

2021

## An Examination of African Americans' Fear of Police Among Generation Z

James Jones

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An Examination of African Americans' Fear of Police Among Generation Z

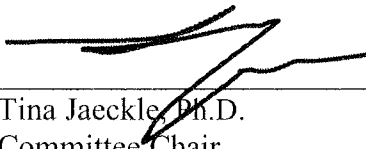
by  
James R. Jones

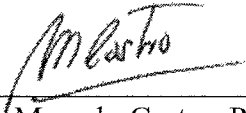
An Applied Dissertation Submitted to the Abraham S. Fischler College of  
Education and School of Criminal Justice in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Nova Southeastern University  
2020

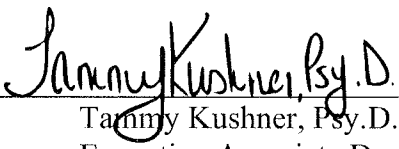
Approval Page

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## Statement of Original Work

I declare the following:

I have read the Code of Student Conduct and Academic Responsibility as described in the *Student Handbook* of Nova Southeastern University. This applied dissertation represents my original work, except where I have acknowledged the ideas, words, or material of other authors.

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## **Abstract**

An Examination of African Americans' Fear of Police Among Generation Z. James R. Jones 2020: Applied Dissertation, Nova Southeastern University, Abraham S. Fischler College of Education and School of Criminal Justice. Keywords: Generation Z, Fear of Police, African American, Level of Fear.

The purpose of this study was to examine the level of fear Generation Z-African Americans have of police. The population for this research consisted of African Americans between the ages of 18 and 25 and resided in the United States of America. From this population, a sample size of 105 participants were constructed for the study. The research compared the level of fear Blacks have of police when grouped by age, gender, education level, region of the country, and community of residence. Random sampling was used for participant selection, and a series of non-parametric ANOVAs (i.e., Kruskal-Wallis tests) were conducted to analyze the data. The results of the study suggested that most Black citizens between the ages of 18-25 were moderately fearful of the police in the United States of America. The study did not find any significant differences in levels of fear of law enforcement based on age, gender, region of residence, or education level. However, community of residence did yield a difference in fear level. The data suggested there was a significant difference in fear of police between suburban and rural communities ( $p = .029$ ), indicating that participants residing in suburban communities ( $M = 3.17$ ,  $SD = 0.71$ ,  $Median = 3.00$ ) had higher levels of fear compared to participants residing in rural communities ( $M = 2.00$ ,  $SD = 1.16$ ,  $Median = 2.00$ ).

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

### Nature of the Research Problem

Police engagement with members of the community often does not result in use of force. When examined further, it is even less likely that a law enforcement officer would use deadly force when coming in contact with citizens. Despite the aforementioned being true on a macro level, this is misleading as it relates to African Americans in the United States of America. African Americans make up only 13.2% of the United States' population but have a greater probability of having forced used against them during interactions with law enforcement than any other race/ethnicity. "More specifically, African American males make up approximately 6.5% of the U.S.' population but are more likely to be shot by police officers than their Caucasian counterparts who make up approximately 21% of American citizens" (Jones, 2017, p 57).

While the presence of social media has created a fallacy that unjustified shootings of African Americans at disproportionate rates compared to their counterparts is new due to the ability for the acts to be recorded and quickly shared, statistics indicate that African American citizens have continuously been killed by police at alarming rates dating as far back as the Reconstruction Era (Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, 2018). However, despite the continued presence of such acts over centuries, many studies only focus on African Americans' attitudes toward police, and comparisons between African American and Caucasian American levels of receptiveness of law enforcement. Past and current research has failed to examine fear level Black citizens have of police in the United States (Ekins, 2016). Furthermore, the body of knowledge also has not explored the aforementioned as it relates specifically to African Americans of Generation Z. The Pew Research Center defines Generation Z as anyone



born between the years of 1995 and 2015. The focus of this population is important because there are many variables that can contribute to their level of fear of police such as social media, education level, region of residence, and community where one resides.

**Alternative Arguments.** While many studies suggest that African Americans are killed at higher rates than their Caucasian counterparts, detractors of the argument contend there may be other factors that contribute to the issue. Some argue that national and local data is flawed because use of force record keeping has produced insufficient data, there is a lack of transparency in data reporting, and when adjusting for crime (rather than population proportion) there is no systematic evidence of anti-Black disparities in fatal shootings, (The United States Commission on Civil Rights, 2018; Cesario, et. al., 2018; Fryer, 2016). In addition, other research examines the thought process, and how police officers feel when they encounter aggressive and or noncompliant people. Nix (2019) suggests that it is important to know what thoughts occur in an officer's head when interacting with noncompliant people (regardless of race) to progress training on decision making and understanding of police interactions with the community.

In addition to the argument of flawed data, and lack of transparency, some argue that Blacks' fear of police can be attributed to social media and other media outlets (Jones, 2017). Prior to the age of technology, it was believed that social transmission, also referred to as word of mouth, contributed to this trepidation. The majority of American citizens use social media to keep in contact with family and friends, as well as to get information on politics, and crime. For many, social media is their primary source for obtaining national, and international news (Jones, 2017). In addition, traditional media outlets such as television, radio, and periodicals provide viewers, listeners, and readers with continuous coverage of negative police/citizen interaction in

local areas. However, coverage does not always reflect the accuracy of the relationship between the two groups (Jones, 2017). Often, the media creates an idea that every interaction between police and the African American community is contentious resulting in use of force. This fallacy is due to the repeat airing of encounters that results in uses of force (both physical and deadly) on a regular basis. In addition, social media outlets such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter also contribute significantly to citizens' perception of how often force is used during a police interaction with African American citizens. The ease of sharing immediately, abundantly, and repetitively such footage via social networks like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and Snapchat, coupled with saturated airtime on traditional media outlets creates a fallacy that manipulates the perceptions and levels of fear African Americans have for the police.

**Problem Statement:** The problem to be addressed by this study is to understand if level of fear of police differ among African American citizens 18-25 years of age when grouped by age, gender, education level, region of country, and neighborhood of residence.

**Purpose of Study.** The purpose of this quantitative methodology using non-experimental research in a survey approach in a cross-sectional design study was to examine if Blacks' fear of police among Generation Z differs based on gender, region of residence, education level, and or community in the United States of America. At this stage in the study, fear was defined as the belief that the presence of a police officer would result in danger, pain, threat, or death. The level of fear was measured by using a Likert Scale.

### **Background of Study**

The first group of slaves were captured from the countries of West Africa and forcibly transported across the Atlantic Ocean to Jamestown, Virginia in August of 1619 to be enslaved

for the next 246 years. This was the birth of African/African American fear of American authority. Throughout the course of slavery, the social construct of race was created to reflect a system of hierarchy as a means of control by slave masters to eliminate the possibility of an uprising by slaves and poor White plantation workers. Property owners recognized the bonding between Black slaves and White plantation workers and identified the risk of a takeover due to slaves being forced to provide free labor and poor White plantation workers providing it for little to nothing in return. In response, plantation owners created a system of supervision where White plantation workers, supervised slaves thereby creating the social construct known today as race in America.

As the Emancipation Proclamation was signed in 1863, and slavery legally and physically ended in 1865, many African Americans rejoiced. However, for the next 155 years from the Reconstruction Era to present, Blacks in America have experienced a strained relationship with law enforcement resulting in their death [Blacks] at the hands of police/authority. While many groups have experienced some form of conflict with police during their existence in the United States, the strained relationship between Blacks and law enforcement has been present for longer than the conflicts between law enforcement and all other racial/ethnic groups. In addition, African Americans are disproportionately represented in nearly all categories of the criminal justice system as it relates to use of force, deadly use of force, arrests, incarceration, length of incarceration, and the death penalty-all of which begins with law enforcement as the entry point into the criminal justice system. As with the ending of slavery, each era in American history brought hope for Black citizens of better opportunities and fair treatment; however, the reality of every new era birthed another sense of trepidation.

**Reconstruction Era.** The Reconstruction Era began in 1865 and ended in 1877 (the generally accepted period). During this time America criminalized nearly all behaviors of newly freed slaves. The country adopted Black codes which were designed to control Blacks and implement the old social structure resembled in slavery. Individual states created their own more restrictive Black Codes which many historians argue closely mimicked slavery as it related to forced labor for different offenses of which was legal via the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment of the U.S. Constitution. Many of the Black Codes restricted Blacks from owning property, conducting business, buying or leasing land, and required Blacks be in possession of documents to provide to authorities to avoid being charged with vagrancy. Many southern states engaged in convict leasing. The aforementioned created an incentive for state authorities to arrest Blacks, thereby enacting the legal loophole created by the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment to re-enslave African Americans.

**Jim Crow Era.** The Jim Crow Era began in 1877 and continued until 1954 with the Supreme Court decision on the court case Brown vs. Board of Education which desegregated public schools. However, despite the ruling, many historians argue that the Jim Crow Era did not end until 1964 with the signing of the Civil Rights Act (as with the Reconstruction era, the beginning & end of Jim Crow are theoretical or subjective proclamations). Jim Crow was a time-period where laws allowed for the segregation and discrimination of Blacks in the United States. Many of the laws that were present during the time of the Reconstruction Era were enacted in the laws that were rewritten during the Jim Crow Era. Legal segregation during this time included the segregation of public schools, parks and beaches, transportation, water fountains, bathrooms, and restaurants. It is important to note, not only was it illegal for Blacks to frequent these places, but the laws were also enforced via violence by police.

