

PERCEPTIONS OF JUSTICE AND LEGAL SOCIALIZATION PROCESSES AMONG
COLLEGE-AGE AFRICAN AMERICAN MALES

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ABSTRACT

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African American males form their opinions of the justice system from various sources. Some have had direct experiences with police, while others have relied on indirect experiences, such as the experiences of their friends. Whatever the case, recent killings of unarmed African American males have forced parents to prepare their children at early ages for potential encounters with police. During adolescence, individuals are gaining awareness of their surroundings and where they fit in society. Thus, the interactions they have with their environment affect how they perceive themselves and their roles in society. Utilizing an ecological approach, it is important to examine the relationship between an adolescent and the macrosystem, which encompasses laws and policies.

Legal socialization is the process by which individuals acquire beliefs about rules and rule violation by internalizing the codified, normative rules of a society (Cohn, Trinkner, Rebellon, Van Gundy, & Cole, 2012). Two components of Fagan and Tyler's (2005) legal socialization framework are legitimacy and cynicism. Legitimacy is considered to be the feeling that one should obey institutional authority (Fagan & Tyler, 2005). Legal cynicism describes the notion that when individuals do not feel laws are legitimate, it is more acceptable not to conform to the established laws (Fagan & Tyler, 2005).

This was a study of the perceptions of justice and legal socialization processes among college-age African American males. The purpose of this study was to gain insight from current college-age males about how they formed their perceptions of the justice system. In particular,

the study sought to explore (a) what African American male college students believe about the legitimacy of the procedural justice process, (b) whether African American male college students believe that experiences with police in the course of their development have influenced their views of cynicism, (c) how African American male college students describe their intentions to prepare their sons for possible encounters with police, (d) how African American male college students describe their experiences with police, and (e) how African American male college students have formed their beliefs about police and the criminal justice system.

Data for this study were collected in two phases. Phase 1 consisted of an 11-question Likert-scale survey that asked questions pertaining to the participants' views about legitimacy, cynicism, their direct and indirect experiences with police, and how they would prepare their sons for potential police encounters. Phase 2 consisted of an optional follow-up interview where participants who took part in the Phase 1 survey could provide additional responses to further explain the answers they provided during the survey. Forty-two (42) participants completed the Phase 1 survey, and 15 participants completed the Phase 2 interviews.

Findings indicated that most participants believed in legitimacy, although in varying degrees. For example, participants believed in obeying institutional authority, but expected to be treated fairly in return. Participants also noted the difference between obeying and trusting institutional authority. Twenty-nine (29) of 42 participants expressed cynicism. However, others did not, and they believed that the justice system was fair. Participants also noted the importance of being educated regarding their rights and used this as a marker to determine whether they would comply. Finally, participants indicated that their parents had a great deal to do with helping to shape their perceptions of justice. They indicated they would prepare their sons for potential encounters with police in many of the ways that their parents prepared them.

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This dissertation is dedicated to my parents,
to whom I owe everything, love more than
life, and learn from every day.

This dissertation is also dedicated to the
participants of my study. Your insight was
invaluable. Please stay on your paths and
remain encouraged.

Finally, this dissertation is dedicated to
innocent victims of negative police
encounters. May you and your families find
the strength to carry on.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

This study sought to address perceptions of justice and legal socialization processes among college-age, African American males. The study retrospectively examined how African American males have formed opinions of the justice system. Most modern societies strive to maintain a safe environment by hiring police officers who are visibly present and seek to deter and prevent crime (Alda, 2014). Without societal rules and regulations to maintain order, individuals would live in constant fear of crime. However, the United States Constitution provides specific safeguards that police officers must follow if they suspect an individual of committing a crime. Specifically, Amendment IV of the Constitution holds that individuals are free from unreasonable searches and seizures, and officials must have probable cause that an individual has, in fact, committed a crime before he or she can be detained (U.S. Const. amend. IV). In an effort to maintain a democratic, yet safe society, there is a constant balance between preventing crime and protecting an individual's freedom and rights (Holwerda, 1983).

Racial disparities in police stops have been found to exist between people of color and Whites; in particular, there are disparities in police stops of African American males (Stoudt, Fine, & Fox, 2011). Aside from the questionable legitimacy of some stops, these encounters can leave lasting impressions on African American males who are stopped by police. The possibility of a negative police encounter has forced African American families to address these issues with their children, preparing them for the worst at young ages. However, there may be emotional and behavioral benefits that emerge when African American parents teach their children about racial socialization (Coard, Wallace, Stevenson, & Brotman, 2004). A 2004 study of 15 African

American parents and guardians found that 70% began preparing their children for racism as early as age 5 (Coard et al., 2004).

In addition, encounters with police can affect an individual's views of justice, as well as the views of his or her family and friends. While the issue of negative encounters between African American males and police has existed for generations, there is a growing need for research related to how negative encounters affect individuals' perceptions of justice and how direct and indirect experiences with police affect African American males' views of the justice system and their place in society.

African Americans have a long history of being policed (Dulaney, 1996). Policing of African Americans began during slavery, when American colonies established rules for slaves called slave codes and developed slave patrols as a policing technique that controlled the behavior of African American slaves and deterred slave rebellions (Dulaney, 1996). Slave "patterollers," as they were called, had unfettered authority to stop, search, whip, and kill any slave whom they suspected of violating the established slave codes (Dulaney, 1996).

Thus, African Americans' plight and struggle for equality within the legal justice system occurred over centuries. Throughout the years, in efforts to improve fairness within the legal justice system for African Americans, civil rights activists endured police brutality and even death. For example, in 1831, Nat Turner was sentenced to death and hung by police for inciting a slave rebellion (Wood & Walbert, n.d). Turner's death caused fear among those who were fighting against slavery, as well as fear among loved ones of African American males who wanted to join in revolts against slavery. Reaction to the revolts sent a clear message to participants that if they fought for their freedom, police could kill them. In 1965, John Lewis was brutally beaten by Alabama state troopers in what is now known as the Bloody Sunday March

(Dickerson, 2015). The brutality of his beating left families whose loved ones were involved in the Civil Rights Movement terrified of the consequences that police could inflict on peaceful protesters who participated in marches for racial justice.

Despite advancements in racial equality since Nat Turner's Rebellion in 1831, negative encounters and tensions between police and African American males persist—particularly instances of police brutality and the killing of unarmed, African American males. In a national survey, males were more likely than females to have force used or threatened against them during police interactions, and African Americans were more likely than Whites or Hispanics to experience the use or threat of force (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2008).

In the 20th century, media began to play an important role in capturing specific instances of police brutality. In 1991, Rodney King was beaten by police officers after a high-speed chase (Kavanagh, 2012). Through various electronic and print media outlets, this encounter illustrated the reality of police brutality to African American households across the country. This encounter also represented one of the first documented examples of witnesses or suspects of negative encounters with police using videos to record what they believed to be police misconduct (Goode & Smith, 2012). The Rodney King police encounter foreshadowed future examples of police misconduct that were captured on tape. For instance, in 1992, Malice Green was kicked and beaten to death by Detroit police officers while in police custody (Chandler, 2012). Witnesses of the incident stated that Green had not done anything wrong other than declining to show officers what was in his hand. These witnesses did not want to show their face on camera due to fear of repercussions from the police officers that beat and killed Green. In 1997, a New York City police officer shoved a broken broomstick up the rectum of Abner Louima, a Haitian American man (Hinojosa, 1997). The public outcry from many African Americans and social justice

advocates in New York City would lay the foundation for many more protests to come due to incidents of police brutality between police and African American males.

Incidents of police brutality can occur in various forms and degrees. Police have assaulted African American males due to mistaken identity. In September 2015, a plain-clothes police officer tackled 35-year-old former professional tennis player James Blake to the ground (Sanchez, Ellis, & Prokupecz, 2015). The officer mistakenly identified Blake as a suspect in a credit card theft plot. Police have assaulted and killed African American males for possessing toy guns and pellet guns that the police have allegedly mistaken as weapons. In 2014, police fatally shot 12-year old Tamir Rice when they mistook a toy gun he was holding for a real gun (Hanna, 2014). In 2014, police shot 22-year-old John Crawford, III, in an Ohio Walmart when they mistook a pellet gun, which was part of the store merchandise, for a loaded gun (Izadi, 2014). Police officers have shot unarmed, African American men on college campuses and outside of stores. In 2015, a campus police officer in Ohio shot Samuel Dubose in the head and killed him (Mura & Gay-Stolberg, 2015). In 1999, police killed 22-year-old African immigrant Amadou Dialo (Cooper, 1999). Dialo was unarmed, and police shot at him 41 times. In 2009, a California transit police officer killed 22-year-old African American Oscar Grant, who was unarmed (McKinley, 2009).

The brutality of killing ranges widely as well. In 2006, Sean Bell was shot at 50 times and killed by a New York City police officer (Borger, 2006). In 2014, Eric Garner died after being placed in a chokehold by police (Goldstein & Schweber, 2014). In 2015, Freddy Gray, age 26, died of a spinal cord injury while in police custody for alleged possession of a pocket knife (Payne, Almas, & Pearson, 2015). There are numerous examples of unarmed, African American males who have been mistakenly accused of a crime, severely hurt, or killed at the

hands of police brutality. These experiences provide a glimpse into the timeline of the history between some African American males and police.

Significance and Relevance of the Problem

Simply being an African American man in America creates risk when it comes to negative police encounters, because police disproportionately stop and search African American males (Dottolo & Stewart, 2008; Weatherspoon, 2004). In addition, African American males face the added challenge of having negative encounters with police in high proportions.

Racial profiling is defined as “any police-initiated action that relies on the race, ethnicity, or national origin rather than the behavior of an individual or information that leads the police to a particular individual who has been identified as being, or having been, engaged in criminal activity” (Ramirez, McDevitt, & Farrell, 2000, p. 3). Racial profiling can occur in the form of police detaining individuals. To illustrate, data show that police stop a disproportionate number of African Americans in cities where they comprise a lower percentage of the population. For example, in Boston, although African Americans made up 24.4% of Boston’s population, they totaled 63.3% of stops by police in 2012 (American Civil Liberties Union [ACLU] Foundation of Massachusetts & American Civil Liberties Union [ACLU] Racial Justice Program, 2014). In New York City, in 2011, the number of young African American men who were stopped by police exceeded the entire city’s population of young Black men (New York Civil Liberties Union, 2012). Police stopped African Americans in Chicago 72% of the time in 2014, although they only comprised 32% of the city’s population (American Civil Liberties Union [ACLU] of Illinois, 2015). In 2014, more than 250,000 stops by Chicago police did not result in arrests (ACLU of Illinois, 2015).

Brief stops by police can quickly escalate into negative encounters. In an interview of 500 New York City youth, 45% of respondents reported that an officer had used a verbal threat, and 46% of respondents reported that the officer had used force against them during the police stop (Fratello, Rengifo, Trone, & Velazquez, 2013). "... 72% of Black men between ages 18 and 34 believed they had been stopped because of their race" (Ramirez et al., 2000, p. 4). "About 30% of Black males have experienced at least one arrest by age 18, and about 49% of Black males have been arrested by age 23" (Brame, Bushway, Paternoster, & Turner, 2014, p. 1).

Negative encounters with police can have lasting psychological and emotional effects on African American males. Contemplation of negative encounters with police can affect individuals psychologically. The paradox of invisibility refers to challenges that African American males face to make them visible to society, while dealing with the everyday physical and psychological stereotypes associated with being an African American male (Franklin & Boyd-Franklin, 2000). Continuous encounters with racism, and the need to cope with continuous racism, can result in anger, rage, depression, and feelings of invisibility within society (Franklin et al., 2000). Examples of the everyday encounters that African American males have with police are commonplace and occur across the nation. In New York City, an African American man said that you have to walk around with a suit and tie on to not be deemed suspicious (Center for Constitutional Rights, 2012). In Boston, young African American males reported fear of being stopped by police on their way to school and said they could be stopped at any time no matter how they were dressed or where they were going (ACLU Foundation of Massachusetts & ACLU Racial Justice Program, 2014). Contemplation of negative police encounters can cause overall suspicion and mistrust of police. Another young African American man described the fear of

always being stopped for no reason just because he is African American (Center for Constitutional Rights, 2012).

Contemplation of discrimination can affect the health of African American males. Studies have linked racial discrimination in areas such as legal discrimination to stressors that can result in greater susceptibility to conditions like cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and a shorter lifespan (Chae et al., 2014). Most recently, researchers have examined the effects of racial discrimination by measuring individuals' leukocyte telomere length (LTL), which is "... sequences of DNA at the end of chromosomes" (Chae et al., 2014, p. 104). Individuals with shorter LTLs have been linked to greater susceptibility to chronic diseases (Chae et al., 2014; Hall, 2014). Further, scientists have found that telomere length can predict longevity of life. Chae et al.'s (2014) study examined 95 African American males between the ages of 30 and 50 who did not have life-threatening or uncontrolled health conditions; they found that instances of racial discrimination among the participants who internalized the discrimination they had experienced affected the participants psychologically and resulted in shorter LTLs. However, this research is not unique to adult African American males. A study of 40 9-year-old African American boys indicated that a stressful social environment could result in shorter telomere lengths and, ultimately, shorter lifespans (Mitchell et al., 2014).

The suicide rate for African American males is increasing. Among African Americans, male adolescents have the highest suicide rates (Crosby & Molock, 2006). While data have not found a direct correlation between police brutality and increasing suicide rates among African American males, experiences with racism and how individuals cope with racism have been linked to stress (Harrell, 2000).

Vicarious racism refers to how individuals are affected by direct and vicarious experiences with racism (Harrell, 2000). There is a looming fear among loved ones of African American males regarding the possibility of negative police encounters. For example, a woman described the need to intervene and challenge police when her family members are harassed by police because if the males in her life question why they are unfairly stopped, matters will become worse (Center for Constitutional Rights, 2012). In Indiana, a mother was pulled over by police for not wearing a seatbelt, yet her boyfriend, a passenger in the car, was ordered to exit the car. When the passenger refused, a police officer broke the windshield of the car with his baton as the mother's 7-year-old daughter watched in horror. In an open letter to the mother of Michael Brown, Sybrina Fulton, whose son was killed by a security guard, described "a growing group of parents and relatives who have lost loved ones to senseless gun violence" (Lacy-Bordeaux, 2014, p. 1).

One parent, a college professor, described the look on his 7 year-old African American son's face as a police car followed him while he was learning how to ride his bicycle (Smith, 2014). This example demonstrates that encounters with police can occur early in the developmental years, during adolescence, or after adolescence. Therefore, parents of African American males have found it essential to talk to their sons about how to handle potential negative encounters with police. When and how parents and/or loved ones talk to their sons about issues related to police brutality and social justice varies.

Also at issue is how to explain to an African American male the fact that police may stop him even though he is innocent of wrongdoing. New York City Mayor Bill DeBlasio described the need to talk about racial profiling with his African American son due to "a history that still hangs over us and the dangers he may face" (Altman, 2014, p. 1). Regarding the shooting of

unarmed teenager Trayvon Martin, President Barack Obama stated, “Trayvon Martin could have been me 35 years ago” (Obama, 2013, p. 297). Former Attorney General Eric Holder said that he had a conversation with his then 15-year-old son regarding how to handle himself if stopped by police due to prior experiences Holder had with police (Franke-Ruta, 2013). These examples illustrate that racial profiling can happen to any African American male, despite socioeconomic status, level of education, or the fact that he has not committed a crime.

Racial Socialization

Racial socialization is “a process that provides children with pride in their racial and cultural identity and self-esteem, and educates them about the racism that exists in this country so that they are not caught unprepared when they encounter discrimination in their lives” (Boyd-Franklin, 2003). The practice of parents preparing their children to cope in society through socialization is a common practice; however, in addition to the ordinary practices of socialization, African American parents have the responsibility of preparing their children for how to deal with possible racial discrimination. The third layer related to socialization deals with how African American parents must prepare their children to handle possible negative encounters with police. In many instances, the need for parents to discuss with their African American sons what to do if stopped by the police is not only an inherent developmental rite of passage, but also a necessary tool for survival. This practice can affect how African American males view justice and the legal system overall. One of the earliest definitions of legal socialization described it as the process by which individuals acquire beliefs about rules and rule violation by internalizing the codified, normative rules of a society (Cohn, Trinkner, Rebellon, Van Gundy, & Cole, 2012). As we will later see, legal socialization can take on various definitions.

At a time when African American males are developing socially and emotionally, it is important to evaluate how negative encounters they witness directly or indirectly influence their perceptions of police and the justice system. Negative police encounters not only affect African American males through their own personal experiences; negative experiences that are witnessed or described by individuals also can affect African American males' perceptions of police. These negative effects can continue for African American males far beyond the encounters themselves. They can leave lasting impressions on an individual's perceptions of justice and the justice system.

During such a critical period of social and emotional growth, it is necessary to evaluate the effects on adolescents of encounters with police. Adolescence is described as a developmental period between childhood and adulthood that begins around age 11 and can last until the late teens or early twenties (Zafar, Nabeel, & Khalily, 2013). During this developmental period, youth form understandings about people, the world, and themselves (Cross & Cross, 2008). "Black males have been found to experience adolescence differently than Whites" (Wyatt, 2009, p. 463). As early as age 10, far earlier than children of other races, African Americans begin to be perceived as adults (Goff, Jackson, Di Leone, Allison, Culotta, & DiTomasso, 2014). African American boys have been perceived as adults as early as age 13 (Goff et al., 2014). Many young African American males have experienced a negative encounter or negative stereotype that depicts them as violent by the time they complete adolescence (Livingston & Nahimana, 2006).

This has implications for how African American males are perceived by police officers and society overall. When individuals of color are unfairly stopped, they lose trust in police (ACLU Foundation of Massachusetts & ACLU Racial Justice Program, 2014). It is important to

examine how direct and/or indirect negative encounters with police can affect an African American's view of social justice, and how negative encounters with police affect the development of African American males. Regarding intentions to prepare African American children for possible police encounters, Hughes (2014) said, "every Black male I've ever met has had this talk, and it's likely that I'll have to give it one day too" (p. 1). Whether, and how, African American males have been prepared to deal with encounters with police during childhood and adolescence can affect how they handle future encounters with police during young adulthood and beyond.

African American males often utilize the racial socialization lessons that their parents taught them in postsecondary settings. For instance, police pulled a gun on a third-year student at Yale and forced him to lay on the ground as he left the library (Lauerman & Staiti, 2015). In Dallas, two college campus police officers forced four African American teenagers to place their hands on the wall, and even handcuffed and hit one African American male as they waited at a bus stop (Noble, 2015). A campus police officer in Ohio shot and killed a 43-year-old unarmed African American man who was stopped for a missing license plate (Williams, Lowery, & Berman, 2015).

