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Kaila T. Glover Dodson
Scripps College

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LET'S TALK: AN ANALYSIS OF THE PSYCHOLOGICAL AND EMOTIONAL IMPACTS OF THE POLICE TALK ON BLACK CHILDREN

By

KAILA T. GLOVER DODSON

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JENNIFER MA
JENNIFER GROSCUP

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Abstract

The 'Talk' is a conversation (or series of conversations) that Black children receive from parents, grandparents, and other guardians and caretakers in their life. The conversation consists of informing them on behaviors to adopt as well as a script to recite should they encounter the police or any other agent of the law. Very little research has been done on the Talk yet alone the impact it has on Black children. Pulling from research on racial socialization, moral development, and the impact of racism on one's well being, the purpose of this study is to explore how Black children are psychologically impacted by law enforcement and other agents of the law. Specifically this study will explore how the Talk can impact perception of law enforcement. This study will consist of qualitative and quantitative methods as participants will participate in an interview as well as complete measures of wellbeing, anxiety, trust in the legal system and perception of law enforcement. Results are predicted to show that Black children have negative perceptions of the legal system and feelings of law enforcement. Furthermore, it is expected that with age, children will comprehend the complexities and emotional circumstances that go into understanding and discussing the Talk. This research has the potential to show the psychological effects of police brutality and police violence beyond the specific interaction.

Let's Talk: An Analysis of the Psychological and Emotional
Impacts of 'The Talk' on Black Children

"It can get real dangerous so don't argue with them, just keep your hands where they can see them,". In the opening scene of *The Hate You Give* Maverick Crater is giving his three kids, Starr (9), Sekani (1), and Seven (10) the Talk. He tells them what to do should they ever have an encounter with the police. Carter then tells them that, "just because we have to deal with this mess, don't you ever forget being Black is an honor because you come from greatness." He does not want his children thinking that being Black is something to be ashamed of which is why he socializes them about the dangers as well as the pride that comes with Black skin. The movie and book *The Hate You Give* written by Angie Thomas is about Starr Carter, a girl who lives in a poor Black neighborhood but goes to a mostly White private school. The two worlds clash when her childhood best friend is shot and killed by the police and she must learn to navigate being a witness to his death. Black youth have always been warned about the experiences they can go through and come across as a result of racism. One of those experiences are interactions with law enforcement and police. The Talk is utilized by Black parents and guardians as a form of protection for their children should they ever have an encounter with the police or any other agent of the law. The conversation usually includes behaviors for children and adolescents to follow if they get pulled over with the goal of them being equipped with the knowledge to make it out of the interaction alive (Miller, 2020). Though the aim of the Talk is to protect and socialize Black children in potentially dangerous encounters, police violence still occurs and still disproportionately affects Black people (Khan & Martin, 2020).

The summer of 2020 was a turning point in conversation for the nation revolving police violence, law enforcement, and the Black community. With the murders of George Floyd

Ahmaud Arbery, Breona Taylor, and many more, serious discussion around defunding the police and police abolition rose to mass media and mass attention. Alongside these conversations, came insight into the consequences of police and policing on the Black community. One of these insights was the recognition of the Talk. Though the Talk is a conversation directed towards children and adolescents, research has focused almost solely on the parents'/guardians' perspective and has not explored how Black children feel about having received the Talk or what emotions may arise during the conversion. Having received this conversation at a young age, the Talk is anticipated to shape Black children's perception of law enforcement and other agents of the law. This proposed study seeks to reveal a gap in the literature by researching the Talk from the child's perspective as well as reveal the psychological and emotional impact the Talk has on Black children.

Origins of the Police and Policing in the U.S.

The police are a law enforcement agency empowered by the state with the intended goal of enforcing laws, preventing crime, and ensuring safety of the communities in which they serve. Archbold writes that policing in colonial America was, amongst other things, heavily influenced by the legal system in England. In both England and colonial America, citizens were responsible for policing in their communities. Because early forms of law enforcement were on a volunteer basis, they lacked structure and were disorganized. In London in 1829 Robert Peel, known as the father of modern policing, introduced the Bill for Improving the Police in and Near the Metropolis. The bill was made with the intention of creating a police force to manage social conflict which resulted from the urbanization and industrialization taking place in the city (Archbold, 2013). This, as well as many other factors, would serve as foundations for what we see in police departments today.

Similar to England, colonial America experienced an increase in population with increased migration from Europe and the forced deportation of enslaved Africans. With a growing population, the volunteer-based system of watchmen became impractical. That being so, the two parts of the nation, the north and the south, used different forms of policing and for different reasons. Formal slave patrols were formed as early as 1704 in the Carolina colonies while the first publicly funded full time law enforcement was established in Boston in 1838 to safeguard shipping property (Archbold, 2013). Throughout the developing nation, the police defended a "public good" which had different definitions depending where you were. The south's system of policing was intended to preserve the system of slavery while the north's system of policing protected those who were rich and owned property. After the civil war, slave patrols were transformed into southern police departments (Hasset-Walker, 2021). These two historical backgrounds serve as the foundations for policing as we know it today. An institution that serves to uphold the status quo of sexist, racist, classist, anti-black ideology rooted in protection of property over people and dedicated to aiding the state in the oppression of marginalized peoples.