**Civil Rights Era.** The Civil Rights Era began in 1954 through 1968. The goal of the Civil Rights Movement was to obtain constitutional rights for Black Americans that were written in the United States Constitution. During his final speech before his assassination, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. stated

“All we say to America is be true to what you said on paper. If I lived in China or even Russia or any totalitarian country, maybe I could understand some of these illegal injunctions; maybe I could understand the denial of certain basic first amendment privileges because they haven't committed themselves to that over there. But somewhere I read of the freedom of assembly. Somewhere I read of the freedom of speech. Somewhere I read of the freedom of press. Somewhere I read that the greatness of America is the right to protest for rights; and so just as I say we aren't going to let any dogs or water hoses turn us around, we aren't going to let any injunction turn us around...” (King, 1968).

He was killed the next day. As in the Jim Crow Era, Blacks protesting for equal rights during this time was met with violence by police and other government authority that resulted in incarceration, serious injury, and death. Some notable protests that ended in Black protesters being incarcerated or physically injured by police include the 1955 Montgomery Bus Boycott, 1961 Albany Movement, 1963 Birmingham Campaign, 1963 March on Washington, 1965 Bloody Sunday (the march from Selma, Alabama to Montgomery, Alabama), 1965 Chicago Freedom Movement, and 1968 Poor People's Campaign.

**Mass Incarceration Era.** The mass incarceration era began in the 1970s and continues until today. More African Americans are disproportionately represented in jails, prisons, and criminal justice supervision than any other race/ethnic group in the country. Presently, there are more African Americans under criminal supervision than there were Black slaves during slavery.

African American men make up approximately 6.5% of the United States population. Despite their small percentage, one out of three will be incarcerated. Many criminal justice researchers and professionals attribute this staggering statistic to the over policing in minority neighborhoods, systemic racism in the court system, discriminatory hiring practices, criminalizing minority behaviors, and the school to prison pipeline.

### **Significance of Study**

The strained relationship between the police and minority-communities dates back far before the Civil Rights Movement. In fact, the history of this relationship can be traced as far back as the Reconstruction Era (1865-1877). Today, minorities still experience some of the same fears of police as they did in the 1800s. While America's history of terroristic culture against members of the African American community at the hands of law enforcement is well documented, recent events that have resulted in the death of Black citizens due to unjustified use of deadly force by police has caused memories of the past to resurface and racial fears of Blacks' to be heightened. Many of these recent incidents include the deaths of Tamir Rice, Botham Jean, Jordan Edwards, Eric Gardner, Philando Castile, Alton Sterling, George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Jacob Blake to name a few. Many studies have been conducted that explore the rate at which African Americans are killed by police compared to other racial and ethnic groups. Some studies suggest the only thing that was significant in predicting whether an unarmed person was shot and killed by police was whether or not they were Black...Crime variables did not matter in terms of predicting whether the person killed was unarmed (Lowery, 2016). Another study found evidence of a significant bias in the killing of unarmed African Americans relative to unarmed Whites, in that the probability of being Black, unarmed, and shot

by police is about 3.49 times the probability of being White, unarmed, and shot by police on average (Ross, 2015).

While previous studies have examined the comparison between the level of fear African Americans have of police compared to their fear of police in other countries (Jones, 2017), the level of receptiveness of African Americans to police compared to the level of receptiveness of Whites to police (Cheurprakobkit, 2006), reasons for unfavorable attitudes toward law enforcement, and the influence of race, ethnicity (Gabbidon, & Higgins, 2008), and social class has towards attitude of the police (Schuck, Rosenbaum, & Hawkins, 2008), there is still a gap in the current body of knowledge that does not study if Blacks' fear of police differ based on age group (Generation Z), gender, region of residence, education level, and or community. The results of this research provide an understanding of the level of fear of specific groups within the African American community. It also confirms the impact negative police interaction has on members of the Black community.

### **Barriers and Issues**

While the surveys used for data collection for the participants remained confidential, due to the level of fear many African Americans have of the police, it is speculated that a lot of people refused to complete the survey because of concern of retaliation. In addition, while the researcher may have had immediate access to participants in his geographical region, obtaining participants in regions and communities outside of his own proved to be challenging. In an attempt to address these two issues, confidentiality statements were provided with each survey to ensure the participants that their identities would remain confidential. In addition, surveys did not require the participants to provide any identifying information. As a result, all surveys were de-identified.

To address the challenge of participants being outside of the immediate geographical location and community of the researcher, electronic surveys were used as a form of data collection. This allowed the researcher to obtain data without having to be physically located in the region which the participants resided. Access to the completed surveys was password protected to ensure safety of the data and to protect the participants (as a second level of protection after de-identification). Upon completion of the study, all data was secured, and was deleted and destroyed to honor the confidentiality statement included on the survey for the participants.

### **Definition of Terms**

Black/African American- All Black people residing in the United States of African descent.

Education Level:

High School- Completion of 4 years with a high school diploma received or having obtained a GED (General Equivalency Diploma).

Associate Degree- Completion of 60 (post-secondary) credits with an Associate Degree received at the community college level in any discipline.

Bachelor's Degree- Completion of 120 (post-secondary) credits with a bachelor's degree received at the College or University level in any discipline.

Graduate Degree- Completion of 36 (graduate) credits or more with a master's or Professional Degree received at the College or University level in any discipline.

Doctorate Degree- Completion of a Doctorate or Doctorate Level Professional Degree received at the College or University level in any discipline.



**Region of Residence:**

New England- Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Connecticut (U.S. Census, 2020)

Middle Atlantic- New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania (U.S. Census, 2020)

East North Central- Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, and Wisconsin (U.S. Census, 2020)

West North Central- Minnesota, Iowa, Missouri, North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, and Kansas (U.S. Census, 2020)

South Atlantic- Delaware, Maryland, District of Columbia, Virginia, West Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida (U.S. Census, 2020)

East South Central- Kentucky, Tennessee, Alabama, and Mississippi (U.S. Census, 2020)

West South Central- Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, and Texas (U.S. Census, 2020)

Mountain- Montana, Idaho, Wyoming, Colorado, New Mexico, Arizona, Utah, and Nevada (U.S. Census, 2020)

Pacific- Washington, Oregon, California, Alaska, and Hawaii (U.S. Census, 2020)

**Community:**

Urban- Area of high-density population; inner city.

Suburban- Residential neighborhood located on the outskirts of a city. Area occupied by primarily single-family homes and apartments occupied in buildings not considered high rise structures.

Rural- a low density population area that has very little homes, buildings, and large plots of land.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### Theoretical Framework

Coined in the mid to late 1980s by Derrick Bell Jr., Richard Delgado, Charles Lawrence Mari Matsuda, and Patricia Williams, critical race theory explores society and culture, racial class, law, and power. It posits that issues in society are a direct result of social structure, and ethnocentrism rather than psychological factors. Its birth occurred in law schools in America building on to the initial theory of critical legal studies which focused on race.

Critical race theory has two primary themes. They are (1) the law is a primary factor in society that is used to ensure white supremacy, and racial dominance is sustained, and (2) that the future of eradicating such a social structure lies in breaking the relationship between law and racial power and progressing towards a societal structure that embraces and ensures rights such as economic, social, political, and equality for disenfranchised groups-specifically African Americans.

Understanding the contentions of critical race theory, it was used as the theoretical framework for this study as law enforcement in the United States is the executive branch of the government responsible for enforcing the law. In addition, dating back to the Reconstruction Era, it can be argued that it has been used as a vehicle responsible for the continued presence of racial dominance by ensuring the disproportionate representation of Blacks in areas such as criminal justice supervision, incarceration, and victims of deadly use of force at the hands of law enforcement. As a result, this theory was used to guide this study as the hypothesis for the research is the level of fear of police will be consistent across all categories when grouped by gender, age, education level, region of country, and neighborhood of residence.

## **Introduction**

The relationship between police and the African American community in the United States of America has been strained for many centuries. While progress has been made to repair the lack of trust African American citizens have for law enforcement, many still remain fearful of the executive branch of the government (or that branch which executes and enforces the laws). The aforementioned is due to past events that damaged African Americans' perception of police and for what they stand [police].

Studies have been conducted on this issue to assist criminal justice professionals and sociologists to better understand the dynamics of the relationship between these two groups. The focus of much of the past literature concentrated on African Americans' attitude towards the police, and or compared the level of Blacks' receptiveness of police to that of other races/ethnicities. However, despite previous research, there is still a gap in the body of knowledge that fails to examine fear of police as it relates to subgroups within the African American community such as Generation Z, those that reside in different regions of the United States, different communities for which African Americans reside, and African Americans of different education levels. It is important to note that while African Americans/Blacks in the United States are all identified as one category on the United States Census, they are a broad range of people with different experiences that can contribute to their differing levels of fear of law enforcement.

