

STRATEGIES USED BY AFRICAN AMERICANS DURING POLICE ENCOUNTERS AND
THEIR EFFECT ON “THE TALK” GIVEN TO BLACK CHILDREN

By

Trevariana Mason

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ABSTRACT

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Scholars have long since documented the tenuous relationship between African Americans the police. Despite the plethora of research that highlights the factors affecting the relationship between the African American community and law enforcement, few studies have examined how African Americans manage police encounters and whether such strategies are gendered. Fewer studies have explored the advice parents give to their children as to how to handle police and whether such instructions are gendered. Drawing from Hirshman’s (1970)’s organization framework, this study explores the strategies African American adults employ during police encounters, the police-citizen outcomes, and whether such tactics vary by gender. The current study also examines the advice parents give to children as to how to navigate police interactions and whether such advice is gendered. Using in-depth interviews with 38 Ferguson, Missouri residents and protesters, findings that suggest men and women utilize similar strategies; however, the outcomes vary by gender. Findings also reveal that parents provide their children with gender specific advice when they encounter police.

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To Michael Brown, who didn't get a chance to live such moments because his life was cut so short-this is for you. Your life has come to mean much more than you may have ever expected.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES	vi
CHAPTER 1: The Need for Research.....	1
CHAPTER 2: Literature Review.....	5
The Michael Brown Incident.....	5
Historical Context on Race, Place, and Policing	6
Contemporary Perspective of Black Citizen-Police Interactions.....	9
Strategic Responses to Police.....	13
Racial Socialization.....	14
Purpose, Goals, and Research Questions.....	18
CHAPTER 3: Methodology.....	19
Analytical Strategy.....	20
Study Setting	21
CHAPTER 4: Research Findings	22
Sample Characteristics.....	22
Strategies in Managing Contact with the Police.....	22
Question Police Officers.....	23
Compliance.....	26
Lodge a Complaint.....	28
Question and Comply.....	30
Policing the Police.....	32
Avoid Police Officers.....	33
<u>Parental</u> Advice on Handling Police Encounters.....	34
Be Respectful.....	35
Comply.....	37
Enforce Your Rights.....	38
Call Parents.....	39
Visible Hands.....	40
Avoid Police Officers.....	40
Avoid Sudden Movements.....	42
Reasons For Advice.....	42
CHAPTER 5: Discussion.....	47
Limitations.....	51
APPENDIX	54
REFERENCES	61

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Select Neighborhood Characteristics	55
Table 2. Demographic Characteristics.....	56
Table 3. Strategies Used to Handle Police Encounters.....	57
Table 4. Parental Advice Given to Boys and Girls.....	58

CHAPTER 1: The Need for Research

Police officers serve as the enforcement arm of the government and are one of the few agencies permitted the right to use deadly force (Sanchez & Rosenbaum, 2011). However, this has proven especially consequential for minority youths and adults (Crutchfield, Skinner, Haggerty, McGlynn, & Catalano, 2009; Hawkins, 2003; Holbert & Rose 2004; Jones, 2014; Lundman & Kaufman, 2003). Dating back to the 1950s, the relationship between African Americans and police officers has been characterized by racial tension and mistrust (Bartley 1969; Boyles, 2015; Porter, 2016). A growing number of studies have investigated African Americans' attitude towards the police and found that African Americans hold more unfavorable views of the police than any other racial or ethnic group (Brown & Benedict, 2002; Brunson, 2007; Cobbina, Owusu-Bempah, and Bender 2016; Crutchfield et, al 2009; O'Riely, 2002; Weitzer & Tuch, 2006). These perceptions are tied to African Americans' increased likelihood of being stopped, searched, and arrested by law enforcement (Lundamen & Kaufmen, 2003; Shaw, 2015). Moreover, Blacks are more likely to be prosecuted, convicted, and incarcerated at rates disproportionate to their percentage of the U.S. population (Alexander, 2010; Dunn, 2010; Moore, Adedoyin, Robinson, & Boamah, 2015; Pettit 2012). For instance, data compiled in a Federal Bureau Investigation (FBI) study revealed that African Americans account for 39% of persons arrested for violent offenses, 30% of persons arrested for property offenses, and 33% of the total prison population while only representing 12% of the national population (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2009). However, these statistics do not reflect a higher propensity for criminal behavior, as research shows that Whites and African Americans use drugs and commit crimes at similar rates (Alexander, 2010); yet, African Americans are more likely to be arrested

and charged for drug offenses than Whites (Alexander, 2010; Holbert & Rose, 2004; Johnson, 2006).

The overwhelming images of African American men and women being brutalized, mistreated, and, in extreme cases, killed by the police in the past few years has perpetuated the view of racially-biased policing (Fridell, 2001; Hall, Hall, and Perry, 2016; Lawrence, 2000; Weitzer & Tuch, 2005). The murders of Oscar Grant, Sean Bell, Sandra Bland, Rekia Boyd, Tanisha Anderson, Aiyana Stanley-Jones, Eric Gardner, Michael Brown, Freddie Gray, Philando Castile, Tamir Rice, and many others, at the hands of police officers, has heightened the belief that police departments partake in racially-biased policing. Race-based policing, also known as racial profiling, is a practice in which an officer makes law enforcement decisions based solely on the race or ethnicity of the civilian (Ramirez, McDevitt, Ferrell 2000; Withrow, 2002). The consequence of racially biased policing is detrimental, as police practices erode the very foundation of American democracy and destroys legitimacy of the police in maintaining social order (Matsueda & Drakulich, 2009). Considering the conflicting accounts of the death of Michael Brown, the demographics of the Ferguson community, and relationship residents have with the police department, many people perceived that the killing of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri was a result of race-based policing, which sparked civil unrest across the nation, including Los Angeles, New York, Seattle, Philadelphia and Chicago.

In response to the mistreatment, harassment, and violence against the African American populace, there has been heightened public and scholarly attention as to how parents prepare their children for race-related encounters with police (Weitzer & Brunson, 2009; Whitaker, 2016). Racial socialization is a strategy parents often use to manage race-related encounters while emphasizing the significance of their race (Constantine & Blackmon 2002; Harris-Britt,

Valrie, Kurtz-Costes, and Rowley, 2007; Hughes, 2006; Thornton, 1997). The perceived discrimination by many African Americans has transformed the racial socialization messages presented by parents to their children. Logically, racial socialization messages given by African American parents are necessary to help their children understand race and navigate intra-racial and inter-racial experiences (Lesane-Brown, 2006; Saleem, English, Busby, Lambert, Harrison, Stock, and Gibbons 2016). Research suggests that racial socialization messages are prevalent within African American families and that parents' experiences with racial discrimination may affect the messages they relay to their children (Constantine & Blackmon 2002; Harris-Britt, Valrie, Kurtz-Costes, and Rowley 2007; Hughes, 2006; Thornton, 1997).

However, scant attention has been given to whether the exclusive messages parents give to their children are gendered. In particular, the police violence towards African American males in recent years may result in parents advising their sons in distinct ways than their daughters when it comes to interacting with the police. In addition, while a number of studies have examined police interactions with citizens (Jones-Brown, 2000; Holbert & Rose 2004; Lundman & Kaufman, 2003; O'Reilly, 2002; Shaw, 2015), few investigate how citizens manage police encounters (but see Weitzer & Brunson, 2009), and whether such strategies are gendered. Since African Americans as a whole have disproportionate involuntary contact with the police (Nordberg, Crawford, Praetorius, & Hatcher, 2016; Renauer & Covelli, 2011; Weitzer & Brunson, 2009), it is likely that they devise strategies to avoid interactions with law enforcements and minimize risk when such interactions do occur. Thus, the proposed study seeks to: 1) examine strategies used by African American adults when encountering police officers, 2) analyze how such tactics shape police–citizen outcomes, 3) explore if such strategies and outcomes are gendered, 4) investigate the advice parents provide to their children regarding how to manage

police encounters, and 5) explore if the advice given is gendered. In addition to filling the gap in the literature, this study is unique in its nature because it takes into account the perspective of protesters in Ferguson, a city that received national attention for weeks and months following the death of Michael Brown.

Before moving to the present research, I will briefly examine the facts of the Michael Brown shooting. This is followed by a review of two bodies of literature, which are relevant for the research. First, I draw on research on race, place, and policing, which serves as a basis for understanding the nature of citizen-police interactions. Here, I provide an overview of historical policing of Blacks, followed by a chronicle of the current state of Black citizen-police interactions. Second, I explore racial socialization and how that shapes the advice that parental guardians relay to their minor children.

CHAPTER 2: Literature Review

The Michael Brown Incident

On August 9th 2014, an unarmed African American teenager, Michael Brown, was shot and killed by Darren Wilson, a white police officer in Ferguson, Missouri. After leaving a convenience store, Brown and his friend Dorian Johnson were confronted by Officer Wilson and instructed to move to the sidewalk (Hill, 2016; Mimms, 2014; Shaw, 2015). After Brown refused to move, Johnson claimed that Wilson initiated a scuffle with Brown and grabbed him by the neck. As Brown attempted to pull away, Officer Wilson drew his gun and shot Brown (Hill, 2016; Shaw, 2015; Matthews, 2016). The first initial shot was in Brown's hand. Johnson reported that moments after Michael was shot in his hand, Brown ran and was shot in his back. Johnson, and several witnesses, declared that Brown raised his hands in an act of surrender; yet, Wilson opened fire.

However, Wilson and the Ferguson Police Department (FPD) contested the claims, alleging that Brown had taken part in a robbery. Wilson claimed that after instructing Brown and Johnson to get off the streets and they refused, he attempted to exit his vehicle and Brown attacked him, causing him to reach for his gun for safety (Matthews, 2016; McSpadden, 2016; Shaw, 2015). Wilson claimed that after shooting Brown in the hand he ran and Wilson gave chase, but he shot him after Brown charged back towards him. Reports show that Wilson fired a total of 12 shots, six of which hit Michael Brown, including two in the head (U.S. DOJ, 2015).

Though several witnesses asserted that Brown had his hands up in an act of surrender prior to Wilson shooting him dead, the Department of Justice concluded that such accounts were inconsistent with physical and forensic evidence (U.S. Department of Justice, 2015). The St.

