

Antioch University

## AURA - Antioch University Repository and Archive

---

Antioch University Full-Text Dissertations &  
Theses

Antioch University Dissertations and Theses

---

2023

### How Racial Trauma Manifests in Black Women from Direct and Indirect Encounters with Police Brutality

Ashley Turner

*Antioch University Seattle*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://aura.antioch.edu/etds>



Part of the African American Studies Commons, Clinical Psychology Commons, Counseling Psychology Commons, Criminology and Criminal Justice Commons, Developmental Psychology Commons, Public Health Commons, Social Work Commons, and the Women's Studies Commons

---

#### Recommended Citation

Turner, A. (2023). How Racial Trauma Manifests in Black Women from Direct and Indirect Encounters with Police Brutality. <https://aura.antioch.edu/etds/937>

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Antioch University Dissertations and Theses at AURA - Antioch University Repository and Archive. It has been accepted for inclusion in Antioch University Full-Text Dissertations & Theses by an authorized administrator of AURA - Antioch University Repository and Archive. For more information, please contact [hhale@antioch.edu](mailto:hhale@antioch.edu).

HOW RACIAL TRAUMA MANIFESTS IN BLACK WOMEN FROM DIRECT AND  
INDIRECT ENCOUNTERS WITH POLICE BRUTALITY

A Dissertation

Presented to the Faculty of  
Antioch University Seattle

In partial fulfillment for the degree of  
DOCTOR OF PSYCHOLOGY

by

Ashley E. Turner

ORCID Scholar No. 0009-0006-5886-1104

July 2023

HOW DOES RACIAL TRAUMA MANIFEST IN BLACK WOMEN FROM DIRECT AND  
INDIRECT ENCOUNTERS WITH POLICE BRUTALITY

This dissertation, by Ashley E. Turner, has  
been approved by the committee members signed below  
who recommend that it be accepted by the faculty of  
Antioch University Seattle  
in partial fulfillment of requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PSYCHOLOGY

Dissertation Committee:

William Heusler, PsyD

Michael Sakuma, PhD

Chalon Ervin, PsyD

Copyright © 2023 by Ashley E. Turner  
All Rights Reserved

## ABSTRACT

### HOW DOES RACIAL TRAUMA MANIFEST IN BLACK WOMEN FROM DIRECT AND INDIRECT ENCOUNTERS WITH POLICE BRUTALITY

Ashley E. Turner

Antioch University Seattle

Seattle, WA

This phenomenological study explored Black women’s lived experiences with racial trauma stemming from direct and indirect encounters with police brutality. A total of nine participants living in Washington state participated in this study. They identified as Black, ciswomen, fluent in English, and at least 21-years-old. In-depth, semi-structured, qualitative interviews were conducted to explore participants’ experiences with police. Transcripts were analyzed using interpretative phenomenological analysis. The results consisted of the following five themes: (a) forms of police encounters, (b) influence of identity, (c) perceived reason for police brutality, (d) emotions stemming from police brutality, and (e) tactics to survive police interactions. These findings have the potential to garner support in dismantling oppressive systems that lead to Black women’s vulnerability and invisibility and reform policies that disproportionately impact Black women. This dissertation is available in open access at AURA (<https://aura.antioch.edu>) and OhioLINK ETD Center (<https://etd.ohiolink.edu>).

*Keywords:* Black women, intersectionality, police brutality, interpretative phenomenological analysis

## **Acknowledgements**

I'd like to acknowledge the contributions of several people for their involvement and support during this journey. First, I would like to thank my dissertation committee, Dr. William Heusler, Dr. Chalon Ervin, and Dr. Michael Sakuma, for their guidance, wisdom, encouragement, and excitement for my topic. I would like to thank my parents, Sandy and Ricky Turner, for their sacrifices over the years that enabled me to pursue a doctoral degree. I would like to thank my sister, Jennifer Turner, who was always willing to allow me to bounce ideas off her and practice presenting my PowerPoint presentations. Lastly, I would like to thank my husband and son, Marqise and Avery Allen, who supported me throughout the years and were sources of support and joy. It truly took a village to navigate this journey!

Table of Contents

List of Tables ..... ix

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION..... 1

    Statement of the Problem..... 1

    Purpose of the Study ..... 3

    Theoretical Frameworks ..... 4

        Critical Race Theory ..... 4

        Black Feminist Thought..... 6

        Black Feminist Criminology..... 7

        Intersectionality..... 8

    Research Question & Hypothesis ..... 9

CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF LITERATURE ..... 10

History of Racism Experienced by Black Women ..... 10

    The Manifestation of Racism..... 10

    Slavery and Beyond ..... 11

    Stereotypes of Black Women..... 14

    Civil Rights Movement..... 16

        #SayHerName ..... 16

    Black Women’s Intersecting Identities..... 17

    Psychological Impact of Police Brutality ..... 20

    Racial Trauma..... 22

    Theories About Police Brutality ..... 23

        Angry Aggression Theory..... 23

Bad Apple Thesis .....	24
Policing Subculture .....	24
Thin Blue Line Theory.....	25
CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY .....	26
Qualitative Research .....	26
Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) .....	26
Participants and Sampling Strategy .....	27
Data Collection .....	28
Data Coding and Analysis .....	28
Data Quality .....	29
CHAPTER IV: RESULTS.....	31
Theme 1. Forms of Police Encounters .....	32
Subtheme 1a. Direct Encounters.....	32
Subtheme 1b. Indirect Encounters .....	37
Theme 2. Influence of Identity.....	39
Subtheme 2a. Prioritized Single Identity .....	39
Subtheme 2b. Intersecting Identities.....	41
Theme 3. Perceived Reason for Police Brutality .....	42
Subtheme 3a. Biases Stemming from Stereotypes .....	42
Subtheme 3b. Evolution of Over Policing .....	44
Subtheme 3c. Disconnection from the Community .....	45
Theme 4. Emotions Stemming from Police Brutality.....	46
Subtheme 4a. Fear of Victimization .....	46



Subtheme 4b. Hopeless About Change Occurring .....	47
Theme 5. Tactics to Survive Police Interactions .....	49
Subtheme 5a. “The Talk”.....	49
Subtheme 5b. Appear Non-threatening.....	51
Subtheme 5c. Think Twice Before Calling the Police.....	53
CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION.....	55
Comparisons with Prior Work and Contributions to Research.....	55
Theme 1: Forms of Police Encounters .....	55
Theme 2: Influence of Identity .....	57
Theme 3: Perceived Reason for Police Brutality .....	58
Theme 4: Emotions Stemming from Police Brutality.....	60
Theme 5: Tactics to Survive Police Interactions .....	61
Implications for Practice .....	62
Clinical Implications for Therapy .....	64
Strengths and Limitations .....	68
Future Research Recommendations.....	68
References.....	70
APPENDIX A: RECRUITMENT FLYER.....	77
APPENDIX B: INFORMED CONSENT.....	78
APPENDIX C: DEMOGRAPHICS MEASURE .....	81
APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE.....	84
APPENDIX E: MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES LIST .....	86

List of Tables

Table 4.1 Summary of Themes ..... 32

## CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

### Statement of the Problem

Racial injustices have plagued the United States of America for over four centuries. Bowleg (2012) asserts that “racism in the United States is not aberrant but an ordinary and immutable characteristic of everyday life for people of color” (p. 1271). In America, Black women must learn to navigate society with the multi-marginalization that stems from race and gender oppressions that “relegate them to a non-existent social standing” (Willingham, 2018, p. 80). Black women have a history with law enforcement that is unique from other communities of women. Black women are killed and arrested at disproportionately higher rates than white women (Crenshaw et al., 2015; Fernandes et al., 2020; Thomas, 2004; Willingham, 2018). The disparity “can be attributed to the war on drugs policies, broken windows strategies of policing, and aggressive over policing of Black communities” (Jacobs, 2017, p. 59). A historical analysis of racial terror helps to elucidate how the legacy of lynching continues to influence current patterns of violence, conflict, and racial inequity experienced by Black women (Petersen & Ward, 2015). The state-sanctioned practices and violence stemming from slave owners, slave patrols, and the Ku Klux Klan and other white supremacist organizations have served to encourage sentiments of anti-Blackness as well as serving as a safe haven for those sentiments that continue to influence present-day interactions between the police and the Black community (Akbar, 2020).

Policing is characterized by a history of violence that is rooted in race and class differences. Institutionalized racism in law enforcement manifests on a spectrum ranging from microaggressions to shooting Black individuals with a greater frequency than other groups. These behaviors exhibited by police can lead to the belief that “The police act not as protector of

*all* people but as protectors of the status quo, tasked with upholding the White, male, and masculine social regime” (Pitman et al., 2019, p. 482). Police brutality is not a singular incident, but rather an everyday occurrence at various locations such as schools, cars, homes, streets, and pools to name a few (Akbar, 2020). The countless cases of excessive force by law enforcement contribute to the Black community’s lack of confidence and satisfaction with the police (Brooks et al., 2016). Scholars argue that policing has become the state’s response to societal problems like homelessness, health disparities, mental health crises, substance use disorders, and unemployment, from which the state has divested. A critique of the police is that they are not invested in providing safety, but rather focused on repressing riots, revolts, and social change. The disproportionate rates of Black individuals impacted by police brutality demonstrates the impartiality of policing (Akbar, 2020).

This research is significant because there have been gaps in the literature pertaining to police treatment of Black women. Black women have experienced police violence since the inception of America. However, most of the existing research on the impact of police brutality focuses on the interactions between the police and Black men. Willingham (2018) asserts that Black women’s experiences with police are relegated to the margins of society because they are often overshadowed by violence against Black men. A contributing factor to the gap in the literature stems from social media’s focus on the demonstrations rather than the incidence of police brutality against Black women (Aniefuna et al., 2020; Crenshaw et al., 2015; Jacobs, 2017). Winters (2020) states, “Despite being 7% of the population, Black women have accounted for 20 percent of the unarmed people killed by police since 1999” (p. 114). Regardless of its prevalence, there continues to be few studies that explore the direct, vicarious, and

intergenerational trauma Black women experience due to police brutality. Aniefuna et al. (2020) assert that violence against Black women by police officers is typically under-reported, under-prosecuted, and undetected” (p. 2). Black women are victims, witnesses, and grief-stricken wives, girlfriends, mothers, and children of victims of police brutality (Jenkins, 2002).

### **Purpose of the Study**

Unfortunately, psychology has played a part in rendering Black women invisible due to not fitting the dominant group of white male norms that remain pervasive in this society. This dissertation aims to intentionally bring Black women into the mainstream discourse. Mainstream traditional psychological theories and frameworks derived in predominantly a Eurocentric-American context is likely limited perspective and applicability to the lived experiences of Black women (Thomas, 2004). The dominant discourse and theoretical perspectives are inadequate in explaining how Black women’s marginalized identities contribute to their mistreatment and experienced inequities (Battle, 2016). The author hopes to use the current privilege of being a graduate student to provide research that addresses violence against Black women. The aim is to shift focus to center on the margins by shifting from the dominant majority to a marginalized and under-researched perspective. Care will be taken to authentically center the study of Black women in their own context and background experiences. Black women deserve “scientific attention in their own right and not simply in comparison to Black men or White women” (Thomas, 2004, p. 290). Racism is embedded in all facets of American society. There is a difference between “use of force” and “violence.” Police violence occurs when the use of force is disproportionate to what is needed to handle a situation. This dissertation will focus on instances where there is an unjustified use of force by law enforcement. It is hoped that this dissertation will represent a significant step in the direction of

acknowledging and curtailing the systemic violence and trauma Black women experience within our society. The goal is to provide research that contributes to equity for all Black women.

## **Theoretical Frameworks**

### ***Critical Race Theory***

Critical race theory (CRT) underscores the social structures that manifest social inequities and oppression, which negatively impacts Blacks. Chaney and Robertson (2013) explain that “Critical race theory is a useful theoretical approach when examining the situations encountered by marginalized groups in a hierarchal society” (p. 484). The CRT movement originated in the 1970s to explore the dynamics between race, racism, and power. Scholars of this time realized that “new theories and strategies were needed to combat the subtler forms of racism that were gaining ground” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001, p. 4). CRT strives to provide insights, perspectives, methods, and pedagogies that can be utilized to transform subordinate and dominant racial inequities (Solórzano et al., 2000). There are several fundamental tenets of CRT: racism is an ordinary occurrence for people of color; racism can be advantageous for white individuals, which decreases their incentive to eradicate it; racism is a social construct that can be invented, manipulated, and discontinued for personal gain (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001).

CRT expands upon principles and ideologies on concepts from law, sociology, history, ethnic studies, and women’s studies (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Solórzano et al., 2000). Racism is an endemic that has directly impacted the U.S. legal system and been a source of racial inequities for people of color navigating the legal system. Parker and Lynn (2002) explain that “Concepts such as color-blind interpretations of the law or meritocracy are ‘unmasked’ by critical race theorists to be precursors for White, European American hegemonic control of the social and structural arrangements in U.S. society” (p. 9). Therefore, CRT aims to expose the

fallacy of racism being virtually eradicated despite racially marginalized individuals' accounts of continued racist incidents and use the power of the courts to eliminate racial oppression. CRT elaborates on the feminist movement's exploration of the relationship between power and construction of social roles stemming from a patriarchal orientation. The concept of redressing historical wrongdoings was incorporated from the Civil Rights Movement. Lastly, the notion of centering a culture's ideas, information, and situation is shared with ethnic studies (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001).

The primary tenets of CRT are deconstruction of structural oppression, reconstruction for equality of all, and construction with equal power (Aniefuna et al., 2020). Critical race theorists are committed to social justice and advocacy (Bowleg, 2012). CRT differs from other academic disciplines due to the proclivity for social justice and activism. Delgado and Stefancic (2001) explain that "It tries not only to understand our social situation but to change it, setting out not only to ascertain how society organizes itself along racial lines and hierarches but to transform it for the better" (p. 8).

CRT has enabled people of color to transition experiential racist incidents into the realm of academia. Parker and Lynn (2002) explain that, "Whereas African Americans and other people of color have always thought in theoretical terms about their conditions of social, political, and economic subordination in a White supremacist society, racism has not been given full explanatory power in the academy" (p. 8). Therefore, CRT provides a space to discuss, challenge, and change how embedded racism is within the American society. CRT expands upon the notion that race is socially constructed and not a biological reality (Bowleg, 2012). Critical race theory provides the foundation to examine the ideology of racism and injuries stemming from racist incidents. Solórzano et al. (2000) assert that "those injured by racism discover that

they are not alone in their marginality. They become empowered participants, hearing their own stories and the stories of others, listening to how the arguments are framed, and learning ways to make the arguments themselves” (p. 64). Unfortunately, educational research has largely ignored the concerns of historically marginalized and disenfranchised communities and utilized culturally inappropriate methods of investigations (Parker & Lynn, 2002). A CRT framework within qualitative research is beneficial for challenging preconceived notions of race and racism. Participants’ narratives are illuminative and document institutional and overtly personal incidents of racial discrimination (Parker & Lynn, 2002).

### ***Black Feminist Thought***

Historically oppressed groups, such as Black women, strive to discover ways to escape from, survive in, and resist daily inequities. Black feminist thought provides an outlet for Black women to grapple with and challenge these inequities that lead to invisibility and dehumanization (Willingham, 2018). Black feminist thought is a theoretical framework that aims to recognize and celebrate Black women’s visibility. Thomas (2004) explains that Black feminist thought “embraces both an Afrocentric world view and a feminist sensibility” (p. 293). Collins (2008) asserts that Black feminist thought explores “experiences and ideas shared by Black women and provides a unique angle of vision on self, community and society” (p. 22).

Black feminist thought arose from two opposing pre-World War II factors. Racial segregation created all-Black neighborhoods where Black women could develop and share information to resist racial oppression. However, during this period, Black women predominantly worked in occupations related to domestic work in affluent white homes and agriculture. Black women’s unique outsider-with position with white homes as domestic workers enabled them to observe and question the contradiction between American womanhood and the



devaluation of Black women (Collins, 2008). Thomas (2004) identifies the following six principles of Black feminist thought: recognizing the importance of critiquing dichotomous thinking; allow oppression and struggle to simultaneously exist; abstain from additive analyses; promote the intersectionality of race, class, and gender; reconstruct the lived experiences, historical positioning, cultural perceptions, and social construction of Black women; and develop a feminism rooted in the intersection of class, culture, gender, and race.