The postsecondary experience can be a difficult time for African American males. In 2014, African American males comprised 12.7% of undergraduates enrolled in degree-granting, postsecondary institutions (National Center for Education Statistics, 2015). Further, African American males represent one of the highest rates of students who are not engaged in their postsecondary experiences (Harper, 2009). As minorities at predominately White institutions (PWIs), it is important to hear about the experiences of African American undergraduate males regarding race, how they have been taught to deal with potential encounters with police, and how

they will prepare their sons for potential encounters with police. As individuals develop cognitively, their ability to think about abstract issues, such as political perspectives, increases (Crandell, Crandell, & Vander Zanden, 2012). Thus, college age is an appropriate target for a retrospective assessment of how perceptions of institutional authority during early years have helped shape individuals' current perceptions, and how the perceptions of police that African American males formed during their early years may affect how they cope with current instances of racial profiling.

Definitions of Key Terms

The following is a list of definitions of key terms used in this study.

- Police brutality is “the use of excessive physical force or verbal assault and psychological intimidation” (Walker, 2011, p. 579).
- Legal socialization is the process by which individuals acquire beliefs about rules and rule violation by internalizing the codified, normative rules within a society (Cohn et al., 2012).
- Institutional legitimacy “is assessed by measuring the degree to which people feel that they ought to obey decisions made by legal authorities, even when those decisions are viewed as wrong or not in their interests” (Fagan & Tyler, 2005, p. 221).
- Legal cynicism “reflects general values about the legitimacy of law and social norms” (Fagan & Tyler, 2005, p. 221).
- Racial socialization is “a process that provides children with pride in their racial and cultural identity and self-esteem, and educates them about the racism that exists in this country so that they are not caught unprepared when they encounter discrimination in their lives” (Boyd-Franklin, 2003).

- Racial profiling is “any police-initiated action that relies on the race, ethnicity, or national origin rather than the behavior of an individual or information that leads the police to a particular individual who has been identified as being, or having been, engaged in criminal activity” (Ramirez et al., 2000, p. 3).
- Adolescence is a developmental period between childhood and adulthood. It is marked by multi-dimensional changes: biological, psychological (including cognitive), and social (Zafar et al., 2013).
- Global procedural justice is civilians’ general assessments of the aggregate levels of procedural justice that police afford to members of the public during typical face-to-face encounters (e.g., traffic stops, calls for service) (Gau, 2014).
- Specific procedural justice involves evaluations made by persons who have experienced face-to-face contacts with officers and are in a position competent to judge the extent to which officers acted with respect, fairness, and neutrality (Gau, 2014).
- The Paradox of Invisibility refers to challenges that African American males face to make them visible to society, while dealing with the everyday physical and psychological stereotypes associated with being an African American male (Franklin et al., 2000).
- Stop and frisk is the police practice of temporarily detaining people on the street, questioning them, and possibly also frisking or searching them (Center for Constitutional Rights, 2012).
- Vicarious racism refers to how individuals are affected by direct and vicarious experiences with racism (Harrell, 2000).

- Reflection consists of making meaning and gaining deeper understanding of experiences (Rodgers, 2002).
- Morality refers to the motivation to behave in accord with one's sense of what is appropriate and right to do in a given situation (Tyler, 2006).

Research Questions

Research questions for this study were as follows:

1. What do African American male college students believe about the legitimacy of the procedural justice process?
2. Do African American male college students believe that experiences with police in the course of their development have influenced their views of cynicism?
3. How do African American male college students describe their intentions to prepare their sons for possible encounters with police?
4. How do African American male college students describe their experiences with police?
5. How have African American male college students formed their beliefs about police and the criminal justice system?

Theoretical Background – Legal Socialization

Regarding legitimacy of the law, data have shown “that people have views about the legitimacy of authorities, that those views shape their behavior, and that those views arise out of social interactions and experiences” (Fagan & Tyler, 2005, p. 220). Whether individuals see the law as legitimate is important because their perceptions of legitimacy help determine their perceptions of the justice system. Legal socialization is “a developmental capacity that is the product of the accumulated experiences in several contexts where children interact with the legal

and other social control authorities” (Fagan & Tyler, 2005, p. 220). The process describes the legal and social accumulated experiences that children have with those in positions of authority and consists of three components: institutional legitimacy, cynicism about the legal system, and moral disengagement (Fagan & Tyler, 2005). Institutional legitimacy “is assessed by measuring the degree to which people feel that they ought to obey decisions made by legal authorities, even when those decisions are viewed as wrong or not in their interests” (Fagan & Tyler, 2005, p. 221). “Legal cynicism reflects general values about the legitimacy of law and social norms” (Fagan & Tyler, 2005, p. 221). “Moral disengagement involves the separation of conduct from moral standards relevant to that conduct” (Fagan & Tyler, 2005). This study examined the processes by which undergraduate African American males form their views of the justice system, their experiences with police, and their intentions to prepare their sons for possible encounters with police.

Theoretical Background - Bronfenbrenner’s Process-Person-Context-Time (PPCT) Model

Bronfenbrenner believed that to fully understand how an individual developed, researchers had a duty to capture the psychological and social meanings one experienced during an interaction (Muuss, 1996). Many of the phenomenological tenets of the ecological theory can be traced to Kurt Lewin, who placed great emphasis on the importance of understanding how individuals perceive their environment (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). While Lewin described the importance of an individual’s environment in relation to development, Bronfenbrenner actually defined and described an individual’s environment (Muuss, 1996).

Bronfenbrenner’s earliest work emphasized the importance of measuring development through the contexts of the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem (Tudge, Mokrova, Hatfield, & Karnik, 2009). In addition to the significance that Bronfenbrenner placed

on interactions between the individual and these contexts, in later years, he sought to examine the relationship between human development, time, and proximal processes (Rosa & Tudge, 2013). The PPCT model consists of four primary concepts: process, person, context, and time (see Appendix A).

Process

Process describes the interactions and relationships between an individual and the persons, objects, and symbols in his immediate external environment (Tudge et al., 2009). Further, proximal processes describe “interactions between organisms and the environment” (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006, p. 795). For example, police are a constant symbol in our society of how individuals maintain law and order. Thus, there are constant interactions between individuals and police that can affect an individual’s development.

Person

Person refers to characteristics that an individual brings to a situation and can be described by demand, resource, and force characteristics (Rosa & Tudge, 2013). Demand characteristics refer to physical characteristics such as skin color (Tudge et al., 2009). Resource characteristics refer to resources, both mental and emotional, such as past experiences (Rosa & Tudge, 2013). Finally, force characteristics refer to “differences that have to do with differences of temperament, motivation, persistence, and the like” (Tudge et al., 2009, p. 200). An example of a demand characteristic could be the effect that being African American or male has on being stopped by police. An example of a resource characteristic could be past experiences of African American males who are stopped by police. An example of a force characteristic could be, based on differences in temperament, how African American males who are stopped by police process their encounters.

Context

Context refers to four interrelated systems and the influences of these systems on an individual: the microsystem (the environment), the mesosystem (relationship between the individual and the environment), the exosystem (indirect influences on the environment), and the macrosystem (groups who share values or belief systems) (Rosa & Tudge, 2013). The microsystemic context can consist of the relationship an African American male has with his family and peers. The mesosystemic context can consist of the relationships that the African American male's family and peers have with police. The exosystemic environment can consist of how relationships with police affect an African American male's development. Finally, the macrosystemic context can consist of society's overall belief systems and views of police. (This study primarily focused on how African American males view police and their perceptions of justice through a macrosystemic lens.)

Time

Time refers to continuous change (Rosa & Tudge, 2013) and measures "the degree of stability, consistency, and predictability over time" (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). An example of time within the PPCT model is assessing how, and whether, views of police and relationships with police within the African American community have changed over time.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The purpose of this study was to gain insight into perceptions of justice and legal socialization processes among college-age African American males. Negative encounters and killings of African American males at the hands of police have caused unrest and uncertainty among many African American families. As a result, parents of African American males have been known to prepare their sons for the possibility of negative encounters with police. This study sought to address how African American males perceived the justice system, how their encounters with police affected their views of the justice system, what they were told about how to interact with police, and what they planned to tell their sons about how to prepare themselves for encounters with police. This was a retrospective study regarding prospective insights into how college-age, undergraduate, African American males perceived the justice system and prepared for potential negative police encounters. Accordingly, the goal of this study was to gain insight from the participants relating to how their socialization to laws and rules affected their perceptions of the justice system, further affecting how they will legally socialize their sons.

Although a great deal of research has been conducted regarding the effects and perceptions of discrimination among various groups, more research needs to be done to shed light upon, and capture the discriminatory experiences of, racism among adolescents of color (Nyborg & Curry, 2003; Seaton, Caldwell, Sellers, & Jackson, 2010). Further, additional research is needed that retrospectively examines how African American males form their perceptions of justice, and how they will prepare their own sons for potentially racially biased encounters. Researchers have examined African American males' perceptions of police, but the population consisted of individuals who had been involved in delinquent acts (Brunson, 2007).

For example, Brunson interviewed 40 African American adolescent males, ages 13-19, from urban communities who had been involved in delinquent acts to gain better insight into their experiences with police. He found that the participants reported being harassed often and treated without respect (Brunson, 2007). Hurst, Frank, and Browning (2000), studied perceptions of police among African American and White juveniles, finding that the African American teens viewed police less favorably than the White teens. In contrast, this study sought to gain insight into the experiences of African American males who had not been involved in delinquent acts.

Recent unprovoked killings and negative police encounters with unarmed African American males support the notion that despite an African American male not being involved with an illegal activity, he can nonetheless experience a negative police encounter, or even death. Researchers have addressed issues relating to the relationship between adolescent development and police perceptions among African American youth (Lee, Steinberg, Piquero, & Knight, 2011). However, a gap in literature exists regarding (a) how African American males who have not been involved with crimes are affected by direct and indirect experiences with police during adolescence, and (b) how these direct and indirect experiences with police during adolescence affect how they will prepare their sons for possible encounters with police. Specifically, further research is needed that examines how negative encounters with police can affect social and emotional development and perceptions of justice among African American males.

Since adolescents are gaining meaning about where they fit in the environment, as well as how laws affect their well-being during the adolescent years, it is necessary to first refer to adolescent developmental literature for insight regarding the relationship between legal socialization and development. In addition, it is helpful to analyze socialization processes from a broad to a narrow perspective: socialization, racial socialization, and legal socialization. Finally,

of equal importance to legitimacy and cynicism, which are components of legal socialization, is the importance of recognizing the relationship between legal socialization and procedural justice as African American adolescents are developing.

Developmental Effects of Negative Police Encounters

To better understand how African American males are affected by direct and indirect encounters with police, it is helpful to put their experiences in context from a developmental perspective. Learning how to deal with racism and understanding how racism affects children during different stages of development are central parts of establishing identity and addressing racism (Derman-Sparks, Higa, & Sparks, 1980). Further, understanding the relationship between development and racism is critical to understanding the effects of racism. As an individual develops, he or she is changing physically, cognitively, and emotionally, and is affected by racism and biases (Crandell et al., 2012). Recognizing the relationship between various domains of development is important (Coppie & Bredekamp, 2009). Further, chronological age becomes less of a predictor of development as their individual experiences become increasingly varied by life experiences (Carstensen, 2006). Racism occurs during various stages of development and throughout the lifespan. There is a gap in literature pertaining to the relationship between development and the effects of racism, particularly racial profiling. Thus, it is important to assess whether African American males' encounters with racial profiling during different times of development affect their perceptions of justice.

Adolescence is a developmental period between childhood and adulthood. It is marked by multidimensional changes: biological, psychological (including cognitive), and social (Zafar et al., 2013). A tragic example of how race, gender, age, and physical stature can lead to negative encounters with police occurred to Emilio Mayfield, a 16-year-old African American adolescent,

in Stockton, California. A police officer punched the sobbing 16-year-old in the face, and eight additional police officers pinned the boy to the ground for jaywalking (Joiner, 2015). A crowd gathered and witnessed the event, and throughout the entire 2 min 26 second encounter, a female bystander could be heard screaming with terror, “He’s just a kid” (Joiner, 2015, p. 1). When the police officers did not listen to the woman’s pleas for them to stop the encounter, she then began to direct instructions to the African American male adolescent in an attempt to help him through the encounter. In addition, one of the young man’s friends quietly sat near the encounter, likely processing the ordeal that his friend was experiencing and hoping that he would not be next. Emilio’s example is not unlike countless other examples of negative encounters between police and African American males. However, what is not clear is how Emilio processed this police encounter and how this encounter affected his development and his perceptions of police. In Emilio’s case, he experienced being hit by an adult police officer, yet likely processed this event on a 16-year-old’s emotional and cognitive level.

Beyond the actual ordeal, the experience might have had lasting developmental effects. For example, the encounter could have affected Emilio emotionally, it could have affected how he perceives police, and it could also have affected how he views himself. It is critical to examine this encounter from a developmental perspective because, as a 16-year-old, this encounter took place at a time when Emilio was developing and gaining insight into himself and the world around him. While this encounter occurred, Emilio was developing relationships with his family, he was forming perceptions about laws related to policing, and he was dealing with perceptions and stereotypes relating to how society perceives him as a young African American male.

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Theory

Ecological theory focuses on the interaction between individuals and the external world (Muuss, 1996). Urie Bronfenbrenner utilized ecology to examine the relationships between the developing person and the external world, and he viewed this world through interrelated structures consisting of (a) the microsystem, (b) the mesosystem, (c) the exosystem, and the (d) macrosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1994; Neal & Neal, 2013). The microsystem refers to the direct experiences that an individual has within his or her immediate environment. Examples of a microsystem include one's family, school, and peer groups. The mesosystem consists of the relationships that an individual has within his or her immediate environment. The exosystem describes the indirect influences in the environment in which the individual lives. Finally, the macrosystem refers to laws, politics, and policies that govern the society in which the individual lives. Bronfenbrenner (1994) later described the chronosystem as a system that reflected change over time in the person and the environment in which the person lived.

Theoretically applying the aforementioned systems to an adolescent African American male, the microsystem could consist of the racial socialization messages that an individual receives from his family. An example of the effects of the exosystem could be the societal tension that an African American male faces regarding police relations. An example of the mesosystem could be the relationship that an African American male has with individuals within his immediate environment, including his family, peers, and police. The macrosystem could represent laws, current court cases, and direct examples relating to killings and negative encounters among African American males. Finally, an example of the chronosystem could be the historical time that an African American male is living in within the context of the state of

relations between African American males and police. Thus, the individual serves as a current marker of where society stands at the point in time in which he is living.

Ecological Processes Within the Context of Families

While Bronfenbrenner's earliest research emphasized the important role that context played in human development, he later began to emphasize the importance that a person plays in his or her own development (Tudge et al., 2009). Bronfenbrenner focused his later research on the idea of proximal processes, and how the interaction between proximal processes and the person, the context, and the time—otherwise known as the PPCT model—affect how an individual develops (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006; Rosa & Tudge, 2013). Process refers to the interactions an individual has with the environment. Context refers to the environment in which development takes place. Time refers to the period in which the proximal processes occur (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006).

Finally, person refers to the characteristics of the developing individual. Examples of these characteristics are generative force characteristics, such as curiosity, which promote development (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). Disruptive force characteristics can impede development (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). Resource characteristics describe a person's ability or inability to develop (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). Abilities and skills promote development, while handicaps and illnesses inhibit development (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). Demand characteristics describe characteristics that influence the way an individual is perceived in the environment (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). They include physical characteristics, such as race and age, or personality characteristics such as anger (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006; Rosa & Tudge, 2013).

Bronfenbrenner (1986) placed great importance on the role of families in ecological development, and explained that a child's development could be affected by multiple ecological systems. The current climate relating to police relations, perceptions of the justice system, and the current state of affairs in relation to negative encounters with police all represent components of the microsystem within which a family functions.

The individual ultimately determines how he or she will be affected by a negative police encounter such as Emilio's. Factors such as the individual person, the process, the context in which it occurred, and the time at which the process occurred (PPCT) are variables that can determine how an individual is affected. Not all individuals develop relationships with the environment in the same context. Thus, it is necessary to expand the ecological framework to focus on how factors such as racism affect how an individual develops. It is important to examine how the unique factors that Emilio brought to this experience, such as race and gender, relate to how this encounter affected his development and perceptions of police, and frankly, of himself. As a result of this pivotal point, Emilio had to internally process (a) whether his race and physical appearance affected why he was stopped, (b) whether he turned to his family and friends to help him make sense of the encounter, (c) whether and how this encounter affected his identity, and (d) what changed in his outlook on life and overall perception of justice.

For every encounter like Emilio's, there is another encounter that has not been taped, that has not been discussed, and that has possibly been internalized. John Dewey viewed reflection as a tool that allows an individual to make meaning and gain deeper understanding of experiences (Rodgers, 2002). Observing young adults provides the opportunity for individuals to reflect upon experiences from early childhood, adolescence, and young adulthood. It is important to

determine how direct and indirect negative police encounters have affected other African American males' development and perceptions of justice.

Theories differ regarding how the aforementioned negative encounter with police might affect adolescents who experience negative police encounters. For example, level of emotional development, chronological age, and coping methods all could play a role in how an individual processes the encounter. Hence, it is important to posit various theories of development to better understand how individuals cope with negative police encounters.

Socialization of Adolescent African American Males

During the developmental period of adolescence, parents are teaching their children skills and mechanisms that will prepare them to function in an adult world (Smetena, Robinson, & Rote, 2015). Further, during this stage, youth are making meaning of themselves and determining where they fit overall within society (Rogers, Scott, & Way, 2015). During this time, youth often look to authority figures for guidance and begin to place great emphasis and self-worth on the relationships that they form with adults and members of their community (Arnon, Shamai, & Ilatov, 2008). One of the ways that parents and loved ones help adolescents cope with and make sense out of the challenges they face is through socialization, which is defined as “the process of learning attitudes, ideas, and behavior” (Finckenauer, 1998); it describes the processes and skills that are instilled in youth to help them become functioning and effective members of society (Smetena et al., 2015).

Stop and frisk is “the police practice of temporarily detaining people on the street, questioning them, and possibly also frisking them” (Center for Constitutional Rights, 2012, p. 3). Data from large cities such as Boston and New York reveal that individuals of color, particularly African American males, are racially profiled at much larger rates than other groups (ACLU

Foundation of Massachusetts & ACLU Racial Justice Program, 2014; Center for Constitutional Rights, 2012). An African American male teen living in New York City has a strong likelihood that he will be stopped and frisked by the time he has graduated from high school (Chang, 2012). An informal survey of 100 young African American and Hispanic males revealed that 81 had been stopped and frisked by police at least once (Gershman, 2000).