Police Brutality & Racial Bias from Police/ Law Enforcement

One of the sources of oppression and violence committed towards the Black community is police brutality (Nelson, 2000). According to The Lancetin (2021) between the years 1980 and 2019 the mortality rate due to police violence was highest in non-Hispanic Black people, followed by Hispanic people of any race, non-Hispanic White people and non-Hispanic people of other races. Panwala (2002-2003) defines police brutality as "an excessive use of force by a police officer under color of law". This is not a new phenomenon as violence from law enforcement toward people of color, especially the Black community, has been going on as long

as police have existed (Archbold, 2013; Khan & Martin 2016; Bor et al., 2018). The problems that the Black community encounter from the police range from excessive force to murder. These practices and uses of excess force have led to tense relationships between the Black community and law enforcement causing emotional, physical, mental, and social challenges for the former community.

Racial bias and disparities in policing derive from a variety of factors including education, policy and practice, income, stereotypes as well as a variety of other factors (Khan & Martin, 2020). Furthermore, it (racial bias) can impact decisions to shoot, who gets pulled over, who force gets used on, and a number of other decisions made by law enforcement. (Goff & Swencionis, 2017). Correll et al., examined shooting decisions in comparison to community members on Black and White targets. It was found that both groups of participants displayed strong racial bias in response speed. In a similar study, research was conducted to explore racial biases in the decision to shoot based on a potentially 'dangerous' target. In the study, researchers Correll, Judd, Park and Sadler (2012) found that law enforcement were quicker in their decision to shoot armed Black targets as opposed to 'don't shoot' for other unarmed races. Additionally, decisions to shoot were higher for Black and Latinx targets than for White and Asian targets. Furthermore, Gray and Parker (2019) examined police shootings to review structural predictors on race-specific police shootings. They found that the larger the population between the ages 15 to 29, the more police shootings there are of Black people. Additionally, Cooley et al.(2019) looked into whether racial disparities in policing were amplified when Black people were in groups rather than by themselves. In their study they found a 1.7% increase in being frisked, 1.7% increase in use of force, 1% increase in being stopped, and 0.3% increase in being arrested if Black people were to be found in groups. With racial disparities in arrests, use of force,

shootings, stop and frisks, and other police practices, it's not surprising that the Talk is needed to help reduce violence that may occur from encounters with the police.. Even when people manage to make it out of a police encounter alive or with little physical harm and they make a complaint, those complaints are almost never taken seriously. Not only does race play a role in excessive use of force complaints, it also plays a role in how complaints are sustained (Ajilore, 2017).

Not only does racial bias play a role in how police exhibit violence, it also plays a role in how citizens justify or denounce violence from police. With stereotypes linking Black people to criminality, there is a historical, deep-rooted notion that the violence committed by police and law enforcement is justified (Nelson, 2000). Hadden et al., (2016) researched the relationship between race and racism attitudes toward police violence against adult males. In the study it was found that White participants are more likely than Black participants to approve of police aggression. Additionally participants with attitudes supportive of police violence also had negative cultural images of Black people. In a similar study, Smith & Merolla (2019) wanted to explore whether different factors (such as personal or situational factors) shaped participants' perceptions of whether it was justified for police to use violence against citizens. It was discovered that police violence was more justified towards both Black people and those with a criminal record. These beliefs were more likely to exist in participants with racial prejudice. If citizens are more likely to justify violence from law enforcement, then the violence they (the police) do exhibit, especially towards Black people, will seem inconsequential. This is another reason the Talk is important. Caretakers are preparing and equipping their children with tools they need to survive a world in which not only could they face violence from law enforcement but in which the public would not hold legal institutions responsible when they commit brutal acts of violence.

After the death of Trayvon Martin and the acquittal of his murderer, George Zimmerman, Black Lives Matter (BLM) was created. The movement has brought national and even global attention for widespread change in policing practices, law enforcement as a whole, and even a call for abolition. With the little change that has occurred, instances with racial bias in law enforcement are still prevalent. As a result, the Black community has had to adapt and adjust to new ways to survive the violent and emotional taxing experience that can result from police encounters. To an extent the Talk has been this for Black families. It has allowed them to point to external factors involving confrontations with police. Moreso it has provided, to some degree, small-scale relief to caretakers of Black children as well as providing those very same children with knowledge to go into encounters with police should they have one.

Coping with Race Based Stress and Racial Socialization

Racial socialization (R.S) is the process by which a child comes to learn about their race. This process is very important for the way Black people but especially Black children navigate the world. Racial socialization is a common parenting practice for Black families (Boykin & Toms, 1985). It is very important for parents and guardians to combat negative stereotypes and negate any messages children of color are bound to receive from broader society. There are various messages about racial socialization that can be communicated to a child. In academia, five main foci have been conducted in research: messages emphasizing pride, warnings about racial inequality, messages that de-emphasize the importance of race (often called a "color-blind" approach) and instead emphasize that hard work will ensure someone can overcome racism, mistrust of other ethnic groups and silence about race and racial issues (Gaskin, 2015). However Boykin and Toms discuss the ways that Black parents specially socialize their children as a result of their race. The three avenues that Black parents utilize include: Black culture and how to

interact with other Blacks, how to get along with other racial groups, and how to cope with their oppressed minority status. In this way Black parents are not just teaching their children about their culture, they are also preparing them for encounters they will have with others (for example the police) who may view them in a negative light.

