and/or policies with strategies to establish trust between African American males and law enforcement officers.

To address a gap in the literature, I chose the qualitative method for this study. Interviews with African American males were used to assess the problem statement and develop an understanding of relevant dynamics.

Research Questions

Using the qualitative approach, I focused on addressing one central question: What are the reasons that African American males have less trust than European American males in the police?

Three subquestions were considered:

1. What do African American males perceive to be the cause for their distrust of the police?

2. What do African American males perceive to be the cause for their confidence and trust of the police?

3. What do African American males recommend as a solution to increase their trust in police officers?

Theoretical Framework

It is always important for researchers to use specific theories to guide the data collection process (Maxwell, 2013). A selected theory can help connect the relationship between African American males and the police. The theoretical base for this study was social relationship theory. I chose this framework because it was useful in supporting my search for a solution to the research problem based on previous and new research. This theory may be useful in developing policies to foster better relationships between African American males and law enforcement officers by implementing improved community outreach programs. This theory was appropriate because mistrust of police officers among African Americans has been continuously increasing. This theory also assists with studying issues that affect a group of people classified by race (Chambers, 2014).

Nature of the Study

The nature of this study was qualitative. Qualitative research is consistent with the need for a composite, detailed understanding of why African American men tend to have less trust in law enforcement officers, which was the focus of my research. Using the social relationship approach assisted with understanding the problem, as it exists today. Staying focused on identifying the underlying trust issues that are involved in interactions between minority males and law enforcement officers is important to develop some type of solution. Interviews with African American men and law enforcement officers helped to provide insight into the problem.

Definition of Terms

African Americans: Citizens or residents of the United States who have origins in any of the Black populations of Africa. In the United States, the term is generally used for Americans with at least partial sub-Saharan African ancestry (U.S. Legal, 1998).

Black: A person having origins in any of the Black racial groups of Africa (Pinn, 1996).

Caucasian Americans or Caucasians: Individuals with origins stemming from Europe, the Middle East, or North Africa (U.S. Census Bureau, 2013).

Civil Rights Movement: An umbrella term for many varieties of activism whose proponents sought to secure full political, social, and economic rights for African Americans in the period from 1946 to 1968.

Jim Crow laws: Despite the abolition of slavery and legal gains for African Americans, a system of racial segregation known as *Jim Crow* arose in the South during the late 1800s and early 1900s. Jim Crow segregation meant that Southern Blacks would

continue to live in conditions of poverty and inequality, with White supremacists denying them their hard-won political rights and freedoms (Kahn Academy, 2018).

Racial profiling: Any situation in which a police officer or a police agency takes action against a person or suspect in a crime solely based on that person's race (Barlow & Barlow, 2002, p. 352).

Slave: To be a slave is to be owned by another person. A slave is a human being classed as property who is forced to work for nothing.

Slavery: Slavery refers to a condition in which people own other individuals, controlling where they live and what type of work they are allowed to do.

Slave patrols: Groups of White men who were responsible for capturing and punishing slaves who attempted to flee their owners (Waxman, 2018).

Social relationship theory: is best known to describe groups of people that express a certain type of behaviors and attitudes toward other members in society. Every society is divided into groups that express distinct lifestyles. The groups may cause conflicts due to their social status, which affects how groups relate to one another (Stapley, 2010).

Assumptions

Assumptions made for this study were as follows:

- African American males who participated in the study were distrustful of law enforcement officers and had experiences that affected their trust of the police.

- African American males who were selected to complete the study agreed to complete the study because of the importance of the issues receiving attention and the need to create changes in police trainings that may be mandated at state and local levels.

- The interviews were semistructured, face-to-face, and reasonable to explore African American males' perspectives about having distrust issues with law enforcement officers due to the history between the two groups and/or personal experiences.

- The interview questions had depth and were worded to ensure that the participants would understand them clearly in order to respond accurately.

- The participants were open and honest, providing details about each question asked during the interviews.

- The results from the study may help in creating positive social change, in that the study's purpose was directed toward helping policy makers of law enforcement agencies understand the issues involved in African American males' reasons for distrusting law enforcement officers. The study resulted in suggestions for strong policies based on the history and experiences of both groups, which may prevent distrust issues from affecting the ability of law enforcement officers to serve and protect communities without targeting members of one group of people as criminals.

Scope and Delimitations

This study included 16 African American male participants within the city of New Orleans and surrounding areas who had witnessed or experienced issues that caused distrust of law enforcement officers or had expressed confidence in the police. To complete the study, I used their perceptions about distrust issues associated with law enforcement officers based on history and/or personal experiences that affected the social relationship between the two groups of individuals (African American males and officers

of law enforcement agencies). They provided recommendations that may assist in improving the relationship by decreasing and preventing bias and discrimination during encounters. Participants who were selected for this study were allowed to share their experiences from other cities and states. Excluded from the study were African American males who did not experience any issues firsthand as victims or witnesses of any issues of distrust associated with law enforcement officers. African American females were also excluded from participating in the study. This study did not include information from anyone with whom I had a personal relationship, including family members, coworkers, friends, or personal associates. This prevented any perceived coercion in the study due to any personal relationship between the participants and me.

Limitations

Several limitations in relation to trustworthiness may have arisen during the completion of this study. Generalizing the results from 16 participants in a snowball sample may have led to one limitation. The findings based on the information provided by the participants may be generalized to other populations of African American males who have expressed distrust of law enforcement officers based on history or personal experiences; however, the results may not be generalized to other populations or states. Due to the limitations involved in this study, future studies could take place to further expand the sample population across states to obtain a more in-depth understanding of distrust of law enforcement officers based on the perceptions of African American males.

Another limitation to consider may involve biased information being provided by participants wanting to express their opinions on the research topic for personal reasons; if participants were motivated in this way, they may not have been 100% honest when

responding to questions during the interview. However, it was presumed that each participant in the study provided honest responses based on the questions asked during the interview. My personal biases as the researcher could also have been a limitation to the study. However, all information conveyed by the participants was used to complete the findings of the study and has been reported accurately as collected during the interviews.

Significance of the Study

This research fills a gap in understanding by focusing specifically on identifying the underlying issues that affect the relationship between African American males and law enforcement officers. This project is significant because it addresses a controversial issue that affects African American males in relation to trust of law enforcement officers (David, 2016). The results of the study provide many needed insights to explain the dynamics associated with the issues that affect the trust of African American males. Insights from this study may aid policy makers, communities, and law enforcement officers in understanding the underlying issues and their effects within the African American community. If both parties, law enforcement officers and African American males, are aware of these issues, it will be possible to develop a working solution to correct these problems. Mistrust of law enforcement officers by African American males has been an ongoing issue in U.S. society. Addressing this issue may assist in reducing or deterring criminal acts that occur within communities.

In one recent case, Eric Garner was murdered during an encounter with police. This case brought more tension to the already-strained relationship between African American males and police (Powell, 2016). African American males viewed this

encounter as a blatant attack against them that drove the wedge of distrust even further (Powell, 2016). Ferguson was another case that African American males saw as an unjust act committed by police officers (Cobbina, Conteh, & Emrich, 2016). Both cases resulted in protests against police officers.

Summary

This chapter has presented historical context relevant to this study concerning distrust of police as expressed by African American males. In this study, I explored African American males' perceptions about issues associated with distrust of law enforcement officers. Using snowballing as a sampling strategy, data were collected via in-depth, face-to-face semistructured interviews with 16 African American males (eight who experienced or witnessed events with law enforcement officers that triggered distrust issues and eight who expressed confidence and trust in the police). I transcribed the information obtained during the interviews and organized the data manually. The data collected were analyzed through Moustakas's (1994) modified van Kaam method for analysis. Findings from this study may lead to positive social change by helping policy makers of law enforcement agencies and police chiefs or leaders understand the reasoning for distrust of police officers as perceived by African American males. In addition, the findings may assist policy makers of law enforcement agencies, police chiefs, and leaders in addressing the need for stronger policies, additional training, and implementation of programs to unite law enforcement officers and African American males by closing the gap of distrust.

In Chapter 1, I provided background of the study, statement of the problem, research questions, theoretical framework, nature of the study, definitions of terms,

assumptions, scope and delimitations, limitations, and significance of the study, ending with a summary based on my research topic. In the next chapter, I present an overview of the purpose of the study, the literature review, and the relevance of the data to this study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological research study was to investigate African American males' perceptions of the police as these perceptions relate to distrust. The problem is that 71% of African American males have the least amount of trust for the police than any other race (Newport, 2016). African American males' perceptions of the police have been negative for a long period of time. Robinson (2017) stated that distrust of police officers is a consequence of the history of law enforcement's role in the Black community. That history extends from slavery into the 21st century. Chapter 1 provided a chronological breakdown of the major issues that have evolved between African American males and police officers. African Americans males have consistently reported that they are at high risk of being racially profiled by the police (Stapleton, 2014).

Racial profiling is the unfair targeting of a group of individuals solely based on race (Robinson, 2017). This practice originated during slavery. It became a more prevalent cultural practice during the War on Drugs campaign in the 1980s as police officers targeted many African American males traveling along certain roads under the assumption that they might be in possession of drugs (Archbold et al., 2013). Police officers basically used the War on Drugs campaign to create a unique method of identifying drug couriers as African American males (Archbold et al., 2013). African American men have always been targets to society due to their physical characteristics that can be views as a threat. Racial profiling has been widely portrayed through the media (Robinson, 2017). It appears that all odds are against African American males in relation to racial profiling because there are no laws to prevent it. Racial profiling serves

as a reflection of society's attempt to control a particular group of people (Robinson,
2017). Robinson (2017) stated that the focus of society is to view certain individuals as a
threat to the larger population of people, and currently African Americans are of the
general interest, with African American men in particular.

It is perceived by many in U.S. society that Whites do not commit violent crimes
and are not a major threat. Therefore, Whites are less likely to receive unfair treatment.
Society focuses on African Americans as targets, and they are portrayed as threats by the
media that are viewed by the majority of citizens (Archbold et al., 2013). However, to a
large extent, politicians and government officials have refused to take notice of
complaints in which police officers have been accused of racially profiling African
Americans and members of other minority groups (Barlow & Barlow, 2002). Their
normal responses have involved dismissing and ignoring reports made against police
officers (Barlow & Barlow, 2002).

African American and European American drivers describe their experiences of
police stops very differently. The ways in which European American drivers typically
view these stops depends on whether they believe that they did, in fact, violate traffic
laws and if they receive a warning or ticket (Haider-Markel et al., 2012). In contrast,
African Americans have stated that they tend to focus on whether they were stopped due
to a traffic violation or whether they are being racially profiled (Haider-Markel et al.,
2012). African American males are more like to be racially profiled than any other group
of people. African American females are less likely than African American males to be
profiled during traffic stops (Haider-Markel et al., 2012). The unfair treatment inherent
in racial profiling has caused an increase in the amount of distrust expressed by African

American males toward law enforcement. African American males are less likely to call on the police for assistance because they fear that the outcome will not be in their favor (Olorunnipa, 2014).

Literature Search Strategy

My literature search strategy included the use of SAGE Premier, the Walden Library databases, ProQuest Central, Political Science Complete, Criminal Justice Database, and LegalTrac. Google Scholar was also used to assist with finding scholarly articles that related to the topic. The search terms associated with my study included the following: *African American males' relationship with the police*, *African American males being racially profiled*, *Jim Crow laws*, *slave patrol*, *slavery*, *African American males' treatment during slavery*, *officer-involved shootings of African American males*, *social control theory*, *social relationship theory*, and *African American males' distrust of the police*. The sourced authors provided relevant and current information that helps in explaining the distrust of police expressed by African American males. Many of the articles used to complete the study were selected because they provided details that were important to the research topic. Additionally, details from court cases helped in explaining the importance of the social conflicts that are mentioned in this study.