Louis Prosecutor, Robert McCullough, chose to bring the case to a grand jury to determine whether there was enough evidence to indict Wilson for his actions. On November 24th, 2014, McCullough declared that the grand jury would not to indict Wilson. Brown's death and the grand jury's decision not to indict Wilson served as a catalyst for social unrest across the nation, causing protests, demonstrations, sit-ins, marches, and dialogue about how race shapes policing.

Following Brown's death, a federal investigation of the FPD took place. The investigation revealed that while African Americans make up 67% of the population in Ferguson they account for 85% of the Ferguson's Police Department's (FPD) traffic stops (compared to 15% for Whites), 90% of FPD's citations (compared to 4% for Whites), and 93% of FPD's arrests from 2012-2014 (Shaw, 2015). Not only did the investigation report that African Americans are more likely to be stopped, searched, or arrested following a vehicular stop than their white counterparts but they accounted for 88% of force used against them by law enforcement (Shaw, 2015). The disproportionality of citations and poor treatment of African Americans fueled the negative sentiments that the African American community has toward the criminal justice system, primarily police officers. This was further exacerbated when the DOJ concluded that the FPD operates in a racially biased manner.

Historical Context on Race, Place, and Policing

In the United States, African Americans have a long history with policing institutions. Centuries of contentious police-minority relationships can be traced to the transatlantic slave trade. Controlling space and place of African Americans is rooted in the deep south of the United States. Policing institutions originated in the slave economy in which slave overseers captured and punished slaves who disobeyed the orders of their masters (Boyles, 2015; Jones-Brown,

2007; LeFlouria, 2015). As slave revolts increased, white populations' cruelty to slaves became institutionalized. This, in turn, led to increased surveillance of slaves, forming slave patrols (Boyles, 2015; LeFlouria, 2015; McNair, 2009). Slave patrols sought to keep slaves "in their place" by using intimidation to reinforce behavior comfortable for whites. Consequently, slaves were terrorized, brutally beaten, sexually abused, and, in extreme cases, mutilated by slave patrols (Boyles, 2015; LeFlouria, 2015).

During the early period of Reconstruction (1865-1867), southern whites found themselves in a peculiar dilemma when the 13th Amendment officially outlawed the institution of slavery in 1865. The 13th Amendment stated that "neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction" (U.S Constitution, Amendment XIII). Though many "ex-slaves" were freed from their plantations following the decree of the 13th Amendment, many white landowners feared losing the manpower needed to sustain their fields for agricultural labor, which was profitable. Consequently, a new system of control emerged (LeFlouria, 2015). One legal tool used to control blacks and maintain the ideology of white supremacy was the passage of black codes, which entailed restrictive laws designed to inhibit the activity of freed blacks and establish another system of forced labor (Bass, 2001). For instance, many southern states adopted vagrancy laws, making it a criminal offense not to work, which was applied selectively to blacks. Those who were unemployed were subject to being arrested and fined or forced into unpaid labor (Bass, 2001). Passed by a political system in which Blacks did not have a voice, the black codes were enforced by all-white police and state militia forces across the South to ensure the "continued subordination of black labor to white economic power" (Bass, 2001, pg. 159).

During early Reconstruction, the black codes were eventually overturned. Not only was slavery officially abolished under the 13th Amendment; blacks were bestowed full citizenship under the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1866, given “equal protection of the laws” based on the 14th Amendment, and provided the right to vote based on the 15th Amendment (Alexander, 2010). However, following the end of Reconstruction, the south reestablished many of the provisions of the black codes in the form of "Jim Crow laws." Jim Crow referred to any state law that established different rules for blacks and whites in southern and Border States between 1877 and the mid-1960s. Under Jim Crow, blacks were relegated to the status of second-class citizens, which touched every part of life. They experienced racial discrimination that extended to schools, housing, jobs, churches, restaurants, hospitals, hotels, restrooms, funeral homes, and prisons (Alexander, 2010). During the Jim Crow era, law enforcement were responsible for upholding and enforcing discriminatory laws, which re-enforced involuntary servitude upon blacks (Bass, 2001; Kennedy, 1997).

Policing institutions were used as a means to enforce restrictions and reinforce inferiority by implementing slave codes, black codes, and Jim Crow policies, which perpetuated a slavery mentality and deprived African Americans of equal rights and opportunities (Boyles, 2015; Jones-Brown, 2007; LeFlouria, 2015; Sanchez & Rosenbaum 2010). Police not only patrolled communities in a biased manner, they also failed to protect African Americans and were involved in questionable acts against minorities (Cohen, 1996; Sanchez & Rosenbaum 2010). The conception of the volatile relationship between African Americans and police has remained, albeit in more subtle way.

Contemporary Perspective of Black Citizen-Police Interactions

The roots of the criminalization of African Americans, as a contemporary phenomenon, date back to the Civil Rights Movement when white supremacists meticulously attempted to portray African Americans' struggle to end Jim Crow segregation in public places as unlawful. Segregation in voting rights, employment, housing, schools, and police use of force served as tactics to imply that Blacks were second-class citizens. The killing of 14-year-old Emmett Till in 1955, sparked emotion around the country as once more, a young black male had been the target of white authority and white supremacy. As African Americans demanded their civil and human rights through protests and marches, their actions were criminalized, perpetuating the earlier thoughts that blacks were innately inhumane, barbaric, and villains (Porter, 2016). For example, the actions of Martin Luther King Jr, Malcolm X, Rosa Parks, John Lewis, and countless other civil and human rights leaders were criminalized. The peaceful and non-violent marches, rallies, and demonstrations were scrutinized by many white Americans who attempted to restrain African Americans to second-class citizenship.

Although the Civil Rights Movement continued, the tactics to obtain freedom, liberty and justice became more resistant. The Black Panther Party, for example, was created to enhance the lives of African Americans in poor-urban neighborhoods; however, their presence was unwelcomed by the FBI. In order to eliminate black militant leaders whom the FBI considered dangerous, the FBI is believed to have worked with various police departments to target particular individuals, accuse them of heinous crimes they did not commit, suppress exculpatory evidence and wrongly incarcerate them (Abu-Jamal, 2004; Aptheker, 1999; Haas, 2010). The creation of the Counter Intelligence Program (COINTELPRO) allowed law enforcement to monitor, infiltrate, discredit and, in many cases, disrupt political, social, and economically

beneficial organizations for minorities. For instance, during the 1970s and the rise of the Black Panthers, an unarmed 21 year old member, Fred Hampton, was shot and killed in his home by the Chicago Police Department (Haas, 2010; United States. Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2003). Black women were equally vulnerable to the use of excessive force by police during this time period. Women such as Assata Shakur, Angela Davis, Elaine Brown, and Kathleen Cleaver were targeted by the FBI due to their affiliation with the Black Panther Party, and were continuously stopped, searched, and arrested by police (Abdu, 2004; Nagel, 2015; Shakur, 1987). Assata Shakur was beaten, taunted, and mistreated by New Jersey Police Department, after accusations of her participation in the killing of a police officer (Nagel, 2015; Shakur, 1987). Once more African Americans were reminded of their second-class citizenship in America.

The emergence of the “law and order” policing, “get tough on crime” policies, and the “war on drugs” during the 1980s were enforced by Ronald Regan and his administration, which resulted in Black men and women being targeted. This ultimately led to a disproportionate number of African Americans becoming recipients of punitive sanctions (Hudson & Davies , 2008; Moffitt & Campbell, 2011; Tate, Taylor & Sawyer, 2013). Such policies perpetuated once more the thought of “black criminality,” with many perceiving criminality as synonymous with black individuals. Police, serving as the forefront of the criminal justice system, have perpetuated what Alexander (2010) deems a “racial caste system” – a system that ensures people of color remain second class status for life. With disproportionate numbers of black individuals behind bars, Alexander (2010) makes the connection between mass imprisonment and earlier forms of social control in the US, arguing that mass incarceration is a well-disguised system of racial control analogous to Jim Crow.

During the 1990s, the policies and tactics of the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) were scrutinized and televised following the 1992 brutal beating of an unarmed motorist, Rodney King. King became the symbol of racial violence and racial tension following his beating by four LAPD officers (Jacobs, 2000; Zook, 2013). The lack of accountability of the LAPD officers, overwhelming accounts of perjury, and force used by the officers further heightened the level of mistrust of police among the African American community (Jacobs, 2000; Solomon & Solomon, 2004; Zook, 2013). The beating of Rodney King led to civil unrest across the country and tension between the black community and police departments across the nation grew largely. Since then, the mistrust of police in the African American community continued to rise as the deaths of Amadou Diallo, Sean Bell, Alberta Spruill, Tarika Wilson, Oscar Grant, and countless others have occurred.

Overall, the inequitable treatment of African Americans throughout the criminal justice system has led many to have unfavorable views of the criminal justice system in general, and police officers specifically. Because African Americans are more likely to have involuntary contact with police (Nordberg, Crawford, Praetorius, & Hatcher, 2016; Renauer & Covelli, 2011; Weitzer & Brunson, 2009), they often have to determine how they will handle such encounters with police officers. Several studies report citizens' demeanor affects the way they are treated by police (Terrill & Resig, 2003). Specifically, suspects that exhibit negative behavior or appear to have a poor attitude, as determined by the police are more likely to have unfavorable outcomes following their encounter with police (Dunham & Alpert 2009; Engel, Sobol & Worden, 2000; Lundman, Sykes, Clark, 1978; Lundman, 1996).

African Americans' views of police officers are shaped by both their personal and vicarious experiences – shared experiences with close friends, family members, and neighbors

(Brunson, 2007; Weitzer & Tuch 2006). For example, in his examination of African American males' direct and indirect experiences with police, Brunson (2007) found that many young males believed that police were hard to communicate with, impolite, and mistreated numerous people within their neighborhoods. The participants also expressed their disappointment with the slow response times and officers' inability to effectively and efficiently solve crime.

