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# The Moderating Influence of Social Media on the Relationship Between Perceptions of Police and Community Violence Among African American Men

Herman Charles Tucker  
*Walden University*

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# Walden University

College of Social and Behavioral Sciences

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Herman C. Tucker, Jr.

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Review Committee

Dr. Rebecca Stout, Committee Chairperson, Human Services Faculty

Dr. Pamela Denning, Committee Member, Human Services Faculty

Dr. Gregory Hickman, University Reviewer, Human Services Faculty

Chief Academic Officer

Eric Riedel, Ph.D.

Walden University

2019

Abstract

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Police and Community Violence Among African American Men

By

Herman C. Tucker, Jr.

MSEd, Nova University, 1986

BS, Bethune Cookman University, 1976

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the degree of

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Human Services

Walden University

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## Abstract

African American males experience homicides significantly higher than other groups throughout the United States. More African Americans are victims of violence, especially deadly violence, compared to any other racial or ethnic group. While research has been conducted on the association between perceptions of police and violence among African American men ages 18 to 44, no research exists on whether social media use moderates this association among African American men ages 18 to 44. This quantitative, cross-sectional study included 45 African American men. The Past Feelings and Act of Violence (PFAV) instrument, the Perceptions of Police (POP), and the Social Media Use Integration Scale were used to measure violence, perceptions of police and social media use, respectively. Overall, participants did not have high levels of violence, had poor perceptions of police, and did not have high dependence on social media use. Study results showed a significant association between perceptions of police ( $F=5.271$ ;  $p=.027$ ) and community violence, where perceptions of police explained 30% of the variance in community violence scores. This study also showed that social media use did not moderate the association between perceptions of police and violence. In addition to continuing to research what factors moderate the association between perceptions of police and community violence, findings in this study could inform strategies and interventions that seek to change African American men's perceptions of police. Interventions should focus on improving relationships between African American men and law enforcement, as well as work to improve perceptions that African American men have regarding police.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

### **Background**

This research describes the association between perceptions of police and community violence, and sought to determine whether social media moderates this relationship. Seminal research conducted in this field has shown that both individual- and community-level factors were associated with violence (Cubbin, Pickle, & Fingerhut, 2000; Sorenson, Upchurch, & Shen, 1996). For example, Sorenson (1996) found that marital factors, household composition, and socioeconomic status were associated with violence when examining a national dataset. Sorenson and colleagues (1996) concluded that examining community and non family relations may be an area worth exploring in efforts to decrease violence. Consistent with Sorenson's seminal work, more recent research conducted by McMahon et al. (2013) reported that normative and behavioral factors, along with community violence, significantly influenced individual violence, especially among African Americans or Blacks. Thus, sociodemographic factors of age, education, employment, geographic location, household composition, marital status, incarceration and socioeconomic statuses, which have been previously shown to be associated with violence, were included in this research to control for known predictors.

The primary independent variable (IV) examined in this research was perceptions of police. Nadal and colleagues (2017) found that Blacks viewed police less favorably than Whites and Hispanics. Although research shows that African American men have poor perceptions of police (Mcneeley & Grothoff, 2016; Weitzer & Tuch, 2004; Brown & Benedict, 2002), there is limited research on the relationship between African

American men's perceptions of police and community violence. Sousa (2013) found that social media use was associated with violence or a propensity toward acts of violence, although little to no research exists regarding this association among urban African American men.

### **Problem Statement**

Homicides among African American males are significantly higher than other groups throughout the United States (United States Department of Justice [USDOJ], 2015). More African Americans are victims of violence, especially deadly violence, compared to any other racial or ethnic group. In fact, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC, 2016) reported that 3% of African American males will not reach their 45<sup>th</sup> birthday due to violence, which is alarming given that violence is 100% preventable (CDC, 2016). Even though there has been a decrease in homicide rates to 4.9 per 100,000 persons in 2015 (Federal Bureau of Investigation [FBI] Uniform Crime Reports, 2015), African American males continue to die at an alarming rate in the United States (Xu, Murphy, Kochanek, & Bastian, 2016). In fact, homicide was the leading cause of death for non-Hispanic Blacks ages 1 through 44, compared to being the fifth leading cause of death for non-Hispanic Whites of similar ages (Sumner et al., 2015). Lo, Howell, and Cheng (2013) reported that African American males, ages 15 to 34, were at greater risk of being a victim, as well as committing a violent crime, than any other group of males in the U.S. For example, David-Ferdon, Dahlberg, and Kegler (2013) reported that the homicide rate for Black males, aged 10-24, remained the highest of all demographic

groups (38 per 100,000) compared to the homicide rate for all young males aged 10-24 (2 per 100,000).

Lee (2016) and Lo et al. (2013) reported that those living in urban communities experience significantly higher rates of violence compared with other ethnic groups in different communities (i.e., rural, suburban). For example, the CDC (MMWR, 2013) reported that the age-adjusted homicide rate for Blacks, aged 10–24, remained the highest compared to Whites. Researchers found that males living in urban communities in California, Louisiana, Maryland, New York, Pennsylvania, and Washington, DC, were at an increased risk of violence (Martinez, Stowell, & Iwama, 2016; United States Department of Justice, 2015), which suggested that African American men living in urban communities throughout the United States were more likely to have similar experiences regarding violence. Because of this, Glackin and Gray (2016) reported that it becomes essential to identify predictors and moderators of violence to reduce the increased burden of mortality, incarceration, and reduced productivity of African Americans living in urban communities given the impact on local and national communities with high levels of violence.

Although this research on violence among African American men living in urban communities illuminated important findings, I found no research that examined whether social media use moderates the established relationship of perceptions about police and community violence. For purposes of this research, violence is defined as any type of act or behavior that could cause physical or mental harm to another person. Being a victim of violence, regardless of the perpetrator's race or ethnicity, is defined as being the victim of

an act or behavior that caused or could cause physical or mental harm. For purposes of this research, community violence included a wide range of acts including, but not limited to, riots, sniper attacks, drive-by shootings, gang/rival wars, bombings, widespread sexual, physical or emotional abuse, whether perpetrated or experienced firsthand.

Attitudes and perceptions, defined as feelings about oneself (Gordon, 2016) and toward others (Romero et al., 2015; Todd et al., 2016), including law enforcement, influences all aspects of human interaction. The term *attitudes* and *perceptions* used throughout this dissertation refer to perceptions of law enforcement or police. Nadal, Davidoff, and Allicock (2017) found that Black Americans were more likely to view police negatively compared to Whites and Latinos. However, a knowledge gap exists on whether social media moderates the association between perceptions toward law enforcement and violence among African Americans living in urban communities. While African Americans' perceptions of police/law enforcement is documented in the literature, there is a lack of studies examining whether social media moderates this association among African American men.

The position that social media use might moderate the association between perceptions about police and community violence has some support from other research findings. For example, Romero et al. (2015) found an association between social media and attitudes and perceptions with being stressed and expressing aggressive behavior. Maxwell (2016) found an association between rage and social media among young African American adults. Further research is warranted to examine the moderating effect

of social media use among African American men, and perceptions and attitudes towards others, in particular, police, in an effort to address the high prevalence of violence in urban communities. Facebook is the primary form of social media use examined in this dissertation because Facebook is one of the primary forms of social media used in African American communities to communicate with family and friends (Vigil & Wu, 2015).

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to examine the moderating influence of social media on the relationship between perceptions of police and community violence among African American men. Specifically, this quantitative, cross-sectional study described the perceptions African American men have toward police/law enforcement, examined the association between perceptions of police and community violence among African American men, and tested whether social media use moderates the association between perceptions of police and community violence among African American males living in urban communities.

The rationale for examining whether social media moderates the association between perceptions of police and community violence was anecdotal findings suggesting that using social media increases violence among certain groups (Maxwell, 2016). However, this has not been fully examined among African American males, a group already having substantially high rates of violence. Another important factor was that research shows that African Americans have poor perceptions of police and law enforcement (Jenkins, 2011; Gaa & Brunson, 2015; Bejan, 2018), but the relationship



between whether this perception of police is associated with community violence has not been fully examined among African American men. This study described perceptions of police, examined the association between perceptions of police and community violence, and tested whether social media moderates the association between perceptions of police and community violence among African American males, ages 18 to 44, who reside in urban communities within Jacksonville, Florida. Jacksonville, Florida was selected as the site for this study since in 2016, 38.4% of its residents ( $N = 927,903$ ) were African Americans (Florida Department of Health, Division of Public Health Statistics & Performance Management, 2017a). In addition, the homicide rate in 2016 for Blacks living in Jacksonville (Duval County) was 12.0 per 100,000 compared with 6.4 per 100,000 for all Black Floridians (Florida Department of Health, Division of Public Health Statistics & Performance Management, 2017b). Jacksonville was selected because of the high homicide rates.

Individual and socioecological factors, such as environmental factors, were measured and described since they were shown to predict violence in seminal research studies conducted by Cubbin, Pickle, & Fingerhut (2000) and Cunradi, Caetano, Clark, and Schafer (2000). Light and Ulmer (2016) reported that socioeconomic, demographic and legal contexts should be used to better understand and predict trends in criminal violence for Blacks. Light and Ulmer (2016) further argued that contemporary social conditions like mass incarceration, contemporary immigration, wealth inequality, residential segregation, and structural disadvantage have substantially predicted violent and/or aggressive behavior in African American males. It is important to determine

whether perceptions toward police among African American men, ages 18 to 44, are changing. In addition, there is a substantial gap in the current literature on how social media moderates the association between perceptions between police and community violence among African American males, ages 18 to 44.

### **Research Questions**

Using a quantitative, cross-sectional study design, the research questions for analysis were as follows:

1. What is the relationship between perceptions of police and community violence among African American men ages 18 to 44?
2. What is the relationship between social media use and community violence among African American men ages 18 to 44?
3. How does social media use moderate the relationship between perception of police and community violence among African American men ages 18 to 44?

### **Theoretical Basis/Conceptual Framework**

The primary theoretical framework used in this study was the social cognitive theory (National Cancer Institute, 2005; Sincero, 2012). The social cognitive theory (SCT), first developed by Bandura in 1975, proposed that humans improve their behaviors through a process of self-observation and evaluation. According to Bandura (1977), all human behavior, including behaviors related to violence, are learned by interacting with one's social environment. Bandura explained that individuals learn how to behave violently from observing and modeling others in their day-to-day environments (Bandura, 1997; Chitrani, Sanauddin, & Owais, 2015). Bandura (1977) further theorized

that if violent behavior is rewarded or commended, individuals learn or feel that this is acceptable behavior. Chitrali and colleagues (2015) explained that individuals imitate behavior that they observe and find others positively endorsing.

According to SCT, the environment and the individual are interrelated and affect behavior (Chitrali, Sanauddin, & Owais, 2015). The SCT is a derivative of the social learning theory (SLT), which posits that individuals learn (a) from their own experiences, (b) by observing others' actions and (c) by seeing the benefits of those actions. Bandura added to the SLT by including the concept of self-efficacy (the ability to make and sustain a change) and renaming SLT to SCT (Chitrali, Sanauddin, & Owais, 2015).

SCT theory was applied to this research in that I sought to determine how social media moderates the association between attitudes and perceptions toward police and community violence among African American men. Messages that promote positive images using social media can help to improve individuals' perceptions of police and community violence, especially among African American men. This can be impactful since positive messages can be disseminated to a diverse group of individuals who use social media, especially African American men. Moreover, SCT can be used to help foster better relationships between police, community members and in particular, African American men in the community, by developing and implementing interventions that seek to change perceptions of each group to ultimately foster and promote better relations in the community.

### **Nature of the Study**

The nature of this study included a quantitative, cross-sectional design (Rudenstam & Newton, 2015) to survey African American men, ages 18 to 44 years, who live in Jacksonville, Florida. A total of 45 African American men were sought to participate in this study in order to have 80% power and 95% confidence to detect a statistically significant difference between one independent continuous variable (perceptions of police), and one moderating variable (social media use) having medium effect sizes of .25 (Erdfelder, Faul, & Buchner, 1996). This sample size of 45 also included the assumption that 5% of African American males who begin the survey would be unable to finish. The 2016 population of African American males, ages 20 to 44, living in Jacksonville, Florida (Duval County), was approximately 47,000 (Florida Department of Health, Division of Public Health Statistics & Performance Management, 2017a).

This study involved a single-participant design where men meeting the inclusion criteria were invited to participate by completing a survey. Inclusion criteria were: (a) self-identifying as African American or Black (b) being between the ages of 18 to 44, and (c) willingness to complete a set of surveys with the researcher. The approach involved primary data collection using a convenience sample, where African American men from various venues like barbershops, churches, local colleges and universities, malls, bus stations, grocery stores, and fraternal organizations were informed about the study, and asked to participate by completing a research-administered survey. These venues were selected because of the high percentage of African American men who patronize them.

Consenting participants completed surveys about their experiences with violence, sociodemographic characteristics, sociopolitical factors, and perceptions and attitudes.

Regression analysis was used since the sole dependent variable was continuous (community violence), the independent variable was continuous (perceptions about police) and the moderating variable was continuous (social media use). Regression analysis, following methods outlined by Hatcher and Stepanski (1999), was used to analyze these data to determine the association between independent variables and the dependent variable (degree of violence). The analysis focused on determining how much variance the independent variables accounted for in the dependent variable. Regression was used since it is an analytical model that eliminates variables, one at a time, that is, explaining the least amount of variance in the model. Thus, through a series of steps, the final model retains only variables that statistically significantly explain a good proportion of the variance in the independent variable.

### **Definitions**

According to Lee (2016), violence is defined as the intentional use of force that results in injury, death, or harm. In this study, I used a broad definition of community violence in an effort to capture any experience or exposure to a violent act. Specifically, the dependent variable in this research is community violence, which was measured by the the Past Feelings and Acts of Violence (PFAV) instrument developed by Plutchik and Pragg (1990) as well as answering four close-ended questions. The PFAV scale was used to measure violence risk and the propensity for violence (Plutchik & Pragg, 1990). This PFAV scale is a 12-item measurement tool designed for self-completion with Likert-

type responses. The maximum score is 33, representing a high propensity or risk for violence (Plutchik & Pragg, 1990). The PFAV has high interitem reliability and an alpha coefficient of 0.85, indicating that it is a reliable measure (Cervantes et al., 2006). The PFAV was analyzed as a continuous measure to represent degree of violence (ranging from 0-33).

Perceptions and attitudes toward police was the primary independent variable, which was measured using the Perceptions of Police Scale (POPS) developed by Nadal and Davidoff (2015). POPS is a validated survey with 12-items that has two primary subscales: general attitudes toward police and perceptions of bias. Nadal and Davidoff (2015) reported that the general attitudes toward policy subscale has a Cronbach's alpha of .91.

The Social Media Use Integration Scale (SMUIS), developed by Jenkins-Guarnieri, Wright and Johnson (2013) was used to measure social media use, specifically Facebook, of African American men. SMUIS was developed to measure the incorporation of social behaviors and daily practices of social media users (Jenkins-Guarnieri, Wright & Johnson, 2013). The SMUIS has 10 items to measure two factors: one factor consists of six items measuring social integration and emotional connection; and the other 4-item factor measuring integration into social routines (Jenkins-Guarnieri, Wright & Johnson, 2013). SMUIS has high reliability correlation scores ( $r = .803$ ) with each factor having high reliability scores (factor 1,  $r = .804$ ; factor 2,  $r = .676$ ) (Jenkins-Guarnieri, Wright & Johnson, 2013).

Sociodemographic characteristics were descriptively analyzed. Sociodemographic characteristics that were measured included: age, education status (by asking “What is the highest grade you have completed?”); employment status (by asking “Are you currently employed full or part time outside of the home?”); geographic location by obtaining the respondent’s zip code; household composition (by asking “How many people currently live with you?”); marital status (by asking whether the participant is married, single, separated, divorced, or widowed, or whether one is in a committed relationship); socioeconomic status (by asking “What is your current annual household income?”).