Theoretical Foundation

There is not a long history of research on distrust of the police by African American males. Therefore, new information is still being gathered in this area. However, the issues that are linked to distrust of police by African American men have been researched for years. As a result of racial profiling, African American males have been at a social disadvantage relative to European American men (Archbold et al., 2013).

Weber developed social relationship theory in 1910. Weber used this theory to better explain the social issues that were taking place during the 1900s. Weber's social relationship theory can be used to address recent and ongoing issues that involve past problems that prevent African American males from trusting the police. Social relationship theory was used as the theoretical background of this study because it helps to explain how the distrust originated.

Social Relationship Theory

Social relationship theory is helpful in explaining why a group of people may express certain types of behaviors and attitudes toward other groups in society. Every society is divided into groups that express distinct lifestyles. The groups may come into conflict due to differences in social status that affect how they relate to one another (Stapley, 2010). In his social relationship theory, Weber focused on relationships between communities and neighborhoods, rather than institutions or social collectivities. Weber was interested in a particular kind of sociology that involved the behaviors of people (Mucha, 2003).

A social relationship can be characterized as actions expressed by one person to another. It can exist as conflict, friendship, hostility, or economic exchange (Mucha, 2003). It is very important to underline that Weber considered conflict and hostility as forms of social relationship because this approach is based on the belief that social relations appear between different parties as well as within a unified social realm (Mucha, 2003).

The first parties that Weber described within his social relationship theory were humans. However, Weber stated that social relationships also exist between

organizations. All types of social relationships can be unilateral or asymmetrical. Social

relationship theory indicates that one party may have a particular attitude toward another

and display actions based on his or her expectations (Mucha, 2003). Weber noted that

social relationships exist in a world of observers. Social relationships can be permanent

or changeable. A social relationship characterized by conflict may be transformed when

there is a solution for the problem that is in existence. It is also possible for one aspect of

an issue to change while another remains constant. Therefore, it all depends on the

terminological convenience and the continuity of change (Mucha, 2003).

Weber devoted much of his work on social relationships to the study of conflict

and hostility. A social relationship can be defined as a *social conflict*, when one party

intentionally targets other parties. The term *peacefully conflict* implies that a conflict

exists but does not involve any physical violence by either party involved. Peaceful

conflict may be displayed when a party tries to control advantages and opportunities that

are also desired by other parties.

Research Application of Social Relationship Theory

There has not been much research on the application of social relationship theory

to the distrust of police by African American males. However, MacDonald and Stokes

(2006) stated that African Americans are more likely than European Americans to

perceive that they have been victims of excessive use of force or racial profiling, as well

as to believe that police treat them more poorly than any other race of people. MacDonald

& Stokes theorized that the construct of social capital offers a nexus for explaining

attitudes toward the police as they pertain to racial differences. They contended that the

restoration of trust in police officers is of critical importance in African American

communities. MacDonald and Stokes claimed that there are inequalities of community support, trust, and civic engagement between Black and White communities. To address a gap in the literature, MacDonald and Stokes (2006) investigated whether there are community-level social processes that explain racial differences in perceptions of the legitimacy of the police. They relied on a national survey of 3,003 U.S. residents to examine socioeconomic, racial, and variation of community sources in the trust of police officers. MacDonald and Stokes noted that researcher Weitzer (2002) argued that studies indicate that all American citizens should receive fair and equal treatment from police officers regardless of their race and gender. Therefore, distrust of police among African American men is based on social conditions that attract more criminal activity in particular areas and fuel cynicism toward the police.

Weitzer (2002) collected data through a qualitative study conducted in Washington, DC concerning the relevance of environmental issues in relation to African American males' perceptions and personal experiences with police officers. Interviews were conducted throughout three communities (consisting of lower-class Blacks, middle-class Blacks, and middle-class Whites) to determine participants' views of police officers in relation to treatment and fairness within their communities. Each group concluded that police officers engaged in racially biased practices. However, each community had a particular way of explaining the biased practices displayed. Some Black participants stated that law-abiding Blacks were unfairly treated and targeted by police due to the large number of Blacks who are actually involved in criminal acts. In contradiction, Blacks of the middle class did not receive any unfair treatment by police officers in their

own communities. Weitzer strongly argued that community composition plays a large

role in the relationship between race and distrust of the police.

Research has indicated a significant relationship and unexpected findings linking

race and distrust of the police (MacDonald and Stokes, 2006). MacDonald and Stokes

(2006) noted that findings suggest that social capital does not fully explain any

relationship between race and trust in the police. First, the researchers asked whether the

police, as an agency of urban social control, promote increased social capital as a part of

a broader community safety policy. MacDonald and Stokes noted that community-

policing efforts can be effective in disadvantaged communities. However, community

policing in disadvantaged communities is very difficult work due to the strain that history

has placed on the relationship between African Americans and police officers. Second,

the researchers noted that the historical use of police for class management and racial

schemes has been a recipe for distrust of police officers in minority communities. Finally,

political and media activities in relation to incidents surrounding police misconduct or

brutality may increase the distrust of police within the African American community.

MacDonald and Stokes recommended qualitative research to further explore the causal

relationships in their findings.

The Cause of African Americans' Distrust of Police

The literature review includes relevant scholarly information about the distrust of

police that is expressed by African American males. The literature review includes

information on past relationships between African American males and the police. The

distrust of police as explained by African American males touches upon history that goes

as far back as slavery and includes slave patrols, Jim Crow Laws, and the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s.

The 14th Amendment of the U.S. Constitution was ratified in 1968 to grant equal protection to all Americans under the law; however, that provision has not been carried out as it relates to African Americans (Powell, 2016). Law enforcement officers have been violating the 14th-Amendment rights of African Americans as a group of people due to their race (Garrison, 2014). However, police departments have routinely denied acts of racial profiling when such acts are reported (Barlow & Barlow, 2002). It seems to stem from the types of racist practices that normally occurred prior to the U.S. Constitution being amended to protect all citizens. Police officers target African American males as violent criminals and misuse their authority to control their behaviors. These practices are a basic reflection of historical policing, which was set in place to monitor and control African Americans (Kappeler, 2017). Police officers, from this perspective, are behaving in the same manner as they were during slave patrols and night watches (Kappeler, 2017).

The first slave patrol was founded in 1704. Its intent was the control of African American slaves who were being policed by European American men to ensure that they were obedient to their slave owners and to prevent them from escaping (Rushing, 2013). African Americans were subjected to harassment, whipping, and other physical forms of punishment, which could even result in death at the hands of the slave patrol when its members deemed this necessary (Rushing, 2013). Some of the struggles that Black people faced during slavery did not stop after slavery ended. In many cases, unfairness toward African Americans became even worse after emancipation (Kappeler, 2017).

Rushing (2013) stated that some of this mistreatment still exists in the modern-day racial profiling of African Americans who are judged on skin color instead of their actions.

Recently, an increase in tension in the Black community has arisen as a result of the Michael Brown case outcome in Ferguson. When the officer in this case was not charged, there was great anger among African American males. Chapman (2017) stated that Blacks are treated worse than Whites during police encounters. In 2013, over 86% of traffic stops in Ferguson involved African American males, whose vehicles were twice as likely to be searched in comparison of those of Whites who were stopped (Chapman, 2017). Police officers target African American males mainly through traffic stops because they believe that they will find drugs or evidence of a crime (Chapman, 2017).

A string of officer-involved murders of African American males around the country has increased distrust of police officers (Dreier, 2016). Before the Michael Brown case, police murdered 12-year-old Tamir Rice in Cleveland and 22-year-old John Crawford III in a Wal-Mart because they had been carrying BB guns. Akai Gurley was killed by police for walking on a dark staircase, and Eric Garner was choked to death after informing officers several times that he could not breathe during the arrest (Hannah-Jones, 2015). Philando Castile was killed during a traffic stop, Walter Scott was killed during a traffic stop due to a broken brake light, Jordan Edwards was killed by a police as he was riding in a car while leaving a party, and Freddie Gray was shot and killed by police officers after he was known to be in possession of a knife. Aware of incidents such as these, African Americans are reluctant to notify the police of any criminal activities they observe because they are afraid that they will end up in the back of the police car themselves or shot to death (Hannah-Jones, 2015)

Distrust of police by African American males is continuing to increase because police officers are not being held responsible for their wrongful shootings of unarmed Black men (Duster, 2017). Former President Obama stated that officers are being asked to do a great deal in disadvantaged communities and are not being thanked for their effort. However, he also argued that officers must address implicit prejudice that causes violent encounters (J. Davis, 2016). Obama contended that mistrust between African Americans and police will continue to grow if these issues are not properly addressed (J. Davis, 2016). African Americans started the Black Lives Matter Movement as a means of expressing their feelings about the African American males who have been killed by police officers and to seek justice for these wrongful deaths (J. Davis, 2016). However, it appears that the Black Lives Matter Movement is not being taken as seriously as the African American community would like it to be (J. Davis, 2016).

Government Issues That Affect African American Males

Government issues throughout U.S. history have affected African American males. After the Civil War, it was declared that slavery had been abolished. Although the abolition of slavery was stated in the 14th Amendment of the U.S. Constitution, measures to ensure true freedom and equality were not being carried out in society. Shortly after slavery was abolished, the Black Codes were set in place in former Confederate states (Hanson, 2011). The Black Code laws prevented Blacks from being completely free (Rushing, 2013). These laws did not allow them to move as freely as they wanted to in relation to travel, and they limited their abilities to earn reasonable wages in the workforce. Blacks were also arrested for minor offenses that could have resulted only in warnings.

Jim Crow laws came into effect based on some of the guidelines from the Black Codes. The Jim Crow laws were similar to the Black Codes but differed as they pertained to some rights. The Jim Crow Laws were known to offer Blacks separate but equal treatment (Hanson, 2011). The landmark Supreme Court case *Plessy v. Ferguson* supported the Jim Crow "separate but equal" provisions (Hanson, 2011). Under this ruling, African Americans still experienced unfair treatment in the areas of education, housing, employment, and transportation. Blacks and Whites had separate living arrangements to prevent Blacks from having the same advantages as Whites. Blacks were prohibited from living in certain communities and having access to White facilities.

African American males did not only suffer unfair treatment of education, housing, wages, and transportation, they also suffered extreme violence from vigilante groups such as lynch mobs and the Ku Klux Klan (Kappeler,2017). Those groups did not have any restraints attached to them; therefore, they were justified in their behaviors toward Blacks. Lynch mobs and the Ku Klux Klan would publicly humiliate and abuse African Americans in front of large crowds including the victim's family. Some of the abuse resulted in deaths for false accusations of crime or inappropriate behaviors such as drinking from the whites only water fountain or entering a white only area (Kappeler, 2017).

The Civil Rights Movement began in the late 1950s and early 1960s as a social movement to end discrimination and segregation against Blacks. Prominent African American males decided to stand up and demand fair and equal treatment as stated in the U.S. Constitution. These leaders such as Dr. Martin Luther King protested by hosting nonviolent marches and rallies. The Civil Rights Movement ended in the late 1960s

resulting in fair and equal treatment of African Americans. However, there were still government issues that arose over time that continued to affect the African American males and their families. Some of those issues involved high populations of African American males incarcerated.

According to statistics, African American males make up a disproportionate number of the population in prison. This massive increased population started in the early 1980s due to government changes in policies that highly affected African American males (Crutchfield & Weeks, 2015). Some of the laws (policies) that were effective in increasing the prison population of African American males included the three-strikes law and War on Drugs. As discussed in the introduction section of Chapter 1, Black males' population of prisoners in the United States of America made up 43% of 1,200 defendants imprisoned under the three-strikes law. The War on Drugs highly impacted African American males due to their sentencing rates being seven times higher than any other race of individuals (Rushing, 2013).

