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## The Murder of George Floyd: A Case Study Examining How the Policing of Black Men and Grassroots Activism Influence the Will of Black Women to Lead

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**The Murder of George Floyd: A Case Study Examining How the Policing of Black Men  
and Grassroots Activism Influence the Will of Black Women to Lead**

A Dissertation

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF  
CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY, ST. PAUL, MINNESOTA BY

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Committee  
Dr. Jana Hennen-Burr, Advisor  
Dr. Tyrone Brookins  
Dr. Gwendolyn Peyton

January 19, 2023

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## Acknowledgments

*"To whom much is given, much is required!"*

This quote reminds me that God has given me so much throughout my life, and I must be compelled to reciprocate my gifts by being a giver as well - that's what this study is - "*my gift*." The knowledge I've gained over my educational life is immeasurable! Beginning with my parents as my first teachers and then formally with my Kindergarten teacher Ms. Kepkee and every other teacher I've had throughout elementary, middle, and high school. Then many mentors, instructors, and professors taught me how to expand my knowledge by being inquisitive and analytical with my verbal and written words as a lifelong learner and college student. Each person I was blessed to encounter helped provide me with the lessons, tools, and skills I needed to create and finish this dissertation.

Many people and colleagues (cohort members especially) have supported and inspired me as I completed this dissertation. So many have read countless sentences, paragraphs, pages, and chapters while helping to edit my writing.

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Also, I want to acknowledge and thank the beautiful and regal Black women participants who shared their experiences and opened their hearts to me. Your willingness to be transparent and vulnerable gave "life" to this work. I hope this dissertation will provide an accurate and reflective summary of your thoughts and experiences. I pray that each of you uses this collective work as a reference, as well as others who are genuinely committed to improving how Black men in our society are policed.

Finally, my love and gratitude go to my incredible family; husband, Eric Mahmoud, Children: Lakesha Odessa Mahmoud-Hunter (husband Johnny Hunter II), E. Riza Mahmoud, C. Quadir Mahmoud, Ella Odessa-Faye Gates, Willie Gates, Jr., Samantha Millbrooks and all of my Grandchildren, nieces, nephews, and other family members (too many to name). Your love for me does not go unnoticed or unappreciated. Lastly, to my friend, Aretta-Rie Johnson - thanks for going on this journey with me. We completed our BA, Master and now Doctorate together - here at Concordia University, you are the epitome of a true Sister/Friend.

With everlasting love and respect!

Appreciatively,  
Ella

## Dedication

It is with a humble and grateful heart that I dedicate this work to all the strong and courageous Black men in my life, beginning with my Father (the late Gene Arthur Gates, Sr.), as well as the heroic and steadfast Black women in my life, beginning with my Mother (the late Odessa Holliday-Gates) who both worked tirelessly to ensure the longevity of not just a family, but a culture of a people. Through my parent's partnership and commitment toward "life," I learned the value of all life - plant, animal, and human. Also, they taught me that being in this society will be a lifelong struggle because, unfortunately, it is not designed to value the life of all people.

Also, I want to dedicate this work to my husband of nearly 40 years, Mr. Eric Y. Mahmoud, who has exemplified what a caring and supportive Black man looks like. I have witnessed him risk his life on numerous occasions for the sake and sanctity of our community. He has modeled for countless young men and our sons (E. Riza, and C. Quadir,) all the qualities that will make them worthy and meaningful as Black men, as well as how Black men should respect and honor the Black woman.

Lastly, I want to dedicate this work to my heirs (especially my Grandchildren); I hope one day they will find this work consequential and something they can use to continue to make the world a better place for all human life.

Respectfully,

“Ella”

## Abstract

This study's objective investigates the viewpoints held by Black women in two urban areas of Minnesota about the social upheaval that followed the murder of George Floyd in 2020 for using a counterfeit \$20 bill. In the last decade, police killings of innocent Black people in the United States have received more attention, and Floyd's death is only one example of this phenomenon. In the U.S., the likelihood of a police officer taking the life of a Black man is higher than that of a White man. Between 2013-2019 there have been 1,641 fatal shootings of defenseless Black men by police officers. Video of Floyd's murder and the demonstrations that followed was extensively disseminated by many news organizations and other media sites (Ladyzhinskaya, 2021). It has been demonstrated that widespread coverage of killings on social media is also easy to access and harms the psychological well-being of the Black community. This is especially true when viewed in the context of the historical framework of institutional and cultural racism and discrimination in the U.S.

This research ascertains the extent to which several Black women residing in the metroplex of Minneapolis and Saint Paul, Minnesota, were prompted to respond and act as a direct result of Floyd's death due to police misconduct. All the participants were selected based on their well-known presence in the Black community. Each spoke intimately about their personal and communal experiences, which have shaped their activism and commitment to social justice. Based on these participants' narratives, recommendations are provided for professional practices which will provide invaluable information to regulatory systems, such as policing and the judicial system.

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## **Chapter One**

### **Introduction**

The death of George Floyd on May 25, 2020, in Minneapolis, MN, intensified the issues relating to policing Black men in America and focused on the leadership of Black women who have created and led movements to address systemic racism. Social activism due to police misconduct is the catalyst that has unified nations and various ethnic groups to voice opposition and demand a resolution to this plight.

My research aims to evaluate the historical context of race in America, especially as it relates to the policing of Black men by White-dominated systems, and will incorporate the views and opinions of Black women in Minnesota about the impact of George Floyd's death on bringing focus to policing, and how his death impacted their activism.

In the recent past, the United States has been grappling with systemic racism in the criminal justice system, whereby police violence has become a prevalent issue in citizens' social lives. Notably, Buchanan and Bui (2020) stated that civilians are vulnerable to deaths resulting from police officers' interactions and are projected to be larger in the US than in any other country. Encounters with racism and prejudice are fundamental components of Black identity in the U.S., and the prospect of other Black people being indirectly traumatized by the sight of police violence against Black people can be distressing. That is to say, exposure to excessive use of force has physiological and psychological implications, such as an elevated risk of cardiovascular events, an increased fear of victimization, and the sensation of being discriminated against because of one's race (Ladyzhinskaya, 2021). Compared with the general population, the mental and physical well-being of Black Americans who have not been subjected to racism is worse. This holds for

both the physical and mental well-being of Black Americans. There has been a long and turbulent history of racism in the judicial system in the United States.

Bonilla-Silva (2019) repeatedly states that police officers' use of excessive force against Black citizens has surged in the recent past with no accountability against the perpetrating police officers. However, the most important thing to emphasize, as noted by Boyd and Clampet-Lundquist (2019), who support the findings supported by Braga et al. (2018), is that there has been a general trend in the surge of Black civilian deaths resulting from interactions with law enforcers. Based on this literature, it is evident that police brutality against civilians has resulted in a parallel death among unarmed civilians.

In the US, the criminal justice system has been historically linked to racism toward Black people. Therefore, even though Brown (2017) reports that there has been an increase in the number of civilian deaths caused by police officers, it is essential to note that police brutality against Black people is higher than that of other races in the US. Similar thoughts are presented by Buckler and Higgins (2016). They state that unarmed Black men are more likely to experience police brutality and harassment than their White counterparts and are likely to afford protection against police use of force. Considering all this evidence, police brutality against Black people has been heightened by the systemic racism that has permeated the criminal justice system for decades. This, in turn, suggests that Black people are more likely to experience police harassment than Whites, limiting access to equal justice.

Reports indicate that Black people have disproportionately been affected by police killings in US history. According to Buehler (2017), while statistics show that approximately 13.2% of the US population consists of Blacks, they represent 27.6% of all deaths attributed to police brutality,

as the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) reported between 1999 and 2013. In like manner, official data on police killings can be reliable. The Bureau of Justice Statistics is known to undercount deaths primarily because police don't have to contribute data. This ratio surpasses two and a half times that of the general Black population. This study indicates strong evidence that the number of unarmed Black males brutalized by police officers is higher than their White male counterparts of the same age due to systemic racism in the criminal justice system and police structure.

I believe that the recent killing of George Floyd at the hands of a police officer in Minneapolis, MN, has triggered a level of unprecedented social unrest and activism in world history, with countless demanding police reforms and social equality. Unlike previous civil rights movements in US history, the ongoing protests and activism related to the death of George Floyd at the hands of a police officer are unique, with great emphasis being placed on achieving social justice and equality for all people despite their race and color.

The killing of George Floyd by a White police officer has spurred activism, with many protesters across the US calling for an end to systemic racism against people of color (Tillery, 2019). More specifically, activism because of Floyd's death and the call to end police brutality against Black people has attracted people from diverse backgrounds who share solidarity with the victims who have died at the hands of White police officers. For instance, it is reported that approximately 15-26 million racially diverse participants participated in demonstrations over the gruesome killing of George Floyd (Buchanan and Bui, 2020). In a different study, a survey poll released by Civis Analytics (Buchanan and Bui, 2020) approximates that at least 15 to 26 million people from diverse racial backgrounds participated in demonstrations over the gruesome killing of Floyd in the following weeks. Taken together, the evidence reviewed above strongly suggests

the key role that the killing of George Floyd by a police officer has had in triggering social activism across the US with calls to end systemic racism and police brutality against Black men.

This chapter will introduce the study by first discussing the background and context of policing, social activism, and racism, followed by my research problem, my research aims, objectives and questions, the significance of the study, and finally, the limitations.

Therefore, my study will focus on the extent to which the killing of George Floyd has triggered the internal will to activism among protesters in the United States, particularly Black women. In so doing, I will provide an overview of systemic racism and police brutality against Black people in the US and the strategies that can be used to end police brutality and discrimination against unarmed Black men in the United States.