This literature review explores previous studies with the intention of identifying what past researchers have said, drawing similarities between related topics, and recognizing central issues within the greater problem. In addition, this review of the literature will also assist in guiding the research by revealing gaps in the body of knowledge. Finally, it will help the

researcher understand appropriate methodologies for rigor and success during the research process.

## **Synthesis of Literature**

### **Blacks' Attitude Towards Police**

For centuries, the use of violence against members of the African American community has been prevalent and well documented. Each era in the United States has recorded rates of police brutality against Blacks that is significantly higher than the rates of their [Blacks] counterparts. These eras include the Reconstruction Era, Jim Crow, Civil Right, and present. Angus and Crichlow (2008) conducted a study examining race and power perspective on police brutality in America. The purpose of this research was to review past cases in the media between the years of 2011 and 2016 of unarmed Black men that were shot and killed by police. It was considered archival research that reviewed previously published data to compare findings. Data was collected from the Washington Post and New York Times to analyze the outcomes, effects, and the repercussions of the incidents in the African American community (Angus, & Crichlow, 2018). The study used Critical Race Theory (CTR) as the theoretical framework for the study. In the cases that were sampled, the results found all police officers involved were acquitted following decisions from grand juries or district attorneys (Angus, & Crichlow, 2018). The data revealed a pattern of the aforementioned. The results of the study further found that the protection of qualified immunity allows officers' misconduct to be dismissed without fair trial. These rulings have a grave impact on the criminal justice system and is one of the primary reasons why officers are able to engage in violence and unjustified deadly uses of force against minorities with very little or no consequences.

Similar to the study conducted by Angus and Crichlow, Brown and Benedict in 2002 examined a similar topic as it related to Blacks and law enforcement. Like many other analyses on the topic, the strengths of the research identified African Americans' attitudes towards the police, and could generalize the findings beyond one geographical location, and population. The study also examined previously written articles on citizens' perceptions of the police in the United States. However, the research did not explore if Blacks' fear of police differed based on age group, gender, region of residence, education level, and or community. The researchers used a quantitative research design that was longitudinal in nature and reviewed 100 studies which focused on factors such as race, age, neighborhood, and contact with the police. The research reviewed spanned from 1965 to 2000. The results of the study indicated that African Americans viewed police less favorable than Whites (Brown, & Benedict, 2002). The findings also suggested a precipitous decline in approval ratings occurred after each major incident of police brutality (Brown & Benedict, 2002).

Unlike many of the other studies that used specifically a quantitative research design to examine African American's attitudes of police, Chaney and Robertson chose to explore racism and police brutality in America through a mixed methods design. The purpose of this study was to examine how citizens perceived the police and how much did race impact the perception. The researchers reviewed both statistical data from the National Police Misconduct Statistics and Reporting Project (NPMSRP), and narratives from 36 contributors to the NPMSRP site. The questions answered in the study were (1) What do findings from the NPMSRP suggest about the rate of police brutality in America? and (2) How do individuals perceive the police department, and what implications do these perceptions hold for Black men in America? (Chaney, & Robertson, 2013). The results of the study found there were 5,986 reports of 382 fatalities linked

to misconduct, settlements and judgments that totaled \$347,455,000, and 33 % of misconduct cases that went through to convictions and 64 % of misconduct cases that received prison sentences (Chaney, & Robertson, 2013). It further found that most Black citizens perceive police negatively, were not trusting of them, and viewed them as actors of police violent acts/police brutality against Blacks.

Most research conducted in the area of African Americans' perception of police are generally conducted via a quantitative research design using a Likert scale or via a qualitative design to obtain the lived experience of Black citizens when engaged by police. Peck in 2015 uniquely conducted an archival study on minority perceptions of police. The research was an archival study. The purpose of her research was to examine perceptions of police attitudes among racial and ethnic groups. The focus was to identify if racial groups perceived police differently. While the research was an archival study, it was also longitudinal in nature as the researcher explored studies from 1985 to 2002 and updated the data based on research completed after 2002. She reviewed 92 past studies that met a specific criterion. The researcher reviewed studies that examined racial comparisons of black/white, non-white/white, and black/Hispanic/white. The results of the study suggested overall, individuals who identified themselves as black, non-white, or minority were more likely to hold negative perceptions and attitudes toward the police compared to whites (Peck, 2015).

Studies in the United States that examine African Americans' perceptions of police are often limited to America. However, in 2017 Jones examined Blacks' fear of police in America and other countries. In the United States African Americans have a long history of victimization at the hands of police. Because of the aforementioned, many Black citizens in America are fearful of contact with law enforcement. As a result, the purpose of this study was to compare

the level of fear Black citizens have of police in the United States compared to their fear of police abroad. The research used a quantitative research design. In order to obtain the data for the study the researcher used a closed ended electronic survey that was delivered via email and text message. To adequately obtain the participants for the study Convenience Sampling/Availability Sampling was used. Traditionally no inclusion criterion is identified prior to the selection of participants when using this method of sampling, but due to the nature of the study and the need for a specific ethnicity for the research, a criterion was assigned. This form of sampling produced 414 participants. To participate in the study, one had to be an American citizen, and eighteen years of age or older. The researcher conducted a multinomial logistic regression to analyze the data. The results of the research suggested overall, people of African Descent are more fearful of encountering law enforcement in the United States of America and felt safer coming in contact with police in other countries (Jones, 2017). The research further recommended for future studies that qualitative and or mixed methods research designs be explored to understand why American citizens feel safer encountering police in different countries.

Unlike much of the literature that specifically examines race and perception of police, Oliveira, and Murphy explored race, social identity, and views of police. They used a quantitative research design, and the research was conducted in Australia. The purpose of the study was to determine if there was a correlation between race/ethnicity and perception of police. In order to answer the research questions, the researchers surveyed 1,204 participants. The surveys were closed ended and were designed to answer the question “Does social identity processes impact people’s views of police”. The researchers constructed this question for the study because previous literature suggested that racial minorities from middle-class communities

tend to have a perception of police that is equally as receptive as non-minorities. The analysis of the data for this research suggested that social identity is a more important predictor of attitudes toward police than race/ethnicity (Oliveria, & Murphy, 2015).

Much of the research on attitudes toward police concentrate on race and ethnicity. However, Schuck, Rosenbaum, and Hawkins included social class and neighborhood as variables to examine. In 2008, Schuck, Rosenbaum, and Hawkins conducted a study on the influence of race/ethnicity, social class, and neighborhood context on residents' attitudes toward the police. The purpose of the study was to examine how race/ethnicity, social class, and neighborhood context interacted to influence four different dimensions of attitudes: neighborhood, global, police services, and fear of the police (Schuck, Rosenbaum, & Hawkins, 2008). The population for the study was derived from the city of Chicago of which 461 participants made up the sample. The aforementioned consisted of 168 Caucasian participants. 131 were African American participants, and 162 were Hispanic participants. The study used a quantitative research design. The results suggested:

“Significant racial/ethnic variation in perceptions of the police, with African Americans reporting the most negative attitudes. The magnitude of the racial/ethnic gap, however varied across the different dimensions with the largest difference between African Americans and Whites in terms of fear of the police. The findings also suggested that African Americans' and Hispanics' perceptions of the police are moderated by the interaction of social class and neighborhood socioeconomic composition. Middle-class African Americans and Hispanics who resided in disadvantaged neighborhoods reported more negative attitudes towards the police than those who resided in more advantaged areas. Overall, the study findings highlighted the complex interplay between experiences,



community context, social class, and type of attitudinal assessment in understanding within and across racial and ethnic variation in residents' perceptions to the police" (Schuck, et. al., 2008, p 515).

Often research on citizens' attitudes toward police do not explore cultural values or the engagement law enforcement has with members of the community. However, Webb and Marshall included the aforementioned in their study. Their study was conducted in Omaha, Nebraska. The purpose of the research was to examine if attitudes towards the police was based on law enforcement-citizen engagement, or if they were a result of cultural values via cultural transmission. It was a quantitative research design which utilized closed ended surveys to obtain the data needed. The racial/ethnic participants of the study were Hispanic, Black, and White. The independent variables for the research were age, race, and gender. The dependent variable was attitude towards police. The results of the research indicated that while race was not a predictor, the neighborhood in which one resides is a significant influence on one's attitude towards the police. Recommendations for future studies included examining youth attitudes towards police as this study focused on adults.

### **Black Citizens' Experience with Police**

Between the years of 1999 and 2015, 78 unarmed Black men and women were killed by police. Often when police kill African American citizens there is a lack of punishment that occurs. In most instances, officers are not charged criminally. As a result, Chaney and Robertson conducted a study to examine if police involved killings of Black citizens between the years of 1999 and 2015 resulted in an indictment. The research was a quantitative research design. Through the study, the researchers would also answer the following questions:

(1) How does the murder of unarmed Black people by police support White Supremacy? (2) What do non-indictments of police suggest about the lives of unarmed Black people? (3) How does the murder of unarmed Black people escalate individual, familial, and communal mistrust of police? (Chaney, & Robertson, 2015). The results revealed that in 63% of the cases where a police officer killed a Black citizen, an indictment did not occur. The researchers argued that the aforementioned undermines the confidence members of this group have in police and increases the likelihood they will regard law enforcement as a threat to their individual, family, and communal safety (Chaney, & Robertson, 2015).