The mass incarceration of Black males due to government polices affected the African American families. Some of the changes that occurred during that period included; federal laws that increased the sentencing for drugs that were sold or used by African Americans such as crack cocaine by 100 or more times more severe than drugs that were used or sold by European Americans such as powder cocaine (Crutchfield & Weeks, 2015). Several debates occurred to prove the new laws were set to control crime mainly in the African American community rather than any other community. The War on Drugs affected the minority individuals and their communities because police officers focused their attention on the drug activities that occurred in the public places versus

methods used by Whites (Crutchfield & Weeks, 2015). African American males have experienced more unfair treatment that any other race due to Government laws and policies.

African American Males' Perceptions of the Criminal Justice System

Along with the government issues that affected African American males, there were criminal justice flaws tied into the laws. Therefore, the criminal justice issues have been an issue since slavery. During slavery there was a form of policing known as slave patrol, which was created, to control slaves by ensuring they didn't run away from their slave owners. The members of the slave patrol units were allowed to discipline slaves in any manner deemed necessary including death. They were also allowed to enter the homes of Blacks and Whites without permission if they suspected them of housing slaves (Turner, Giacopassi, & Vandiver, 2006; Simmons, 2011). Slave patrols was considered the first form of policing and known to have set the standards for modern day policing (Kappeler, 2017).

As years passed on, the criminal justice system continued to allow racism to shape its foundation. African American males were overrepresented in the prison population compared to than any other race. This was mainly due to laws being set in place that allowed police officers to use racial profiling during traffic stops and in attempt to solve crime (Turner, Giacopassi, & Vandiver, 2006). Racial profiling had become a big issue in the 1980's when "Driving While Black" became a criminal act (Kamula, 2016). Officers were more likely to stop Black male drivers than any other race of drivers. The Supreme Court case, *Whren v. United States (1996)* stated that officers could stop anyone for any traffic violation and search their persons and vehicles to discover a more serious crime.

Therefore, officers could racially profile drivers during any types of traffic stops. This resulted in many police officers engaging in profiling because they believed that African American males were more likely to commit crime than any other race (Campbell, 2017).

African American males suffered sentencing disparities when they were arrested. African American males received a higher sentence rate than any other race regardless of the crime committed (Campbell, 2013). The criminal justice system was harsher on African American males than European American males who have committed the same crime (Kamalu, Coulson-Clark, & Kamalu, 2010; Patterson, 2015). Brennan (2006) stated that ethnicity and race appeared to be more important than the crime that was committed (Kamalu, Coulson-Clark, & Kamalu, 2010). One example of racial disparities in sentencing involved the prison sentences for crack and powder cocaine. African American males received triple the sentencing rate for possession of crack cocaine than European American males arrested for possession of powder cocaine (Kamalu, Coulson-Clark, & Kamalu, 2010).

African American Males' Perceptions of Police Issues

African American males perceive that police officers today are continuing to use policing strategies and techniques from when policing originated. Gallup polling between 2012 and 2014 displayed that 71% of African Americans had very little to no trust in the police, while the vast majority (58%) of European Americans had a great deal of trust in the police. African American males believe there have always been issues of racism and excessive violence (BBC, 2015). African American men are more likely to experience some type of violence performance by police officers than any other race. Many law

enforcement officers have been racially profiling Black men for decades and have been successful at continuing to do so without receiving any consequences (Weitzer, 2015).

African American males that reported being in direct contact with police officers expressed negative views associated with their experiences. Even the African American males that have reported a crime to the police stated that it could sometimes be an uncomfortable experience, as they were mistreated and disrespected by the officers that responded to the calls (Patterson, 2015; Schuck, Rosenbaum, & Hawkins, 2008). In the study, African Americans were at top of the chart with 67% that fear encounters with police officers as opposed to Caucasians expressing 21.5% of fear (Schuck et al., 2008). Drier (2016) stated that history has placed tension between African American males and law enforcement officers. Therefore, African American males may continue viewing the historical events that took place as part of the distrust of police officers. Lynching and other forms of abuse performed on African Americans were allowed to continue without anyone standing up for the rights of the African Americans. Racist individuals knew they could continue getting away with murdering African Americans without facing charges or being convicted in the courtroom (Drier, 2016). African American males may fear that the issues of officer-involved shootings will continue because nothing is being done to prevent them from occurring.

Summary and Conclusion

African American males continue to distrust law enforcement officers throughout the United States, due to incidents that arose during historical moments (Drier, 2016). The recent events that involve African American males and law enforcement officers, as it relates to officer-involved shootings, further increases the distrust associated between

the two groups (J. Davis, 2016). Increased officer-involved shootings of unarmed African American males has raised a controversial issue within communities. Weitzer (2015) stated that police officers most likely shoot and kill European American males that are armed and dangerous; however, police officers have continued to shoot and kill unarmed African American males. Therefore, those officers may tell their side of the story based on the issues they were challenged with as opposed to seeking back up to assist with unarmed African American males prior to the shootings (Duster, 2017). Body cameras and witnesses help some departments with obtaining the truth during the police encounters. In most cases the shootings were unnecessary, and the victims could have been subdued using other police strategies.

There are many police departments that are working to reduce the number of unarmed and mental illness shootings. Therefore, understanding the experiences and perceptions of African American males who have expressed distrust of police officers is needed to assist with creating new policies and procedures within policing (Hannah-Jones, 2017). Their statements can be very beneficial to policy-makers in efforts to increase trust of police officers by all races and genders.

There is a gap in research that focuses on understanding the distrust of police officers as expressed by African American males. The perceptions of African American males are very important to impact social change in community policing. Previous studies have not explored African American perceptions of police officers as it relates to the distrust through a theoretical framework of Weber's (1910) social relationship theory (Gane, 2005 & Weber, 1947). Therefore, this study has addressed the gap and provided new information for Public Policy and Administration.

In Chapter 2, an introduction, literature search strategy, theoretical foundation, social relationship theory, the application of the social relationship theory, the cause of distrust of police by African American males, African American males' perceptions of police issues, and a summary and conclusion.

Chapter 3: Research Method

In this study, I explored African American males' perceptions of police in an effort to understand distrust of police officers in this population. This study represents African American males perceptions of the police as it relates to previous and recent issues that have taken place in the United States. Snowball sampling was used to collect data for this study through face-to-face semistructured interviews with 16 African American males within New Orleans and the surrounding areas. Participants included individuals who expressed distrust of police officers as well as individuals who had established positive relationships with police officers. The data obtained from interviews were managed manually as they were being transcribed. The study was conducted in accordance with the Institutional Review Board (IRB) guidelines of Walden University to ensure that participants received ethical protection. The IRB approved the application for the study and provided the approval number 08-09-18-0384333. In Chapter 3, I address my role as the researcher, the methodology, the research design, and issues of trustworthiness, concluding with a summary.

Research Design and Rationale

In this section, I address the research questions that represented the topic. The phenomenological research rationale is also discussed. This section is organized into subsections on the research questions and the phenomenological research design rationale.

Research Questions

Using the qualitative approach to research this study, I focused on addressing one central question: What are the reasons that African American males have less trust in the police? I addressed several subquestions:

1. What do African American males perceive to be the cause for the distrust of the police?

2. What do African American males perceive to be the cause of confidence and trust of the police?

3. What do African American males recommend for increasing their trust in police officers?

Phenomenological Research Design Rationale

To complete this study, a qualitative phenomenological research design was used to explain African American males' perceptions of the police based on lived experiences in order to understand their feelings of distrust. Snowball sampling, also known as *chain sampling* (Ravitch & Carl, 2016, p. 134), was used to retrieve data from participants through semistructured interviews with 16 African American males within New Orleans and the surrounding areas who had expressed either distrust or confidence in police officers. Data obtained from interviews were managed manually prior to being transcribed.

A mixed-method approach was considered for this study because it might have offered reinforcement of the study based on both methods (Creswell, 2009, p. 14). It would have helped provide a better understanding of the study if the outcome of one method did not fully explain the results (Creswell, 2009, p. 15). However, a mixed-

method design was not chosen because it was not required to answer the central research question or the four subquestions associated with the study. A quantitative study design was considered to explore the variables that are associated with the problem to explain cause-and-effect relationships (Creswell, 2009, p. 151). However, a quantitative research design would not have helped in explaining the problems associated with the study because actual experiences cannot be measured with the instrumentation used for such a design (Creswell, 2009). Therefore, a qualitative method was the most appropriate for this study because it allowed participants' personal experiences of the phenomena to be described in detail (Creswell, 2009).

I considered five qualitative research designs: ethnography, narrative inquiry, phenomenology, grounded theory, and case study (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). The phenomenological research design was selected to better understand the phenomena based on the perspectives of those who had experienced it and had a desire to share their experience. The phenomenological research design was used to present the nature of African American males' experiences with the police that had led to feelings of distrust.

Role of the Researcher

The work of a qualitative researcher differs from that of a quantitative researcher because of the nature of the researcher's role within each method. Quantitative researchers are very distant from their participants due to the instrumentation used to gain information. In contrast, qualitative researchers have to be involved in the research process as participants; the researcher serves as an instrument with this approach (Creswell, 2013). As a qualitative researcher, I assumed a role that involved observing and participating (i.e., a participant-as-observer role) during in-depth, face-to-face

semistructured interviews (Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 2008). I had the personal involvement of being in direct contact with the participants who were recruited for the study. Most of the contact involved e-mails, telephone calls, and face-to-face conversations to retrieve information, as well as to discuss the confidentiality and privacy of the information being obtained for the study. I personally transcribed, analyzed, coded, and interpreted data collected from the participants during face-to-face interviews (Saldana, 2016).

In the process of recruiting participants, I refrained from recruiting family, friends, or anyone with whom I had a personal or professional relationship. It was in the best interest of the study not to involve anyone in my social network as a research participant. Those who were allowed to participate in the study did so without being obligated or persuaded. I ensured that all participants had agreed to take part in the study at their own free will.

As the researcher in this qualitative study, I understood the importance of not being biased and remaining open minded in relation to the topic (Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 2008). I was very mindful of my personal biases that relate to the topic of this study and used strategies to prevent these biases from affecting the study. I respectfully allowed my participants to respond to all questions and provide any information about the topic without displaying biases or personal feelings toward them as participants. I respected the personal experiences that they shared about the topic and ensured that there were no conflicts of interest during the study. Each participant received a summary report of the research findings via e-mail after the study had been completed and approved.

Methodology

In this section, the methodology is discussed. In-depth information about the study is provided so that other researchers may repeat the research if desired. Subsections within this section address the participant selection logic; instrumentation; procedures for participation, recruitment, and data collection; and data analysis plan.

Participant Selection Logic

Snowball sampling, also referred to as *chain sampling*, was used to recruit potential participants who fit the criteria for the study, who then recommended potential participants who also fit the criteria (Ravitch & Carl, 2016, p. 134). The criteria encompassed African American males who expressed personal experience with police officers that had either caused them not to trust police officers or allowed them to establish trust in police officers. Each potential participant who met the criteria was contacted via telephone, by e-mail, or in a face-to-face conversation. Potential participants were sent a personal invitation letter requesting their involvement in the study and were asked to recommend other African American men who had personal experiences with police officers that had either caused them to experience distrust issues in relation to the profession or allowed them to establish a positive working relationship with the police.

The appropriate sample size within a phenomenological design is as many participants as necessary to fully explore the topic. In general, it is recommended that researchers adopting this design use a sample size of three to 10 participants for each phenomenon being explored (Creswell, 2013).

Instrumentation

A 30–minute questionnaire was used to conduct an in-depth face-to-face interview with each participant. The structure of the questionnaire focused on retrieving information from African American males about distrust issues and experiences associated with police officers. I developed the questionnaire to obtain participants' perceptions about causes of distrust in police officers, the history of issues related to distrust, causes of trust in police, effects associated with experiences that cause distrust, and recommendations to prevent distrust from increasing and to resolve issues related to distrust.