### **Assumptions, Scope/Delimitations, and Limitations**

While regression analysis is a very powerful statistical tool to use for data with a continuous dependent variable (degree of violence), there are limitations with this analysis. For example, having small sample sizes for those exposed to violence might threaten the validity of the analysis (Hatcher & Stepanski, 1999). If very few men are exposed to violence, then there will be little to no variance on the dependent variable, making it difficult to detect a statistically significant difference between study factors, provided one exists. This is one reason that the dependent variable was asked in several different ways to increase the likelihood that a large number of participants would have been exposed to some level of violence. The analysis also sought to examine trends toward violence as well as reported the observed probabilities for findings due to chance. Other limitations that potentially affect the entire study is recruiting only men truly interested in this research, resulting in potential selection bias (Saddler, 2010). This is why I sought to recruit men from various venues.

I also noted how many men refused to participate in the study. Noting how many men refused to participate helped to show that the sample was representative of any African American male who lives in Jacksonville. Another potential limitation is that individuals might be fearful of answering truthfully, which could result in missing information, or responses that participants feel are desired, resulting in information bias (Krumpal, 2013). One way to eliminate this potential limitation is to make the survey completely anonymous to avoid collecting any identifying or contact information that could in any way identify study respondents.

Another limitation, as seen in most quantitative study designs, is that all variables important to predict violence might not be measured as part of this study (Palinkas, 2014). That is why I searched the scientific literature to identify factors shown to be important to, or statistically significantly associated with, violence in other groups as well as specifically important in African American men. I acknowledge the potential for personal bias given the fact that I am an African American male who lives in an urban community with a high prevalence of violence, and with personal experiences of being a victim of violence.

Researchers must tailor their data according to their research questions. I used primary data collection methods to answer specific questions in this research. According to the literature, primary data collection methods consist of what the researcher collects firsthand (Palinkas, 2014). Several instruments and items were used to measure the variables of interest in this study. Questions on sociodemographic characteristics were collected using a demographic information sheet; for example, the form included age,



level of education, marital status, geographic location (i.e., zip code), household composition, incarceration status, and socioeconomic level (as defined by annual household income).

### **Significance of the Study**

This study was designed to decrease the information gap between what is known about violence among African American men, and whether social media use moderates the association between perceptions of police and community violence. It is important to understand how social media use moderates the association between perceptions toward police and community violence given the increased use of social media in every day society (Shahjahan & Christy, 2014; Pew Research Center, 2018). This study contributes original information on how perceptions of police and social media are associated with violence among urban, African American men, ages 18 to 44. It is expected that study findings lead to the development of strategies and interventions that address violence, and ultimately lessen the rates of violence among African American men living in urban communities throughout Jacksonville, Florida.

According to the United States Department of Justice (U.S. DOJ) (2015), valid research findings help to inform others when developing strategies and interventions to reduce violence within African American communities. Study findings can inform the development of strategies and interventions specifically designed to reduce the negativity of social media and help African American men filter inaccurate social media information that might contribute to creating community violence. Reducing use of inaccurate or enraging social media sources can serve to decrease propaganda that has the

potential to further increase violence among African American men, ages 18 to 44, who have the highest rates of violence (U.S. DOJ, 2015).

According to the Association for Psychological Science (2016), social change occurs when an organization or institution alters existing practice to adopt new practices based on a change in values, beliefs or new information. The U.S. DOJ (2015) explained that a large body of evidence must exist before institutions, organizations, or even policy makers can implement social change. One innovative approach to changing the moderating effects of social media, given its diverse and widespread application, is to create positive messages for widespread dissemination. Findings from this research can contribute to determining whether social media moderates can be used to promote messages that eventually reduce violence among African American males, ages 18 to 44, thus creating positive social change. That is one reason why this research seeks to simultaneously examine perceptions of police and social media as a moderator, since these factors can be carefully incorporated into designed interventions.

### **Summary (and Transition)**

African Americans experience homicides at alarming rates in the United States—more than any other racial or ethnic group. This dissertation was designed to examine the association between perceptions of law enforcement and violence among African American men, ages 18 to 44, as well as test whether social media use moderates this relationship.

Chapter 2 is a review of the literature as it relates to African American men and violence, perceptions of law enforcement, portrayal in the social media and usage

patterns, and current information about the association of these variables. Chapter 2 shares evidence where African American men are negatively portrayed in the social media.

The research design is described in Chapter 3 as well as the instruments used, sampling techniques, data collection strategy, and proposed data analysis. How participants were informed about the study and asked to participate by completing a survey, along with the descriptive and analytical analyses, are presented in Chapter 3. The perceptions of police scale developed by Nadal and Davidoff (2015) was used to assess participants' attitudes and perception about police/law enforcement. The social media use integration scale developed by Jenkins-Guarnieri (2013) was used to measure the use of Facebook. The Past Feelings and Violence scale developed by Plutchik & Pragg (1990) was used to measure violence exposure and involvement. Responses on these validated scales, along with sociodemographic characteristics, were then analyzed to answer specific aims of this research.

Chapter 4 includes results from the descriptive analysis as well as reports on the three research questions in this study. Statistically significant findings are presented in Chapter 4 in addition to rejecting or retaining the null hypothesis for each of the three research questions in this study. Overall findings were that African American male have a poor perception of police and that this perception significantly statistically is associated with community violence. Findings also show that social media use is not statistically significantly associated with community violence, nor does it moderate the association

between perceptions of police and community violence among African American men participating in this study.

Chapter 5 includes implications, limitations, the social impact of this research, recommendations for future research studies and a closing summary. Implications are to develop interventions that will bridge the gap between law enforcement and community members.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### **Introduction**

This chapter consists of a literature review regarding violence and African American men. African Americans' involvement with violence, as a perpetrator or a victim, is presented. In addition, this literature review presents current perceptions of police and social media use, and factors associated with violence among African American men. The terms *Black* and *African American* are used interchangeably throughout this dissertation to refer to individuals born in America, of darker skin color, whose ancestry originated in Africa. Specifically, this literature review includes research on African Americans' attitudes and perceptions toward law enforcement and perceptions as they relate to being involved with violence. Additionally, this review presents violence in social media, social media's effect on African Americans, including how African Americans are portrayed in social media and social media's potential impact.

Literature used in this review was identified from the following series of academic databases: EBSCO ebooks, ProQuest Science Journals, PsycARTICLES, PsychINFO, and PubMed. I searched the literature for information on violence (dependent variable), attitudes and perceptions toward law enforcement (independent variable) and social media use (moderating variable) in African American men. Specifically, search terms included violence, predictors of violence, attitudes of police/law enforcement, perceptions of police/law enforcement, social media use, media violence, social media exhibits of African American men, and social media use and violence among African American men. This review concludes by presenting prior

research examining the association between attitudes and perceptions toward police and community violence as moderated by social media use among African American men.

### **Violence among African Americans**

Violence is defined as the premeditated use of physical force or the threat of force against another person or oneself, which can cause injury or death, mental harm, poor deprivation or development (Ioan et al., 2013). *Community violence* is a complex term that refers to a wide range of events which includes, but is not limited to, drive-by shootings; workplace assaults; gang wars; sexual-, physical- and emotional abuse; riots; and sniper attacks (PTSD, 2007).

Although the number of reported homicides steadily decreased in the general population from 1990 through 2016, recent findings indicate that violent crimes are on the rise in the United States. For example, there was a 4% increase in violent crimes from 2015 to 2016 (US Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2018). According to the FBI Supplementary Homicide Report (SHR, 2018), the homicide rate among Blacks in the United States was 19 per 100,000 individuals, which was substantially higher than the homicide rate of 3 persons per 100,000 for White individuals. Violence also disproportionately affected African American men since 88% of the 7,014 Black homicide victims in 2015 were men (FBI SHR, 2018). In fact, the overall rate of homicide among Black men was 34 per 100,000, compared to the overall rate of homicides among White men (4 per 100,000; FBI SHR, 2018). Researchers continue to search for reasons why violence is more prevalent in African American communities compared with other communities in America (Jackson, Shestov & Saadatmand, 2017).

### **Predictors of Violence among African American Men**

A seminal article by Hastings and Hamberger (1997) outlined that the sociodemographic predictors of violence were previous violent behavior, age, gender/sex, race, socioeconomic status, family history of violence, and alcohol use. Since this seminal study, Farrington, Gaffney and Ttofi (2017) conducted a systematic review of 216 systematic review studies to identify factors that predict violence (Farrington, Gaffney & Ttofi, 2017). Along with Farrington et al. (2017), other researchers have identified factors that predict violence including age, gender/sex, socioeconomic status, family history of violence, alcohol use, and geographical location/community violence exposure were predictive of violence.

#### **Age**

Emerging adults, defined as individuals, ages 18-29, were significantly more likely to be involved in violence. Blacks, ages 18-29 years old, experience violence at high levels compared to other age groups. In fact, although the US Census (2016) reported that Blacks, ages to 18-29, represent about 2% of the population in the United States, the CDC (2017) reported that 26% of assault victims and 21% of homicide victims were Blacks, ages 18-29.

#### **Gender**

Men were traditionally believed to be more violent, or more aggressive, than women. According to McDonald and Navarette (2012), men have been raised to be “warriors.” In particular, these authors hypothesized that men are physiologically programmed to protect themselves, their properties and their families, including women

and children. Thus, according to this Warrior hypothesis, men would be more likely to be involved with violence (McDonald, Navarette & Vugt, 2012). McDonald, Navarette and Vugt (2012) further proposed that men who do not have economic power would sometimes resort to violent tactics if they do not have other options to obtain economic success. McDonald's position was consistent with Merton's Strain Theory (1938), which posited that individuals of lesser economic power (i.e., limited to no resources) respond to the strains of society in one of five ways. Merton (1938) defined one response as innovation where individuals use illegitimate or unconventional ways to obtain the goals that society values. Merton (1938) defined other responses of: conformity where individuals seek to obtain goals valued by society in legitimate ways; ritualism where individuals set more humble, achievable goals; retreatism where individuals do not conform or adhere to society's values or standards; and rebellion where individuals collectively work to replace goals valued by society with goals they find more meaningful or valuable. Thus, African American men may be responding with, or involved with violence as a means to adjust to their social and societal circumstances. This theory might be further supported by the plethora of research showing that Black males were significantly more likely to be a victim (or perpetrator of) violent crimes (Xu et al., 2016; Sumner et al., 2015; FBI, 2015).

### **Socioeconomic Status (SES)/Income**

According to the American Psychological Association (2012), socioeconomic status (SES) was not just about financial status but also was determined by educational accomplishment, monetary security, and personal perceptions of social status and social



class. Evaluating violence at the community level can be significant because factors at this level often impacted a mass number of people (Chen, Voisin, & Jacobson, 2016; McMahon et al., 2013). Socioeconomic status (SES) in the community played a vital role in that most communities are frequently segregated by SES, racial makeup as well as ethnicity. Focusing on the risk and protective aspects of violence at the communal level will most likely create the most change in the community (Chen et al., 2016; McMahon et al., 2013).

Some risk factors of community violence included high levels of unemployment, poverty and transiency, poor housing conditions, gang violence, emotional anguish and an absence of access to services (Chen et al., 2016; McMahon et al., 2013). On the other hand, there were positive factors that safeguard people and communities from these risk factors such as having a steady economy, constructive communal standards, ample resources, high levels of communal solidity, family support and rewards for prosocial civic participation (Jain & Cohen, 2013).

### **Family History of Violence**

Smith-Marek and colleagues (2015) found that individuals who committed violent crimes as youth were more likely to commit violent crimes as adults. In addition, these researchers found a significantly strong association of having a family history of violence and being a victim of violence (i.e., intimate partner violence) as an adult. Smith-Marek and colleagues (2015) also found this relationship to be stronger for females than for males; thus, women who had a family history of violence were significantly more likely to be a victim of violence as an adult compared to males. Boyas et al. (2017) also

provided additional support that African Americans who were exposed to violence are significantly more likely to have parental conflicts; their cross-sectional study showed a statistically significant association between increased use of violence and parental conflicts among 2,328 African American youth ages 12-17.

### **Incarceration Status**

According to the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP, 2014), incarcerations increased from approximately 500,000 in 1980, and projected to be more than 2.2 million people incarcerated by 2015. According to the NAACP (2014), 1 in every 37 adults or 2.7% of the total United States population was under some form of correctional supervision. However, 2.3 million, or 34% of the total 6.8 million African Americans living in the United States were under some form of correctional supervision (NAACP, 2014). Nellis (2016), as part of the Sentencing Project, reported that Blacks were incarcerated at a rate that is 5.1 times more than their White counterparts. Moreover, more than half of the prison population in Alabama, Delaware, Georgia, Illinois, Louisiana, Maryland, Michigan, Mississippi, New Jersey, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Virginia were Black or African American. Thus, it is important to assess involvement or exposure to prisons/incarceration since that can affect how African Americans perceive law enforcement and police.

### **Geographic Location**

Truman and Langton (2014) reported that Blacks are significantly more likely to be exposed to, or a victim of violence since they were more likely to live in geographical areas or neighborhoods with high rates of community violence. In fact, the FBI reported

this in a 2015 (Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), 2015) report, and later again in a 2018 (FBI, 2018) report that those living in urban communities, especially Blacks, had a high risk of being involved with violence.

Studies are increasingly examining factors beyond the traditional sociodemographic factors to explain the increasing levels of violence in American and specifically among African American men. Social media and attitudes and perceptions and their association to violence were explored in this review.

### **Aggression and Learned Behavior**

Aggression is defined as intentional acts of violent acts or behavior toward another person or group. Khaurana (2015) highlighted issues related to aggression that plague individuals with the use of media. Khaurana (2015) asserted that safety is an ongoing concern. Khaurana (2015) highlighted the amount of violence that is depicted in the various forms of media used. Krahé (2014) believed that there is an ongoing debate regarding the media and the exposure of violence it brings to its audience at large. Research contended that aggressive behavior has been demonstrated in numerous studies by people of all ages, races, sexes, and personality types (Anderson, 2016). The common theme within the literature was that media violence effects are not large in itself, but over time can accumulate into significant changes in behavior that greatly impact both the individual and society (Anderson, 2016).

Bandura's (1975) seminal Bobo Doll experiment revealed that young individuals were significantly influenced by actions of adults (Bandura, 1975; McLeod, 2014). Specifically, young adults continued to behave aggressively when adults committing

similar aggressive behaviors were rewarded; on the other hand, young adults stopped behaving aggressively when adults committing similar aggressive behaviors were punished (Bandura, 1975). This work significantly impacted the field of social psychology and directly impacted this research since it supports the fact that what individuals observe through various communication technologies and mass communication media directly influences behaviors and actions. Bandura's theory (1975) and research findings were further supported in work by Şengönül, (2017) who showed that when a screen hero used violence as a means to reach success, viewers were affected and resorted to violence to settle their real-life conflicts.

### **Attitudes and Perceptions of Violence among African Americans**

The positive association between victimization and violence is well documented throughout literature. Research with African American male adolescents demonstrates that youth who have experiences of victimization in the community are much more likely to exhibit aggressive and violent behaviors (Voisin et al., 2016). Voisin and colleagues (2016) conducted a cross-sectional study using a convenience sample of 638 African American adolescents living in predominantly low-income, urban communities to learn more about their views on community violence, mental health, school engagement activities, substance use, and sexual behaviors. Youth, ages 13 to 24, were recruited from a variety of community locations, including three high schools, one church youth group, two community youth organizations, and four public places like parks, movie theatres, malls and fast food restaurants where youth frequented. Voisin et. al. (2016) found that African American male adolescents residing in urban neighborhoods may be influenced

by a discrete, informal street code that requires aggressive behavior or acts of toughness in order to obtain the respect of others. Research supports the existence of street codes that develop through a sense of hopelessness due to racial, structural, and economic inequalities, and their role in increasing delinquent and violent behavior. While it was proposed that acquiring their street code protects youth from victimization, research has demonstrated that this actually increases the risk of victimization (Voisin et al., 2016).