Rarely has there been a study that researched the impact of the words of a person and how their statements perceived created a perception of oneself and the world. After the violent beating of Rodney King by police in Los Angeles, California, four police officers were ordered to stand trial. At this time, Rodney King was called to the stand as a witness for the state. Multiple times during his testimony King would state “Can’t we all just get along.” The purpose of this study was to examine the public quotes made by Rodney King, as well as what these quotes revealed about the world paradigm of King, as well as how he perceived himself and his place in the world (Chaney, & Robertson, 2014). The study was a qualitative research design. The researchers used Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as the theoretical framework to guide their research. They explored 20 quotes that were made by Rodney King during the trial and after to see how they influenced society’s perception of the police. They also, sought to identify how Rodney King’s words during this time define the state of police minority relations. The results of the study found that the quotes of King indicate he was thankful for the struggles of the Civil Rights Movement that allowed for the progression he experienced in the 1990s but was also annoyed with the biased and unfair treatment of Blacks by

the legal system and law enforcement. The results of the research further found the feelings of other Blacks aligned with his thinking and the sentiments of his quotes.

As many variables such as Blacks' perception, and attitude towards police had been tested in previous studies, Chaurprakobkit researched other areas that could be responsible for the strained relationship between the two groups. The researcher conducted a study on the impact of race, experience, and feelings of safety on attitudes toward the police. The researcher explored citizens' perception of police demeanor, how well officers performed the duties of their job, and if there was a correlation between race and feeling of safety in one's neighborhood as it related to police presence. The purpose of the study was to examine the impact race had on police attitude towards citizens and the citizens' feeling of safety in their communities. This study used a quantitative research design to examine three primary factors. In order to evaluate the aforementioned, the researcher created a sample size of 393 participants and provided them with closed ended surveys. The criteria to be a participant was that one had to be either a victim of a crime, or a complainant in the jurisdiction of the study. The research was conducted in Marietta, Georgia in 2004. The results of the study suggested that overall (1) the majority of respondents felt safe in their neighborhood and were satisfied with the police who handled their case; (2) the same amount of Blacks and Whites reported negative experiences with the police; and (3) although all three factors greatly affected attitudes, contact experience with the police was the most influential (Chaurprakobkit, 2006).

While many studies on police and community relations (concentrating on Black citizens and police relationships) often derive from the negative treatment of the Black community as a whole, Desmond, Papacharistos, and Kirk were inspired by the police interaction of a single individual. The purpose of the study was to examine the experience of Black men that endured

violence against them by police officers. The study occurred in Milwaukee and the goal was to determine if violence against Black men affected police related 911 calls. The interest for this research came as a result of the beating of a Black man named Frank Jude. The research used a quantitative design that examined every 911 call over a longitudinal period. They reviewed 1,104,369 calls for service between March 1, 2004 and December 31, 2010. The data provided by the Milwaukee police department included the “date, address, city code and description of each call, and a disposition code reporting how the call was resolved (Desmond, Papachristos, & Kirk, 2016). The results of the study found that due to the earlier beating of Frank Jude, the police department failed to receive nearly 22,000 calls for service. The results of the study also found that “other local and national cases of police violence against unarmed Black men also had a significant impact on citizen crime reporting in Milwaukee. Police misconduct can powerfully suppress one of the most basic forms of civic engagement: calling 911 for matters of personal and public safety” (Desmond, Papachristos, & Kirk, 2016).

Most researchers for purposes of efficiency limit the location of their studies. However, Gabbidon and Higgins did the opposite. The data for the research was not specific to one area of the United States. The purpose of the study was to determine if race and ethnicity was a predictor for how Blacks are treated by police. The researchers used secondary data to examine how race relations impacts public opinion of the treatment of Black citizens by law enforcement. The source of the data was from recent gallop polls. The data collected from the gallop polls examined if there was a correlation between race and ethnicity and if the aforementioned guided citizen views on the treatment of Blacks and Whites by police. The independent variables in the study were race, age, gender, education, employment status, region, and political ideology. The

results suggested that all of the independent variables were significantly related to public opinion regarding the perceived treatment of Blacks by the police (Gabbidon, & Higgins, 2008).

Criminal justice professionals are aware that African American citizens are disproportionately represented as victims in police shootings. However, understanding to what extent race was a primary factor had been previously unknown. The purpose of the study conducted by Cody Ross was to analyze police shootings to determine the extent to which racial bias was a predictor. The data examined was from 2011 to 2014 for all of the United States. The reason for the interest in the research was due to the increased number of minorities that had been killed by police over the past decades. This study used secondary data to analyze police shootings to determine the extent to which racial bias was a predictor. The data was obtained from the U.S. Police-Shooting Database (USPSD) which is responsible for recording police involved shootings in the United States. The data was examined from multiple counties across the country from years 2011-2014. In an earlier study data was obtained from the FBI's Supplemental Homicide Reports of which is largely self-reported (as such the data would not expect to show any bias). To analyze the data from the USPSD, a multi-level Bayesian model was used. Researchers considered variables such as 1) whether suspects/civilians were armed or unarmed, and 2) the race/ethnicity of the suspects/civilians. The results of the study found evidence of a significant bias in the killings of unarmed Black Americans relative to unarmed White Americans, in that the probability of being {black, unarmed, and shot by police} is about 3.49 times the probability of being {white, unarmed, and shot by police} on average (Ross, 2015). The findings of the data also found

“multi-level modeling showing that there exists significant heterogeneity across counties in the extent of racial bias in police shootings, with some counties showing relative risk

ratios of 20 to 1 or more. Finally, analysis of police shooting data as a function of county-level predictors suggests that racial bias in police shootings is most likely to emerge in police departments in larger metropolitan counties with low median incomes and a sizable portion of Black residents, especially when there is high financial inequality in that county.” (Ross, 2015, p. 1).

### **Police and Community Relations in the Black Community**

African Americans intensified their protesting for equal rights in the United States during the Civil Rights Movement. Since then, there has been many movements created championing equality and equal protection under the law. Cline in 2017 conducted a study on poverty, race, and police. This study explored the lived experience of participants in the Black Lives Matter movement and their use of the hashtag. The Black Lives Matter movement was birthed after the killing of Trayvon Martin. The hashtag was used to spread information and photos on the internet and social media. The study also examined the counter use of the hashtag #AllLivesMatter. This study used a qualitative research design that examined the role of the hashtag #BlackLivesMatter in the Black Lives Matter movement. To obtain the data for the study, the researcher conducted multiple open-ended interviews. More striking than the slogan’s ability to express so much in so few words is how painful it is that its message needs to be asserted” (Petersen-Smith, 2014). Through the interviews the data suggested that:

1. “Protesters and their supporters were generally able to circulate their own narratives on Twitter without relying on mainstream news outlets.
2. Evidence that activists succeeded in educating casual observers on Twitter came in two main forms: expressions of awe and disbelief at the violent police reactions to the Ferguson

protests, and conservative admissions of police brutality in the Eric Garner and Walter Scott cases.

3. The primary goals of social media use among our interviewees were education, amplification of marginalized voices, and structural police reform” (Cline, 2017).

As with the Black Lives Matter Movement, recording police to capture wrongdoing is relatively new. While police brutality against African Americans is an old occurrence, phone recordings and the ability to share the footage quickly and abundantly creates a fallacy that it has only recently become a practice at high rates by police. Farmer, Sun, and Starks conducted research on the willingness to record police-public encounters. The purpose of their study was to assess racial and nonracial factors that influence citizen willingness to record police-public encounters (Farmer, Sun, & Starks, 2015). The researchers used a quantitative research design and closed ended surveys to obtain the data for analysis. The data for the research was collected over the course of two semesters (Fall/2012 and Spring/2013). Two Universities were used as the population for the research. However, for reasons of confidentiality the names of the institutions were not released. They were referred to as two public universities in a mid-Atlantic state. The sample size for the study consisted of 644 total participants breaking down in to 375 minorities and 269 Whites. The researchers conducted a bivariate analysis focused on the comparison of the mean scores of willingness to record the police across racial/ethnic minorities and majorities (Farmer, Sun, & Starks, 2015). The results of the study suggested that minority students and those who believed that recording served social justice, had a deterrent effect on the police, and was legally justified were more likely to engage in such behavior (Farmer, Sun, & Starks, 2015). The findings also indicated that past recording experience and negative

encounters with the police also led to higher levels of willingness to record police activity. Implications for policy and future research were discussed (Farmer, Sun, & Starks, 2015).