### **Statement of the Problem of Practice**

When George Floyd pleaded for his life and called out for his mother while police officer Derek Chauvin penetrated his knee on his neck, causing his death, the world's soul gasped in horror and disbelief. I will explore what is missing in the literature as it relates to such questions as "Does the current system of policing implicitly or explicitly condone the actions of officers who violate the human rights of others?"

My Problem of Practice or area of focus is the activism of Black women, which has been long established and is most recently more publicized through the events surrounding George Floyd's death. Racism is directly observable, actionable, and connects to the broader issue of improving policing as it relates to Black men. The evolution and participation of Black women in community activism is a form of educational leadership that ensures a process of engagement, guidance, and the use of talents and energies of individuals, communities, and systems toward achieving common practices that support and sustain the life and liberty of others. This form of

leadership and education is specific to social justice and is found in individuals, organizations, and institutions.

The issues addressed through my study will provide knowledge and techniques focusing on reviewing procedural justice systems, the behavior of law enforcement authorities who have systematically disenfranchised Black men and people of color, as well as how Black women have shown up and are present in the fight for equality and how I believe by embracing this type of progression of regulatory systems, as a society, we begin to notice the difference and make the necessary changes to create a more cohesive society while understanding that the system may never be equal.

Through examining current literature and interviews to establish a historical rationale for this problem, several in-depth questions will be addressed in my study to understand why Officer Chauvin felt he could do what he did so blatantly. And lastly, I will be investigating the question, "How have Black women answered the call, through social activism, to address and rectify systems of policing rooted in racism?"

### **Study Purpose**

The purpose of this qualitative research study is to explore how policing and regulatory systems which enable, support, and endorse policing, have systematically impacted the lives of Black men and how the death of George Floyd, specifically, has impacted the social activism of Black women. Through interviews, my study will evaluate the impact policing has had on the justice system and Black women involved in social justice movements in the Minnesota urban communities of Minneapolis and St. Paul, Minnesota.

## **Research Questions**

Through a qualitative research approach, the overall objective of my interviews is to examine the perception of the value of a Black man's life as identified by Black women and how regulatory systems, such as policing, can move from how they define the value of a Black man's life and how that definition impacts how they systematically control Black men. Ideally, be able to examine how activists can work with these systems to create strategies that don't jeopardize the communities' perception of safety by collaboratively defining standards and ways in which the execution of how policing is implemented.

**RQ 1** - To what extent are/were Black women in Minnesota motivated and called to activism due to the death of George Floyd?

**RQ 2** - How have the challenges Black women encountered during the social unrest sparked by the death of George Floyd inspired or altered their leadership and impacted social justice reform?

**RQ 3** - How have Black women activists in Minnesota worked to end systemic racism against Black men in policing?

## **Research Design**

I will use an ethnographic qualitative research methodology to investigate how Black women in Minnesota responded to the call to action due to the death of George Floyd. Grounded in anthropology, Taxis and Barber (2003) reported that ethnography focuses on individual behavioral patterns, perceptions, and beliefs on how they influence their interactions and how it evolves within a given culture. An ethnographic design is selected for the study because, according to Patton (2014), the primary aim of ethnography is to "understand the socio-cultural contexts,

processes and meanings of cultural systems from a perspective of a group being investigated" (Whitehead, 2004, p.16). Therefore, an ethnographic design is considered suitable for the study. It will help me understand systemic racism and police brutality among African American communities and how their views towards such sociocultural contexts have evolved.

I realized that the study I'll be conducting has two main actors: the researcher and the participants; according to Maxwell (2013), by conducting this type of research design, an interactive approach will guide the entire study, collecting, recording, and modulating data and information. Case studies tend to focus on qualitative data using interviews, observations, and analysis of primary and secondary sources (e.g., newspaper articles, photographs, and official records). In this ethnographic qualitative research design, the participants engage in real-life settings. This kind of research design envisions encountering all the issues and underlying currents around the subject of the study. Ethnographic writing is now commonly understood to be "contextual, rhetorical, institutional, generic, and political," depicting the stories of actors as "true fiction" (Barron, 2013).

Lastly, an ethnographic study will allow me to gather detailed information about a phenomenon within a given cultural context (Lassiter, 2005). Therefore, the research design is appropriate for the study because by investigating how George Floyd's death has spurred activism among Black women, I will have the opportunity to be immersed in the Black culture and, in the end, develop descriptions that accurately depict the meaning of systemic racism and police brutality against unarmed Black men, and how the death of George Floyd has triggered internal will towards activism among Black women.



This ethnographic study will be based on the social-constructivist paradigm. The paradigm is based on the assumption that meaning is derived from people's interactions in society. This study will use the paradigm to explain how interactions between Black men and police can be dangerous and often deadly.

### **Significance of the Study**

My research seeks to provide information that may be used to address the systemic racism that has been perpetrated against Black people in the United States. Therefore, my topic is significant because it addresses a key controversial issue in the US criminal justice system, the extent to which police have used stereotypes and racism in policing to dehumanize and brutalize Black people, specifically Black men.

The study findings may provide policymakers, communities, and law enforcement officers with valuable information about the need to improve their interactions by fighting the historical prejudices against Black people. Second, there has been mistrust between Black men in the US and law enforcement officers in society for an extended period. Therefore, by recognizing the cause of systemic racism and the injustices within the criminal justice system, the study findings may assist in promoting trust and cooperation between law enforcement officers and Black males, thereby deterring criminal activities.

The study findings may positively contribute to social change by providing critical information to inform policy reforms by encouraging law enforcement officers and Black males to cooperate. In this way, the study findings may be of great importance to policymakers. It may help police officers appreciate the extent to which police brutality against Black males is specific to this group and initiate appropriate strategies that can be used to address the historic systemic racism in policing. Moreover, the study findings may help policymakers better understand factors

contributing to systemic racism in policing against Black people in the United States and the use of deadly force by police against them from the victims' perspective.

Study results may also be used to promote a positive social change that may be affected by creating a public policy that requires compulsory annual ethics training, cultural sensitivity training, and annual training for all law enforcement officers to improve their relationship with Black men. In turn, this may support the finding of an appropriate method that can be used to treat Black males fairly and respectfully while simultaneously effectively mitigating death, violence, and crime.

### **Research Site/Context and Participants**

With a small Minnesota Black population of 6.4%, the primary participants for this study will be several Black women located in the urban areas of Minneapolis, and Saint Paul, Minnesota. A. criterion-based/purposive sampling technique will be used to identify the participants, who will be selected according to criteria relevant to the research questions. This selection aims to create an environment that gives the researcher the emic perspective of those inside the bowels of the social movement triggered by the death of George Floyd.

### **Role of Researcher**

As the researcher in a qualitative study, I aim to access the participants' thoughts and feelings. However, the data is being collected, and my primary responsibility is safeguarding participants and their data.

### **Developing Competence in Methods**

The research process will apply a triangulation model with different research methods, data collection, investigation, and theoretical perspectives.

## **Collecting and Analyzing Data**

I will utilize raw observational data that has yet to undergo a process of interpretation and transition to interviews. These are standard research guidelines (IRB standards), values and norms premised on general rules of science. I will utilize research instruments, tools, or means of measuring variables in a data collection process with the guidance of research protocol, a documented outline plan of the study to answer the research questions, and describe all the objectives, methodologies, and necessary statistics useful for the study.

### **Define the research question**

When defining my research questions, It is important to realize who I am in the process and understand my role and responsibilities as they relate to the integrity of the research. I will need to clearly define what I want to know from my participants in conjunction with what I already know about the subject to maintain the overall quality of the information I am obtaining.

### **Determine the best data collection(s) method for the research questions –**

The best method for this type of qualitative ethnographic case study is in-depth interviews.

### **Develop a cohesive interview guide**

The interview guide will consist of open-ended questions that will provide a framework for the interviews. The goal is to collect as much information as possible so that the interview questions would encourage participants to share their experiences openly.

**Stay neutral**

Preventing bias is critical for collecting authentic responses from participants.

**Analyzing and presenting the findings –**

Ethnographic qualitative research design facilitates objectivity and enables me to identify previously visible underlying issues. It will also not interfere with the participants and therefore increases the possibility of objectivity. Scientific research is procedural and systematic. It happens through a designated and documental process, identifying who does what, when, and why. It shows the order, the mode, and the people involved in collecting and processing data. As the researcher, I have to do the study analysis, break down the study into sub-concepts to inspect and understand the subject better, and later restructure parts to make a coherent whole.

**Overview of Previous Research**

Racism in the United States and systemic police brutality against Black people have attracted researchers' attention; a plethora of research has been published on police brutality against Black people. In a study examining the major cause of Black deaths in the United States among young men, Buehler (2017) conducted a study in the US, which shows that one in every two thousand Black men and one in every three thousand Black women die from police brutality. In like manner, a survey by Buckler and Higgins (2016) predicted that the risk of Black men being killed by a police officer was higher than non-Blacks, because a law enforcement officer may kill one in every three thousand Black men who interact with them.

In this regard, the above evidence strongly suggests that racism has percolated throughout the US policing system. Black men are disproportionately likely to be stopped and brutalized by police officers (Tillery, 2019). US law enforcement officers are reported to kill more unarmed people than in any other country (Schwartz & Jahn 2020). However, a significant body of literature suggests that Blacks are at an increased risk of being killed by police officers than their White counterparts. Brown (2017) noted that it is important to recognize the surge in violence against Black males in the United States by police officers. To this end, the above statistics provide a richer understanding of police violence's geographic and demographic character against Black males.