In economically disadvantaged communities, youth are more likely to demonstrate high rates of community violence compared with youth from other communities. Specifically, Gaylord-Harden et al. (2015) reported that a disproportionately high number of African American youth living in low-income neighborhoods are involved with, or exposed to violence. Gaylord-Harden, Zakaryan, Bernard, and Pekoc (2015) utilized cluster analysis to identify violence and aggressive behavior, and found that African American males were significantly more likely to experience violence and have psychosocial factors related to violent behaviors. The social and economic burden of community violence for African American males includes elevated rates of homicide and incarceration; therefore, it is imperative that scholars and researchers provide continued efforts to increasing and advancing our knowledge of predictors of violence among this group (Murry, Block, & Liu, 2016).

A study conducted by Reed et al. (2014) to determine if physical violence experiences occurring during early and late adolescent (12-21 years of age) places African American males at increased risk for interpersonal violence experiences beyond adulthood. African American males from four urban sites in the Northeast were recruited

to participate in this cross-sectional study. Approximately 10% of participants reported experiencing physical violence victimization during early or late adolescence. Through logistic regression analysis, African American males aged 30 years and older who reported experiencing acts of violence during adolescent were 3.7 times more likely to report involvement in street violence within the past 6 months, and 3.2 times more likely to report perpetration within the past year than African American males who did not report experiencing physical violence during adolescence (Reed et al., 2014).

Researchers document that African American males experiencing physical violence in early adolescence significantly influences their emotional and social development (Gau & Brunson, 2015; Slocum, Ann Wiley, & Esbensen, 2016). Research provides supporting evidence that any type of violence experienced in young children and adolescents increases risk for deviant behavior and involvement in crime (Gau & Brunson, 2015). Interviews conducted with African American male participants about their cumulative exposure to violence as victims and witnesses established a deeper understanding of their vulnerability as African American males in their Baltimore neighborhoods. Many of the participants demonstrated an “Am I next?” mentality, as the continued presence of violence in their communities demonstrated susceptibility to homicide and premature death . The narratives of fear were pervasive among interviewees, as the traumas and complexity of these experiences for young men experienced chronic risk. They also provided insight as to how trauma and loss may be shaped by masculinity. Generally, males, are socialized and represented as fearless and tough, and African American males in urban contexts are socialized to street codes and

expected to carry a persona of toughness. Anger expressed through violence fits comfortably within the framework of masculinity, especially in urban environments (Slocum, Ann Wiley, & Esbensen, 2016).

### **Self-Perceptions and Association with Violence**

What remains relatively unknown is how African American men view themselves, and whether their perceptions of self, others and even law enforcement relates to their views and experiences with violence. Perceptions of self- and others significantly affect individuals ages 13 to 18. In fact, Anderson (2016) showed that violence in social media affects an adolescent's behavior through observational learning where Krahe (2014) suggested that this strong impact is due to diminished social interactions and induced aggressiveness. Young adults who spend endless time consumed with technology and social media often have a difficult time developing social skills (Gansner, 2017). The adolescent mind is not fully developed and is easily influenced (Anderson, 2016). Whether it is fear or excitement, the emotions elicited after viewing violent content leaves an imprint (Byrd, Gilbert, & Richardson, 2017).

Even though Black males have made significant progress to cope with segregation and discrimination in America as well as access educational and economic opportunities, significant barriers still exist that affect other Americans' perceptions of them (Jenkins, 2011). There are various factors that influence opportunities and achievements of Black men and society's perceptions and attitudes towards this group as well as how they perceive themselves can impact their lives (Jenkins, 2011). Review of the social and cognitive science literature revealed that media is less likely to present Black boys and

men as being positive, independent contributors to society as being successful in life (Jenkins, 2011).

### **Perceptions Toward Others and Association with Violence**

According to Tesfamariam (2012), Black-on-Black violence is a part of a long history of violence within African American communities. In particular, Tesfamariam (2012) sought to understand why African American men commit violent acts against other Black men, more than other ethnic or racial groups. Tesfamariam (2012) found that a history of segregation, limited employment opportunities and extended lengths of unemployment as well as low achieving educational systems reduces Black males' self-esteem, resulting in a propensity for increased violence. Tesfamariam (2012) also concludes that Black males, as a result of their limited resources and environmental conditions, often result to violent acts to protect territorial/geographical space (that they don't own) to foster power and increase self-esteem, which is consistent with Merton's Strain Theory (1938). Thus, the theory is that Black men become violent against anyone else in their proximity, which most likely, tends to be other Blacks, or individuals who are of similar descent, ethnicity, or communal upbringing.

Researchers like James-Johnson are pursuing ways to instill more self-worth into Black men in communities across America by launching the Cain and Abel project (James-Johnson, 2017). According to James-Johnson (2017), the aim of this project is to inspire Black males living in urban communities to have respect and value others in the communities in which they live. James-Johnson (2017), using an interactive strategy of having victims of violence and perpetrators engrave the names of those who were killed



on a public monument, suggests that this activity will help to increase self-awareness and empathy for others. Although interventions like these seem promising, results and effectiveness is still being studied and is currently unknown.

### **Perceptions of Law Enforcement and Association with Violence**

The use of deadly force by law enforcement is viewed by the public as the most powerful form of authority and it can be undermining to the perception of the individuals who are impacted, thus distorting the legitimacy of law enforcement (Bejan, 2018). According to Donaldson (2015), Black men are depicted by police officers as dangerous suspects. Bejan (2018) denoted that these incidents, including the killing of law enforcement officers, have led various scholars to look at whether there have been changes in practical policing that is reflected in amplified crime. In 2018, Bejan (2018) reported that the levels of police violence/killings were similar in Blacks as for other ethnic or racial groups. Social media reports/images increase perception that Blacks experience police maltreatment, to include profiling, beatings and murder, at higher rates than other ethnic or racial groups. Lim (2015) found that broadcasting of highly publicized cases (i.e., Brown versus Ferguson, Missouri) causes national attention to focus on police maltreatment and injustice against individuals, especially minorities, which then further supports individuals' negative perceptions of police. In addition, Lim (2015) further explains that social media also serves to confirm individuals' negative beliefs and perceptions with others having similarly negative beliefs and perceptions, thus making it seem that these negative views about police maltreatment are pervasive and widely accepted as normal occurrences in American society.

According to Bejan et. al (2018), deadly interactions between law enforcement and African Americans increased with the killing of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri. Bejan (2018) reported that these fatal interactions are rare in the context of all interactions between law enforcement and African American males. However, Bejan (2018) also found that these interactions evoke strong emotional reactions from those directly impacted by these acts, including citizens and law enforcement officers/officials. These events typically result in damaged perceptions of Blacks and of law enforcement, and are normally slow to resolve (Bejan, 2018).

Gua and Brunson (2015) conducted face-to-face interviews with 45 males ages 13 to 19 identified from three low-income neighborhoods in St. Louis, Missouri, to learn more about youths' views regarding police. Through purposive sampling, youth who participated in various community organizations in the community were invited to participate in in-depth interviews. Gua and Brunson (2015) found that African American men felt their lives are not valued, and do not trust authorities to properly investigate deaths or protect African American males. This predisposes African American men to remain alert for looming danger. An intentional state of alertness and heightened reactions are a result from these experiences and can contribute to the perception of violence among African American males (Gau & Brunson, 2015).

Jenkins (2011) reported that expectations and biases on the behalf of law enforcement, employers, educators, health care providers and other public stakeholders plays a significant role in influencing the outcomes of millions of Black males as well as their perceptions of themselves, and their sense of empowerment to achieve and be

successful under adverse circumstances (Jenkins, 2011). Jenkins' (2011) peer-reviewed commentary discusses three studies conducted by *The Opportunity Agenda* examining perceptions of African American men and boys, and how they view the media, and opportunities that exist to help improve their lives and everyday circumstances. Jenkins (2011) stated that while significant time has been spent to uncovering societal injustices toward Black men, significantly more work is required to integrate strategies and interventions into existing social and societal infrastructure to effectively impact systemic change.

Coke (2018) reported that societal subconscious biases make it difficult to view Black males as victims, especially since the crime victims' movement has historically been led by White, middle-class Americans. As a result, Coke (2018) reported that legislation often fails to award Black male victims as compared to other ethnic or racial male victims who legally seek compensation due to being a victim of an individual or societal injustice. These same subconscious bias about Blacks being the perpetrator, rather than the victim, more than likely strains relationships between Blacks, law enforcement and the criminal justice system.

Another issue that often influences the relation between law enforcement and the community is the continued code of silence (George & Harris, 2015; Owen & Carrington, 2014) that affects African American communities. In essence, African American communities often protect those who commit violent crimes, due to several reasons including, but not limited to, feeling protected by law enforcement, retaliation from the perpetrator and/or the perpetrator's family, or an overall lack of empathy for the victim or

commitment to the community (George & Harris, 2015; Owen & Carrington, 2014).

Furthermore, little to no research exists examining the association between the use of social media, perceptions of self- and of law enforcement, and violence.

### **Social Media Use**

The use of social media is now an integrated part of modern day culture.

According to Shahjahan and Chisty (2014), social media websites are now everywhere to address all types needs and interests. The Pew Research Center (2018) found a high prevalence of social media use where 88% of Americans, ages 18 to 29, were using social media. These sites provide unique ways for individuals to communicate on a global level (Shahjahan & Chisty, 2014). Onukwube (2016) suggested that the majority of global communication is exchanged using social media rather than other traditional forms of communication, including but not limited to telephone or written correspondence. The Association for Psychological Science (APS, 2016) reports that using social media activates pleasure areas in the brain, which produces similar emotions and feelings. For example, any enjoyable experience, like winning money, eating a favorite food, or traveling to a favorite place, produces a response in the brain similar to responses produced from receiving “likes” on social media posts (APS, 2016).

Facebook was among the first social networking application available to consumers, and is now one of the most widely used forms of social media (Vigil & Wu, 2015). According to Vigil and Wu (2015), there are more than several hundred million Facebook users worldwide in 2012. According to Facebook (Digital Divide, January 29, 2015), 90% of African Americans use this social media application to communicate with

family and friends. Communication is the essential element that creates and maintains relationships. Due to the onset of social media, communication is simple and fast (Shahjahan & Chisty, 2014). Social media networking sites that allow for this fast and simple form of communication include applications such as Snapchat, Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter. These social media networking sites allow individuals to connect with others all over the world (Shahjahan & Chisty, 2014). There are positive results when utilized correctly, such as highlighting positive interactions, noteworthy accomplishments, and sharing personal or agency updates (Feroz, Kahn, and Sang, 2014). Although the use of social media broadens the social connection to the world, it does not come without its risks (Ramasubbu, 2015). Some of its adolescent users face peer pressure, depression, sexting, and bullying as a result. The other risk with the extensive use of social media is the loss of privacy. Additionally, the information shared via a social media platform is unregulated (Onukwube, 2016). Years of tweeting, posting, sharing, liking, and updating contributes to a larger digital footprint, making it easy to search and locate a person (Ramasubbu, 2015).

Technology, in the form of computers and cell phones, has become a vehicle for communication. An estimated 97% of people in the United States between the ages of 12 and 18 years use the internet daily (Whittaker & Kowalski, 2014). Nixon (2014) found that 99% of students surveyed reported that they had access to the internet at school and/or at home. Although Nixon (2014) found that the majority of individuals reported using computers, there are distinct differences regarding the amount of computer usage and online activity (Nixon, 2014). For example, individuals with a lower socioeconomic

status reported lower rates of internet access and usage (Nixon, 2014).

Whittaker and Kowalski (2014) explored the weaknesses of the internet when it comes to the development of social skills. The internet gives people the choice to interact with a variety of individuals. Avoiding individuals in real-world interaction limit the development of social skills (Whittaker & Kowalski, 2014). Researchers believe computers allow individuals to avoid uncomfortable situations (Whittaker & Kowalski, 2014). Computers also limit the capacity for detection of body cues important to conversation (Whittaker & Kowalski, 2014). Individuals recognize emotions through face-to-face communication where sole reliance on the internet as a communication tool can be problematic (Garett et al., 2016).

Bauman (2015) found few cases of close friendships developing online. Nixon (2014) concluded the use of the internet to build social relationships limits the ability to develop interpersonal skills necessary to form strong in-person social networks. Individuals tend to make online choices contrary to real-world behaviors (Garett et al., 2016). Survey results confirm adolescents are likely to increase non-conforming and aggressive interactions online (Garett et al., 2016). Adolescents often do not fear repercussions to online behavior (Garett et al., 2016). Individuals who are embarrassed to confront someone face-to-face often feel more comfortable confronting the person online (Whittaker & Kowalski, 2014). However, the impact of internet use and its potentially negative effects have not been fully researched in adult populations, or among African American male adults.

## **The Impact of Social Media**

The increasing availability of new and interactive communication technologies and mass communication media in the 20th and 21st centuries have been a radical and noteworthy change, not only in society, but also the social world (Şengönül, 2017). Khaurana (2015) stated that nearly 55.4% of the world's population, ranging from age 15 to 25, utilizes social networking sites as an important form of entertainment. Of these users, males utilize social media more than women in efforts to engage others that they would not typically engage or communicate with (Khaurana (2015). A problem with the effect of social media on society is the lack of interaction that natural face-to-face meetings provide (Khaurana, 2015). The lack of a face-to-face meeting fails to give individuals a personal interaction. This is a dangerous problem since in-person interactions allows one to learn to observe another's body language, and provides opportunities to develop social skills for use in both professional and leisure settings (Kahurana, 2015). However, Khaurana (2015) reports that social media use can often result in impersonal interactions, misunderstood context, and technical issues with devices.

Social media has altered communication among humans, including the way people read, write, and speak. Adolescents recognize the influence of social media on their daily lives, and agree that it is a new communication environment (Vevere, 2015). The impact of social media on culture forces professionals and employers to familiarize themselves with various networks for expansion and employment purposes (Vevere, 2015). This creates an opening for employers to block certain sites on company devices

(Veveve, 2015). Visiting social sites are often a part of an internet user's daily routine. Each user determines the content of their profile and are responsible for complimenting their social and professional life in a respectable manner (Gaitho, 2017). A positive effect of social media is the expansion of networking, expressing, and communicating information with others located in various places not in one's immediate surroundings (Gaitho, 2017). In addition to using social media for personal uses, Gaitho (2017) explained that social media allows employers/business owners to network, promote and educate others about their businesses through online venues (Gaitho, 2017). Gaitho (2017) also reported that 19% of employers make hiring decisions using information found on social media sites such as LinkedIn.

The rise of social media demonstrates the engagement, interaction, and forms of communication in the world. Social media provides an opening into the lives and thoughts of individuals in the community and the problems of race (Byrd et al., 2017). Byrd and colleagues (2017) suggest that the repetitive use of social media affects emotional and mental health. For example, a person who suffers from emotional and mental health problems might be easily distracted and thus, might struggle to remain attentive (Byrd et al., 2017). The rise in social media has led to the rise in crimes committed online, such as identity theft and cyberbullying (Brochado, Soares, & Fraga, 2017).

Social media networks connect individuals by family or friend relationships, colleagues, or peers. Social media plays an increasing role on society and its influence on conflict (Zeitsoff, 2017). Addressing the position of violence in the media connects to the



violence portrayed in society (Zeitzoff, 2017). Although a person is ultimately responsible for his/her decisions, one must review the frequency and type of activity on social media. The frequency of violence and the speed in which it is transmitted across a variety of social media platforms is rampant given that social media enhances the speed of information shared (Zeitzoff, 2017).

### **African Americans' Use of Social Media**

Lynn (2017) reported that the constant use of social media in the African American community begins at a young age and explains why it is an issue among all age groups. Although Smith (2014) contends that overall, Blacks' use of social media trail Whites by 7% (i.e., 80% of African Americans compared to 87% of Whites), a 2016 Nielson report showed that the greatest increase in internet use via a smartphone or broadband, up from 86% in 2015 to 91%, was among African Americans. Smith (2014) reported that professional African Americans use social media at similar rate as European Americans, which is described as an acculturative effect where African Americans seek to understand and behave more like European Americans who are still considered to be the majority culture (Smith, 2014). In addition, African Americans are the second largest multicultural group to own a mobile device (Nielsen, 2016; Lynn, 2017). With 91% of African Americans owning at least one smartphone, 9 out of 10 African Americans have constant access to the internet and social media sites (Lynn, 2017). The use of social media, whether the purpose is positive or negative, has an increasing presence in the African American community because African Americans of all ages report that they are more apt to test new technology (Nielsen, 2016). In addition, although Blacks' use of

social media trails that of Whites, Blacks who use social media spend at least an hour more on social media sites, often more than other races (Lynn, 2017). For purposes of this dissertation, the use of Facebook was the primary social media platform assessed.