The intersectionality of race, class, and neighborhood context are dynamic with regards to citizen-police encounters and citizens' perception of police. Friction between police and minority citizens are particularly prevalent amongst low income and high crime neighborhoods (Hawkins, 2003; Lynch & Sabol, 2004; Weitzer, 2005). Officers are more likely to police such neighborhoods, which increases the number of police-citizen contacts; thus, heightening the potential for undesirable encounters (Brunson, 2007). Consequently, poor minorities' environment becomes a liability, as police officers have heightened suspicion of these low socioeconomic neighborhoods (Hawkins, 2003; Lynch & Sabol, 2004; Weitzer, 2005). Being young, African American, and male from economically distressed neighborhoods all contribute to the increased likelihood of being searched and arrested, resulting in unfavorable views of the police (Crutchfield, 2009; Gabbidon et. al, 2011; Jones-Brown, 2000; Sheb, 2009).

Strategic Responses to Police

Given the experiences African Americans have with law enforcement, it is not surprising that they would attempt to reduce contact with police officers or determine ways to manage their police encounters when they do occur. For instance, Hirshman (1970) detailed various ways people respond when they find themselves in problematic organizations. These options are exit, loyalty, and voice. *Exit* occurs when a person chooses to sever ties with the organization and decides to go to another place to suit their needs (Weitzer & Brunson, 2009). *Voice* permits displeased clientele to express complaints and assert potential solutions to the organization. The final option, *loyalty*, permits clientele to remain dedicated to the problematic organization with the hopes that the organization will somehow improve (Weitzer & Brunson, 2009).

Although Hirschman's framework focuses on organizations more broadly, one can also consider how people respond to police departments. Similar to organizations, members of police departments can be problematic when they perform poorly, provide unsatisfactory services, and mistreat citizens. Therefore, when dissatisfied clientele find themselves in undesirable situations, they must find ways to respond to the organization. Unlike organizations, citizens are unable to transport their loyalty to another department. Moreover, while individuals are unable to "exit" from the control of police when contact has occurred, they can enact strategies to avoid contact with police. In addition, citizens may use their "voice" to contest specific actions of police in an attempt to hold them police accountable (Weitzer & Brunson, 2009). This strategy can be demonstrated verbally (i.e. cursing, questioning police, name calling, lodging complaint) and nonverbally (i.e. physical aggression, evasion, noncompliance).

Using Hirshman's (1970) framework, Weitzer and Brunson (2009) examined how citizens manage their contact with the police officers. In their qualitative analysis of 45 young African American males in St. Louis, Missouri, Weitzer and Brunson (2009) found that young Black men rely on both proactive and reactive tactics to reduce the likelihood of contact and conflicts with police. In particular, youths rely on exit (avoidance of police), voice (verbal resistance, lodge complaint), and loyalty (to family, friends, and community members who provide cautionary advice as to how to avoid police and guide interactions when they do occur) strategies to navigate contact with law enforcement. Although Weitzer and Brunson (2009) meticulously analyzed the strategies young African American males used when encountering police, an important limitation is that they failed to include women in their analysis. No doubt, given the experiences African Americans have historically had with the police, it is likely the interactions affect the parental advice given to children regarding the police.

Racial Socialization

Racial socialization is defined as behavioral messages that are transmitted to younger generations for the development of attitudes, behaviors, and beliefs regarding the meaning and significance of race and racial stratification (Freeman, 2012; Scottham, 2009). In response to the recent social unrest over racial inequalities within the criminal justice system and police brutality against African American people in the United States, there has been increased scholarly attention as to how African American parents prepare children for race-related encounters (Saleem et al., 2016; Wallace, 2014; Whitaker & Snell, 2016). Most African American parents prime their children to withstand oppression in this nation. It is not uncommon for parents to engage in racial socialization practices that teach children how to deal with racial bias and discrimination (Coard, Wallace, Stevenson, Brottman, 2004; Thorton, 1997; Saleem et. al, 2016;

Whitaker & Snell, 2016). The use of racial socialization allows parents to prepare their children to live within both black and white cultural contexts (Bell & Nkomo, 2001).

Studies suggest that racial socialization is gendered and in some cases dependent on class (Bell & Nkomo, 2001; Saleem et al., 2016; Wallace, 2014; Whitaker & Snell, 2016). Since young African American males have an increased likelihood of interacting with police (Brunson & Weitzer 2009; Goff, Jackson, Lewis Di Leone, Culotta, DiTomasso, 2014), parents often provide different advice to their sons and daughters as to how to manage their interactions within a predominately white culture. Girls are often taught to armor themselves when entering predominately white spaces to ensure that they are taken seriously (Bell & Nkomo, 2001). Armoring is a form of socialization in which girls acquire the socially acceptable behaviors, preferences, and cultural attitudes, which allows them to develop a protective shield as a buffer for unpleasant race-related situations (Bell & Nkomo 2001). For instance, Bell and Nkomo's (2010) study found that females who were raised in families of nurturance and support received two armor techniques, including being respectable and developing courage. In contrast, females raised in families entrenched in struggle and survival revealed that being self-reliant and strong was emphasized as armoring strategies.

Unlike females, black males are often taught to appear less dominant to ensure that they are not viewed as a threat to members in society (Bell & Nkomo, 2001; Hughes, 2014; Whitaker & Snell, 2016). Black males are often perceived as older and more threatening compared to their white counterparts; thus, heightening their possibility of force being used against them during police encounters (Goff, Jackson, Lewis Di Leone, Culotta, DiTomasso, 2014; Holbert & Rose, 2014; Whitaker & Snell, 2016). For example, black males are often advised to avoid wearing

baggy clothes, sagging pants, hoodies, or any article of clothing that is associated with an urban style in order to appear less harmful (Hughes, 2014).

Research suggests racial socialization is important to adolescent development (Harris-Britt, 2007; Scottham, 2009). Racism may be particularly salient during the adolescent years when the child is formulating his or her identity and beginning to have conceptualizations regarding the social world. Racial socialization serves as the implicit, purposeful, and unintended ways a parents' beliefs, experiences, and behaviors convey views about the social world to their child. This practice is primarily in African American families that intend to protect their child from harmful feelings and prepare them for the race-related issues that they may encounter in the future. Research indicates the racial socialization messages that parents transmit are informed by their personal encounters with racial discrimination (Hughes, 2003; Saleem et. al, 2016; Tilton, 2011). Instances of African American parents encountering members of other races in classrooms, employment settings, and within the criminal justice system all prepare parents to share their experiences with the children.

It is likely that the interactions between adult African Americans and police affect the parental advice given to children regarding the police. When parents engage in racial socialization, African American children learn their perceived inferiority when encountering police, and prepare for harassment and discrimination (Hughes, 2003; Jones, 2014; Saleem, English, Busby, Lambert, Harrison, Stock, & Gibbons, 2016; Whitaker& Snell, 2016). Due to the tragic slaying of men and women over the past few years as previously mentioned, African Americans parents often have "the talk" to discuss the importance of survival when encountering law enforcement (Harris- Britt 2007; Weitzer & Tuch 2006; Whitaker& Snell, 2016; Saleem et al 2016). Such conversations offer survival strategies to children when they interact with the police

(Weitzer & Tuch, 2006; Whitaker & Snell, 2016). Used as a protective factor for African American parents to prepare children to face discrimination and serving as a socialization tactic, black males are typically taught that when encountering police, they must keep their hands in plain view, make no sudden movements, and remain courteous and respectful towards the officers (Harris, 2002; Weitzer and Tuch 2006, Whitaker & Snell, 2016). Contrary to popular belief, “the talk” is not about avoiding criminal behavior; rather, it is about avoiding the *perception* of criminal behavior (Whitaker & Snell, 2016). Black boys and girls are generally taught to look less urban and less threatening to avoid being perceived as mischievous or criminal. Black girls are also warned that they should tread a fine line between standing up for themselves and appearing to have an attitude to decrease their possibility of having negative encounters with the police (Hughes, 2015; Morris, 2015; Whitaker& Snell, 2016)

While conversations about how to interact with police when stopped is a survival mechanism that parents try to pass on to their kids, there are unintended consequences. That is, African American children may perceive themselves as being inferior once they learn that they may be stopped and searched unnecessarily by the police. Perceived as dangerous and threatening by the broader public, African Americans risk being perceived as suspicious by the police. Consequently, Black children may internalize these biases when they learn that they are often considered guilty for the mere color of their skin.

Purpose, Goals and Research Questions

Considering that few studies explore how African Americans manage encounters with law enforcement (but see Weitzer & Brunson, 2009), and little is known about the advice parents give to their children as to how to handle encounters with law enforcement, the study seeks to add to the literature. The purpose of the research study is to: (1) identify the strategies African American men and women use when encountering police; (2) examine how such tactics are shaped by police–citizen outcomes; (3) explore whether the strategies and outcomes used when encountering police are gendered; (4) identify the parental advice given; and (5) assess whether advice given to children is gendered. This study is unique in nature because it examines how gender shapes strategic responses and parental advice to interacting with police. The current study compares men and women’s experiences with and perceptions of the police. The comparative analysis allows for an examination of how gender intersects with race in shaping the nature of police-Black citizen interactions. Understanding the relationship between African Americans and police and its effect on parental advice can provide a better understanding of how and why racial socialization occurs in African American households, and how police encounters are managed. This study is timely given the increased media attention of African Americans being the recipients of brutal force by police officers (Alexander, 2010; Johnson, 2006; Shaw, 2015).

CHAPTER 3: Methodology

The current study draws on in-depth interviews with Black residents and protesters in Ferguson following the death of Michael Brown. Here I analyze 61 incidents of police citizen encounters drawn from interviews with 38 Black individuals who self-identified as having engaged in community action in Ferguson following the death of Brown. The study draws from qualitative, in-depth interviews that were conducted between October and November 2014. Participation in the study was voluntary and respondents were paid a total of \$40.

The sample selection was purposive in nature as the sample recruitment involved individuals who engaged in protests, marches, rallies, and community meetings following the death of Michael Brown. Respondents were recruited to participate in the study using various methods. First, a flyer about the research project was placed on Dr. Cobbina's Facebook and Twitter account, which was widespread. Second, the editor of a minority St. Louis newspaper, broadcasted the study details to his over 7,000 followers. Third, an ad was placed in the employment section of the minority newspapers, and lastly, fliers were distributed on a local college campus.