More than three out of five African Americans in the United States have said that police treated them or a family member unfairly (Holland, 2015). Six out of 10 African American males stated that they had been treated unfairly by police (Holland, 2015). Twenty-four percent of young African American men under the age of 35 said that the police had treated them unfairly within the past 30 days (Newport, 2013). Other statistics add to this picture. Nearly half of African American men are arrested by the age of 23 (Brame et al., 2014). Young African American men are 21 times more likely to be killed by police than their White counterparts (Gabrielson, Jones, & Sagara, 2014). Males are more likely than females to experience force or the threat of force by police, with African Americans more likely than Whites to experience force or threat of force by police (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2008).

Racial stereotyping may be related to unfair police practices against African Americans (Schuck, 2004). The perception that African American children are perceived as less innocent is often acted on through the use of racial profiling, which is defined as “any police-initiated action that relies on the race, ethnicity, or national origin rather than the behavior of an individual or information that leads the police to a particular individual who has been identified as being, or having been, engaged in criminal activity” (Ramirez et al., 2000, p. 3). Unfortunately, there has been little research examining how negative experiences with police based on racial stereotyping affect African American males developmentally, particularly during adolescence. Alarming

statistics relating to negative encounters with police, in addition to unfair police practices that some African American children experience, often require the need for parents to prepare their children for how to handle potential encounters with police.

Racial Socialization

Racial socialization refers to messages and practices that provide information concerning race and its relationship to identity, relationships, and social standing (Thornton, Chatters, Taylor, & Allen, 1990). Once described as “that constant, bone-deep existential fear of harm and death at the hands of police” (Berrigan, 2015, p. 1), parents prepare their African American sons at an early age for the possibility of having a negative encounter with police. One way that they prepare their sons for possible discrimination is through socializing them to understand how race plays a factor in internal and external perceptions. African American parents often do so by preparing their African American children for bias and discrimination (Elmore & Gaylord-Harden, 2013; Hughes, Rodriguez, Smith, Johnson, Stevenson & Spicer, 2006). Whereas common parent-child conversations consist of discussing the dangers of drugs and alcohol, or driving without a seatbelt (Feeney, 2000), parents of African American males must specifically address how one negative encounter with a police officer can change one’s life in an instant, ultimately resulting in death. In addition to the challenges and issues that adolescents face in general, African American adolescent males often face the added challenge of possible issues relating to racial discrimination and racial profiling. Some parents refer to these talks as the “Black Male Code” (Washington, 2012, p. 1). Other parents simply refer to it as “the talk” (Berrigan, 2015). Regardless of the specific techniques and approaches, parents of African American males share a universal purpose through these talks—to prepare their sons regarding

strategies for dealing with racism, racial profiling, and potentially violent encounters (Thomas & Blackmon, 2015).

The protective factors that parents put in place to protect their sons against racial profiling describe coping mechanisms for survival. However, there exists an internal, subjective experience that an African American male endures as a result of direct or indirect negative experiences with police. For example, when describing the role of police, African American males explained feeling as if police are not there to protect people, constantly feeling under siege, and feeling perceived as a criminal (ACLU Foundation of Massachusetts & ACLU Racial Justice Program, 2014; Center for Constitutional Rights, 2012). The ability to discuss potential racial encounters with loved ones is important (Elmore & Gaylord-Harden, 2013). However, not all African American males have the opportunity, for a myriad of reasons, to experience such talks with parents or loved ones. Nevertheless, adolescents who experience racial discrimination have been found to suffer psychologically from depression and emotionally from stress (Neblett et al., 2008). Extensive research assessing the effects of parent racial socialization among adolescents has been conducted (Brown, Linver, Evans & DeGennaro, 2009; Elmore & Gaylord-Harden, 2013; Frabutt, Walker, & MacKinnon-Lewis, 2002; Hughes & Johnson, 2001; Hughes et al., 2006).

African American and Latino males have been found to have the highest rates of negative interactions with, and mistrust of, the police (Fine et al., 2003). Society is sending constant messages to adolescent males regarding their race and gender. For example, stereotypes portray males of color as “threatening, enraged, beset by hardship, violent, angry, withdrawn, disrespectful, thugs, untouchable, and unfeeling” (Knight, 2015, p. 1). Such stereotypes can link race to criminal propensity, making African American males more susceptible to racial profiling

and encounters with police (Welch, 2007). Real-life examples offer proof: Emmitt Till, Trayvon Martin, Michael Brown, Michael Davis, Jason Goolsby, Marcel Hamer, and Philando Castile. African American males face competing forces of racial discrimination, gender discrimination, and stereotypes that often begin to intersect during adolescence.

Social Justice as a Procedural Framework

The degree to which adolescents view police, or any authority, as fair depends on whether they feel that they experienced a fair police encounter (Fagan & Piquero, 2007). Thus, adolescents are socializing their views of justice—and basing their perceptions of the fairness of laws, police, and the justice system—on how they are treated by such individuals. Social justice is “a basic structure of society” and describes “the way in which major social institutions distribute fundamental rights” (Rawls, 2009, p. 6). Although individuals interpret the meaning of justice differently, most agree that the hallmarks of justice revolve around establishing rules for society that promote a fair exchange of basic rights and duties (Rawls, 2009). “Police maintain societal order and social control by enforcing laws” (Factor, Castilo, & Rattner, 2014; Mazerolle et al., 2014), and one method of securing justice within society is by assuring its citizens that there will be safety and order through enforcement of rules and laws. In other words, citizens agree that rules and laws should be established for protection, and they trust that those in authority will implement rules and laws fairly. Thus, individuals depend on police as authoritative leaders who symbolize citizens’ goals for what represents a fair, safe, and just society.

Interactions between citizens and police officers play a critical role in police encounters. Ultimately, police measure the effectiveness of their encounters by judging whether an individual complied with the officer’s directives and obeyed the law (Tyler, 2003, 2004). In

addition, relationships and encounters with police consist of physical and emotional interactions (Jones-Brown, 2000). Strictly judging the efficacy of a police encounter by whether a citizen obeyed an officer's directives does not capture the internal experiences of the individual who was stopped, such as the feelings that an individual is having and the perceptions that an individual is forming during and after his or her stop. Further, a solely authoritative approach to measuring the efficacy of a police encounter underestimates the inherent capacity of people to follow rules and cooperate with police when they are treated fairly. It also underestimates the faith of citizens to trust that, in exchange for living in a safe society, citizens will agree to grant police officers discretion to exercise authority as needed (Tyler, 2003).

In addition, an individual's decision to comply with laws has internal components. Tyler (2006) stressed that an individual's sense of morality must not be underestimated in terms of his or her willingness to comply with laws. Morality refers to "the motivation to behave in accord with one's sense of what is appropriate and right to do in a given situation" (Tyler, 2006, p. 313). People feel a right to engage in conduct that they feel is morally right regardless of whether it is against the law (Tyler, 2006). Thus, to better understand the legality and meaning of social justice, we must first understand how individuals perceive justice (Sanders & Hamilton, 2001).

The Origins of Procedural Justice

Since compliance with the law is the ultimate measure of the effectiveness of a police encounter, individuals' subjective feelings and perceptions of the police encounter are secondary. However, much can be learned about improving relationships between police and citizens by assessing the significance of citizens' perceptions and feelings regarding whether they have been treated fairly by police. The Group Values Relational Model (Goodman-Delahunty, 2010; Lind & Tyler, 1988) explains that trustworthiness, respectful treatment, neutrality, and voice are

factors that individuals use to determine whether police treat them fairly. For example, when individuals evaluate a police officer's trustworthiness, they are usually determining whether a police officer appears to be sincere, caring, and unprejudiced in their actions (Tyler, 2007). When individuals evaluate a police officer's respectfulness, they are assessing whether the police officer is treating them with dignity (Tyler & Lind, 1992). When individuals evaluate a police officer's neutrality, they are assessing whether the authority is objective, transparent, and consistent (Tyler, 2007). And when individuals evaluate a police officer's fairness, they are determining whether they have a voice, or an opportunity to explain themselves during the decision-making process, and whether the authority is listening to them (Goodman-Delahunty, 2010).

Retributive justice, distributive justice, and procedural justice form the frameworks of social justice, and when any of these frameworks are violated, injustice occurs (Sanders & Hamilton, 2001). Retributive justice focuses on the consequences of the person who broke a law, whereas distributive justice focuses on "allocation of resources, such as rights, wealth, and income" (Sanders & Hamilton, 2001, p. 8). Procedural justice, on the other hand, focuses on how individuals perceive fairness and the overall equality of processes. The origins of justice research focused on distributive fairness, or the view that individuals evaluated the fairness of an encounter based on the outcome (Tyler & Blader, 2003). However, Thibaut and Walker (1975) expanded insight into perceptions of justice by examining how the ability of individuals to participate in the decision-making process affected their views of fairness. Tyler & Blader (2003) found that when discussing issues related to justice, people placed the greatest importance on procedural issues, such as the importance of others treating them with respect. In addition to the formulaic interaction of a police encounter that involves determining the reason for a stop, there

is a human aspect that involves interaction, communication, feelings, and emotions between two or more people. Moreover, findings suggested that people place greater importance on the fairness of encounters than the outcomes (Tyler & Blader, 2003).

“The procedural justice perspective argues that the legitimacy of the police is linked to public judgments about the fairness of the process through which the police make decisions and exercise authority” (Sunshine & Tyler, 2003, p. 514). Assessing the fairness of police procedures has been found to be an effective method of judging police outcomes and encounters (Tyler, 1990). Procedural justice evaluates the relationship between the legitimacy of authorities and the manner in which police exercise their authority (Tyler, 2004) and holds that “people are viewed as evaluating authorities by assessing whether they use fair procedures when engaging in policing activities” (p. 91). Specifically, Tyler (2006) emphasized that people are more likely to accept rules from authority when they have been treated justly relating to decisions that are made.

Perhaps the greatest amount of research regarding the effects of relationships between police and citizens relates to assessing how perceptions of fairness can affect overall views of police legitimacy. Legitimacy refers to “the property that a rule or an authority has when others feel obligated to defer voluntarily” (Tyler, 2003, p. 307). Individuals view police as more legitimate when they are treated fairly by police (Reisig, Bratton, & Gertz, 2007). Individual perceptions of justice vary according to individual experiences, collective attitudes, media influences, neighborhood contexts, and socioeconomic statuses (Engel, 2005). There is a greater likelihood that individuals will comply with laws and those who are in positions of authority when they view those who are in authority as fair and legitimate (Bradford, Hohl, Jackson, & MacQueen, 2015), and people are more inclined to cooperate with police and view the police as

more legitimate when police officers treat individuals fairly and with respect (Sunshine & Tyler, 2003).

Specific procedural justice involves evaluations made by persons who have experienced face-to-face contacts with officers and are in a position competent to judge the extent to which officers acted with respect, fairness, and neutrality (Gau, 2014). Public opinions have been found to play a significant role in police-citizen encounters, as the likelihood of an individual complying with a police order has been linked to whether the individual deems the directive as a voluntary option (Tyler, 2003). For example, people have been found to have a greater chance of complying with police when they are not angry as a result of how they have been treated during a police encounter (Murphy, 2009). Examples of instances where citizens might judge the level of fairness that police officers use include an officer treating a citizen respectfully, an officer acting properly during a police encounter, and an officer considering an individual's feelings during the police encounter (Donner, Maskaly, Fridell, & Jennings, 2015).

Applying Procedural Justice in Various Contexts

Gender, race, socioeconomic status, and age are factors that can affect perceptions of police fairness and outcomes. Initial data relating to the relationship between gender and procedural justice can be traced to perceptions of fairness within business organizations (Sweeney & McFarlin, 1997). Within such organizations, women placed greater importance on the fairness of processes within the workplace, while men placed greater importance on a fair distribution of outcomes within the workplace. Support for the aforementioned rationale has emerged from research about the early differences between how boys and girls are socialized, with boys generally being socialized to be independent and girls being socialized to be obedient (Yagil, 1998). When assessing the effects of gender and procedural justice relating to traffic

stops and compliance, women were found to have a stronger sense of the need to comply with traffic laws than men (Yagil, 1998). Further, research relevant to policing, specifically stop-and-frisks, has examined how young men who have been stopped and frisked viewed the importance of procedural justice. Among 45 adolescents from urban St. Louis neighborhoods, young males, ages 13 to 19, offered in-depth perceptions of their observations, encounters, and personal experiences with St. Louis police officers (Gau & Brunson, 2010). Seventy-eight percent of the respondents reported being stopped by police at least once in their lives (Gau & Brunson, 2010). Respondents also expressed feelings of being stopped for no reason, and being stopped due to the neighborhood in which they lived (Gau & Brunson, 2010). Finally, White male respondents expressed more positive views of police and less frequent negative experiences with police than African American male respondents (Gau & Brunson, 2010).

Research has assessed the relationship between neighborhoods and views of police fairness through procedural justice. The neighborhood in which an individual lives has been found to affect relationships between police and citizens, as well as police practices (Brunson & Weitzer, 2009). Recently, there have been numerous negative police encounters between African American males and police in disadvantaged neighborhoods such as Ferguson, Missouri (Healy, 2014), and Baltimore, Maryland (Sanchez, Ellis, & Karimi, 2015). According to neighborhood racial composition theory, the racial composition of a neighborhood affects residents' relationships with police (Weitzer, 2000). Police are less likely to show respect to individuals who live in disadvantaged neighborhoods and communities (Weitzer, 2015). Applying this theory to African American males, greater numbers of African American men in lower socioeconomic neighborhoods have been linked to greater chances of African American males being racially profiled (English, Lambert, Evans, & Zonderman, 2014).

In the past, courts have granted police officers greater discretion to stop and frisk individuals within disadvantaged neighborhoods whom they deem suspicious (Gau, Corsaro, Stewart, & Brunson, 2012). Further, police officers have been found to use greater force in encounters with suspects in disadvantaged neighborhoods (Terril & Reisig, 2003). Residents of disadvantaged communities also may face more negative encounters with police because they may be perceived by some as having less of a voice and less of an opportunity to hold police accountable for negative actions (Brunson & Weitzer, 2009). Individuals from disadvantaged neighborhoods have been found to have a greater distrust of police, and it is important to explore their perceptions of fairness at the micro-level (Nix, Wolfe, Rojek, & Kaminski, 2015). However, views of procedural injustice are not limited to African Americans from lower socioeconomic statuses. In a national survey of traffic stop police encounters, African Americans of all social classes were found to have greater perceptions of procedural and distributive injustice than whites (Engel, 2005). For example, African Americans were more likely than Whites to perceive that police stops were illegitimate, improper, and more frequent (Engel, 2005).

Age is another factor that influences perceptions of police. Younger youth have been found to have more positive perceptions of police than older youth (Brick, Taylor, & Esbensen, 2009). One of the objectives of a kindergarten curriculum is to convey to children the importance of justice and understanding (Dalbert & Sallay, 2004). Even more specific than a general understanding of justice and its importance, it has been found that preschoolers are indeed aware of the importance of procedural justice (Grocke, Rossano, & Tomasello, 2015). In addition, children between the ages of 6 and 8 have been found to begin to value fairness and conceptualize the importance of impartiality in decision-making (Shaw & Olson, 2014).

Research into how fair decision making affects family dynamics is increasing (Fondacaro et al., 2006). Adolescents whose parents treated them fairly during family disputes have been found to have more positive relationships with their family (Fondacaro et al., 2006). Conversely, adolescents who perceived unfair decision-making processes by their parents were more likely to socialize with deviant peer groups (Stuart, Fondacaro, Miller, Brown, & Brank, 2008).

Perceptions of police are not universal, and race has been found to affect police perceptions (Huebner, Schafer, & Bynum, 2004). “African Americans have been found to have more negative evaluations of police performance than Whites” (Priest & Carter, 1999, p. 463). Racial divisions between police and African Americans have been well documented in literature, with research indicating that African Americans generally have more negative views of police than Whites (Eschholz, Blackwell, Gertz, & Chiricos, 2002; Priest & Carter, 1999).

Lack of trust in police among African Americans can be chronologically traced through history and passed on to the present, beginning with the Civil War, when police often failed to protect African Americans from violent acts such as lynching (Priest & Carter, 1999). Despite chronological progression, lack of trust and skepticism of police remain an issue among some African Americans. There are several reasons that the mistrust of police among African Americans persists. Media and, specifically, the coverage of major events involving police brutality, have been found to play a role in African Americans’ attitudes toward police and the belief that police biases exist (Flanagan & Vaughn, 1996; Weitzer & Tuch, 2005). For example, the legal outcome of the 1991 beating of Rodney King by four White Los Angeles Police Department officers caused African Americans to ponder fairness within the justice system (Sigelman, Welch, Bledsoe, & Combs, 1997). After the four officers received a not guilty verdict, polls showed an overwhelming majority of African Americans thought the officers

should have been convicted, and an overwhelming majority of African Americans, as a result of the not guilty verdict, felt they could not get justice in America (Sigelman et al., 1997).

Moreover, media stories that depicted the Rodney King beating and police brutality overall led to greater citizen distrust and cynicism regarding Los Angeles police officers (Flanagan & Vaughn, 1996). In 1992, the beating and killing of Malice Green by members of the Detroit Police Department revealed to some Whites, and confirmed to some African Americans, that the epidemic of police brutality extended beyond Los Angeles (Sigelman et al., 1997).

Global procedural justice includes civilians' general assessments of the aggregate levels of procedural justice that police afford to members of the public during typical face-to-face encounters (e.g., traffic stops, calls for service) (Gau, 2014). Personal interaction with police is clearly one of the most important factors that affects perceptions and opinions of police (Brick et al., 2009). Direct, negative experiences between police and citizens have been found to negatively affect citizens' opinions of police (Weitzer, 2015). Examples of negative treatment during a police encounter include a police officer being rude during an encounter, not providing a reason for stopping an individual, detaining an individual for an extreme amount of time, and using excessive force during the encounter (Weitzer, 2015).