### **Theory of Desensitization**

One approach describing the long-term effects of exposure to media violence on aggressive behavior is called the theory of desensitization (Krahé, 2014). Recent research established a relationship between exposure to violence and desensitization (Krahé, 2014). Using data from cross-sectional and longitudinal study designs, Krahé (2014) summarized that repeated exposure to emotional stimuli such as the media and video games may lead to habituation of certain natural emotional responses or “desensitization”. For example, a study on 295 youth with average age of 13 found a significant correlation of  $r = .39$  between violent video game use and self-reported physical aggression (Krahé, 2014). Despite expectations that blood wounds or other scenes with painful consequences would curb aggression, research has revealed that such scenes desensitize or even increase aggression of some viewers (Gansner, 2017). In fact, Krahé (2014) found in a longitudinal study involving 1,237 students with an average age of 13.4 that video games with high violent content significantly predicted physical aggression (Krahé, 2014).

Experimentally, viewers who gave weak negative emotional response behaved much more aggressively in real life compared to those who gave strong negative emotional responses when viewing violent acts/media (Krahé, 2014). In addition, individuals who consume violent media become less sympathetic to victims of violence

(Gaitho, 2017). Hartmann, Moller and Krause (2015) found that men who played violent video games were less empathetic, justified the use of physical violence more, and displayed a greater need for aggression, compared with females who played video games. Specifically, Hartmann et al. (2015) conducted a cross-sectional study where 444 individuals from two universities completed an online survey where the average age of the 444 participants was 24 with 69% being male. Hartmann and colleagues (2015) found that men reported playing violent video games significantly more often than women, reported more enjoyment from playing these games significantly more, and reported more gratification from playing violent games than women. In addition, Hartmann and colleagues (2015) suggested that men played violent games more because they experienced less guilt, less empathy, and greater enjoyment compared to women. People who showed less empathy to the victims of violence were also less willing to help a victim in real life (Molitor & Hirsch, 1994; Krahe, 2014) Adults exposed to media violence were also less willing to help those in need (Krahe, 2014).

After an individual is exposed, views, or plays violent media, there is a brief period in which that individual thinks more aggressively (Anderson, 2016). The person exposed tends to think and feel more aggressively and perceives others as more hostile. They ultimately see that an aggressive solution is the more acceptable and beneficial solution. These short-term effects typically dissipate rather quickly. However, due to repeated exposure to the violence portrayed in the media, what is learned and deemed as short-term lessons become more permanent (Anderson, 2016). This is described as being similar to studying and practicing learning skills or a concept. Ultimately, the person

begins to view aggression as a more advantageous response skill set (Anderson, 2016). This desensitization effect is becoming increasingly evident. For example, Byrd and colleagues (2017) posit that people will naturally become more tolerant to violence and less sympathetic to the victims of violence (increased desensitization) when continually exposed to violence. However, Byrd and colleagues (2017) note that innovative approaches are required to empirically quantify how much exposure, and over what amount of time directly increases desensitization toward violence.

Researchers reported that people showed less psychological arousal to real displays of violence as their exposure to media violence increased (Byrd et al., 2017). Concerns about the potentially harmful effects of exposure to violence in the media rests on the assumption that violence is a common and widespread feature of different types of media, such as films, TV, video games, books, cartoons, and music; and, that these contents are widely utilized by individuals of all ages (Krahé, 2014). However, there is limited research to indicate that an increased number of hours on social media correlate directly with aggressive behavior, but there is literature that connects certain types of internet use to increased aggressive behavior (Gansner, 2017). Moreover, research is limited regarding social media and violence among individuals 18 years or older.

### **Violence in the Media**

Media violence is defined as watching any type of violent act through television programming including, but not limited to, cartoons, drama, comedy, but not expanded to a social media (Şengönül, 2017). Media violence is further defined as any action witnessed by its viewers, readers, or listeners or participated in that is intended to cause

physical harm to another person in the form of physical violence (Krahé, 2014; Şengönül, 2017).

Violent portrayals on television foster violent thoughts for later use by viewers and trigger violent behavior (Şengönül, 2017). In response, viewers are warned that the content they are about to watch might be excessively violent and not appropriate for all ages, especially individuals who are particularly affected by observing violent acts (Şengönül, 2017). In addition, aggressive behavior does not always occur in physical form and nature, and can be induced from exposure (Şengönül, 2017). Psychologists distinguish less serious forms of aggression such as verbal retaliation, engagement in spreading rumors or insulting people, and profanity (Şengönül, 2017).

Public debate is reaching consensus that continual exposure to violence in the media influence behavior. For example, Şengönül (2017) reported that increased exposure to violence, from television or other regularly watched media, independently contributes to the development of aggressive behavior. Studies show that there are at least five violent acts displayed each hour during the prime-time evening programs (Phillip, 2017; Şengönül, 2017). Khaurana (2015) highlighted the amount of violence depicted in the various forms of media used directly influences behavior.

The impact of social media on society plays a significant role in portraying violence. For example, when a screen hero uses violence as a means to reach success, viewers are affected and can resort to violence to settle their real-life conflicts (Şengönül, 2017). In addition, the media tends to portray heroes using violence as a justified means of resolving conflict and prevailing over others (Krahé, 2014). Furthermore, the media

tends to portray heroes using violence as a justified means of resolving conflict and prevailing over others (Krahé, 2014). The presence of others when watching or being exposed to violence is also a strong social component regarding aggressive behavior. For example, Gansner (2017) found that the presence of others while viewing media violence can either facilitate or prevent the development of aggressive behavior (Gansner, 2017). Gansner (2017) reported that a 2008 seminal study by Ybarra et. al. found that youth who viewed violent online content were significantly more likely to commit serious crimes themselves. Ybarra and colleagues (2008) found that among 1,588 youth, ages 10 – 15, 88% reported being exposed to violence online. In addition, Ybarra (2008) found that youth who reported exposure to violence via online sources were significantly more likely to be involved in seriously violent behavior in the previous 12 months.

The common theme within the literature is that media violence effects are not large in itself, but over time can accumulate into significant changes in behavior that can greatly affect both the individual and society (Anderson, 2016). A study evaluated whether reducing exposure to screen violence such as television and video gaming over several months or longer could reduce aggressive behaviors in individuals (Anderson, 2016). Anderson (2016) reported that individuals who had media interventions showed a decrease in aggression opposed to those who did not. The ways in which media violence exposure increases aggression in the short term are through direct imitation of the behavior that was observed, observation and learning, attitudes and beliefs, and expected benefits (Şengönül, 2017; Anderson, 2016). Anderson (2016) reported that longitudinal studies revealed that children exposed to violence as early as age 8 were significantly

more likely to become violent adults by age 30, even after controlling for aggressive behaviors displayed at age 8. Anderson (2016) summarized another six-month study where youth who frequently played violent video games at the start of the school year had a 25% increased likelihood of being in a fight during the year, even after controlling for previous fight history.

Due to the research on media and violence, the American Academy of Pediatrics (2016) recommends strict limits on a child's exposure to any types of media, which includes television watching and computer use. Specifically, AAP (2016) recommends: pediatricians to discuss what children watch as part of well-child examinations, and for pediatricians to advocate for more child-positive media; parents to be mindful what shows their children watch and what games they play; and policy makers should consider promoting legislation that provides caregivers and children with more specific information on what content is in media. Research on children, adolescents, and young adults contends that both nonviolent and violent media contribute to the world problems we currently face today (Gansner, 2017; Anderson, 2016). In addition, the American Academy of Pediatrics (2010) released an alarming report that males prefer more violent content compared to females.

### **The Perception of Media**

Khaurana (2015) highlighted that social media is used to bring people together from all over the world. Hildreth (2015) summarized that social media advocates employ its ability to connect to others while business owners utilize it for marketing purposes. Despite advantages, the perception of the media in general has a dismal and gloomy

outlook among professionals (Khaurana, 2015). While the perception of media's impact may vary, a negative perception still exists among users since some scholars believe that the exposure to violence through the media causes more detriment than benefits (Hildreth, 2015). The current consensus is that exposure to media violence impacts aggression. Phillips (2017) posited that information put on social media contributes to creating a more aggressive and violent population. Regardless of its origination, whether used for entertainment purposes endorsed by TV programs or integrated into gaming systems for animation, the presence of violence in varying social media platforms is consistent and impactful (Phillips, 2017).

### **Portrayal of African American Men in Social Media**

African Americans historically are portrayed negatively in social media. Negative perceptions continue to have an adverse impact on Black males in the United States since slavery. According to Donaldson (2015), negative portrayal in mass media influences how Black men view themselves in the United States. For example, Donaldson (2015) reported that Black men are less likely to appear as professional experts (on any credible topic), consumers of luxury items, or reliable and reputable characters and responsible stakeholders to society. Thus, the underrepresentation of positive views and the overrepresentation of negative views of Black men in media, television, the internet, fiction shows and movies, print advertising and video games undoubtedly shape the public view and attitudes of Black men in the United States. These negative views tend to decrease Black men's self-esteem as well as create the perception that these views are natural and inevitable for Black males (Donaldson, 2015). Donaldson (2015) reports that not much



has changed in how society views Black males, and that significant change must occur with social media to foster improved portrayal of Black men in American society.

The use of violent media contributes to continued aggressive attitudes and behaviors towards others (Krahé, 2014). Historically, African Americans are portrayed more negatively in media compared with other groups (Covington, 2010). This negative portrayal has continued into social media use. For example, Covington (2010) reported that on average, there are more negative stories reported in social media about African Americans compared to positive stories, or to other ethnic groups. According to Covington (2010), African American males are depicted as more violent than other ethnic groups, including being depicted as dangerous and hedonistic in various social media venues (i.e., on screen; movies). Through his research, Covington discovered that Black males were, and still consistently are, portrayed as being excessively violent and more threatening than other races or ethnic groups in the United States (Covington, 2010). Covington (2010) also discovered, after reviewing films from the 1960s to date, that Black females are often portrayed as prostitutes, drug addicts, and irresponsible mothers who frequently abuse their children. Covington (2010) further states that these distorted violent images of Blacks are often adopted as truth, eventually being documented in criminological history, impacting society's view (and potentially subsequent treatment) of African American males.

### **Summary**

This chapter was an overview of the impact of violence and some predictors of violence on African American Men. African American men are unreasonably impacted

by violence; Black males who live in low socioeconomic environments are more at risk of witnessing violence and becoming victims of violence as well as being perpetrators of violence. The literature further denotes that African American men face negative societal stereo types which have caused low self-esteem and the feeling of hopelessness in many of these men.

Chapter 3 is a detailed explanation of the methodology used to address research questions and gaps that have been acknowledged in former chapters.

## Chapter 3: Research Method

### **Introduction**

This chapter is an explanation of the quantitative methods used to analyze the association of perceptions toward law enforcement and community violence as moderated by social media use in African American men. Research methodology is explained as well as the sampling techniques. Instruments used as well as data collection procedures are presented. The analytical approach to include statistics are discussed, along with threats to internal and external validity. This chapter also discussed the ethical protection for African American men who were asked to participate in this research.

### **Research Design**

I used a quantitative, cross-sectional design to answer the research questions in this study. According to Creswell (2009), the purpose of quantitative research is to determine the relationship between various factors, where one factor is designated as the independent variable, and another factor is designated as the dependent or outcome variable. According to Babbie (2018), quantitative methods are used to describe measurements as well as conduct statistical, mathematical, or numerical analysis of data to examine how variables are connected. There are several sources from which to collect data including, but not limited to, polls, questionnaires/surveys, or by using preexisting information (Babbie, 2018). Primary data analysis refers to when the researcher analyzes information directly collected by the researcher, while secondary data analysis refers to when the researcher analyzes information already existing, and previously collected by

someone else (Babbie, 2018). I used quantitative methods, using primary data collection procedures to analyze the research questions proposed in this study.

Researchers indicate that using quantitative methods to analyze the research questions in this study are appropriate. For example, Maxwell (2016) used quantitative methods to describe social media use in African Americans and in particular, African American men. Maxwell (2016) also used quantitative methods to describe attitudes and perceptions toward self-, others- and law enforcement in African American men. Further, Donaldson (2016) used quantitative methods to explore the association between social media use and violence. Donaldson (2016) also used quantitative methods to explore the association between attitudes and perceptions and violence.

The overarching question in this research study was to examine whether social media use, and attitudes and perceptions toward violence, statistically predict violence among African American men, ages 18 to 44, regardless of the perpetrator. The following research questions guided the study:

RQ1: What is the relationship between perceptions of police and community violence among African American men, ages 18 to 44?

$H_0$ : There is no relationship between perceptions of police and community violence among African American men, ages 18 to 44.

$H_1$ : There is a significant relationship between perceptions of police and community violence among African American men, ages 18 to 44.

RQ2: What is the relationship between social media use and community violence among African American men ages 18 to 44?

$H_0$ : There is no relationship between social media use and community violence among African American men ages 18 to 44.

$H_1$ : There is a significant relationship between social media use and community violence among African American men ages 18 to 44.

RQ3: How does social media use moderate the relationship between perception of police and community violence among African American men ages 18 to 44?

$H_0$ : Social media use does not moderate the relationship between perception of police and community violence among African American men ages 18 to 44.

$H_1$ : Social media use does moderate the relationship between perception of police and community violence among African American men ages 18 to 44.

### **Setting and Sample**

The sample in this study was drawn from a population of males between the ages of 18 and 44. A convenience sample of men living in an urban community in Northeast Florida were recruited from areas African American men frequent throughout the community. In 2017, 62,725 African American men (Florida Department of Health, Division of Public Health Statistics & Performance Management, 2017a) of the total population lived in the Northeast community being targeted for this study.

The setting was appropriate to the study because visiting various areas where African American men live and congregate would increase the likelihood of inviting men who are more representative of the general population of African American men who experience violence, the outcome of interest. A total of 45 African American men were desired to participate in this study in order to have 80% power and 95% confidence to

detect a statistically significant difference between 1 independent continuous variable and 1 moderating continuous variable, having medium effect sizes (Erdfelder, Faul, & Buchner, 1996). This sample size of 45 also included the assumption that 5% of African American males who begin the survey would be unable to finish. According to Rudenstam and Newton (2007), power determines how likely the study is to avoid Type II error. According to Creswell (2003), Type II error can occur when the outcomes fail to discard the null hypothesis which suggests that some outcome existed that the study did not detect.

The method involved primary data collection using a convenience sample of Black men from various locations such as barbershops, churches, local colleges and universities, malls, bus stations, grocery stores, and fraternal organizations. Potential participants were informed about the study and asked to participate by completing a research-administered survey. These venues were selected because of the high percentage of Black men who utilize them. This study comprised a single-participant design where men meeting the inclusion criteria were invited to participate by completing a survey. Men who self-identify as African American, between the ages of 18 to 44, were invited to participate by completing a survey. This age range was selected because state statistics show that the incidence of violence and homicide are highest among this group (Florida Department of Health, Division of Public Health Statistics & Performance Management, 2017).

Agreeable participants completed surveys about their experiences with violence, sociodemographic characteristics, sociopolitical factors, and perceptions and attitudes. According to Creswell (2003), convenience sampling is a nonprobability sampling

technique where participants are chosen due to their convenient accessibility and proximity to the person conducting the study. One example of convenient sampling is where the researcher is given a list of names and the researcher chooses the first five names or the first five names in alphabetical order (Creswell, 2003). Criteria for the study included that participants be of African American descent between the ages of 18-44 years who were asked to report on their feelings/perceptions of police, self-report their experiences with violence, and report on their use of social media.