Black feminist thought addresses a fundamental contradiction of U.S. society. Collins (2008) makes the following assertion:

On the one hand, democratic promises of individual freedom, equality under the law, and social justice are made to all American citizens. Yet on the other hand, the reality of differential group treatment based on race, class, gender, sexuality, and citizenship status persists. (p. 23)

Ultimately, the aim is to empower Black women to use a social justice orientation to tackle intersecting oppressions. However, Black feminist theorists understand that Black women are simultaneously navigating multiple forms of oppression. It is important to acknowledge that not all Black women are oppressed in the same way and there is variance in Black women's experiences with oppression (Collins, 2008).

### ***Black Feminist Criminology***

The Black Feminist Criminology (BFC) was developed to address the devaluation of possessing multiple marginalized identities, such as race, skin complexion, sex, gender identity, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, disability, and religion. The following four themes are explored within BFC: social structural oppression, the Black community and culture, intimate and familial relations, and Black women as individuals (Aniefuna et al., 2020). Potter (2006)

explains that Black feminist criminology “extends beyond traditional feminist criminology to view African American women . . . from their multiple marginalized and dominated positions in society culture, community and families” (p. 107).

### ***Intersectionality***

Intersectionality is a fundamentally core principle in Black feminist scholarship. Intersectionality provides an analytical framework to conceptualize, explore, critique, and address disparities and social inequality. The understanding of the term intersectionality as it pertains to Black women is imperative for the following reason:

Black women are marginalized from both antiracist policy and feminist theory, because the underpinnings of both conceptions are based on experiences that fail to demonstrate the interaction of race *and* gender. The exclusion of Black women’s experiences promotes scholarship (and ultimately public acceptance) that invalidates the seriousness of Black women’s struggles combating racism, sexism, classism, and any other forms of discrimination simultaneously, which ultimately leads to the erasure of their existence altogether” (Aniefuna et al., 2020, p. 4).

The centering of intersectionality is important for this dissertation because the paradox of being Black and a woman is a complex marginalized identity that can influence how Black women are perceived and treated by law enforcement. Theoretical frameworks that fail to apply an intersectional perspective perpetuate the scholarly silencing of Black women’s voices (Aniefuna et al., 2020). An elemental tenet of intersectionality is that social identities “are not independent and unidimensional but rather multiple, interdependent, and mutually constitutive” (Bowleg, 2012, p. 1268). Therefore, neither Black women’s gender nor race identity alone is enough to explain their experiences of police brutality. Attempts to understand police brutality from one

identity overlooks the complex ways multiple identities intersect to create social inequity. Another defining aspect of intersectionality is that it focuses on historically oppressed and marginalized populations from their vantage point and in their own context rather than the norm being from the perspective of White middle-class individuals (Bowleg, 2012). A strength of intersectionality is that it “does not presume that all interlocking identities are equally disadvantaged ... [because] low and high-status social identities intersect to yield disparity and advantage” (Bowleg, 2012, p. 1269). It is erroneous to assume that all women have the same experiences with the police.

### **Research Question & Hypothesis**

Alase (2017) explains that “the research questions should encapsulate the essence of what the research study is trying to uncover” (p. 5). Research questions are important because they influence the information that will be garnered. In this dissertation, it will be argued that Black women’s encounters with police brutality stem from state-sanctioned violence dating back to slavery and their intersecting identities related to race, gender, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic status that contribute to their continual victimization, invisibility, and dehumanization. This dissertation will explore the intersectionality of race, gender, and racial trauma stemming from Black women’s encounters with the police. The research question that will be addressed is as follows: what are Black women’s lived experiences with racial trauma stemming from direct and indirect encounters with police brutality?

## CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

### History of Racism Experienced by Black Women

#### The Manifestation of Racism

In order to explore what racism is and how it impacts people of color, specifically Black women, it is important to define race. Shavers and Shavers (2006) define race “as a continuously evolving social construct used to categorize individuals into groups that have typically been based on the physical characteristics of an individual or his/her ancestors” (p. 387). The inclusion of the phrase “social construct” is important because it emphasizes the fact that race is more than a biological difference, but rather a societal construct that has its origins in oppression (C. Jones, 2000). Harrell and Sloan-Pena (2006) define racism as “a system of oppression based on racial/ethnic group designations in which a pervasive ideology of racial superiority and inferiority provides the foundation for structural inequalities, intergroup conflict, discrimination, and prejudice” (p. 396). Racism is an asymmetric power system that creates unearned privileges for a dominant group. Whiteness continues to be the gold standard of humanity in America. Rembert et al. (2016) argues that Black people are considered to be subhuman because “Whiteness codifies the Black body and being as demonic, monstrous, and criminal” (p. 228). Therefore, the Black individual is perceived as a threat from birth.

Racism manifests itself in three primary forms in our society: institutional, interpersonal/personally, and individual internalization. Institutional racism is characterized by the implementation of policies and norms that result in implementing and maintaining harmful racial disparities and inequities (Harrell & Sloan-Pena, 2006; C. Jones, 2000; Shavers & Shavers, 2006). C. Jones (2000) explains that “Institutional racism is normative, sometimes legalized, and often manifests as inherited disadvantage... [It] is often evident as inaction in the face of need”

(p. 1212). Interpersonal/personal racism occurs when an individual's biases and preconceived beliefs about a racial group impact their ability to be respectful towards them (Harrell & Sloan-Pena, 2006; C. Jones, 2000; Shavers & Shavers, 2006). Interpersonal/personal racism may be exhibited as the following: lack of respect, suspicion, devaluation, scapegoating, and dehumanization (C. Jones, 2000). Lastly, internalized racism is when a racially oppressed group accepts negative messages propagated by a dominating race that causes low self-worth and tolerance of maltreatment by others (Harrell & Sloan-Pena, 2006; C. Jones, 2000; Shavers & Shavers, 2006). It is important to note that "Racial discrimination can be intentional or unintentional, conscious or unconscious. The result of the behavior is racial discrimination, regardless of motivation, intentionality, or consciousness" (Harrell & Sloan-Pena, 2006, p. 396).

### **Slavery and Beyond**

The long and contentious history Black Americans have with the police stem from slavery. During slavery, Black women were considered property that could be exploited physically and sexually (Battle, 2016). The dehumanization of Black women during slavery enabled slave owners to justify holding them in captivity and raping, maiming, and killing them (Jacobs, 2017). Enslaved Black women were not offered protection from the physical abuse and sexual advances of slave owners. DeLongira (2006) explains that "Masters and overseers did not simply beat female slaves, but often did so with the women semi or completely nude, a technique that further defeminized them. This practice left black women subjected to physical torture but also public humiliation" (DeLongoria, 2006, p. 63).

Many scholars trace the history of policing to slave patrols, early police forces, the Ku Klux Klan, and militias. From the early 1700s to mid-1800s, slave patrols were used for runaway

slaves and slave revolts (Akbar, 2020). Brooks et al. (2016) identifies several functions of slave patrols:

(1) to chase down, apprehend, and return to their owners, runaway slaves; (2) to provide a form of organized terror to deter slave revolts; and (3) to maintain a form of discipline for slave workers who were subject to summary justice, outside of the law, if they violated any plantation rules. (p. 349)

During the colonial days, the informal police system was comprised of community volunteers whose primary responsibility was to warn of impending danger. The first centralized municipal police department emerged in 1838 in the city of Boston. After the Civil War, Black codes replaced slave codes as a means of controlling freed slaves (Brooks et al., 2016). Ritchie (2017) explains that “Black codes controlled the movements of formerly enslaved Black people, severely restricted liberty in employment and conduct, and continued to empower state police forces” (p. 29). By the late 1880s, Black women were 5.8 times more likely to be arrested by police than their white counterparts (Ritchie, 2017). Petersen and Ward (2015) argue that lynching set the foundation for the violence that ensued during the Civil Rights Movement, which cultivated cultural and institutional environments that are more accepting of the current violence towards Black Americans. Although individuals for various ethnic and racial backgrounds were lynched, “African Americans paid the heaviest toll, comprising around 90% of the nearly 5,000 documented victims of lynchings between 1882 and 1951” (Petersen & Ward, 2015, p. 116, cited from Tolnay & Beck, 1995).

Jim Crow segregation laws ultimately replaced Black codes from the early 1900s to the late 1960s (Brooks et al., 2016; Ritchie, 2017). Although the intention of President Abraham Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation was to free slaves, it was not until the civil war was won

that slaves were freed. However, freedom was illusory because “Constitutional amendments guaranteeing African Americans ‘equal protection of the laws and the right to vote proved impotent...once a white backlash against Reconstruction gained steam” (Alexander, 2012, p. 20). The intense backlash stemmed from whites who feared the power gained by Blacks and their requests for increased social and economic equality. Alexander (2012) makes the following statement about the Jim Crow segregation system:

segregation laws were proposed as part of a deliberate effort to drive a wedge between poor whites and African Americans. These discriminatory barriers were designed to encourage lower-class whites to retain a sense of superiority over blacks, making it far less likely they would sustain interracial political alliances aimed at toppling the white elite. (p. 34)

Jim Crow served to protect white’s economic, political, and social interests now that slavery was abolished. These laws led to the disenfranchisement and discrimination of Blacks. It is not surprising that Jim Crow system of segregation emerged following the collapse of slavery as a mechanism to relegate Blacks to a subordinate racial caste. History has demonstrated that racism is adaptable. Alexander (2012) asserts that “African Americans repeatedly have been controlled through institutions such as slavery and Jim Crow which appear to die, but then are reborn in new form, tailored to the needs and constraints of the time” (p. 21).

With the fall of Jim Crow, there was a shift from segregation to crime. Racially sanitized rhetoric such as the phrase “cracking down on crime” came to symbolize and cloak hostility towards Blacks. The assumption that the War on Drugs was launched in response to the crack cocaine crisis in inner-city neighborhoods is a common fallacy. The legislation of the 1980s and 1990s became increasingly more punitive as elected officials strived to demonstrate their ability

to be tough on crime. Sentencing policies greatly exacerbated racial disparities in arrests, convictions, and incarceration rates among the Black community (Alexander, 2012; Farber, 2019). Large percentages of the Black community are marginalized due to mass incarceration. Alexander (2012) asserts the following:

Mass incarceration refers not only to the criminal justice system but also to the larger web of laws, rules, policies, and customs that control those labeled criminals both in and out of prison. Once released, former prisoners enter a hidden underworld of legalized discrimination and permanent social exclusion. (p. 13)

Black Americans were vilified during the War on Drugs. Alexander (2012) reports that “More African Americans are under correctional control today—in prison or jail, on probation or parole—than were enslaved in 1850, a decade before the Civil War began” (p. 175). The colorblind belief that race no longer matters has blinded the American public to the treacherous realities of race in our society, particularly for Black Americans.

### **Stereotypes of Black Women**

The social disenfranchisement and dissemination of negative stereotypes of Black women reinforced their inferior social status (Battle, 2016). Black women’s body clashed with the western world’s idealized Eurocentric concept of beauty. Much of present-day perceptions of Black women stem from narratives created during “slavery, Reconstruction, and Jim Crow, shaping conscious and unconscious reactions and understandings of Black women’s personhood, conduct, and experiences of violence, as well as police responses to Black women” (Ritchie, 2017, p. 35).

Prominent stereotypes of Black women are mammy, jezebel, sapphire, and superwoman. Ritchie (2017) explains the following:



The ideal Black woman conforms to the image of the ‘mammy’—submissive, maternal, domestic, religious, and devoted to both her family and the white people for whom she works, and tolerant, if not deserving, of all forms of imposition, violation, pain, and abuse. (p. 35)

During the colonial and slave era, Black women were caricatured by white men as sexual animals with loose morals and governed by their libido. This oversexed depiction of Black women is referred to as the Jezebel stereotype, which “provided a woman who could be juxtaposed against the notion of a ‘true’ woman, a feminine, chaste, white woman” (Jacobs, 2017, p. 47). The Sapphire stereotype evokes “the image of the domineering, emasculating Black woman” (Ritchie, 2017, p. 36). A misconception stemming from the Jezebel and Sapphire stereotypes is that Black women are subhuman, animalistic, and require violence to be controlled. The superwoman stereotype stems from the two previously mentioned stereotypes. The Superwoman can be a double-edged sword. On one hand, it is an asset that has been essential to enduring tremendous historical hardships. However, it can be a vulnerability at times. Romero (2000) asserts that “an overused asset that develops uncritically without ongoing evaluation and attention to changing needs and demands runs the risk of becoming a liability” (Woods-Giscombe, 2010, p. 225, cited from Romero, 2000). The Superwoman trope emerged out of necessity for survival to counteract Black women’s experiences with racism, gender-based oppression, and disenfranchisement (Woods-Giscombé, 2010). Ritchie (2017) asserts the following:

Any departure from the mammy role in a police interaction therefore becomes dangerous for a Black woman, her stance presumed to be unacceptably aggressive, the physical threat she poses drastically overblown, her sexuality automatically deviant, her body devoid of feeling, her personhood undeserving of protection. (p. 36)

### **Civil Rights Movement**

Although rarely talked about, the Civil Rights Era is also marked with police restricting the rights of Blacks and prohibiting them using the same public spaces as their white counterparts (Brooks et al., 2016). Milani et al. (2021) indicate that “a trope of heavily, often disproportionately, armed and armored police positioned against young, unarmed protestors is indelibly associated with policing of the 1960s” (p. 3). Battle (2016) explains that “The laws that were designed to uphold and maintain the system of White supremacy protected White men, rather than upholding the dignity and humanity of Black women” (p. 127). Sadly, the success that occurred during the Civil Rights Movement did not stop violence towards Blacks. In the 1990s, tension between Blacks and the police escalated after the beating of Rodney King, sodomy of Abner Louima, and shooting of Amadou Diallo (Brooks et al., 2016; DeGruy, 2017). Willingham (2018) argues that “Today’s white cops who beat, kill, and rape black women are no different from yesterday’s slave owners who beat and raped their enslaved black women” (p. 78).

### ***#SayHerName***

The Twitter hashtag, #SayHerName, was created by several Black female activists who sought to bring awareness to the Black female victims of police murder, which had been largely ignored by the public (Towns, 2016). The #SayHerName campaign is an interdisciplinary beckoning call amongst Black feminist activists and scholars to counter the silence of mainstream media after the physical and psychological harm perpetrated by police towards Black

women (Aniefuna et al., 2020). The veracity and credibility of Black women are often questioned when they report being victimized. Yarbrough and Bennett (2000) assert that Black women's racial and gender identities make her "particularly and peculiarly susceptible to being disbelieved" (Jacobs, 2017, p. 626). In recent years, social media outlets have highlighted the most egregious cases of police brutality, while national headlines focused on reporting the subsequent demonstrations. Aniefuna et al. (2020) explain that "Because of the lack of national outcry for the lives of Black women, social media provides primary access to knowledge of police and vigilante violence against Black women and girls" (p. 6). However, one's awareness is limited to the platforms and accounts one chooses to consume.

### **Black Women's Intersecting Identities**

An intersectional perspective that acknowledges identities such as race, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, and disability influence police violence against Black women.

Ritchie (2017) discusses the policing of gender identity:

The lines of gender are drawn most literally between a false gender binary that tolerates no deviation in appearance, behavior, or expression from characteristics associated with the gender assigned at birth, leading to suspicion and presumptions of instability, criminality, fraud, and violence in police interactions with transgender and gender-nonconforming people, particularly of color. (p. 127)

Gender policing occurs when police officers insist on individuals showing their form of identification or disclosing their "real" name when their gender markers on the form of identification do not match gender expression. Scholars have found that "Police often respond to gender nonconformity with 'street justice,' administered through verbal harassment and abuse, including slurs such as 'faggot,' 'dyke,' 'tranny,' 'he/she,' 'freak,' and 'bitch,' and often

accompanied by physical violence” (Ritchie, 2017, p. 137). Lastly, gender checks are at times implemented by police to “determine an individual’s physical characteristics for purposes of assigning a gender, to punish and humiliate trans people, to satisfy curiosity, or for sexual gratification (Ritchie, 2017, p. 138). The practices are a dehumanizing daily reality for Black gender-nonconforming women and transgender people nationwide.

Black queer women experience sexuality-based policing. Sexuality policing occurs on a spectrum that includes Black lesbian, bisexual, and queer women of all gender identities. Ritchie (2017) indicates that the policing occurs as a form of punishment for their “very deviance from heterosexual, monogamous norms [in order to] render the public sphere ‘safe’ from non-normative sexuality” (p. 158). The police tactic of criminalizing the possession or presence of a condom as evidence of an individual’s intent to allegedly engage in sex work disproportionately impacts Black women and LGBTQ individuals due to stereotypes of them being sexually deviant and promiscuous. Ritchie and Jones-Brown (2017) make the following assertion:

Police officers’ use of condoms present on or near women’s bodies as evidence of their criminal conduct thus represents both direct and indirect interference by the state with women’s sexual and reproductive autonomy and ability to protect themselves, as well as public health, with disproportionate impacts on women of color profiled and targeted by prostitution enforcement. (p. 5)

This practice disincentivizes Black women and LGBTQ individuals, who are at an increased risk of police profiling and brutality, from carrying and distributing condoms.