I used open-ended questions to conduct the semistructured interviews. In a semistructured interview, the interviewer guides the interviewee throughout the conversation. However, the interviewer has no control over the information provided by the participant. The interviewer may ask for additional details about an interesting topic mentioned by the interviewee during the interview. The interviewer can ensure that the information needed for the study was obtained by asking focused questions and paying close attention to each participant.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

Once Walden's IRB had approved the study to be conducted, I recruited and contacted African American males who had expressed distrust issues related to police officers or had expressed trust in police officers who were known to meet the criteria for the study. I made contact with potential participants via telephone, through face-to-face contact, or by e-mail. All participants who met the criteria for the study were sent an invitation letter to participate in the study and were asked to refer other African American

males I did not allow any of my family members, friends, or coworkers, or anyone with a past relationship with me, to participate in the study.

After receipt of the invitation letter, potential participants were asked to respond to a few questions to confirm their fit for the study and to further express their interest in participating. Receiving responses from potential participants helped in selecting those who were the best fit for the study based on the participation criteria. Those participants who were selected for the study received an e-mail or telephone call to confirm their interest and to schedule an appointment to conduct an individual semistructured interview at a convenient date and time. The interviews were conducted in a private room at Pierre A. Capdau Charter School located at 5800 St. Roch Avenue in New Orleans, LA.

Each participant received a copy of the consent form to participate in the study. They were asked to read over it and then sign to confirm their participation. The consent form explained that participation was voluntary and that there would be no compensation for taking part in the study. Questions and concerns of the participants were addressed prior to them signing the consent form. All participants were advised that all information obtained would be recorded but kept private to ensure confidentiality. Each interview was audiotaped and lasted between 25 and 30 minutes, as expressed in the invitation letter. After completion of the interview, participants were allowed to ask additional questions about the study. I personally thanked each participant after the interview was concluded.

Each participant received a transcript of the interview after it had been transcribed to ensure that the participant was comfortable with the information provided and to ensure accuracy of the transcribed information. The review of transcripts by participants

helped to ensure credibility, accuracy, and validity of the information recorded during the interviews.

Data Analysis Plan

In the process of analyzing the data received from the interviews in relation to the research question, I personally managed the data. I used manual coding to identify particular patterns (Saldana, 2016). I also organized segments of text to create particular themes (King, 2004).

Data were analyzed using Moustakas's (1994) modified van Kaam method of analysis. The following steps were involved in the analysis:

1. Listing and preliminary groupings—horizontalization

2. Reduction and elimination

3. Clustering and thematizing the invariant constituents

4. Identification of the invariant constituents and, using relevant, validated invariant constituents and themes, construction of an individual textural description for each participant of the experience

5. Inclusion of verbatim examples from the transcribed interviews

6. Construction of an individual structural description for each participant based on the individual textural description and imaginative variation

7. Construction of a textural-structural description for each participant of the meanings and essences of the experience incorporating the invariant constituents and themes. (Moustakas, 1994, pp. 120-121)

Issues of Trustworthiness

This section addresses all concerns that relate to trustworthiness and is organized

into subsections on credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability, and ethical

procedures.

Credibility

As a qualitative counterpart to internal validity, credibility describes how

confident the researcher is in being able to provide the truth in the findings of a study

(Hollaway & Wheeler, 2002). Qualitative researchers may be able to obtain the truth of

their findings by using the following strategies: (a) time sampling, (b) prolonged and

varied field experience, (c) triangulation, (d) reflexivity, (e) member checking, (f)

interview techniques, and (g) establishing the authority of the researcher (Patton, 2002).

In using interview techniques and member checks, I informed participants that they could

refuse to answer certain questions and could withdraw from the study at any time. I asked

participants some questions a second time to ensure that they reported the same

information consistently. Each participant received an e-mail with the interview transcript

to ensure that the information had been accurately recorded. I also encouraged each

participant to provide feedback via e-mail or telephone.

Transferability

As a qualitative counterpart to external validity, transferability relates to how the

researcher explains that the findings of his or her research can be transferred to other

contexts (similar situations, similar phenomena, or similar populations; Bitsch, 2005;

Maxwell, 2013). Researchers use thick descriptions containing contextual information

that enables those outside of the culture studied to understand circumstances foreign to

their experiences in order to prove that the research findings can be applied to other circumstances, situations, and contexts (Bitsch, 2005). In the study, I ensured transferability by providing thick and rich descriptions of the study's context and participants.

Dependability

As a qualitative counterpart to reliability, dependability assists with ensuring that a study can be repeated over time by other researchers and their findings will be accurate to this study (Bitsch, 2005). Strategies used to establish dependability include (a) triangulation, (b) peer examination, (c) a code-recode strategy, and (d) an audit trail. I used an audit trail in this study to assist with ensuring dependability. I continued using the documents obtained during the study, such as transcriptions, interview notes, and tape-recorded interviews, to ensure that the findings were accurate and consistent.

Confirmability

As a qualitative counterpart to objectivity, confirmability pertains to the neutrality of the researcher's findings. It ensures that other researchers can confirm the study if desired (Bitsch, 2005). Strategies used to establish confirmability include the use of an audit trail, triangulation, and reflexive journaling (Bitsch, 2005). I ensured confirmability of this study via the use of audit trails. I continued using the documents obtained during the study, such as transcriptions, interview notes, and tape-recorded interviews, to ensure that the findings are accurate and consistent.

Ethical Procedures

This study was performed in accordance with the standards established by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Walden University and all rules that relates to state

and federal regulations in New Orleans and its surrounding areas to provide ethical protection of the participants involved in the study. I began collecting data for the study after the IRB approved it. The data received from the participants did not contain any risk greater than the minimal risk. All guidelines established by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Walden University were used to ensure the data received from the participants is protected.

Prior to asking questions during the interview, all participants received consent forms to sign that were approved by the IRB at Walden University (08-09-18-0384333). Receiving consent from the participants ensured that none of the interviews were forced or completed unwillingly. The consent form included details about the participant's protection of privacy and ethical procedures such as their ability to withdraw from the study at any given time. Physical and psychological risks that could have been experienced by the participants were discussed to advise the client that he could withdraw from the study at any moment he feels uncomfortable during the study.

I ensured that I respected all of the participants' rights during the interview. Shortly after the interview was successfully completed all identifiable information about the participant was eliminated. Therefore, each participant received a unique code to match the information they provided. This method was used to ensure that the participants' identity will not be exposed at any point during or after the study is completed. All participants were aware that the interviews were being recorded to ensure that accurate information would be transcribed. Participants were informed that they would be allowed to review the transcripts at a later time to ensure accurate information

was transcribed from the recordings. The audio recording and all other documents were stored in a secured location in my home.

All information was locked in a file cabinet and stored on a computer that is password protected. The information will be secured and locked for five years according to Walden University's guidelines. All information will be destroyed properly using shredding and deleting of all files. Participants received the contact information for my Dissertation Committee chair and my personal information to express any further concerns or questions about the study. Each participant will receive a summary report of the findings after the study is approved.

Summary

I interviewed African American males to explore their perceptions on the distrust and trust associated with law enforcement officers. The well in-depth semistructured interviews were coded by patterns and transcribed manually. Moustaka's (1994) modified van Kaam method was used to analyze the data. The collected data ensured that the risk was minimal, as stated by the IRB at Walden's University, to protect the privacy, and rights of the participants.

In Chapter 3, I included the research design and rationale, methodology, role of the researcher, issues of trustworthiness and a summary. In Chapter 4, the settings, demographics, data analysis, data collection, evidence of trustworthiness, results, and summary. In Chapter 5, I will include the limitations of the study, the interpretation of findings, recommendations, implications, and a conclusion.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this phenomenological qualitative research study was to explore

the perceptions of 15 African American males in relation to trust or distrust in police

officers. Semistructured interviews that involved in-depth responses from the participants

were used to address the central question concerning African American males'

perceptions in an effort to understand distrust of police in this population. In addition,

three subquestions were considered:

1. What do African American males perceive to be the cause for their distrust of

    the police?

2. What do African American males perceive to be the cause of their confidence

    and trust of police?

3. What do African American males recommend for increasing their trust in

    police officers?

Moustakas's (1994) modified van Kaam method of analysis was used to analyze

the data collected from the interviews. The research questions were used to create themes

that emerged from the data that were collected from participants. In Chapter 4, I address

settings, demographics, data collection, data analysis, evidence of trustworthiness, and

results, ending the chapter with a summary.

Setting

Data were collected through in-depth semistructured interviews using a snowball

sample of eight African American males who had expressed confidence and trust in

police officers and eight African American males who had experienced or witnessed

incidents that had caused them to distrust police officers. Most of the interviews took place between August 20, 2018 and September 9, 2018 at Pierre A. Capdau Charter School, located at 5800 St. Roch Avenue in New Orleans, LA. Other interviews were conducted via recorded telephone conference. Participants were interviewed in a private and safe setting to ensure that their responses and identity remained confidential.

Demographics

Of the 16 participants who were involved in the study, eight expressed confidence and trust in police officers, and eight indicated that they had experienced or witnessed incidents that had caused them not to trust police officers. All participants were African American males over the age of 18 years.

Data Collection

The instrument for the study was a 30-minute interview that involved a questionnaire I developed to obtain responses from participants. The interview questions allowed participants to express their perceptions about (a) their feelings toward police officers, (b) the reasons that they had confidence or distrust in police officers, (c) the effects of their feelings toward police officers, (d) how they felt when they encountered police officers, (e) whether they had experienced issues or effects on their self-worth based on their distrust, (f) whether they felt that history played a role in distrust issues, (g) how distrust affects the relationship between African American males and police officers, and (h) recommendations to create working relationships between African American males and police officers. The interviews were recorded and lasted approximately 30 minutes each. I transcribed the interviews and sent each participant an

e-mail with the transcript and audio recording of the interview to ensure that all information was accurate.

Data Analysis

To analyze the interview questions in relation to the central research question and three subquestions, I used manually manage the data collected and transcribed the interviews. Moustakas's (1994) modified van Kaam method of analysis was used to analyze the data retrieved from participants. This method included the following steps:

1. Listing and preliminary grouping

2. Reduction and elimination

3. Clustering and thematizing the invariant constituents

4. Final identification of the invariant constituents and themes by application

5. Using relevant, validated invariant constituents and themes; constructing individual textual descriptions of the experience

6. Constructing individual structural descriptions of the experience based on the individual textural descriptions and imaginative variation

7. Constructing for each research participant a textural-structural description of the meaning and essences of the experience. From the individual textural-structured descriptions, develop a composite description of the meaning and essences of the experience, representing the group as a whole. (Moustakas, 1994, pp. 120-121)

There were no discrepant cases found during data analysis. Themes and subthemes that emerged during the analysis are discussed in the results section of this chapter.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Validity and reliability through credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability were established in this phenomenological research study. Credibility was established through saturation, reflexivity, and transcription review. Using reflexivity, I disclosed all experiences that related to trusting the police and distrust of police officers. I sent each participant a transcript of his interview via e-mail to allow him the opportunity to review it and verify its accuracy. Additionally, I discussed the participants' feedback with them by phone or e-mail. Transferability was ensured by the use of in-depth description of the study's context and participants. Snowball sampling was used for the study as well. Dependability was established through the use of audits to ensure that information was accurately transcribed. I crosschecked tape recorded interviews, interview notes, and transcriptions. Confirmability was established through reflexivity and audit trails.

Results

Through data analysis, I identified 12 themes. The report of the results in this section is presented in subsections addressing the central research question, Subquestion 1, Subquestion 2, and Subquestion 3.

Central Research Question

What are the reasons that African American males distrust the police? Data were analyzed based on the central question, and two themes emerged. Theme 1 involved personal experiences, and Theme 2 involved police perceptions of fear when encountering African American males.