In a different study, Claus et al. (2018) pioneered a study to understand the effect of systemic racism on Black people. The study findings revealed that police brutality and racial profiling resulted in mental health problems in Black participants. Edwards (2018) expressed similar thoughts, whose findings suggested that racial profiling and police brutality negatively influenced Black victims' mental health and psychological well-being; moreover, a study by Carney (2016) also revealed that racism and stereotyping of Black people led to acute anxiety, depression, discrimination in the education system, discrimination in employment, and unequal access to health services compared to their White counterparts. The literature reviewed above suggests that Black people's perception and experience with racism and racial profiling have resulted in adverse effects, including unequal access to education, unemployment, and health services.

## **Theoretical Framework**

The study will utilize a qualitative analysis to reveal insights into how people interact with the world, Creswell (2009). The paradigm is based on the assumption that meaning is derived from people's interactions in society and will be used in this study to explain how interactions between Black men and police are stereotypical and, in many cases, deadly.

### **Definition of Terms**

*Black or African American* refers to "a person having origins in any of the Black racial groups of Africa" (United States Census Bureau, 2017 ).

*Police misconduct*: Police behavior that depicts a law enforcement officer as being biased or prejudiced toward certain persons, cultures, races, or backgrounds leading to their mistreatment (Brown, 2017).

*Racism*: Refers to the prejudice and discrimination against a person or people based on their racial or ethnic group (Buchanan & Bui, 2020).

### **Conclusion**

I believe police officer Derek Chauvin's murder of George Floyd has exposed a horrible truth about police brutality against Black men. George Floyd's murder enraged, enlightened, and empowered many, especially Black women. The well-established and documented activism of Black women has prompted my study. Through examining the effect of racism, I hope my study will lead to ways of improving the system of policing as it relates to Black men. Black women have demonstrated that community activism is a form of educational leadership that ensures a

process of engagement, guidance, and the use of their talents will lead toward achieving common practices that support social justice and will help to sustain the life and liberty of others.

## Chapter Two

### Introduction

One thousand, six hundred and forty-one (1,641). According to research published by Thaddeus Jones, who is currently serving as both the Illinois State Representative for the 29th District and as the Mayor of Calumet City, Illinois, how many known fatal shootings there have been by police of unarmed Black men in this country between 2013 and 2019 (<https://mappingpoliceviolence.org/>). The public assassination of George Floyd on May 25, 2020, in the picturesque city of Minneapolis, ignited a whirlwind of images not often seen of the fate of Black men in our country. For more than eight minutes, a common-looking, middle-aged White police officer named Derek Chauvin took the liberty to decide if a man would live or die. He chose death. Chauvin was ultimately found guilty of murder. He had no idea that his actions at the time would intensify international outrage and protests against racism and police brutality, ultimately calling for a change in how the status quo interprets the value of a Black man's life.

The Problem of Practice, or area of focus for this study, is an examination of the activism of Black women, which is directly observable, actionable, and connects to the broader issue of improving the system of policing as it relates to Black men. The evolution and participation of Black women in community activism is a form of educational leadership that ensures a process of engagement, guidance, and the use of talents and energies of individuals, communities, and systems toward achieving common practices that support and sustain the life and liberty of others. This form of leadership and education is specific to social justice. Probing pertinent literature about policing, social activism, and the will of Black women to lead, the questions addressed in reviewing the literature are, essentially, **why** have procedural justice systems been overlooked and,



in some cases, condoned the behavior of law enforcement authorities who have systematically disenfranchised Black men and people of color? **How** have Black women shown up and are present in the fight for equality regarding the survival of Black men in our society? **When** will judicial and other regulatory systems begin to notice the difference and make the necessary changes to create a more balanced society in pursuit of all men/women being created equally? Lastly, **what** current examples exist of such efforts?

### **Literature Review Overview**

This study aims to understand how racism and police brutality against Black people has triggered social activism, specifically Black women, and how it has been linked to racism, which happens to be a key social issue grappling the United States. The 2020 murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis, Minnesota, at the hands of a police officer, has renewed social unrest led by the Black Lives Matter social movement in the United States to a pre-eminent level. The massive protests have been fueled by grief, fury, rage against injustice, institutionalized racism, and frustrations at the police system's pervasive brutality against those it deems unworthy (Buchanan & Bui, 2020). Recent polls released by organizations such as Civis Analytics suggest that approximately 15-26 million racially diverse participants participated in the demonstrations over the gruesome killings of George Floyd (Buchanan & Bui, 2020). In turn, these enormous numbers of protestors over social justice in the United States of America have become the largest ever movement in the country's history, as documented by crowd-counting experts (Buchanan & Bui 2020).

In this section, the focus of the literature reviewed will be the historical background of policing, social activism, and the will of Black women to lead. The first topic in this section

includes the motivation and ideology of the Black Lives Matter movement, founded by Black women. The purpose will be to understand the inspiration and purpose that the movement has had over the years. Second, an extensive review of recent systemic police brutality against people of color, specifically towards Black men, was explored.

Racism and discrimination against people of color were also forged to provide a clear view of racism in the United States. Lastly, the effect of racism on people of color in the United States and strategies for mitigating and ending historical and social injustices in the United States was dissected. Chapter Two will end with a conclusion and a synthesis of the findings and implications drawn from the literature. To ensure current sources were used, the search ranged from 2016 to 2020. The keywords were used to search databases: *police brutality, Black Americans, police shootings, systemic racism, the criminal justice system, George Floyd, racism, and Black women activism*. The subsequent sections present a discussion of the literature on key themes that emerged from the literature search and their link to the current topic.

## **Section I: POLICING**

### **Brief History of Racism and Policing Blacks in the United States**

This section aims to evaluate Black men and the racial discrimination by police, its effects, and its continued impact on the African American community. Racism is often synonymously used with prejudice (biased feelings or affect), stereotyping (biased thoughts and beliefs, inconsistent generalities), discrimination (differential treatment or the absence of equal treatment), and bigotry (intolerance or hatred) (Boyd & Clampet-Lundquist, 2019). The racial discrimination practice is covertly theorized as established simple social-psychological processes underlying individual

mindsets (i.e., stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination) merely applied to the context of race (United Nations, 2017). The ethics of policing and imprisonment have been rising over the past years. The mass shooting of citizens in the US and other countries, not forgetting mass incarceration issues, calls for reviews of the administrative bodies. It is, therefore, essential to focus on ideals that promote justice against any features of criminal injustices against certain races (Oxley, 2018).

The fight for social justice has been fueled by gun violence, racial inequality, and other forms of human mistreatment in the US. The history of the United States has been tarnished by racism since colonization when the slave trade was very high among the Indigenous landowners. People of African origin were enslaved during the colonial days due to racism (Tyler, 2017). Although at times indicated, the context of race is not essentially considered unique in social-psychological research; rather, the psychological concerns and experiences of racism are usually deducted from the minority (vs. majority), low-status (vs. high status), subordinate (vs. dominant), and out-group (vs. in-group) research prototypes (Brown, 2017). The specific role played by race in organizing individuals and personalities that presently constitute marginalized and dominant groups has been obscured by this approach since race is entrenched in an ancient and traditional context (Tyler 2017). According to Bonilla-Silva (2019), discrimination decisively dominates another individual or group centered on a single or various genuine or imaginary differences.

Segregation resulting from discrimination inflicted a negative self-concept on Black children. The studies above suggest that discrimination is linked to African Americans' negative psychological and physical health symptoms. Additionally, as Brown (2017) established, considerable cognizance occurs inherently. The effect of discrimination is both interior and

exterior; for instance, when children are told they are less worthy and given less than others, they tend to believe they are worthless as human beings. In a study by Boyd and Clampet-Lundquist (2019), an examination of individuals' attitudes was conducted to understand how stereotypes operate implicitly, outside the conscious mind and how constant surveillance and threatening behavior by police, whether or not a person is engaged in criminal activity, causes some people to modify their daily routines, creates additional management of how one presents oneself and may generate a feeling of helplessness when one's activities are continually questioned.

Jealous (2018) noted an increase in the cases of unarmed Black men, but the general public is also threatened, more so than the Black community. According to Jetelina et al. (2020) and Lai et al. (2016), people and communities visualize and portray law enforcement as their protectors against harm. Even though police officers undergo training to protect the community and those around them, they are also known for being tangled in horrendous activities that involve misconduct and coercion (Lartey, 2018). Police officers even abuse citizens and fatally shoot them; later, they are declared innocent and unarmed. Society is thus scrutinizing these actions of the police, among others. These violent acts usually occur because police officers use racial profiling when arresting suspects (Lawson, 2018). These reasons made the U.S. Supreme court rule in the case of *Tennessee v. Garner*, 471 U.S. 1 (1985), that the Fourth Amendment prohibits "the use of deadly force to effect an arrest or prevent the escape of a suspect unless" the arresting officer feels that the individual is a suspect or is guilty of committing the crime that involves significant physical injury or any form of infliction, and the use of intentional deadly physical force cautiously, whenever necessary (Legewie & Fagan, 2019). In effect, McManus et al. (2019) outlined that federal standards seem to be duplicated by the statutory laws concerned with using force in arresting individuals. Ultimately, residents are left wondering and asking questions about

the intentions of the law enforcement officers, which negatively impacts the psychology of the African American community (Miller & Garran, 2017; Milkman, 2017).

A large section of the minority groups still suffers while facing the effects of concentrated disadvantage (Schwartz & Jahn, 2020). Various suggestions that can be considered are outlined: (a) officers should complete a thorough background check upon entering the Police Academy or the force, including polygraph and psychological examinations, and (b) there need to reorganize police training for it to address cultural differences in the behavior of various trainees, like how to work with individuals that are mentally compromised, when to use reasonable excessive force as well as how to use better strategies and communication techniques, and (c) police leaders need to prioritize practical training, encouraging officers on the importance of fostering positive relationships with the general public (Schimmack & Carlsson, 2020).