Racial profiling and police brutality in the context of responses to violence (i.e., domestic, sexual, family, homophobic, and transphobic) is seldom discussed. Concerning police

responses to violence may entail sexual harassment, physical assault, “outing” LGBTQ individuals, and profiling survivors as perpetrators of violence (Ritchie, 2017). Scholars indicate that “Survivors of [police] violence are less likely to be able to speak out, because they need the police to remain willing to respond to future calls for assistance or because of shame, silence, and fear of retaliation” (Ritchie, 2017, p. 187). In addition to overt forms of violence, “Denial of protection is also a form of violence and increases vulnerability to other forms of violence by signaling to abusers and bystanders that violence against women of color is acceptable” (Ritchie, 2017, p. 189).

A significant portion of Black women’s encounters with the police occur during police responses to mental health crises. Ritchie (2017) reports that “The risk of being killed during a police incident is 16 times greater for individuals with untreated mental illness than for other civilians approached or stopped by officers” (p. 92). Due to a shortage of alternative options, police often respond to people amid a mental health crisis. Unfortunately, police officers often lack the comprehensive training of mental health professionals, which leads to them being less equipped to handle mental health crises and relying on excessive force to handle the situation (Crenshaw & Ritchie, 2015). Ritchie (2017) asserts that “Actual or perceived disability, including mental illness, has thus served as a primary driver of surveillance, policing, and punishment for women and gender-nonconforming people of color throughout US history” (p. 91).

The war on drugs has been a racialized operation within the United States. Black women are “disproportionately impacted by the policing of poverty simply by virtue of making up a significant portion of the population of low-income and homeless people of color” (Ritchie, 2017, p. 45). Because police forces surveill low-income communities of color, Black women

are at an increased risk of police interactions due to the enforcement of drug laws, crimes of poverty and public order offenses, and broken windows policing. The criminalization of poverty ensnares Black women in a devastating way. Hence, the existence of “controlling narratives developed in service of colonialism and white supremacy transform women of color into a caricature, an implicit threat justifying violent responses” (Ritchie, 2017, p. 236).

### **Psychological Impact of Police Brutality**

The constant threat of injury or death by police negatively impacts the psychological functioning and physical health of Black women. Traumatic experiences, such as police brutality, are closely linked to mental health challenges. Traumatic stress reactions that are clinical disorders or subclinical reactions can arise from either experiencing or witnessing police brutality or having close family and friends be victimized by the police. In addition to PTSD, Acute Stress Disorder, adjustment disorders, other specified or unspecified trauma and stress related disorders, dissociation disorders, and clinical disorders such as Major Depressive, Panic, Somatization, and Substance Use disorders, as well as subclinical levels of depression and anxiety can occur because of direct and indirect exposure to police brutality (Jenkins, 2002).

An emerging body of research explores the deleterious impact of police brutality. The body produces a stress response to a traumatic event that can evoke sadness, anger, shock, and denial in the short-term. However, a persistent stress response and continuous recollection of a traumatic situation can develop into PTSD and chronic anxiety and depression (McLeod et al., 2020). Geller et al. (2014) found that young men who reported more police contact also reported higher levels of symptoms of trauma and anxiety stemming from those encounters. Oh et al. (2017) found that Black American adults who experienced police mistreatment or abuse in their lifetime had greater odds of disclosing lifetime suicidal ideation and attempt. Bor et al. (2018)

identifies the following ways Black American's mental health can be compromised due to police brutality: heightened awareness of systemic racism, increased fear of victimization, greater mortality expectations, increased vigilance, activation of prior trauma, and communal bereavement. Sewell et al. (2016) elaborates on the psychological distress stemming from hypervigilance to underscore the research showing that it can cause changes in the hippocampus, prefrontal cortex, and amygdala due to chronically activating coping strategies.

Negative encounters with the police may cause unhealthy internalizations that lead to low self-esteem and self-worth (Hirschtick et al., 2020). Women interviewed after police encounters have reported feeling humiliated, embarrassed, and ashamed due to the exertion of power by male officers (Fernandes et al., 2020). Black women's parenting can be profoundly impacted due to police brutality. Black mothers recognize that their fundamental responsibility of ensuring the protection of their children is not guaranteed due to their race (Jenkins, 2002). Aniefuna et al. (2020) indicate that trauma symptoms are associated with Black mother's inability to safely parent their children. Police brutality may also impact Black women's "assumption about the safety of the world, their trust in others, and the belief that they can keep their families safe" (Jenkins, 2002, p. 35).

Researchers have found that chronic exposure to psychological stress can lead to physiological dysregulation and increase overall health risks in Black women (Woods-Giscombe, 2010). In addition to mental health implications, police brutality can directly and indirectly compromise Black women's physical health. Acute and chronic stress stemming from police brutality can decrease immune system functioning, which can increase vulnerability to disease and infection. Diminished motivation to engage in behaviors that would promote health also indirectly compromises one's physical health. Physical health challenges can be exacerbated by

poverty and racism (Jenkins, 2002). Hirschtick et al. (2020) explain that, “If individuals perceive recurrent police exposure as stressful, dysregulation of the body’s natural response to stress may result in prolonged secretion of cortisol leading to allostatic load” (p. 2). In conclusion, Black women’s reactions to police brutality vary. Jenkins (2002) explains that “Individual responses are a result of the incident and a constellation of individual, social risk, and protective factors” (p. 32). The emotional, psychological, familial, and communal toll on Black women stemming from police brutality is incalculable (Akbar, 2020).

### **Racial Trauma**

Racial trauma can have lasting adverse effects on a Black woman’s functioning and well-being. A racist incident is an assault on an individual’s personhood that renders responses such as disbelief, shock, shame, self-blame or dissociation, which may lead to maladaptive coping behaviors (Williams et al., 2018). Due to the lack of attention and research on Black women’s experiences with police violence, “Black women tend to suffer silently and bear their trauma” (Aniefuna et al., 2020, p. 9). Emerging studies have found that watching violent and dehumanizing footage of police brutality against Black Americans on the news and social media outlets contributes to the traumatization of the Black community. The mass media coverage of police brutality compounded with the intergenerational trauma in the Black community stemming from the violent history of slavery, the Jim Crow era, and current systemic oppression has left many Black Americans feeling hopeless, angry, anxious, and depressed (Williams et al., 2018). Some researchers have also found that desensitization to police violence may occur due to the media’s increased coverage of these acts of violence, which may lead to a lack of empathy and sympathy for Black women’s encounters with police brutality (Williams & Clarke, 2019).



Race-based stress stems from the following sources: personal, vicarious, collective, and transgenerational. Personal racism-related stress occurs from experiences an individual is directly involved such as episodic events, chronic conditions of living, and everyday racism situations. Vicarious racism related stress may occur from an individual witnessing, observing, or hearing about another individual's experience with racism. An awareness of power differentials and systemic disparities that lead to less access to resources or more negative outcomes for a racial/ethnic group is a form of collective racism-related stress. Lastly, the continued vestiges of historical traumas that are transferred across generations is known as transgenerational racism-related stress (Harrell & Sloan-Pena, 2006). Traumatic events can cause enzymatic alterations in the brain that are heritable to future generations of offspring. Intergenerational alterations increase the etiological likelihood of future offspring developing mental illness symptoms, such as PTSD, depression, and anxiety. Environmental stressors can activate these alterations or epigenetic changes (Williams et al., 2018).

### **Theories About Police Brutality**

#### ***Angry Aggression Theory***

The angry aggression theory is one perspective on the occurrence of police brutality. The theory indicates that “people who are chronically aroused tend to perceive a wider range of potential threats and tend to respond to perceived threats more aggressively than others” (Brooks et al., 2016, p. 350). Therefore, police officer's line of work heightens their physiological arousal state, which makes them more susceptible to using excessive force. The Supreme Court has based many of its decisions under the belief that law enforcement must make split-second decisions on whether to use force as a means of self-defense. However, Gross (2016) explains

that “police officers typically use force offensively rather than defensively and do so with at least some degree of premeditation” (p. 162).

### ***Bad Apple Thesis***

A common explanation for police brutality is the “Bad Apple Thesis,” which attributes police violence to “rogue officers [who] have acted outside the scope and ethos of the department, using violence and corruption as a matter of individual prerogative” (Milani et al., 2021, p. 7). This theory is appealing because the blame is placed on discrete individuals and preserves the institution of law enforcement, thereby decontextualizing police brutality from a systemic issue. The theory is considered “solvable” by firing the “Bad apples,” restructuring recruitment practices, enhance ethics training, and develop a committee to monitor problematic behaviors (Milani et al., 2021). However, for the last several decades, law enforcement has been hyper-focused on fighting a “war on crime,” which has led to the militarization of polices forces. Gross (2016) indicates that police force trainings have emphasized “the use of firearms and defensive tactics, while virtually ignoring crisis intervention and de-escalation strategies” (p. 162).

### ***Policing Subculture***

Scholars have found that the “police subculture is characterized by not only suspiciousness, cynicism, and clannishness, but also hyper-masculinity, respect for authority, and valued experience and hierarchy” (Milani et al., 2021, p. 7). This framework associates excessive force as part of the job description and a way of reasserting status and power when challenged by a civilian. When police officers believe their authority and masculinity are being questioned, it can trigger the use of excessive force and/or violence (Jacobs, 2017). Violence becomes enmeshed in routine policing when they utilize physical force such as shootings, pepper spray,

tasers, body cavity searches, and SWAT raids to enforce a decision (Akbar, 2020). The issue with this theory is that it “positions violence—excessive, unjustified force—as something that occurs essentially by mistake, while attempting to do the right thing” (Milani et al., 2021, pp. 7–8).

### ***Thin Blue Line Theory***

The thin blue line theory is a moralistic explanation that asserts “police are acting on behalf of the law-abiding, defending order and normative values in some putative war against crime” (Milani et al., 2021, p. 8). Therefore, some believe that the utilization of force is essential to effective policing. Unfortunately, this theory encourages police to use any-means-necessary to fight crime and uphold justice. Therefore, excessive force is discredited and overlooked. However, scholars have found that force is rarely used by police in developed democracies (Milani et al., 2021). Societal indifference to police brutality is dangerous because it enables the issue to continue to exist and fester.

## CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

### Qualitative Research

A core tenant of qualitative research stems from “the belief that knowledge is constructed by people in an ongoing fashion as they engage in and make meaning of an activity, experience, or phenomenon” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 23). An individual’s reality is constructed as one interacts with the world. Qualitative researchers strive to understand how people interpret experiences and the meaning attributed to their experiences (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In relation to this dissertation topic, “Qualitative methods can offer unique contributions to the emergence of new and unexpected understandings in the psychology of Black women, to cultural and contextual sensitivity in research, and to strengths-based approaches that reverse negative stereotypes about this population” (Thomas, 2004, p. 290).

### Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)

An interpretative phenomenological analysis was employed in order to understand the phenomenon of the interactions between Black women and the police. An IPA is based on the following:

the assumption that *there is an essence or essences to shared experience*. These essences are the core meanings mutually understood through a phenomenon commonly experienced. The experiences of different people are bracketed, analyzed, and compared to identify the essences of the phenomenon. (Patton, 2015, pp. 116–117, emphasis in original)

An IPA approach aims to capture and describe the common aspects of an experienced phenomenon. In addition to describing the participants’ lived experiences, the researcher is also required to interpret the meaning of those lived experiences (Alase, 2017). Merriam and Tisdell

(2016) explain that “a phenomenological approach is well suited to studying affective, emotional, and often intense human experiences” (p. 28).

The concept of bracketing was used to differentiate my personal experiences from the participants’ lived experiences. Alase (2017) explains that “IPA research study should stay on top of any explicit and implicit biases that may jeopardize the goal and integrity of the study by bracketing (removing) the researcher’s personal experience from the ‘lived experiences’ of the research participants” (p. 17). Smith et al. (2009) explain that bracketing “enables participants to express their concerns and make their claims on their own terms” (p. 42). The researcher incorporated bracketing during the interviews and data collection segments of the study

### **Participants and Sampling Strategy**

Creswell and Creswell (2018) indicate that a phenomenological approach often entails three to ten participants. The sample was gathered via the snowball sampling technique. A sample of nine Black self-identifying women were recruited. Alase (2017) asserts that “The selection of these participants should reflect and represent the homogeneity that exists among the participants’ sample pool. The essence of conducting an IPA research study with homogenous participants is to get a better gauge and a ‘better understanding’ of the overall perceptions among the participants’ ‘lived experiences’” (p. 5). Smith et al. (2009) indicate that homogenous samples enable the researcher to “examine convergence and divergence in some detail” (p. 3). To be eligible to participate in the study, participants met the following inclusion criteria: self-identify as a Black American or African American; self-identify as a ciswoman; be 21 years old or older; be fluent in English; and live in Washington state. The exclusion criteria include the following: not Black American or African American; do not self-identify as a ciswoman; younger than 21 years old; not fluent in English; and do not live in Washington state.

## **Data Collection**

I incorporated various safeguards to reduce harm and protect the rights of the participants by obtaining permission from the institutional review board (IRB) from my home institution, Antioch University Seattle. Participants who met the inclusion criteria were sent a brief demographic information questionnaire to obtain background information. Semi-structured interviews were utilized with the participants. A semi-structured interview “allows the researcher and participant to engage in a dialogue whereby initial questions are modified in the light of participants’ responses, and the investigator is able to inquire after any other interesting areas which arise” (Smith et al., 2009, p. 57). The interviews took place online using Zoom, a HIPAA-compliant web and video conferencing platform. The interviews lasted between 30 minutes and 80 minutes. Informed consent is an essential component that was needed prior to the commencing of the study. Before the interview began, I clarified the objectives of the interview and reviewed consent. Consent also included permission for the interview to be recorded. In the interview, I used open-ended questions to elicit the participants’ authentic views and opinions. Reflections were used in the interviews “to clarify statements and to help participants feel affirmed and valued” (Woods-Giscombe, 2010, p. 671). The researcher took notes during the interview to jot down observations throughout the process. Aliases were used for the files, transcript, and dissertation results. Possible identifying information was removed from quotes. Audio recordings transferred to a secure, password protected, external hard drive.

## **Data Coding and Analysis**

The data coding procedure and process entails transcribing verbatim the interviews and reading the transcripts several times least “to get a feel of what the research participants were saying verbally, and also to get a better feel of the participants’ ‘state of mind’ vis-à-vis how the

subject-matter has affected their ‘lived experiences’” (Alase, 2017, p. 8). The transcriptions included removing identifying information about the participants. During the data coding and analysis phase, “Qualitative researchers typically work inductively, building patterns, categories, and themes from the bottom up by organizing the data into increasingly more abstract units of information” (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 181). Coding consisted of organizing the data by bracketing segments of sentences or paragraphs and ascribing a label to represent that category (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Coding assisted with the development of themes of the major findings. The themes were supported by quotations from the participants. Data storage and management is another crucial aspect of qualitative research that occurred during the dissertation process. Alase (2017) states “it is the responsibility of the researcher to provide adequate security for the safekeeping of the data that was collected” (p. 6).

### **Data Quality**

Qualitative researchers determine the trustworthiness and rigor of a study by considering the following factors: dependability, credibility, transferability, and confirmability. Dependability refers to the consistency and reliability of the data (Anney, 2014). Anney (2014) defines credibility as “the confidence that can be placed in the truth of the research” (p. 276). Credibility assesses the plausibility of information gathered and interpreted from the participant. Transferability is the qualitative equivalent of generalizability used in quantitative research. Transferability explores how the study’s results can be applied to different contexts with other participants (Anney, 2014). Lastly, confirmability examines to what extent the results are derived from data and can be corroborated by other researchers.

I took steps to ensure the validity and reliability of the findings. The incorporation of validity strategies “should enhance the researcher’s ability to assess the accuracy of findings”

(Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 200). I implemented the following strategies to ensure the validity and reliability of the study: triangulation, peer debriefing, and reflexive thinking in the form of memos. Data triangulation enabled me to enhance the quality of the research by using different sources of data such as interviews, participant observation, and multiple participants. The use of peer debriefings occurred with my dissertation chair and two committee members. Peer debriefings enabled the researcher to discuss new insights about the study and get additional support on areas that need to be strengthened. Lastly, I kept a reflexive journal. Reflexivity enables the research to reflect on the impact of one personal background, biases, and perceptions on the process of data collection and analysis (Anney, 2014). I incorporated reflexive thinking in the form of memos, which are “notes written during the research process that reflect on the process or that help shape the development of codes and themes” (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 184).