In responding to the central question, participants were asked to explain and describe their reasons for not trusting the police. All of the participants shared their experiences to assist with understanding their perceptions of the police in relation to distrust. Some stated that they had bad encounters with the police during their late childhood and early teenage years, which developed their perceptions due to the treatment they experienced. Overall, the participants stated that they were treated in an unfair manner during the experiences, which was the main theme identified in answering the above-mentioned research question. Other responses from participants indicated that distrust existed because police officers tended to express a perception of fear when encountering African American males. These themes are displayed in Table 1.

Table 1

Perceptions of Distrust of the Police by African American Males

Theme	Number ($n = 8$)	Percentage
Personal experiences	6	75%
Police perceptions of African American males	3	37.5%

Note. Some participants' responses fell under multiple themes.

Theme 1: Personal experiences. Most of the African American males shared their reasons for distrusting the police. Most of the African American males who participated in this study stated that bad encounters with police officers cause a person not to trust the police. This theme was reflected in responses from five out of eight total subsample population for this study (see Table 1). Participants stated that the police

officers whom they encountered were very unprofessional and rude. Participants shared similar experiences by explaining that they were not informed of a particular reason for a traffic stop. They stated that the police asked them several questions but did not answer any questions that they asked. Further, the participants stated that they did not receive any explanation after being arrested or released. Participant 11 shared,

> I don't trust the police because in my younger days they used to do some messed up stuff like harass my friends and myself for no reason. I still remember when I was 17 years old, an officer stopped me while I was walking home from football practice and he arrested me for marijuana. I never smoked marijuana or had used drugs before, but he planted it on me by saying he found two bags of weed in my gym bag. When I tried to explain to him that I didn't do drugs or involve myself in drug activity, his response was "well I said you do, now get your ass in the car." I tried talking to him on my way to lock up, but he just ignored me. I begged and cried because I didn't want to go to jail. Even as a high school senior, that officer didn't try to change his mind or correct the situation. He continued to ignore me as I was trying to figure out where the marijuana came from. So ever since then I don't trust them even though I have had some good experiences with other officers, as I got older. I will never forget those first encounters.

Participant 12 shared,

> The reason why most African American males don't trust police is because of our first experience when we see police in our neighborhoods. They present themselves as an army of people ready to go to war instead of individuals that are

supposed to protect and serve our communities. It sends a message that they are not there to assist me but to arrest me. When I was younger (maybe around 16 years old) I had been stopped by the same police officer several times a week for at least two months even though I did nothing wrong. He always handcuffed me and checked my name for warrants. But he would never answer any of my questions, or anything. Even though he didn't arrest me most of times, I learned not to trust the police. My mother and I went to the district and attempted to make a report of the incidents but were informed that I would be arrested for falsifying information against an officer. They didn't even take down the information that my mother and I were trying to explain. They just threaten to arrest me because they all work in a code of silence to protect the badge. I guess that was more than enough for me to realize that I can't trust the police.

Similarly, Participant 4 shared that he had experienced a few incidents with the police that should have been handled better as they related to being harassed and stopped by the police for unknown reasons. Participant 7 shared that although he had a lot of friends who were police officers, he does not trust any officers besides them due to experiences involving disrespectful behavior by police officers, especially when he was traveling. Similar to Participants 4, 11, 12, and 7, Participant 10 stated that he did not have a negative personal experience with police, but as he was growing up, he had witnessed enough negative experiences within his neighborhood that he did not trust the police. He stated that when he saw police mistreat other African American males in his presence, he started changing his views of the police. He provided examples that involved police brutality in most of the incidents that he witnessed. He stated that the

more incidents he witnessed, the more he began realizing that the police were the "bad guys" in his neighborhood. Participant 10 stated,

> The police are people that are given higher power then the rest of us due to their badge. It doesn't necessarily mean they have good intentions for others. Many of them join the department just to get that power which is the badge in their possession to protect them in their wrongdoings and bad intentions.

> Similarly, Participant 5 believed that most of the police incidents that he witnessed were negative due solely to the power that police officers have. He stated that they treat people in an unfair manner but expect glorified treatment in return because of their badge. Participant 7 expressed that many officers hide behind their badges. He explained that police officers commit wrongful acts and mistreat others because they are the police and they know that local government protects them.

The African American male participants who expressed distrust of the police stated that their views of the police had been shaped by their personal experiences. They each stated that they had some positive experiences with police officers but still did not trust the police. Participant 11 explained that he had several good experiences with officers as he became older but that he would never forget his first encounters. Similarly, Participant 5 explained that as he became older, he understood that all police officers are not bad officers. However, he still did not fully trust the police because he had witnessed some bad experiences.

Theme 2: Police officers' perceptions of African American males. Although many of the participants provided statements that explained their experiences that affected their decision of whether to trust police officers, others stated that their distrust

was based on police officers' perceptions of African American males. These participants discussed incidents that involved interactions between African American males and the police. The participants stated that police perceptions of African American males might be a major reason for African American males' perceptions of the police. The theme of police officers' perceptions of African American males was reflected in the responses of three out of eight total subsample population (see Table 1).

Participant 4's responses supported this theme when he stated,

The main reason I do not trust the police is due to the issues that are going on all across the country that represents the relationship between African American males and the police. Police officers has been conducting themselves in very poor decision-making manner as it relates to killing unarmed African American males and stating that they feared for their lives during the encounter.

Similar to Participant 4, Participant 3 stated,

It's the way they have treated us over the years. There are way too many unarmed African American males that are being murders by police officers and police officers are not being held accountable for their actions. It's like as long as the individual is African American it's okay for them to lose their lives and for their loved ones to suffer in pain due to the loss. So if police officers are being recorded and evidence is being released that these men did not pose an actual threat, then how is it possible for any other African American male to trust police. It's like enjoying your family, career, and life to the fullest (whether it's the perfect life or not) then being stopped by the police and not sure if you are going home or if your life will come to end real soon. That's a very difficult and

uncomfortable position to be put in. But they expect us just to accept the nervous feeling and act natural. For me that's hard to do, but when you nervous because they are pulling you over and you are unsure of their intention especially after being aware of all the others that were murdered by them, they assume you are guilty of something or try to say you trying to harm them. Police officers don't even try to understand that there is a problem that other police officers have created for them in the African American community. They just join the problem by not trying to make us feel like we matter, so they mistreat us as well because we are nervous and uncomfortable being in their presence. It's like running into Jason from *Friday the 13th* and you are not nervous or afraid after knowing how many other lives he has taken.

Participant 2 expressed that the police take a different approach with African American males than with any other group of individuals. He also stated that he had witnessed several incidents involving African American females and the police. Participant 2 shared that he respected that the police did not usually approach African American females as aggressively as they approached African American males. However, he stated that he was just trying to prove his point that the officers were rougher when encountering males. He also noted that officers' approaches could be based on their perceptions of African American males. Participant 2 contended that some officers felt that African American males represented more of a threat than African American females.

Subquestion 1

Subquestion 1 was as follows: What do African American males perceive to be the cause for their distrust of the police? In the data analysis for Subquestion 1, four themes emerged: media, police biases toward

African American males, history of the relationship between African American males and the police, and police officers' abuse of power.

Participants noted several factors when responding to the first subquestion. Themes of media, police biases toward African American males, history of the relationship between African American males and the police, and police officers abuse of power. Participants explained there are several causes for police distrust based on the perceptions of African American males. Although some of the participants have expressed their personal reasons for distrust of the police, they shared other views that play a role in understanding the cause from an African American males' perspective. Also, those participants who expressed trust in the police (as individuals) shared their views on the causes that play a role in the distrust of African American males. As a whole group involving participants that trust and distrust the police they perceived the media, police biases toward African American males, history of the relationship between African American males and the police, and police officers' abuse of power to be prominent factors toward the cause of police distrust by African American males. The themes related to the causes of police distrust expressed by African American males are displayed in Table 2.

Table 2

Subquestion 1: Causes of Distrust by African American Males

Theme	Number ($N = 16$)	Percentage
Media	8	5%
Police officers' biases	4	25%
History	9	56.4%
Abuse of power	4	25%

Note. Some participants' responses fell under multiple themes.

Theme 1: Media. A very large percentage of the participants refereed to the role of the media as a cause of police distrust by African American males. This theme received 8 out of the 16-sample population (Table 2). The media was referred as being the number 1 source that affects the relationship between African American males and the police. Participants stated that the content of the incidents that involve officers shooting unarmed African American males keeps the tension growing and increases their distrust for the police. As a result, the African American community distance themselves from police officers to prevent any unwanted and unnecessary encounters. Participant 9 supported this theme when he expressed that "the few incidents that receives media attention are so harsh that it builds the representation of the police. Because many of those incidents involve African American males and it sends the wrong message to the community."

Similar to Participant 9, Participants 2, 3, 4, and 14 related that the information that is exposed through the media highly affects their ability to change their perception of the police. Participant 2 shared that "the media has highlighted some high profiled cases where police officers have done some things that makes one have to question their actions." Participant 7 shared that the media is known for overexposing certain incidents that involves police officers and African American males.

Participant 1 shared,

There is a lot of media coverage that exposes how some police are quick to murder or harm African American males regardless of their age. It doesn't matter if they are 12 years old (basically a young boy) or if they are 65 years old (a senior citizen), they are still being treated as less than other races. Therefore, the African American community has no choice but to feel that ALL police have the same intention to harm African American males. Therefore, the media plays a large role in African American perceptions of the police.

Participant 8 shared,

I believe that the media does an excellent job at ensuring African American males distrust the police. The media overexposes the negative issues that deal with the police but fail to expose the positive events. It's like they allow the mistakes and bad choices of the few bad cops to represent the face of the police department. There isn't much media coverage available to represent those police officers that are doing an excellent job protecting and serving their communities. So, it is understandable that a vast majority of African American males don't trust the police due to the media.

Theme 2: Police biases. A few participants' notes that biases of African American males expressed by police officers tend to cause African American males not to trust the police. The theme, police officers' biases, received 4 out of 16 the total sample population (Table 2). Participants reflected on some of the biases that are expressed by police officers when they encounter African American males. Participants pointed to officers' experiences and upbringing that could lead the officers to treat African American males in unfair manners. However, it affects the trust of police officers by African American males. Participants noted that if officers' upbringing and experiences were based on mistreating and not respecting African American males, then it would always affect the biases associated with African American males. Participants expressed that police officers' biases may not be intentional, but it does exist.

Participant 13 noted,

I think African American males distrust the police due to the way they are handled when they are in situations that results in them being arrested. They are not handled with the respect and dignity due to a human being and this can create the distrust.

Participant 6 shared,

Many African American males assume that we will automatically be prejudged based on our past, family history, or the police officer's personal bias of us as a race. So when the police come in a community that they may be unfamiliar with to conduct an investigation or to make an arrest, they may be on high (to protect themselves). Therefore, the community transition to a different type of high (being afraid or feel like they are in danger) and they expect the worst out of the

situation. Especially, knowing that the police have all the weapons and power, but they enter the situation on a high level, which may involve bad attitudes, unprofessionalism, and reckless encounters. This is how the trust continues to be broken.

Similar to Participant 6, Participants 7 and 14 noted police officers' biases are associated with all African American males as it relates to be viewed as criminals and treated less than human beings. Participants 6 and 7 also noted that their personal encounters with police biases are always disrespectful and involves unreasonable treatments.

Theme 3: History of the relationship between African American males and police. More than half of the participants of this study referred to the history of the relationship between African American males and the police. The theme, history of the relationship between African American males and the police, received nine out of the 16 total sample population (Table 2). A few participants shared that there has always been a issue with distrust of the police in the African American communities. Participants noted that the history could date as far back as slavery when trying to explain the relationship between African American males and the police. Participants stated that it appears that there hasn't been much change in policing for African Americans especially males.

Participant 10 expressed, History plays its part as it relates to understanding why African American males distrust the police.