Data collection began with a digitally recorded in-depth, semi-structured face-to-face interview, which lasted on average one hour. Interviews were conducted in several locations across the St. Louis area, which included a conference room at a local university, multiple fast food restaurants, coffee shops, and a local public library. The interviews were later transcribed and read into NVivo and served as the primary data for this contextual examination.

When analyzing the strategies respondents used when they encountered the police, the unit of analysis for the current study is the police–citizen encounter. In all, respondents in the

study provided detailed descriptions of 61 incidents of direct encounters with police before and after the death of Brown. As a general rule, narrative accounts of a police encounter had to specify details of the incident, including information about involuntary police-initiated stops, respondents' reaction to being stopped, and the outcome that resulted from citizens' response. However, when analyzing the parental strategies given, the unit of analysis is the individual respondent.

The larger study focused on Ferguson residents' and protesters' experiences and perceptions of the police and their involvement and experiences in community action. The present study draws upon qualitative interviews with 38 Black protesters from Ferguson to investigate how African American men and women manage police encounters and whether such strategies vary by gender. In addition, this study investigates the advice parents¹ give to their minor dependents when they interact with police and whether such advice is gendered.

Analytical Strategy

The audio recordings from the 38 interviews were transcribed and read into NVivo, a qualitative software. To begin the analysis, I sorted all relevant data into two separate datasets, which include: (1) respondents' strategies for handling police encounters and (2) the parental advice given to children when they encounter police. I used inductive analysis techniques to identify common tactics used by black men and women when they interact with police and advice to navigate police encounters. For the dataset, Dr. Cobbina and I independently coded 10 cases for themes concerning perceptions, and then met to discuss, compare, and refine the codes. A codebook was created and we then independently coded an additional 10 cases. After

¹ The current study considers the advice given to children from parents or primary guardians.

obtaining a kappa value of .7 or more, which suggests substantial agreement between codes, I coded the remaining cases. This analytic approach established inter-rater reliability, which resulted in a more systematic and rigorous examination. The current study will depict concepts and illustrations that reflect the most common patterns of protesters' accounts.

Study Setting

Ferguson, located in St. Louis County, is populated with more than 21,000 people. The city of Ferguson is suburban; yet, the structural conditions resemble that of many urban communities. Table 1 provides a comparison of Ferguson and St. Louis residents' overall demographic and socioeconomic statistics. The table depicts clear disparities between the characteristics of the residents who live in the city of Ferguson compared with those who live in the St. Louis County. In particular, there are three times as many blacks who reside in Ferguson compared to St. Louis County. Residents of Ferguson experience higher unemployment and poverty rates than residents of the County; moreover, Ferguson residents have a median income \$20,000 lower than those in the County. The proportion of female-headed households is also two times greater in Ferguson. Overall, those residing in Ferguson face a number of socioeconomic strains when compared with individuals who reside in St. Louis County.

CHAPTER 4: Research Findings

Sample Characteristics

Table 2 provides a basic demographic description of the sample for this study. As shown, there are 38 African American protesters (15 males and 23 females) included in the study. Respondents ranged in age from 18 to 74 with a mean age of 42 years. As it relates to educational status, the modal category is some college education, with most respondents indicating that they were either currently in college or had attended/taken some college courses, and had completed high school. In terms of current economic status, 13 respondents reported that they were currently employed part- or full-time at the time of the interview and 25 respondents reported they were unemployed. Lastly, 18 of the respondents included in the sample lived in the city of Ferguson and for an average of nine years, while the remainder of the sample resided in the broader St. Louis area and for an average of 11 years.

Strategies in Managing Contact with the Police

Extending Hirschman's (1970) framework, the current study turns attention to black men and women's narrative accounts of involuntary police encounters to investigate how they manage police encounters, how such tactics shaped police–citizen outcomes, and whether these patterns vary by gender. In particular, 61 police–citizen incidents were described by black men and women in the sample. Below I provide in-depth descriptions of the six most common strategies. The top six strategies, listed from the most to the least used, include questioning police, comply with police instruction, lodging a complaint, question and comply, policing the police, and avoid law enforcement ²(see Table 3).

² 9 incidents are not included because they entailed strategies used by a couple of people such as non-compliance, cursing, and flight, because these strategies were not a dominant theme, they are not discussed.

Question Police Officers

Among the 61 incidents of police-citizen encounters 15 men (N=9) and women (N=6) reported questioning police officers during involuntary encounters. In all nine incidences occurring with black males who questioned police officers it proved to be unfavorable for them, as it often resulted in arrest or physical/verbal assault. Tyrone, for example, reported an incident in which an officer used force on him:

One morning, I was walking to the bus stop to go to work taking public transportation. The police pulled up on me. He [the police] was asking me like where you going. I'm like, why? Like why are you asking me where I'm going? So they [the police] just got out of the car and put me in handcuffs. He told me it was a failure to cooperate with an officer. I got locked up right then and there.

Likewise, when Keanu was stopped by the police and told he had a warrant, Keanu questioned the officer, asking "[are] you sure you're right? There's a lot of Keanu Smith's especially younger guys with my name. Are you sure you got the right Keanu Smith because I don't have a warrant?" When Keanu proceeded to get his phone to call the police for some additional backup "I was tazed through my coat through the window they kept tazing me. After I got out, I fell to the ground. He kept tazing me. My shoulder was swollen for over 10 days because of the way they tazed me."

Similarly, Darnell described an encounter he had with police:

I walked to the store one day and they [the police] just jumped out the bushes on me. I don't know who they were looking for or whatever. They [the police] just jumped out the bushes, held me I'm like "man, what is you all doing?" [They said] "we're looking for drugs." I'm like "you all should've ask[ed] me if I had that." They jumped out like literally out the bushes and kind of just grabbed me, me and my friend Damen. They kind of just grabbed us and like you know, "what you all got? Where you all going, who you all staying with?" I'm like, "I don't have to answer none of those questions" so he put the cuffs on me because I'm talking stuff and asking questions He didn't lock me up though. He slammed me against the car. He roughened me up a little bit and just let me go.

Although Darnell and his acquaintance were handcuffed, they were eventually let go because neither had drugs on them. However, it was not before Darnell and his friend experienced physical assault by a police officer. Some respondents experienced a combination of both physical and verbal assaults from police when they questioned them. For instance, Donte described an incident that occurred following a demonstration for Michael Brown:

When I left, he [the police] flagged me over [had his sirens on me]. Flagged me over. He walked up to my car. He dragged me out of the car and he threw me on the ground. He searched my car. He threw all my clothes out ... So I ask him why? What's the cause for? He told me, "Shut the fuck up, nigger. Get the fuck off the street, nigger... He said something crazy to me so I said something to him "who the fuck you talking to?" He took out his night club, stick or whatever and hit me with it.

As these accounts suggest, there are negative consequences for black men who question police officers, as it can result in arrest and excessive force towards them. It is, however, important to note that when black men in the study questioned police officers when stops occurred, they typically did so when they believed they posed no threat to officers and warranted no suspicion.

Although black women in the study (N=6) had fewer police encounters than men in which they questioned police officers, when they did they were either let go or sanctioned with a ticket. Among the incidents in which women questioned the police officers, two resulted in citations. Jada, for example, described how she commonly questions officers when stopped:

I mean there's times when maybe I was pulled over and I would tell him to listen closely. I would roll my window down a little bit and he [the police] would ask me to roll my window down all the way and I'll tell them I don't feel comfortable. "What did you pull me over for? What have you pulled me over for? Am I being charged? What are you giving, are you going to give me a ticket? If you're giving me a ticket, can you slide it on through the window?"

Because of Jada's distrust of police, when pulled over she questioned the officer but only through her partly rolled down car window. Likewise, Rachel described an incident when she

was pulled over after a police officer ran her plates. She lamented: “I hadn’t made an illegal turn or anything like that. But they [the police] had run my plates Why did you [the police] even run my plates if I hadn’t done anything?” Although neither Jada nor Rachel encountered physical violence from police like some of their male counterparts, they received traffic tickets following their encounter. Similarly, Shandra explained that once she was stopped by a police officer while engaging in prostitution and drug addiction. As she was being arrested she asked the officer “why are you locking me up?” The officer responds “If you don’t shut your mouth, I’ll plant some dope on you and you’ll really have some problems.” Upon hearing this and being a drug addict at the time, Shandra questioned him saying “You’d [police officer] actually do that ... and I got a [drug] problem.”

Overall, black men and women often questioned police officers to obtain a better understanding of why they were initially stopped by police. However, the outcome varied across gender. Black men who questioned police officers were subject to arrest or physical/verbal assault. In contrast, black women who questioned police were subject to less aggression and minor sanctions, such as receiving a ticket. The “voice” of men and women were displayed through their acts of contesting their dissatisfaction with the actions of police by questioning police officers’ actions and motives.

Compliance

Despite the dominant strategy of questioning police officers, compliance with law enforcement was not uncommon (N= 10 for men; N=4 for women). Compliance consisted of respondents following the direct orders of the police. However, this did not always result in a favorable outcome for black men. Tyrone, for example, described an incident where he was stopped by police and asked to provide his license, registration, and proof of insurance. Tyrone stated, “I didn’t have any insurance at the time. So I just gave him my license and registration for my car.” Though Tyrone complied, his car was searched and he was charged with two counts of armed robbery. After spending months in jail, Tyrone stated, “[t]hey ended up getting some surveillance from the actual one of the robberies. They found like by looking at the tapes, they found out it wasn’t me. So they dropped the charges.” Although Tyrone was aware that he had not committed the crime in which he was being arrested for, he followed the orders of the officers, and went to jail until his name was cleared. Xavier also described an encounter that took place one night as he was walking home from an event when he was stopped by an officer:

[The police officer] said “put your hands up” – I didn’t bother to argue with him, I just complied and he said, “take off your head covering.” I took off my head covering. He says, “put your hands up” then he goes, “put your items on the ground.” I put them on the ground and he says, “get down on the ground.” I get down on the ground and I didn’t know to interlace my fingers so I just had my hands up while I was face down. Then he said, “interlace you fingers behind your head.” So I did. I cooperated with him.