### **Measures**

Researchers must tailor their data according to their research questions. Surveys using validated measures/instruments which will result in nominal, ordinal and continuous type data. According the literature, primary data are a collection of data that have never been collected (Palinkas, 2014). Several instruments and items were used to measure the variables of interest in this study. Questions on sociodemographic characteristics and social media use were collected using a demographic information sheet; for example, the form included age, level of education, marital status, geographic location (i.e., zip code), household composition and socioeconomic level (as defined by annual household income), and incarceration status. All instruments used in this study to measure the dependent variable, independent variable and moderating variable were treated as continuous measures.

Table 1

*Summary of Instruments/Tools*

Construct	Variable	Name	# of Items	Range
Violence	Dependent	Past Feelings Acts of Violence scale (PFAV)	11	0 – 33
			1	Yes/No
Attitudes/Perceptions toward Law Enforcement	Independent	Perceptions of Police Scale (POPS)	12	12 – 60
Social Media Use	Moderator	Social Media Use Integration Scale (SMUIS)	10	10 – 60

**Past Feeling and Acts of Violence**

According to Lee (2016), violence is defined as the intentional use of force that results in injury, death, or harm. In this study, the Past Feelings and Violence scale was used to measure violence. In this study, the dependent variable, violent behavior, was measured using an instrument called the Past Feelings and Acts of Violence (PFAV) scale developed by researchers Plutchik and van Praag (1990). The permission to use the PFAV along with the scale are found in Appendix B. The PFAV Scale measures both violence risk and the tendency for violence as continuous measures, which contributes more information to statistical analysis (Creswell, 2003). The PFAV scale uses a 12-item measurement tool designed for self-completion with Likert-responses. The maximum score is 33, representing a high propensity or risk for violence (Plutchik & Pragg, 1990). The PFAV has high inter-item reliability and an alpha coefficient of 0.85, indicating that is a reliable measure (Cervantes et al., 2006). The PFAV allows one to measure degree of violence (ranging from 0-33). The range of values were reported to measure the degree to which respondents report violent behaviors or tendencies.



The PFAV questionnaire was administered to collect quantitative data. Participants responded to 12 items on this quantitative questionnaire. The PFAV is similar to a Likert-type scale with a 4-point system ranging from *never* to *very often* to *very often to more than twice*. 'Never' was scored as '0', a response of 'Sometimes' was scored as '1', a response of 'Often' was scored as '2', and a response of 'Very Often' was scored as '3'. Item 12 required a 'Yes' or 'No' response. Scoring was computed by summing responses to 11 items which ranged from 0 to 33. The sum scores for items 1 through 11, ranging from 0 to 33, were used as a continuous variable for quantitative investigation.

This self-reporting measurement instrument has responses that range from *never* to *very often* and *never to more than twice* (Plutchik & Pragg, 1990). Upon completion of the survey, an overall score was calculated by summing the responses and weighting from 0 to 3 with *never* equaling 0; *sometimes* and *once* equaling 1; *often* and *twice* equaling 2; and *very often* and *more than twice* equaling 3. According to Plutchik & Pragg (1990), this tool is a valid measure of violence risk given its high coefficient alpha of 0.77.

### **Attitudes and Perceptions of Police**

The Perceptions of Police Scale developed by Nadal and Davidoff (2015) was used to assess participants' attitudes and perception about police/law enforcement. Nadal and Davidoff (2015) granted permission for me to use POPS in this research to increase understanding of how African American men perceive police officers, and how their

perceptions are associated with violence (See Appendix A for permission to use and scale).

Variables that were used as the independent variable included attitudes and perceptions of law enforcement and social media use. Perceptions and attitudes toward law enforcement were measured using the Perceptions of Police Scale (POPS) developed by Nadal and Davidoff (2015). POPS, found in Appendix A, is a validated survey with 12-items that has two primary subscales: general attitudes toward police and perceptions of bias. Each item is scored as 1, representing *strongly agree* to 5, representing *strongly disagree*. The value for each item is summed to create a total score ranging from 12 to 60 where higher scores represent a less favorable perceptions of police. Nadal and Davidoff (2015) reported that the general attitudes toward police subscale has a Cronbach alpha of .91.

Using POPS, Nadal, Davidoff, Allicock, Serpe and Erazo (2017) found that Blacks (n = 55) were more likely to have poor perceptions of police officers than other racial or ethnic groups of Whites (n = 45), Hispanics (n = 94) and Asians (n = 26). Nadal and colleagues (2017) found statistically significant associations between scores on POPS and self-reports of police unfair treatment, providing more empirical evidence that POPS is a valid tool to measure perception of police.

### **Social Media Use**

Social media use was measured using the Social Media Use Integration Scale (SMUIS) developed by Jenkins-Guarnieri and colleagues (2013). For purposes of this dissertation, the use of Facebook was the primary social media platform assessed. The

SMUIS scale, found in Appendix C, has 10 questions with high reliability and validity. A response of *strongly disagree* scored a 1, a response of *slightly disagree* scored a 2, a response of *disagree* scored a 3, a response of *agree* scored a 4, a response of *slightly agree* scored a 5, and a response of *strongly agree* scored a 6. All scores were summed to create an overall SMUIS score where higher scores suggest more use and dependence on social media while lower scores indicate less use and dependence of social media.

### **Sociodemographic Characteristics**

Sociodemographic characteristics were also collected and used to describe study participants. Sociodemographic characteristics were measured by: age, education status by asking *What is the highest grade you have completed?* Employment status was measured by asking *Are you currently employed full or part time?* Geographic location by obtaining the respondent's zip code. Marital status was measured by asking whether the participant was married, single, separated, divorced, or widowed, or whether one was in a committed relationship. Socioeconomic status was measured by asking *What is your current annual household income?* Incarceration status was measured by asking *Have you ever been in jail or prison?*, and if yes, *for how long?* (Appendix D).

### **Data Collection and Analysis**

Participants completed a survey questionnaire that was administered by this researcher. In such situations as survey research, the informed consent form requiring a signature is oftentimes the only identifying information that connects a respondent to the research (Krumpal, 2013), which in itself, can become a potential to decrease anonymity and confidentiality (Creswell, 2003). Given the nature of this research, asking Black men

to provide their honest attitudes and perceptions toward self, others and law enforcement, and asking them to provide a consent form which reveals their name, could serve to deter participation. I sought to have this research approved without documentation of consent where consent can be implied when respondents complete a survey. As standard primary data collection research methodology (Creswell, 2013), I created a flyer (see Appendix E) that included the purpose of the study, the number of desired participants, the areas and timeframe in which the study was conducted, and my contact information all required elements for research approved with a waiver of consent. This flyer was given to anyone interested in completing a survey. After explaining the study's purpose and answering questions, I asked potential respondents if they would like to participate by completing the questionnaire. Completed questionnaires indicated that consent was given. I also noted the number of eligible participants who declined to participate for participation reporting purposes.

A stepwise regression analysis was used since the sole dependent variable was continuous and the independent variable was continuous (attitudes and perception measures) using methods outlined by Hatcher and Stepanski (1999). The Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) software was used to analyze how much variance the independent variables account for in the dependent variable. While regression is a very powerful statistical tool to use for data with a continuous dependent variable (degree of violence), there are limitations with this analysis. For example, having small sample sizes for those exposed to violence might threaten the validity of the analysis (Hatcher and Stepanski, 1999). If very few men are exposed to violence, then there will be little to no

variance on the dependent variable, making it difficult to detect a statistically significant difference between study factors, provided one exists. This was one reason that the dependent variable was measured with a scale having several different items to increase the likelihood that a large number of participants would have been exposed to some level of violence.

The analysis also examined trends toward violence as well as reported the observed probabilities for findings due to chance. Other limitations that potentially affect the entire study was recruiting only men truly interested in this research, resulting in potential selection bias (Saddler, 2010). This is why I recruited men from various venues.

### **Descriptive Analysis**

Perceptions of police (independent variable), social media use (moderating variable), community violence (dependent variable) and sociodemographic factors were analyzed to describe means and frequencies. Regarding the dependent variable, total scores on the PFAV were analyzed to describe violence risk among respondents using sum and mean scores. Measures of central tendency to include means and median values were analyzed to describe perceptions of police as well as social media use among respondents. Specifically, the items on the POPS were summed to determine respondents' attitudes and perceptions toward law enforcement. Sociodemographic variables were descriptively analyzed (i.e., frequencies, counts; median, mean) and reported.

## **Analytical Analysis**

**Analysis for Research Question 1 – Perceptions & Attitudes Toward Law Enforcement and Community Violence.** Regression, using PFAV scores as the dependent variable and POPS scores as the independent variable was conducted to measure the association between perception of police and community violence. This association was statistically significant if the p-value was  $\leq .05$ .

**Analysis for Research Question 2 – Social Media Use and Community Violence.** Regression, testing the association between SMUIS scores and PFAV scores, was conducted to measure the association between social media use and community violence. This association was statistically significant if the p-value was  $\leq .05$ .

**Analysis for Research Question 3 – Social Media Use Moderating the Association between Attitudes and Perceptions of Police and Community Violence.** I used Baron and Kenny's approach (1986) to test whether social media use moderates the association between perceptions of police and propensity towards violence. The first step to test moderation was where I created a centered-mean score for POPS by subtracting the POPS mean value from each observed POPS value. The second step to test moderation was where I created a centered-mean score for the SMUIS by subtracting the SMUIS mean value from each observed SMUIS value. The next step is where I created an interaction term by multiplying the centered POPS value (independent variable) by the centered SMUIS value (moderator variable). I then conducted a regression analysis where PFAV scores were regressed on POP scores in Block 1 and then the interaction term of

centered-mean POPS by centered-mean SMUIS was entered into Block 2. All associations having a p-value  $\leq .05$  were considered statistically significant.

### **Internal Validity**

Internal validity is defined as how truthful are the findings of a particular research study (Creswell, 2013). The factors that affect internal validity are bias, chance and confounding (Creswell, 2013). Bias, often difficult to measure, can be introduced in survey research by how we select participants or how information is collected. I sought to reduce selection bias by visiting a wide range of locations where African American men congregate. I approached all men appearing to qualify for the study (i.e., appearing Black and within the 18 to 44 age range).

Another source of bias is how information is reported (Creswell, 2013; Krumpal, 2013). Another potential limitation specific to this research is that individuals might be fearful of answering truthfully, which might result in missing information, or responses that participants feel are desired, resulting in information bias (Krumpal, 2013). I sought to reduce information bias by reinforcing to potential respondents that all of their information was anonymous and would be kept strictly confidential, and that once they agreed to participate, no identifying or contact information was collected. Thus, I would not be able to tell which responses belonged to which respondent once surveys were completed and compiled. Thus, this hopefully increased respondents' comfort levels to answer truthfully about their violence involvement, social media use, and attitudes and perceptions about law enforcement.

Another potential limitation, as with all quantitative study designs, is the potential for confounding given that all variables important to predict violence might not be measured as part of this study (Palinkas, 2014). However, I searched the literature to identify variables, as included in the sociodemographic variables, as important when examining violence in any group.

Another potential limitation is finding statistically significant results that are truly due to chance (Type I error), or failing to find a statistically significant result when one does exist (Type II error) (Creswell, 2013). I have selected a 95% confidence interval at .05 alpha error to reduce the potential for a Type I error, that is concluding that an association exists when one does not truly exist. I have also determined a sample size based on 80% power, which seeks to avoid a Type II error where I would fail to find an association when one, in fact, does exist.

### **External Validity**

External validity represents how well findings of a research study can be generalized to others in the general population (Creswell, 2013). However, external validity is only applicable or relevant when there is a high likelihood that internal validity exists since one should not generalize invalid results or findings to the population at large (Creswell, 2013). To help ensure that my findings represented the general population of African American men, ages 18-44 who would have participated, I noted how many men refused to participate in the study. Noting how many men refused to participate helped to show that the sample was representative of any African American male who lived in Jacksonville.



### **Protection of Participants**

Participation in this research study was completely voluntary, and participants were informed that they are free to withdraw participation at any time. There were no known threats or harm associated with participating in this study although participants might have experienced increased anxiety from reporting about their experiences with violence. Participants were informed that all of their information was confidential and completely anonymous. This research was reviewed and approved by the Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB 02-11-29-0341656) to ensure the protection of participants through the ethical conduct of this research, to include but not limited to, study procedures, participant recruitment, instruments and data collection, and analysis. All participants received information/flyer about the study, and informed consent was be implied upon survey completion. The information/flyer included the purpose of the study, who was being asked to participate (i.e., African American men, ages 18 – 44, and the number of men desired to complete a survey (n = 45).

Participants did not provide any identifying information on surveys, to include names, contact information or addresses. This increased the likelihood to protect anonymity for those completing a survey. Given the anonymity, there was a small likelihood that someone can participate (by completing the survey again) more than once. However, I did not visit the same venues more than once, and given the length of the survey and the number of men desired, men who already completed it more than likely would indicate so. I provided my contact information to participants, or anyone else, expressing interest in knowing the study results. All surveys are be kept in a locked file

cabinet in my storage room for the required time mandated by the University, after the research is complete and the research findings are shared with the University. After this period, all surveys will be shredded and destroyed.

### **Summary**

This chapter offered an overview of the quantitative methods that were used to answer the two quantitative questions presented in this research. This chapter described the research questions, the setting and sampling approach to engage population that were asked to participate, the instruments that were used to measure variables and the analytical approach that was used to test associations. Violence was measured with specific questions in addition to using the PFAV developed Plutchik and van Praag (1990). Social media use was measured using the Social Media Use Integration Scale (SMUIS) (Jenkins-Guarnieri, Wright, & Johnson, 2013). POPS (Nadal & Davidoff, 2015) was used to measure attitudes and perceptions toward law enforcement. The validity and reliability of instruments used in this study were also discussed. Lastly, the protection of participants was also discussed.

## Chapter 4: Results

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this study was to examine the moderating influence of social media on the relationship of perceptions of police and community violence among African American men. In this chapter, the data collection and analysis processes are discussed, including how data were collected. The process by which data were analyzed is also described. Finally, a detailed discussion of the results are presented. Specifically, results from descriptive analysis, the analytical analysis using regression modeling, and an overall summary of the results are presented. Three quantitative research questions were addressed in the study.

Quantitative Research Question 1. What is the relationship between perceptions of police and community violence among African American men ages 18 to 44?

Quantitative Research Question 2. How does social media use moderate the relationship between perception of police and community violence among African American men ages 18 to 44?

Quantitative Research Question 3. How does social media use moderate the relationship between perception of police and community violence among African American men ages 18 to 44?

### **Data Preparation**

A total of 45 African American men were sought to participate in this study in order to have 80% power and 95% confidence to detect a statistically significant difference between the independent variable (perceptions of police), the moderating

variable (social media use) and the dependent variable (community violence), having medium effect sizes of .25 G\*Power (Erdfelder, Faul, & Buchner, 1996). This sample size of 45 also included the assumption that 5% of African American males who begin the survey would be unable to finish. A significance level of 0.05, a power of 0.80, and a medium correlation of 0.25 for an a priori regression model resulted in a required sample size of 45 African American men for the statistical model.

A total of 45 participants met the criteria for completion of the survey, which was: (a) self-identifying as an African American male and (b) being between the ages of 18-45. A total of 45 men were approached who met inclusion criteria. Every man agreed to participate in the study. This represents a 100% response rate. The final sample used for the purpose of data analyses was 45 completed surveys. Prior to statistical analyses, it was determined that all data would be analyzed and no participant responses would be omitted due to missing information on any other response. Any items that were unanswered or had more than one response were coded as missing. In other words, all available responses were included in the analysis.