We are viewed in society as the lesser race just as we were viewed during slavery. So, it's likely some people even with a badge have decided to mistreat us as if we are less than animals due to their personal bias. The police still view us as

criminals and worthless individuals due to the color of our skin. They can't possibly make me believe that Whites don't commit crimes or haven't made some poor decisions.

Similarly to Participant 10, Participants 3, 4, 5, and 7 noted that history plays a big role in understanding the relationship between African American males and the police because nothing has changed to create a working relationship between the two groups. Those participants expressed that police departments were established to police the Blacks and protect the Whites. Participants 3, 4, and 5 believe that the distrust expressed by African American males won't decrease because the events that took place in history such as slavery, segregation, and black codes played a vital role.

Participant 2 shared,

History plays a major role in the perception of police officers in the African American community. We don't have to look that far into the past to see when something as ridiculous as segregation was legal. Police would enforce laws solely based on the color of one's skin. No matter how morally wrong and (or) down right unjust the laws may have been police would enforce these laws. Fast forward to today, some of the laws are racially bias as they pertain to a particular ethnic group. I bring your attention to the difference between crack cocaine users and the newly pill addiction crisis that has shaken the White community. How readily was crack cocaine users given jail time, whereas the pill users were given rehabilitation options. History has painted a picture of mistreatment throughout the years.

Participants 12 and 14 noted that police departments were originated from slave patrols in a manner to control African American males. Both participants referenced the word "control" as being the key role of police officers when they encounter African American males. Participant 12 shared,

My perceptions are based on my personal experiences with the police. They are used to harassing us and feel comfortable doing it because of some laws and events that occurred in history. The perfect example would be slavery because policing originated from there. Slave patrols were designed to police the Blacks in an attempt to have control. They were not there to prevent us from being murdered, raped, or beaten by the slave owners. Therefore, it's a continuation of that design going on today. The police can arrest us, mistreat us, and even kill us without having any real reason to do so in a similar manner as slave owners and members of the slave patrol. To this day, there are no laws in place to protect us from wrongful and cruel acts of the police.

Participant 6 believes that the history of the relationship between African American males and the police may have caused the distrust issues for some people. Participant 6 shared,

In the early 90s, there was an outrageous amount of police brutality and unjustified police killing of unarmed African American males in New Orleans. It was a difficult time for many families because the victims of the police shootings were being described in a disrespectful manner to make society feel like the police made the best decision. For example, if my daddy, brother, friend, neighbor

or someone that was close to me was murdered by the police then how am I supposed to grow up or move forward to trust the police.

Theme 4: Police officers' abuse of power. A couple of references were made to some of the poor decisions some police officers made when encountering African American males. The theme, Police officers' abuse of power, received two out of the16 total sample population (Table 2). Two participants shared that police officers tend to abuse their power when they interact with African American males. Both participants believe that police officers mistreat African American males in an overly aggressively manner that sometimes ends in death. Participant 4 expressed,

> Many police officers react and response as a powerful figure as opposed to treating people with respect and professionalism. With that said, it kind of makes me feel like they do a great deal of abusing their powers by disrespecting and harming African American males.

Participant 10 expressed,

> The police are given higher power then the rest of us due to their badges. It doesn't necessarily mean they have good intentions for others. Many of them join the department just to get that power, which is the badge in their possession to protect them in their wrongdoings and bad intentions.

Subquestion 2

Subquestion 2 was the following: What do African American males perceive to be the cause of their trust for the police? Based on Subquestion 2 analyzed data, three themes emerged. This subsection is organized as follows: Theme 1: Growth mindset, Theme 2: Developed relationships via community engagement, and Theme 3: Fair

treatment. In responding to the second subquestion, participants described their ability to trust the police. Some of the participants expressed that it involved a process for them to start trusting the police. They noted that their families did not teach them to trust the police; however, they began trusting them on their own. The themes for subquestion 2 are displayed in Table 3.

Table 3

Causes for Trusting the Police for African American Males

Theme	Number ($n = 8$)	Percentage
Growth mindset	2	25%
Developed relationships	4	50%
Fair treatment	2	25%

Theme 1: Growth mindset. A couple of participants perceived that their growth mindset assisted them with being able to trust the police. This theme received two out of the eight total subsample population or 25% (Table 3). These participants noted that it required some fairness to be given to all police regardless to the ones that were engaging in wrongful acts. The participants expressed that they do not believe it's fair to treat all police officers as bad cops because there is only a small percentage of cops who chooses to make poor choices.

Participant 1 shared,

I must say that I had to set aside a lot of things in order to develop confidence in the police. I had to realize that these individuals are not the same individuals that

operated slave patrols, enforced segregation, used racial discrimination, and etc.

These are individuals that are policing the country today and not all of them are

corrupt. As a matter of fact, many of them are not corrupt. Policing is a dangerous

career and I doubt that people join the force just to kill or mistreat African

Americans. Therefore, I believe that the police are here to protect and serves us as

they are trained to do. I will not allow a few bad cops to convince me that police

officers can't be trusted. I have encountered several officers of different gender,

races, and geographical location that have treated me with respect, fairness, and

professionalism.

Participant 9 shared,

I had to develop confidence in the police because they choose the career in law

enforcement and are not drafted. With that said, these are individuals who have

some type of passion working in the community to create peace by protecting and

serving. There are many officers in New Orleans who does a tremendous job at

engaging with the community and making it seem as a family-oriented city as it

relates to the communities and the police. So, I had to respect them for the things

they do in our communities because it is not a required part of their job

descriptions.

Theme 2: Developed relationships via community engagements. Participants

had various perceptions about their ability to trust police officers. This theme received

four out of the 8-subsample population or 50% (Table 3). Participants noted that they

were able to develop trust of police officer by developing relationships with them.

Participants expressed that police officers are just as willing to engage in discussions and answer questions in order to increase trust from African American males.

Participant 6 expressed,

Many of the police officers are involved in community activities such as sports and marching units in the city. They do not receive any additional pay to be active in their communities. They do these things from their hearts, and a person with a good heart is someone that I can feel comfortable with and trust. They are more relaxed and willing to meet community members when they are attending the events.

Similarly to Participant 6, Participant 16 agrees that community policing in the city of New Orleans has been very effective with attempting to build more confidence of the police within the African American communities. Participant 15 noted that he has only encountered police during community events in New Orleans and always received the best treatment from them. Participant 15 expressed that the police officers he encountered were down-to-earth and made him feel welcomed to be in their presence. Participant 11 agreed with Participant 15 that police officers that are engaged in community activities are to be respected and trusted because they have good intentions.

Theme 3: Fair treatment. A couple of participants expressed that they were always treated fairly and with respect when they were stopped by police officers. They believe their experiences caused them to trust the police because not all cops are bad cops. This theme received 2 out of the 8 total subsample population or 25% (Table 3). Participants noted, they felt safe when being encountered by the police and knew that they were going home to their families without any incidents occurring. Both participants

stated that they were the reason for the traffic stop and was still treated with respect when pulled over by the officers.

Participant 8 shared,

I never had a bad experience with a police officer. All my encounters with the police in New Orleans were with professional officers that treated me fairly and helped me with understanding why I was pulled over. They greeted me by my name after receiving my identification and engaged in some sports talk to keep me calm. Some allowed me to leave the scene without receiving a ticket and advised me to correct the issues. In one incident, I was very upset and annoyed, but the officer did not match my energy, he just asked me to calm down. The officer politely explained that he was just doing his job and that it wasn't anything personal. So, I pretty much feel safe when I encounter police officers in my city. I have a great deal of respect and confidence in them.

Similarly to Participant 8, Participant 13 believes that the police officers in the city of New Orleans can be trusted. Participant 13 shared,

One reason I have confidence in police is because I haven't had any bad encounters with them; however, I am aware of many situations that were awful for other people. I don't know if confidence is the correct word to describe my feelings toward the police; however, I have an expectation that they will do the jobs that they have been hired to do without bias behaviors and with respect to everyone. I trust that they will make the very best decision when they encounter all African American males because that city of New Orleans doesn't have any recent issues with officer involved shootings of unarmed African American

males. I would also trust other officers from other areas because I don't think that there are many bad cops out there doing the things that the media exposes.

Subquestion 3

Subquestion 3 was the following: What do African American males recommend as a solution to increase their trust in police officers? Based on subquestion 3 analyzed data, four themes emerged. This subsection is organized as follows: Theme 1: Community Involvement, Theme 2: Training, Theme 3: Accountability, and Theme 4: Respect.

In responding to the third subquestion, participants recommended solutions that may assist with increasing their trust in police officers. Some participants believe that the solutions provided would be a start to develop working relationships between police officers and African American males. Other participants believe that the recommendations should be taken seriously if the police are genuinely trying to impact change that would prevent African American males from distrusting them. The themes from subquestion 3 are displayed in Table 4.

Table 4

Recommended Solutions to Increase Trust of the Police by African American Males

Theme	Number ($N = 16$)	Percentage
Community involvement	11	68.75%
Training	8	50%
Accountability	9	56.25%
Respect	2	12.5%

Note. Some participants' responses fell under multiple themes.

Theme 1: Community involvement. More than half the participants of the study recommended community involvement as a possible solution to increase trust of the police by African American males. This subtheme received 11 out of 16 of the total sample population (Table 4). Participants expressed that there is very little interaction with the police, other than being pulled over or stopped by them. Participants believe that developing a relationship with the police could help increase their trust. Therefore, they would love the opportunities to get to know them better and to give the police the same opportunities.

Participant 1 shared,

Police officers can engage themselves in some activities that occur in the African American communities to send a message that they are there to protect and serve instead of trying to control them. Officers have to remember that the community also protects them as well; therefore, it is better to be considered a friend than an enemy. Officers can volunteer at schools, parks, block parties, picnics, and (or) family gatherings to take time to learn faces and names. This helps them with being able to build a positive relationship with individuals by addressing them by their names and knowing something's about them.

Similarly to Participant 1, Participants 2, 4, and 5 noted that police officers should attend more community events and activities to become more familiar with the people by interacting with them.

Participant 3 shared,

Community engagement is the key to changing the past relationship between

African American males and the police. Police officers must make themselves

known as part of the community that they serve. They can't always just make

arrest and write tickets. They must show that they are there to protect and serve

that community. They must start building relationships with the youth, elderly,

and other adults by volunteering and hosting community events. This can be a

start to help police officers develop some type of relationship with African

American males and the community.

Similarly to Participant 3, Participants 6, 7, and 8 noted that there are many opportunities

for police officers to become involved in activities by showing up to assist, donating, or

sponsoring the event. Participant 6 shared,

The police must continue being involved in the community by engaging in

activities. It can be as simple as donating water to a sport team, attending a game

for support, introducing themselves to others, and connecting themselves to the

culture. Police officers should be very mindful that the media is very effective in

keeping people informed of incident; therefore, they must build the trust back up

every time a bad cop within the department decreases it.

Participants 9 and 10 expressed that police officers of all races must be willing to

be involved in the African American community to understand that all African

Americans are not criminals and they all should be treated with respect.

Theme 2: Training. Half of the participants recommended better training of

police officers as a solution to assist with increasing the trust of police officers by African

American males. This subtheme received 8 out of the 16 total sample population (Table

4). Participants shared that there should be more training available to assist police officers with making better decisions. Participants believe that all police officers should receive trainings that prepare them for all possible situations prior to graduating from the academy.

> Participant 1 shared,
>
> I recommend proper training of officers prior to them working in the streets. Maybe some kind of ethics training, moral and character training, and understanding cultural differences as it relates to races. Those training should be conducted twice a year after they graduate from the academy and officer should be held accountable for their actions. They can also revisit the use of force and self-defense trainings to encourage officers to use every technique needed when a suspect is not armed and to talk down a visibly armed suspect.

Similarly to Participant 1, Participants 2, 4, and 7 noted that there should be a continuation of training for officers even after graduating from the academy. Participant 4 expressed,

> Better training of police officers by having some training even after they have completed the academy. Those trainings could be done twice a year and as needed. This can help with discussing current events as they occur and prevent officers from making the same or similar mistakes.