Throughout the history of the United States minority groups (especially African Americans) have been victims of unfair police treatment- specifically police brutality. Many would argue the aforementioned dates back to the 1800s during the time of the Reconstruction Era after slavery. The current relationship between the African American community and police is built on a history of unfair treatment and police misconduct. To explore the fracture in the relationship further Weitzer and Touch conducted a study on police-community relations in a majority-Black city. The purpose of this research was to examine the role of each factor in shaping citizens' perceptions of police misconduct, racial differences in these perceptions, and the reasons underlying them (Weitzer, & Touch, 2008). The study occurred in Washington, D.C. To get the data needed for the research two surveys were given to residents. One survey was administered between June 1998 and August 1998 and the second was given between December 1999 and January 2000. Random sampling was used via an electronic digital dial phone call system which allowed for telephone interviews to be conducted. The response rates were approximately 60%. The first survey produced 2,216 participants and the second survey produced 2,420 participants. The total sample size was 4,636. The racial demographics of the participants were 2,640 African Americans, 1,495 non-Hispanic Whites, 176 Hispanics, and 185 others (140 respondents did not identify their race). The independent variables in this study were race, education, age, marital status, gender, parenthood, and year survey taken. The dependent variable was perceived police misconduct. The results of the study found that Blacks were about twice as likely as Whites to believe the city's police stop too many people without good reason, that they are too tough on people whom they stop, and that they are verbally or physically



abusive toward citizens (i.e., seeing each type of abuse either as a big problem or as some problem in their neighborhoods) (Weitzer, & Touch, 2008).

### **African American Youth and Police Encounters**

Many studies focus on African Americans' attitude toward the police as it relates to adults. Often juveniles are excluded from these analyses despite having their own experiences with law enforcement. Brunson, and Miller's study provided researchers with an understanding of the lived experience of young African American males when coming in contact with police in the United States. Many other studies were quantitative and focused only on attitudes towards police. The purpose of this study was to examine the lived experience of African American youth in urban neighborhoods and their experience with police. This study provided an explanation of why African American males are more likely to be less receptive to police than their Caucasian counterparts. While it provided great insight, like many of the other studies, it only focused on one geographical location in the United States, and did not offer a comparison between America, and other countries. There have been many studies conducted on the attitude, and level of receptiveness of African Americans toward police. In addition, other research has also compared the attitudes of African Americans, and Whites towards police. Despite the researcher, location of the study, or the sample size, all of results were identical. The study used a qualitative research design to understand the lived experience of the youth. To obtain the data needed to be transcribed via NVivo open ended surveys were used. All the literature suggested that African Americans are less receptive of the police than their Caucasian counterparts. Much of the research indicates the reason for the aforementioned is due to unfair, aggressive, and hostile policing practices against minorities.

Byrd (2015) conducted a study on why police officers disproportionately use excessive force towards blacks and why this systemic problem must end. One of the reasons for the research was because African Americans make up approximately 13% of the population. However, they are 2.5 times more likely than their White counterparts to be killed during a police encounter despite Whites making up a much larger portion of the population. The purpose of this study was to examine excessive force Black youth experience when engaged with police and make the argument that Blacks deserve to be protected against death at the hands of police officers. This research used a qualitative research design to examine the data on excessive use of force on Black youth. The researcher reviewed multiple interactions between law enforcement officers and Blacks and other races and compared the levels and types of engagements. The purpose was to determine if there was a difference or similarity on how incidents were handled. The research suggests justice for the senseless execution of Blacks seems nebulous (Byrd, 2015). The research further found it had become routine for each victim's past to be "laid bare, every misdeed brought to light and used as justification for police officers choosing to act as judge, jury, and executioner—due process on the city street and in a public-school hallway" (Byrd, 2015).

For centuries-dating back to the Reconstruction Era, behaviors of Blacks in the United States have been criminalized. Laws during the Reconstruction Era that prohibited Blacks from congregating was used as a means to criminalize behavior and enact the 13<sup>th</sup> amendment is now present in urban neighborhoods occupied by Black Americans in the form of loitering. The presence of these laws in urban African American communities and absent in White neighborhoods show a clear difference in the policing practices based on race and contributes significantly to the disproportionate representation of African Americans under criminal justice

supervision in the United States. As a result, Payne, Hitchens, and Chambers conducted a study exploring the negative encounters youth and young adults have with police in their neighborhoods. The purpose of this study was to examine the lived experience of Black youth and Black young adults' interaction with police in Wilmington, Delaware. The study used a mixed methods research design to understand the lived experience of the participants. Data was collected from males and females between the ages of 18-35 in the forms of surveys (520), individual interviews (24), dual interviews (4), group interviews (3), and extensive field observations. In order to statistically analyze the data, a Chi-square test and ANOVA were conducted. The quantitative results of the study suggest an interactional relationship exists between race, gender, and age on experiences with police. Younger Black men (18–21) were found to have the most negative contact with police. Analysis suggests a smaller, more hardened mostly male variant of the larger street community has had repeated contact with police (Payne, Hitchens, & Chambers 2017). The qualitative results produced two themes. They were (1) disrespect and disdain for residents and (2) low motivation for working with police. Street PAR methodology was also found to be instrumental in working with local residents and the Wilmington Police Department to improve conditions between residents and police (Payne, Hitchens, & Chambers 2017).

### **Immigrants' Fear of American Law Enforcement**

In addition to Blacks' fear of police in the United States, it should be noted there are immigrant groups that share the same trepidation of American law enforcement, but for different reasons. Groups such as the Latinx community, and immigrants of Middle Eastern descent often fear contact with police due to fear of deportation, police brutality, and incarceration. As it relates to race, each group is categorized as Black (African Americans and others of African

descent), and Brown (Latinx community, Middle Eastern Community, and Asian Community). All are considered people of color (POC).

**Immigrants' Perceptions of Police.** The immigrant population in the United States is growing. However, the body of knowledge on immigrants' perceptions of police does not reflect this increase. According to Wu (2010), while most studies on the public's attitude towards the police often focus on Blacks and Whites, research on immigrants' perceptions remains scarce. "Yet immigrants' views have important implications for policing and in particular for police–community relations." (Wu, 2010, p. 1). His study examined perceptions of law enforcement among different immigrant communities in the United States. The results of the research suggest that foreign born immigrants were more critical of police than native born residents (Wu, 2010). In addition, it was found that political climate is a main factor that contributes to immigrants' diminished trust of police (Wu, 2010). While this study was able to contribute to the limited research on the topic of immigrants' perceptions of police, the author stated that solid empirical data are difficult to gather on the topic (Wu, 2010).

**Latinx Community Fear of Police.** Despite Latinos having a higher rate of contact with law enforcement in the United States than Latinas, Latinas also share fear of being arrested, deported, having violence used against them, and incarcerated. Latinos/Latinas are the largest minority group in the United States and are victims of violent crimes at rates much higher than their Caucasian counterparts. However, despite their high rate of victimization, they are less likely to report crime to police than African Americans and Italian Americans (Davis & Henderson, 2003). Messing, Becerra, Ward-Lasher, and Androff (2015) conducted a study of 1,049 Latinas on perceptions of law enforcement, and trust for the American criminal justice system. The results of the study suggest that lack of police reporting among this group is due to

fear of deportation, and negative perceptions of procedural unfairness in the American justice system (Messing, Becerra, Ward-Lasher, & Androff, 2015). The authors of the study contend that this indicates a presence of encounters with police that resulted in discrimination and legal violence of the immigration system, or others they know have suffered this experience (Messing, Becerra, Ward-Lasher, & Androff, 2015).

Barrick (2012) like many other researchers on immigrants' perceptions of police found that research on the Latinx population on this topic was underdeveloped. As such, she conducted a study on this group to determine if they were receptive to law enforcement. The study examined responses from data collected by the Pew Research Center from 2015 Latinx citizens in the Summer of 2008. The research questions focused on areas of politics, immigration enforcement, crime and criminal justice, media use and consumption, and demographics (Barrick, 2012). Questions specific to the study asked:

“How much confidence do you have that police officers in your community will: (1) do a good job enforcing the law; (2) not use excessive force on suspects; (3) treat Latinos fairly; and (4) do a good job dealing with gangs?” The response options were “a great deal,” “a fair amount,” “just some,” and “very little.” (Barrick, 2012).

The results of the study suggest that members of the Latinx community whose immigration status have been questioned by police was less likely to be receptive of law enforcement (Barrick, 2010). Also, Latinx people that provided responses in Spanish-indicating that they were not fluent English speakers-recorded being less confident in police. The aforementioned was consistent with a previous study conducted by Skogan (2006) in Chicago suggesting that Latinx people that were not English speaking were more likely than those [Latinx citizens] that

were fluent in English to believe police in America engaged in high rates of police brutality, and corruption.

Research on African American youth and police are consistent in suggesting Black youth are less receptive to police than their Caucasian counterparts (Brunson and Miller 2006). This is because Black kids believe their neighborhoods are more overpoliced compared to White youth (Brunson and Miller 2006). However, like Latinx adults, research on Latinx youth and their perception of police in America is scarce. As a result, Solis, Portillos, and Brunson (2009) conducted a study on Latino youth experience with and perceptions of involuntary police encounters. The study used Latino critical race conceptual framework to examine police encounters with Latinx youth in New York City. The results of the research suggest

“unfavorable views of local police, concerns about the amount of time it takes for officers to arrive when summoned, and officers’ routine disrespect of community members during involuntary police-citizen encounters. Youth also discussed what they perceive as a lack of concern about Latino/a neighborhoods and expressed fears of becoming crime victims due to inadequate police protection and negative treatment from officers.” (Solis, Portillos, and Brunson 2009).

The results of this study were consistent with previous literature on African American youths’ perceptions of police.