## CHAPTER IV: RESULTS

Five themes were identified during the analysis process (Table 4.1). The first theme, “Forms of police encounters,” consists of two subthemes: (a) Direct encounters and (b) Indirect encounters. The second theme, “Influence of identity,” consists of two subthemes: (a) Prioritized single identity and (b) Intersecting identities. The third theme, “Perceived reason for police brutality,” consists of three subthemes: (a) Disconnection from community, (b) Biases stemming from stereotypes, and (c) Evolution of over policing. The fourth theme, “Emotions stemming from police brutality,” consists of two subthemes: (a) Fear of victimization and (b) Hopeless about change occurring. Lastly, the fifth theme, “Tactics to survive police interactions,” consists of the three subthemes: (a) “The talk”, (b) Appear non-threatening, and (c) Think twice before calling the police. These themes encapsulate the participants’ experiences.

**Table 4.1***Summary of Themes*

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Subtheme</b>
Forms of police encounters	Direct encounters
	Indirect encounters
Influence of identity	Prioritized single identity
	Intersecting identities
Perceived reason for police brutality	Disconnection from community
	Biases stemming from stereotypes
	Evolution of over policing
Emotions stemming from police brutality	Fear of victimization
	Hopeless about change occurring
Tactics to survive police interactions	“The talk”
	Appear non-threatening
	Think twice before calling the police

---

**Theme 1. Forms of Police Encounters**

This theme explores the various types of interactions the participants have had with the police that range from being racially profiled to being physically assaulted.

**Subtheme 1a. Direct Encounters**

More than half of the participants discussed being racially profiled by police. Penelope discussed a police encounter when driving:

I've never had a situation where I've had, um, felt like I had any excessive force or was, you know, abused or anything like that by the police....I would say probably, like just getting pulled over has probably been the most direct interaction I've ever had with a police officer . . . On one occasion an officer said you didn't put your blinker on, and you were going an excessive speed. And I was like, oh, I didn't realize I was going an excessive speed, I drive this road all the time, you know, so I'm aware of what this limit is, but ok. And then he looks at my car and he's like, well if you weren't scarfing down soda and Twinkies, you would have been paying attention. (105–112)

Penelope's indication that she never had "any excessive force" demonstrates some self-consciousness and minimization of her described experience. Although she did not experience excessive force, she did notice that the officer's demeanor and attitude shifted when she was inquisitive and tried to clarify why she was being pulled over. He became rude and accused her of not paying attention while driving. Ryleigh also recounted an incident where she was felt racially profiled:

One time I was sitting on, um, some steps because I had a hair appointment . . . I wasn't doing anything. I was just waiting for my hair appointment. There's clearly other people around and then he just went to me. I just got irritated and then I felt like they sensed that and then they're just like oh, we're just asking the question and then they drove off and tried to give me a McDonald's gift card....It's just like a lot of Asian and white people that live there. But there's a hair shop there, so they're probably wondering, like what am I doing there? Cause they probably don't see my race there. (23–38)

Ryleigh's statement "Cause they probably don't see my race there" alludes to her belief that she was profiled because she was a Black woman in a predominantly Asian and white neighborhood.

The police trying to bribe her with a McDonald's gift card suggests that they recognized that singling her out was inappropriate and offensive.

In contrast to Penelope and Ryleigh who discussed racial profiling incidents with white cops, Bailey talked about an incident with a Black male cop:

I was in the car with a friend of mine and we were going to pick up another friend. Their apartment complex was gated, so we didn't have the passcode to get past the fence. We were probably sitting there for about 5–10 minutes when an officer came up and just made us get out of the car and started asking us a lot of questions about why we were standing there and who we were waiting for . . . I grew up in a low-income neighborhood and we were still very much within our comfort zone and so there was nothing about this complex that would indicate that these people were high class or economically wealthy.

(23–57)

Bailey's statement "nothing about this complex would indicate that these people were high class or economically wealthy" suggests that this police interaction was surprising because she was targeted by police in her own neighborhood. The police officer may view himself as being part of a different sector of society due to his status as a police officer. Therefore, he does not feel an affinity or kinship with the Black girls he was racially profiling at the time. He was more loyal to the police badge than the Black community. Bailey was the only participant who discussed an encounter with a Black male officer.

In addition to racial profiling incidents, participants also discussed situations where they reached out to police for assistance and were disappointed by the interaction. Elizabeth explained that she called the police because the property she manages was vandalized. Elizabeth made the following reflections about her interaction with the officer:

I feel like if I call the police for anything, there should be some amount of concern or listening where we can talk about it. Like, it was dismissive and curt because he stopped my questions to tell me that he was asking the questions. (103–108)

Similar to Penelope, Elizabeth noticed that the police officer’s demeanor shifted when she asked questions to better protect against vandalism in the future. The officer’s assertion that he is “asking the questions” gives a depiction of an officer who is unsympathetic to Elizabeth’s concerns for safety and is imposing authority over another individual. Eloise discussed a discouraging interaction with police officers when she called for help after bounty hunters, pretending to be police, searched her home without consent:

The police came and reprimanded us and said, um, ‘you just let them into your house?’ I said, ‘they were dressed as police officers.’ And he was like, ‘well, you can ask for identification,’ and I said, ‘I’m Black. Do you really expect me to ask for identification? I’m not even asking for your identification, let alone someone who has his gun drawn and out of the holster.’ (362–369)

The use of the word “reprimanded” insinuates the police talked down to her in a patronizing manner and blamed her for being victimized. Eloise’s statement about not being comfortable asking for identification as a Black person speaks to the power differential between civilians and law enforcement. This statement also addresses concern about not wanting police to think she is challenging the officer’s authority, which could potentially lead to the officer feeling threatened and retaliating against her.

Josephine reported that she got in an argument with a sales clerk and called the police for reinforcement. The police ended up arresting her and accusing her of being on methamphetamines:

The police came with an ambulance. It was like I was ambushed. And they broke my earphones and spilled my Starbucks food on the concrete. One of the police officers was like, she's on the Jenny Craig meth diet....I was taken to the hospital (pause) and it just (long pause) it's like I have no civil rights when it comes to cops. The cops are poorly trained here and don't know how to deal with a person like me. (19–31)

The use of the word “ambush” evokes the visualization of a battleground, which is what interacting with police may feel like for Josephine given the physical and verbal altercation that she described. The timing of her pauses signifies feeling exhausted and exasperated by police treatment of Black women. Josephine has been diagnosed with Schizoaffective Disorder and Posttraumatic Stress Disorder. Her assertion that police “don't know how to deal with a person like me” addresses concerns about police's inability to intervene in mental health crises in a safe and trauma-informed manner.

Several participants discussed their experiences with having the police called on them. Michaela explained that she is diagnosed with Bipolar Disorder, and when she was about 13 or 14 years old, her mother called the police on her to have her removed from the home during a manic episode. Michaela stated, “They [the police] came and it went left. Instead of let's handcuff her and you know, take me to the hospital, they took a taser gun to me, so it burnt holes in the back of my skin” (51–55). Michaela's use of the phrase “it went left” suggests that she did not anticipate getting tased and injured during the police interaction. She went on to explain that she eventually gets handcuffed and placed in the back of the police car. While in the back of the police car, one of the officers got frustrated because she was kicking the seats in front of her. He pulled the car over on the freeway, pulled her out of the car, and started choking her. While choking her, he stated, “I can kill you and nobody will give a fuck because I'm a cop and you're

not shit” (75–77). The officer’s behavior underscores his lack of respect and dehumanization of a Black female child. It also highlights the officer’s entitlement and belief that he can act with impunity.

Logan reported that her daughter called the police after an altercation between them. A Latino and white officer responded to the call:

The white guy stood back. The Hispanic guy engaged me and I said ‘culturally, we have a problem here. She wants to be disrespectful and I’m not gonna have it.’ And the Hispanic guy looked at me, he said ‘I understand, I got knocked upside my head quite a few times....We’ll just take her away from the house.’ I was surprised they put her in a car and took her away. (68–71)

Logan was the only participant to lead with a favorable interaction with the police. Based on the officer’s response, “I understand, I got knocked upside my head quite a few times,” it appears that the Latino officer was able to relate to Logan on a cultural level and understand her response to her daughter. Logan’s statement, “I was surprised,” gives voice to the unspoken expectation that interactions with the police will go poorly.

### **Subtheme 1b. Indirect Encounters**

Several participants discussed family members being racially profiled. Logan recounted an incident that was shared by her Black male cousin. She stated, “a police officer pulled him over, said ‘whose vehicle is this?’ He said ‘it’s mine’. The officer responded with, ‘You are a Black man, you can’t afford this vehicle’ (533–536). Adelaide also shared a situation that entailed her siblings being racially profiled on her graduation day when their car was singled out of a line of three cars of family and friends who were driving through a predominantly white environment:

They called up back-ups, so a couple of other cop cars came. And then they ended up saying that ‘oh, well we gave them a warning because he was tailgating you too close. You guys need to have some more space between you’. And then he let them go (laughs). That was it. He ran everybody’s ID and checked to make sure the car was registered. He also made all three of them get out of the car at one point. (842–850)

The timing of Adelaide’s laugh alludes to her belief that the investigatory police stop was invasive and unnecessary because they were given a warning for tailgating, which she did not believe was occurring. The laugh also masks her discomfort recounting an incident that increased her fear for the safety of her siblings at the time.

A few participants discussed physical altercations that occurred between loved ones and the police. Penelope described a situation where police used excessive force on her ex-boyfriend even though he was not involved in the fight they were called to de-escalate:

He was physically assaulted. And he had nothing to do with the fight that had started. He had a chain that was snatched. His lip was busted. The police beat him up. He had on a leather coat that was torn. They tried to tase him, but one of the prongs hit his leather coat as opposed to his body. And so, since he wasn’t feeling it, I think that, um, like, a mythological superhuman Black man, you know, that idea got into their heads, and they just went to town on him. Like, oh the tasers not working, the tasers not fazing him? Ok, we have to really physically restrain this man. (304–313)

Penelope implies that the excessive use of force was senseless because her ex-boyfriend was not involved in the initial fight. She further supports the assertion that he was “beat up” by police by explaining that the physical assault consisted of his chain being “snatched” from his neck; his lip getting “busted”; and him getting tased. Her use of the phrase, “mythological superhuman Black



man,” addresses the stereotype of Black men having superhuman strength. Therefore, police biases of Black men having superhuman strength influences their belief that excessive force is necessary to control the Black male body.

Bailey shared what she witnessed when she called police for a domestic violence situation that occurred between her mother and her husband at the time:

It probably took them three or four hours to get there . . . I almost felt as if they were trying to wait until the altercation died down before they showed up (laughs). Like they just wanted to come through, but not really diffuse the situation. And even then they showed up saying, ‘what’s gonna happen, either you guys separate or both of you are going to jail.’ Like that was really the ultimatum that they gave. (400–411)

Similar to Adelaide, the timing of the laugh appears to mask the pain and fear she had for her mother’s safety given she was the one who initiated contact with the police. Bailey’s concluding statement of “Like that was really the ultimatum they gave” elicits feelings of shock, discouragement, and disgust at the police’s response to a domestic violence call.

## **Theme 2. Influence of Identity**

This theme explores the identity or identities the participants believe contributed to their treatment during their most notable direct police encounters. Some participants indicated one identity influenced the interaction with the police, while others asserted several of their identities contributed to how the police treated them.

### **Subtheme 2a. Prioritized Single Identity**

Michaela believed that her Black identity influences how police interact with her. She stated, “They profile you because you are Black. Period. It doesn’t matter if you’re a guy or a girl when you’re Black” (535–536). For Michaela, race takes precedence over gender as

exemplified by her statement, “It doesn’t matter if you’re a guy or a girl when you’re Black.” She goes on to say that even when “people have mental health problems, they aren’t going to know you have them. They are just going to see your skin color so that really dominates everything” (545–547). Michaela implies that, at times, one’s mental health challenges can be an invisible disability. Therefore, it can be easier for police to make assumptions based on one’s race versus mental health challenges.

Eloise echoed Michaela’s belief that race influenced how the police treated her after the bounty hunters entered her home without showing any identification. Eloise stated, “But the sad thing about it was, I think if we were white, those police officers wouldn’t have come over and harassed us for being so—you know, they treated us like we were being foolish. Like it was our fault it happened” (421–425). Eloise introduced the differences in how white officers treat Black and white individuals. Based on Eloise’s statement that “those police officers wouldn’t have come over and harassed us,” it can be inferred that she believes that white police officers treat other white victims better than Black victims of a crime. The shared race offers white victims inherent grace, respect, and empathy that is not automatically given to Black victims.

Bailey disagreed with Michaela and Eloise about race being a prioritized identity that influences police encounters. Bailey attributed her negative interactions with police to her socioeconomic status:

Almost all of my interactions with officers, I feel like would have gone differently not, if I was a different color, but if I was in a different economic class....If you present yourself as someone who has more money, um that lives above or makes enough money above the poverty line, officers tend to have more patience for you than do in lower-income neighborhoods. (374–383)

In this excerpt, Bailey appears to correlate a socioeconomic status above poverty with increased patience. This seems to suggest that police officers are more inclined to assist those with a higher socioeconomic status because they may view them more as equals and worthy of their time and respect.

Logan is the only veteran in the study and believes that she is treated with more respect by law enforcement due to her veteran status:

I think the military part of me is what influences how they respond to me. I think it's some type of grace because many of them have been in the military before and they're veterans. So I think there's maybe a minor courtesy. (803–812)

Logan's use of the words "grace" and "courtesy" insinuates that the police are lenient and respectful towards her because they view her as an equal due to her veteran status. These sentiments are tenets of Black exceptionalism, which perpetuates the idea that a Black individual who possesses desirable traits is worthy of being shielded from discrimination and racism. Ultimately, the veteran status is viewed by Logan as a protective factor during police encounters.

### **Subtheme 2b. Intersecting Identities**

A few of the participants attributed their treatment by police to their possession of two or more intersecting identities. Adelaide indicated that "being Black and being very young" influence how police interact with her (369). She goes on to clarify that she "looks a lot younger" than her actual age (373). Upon further reflection, Adelaide explained that she views "being young and then being Black" respectively as impacting interactions with police (400). In the span of approximately five minutes, Adelaide mentioned her age and how people view her as younger multiple times. This in conjunction with her assertion that age influences police interactions more than being Black, suggests that she may be self-conscious about appearing

younger than her stated age out of fear of being taken advantage of due to appearing young. It is interesting that she does not consider her gender to influence police interactions.

Although Josephine agreed with Adelaide that race influences police interactions, she identified two other identities that impact police officers' perception of her. She stated, "African American, female, and disability. I have three strikes against me. They're not gonna give me a chance. They're not gonna try to de-escalate the situation" (538–541). Josephine's comparison of her three historically oppressed identities to the three-strikes law, which requires mandatory life imprisonment if an individual is convicted of three violent felonies, suggests that she feels targeted and imprisoned by police officers' prejudices against her. Her statement of "They're not gonna give me a chance" further supports her belief that she is confined by ascribed misconceptions of her identities.

### **Theme 3. Perceived Reason for Police Brutality**

All of the participants engaged in some form of meaning making to unpack why Blacks continue to experience police brutality.

#### **Subtheme 3a. Biases Stemming from Stereotypes**

The majority of the participants discussed how police biases stemming from stereotypes of Black women contribute to police brutality. Seven out of the nine participants referenced some form of the angry Black woman stereotype. Bailey explained that police biases of Black women lead to a loss of their identity.

Our attitude. Our abrasive nature. Um and ghetto-ness. Like there's this assumption that (pause) we're gonna start like breaking stuff, throwing stuff, cursing people, calling them out their name, and so like there's this patronizing that occurs. Let me just give her what

she wants so she can get out of here. Um so yeah, I think that there's so many stereotypes that are attached to us that we lose our own identity in the mix. (610–621)

The stereotypes mentioned in the passage conjure a visualization of an emotionally unstable and out of control individual, who police do not take seriously. Therefore, due to the previously mentioned stereotypes, police treat Black women condescendingly and insincerely appease them to decrease the amount of time interacting with them because they are viewed as a nuisance.