An indirect, or vicarious, experience with police refers to "learning about the police through the experiences of others" (Rosenbaum, Schuck, Costello, Hawkins, & Ring., 2005, p. 346). Such experiences have been found to be of critical importance in determining how people view police (Rosenbaum et al., 2005; Weitzer, 2015). Examples of indirect encounters with police include, but are not limited to, witnessing a police officer break up a fight or gathering, or observing a friend or loved one be searched by police (Jones-Brown, 2000). Recent examples of indirect experiences with police also include interactions between citizens and police during

peaceful protests in Baltimore, Maryland, and Ferguson, Missouri. Increasingly, research is examining the effects of stops and frisks of African American males on loved ones, which have been found to not only affect the individual who is stopped, but also family members of that individual (Center for Constitutional Rights, 2012). In addition, friends and family of an individual who had a negative experience with police have been found to have more negative views of police (Machura, Love, & Dwight, 2014). Aging and life experiences also affect African Americans' perceptions of police. In a 2008 study, middle-aged adults recounted issues they faced related to racial discrimination and police brutality, expressed concern for future generations of African American males, and felt police harassment was an ongoing issue for all African American men (Dottolo & Stewart, 2008).

Procedural Justice Perceptions Among African American Males

Although justice carries fairly universal symbolisms, how justice is perceived and enforced varies greatly. Society entrusts police to carry out fair practices, and it is often through police encounters that individuals form their perceptions of justice. Such perceptions are formed through direct and indirect experiences. Race and gender have been found to affect perceptions of police, with African American males being treated unfairly by police at disproportionate rates (Holland, 2015). Such negative encounters with police can leave lasting impressions and perceptions, affecting not only the individual who has the encounter, but also family and friends of the individual.

Some parents of African American males feel the need to socialize their sons for possible encounters with police by preparing them for possible negative discriminatory experiences, racial encounters, and racial profiling. These socialization lessons often come in the form of talks, discussions, and reflections. Some African American parents once considered this talk

appropriate during adolescence. However, parents are feeling the need to have these discussions at much earlier ages for numerous reasons. For example, negative encounters with police are occurring at increasingly younger ages, and children who appear physically older than their actual age are being perceived as adults. These perceptions have resulted in negative, even deadly consequences, including Michael Davis, Darrin Manning, Jason Goolsby, and Tamir Rice, just to name a few.

Legal Socialization

The process of socialization can have broad effects on adolescents. They are learning where they fit in society. One of the socialization processes this entails is gaining insight into how they are perceived by authorities and the meaning of laws. Legal socialization is “the product of the interactions of individuals with law” (Fagan & Piquero, 2007, p. 734). From a developmental perspective, the origins of legal socialization processes are immersed in the cognitive developmental approaches of Kohlberg, Erikson, and Piaget (Cohn & White, 1986). For example, Piaget emphasized that an individual’s level of moral development helped to determine how they processed and understood issues of morality (Cohn & White, 1986). Kohlberg and Erikson stressed that children gained moral and cognitive awareness through a series of developmental steps or stages (Cohn & White, 1986). Just as children and adolescents are processing and internalizing experiences, they are forming perceptions about laws, right from wrong, and the entire world surrounding them. As such, children develop perceptions of individuals in positions of authority at an early age, and those perceptions influence their actions toward police during adolescence and adulthood (Fagan & Piquero, 2007). Piaget placed importance on an individual gaining maturity with time, and he believed that individuals progressed through developmental stages in life that prepared them to adapt and survive in the

environment (Muuss, 1996; Piaget, 2008; Thomas, 2005). He placed great emphasis on the relationship between a child's development, the environment, and how the child participated in, and responded to, his environmental experiences (Muuss, 1996). He sought to determine how knowledge developed in individuals and believed that an individual's perceptions were formed from experiences and his or her maturational level at the time of the experience (Thomas, 2005).

A developmental theory is most effective when it adequately provides a lens through which we can see children and their growth (Thomas, 2005). The most effective theories (a) accurately reflect participants, (b) help explain the past and predict future events, and (c) effectively explain development (Thomas, 2005). In addition to measuring development through cognitive, moral, and social lenses, a theory should also consider contextual factors that influence a child's development—such as family relationships, community, policies, culture—and how these factors affect the individual's development (Livingston & Nahimana, 2006).

An ecological approach to development helps to explain these important factors that influence a child's development (Livingston & Nahimana, 2006). There has not been a great deal of research into how legitimacy affects perceptions of police according to race, and even less research approaching legitimacy from an ecological perspective (Bell, 2016). Approaching development from an ecological perspective has multiple benefits (Sontag, Wright, Young, & Grace, 1991). Human ecology recognizes the importance of understanding community, understands the important role that families play in the process of development, and recognizes that subjective human emotions are a critical part of better understanding individuals.

Legal Legitimacy

As noted earlier by Tyler (2006), when individuals feel that they have a fair procedural justice process, they are more likely to view institutional authority as legitimate and they are

more likely to obey. Fagan & Tyler (2005) describe legitimacy as the feeling that one should obey institutional authority. The term can be thought of as an agreement between an individual and an authority figure that implies as long as the person in authority treats an individual in accordance with the law, that individual will follow the requested demands of the authority figure (Tyler, 1990). Regarding policing and legitimacy, earlier research focused on instrumental policing models, which stressed that individuals complied with institutional authority primarily out of fear of the consequences in not doing so and stressed that individuals based their willingness to comply on their judgment as to whether a person in authority is capable of resolving the conflict (Meares, 2000; Tyler, 1997; Tyler, 2004). In contrast, in addition to whether an authority is capable of resolving conflict, identity-based relation models emphasize that as people form opinions of institutional authority, they assess whether the person in authority appears to rule fairly and with concern for the individual (Tyler, 1997). Indeed, Tyler felt that the reasoning behind individuals' views of legitimacy are of importance when it comes to issues of legitimacy; they believe that how they are treated reflects their social standing within a group and, quite possibly, how they will be treated within their group (Tyler, 1997). Individuals have been found to see those in authority as more legitimate when the authority figures treat others fairly and with respect, make decisions with integrity, and convey through their actions that they value citizens (Tyler, 1997). Consequently, when individuals trust institutional authority, citizens are more willing to cooperate with police, and feel more obligated to prevent crime within their own spaces (Tyler, 2004). Thus, legitimacy can be seen as an implied contract between institutional authority and a citizen, where a citizen agrees to follow rules, abide by efforts to thwart crime, and support the goals and mission of institutional authority. In turn, he or she feels treated fairly and respectfully in his or her police interactions.

One of Tyler's (1990) earliest studies of legitimacy focused on whether individuals' feelings about the legitimacy of authorities affected their willingness to comply. It consisted of a scale that measured the extent to which (a) respondents felt they were obligated to obey the law, and (b) the degree to which they supported legal authority. Tyler found that more than 80% felt they should obey laws, even if it went against their beliefs. He also found that individuals always tried to follow laws, even if they did not believe the laws were just. In addition, Tyler's study found that factors such as older age, level of education, and whether respondents felt they received fair treatment from authority figures influenced an individual's willingness or feelings of obligation to comply. Finally, Tyler's results indicated that respondents who indicated that they received unfair treatment by individuals in positions of authority did not have a jaded outlook on their future interactions with police.

Perceptions of legitimacy have also been studied from the perspective of adolescents. Fagan & Piquero (2007) found that, as with adults, the manner in which individuals in positions of authority treat adolescents influences whether those adolescents view them as legitimate (Fagan & Piquero, 2007). However, it was also noted that, during this developmental period, adolescents are forming views and processing opinions about fairness in the justice system, beliefs, and life values that influence their views of legitimacy during adolescence and beyond. In addition to forming views, opinions, and beliefs during adolescence, African American adolescents are also processing beliefs about race and their own identities. These findings support the belief that fairness of procedure affects views of those in authority.

Piquero, Fagan, Mulvey, Steinberg, & Odgers (2005) stressed the need to extend research on legal socialization to juvenile offenders as a means to gain better insight among adolescents who have had contact with police. The authors examined 1,355 African American, White, and

Hispanic adolescents between the ages of 14 and 18 who had been charged with committing serious offenses. The authors measured the participants' views of legitimacy and cynicism over an 18-month period and found that once respondents passed the age of 14, their perceptions of legitimacy did not change substantially. Piquero et al. (2005) also found that older respondents perceived the justice system as less legitimate than younger respondents. Lee et al. (2011) researched whether ethnic identity affected participants' views of legitimacy, and found those who reported higher levels of pride in their ethnicity also had higher views of legitimacy toward police and laws. The authors indicated that future research should assess whether views of legitimacy remain the same from adolescence into adulthood.

Piquero et al. (2005) reasoned that juvenile offenders provide greater insight into perceptions of legal socialization because they have had more experiences with the legal system. However, current circumstances regarding police misconduct, police brutality, and killings of unarmed African American males warrant the need for research regarding legal socialization processes among African American males of all types. For example, in a sample of young males between the ages of 18 and 26 who lived in New York City, Tyler, Fagan, and Gellar (2014) found that the respondents were more willing to cooperate with police whom they viewed as legitimate. The more the respondents viewed police as legitimate, the less likely they were to take part in crime. Other research has been conducted on views of legitimacy among adolescents and juvenile offenders. However, there is a need for research that extends the concept of legitimacy to nonoffending African Americans—not only during adolescence, but also through adulthood. Individuals begin to form perceptions of legitimacy during adolescence, but experiences occur throughout the lifespan. There is little research on legal socialization processes among college-age African American males. In particular, additional research is needed that

examines the role legitimacy plays among African American undergraduates on college campuses.

Legal Cynicism

Legal cynicism describes the notion that when individuals do not feel laws are legitimate, it is more acceptable not to conform to established laws (Fagan & Tyler, 2005). It is described as a guide that affects the way individuals perceive legal legitimacy (Kirk & Papachristos, 2011). Legal cynicism derives from the concept of “anomie about law,” meaning “laws are meant to be broken” (Lee et al., 2011). In the past, African Americans and individuals from low socioeconomic statuses were thought to believe in “anomie” and that laws were meant to be broken. However, legal cynicism derives less from race and low socioeconomic status than from negative and unfair experiences with law. Further, this supports the notion that the more an individual experiences unfair experiences with legal authorities, the more he or she loses trust in those authorities and is likely to develop a negative attitude toward having equal opportunities within the legal system (Nivette, Eisner, Malti, & Ribeaud, 2014; Sampson & Bartusch, 1998;).

Sampson & Bartusch (1998) found that African Americans were not prone to violence and deviance. In fact, their study of over 8,000 Chicago residents found African Americans to be less tolerant of crime than Whites. In addition, they found that African Americans could certainly live in high-crime areas, yet be intolerant of crime. They did, however, find that people in low-income/poverty areas had a higher ability to tolerate deviance. The phrase “concentrated disadvantage” represents neighborhoods that are prone to factors such as “poverty, public assistance, unemployment, female-headed families, and blacks” (Sampson & Bartusch, 1998, p. 789). Yet, Kirk & Papachristos (2011) added that culture influences legal cynicism because

individuals in neighborhoods communicate and share their views and perceptions of fairness about the justice system.

Contributions to Existing Research

Lady Liberty, a blindfolded citizen, holds an unbalanced scale to represent America's quest for impartiality and equality in the justice system (Sanders & Hamilton, 2001). However, justice is not always equitable. Gender, race, socioeconomic status, and age provide examples of possible disparities in perceptions of justice and legal outcomes. If justice cannot be seen through a clear, evenly distributed, African American and White lens, arguably neither can an individual's reactions to discriminatory police encounters. For example, not every African American male who experiences a direct or indirect negative police encounter has the same perceptions, thoughts, feelings, and consequences regarding the experience.

Generally, one of the unspoken, yet understood, goals of adolescence is to allow youth opportunities to apply life lessons they are learning through socialization and interactions with other youth in a fairly tolerant and teachable society. Due to their race and gender, African American males are not always provided the same opportunities and lifelines as their adolescent peers of other races.

In addition to facing challenges related to race and gender, African American adolescent males must also make sense of the ordinary challenges and stressors that most adolescents face. Perceptions of African American children begin to change at a much earlier age than those of children in other racial groups, with African American children being seen by some as less innocent and more like adults by the age of 10, in turn making them more susceptible to being judged as adults and treated more harshly (Goff et al., 2014). Specifically, as early as age 10,

African American boys begin to be viewed as less innocent than White males of the same age, leaving them vulnerable to adult-level repercussions if accused of a crime (Goff et al., 2014).

Such findings are a common occurrence. In California, Michael Davis, a 5-year-old boy with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), was handcuffed and arrested by police for getting into a fight at school (Manoucheri, 2012). In Flint, Michigan, police handcuffed a 7-year-old boy who was accused of being violent (Carrero, 2015). In New York City, bystanders protested as a plainclothes police officer repeatedly punched a 12-year-old African American boy whom they alleged, but had not confirmed, assaulted a person with a cane (Parascandola, Paddock, & Tracy, 2014). In Washington D.C., police pinned 18-year-old Jason Goolsby, an African American scholarship recipient, to the ground because he allegedly made customers in a bank feel uncomfortable (Swaine, 2015). In Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, a police officer squeezed 16-year-old African American male Darrin Manning's testicles so forcefully during a stop-and-frisk patdown that his testicles ruptured (Braverman, 2014). In New York City, a police officer knocked then 16-year-old Marcel Hamer to the ground for allegedly smoking marijuana, which was later found to be a cigarette; he now suffers neurological impairments, such as headaches and dizziness (Furfaro, 2014). In North Carolina, following a call from neighbors of a suspected burglary, police pepper sprayed an African American teenage male as he entered the door of his White foster family's home (Hannah, 2014). In New York, three African American basketball players, accused of blocking pedestrian traffic, were arrested as they waited for a school bus to take them to a basketball scrimmage (Baker, 2013). Their high school basketball coach watched his players be arrested as he tried to explain to the police why the three young men were innocently following his instructions to wait in a central location for the scrimmage bus (Baker, 2013). In Illinois, two plainclothes police officers handcuffed a 13-year-old African

American male whom they mistakenly believed fit the description of a suspected African American male who had committed burglary; the 13-year-old's mother watched in agony as police handcuffed her son (Greenwell, 2012).

The repercussions that African American adolescent males face for being perceived as older are numerous. African American youth who have been perceived as older and discriminated against have been found to suffer higher levels of depression and lower levels of self-esteem (Seaton et al., 2010). Among adolescents, data have not shown a correlation between perceived racism and elevated blood pressure. However, a correlation has been found between discrimination and physical appearance among adolescents (Matthews, Salomon, Kenyon, & Zhou, 2005; Seaton et al., 2010). This finding is particularly important considering the amount of emphasis placed on individual characteristics and physical appearance during adolescence. Finally, African American males who are perceived as older face the possibility of being negatively racially profiled at a much earlier age—providing greater opportunities for dangerous encounters with police. Being an African American male in the United States carries images and stigmas (Henfield, 2012). Certain images portray African American males as criminals and prone to violence (Eberhardt, Goff, Purdie, & Davies, 2004; Henfield, 2012; Smith, Allen, & Danley, 2007; Welch, 2007). Such stereotypes and perceptions can begin at an early age and can affect how African Americans are viewed by society, including those in positions of authority, such as police. Considering the effects that racial profiling can have on the perceptions of African American males, it is important to examine how these experiences affect development during adolescence.

One of the ways that individuals gain meaning about their place in society is through messages that are conveyed to them through their experiences and interactions with members of

society (Taylor & Nanney, 2011). Applying this to the issue of policing in America, for an African American male, negative experiences with police can begin at an early age. Literature supports the need to understand perceptions of justice among delinquent adolescents of color. However, research into perceptions of justice among non-delinquent African American males is scarce. Even more limited, to my knowledge, are studies that highlight how socialization processes that African American males receive during adolescence and beyond affect how they presently perceive police and how they will socialize their sons to possible encounters with police. This study attempted to evaluate perceptions of justice among African American males from a legal socialization framework, particularly evaluating the components of legitimacy and cynicism from a nonoffender perspective. This study also approached the subject of how African American males perceive justice from a human ecological approach, balancing messages that African American males receive from their families against various other ecological systems consisting of laws and time.

CHAPTER III

QUALITATIVE METHODOLOGY

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study was to explore perceptions of justice and legal socialization processes among college-age African American males. In particular, this study sought to address the following questions:

1. What do African American male college students believe about the legitimacy of the procedural justice process?
2. Do African American male college students believe that experiences with police in the course of their development have influenced their views of cynicism?
3. How do African American male college students describe their intentions to prepare their sons for possible encounters with police?
4. How do African American male college students describe their experiences with police?
5. How have African American male college students formed their beliefs about police and the criminal justice system?

Exploring how direct and indirect encounters with police affected African American males' perceptions of fairness and justice required insight into their developmental processes. Further, to fully explore how these perceptions affected their development, I had to examine how a person changed over time through interactions with, and perceptions of, his or her immediate environment (Muuss, 1996). Utilizing an ecological perspective allowed insight into the relationship between individuals and their social and physical environments (Muuss, 1996). Bronfenbrenner (1979) described the environment as a set of interrelated structures and systems.

To better understand how those systems affected development, I analyzed relationships that African American males had with their families, how these policies and laws directly and indirectly affected them, and how their relationships with these systems changed over time. This chapter explains the (a) rationale for a qualitative research design, (b) rationale for a content analysis methodology, (c) reflexivity, (d) review of literature, (e) data collection, (f) data analysis, (g) findings process, and (h) plans for trustworthiness.

Rationale for a Qualitative Methodology

Gaining insight and understanding into how encounters with racial discrimination affect development involved dialogue, insight into experiences, and reflection and exploration of participants' stories. Qualitative research seeks to understand a phenomenon, and it involves the exploration of a complex problem or issue (Creswell, 2013; Marshall & Rossman, 2011). It also seeks to advocate for individuals and provide insight into political issues through participants' stories and experiences (Creswell, 2003). Creswell (2013) explained that there are numerous benefits to qualitative research. To elaborate, qualitative research (a) de-emphasizes a power relationship and allows the voices of participants to be heard, (b) provides unique insight when quantitative and statistical analyses may not provide a full explanation of the problem, (c) allows researchers to address the actual settings of participants, and (d) is cognizant of, and sensitive to, the social identities of participants.

Qualitative research was appropriate for this study for several reasons. First, in-depth interviews allowed participants to express their views and reflect upon their experiences with police in a safe environment without repercussions. Second, exploring African American males' perceptions of justice from a qualitative, content-analysis perspective provided me with the opportunity to gain insight into the emotional and developmental effects on participants of direct

and indirect encounters with police in ways that quantitative data as a primary method may not have captured. Finally, addressing this study from a qualitative approach provided participants who might feel underrepresented or misunderstood with the opportunity to explain their points of view and express their feelings.