Unlike racial minorities, Whites are not racially socialized and when they are, it is not in the same way as racial minorities (Gaither & Loyd, 2018). If White parents don't see race as something that their children need to be taught early on, it would make sense that miscommunication and conflict between races can occur early on in childhood. Racial socialization has been found to help Black youth cope with racialized stressors (Anderson et al., 2018). Being socialized about one's race, emphasizing pride, can help with individual self-esteem. Constantine & Blackmon (2002) researched the relationship between racial socialization messages and specific realms of self-esteem (including home and peer). In their study they found socialization helped with the adolescents' peer self-esteem. Additionally, Crocker and Quinn (1998) discovered that Black Americans' self-esteem can be protected by attributing experiences related to racism towards prejudice and discrimination rather than personal shortcomings. During the Talk when Black children are socialized about law enforcement and behaviors to exhibit, it's important that they know that those encounters don't have to do with them as people. It has to do so with external factors and an institution that has racist underpinnings. Racial socialization shapes children's opinions and perceptions about a wide variety of subjects. Sindall et al. (2016) conducted research on public trust and confidence in the police. A main finding they discovered was children's attitudes were based on and shaped by their parents'. Attitudes and perception are based on and ever changing as a result of the experiences and images of legal authorities that they see (Sindall, 2016). Similarly, the Talk is

shaped by caretakers' experiences and knowledge of the world and of law enforcement to equip children with the possible situations that can occur with police, security guards, and campus security.

Perception and Trust of Law Enforcement and the Legal System

Race plays a role in the way people view law enforcement and in the way they view the legal system. As a result of one's race, a person can have varied experiences with both institutions. Additionally, race and other demographics play a role in how people define legitimacy and trust in police (Kearns et al., 2019). Nordberg et al. (2018) researched youth (18-24) experiences with increased surveillance and contact with police and law enforcement. In her study she interviews twelve Black youth about their experiences and their perception of the police. In the interview, one of the main themes was negative feelings towards the police including fear and anger. Wheelock et al., (2018) researched what factors shape attitudes about police. Specifically, they examined what (if at all) influences satisfaction in police. In their study they found that race plays a crucial role in determining the ways someone views the police. In all their models, they found that Black participants were less likely than their White and Latinx peers to be satisfied with police. Similarly, McNeely & Grothoff (2015) build on prior research regarding the effect of race perception of law enforcement. Their study specifically examined how an individuals' perception of racial tension can affect attitudes about police. As conducive to their hypothesis, they discovered that an individuals' perception of race relations in their community is connected to negative perceptions of police. Specially, those who believe their communities suffered from racial mistrust had significant mistrust in police as well.

Negative perceptions of the justice system apply to both law enforcement and the legal system. There are a variety of reasons that add to Black people's distrust in legal institutions.

Hurwitz & Peffley (2005) researched the racial divide in beliefs about the fairness of the justice system. They found that Black people found the justice system to be unfair significantly more than Whites. Additionally, this belief affected how participants interpreted events as well. Thus Black people who have little to do with the justice system were also suspicious of police and police encounters with other Black people. Similarly, O'Brien (2020) researched whether mass incarceration affected a racial split of public perception of the justice system. In the study, he found that Blacks were more skeptical than Whites in legal institutions. Furthermore, as mass incarceration grew Black people's predicted confidence in the Supreme Court declined while Whites' increased. Ultimately, as the U.S.'s carceral state grew, Black Americans' trust in justice (and the justice system) staggered or declined. The research demonstrates that because there is a lack of trust in the U.S.' legal institutions (the justice system and the law enforcement), the Talk is a way to help safeguard (at least a little) from the negative effects the Black community effects from these institutions.

The Talk

As discussed in the previous section racial socialization is a process by which a child comes to learn about their race. Not only that but it has been found to help with racialized stressors for Black youth specifically (Anderson et al., 2019). One way a Black child gets socialized about their race is through the Talk. The Talk is the way Black parents teach their children how to handle encounters with the police and other authoritative figures. The conversation involves how they will be perceived based on their skin color and actions. As well as what behaviors they need to embody, like putting their hands on the dashboard and repeatedly announcing their actions before they do them, in order to 'make it home'. In Miller & Vittrup's (2020) study, the method they used in their study was a phenomenological approach in which

interviews were conducted. They found that parents believed following guidelines and showing law enforcement respect was the best thing for their children. It's important to note that regardless of how parents felt about law enforcement, they emphasized and stressed that showing respect throughout the interaction was the most important component in their guidelines. This framework of 'making it home' is fueled by the real fear that their children might not come back. Black mothers often are responsible for teaching their children how to respond to police violence. This framework often marginalizes girls' experiences as it makes it seem as if boys are the primary targets of police, emphasizes masculine forms of violence, and is directed almost exclusively at boys (Gonzalez, 2019).

The Talk does not just have the intention of protecting Black children from law enforcement and police but also from vigilantes who may exhibit violence towards them, as with the case with Trayvon Martin and Ahmaud Arbery. Thomas & Blackmon (2014) examined the impact of the death of Trayvon Martin, and more specifically the trial of George Zimmerman, on racial socialization of Black families. They used interview methods and found parents communicated strategies to their children to handle racial profiling and experiences in which violence might occur. Additionally, parents were asked to report on what the Trayvon Martin shooting meant for them respectively. One of the questions they were asked about was whether the shooting made them worry for their children and whether that worry differed for girls and boys. There were parents who indicated a gender difference in worry for their children (86.3% were more concerned for boys) and a majority of the responses indicated that Black men and boys were a target for racism from the police.