The independent variable in this study was perceptions and attitudes towards police while social media use was analyzed as a moderating variable. The dependent variable in this study was community violence. Several instruments were used to record information as part of this research study: the Past Feelings and Violence Scale (PFAV), developed by Plutchik and van Praag (1990), was used to measure propensity for violence; the Perceptions of Police Scale (POPS), developed by Nadal and Davidoff (2015), was used to measure how the participant felt toward police; and the SMUIS,

developed by Jenkins-Guarnieri and colleagues, (2013) was used to measure dependence on social media use of Facebook. Additionally, questions on sociodemographic characteristics included age, level of education, marital status, geographic location and socioeconomic level, and incarceration status were collected using a demographic information sheet.

### **Descriptive Analysis**

The research study was conducted in Jacksonville, Florida with 45 African American men ages 18 to 44. Descriptive analyses of participants are found in Tables 2 through 10. The average age was 33.9 with a standard deviation of 7.79. The age of participants ranged from 18 to 44 where two people were ages 18 years old at the time of survey completion and two participants were 44 years old at the time of survey completion.

Table 2

*Descriptive Analysis of Participants (Age), N = 45*

Demographic variables	Frequency ( <i>n</i> )	%
Age		
18	2	4.44
19	1	2.22
20	2	4.44
21	1	2.22
25	2	4.44
26	1	2.22
27	2	4.44
28	1	2.22
30	4	8.89
31	2	4.44
32	4	8.89
33	3	6.67
34	1	2.22
35	1	2.22

36	2	4.44
37	1	2.22
39	1	2.22
40	4	8.89
41	1	2.22
42	3	6.67
43	4	8.89
44	2	2.22

Note: Values might not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Table 3 shows that the majority of participants, 95.1%, had at least 12 years of education. Two participants reported having at least a 10<sup>th</sup> grade education. A total of 48.8% of participants (n = 20) had 12 years/GED education. A total of 5 (12.2%) participants reported having some college education. A total of 4 (9.8%) reported having at least a Bachelors degree while 7 (17.1%) reported having at least a Masters degree. One participant (2.4%) reported having a Doctorate degree while 2 (4.9%) participants preferred not to provide this information.

Table 3

*Descriptive Analysis of Participants (Education), N = 45*

Demographic Variables	Frequency (n)	%
Education		
< 12 Years	2	4.9
12 Years/GED	20	48.8
Some college	5	12.2
Bachelors Degree	4	9.8
Masters Degree	7	17.1
Doctoral Degree	1	2.4
Prefer not to answer	2	4.9

Note: Values might not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Table 4 shows employment and income status. Regarding employment, 92.2% of participants were employed. For income, 20% (n = 9) reported incomes  $\leq$  \$25,000. A total of 17.8% (n = 8) reported incomes between \$25,000 up to \$50,000 while another 17.8% (n = 8) reported incomes between \$50,000 up to \$100,000. A total of 11.1% (n = 5) reported incomes equal to, or greater than \$100,000. One out of three participants (33.3%; n = 15) preferred not to report income.

Table 4

*Descriptive Analysis of Participants (Employment and Income), N = 45*

<hr/>		
Employed		
Yes	41	92.2
No	3	6.8
Income		
$\leq$ 25,000	9	20.0
> 25,000 – 50,000	8	17.8
$\geq$ 50,000 – 100,000	8	17.8
$\geq$ 100,000	5	11.1
Prefer not to answer	15	33.3
<hr/>		

Note: Values might not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Marital status was also collected as part of demographic information (Table 5). A total of 18 (40%) men reported never having been married. Fourteen (31.1%) men reported being married while 6 (13.3%) reported being in a committed relationship. One (2.2%) participant reported being widowed, 2 (4.4%) reported being divorced, and 3 (6.7%) reported being separated. One (2.2%) preferred not to answer this question. Based on these results, men were either never married (40%) or married (31.1%).

Table 5

*Descriptive Analysis of Participants (Marital Status), N = 45.*

Marital Status		
Never Married	18	40
In a Committed Relationship	6	13.3
Married	14	31.1
Widowed	1	2.2
Divorced	2	4.4
Separated	3	6.7
Prefer not to answer	1	2.2

Note: Values might not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Shown in Table 6, all zip codes were grouped into geographical zones according to the Duval County Health Department's (DCHD) stratification models (Duval County Community Health Assessment and Community Health Improvement Plan, 2012). The DCHD created a geographical zoning system, based on zip codes, to better describe the health status of Jacksonville residents given the fact that Duval County (Jacksonville, Florida) is the largest city/county in landmass in the entire contiguous United States (Duval County Community Health Assessment and Community Health Improvement Plan, 2012).

Table 6

*Descriptive Analysis of Participants (Geographical Zip Code), N = 45*

Geographical Zip Code		
Urban Core	21	46.7
Arlington	5	11.1
Northside	9	20.0
Southside	1	2.2
Westside	6	13.3
Prefer not to answer	2	4.4

Note: Values might not sum to 100% due to rounding.



Stratifying zip codes into geographical zones regions of urban core, Arlington, Northside, Southside and the Westside provides a more transparent method to describe health and social conditions of the community, to include crime and violence as well as observe health disparities. Using DCHD classification, 46.5% (n = 21) of participants lived in Jacksonville's urban core, 20% (n = 9) live on Jacksonville's Northside, and 13.3% (n = 6) live on the Westside.

Incarceration status shown in Table 7, more than 6 out of 10 men (62.2%, n = 28) reported never being incarcerated. Of the 17 (37.8%) men who reported being incarcerated, 5 (38.5%) of them had been incarcerated for more than 1 month yet less than 1 year.

Table 7

*Descriptive Analysis of Participants (Incarceration Status), N = 45.*

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Incarceration Status		
No	28	62.2
Yes	17	37.8
If yes, How long? N = 17		
≤ 1 Day	3	23.1
> 1 Day - < 1 Month	3	23.1
≥ 1 Month - < 1 Year	5	38.5
≥ 1 Year	2	15.4

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Note: Values might not sum to 100% due to rounding.

### **Past Feeling and Acts of Violence**

In this study, the dependent variable, violent behavior, was measured using the Past Feelings and Acts of Violence (PFAV) scale developed by Plutchik and van Praag (1990). The PFAV uses 12 items on a Likert-response scale to measure both violence risk and the tendency for violence as continuous measures (Plutchik & van Praag, 1990). The PFAV questionnaire was administered to collect quantitative data using a Likert scale, with scores ranging from 0 (*never*) to 3 (*very often*). The scoring was computed by summing the responses from Items 1-11 since Item 12 was a 'yes'/'no' response and was not included in the summary score. Thus, the maximum score was 33, representing a high propensity or risk for violence (Plutchik & Praag, 1990).

Participants' responses on the PFAV reveal a total average score (summing all 11 items), resulting in a possible range between 0-33, was 4.95 with a standard deviation of 3.29. Results for each item response is found in Table 8. Regarding each item, 44.4% (n = 20) reported never getting angry very easily while 53.5% (n = 24) reported sometimes getting angry very easily. Less than 3% of participants reported being angry very easily. A total of 68.9% (n = 31) reported being very angry at people sometimes while 26.7% (n = 12) reported never feeling very angry at people. A total of 95.6% (n = 43) reported never (75.6%) or sometimes (20%) being angry for no reason at all. A total of 86.7% (n = 39) reported never getting a weapon when angry while 13.3% (n = 6) reported sometimes getting a weapon when angry.

A total of 51.2% (n = 22) of participants reported never causing an injury in a fight while 39.5% (n = 17) reported that they have sometimes caused an injury in a fight.

Table 8

*Descriptive Analysis of Item Responses to the PFAV*

Items	Never	Sometimes	Often	Very Often	Mean (STD)
	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	
Do you find that you get angry very easily?	20 (44.4)	24 (53.3)	1 (2.2)	0 (0)	0.58 (0.54)
How often do you feel very angry at people?	12 (26.7)	31 (68.9)	2 (4.4)	0 (0)	0.78 (0.52)
Do you find that you get angry for no reason at all	34 (75.6)	9 (20.0)	1 (2.2)	1 (2.2)	0.31 (0.63)
When angry, do you get a weapon	39 (86.7)	6 (13.3)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0.133 (0.34)
Have you ever caused injury in a fight (for example: bruises, bleeding, or broken bones)?	22 (51.2)	17 (39.5)	3 (6.9)	1 (2.3)	0.64 (0.73)
Have you ever hit or attacked a member of your family?	32 (72.1)	13 (28.0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0.29 (0.46)
Have you ever hit or attacked someone who is not a member of your family?	22 (48.9)	21 (46.7)	2 (4.4)	0 (0)	0.56 (0.59)
Have you ever used a weapon to try to harm someone?	35 (77.8)	8 (17.8)	2 (4.4)	0 (0)	0.27 (0.54)
Are weapons easily accessible to you?	16 (35.6)	14 (31.1)	10 (22.2)	5 (11.1)	1.09 (1.02)
How often have you been arrested for a nonviolent crime such as shoplifting or forgery?	37 (82.2)	7 (15.6)	0 (0)	1 (2.2)	0.22 (0.56)
Have you ever been arrested for a violent crime such as arm robbery or assault?	40 (88.9)	4 (8.9)	0 (0)	1 (2.2)	0.16 (0.52)
			Yes	No	
			N %	N %	
Do you keep weapons in your home that you know how to use?			25 (55.6)	20 (44.4)	

Note: Values might not sum to 100% due to rounding.

A total of 72.1% (n = 32) reported never hitting or attacking a member of their family while 29 (n = 13) reported sometimes hitting or attacking a member of their family. The majority (77.8%; n = 35) of participants reported never using a weapon to try to harm someone while 17.8% (n = 8) reported sometimes using a weapon to harm someone. A total of 16 participants (35.6%) reported that weapons are never easily accessible, 14 (31.1%) reported that weapons are sometimes easily accessible, 10 participants, or 22%, reported that weapons are often accessible while 5 participants reported that weapons are very often accessible. A total of 82.2% (n = 37) reported that they have never been arrested for a nonviolent crime such as shoplifting or forgery while 15.6% (n = 7) reported sometimes being arrested for a nonviolent crime such as shoplifting or forgery. Regarding a violent crime, 88.9% (n = 40) reported never being arrested for a violent crime while 8.9% (n = 4) reported sometimes being arrested for a violent crime. Regarding keeping weapons in the home, 55.6% (n = 25) reported 'yes' that they keep weapons in their home that they know how to use.

### **Perceptions of Police**

Attitudes and perceptions of law enforcement was measured using the perceptions of police scale (POPS) developed by Nadal and Davidoff (2015). POPS is a validated survey with 12-items that has an overall Cronbach alpha of .94, indicating that items capture how individuals perceive police. POPS includes two primary subscales: (a) general attitudes toward police and (b) perceptions of bias. Nadal and Davidoff (2015) reported that the general attitudes toward police subscale has a Cronbach alpha of .93, and the perceptions of bias subscale has a Cronbach alpha of .88.

Table 9

*Descriptive Analysis of Responses to the POPS*

Items	Strongly Agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly Disagree		Mean (STD)
	N	(%)	N	(%)	N	(%)	N	(%)	N	(%)	
Police officers are friendly	4	(8.9)	7	(15.6)	17	(37.8)	10	(22.2)	7	(15.6)	3.2 (1.16)
Police officers protect me	3	(6.7)	8	(17.8)	13	(28.9)	8	(17.8)	13	(28.9)	3.4 (1.27)
Police officers treat all people fairly	4	(8.9)	6	(13.3)	11	(24.4)	6	(13.3)	18	(40.0)	3.6 (1.37)
I like the police	4	(8.9)	7	(15.6)	18	(40.0)	8	(17.8)	8	(17.8)	3.2 (1.18)
The police are good people	4	(8.9)	5	(11.1)	21	(46.7)	10	(22.2)	5	(11.1)	3.2 (1.07)
The police do not discriminate	5	(11.1)	8	(17.8)	8	(17.8)	5	(11.1)	19	(42.2)	3.6 (1.47)
The police provide safety	6	(13.3)	6	(13.3)	18	(40.0)	11	(24.4)	4	(8.9)	3.0 (1.14)
The police are helpful	5	(11.1)	12	(26.7)	12	(26.7)	12	(26.7)	4	(8.9)	2.9 (1.17)
The police are trustworthy	3	(6.7)	9	(20.0)	19	(42.2)	6	(13.3)	8	(17.8)	3.2 (1.15)
The police are reliable	5	(11.1)	7	(15.6)	19	(42.2)	9	(20.0)	5	(11.1)	3.0 (1.13)
Police officers are unbiased	4	(8.9)	8	(17.8)	9	(20.0)	6	(13.3)	18	(40.0)	3.6 (1.41)
Police officers care about my community	5	(11.1)	7	(15.6)	9	(20.0)	7	(15.6)	17	(37.8)	3.5 (1.42)

Note: Values might not sum to 100% due to rounding.

The mean score for perceptions of police was 39.47 ( $n = 45$ ). Table 9 shows responses for each of the POP items. Of the participants surveyed, 8.9% strongly agreed that the police are friendly, 15.6% agreed that police are friendly, 22.2% disagreed that police are friendly while 15.6% strongly disagreed that police are friendly. Almost 40% of respondents were neutral regarding their view about whether police are friendly. A total of 6.7% strongly agreed that police officers protect them, 17.8% agreed that police officers protect them, 28.9% were neutral, 17.8% disagreed that police officers protect them while 28.9% strongly disagreed that police officers protected them.

Regarding fairness, 8.9 % strongly agreed that police treat all people fairly, 13.3% agreed that police treat all people fairly, 24.4% were neutral, 13.3% disagreed that police treated all people fairly and 40% of respondents strongly disagreed that police treat all people fairly. A total of 8.9% strongly agreed that they like the police while 17.8% strongly disagreed that they like the police. A total of 40% were neutral regarding whether they like the police. A total of 8.0% of participants strongly agreed that the police are good people while 46.7% were neutral, 22% disagreed and 11.1% strongly disagreed that the police are good people. While 11.1% of respondents reported that the police do not discriminate, 17.8% were neutral and 42.2% strongly disagreed with this statement.

A total of 26.7% agreed that police are helpful with similar percentages of respondents being neutral (26.7%) and disagreeing (26.7%) with this statement.

Additionally, 40% of respondents strongly disagreed that police officers are unbiased. In

addition, 37.8% of respondents strongly disagreed that the police care about the community compared to 11.1% strongly agreeing that police care about the community.

### **Social Media Use**

The SMUIS developed by Jenkins-Guarnieri and colleagues (2013) was used to measure social media use. The SMUIS scale has 10 questions to measure two overall constructs or factors: social integration and emotional connection; and integration into social routines (Jenkins-Guarnieri, Wright, & Johnson, 2013). Respondents' results to each of the 10 items on the SMUIS is shown in Table 10.

The average overall score was 29 with a standard deviation of 10, indicating less dependency on social media use of Facebook given a range of 6-60. In particular, 43.2% of respondents strongly disagreed that they feel disconnected from friends when not logging into Facebook. A total of 34.1% strongly disagreed with being disappointed if they could not use Facebook at all while 43.2% strongly disagreed with being upset if they could not log into Facebook. A total of 31.8% of respondents strongly disagreed with Facebook playing an important role in their social relationship although 29.6% agreed with this statement. In addition, 52.3% of participants agreed that they enjoyed checking their Facebook accounts while 20.4% strongly disagreed with this statement. A total of 50% of participants agreed that they responded to the content that others share using Facebook.