Rationale for a Content-Analysis Research Design

One of the goals of this study was to gain insight into how direct and indirect experiences with police affected African American males' perceptions of fairness and justice. Accordingly, it was first necessary to assess the participants' beliefs about the justice system. Next, it was important to select a theoretical framework that allowed me to closely examine the participants' responses for potential themes, similarities, and/or differences relating to the phenomenon of legal socialization. Content analysis is "the process of identifying, coding, and categorizing the primary patterns in the data" (Patton, 1990, p. 381). In addition to being used as a method to analyze data, content analysis also is useful to help make sense of a phenomenon (Yang & Miller, 2008; Downe-Wambolt, 1992). In addition, it is a method used to select themes from data and help describe how often similar concepts emerge within data (Yang & Miller, 2008). The content analysis process generally consists of carefully reviewing the data, categorizing, or coding, the data, and determining where the data fit within the established categories (Franzosi, 2007). This method was appropriate for my study because I used surveys and interviews to gain understanding of the phenomenon of legal socialization. More specifically, I coded the data that I derived from my participants into categories as a means of providing insight into the five research questions relating to participants' perceptions of the justice system.

Reflexivity

It is important that the researcher acknowledge and recognize the biases and values he or she has experienced relating to the phenomenon being studied (Creswell, 2013). Negative encounters with police and racial profiling transcend socioeconomic status, academic achievement, and adhering to rules. Acknowledging my role as an African American male involved exploring how indirect encounters with police affected my own development. I had to reflect on the lessons that my parents taught my brothers and I, and closely examine how those lessons prepared me for dealing with any potential encounters with police. Further, it involved reflecting upon how I want to convey the socialization practices that my parents taught my brothers and I to my future children. I had to make sense of a delicate balance between how media incidences of police brutality—that seem to occur with increasing regularity—and a history of racial profiling injustices have shattered my perceptions of fairness, yet how support systems, such as family and mentors, have rebuilt my faith in justice. Finally, I needed to explore how other African American males seek to make sense of the complex issue of racial profiling and direct and indirect encounters with police.

LaFollette (2007) describes the story of a prisoner who witnessed a fellow prisoner being prepared for execution. As he watched this process, the prisoner, John Bradford, reflected, “There but for the grace of God go I” (p. 1). I often reflect upon the startling realization that racial profiling is such a complex issue because it transcends age, socioeconomic status, and how completely individuals abide with laws. As the aforementioned examples support, I could easily be one step away from a negative encounter with police that could result in drastic consequences, even death.

I am fully aware of my vested interest in this topic. I have perceived disparities in the justice system for quite some time, which motivated me to attend law school. During law school, I learned African American letter law that provided me with a legal knowledge base to support my perceptions of disparities in the law. Knowledge of the law is important because it provided me with evidence and a legal lens to point to legal disparities. In addition, my status as an African American male affected why I wanted to conduct research relating to legal socialization. I had a personal interest in this topic because, despite having a working knowledge of the law, as an African American male, I am equally vulnerable to experiencing a negative police encounter. Although I have not personally experienced severely negative encounters with police, I have followed too many instances of African American males who have had such experiences yet had no recourse. Further, I had an interest in this topic because legal socialization affects African American males despite socioeconomic status, amount of education, or physical characteristics. I would like my research to provide greater insight into how negative encounters affect not only individuals, but also their family members.

Review of Literature

The review of literature in Chapter II provides support for the study, serves as a framework for future findings, and connects theory to phenomenon (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). I explored, through this study, the developmental effects of racial discrimination among African American males, and how direct and indirect experiences with police affect their development. Since the study retrospectively analyzed perceptions of justice among African American college-age males during adolescence, it was necessary to review literature relating to adolescent development. It also was necessary to analyze how participants were socialized to laws and views of the justice system, so it was important to review literature relevant to racial

and legal socialization. Finally, I utilized Bronfenbrenner's ecological framework to gain insight into how laws affect individuals and families. Thus, it was important to include literature related to Bronfenbrenner and the Person, Place, Context, Time (PPCT) model.

Data Collection

Ethical Considerations

The university's Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved the informational letter to subjects and the consent form (see Appendix B) in advance.

I did not begin any data collection until I received written approval from the university's IRB (see Appendix C). An informed consent document provided the participant with an overview of the data process and served as an agreement between the participant and me. The informed consent document detailed the terms of the data process, including the objectives of the interview, potential risks of taking part in the interview, and the participant's right to decline or stop participating in the study at any time during the study (Sin, 2005). I provided my name and my advisor's contact information on the consent form. However, the participant did not identify his name on the consent form to protect his anonymity.

I used passive consent for participants in Phase 1 and Phase 2. To elaborate, prior to completing a survey in Phase 1, each participant was required to read the terms of the informed consent document. The participants indicated that they agreed to participate in the study by completing the survey and returning it to me.

Recruitment

The recruitment criteria for this study consisted of African American-male undergraduate students, between the ages of 18 and 25. Initially, I utilized the university's Office of Institutional Equity and instructors at the university to recruit potential participants. However, I

ultimately recruited all participants for my study from large, university classes. At no time did I know the participants' names. Utilizing colleagues is an effective method of selecting participants for a study (MacDougall & Fudge, 2001). As such, I requested assistance from faculty and staff of university departments to recruit participants. I sent various faculty and staff a general email describing my study, and asking for permission to visit his or her class to briefly discuss my study. I visited nine different large classes over the course of one month. The protocol for each recruitment visit was the same – upon invitation from the instructor, I arrived at the classroom before class, or immediately prior to class dismissal. Next, I introduced my proposed study, and asked any participant who may have been interested in participating to meet me immediately after class. If a potential participant expressed interest in my study, I handed the individual an informational letter; he read it and if he agreed to the provisions of the informed consent, he returned the consent form and completed a survey instrument.

Snowball sampling describes a process whereby people recommend other potential participants who might fit the recruitment criteria (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). In some instances in this study, when visiting classes to recruit participants, other students assisted in arranging a time to set up an interview if they knew of another person who fit the recruitment criteria and might be interested in participating. Two of my participants were recommended to me as a result of a classroom visit. The students provided my email address to the potential participants and arranged a time for me to meet the participants. The students who referred these potential participants to me facilitated the meeting time to protect the anonymity of the potential participants. Saturation refers to “gathering enough information to fully develop a model” (Creswell, 2013, p. 89). Fifteen participants took part in the Phase 2 interviews. I knew that I

reached saturation upon completion of fifteen interviews because similarities in answers began to occur and categories began to emerge.

Survey Instrument

I conducted two phases of data collection. Phase 1 consisted of an 11-question survey (Appendix D). Phase 2 consisted of an optional follow-up interview for participants who agreed to elaborate on the answers that they provided on their 11-question survey. The survey instrument for Phase 1 and Phase 2 of data collection were the same. In phase 1, participants answered 11 questions, and in Phase 2, participants had the option of elaborating on answers that they provided to the 11 questions during phase 1. If participants were interested in completing the survey, I met with them after class or arranged a time to meet on campus. Of 42 participants who completed a survey during Phase 1, 15 African American male undergraduate students agreed to participate in an in-depth interview. The in-depth interview allowed the participants to provide additional insight into any of the 11 survey questions they completed during the Phase 1 survey. There were no financial incentives for participants who took part in the study. All interviews occurred in person and on campus.

The first question asked the participant to indicate his age. The second question asked the participant to indicate his geographical category of origin (inner city, rural, or suburban). The third question asked the participant whether he would be willing to take part in an in-depth interview relating to the survey. The other eight Likert-type questions asked participants to indicate (1) their views on legitimacy (2) their views on legal cynicism, (3) when they had most of their contact with police, (4) how much of what they believed about police came from direct experiences, (5) how much they believed about the criminal justice system came from direct experiences (6) their views of police, (7) what their parents told them about how they should

interact with police, and (8) what they intended to tell their sons regarding how to interact with police. For each Likert-type question, there were five options ranging from a-e (see Appendix D). I asked the participants not to include their names on the survey, and at no time was I aware of the participants' names. Survey questions during Phase 1 provided quantitative data, which was analyzed to provide descriptive statistics. In Phase 2, which consisted of in-depth interviews, I used open coding of qualitative data followed by axial coding.

Interview Processes

Triangulation consists of a researcher using multiple sources and methods to ensure that findings are consistent (Creswell, 2013; Patton, 1980). The data collection methods for this study consisted of in-depth, semi-structured interviews that contained open-ended questions, which allowed issues to be explored through the responses of participants (Pope & Mays, 2000). Generally, with semi-structured interviews, the researcher prepares a script. However, the participants need to have flexibility and openness in how they respond to the researcher's questions (Myers & Newman, 2007).

Again, the purpose of the second data collection phase was to provide participants who so chose with an opportunity to elaborate on the answers that they provided on the 11-question survey. Participants could elaborate on as few or as many questions as they wished. While the interview times ranged, most interviews lasted around 45 minutes. The shortest interview was under ten minutes, and the longest interview was over an hour.

Research Participants

Since the goal of this study was to explore how direct and indirect experiences with police affect the development of African American males, there were specific criteria regarding the sample. Criterion sampling is an effective sampling strategy to use when participants share a

common experience or phenomenon (Creswell, 2013). In this study, I purposely selected African American males to determine whether they had indirect or direct negative encounters with police. More specifically, participants were African American male undergraduate students. In compliance with the university's IRB, all participants read an informed consent document, which described the purpose of the study, provided my name and email address if they had any questions during and after the interview, explained that no questions would harm the participant, and indicated that the participant had the right to end the interview at any time. Participants returned the informed consent prior to partaking in the study.

Sample Size

The sample size for this study consisted of 42 African American college-age males for Phase 1 of the survey, and 15 of the 42 males for Phase 2 of the interview.

Data Analysis

Data Management

I recorded all Phase 2 interviews by using a computer and a back-up tape recorder. Transcription is more than a mechanical process; it represents the phenomena of the participants (Davidson, 2009). As a method of gaining familiarity with my participants, I transcribed all interviews. I stored all data on a computer hard drive and a backup drive, and I had sole access to all data. Capturing participants' exact words, gestures, and pauses is a critical part of demonstrating the full interview (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012). To capture the full essence of the participants' interviews, I transcribed all aspects of the participants' interviews to replicate their exact responses and perceptions as accurately as possible.

Coding

Coding is the most important part of the qualitative data analysis process. It consists of the researcher categorizing the data in a way that, in the researcher's view, represents the participants' experiences and the literature (Creswell, 2013). The constant comparison method consists of a continuous process of coding and analyzing data throughout the analysis phase of a study, which results in the formation of categories (Westbrook, 1994). I continued to re-examine participants' responses, identifying similarities, differences, and potential categories. I utilized open coding to seek major categories of information (Creswell, 2013).

Once I established major categories via open coding, I sought more specific categories through axial coding (Westbrook, 1994). Once coding was complete, I determined whether patterns emerged (Westbrook, 1994). I knew that the categorizing process was saturated, or theoretically sufficient, once no new information emerged (Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Westbrook, 1994). In addition, I consistently utilized memoing as a technique to formulate and gather ideas throughout the coding process (Creswell, 2013). Finally, a theme is "an outcome of coding, categorization, and analytic reflection" (Saldana, 2009, p. 139). Themes emerged from the coding and categorization of my data.

Findings Process

I utilized Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS, v. 20) to tabulate participants' responses for the Phase 1 survey. Frequency statistics provided a summary of the 42 participants' responses to that survey. I used a constant comparative methodology to code the responses from the in-depth interviews of the 15 participants in Phase 2, seeking emerging categories and themes. Based on the findings, I was able to define implications and plans for future research related to the topics of legal socialization and perceptions of justice.

Plans for Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness refers to the process a researcher uses to assure all parts of the research process and overall study are forthright, reflective of his or her participants, and accurate (Creswell, 2003). I utilized the following methods to ensure my study was accurate and reflective of the participants' experiences.

Triangulation

Triangulation occurs when a researcher utilizes multiple methods in a study with the purpose of providing support for the validity of his or her data and findings (Creswell, 2003; Patton, 1980). Descriptive statistics "classify and summarize numerical data" (Hinkle, Wiersma, & Jurs, 2003). In this study, descriptive statistics complemented the primary qualitative findings by providing an overview of responses. Specifically, frequencies were used to represent the occurrence of participants' responses (Hinkle et al., 2003).

Bias

Bias consists of acknowledging and noting any experiences, opinions, and perceptions the researcher has relating to the study (Creswell, 2003). Acknowledging biases allows a reader to posit how the researcher's experiences, opinions, and perceptions relate to the study's structure and outcomes (Marshall & Rossman, 2011).

I acknowledge that indirect encounters with police have affected my development and perceptions of justice. I further acknowledge that, as an African American male, I fit the description of my participants, thus bringing to the study a level of empathy and understanding regarding the topic of racial profiling. Further, I bring to the study a scholarly interest related to racial profiling and stop and frisk practices. Accordingly, and fully recognizing these biases, I recognize that, just as I have mentioned race, gender, and experiences with police as

commonalities, they also could serve as exceptionalities, as every individual has a unique perspective, experience, and opinion relating to the topic. Thus, I made every attempt to let each participant reveal his own perceptions in relation to the topic.

Peer Debriefing

Peer debriefing provides the researcher with an opportunity to review his or her data with an individual to check for accuracy during the study (Creswell, 2003). I sought feedback during all stages of the study from my advisor and committee members. In addition, I consulted with colleagues regarding the rationale for my research design and methods.

Summary

This study examined college-age African American males' perceptions of justice through two phases of data. Upon approval from the university's institutional review board, I recruited my participants by visiting large university classes to explain my proposed study and utilizing the snowball method of recruitment. Phase 1 consisted of an 11-question survey, which 42 participants completed. Phase 2 consisted of a voluntary, follow-up interview where participants could provide explanations to the responses they provided in the Phase 1 survey. Fifteen out of 42 participants provided a follow-up interview.

I utilized SPSS v. 20 software to tabulate frequencies of participants' Phase 1 answers. I transcribed all participants' answers for Phase 2 and used a constant comparison approach in search of themes, as well as open coding to find major categories. This was followed by axial coding for specific categories.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

This chapter presents results from college-age, undergraduate African-American males' perceptions of justice as collected via an 11-question survey distributed on a college campus. The survey sought to gain insight into participants' beliefs and experiences with the justice system, and whether those beliefs and experiences have influenced how they will prepare their sons for potential encounters with police. First, this chapter summarizes descriptive statistics from the survey, which was administered to 42 participants and provided a context for the second phase of data collection. Next, the chapter presents qualitative findings from the 15 participants who participated in Phase 2 of the study and provided additional insight into the answers they selected in Phase 1.

Description of Participants

Participants in Phase 1 consisted of 42 African American college-age males. They were asked to indicate their age; Table 1 presents a summary of those ages. Of the 42 responding college-age, African-American undergraduate males, five (11.9%) were 18; nine (21.4%) were 19; eight (19.0%) were 20; six (14.3%) were 21; nine (21.4%) were 22; and five (11.9%) were 23. The mean was 20.5 years old.

Table 1:

Age of Respondents

Age	Total	Percentage
18	5	11.9
19	9	21.4
20	8	19.0
21	6	14.3
22	9	21.4
23	5	11.9
Total	42	100

Participants also were asked to indicate the type of community in which they grew up (inner city, rural, or suburban). Table 2 summarizes their responses. Of these participants, 30 (71.4%) grew up in the inner city, three (7.1%) grew up in a rural area, and nine (21.4%) grew up in a suburban area.

Table 2:

Location of Participants

Location	Total	Percentage
Inner city	30	71.4
Rural area	3	7.1
Suburban	9	21.4
Total	42	100

Survey Data

The first survey question asked participants to reflect on legal legitimacy, which is the feeling that one should obey institutional authority (Fagan & Tyler, 2005). Participants were asked to indicate whether they believed they should obey institutional authority. Table 3 shows the participants' responses. Eighteen (18) of the 42 participants noted that they tend to believe in legal legitimacy, which was the highest grouping. Thirty-eight (38) of the 42 participants believe in legitimacy at least to some extent. The mean was 3.60. The standard deviation was .912.

Table 3:

Legal Legitimacy

1 Never	2 Most of the time not	3 Sometimes	4 I tend to believe this	5 I always believe this
1 (2.4%)	3 (7.1%)	14 (33.3%)	18 (42.9%)	6 (14.3%)

The next question asked participants to reflect on legal cynicism, which describes the notion that when individuals do not feel that laws are legitimate, it is more acceptable not to

conform to established laws (Fagan & Tyler, 2005). Participants were asked to indicate whether their experiences with police have left them feeling cynical. Table 4 summarizes the participants' responses. Twenty-nine (29) of the 42 participants expressed at least some degree of cynicism.

The mean was 3.14. The standard deviation was 1.11.

Table 4:

Legal Cynicism

1 Not cynical at all	2 Generally not cynical	3 Sometimes	4 Generally cynical	5 Very cynical
2 (4.8%)	11 (26.2%)	14 (33.3%)	9 (21.4%)	6 (14.3%)

Participants were then asked to indicate when they had experienced most of their contact with police. Table 5 indicates their responses. Thirty-three (33) of the 42 participants had contact with police within the past five years. The mean was 2.02. The standard deviation was 1.30.

Table 5:

Contact With Police

1 In the last year or 2	2 In the past 5 years	3 In the past 10 years	4 In the past 15 years	5 Throughout life, including childhood
19 (45.2%)	14 (33.3%)	2 (4.8%)	3 (7.1%)	4 (9.5%)

Next, participants were asked to indicate how much of their beliefs come from direct experiences with police. Table 6 summarizes their responses. Twenty-six (26) of the 42 participants indicated that their beliefs about police stem from both direct and indirect experiences. The mean was 3.02. The standard deviation was .87.

Table 6:

Beliefs About Police From Direct Experience

1 All from media and others	2 Most from media and others	3 Both direct and indirect experience	4 Most beliefs from personal experience	5 All from personal experience
3 (7.1%)	4 (9.5%)	26 (61.9%)	7 (16.7%)	2 (4.8%)

For the seventh question, participants were asked to indicate how much of what they believe about the criminal justice system came from direct experiences. Table 7 shows the participants' responses. Thirteen (13) of 42 participants indicated that what they believe about the criminal justice system came from personal experiences. The mean was 2.92. The standard deviation was 1.11.

Table 7:

Beliefs About Criminal Justice System From Direct Experience

1 All from media and others	2 Most from media and others	3 Both direct and indirect experience	4 Most beliefs from personal experience	5 All from personal experience
5 (11.9%)	9 (21.4%)	15 (35.7%)	10 (23.8%)	3 (7.1%)

The next question asked participants to indicate their views about police. Table 8 indicates their responses. While the participants indicated that their beliefs about police ranged from being identical to their parents to completely different from their parents, nineteen (19) of the 42 participants indicated that their views of police were similar to those of their parents. The mean was 2.52. The standard deviation was 1.15.