Mental and Physical Effects of Racism

Unfortunately racism and racial discrimination is a lived part of racial minorities'
experiences and the daily struggle of dealing with racism in its many forms can take its toll in
physical, mental, and emotional ways. Racism is experienced as a type of trauma for people of
color due to the economic, social, and political implications it has (LaVeist & Issac, 2012).
Racial discrimination is a chronic source of trauma that can start very early on in one's life, so
much so that the it effects the lives of many children of color and their mental and physical
outcomes (Sanders-Phillips, 2009). There are specific mental health outcomes that law
enforcement and police racial bias have on the Black community. In Miller & Vittrup's (2020)
study on the indirect effects of police racial bias, they found that participants showed that their
mental health had been impacted by the police. The main three effects they found that impacted
participant mental health was fear, anger, and stress. Additionally Lee & Robinson (2019)
researched Black men's exposure to trauma as a result of police violence. Using qualitative
measures, they also found that fear and vigilance were effects from traumatic encounters with the
police. Similarly, McLeod et al. (2019) wrote a systematic review of police interactions and its
effect on the mental health of Black Americans. In their review of 11 studies, they found that
there was statistical significance between poor mental health and negative interaction with
police. They also found that Black people had greater exposure to police than any other racial
group.

The everyday instances of racism on top of knowing that an encounter can be a life or
death situation is very daunting. Not only that, but knowing that the encounter is from people
who are supposed to "protect you" and is the result of one's skin color can have negative
consequences for one's mental health and wellbeing (Gilbert, 2014). Staggers-Hakim explores

the impact of police violence on the mental health of young Black men. Specifically she investigates the implications of the awareness of police violence and the effects it has on young Black boys. In her study, she implemented a focus group methodology and used guided, open-ended questions about police brutality and national examples to measure their understanding and awareness of the topic. In her study she found fear was a major factor among the boys. The exposure to the national cases had traumatized the boys. They feared that someone they knew or they themselves may be next in experiencing such violence and execution. Though participants had talked to their parents about behaviors to exhibit around law enforcement, they still feared being abused and even killed by the cops.

There is a lasting impact of stress that racism has on the body and brain, producing an increased risk for mental health disorders. Furthermore, exposure to racism or racial discrimination increases ones chances for a chronic stress state (Bale & Jovanovic, 2021). With this in mind, research from Harris (2021) explored the psychological effects of indirect exposure to police brutality through the media. In her study she found that there was no psychological response when comparing White and Black participants. However, she did find that Black participants reported experiencing fear in relation to police encounters, felt more targeted by law enforcement, and experienced violence from police more than their White peers. The stress of dealing with police violence and police brutality on top of the regular stress that racism brings every day, can have very serious, dangerous, long term effects on the minds and bodies of the Black community.

Development and Morality

Children develop at very different rates and at different ages. It is not only their emotions, thoughts, and behavior that are developing but their sense of morality as well. Two

psychologists famous for their work in moral development are Jean Piaget and Lawrence

Kholberg. Piaget (1932) was interested in three main aspects of child moral reasoning: children's

understanding of rules, children's understanding of moral responsibility, and children's

understanding of justice. From this Piaget developed two main types of moral thinking:

heteronomous morality (5-9 years old) and autonomous morality (9-12 years old). Heteronomous

morality is identified by the obedience of rules from authoritative figures while autonomous

morality is identified by making decisions about morality on your own. Similarly, Kholberg also

had a theory of moral development. Kholberg's theory (1984) on the other hand was more

concrete and fixed than Piaget's. Wanting to expand on Paiget's theory, Kholberg developed

three stages of moral reasoning: preconventional, conventional, and post conventional. The

preconventional stage is shaped by authoritative figures about the child. Conventional moral

development is described as an acceptance to societal rule around what is right and wrong.

Lastly, postconventional moral development is characterized by judgment based on self-chosen

principles and ideals.

Early childhood (5-8) and middle childhood (8-12) will have an impact on how children

are able to fully interpret and understand the Talk. Heck et al. (2021) explored the cognitive

development of children through damage caused by internal wellbeing and emotional harm. In

their study they found that as children got older (participants were ages 5-10) they rated

emotional harm as increasingly hurtful and "the older children were more likely to associate a

longer-lasting memory of an event with emotional harm rather than physical harm". This shows

that as children age, they will understand the complexities and emotional circumstances that go

into understanding and discussing the Talk. Additionally, Nucci et al., (2018) explored moral

judgments in children 8-17. The researchers explored the topic across three domains, harm,

indirect harm, and helping. They discovered with age and experience children can take into account multiple perspectives and a variety of variables in a situation. Based on this research, younger children will have a harder time understanding the complexities of the Talk more than older children.

Study Overview

There has been ample research on police and racial socialization, however there has been very little research done on the Talk. The research that has been done on the Talk focuses almost exclusively on the perspective of the caretaker. The intention of the proposed study is to investigate how children of color are psychologically impacted by law enforcement and other agents of the law. Specifically, the goal of this study is to explore the impact the Talk has on Black children and their perception of law enforcement. This will be explored through a correlational study that will use both qualitative and quantitative methods. Interviews will be conducted with children on whether they've received the Talk, the content of the Talk, perception of law enforcement, as well as whether they have had encounters with police. Additionally, scales will be used to measure wellbeing, anxiety, trust in the legal system and perception of law enforcement. For the proposed study it is hypothesized that: (1) Black children are socialized as a form of protection (2) the age (5-18) a child receives the Talk will have a negative effect on their perception of trust (3) Boys will be the subject for the Talk regardless of the child's gender. (4) Regardless of gender children will be equally distrustful of law enforcement. (5) The behavior of Black children will be different around authoritative figures and law enforcement (6) As a result of their different developmental stages, children of different ages will interpret the talk differently