Penelope also discussed police officers' biases about Black women being angry, but she differed from Bailey in her belief that it led to appeasement. Penelope believed that the stereotypes caused them to feel the need to control Black women. She stated, "they will continually be telling the Black woman to calm down, as if she's, you know, too angry and too wild. Like, verbally trying to control her" (266–271).

Ryleigh also mentioned police viewing Black women as angry. She stated, "And they think we're just angry for no reason. I'm just wondering, like why do you think we're angry?" (935–936). The statement "And they think we're just angry for no reason" implies that the police lack an understanding of the historical and systemic barriers and oppressions that contribute to Black women feeling frustrated and angry.

Participants also talked about how the strong Black woman stereotype contributes to the continuation of police brutality. Ryleigh stated, "we have the title of the strong Black woman. And sometimes we like to keep things in" (570–572). This statement suggests that the stereotype of the strong Black woman gets in the way of Black women reaching for assistance and support during and after an incident of police brutality. Their first instinct is to carry the burden alone in silence. Bailey echoed Ryleigh's sentiments about the negative impact of the strong Black woman:

There's so much more pressure on a Black woman when she doesn't have those resources to call to help her. And (pause) officers don't become this go-to area and so like our mental health takes a hit because we end up carrying more and dealing with more than the average person should. And so I think the absence of quality policing is what is affecting our mental health the most. (671–681)

### **Subtheme 3b. Evolution of Over Policing**

Several participants explored how the origins of law enforcement set the groundwork for over policing Black communities, which leads to an increased chance of police brutality. Elizabeth stated, “slave catchers evolved into modern day police who perpetuate lynching of the Black community” (455–456). An analysis of this statement gives voice to the historical tolerance and normalization of lynching paving the way for the continuation of excessive force being perpetuated on Black bodies. Logan stated that “the unspoken aspect of their [police officers’] job is to keep Black people in line” (2149). Black individuals are kept in line through the threat and/or enactment of physical, emotional, sexual, and psychological harm. Penelope asserted that “police intentionally over patrol Black neighborhoods and areas where Black folks congregate. The over policing of Black neighborhoods and schools leads to increased interactions with the police” (287–290).

Of note, Bailey was the only participant who disagreed with the sentiment of over policing occurring disproportionately in Black neighborhoods. Bailey noticed that more police officers were located in more affluent neighborhoods:

There were actually much more cops in the higher-end neighborhoods. It is almost like that side of town was just their preference to hang out and so like they would have to

leave their comfort to come respond to something in the lower SES neighborhood.  
(476–481)

It is possible that the police preferred the “higher-end neighborhoods” because that is where they lived, so they were more familiar and comfortable with those communities.

### **Subtheme 3c. Disconnection from the Community**

A significant portion of the participants reflected on the police’s disconnection from the community. Penelope reflected on the divide between the police and the Black community:

It is definitely like a ‘us’ versus ‘them’ type of thing and ‘us’ being police versus non-police and ‘us’ being white versus Black. A disconnection from the community leads to not knowing the culture and not knowing how, and what people do. Not knowing what actually is threatening and what is just culture. (473–478)

The use of the phrase “us versus them” is two-fold because it is used to describe two sets of adversaries: police and civilians and Black and white individuals. The implication is that white officers do not know how to appropriately interact and intervene with the Black community. As mentioned in subtheme 3a, Biases stemming from stereotypes, white officers’ biases and unfamiliarity with Black culture contribute to misunderstandings due to perceiving innocuous things as more threatening. It can be implied that Penelope believes that it is problematic for officers to not live in the areas they are policing because lack of exposure to Black people leads to incidents of police brutality and paucity of patience and empathy for the community they took an oath to serve and protect.

Elizabeth expressed a similar sentiment that police are not connected to the Black community. However, she attributed the disconnection to police fearing Black communities:

Community policing looked different when I was younger. Police actually had a relationship with you. They would communicate better. There is currently a disconnect from the community they're protecting. I feel like now there's this fear that has grown in police officers. I just don't feel like people are actually picking off officers for them to be so fearful. (1055–1061)

An analysis of Elizabeth's assertion that "now there's this fear that has grown in police officers" suggests that police use of excessive force with the Black community is a way to overcompensate and mask their concern for their safety when interacting with the Black community.

#### **Theme 4. Emotions Stemming from Police Brutality**

Experiences with police brutality take an emotional toll on Black women. Fear and hopelessness were endorsed by the majority of the participants.

##### **Subtheme 4a. Fear of Victimization**

Several of the participants mentioned a fear of being injured or killed by police during an interaction. Adelaide addressed a fear of being injured by police:

As educated as I am, I am always fearful of when the police officers are going to lose their cool and (pause) you know, step out of line. So I'm always fearful of being like thrown around, I mean like my [sibling 1] has been arrested a handful of times and instead of just being arrested, like he always comes back brutally beat up by police officers. So things like that make me nervous like I don't wanna get hurt in this situation. (305–310)

Adelaide's fear of the police is grounded in direct and indirect encounters she has experienced through her older brother who has endured physical and verbal abuse from the police. By



prefacing the passage with “As educated as I am,” Adelaide acknowledged that education attainment does not protect Black individuals from being victimized by police. Adelaide’s use of the phrase “lose their cool” insinuates a concern about police being unable to regulate their emotions, which could result in her being wounded in an unnecessary physical altercation. Her description of her brother being “brutally beat up” invokes an image of someone being kicked, punched, tased, and bludgeoned with a baton resulting in facial bruises, bruised ribs, black eyes, a broken nose, a broken jaw, and missing teeth. Penelope escalated Adelaide’s fear of being physically injured to being killed. Penelope stated, “I’m worried, like, am I gonna get out of this alive? Or this going to be a cop that is trying to prove something, and I end up losing my life over not putting my blinker on or something” (47–49).

Several participants discussed concerns related to people in their lives. Logan expressed concern for her children. Logan stated, “I’m always on guard. You know, I’m always watching because I don’t trust. I’m afraid the police will kill my [child]. And I feel like I’m on guard that I have to protect my [children] because the world sees them as a threat” (1351–1356). Logan’s statement that “the world sees them as a threat” gives voice to the fear of her children being killed because of the color of their skin. The phrase conveys the fear that police view blackness as threatening.

#### **Subtheme 4b. Hopeless About Change Occurring**

All of the participants expressed feeling hopeless in some capacity due to the continuation of police brutality. Adelaide made the following reflection:

It is kinda hard to heal from something that’s still a problem. And I think it’s difficult to heal from something when (pause) (sigh) it’s happened for so long. There’s not a lot of active change taking place. It’s like we have to do so much even to get our voices heard,

so I think it's difficult to heal from things when we don't feel like we're respected and we don't feel like we're valued. And we don't feel like anything's gonna change, so what's the point? (1564–1572)

The timing of Adelaide's pause and sigh in the passage exemplifies the fatigue, exasperation, and lack of hope that change will occur. Her rhetorical question of "what's the point" signifies feeling defeated and unmotivated due the lack of progress addressing police brutality and absence of accountability.

Penelope echoed Adelaide's feelings of hopelessness as she discussed a t-shirt with the names of victims of police brutality. Penelope stated, "I have a T-shirt that has names of people involved with the police. And then, it has an ellipsis because there's going to be more. And there absolutely has been more" (434–437). Penelope's use of the phrase "people involved with the police" is code for "people killed by the police", which conveys a harsh reality. Penelope's explanation of the "ellipsis" is powerful because intentionally leaving the list of names unfinished signifies the expectation of more Black individuals being killed by the police.

Ryleigh shared similar frustrations to Adelaide and Penelope:

It is rare that there are consequences for police officers. Because every time they hurt one of us, it's literally like they're on leave for like two weeks and then they're brought back on and they're doing the same thing. It just keeps repeating. (534–541)

Ryleigh explained that the Black community feels hopeless and unprotected because police are not held accountable for their transgressions against the Black community. Ryleigh was the only participant who reported wanting to be a police officer at one point. However, she became disillusioned with the profession:

I wanted to be a police officer to make changes. But then, as I got older, I wanted no parts of it. I just see how they treated Black people and how Black people that are police officers are treated. I just don't feel like there will ever be a change. (169–177)

Ryleigh expressed feeling powerless to create systemic changes within the police force. Her assertion, “I just don't feel like there will ever be a change,” signifies disenchantment with the profession and hopelessness for improvement in the treatment of Black people. Of note, Ryleigh's decision to choose a different career also appeared to be influenced by concern for being treated poorly by white colleagues and ostracized by the Black community. The previous analysis is exemplified by Ryleigh's statement, “I just saw how they treated Black people and how Black people that are police officers are treated.”

### **Theme 5. Tactics to Survive Police Interactions**

This theme explores strategies that have been shared amongst family and friends to prepare them to interact with police officers. The strategies discussed are to ensure that Black individuals are prepared to navigate situations with the police in a safe way that ensures they get out of the interaction alive.

#### **Subtheme 5a. “The Talk”**

Most of the participants discussed having conversations with family and friends about how to navigate police interactions, which is oftentimes referred to as “the talk.” Penelope reflected that her parents did not talk to her about how to interact with the police until adulthood:

Honestly, I don't think that I did talk to my parents or family about that, until things started happening. So, I was already an adult. I think they had it because they know how I question things. They were like ‘listen, you need to calm down. Don't be out here getting

pulled over trying to argue back and forth with the cops. Just chill out. We want you to get out of it safe. Get out of it unharmed. Get out alive.’ (510–518)

Penelope’s use of the phrase “until things started happening” may be considered a misnomer by some due to the historical underpinnings of police brutality. A closer analysis of the phrase suggests that Penelope is referring to the recent capturing of police brutality through social media, which can incorrectly make it seem like police brutality is occurring more frequently.

Logan explained that she had “the talk” with her children, but worries that they are still naive to the dangers of interacting with the police. Logan stated, “You don’t have to do anything wrong. (Pause) And that’s one of the things that I feel like we missed out on with our kids is that we didn’t make them understand the seriousness of them being Black in America” (1200–1204). Despite her attempts to elucidate the potential dangers of interacting with police to her children with the “the talk,” Logan’s unspoken sentiment is feeling powerless to protect her children from the police.

Although Adelaide indicated that her parents had “the talk” with her and her siblings at an early age, she indicated that there were aspects that were not emphasized enough:

When growing up, my parents taught us about how to have interactions with police officers. A lot of what we were taught and a lot of the talk was around how Black-or how police officers treat Black men rather than how they treat Black women. So as everything kind of unfolded with the 2020 thing, it just made me even more like oh woah, like if they’re doing that to her [Sandra Bland], then those are types of things that can happen with me. (499–508)

Adelaide alluded to the fact that she had the misconception that negative police interactions primarily happened between Black men and police. Of note, in subtheme 2b, Intersecting

identities, Adelaide identified her race and age as influencing how police interact with her, but not her gender. It is possible that her parents' teachings have influenced her to overlook how her gender also can contribute to police interactions. Adelaide's exclamation of "oh woah" suggests feeling shocked by the realization that Black women can also be harmed and potentially killed through no fault of their own during police interactions.

### **Subtheme 5b. Appear Non-threatening**

Almost all of the participants discussed the importance of appearing non-threatening when interacting with police. Penelope explained why she curbs her inquisitive nature when interacting with the police:

I'm docile with them, you know, like OK let me just be quiet. Let me just not appear threatening (laughs) even less threatening than I already am, 'cause I don't feel like I appear threatening in any way....And so, it's bittersweet in the sense that I become docile, which I don't like, because I want to always be a person that speaks out and questions and inquiries. So that's the bitter part because I don't get to do that. And I guess the sweet part is that I get out alive. (737–750)

The timing of Penelope's laugh and the statement "even less threatening than I already am" suggests that she feels that it is preposterous for police to view her as a threat. Penelope's conscious decision to be "docile" to evade being abused by police gives credence to Logan's statement in subtheme 4a, Fear of victimization, that just being in a Black body may cause the police to feel threatened and the need to assert control. Calling police interactions "bittersweet" is a disheartening reality. Penelope identified herself as an inquisitive person, and feels that she has to stifle that characteristic to be palatable for police. By labeling the end of a police encounter as "sweet," there is an implicit expectation that harm is likely to occur when

interacting with police. Therefore, it is implied that a Black woman cannot present as her authentic self without fearing for her safety.

Eloise expressed similar concerns as Penelope about not feeling like she can speak freely with the police:

There's a really fine balance because if you assert yourself too much, then you're disrespectful, and if you assert yourself too little, they think they can take advantage of you. So, I had to be very careful. I try to appear to be as non-confrontational as possible. I'm supposed to be free, and I'm supposed to be free to be brave. But I can't do that if I have an authority figure over me telling me that I'm bad because I'm Black. (711–720)

Eloise addressed how being assertive can be misinterpreted as being disrespectful. This elaborates on Bailey's comments about Black women being perceived by police as having an attitude and being abrasive in subtheme 3a, Biases stemming from stereotypes. Being "non-confrontational" is an attempt to counter the misconception of Black women being angry. There is an undercurrent of frustration that seeps out with Eloise's assertion "I'm supposed to be free, and I'm supposed to be free to be brave." It can be inferred that Eloise does not feel free to be herself, advocate for herself, or speak her truth due to the color of her skin.

Logan reported that her husband gave their daughter a warning related to her presentation when around police officers. Logan stated, "He said, 'don't show 'em yourself. Don't show your ugly cause they're gonna face plant you'" (399–404). He advised their daughter not to misbehave or do anything that would encourage the police to be physically aggressive. This injunction suggests that any behavior that may be interpreted as confrontational can lead to a physical altercation with police. Bailey agreed that there is a belief that police will retaliate and be aggressive if you are not compliant. She stated, "I think that there's this level of expectation

of police brutality because if you make them run, if you make them chase you, if you are not compliant in every single way, violence will immediately follow” (1094–1099).

### **Subtheme 5c. Think Twice Before Calling the Police**

Almost all the participants discussed hesitating to call the police when feeling unsafe.

Penelope made the following statement:

I feel like I want to, I need to because I’m kind of questioning my safety with, you know, whatever activity that’s happening in my neighborhood. At the same time, I know if I call the police that also is (pause) a danger to me, you know? So, you are trying to choose the worst or the least of the two evils. I’m not safe in either situation. Am I more unsafe by just dealing with this and keeping my head down and ignoring and minding my business, or am I more safe calling the police and trying to get this taken care of? (851–860)

Penelope voiced the internal struggle Blacks have when debating whether or not to call the police. Black individuals may choose to navigate dangerous situations on their own for fear that the police may make the situation worse or kill someone in the process. Michaela also voiced feeling uncertain about calling the police. She stated, “I don’t like the police. It’s like you don’t want to call them, but you need them at times. I just don’t call them. I try to handle it myself” (835–836). Michaela tries to figure out the situation on her own and calls the police as a last resort. Due to there being a history of police jeopardizing Black individuals’ safety, they are forced to take matters into their own hands at times and prioritize their safety by not involving the police.

Bailey also addressed Black women being less inclined to call the police due to their history of disappointing the Black community:

I feel like officers and their priorities have a complete disregard for (pause) what the people actually need in that moment and so like we feel, I feel disregarded. And I feel like our priorities are not aligned and so there is really like, so let me really think about calling them only if I'm in danger of really dying. (1124–1131)

The lack of alignment in priorities can be traced back to police being disconnected from the community, which was discussed in subtheme 3c, Disconnection from the community. It is difficult to support Black women and the Black community when there is no knowledge of their strengths, vulnerabilities, and needs. Therefore, it is easy to “feel disregarded” when police do not actively try to engage with Black women.

Eloise stated, “It makes you not wanna call the police, because you don't know how they're gonna respond in the first place. And after having bad experiences, it makes you feel like who am I supposed to really call? (844–849). Eloise indicated that her negative interactions with the police have tainted her perception of them and makes her mistrustful of their intentions. Eloise's question of “who am I supposed to really call?” has an undertone of exasperation stemming from an inability to be protected by the profession that swore an oath to serve and protect.



## CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to explore the intersectionality of race, gender, and racial trauma stemming from Black women's encounters with the police. During the semi-structured interviews, all nine participants in the study discussed their direct and indirect experiences with the police. The intention of the study was to provide a platform for Black women to share their unique stories. The hope is for this research to provide professionals with a greater understanding of Black women's lived experiences with police officers in order to (a) garner support in dismantling oppressive systems that lead to Black women's vulnerability and invisibility (b) reform policies that disproportionately impact Black women.