Table 8:

Views About Police

1 Beliefs identical to parents	2 Beliefs are similar to parents	3 Beliefs are unrelated to parents	4 Beliefs are different than my parents	5 Beliefs are completely different than my parents
7 (16.7%)	19 (45.2%)	5 (11.9%)	9 (21.4%)	2 (4.8%)

Participants were asked to indicate what their parents told them about how they should interact with police. Table 9 summarizes the responses of the participants. Seventeen (17) of the 42 participants indicated that their parents told them to be careful about trusting police and think carefully about complying. The mean was 3.12. The standard deviation was 1.23.

Table 9:

Parental Advice About Police

1 Do not trust and do not comply	2 Be careful	3 I will not tell them anything	4 Generally trust and comply	5 Always trust and comply
2 (4.8%)	17 (40.5%)	3 (7.1%)	14 (33.3%)	6 (14.3%)

Finally, participants were asked to indicate what they would tell their sons about how they should interact with police. Table 10 indicates the participants' responses. Twenty-one (21) out of 42 participants indicated that they will tell their sons to generally trust police and comply if possible. The mean was 3.36. The standard deviation was 1.12.

Table 10:

What Will You Tell Your Sons About How They Should Interact With Police?

1 Do not trust police and do not comply	2 Be careful about trusting police and complying	3 I will not tell them anything	4 Generally trust police and comply if possible	5 Always trust police and comply
0 (0%)	16 (38.1%)	0 (0%)	21 (50%)	5 (11.9%)

Summary of Survey Data

Survey results indicated that a majority of participants believe in legitimacy, at least to some extent. Over half of the participants expressed at least some degree of cynicism. An overwhelming majority of participants had contact with police within the past five years. Over half of the participants' beliefs about police stemmed from both direct and indirect experiences. Less than half of participants indicated that what they believed about the criminal justice system came from direct experiences. Slightly less than half of participants indicated that their views of police were similar to those of their parents. Less than half of participants indicated that their parents told them to be careful about trusting police and think carefully about complying. Finally, just under half of participants indicated that they would tell their sons to generally trust police and comply if possible.

Qualitative Data

During the critical period of adolescence, African American males are forming their opinions of laws, the justice system, and those who enforce laws. The messages they receive regarding how to cope with potential police encounters begins at an early age, yet remains until death. In other words, adolescence begins the socialization process, yet the experiences, and how African American males process police experiences, remain. Forty-two participants answered an

11-question survey pertaining to (a) their beliefs about police legitimacy, (b) legal cynicism, (c) their intentions to prepare their sons for possible encounters with police, (d) their experiences with police, and (e) how they have formed their beliefs about the justice system. Out of 42 participants who completed the survey, 15 agreed to participate in an in-depth interview relating to the questions. A summary of their beliefs, feelings, and opinions follows.

Summary of Qualitative Data

Research Question 1: What Do African American Male College Students Believe About the Legitimacy of the Procedural Justice Process?

While there was an overwhelming consensus among participants that they would obey institutional authority, their reasons why, and conditions upon which they would obey institutional authority, provided additional insight.

One participant explained that he had absolute faith in institutional authority, and would always obey them. The main reason, he explained, that he would always obey was because he felt that police did not pull over people who did not break the law. For example, he recalled that he has never been stopped by a police officer because he does not break the law. He also said that if he were ever to be unfairly stopped by a police officer, our justice system is equipped with laws that will protect his innocence.

One theme that emerged was the participants' need to obey institutional authority because they knew there could be serious repercussions, including death, if they did not. One participant provided additional insight into his response by explaining that not complying with institutional authority, could result in him going to jail or being hurt, even killed, by police, even if he might have been complying with the law and following orders.

Another participant explained that he would always obey institutional authority, but provided insight into the mental thoughts and rationalization that occurred for him as he was being pulled over. For example, he said that while he was stopped he was thinking that it was unfair, but he knew that he had to comply because he felt that if he did not comply, he would face repercussions. Moreover, in addition to facing repercussions if he did not comply, the participant said that if he did not comply, he would react exactly how he felt police wanted him to react. In other words, the participant explained his thought process for complying as weighing the costs and rationalizing the outcome.

Participants stressed that they did not view obeying and trusting police synonymously. For instance, three participants expressed that they would always comply with police, but made it clear that their willingness to comply did not mean they necessarily trusted police. Their responses indicated that they saw a distinct difference between trusting police and complying with police. The participants provided several examples to support their thoughts. One participant equated complying with institutional authority as playing by the rules and doing whatever police tell you to do. He also expressed disappointment because he felt that it was not fair that police could unfairly pull him over and he had no recourse, or he at least felt that the recourse would not result in his favor, even if he were in compliance.

Still acknowledging that they would obey institutional authority, other participants stressed that in exchange for obeying institutional authority, they expected to be treated fairly in return. One participant said he would obey police, but felt that respect should be reciprocated. Another participant explained that he would comply with police orders, as long as police were going about the procedure fairly and treating him with respect. Finally, a third participant's response was similar in that he expected to be treated with respect. However, he went a step

farther than the preceding participant by saying that if police did not treat him with respect, he was prepared to respond in-kind with hostility, if necessary.

The participants' responses reflected a variety of beliefs regarding their views of legitimacy – ranging from always obeying, to only obeying if treated with respect. Despite the myriad of beliefs, their rationale supported Fagan & Tyler's (2005) definition of legitimacy, and affirmed the importance of obeying institutional authority among participants as a necessary means to stay alive and survive a potentially negative police encounter.

There was an overwhelming consensus among participants that they would obey institutional authority. However, the participants' responses provided insight into the severe repercussions that could result if they did not obey institutional authority. They also stressed that obeying, as opposed to trusting institutional authority were not synonymous. Also of importance were their responses indicating that in exchange for obeying police, they expected to be treated fairly in return. The participants expressed that compliance was the best way to alleviate severe consequences, even if they felt that they were not treated fairly during the police encounter. One participant spoke of the mental thoughts that raced through his mind during a police encounter that he felt was unfair:

“Mentally, I'm thinking this isn't right, or should I do this, but I know if I do that I'm putting myself in this position to be exactly where they want me to be.”

Research Question 2: Do African American Male College Students Believe That Experiences With Police in the Course of Their Development Have Influenced Their Views of Cynicism?

Legal cynicism describes the notion that when individuals do not feel laws are legitimate, it is more acceptable not to conform to established laws (Fagan & Tyler, 2005). During Phase 1,

participants' responses ranged the spectrum of not being cynical at all to being very cynical.

Although most participants during Phase 1 expressed at least some degree of cynicism, Phase 2 responses provided valuable insight into their varying degrees of cynicism.

Not every participant felt cynical. During the follow-up interviews, two participants found laws to be legitimate and expressed that they would always comply. They saw laws as black and white and believed that you would generally not have problems with law enforcement unless you broke the law.

For example, one participant saw laws as absolute, and explained that if you do not break laws, you will not get stopped by police. Another participant believed that he would not have difficulties with the law for two reasons. First, he believed that laws that are in place would protect him from potential police misconduct. Second, he believed that often individuals who have negative encounters with police are not treating police officers in a respectful manner. He believed that many times, individuals who have negative encounters with police face repercussions because they have attitudes with police, or do not respond to police in a proper manner. He added that if individuals respond to police in these manners, the police are bound to respond in-kind.

Consistent with certain participants' views of legitimacy, participants explained that although they felt cynical, they would always comply with institutional authority. Participants once again provided insight into the mental effects of arguably unfair encounters with police. For example, one participant explained that he was more cynical with his thoughts, yet more positive in his actions. A second participant expressed that even if he did not view a law as fair, he would nevertheless obey the law because the repercussions could affect other people that he cared about. A third participant reasoned that the best way to address police inequities was through

addressing such issues through other venues, such as advocating peacefully or by succeeding in life. A fourth participant recalled that his parents told him to always comply with police no matter how he felt internally about the encounter. He also noted the difficulty with complying when he did not feel that the reason that police stopped him was fair. He explained that he understood that complying at all costs was the proper thing to do in theory, but in practice, it was much harder to do.

Two participants expressed that if they were doing the right thing and following laws, they were less likely to comply if they felt the treatment or the reasons for being stopped by police were unfair. They stressed, however, that they believed in following laws if they were fairly enforced, and made clear that their willingness to comply was contingent upon their individual experience with the police officer. In addition, they used their knowledge of legal rights as a gauge to measure whether they needed to comply with a law. For example, they stated that they had legal rights that protected them from having to comply if they felt they had not broken the law.

A final participant recalled the importance of the messages that his parents conveyed to him regarding always complying with police officers, even if he had not done anything wrong in his view, but also stressed the importance of standing up for what he believed in and not letting anyone degrade him.

Three participants expressed feelings of cynicism due to perceived injustices in the enforcement of laws. For example, one participant depicted a negative police encounter as a balancing act between standing up for what he knew was right and standing firm to the fact that he did not break a law, versus the ability to live another day. In his case, he indicated that he would be willing to die in order to stand up for his beliefs. He elaborated by saying that his goal

was always to believe that a potential police encounter would end peacefully, but if he were mistreated by a police officer, he would fight to protect himself because he found maintaining his rights and his safety to be more important than actions enforced by individuals.

A participant indicated that he was cynical because he felt that laws that police enforce sometimes unfairly target certain segments of society, such as individuals from the inner city. He further said that he felt it was necessary to advocate against such laws and challenge the enforcement of these laws, if necessary.

The participants' responses regarding legal cynicism were much more layered than their responses to legal legitimacy. For example, in Research Question 1, the majority of participants believed in the need to obey institutional authority. Participants' responses in Research Question 2, however, reaffirmed the need to obey institutional authority, but revealed the possibility of being able to obey institutional authority, while not having complete trust in the justice system.

Re-assessing Fagan & Tyler's (2005) definition of legal cynicism, participants in this study may not have seen the justice system as legitimate, but the majority of participants, nonetheless, felt the need to conform to established laws. Their responses indicated their belief in compliance, yet not in the sometimes unfair enforcement of laws. Among them, certain feelings of cynicism emerged from hearing of killings of unarmed African American males. For example, one participant commented on his cynicism towards police due to recent killings of unarmed, African American males:

"I feel very cynical toward police because I can't really take a body of people seriously who are gunning down people who look like me."

Research Question 3: How Do African American Male College Students Describe Their Intentions to Prepare Their Sons for Possible Encounters With Police?

The socialization practices that many individuals receive during adolescence, as well as direct and indirect experiences, shape how they will process potential encounters with police. The goal of Phase 2 of this study was to interview undergraduate African American males to determine whether the socialization practices they received during adolescence, if any, would influence the way that they will prepare their sons for possible encounters with police. While all 42 Phase 1 participants expressed that they would certainly prepare their sons for potential encounters with police, the messages they would tell their sons varied. Phase 2 follow-up interviews detailed some of those messages. One participant said that he would tell his son to always comply with police because arguing your point with a police officer would not be worth the risk to his life. Another participant said that he would tell his children to always comply with police because ultimately they have the upper hand.

Participants placed importance on the messages they received from their parents regarding how to handle encounters with police, and explained that they would prepare their sons for potential encounters with police in the same way that their parents had prepared them. Three participants provided insight into how the messages that they will tell their sons will be similar to what their parents told them. For example, one participant said that the messages that he will tell his sons will be very similar to the messages that his parents told him – to not show any signs of frustration or disrespect with police if they feel that police stopped them unfairly.

A second participant offered similar thoughts, but elaborated on the instructions that he would tell his sons, such as the need to keep their hands out of their pockets, to maintain eye contact, and not to give the police any reason to feel the need to escalate the encounter. A third

participant noted he would give his sons the same advice that his parents provided to him, but elaborated on why he felt he would still have the need to provide these messages to his son. He described this need as essential because his son would be an African American male living in America. He also described the need to provide instructions to his son regarding how to handle potential police encounters as a reality and something that has been passed on from generation to generation.

One of the major themes that emerged was the need for participants to educate their sons about how to handle potential encounters with police. They spoke of the importance of their sons being educated on several levels. First, it was seen as a means of decreasing the likelihood of them having a negative police encounter. Next, they spoke of the need to make sure that their sons have knowledge of the justice system. Two participants spoke of the importance of their sons being educated as a means to know when and how to deal with negative police encounters. These two participants spoke of education as tools for their sons that would provide them with resources that would put them in better positions to advocate against injustices. One of the participants specifically explained that he would tell his son that not all battles were intended to be fought at that time, further stressing that education would be a source of empowerment. The participants spoke of the need for their sons to know their legal rights because they want their sons to know what actions are justified on the part of police officers. They also saw education as the best means for their sons to form their own perceptions of justice.

Another theme that emerged from the interviews was empathy that participants would express toward their sons possibly having to experience a negative police encounter. Participants stressed that no matter they would tell their sons that no matter how badly they were feeling on the inside, to not show it and always comply. They also stressed that they would tell their sons,

that they knew it was unfair, but unfortunately, respecting a police officer despite the fact that the encounter may have been unfair was a way of life and something they would have to do to remain alive.

Three participants listed specific instructions that they would tell their sons in preparation for a police encounter. For example, participants stressed that they would tell their sons to be cautious of police, as well as caution their sons about the perceptions and realities of being an African American male in America. A participant stated that while he would inform his son of the harsh realities of being an African American male in America, he would stress that his son know his importance and value. Another participant elaborated on this theme by saying that he would stress the importance of his son having internal pride that cannot be taken away as the result of a negative police encounter.

Not all responses focused upon empathy, socialization practices, and messages that participants would convey to their sons. A theme that emerged, as well, was a willingness among participants to advocate for their sons' legal rights through protesting. For example, one participant did not rule out the possibility of a rebellion if police relations did not improve within the next few years. He explained this by saying that it is quite possible that police relations may not improve by the time his son is born. He further made it clear that he would stress peace and compliance to his son, but if the justice system worsened to the point that if his rights and those of his son were increasingly taken away, he would be willing to fight with his son for their rights.

Participants recalled the importance of messages that their parents told them regarding how to handle an encounter with police, and many stressed that they would utilize the same messages that they were told when it was time to talk to their sons about potential encounters with police. More specifically, they indicated that their messages to their sons would provide

understanding and empathy, as well as equip them with specific instructions intended to keep them alive. For example, a participant explained specific instructions and messages that he will convey to his son regarding how to interact with police:

Outwardly, they need to be respectful. Say yes sir, no sir, that type of thing. Be as friendly as possible regardless of how you are feeling on the inside. It's ok to be mad if something you feel is going wrong....but don't show that because things can get worse.

Finally, some participants believed in the importance of advocating for legal rights through protesting, if necessary.

Research Question 4: How Do African American Male College Students Describe Their Experiences With Police?

This study began by asking participants about their broad views of legitimacy. Next, participants expressed their beliefs about cynicism. To gain a better understanding of beliefs about cynicism, it was important to gain insight into their experiences with police. The participants' responses to this question reflected their varied experiences, which some described as positive, some negative, some fair, and some unfair. Participants also described differing treatment by police based on their geographic location. For example, some expressed better treatment while on a college campus as opposed to their hometowns, and vice versa.

Of great importance for participants who reported positive and fair encounters with police were the contexts in which the police encounters occurred. For example, one participant had positive memories of seeing police as leaders when he was younger. He recounted being a part of an athletic league where police officers volunteered and helped mentor young students. He explained that seeing police officers as volunteer coaches allowed him to see them in a positive light and even as role models. Another participant felt that he was treated fairly even if he was

pulled over by police. He further provided the example of a time when a police officer pulled him over, was fair, and even proceeded to give the participant advice about the path to become a police officer. A third participant recalled an encounter in his neighborhood when police officers protected him and his family from a shooting in his neighborhood. Although the participant was six or seven at the time, he still recalls the efforts that the police officer made to protect the participant and his family. In short, participants reported positive experiences with police when they saw them in various capacities within the community.

Just as some participants spoke of positive and fair encounters with police, other participants detailed negative and/or unfair experiences. Even though certain encounters occurred years ago, the memories for some were quite vivid and detailed. For example, one participant recalled his first encounter with police when he was 16 and had just gotten his license. He described how the police asked his little brother, age 14, to put his hands on the dashboard. The participant's little brother was not driving and was a passenger in the car. He recounted feeling like the police treated not only him, but also his little brother like criminals – all for not having his car lights on. The participant felt that the police could have handled the encounter quite differently and not escalated the situation. He was most concerned with feeling that he had to console and protect his younger, 14-year-old brother who was confused and scared for both of their safety.

One participant recalled an experience that left him to question his faith in the fairness of the procedural justice process. He was pulled over for allegedly going over the speed limit. The participant did not agree with the police officer's claim that he was speeding, so he challenged the citation in court. According to the participant, the experience showed him that even if he was

not breaking the law, if a police officer wanted to pull him over and give him a ticket, the officer had the final word and he had very little recourse.

Another theme that emerged was the perceived difference in how police treated participants on campus versus in some of their hometowns. Participants expressed feeling more protected by police on campus. Further, participants noted differences in policing goals on campus versus their hometowns. For example, a participant explained that on a college campus, police were generally seeking to protect students from mass shootings, as opposed to things that police in the inner city may seek to protect against, such as illegal drugs, gun possession, and robberies. He noted that the police protection he received from police on campus was an added layer of privilege—although perhaps indirect privilege because the police were seeking to protect all students, so he happened to fall within the category that police sought to protect. The participant expressed having a privilege as a college student on a campus that he does not have when he returns home.

Another participant expressed equal sentiments. He perceived differences in the reasons that police stop people on college campus versus cities. For example, he said that he perceived the main goals of police on college campuses to be protecting against drinking and driving, compared to reasons police may pull him over in the city where he was from, such as the way an individual looks or the type of car he is driving.

One participant expressed being treated better by police on a college campus because, in his mind, police likely perceived him as a token African American person aspiring to get an education. He juxtaposed this with the treatment that he would likely receive at home, where he felt police would be more likely to see him as a product of his own environment.

Another participant noted perceived disparities in police treatment based upon geographic location, however, his thoughts highlighted disparities in the responsiveness of police based upon geographic location. The participant explained that he preferred handling situations that might involve police on his own, as opposed to going through the process of dealing with police. For example, the participant recalled disparities in the length of time that it took police to show up, and was even skeptical of initiating contact with police for help. He explained that as a result of his experiences, he would rather deal with a situation on his own than call the police for assistance.