Stuart (2016) conducted a study on Criminal Justice Policy Review. He found patterns of behavior in a large police department, whereby a small number of police officers recorded being involved in use-of-force incidents frequently. Similar findings are outlined by Tillery (2019), who studied Criminal Justice and Behavior and alludes that educated, more experienced officers are less likely to use force unjustifiably. On the other hand, reviewed case studies indicate that violence in police departments is heightened by inadequate training programs and a lack of accountability (Salter et al., 2018). Therefore, further research is needed to establish the differences between officers' behaviors based on experience and training (Singer, 2017).

Despite inconclusive evidence, researchers have concluded that race is a significant factor in the criminal justice system (Umberson, 2017). Schwartz and Jahn (2020) established that minorities, who are majorly African Americans, have a higher chance of facing harsher sentences

"for assaults on Whites than on Whites committing the same offenses" (p. 576). Other crucial discriminatory factors that play a role in systematic identity and oppression include class, race, and gender privilege (Walsh, 2020). As Wright and Unah (2017) stated, media stories about unarmed Black men being killed or shot by police may lead civilians to question the Black man's innocence while assuming that the police officer is the good guy. The justifiable use of force by police officers makes civilians draw their conclusions. News media depictions often influence such conclusions and the longstanding stereotypes that spread victim-blaming (Schimmack & Carlsson, 2020). According to Zoorob (2020), police officers who have nurtured and manipulated these attitudes and perceptions, which have been ingrained since slavery, are also quick to release the medical reports or prior-arrest records of victims in a bid to "somehow" justify the killing of individuals by police. Similar findings are shared by Shalal (2020). They pinpointed that the Fourth Amendment was also violated by the Cleveland police department due to the use of excessive force continuously in their practice.

In another study, the Ferguson, Missouri, police department was also said to have an alarming pattern of "clear racial disparities" and "discriminatory intent" (Schwartz, 2020). In effect, researchers need to explore data from various police departments like Ferguson and Missouri, which are under the federal government, to ascertain if the changes made in the aftermath of racially insensitive practices and tragic events improved the situation. Other sophisticated analysis approaches should be included to determine whether the number of incidents involving the police shooting and killing of unmarked Black men has decreased (CBS, 2020). According to Solomon and Martin (2019), preventing the increase in such incidents involves producing policy recommendations that focus on implementing effective technological tools and educational resources for police officers.

Previous studies on police brutality indicate that the degree to which social status and race impact the results of police aggression and violence towards minority young men is not yet detailed (Harris, 2019). As Schimmack and Carlsson (2020) suggested, racial profiling is still the main problem propelling police violence, and incorporating evidence-based practices should be considered by police leaders to implement solutions to reduce police brutality incidents over time. Their study, *Mapping Police Violence* (2020), reported why police officers in 2005 and 2014 killed more than 5,000 civilians. Findings showed that despite the differences between Rio de Janeiro and major American cities, similar trends of police brutality towards minorities existed, more so in marginalized and predominantly Black communities. The above findings prompted changes in the strategies for police coercion incidents and other incidents of violence that contribute majorly to the violent culture.

### **Statistics of Police Brutality Against Black People**

Recent Statistics by Berman (2020) and *Mapping Police Violence* (2020) suggested that police kill approximately 1 in every 1000 Black men throughout their life and is the leading cause of death and racial distress for Black men in the United States. In the same vein, Schimmack and Carlsson (2020) expanded on this issue relating to the threat that Black males encountered at the hand of police and reported that the risk of Black people being killed by police officers' peaks between the ages of 20 years and 35 years for Black men and women respectively, pointing to the extent to which police brutality has extended systemic racism against Black people in the US. Schwartz's (2020) study on the prevalence of police brutality against Black people is complemented by Schwartz and Jahn (2020). Their study suggested that Black people from Alaska were more likely to be killed by police than White people due to stereotypes and systemic racism

within the policing system against Black people. These statistics indicate that the number of Black people likely to be killed by police officers in the US is increasingly alarming as it does not affect other races like the Black community. This means that the number of Black men killed by police officers, particularly unarmed Black men, is higher than White men, according to Schwartz's (2020) study.

Official government statistics and independent surveys reported by various media outlets suggest that there has been a surge in the number of Black men's deaths linked to police brutality, particularly Black unarmed men. A report published by ProPublica providing an analysis of fatal police shootings in the US between 2010 and 2012 suggests that Black males were 13 times more likely to be killed by police officers than their White male counterparts (Schimmack & Carlsson, 2020). Given the surge in police brutality against Black men, Claus et al. (2018) support findings reported by Schimmack and Carlsson (2020) that link the brutality to systemic policing racism. The study notes that prejudice has been the polarizing theme regarding the dialogue relating to fatal experiences between police and Black males in the United States. This is alarmingly concerning among activists who indiscriminately support social equality for all citizens. Worth mentioning is that Cunningham (2020) and Graham et al. (2019) stated that studies on implicit and explicit prejudices suggest that the public may strongly prefer White over Black police and may not be mindful of their systematic prejudices. The studies discussed above allude to the fact that racism has significantly contributed to police brutality against Black men compared to their White counterparts.

Additionally, as the CDC (2020) recorded, Black people are disproportionately affected by police killings, referring to the available limited data. Whereas the Black community represents



13.2% of the US population, they account for 27.6% of all deaths resulting from police brutality between 1999 and 2013 (CDC, 2020). Similarly, the FBI's Supplementary Homicide Report reveals that 31.8% of the individuals reported to be shot by police were Black men. This percentage exceeds two and a half times the total percentage of African Americans relating to the general population (13.2%). The above evidence indicates that the number of unarmed Black men killed by a police officer is higher than that of White men, of the same age, due to systemic racism, discrimination, and stereotyping of Black people in policing.

In a different but similar study, reported by CDC (2020), *The Guardian*, in its study on police killings of Black men, entitled "Counted," established that Black men of ages 15 and 34 years were likely to be killed by police officers nine times more than their White counterparts of the same age bracket in 2015 (Lartey, 2018). Comparable findings relating to the prevalence of police brutality against Black men were reported by Claus et al. (2016). They noted that of the deaths reported at the hands of police officers, 15% of all deaths logged in 2015 by investigations into the use of force by police were comprised of Black men aged 15 to 35 years (*Mapping Police Violence*, 2020). *The Guardian's* report on police killings of Black people is supported by *The Washington Post* survey that reported that of 954 fatal shootings by police in 2015 that were examined, 242 of them were of unarmed Black men. Similar results on fatal police shootings by *Mapping Police Violence* suggest that 25% of all people killed in 2017 were Black, although the Black community comprises 13% of the total population (Berman, 2020; *Mapping Police Violence*, 2020). Paired with recently released official mortality data, these findings demonstrate that approximately one in every 65 deaths of a Black man in the United States is a murder by the police (Cunningham, 2020).

Likewise, the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination in its *Concluding Observation for the USA* in 2017, noted: "The Committee reiterates its previous concern at the brutality and excessive use of force by law enforcement officials against members of racial and ethnic minorities including against unarmed individuals, which has a disparate impact on African Americans" (Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, 2017). Overall, there is strong evidence to indicate police in the USA disproportionately kill Black people.

Statistics by Edwards et al. (2018) suggest that it is infrequent for police officers accused of killing Black people to be sentenced. The *Root Newspaper* (2021) reported similar results. It noted that police officers linked to Black people's killings between 2005 and 2017 were 49 individuals, and only five of the police officers accused of the killings were imprisoned. Similar reports by *The New York Times* (2020) and *Washington Post* (2020) suggest that only 54 police officers have been convicted of murder charges involving Black people during this same period. In the same way, data from *Mapping Police Violence* revealed that of the 104 cases relating to police killings from 2005-2017 relating to Black people, only 13 of the police officers involved were convicted. Four cases were tried and ended in a mistrial, or the charges were dropped against the police officers involved due to a lack of evidence.

## **Section II: RACISM**

### **Systemic Racism in America's Justice System**

The killing of unarmed Black men by law enforcers in the United States can be traced to 1619 when the first slave ship, a Dutch Man-of-War vessel, docked in Point Comfort, Virginia;

hence it is not a recent occurrence given that the US itself came from racist systems (Buehler, 2017). Due to overcrowding, unsanitary conditions, and inadequate provisions on the ship, countless enslaved Africans were killed preceding the expedition to America. Nonetheless, these conditions were the initial step in dehumanizing enslaved people and laid the foundation for the conditions they would be subjected to upon arrival in the colonies. The arrival of more slave ships with human cargo resulted in numerous states adopting laws to govern the enslaved Africans and their ownership. The most extensively adopted laws were the Slave Codes, influenced by the extremely successful *Barbadian Slave Law*. The Barbadian Slave Codes were enormously established by the British to validate the practice of slavery and authorize the planters' brutal treatment of their African slaves (Buckler and Higgins, 2016).

Buckler and Higgins (2016) defined that enslaved Africans had no human rights under these codes and were likened to farm animals or property. The Slave Codes in the United States originated in Maryland and Virginia, and the standing of the slave, more precisely the enslaved African, was defined as a piece of possession that could not take part in activities that their White owners engaged in. In other words, they had no rights. Likewise, the Slave Codes allowed masters to punish enslaved Africans for what they considered intolerable behavior (Umberson, 2017).