**Chinese Immigrants’ Perceptions of Police.** New York City contains the largest Chinese population of any city located outside the continent of Asia. As of 2017, New York City had a Chinese population close to 900,000. As a result, it is important to study Chinese police relations within this location. Chu, Huey-Long Song, and Dombrink (2004) examined

Chinese immigrants' perceptions of police in Queens, Manhattan, and Brooklyn between July and August of 2004. The authors conducted surveys of 151 Chinese participants that resided in the three aforementioned boroughs. The results of the study suggest:

“(a) Individuals who had previous contact with police rated police as less favorable, (b) those who rated police as helpful when they called the police for help expressed greater satisfaction toward police, and (c) a strong majority of respondents stated that more bilingual police were needed in the city.” (Chu, Huey-Long Song, & Dombrink, 2004)

Overall, the authors contend that the participants' perception of police was strongly based on the quality of the police interaction, oppose to the number of times they had contact with officers. The study's participants also cited strengthening the quality of the services law enforcement provides, an increased representation of bilingual officers, and cultural diversity as methods to strengthen the satisfaction level of this immigrant group on police (Chu, Huey-Long Song, & Dombrink, 2004).

Wu, Sun, and Smith (2011) also explored Chinese immigrants' satisfaction with police. Their focus on Chinese immigrants was because they discovered the literature overlooks non-Black, and non-Hispanic minority groups-specifically Asian on the topic. The study surveyed 400 Chinese immigrants with a particular focus on Chinese immigrants' attitudes towards the police. The results of the study suggest the majority of Chinese residents have a positive perception of American law enforcement (Wu, Sun, & Smith, 2011). The aforementioned was based on factors such as performance, areas of effectiveness, integrity, and demeanor.

### **Summary**

Numerous studies on African American's attitudes toward police have been conducted in the last fifty years due to the history of events that have occurred against Black citizens by law enforcement in the United States. Most studies are limited in their focus and concentrate on variables such as participants over the age of eighteen, or specific geographical areas. While most related studies focus on African Americans' attitudes toward police as well as their perception of law enforcement, there are very little studies that examine how fearful are Black American citizens of police. Thus, there is a significant gap in the literature that has not explored fear of police as it relates to Generation Z, gender, region of residence, education level, and community of residence. Future studies analyzing how fearful these groups are of police will provide an understanding of the level of trepidation specific groups have of law enforcement within the African American community. It will also confirm the impact negative police interaction has on members of the Black community.

### **Research Questions**

The research questions constructed for this study are:

RQ 1: Are there differences in fear of police based on age (18-25)?

RQ 2: Are there differences in fear of police based on gender?

RQ 3: Are there differences in fear of police based on region of residence?

RQ 4: Are there differences in fear of police based on education level?

RQ 5: Are there differences in fear of police based on community of residence?



## Chapter 3: Methodology

### Participants

The sample for this study consisted of citizens in the United States that identified as Black and were between eighteen and twenty-five years of age. Males and females were eligible to participate in the research. A sample size of 105 was constructed. The largest proportion of participants were between 24-25 years of age ( $n = 41$ , 39%). The majority of participants were women ( $n = 64$ , 61%), and the largest proportion of participants had a high school education ( $n = 46$ , 44%). The largest proportion of participants resided in the South Atlantic region ( $n = 43$ , 41%), and most participants resided within suburban communities ( $n = 63$ , 60%). Finally, most participants indicated that they were moderately fearful of the police ( $n = 55$ , 52%). The participants for the study was a smaller segment of the greater population in that they were selected from Generation Z. In being selected from Generation Z, only those that were of adult age within the particular birth group were eligible for participation. Random sampling was used to obtain the participants for this research. Random sampling is a form of sampling where each participant is selected by chance and each member of a population has an equal opportunity of being selected. This form of sampling is best to protect against sampling bias.

Due to many of the participants not being in the same region as the researcher, electronic surveys were used to collect the data for the study. Mechanical Turk (MTurk) was used as the subject recruitment and data collection tool. "Amazon.com's Mechanical Turk (MTurk) has the potential to facilitate low-cost experiments in political science with a diverse subject pool. MTurk is an online web-based platform for recruiting...Not surprisingly, scholars across the social sciences have begun using MTurk to recruit research subjects." (Berinsky, Huber, & Lenz,

2011, p. 1). The use of MTurk allowed the sample for the study to be more reflective of the population, and there by strengthening the external validity of the research.

### **Instruments**

To reach participants in multiple regions of the country without having to physically be in the location an electronic survey was created and distributed. The survey was created through an electronic survey tool called Qualtrics. Qualtrics is a web-based survey tool that allows researchers to create surveys to collect data for their studies. The survey consisted of six questions. The questions and answer selections for each are below:

1. What is your age?

18-20

21-23

24-25

2. What is your gender?

Male

Female

3. What region of the country do you reside?

Middle Atlantic- New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania

East North Central- Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, and Wisconsin

West North Central- Minnesota, Iowa, Missouri, North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, and Kansas

South Atlantic- Delaware, Maryland, District of Columbia, Virginia, West Virginia,

North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida

East South Central- Kentucky, Tennessee, Alabama, and Mississippi

West South Central- Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, and Texas

Mountain- Montana, Idaho, Wyoming, Colorado, New Mexico, Arizona, Utah, and Nevada

Pacific- Washington, Oregon, California, Alaska, and Hawaii

4. In what type of neighborhood do you reside?

Urban- Area of high-density population; inner city.

Suburban- Residential neighborhood located on the outskirts of a city. Area occupied by primarily single-family homes and apartments occupied in buildings not considered high rise structures.

Rural- a low density population area that has very little homes, buildings, and large plots of land.

5. What is your formal level of education?

High School- Completion of 4 years with a high school diploma received or having obtained a GED (General Equivalency Diploma).

Associate Degree- Completion of 60 (post-secondary) credits with an Associate Degree received at the community college level in any discipline.

Bachelor's Degree- Completion of 120 (post-secondary) credits with a bachelor's degree received at the College or University level in any discipline.

Graduate Degree- Completion of 36 (graduate) credits or more with a master's or

Professional Degree received at the College or University level in any discipline.

Doctorate Degree- Completion of a Doctorate or Doctorate Level Professional Degree received at the College or University level in any discipline.

6. How fearful are you of the police?

Not fearful at all.

Minimally fearful (Your level of fear is 1-3 on a scale to 10)

Moderately fearful (Your fear level is 4-6 on a scale to 10)

Extremely fearful (Your fear level is 7-10 on a scale to 10)

The validation of the survey questions occurred by first having them reviewed by the dissertation committee, then running a pilot test using a second electronic survey tool (Survey Monkey) for the said pilot test. Following completion of the test run, the data was cleaned to check the internal consistency. Minimal revisions were made to the final survey and entered into Qualtrics for distribution.

### **Procedures**

The design selected for this study included the use of quantitative methodology using non-experimental research in a survey approach in a cross-sectional design. Furthermore, meaningful comparisons among various dependent variables were also conducted. This research design allows the researcher to compare levels of the study's independent variables on the dependent variable of fear.

**Consent.** Prior to beginning the survey the participants read and electronically acknowledge an informed consent form that ensured the participant was aware of any risks associated with the study, that the study was completely voluntary and could be stopped at any time, that their personal information would remain confidential (de-identified, password protected, and only the researcher will have access to data), and that all data would be permanently deleted and destroyed upon completion of the research.

**Data Collection.** In an attempt to obtain data from the participants, a closed ended survey was constructed using MTurk. Once the survey was made, it was uploaded to the MTurk website where workers of the platform distributed the survey to participants that met the study criteria. The survey was able to be sent via text, email, social media, or listed on a website created for the study. Each survey was administered electronically and consisted of six closed ended questions. All the responses of the participants were confidential. Information received from the survey was the participant's gender (coded as 1 for male, and 2 for female), age (coded as 1 for 18-20, 2 for 21-23, 3 for 24-25), region of residence (coded as 1 for New England, 2 for Middle Atlantic, 3 for East North Central, 4 for West North Central, 5 for South Atlantic, 6 for East South Central, 7 for West South Central, 8 for Mountain, and 9 for Pacific), level of education (coded as 1 for high school, 2 for Associate Degree, 3 for Bachelor's Degree, 4 for Graduate Degree, and 5 for Doctorate Degree), community of residence (coded as 1 for urban, 2 for suburban, and 3 for rural), and how fearful they were of the police (coded as 1 for not fearful at all, 2 for minimally fearful, 3 for moderately fearful, and 4 for extremely fearful).

The regions of the country identified for which to collect data from was selected to examine fear level across the entire continental United States. Likewise, all education levels were also chosen to explore level of fear of police among every education level. Finally, the study focused specifically on Generation Z. However, only those legally identified as adults due to age were eligible for participation. As a result, this only included participants 18-25 years of age.

### **Data Analysis**

In this study the independent variables were age, gender, region of residence, education level, and community of residence. The dependent variable was level of fear. A non-parametric

ANOVAs (i.e., Kruskal-Wallis tests) was conducted to determine the extent to which level of fear was related to the outcome measured. In the results section of the study, descriptive statistics is provided, and the selectin of ANOVA (i.e., Kruskal-Wallis tests) applies to all research questions in the study.