Proposed Method

Participants

Based on a power analysis, it was found that 66 participants will be used for the study. In using census data (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015-2019) 50.8% of the participants will be women and 49.2% will be men. There were no data found on non-binary individuals, however that does not mean that they would not be accepted for the proposed study. Participants will include Black children between the ages of 5 to 18. Participants will be recruited through schools, youth based clubs, and anywhere else parents and guardians may go with children. Additionally, snowball sampling will be incorporated, as participants will be given the researchers information to ask other potential participants about their participation. Participants will be compensated in any way that they seem best fit. Compensation will be bound to vary as a result of the varying ages of the participants. Furthermore, compensation will also be given to the parents of the participants as well. Compensation will include one of the following for caretakers: groceries or a $50 gift card to a grocery store, child day care services for as long as the study is conducted, or $40. For the participants, compensation options will include stickers, a tote bag, a book, a toy, or $20. All participants will also be given lunch or a snack (whichever they prefer). Compensation for children will vary seeing as ages 5-18 will be included.

Materials

Scales

Stress and Anxiety.

The Societal, Attitudinal, Familial, and Environmental Acculturative Stress Scale for Children (SAFE-C; Chavev et al., 1997) was created to measure stress in children. The scale was modified from the 1987 Mena, Padilla, & Maldonado SAFE scale to have a more child-inclusive

language. The scale is measured by 36 items. Items ask about school, family, and personal stressors in a child's life. A few items in the scale include: It's hard for me to tell my friends how I really feel, I don't have any close friends, It's hard for me to ask questions in class, and I worry what other kids think of me. The SAFE-C utilizes a 6-point Likert-type format with points 1-5 representing one of the following in ascending order: *Doesn't bother me, almost never bothers me, sometimes bothers me, often bothers me, and bothers me a lot.* If a subject responds with a "0" score, this represents a statement that does not apply to the subject. For example, if a child were to put "0" for question 16 which is "I worry about being sick" then that would mean the question does not apply to them because they don't worry about being sick. Cronbach's alpha for the SAFE-C on the overall sample (N = 71) is .86. This means that the scale has very good reliability. (Chavez et al, 1997)

The Race-Based Traumatic Stress Symptom Scale (RBTSSS; Carter et al, 2013) was developed to assess a person's psychological and emotional reactions to racism and racial discrimination. RBTSSS is measured by 52 items across 7 domains. Depression, Anger, Physical reactions, Avoidance, Intrusion, Hypervigilance/Arousal, and Low self-esteem. To receive a score, participants answer yes/no based on the memorable event (with racism). For the proposed study, 5 out of the 7 smaller scales in the RBTSSS should be used. The domains Avoidance and Intrusion will not be used. For reliability, Cronbach alpha coefficients ranged from .66-.90 which means the scales range from good to very good reliability .

Trust in the Legal System.

Perception of Racial Injustice in the Criminal Justice System (Henderson et al., 1997) was designed to evaluate perceptions of racial injustice in the legal system and will be measured by a four-item scale. The responses are on a three-point scale with "1" relating to a Black person

in the scenario, "2" relating to a White person in the scenario and "3" relaying that the scenario will be the same for both races. The four items the scale include are: While on patrol, police officers are more likely to stop and question, If a police officer stops a car that is going 10 miles over the speed limit, the officer is more likely to give a ticket to, If a person is in court for stealing from a department store, who is more likely to receive a jail sentence for this offense, and Who would a jury be more likely to give the death penalty to. For reliability, Cronbach alpha was used. For hassled by police the value was .78 for the total sample, .72 for Whites and .70 for African Americans. In essence, the reliability for all three categories of samples have good reliability.

Perception of Law Enforcement.

Diffuse Confidence in Police Scale (Haas et al., 2014) is a 8 item scale that is used to measure attitudes about what an institution does in specific situations vs the institution as a whole authoritative entity. An example of an item the scale uses is "The police do their job well." The scale utilizes a Likert response format, ranging from 1 being "*fully disagree*" to 5 "*fully agree,*". This scale has a Cronbach's alpha coefficient between .85 and .86 which means it has very high reliability. (Daugherty & Dambrot, 1986).

School Safety Officer Scale (SSO; Zullig et al., 2017) is an 8 item scale that is used to measure students' perceptions of and experiences with security officers. The items ranged on aspects such as comfort to being able to Talk to the officer in their school. An example from the scale is "I feel comfortable with the officer in my school." The scale is rated on a five-point on Likert scale with 1 being *"very true"* to 5 *"being not true at all"*. The SSO Scale was adapted from the Perception of the SSO Survey from the Poudre School District (Dickmann, 1997). The original scale was developed specifically for police officers on campus, rather than SSOs, whose

role goes beyond policing in schools (Dickmann, 1997). For this scale the Cronbach' alpha was .93, meaning the reliability is very high.

Psychological Well Being.

Revised (12-Item) Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM; Roberts et al., 1999) is modified based on Phinney's 1992 scale which measures ethnic identity. MEIM uses 2 subscales: affirmation/belonging and exploration. An item from the affirmation/belonging subscale would be "I am happy that I am a member of the group I belong to." An item from the exploration would be "I participate in cultural practices of my own group, such as special food, music or customs." MEIM uses a 14-item scale for reliability and utilizes a 4-point scale with 4 *"being strongly agree"*; 3 *"being agree"*; 2 *"being disagree"*; and 1 being *"strongly disagree"*. Cronbach's alpha ranged from .81 to .89 across ethnic groups. Seeing as the value was on the higher end of accessibility, the scale has very high reliability.