According to Schwartz (2020), an ancient viewpoint of discrimination has indicated that European Americans have segregated themselves from African Americans both symbolically and culturally. The division was meant to psychologically validate the despotic relationships and establish a superior/inferior complex (Schwartz, 2020). Braga et al. (2018) stated that familiarity with power lowers perspective-taking, making individuals less open to others. White privilege, the inherent advantages a white person possesses based on their race in a society characterized by

racial inequality and injustice (Cheung, 2020), is an undetectable and habitually unnoticed condition that has emphasized the distance between Black and White groups. Buehler (2017) found that Whites live but do not recognize their privilege, restricting their racial interactions. The Black population's experiences have continued to be shaped by traditional forces that have habitually demeaned, disadvantaged, and denied them equal access and opportunity (Carney, 2016). Consequently, these features that reinforced generic social classification as being either White or Black have contributed to the years of American racial interactions.

From time immemorial, Blacks and police have had, at best, a turbulent relationship in the US (Tillery, 2019). In their text, *White policing of Black populations: A history of race and social control in America*, Walsh (2020) explains how Blacks were contained in the ghettos in the late 19th and early 20th Centuries in Europe using modern policing. Singer (2017) also observed that this practice was becoming standard in America, whereby policing was also being used as a means of social control, protection of the rich's interest, and in this case, by controlling Blacks.

Over-policing in the Black community has recently been a highly debated topic. According to Buckler and Higgins (2016), it has been established that the likelihood of police misconduct is higher in financially challenged communities where the inhabitants are ethnic minorities. This is arguably the policing strategy since most Blacks still live in low urban over-policed areas (Zoorob, 2020). Wright and Unah (2017) established that it was a well-known fact that police mistreated Black citizens with impunity in this environment as elicited by the varying amount of violence perpetrated on Blacks and other ethnic minorities in poor communities.

Buehler (2017) clarifies that "A sense of superiority shapes dominant-group attitudes toward other racial groups over others and by a desire to defend dominant-group interests against

threats, whether real or perceived" (p. 400). In other words, this feeling of supremacy validates the police officers' actions as they seek to protect the dominant class by any means possible.

The war on drugs and how it was clearly stated by President Nixon's former aide John Ehrlichman that it was directed at Blacks and Latinos is a good example of systemic control (Buckler & Higgins, 2016). The attitudes and functions of the slave patrols are very similar to this action. Young ethnic minorities frequently are the objects of this maltreatment and thus harbor hostile feelings toward the police (Schwartz, 2020). The severe maltreatment of African Americans by America's judicial system has been intensely defined since ab aeterno. The African American experience with America's legal system has been characterized by kidnapping, lynching, police brutality, and unfair prison sentences during the last 400 years (Salter et al., 2018). As Stuart (2016) established, African Americans have been marginalized and targeted for abuse by the American judicial system since its founding. Generally, Schimmack and Carlsson (2020) observed that African Americans are more likely to have negative encounters with law enforcement agencies. In addition, studies have established that African American male students are more severely penalized when participating in similar misbehavior acts than their European American male counterparts (Schwartz & Jahn, 2020). Additional comparisons with White male adolescents have confirmed that Black male adolescents are more likely to receive disciplinary action and imprisonment than culturally appropriate therapeutic interventions (Buehler, 2017).

The above conclusion concurs with a report issued by the U.S. Surgeon General, revealing that Black Americans were more likely to be imprisoned than European Americans (Buckler & Higgins, 2016). Researchers have established that Blacks constitute 49% of the United States prison system, even though they only make up 6% of the United States population (Schwartz &

Jahn, 2020). According to a 2019 US Department of Justice report, African American male youths are also overrepresented in the juvenile justice system. Although 62 percent of children arrested in the U.S. were White, children of color were nearly two times more likely to be arrested than White children, and Black children were two and a half times more likely.

As established by the 2010 US Census Bureau, 12% of Black American males were imprisoned, slightly lower than those who had attained a tertiary level of education (13%). In contrast to Whites, Schwartz and Jahn (2020) established that Blacks were likely to be imprisoned for longer, be tried as adults regardless of their juvenile status, and more likely to be given capital punishment sentences for committing crimes against Whites than for committing crimes against fellow Blacks. Discriminatory treatment by the American judicial system towards Blacks is irrefutable, as illustrated by the conspicuous statistical accounts. The additional tasks of emotionally navigating through the threats and hindrances placed in their way by the legal system are an operative distraction to the academic achievement of Black Americans.

### **Effects of Racism**

According to a study by Hemenway et al. (2018), structural racism has historically been at the societal level as the primary tool used by the dominant groups in society to offer its members privileges while simultaneously disadvantaging the minor groups. Hemenway et al. (2018) stated that the dominant group uses structural racism to acquire critical societal resources, including employment and higher wages, and practically limits the minority group's access to these valuable resources. Similarly, Mayorga and Picower (2018) expound that Black Americans and other minorities in the United States have been disadvantaged significantly historically due to their origin and skin color, limiting their access to key resources such as healthcare, education, and

employment. How racial prejudice shapes individual experiences, have been investigated, at length, by researchers in different fields of social sciences.

As far as Black people are referenced, racism is considered a frequent source of acute strain and emotional stress. In particular, these sentiments are echoed by Holmes et al. (2019). They noted that acute strains manifest in several ways, including constrained opportunities and unequal access to key resources in society (Cunningham, 2020), which has been reflected in discrimination and stereotypes directed toward Black people (Keisha, 2021). In turn, this heightened stress, coupled with limited access to equal opportunities in society, may negatively affect Black people's mental and psychological health (Keisha, 2021).

Given the above studies, evidence suggests that acute stress resulting from racism may result in mental and emotional distress among Black people, negatively impacting their overall health (Keisha, 2021; Schwartz, 2020). Several researchers have extensively documented and established that different forms of racism influence an individual's mental health and overall well-being. For example, Ross et al. (2018) reported that of the two hundred and thirty Black American participants who took part in a study to investigate the effects of structural racism on their mental health, 98% of them noted that racism negatively impacted their mental health and emotional wellbeing.

According to research conducted by Schwartz and Jahn (2020), racial discrimination and profiling of individuals from different backgrounds have been linked to the quadrupling of unemployment rates among African Americans over the years. Salter et al. (2018) noted that despite clear racial progress in the US, systemic racism persists in the key dimension and has even increased. For instance, Schwartz (2020) noted that racial gaps regarding unemployment had

shown no significant change since 1960, the African Americans gap in the labor market has been drastically expanding, and African-Americans have difficulty in securing employment due to widespread racism and brutal police experiences that have negatively impacted their resumes.

Another effect of racism, per the literature, is on Black women; racism-related stress has been linked to experiences of sexism in their community. Just like racism, sexism has been reported to reflect an individual's attitude, collective ideologies, and the structure of social institutions in society (Cunningham, 2020). In this regard, chronic stressors linked to systemic stress against Black women directly influence their psychological well-being, extending social interactions with other racial groups (Cheung, 2020). In like manner, recent systematic review studies have revealed that stereotyping Black women has increased depression and anxiety (Cunningham, 2020). The study above suggests that racism strongly contributes to anxiety and depression in Black women (Cheung, 2020).

Research also suggests that racism has infiltrated the education system in the US, thereby disadvantaging Black people. Fridkin et al. (2017) reported consistent problems witnessed by children in minority groups, including limited access to early learning and learning resources and low instructor retention rates. Similar thoughts were expressed by Figures and Legewie (2019) and Frankovic (2019). They noted that the lack of enough learning resources for minorities, particularly African American students, leads to low graduation rates and high attrition rates. Statistics released by Edwards et al. (2019) and Feldman et al. (2017) suggested that students with a White background were three times more likely to graduate than their Black counterparts in high school.

Another effect of racism is that without required learning resources, which are readily available to their White counterparts, Feagin (2017) established that the chances of Black students



dropping out of school were twice as high as those of their White counterparts. Therefore, the evidence presented above summarizes the negative impacts that systemic racism has within the US education system because it limits the probability of Black students competing favorably with their White counterparts to realize their academic goals (Schimmack & Carlsson, 2020). The present analysis also points toward the need for robust policies, such as affirmative action, which seeks to promote equal opportunities for all people, including equal opportunities to learn. Third, strong evidence suggests that systemic racism continues to infiltrate the academic system as students from majority groups are given preference in terms of resource allocation over their minority counterparts; in this case, in terms of resource allocation, such as qualified instructors (Graziano & Gauthier, 2019).

Racial oppression had a severe impact on women, in particular, Black women. This resulted from pre-existing unequal gender relations in our society (Cunningham, 2020). Despite the USA having a life expectancy of 78 years, many Black people still experience substandard health services instead of White people across the life cycle (Cheung, 2020). Generally, as Blacks progress from childhood to adolescence, they undergo a series of chronic and infectious diseases, something less common to White people (Graham et al., 2019).

### **Strategies for Combating Systematic Racism**

Unlike the state norms, racism has been found to operate at several levels, specifically cultural, institutional, interpersonal, and personal (Cunningham, 2020). Based on this literature, it is evidenced that Whites have advanced racism in all aspects, including health (Claus et al., 2018). This, too, has been evidenced by a surge of racially abused Blacks in the United States. Today, one of the most insurmountable challenges facing Blacks, foreign immigrants, and locals in the

US is systemic racism (Sandell & Cook, 2020). Racial discrimination and racism, well manifested in political oppression and economic exploitation, have been at the epicenter of United States history since the inauguration of colonial conquest (Cheung, 2020). Since then, America's history has been impacted by racial dominance by the Whites, while Blacks on one side struggle to overcome discrimination (Cunningham, 2020). Fortunately, this view is supported by (Wilson 1999), who illustrated that successive White majority won the USA regimes, instituted racial policies, and racial legislation suppressed the minority Blacks culminating in the system of Black stereotypes that institute racial discrimination and oppression (Graziano & Gauthier, 2019). Consequently, African Americans frequently experience intense racism coupled with economic disempowerment and marginalization (Sandell & Cook, 2020).