### **Comparisons with Prior Work and Contributions to Research**

#### *Theme 1: Forms of Police Encounters*

All of the participants discussed direct and indirect encounters with the police. Alang et al. (2023) made the following assertion about police brutality:

Police brutality can be experienced directly through personal contact with the police, vicariously through witnessing or hearing about police actions in the media or within one's kin and social networks, and ecologically through living, working, or attending schools in heavily policed neighborhoods. (p. S29)

The participants described police interactions that ranged from verbal aggression to physical assaults. Bowleg et al. (2022) asserts that police brutality exists on a spectrum of daily manifestations of racism. Martin (2021) explains that police brutality against Black women can occur in the following contexts:

- (1) racial profiling while driving, (2) policing of poverty, (3) the war on drugs, (4) policing of mental health crises, (5) death in custody, (6) collateral damage, (7) responses

to domestic violence, (8) policing of gender and sexuality, (9) sexual assault targeting, (10) the school-to-prison pipeline, (11) responses to Black women who demand justice for family members, and (12) criminalization of Black mothers. (p. 1003)

The majority of the participants discussed racial profiling that occurred either while driving or while waiting for someone in a particular neighborhood. Bowleg et al. (2022) explained that police have a propensity to disproportionately surveil, stop, and harass Black individuals for minor or nonexistent infractions, especially in gentrified environments. Cochran and Warren (2013) found “that minority citizens will be skeptical of stops conducted by White officers because of the negative experiences that many Black citizens report with police along with the numerous investigations of racial profiling launched against U.S. law enforcement agencies” (p. 222).

Other forms of police brutality entail neglect, verbal abuse, psychological violence, intimidation, and physical violence that can be dehumanizing and, at times, lethal (Alang et al., 2023; Amuchie, 2016; Bowleg et al., 2022). In addition to navigating racism and sexism from police officers, Black women’s mental health is also stigmatized by ableism. Several participants elaborated on their distress due to police handling of mental health crises. Martin (2021) indicated that “police encounters with disabled Black women that result in nearly routine showings of excessive and deadly force are not isolated incidents” (p. 1026). One participant expressed her frustration at police response to domestic violence incidents she witnessed. Alang et al. (2023) asserted, “Black survivors of violence are treated as though they deserve abuse, and as though they are incapable of claiming a self worth defending” (p. S32).

All the participants discussed several negative interactions with white police officers. Cochran and Warren (2013) found that “when minority citizens are stopped by white officers,

they seemingly viewed officer behavior more skeptically” (p. 219). However, a significant portion of current research has found that officers of color have a tendency to respond harsher to civilians of color than white officers (Cochran & Warren, 2013). One participant discussed having a disappointingly negative interaction with a Black police officer. Carbado and Richardson (2018) cite five reasons for why Black officers engage in police brutality:

(1) all officers operate within the same “legal backdrop” of protections that allows officers to search Black people with impunity; (2) Black officers also have “same-race and interracial biases”; (3) Black officers may experience racialized and/or masculinity threats that prompt them to target Black people violently; (4) structural factors of policing such as those that link performance evaluations, raises and promotions to the number of citations, stop and frisks, and arrests, incentivize all officers to target Black people; and (5) that “to fit into and become a part of the law enforcement community of ‘blue,’ Black police officers may have to marginalize the concerns of and dissociate themselves from the community of ‘Black’” (1991).

Therefore, Black officers can experience internalized racism, which contributes to them having biases and stereotypes about Black civilians. Internalized racism can cause them to become vessels for oppressive systems through their engagement in police brutality to the detriment and fractioning of the Black community.

### ***Theme 2: Influence of Identity***

All the participants reflected on how their identity or various identities influence their interactions with the police. A few of the participants prioritized a single identity, which they identified as having an impact on their experience with the police. Two participants reflected how their identity as a Black individual shapes how police respond to them. Yadon (2022)

explains that “skin color is one of many factors influencing how race is experienced and serves as an especially important marker given its salience and visibility. Color can be a consequential cue among institutional actors, like police, to inform their interactions with civilians” (p. 1210). Wright and Headley (2020) examined the influence of race and ethnicity on policing and found that white officers were more likely to use increased levels of force on Black civilians in comparison to when interacting with white civilians. One participant attributed her positive interaction with police to her veteran status. However, J. Gonzalez et al. (2018) found that “veteran status, regardless of deployment history, is associated with increased odds of shootings among law enforcement officers” (p. 6). Lastly, one participant believed that socioeconomic status took precedence over other identities. Crenshaw and Ritchie (2015) explain that “many Black women who are abused and killed by police are among the low-income and homeless people increasingly targeted by the policing of poverty” (p. 14).

A significant portion of the participants shared how several of their identities contributed to how police treated them. One participant indicated her identity as a Black woman with mental health challenges led to negative treatment by police. Alang et al. (2023) explains that gendered racism causes Black women “to be dehumanized, viewed as disposable, inherently threatening, and not worthy of defense” (p. S31). Although there is a dearth of research on police treatment of Black women with disabilities, approximately one-third to one-half of individuals with mental and physical disabilities are killed by police (Bowleg et al., 2022).

### ***Theme 3: Perceived Reason for Police Brutality***

The majority of the participants engaged in mean making to explain why police brutality continues to plague the Black community. The majority of the participants explored how the existence of negative stereotypes about Black women are dangerous because they lead to the

condoning and justification of excessive police force against Black women. Operario and Fiske (1998) assert that “racial stereotypes perverted U.S. culture because people rely on cognitive shortcuts to simplify the world, and the qualities associated with racial minority groups in particular have historically negative connotations” (p. 35). Several of the participants directly and indirectly alluded to the angry Black woman stereotype. The angry Black woman stereotype characterizes Black women as being “filled with uncontrollable rage and unwarranted and sporadic anger” (Amuchie, 2016, p. 649). Therefore, Black women are dehumanized and perceived to be deviant and deserving of violence for being too outspoken and unfeminine (Brown-Iannuzzi et al., 2022). Another stereotype that was explored was the strong Black woman. This trope is equally debilitating as the angry Black woman because Black women are portrayed as being able to withstand any form of abuse and stress (Amuchie, 2016). Martin (2021) makes the following assertion:

Black women are socialized early in life into silence due to their invisibility and exposure to criminalization and public punishment...They are socialized into masking pain as a coping mechanism. This can also be explained in part because Black women are on the margins of multiple identity categories and thus susceptible to multiple “isms.” (p. 1027)

Therefore, the strong Black woman trope denies Black women the space to be vulnerable in order to gain support navigating their various forms of oppressions.

Several of the participants discussed how police brutality originated from how Blacks were treated during slavery. Bowleg et al. (2022) asserts that “police brutality in Black communities is not a new problem; it is a more than 400-year-old one. Some historians consider ‘slave patrols’ . . . to be precursors to modern day U.S. police forces” (p. 369). Other participants voiced their frustration at the oversaturation of police surveillance in predominantly Black

neighborhoods that are historically under-resourced. Alang et al. (2023) explains that “racially minoritized communities are disproportionately exposed to police brutality, significantly increasing mortality rates and elevating odds of physical and psychological problems” (p. S29). Only one participant voiced frustration at police presence in wealthier neighborhoods. Laniyonu (2018) found increased police stop and frisk situations in gentrifying neighborhoods and their neighboring communities. Boyles (2015) also found that Black residents in a predominantly white suburb had disproportionately more contact with police than the white residents.

#### ***Theme 4: Emotions Stemming from Police Brutality***

Several of the participants discussed their fear of becoming a target of police violence due to direct and vicarious police brutality experiences. S. Gonzalez and Deckard (2022) found that “Black women reported dual frustration and fear around their own past and potential experiences of police neglect and misbehavior” (p. 15). Bowleg et al. (2022) indicated that in a survey of Washington, D.C. residents, “53% of Black residents reported that they feared police, compared with just 13% of white residents; 28% of Black residents endorsed the highest response (‘a lot’) to describe this daily fear” (p. 365). In addition to fearing for their own safety, some participants talked about fearing for the safety of their children, particularly Black sons. Dormire et al. (2021) found that Black childbearing women had “a pervasive and profound fear for their children, specifically sons who are at a higher risk of being killed in normal daily activities” (p. 4490).

All the participants expressed a sense of hopelessness at there being any progress at addressing police brutality due to the continued lack of accountability. Joseph (2022) postulates that “one of the biggest failures of the criminal justice system in the United States is the lack of accountability or enforcement against police officers who kill Blacks” (p. 180). As many of the

participants alluded to, it is hard to have faith there will be change when the legal system does not hold police officers who perpetrate violence accountable. Martin (2021) voices Black women's frustration by explaining how "extreme racialized and gendered police violence is normalized and in turn further justified by the failure of institutional sanctions—namely, lack of officer terminations and avoidance of civil and criminal legal liability—and absence of general social disapproval" (pp. 1005–1006). Therefore, there is a sense of hopelessness about the world changing to be a safer place for Blacks.

### ***Theme 5: Tactics to Survive Police Interactions***

The majority of the participants discussed having "The Talk" at some point in their lives with immediate and extended family. "The Talk" is the intergenerational transmission of etiquette by Black individuals utilized to safeguard children from harm when interacting with the police (Anderson et al., 2022; Brunson & Weitzer, 2011). Anderson et al. (2022) explain that "'The Talk' appears to be rooted in the belief that racism is both pervasive and unavoidable for Black people and children, therefore, have to be equipped with the necessary knowledge to successfully traverse society" (p. 480). The participants indicated that they had "The Talk" to ensure that they and their loved ones would minimize harm and/or prevent death during a police interaction.

For Black women and girls, S. Gonzalez (2022) believes that the "talk concentrates on teaching black girls how to socially distance themselves from confirming stereotypes by learning to be 'ladies' ...[by promoting] idealized classed, racialized, and gendered norms designed to regulate their behavior, appearance, and agency" (p. 35). This is linked to several participants' statements about intentionally appearing non-threatening. The underlying belief was that their demeanor can influence the interaction with the police. This notion is supported by Brunson and

Weitzer (2011), who found “that police officers expect deference from citizens and react harshly when citizens are critical, belligerent, or hostile” (p. 431). However, Bowleg et al. (2022) disagrees with the effectiveness of “The Talk”:

Designed to keep children safe from police brutality, “The Talk” is also arguably a tacit form of respectability politics, the notion that Black people should adapt the ways they walk, talk and dress to avoid racism and racist stereotypes. Because Blackness is noncontingent, however, the notion that Black people could avoid police brutality simply by acting “respectably” is merely another racist canard. Black people are at risk of becoming the victims of police brutality regardless of how they behave. (pp. 369–370)

Therefore, Bowleg et al. (2022) believe that “The Talk” does not ensure safety because Black individuals are deemed a threat and are at risk because of the color of their skin.

### **Implications for Practice**

This study has implications that can aid in meeting the needs of Black women impacted by police brutality. Although the participants discussed how police brutality occurs frequently within Black communities, there continues to be no comprehensive national data about it because the federal government does not mandate its collection and police departments and unions are against it (Amuchie, 2016; Bowleg et al., 2022). Unfortunately, a void of data can be misinterpreted as a lack of a problem. Bowleg et al. (2022) asserts that “intersectional anti-Black police brutality data are essential to inform advocacy and structural interventions to reduce police brutality” (p. 366).

The majority of the participants expressed a hesitation to call the police due to concern about how they would respond to the situation. Reallocating money from police departments to other community-based budgets such as mental health organizations, substance use treatment



facilities, healthcare agencies, affordable housing options, community developers, and crime prevention programs can help strengthen community resources (Alang et al., 2023; Bowleg et al., 2022). Shifting some responsibilities from police to more appropriate community resources, such as in cases of low-level offense traffic stops, mental health crises, and social service calls, can lead to a decrease in police brutality incidents (Martin, 2021). In addition to fear of police response to situations, there was also a pervasive sense of hopelessness from participants. The enforcement of changes ranging from the local to nationwide reform that address police culture, policies, and practices can lead to greater accountability and increased hope for improvement. Possible reforms include the following: internal discipline such as suspending paid leave for officers under investigation and withholding pensions and refusing to rehire officers involved in excessive force incidents (Martin, 2021). Including Black women and community-based organizations in conversations about accountability can lead to increased accountability and transparency, which can build trust between police and the community.

Several participants discussed how their mental health is negatively impacted because of police brutality. The mental and emotional health of Black women needs to be prioritized for authentic collective healing to occur. Curtis-Boles (2013) explains that “research has identified stigma, insensitivity in the mental health system, racial bias, and cultural incompetence of providers as key barriers to mental health service utilization in the Black community” (p. 430). These barriers lead to the perpetuation of the strong Black woman stereotype, which entails Black women being self-reliant and silently managing physical, emotional, and psychological pain alone. It is imperative that Black women have a supportive space where they can share, process, analyze, and reclaim their stories in order to feel empowered (Amuchie, 2016; Martin 2021). Therefore, it is essential that clinicians incorporate an intersectionality framework in their

clinical practice to “consider the richness and uniqueness of individual experience in the context of systems of multiple subjugation” (Curtis-Boles, 2019, p. 433).

### **Clinical Implications for Therapy**

A multicultural orientation is an imperative foundation for all psychologists providing therapy to Black women. It entails that the therapist “remain open, respectful, considerate, humble, and interested in the client’s cultural identity and experiences (Shelton, 2022, p. 25). In addition to being aware of and monitoring their own biases, values, and assumptions, psychologists must also expand their worldview to be aware of the historical and current oppressive systems contributing to the inequities experienced by Black women (L. Jones & Harris, 2019; Turner et al., 2022). Turner et al. (2022) assert that biases can influence various aspects of treatment such as assessment, diagnosis, interventions, perception of progress, and case conceptualization. By utilizing a multicultural orientation and intersectionality framework to be aware of the marginalized and privileged identities, the psychologist is able to avoid pathologizing behaviors and be better attuned to the cultural factors impacting a Black woman’s wellness.

As previously mentioned, the first step for psychologists providing cross-cultural therapy to Black women is engaging in active self-reflection to increase one’s understanding of assumptions and past experiences with Black women that may influence interactions (Lyn, 2022). Shelton (2022) encourages clinicians providing cross-cultural therapy to “remain interested and explorative into the client’s perception of how their experiences are shaped by their cultural identities (p. 25). However, microaggressive behaviors may occur when providing cross-cultural therapy. It is important for the therapist to be aware of statements that may perpetuate silencing and minimization of experiences with discrimination. L. Jones and Harris

(2019) explain that “therapists must possess a willingness to validate the perceptions of racism, discrimination, and bias that Black women have experienced in mental health and social service agencies, providing a space in which Black women can re-story their identified problems without feeling invalidated or dismissed (p. 256). Ruptures between the clinician and client can be repaired by engaging in cultural humility and acknowledging one’s mistakes and cultural transgressions (Shelton, 2022). Clinicians are encouraged to “avoid any misguided efforts to ‘prove themselves’ as being culturally competent” (Lyn, 2022, p. 201). Hargons et al. (2022) encourage clinicians identifying as men to be mindful how of their gender identity can contribute to power differentials that may manifest with Black female clients. Lyn (2022) advises that White and/or non-Black clinicians “be prepared to defer any hurt feelings stemming from hearing reactions to white or male supremacy” (p. 201). Feedback is an essential component of cross-cultural therapy. Eliciting feedback aids in the client feeling heard, respected, accepted, and validated (Shelton, 2022).

Black women psychologists are likely to encounter unique experiences when providing therapy to Black women clients. Their various identities, experiences, and intricate knowledge of the Black community influence their work with clients (Goode-Cross & Grim, 2016). However, challenges related to overidentification and emotional enmeshment may emerge for Black women psychologists working with Black women clients:

Overidentification with Black clients may result in inaccurate assumptions about the client based on the therapists’ personal experiences. Strong identification with clients can also lead to strong emotional reactions, a heightened sense of responsibility for the client’s well-being, and excessive pressure to be maximally authentic and helpful to the client. (Scharff et al., 2021, p. 78)

Clients' judgments and expectations can also negatively affect treatment and can lead to rejection of the therapist. Goode-Cross and Grim (2016) explain that a client's perception of privilege and racial identity and assumptions about the clinician not being "Black enough" can negatively impact how the client relates to the clinician (p. 46). Scharff et al. (2021) explain that some clients may be "distrustful of Black professionals due to internalized racism [which] can also contribute to challenging dynamics between Black clients and their Black therapists" (p. 78). The clinicians are not immune to the same racial trauma, gender related stresses, police violence, historical oppressions, and systemic inequities that their clients are experiencing. Therefore, Black women psychologists can experience burnout and secondary trauma from empathically listening and supporting their clients, which can adversely affect their ability to cope in their personal and professional settings (Shell et al., 2021).