The Stirling Children's Wellbeing Scale (SCWBS; Carter & Liddle, 2015) was created to measure emotional and psychological wellbeing in children 8-15. SCWBS uses a 5-point Likert scale and measures along 15 items. An example item from the scale is "I've been in a good mood". The highest score a child can receive is a 60 and the lowest score they can receive is a 12. Items 2, 7, and 13 do not contribute to the scoring of SCWBS. SCWBS showed a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.82 which is of very high reliability.

Interview

To measure the effect of the Talk on Black children, an interview will be conducted. There will be 14 questions asked in the interview for the participants. The purpose of these questions will be to gain as much knowledge about what participants experienced during the Talk and as a result of the Talk.

Behavior and Developmental Differences will both be explored and analyzed through qualitative measures by thematically analyzing what is asked of the participants and what is discussed in the interviews. It is expected that younger children will either not have had the Talk yet or will give more basic understanding of what they believe happens in police altercations. In terms of behavioral changes, it is expected that children will report having to not wear certain clothes, change physical behaviors like keeping their hands out of their pockets, and

Procedure

The research design of this study will be non-experimental and correlational as it is going to study the connection between the Talk and Black children. Before participating in the study, participants will complete assent and consent processes. As this study will be recruiting participants as young as five years old, guardian permission will be acquired as well as the following: having the study explained to the child, the purpose of the study, what will happen if they agree to participation, that participation is voluntary, that they will be able to ask their guardian or the researcher questions at any point in the process, and that their guardian knows that they have been asked to be apart of the study. An assent process will take place for children ages 5-13. For children ages 14-18 informed assent forms will be given. This study will be conducted in a lab with covid-19 protocols put in place. This study should be conducted in person to better establish trust between the participant and the individual.

Once participants come into the lab, they will participate in a 14 question interview followed by completing the measures of wellbeing, anxiety, trust in the legal system and perception of law enforcement. Once participants have finished completing their measures, they will be debriefed about the study. Participants will then be asked if they have any further questions about the study.

Ethical Considerations

The level of risk participants should expect to experience in this research is above the level of minimal risk. Though police violence and police brutality is something the Black community is exposed to on a near daily basis. Being exposed to these events on a daily basis will still induce significant distress because of violence that directly impacts them. As referenced to by the research in the mental health section, racism, is in itself, a form of trauma for people of color. Therefore, seeing media in which people who look like you are being subjected to brutal forms of force, will cause significant distress no matter how many times one is exposed to it. This in conjunction with the target age of participants, makes the level of risk in the study above minimal. There is no way to know how often each participant comes into contact with the information (of police brutality) unless explicitly asked. Information about the study will be presented in the informed consent form before participants and parents of participants can make an informed decision on whether or not they would like to participate in the study.

There is no deception involved in this study and compensation will not be so high that it is coercive. Therefore subjects' participation will be completely voluntary should they choose to participate. Though participation will be compensated, it will be comparable to what is being asked of the participants. Compensation will include one of the following for caretakers: groceries or a $50 gift card to a grocery store, child day care services for as long as the study is conducted, or $40. For the participants, compensation options will include stickers, a tote bag, a book, a toy, or $20. All participants will also be given lunch or a snack (whichever they prefer). Compensation for children will vary seeing as ages 5-18 will be included.

The study presented does involve a protected and vulnerable population. Children are an extremely vulnerable population because they are minors and cannot provide consent.

Additionally, their brains are not fully developed yet which is why they cannot give or receive informed consent in the way an adult can. Furthermore, this proposed study does require participants to consider sensitive issues or topics, like police violence, that may cause them discomfort. This is necessary because the Talk has not been studied extensively before and the few times it has, it has not focused on children. It is necessary for Black children to be the focus of this study because they are just as affected by police brutality as any other subcategory of the Black community. Additionally, they are the subject and the recipients of the Talk and we don't know what kind of effect receiving this kind of conversation can have on a child's development without studying children directly. To protect participants, trust will be built before any questions about sensitive topics are asked.

The data being collected will be confidential. Aside from demographic information, no other type information related to the participant will be asked from the participants. Participants will be assured that no identifying information will be obtained and all answers will be kept confidential. As stated, participant responses to interview questions and scales will be kept secure through a password protected google doc that only researchers have access to. Additionally, informed consent documents and responses to the stimulus materials will be stored separately, and there will be no way to link participants' consent documents to any identifying information or responses in the research materials. At no time during the dissemination of the research results will any participants' names be used nor will any information be used which would allow individual participants to be identified.

The risks will be minimized by both informed consent/assent and debriefing processes. An assent process will take place for children ages 5-13. For children ages 14-18 informed assent forms will be given. In the consent form everything that will be conducted in the procedure will

be written up and shown to the participants. As stated in the procedure, the following will be explained in the assent process: the study and the study's purpose, what will happen if they agree to participation, a explanation to make clear that participation is voluntary, clarification that questions are welcome to ask their guardian or the researcher at any point in the process, and that their guardian knows that they have been asked to be a part of the study. This study will be conducted in a lab with covid-19 protocols put in place. This study should be conducted in person to better establish trust between the participant and the individual. Additionally, in the debriefing process everything that was being explored in the study will be written up and explained. Not only this but questions will be asked that are not related to the study to mitigate any effects that may have come from having to answer questions on police brutality, violence, and the Talk. Seeing as talking about police brutality, violence, and the Talk could be distressing to participants (LaVeist & Issac, 2012; Sanders-Phillips, 2009; Isoya, 2021; Bale & Jovanovic 2021), having questions unrelated to race will help reduce any effects that may have come up because of discussing these topics.