Racism forms a significant part of success and well-being in the United States (Sandell & Cook, 2020). African Americans, Latinos, American Indians, and other communities of color are devalued and disadvantaged by policy and culture. Racism exists in many forms; at personal and interpersonal levels, personal feelings, beliefs, and interactions express negative evaluations of historically excluded groups (Cheung, 2020). Considering all the evidence in the above literature, several strategies have been used to combat racism systematically (Sandell & Cook, 2020).

Schimmack and Carlsson (2020) suggested that using effective community tools and strategies identifies structural racism as the main cause of racism. Analysis of effective strategies classifies race as a social factor rather than a biological construct (Graham et al., 2019). Effective strategies are engineered to promote understanding of intersections towards factors such as race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and gender (Claus et al., 2018). A well-defined effective strategy to end racism while promoting racial healing provides participants with a cognitive and clear

understanding of the cultural, structural, institutional, and political aspects of racism and the development of skills in working effectively (Berman, 2020). A Cook County (Illinois) Place Matters team presentation featured an explicit discussion of structural racism and power imbalances as determinants of unfair resource distribution (Claus et al., 2018). Similarly, similar research by King County (Washington.) Equity and Social Justice Ordinance trained a countering bias of the people training persons involved in the hiring process where Whites' racism was highly instigated. Promoting a detailed understanding of how communities become healthy and unhealthy places and the role of racism and privilege in this process are necessary components of effective strategies to combat racism (Safi, 2020). It reduces bias and promotes the healing of racially abused groups in each community to a greater extent (Fisher, 2020).

Historically, there is an existing local specification on how policies and practices were formed. Community members must be engaged in drafting an inventory of the current local policies and practices that continue rather than conflict with legacy-based inequalities (Safi, 2020). Experienced program facilitators must commit to teaching a long-term history of racism and privilege within the community (Buchanan & Bui, 2020). Furthermore, government officials must start listening to community-based complaints and becoming accountable while instituting changes (Buchanan & Bui, 2020). Recently, there has been a recurrence of a lack of accountability and equity from traditionally excluded communities, specifically African Americans and other immigrants (Tatter, 2020).

Communities working to undo place-based inequality, thus reducing racial-based inequities, must recognize the power of institutions (Claus et al., 2018) and the underlying political ideologies and individual barriers to long-term, transformational change strategies on racism

within the United States (Edwards et al., 2018). Long-term commitment has a component that provides a supportive and inspired collaboration that addresses the discrimination and privilege in the United States regarding Black people, immigrants, and locals (Edwards et al., 2018). Henceforth, community members and other unexpected allies facilitate educational efforts that support long-term commitment toward advocacy for social change (Graziano & Gauthier, 2019).

### **Section III: SOCIAL ACTIVISM**

#### **The Death of George Floyd and Black Women's Activism**

It is essential to understand the history of activism concerning social movements to view how radical ideas have shaped the efforts to win against women's suffrage and civil rights for all. However, there are complexities encountered in researching and teaching the history of the social movements in the US (Worden & McLean, 2018). The video showing George Floyd's gruesome murder on May 25, 2020, in Minneapolis by a police officer is horrific but not startling; abysmal but not infrequent, portraying a kind of act recurrently witnessed in the US. As such, policing is mediated by one's race (Graziano & Gauthier, 2019). Owing to its gruesome nature, Graham et al. (2020) noted that the death of George Floyd has fortunately reignited activism in many regions across the world of ordinary folk not often seen in protest movements, calling for the need to end racism in policing in the United States. Floyd's death has reignited a new wave of activism involving a diverse array of conscientious objectors from various races, genders, social-economic statuses, religions, and regions of the world. The terrifying video of Floyd's death posted by a bystander steadily triggered the conversation about police brutality and racism toward Black people.

Social activism is a more inclusive trend in the US, addressing voting rights, political representation, access to better healthcare facilities, global climate change, wages, and salaries, ending violence, and other aspects affecting people's daily lives. Seal (2012) defines social activism as "The man of action views the issue of means and ends in pragmatic and strategic terms. He has no other problem; he thinks only of his actual resources and the possibilities of various action choices". Through protests, many strategically acted due to the death of George Floyd, as it was terrifying, as reported by witnesses and media houses (Graziano & Gauthier, 2019). In particular, on May 25, 2020, a worker at a grocery store in Minneapolis contacted the police stating that a drunk man had used a fake \$20 bill to buy cigarettes from the store, as per the 911 call transcript (Graziano & Gauthier, 2019). Videos from the bystander and security footage show police officers arriving at the scene and forcing the man, identified later as George Floyd, out of his vehicle (Graziano & Gauthier, 2019). Within a short time, another video that went viral on social media showed the man firmly lying on the ground as a White male police officer pressed his knee into Floyd's neck, holding him down until he died (Graziano & Gauthier, 2019).

From the video footage, it can be seen and heard that Floyd was pleading with the police officer to let him go because he could not breathe and was in great pain. Shockingly, the police officer did not listen to Floyd's pleading, leading to a protest by bystanders (Chadwick, 2020). The police officer, who was later identified as Derek Chauvin, failed to listen to the pleadings made by Floyd until the paramedics arrived while he was still pressing his knee on Floyd's neck several minutes later (Chadwick, 2020). Reports by paramedics noted that Floyd had no pulse when placed in an ambulance and was declared dead (Chadwick, 2020). In particular, the Minnesota incident report stated, "Medics performed pulse checks several times, finding none and delivering one

shock by their monitor. [The patient's] condition did not change" (Chadwick, 2020). Later, Floyd was declared dead at Hennepin County Medical Center in downtown Minneapolis, Minnesota.

According to a study by Safi (2020), news relating to the death of George Floyd triggered a wave of protests and activism worldwide. The next day, protests were reported in Minneapolis, with some turning violent. The death reignited a new wave of activists across the 50 states in the United States, with the central theme of calling for an end to police brutality against African Americans (Safi, 2020). One of the key aspects linked to protests and the new wave of activism among millions of Americans, the protests are specifically about policing (Hernandez & Muller, 2020). More importantly, the death and social unrest in the following weeks and months expose the fact that the criminal justice system in the US presents an accurate picture of racial oppression against minorities (Hernandez & Muller, 2020). A survey showed that activism for an end to racism and discrimination against people of color attracted over 50,000 people in Philadelphia, 20,000 in Chicago's Union Park, and up to 10,000 on the Golden Gate Bridge, according to estimates by Edwin Chow, an associate professor at Texas State University, and researchers at the Crowd Counting Consortium (Buchanan & Bui, 2020).

Unlike previous social demonstrations in the US, which have been on an alarming scale, the protests linked to the killing of George Floyd by a police officer have heightened attention to the issues of racism in the United States (Fisher, 2020; Tatter, 2020). The most notable thing from the death and protests attached to Floyd's death is the outrage that was sparked across the globe. Different cities witnessed a mammoth number of protesters who showed solidarity for the victims who died at the hands of police officers, especially when one considers that they were unarmed. For instance, the shock and waves of grief were felt in England (Safi, 2020). Thousands of people

in London staged demonstrations calling for societal equality and ending brutality against unnamed Black men. Activists also staged demonstrations throughout all continents, showing unity with the victims who had died at the hands of police, especially Black men in the United States (Hernandez & Muller, 2020; Safi, 2020). In effect, the literature reviewed seems to suggest that while the killing of George Floyd took place in the United States, it has transcended across the world, resulting in strong emotions, personal reflection as well as activism to end police brutality and racism within the criminal justice system in the US (Buchanan & Bui, 2020).

Floyd's death resulted in social activism to end racism in the criminal justice system, but it has also sparked religious activism across the United States. Shalal (2020) reported that Floyd's death has sporadically triggered local and global outrage and activism about how police officers use excessive force when handling Black men. Sandell and Cook (2020) reported that religious leaders and other faith-based groups in the United States had come together to commemorate the occurrences during the civil rights movement in the 1960s. Similar thoughts are expressed by Shalal (2020), who reported that at least 1000 Rabbis, Pastors, Imams, and other religious leaders conducted an online conference to discuss the systemic nature of violence and racism against Black people by police officers in the United States.

Apart from religious activism, Floyd's death has inspired and triggered different forms of activism. In the view of Haner et al. (2019), people, particularly Black women, worldwide have become internally motivated to participate or engage in activism as the only way to end the historical racism against Black people. In particular, CBS (2020) reported that Floyd's death had inspired activism to inform and create online petitions calling for speedy reforms in the police system. Petitions such as #8CantWait recommend swift action with eight policies that locales may

adopt to curb the widespread, systematic racism against Black people. Moreover, Cheung (2020) noted that Floyd's death had triggered activism in the form of education as the number of people calling for police education continues to increase.

### **Ideology and Formation of The Black Lives Matter Movement**

Formed by three Black women, Alicia Garza, Patrisse Cullors, and Opal Tometi, Black Lives Matter is a compelling illustration, according to Platt (2020), and is a movement based on the ideology of undoing the acute racial discrimination in the United States, particularly toward Black people. Petermon and Spencer (2019) echoed the same views. They stated that the objective and organizational structures that social activists have used to spearhead the objectives of BLM could transform it into a broader social movement that can effectively complete and finish the 1960s Civil Rights movement objectives.