It was only when another officer arrived at the scene that it became apparent that Xavier was not the robbery suspect and he was eventually let go.

At times, when men complied with officers after being stopped, the respondents were overly apologetic for their actions. For example, Willie explained his response to an officer after being stopped for coming to a rolling stop at a stop sign. He said, “I apologize. If you want to

give me a ticket I totally understand, I understand you're doing your job. You got a hard job to do.” Likewise, Eric disclosed that when approached by a police officer he tends to stay on his best behavior. He said: “I don’t reach into my pocket. If a policeman comes to my car, I’ll make sure my hands are visible, and I’ll see what’s wrong. If I know I did something, I’ll offer a sincere apology.” Both Willie and Eric offered apologies to lighten the level of intensity during their encounter, which proved to be a useful strategy, as neither were given a traffic ticket or arrested.

However, compliance with officers coupled with high socioeconomic status can affect the outcome of police-citizen encounters. Eric, for instance, explained that “I had a police officer stop me one day, and he came to my car, and he said, “Sir, do you know why I stopped you?” I said, “Well, no, I don’t.” He told me why he stopped me, and I said, “Oh, I’m sorry, that was terrible, I shouldn’t have done that.” However, after the officer ran a check on Eric, he noticed that he resided in an affluent neighborhood. Subsequently, Eric did not receive a ticket, as the officer informed him, “when we [the police] approach people like you, we approach you differently because we know you can cause us [legal] trouble ... you’re well connected.” Eric understood that his socioeconomic status and his socioecological environment placed him within a privileged status that altered his interaction with police officers and the ultimate outcome of the incident. No doubt, black men’s socioeconomic and social status may have contributed to their decision making on what strategy to use while encountering the police.

Similar to men, black women in the study described having police encounters in which they also complied with police commands. Their descriptions in turn revealed that they primarily did as they were told by police officers to avoid further issues with the police. In her discussion of police, Rachel asserted “[i]f they say stop doing something, I stop. I might not probably think

it's right or whatever.” Likewise, Isabelle, noted that after being stopped for a traffic violation, she complied with the officers’ instructions to provide him with license and insurance. Isabelle states, “I show[ed] him a copy of my insurance card and he gave me a ticket for not having insurance.” Although some women did comply, they were not let off the hook, as they received citations and tickets for violating traffic laws.

Lodge a Complaint

Although a common way citizens expressed their voice was to question officers, filing a formal grievance against a police officer is another mechanism citizens may use in an attempt to have their voices heard (see Weitzer & Brunson, 2009). In particular, when respondents believed that they they were treated unfairly or had an unfavorable police encounter, they lodged a complaint. (N=5 for men, and N= 5 for women). Recall that after Donte left a demonstration for Michael Brown, an officer cursed at him and beat him with a baton. After the incident Donte came across a higher-up police authority and explained having been assaulted by the officer. The higher-up asked him “you got proof?” After responding that he did not, Donte stated the authority figure responded, “[if] you got no proof, well get the fuck out of here.” Similarly, Eric explained an incident in which shortly after moving into an affluent, white neighborhood, six officers stopped him in his driveway with guns drawn on him, accusing him of car theft. When Eric informed them that he lived at this residence, an officer replied, “You don’t live here; no niggers live here.” Eric went on to provide the officers with identification to verify his address, and the officers left with no apology. He then chose to complain to a higher-up official at the police department following the incident. In doing so, the higher-up authority justified the police officers’ actions by questioning: “What do you expect ... A middle class, white community, we don’t expect to see black folk down here.” However, Eric explained “had I done something

sporadic, I would've been shot. Because I have enough common sense to know that when I'm facing six to eight drawn weapons, it's not the time to be hero. That's time to say, 'Sir, I'm sorry, what'd I do?'"

Some Black women, just as Black men, lodged complaints when they had a negative encounter with police who were disrespectful. Similar to their male counterparts, they did not want to act sporadic or disrespectful toward the police officer during the incident, and, in turn, filed a complaint to a higher authority. Aliyah described an incident when she was accused by a police officer of completing an improper lane change and being under the influence while driving. Although Aliyah tried to explain that she had a medical condition that could have contributed to the perception of her driving under the influence, the officer insisted she take a breathalyzer test. Since Aliyah refused because she did not know whose mouth had been on the breathalyzer, the officer issued her a ticket. Aliyah stated "I had to go to court, and I explained the case. They [The judge] threw it out." While the case was dismissed, Aliyah did have to pay court costs. Likewise, recall the encounter with Isabelle, who was given a ticket for not providing proof of insurance to a police officer, even though she had given a valid insurance. Isabelle took the matter to court and won her case after the judge ruled she had provided the proper documentation. However, in some cases, women did not win their case. Following Ebony's encounter with police, where she was accused of failing to make a complete stop at a stop sign, she took the matter to court to petition the traffic tickets she received. During the hearing Ebony requested to view the red-light camera footage to verify whether or not she did indeed fail to make a complete stop. The judge denied her request stating, "[i]t's you. Why do you want to see it?" The judge ruled that Ebony had failed to make a complete stop and she was required to pay the citation as well as court costs.

As we can see, some respondents attempted to use their “voice” by lodging a complaint to higher authorities. At times, attempts to lodge a complaint to higher officials were dismissed, further perpetuating the blue code of conduct. In other words, the officers were less likely to listen to the complaints of the residents and were more likely to justify the actions of the police officer, as was evident with Donte and Eric’s situation. Neither men, however, chose to take the case to court. However, some Black women such as Aliyah, Isabelle and Ebony, did take their complaint to court. In Aliyah and Isabelle’s case, they won the court case against the department; however in Ebony’s case she was deemed guilty. While some men and women attempted to lodge a complaint against the officers, many others did not consider doing so. Particularly noteworthy were the obstacles that respondents endured during the filing process. Fellow officers, chiefs and sheriffs justified the actions of officers and were dismissive to the complaints respondents intended to file. This underscores a much larger dynamic residents face when challenging persons of a high authority status. That is, the cost of formally lodging a complaint may be extremely high and the likelihood of success may be too low (Weitzer & Brunson, 2009).

Question and Comply

In the study, the intersection between questioning police officers and compliance arose. In particular, six respondents (5 men, 1 woman) reported incidents in which they first questioned police officers for the reason they were being stopped, but this was followed by compliance with officers’ directives. For example, when pulled over by law enforcement, Jasmine said:

I asked, “why are you pulling me over”, and he said “you were speeding.” So I just gave him my information. He went to his car and came back, gave me a ticket. I signed it, and pulled off, I really didn’t say anything.”

Although Jasmine received a ticket, some of the men in the study endured verbal and physical abuse by officers when they questioned and complied with officers. Consider Maurice’s account

in which he detailed police having entered his home to search for his brother: “They bust through my door, didn’t ask who I was, just illegally grabbed me by my neck and threw me down.”

Though the police were looking for Maurice’s brother, Maurice asked them “what are you talking about? I have no clue.” Despite trying to answer their questions, Maurice suffered verbal and physical assault at the hands of the officers because he could not inform them of where his brother was located. Likewise, Javonte, described an incident where his brother was stopped by police while he was in the passenger side. When the officer asked Javonte for identification, he asked “why do you need to see my ID? I’m not the one driving.” The officer responded, “don’t ask me why. Just do what I tell you.” Though Javonte showed him his identification, he ended up being arrested for a prior charge that Javonte insisted was supposed to have been dismissed by the courts years ago. Similarly, Jaquann described an incident where his probation officer advised him that he had a warrant out for his arrest and needed to take care of it. Jaquann explained:

I turned myself in, like 2:30 in the morning. They walked me all the way to the back to booking without no handcuffs on. Once I got back I turned around, they [police] tried to put some handcuffs on me, I was like, “[w]hy you putting handcuffs on me? I thought you were just going to put me in a holding cell, and send me on by my way.” They slapped me down to the ground, and two other officers came in, and they was kicking me and all that type of stuff. They hit me with resisting arrest, and a third-degree assault on a police, and I didn't even touch the police.

Overall, when men questioned police and complied with the orders of law enforcement, they were still subject to arrest, verbal and physical force. In Jasmine’s encounter, she questioned the police officer about why she was pulled over, however she only received a ticket and was not subject to physical or verbal force.

Policing the Police

Hirschman (1970) and Weitzer and Brunson (2009) described three common mechanisms individuals use when confronted with unwarranted encounters, including *exit, voice, and loyalty*. However, beyond this framework, in the current study an additional theme surfaced – policing the police. Although not very common (N=4 women), each of the four female respondents who relied on this strategy reported relying on their cell phones to hold officers accountable. Susanna, for example, described an incident where she was pulled over by an officer, for what she believed was due to her tinted window and the type of car model she drove. She explained that the officer approached her and insisted that her plates had been expired for two years. Susanna, confident that all of her vehicle registration and tags were up-to-date told the officer “[y]ou need to run them [license plates] again ... You know they not [expired]. You wanted to see who was behind these tints. That's all that you wanted.” As the officer came to the other side of the vehicle, Susanna explained: “I flashed my flashlight at him and I started recording him He backs up... and then says ‘oh well, I'm sorry. I'm sorry. I made a mistake.’” Only after Susanna recorded him, did the officer leave, as he realized that he had no legitimate reason for having stopped her. Similarly, Asia noted that prior to the death of Michael Brown she was more apt to serve as a bystander when witnessing others encounter the police: However, she acknowledged “when I see lights [police] now, I’ll pull over and pull my phone out and start recording. If I see them chasing someone or if I see them pull somebody over, I’ll make a phone call to the organization of some of the other protesters.” Jada agreed, noting that in times past “we would have never done that ... [but now] we’re recording.”

Overall, Black women’s inclination to record police for fear of injustice and mistreatment by police served as an overarching theme. Some women were more apt to help others to alleviate

the possibility of a police officer using improper police tactics. Each of the women resorted to “policing the police” due to the fear of force being used against them by a police officer, and the belief that justice would not be served. Women also described their mistrust for the police as one of the primary reasons to “police the police.”