The benefits of the study outweigh the potential risks to participants. This study has potential for societal and scholarly benefit. Because the Talk is not that well researched, there is a lot that can be discovered from it and about it. The studies that are conducted on the Talk should be done so in a sensitive manner because Black people are victims of police violence and may not want to participate in research that could retraumatize them. However, being from the community, I am doing my best to phrase the interview questions and study the best way I know how so as to not be insensitive. It is extremely important that this research be conducted in a manner that is sensitive to participants and that the participants leave as unaffected by the study as possible.

Anticipated Results

Results will be discovered through thematic analysis of interview answers and calculated scores of scales. The main themes that will be discovered in the interviews will be: *Mistrust and Negative Perceptions in Law Enforcement*, *Mental Consequences, Racial Discrimination, and Developmental Differences.*

Qualitative Data

Participants' interview answers will be analyzed to draw out common themes. This will be done by reviewing participants' answers and identifying key concepts and concerns that come up. The interviews conducted in the study are intended to gain deeper insight about the Talk from the child's perspective. It is expected that Black children will have negative feelings and perceptions about the police as well as discuss any emotional and mental effect the Talk and police encounters (should any participants have any) have had on them. Additionally, the following two questions, (1) whether the behavior of Black children will be different around law enforcement, authoritative figures, and other agents of the law and (2) whether as a result of their different developmental stages, children of different ages will interpret the Talk differently will be explored through the interview and data as well. It is expected that data will show that children in earlier developmental stages will have a more complex understanding of the Talk than children in later developmental stages.

Mental Consequences

There is expected to be a lasting impact that race-based experiences and racism can cause on people of color. This will be determined by analyzing data from the interviews and cross referencing from the score of scales on well-being. Mental health, especially depression, has

been closely associated with discrimination (Isoya & Yamada, 2021). The daily experience of being a person of color comes with elevated stress that can impact one's mental health (Sanders-Phillips, 2009), which can be extremely exacerbated when those experiences involve violence and/or death. Baćak & Nowotny (2020), explored the association between police stops and depression among White and Black young adults and found that there was a greater association for young Black adults than Whites ones. Consistent with Bale & Jovanovic (2021), exposure to racism or racial discrimination increases ones' chances for a chronic stress state, similar results are expected from the responses of the participants.

Mistrust and Negative Perceptions in Law Enforcement

Mistrust and negative perceptions of law enforcement will be the most common and consistent theme found from the interviews. With increased surveillance and poor experiences with police, Black youth have negative feelings towards the police including fear and anger (Nordberg et al., 2018) Based on this research and similar literature (Chaney, 2013; Clevenger et al., 2018; Wiley, 2001), Black children will have both negative feelings and perceptions of the police.

Developmental Differences

A child's developmental stage has an impact on how children are able to fully interpret and understand the Talk. Cognitive development and its relation to emotional harm and internal wellbeing is more understood by children as they get older (Heck et al., 2021). This shows evidence that as children age, they will understand the complexities and emotional circumstances that go into discussing the Talk. Additionally, as children age they take into account more perspectives, experiences, and variables in a situation as they come to terms with moral decisions

(Nucci et al., 2018). Based on this, it is supported that younger children will have a harder time understanding the complexities of the Talk more than older children.

Mistrust in law enforcement will be a common theme in the interviews and will increase with age after a child is 12 years old. As stated earlier, a lot of times children shape their attitudes based on their parents (Sindall, 2016). From there, attitudes and perception are based on and ever changing as a result of the experiences and images of legal authorities that they see (Sindall, 2016). Therefore if a Black child's perception of the police is already negative, and they are constantly retaining cases of police brutality, the prediction is that their mistrust in law enforcement will be bound to increase.

Behavior

As a result of the Talk and the socialization of the violence that can occur because of police encounters, Black children will adapt their behaviors in situations involving agents of the law and authority figures. In Laupa et al.'s (1986) chapter, they discuss the various ways a child comes to develop their behaviors of obedience. Though there is research on obedience (in relation to authority figures) as connected to socialization and cognitive-developmental theory, the researchers discuss that children see the world in three domains: moral, social-organizational, and the psychological. They write that children's social development does not come from being socialized into obeying authority but rather their concept of authority is developed over time, across each domain. With this complex view of authority a child can have, it can call into question the legitimacy of authority figures for that child. This research explains why the behavior of Black children would be modified for situations with agents of the law and authority figures while also maintaining a complex relationship with them as a whole.

Quantitative Data

Multiple statistical tests will be run in order to test the study hypotheses. A simple correlation test will be conducted to test the prediction that age (5-18) and trust are negatively correlated. Sidall et al (2016) wrote about public trust and confidence in police in England and Wales. In their article, they discuss how ages 10-15 are crucial in attitude formation and that the strongest link in perception of trust in police are parents and their perception of law enforcement. Though this study was conducted in Europe, there is reason to believe that the same conclusions can be made about people in the U.S.