Ince et al. (2019) noted that one of the basic systems that BLM organizers seek to transform relates to the US's criminal justice system. Similarly, Hawthorne (2019) reported that BLM organizers have tirelessly been working to initiate drastic changes in the criminal justice system toward ending racism against Black people for the past few years. Similarly, Petermon and Spencer (2019) echoed similar views. They noted that activists within the BLM movement profoundly understand the public beliefs relating to crime and racism and how racial disparities worsen criminal activities in society. Therefore, Henderson and Louis Jr. (2017) strongly contend that the BLM activists are trying to initiate a conversation on how racism has negatively pervaded the criminal system, thus dehumanizing the Black community. Given these points, activists within the BLM movement have solely focused on reducing systemic racism against Black people and creating an equal society where the criminal system is fair to all, notwithstanding one's race or



origin. Taken together, this literature tends to suggest the main objective of BLM is to fight racism in society and support equal rights within the criminal justice system.

The BLM movement is determined to end systemic racism and acknowledges that race is a key factor for consideration in modern society. In this case, if race were truly invaluable and Black lives mattered, there would be no chance of the current racial disparities in the criminal justice system against them (Faraji, 2016). Therefore, Hoffman et al. (2019) allude to the above findings reported by Hargons et al. (2017), stating that race is an indispensable factor that society needs to talk about openly without fear of being dubbed a racist. In this way, by ignoring a discussion on the effects of racism in life, particularly among Black people, it is possible that being silent on it might worsen the issue further. Given the above-reviewed literature, it is clear that the authors present strong evidence that racism can no longer be ignored in society, and people must be open to talking about it because it is a primary step in combating systemic racism and police brutality against Black people.

### **Previous Literature on Social Activism and Black Women**

The death of George Floyd continues to spur Black women toward social activism to compel radical changes in policing in the United States, specifically in Minneapolis and Saint Paul, Minnesota. The issue of social activism has been emphasized since the Industrial Revolution in the 19th Century when marginalized groups started facing advanced levels of discrimination. The groups were discriminated against on race, sexual status, age, religion, heritage, social status, wealth, ethnicity, and other factors. Throughout the late 20th Century, a new form and group of Black women activists and survivors of police brutality have maintained a steady resistance informed by incidences of police brutality against African Americans (Keisha, 2021); many are

mothers of slain individuals, such as Breonna Taylor, an Emergency Medical Technician killed by police in a botched raid in Louisville, Kentucky on March 13, 2020.

It is vital to note that social activism has taken a different direction to bring people together and achieve the goal of changing society (Castelli, Gattinara & Zamponi, 2020). Over the years, Black females have resisted police aggression. Their daily multi-tiered activism practices toward people of color have assumed different realms, including political, intellectual, and cultural expressions, committed to the call of transforming policing practices in the US while safeguarding Black life (Keisha, 2021). Several female activists have engaged in verbal and physical defense and letter-writing campaigns to journalists (Keisha, 2021). Moreover, Black female activists have partnered with several organizations to end police brutality against people of color. Black women such as Madame Stephanie St. Claire used the New York Amsterdam News to caution Black females regarding the abusive policing practices in New York (Keisha, 2021). Through her many editorials to the New York Amsterdam News, Madame Stephanie St. Clair once wrote, "if officers meet you on the streets and suspect you of anything, do not let them touch you on the streets or take you to any hallway to be searched" (Keisha, 2021 and Harris, 2008).

Black women social activists have continued to be at the center of a national movement of social activism aimed at bringing about substantive changes in American policing. Black women activists continue to bring attention to police violence, mainly focusing on the vulnerability of Black women and race (Gorn, 2018). For instance, in 1930, the article *Queen Mother* vehemently condemned police actions that resulted in brutal attacks on Black people (Gorn, 2018). In November 1945, police officers were accused of shooting and killing a 14-year-old Harlem resident Wilbert Cohen. According to the statement by the police, they accused the deceased

teenager of peeping through a window on East 119<sup>th</sup> Street (Gorn, 2018). Following the shooting, Cohen's mother assumed an active role in raising national awareness regarding the brutality of police violence that led to her son's death. At Cohen's funeral, protestors publicly demanded total justice for the affected family and accountability from the police department.

Equally, during the Civil Rights era, most Black women played an important role in using political movements to raise a case against state function violence towards Black people. For instance, in 1955, Mamie Elizabeth Till-Mobley, the mother of the 14-year-old Emmett Till, became one of the leading voices that demanded justice following her son's brutal murder by officers while visiting their relatives in Mississippi (Gorn, 2018). Following his lynching, Till's mother used visual protest to compel the public to acknowledge the violence and White supremacy that affected African Americans (Gorn, 2018). She had an open casket at her son's funeral because she wanted the whole world to see it (Gorn, 2018).

Furthermore, activists Fannie Lou Hamer led a resistance movement in the 1960s denouncing state function violence and underscoring the distinctive experiences of Black women (Owens, 2021). During her famous speech at the 1964 Democratic Convention, Hamer voiced opposition against discrimination and violence that Black people encountered in the policing of citizens (Keisha, 2021). She called for politicians and influential people in the community to resist the violence and systemic racism against Black people in the US (Keisha, 2021). Equally, in the early 1980s, activists Mary Burps and Veronica Perry, both Black women living in New York City, spearheaded and led initiatives to counter police violence among Black communities (Keisha, 2021). While leading activism against police brutality, Mary was shot in 1984 (Keisha, 2021). In

June 1985, a year after Mary's 66-year-old mother was shot and killed, police officers were accused of killing Veronica's son, Edmond Perry (Keisha, 2021).

Keisha (2021) found that for many decades since the social movement and emancipation of women, Black women have been instrumental in pioneering innovative social activism strategies to bring the country to the attention of systemic racism in policing that African Americans encounter often. Black female activists have continued to lead social activism against police brutality and excessive use of power when policing Black communities. For instance, in the 2019 killing of Lexington, Kentucky resident and Emergency Medical Technician Breonna Taylor in her home, Black women, including Taylor's mother and sister, used the concept of social activism to bring national attention to the death of Taylor (Keisha, 2021).

In June 2020, an organization headed by Civil Rights activist Tamika Mallory organized #justice for Breonna Taylor and organized rallies in Frankfurt, Kentucky (Keisha, 2021). The movement drew at least 500 people, aiming to bring the increasing police brutality against Black African Americans to people's attention (Owens, 2021). Together, the countrywide efforts of Black women as social activists have played an essential role in shaping the nationwide movement against racism (Keisha, 2021).

The above cases represent past instances where Black women have been vocal in leading social activism against police brutality by calling for accountability and social justice (Keisha, 2021). As such, Black women are likely to continue leading the way forward, organizing a protest against racial injustices, and demanding substantive radical changes in American history (Gorn, 2018).

## Conclusion

Many social injustices in the United States affect disadvantaged individuals or marginalized groups, specifically Black men. The first area examined, *policing*, gained a deeper understanding of how George Floyd's plea to his mother triggered Black women to answer the call to end inequity, police brutality, and systemic racism against Black men, specifically at the hand of officers sworn to protect and serve, and how the system of policing has framed the society we live in. The next area focused on social egalitarianism, where scholars examined the effect of *racism* on marginalized groups in the US and underscored the benefits of social justice by addressing the link between grassroots organizing led by Black women. Lastly, the research homed in on the *social activism* of Black women, and scholars provided an overview of community-based organizing and key motivators for Black women to respond to injustice.

Although activists have called for the need to promote fairness and equality in policing, less attention has been given to the factors that have motivated Black women to participate in activism against police brutality, particularly following the public, gruesome murder of George Floyd. Given the recent surge in the number of Black women participating in the social justice movement, further research is needed to explore factors that motivate Black women activists to engage in protests associated with the murders of Black men. The justice system should end racial oppression in the US to promote peace and improve the lives of Americans for a better global understanding and recognition. Corrupt behaviors and other negative perspectives witnessed in the justice system must be terminated for effective service delivery to the citizens (Westmarland & Rowe, 2018).

As earlier stated, reducing tragic incidents that involve improvement influences police and residents in methodologies and data analysis techniques in the criminal justice field (Mapping Police Violence, 2020). Moreover, such approaches may give civilians more confidence in law enforcement officers in their communities. In the next chapter, I will present Chapter 3 and discuss the research methodology used to guide the study.

## **Chapter Three**

### **Introduction**

My critical qualitative ethnographic study investigated how George Floyd's plea to his mother in the hands of the police officers has triggered an "internal" will and leads toward activism among Black women, especially when something threatens their lives and the sustainability of their children, community, and faith. To contextualize my study, I focused on Black women in Minneapolis and Saint Paul, Minnesota. In this chapter, I discuss my research design and rationale for my selection, participants and research site, the role of the researcher, research ethics, and instrumentations and protocols. In addition, the procedures and data analysis process, assumptions, limitations, delimitations, and conclusion of the chapter will be discussed.

### **Research Design**

I chose a qualitative research methodology to investigate the leadership of Black women due to the death of George Floyd. Yin (2015) suggested that qualitative research methodology is utilized to investigate "research problems inquiring into the meaning of individuals or groups ascribed to social or human problems" (p.37). Additionally, Merriam (2002) indicated that qualitative research methodology allows the researcher to explore the culture and the meaning a certain group of people has placed on it, thereby allowing data collection in its natural settings. Furthermore, Yin (2015) supported the above literature by underscoring that qualitative research methodology allows the researcher to obtain meaningful and rich information about a topic in its natural setting. In this case, investigating systemic racism and police brutality and how the death of George Floyd has spurred activism among Black women.