Avoid Police Officers

Finally, a few respondents (N=3) also mentioned making a concerted attempt to avoid police contact at all cost. Given some of the personal and vicarious experience some had with the police, mistrust between Black individuals and the police was pervasive. Thus, effort was made to evade police. For example, Rachel acknowledges her attempt to limit her contact with police, stating: “I was just taught to just not engage with them at all. Try to stay out of their way because if they want to get you, they’ll get you. That’s what I feel.” Likewise, after enduring an incident in which an officer retaliated against her, Crystal lamented, “I don’t even want to call [the police] for anything unless it’s major. I don’t feel the need to have to even call the police for anything.” Similarly, when asked about his experience with police, Marcus stated “I haven’t had too many experiences. I try to stay away from them, period, as a black man.” Respondents avoidance of police officers aligns with research that acknowledges cynicism that black men have towards officers, given the negative encounters many have experienced with law enforcement (Brunson & Weitzer, 2009; Cochran & Warren, 2011; Lerman & Weaver, 2014).

Overall physical and verbal force was used against Black men when they questioned police officer. Although Black women in the study had fewer encounters than men in which they questioned police officers, when they did they were let go or sanctioned with a ticket. This was also true when comparing men and women who complied with an officers’ commands;

Black men were subject to physical and verbal force at the hands of a police officer or subject to arrest whereas women were let go. With regards to men and women who lodge complaints, black men would lodge a complaint with a higher up law enforcement official (i.e. lieutenant, sheriff) but would not forward their complaint any further, whereas women in the study were more apt to take their complaints to court. Finally, only women relied on the strategy of policing police through recording police officers on their phone or serving as a witness to other individuals who encounter police. Overall, men were more often subjected to physical violence regardless of the strategies used when encountering police than women.

Parental Advice on Handling Police Encounters

As we have seen, across gender respondents utilized similar strategies to manage police encounters; however, police–citizen outcomes were shaped by gender. Given these findings, how did these parents advise their own children when they encounter police? It is to this question that we now turn.

Among the 38 respondents in the study, 63 recommendations were given to children as to how to handle police encounters. Overall males were given more parental advice than females regarding strategies to use when encountering police. Particularly, the most common advice given to boys includes being respectful (N=24), complying (N=14), enforcing rights (N=6), calling parents (N=5), keeping hands visible (N=4), and avoiding police officers (N=3). Advice given to girls includes being respectful (N=12), complying (N=9), avoiding police officers (N=3), and avoiding sudden movements (N=3). In general, boys and girls were warned that they were targets of police practices and must do whatever it takes to survive the encounters. Table 4 provides a comparison of the advice provided by Black parents to children regarding strategies to use when encountering law enforcement.

Be Respectful

Situated in their perceptions of the police, parents in the study described relaying several suggestions to their children when they encountered police. Specifically, 24 advised their male children to show respect to officers when stopped. Shandra stated she told her grandsons to “calm down and just listen. Let them [the police] do their job – let them just make sure you can get to the police station. Somebody can know that you’re all right.” Similarly, Rachel said that “I’ve told my son if the police stop him, raise his hands up, say yes, sir, no, sir,” Likewise, Shaniqua, advised her sons “[n]ever try to disrespect [the police]. Keep respect for yourself, and as much more respect you have for yourself, try to give it to that person [police] no matter what color they are.” Also, Shanice advised her son “if police pulls you to the side you need to be respectful. [Say] ‘yes, sir.’ Do what he asks you to do, no smart mouth no talking back.” By the same token, Aliyah advised her son to “say yes sir, no sir. Don’t raise your voice. Don’t frown up. Don’t tense up. Whatever they [police] ask you to do, do it.”

Men who instructed their sons to be respectful did so to stress to them how detrimental their actions can be if they make a false move when encountering police. For example, Tray expressed his fear of his son encountering a police officer and a series of events mirroring Michael Brown’s death. Tray stated:

My advice to my son when you see the police you have to respect them because they are in authority. You don’t have to get into any heat with them. You don’t have to throw no tantrum with them [police] just basically do what they tell you I don’t want my son interacting with any police and then end up like Mike Brown.... Basically, be respectful to the people [police] because they are in a position of authority anyway.

Similarly, Toby advised his sons to “cooperate. If they tell you go to the left, go left. If they tell you to go right, go right, because it’s not worth it.” Toby went on to explain that “when I saw

Michael Brown lying on the ground, I saw my sons and I would not want to see that happen to them.” Through the male parent’s responses, it is evident that Michael Brown’s death had an impact on their lives, instilling fear that their sons could be subject to the same tragic outcome.

Similar to boys, many respondents advised their female children to be respectful when they had police encounters (N=12). For example, Rachel stated “I teach my daughters to be respectful ... you’re free. You need to stay free.” Likewise, Dominique acknowledged she advised her daughter to “act sensibly, don’t smart mouth police, be honest, and answer questions intelligently.”

Male parents also advised their female children to be respectful. Willie told his daughter to “be respectful, don’t make any sudden moves, say yes or no sir, yes or no ma’am... just get through the encounter, it is not a time to debate.” However, when Tray discussed the advice he gave his daughter when encountering police, he acknowledged that he is less fearful of his daughter having a conflict with police as he is his son. He stated, “I feel like the boys [are] the ones that are more out there...and could be targeted.” Also Ashley disclosed that she advised her daughter to be respectful; however, she believed that young African American males are more likely to be targeted by police and subject to police force than African American women. Similar to Tray and Ashley, Isabelle fears for her sons more than her daughter; however, Isabelle advised her daughter to be respectful. Isabelle stated “most of the time, they [police] don’t rough up females. You know, they will yell at you and all of that, and probably give you tickets, unnecessary tickets and stuff like that. But they won’t rough you [girls] up.” Parents’ concerns that their black sons are more likely to be targeted compared to females, are not unfounded as numerous studies have shown that young, black men are more likely to be recipients of being stopped, searched, and arrested (Alexander, 2010; Cohen, 1996; Holbert & Rose, 2004; Jones,

2014; Lundman& Kaufman, 2003). Nevertheless, black females are not immune from negative police encounters; hence they too were advised to show deference to officers when encounters occurred.

Comply

In addition to being respectful, parents also responded that they advise their male children to comply with police orders (N=14). Crystal, for example, stated “If you’re in a situation where you have to interact, do as you’re told to do. Because most of the time, if you don’t, there’s a chance you’re going to lose your life.... there’s a chance that you can lose your life, and even if you do do as you’re told [by police], there’s a chance that you could still lose your life.”

Laquisha described sitting her children down, letting them know “if a cop stops you, immediately stop. If they tell you to put your hands behind your back or put your hands on your head, stop, don't move, and do exactly what the police tells you ... Because if not, they could possibly be beaten, smacked, abused, anything.... Don't resist arrest, no, no, ever. And don't talk back. Do what the police say.” Andre disclosed the advice he gave his son, especially since they reside in a predominantly white neighborhood:

Understand his rights, you know, comply. Understand that, you know, how he’s being labeled, even as early as in school by his grades and, you know, performance in school, helping them trying to understand He has white friends and I want him to understand that, there's no guarantee, but there's a good chance you out, when you're a teenager, hanging with your white buddies, you all get pulled over, they're going to give you a harder time than they gonna give your buddies... because he’s black. I try to help him to understand, not just policing, but just race in a larger scale, and correlation between potential outcome between race and policing. I expose him to the harsh realities around policing and treatment towards young black males.

Similarly, Javonte stated he advised young Black men when encountering police to “just cooperate with them [police]. If the cop tells you something, don’t question him Just say ‘I’m

sorry.’ Cooperate with them.” Craig also advised his male children when interacting with police to “be respectful, be honest and make sure that you cooperate with the police. If they ask you something, just cooperate. It’ll be over with soon but just to be respectful, cooperate, and just make sure that you’re abiding by the law if they ask you to do something.”

Complying with officers was not just common advice parents gave to their sons, but also to their female children (N=9). For example, when stopped by the police, Shandra advised her daughters point blank to “[s]hut up, calm down [and] listen. Talk to them [the police] so they don’t have a reason to kill you and they don’t have a reason to beat you.” Similarly, Jada declared “anything can happen to you, as long as you have dark skin, it can happen to you. So I told my daughter to just comply.” Aliyah agreed, instructing her daughter to “just be quiet; be cordial. When they [the police] ask you for something, hand it to them. If they ask you to do something, do it.” Jalen concurred, stating that he told his daughter “if a police asks you something, you have to submit to authority.” In general, parents warned both their male and female children to be respectful and comply with the demands of the officer to assure their children would leave the encounter safely. In general, parents expressed their concern with black males being targeted by police policies and practices and recipients of verbal and physical abuse at the hands of law enforcement.

Enforce Your Rights

A number of parents expressed that they advised their male children to enforce their rights during their encounters with police officers (N=6). Unlike being respectful and compliant to police, only boys were advised to actively enforce their rights when they are involuntary stopped by law enforcement. Jada told her sons “know your rights ... ask questions if you don’t

feel comfortable.” Likewise, Andre stated, “I try to get him [his son] to understand his rights, and understand that he is being labeled.” Similar to the advice Andre provided his son with, Yolanda told her son, “You have to know your rights. Don’t get smart. Try to answer all his [police] questions. But at the same time, don’t let him walk all over you. You have to know your rights.” Overall, boys were offered the advice of enforcing their rights when encountering police officers. This theme is consistent with the literature, which acknowledges African American males are taught to be masculine and defend themselves if need be (Dow, 2016; Howard, Rose, & Barbarian, 2013; Lewis-McCoy, 2016).

Call Parents

Moreover, respondents mentioned the importance of advising their male children to call a parent or another adult for assistance when police encounters occurred (N=5). Arlene, for example, advised her son that after complying with the police, “Ask for your call and let us know where you are at.” Likewise, Rachel instructed her son to request if he could call her after he has complied stating, “ask them [police] ‘may I please hurry up and call my mom?’ Call me, I’m on my way.” Shonice expressed similar thoughts and concerns regarding her son encountering police officers. Nervous for her son’s wellbeing after obtaining his license, Shonice counseled her son to “call me on your cell phone. If you’re in a car and somebody pull you over, call me so I can come immediately.” Interestingly, all of the respondents who directed their male children to call a parent or another adult were women. This is important to note considering in most families women are considered the nurturers and men are known as the protectors. However, in the sample, mothers guided their male children to call them for protection from police officers whom they largely assume to be male officers in the verbiage they use when describing officers (“he”, “him”).