Table 10

*Descriptive Analysis of Responses to the SMUIS*

Items	Strongly Disagree		Slightly Disagree		Disagree		Agree		Slightly Agree		Strongly Agree		Mean (STD)
	N	(%)	N	(%)	N	(%)	N	(%)	N	(%)	N	(%)	
I feel disconnected from friends when I have not logged into Facebook	19	(43.2)	2	(4.6)	12	(27.3)	7	(15.9)	3	(6.8)	1	(2.3)	2.45 (1.47)
I would like it if everyone used Facebook to communicate	12	(27.8)	6	(13.6)	13	(29.6)	9	(18.2)	4	(9.1)	1	(2.3)	2.75 (1.39)
I would be disappointed if I could not use Facebook at all	15	(34.1)	3	(6.8)	16	(36.4)	7	(15.9)	1	(2.3)	2	(4.6)	2.59 (1.40)
I get upset when I can't log on to Facebook	19	(43.2)	1	(2.3)	13	(29.6)	8	(18.2)	1	(2.3)	2	(4.6)	2.48 (1.49)
I prefer to communicate with others mainly through Facebook	17	(38.6)	3	(6.8)	10	(22.7)	9	(20.4)	3	(6.8)	2	(4.5)	2.64 (1.56)
Facebook plays an important role in my social relationship	14	(31.8)	3	(6.8)	10	(22.7)	13	(29.6)	1	(2.3)	3	(6.8)	2.84 (1.54)
I enjoy checking my Facebook account	9	(20.4)	4	(9.1)	3	(6.8)	23	(52.3)	4	(9.1)	1	(2.3)	3.27 (1.40)
I don't like to use Facebook	6	(13.6)	5	(11.4)	17	(38.6)	7	(15.9)	3	(6.8)	6	(13.6)	3.32 (1.51)
Using Facebook is part of my everyday routine	7	(16.7)	7	(16.7)	8	(19.0)	14	(33.3)	3	(7.1)	3	(7.1)	3.19 (1.45)
I respond to content that others share using Facebook.	8	(19.0)	2	(4.8)	4	(9.5)	21	(50.0)	6	(14.3)	1	(2.4)	3.43 (1.39)

Note: Values might not sum to 100% due to rounding.



## Statistical Analysis

### Research Question 1 – Perceptions & Attitudes Toward Law Enforcement and Community Violence

Regression, using PFAV scores as the dependent variable, and POPS scores as the independent variable was conducted to examine the association between perceptions of police and community violence. Associations having a p-value  $\leq .05$  were statistically significant. The total POPS score was the only variable included in the model with PFAV as the dependent variable.

Findings from regression analysis (shown in Table 11) showed that perceptions of police scores were significantly associated with past feelings and violence scores ( $F = 5.271$ ;  $p = .027$ ). Thus, the null hypothesis that there is no relationship between perceptions of police and community violence among African American men ages 18 to 44 was rejected. These findings show that higher POP scores are statistically significantly associated with higher PFAV scores, being employed is statistically significantly associated with higher PFAV scores, and being younger is statistically significantly associated with higher PVAV scores.

Table 11

*Regression Analysis Modeling PFAV as Dependent Variable and POPS as Independent Variable*

Variable	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F value	Sig.
Regression	51.709	1	51.709	5.271	.027
Residual	402.198	41	9.810		
Total	453.907	42			

### Research Question 2 – Social Media Use and Community Violence

Regression examining the association between PFAV scores and SMUIS scores was conducted to examine the association between social media use and community violence. Associations having a p-value  $\leq .05$  were statistically significant. The total SMUIS score was the only variable included in the model with PFAV as the dependent variable.

Findings from regression analysis (shown in Table 12) showed that social media use was not statistically significantly associated with past feelings and violence scores ( $F = 3.546$ ;  $p = .068$ ). Thus, the null hypothesis that there is no relationship between social media use and community violence among African American men ages 18 to 44 was retained.

Table 12

*Regression Analysis Modeling the Association between PFAV Scores and SMUIS Scores*

Variable	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F value	Sig.
Regression	39.438	1	39.428	3.546	.068
Residual	411.537	37	11.123		
Total	450.974	38			

### Research Question 3 – Social Media Use Moderating the Association between Attitudes and Perceptions of Police and Community Violence

To test the hypothesis that social media use moderates the relationship between perceptions of police and community violence, a stepwise regression analysis was conducted. The overall model was not statistically significant,  $R^2 = .204$ ,  $F(3, 35) = 2.983$ ,  $p = .837$ . Table 13 includes correlations among variables. The POPS (correlation coefficient =  $.37$ ,  $p = .018$ ) and SMUIS (correlation coefficient =  $.37$ ,  $p = .034$ ). Overall POP scores and SMUIS scores were centered using Baron and Kenny's (1986) method for analyzing moderation in statistical analyses.

Table 13

#### *Correlational Analysis of PFAV, POPS and SMUIS Scores*

Variable	1	2	3
1. Total PFAV	--	.37*	.29*
2. POPS		--	-.011
3. SMUIS			--

\* $p < .05$

In the first step, the centered-POP variable included in the model was statistically significantly associated with propensity towards violence. This variable accounted for 33.6% of the variance in total PFAV scores,  $R^2 = .113$ ,  $F(1, 45) = 5.271$ ,  $p = .027$ . Next, the centered-SMUIS scores were not statistically significantly associated with propensity towards violence,  $R^2 = .087$ ,  $F(1, 38) = 3.546$ ,  $p = .068$ . Regarding SMUIS moderating the association between POPS and PFAV, the centered-SMUIS scores were entered in the model but did not statistically significantly add to the variance in total PFAV scores,

$\Delta R^2 = .203$ ,  $\Delta F(2, 36) = 4.047$ ,  $p = .052$ . Thus, centered-SMUIS scores did not significantly add to the amount of variance in the criterion accounted for,  $R^2 = .090$ ,  $F(1, 9) = 4.045$ ,  $p = .052$ . Next, the interaction term of centered-POPS\*centered\*SMUIS was entered into the third step of the regression. This interaction term did not account for a significant amount of additional variance in PFAV scores,  $\Delta R^2 = .204$ ,  $\Delta F(1, 35) = .043$ ,  $p = .837$ .

Shown in Table 14, the only significant term when conducting regression analysis with total PFAV scores was the centered-POP scores ( $F = 4.713$ ;  $p = .034$ ). This explained 33.6% of the variance in PFAV scores. However, the model with centered-POP scores and centered-SMUIS scores only explained an additional 9% of the variance in PFAV scores with a  $p$  value of .052, indicating that these two variables were not statistically significantly associated with PFAV scores. The third model where centered-POP scores, centered-SMUIS scores and the interaction of centered-POP scores by centered-SMUIS scores were entered into the model also failed to show statistically significant moderation (1% additional variance explained, change in  $F$  value of .043;  $p = .837$ ). Thus, the null hypothesis that social media does moderate the relationship between perception of police and community violence among African American men ages 18 to 44, was retained since the centered-SMUIS scores as well as the interaction term between centered-POPS\*centered-SMUIS failed to significantly add to the model or explain additional variance of PFAV scores.

Table 14

*Regression Testing for Moderation on PFAV by Centered-POPs, Centered-SMUIS & Interaction*

Model	B	Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients Beta	t	Sig.
Centered POPs	.101	.046	.349	2.206	.034
Centered SMUIS	.112	.056	.305	1.995	.054
CenteredPOPs& CenteredSMUIS	.001	.004	.033	.207	.837

**Summary**

A total of 45 African American men aged 18 to 44 participated in this study to first describe their past feelings and violence propensity, their perceptions about police and whether social media use moderated the association between PFAV and POPS. Findings from this study revealed that participants had overall low propensity towards violence as evidenced by low PFAV scores. Participants also had overall poor perceptions of police as evidenced by low scores on the POPS. Regarding social media use, participants had low dependence on social media use as measured by the SMUIS.

Regarding research question 1, perceptions of police was a statistically significant predictor of propensity to violence when modeling perceptions of police in regression analysis,  $R^2=.338$ ,  $F(1, 45) = 5.271$ ,  $p = .027$ . Specifically, results revealed that African American men in this sample who had poor perceptions of the police were statistically significantly more likely to have a higher propensity towards violence. Regarding research question 2, the overall model was statistically significant,  $R^2=.336$ ,  $F(3, 35) =$

2.983,  $p = .837$ . results of this study failed to reject the null hypothesis that social media use does not moderate the association between perceptions of police and community violence since adding the centered-SMUIS scores as well as the interaction term between centered-POP\*centered-SMUIS did not statistically significantly add to the overall model or explain any additional variance of PFAV scores. Thus, social media was not shown to be a moderater of the relationship in this study. Research implications, study limitations and strengths, consistency with the current literature, future research opportunities as well as social change implications are presented in Chapter 5.

## Chapter 5: Discussion

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this research was to examine whether perceptions of police significantly predicts community violence, and whether social media use moderates this association among African American men. This was important since homicides among African American males are significantly higher than other groups throughout the United States with more African Americans victims of violence, especially deadly violence, compared to any other racial or ethnic group (USDOJ, 2015). Thus, this research sought to identify and understand factors that predict and/or moderate involvement or propensity toward violence within African American male populations. This chapter summarizes the results from this study and presents the implications of the findings. It concludes with recommendation for further research.

### **Interpretation of the Findings**

This study was guided by two research questions. The first research question was "Do perceptions of police significantly predict community violence among African American men ages 18 to 44?", while the second research question was "Does social media use moderate the association between perception of police and community violence among African American men ages 18 to 44?" It included 45 African American men, ages 18 to 44 years, who participated in this study. The Past Feelings and Violence (PFAV; Plutchik & van Praag, 1990) survey was used to measure propensity towards violence. The Perceptions of Police survey (POPS; Nadal & Davidoff, 2015) was used to

measure respondents' perceptions of police. The Social Media Use Integration Scale (SMUIS; Jenkins-Guarnieri, 2013) was used to measure dependence on social media.

To summarize, 45 African American men, ages 18 to 44, living in Jacksonville, Florida, participated in this research. The primary independent variable was perceptions of police measured using POPS, and the moderating variable was social media use measured using SMUIS. Results regarding perceptions of police revealed very poor perceptions of police. Almost 37.8% of participants surveyed felt that police are unfriendly while 46.7% felt that police did not protect them. Regarding fairness, 53.3% of respondents disagreed that police treated all people fairly and almost 17.8% reported not that they do not like police. Additionally, 33% disagreed with the statement that police are good people with 42.2% of participants feeling that police discriminated. Further, 26.7% of participants felt that police were not helpful, 40% reported that police are biased, and 37.8% felt that police do not care about the community.

These results show that African American men in this sample did not have a favorable perception of police. These findings are not surprising when considering research that shows Black men are eight times more likely to be stopped and searched by police compared to their White counterparts (Hargreaves, Husband, & Linehan, 2017). Further, Black men between the ages of 18 and 44 are 3.2 times more likely to be killed by a police officer compared to Whites (Jones-Webb, Calvert & Brady, 2018), which also can explain their poor perceptions of police.

These findings that African American men have poor perceptions of police are consistent with the current literature. In fact, the mistrust of law enforcement has been a



longstanding finding (Tesfamariam, 2012) that was found in this research, and continues to be consistent with others' research findings (Hargreaves, 2017; McFarland et al., 2018; Najdowski et al., 2015, Sewell, 2017). The mistrust and poor perception of police is prevalent among Blacks individually, in their communities, and is exacerbated via continual stereotypes of Blacks portrayed via social media (Najdowski et al., 2015).

Participants' responses to social media use revealed low dependence on social media use. Specifically, participants were not avid users of Facebook and stated it did not regulate their daily lives. For example, the average overall score was 29 with a standard deviation of 10 which indicates that participants fall slightly below an expected average of 30 (scale ranges from 6-60). A total of 34.1% strongly disagreed with being disappointed if they could not use Facebook while 43.2% strongly disagreed with being upset if they could not log into Facebook. Almost 1 out of 3 respondents (31.8%) strongly disagreed that Facebook played an important role in their social relationship although a similar percentage (29.6%) felt that Facebook did play an important role in their social relationships. While a little more than half (52.3%) of participants enjoyed checking their Facebook accounts, 20.4% strongly disagreed that they enjoyed checking their account.

Although these results appear inconsistent with previous findings that Black Americans use internet services more than other groups (Goodwill, Anyiwo, Williams, Johnson, Mattis & Watkins, 2018), findings in this study indicate that African American men do not depend or heavily rely on Facebook. Sociodemographic factors were also modeled to account for their contribution to the association between perceptions of police

and community violence. The percentage of African American men with at least a high school education (95%), employed (92%), in a committed relationship (44%), and never incarcerated (62%) was high among this sample.

The dependent variable, propensity towards violence, was also examined. Findings show that African American men in this study reported an overall low propensity towards violence. For example, 44.4% of respondents reported that they never get angry easily while 3% reported being angry very easily. In addition, almost all participants (95.6%;  $n = 43$ ) reported never being angry for no reason while 86.7% ( $n = 39$ ) reported never getting a weapon when angry. The majority (51.2%) of participants reported never causing an injury to others while 77.8% report never using a weapon to try to harm someone when in a fight. The majority (72.1%) of participants also reported never being involved with domestic violence even though 33.3% of respondents reported that weapons are easily accessible.

Eight of 10 respondents reported never being arrested for a nonviolent crime while nine of 10 respondents reported never being arrested for a violent crime. Interestingly, a little more than half of participants (55.6%) reported keeping a weapon in their home that they know how to use. These findings are consistent with Johnson and Chopik (2019) and Najdowski et al. (2015), who like other researchers, reported that Blacks are not as violent as stereotypically portrayed in society or through media.

Researchers have identified factors that predict violence include age, socioeconomic status, family history of violence, and geographical location/community violence exposure were predictive of violence. Blacks ages 18-29 years old experience

violence at high levels compared to other age groups. Although Blacks ages to 18-29 represent about 2% of the population in the United States, the CDC (2017) reported that 26% of assault victims and 21% of homicide victims were Blacks ages 18-29.

Regarding Research Question 1, “What is the relationship between perceptions of police and community violence among African American men ages 18 to 44?”, perceptions of police was a statistically significant predictor ( $F = 5.271, p = .027$ ) of propensity to violence. Given these results, the null hypothesis of no relationship between perceptions of police and propensity towards violence was rejected, and there is a relationship between perceptions of police and community violence among African American men ages 18 to 44.

Research Question 2 was whether social media use statistically significantly moderated the association between perceptions of police and propensity to violence. While the overall model to include centered-POP scores, centered-SMUIS scores and the interaction term of centered-POP\*centered-SMUIS was significant, centered-SMUIS scores and the interaction between centered-POP\*centered-SMUIS scores fail to account for additional variance of PFAV scores. Thus, this result showed that SMUIS was not a statistically significant moderator of the association between perceptions of police and propensity towards violence. Thus, the null hypothesis that social media use does not moderate the association between perceptions of police and propensity towards violence was retained.

### **Limitations of the Study**

The applied research may be limited in the ability to generalize findings given the

limited sample size. However, the sample was large enough to detect statistically significant findings. In addition, respondents' sociodemographic characteristics are comparable to 2017 reports on African Americans living in Jacksonville, Florida (Florida Department of Health, Division of Public Health Statistics & Performance Management, 2017c). For example, the median household income for Blacks living in Duval County (Jacksonville, Florida) in 2017 was \$36,544 with 86.2% of individuals  $\geq 25$  years having earned a high school diploma (Florida Department of Health, Division of Public Health Statistics & Performance Management, 2017c), which is comparable to 17.8% of participants in this sample reporting incomes between \$25-\$50K and 95.1% having earned at least a high school diploma, respectively.

Another potential limitation is the use of selected surveys. For example, having open-ended questions might allow for further exploration and explanation of why participants had the perceptions or views that they had, or might have allowed to further put information into context. On the other hand, using validated surveys provides opportunities to compare results from this research to results from other studies using these same surveys.

### **Recommendations**

Recommendations for future research include expanding this study by increasing the number of participants to examine ages. With expanding ages, it will provide views of a larger demographic pool and examine the variables of ages and their perceptions. It is believed that different age groups will respond differently to the various scales, with an emphasis on social media (Facebook). It is also recommended that other social media outlets are included, as this scale only used Facebook. Different age groups or generations of people use different social media outlets.

It is also recommended that based on the results of the scales that programs should be implemented to assist with the perception of police in the community. Given the issues that are highlighted in the media, the perceptions revealed what is being displayed through these news media outlets. Bridging the gap of law enforcement through community policing may assist with closing the gap on the negative perceptions detailed by the participants.

Lastly, in addition to the expansion of age groups, the number of participants for each scale completed needs to be increased. There were fluctuations in the number of participants answering the surveys. Some numbers were significant, while others were not. In order to make each questions and scale statistically significant, the minimum number of participants from each age group must be increased. This will allow for statistical results that can be validated and used in similar studies.