Black women psychologists providing therapy to Black women also has the potential to be a powerful experience for both the clinician and client. Researchers have found that the shared culture and cultural solidarity can lead to a greater connection and deeper understanding of the clients' experiences (Scharff et al., 2021; Shell et al., 2021). Due to Black therapists' nuanced understanding of Black communities, they have been found to be able to establish a therapeutic alliance more quickly and easily, which aids in their ability to intervene in more culturally congruent ways (Goode-Cross & Grim, 2016; Scharff et al., 2021). Clinicians' incorporation of racial socialization messages and self-disclosure have the potential to inoculate the deleterious effects of systemic inequities and normalize some Black clients' experiences (Goode-Cross & Grim, 2016).

Culturally specific and culturally adapted treatment interventions can help support Black women's healing. Shelton (2022) made the following assertion:

These interventions respect the collective experience of Blackness and womanness, while holding the unique identity of the individual....Interventions with African American women build from the client's personal resilience and confront unhelpful intrapersonal dynamics, while naming and addressing systemic oppression....Interventions honor self-expression, language, and voice and create space for strengthening self-acceptance.

(p. 33)

When utilizing evidence-based treatment interventions such as cognitive behavioral therapy, psychodynamic therapy, and interpersonal therapy, it is important to shift from a Eurocentric framework and incorporate the following: include cultural values relevant to Black women; identify and confront systemic oppressions impacting Black women; and underscore individual and collective strengths (Hargons et al., 2022; Turner et al., 2022). When utilizing cognitive behavioral therapy, clinicians should consider how sociopolitical and cultural influences impact Black women. Turner et al. (2022) explain that "helping the client differentiate between maladaptive beliefs and accurate helpful instincts around injustices experienced has an empowering effect" (p. 153). Cultural modifications for interpersonal therapy entail the following: discussing how stigma is associated with getting mental health support; engage in conversations about cultural differences between therapist and client; and identify affirming relationships and practice asserting personal needs (Turner et al., 2022).

The inclusion of holistic and nontraditional interventions can be beneficial for Black women. Holistic therapies endorse self-care and explore Black women's physical activity, sleep hygiene, social connectedness, spiritual practice, and knowing limits (Harper & Williams, 2022, p. 47). Nontraditional interventions may include the use of art, poetry, spoken word, music, and dance (Lyn, 2022; Moore-Lobban et al., 2022). For Black women, "these forms of expression

can create an environment that feels culturally congruent and open and may serve as a catalyst for change in a variety of ways (Moore-Lobban et al., 2022, p. 67).

### **Strengths and Limitations**

The study consisted of several important strengths. Solely, prioritizing the voices and experiences of Black women is a strength because they are often overshadowed by Black men and white women. Another strength was that the participants felt safe and comfortable being vulnerable and candid about their lived experiences with police due to sharing the same race as the interviewer. All the participants expressed gratitude for having a space to reflect and share their unique experiences. Many indicated that being part of the study was an empowering and healing experience.

There are also several limitations to this study that are worth acknowledging. Due to the inherent design of interpretive phenomenological research allowing for smaller sample sizes, this research is not generalizable to all Black women navigating police brutality. Although efforts were made to recruit Black women who were diverse in age, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, and educational attainment, all the participants lived in Washington state. Therefore, it is possible that Black women in other regions of the country may have different experiences with police that are specific to their geographic region. Lastly, due to the interviewer and interviewees sharing the same race, there may have been some assumed shared understandings in place of explicit explanations.

### **Future Research Recommendations**

A large sample size is often valued in research due to the benefits of being able to generalize the results. Future research should continue to enhance this body of knowledge by recruiting a larger sample size that includes Black women from across the country to fill gaps in

literature about Black women's directed and vicarious police experiences. The incorporation of culturally sensitive quantitative methods may help the information uncovered be more generalizable and deepen our understanding of Black women's experiences with the police. The addition of surveys enables Black women to have various modalities to convey their lived experiences. Given that the study only focused on cisgender Black women, future research should expand on this study to include transgender and non-binary individuals because they have higher rates of police brutality than their cisgender counterparts (Alang et al., 2023). Finally, several of the participants discussed situations that occurred with the police during their childhood. Further research should examine the lived experiences of Black female youth.

## References

- Akbar, A. A. (2020). An abolitionist horizon for (police) reform. *California Law Review*, *108*(6), 1781–1846. <https://doi.org/10.15779/Z38M32NB2K>
- Alang, S., Haile, R., Hardeman, R., & Judson, J. (2023). Mechanisms connecting police brutality, intersectionality, and women’s health over the life course. *American Journal of Public Health*, *113*(S1), S29–S36. <https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.2022.307064>
- Alase, A. (2017). The interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA): A guide to a good qualitative research approach. *International Journal of Education & Literacy Studies*, *5*(2) 9–19.
- Alexander, M. (2012). *The new Jim Crow: Mass incarceration in the age of colorblindness*. New Press.
- Amuchie, N. (2016). “The forgotten victims”: How racialized gender stereotypes lead to police violence against Black women and girls: Incorporating an analysis of police violence into feminist jurisprudence and community activism. *Seattle Journal for Social Justice*, *14*(3). <https://digitalcommons.law.seattleu.edu/sjsj/vol14/iss3/8>
- Anderson, L. A., Caughy, M. O., & Owen, M. T. (2022). The talk and parenting while Black in America: Centering race, resistance, and refuge. *Journal of Black Psychology*, *48*(3–4), 475–506. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00957984211034294>
- Aniefuna, L. I., Aniefuna, M. A., & Williams, J. M. (2020). Creating and undoing legacies of resilience: Black women as martyrs in the black community under oppressive social control. *Women and Criminal Justice*, *30*(5), 356–373. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08974454.2020.1752352>
- Anney, V. N. (2014). Ensuring the quality of the findings of qualitative research: Looking at trustworthiness criteria. *Journal of Emerging Trends in Educational Research and Policy Studies*, *5*(2), 272–281.
- Battle, N. T. (2016). From slavery to Jane Crow to say her name: An intersectional examination of Black women and punishment. *Meridians*, *15*(1), 109–136. <https://doi.org/10.2979/meridians.15.1.07>
- Bor, J., Venkataramani, A. S., Williams, D. R., & Tsai, A. C. (2018). Police killings and their spillover effects on the mental health of Black Americans: A population-based, quasi experimental study. *Lancet*, *392*, 302–310. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(18\)31130-9](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(18)31130-9)



- Bowleg, L. (2012). The problem with the phrase “women and minorities”: Intersectionality, an important theoretical framework for public health. *American Journal of Public Health, 102*(7), 1267–1273.
- Bowleg, L., Boone, C. A., Holt, S. L., del Río-González, A. M., & Mbaba, M. (2022). Beyond “heartfelt condolences”: A critical take on mainstream psychology's responses to anti Black police brutality. *American Psychologist, 77*(3), 362–380. <https://doi.org/10.1037/amp0000899>
- Boyles, A. (2015). *Race, place, and suburban policing: Too close for comfort*. University of California Press.
- Brooks, M., Ward, C., Euring, M., Townsend, C., White, N., & Hughes, K. L. (2016). Is there a problem officer? Exploring the lived experience of Black men and their relationship with law enforcement. *Journal of African American Studies, 20*(3–4), 346–362. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/44508184>
- Brown-Iannuzzi, J. L., Cooley, E., Cipolli, W., & Mehta, S. (2022). Race, ambivalent sexism, and perceptions of situations when police shoot Black women. *Social Psychological and Personality Science, 13*(1), 127–138. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1948550620987659>
- Brunson, R. K., & Weitzer, R. (2011). Negotiating unwelcome police encounters: The intergenerational transmission of conduct norms. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography, 40*(4), 425–456. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0891241611409038>
- Carbado, D. W., & Richardson, L. S. (2018). The Black police: Policing our own. *Harvard Law Review, 131*(7), 1979–2026.
- Chaney, C., & Robertson, R. V. (2013). Racism and police brutality in America. *Journal of African American Studies, 17*(4), 480–505. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12111-013-9246-5>
- Cochran, J. C., & Warren, P. Y. (2013). Racial, ethnic, and gender differences in perceptions of the police: The salience of officer race within the context of racial profiling. *Journal of Contemporary Criminal Justice, 28*(2), 206–227. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1043986211425726>
- Collins, P. H. (2008). *Black feminist thought: Knowledge, consciousness and the politics of empowerment*. Routledge.
- Crenshaw, K. W., Ritchie, A. J., Anspach, R., Gilmer, R., & Harris, L. (2015). *Say her name: Resisting police brutality against Black women*. African American Policy Forum and Center for Intersectionality and Social Policy Studies. [https://scholarship.law.columbia.edu/faculty\\_scholarship/3226](https://scholarship.law.columbia.edu/faculty_scholarship/3226)
- Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2018). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (5th ed.). Sage.

- Curtis-Boles, H. (2013). Living in the margins: Intersecting identities and clinical work with Black women. *Women & Therapy, 42*(3–4), 430–446. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02703149.2019.1622904>
- DeGruy, J. A. (2017). *Post traumatic slave syndrome: America's legacy of enduring inquiry and healing*. Joy DeGruy Publications.
- Delgado, R., & Stefancic, J. (2001). *Critical race theory: An introduction*. New York University Press.
- DeLongoria, M. (2006). *Stranger fruit: The lynching of Black [sic] women: The cases of Rosa Jefferson and Marie Scott* [Doctoral dissertation, University of Missouri-Columbia]. Mospace. <https://doi.org/10.32469/10355/4447>
- Dormire, S. L., Gary, J. C., Norman, J. M., & Harvey, I. S. (2021). Insights into fear: A phenomenological study of Black mothers. *Journal of Advanced Nursing, 77*(11), 4490–4499. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1111/jan.14963>
- Farber, D. (2019). *Crack: Rock cocaine, street capitalism, and the decade of greed*. Cambridge University Press.
- Fernandes, A. D., Leupp, K., & Cryer-Coupet, Q. (2020). Watched, stopped, and handcuffed: The effects of direct and indirect police contact on the health of black women, 1–25. [https://www.cgm.pitt.edu/sites/default/files/Virtual\\_Seminars/fernandes\\_april\\_watched\\_topped\\_and\\_handcuffed.pdf](https://www.cgm.pitt.edu/sites/default/files/Virtual_Seminars/fernandes_april_watched_topped_and_handcuffed.pdf)
- Geller, A., Fagan, J., Tyler, T., & Link, B. (2014). Aggressive policing and the mental health of young urban men. *American Journal of Public Health, 104*(12), 2321–2327. <https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.2014.302046>
- Gonzalez, J. R., Bishopp, S. A., Jetelina, K. K., Paddock, E., Gabriel, K. P., & Cannell, M. B. (2018). Does military veteran status and deployment history impact officer involved shootings? A case-control study. *Journal of Public Health, 41*(3), e245–e252. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260515599241>
- Gonzalez, S. M. (2022). Black girls and the talk? Policing, parenting, and the politics of protection. *Social Problems, 69*(1), 22–38. <https://doi.org/10.1093/socpro/spaa032>
- Gonzalez, S. M., & Deckard, F. M. (2022). “We got witnesses” Black women’s counter surveillance for navigating police violence and legal estrangement. *Social Problems, 1*–18. <https://doi.org/10.1093/socpro/spac043>
- Goode-Cross, D. T., & Grim, K. A. (2016). “An unspoken level of comfort”: Black therapists’ experiences working with Black clients. *Journal of Black Psychology, 42*(1), 29–53. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0095798414552103>

- Gross, J. P. (2016). Judge, jury, and executioner: The excessive use of deadly force by police officers. *Texas Journal on Civil Liberties & Civil Rights*, 21(2), 155–181.
- Hargons, C. N., Malone, N., & Montique, C. (2022). Intersectionality in therapy for African American and Black women. In K. Shelton, M. K. Lyn, & M. Endale (Eds.), *A handbook on counseling African American women: Psychological symptoms, treatments, and case studies* (pp. 1–19). Praeger.
- Harper, L. S., & Williams, C. (2022). Depression and anxiety in African American women. In K. Shelton, M. K. Lyn, & M. Endale (Eds.), *A handbook on counseling African American women: Psychological symptoms, treatments, and case studies* (pp. 42–52). Praeger.
- Harrell, S. P., & Sloan-Pena, G. (2006). Racism and discrimination. In Y. Jackson (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of multicultural psychology* (pp. 396–402). Sage.  
<https://doi.org/10.4135/9781412952668>
- Hirschtick, J. L., Homan, S. M., Rauscher, G., Rubin, L. H., Johnson, T. P., Peterson, C. E., & Persky, V. W. (2020). Persistent and aggressive interactions with the police: Potential mental health implications. *Epidemiology and Psychiatric Sciences*, 29 (e19), 1–8.  
<https://doi.org/10.1017/S2045796019000015>
- Jacobs, M. S. (2017). The violent state: Black women’s invisible struggle against police violence. *William & Mary Journal of the Law*, 24(1), 39–100.  
<https://scholarship.law.wm.edu/wmjowl/vol24/iss1/4>
- Jenkins, E. J. (2002). Black women and community violence: Trauma, grief, and coping. *Women & Therapy*, 25(3–4), 29–44. [https://doi.org/10.1300/J015v25n03\\_03](https://doi.org/10.1300/J015v25n03_03)
- Jones, C. P. (2000). Levels of racism: A theoretic framework and a gardener’s tale. *American Journal of Public Health*, 90(8), 1212–1215. <https://doi.org/10.2105/ajph.90.8.1212>
- Jones, L. V., & Harris, M. A. (2019). Developing a Black feminist analysis for mental health practice: From theory to praxis. *Women & Therapy*, 42(3–4), 251–264.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/02703149.2019.1622908>
- Joseph, J. (2022). Invisible police lethal violence against Black women in the United States: An intersectional approach. *A Journal of Social Justice*, 34(2), 177–186.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10402659.2022.2044729>
- Laniyonu, A. (2018). Coffee shops and street stops: Policing practices in gentrifying neighborhoods. *Urban Affairs Review*, 54(5), 898–930.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1078087416689728>
- Lyn, M. K. (2022). Group therapy with Black and African American women. In K. Shelton, M. K. Lyn, & M. Endale (Eds.), *A handbook on counseling African American women: Psychological symptoms, treatments, and case studies* (pp. 189–208). Praeger.