Visible Hands

A few respondents also reported instructing their children to make their hands visible at all times when encountering police (N=4). Such advice, however, was just given to male children. Ebony, for example, warned her male children to “keep their hands on the steering wheel. Never move their hands off the steering wheel and always listen to police.” Likewise, Shaniqua urged her son to “throw your hands up” if he encounters police. Similarly, BreAnn told her son to “[j]ust be respectful. Make sure ... they [the police] can see your hands.” Given the concern these parents had regarding how police would perceive them, they attempted to use preventative measures to ensure their children are aware of ways to handle police encounters. Making sure hands remained visible served as a way to set officers at ease to ensure a police stop did not turn into a tragic or fatal incident.

Avoid Police Officers

Although not a common theme, three respondents reported advising their male children to avoid police at all cost to limit the probability of being stopped by a police officer. For example, Shanice disclosed how she directed her son to avoid participating in activity that would initiate contact with a police officer. Of her son, she stated: “He doesn’t dress with his hanging pants – he’s real respectful, he doesn’t drink, he doesn’t smoke.” Shanice’s remarks insinuate that the appearance of black males can often be perceived as criminal. Additionally, Monique advised her son “if you see the police, just go another direction; especially if I’m not there to protect you because it’s our word against theirs...If you see the police, walk the other way. Walk the other way to stay as far away from them [police] as possible.”

When asked what advice respondents give their female children when encountering police, three respondents reported advising their daughters to avoid police contact. For example, Monique described warning her daughter to “try to stay out of trouble [because] all police are not right. You can’t trust – some [police] are good, some are bad. You don’t know who to trust now ... keep away from the police as much as possible.” In a similar manner, Crystal, stated, “I just taught her [my daughter] to just not engage with them [police] at all. Try to stay out of their [police] way because if they want to get you, they’ll get you.”

Some parents advised both their sons and daughters to avoid police contact. Boys were warned to avoid police because they were targets and in the event an encounter took place it would be their son’s word versus the police leaving their son at a disadvantage. Interestingly, Shanice advised her son to avoid police, however she mentioned that her son was good and did not fit the typical criminal image (i.e. sagging pants, use drugs or alcohol), which heightens the perception of crime and possibility of police encounters (Anderson, 1999; Smiley & Fakunle, 2016; Whitaker, 2016). Shanice’s comments also fit into the larger dynamic of “the talk” that parents have with their children. Parents do not have such discussions to warn their kids about avoiding criminal behavior; rather, it is about avoiding the perception of criminal behavior to the outside world (Whitaker & Snell, 2016). Girls were primarily warned about their race and its effect on their encounters with police, however, Black boys were warned about the intersectionality of their race and gender and how both effect the ways law enforcement perceive young, black males.

Avoid Sudden Movements

While some parents advised their children to avoid officers or behaviors that would increase the odds of police contact, if contact is made with officers, three parents instructed their daughters to avoid sudden movements. For instance, Shaniqua advised her daughter “don’t do any fast movements so they won’t say you’re doing nothing. Don’t be reaching for anything and all that.” Willie also acknowledged that in addition to advising his daughter to be respectful and comply, he told her “don’t make any sudden moves.” Both Willie and Shaniqua acknowledged that they provide their daughters with this particular advice because their children are black and, at times, drive alone. However, while Deja too advised her daughter to avoid sudden movements, she believes that “police are not as forceful with women” compared to men.

Reasons For Advice

While parents offered their children a plethora of advice on how to handle police encounters, there were three common reasons for doing so. Specifically, parents believed that their children were *targeted* due to their race and/or gender (N=10), they wanted to ensure that their child *survived* the police encounter (N=4), and parents wanted to ensure that their children understood *police are in authority* during encounters (N=3)³⁴. Respondents reported providing their children with advice when encountering police due to belief that their children would be targeted by police officers and their policies as a result of their skin color. The belief that blacks were targeted by the police was expressed by Jada who asserted “anything can happen to you as

³ There are a total of 17 reasons included as a result of missing data.

⁴ Presumption of guilt was also coded as reasons parents provide their children with advice, however, the code was not significant in the sample.

long as you have dark skin because I've seen and I've heard of situations where they're taunting us [blacks]." As a result, Jada advised her daughter to comply with officers. Likewise, Diamond told her son that since "you're black sometimes we're not treated right because of the color of our skin." Shaniqua believed that the police and white people "really don't want you [Bbacks] to come up. They do not want you to be here. They want to kill all our kids off. So our race is pretty much going to be gone...They would love to get rid of us." Similarly, Rachel recalled after the killing of Trayvon Martin, telling her son:

You see why I don't want you walking up and down this street? Because you're a target. You already have two strikes against you. You're black, and you're a male. You got to be careful out here. You are in an endangered species ... The way things are just set up and the criminal justice system. I mean, police officers automatically target them [black boys] when they see them.

Rachel made the startling claim that as a young, black boy, her son is an endangered species. Tilton (2011) also made such claims, noting that the intersection of race, class, and gender often affects who is perceived as dangerous "thugs" or criminals. Additionally, in the current study Tray admitted to providing his son with the advice of being respectful because "I feel like the boys are the ones that are more out there...and could be targeted."

Considering that males received a greater number of instructions as to how navigate police encounters than females, it is clear that parents have a general fear for their sons and how police may perceive them. The findings are consistent with research, which acknowledges that race and gender influence how African American males are treated within societal institutions and by law enforcement (Brunson & Miller, 2006; Dow, 2016; Rios, 2006). Research shows that African American children are more likely than White children to be perceived as aggressive (Dow, 2013; Ferguson, 2000; Harris-Perry, 2011; Morris, 2007). The current study highlights

that African American parents believe their children are targets, leading them to advise various ways to handle encounters with law enforcement.

In addition to the perception that Black males were targeted, some parents also instructed their children simply to survive the police encounter. Parents were well aware that how their child acts could affect how police would respond, which could be potentially fatal. For example, Crystal advised her son to avoid law enforcement and if forced to interact with police to follow directions because “most of the time, if you don’t, there’s a chance you’re going to lose your life.” Likewise, Deja advised her sons and daughters to handle encounters precisely so they are able to “live to fight another day.” Ebony also asserted the reasons she advised her children on how to interact with police because she “don’t want them to be another tragedy.” Such discussions were viewed as vital for parents to have with their children. BreAnn replied that providing strategic ways on how to interact with police remained imperative because “it’s like teaching them how to walk or potty-training them. It’s, to me, its rules on engaging with police. It’s something I have to do that my white co-worker doesn’t have to do with her children, and it’s important.”

Such statements are not surprising, as a plethora of media images have shown African American men and women fatally killed at the hands of white police officers (McKinley, 2009; McLaughlin, 2004). African American parents and their children are exposed to these images and therefore are inclined to provide their children with the advice regarding police encounters to ensure their child will return home unharmed following their encounter with police. Black parents often believe that it is their duty to collectively inform their sons and daughters that they could be treated differently or get into serious trouble for their looks and their skin color, something white parents rarely have to consider (Burnett, 2012; Whitaker & Snell, 2016). The

findings reveal that parents provide black children with advice due to fear for their child's survival.

Lastly, parents reported providing their children with advice acknowledging police have ultimate authority and as a result their orders should be followed. For example, Jalen stated "if a police asks you something, you have to submit to authority." Likewise, Tray stated he advises his son "when you see the police you have to respect them because they are in authority." Similarly, since Ebony has witnessed officers provide excuses for shooting people, often men of color, she told her children to understand that in the eyes of the law "the police officer is *always* right and you're always wrong."

Overall, boys were provided with more advice than girls on how to handle police encounters. Both boys and girls were largely advised to be respectful to police officers and comply with officer demands. However, boys were often advised to know their rights and call parents when encountering police, whereas girls were only instructed, outside of be respectful and comply, to avoid any sudden movements. The reason many parents gave their children advice about encountering police were for the fear that their child/children would be targeted due to their race and/or gender, and to heighten the chances of their child/children survival following an encounter with police. The findings are consistent with the literature that demonstrates the nature of "the talk" and how it is used during racial socialization to prepare primarily young black males to encounter police. Although young, black girls receive the "the talk" from parents, young black males receive such discussions more often, and are warned about the issues they will face as a function of their race and gender in society (Smiley & Fakunle, 2016; Whitaker & Snell, 2016). Parents are aware that they will have to prepare their children to maneuver in a primarily white society who will likely have involuntary police contact(s). Therefore parents

are forced to provide their children with advice about the world, their position within the world, and their perceived danger to the world (Smiley & Fakunle, 2016; Tilton, 2011; Whitaker & Snell, 2016).

CHAPTER 5: Discussion

Previous research has shown various ways people respond when they find themselves in problematic organizations. In Hirschman's (1970) examination of organizations, he found that members had essentially three responses when they perceived the organization diminishing in quality; they can *exit* – withdraw from the relationship entirely; they can use their *voice* – attempt to improve the relationship through filing a complaint or proposal for change, or they could remain *loyal* to a problematic organization (see also Weitzer & Brunson, 2009).

Extending Hirschman's (1970) organizational framework, the current study investigates how black men and women respond to encounters with officers, how such tactics shaped police–citizen outcomes, and whether these patterns vary by gender. The study also uses Hirschman's (1970) framework to explore the advice black parents provide their children as to how to manage police encounters. With regards to strategies used by adult African American men and women, *exit* was exhibited through avoiding police, *voice* was displayed through questioning police officers and lodging a complaint, and *loyalty* was demonstrated by complying with an officer's demand. Both *voice* and *loyalty* coincide when respondents first questioning a police officer then complying with the officer's demands. This study found that when black men encountered police, they more often than not questioned police officers, complied with the demands of the police officers, and/or questioned then complied with the demands of police officers. However, when black males questioned police or questioned/comply with police officers as strategies they were more likely to be subject to physical force and arrest than black women. Black women who used these strategies, however, generally received tickets and were freed to go.