It is important to note the breadth of perceptions regarding police encounters. Participants' responses included examples of positive, as well as negative experiences. Some experiences were fair, and some were unfair. Thus, the participants' range of experiences and opinions about police rejected the notion that all African American males have negative perceptions toward institutional authority. A clear-cut theme, however, was the difference in treatment that participants received on college campuses, as opposed to cities. A participant elaborated on the perceived differences by saying:

“On college campuses...police are there to make sure that a mass shooting doesn't occur....they're trying to keep individuals safe as a collective.”

Research Question 5: How Have African American Male College Students Formed Their Beliefs About Police and the Criminal Justice System?

The participants' responses reflected how they formed their beliefs about police and the justice system. They spoke of the effects of media coverage involving police shootings of unarmed young males, such as Trayvon Martin and Eric Garner. Parental beliefs and socialization practices regarding how to handle potential police encounters also played a pivotal

role in shaping participants' beliefs about police and the justice system. In addition, direct and indirect experiences with police, both negative and positive, influenced participants' beliefs. Finally, historical markers such as monumental court cases, civil rights activists, and specific events in history (i.e., the Civil Rights Movement and the killings of Rodney King, Michael Brown, and Sandra Bland) have helped shape the participants' beliefs about police and the justice system.

Participants spoke about the media, and particularly outlets such as Facebook and YouTube, as a means of indirectly witnessing negative police encounters. For some, observing these police encounters on their computers, televisions, or phones influenced their beliefs in the justice system. For example, a participant expressed that the media affected his views of police and the criminal justice system because he saw African American males being shot on the news and told himself that he did not want that to happen to him, so he should know how to handle himself if he ever had a negative police encounter. Two participants spoke of technological advancements, such as Youtube, Twitter, Instagram and Facebook, as methods of publicizing negative encounters with police in raw form, yet a participant noted that negative encounters with police could be traced all the way back from slavery. The difference, in his opinion, was that these technological advancements offered a way to shed light on these experiences.

For many participants, their parents also played an important role in helping to form their beliefs about police and the criminal justice system. Participants expressed trust and reliance upon their parents when dealing with issues relating to how to handle potentially negative encounters with police. Many of the participants recounted lessons that their parents taught them regarding how to handle a police encounter. Many of these lessons were from their fathers and have influenced their beliefs. For example, one participant cited specific messages that his father

told him regarding how to conduct himself if he were stopped by police, such as keeping both hands on the steering wheel and putting all of the car windows down. The participant remembered his father's advice and says he still refers to this advice as an adult. Another participant said he discusses experiences that he has with police with his parents whenever they occur, and noted that nine times out of ten, his father relates to the type of stop that occurred because it happened to him at some point in time. Another participant said that he never had a specific conversation with his parents about what to do if stopped by police, but noted that if a news story surfaced about an African American being shot by police, his parents would caution him to listen to police at all times, because that could very well be him.

Personal experiences helped participants form their opinions of the justice system. A commonality among the participants was that they judged their perceptions of police based on their own, direct experiences with them. Participants spoke of the importance of judging police based upon their own experiences and how police treated them directly during their experiences. One participant recalled a positive interaction between his parents and police that helped him form a positive opinion of institutional authority.

Not every participant had a direct experience with police that affected how they perceived the justice system. Others noted that indirect experiences with their friends, as well as stories in the media of unarmed African American males being killed, affected their perceptions and illustrated disparities within the justice system. One participant noted that recent killings of unarmed, African American males led him to believe that all African American males' lives are in danger. A second participant recounted indirect experiences that he heard of from others from higher socioeconomic statuses; he said that for many, lack of education about laws and rights, as well as lack of financial means are barriers that demonstrate disparities within the justice system.

Finally, a third participant reflected upon recent killings of unarmed African American males and expressed his sadness at how the cycle of unarmed African American males seems to continue without any legal repercussions.

Participants placed great emphasis on how historical events helped to form their beliefs about the criminal justice system. They explained the history between African Americans and the justice system, tracing it back to slavery, including their perceptions of laws that were intended to guarantee due process to all Americans, and the roles that influential leaders, such as Ghandi and Martin Luther King, Jr., have played in their approaches to attaining fair encounters in the justice system. For example, one participant stressed the influence that these leaders had on the way he looked at handling disparities within the justice system. He said that their leadership in dealing with social inequities inspired him to handle disparities within the justice system by obeying laws, proceeding peacefully, and exhibiting self-control by not giving institutional authority a reason to shoot or arrest him.

Two participants spoke of the significance that history played on the current state of the justice system, citing the history of slave patrols and paterollers during slavery that were used to capture African Americans. Upon reflection, one of the participants expressed that the effects of these practices still linger within today's justice system. Another participant cited the Declaration of Independence by saying that "all men are created equal", yet noted that disparities within the justice system are not reflected in the current treatment of African American males.

It is important to note that the aforementioned sentiments among the participants were not universal. One participant agreed that history played an important role in the current state of the justice system, but expressed trust in the legal system and believed that even if he were to be unfairly stopped or profiled by police, the justice system would protect him.

To summarize, participants formed beliefs about police and the justice system from a variety of factors. Lessons their parents taught them, as well as specific instructions regarding how to handle potential police encounters helped form their beliefs. In addition, personal experiences had a great deal of influence on their views. Lastly, many participants relied on historical facts regarding African Americans and the justice system to shape their beliefs. One participant explained the role that historical figures have played in his approach to addressing inequities within the justice system:

I tend to recall a lot of things that Ghandi and Martin Luther King talked about, and a lot of what they spoke on was self-control. Although I may feel the urge to be resistant, although I may feel the urge to be aggressive or to do something about social inequalities, it's better for me to move silently; it's better for me to obey the laws and not give a reason to be shot at or arrested unfairly.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

Relevance of Research

The possibility of negative encounters between African American males and police have forced families of African American males to prepare their sons for potential encounters with police and explain to them the potential repercussions and societal perceptions that accompany being an African American male in today's legal and social climates. In addition, media, direct, and indirect experiences with police all affect how a growing adolescent views police, the justice system, and his place within society.

The purpose of this study was to gain insight into perceptions of justice and the legal socialization processes of college-age African American males. The study utilized college-age African American males to reflect upon how their parents prepared them for potential encounters with police. Based on accumulated reflections of the socialization messages, experiences with police, and perceptions that participants formed about the justice system, the study further asked the participants to explain how they would prepare their sons for potential encounters with police.

The study utilized the frameworks of legal socialization and human ecological theory as a basis for assessing how participants formed their perspectives of justice. Although scholars have researched perceptions of justice among adolescents, they have not focused on using adolescence as a framework to retrospectively explore how socialization affected development, while looking ahead to posit how, and whether, the socialization techniques they received during adolescence might affect how they prepare their sons for potentially negative encounters with police.

In particular, I sought to further understand (a) what African American male college student believed about the legitimacy of the procedural justice process, (b) whether African American male college students believed that experiences with police in the course of their development had influenced their views of cynicism, (c) how African American male college students described their intentions to prepare their sons for possible encounters with police, (d) how African American male college students described their experiences with police, and (e) how African American male college students formed their beliefs about police and the criminal justice system.

Theoretical Frameworks

This study examined perceptions of justice among college-age males by asking participants to recall their experiences with the justice system during adolescence and beyond. In addition to the biological, psychological, and social changes that occur during adolescence, development also consists of making sense of the environment and one's relationship with that environment (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Zafar et al., 2013). Specifically, during development, adolescents are making sense of the macrosystem, which consists of legal and political systems (Rosa & Tudge, 2013). Along with emotional, cognitive, and social development, African American adolescent males are processing how they perceive laws and rules, and how those who enforce laws and rules perceive them. The perceptions, beliefs, and messages that are being received during adolescence help individuals determine their place in society for years to come.

The beliefs, opinions, and experiences that participants in this study recalled were captured, in part, through a legal socialization framework, which is part of adolescent development and describes the interactions that children and adolescents have with legal authority (Fagan & Tyler, 2005). In particular, the study focused on legal legitimacy and

cynicism, two components of the legal socialization framework (Fagan & Tyler, 2005). I wanted to explore whether the quality of interactions, experiences, and beliefs that participants formed during adolescence influenced their views of legitimacy and cynicism within the macrosystem.

Findings

What Do African American Male College Students Believe About the Legitimacy of the Procedural Justice Process?

Legitimacy is considered to be the feeling that one should obey institutional authority (Fagan & Tyler, 2005). Consistent with the literature (Tyler, 1990; Fagan & Tyler, 2005; Tyler, 1997, 2004), participants who recounted their experiences with police during adolescence and beyond felt that they were more likely to comply with institutional authorities who treated them fairly. Out of 42 participants, 38 African American college-age males believed in legitimacy at least to some extent. However, out of 15 participants who provided qualitative insight, the reasons and the conditions under which participants felt they should obey institutional authority varied.

Most participants explained that they obeyed institutional authority because if they did not, there would be serious consequences. Other participants made clear that they would obey institutional authority, but expected to be treated fairly in return. One participant in particular noted that if he was treated unfairly, and believed that his actions were just, he was willing to face the consequences of advocating on his own behalf. Finally, while there was an overwhelming consensus among participants to obey institutional authority, participants emphasized the difference between obeying and trusting institutional authority. Their responses reaffirm the importance that Tyler (2006) placed upon the role that morality plays in obeying laws. For example, certain responses supported Tyler's (2006) findings that indicated that

individuals will participate in rules that they feel are morally correct to follow, even if the rules are not against the law. Applying Tyler's findings to the above responses, even though participants felt that they were unfairly stopped, they chose to comply because they knew there would be more severe consequences if they did not.

Just as Tyler (2006) explained that people were willing to adhere to their moral beliefs regardless of whether something is legal, participants discussed the lessons that their parents taught them regarding the need to be respectful during encounters with police, even if they felt that police were unfairly stopping them. In other words, participants indicated that the socialization messages they learned from their parents remained with them after adolescence.

While the specific messages that participants would convey to their sons varied, the participants' responses were consistent with data (Brown, Linver, Evans & DeGennaro, 2009; Elmore & Gaylord-Harden, 2013; Frabutt, Walker, & MacKinnon-Lewis, 2002; Hughes & Johnson, 2001; Hughes et al., 2006) that show the importance of preparing African American children for how to deal with potential bias and racism. The approaches and content of what participants would tell their sons regarding how to handle a police encounter varied, yet the need to prepare their sons for such encounters was clearly indicated in the participants' responses.

Do African American Male College Students Believe That Experiences With Police in the Course of Their Development Have Influenced Their Views of Cynicism?

Legal cynicism describes the notion that when individuals do not feel laws are legitimate, it is more acceptable not to conform to established laws (Fagan & Tyler, 2005). Earlier research regarding legal cynicism derived from the term "anomie," and stressed that African Americans and individuals from low socioeconomic statuses believed less in laws and felt that laws were meant to be broken (Lee et al., 2011). There is a relationship between feelings of cynicism and

perceived unfairness in how individuals are treated (Nivette et al., 2014; Sampson & Bartusch, 1998).

Of the 42 participants, 29 expressed at least some degree of cynicism. Consistent with literature relating to cynicism (Nivette et al., 2014; Sampson & Bartusch, 1998), participants who reported having unfair experiences with institutional authorities expressed a greater degree of negativity toward the legal system. However, this certainly was not always the case. Phase 2 findings revealed several participants who unequivocally believed in the fairness of the justice system and felt that the justice system was equipped with procedural safeguards (e.g., the Exclusionary Rule, the reasonable suspicion standard) that guaranteed procedural fairness in any police encounter. Other participants, due to their knowledge and understanding of procedural safeguards, stated that they would not comply with institutional authority if they had not violated laws. Finally, participants expressed overall feelings of cynicism due to perceived disparities in how laws were enforced. Additional research is needed to explore feelings of cynicism among non-offending, African American males during adolescence and beyond.

How Do African American Male College Students Describe Their Intentions to Prepare Their Sons for Possible Encounters With Police?

Parents of African American children often attempt to buffer their children from racial discrimination by socializing them to the effects of potential discrimination (Elmore & Gaylord-Harden, 2013; Hughes et al., 2006). These socialization practices often take the form of discussions regarding how to handle potential encounters with police or other forms of racial discrimination (Thomas & Blackmon, 2015). Consistent with the literature, all participants indicated that they would discuss potential police encounters with their sons, although the

messages that they would convey to their sons varied from being careful about trusting police to always trusting police.

Phase 2 findings indicated rich discussions between parents and their sons regarding how to handle potential police encounters. The messages included reflections regarding incidents that happened to the participants' parents, and how their parents handled the situation or possibly would have handled the encounter differently. In addition, the messages often served as pleas to obey the law at any cost in an effort to remain alive. The literature is consistent with the findings in this study. However, this study also sought to examine whether any relationships existed between socialization messages that participants were equipped with, and socialization messages that participants would tell their sons. Indeed, an overwhelming number of participants revealed that they would share the same lessons with their sons that their parents had shared with them.

How Do African American Male College Students Describe Their Experiences With Police?

Racial biases, including negative encounters with police, can affect the development of African American children. As early as age 10, some African American children can be perceived as older (Goff et al., 2014). Further, negative stereotypes and perceptions that depict African American males as criminals and violent linger in our society (Eberhardt et al., 2004; Henfield, 2012; Smith et al., 2007; Welch, 2007). The literature details stereotypes and perceptions of young African American children. However, there is less literature detailing their experiences with police. More specifically, there is less literature regarding racial experiences of African American males from adolescence to college age. Smith et al. (2007) discuss experiences of African American males on college campuses, yet more exhaustive research is needed to highlight their experiences.

As Tyler (2006) indicated, individuals are more likely to accept authority when they feel they are treated fairly. Thirty-three of 42 participants in this study had contact with police in the past five years. Among participants, no encounter with police was the same. Some spoke of positive experiences, yet others spoke of unfair experiences that altered their faith in the justice system. Examples of positive experiences included receiving career advice from police (even when the individual was stopped for a traffic violation), experiencing a straight-to-the-point police stop, and observing police protecting communities from crime. Examples of negative experiences included feeling unfairly targeted and being treated without respect during routine traffic stops.

How Have African American Male College Students Formed Their Beliefs About Police and the Criminal Justice System?

Human ecology posits that individuals depend upon one another and various entities within the environment to survive and thrive (Bubolz & Sontag, 2009). Thus, an emphasis is placed upon how individuals perceive their place in society. Family represents the nucleus of the microsystem and serves as a core for an individual's development (Tudge, Mokrova, Hatfield & Karnik, 2009). Accordingly, parents play a pivotal role in forming perceptions, values, and ideals among young children and adolescents. Muuss (1996) described the importance of providing greater context regarding an individual's place in society via the other various ecological systems described by Bronfenbrenner, such as the mesosystem (i.e., relationships between a family and police), the exosystem (i.e., media's perceptions of young African American males), and the macrosystem (i.e., a young adolescent's social class). Among all of these systems, the adolescent African American male is forming his own meanings and perceptions. In this study, specific emphasis was placed on the macrosystem and the effect of laws and law enforcement on African

American males. Indeed, participants' responses reflected the role of each system in forming their beliefs about police and the criminal justice system. Media's reporting of unarmed African American males influenced participants' views and perceptions of fairness within the criminal justice system. Conversations, more specifically racial socialization messages, that participants received from their parents affected how participants viewed the criminal justice system, as well as how they were to conduct themselves if police stopped them. Experiences that participants heard about indirectly involving police also influenced their views of police and the criminal justice system. Finally, civil rights advocates, such as Ghandi and Martin Luther King, Jr. served as role models for participants regarding how to best advocate against perceived unfairness within the justice system. Media, parents, direct and indirect experiences, as well as history support the importance of an individual's relationship with the aforementioned themes when forming perceptions of police and the criminal justice system overall.

Summary

Participants overwhelmingly believed in legitimacy, and their reasons for obeying institutional authority varied. For example, some obeyed because they knew there could be serious repercussions, even death, if they did not. Others believed in obeying institutional authority as long as they were shown respect in return. Of particular importance was the theme that emerged regarding the difference between compliance and trust. In other words, participants noted that they believed in complying with institutional authorities, but did not necessarily trust them. Equally important were the messages that their parents taught them regarding the need to respect police to minimize unsafe encounters. For example, participants indicated that, even if they felt police were not treating them fairly during a police encounter, their parents had urged them to follow what they had been taught and comply to avoid dangerous repercussions. This is

consistent with Tyler's (2006) findings regarding the role that morality plays in relation to police compliance.

Participants still believed in conforming to established laws. However, a difference emerged between the theoretical concept of legitimacy and specific instances. For example, participants made it clear that whether they comply depends on their individual interaction with the person in authority, how that person in authority treats the participant, and whether the participant finds the law to be fair.

Responses to experiences with police and the criminal justice system varied as well. Some participants had positive experiences with police and positive views about the justice system, while others described negative encounters that they perceived as unfair. What was distinguishable, however, was the difference in treatment by police that participants experienced based on whether they were on campus or in their hometown. A majority of participants expressed feeling safer and more protected with police on campus. They felt that police on campus focused more on the general safety of individuals. Nevertheless, other participants recounted instances of feeling unfairly profiled on campus.

Despite a myriad of views regarding beliefs about the justice system and institutional authority, the clearest theme was the importance of the messages that participants received about how to handle police encounters. Participants shared lessons their parents told them regarding how to handle a negative encounter, with the main theme being to comply to stay alive. In turn, conversations with participants revealed that they would stress the same message to their sons. Just as Bronfenbrenner placed importance on families at the heart of the microsystem (Bubolz & Sontag, 2009), participants in this study revealed through qualitative interviews that parents played an intricate role in their formation of beliefs about the justice system.

In addition, media pieces showing young African American males who had recently been shot or experienced negative police encounters, and personal experiences such as participants' own interactions with police, helped form their beliefs of the justice system. Twenty-six of 42 participants indicated that their beliefs about police stemmed from both direct and indirect experience. This statistic further supports the role of various ecosystems that all influence an individual's development.

Finally, the findings from this study were consistent with research that supports the feeling among individuals in disadvantaged neighborhoods that they have less of a voice with police (Brunson & Weitzer, 2009). For example, as mentioned previously, participants in this study expressed how they often felt greater protection by police on a college campus as opposed to their hometowns, some of which were urban neighborhoods.