## **Implications**

The implication of this research is grounded in the fact that not all African American men have a high propensity towards violence even though they have access to and own weapons. One implication is that stereotypes, including but not limited to, being uneducated, unemployed, in non-committed relationships, or being incarcerated should be challenged given findings from this study which shows a high percentage of Black males being counter to all of these characteristics. Changing these views might also directly influence perceptions of self as well as perceptions of others, including police officers and law enforcement.

Another implication is that African American men ranging in ages from 18 to 44 do not have a good perception of police. Poor perceptions of police officers by Black men have high implications. As viewed in the media with celebrated and non-celebrated cases, acts of violence have been the result of perceived unfair treatment and lack of justice. With an already damaged history and negative perception by Black communities, violence could increase if negative perceptions continue to increase. These implications suggest a strong need for more research on the relationship of police officers, Blacks, and urban communities. It will allow researchers to further examine factors that may predict violence.

The implication of these findings is directly relevant to African American men, ages 18 to 44 who live in Jacksonville, Florida, where this research was conducted given the substantially high rates of violence (Schiller, 2019, March 27). In fact, the chances of being a victim of violent crime in Jacksonville Florida is 1 out of 156 compared to being

a victim of a violent crime throughout the state of Florida (1 out of 245) (Schiller, 2019, March 27). This study described perceptions of police, examined the association between perceptions of police and community violence, and tested whether social media moderates the association between perceptions of police and community violence among African American males ages 18 to 44 who reside in urban communities within Jacksonville, Florida. Conducting this research in Jacksonville, Florida was important given the high homicide rate; in 2016, 12.0 per 100,000 Blacks were killed compared to 6.4 per 100,000 for all Black Floridians (Florida Department of Health, Division of Public Health Statistics & Performance Management, 2017b). Thus, the context of these findings helps to understand how perceptions of police, propensity towards violence as moderated by social media, is associated.

An opportunity exists to improve the lives of African American men and reduce the morbidity and mortality as a result of violence. I have confirmed two important findings from this study: First of all, African American men report low propensity to violence and results showed that social media use dependence statistically significantly moderated the association between perceptions of police and propensity to violence. One of the objectives of this study was to examine how African American males are exposed to violence in hopes that further research could provide solutions to reduce violence propensity in this particular population.

Understanding which factors significantly predict violence could provide opportunities for program development resulting in positive social change. Secondly, findings from this research suggest that efforts to improve African American males'

perceptions of police are warranted, such as creating positive messaging campaigns, and revisiting efforts for community patrolling to build better police relationships and visibility with the community. Building better relationships could result in increased trust with law enforcement, thus ultimately serving to reduce community violence.

This research found that African American men do not have a high dependence on social media use, and that social media use failed to modify the association between perceptions of police and propensity towards violence. Thus, the social change that can be offered as a result of this research focuses on creating messages to foster better perceptions of police among African American men. Given that social media use failed to show a moderating effect, no social change regarding this variable can be offered without further research. Thus, an opportunity for social change could be to further examine whether various types of social media use, to include but not limited to internet surfing, Instagram, twitter and snapchat, along with various images or videos can be used to promote positive messages about police, about African Americans males, and positive relationships between police and African American communities.

### **Conclusion**

This study was designed to decrease the information gap between what is known about violence among African American men, and whether social media use moderates the association between perceptions of police and community violence. It is important to understand how social media use moderates the association between perceptions toward police and community violence given the increased use of social media in every day society (Shahjahan & Christy, 2014; Pew Research Center, 2018).



This research has several notable findings. First, this sample was comprised of educated, employed African American men who were in committed relationships and have little to no incarceration. Another notable finding is African American men in this sample reported minimal to no propensity towards violence as measured by the past feelings and violence scale. While the feelings of violence may be minimal, a high percentage of African American men reported accessibility and ownership of firearms. Another, yet less surprising finding, is that African American men have poor perceptions of police which is consistent with the literature indicating that African American men are often stereotyped as being violent, are substantially more likely to be stopped by law enforcement, arrested and incarcerated compared to other ethnic or racial groups (McFarland, Taylor, McFarland & Friedman, 2018; Najdowski et al., 2015, Sewell, 2017).

This study contributed original information on how perceptions of police and social media are associated with violence among urban, African American men ages 18 to 44. It is hoped that study findings will lead to the development of strategies and interventions that address violence, and ultimately lessen the rates of violence in African American men living in urban communities throughout Jacksonville, Florida. The subconscious bias about Blacks being the perpetrator rather than the victim more than likely strains relationships between Blacks, law enforcement, and the criminal justice system (Coke, 2018).

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## Appendices

## Appendix A: Perceptions of Police Scale (POPS)

(Nadal, K., & Davidoff, K) *Permission has been granted by the author for general use and appropriate citation.*

Thanks for filling out [Perceptions of Police Scale \(POPS; Nadal & Davidoff, 2015\)](#)

Here's what we got from you:

# Perceptions of Police Scale (POPS; Nadal & Davidoff, 2015)

Please complete this form if you are interested in using the Perceptions of Police Scale.

**Email address \***

herman.tucker@waldenu.edu

**Name \***

Herman Tucker

**Affiliation/ Institution \***

University of Walden

**How will you use the POPS? \***

To assess African American men's views about police

**When do you plan on completing your project? \***

As soon as IRB approval is obtained; January 2019

Thank you!

Thank you!

Thank you for submitting your answers. You may now download the POPS from:

[https://drive.google.com/file/d/13-](https://drive.google.com/file/d/13-HhS6zOCqU_oow9NczE4hNvstGiJisC/view?usp=sharing)

[HhS6zOCqU\\_oow9NczE4hNvstGiJisC/view?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/file/d/13-HhS6zOCqU_oow9NczE4hNvstGiJisC/view?usp=sharing) When you complete or publish your findings, please report any significant findings to:

<https://www.kevinnadal.com/contact>

Perceptions of Police Scale (POPS)



## PERCEPTIONS OF POLICE SCALE SCORING INFORMATION

Scoring Directions. Below are questions regarding perceptions of the police in the United States (U.S.). Using the 5-point scale, please rate how much you personally agree or disagree with each statement. Record your response to the left of each item.

- 1. To calculate the POPS Total score, add ALL scores for all 12 items for the total score.
- 2. To calculate the POPS Subscale scores:
  - Subscale 1: General Attitudes toward Police Add items 1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 11, and 12.  
Divide the total by 9 to obtain the subscale score.
  - Subscale 2: Perceptions of Police Bias Add items 3, 6, and 10. Divide the total by 3 to obtain the subscale score.
- Results from Nadal and Davidoff (2015) suggest that higher scores indicate less favorable perceptions of the police, while lower scores indicate more favorable perceptions of the police

## Appendix B: Past Feelings and Violence Scale (PFAV)

### **Past Feelings and Acts of Violence Scale**

Robert Plutchik

#### **Acronym**

PFAV

#### **Primary Source**

Plutchik, R., & van Praag, H. M. (1990). A self-report measure of violence risk: II. Comprehensive Psychiatry, 31, 450-456.

#### **Purpose Statement**

Past Feelings and Acts of Violence Scale (PFAV) is designed to measure respondents' risk of violence. Items focus on feelings of anger and acts of violence against others. Respondents are asked whether they have beaten strangers or members of their family, whether they lose their temper easily, whether they carry and use weapons, whether they have been arrested, and so forth.

#### **Response Options**

The PFAV is a self-report questionnaire and contains 4-point Likert-type scales ranging from "never" to "very often" and "never" to "more than twice".

#### **Sample Items**

"Do you find that you get angry for no reason at all?"; "Have you ever hit or attacked someone who is not a member of your family?"; and "Are weapons easily accessible to you?"

#### **Reliability**



Coefficient alpha reliability = .77 (N = 100).

### **Number of Questions**

12.

### **Directions for Scoring**

To obtain total scores for items 1-11, sum responses ranging from “never” to “very often”/”more than twice” and weighted from 0 to 3. Item 12 calls for frequencies and/or percentages.

**From:** docdel@bmdshapi.com <docdel@bmdshapi.com>

**Sent:** Monday, November 19, 2018 8:59 AM

**To:** Herman Tucker

**Subject:** Re: Requesting permission to use the Past Feelings and Acts of Violence Act

Dear Herman Tucker:

Thank you for providing the requested information. Attached is a packet of information on the Past Feelings and Acts of Violence Scale.

If you have any questions, please let us know.

Thank you,

Diane Cadwell

(Plutchik, R., & van Praag, H. M., 1990). *Permission granted for general use.*

Please read each statement and indicate how often you do or feel each of the things described, by placing a check in the appropriate space.

1. Do you find that you get angry very easily? How often do you feel very angry at people?  
Never \_\_\_ Sometimes \_\_\_ Often \_\_\_ Very Often \_\_\_\_\_
2. Do you find that you get angry for no reason at all?  
Never \_\_\_ Sometimes \_\_\_ Often \_\_\_ Very Often \_\_\_\_\_
3. When angry, do you get a weapon?  
Never \_\_\_ Sometimes \_\_\_ Often \_\_\_ Very Often \_\_\_\_\_
4. Have you ever caused injury in a fight (for exam- bruises, bleeding or broken bones)?  
Never \_\_\_ Sometimes \_\_\_ Often \_\_\_ Very Often \_\_\_\_\_
5. Have you ever hit or attacked a member of your family?  
Never \_\_\_ Sometimes \_\_\_ Often \_\_\_ Very Often \_\_\_\_\_
6. Have you ever hit or attacked someone who is not a member of your family?  
Never \_\_\_ Sometimes \_\_\_ Often \_\_\_ Very Often \_\_\_\_\_
7. Have you ever used a weapon to try to harm someone?  
Never \_\_\_ Sometimes \_\_\_ Often \_\_\_ Very Often \_\_\_\_\_
8. Are weapons easily accessible to you?  
Never \_\_\_ Sometimes \_\_\_ Often \_\_\_ Very Often \_\_\_\_\_
9. How often have you been arrested for a nonvio- lent crime such as shoplifting or forgery?  
Never \_\_\_ Sometimes \_\_\_ Often \_\_\_ Very Often \_\_\_\_\_
10. How often have you been arrested for a non-violent crime such as shoplifting of forgery.

Never \_\_\_\_ Once \_\_\_\_ Twice \_\_\_\_ More Than Twice \_\_\_\_

11. Have you ever been arrested for a violent crime such as armed robbery or assault?

Never \_\_\_\_ Once \_\_\_\_ Twice \_\_\_\_ More Than Twice \_\_\_\_

12. Do you keep weapons in your home that you know how to use? No \_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_

### Scoring Directions

1. A 'never' response receives a '0'; a 'sometimes' response receives a '1', a 'often' response receives a '2' and a 'very often' response receives a '3'.
2. Total all scores to calculate the PFAV total score.
3. Higher scores suggest more risk or propensity toward violence and violent behaviors while lower scores such lower risk or propensity toward violence and/or violent behaviors.

### Appendix C: Social Media Use Integration Scale (SMUIS)

Dear Mr. Tucker,

You have our permission to use the scale. We just request that when you have finished collecting your data, you send us a summary of your results with the SMIUS, especially any psychometric data you obtained on the SMIUS from your sample.

Best regards and good luck with your research.

Brian

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**From:** Herman Tucker <herman.tucker@waldenu.edu>

**Sent:** Thursday, November 15, 2018 9:29:34 AM

**To:** Johnson, Brian

**Subject:** Requesting permission to use your Social Media Use Integration Scale (SMUIS)

Dr. Johnson,

I am a doctoral candidate at Walden University, and am requesting use of your Social Media Use Integration Scale (SMUIS) to research the association between social media use, perceptions toward/of police, and experience with violence among African American men, ages 18-44. Specifically, I will examine whether social media use mediates the association between past feelings and violence and perceptions toward/of police.

This email serves as my formal request for permission to use the SMIUS published by you and your co-author Dr. Jenkins-Guarnieri.

I eagerly await your response.

Thank you.

Herman Tucker

\*\*This message originated from outside UNC. Please use caution when opening attachments or following links. Do not enter your UNC credentials when prompted by external links.\*\*

Please read each statement and indicate how much you disagree or agree by placing a check in the appropriate space.

1. I feel disconnected from friends when I have not logged into Facebook.

Strongly disagree   Slightly disagree   Disagree   Agree   Slightly Agree   Strongly Agree

2. I would like it if everyone used Facebook to communicate.

Strongly disagree   Slightly disagree   Disagree   Agree   Slightly Agree   Strongly Agree

3. I would be disappointed if I could not use Facebook at all.

Strongly disagree   Slightly disagree   Disagree   Agree   Slightly Agree   Strongly Agree

4. I get upset when I can't log on to Facebook.

Strongly disagree   Slightly disagree   Disagree   Agree   Slightly Agree   Strongly Agree

5. I prefer to communicate with others mainly through Facebook.

Strongly disagree   Slightly disagree   Disagree   Agree   Slightly Agree   Strongly Agree

6. Facebook plays an important role in my social relationships.

Strongly disagree   Slightly disagree   Disagree   Agree   Slightly Agree   Strongly Agree

7. I enjoy checking my Facebook account.

Strongly disagree   Slightly disagree   Disagree   Agree   Slightly Agree   Strongly Agree

8. I don't like to use Facebook.

Strongly disagree   Slightly disagree   Disagree   Agree   Slightly Agree   Strongly Agree

9. Using Facebook is part of my everyday routine.

Strongly disagree   Slightly disagree   Disagree   Agree   Slightly Agree   Strongly Agree

10. I respond to content that others share using Facebook.

Strongly disagree   Slightly disagree   Disagree   Agree   Slightly Agree   Strongly Agree

### Scoring Directions

1. A 'strongly disagree' response receives a '1'; a 'slightly disagree' response receives a '2', a 'disagree' response receives a '3', an 'agree' response receives a '4', a 'slightly agree' response receives a '5' and a 'strongly agree' response receives a '6'.
2. Items 1 – 6 will be summed to measure the social integration and emotional connection factor.
3. Items 7 – 10 will be summed to measure the integration and social routines factor. 'sometimes' response receives a '1', a 'often' response receives a '2' and a 'very often' response receives a '3'.
4. Total all scores to calculate overall score for the SMUIS total score.

5. Higher scores suggest more use and dependence on social media while lower scores indicate less use and dependence of social media.

## Appendix D: Sociodemographic Questions

**Age**

What is your age? \_\_\_\_\_ Prefer not to answer \_\_\_\_\_

**Level of Education**

What is the highest grade you have completed? \_\_\_\_\_ Prefer not to answer  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Employment Status**

Are you currently employed? YES NO

**Marital Status**

Married \_\_\_\_\_ Divorced \_\_\_\_\_ Widowed \_\_\_\_\_ Separated \_\_\_\_\_

Never been married \_\_\_\_\_ In a committed relationship \_\_\_\_\_

Prefer not to answer \_\_\_\_\_

**Geographic Location/ Zip Code**

What is your zipcode? \_\_\_\_\_ Prefer not to answer \_\_\_\_\_

**Annual Household Income**

What is your current annual household income? \_\_\_\_\_ Prefer not to answer  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Incarceration Status**

Have you ever been in jail or prison? NO YES

If yes, how long were you in jail or prison?



## Appendix E: Information Flyer

**We need you!** We need Black men ages 18 to 44, to give your attitudes and perceptions about violence, law enforcement and social media use. Participation is completely voluntary.



**Why?** To learn more about Black men's views about violence in our communities.

**How?** By asking Black men, ages 18 to 44, to participate by completing a one-time survey, lasting no more than 15 minutes.

**Where?** The study is taking place throughout our local community at various venues.

**When?** Men will be invited to complete a survey until 45 eligible men have completed a survey. All survey information will be stored in locked file cabinets or in password protected computer files.

**Will it cost to take part?** Participating in this study is free. Men will not receive any compensation for taking part.

**Is there a risk to participate?** While risks are small, you might feel anxious about answering some of the questions. There are no right or wrong answers and you can refuse to answer any question you don't want to answer.

**Interested?** Please call (407) 408-5515 for more information.