A Chi-square Test of Independence will be used to test the hypothesis that regardless of gender of the child, boys will be the subject of the talk. Gonzalez (2019) describes how the making it home framework can be hurtful because of the way it marginalizes Black girls from the discussion and the unique, gendered violence they can experience at the hands of the law enforcement. Additionally, consistent with Blackmon and Thomas' study on the influence of Trayvon Martin death of racial socialization in Black families, it was revealed that parents and guardians were more worried about police violence affecting Black boys than they were affecting Black girls.

It is predicted that there won't be trust differences as a function of gender and therefore a 2 Independent Sample T-test will be conducted. Fine et al. (2019) wrote about the racial gap in perception of law enforcement. They found that White youth have the most positive perception followed by Latinx and Black youth respectively. Huebner et al. (2004) also explored Black and White perceptions on police services and performances. They tested for a variety of variables including gender. In their study they found that for Black people, age and education were stronger predictors for perceptions than any other variable. They also found that although gender

was significant for community policing, there was no difference for the other models presented. Therefore there is reason to believe that regardless of gender children will be equally distrustful of law enforcement.

Scholarly Merit & Broader Impacts

The purpose of this study is to explore the Talk Black parents and guardians use to socialize their children. The goal is to explore the psychological, behavioral, and emotional effects that the Talk has on Black children. The little research that has been done on the Talk has focused almost exclusively on the parents and guardians' perspectives. This proposed study is intended to expand on the literature by not only exploring the Talk in depth but by also exploring the socialization through the intended targets' perspective that of through the children.

There are many benefits that can come from this study and that others like it can bring to the Black community. There is little to no research done on what police violence and police brutality has caused Black families to do in response as a form of survival. The Talk is one form of survival that Black families use to prepare their children for altercations and interactions with the police and other authoritative figures. In my research I have only found two to three articles on the Talk and only one discussed the Talk and the impact it has on girls specifically because of the gendered notion of the content of the Talk (Gonzalez, 2019). Apart from the article previously discussed, most of the research found on the Talk focuses on parents/guardians and how police brutality affects them as caretakers. The proposed study would add to the literature by focusing especially on how the Talk affects children, and the way the Talk impacts children of different genders (if at all) and ages.

The second benefit that this study offers is to society at large. From the murder of Trayvon Martin in 2012 to the murder of George Floyd in 2020, the Talk has been a way to safeguard Black children from what might happen should they encounter a police officer. Studies like this one can help shed light into the impact police brutality has on Black families outside of the interaction alone between Black people and the police. The socialization of Black children in encounters with police officers is another way law enforcement has impacted the structure of Black families. If there are ways that the psychological and emotional wellbeing of Black children can be protected, that should be discovered and utilized.

This topic is important because police brutality has been prevalent for as long as police have been around. Therefore Black parents have been teaching their kids to adapt to violence from law enforcement from its very inception. This is why it is important to address the gap in the literature. Police brutality is a reality for many Black people and it's important to know and research the ways that effects of violence from the police go far beyond the interaction between a cop or a security guard. Violence at the hands of the police needs to be addressed and stopped. Not just because of the immediate death and violence that an interaction can lead to but also because of the lasting effects that the police, law enforcement and their presence have on the Black community.

We know that racism has an impact on the mental and physical development of people of color (Isoya, 2021; Baćak 2020,). If there are any negative effects of getting the Talk on Black children that is an important thing to know. Why? Because then there will need to be further research on what would be the best way for Black children to be protected from law enforcement and other agents of the law while also preserving their physical, mental, and emotional wellbeing. Receiving such a Talk from a loved one and trusted individual is most

likely the best way to mitigate any severe trauma and negative effects that may occur from having such a conversation. And yet there must be an element that can be added in conjunction with the Talk to lessen any psychological effects that the conversion produces.

The problem could get worse if not addressed. The Talk has always been around but there is only so much a guardian can do to prepare a child for worse case scenarios. We should explore this topic now because, though this violence has always impacted the Black community, we are finally in a moment as a nation and as a world where we are more willing to listen to the needs of the Black community. Coming out of the rebellions from the summer of 2020 with the murders of George Floyd, Breona Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery and so many more, the people of the United States seem to be more perceptive to the tenuous relationship between law enforcement and the Black community. The best thing to do would be to take a hold of this moment, while people are still listening, and address the needs of the Black community fully. Whether it be economically, emotionally, or mentally. One way that can happen is by investing in means that will address the wellbeing of Black families, Black children and Black people.

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Appendix A

Interview Questions
1. Do you know what the Talk is?
2. Have you ever had the Talk? If so, at what age?
3. What was the topic of conversation when your caretaker (ie. your mom, dad, and or guardian) had the talk with you?
4. Do you think there was a gender difference in who your parents discussed the police target?
5. How did you feel when you received the Talk? What about now looking back?
6. How do you feel about the police? Law enforcement? Authority figures? Security guards?
7. Have you ever had an encounter with the police or any other kind of law enforcement? A security guard? A school officer?
8. Do you change your behavior when you are in public? For example, do you wear the hood of your hoodie? Where do you put your hands? Do you change the pace of how you are walking ?
9. What would you do if a security guard approached you? A police officer? Any other authority figure?
10. How do you feel when you hear about Black people getting killed in the news or online?
11. Do you think there is a gender difference in who is hurt by police?
12. How do you feel when you go outside? Do you worry about what might happen if a cop shows up? What about when a member of your family leaves?
13. Do you think the Talk has prepared you for possible encounters with law enforcement?
14. What are some aspects that you have taken away from the Talk

*some questions, like question 9, will not be asked to children younger than 10

*questions will also be phrased differently depending on the age of the participant