## Chapter 4: Results

### Introduction

The purpose of this quantitative methodology using non-experimental research in a survey approach in a cross-sectional design study was to examine if Blacks' fear of police among Generation Z differed based on age, gender, region of residence, education level, and community of residence in the United States of America. The sample for this study consisted of citizens in the United States that identified as Black and were between 18 and 25 years of age. Members of the sample were recruited via MTurk to complete an online survey asking for their demographic characteristics, and level of fear. This chapter contains the results of the data collection and statistical analysis to answer the research questions.

### Demographic Characteristics

An initial total of 113 participants responded to the survey. Eight participants were removed from the dataset because they did not answer all the survey questions, leaving a final total of 105 participants included in the analysis. Table 1 displays the characteristics of the sample. The largest proportion of participants were between 24-25 years of age ( $n = 41, 39\%$ ). The majority of participants were women ( $n = 64, 61\%$ ), and the largest proportion of participants had a high school education ( $n = 46, 44\%$ ). The largest proportion of participants resided in the South Atlantic region ( $n = 43, 41\%$ ), and most participants resided within suburban communities ( $n = 63, 60\%$ ). Finally, most participants indicated that they were moderately fearful of the police ( $n = 55, 52\%$ ).

**Table 1***Frequency Table for Study Variables*

Variable	<i>n</i>	%
Age		
18-20	25	23.81
21-23	39	37.14
24-25	41	39.05
Gender		
Female	64	60.95
Male	41	39.05
Region of residence		
South Atlantic	43	40.95
Middle Atlantic	37	35.24
East North Central	4	3.81
East South Central	1	0.95
West North Central	1	0.95
West South Central	3	2.86
Mountain	6	5.71
Pacific	10	9.52
Community of residence		
Suburban	63	60.00
Urban	38	36.19
Rural	4	3.81
Education		
High School	46	43.81
Associate Degree	9	8.57
Bachelor's Degree	44	41.90
Graduate Degree	6	5.71
Fear of police		
Not fearful at all	6	5.71
Minimally fearful	15	14.29
Moderately Fearful	55	52.38
Extremely Fearful	29	27.62



## Data Analysis

In order to answer the research questions, a series of non-parametric ANOVAs (i.e., Kruskal-Wallis tests) were conducted. The Kruskal-Wallis test is appropriate to conduct when the research involves determining if differences exist between groups on an ordinal outcome variable (Conover & Iman, 1981). Because level of fear is an ordinal variable, the Kruskal-Wallis test is appropriate to conduct. Additionally, because the Kruskal-Wallis test is a non-parametric test, distributional assumptions such as normality and equality of variances do not need to be tested (Conover & Iman, 1981).

### Research Question 1

RQ 1: Are there differences in fear of police based on age?

To address RQ1, a Kruskal-Wallis test was conducted with age group as the independent variable and fear of police as the dependent variable. The results of the test were not significant,  $\chi^2(2) = 1.33, p = .513$ , indicating that participants' levels of fear of the police did not differ between age groups. Table 2 displays the results of the test and the mean ranks for levels of fear for each age group.

**Table 2**

*Kruskal-Wallis Rank Sum Test for Fear of Police by Age*

Age	Mean Rank	$\chi^2$	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
18-20	47.46	1.33	2	.513
21-23	55.28			
24-25	54.21			

## Research Question 2

RQ 2: Are there differences in fear of police based on gender?

To address RQ2, a Kruskal-Wallis test was conducted with gender as the independent variable and fear of police as the dependent variable. The results of the test were not significant,  $\chi^2(1) = 0.02, p = .877$ , indicating that participants' levels of fear of the police did not differ between men and women. Table 3 displays the results of the test and the mean ranks for levels of fear for each gender.

**Table 3**

*Kruskal-Wallis Rank Sum Test for Fear of Police by Gender*

Gender	Mean Rank	$\chi^2$	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
Female	52.66	0.02	1	.877
Male	53.52			

## Research Question 3

RQ 3: Are there differences in fear of police based on region of residence?

To address RQ3, a Kruskal-Wallis test was conducted with region of residence as the independent variable and fear of police as the dependent variable. Because there was only one participant in the East South-Central region, this category was grouped with the East North Central region to create one category for the East region for the present analysis. Likewise, because there was only one participant in the West North Central region, this category was grouped with the West South-Central region to create one category for the West region for the present analysis. The results of the test were not significant,  $\chi^2(5) = 6.87, p = .230$ , indicating that

participants' levels of fear of the police did not differ between regions. Table 4 displays the results of the test and the mean ranks for levels of fear for each region.

**Table 4**

*Kruskal-Wallis Rank Sum Test for Fear of Police by Region*

Region	Mean Rank	$\chi^2$	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
South Atlantic	56.65	6.87	5	.230
Middle Atlantic	52.78			
East	65.80			
West	39.38			
Mountain	56.00			
Pacific	35.35			

#### Research Question 4

RQ 4: Are there differences in fear of police based on education level?

To address RQ4, a Kruskal-Wallis test was conducted with education level as the independent variable and fear of police as the dependent variable. The results of the test were not significant,  $\chi^2(3) = 0.17$ ,  $p = .983$ , indicating that participants' levels of fear of the police did not differ between education levels. Table 5 displays the results of the test and the mean ranks for levels of fear for each education level.

**Table 5**

*Kruskal-Wallis Rank Sum Test for Fear of Police by Education Level*

Education	Mean Rank	$\chi^2$	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
High School	52.35	0.17	3	.983
Associate Degree	55.22			
Bachelor's Degree	53.61			
Graduate Degree	50.17			

### Research Question 5

RQ 5: Are there differences in fear of police based on community of residence?

To address RQ5, a Kruskal-Wallis test was conducted with community of residence as the independent variable and fear of police as the dependent variable. The results of the test were significant,  $\chi^2(2) = 6.51, p = .039$ , indicating that participants' levels of fear of the police significantly differed between community types. Pairwise comparisons were conducted to determine the exact nature of the differences. The pairwise comparisons revealed that there was a significant difference in fear of police between suburban and rural communities ( $p = .029$ ), indicating that participants residing in suburban communities ( $M = 3.17, SD = 0.71, \text{Median} = 3.00$ ) had higher levels of fear compared to participants residing in rural communities ( $M = 2.00, SD = 1.16, \text{Median} = 2.00$ ). No other comparisons were significant. Table 6 displays the results of the test and the mean ranks for levels of fear for each community type.

**Table 6**

*Kruskal-Wallis Rank Sum Test for Fear of Police by Community*

Community	Mean Rank	$\chi^2$	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
Suburban	57.56	6.51	2	.039
Urban	48.26			
Rural	26.25			

## Chapter 5: Discussion

### Summary of Study

Blacks fear of police in the United States has been a well-documented issue for centuries. However, the level of fear experienced by this racial group was never clear. Past research often focused on the comparison between how receptive Blacks and Whites were to police presence and overlooked how fearful their [police] presence made Blacks. The purpose of this study was to examine if Blacks' fear of police among Generation Z differed based on gender, region of residence, education level, and or community of residence in the United States of America. For brevity purposes, region of residence was categorized as New England (Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Connecticut), Middle Atlantic (New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania), East North Central (Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, and Wisconsin), West North Central (Minnesota, Iowa, Missouri, North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, and Kansas), South Atlantic (Delaware, Maryland, District of Columbia, Virginia, West Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida), East South Central (Kentucky, Tennessee, Alabama, and Mississippi), West South Central (Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, and Texas), Mountain (Montana, Idaho, Wyoming, Colorado, New Mexico, Arizona, Utah, and Nevada), and Pacific (Washington, Oregon, California, Alaska, and Hawaii). Level of education was categorized as High School (Completion of 4 years with a high school diploma received or having obtained a GED (General Equivalency Diploma)), Associate Degree (Completion of 60 (post-secondary) credits with an Associate Degree received at the community college level in any discipline), Bachelor's Degree (Completion of 120 (post-secondary) credits with a Bachelor's Degree received at the College or University level in any discipline), Graduate Degree (Completion of 36 (graduate) credits or more with a Master's or Professional Degree

received at the College or University level in any discipline), and Doctorate Degree (Completion of a Doctorate or Doctorate Level Professional Degree received at the College or University level in any discipline). Community of residence was categorized as Urban (Area of high-density population; inner city), Suburban (Residential neighborhood located on the outskirts of a city. Area occupied by primarily single-family homes and apartments occupied in buildings not considered high rise structures), and Rural (a low-density population area that has very little homes, buildings, and large plots of land). Finally, level of fear was measured as not fearful at all, minimally fearful (level of fear is 1-3 on a scale to 10), moderately fearful (level of fear is 4-6 on a scale to 10), and extremely fearful (level of fear is 7-10 on a scale to 10). This chapter focuses on findings of the research, strengths, weaknesses, limitations, and implications of the study. It also provides recommendations for future research.

The study was designed to explore if level of fear differed based on different variables. As a result, the research was guided by the following five research questions:

RQ 1: Are there differences in fear of police based on age (18-25)?

RQ 2: Are there differences in fear of police based on gender?

RQ 3: Are there differences in fear of police based on region of residence?

RQ 4: Are there differences in fear of police based on education level?