Participant 9 noted,

> I think that the academy should require some higher standards such as 25 years old and older, bachelor's degree in criminal justice or extend the training academy longer to ensure that they understand the meaning of protecting and serving and

take citizens' complaints seriously each and every time. The requirements

shouldn't focus so much on physically agility (it should be something worked on)

because a lot of good individuals are discouraged to apply because they are afraid

to fail. The academy should focus on laws, cultural and ethical training, self-

defense and so forth. Just because a person is in good physical shape doesn't

mean he or she will be make great cop.

Participant 12 shared,

Police are considered to be service providers; therefore, they need to be more of a

people's person meaning that they have to learn better communication skills.

They must want to respect us and develop a working relationship with us. I can

share all the thoughts in the world, but if they are not willing to apply them then

what is the point. Those officers who are truly trying to do their job correctly and

fairly are already aware of the things they can do to fix the relationship. Those

officers that are doing the actual wrongdoing are fully aware of their actions and

the choices they make. So, no matter what strategies, methods, or plans will be

put in place there will always be some officers who will not abide by them.

Therefore, trainings should be focused on the individuals as it relates to their

interactions with others recruits and personnel in the academy. The academy

instructors have to make better decisions prior to allowing police recruits to move

forward. They have to pay more attention to the individual during the actual

trainings.

Similarly to Participant 12, Participants 11, and 13 noted that police trainings should ensure that the officers are prepared to move forward due to the criteria of passing and personal observations of attitudes and characteristics.

Theme 3: Accountability. More than half of the participants expressed the importance of holding police officers accountable for their actions. This subtheme received 9 out of 16 total sample population (Table 4). Participants noted that accountability of officers is a big issue because they are not receiving consequences for some of their actions. Participants believe that the officers involved in the shootings of unarmed African American males are not being held accountable for their actions. Participants believe that they can increase their trust in police officers if police officers can start being held accountable for their wrongdoings.

Participant 12 shared,

The government has to begin holding the police accountable for their actions. When I said accountable, I mean being able to state that they did not train them to make poor decisions when interacting with any class of citizens. Until the government makes changes that will protect all citizens from police wrongdoings there will always be the perception of distrust in the African American community. The only way to modify negative behaviors is to use negative consequences.

Similarly to Participant 12, Participants 3 and 5 noted that police officers have to be held accountable for doing the same acts that they were sworn in to protect us from.

Participants 1, 5, and 6 noted that police are to be held to the highest standards and should not receive special treatment when they conduct wrongful acts. The

participants feel that police officers should be held accountable for their actions to prevent others from feeling comfortable with engaging in wrongful acts. Participant 1 shared,

Accountability should definitely be discussed because it's not a good picture for African American males when police officers are shooting, harassing, or harming us when they are supposed to protect and serve regardless of the past arrest, reputation in the community, or etc.

Participants 4, 5, and 8 expressed that holding police officers accountable for their actions could increase the trust of police by African American males. Participant 4 noted, also hold police officers accountable for their actions. This can help African American males feel safe in the presence of police officers. Participants 15 and 16 stated that police officers should receive consequences for their actions. Participant 15 shared,

In order to decrease and prevent distrust of the police I recommend that police officers are held accountable for their actions. If they are not held accountable the more African American males won't trust the police. Police officers should be informed that they are responsible for their actions when they are completing trainings in the academy. This would prevent the African American community from viewing the entire police force as corrupt because those cops that engage in wrongful acts would only represent themselves.

Participant 16 shared,

Police departments must prevent from covering up the wrongful acts done in their departments. They must set the expectations and standards for their department and stand by them. Police departments must learn to hold officers accountable for

their actions especially when it doesn't make any sense to use unnecessary force against and unarmed individuals.

Theme 4: Respect. A couple of the participants mentioned respect as a recommendation to increase the trust of police officer by African American males. This subtheme received 2 out of the 16 total sample population (Table 4). Participants noted that giving respect could increase the ability to trust the police. Participants believe that the police officers should be more considerate of the approach when encountering African American males.

Participants 10 and 13 noted that officers don't give much respect to African American males, but should work toward doing so in order to create a working relationship. Participant 10 shared,

Respect has to be given in the same manner as it is expected to be received. Police officers have to earn the respect of African American males by treating them fairly and as if they matter. Respecting one another is the key to starting a trusting relationship. Officers should consider displaying respect every time they encounter an African American male because it's so much going on between African American males and the police to increase the distrust.

Participant 13 shared,

One way of preventing and decreasing distrust of police officers by African American males is for the police to remain open, honest, and respectful. The police should always display respect as much as possible in all situations. We understand their lives are on the line, but they should have the training needed to

perform their job in a way that protects them and the people they serve. This should assist the police with handling all individuals with respect.

Summary

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to explore 16 African American males that involved, 8 African American males that have expressed distrust of the police and 8 African American males that have expressed confidence in the police. One central question and three subquestions guided the study. Using Moustaka's (1994) modified van Kaam method of analysis and participant's face-to-face interviews, 12 themes emerged in the responses from the research questions.

First, in regards to African -American males reasons for having distrust of the police, findings indicated that most participants had bad experiences with the police. In addition, findings indicated that participants believed the police officers perceptions of African American males are a big issue that prevents African Americans from trusting the police. Second, in regard to African American males' perceptions of police distrust, findings indicated many factors that contributed to the distrust of police such as media, police officers' biases, history between African American males and the police, and police officers abuse of power. Therefore, participants referenced the role of the media as being effective in exposing police behaviors of wrongdoings when encountering unarmed African American males. Findings also indicated that police officers' perceptions of all African American males as being a threat contributed to African American distrust of the police. Findings also indicated that the history between police officers and African American males also contributed to the distrust as expressed by African American males.

Findings indicated that police officers issues of abuse of powers when encountering African American males play a role in the distrust.

Third, in regard to African American males perceptions of confidence and trust of the police, findings indicated a growth mindset. Participants explained that they had to change their way of thinking in order to develop trust of the police. Participants stated that they were raised not to trust the police, but as time passed they changed their views of the police because not all cops are bad cops. Findings indicated that developed relationships assisted with trusting the police. Participants expressed that having the opportunities to talk with off duty police officers that volunteered in their communities helped with being comfortable with police officers and having confidence in them. Findings indicated that fair treatment assisted with having confidence in the police. Participants expressed that all of their encounters with police officers were decent experiences. Participants stated that they were treated with respect during every encounter with the police. Findings indicated that there is an expectation of trust of police officers. Participants stated that police officers are sworn in to protect and serve citizens; therefore, they have an expectation of the officers to perform their duties.

Fourth, in regard to African American males' recommendations to assist with increasing their trust of the police, findings indicated community involvement. Participants expressed the need of police officers being more involved in the community to assist with understanding the people and the culture. Findings indicated training as a recommended a possible solution to increase trust. Participants expressed that police officers should receive extensive trainings that reflect the current issues of officer involved shootings of unarmed African American males in a manner to prevent the issues

from reoccurring. Findings indicated police officer's accountability as a recommendation to increase the trust associated with African American males. Participants explained that holding police officers accountable for their actions would assist African American males to feel safer during encounters. Finding also indicated respect as a recommendation to increase trust. In Chapter 4, I included the demographics, setting, data analysis, data collection, evidence of trustworthiness, results and a summary. In Chapter 5, I include the interpretations of findings, limitations of the study, recommendations, implications, and a conclusion.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusion, and Recommendations

In this phenomenological research study, I explored 16 African American males' perceptions of police in order to develop an understanding of distrust toward police in this population. I collected data through in-depth semistructured interviews that were conducted face to face. The design of this study was selected to answer one central research question about African American males' reasons for not trusting the police. Three subquestions were also considered, which pertained to African American males' perceptions of the causes for distrust of police officers, African American males' perceptions of the causes of trust in police, and African American males' recommendations to increase trust in police officers.

Using Moustakas's (1994) modified van Kaam method of analysis, I discovered 12 themes. First, findings indicated that most participants believed that personal encounters with police officers played a role in perceptions of the police. In addition, participants believed that police officers' perceptions of all African American males as threatening also caused distrust. Second, findings indicated that exposure of police officers' acts of wrongdoing via the media, police officers' personal biases, the history of interactions between police officers and African American males, and police officers' abuse of power were factors that created distrust toward police as expressed by African American males. Third, findings indicated that a growth mindset, relationships that had been developed, fair treatment, and expectation of trust were key factors that allowed some participants to develop confidence in police officers. Participants expressed that all cops are not bad cops, arguing that cops who are actually doing an excellent job should not suffer for the behavior of cops who are making poor decisions. Participants explained

that they believe that every individual deserves a fair chance in life without being judged based on the views of others. Fourth, findings indicated participants' recommendations to assist with increasing African Americans' trust of the police. Findings also indicated the need for improved training and practices, changes to legislation and laws, and changes to the policing styles currently being used in some enforcement agencies.

In Chapter 5, I include the interpretation of findings, limitations of the study, recommendations, implications, and a conclusion.

Interpretation of Findings

To explore 16 African American males' perceptions of the police in an effort to understand distrust of police in this population, this qualitative phenomenological research study was designed to answer one central question and three subquestions. The findings for this study were interpreted using Weber's (1910) social relationship theory and the literature review. This section is organized into subsections addressing the central research question, Subquestion 1, Subquestion 2, and Subquestion 3.

Central Research Question

The central research question was the following: What are the reasons that African American males express distrust of the police? The results for the central research question indicated that most participants believed that bad experiences with police officers can cause distrust. In addition, findings indicated that participants believed that police officers' perceptions of all African American males as threatening cause African American males to distrust the police. Participants noted experiences in which the police had been very disrespectful toward them because they were not treated with

fairness or in a professional manner. Participants shared that they had been ignored, yelled at, and handled roughly.

Some participants focused on the perception of African American males as a threat by police officers. Those participants stated that it is dangerous for an African American male to encounter a police officer who will view him as a threat because that officer may be the cause of his death.

Findings for the central question can be explained through Weber's social relationship theory, as expressed by Gane (2005). African American males who participated in this study and expressed distrust of police believed that their prior experiences and police officer perceptions of African American males were reasons for distrust. Social relationship theory indicates that individuals or groups may treat members of society who are not part of the majority group differently (Weber, as cited in Gane, 2005). Weber stated that the members of the majority group in society may choose to treat other members of society in a lesser manner. Especially when class, status, or party motivates social relationships, the majority group may limit outsiders from receiving the same treatment as insiders. Therefore, according to Weber's theory, police officers, who may be considered members of the majority group, may treat African American males differently based on the culture or subculture of the police department, which can create conflict between the two groups.

It is difficult to ignore the fact that African American males are more likely than any other group to distrust the police. Drake (2015) noted that African American males have less trust in the police than European American males do. Gallup (2016) conducted a study in which 71% of African American participants expressed distrust toward the

police. This issue of distrust of police officers as expressed by African American has

existed for years (David, 2016). In this study, I found that African American males tend

to distrust police based on their experiences with them and their belief that many officers

perceive all African American males as a threat, which can be attributed to societal views

of African American males as a threat. (Archbold et at, 2013, Barlow and Barlow, 2002)

noted that government officials and politicians have been dismissing and ignoring reports

made by African Americans that were filed against police officers. Therefore, they have

been unable to establish an understanding of the distrust of police as expressed by

African American males.

Subquestion 1

What do African American males perceive to be the cause of distrust of police?

The results for Subquestion 1 indicated that along with all of the participants reporting

that they previously distrusted or currently distrust the police, several factors contributed

to distrust, such as media, police officers' biases toward African American males, the

history between police officers and African American males, and abuse of power by

police officers during encounters with African American males.