Through *voice*, respondents have the ability to go beyond the police sphere of control to invoke change by questioning the police, lodging a complaint, or policing the police. Of the 15 encounters that occurred with women and men who questioned police officers, respondents did so when they believed they were stopped for no reason or were not given a valid reason by the police officer. Overall, physical and verbal force was used more often against black men than black women when they questioned police officer. Although black women in the study had fewer encounters than men in which they questioned police officers, when they did they were let go or sanctioned with a ticket.

The strategy of lodging a complaint established a voice for individuals who were unhappy with the operation of the department; however, respondents within the sample were faced with continued struggles when attempting to report their concerns to higher authorities. In the study, black men and women reported lodging a complaint. However, when men reported attempting to file a complaint with a higher up law enforcement official, they often declined to hold the offending officer accountable for the complaint. In these cases, verbally offensive language and physical force used by officers warranted no reprimand according to their superior. The dismissive attitudes of the higher authorities created a pervasive dynamic throughout the department, further enforcing a “them” vs. “us” mentality. This can lead to feelings of discontentment and frustration when police officers are not reprimanded for their actions. This could also explain why black men who attempted to lodge a complaint with a higher up law enforcement official (i.e. lieutenant, sheriff) did not forward their complaint any further. Interestingly, black women who lodged a complaint often went beyond reporting to a lieutenant or sheriff and took their cases to court. The majority of the women who took the matters to court won their case, as the judges ruled in their favor.

Beyond Hirshman (1970) and Weitzer and Brunson's (2009) study, the current study found that a few of the women in the study used their voice by policing police. Women reported "policing the police" due to the fear of force being used against them, or others, by a police officer. These women believed that recording the police would increase their chance of justice being served if indeed police mistreated them. A couple of the women also mentioned pulling over to record others and serve as a support system to those who were stopped by law enforcement.

In addition to respondents using their voice, *loyalty* was also manifested when they complied with officers' direct orders of the officer. These respondents manifested loyalty by remaining respectful and submitting themselves to the commands of law enforcement. During some encounters, respondents reported apologizing to the officers during the encounters. For men who utilized this strategy it proved to be useful, as they were able to avoid receiving a citation or being subject to arrest. However, for the women in the study who complied, some received citations for traffic law violations.

Overall, black men and women used several strategies to minimize or handle police encounters. While men and women used similar strategies, the outcome of police-citizens encounters varied by gender. That is, while women often were let go or received a ticket when they used certain strategies, men, on the other hand, were often arrested or the recipients of physical or verbal force by officers. The only exception is when men complied with officers they were times when they were free to go without incident.

Hirschman's (1970) framework was also used when exploring the advice parents provided their children with regarding ways to manage police encounters. Interestingly enough,

while respondents often used the strategy of questioning officers, black boys and girls were often instructed to use loyalty strategies to manage police encounter. In general, parents advised both their male and female children to be respectful and comply with the demands of the officer to assure their children would leave the encounter safely. As a whole, parents believed that black boys were more likely to be the targets of police tactics, and black girls were less likely to be mistreated when encountering police.

In contrast to the loyalty strategy, parents also instructed their children to use their voice by enforcing their rights and calling them when encountering police. Such a strategy allows the child to use their *voice* in an indirect manner. That is, although children are not filing a formal complaint to a police department or taking a case to court, they can express their concern to someone of higher authority within their lives: their parents.

This study found that parents provided their sons with more advice than daughters regarding strategies to use when encountering police. In general, parents warned both their male and female children to be respectful and comply with the demands of the officer to assure their children would leave the encounter safely. Some parents believed that black boys were the targets of police tactics, and Black girls were less likely to be mistreated than boys when encountering police.

Parents also advised their children of *exit* strategy by warning their children to avoid police contact at all cost. Although not a common theme, respondents reported advising their male and female children to avoid police at all cost to limit the probability of being stopped by a police officer. Many parents warned their child to avoid the perception of criminal activity (i.e such as wearing urban clothing). Specifically, parents cautioned their sons about the

intersectionality of their race and gender, which would increased the probability of involuntarily police contact; whereas girls were warned primarily about the treatment they will receive on the sole basis of their race.

Parents were aware of the adversities their black sons and daughters may face; thus, they attempted to armor their children, preparing them to live in a society that is predominately white and generally perceives people of color as criminals. Parents reported advising their children of the potential dangers they may face due to their race but also warned their children of the perceived danger they posed to the world. For many parents in the study they were inclined to provide their children with the advice regarding police encounters to ensure their child will return home unharmed following their encounter with police. Overall, parents feared for their children due to society's trepidation of their Black children. This led parents to have "the talk" and to take preventative measures to ensure that their child will survive an encounter with police.

Limitations

Despite the study findings, they are not without limitations. First, some features of the design of the study threatened validity of the findings. Although detailed narratives were discussed, respondents were not asked explicitly about the strategies used when encountering police. Specifically, they were asked about their experiences with police before or after the death of Michael Brown. Through the sample's responses, themes emerged regarding strategies used when encountering police. If the question of specific strategies used when encountering police had been asked explicitly, the size of the sample for the study may have been much larger and more strategies may have surfaced. At the same token, it is also possible that if respondents were

systematically asked about the strategies used to manage police encounters some respondents would have not specified the strategies if they perceived their own actions to be inappropriate.

Second, the small sample size impacts the generalizability of the findings to general population. It is unclear whether the findings of the strategies used by respondents in the study reflect the majority of the black population. It is also unclear whether the advice given by a limited sample is consistent with the advice given by most parents. Thus, future studies should explore these questions with a larger sample size in a different geographical location.

Thirdly, only the strategies and advice of black men and women were explored during this study. While blacks are more likely to have negative experiences with police as well as heightened levels of mistrust for police (Bartley 1969; Boyles, 2015; Porter, 2016; Zook 2013), it is valuable to explore whether other racial/ethnic groups use specific strategies when encountering police as well as if, and what advice they provide their children with regarding potential police encounters. In particular, Hispanics are a rising population, and studies show that they too have negative experiences with the police and are often targeted. Thus, it would not be surprising to learn that they too utilize strategies to minimize police encounters or that parents caution their children regarding specific actions to take when they encounter law enforcement.

The final limitation involves the study's setting; Ferguson, Missouri. Considering the tragic death of Michael Brown, it is possible the study setting and the nature of the environment following Brown's death impacted the advice parents provided their children with. Also, one must also question whether the findings would be the same if the study were done in a predominantly middle-class Black community. Aware that Ferguson does not represent all communities, no claims are made that the results would emerge in a similar study done in a

different city. In addition, the socioeconomic status of each of the respondents was not collected; therefore, it was not possible to determine the effect social class plays on advice provided to children on managing police encounters. Although there is a lack of information regarding the socioeconomic status of the respondents, Ferguson, Missouri is a predominantly Black city and faces similar socioeconomic challenges that many urban cities face.

The amount of media attention Ferguson received following the death of Michael Brown, the broadcasting of Brown's slain body, and the protests, marches, and other acts of civil unrest all may have affected the advice given by parents to their sons and daughters. The gruesome images of primarily Black males being victims of an unkind criminal justice system may have affected the plethora of advice given to black boys compared to that of which Black girls received. Although the sample size is small and the setting of the study is Ferguson, Missouri the content is rich in nature, and gives insight into the various ways killings of unarmed African Americans affect the community.

APPENDIX

Table 1 - Select Neighborhood Characteristics

	Ferguson	St. Louis County
Percent African American	67.5%	23.7
Median family income	\$38,685	\$58,910
Percent unemployment	12.2	8.6
Percent poverty	24.9	10.9
Percent female-headed household with children	17.5	8.1

Table 2 – Demographic Characteristics

	N=38
Gender	
Male	15
Female	23
Age	
Mean	42
Range	18-74
Race	
African Americans	38
Education	
Some elementary	2
High school diploma/ GED	11
Some College	15
Associate/ Bachelor degree	6
Graduate Degree	2
Economic Standing	
Unemployed	25
Employed Part/Full Time	13
Residence	
Ferguson	18
St. Louis	20
Years in Residence	
Mean-Ferguson	9
Mean St. Louis	11

Table 3- Strategies Used to Handle Police Encounters

	Male	Female
Question Police Officers	9	6
Comply	10	4
Question PO & Comply	5	1
Lodge a Complaint	5	5
Policing Police	0	4
Avoid Police	1	2
Total	30	22

Table 4- Parental Advice Given to Boys and Girls

	Male	Female
Be Respectful	24	12
Comply	14	9
Enforce Rights	6	0
Call Parents	5	0
Keep Hands Visible	4	0
Avoid Police Officers	3	3
Avoid Sudden Movement	0	3
Total =	56	27

Codebook for Advice

Advice

Avoid PO – Reference to evading police contact

Avoid sudden movements – Avoid making quick movements when confronted by PO

Avoid Travelling on Streets – Reference to minimizing walking down the street

Be respectful - Reference to being respectful, saying "sir" and "ma'am;" don't get smart with police; don't argue or raise voice

Comply - Reference to do as PO instruct; don't fight or offer any resistance

Enforce your rights – reference to staying silent if arrested; don't agree to search of vehicle

Phone Call – use phone to call parents or somebody

Stop in Safe Area – stop in area that is well lit or has people around

Visible Hands – Reference to hands being in plain view

Reasons

Guilty – Reference to PO making citizen appear guilty even if not

PO Authority – Reference to PO having authority over citizens and they are in charge of enforcing the law

Survival – Reference to staying alive beyond the PO encounter

Target – Reference to Black males being a target by police

Codebook for Strategies Used During Police Encounters

Strategies

Avoid PO- Make effort to systematically and routinely evade the police so as not to have direct encounter

Non-Compliance- Respondent does not obey police order

Question PO- Asks PO questions; challenges the PO authority

Comply- Obeys police orders. The respondent explicitly states that s/he complied (or would comply) with police directives. This may include the respondent taking meticulous steps are taken beyond compliance to ensure encounter

Lodge A Complaint-Makes attempts to file a formal grievance against an officer or decide to fight case in court

Policing the Police- Proactive scrutiny of the police, mention of recording the police with cell phone or any recording device or an attempt to gather people to observe an incident to ensure that police act appropriately

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