RQ 5: Are there differences in fear of police based on community of residence?

The study analyzed survey responses from ( $N=105$ ) Black participants between the ages of 18-25 across different regions of the country, neighborhood types, education levels, and male and female genders. A third-party data collection agency (MTurk) was used to recruit

participants for the study and collect the data. Random sampling was used by the data collection agency. Random sampling was used because it protects against sampling bias.

The results of the research suggested that most Black citizens between the ages of 18-25 were moderately fearful of the police in the United States of America. The study did not find any significant differences in levels of fear of law enforcement based on age, gender, region of residence, or education level. However, community of residence did yield a difference in fear level. The data suggested there was a significant difference in fear of police between suburban and rural communities ( $p = .029$ ), indicating that participants residing in suburban communities ( $M = 3.17$ ,  $SD = 0.71$ , Median = 3.00) had higher levels of fear compared to participants residing in rural communities ( $M = 2.00$ ,  $SD = 1.16$ , Median = 2.00).

## **Discussion**

The purpose of this study was to examine if levels of fear of police differed when grouped by gender, age, region of the country, and neighborhood of residence. The results of the data suggest that most Black citizens between the ages of 18-25 were on average moderately fearful of the police in the United States of America. There were no differences of fear level of police when grouped for age, gender, or region of the country. However, the data suggested there was a difference in levels of fear of law enforcement among those residing in suburban and rural communities with those in suburban communities citing being more fearful of police.

In some instances, no significant findings can indicate a problem with a study's research design, data collection methods, sampling approach, or survey design, it is not the rule however, and should be examined on a study-by-study basis. In this study, there were no significant findings. However, it was not alarming because the results of level of fear of American police among Black citizens was consistent with previous literature (Jones, 2017; Brunson & Miller,

2006; Brown & Benedict, 2002; Cheurprakobkit, 2006; Farmer, Sun, & Starks, 2015; Payne, Hitchens, & Chambers, 2017; Schuck, Rosenbaum, & Hawkins, 2008; Weitzer, & Touch, 2008). In nearly all studies, when African American citizens were surveyed about their level of receptiveness of the police or their fear of police the results were consistent in that they are either not receptive police or they are fearful of law enforcement. The results of this study confirmed that the influence of independent variables is not a significant factor that contributes to or detracts from Blacks' fear of police in the United States. In other words, Black citizens in the United States of America are consistently fearful of police across all categories-age, gender, education level, and region of the country. As stated previously African Americans that reside in the suburbs are more fearful than those that reside in rural areas. However, because the question of "why are you fearful of police" was not posed in this research, it is impossible to ascertain why the fear level of Blacks that reside in the suburbs is higher than Blacks that reside in rural communities.

While the results of this study are largely consistent with previous research, generalizing the results, and the external validity may be challenged due to the small sample size. As a result, it would be strongly recommended that researchers attempting to duplicate this study ensure a larger number of participants. Also, when results are significant, it would be beneficial to understand why. This means including questions in the survey that would allow the researcher to glean an understanding of the cause of the relationship.

Ultimately, the history of the research on Blacks relationship with American law enforcement has been largely quantitative. To better understand why Blacks are fearful of police in the United States of America, more studies that use a qualitative research design or mixed



methods needs to be employed. The implications in utilizing a qualitative research design would allow for true understanding of the problem, and changes to be made.

### **Strengths of the Study**

The major strengths of the study included the examination of the level of fear Generation Z has of the police-the generation most involved in current protests and activism against police brutality on Black citizens in the United States. In addition, the study was able to explore the varying levels of fear among this group as it related to gender, region of the country, neighborhood of residence, and highest level of formal education completed. Finally, the use of a third party to collect the data for the research proved to be a significant strength of the research by ensuring random sampling transpired, which contributes to strong external validity in studies. This sampling method ensured sampling bias did not occur when selecting participants.

Previous studies conducted on African Americans' fear of police in the United States have not specifically examined Generation Z, or considered variables such as region of the country, type of neighborhood, and level of education. As a result, this study contributed to the body of knowledge generated by scholars, and criminal justice professionals that attempt to understand the impact the fractured relationship between Blacks and police in the United States has on Black citizens. In the past, studies examined how receptive American citizens were of law enforcement, and compared race, gender, and education level.

### **Weaknesses of the Study**

One of the weaknesses of the study was that the sample size consisted of 105 participants. Initially, the study was designed to have a minimum of 250 participants. However, for unknown reasons many refused to complete the surveys and or answer all the questions on the surveys

rendering many [surveys] unusable. Given this challenge, the researcher considered recruiting additional participants outside the use of the third party (MTurk). However, by doing so, the sampling method would have changed from random sampling to convenience sampling. As a result, the final decision was to move forward analyzing the data that was collected using random sampling (105 participants). The reason for the aforementioned is because random sampling protects against sampling bias, thereby protecting the integrity of the study, while convenience sampling makes it difficult to generalize findings, and creates significant challenges to a study's external validity.

### **Limitations of the Study**

Internal validity is the ability to confirm that the independent variable caused the outcome of the dependent variable. This is often referred to as statistical significance in statistics of which is determined by .05. There are seven threats to internal validity. They are history, maturity, testing, instrumentation, statistical regression, mortality, and sample size. For this study, the threat to internal validity was sample size. The purpose of a sample is to reflect the population being studied. However, the researcher had trouble obtaining participants in regions and communities outside of his own. In addition, while the survey used for data collection for the participants remained confidential, due to the level of fear many African Americans have of the police, a lot of people refused to complete the survey because of concern of retaliation. As a result, the aforementioned challenges limited the sample size for the study which made it difficult to generalize the findings of the study to the greater population. In an attempt to address these two issues, confidentiality statements were provided with each survey to ensure the participants that their identities would remain confidential. In addition, surveys did not require

the participants to provide any identifying information. As a result, all surveys were de-identified.

To address the challenge of participants being outside of the immediate geographical location and community of the researcher, electronic surveys were used as a form of data collection. This allowed the researcher to obtain data without having to be physically located in the region of which the participants resided.

External validity is the extent to which the findings of a study can be generalized beyond the sample. As stated above, obtaining participants for the study proved to be challenging due to fear and distance. As a result of the possibility of a small sample size the study ran the risk of having poor external validity. In an attempt to control for this limitation, the provisions discussed above assisted in ensuring the appropriate sample size so the findings of the research could be generalized beyond the sample.

In addition to the aforementioned, another limitation of the study was that while the results provided insight on the level of fear Blacks in America have of the police, it did not provide an understanding of why Blacks fear law enforcement. The research used a quantitative methodology using non-experimental research in a survey approach in a cross-sectional design, and an ANova to analyze the data. Quantitative data only provides an understanding to how often, or at what rate something occurs. Quantitative research designs are invaluable when used to gather and analyze objective information.

The information gleaned from the research did not provide any qualitative findings. As a result, there still remains a gap in the literature that does not explain why Blacks that belong to Generation Z experience the level of trepidation cited in the study. Ultimately, the greatest

limitation of the study was not having an understanding of the qualitative factors that contribute to the phenomenon.

## **Implications**

Previous studies on police and the Black community in America suggests the ravaged relationship between the two groups dates back as far as the Reconstruction Era. However, while Blacks fear and distrust for the executive branch of the government in the United States has come to be common knowledge, the level of fear had remained unknown. While many scholars and civil rights activists have rationally hypothesized that for some members of the Black community the level of fear was alarming, the absence of formal academic studies could not confirm their contentions.

Despite past research, Black men in the United States of America are 2.5 times more likely to be killed by police than their White counterparts. In addition, Black men also have a higher probability of having force used against them during a police encounter than are their Caucasian counterparts. Violent interactions such as the aforementioned, along with incarceration statistics of African American men-1 out of every 3 will be incarcerated in their lifetime-which starts with the law enforcement who are the entry point in the criminal justice system-are hypothesized to be some of the main reasons for the levels of fear of police Blacks in America experience. However, without studies to test this hypothesis, confirmation would be nonexistent, and as a result, policy change will not occur.

The purpose of this study was to examine if Blacks' fear of police among Generation Z differed based on gender, region of residence, education level, and or community in the United States of America. The results of the research confirm the hypothesis that there is a level of fear

experienced by Blacks in the United States across all categories. Acknowledging and understanding the feeling of trepidation police officers represent for Blacks in America, the data from the research suggests that training throughout the country in the field of law enforcement should occur in the areas of cultural sensitivity, verbal de-escalation, and other measures focused on decreasing violent and deadly interactions with members of the Black community.

### **Future Research**

As stated previously, one of the major weaknesses of the study was the small sample size. In the future, in order to ensure generalizability of the results, and strengthen the study's external validity, it is recommended to increase the sample size of the participants. In addition, while the quantitative research design was invaluable in identifying the level of fear Blacks feel about the police, understanding specifically why could not be answered. As a result, it is recommended that future researchers use a qualitative research design to answer more specific questions that would yield comprehension of why Blacks are fearful of police in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Finally, this study focused on Generation Z. It is recommended that future research explore the differing levels of fear Blacks have of police for different generations based on the same variables tested in this research-gender, region of residence, education level, and community of residence in the United States of America.

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