- Martin, J. (2021). Breonna Taylor: Transforming a hashtag into defunding the police. *Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology*, 111(4), 995–1030.
- McLeod, M. N., Heller, D., Manze, M. G., & Echeverria, S. E. (2020). Police interactions and the mental health of Black Americans: A systematic review. *Journal of Racial and Ethnic Health Disparities*, 7(1), 10–27. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40615-019-00629-1>
- Merriam, S. B., & Tisdell, E. J. (2016). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation* (4th ed.). Jossey-Bass.
- Milani, J., Bradford, B., & Jackson, J. (2021) Police legitimacy: An entry to the encyclopedia of research methods in criminology and criminal justice. *Criminology and Criminal Justice*, 1-19. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190264079.013.380>
- Moore-Lobban, S.J., Espinola, M., & Powdrill, K. (2022). Post-traumatic stress and complex trauma. In K. Shelton, M. K. Lyn, & M. Endale (Eds.), *A handbook on counseling African American women: Psychological symptoms, treatments, and case studies* (pp. 55–77). Praeger.
- Oh, H., DeVyllder, J., & Hunt, G. (2017). Effect of police training and accountability on the mental health of African American adults. *American Journal of Public Health*, 107(10), 1588–1590. <https://doi.org/10.2105/ajph.2017.304012>
- Operario, D., & Fiske, S. (1998). Racism equals power plus prejudice: A social psychological equation for racial oppression. In E. Eberhardt & S. Fiske (Eds.), *Confronting racism: The problem and the response*. Sage.
- Parker, L. & Lynn, M. (2002). What’s race got to do with it? Critical race theory’s conflicts with and connections to qualitative research methodology and epistemology, *Qualitative Inquiry*, 8(1), 7–22. <https://doi.org/10.1177/107780040200800102>
- Patton, M. Q. (2015). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods: Integrating theory and practice* (4th ed.). Sage.
- Petersen, N., & Ward, G. (2015). The transmission of historical racial violence: Lynching, civil rights–era terror, and contemporary interracial homicide. *Race & Justice*, 5(2), 114–143. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2153368714567577>
- Pitman, B., Ralph, A. M., Camacho, J., & Monk-Turner, E. (2019). Social media users’ interpretations of the Sandra Bland arrest video. *Race and Justice*, 9(4), 479–497. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2153368717705420>
- Potter, H. (2006). An argument for Black Feminist criminology: Understanding African American women’s experiences with intimate partner abuse using an integrated approach. *Feminist Criminology*, 1(2), 106–124. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1557085106286547>

- Rembert, D., Hill, R., & Watson, J. (2016). A trilogy of trepidation: Diverse perspectives on police violence targeting African American males. *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment*, 26(2), 227–235. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10911359.2015.1083506>
- Ritchie, A. (2017). *Invisible no more: Police violence against Black women and women of color*. Beacon Press.
- Ritchie, A. J., & Jones-Brown, D. (2017). Policing race, gender, and sex: A review of law enforcement policies. *Women & Criminal Justice*, 27(1), 21–50. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08974454.2016.1259599>
- Romero, R. E. (2000). The icon of the strong Black woman: The paradox of strength. In L. C. Jackson & B. Greene (Eds.), *Psychotherapy with African American women: Innovations in psychodynamic perspectives and practice* (pp. 225-238). Guilford Press.
- Scharff, A., Roberson, K., Sutherland, M. E., & Boswell, J. F. (2021). Black therapists working with Black clients: Intervention use and caseload preferences. *Practice Innovations*, 6(2), 77–88. <https://doi.org/10.1037/pri0000147>
- Sewell, A. A., Jefferson, K. A., & Lee, H. (2016). Living under surveillance: Gender, psychological distress, and stop-question-and-frisk policing in New York City. *Social Science & Medicine*, 159, 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2016.04.024>
- Shavers, V. L., & Shavers, B. S. (2006). Racism and health inequity among Americans. *Journal of the National Medical Association*, 98(3), 386–396.
- Shell, E. M., Teodorescu, D., & Williams, L. D. (2021). Investigating race-related stress, burnout, and secondary traumatic stress for Black mental health therapists. *Journal of Black Psychology*, 47(8), 669–694. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00957984211033963>
- Shelton, K. (2022). Culturally competent counseling practice with African American women. In K. Shelton, M. K. Lyn, & M. Endale (Eds.), *A handbook on counseling African American women: Psychological symptoms, treatments, and case studies* (pp. 20–41). Praeger.
- Smith, J. A., Flowers, P., & Larkin, M. (2009). *Interpretative phenomenological analysis: Theory, method and research*. Sage.
- Solorzano, D., Ceja, M., & Yosso, T. (2000). Critical race theory, racial microaggressions, and campus racial climate: The experiences of African American college students. *Journal of Negro Education*, 69(1/2), 60–73.
- Thomas, V. G. (2004). The psychology of Black women: Studying women’s lives in context. *Journal of Black Psychology*, 30(3), 286–306. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0095798404266044>

- Tolnay, S., & Beck, E. (1995). *A festival of violence: An analysis of southern lynchings, 1882-1930*. University of Illinois Press.
- Towns, A. R. (2016). Geographies of pain: #SayHerName and the fear of Black women's mobility. *Women's Studies in Communication*, 39(2), 122–126. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07491409.2016.1176807>
- Turner, T. D., Endale, M., & Lyn, M. K. (2022). Individual counseling. In K. Shelton, M. K. Lyn, & M. Endale (Eds.), *A handbook on counseling African American women: Psychological symptoms, treatments, and case studies* (pp. 148–166). Praeger.
- Williams, M. T., Metzger, I. W., Leins, C., & DeLapp, C. (2018). Assessing racial trauma within a DSM–5 framework: The UConn racial/ethnic stress & trauma survey. *Practice Innovations*, 3(4), 242–260. <https://doi.org/10.1037/pri0000076>
- Williams, S., & Clarke, A. (2019). How the desensitization of police violence, stereotyped language, and racial bias impact black communities. *Psychology & Cognitive Sciences*, 5(2), 62–67. <https://doi.org/10.17140/PCSOJ-5-151>
- Willingham, B. C. (2018). Black women and state-sanctioned violence: A history of victimization and exclusion. *Canadian Review of American Studies*, 48(1), 77–94. <https://doi.org/10.3138/cras.2017.018>
- Winters, M. (2020). *Black fatigue: How racism erodes the mind, body, and spirit*. Berrett Koehler Publishers, Inc.
- Woods-Giscombe, C.L. (2010). Superwoman schema: African American women's views on stress, strength, and health. *Qualitative Health Research*, 20(5), 668–683. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732310361892>
- Wright, J. E., & Headley, A. M. (2020). Police use of force interactions: Is race relevant or gender germane? *The American Review of Public Administration*, 1–14. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0275074020919908>
- Yadon, N. (2022). “They say we’re violent”: The multidimensionality of race in perceptions of police brutality and BLM. *Perspectives on Politics*, 20(4), 1209–1225. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S153759272200>
- Yarbrough, M., & Bennett, C. (2000). Cassandra and the sistahs: The peculiar treatment of African American women in the myth of women as liars. *Journal of Gender, Race and Justice*, 3, 625–657.



## APPENDIX B: INFORMED CONSENT

### Antioch University Seattle Research Consent Form

The Doctor of Psychology Program supports the practice of protection for human participants in research and related activities. The following information is provided so that you can decide whether you wish to participate in the present study. You should be aware that even if you agree to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time, and that if you do withdraw from the study, you will not be subjected to reprimand or any other form of reproach.

#### *Purpose of the Study*

You are invited to participate in a research study. The purpose of this research is to fulfill the requirements for the Doctor of Psychology program at Antioch University Seattle. The researcher, Ashley Turner, is conducting a research study to explore Black women's lived experiences with racial trauma stemming from direct and indirect encounters with police brutality.

If you participate in this research, you will be asked to meet with the researcher for a scheduled interview for up to two hours. Interviews will be conducted via a HIPAA compliant video software named Zoom.

No deception will be used in this study. The interview will consist of open-ended questions about your experience as a Black woman with the police. How you answer the questions will be your choice. At any time in the process, you may decline to answer or choose to withdraw from the interview and study. The interview will be audio recorded. The audio recording of the interview will be subsequently transcribed verbatim. Any identified information, such as your name and address will be removed from the transcript to protect your privacy. You will be given an electronic copy of the transcript for your review, if you request. At the time of review, you have the right to request that any information be removed from the transcript. You may also decide within two weeks of your interview to withdraw from the study and have your data destroyed.

Personal data that you provide (i.e., name, contact information, and location) will be stored separately from the interview recording and transcript. This information will not be included in the research study. You will be asked to provide an alias for the interview and any data specific to your interview will be stored under your preferred alias. No participation beyond the interview is required, however, you will be offered the opportunity to read the results of the study once it is completed.

#### *Using Video Software*

Using Zoom will allow for participation in the study when the researcher and participant are not in the same location. All precautions to protect information will be used when using the Zoom platform. While video data is encrypted, this is not fail-safe, and the researcher cannot be held responsible for the security of a third-party site and cannot offer additional protections above and beyond what the software provides. The researcher will only record the audio portion of the interview. No video components will be recorded or retained. For the purposes of maintaining a comfortable and research-friendly environment for this study, the researcher requests that the participant engages in the interview process in a quiet location with



minimal distractions and no other parties present for the duration of the interview.

### *Risks and Benefits*

You may experience increased emotional and physical discomfort leading up to, during, and/or after the interview. You might be reminded of stressful encounters with the police. If at any time during the interview process you become upset, fatigued, or uncomfortable, you may take a break or withdraw from the study without any consequences. If you experience difficult emotions that require further consultation or therapeutic support, I encourage you to speak to the researcher (myself) at any time of the study. A list of mental health resources will be provided to you along with your signed consent to participate. Please feel free to use this resource as a guide for assistance should you desire to speak with a professional about any discomfort. Any financial charges associated with outside services will be your financial responsibility.

The opportunity to share and process one's experience with someone willing to listen can be a validating experience. The sharing of these experiences may also be beneficial to others who have gone through similar situations. This is an opportunity to bring attention to the reality of these experiences for Black women. Your participation may improve the field of psychology. This may assist psychologists by providing insight into the experiences of Black women and identifying ways to approach work with Black women impacted by police brutality. Lastly, you will be mailed a copy of this study's results upon your request.

### *Compensation*

No compensation will be provided for participation in this research study. Your participation in this research is strictly voluntary. You may refuse to participate or choose to stop your participation at any point in the research without fear of penalty or negative consequences of any kind.

### *Confidentiality and Privacy*

The information/data you provide for this research will be treated confidentially, and all raw data will be kept in a secured file by the principal investigator. Results of the research will be reported as aggregate summary data only, and no individually identifiable information will be presented.

### *Limits to Confidentiality*

In certain situations, I am required by law as a mandated reporter and the ethical guidelines of my profession to disclose information whether or not I have your permission. The following situations are examples in which I am ethically and legally obligated to break confidentiality:

- You tell me that you plan to cause serious harm or death to yourself, and I believe that you have the intent and ability to carry out this threat in the very near future. If this were to be disclosed, it would be my ethical and legal obligation to engage in safety practices by assessing your current state of being, contact the proper authorities – usually resulting in calling emergency services (i.e., 911).
- You tell me that you plan to cause serious harm or death to someone else, and I believe that you have the intent and ability to carry out this threat in the very near future. If this were to be disclosed, it would be my ethical and legal obligation to warn the individual in which the act(s) would be executed upon, as well as contact the appropriate authorities (i.e., 911 and/or the police).

• I have a reasonable suspicion, or you tell me that you are engaging in the abuse and/or neglect of another individual (i.e., child, adult, elder person) physically, sexually, emotionally, or any combination of the aforementioned. In this situation, I am required by law to report the reasonable suspicion or disclosure of abuse and/or neglect to the Department of Social and Health Services.

*Contact Information*

You also have the right to review the results of the research if you wish to do so. A copy of the results may be obtained by contacting the principal investigator at the address below:

Antioch University Seattle  
ATTN: Ashley Turner, MA, PsyD Student  
2400 3rd Avenue, Suite 200  
Seattle, Washington

There will be no direct or immediate personal benefits from your participation in this research. However, the results may contribute to the advocacy and revision of and for more culturally inclusive and culturally appropriate practices in the field of psychology.

If you have questions later, you may contact the primary researcher and investigator, Ashley Turner, MA, PsyD Student, or Faculty Research Advisor, Dr. William Heusler, PsyD, if there are any questions.

*Participant Agreement*

I have read and understand the information explaining the purpose of this research and my rights and responsibilities as a participant. My signature below designates my consent to participate in this research study, according to the terms and conditions outlined above. I understand that this research study has been reviewed and Certified by the Institutional Review Board, Antioch University, Seattle. For research-related problems or questions regarding participants' rights, I can contact Antioch University's Institutional Board Chair, Mark Russell, PhD.

Participant Name (printed): \_\_\_\_\_

Participant Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Participant Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Is it OK to leave you a voicemail message on this phone? Yes  No

In addition to agreeing to participate, I also consent to having the interview audio-recorded.

Participant Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Printed name of person obtaining consent: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of person obtaining consent: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX C: DEMOGRAPHICS MEASURE

**Do you identify as Black/African American?**

Yes, Black/African American only

Yes, Black/African American and another race/ethnicity

What other race/ethnicity? \_\_\_\_\_

No

**What is your gender? Please select all that apply.**

Man

Woman

Non-Binary

Another gender, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

**Do you identify as transgender?**

Yes

No

Unsure

**Please indicate your age in years (e.g. 25 or 52):** \_\_\_\_\_

**Do you identify as a person with a disability?**

Yes

No

Unsure

**What country were YOU born in?**

1.  U.S.

2.  Outside of the U.S., Where? \_\_\_\_\_

How old were you when you first came to the U.S.? \_\_\_\_\_

How many years have you lived in the U.S.? \_\_\_\_\_

**Please select the highest level of education you have completed or the highest degree you have received:**

Less than high school degree

High school graduate (high school diploma or equivalent including GED)

Some college but no degree

Associate degree in college (2-year)

Bachelor's degree in college (4-year)

Master's degree

Doctoral degree

Professional degree (JD, MD)

Other, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

**Please indicate the answer that includes your entire household income in 2021 before taxes:**

Less than \$10,000

\$10,000 to \$19,999

\$20,000 to \$29,999  
 \$30,000 to \$39,999  
 \$40,000 to \$49,999  
 \$50,000 to \$59,999  
 \$60,000 to \$69,999  
 \$70,000 to \$79,999  
 \$80,000 to \$89,999  
 \$90,000 to \$99,999  
 \$100,000 to \$149,999  
 \$150,000 or more  
 Prefer not to say

**Which of the following best describes your sexual orientation?**

Heterosexual/Straight  
 Lesbian  
 Bisexual  
 Queer  
 Questioning  
 Other  
 Prefer not to say

**Which of the following best describes your current relationship status? Please check all that apply.**

Married  
 Widowed  
 Divorced  
 Separated  
 In a Relationship/Partnered  
 Dating  
 Single  
 Prefer not to say

**Have you ever served on active duty in the US Armed Forces?**

Yes  
 No

*If yes, Are you now serving in the U.S. Armed Forces?*

Yes  
 No

*If no, When did you serve in the U.S. Armed Forces?*

September 2001 or later  
 August 1990 to August 2001  
 May 1975 to July 1990  
 Vietnam Era (August 1964-April 1975)  
 February 1955 to July 1964  
 Korean War (July 1950 to January 1955)  
 January 1946 to June 1950  
 World War II (December 1941 to December 1946)  
 November 1946 or earlier

**Which statement best describes your current employment status?**

- Working (paid employee)
- Working (self-employed)
- Not working (temporary layoff from a job)
- Not working (looking for work)
- Not working (retired)
- Not working (disabled)
- Not working (other), please specify: \_\_\_\_\_
- Prefer not to answer

## APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

### Interview Schedule

1. Please tell me more about your most notable or significant *direct* interaction with police.
2. Do you connect your experiences with the police to any of your identities (i.e., gender, race/ethnicity, sexuality, socioeconomic status, age, disability, religion, etc.)? If so, how?
3. Tell me about your views of police treatment of Black women.
4. Police interactions may impact an individual's mental health. Do you believe that your interaction with the police impacted you? If so, how so?
5. Have you had an *indirect* encounter with the police through a family member or close friend? If so, can you tell me more about how that indirect encounter impacted you?
6. How have you coped with your experience with the police?
7. How can psychologists support Black women who are navigating trauma stemming from interactions with police?

### Prompts

#### Direct encounters with police

- Was physical, non-physical aggression (i.e., threatening, intimidating, stopping without probable cause, or use of slurs), or sexual contact part of this experience?
- What was your mood during and after that experience?
- What was going through your mind at the time of the encounter?
- How did your body feel during and after the encounter?
- How many police encounters have you had in the past year? How many police encounters have you had in your lifetime?
  - i. How would you describe these encounters (negative or positive)?
- Do you think the dual identities of being Black and women shape the experiences that you and other Black women have with the police?
- What might be the long-term effects of your experience (s) with the police (negative or positive)?
- 

#### Indirect encounters with the police through a family member or close friend?

- Was physical, non-physical aggression (i.e., threatening, intimidating, stopping without probable cause, or use of slurs), or sexual contact part of this experience?
- What was your mood during and/or after witnessing/learning about that experience?
- What was going through your mind during and/or after witnessing/learning about that encounter?

- How did your body feel during and/or after witnessing/learning about that the encounter?

**Positive** Encounters with police

- What behaviors did the police do that demonstrated their ability to handle a situation well?
- In what ways have you felt supported by police?
- What kinds of emotions, thoughts, and behaviors occurred after a positive experience with police?

**Concluding Questions:**

- What might be barriers to healing from police brutality?
- What recommendations do you have for survivors of police brutality?
- What might be some factors that would aid in more effective and beneficial assistance to supporting a Black woman's healing from police brutality?

## APPENDIX E: MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES LIST

### Hotlines:

- National Alliance on Mental Health (NAMI) Helpline. The NAMI HelpLine can be reached Monday through Friday, 10 am–6 pm, ET., and the number is 1-800-950- NAMI (6264).
- Crisis Text Line – Text NAMI to 741-741. The text line connects you with a trained crisis counselor to receive free support and is open 24 hours/day, 7 days/week.
- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline. The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline is toll-free, can be reached 24 hours/day, 7 days/week, and the number is 800-273-TALK (8255).

### Mental Health Organizations & Foundations:

- Therapy for Black Girls
- Boris Lawrence Henson Foundation
- Black Emotional and Mental Health Collective
- The Loveland Foundation
- Melanin and Mental Health

### Podcasts:

- Homecoming Podcast with Dr. Thema
- Therapy for Black Girls
- Balanced Black Girl
- Ourselves Black

### Phone Applications:

- Shine
- The Safe Place
- Ayana Therapy
- Health in Her Hue