Findings for Subquestion 1 may be attributed to Weber's social relationship

theory, in that they relate to conflicts between a majority group (police officers) and a

minority group (African American males), as stated by Stapley (2010). Social

relationship theory can also be viewed through social action and precede concepts such as

self-interest, conflict, power, and domination (Mucha, 2003). Therefore, Drier's 2016

reports that media exposure of officer involved shooting across the country can be

associated with the distrust of police officer by African American males. This relates to

the study's findings that media are effective in exposing wrongful acts performed by police officers during their encounters with unarmed African American males. Drier (2016) noted that media exposure of officer-involved shootings increases distrust of police as expressed by African American males, which is in line with the findings of this study that the media play a large role in African American males' distrust of the police.

Findings for Subquestion 1 may also be attributed to police officers' biases in relation to African American males. Campbell (2017) noted that police officers tend to believe that African American males are more likely to commit crimes than members of any other race; therefore, many officers treat African American males as criminals during encounters. In this way, officers' biases play a role in the cause of distrust of officers expressed by African American males. Many African American males fear encountering the police because of the biases to which they have been subjected (Weitzer, 2015), which is in line with the findings that officers' personal biases about African American males can be a cause of the distrust expressed by African Americans.

Findings for Subquestion 1 also pertain to the history of the relationship between African American males and the police. Drier (2016) stated that history has created tension between African American males and law enforcement officers. Therefore, African American males may continue viewing historical events as reasons for distrust of police officers. Lynching and other forms of abuse perpetrated against African Americans were allowed to continue without anyone standing up for the rights of African Americans. Racist individuals knew that they could continue getting away with murdering African Americans without facing charges or being convicted in the courtroom (Drier, 2016). This historical background can be viewed as underlying police

officers' quick decisions to shoot unarmed African American males. This is in in line with findings that the history between African American males and police officers represents a cause for the distrust expressed by African American males.

Findings for Subquestion 1 also indicate the impact of police officers' abuse of powers when interacting with African American males. African American males who reported being in direct contact with police officers expressed negative views associated with their experiences. Even African American males who have reported crimes to the police have stated that this was an uncomfortable experience, in that they were mistreated and disrespected by the officers who responded to their calls (Patterson, 2015; Schuck et al., 2008). Schuck et al. (2008) reported that 67% of African Americans stated that they feared encounters with police officers, compared to 21.5% of Caucasians who expressed this fear. Weitzer (2015) noted that African American men are more likely to experience some type of violence performed by police officers than members of any other race. This is in line with the finding that African American males have less trust in police due to officers' abuse of power.

Subquestion 2

Subquestion 2 was as follows: What do African American males perceive to be the cause for confidence or trust in police officers? The results for Subquestion 2 indicated that a growth mindset over time, relationships developed with police officers, fair treatment during police encounters, and the expectation of trust are factors that contribute to African American males' ability to trust the police.

Weitzer (2002) conducted a study in attempt to explain how community composition plays a role in perceptions of the police. Data were collected during

Weitzer's qualitative study in Washington, DC indicating the relevance of environmental issues in relation to African American males' perceptions and personal experiences with police officers. Interviews were conducted throughout three communities (lower-class Blacks, middle-class Blacks, and middle-class Whites) to determine views of police officers pertaining to treatment and fairness within these communities. Each group concluded that police officers engaged in racially biased practices. However, the communities had different ways of explaining the biased practices displayed. Some Black participants stated that law-abiding Blacks were unfairly treated and targeted by the police due to the large number of Blacks who were actually involved in criminal acts within their communities. In contrast, Blacks of the middle class did not receive any unfair treatment by police officers in their own communities. Weitzer argued that community composition plays a large role in the relationship between race and distrust of the police. Gallup conducted a study in 2016 in which 71% of African American participants expressed distrust of the police while the remaining 29% of African American participants expressed confidence in the police.

The findings of this study concerning participants' confidence in the police may be seen as consistent with the aforementioned studies by Weitzer (2002) and Gallup (2016). Participants noted that they were aware of some of the issues that other African American males had experienced that may have caused them to continuously distrust the police. However, they were able to have confidence in the police for the following reasons: (a) a growth mindset that enabled them to understand things from different viewpoints in relation to policing, (b) the ability to develop working relationship with police officers within their communities, (c) the fact that they were fortunate not to have

had any bad experiences with police officers, and (d) their expectation that police officers join the force to protect and serve.

Subquestion 3

Subquestion 3 was the following: What do African American males recommend to increase their ability to trust police officers? The results for Subquestion 3 indicated the need for community engagement of police officers, improved training of police officers, police officers being held accountable for their actions, and police officers giving respect to all citizens regardless of race and gender.

Findings indicated the need for police officers to become engaged in communities, which may be seen as consistent with Schlosser's (2013) finding that there has been little cultural training of police officers since 1960. Cultural training involves teaching police officers how to relate to members of all cultures by means of communication and resolving conflicts. Schlosser indicated that police departments might not provide adequate training on cultural diversity to help officers operate in a diverse society. Schlosser recommended that police trainings involve proactive measures to assist officers in dealing with challenges that may occur during police encounters. It was also concluded that training police officers to become more proactive would involve strategies to assist with recognizing and respecting cultural differences. These findings are consistent with some of the participants' expressions in this study that cultural training and awareness are needed to assist with improving policing in African American communities.

Findings that indicate the need for police officers to engage with the community resonate with Robinson's (2017) recommendations that police officers should

intentionally engage in positive interactions with the community they are policing. Robinson noted that police officers usually do not reside in the communities that they are assigned to patrol; this situation may engender a belief that the officers do not care about the general well-being of community residents. Robison also noted that if police officers lived in the areas that they patrolled, they would display better attitudes and relationships with residents. Community engagement may be a key to increasing African Americans' trust of police officers and may lead to reduction in criminal activity due to community members' willingness to cooperate with the police (Robinson, 2017). These findings support the participants' recommendation for community engagement of police officers to assist with increasing trust of police among African American males.

Findings that indicated the need for police officers to be held accountable for their actions may be linked to Mentel's (2012) conclusion that transparency and accountability of police officers are important factors within the African American community. Mentel noted that transparency is essential in order to develop positive community-police relationships. Mentel stated that having policies in place to hold police departments accountable for their actions could assist with gaining the trust of community members. These findings support the participants' recommendation that police officers become more accountable for their actions to assist with increasing the trust of African American males.

Findings that indicated the need for police officers to give respect to African American males may be linked to Jones-Brown's (2000) conclusion that many African American males noted that their experiences of disrespectful encounters with the police prevented them from currently trusting the police. The African American males who

participated in the study failed to develop trust for police officers regardless of recent

positive encounters with officers (Jones-Brown, 2000). Those findings are consistent with

the finding of my study, which indicated that respect from all officers is needed in order

for African American males to increase their trust in the police.

Limitations of the Study

A few limitations to trustworthiness arose in conducting this study. The first

possible limitation of the study involves generalizing the results, given that a snowball

sample of 16 participants was used. The findings may be generalized to similar

populations of African American males in the city of New Orleans and its surrounding

areas who have experienced or witnessed issues with police officers that have caused

them to feel distrust or who have expressed confidence in the police, but the results may

not be generalized to other states or populations. Future studies could expand the sample

population across cities and states to develop a broader understanding of African

American males' perceptions of the police, with or without emphasis on understanding

distrust. Additionally, a different sampling strategy could be used, such as quota or

purposeful sampling.

The second limitation of the study involved the possibility of social desirability

bias. Participants may not have been fully honest with their responses because they

wanted to remain positive when sharing their experiences. However, it was assumed that

all participants provided open and honest responses to the interview questions.

Recommendations

Two recommendations for future research emerged from this study. The first

recommendation, alluded to in the above section on limitations of the study, is that future

studies extend the sample population across other cities and/or states to gain a broader understanding of African American males' perceptions of the police, with or without emphasis on understanding distrust. Findings from such research could then be compared to the findings of this study.

Second, studies that involve African American females experiences with police officers to examine their perceptions of the police can be researched as Gabbidon et al. (2011) noted that African American females tend to share similar experiences with the police officers as African American males. As a result, research should be conducted on African American females experiences to explain their similarities of African American males experiences with police officers. The findings of the study could be compared to this study and other studies to help support the need of stronger policies for policing.

Implications

In order to decrease and prevent distrust of police, African American males recommended improved training practices and changes to legislation and laws that relates to accountability of police officers. These recommendations for law enforcement leaders, law enforcement policy makers, and police officers have several implications. It is necessary that leaders, policy makers, and administrators of law enforcement accept and respect the accounts of African American males who have expressed distrust or confidence in the police because they have shared their experiences and experiences of other African American males that have caused the distrust of police officers (Schuck et al., 2008). Therefore, the perceptions expressed by African American males that explains the reality of police distrust are very beneficial as there is a need for policy changes

within law enforcement agencies in order to decrease and prevent distrust of the police as expressed by African American males (Schuck et al., 2008).

First, many participants referred to improved training practices and policies as the means of cultural awareness, self-defense, and use of force for officers to have reasonable and fair encounters with African American males. The results displayed that properly training officers to communicate and understand all cultures, protect themselves without the need of a weapon (when appropriate), and to prevent officers from abuse the amount of force needed to stop an unarmed threat. Therefore, improved trainings based on real-life scenarios and simulation models were referred to by most of the participants. It is important that officers who are already on the force attend the trainings as well. These training should occur annually and as needed to refresh officers that may be struggling with incorporating the practices. Thus, police academy trainings should include African American males as a sensitive subject within the curricula due to the high percentage of distrust expressed by them.

Second recommendations were directed at leaders, legislators, administrators, and policy makers of law enforcement who have the authority to revisit and rewrite current policies and laws that can positively affect African Americans and other minorities. As Robinson (2017), explained that the FBI director, James Coney, stated that police departments are not obligated to report shooting details or death reports to any federal agency. Therefore, it can be noted as a call of action needed for social justice by the National Association of Social Workers to challenge the social injustice (Robinson, 2017). It is important for community members and activist to contact policymakers to push for a bill that would require police departments to report all deaths that occur at the

hand of law enforcement officers. It is important to provide federal agencies with death reports to ensure that police departments and officers are being monitored and or thoroughly investigated. Participants suggested policy changes that would hold police officers accountable for any and all unjust and unfair treatments of African American and other minorities. Therefore, action from legislators, leaders, administrators, and policymakers of law enforcement is needed to hold police officers accountable for their actions to provide a personal feeling of safety and worth to African American males and other minorities (Olson, 2014).

The findings from this research study adds further knowledge to the public policy and administration literature on police distrust based on the perceptions and experiences of African American males. This information may also interest other fields such as criminal justice and public safety. The findings from this study are also applicable to many other organizations and agencies including local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies.

Conclusion

To further address and understand the issues of distrust of police as expressed by African American males, it was important to obtain the perceptions of African American males that experienced and (or witness) issues that caused the distrust and African American males that express confidence in the police. Findings of this phenomenological study supported previous research findings studies such as Jones-Brown (2000), Robinson (2017), and Olson (2014) that also reported a higher percentage of distrust of the police expressed by African American males, which created a division between the two groups. Therefore, it would be difficult to dismiss the accounts of African American

males who have experienced and (or) witnessed incidents that have caused them to distrust the police as being sensitive or over challenging because they provided first hand details about real experiences.

African American males have shared their perceptions to provide a well indepth understanding of the reasons there is a high percentage of distrust of law enforcement officers. Therefore, their experiences of distrust and their perceptions of the causes that created the distrust are very beneficial and important as there is a demand for national policies that outlaws unfair and unjust treatments of African American males in order to decrease and prevent the distrust and improve the relationship between the two groups (Robinson, 2017). In addition to using this study to possibly create or rewrite policies and laws, findings from this study can be used to impact positive social change in reference to police departments' training practices as it relates to understanding cultural differences and use of force; community engagement of police officers to assist with developing relationships with community members; and holding police officers accountable for their wrongdoings.

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