Implications for Practice

Policies and laws are germane to protecting the safety of individuals. The effects of programs such as stop and frisk on individuals of color have been well documented (ACLU Foundation of Massachusetts & ACLU Racial Justice Program, 2014; Center for Constitutional Rights, 2012; Chang, 2012). However, the efficacy of the Stop and Frisk Program remains controversial. For example, president-elect Donald Trump supports a platform that would reinstitute Stop and Frisk in cities such as Chicago in efforts to reduce crime (Diamond & Wright, 2016). Other approaches to reducing crime and building trust consist of taskforces, such as President Obama's Presidential Taskforce on 21st Century Policing (Office of Community Oriented Policy Services, 2015). The taskforce consisted of various community leaders, officials, and representatives who sought to increase public trust in the justice system, while simultaneously reducing crime (Office of Community Oriented Policy Services, 2015).

While protection of citizens is fundamentally necessary to maintain order, the ultimate goal should be to enforce laws that fairly and effectively maintain safety. It is crucial that the stories of individuals who have experienced perceived unfair and negative encounters with police continue to be told, for without dialogue between those who enforce the law and citizens who are affected by the law, there can be no further understanding.

Several participants spoke of positive memories of police during childhood and beyond. Examples included a positive police presence in schools, police protecting individuals in their neighborhoods, and police offering career advice. There needs to be continued collaboration between police and citizens, as well as opportunities for citizens to see police in positive community-oriented activities, such as intramural sports leagues and mentoring relationships. Such opportunities may lead to insight and understanding for all parties.

Further, several participants expressed the disparities between treatment that they received from police on college campuses versus their hometowns. One suggestion to increase relationships between police in urban environments and its citizens might be to actively recruit police officers to serve in the cities in which they grew up.

Finally, and perhaps most important for purposes of this study, some participants expressed the pain that negative encounters with police have caused them. It is important to form clubs or groups, particularly on college campuses that promote inclusion. For example, most college campuses have Offices of Inclusion that seek to support underrepresented groups and provide forums and outlets for students to discuss relevant issues, such as racial profiling. Another way to provide support for individuals who have had negative encounters with police is to form focus groups where individuals can discuss their experiences in a safe and non-judgmental environment. Finally, during this study, participants were willing to discuss their

experiences and expressed appreciation for allowing their voices to be heard. Thus, continued studies that provide individuals with opportunities to share their experiences is of critical importance to shedding additional light into African American, college-age males' perceptions of justice and legal socialization processes.

Implications for Theoretical Frameworks: Revisiting the PPCT Model

An ecological approach was appropriate for this study because human ecology studies the relationship between a developing person and a changing environment (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Specifically, my focus was on the relationship between participants and the macrosystem, which represents the legal values of society (Muuss, 1996). As part of the macrosystem, this study sought to gain insight into how participants were socialized to deal with potential police encounters in the justice system, and how these socialization messages affected their views of legitimacy and cynicism. Upon reflection and full analysis of data, it was beneficial to revisit the importance of Bronfenbrenner's Process, Person, Context, and Time (PPCT) model described in Chapter 1.

The participants in this study provided insight into their retrospective perceptions of police (process) as college-age African American males (person). Their perceptions of the justice system were based on various ecological systems consisting of parental messages, direct experiences, indirect experiences, and media (context). Participants also stressed the importance of context in assessing their perceptions and opinions of police and the justice system. In addition, participants brought to the study the shared context of being college-age African American males. Finally, a critical aspect of the study was the necessary reflection; participants needed to retrospectively revisit how people and events during adolescence helped form their views of justice today (time). Moreover, participants needed to prospectively analyze how the

views they formed during adolescence might influence how they will prepare their future sons for potential police encounters. It is also important that participants shared the significance of historical perceptions of the justice system as it relates to African Americans, along with how this helped shape their perceptions of justice—as did current killings of unarmed African American males.

Study Limitations

This study had at least three limitations. First, I assessed perceptions of the justice system among college-age males, ages 18 to 25. In the future, I hope to broaden the scope of this study to determine whether opinions of the justice system vary among younger and older college-age males. In other words, further research is needed to explore whether perceptions of police vary based on the amount of time an individual has matriculated on a college campus, or whether individual experiences and socialization practices during childhood and adolescence remain the most relevant factor in determining perceptions of police.

As previously mentioned, this study focused on perceptions and experiences with police among college-age African American males. However, African American girls are the fastest growing segment of the criminal justice population (Morris, 2013). To illustrate the significance, one participant, during his Phase 2 interview, mentioned that he worried more about potential police encounters for his future daughter due to a recent increase in shootings of African American females. Undoubtedly, negative police encounters occur among other various groups, and my future research should explore the effects of encounters with police among additional segments of the population, such as African American females, White males, White females, Hispanic males, Hispanic females, and Muslims.

Second, as mentioned in Chapter 1, it must not be understated that police play a pivotal role in maintaining order in our society and put their lives on the line every day. Thus, for every negative encounter with police that an individual experiences, there are countless examples of unsung deeds that police officers do on behalf of citizens. It is my hope that this study will provide a foundation for future research that expands insight into perceptions of justice for various segments of the population. Future studies should include surveys and interviews that provide police with the opportunity for their voice to be heard as well.

Third, while being an African American male puts an individual at risk for having a negative police encounter (Dottolo & Stewart, 2008; Weatherspoon, 2004), it must be stressed that there is no specific formula for calculating the demographics of police who initiate such encounters. In other words, instances of racial profiling against African American males are not confined by race or gender. For example, racial profiling can occur regardless of either party's gender or race. In fact, Wilkins and Williams (2008) discuss the pressure that some African American police officers feel as minorities to conform to the sometimes racially biased police culture. While this study did not address the race or gender of police officers in relation to experiences, negative and positive, that participants detailed during the data collection phase, future research needs to explore the various instances of racial profiling that occur regardless of race and/or gender.

Future Research

During the course of this study, several participants thanked me for allowing their stories to be heard. Perhaps, for some, the interview was even a cathartic opportunity to express their feelings. Future research needs to examine how young African American males cope with incidences of perceived racial bias during adolescence and beyond. Not only is continued

research important to assess the psychological and emotional effects of negative encounters with police, but also this research is critical in order to evaluate the biological effects of racism on African American males across the lifespan. In addition, there is a need for research that provides insight into the experiences and perceptions of African American police officers, and institutional authority in general.

As the participants in this study explained, it is possible to obey institutional authority, yet not trust those who enforce laws. To illustrate, as one of the participants said, a young African American male can have cynical views of the justice system, yet still obey the law and show respect to police officers, even if they do not feel that the actions are justified. In other words, participants' responses reflected the duality in thoughts versus actions that often occurs during a police encounter. During this study, some participants detailed the anger they had after they experienced perceived unfair encounters with police. For example, Participant 3 described the displaced anger he had after a police encounter, and the feeling that no one cared. He recounted the questions that he wished he had asked the police officer, and wondered if anyone cared about the epidemic that was occurring with disparities in the justice system. Another participant recalled his feelings of disappointment in the justice system because when he was accused of speeding and emphatically believed that he was not driving over the speed limit, he went through the proper procedural channels, only to hear that the police officer was the expert and had the final say.

Participant 10, during his interview, revealed that at times he did not even feel like a citizen in our society. As the literature supports, negative racial encounters can be linked to shorter lifespans (Chae et al., 2014). Future research needs to study the effects of racial

discrimination among African Americans across the lifespan, particularly from adolescence through early adulthood.

Next, at the heart of this study was the role that families, particularly parents, played in socializing their African American sons for potential encounters with police. An ecological approach to development assesses the role that various systems (e.g., media, school, peers, laws) have on the individual. In other words, an ecological approach encourages various systems to work together for the good of an individual. Additional research should examine the effects of various ecological systems on the development of African American males, such as the influences of media, peers, and laws. Additionally, future research should focus on the effects of racial profiling on not only the individual who is profiled, but also family members of the individual as well.

Another area for future research consists of examining the role, if any, that skin color has in relation to experiences with racial profiling. For example, there is a need to determine whether there is a positive correlation between skin color of participants and the frequency of racial profiling encounters.

Finally, analyzing perceptions of justice and legal socialization processes from additional frameworks, such as social exchange theory or resiliency frameworks, might provide additional insight into perceptions of justice. Examining the effects of racial profiling from various models such as resiliency frameworks may shed insight not only into how individuals, but also their families, cope with negative encounters with police and instances of racial profiling.

Conclusion

This study sought to examine how legal socialization practices affected African American males' perceptions of justice during adolescent development and beyond. Particularly, the study sought to gain better understanding of African American males' views of legitimacy and legal cynicism. African American male college students' beliefs about legitimacy and cynicism, as well as how they were socialized to deal with police encounters, were not monolithic. For example, although some participants expressed distrust in the justice system, others fully trusted and believed in complying with authority not out of fear, but out of their beliefs in the fairness of the justice system. Hence, the stereotype that all African American males distrust police is untrue.

This study supports the notion that individuals can believe in conceptual definitions of legitimacy and safety, yet diverge from the broad concept of compliance when issues of procedural justice and fairness arise. Perhaps unjustified killings of unarmed African American males and negative police encounters point to the fact that, despite laws within our macrosystem that are intended to protect individuals, the relationship between these laws and individuals is not clear cut. Since negative police encounters can occur to anyone, future research should continue to explore perceptions of justice among broad populations. African American males recall the messages their parents told them. What remains clear is the continued need for parents of African American males to teach their sons how to survive in a society where they sometimes feel as if they are not valued. One participant summarized conflicting views that he had regarding legitimacy and cynicism:

It's like a double-sided coin because I see my peers who look just like me getting shot and killed mainly for the color of their skin and it's like why should I obey them? But in the same sentence I feel like since I don't want to die, I should obey them?

It is my hope that continued research into perceptions of justice will provide an outlet for beneficial dialogue between police and African American males, ideally creating an environment where the need to comply due to fear is replaced with the need to comply out of mutual respect. Creating a justice system where mutual respect exists will benefit communities, families, and individuals for generations to come.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Application of PPCT Model

Table 11:
Application of PPCT Model

Process	Person	Context	Time
Retrospective Perceptions of Police	African American, college-age males	Influences of the various ecological systems, parental messages, direct experiences, media, etc.	Perceptions of justice over time, what participants were told, their perceptions, and how they will prepare their sons for potential encounters

(Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006; Rosa & Tudge, 2013)

APPENDIX B

Consent Form

Research Participant and Consent Information

You are being asked to participate in a research project. Researchers are required to provide a consent form to inform you about the study, to convey that participation is voluntary, to explain risks and benefits of participation, and to empower you to make an informed decision. You should feel free to ask the researchers any questions you may have.

***Study Title:* Perceptions of Justice and Legal Socialization Processes Among College-Age African American Males**

***Researchers:* Brian G. Johnson and Robert J. Griffore, Department of Human Development and Family Studies, Michigan State University**

Address and Contact Information: 13 H Human Ecology Building 517 432-3818

1. EXPLANATION OF THE RESEARCH AND WHAT YOU WILL DO

You are being asked to participate in a research study. The purpose is to explore how direct encounters with police affect African American males' perceptions of justice and legal socialization processes. We want to study African American male college students' experiences with police; how these experiences may have affected their belief in the validity, and trust of police and the justice system. We would also like to explore how their levels of belief and trust in the justice system affect how they will prepare their sons for possible encounters with police. We are asking you to participate by completing a brief survey instrument and, if you wish, to be interviewed. We expect that the survey instrument will take no more than 10 minutes, and that the interview will take about 30 minutes to complete.

2. YOUR RIGHTS TO PARTICIPATE, SAY NO, OR WITHDRAW

- Please respond to this survey and to the interview only if you are African American and male
- Please respond to this survey only if you are between the ages of 18 and 25. Please do not respond to this survey if you are not at least age 18.
- Participation in this research project is completely voluntary.
- You have the right to say no.
- There are no expected or known risks.
- We do not expect that any of the questions will cause you discomfort or distress.
- If you do wish to discontinue or to skip any questions, you may do so at any time.
- Choosing not to participate or withdrawing from this study will not make any difference in the quality of any services you may receive or benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

3. COSTS AND COMPENSATION FOR BEING IN THE STUDY

- There will be no cost to you if you participate in this study. You will not receive money or any other form of compensation for participating in this study.

4. ANONYMITY

- Your information will be anonymous.
- Please do not write your name on the questionnaire or provide your name in the context of an interview, if you choose to be interviewed.
- Please do not provide any other information that could link you with the information you provide.
- Please do not share the information you provide with anyone else.
- In answering the questions on the survey instrument and/or participating in the interview, please do not provide any information that may be related to a crime, that is, activity that may be a violation of civil or criminal statutes involving you or any other individuals(s).

5. KEEP THIS CONSENT INFORMATION

If you decide to participate in the study, you may keep this consent information.

6. CONTACT INFORMATION FOR QUESTIONS AND CONCERNS

If you have concerns or questions about this study, such as scientific issues, how to do any part of it, or to report an injury related to completing the questionnaire, please contact the researchers (Brian G. Johnson and Robert J. Griffore: Department of Human Development and Family Studies, Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan 48824-1030, john3582@msu.edu or griffore@msu.edu).

If you have questions or concerns about your role and rights as a research participant, would like to obtain information or offer input, or would like to register a complaint about this study, you may contact, anonymously if you wish, the Michigan State University's Human Research Protection Program at 517-355-2180, Fax 517-432-4503, or e-mail irb@msu.edu or regular mail at 207 Olds Hall, MSU, East Lansing, MI 48824.

7. AGREEMENT

You indicate your agreement to participate by completing and returning the survey instrument and by responding to questions asked by Brian Johnson in the interview.

APPENDIX C

IRB Consent

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

February 29, 2016

To: Robert Griffore
13H Human Ecology

Re: **IRB# x16-299e** Category: Exempt 2
Approval Date: February 29, 2016

Title: Perceptions of Justice and Legal Socialization Processes Among College-Age, African American Males.

The Institutional Review Board has completed their review of your project. I am pleased to advise you that **your project has been deemed as exempt** in accordance with federal regulations.

The IRB has found that your research project meets the criteria for exempt status and the criteria for the protection of human subjects in exempt research. **Under our exempt policy the Principal Investigator assumes the responsibilities for the protection of human subjects** in this project as outlined in the assurance letter and exempt educational material. The IRB office has received your signed assurance for exempt research. A copy of this signed agreement is appended for your information and records.

Renewals: Exempt protocols do not need to be renewed. If the project is completed, please submit an *Application for Permanent Closure*.

Revisions: Exempt protocols do not require revisions. However, if changes are made to a protocol that may no longer meet the exempt criteria, a new initial application will be required.

Problems: If issues should arise during the conduct of the research, such as unanticipated problems, adverse events, or any problem that may increase the risk to the human subjects and change the category of review, notify the IRB office promptly. Any complaints from participants regarding the risk and benefits of the project must be reported to the IRB.

Follow-up: If your exempt project is not completed and closed after three years, the IRB office will contact you regarding the status of the project and to verify that no changes have occurred that may affect exempt status.

Please use the IRB number listed above on any forms submitted which relate to this project, or on any correspondence with the IRB office.

Good luck in your research. If we can be of further assistance, please contact us at 517-355-2180 or via email at IRB@msu.edu. Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,



Harry McGee, MPH
SIRB Chair

c: Brian Johnson



Office of Regulatory Affairs
Human Research
Protection Programs

Biomedical & Health
Institutional Review Board
(BIRB)

Community Research
Institutional Review Board
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Social Science
Behavioral/Education
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Initial IRB Application Determination ***Exempt***

APPENDIX D

Survey Instrument

Questions for Phase 1 Survey and Phase 2 Interview

Instructions:

a. Please do not write your name on the questionnaire or provide your name in the context of an interview, if you choose to be interviewed. Please do not provide any other information that could link you with the information you provide. Please do not share the information you provide with anyone else.

b. Please indicate your answer to Question #1 by writing your age on the line following the question. Answer the remaining questions by circling your preferred answer.

c. In answering the following questions and/or participating in the interview (if you choose to be interviewed) please do not provide any information that may be related to a crime, that is, activity that that may be a violation of civil or criminal statutes involving you or any other individuals(s).

d. Please respond to this survey and to the interview only if you are African American and male

e. Please respond to this survey only if you are between the ages of 18 and 25. Please do not respond to this survey if you are not at least age 18.

1. What is your age? _____

2. Where did you spend most of your life?

- a. Inner city
- b. Rural area
- c. Suburban

3. Legitimacy is considered to be the feeling that one should obey institutional authority (Fagan & Tyler, 2005). Which of the following describes your perception of whether you believe you should obey institutional authority?

- a. I never believe this
- b. Most of the time I do not believe this
- c. Sometimes I believe and sometimes I do not
- d. I tend to believe this
- e. I always believe this

4. Legal cynicism describes the notion that when individuals do not feel that laws are legitimate, it is more acceptable not to conform to established laws (Fagan & Tyler, 2005). Thinking about your experiences with police, have they left you feeling cynical?

- a. Not cynical at all.
- b. Generally not cynical.
- c. Sometimes cynical and sometimes positive.
- d. Generally cynical
- e. Very cynical

5. When have you had most of your contact with police?
- a. In the last year or two
 - b. In the past five years
 - c. In the past 10 years
 - d. In the past 15 years
 - e. Throughout your life, including childhood.
6. In general, how much of what you believe about the police comes from your direct experience with them?
- a. All of what I believe comes from media and the opinions of others.
 - b. Most of what I believe comes from media and the opinions of others.
 - c. Both direct and indirect experience
 - d. Most of what I believe comes from personal experience with police.
 - e. All of what I believe comes from personal experience with police.
7. In general, how much of what you believe about the criminal justice system comes from your direct experience with the system?
- a. All of what I believe comes from media and the opinions of others.
 - b. Most of what I believe comes from media and the opinions of others.
 - c. Both direct and indirect experience
 - d. Most of what I believe comes from personal experience with the system.
 - e. All of what I believe comes from personal experience with the system.
8. Which of the following best describes your views of police?
- a. My beliefs are identical to those of my parents.
 - b. My beliefs are similar to those of my parents.
 - c. My beliefs are unrelated to those of my parents.
 - d. My beliefs are somewhat different from those of my parents.
 - e. My beliefs are completely different from those of my parents.
9. What were you told by your parents about how you should interact with police?
- a. Do not trust police and do not comply.
 - b. Be careful about trusting police and think carefully about complying.
 - c. They told me nothing.
 - d. Generally trust police and comply if possible.
 - e. Always trust police and comply.

10. What will you tell your sons about how they should interact with police?

- a. Do not trust police and do not comply.
- b. Be careful about trusting police and think carefully about complying.
- c. I will not tell them anything.
- d. Generally trust police and comply if possible.
- e. Always trust police and comply.

11. Would you be interested in participating in an in-depth interview relating to these questions?
Please circle either yes or no.

Yes

No

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