Qualitative research methodology is used when little information is provided about the investigated phenomenon (Stake (2010). In this case, qualitative research methodology is suitable for the study because little information exists regarding what motivated Black women towards activism due to George Floyd's death and how systemic racism and police brutality among Black men ignited a worldwide opposition movement.

Concerning research design, I selected an ethnographic approach. Grounded in anthropology, accordingly, ethnography focuses on individual behavioral patterns, perceptions, and beliefs on how they influence their interactions and how it evolves over a period within a given culture (Taxis and Barber, 2003). An ethnographic design was selected for the study because, according to Patton (2014), the primary aim of ethnography is to "understand the socio-cultural contexts, processes and meanings of cultural systems from a perspective of a group being investigated" (Whitehead, 2004, p.16). Therefore, an ethnographic design was considered suitable for the study. It allowed me to examine systemic racism and police brutality among Black communities and how their views towards such sociocultural contexts have evolved.

Lastly, an ethnographic study allowed me to gather detailed information about a phenomenon within a given cultural context (Lassiter, 2005). Therefore, the research design was appropriate for the study because by investigating how George Floyd's death has spurred activism among Black women, I had the opportunity to be immersed in the Black culture and, in the end, develop descriptions that accurately depict the meaning of systemic racism and police brutality against unarmed Black men, and how the death of George Floyd has triggered internal will towards activism among Black women.



## **Research Questions**

**RQ 1** - To what extent are/were Black women in Minnesota motivated and called to activism due to the death of George Floyd?

**RQ 2** - How have the challenges Black women encountered during the social unrest sparked by the death of George Floyd inspired or altered their leadership and impacted social justice reform?

**RQ 3** - How have Black women activists in Minnesota worked to end systemic racism against Black men in policing?

An ethnographic research approach assisted me with understanding the "why," "how," and "what" of George Floyd's death by allowing the voices of Black women to be heard. The overall objective of my interviews was to examine the perception of the value of a Black man's life as identified by Black women who have been actively involved in the social unrest sparked by the death of George Floyd and how regulatory systems, such as policing, can move from how they define the value of a Black man's life and why that definition, impacts how they systematically view and control Black men.

## **Research Context**

The target population for the study included Black women in Minneapolis and Saint Paul, Minnesota. Statistics released by the US Census Bureau in 2010 showed that 63.8% of Minneapolis consisted of White compared to African Americans, who accounted for 18.86% of the total population (United States Census Bureau, 2017). Given the above information, it is evident that the dominant race in Minneapolis is White.

However, while Minnesota is considered one of the states with highly educated Blacks, many are unemployed and face other social challenges, such as discrimination and racism in their places of work (United States Census Bureau, 2017). Limited opportunities economically and socially have disadvantaged African Americans and the ability to compete for equal opportunities with their White counterparts favorably (Frankovic, 2019). Statistics reflect that since 2000 over 100 deaths have been reported in Minneapolis due to police shootings and mainly affecting the Black community (Schwartz, 2020). Interestingly, at least 27% of these deaths involved unarmed Black men (Schwartz, 2020).

In this context, the selected site provided an ideal setting to conduct the present study of systemic racism against Black people in Minneapolis and St. Paul, particularly in George Floyd's death which has spurred widespread activism globally. Before contacting the participants, permission authorizing the study was sought and approved by the University's Internal Review Board, permitting me to contact participants.

### **Participants**

After responding to the invitations, all participants were subjected to inclusion and exclusion criteria. They were required to sign a consent form for voluntary participation. The purposive sampling technique was used to recruit participants. Yin (2015) suggested that researchers use the purposive sampling technique to recruit participants with common features and practices towards a given phenomenon. In this case, the purposive sampling technique was used to recruit Black women who have experienced systemic racism or possess extensive knowledge about police brutality. To be included in the study, participants met the following criteria for exclusion and inclusion:

1. Black females.
2. Age 25 years and older.
3. Reside in the Minneapolis or Saint Paul areas.

### **Role of the Researcher**

Yin (2015) suggested that researchers are the primary instrument of data collection in a study. I executed this role by being the primary instrument for collecting and analyzing data. Merriam (2002) also stated that for a study to be conclusive and well-executed, the researcher must understand the specific roles that need to be undertaken within the study process, such as planning for the study, designing the study problem, designing instruments for the research and selecting appropriate data analysis tools.

My first role in this study was to reduce and mitigate bias, which may negatively influence the value of the study. Dulock (1993) suggested that personal bias is a key factor likely to affect the validity and reliability of the study findings. Similar thoughts are expressed by Yin (2015), who stated that reducing the researcher's bias in a study is an important role that an investigator has in ensuring the transferability and reliability of the study. I ensured that my personal bias was reduced and minimized by documenting all personal opinions, prejudice, and beliefs toward the phenomenon being established. In addition, I used the bracketing technique to maintain the focus of interview responses by ensuring that all personal interests, biases, beliefs, perceptions, and attitudes about the phenomenon being studied were explicitly stated.

Second, I had the role of adhering to ethical guidelines within the study. To execute this role, I will ensure that participants are well briefed about the study objectives, purpose, how the

results will be used, and their role in the study process. Yin (2015) also underscored that the researcher has to promote the privacy and confidentiality of the participants. To attain this role, as Patton (1999) supported, I provided the participants with a consent form to sign before being recruited to the study. The participant's privacy and confidentiality were safeguarded using pseudonyms so that I only knew their identity. Concerning permission to conduct the study, as a key ethical guideline, I obtained an approval letter from the university's Institutional Review Board, permitting me to contact participants and collect data.

The third role I had in the study was to recruit participants who were to be used to collect data. I fulfilled this requirement by allowing participants to participate in the study voluntarily. All prospective participants were required to be knowledgeable on police brutality and systemic racism and how both have affected the life of Black men and have experienced their impact in their interactions. To minimize the chances of gathering biased responses from participants, I did not supply any economic incentives to motivate participants into the study. All participants were required to participate in the study without undue influence.

My fourth role in this study was maintaining communication and contact with the selected participants. Maintaining contact and timely communication with the participants allowed all parties to get the needed information about their participation in the study. Email, Facebook, phone calls, and face-to-face meetings were used where applicable. However, I limited all communications to critical issues about the study.

## **Research Ethics**

The study commenced by obtaining approval from the University's Institutional Review Board before data collection. Fundamental ethical principles were underscored in Belmont's Report, such as respect for persons, justice, and beneficence. In this study, respect for all participants was accomplished by ensuring that all participants were talked to directly. Second, respect for persons was upheld by ensuring that participation is voluntary and there is no discrimination when recruiting participants. The participants signed a consent form detailing how their privacy and confidentiality shall be preserved in the study (Yin, 2015). It is also important to emphasize that respect for the person in the study was promoted in various ways where the computer, personal information relating to interview results, audiotapes, and interview transcripts were password-protected to prevent third parties from accessing them.

The principle of beneficence was upheld in the study by ensuring that the potential risks and benefits were well documented and communicated to the participants. In this study, the significant risk was disclosing participants' identities during the data collection. To circumvent this risk, I avoided disclosing the participants' identities (Yazan, 2015). I accounted for the justice principle in the study by ensuring that potential participants were allowed to participate in the data collection process (Sandelowski, 2000).

To mitigate potential data breaches and reveal participants' identities, I stored electronic data on external storage devices and password-protect them (Merriam, 2002). After three years, all data stored on my personal computer will be deleted to prevent the third party from accessing it (Lassiter, 2005).

## **Data Collection**

Semi-structured interviews were used in this study to gather data. Yin (2015) suggested that qualitative researchers frequently use semi-structured interviews when conducting qualitative studies to gain a deeper understanding and detailed description of the phenomenon being investigated. This being a qualitative study, semi-structured interviews were considered appropriate for data collection. It allowed participants to provide thick descriptions of their perceptions, views, and attitudes toward the investigated phenomenon. Additional justification for using semi-structured interviews in the study is by Dulock (1993), who suggested that qualitative researchers use semi-structured interviews to gather detailed information about a given phenomenon by asking probing questions that explain why a person holds such beliefs about the phenomenon being investigated. Online one-on-one interviews were conducted through Zoom because of concerns surrounding the Covid-19 pandemic. Recording of the participants was conducted with prior permission.

To promote the reliability of the interview protocols, member checking was used to assess the reliability and truthfulness of the research. Member checking is a qualitative technique that researchers use to allow participants to re-examine their responses before analysis to ensure that they represent their thoughts during the interview sessions. To achieve the reliability of interview data, methodological triangulation was used. As such, the above approaches ensured that the interview instruments used to gather data in the study were eligible, and I could collect data that addressed the research questions.

## **Procedures and Analysis**

I begin the data collection process by obtaining approval for research from the University's Institutional Review Board (IRB). Those who responded to an invitation to participate were subjected to inclusion and exclusion criteria designed to ensure that knowledgeable and informed participants participated in the study. Upon scrutiny, those meeting the requirements for inclusion in the study were contacted by phone or email. Before participating in the study, the selected participants signed a consent form authorizing their voluntary participation. The consent form detailed the study's purpose, the researcher's role, and the participants' duty in the research process. After agreeing to such terms in the consent form and signing them, each participant scheduled an interview at a reasonable and convenient date.

Data collection was done through semi-structured interviews. During the interview, I reminded the participants of their privacy and confidentiality as outlined in the consent forms. To record participants during the interviewing process, permission was sought to ensure that no unethical conduct was permitted in the study. Participants' names were coded uniquely to obscure their real identities from third parties. Interview sessions lasted sixty to ninety minutes to offer ample time for participants to participate in the study and provide reasonable responses.

Concerning data analysis, I commenced the process immediately after the interviewing process. Yin (2015) recommends that the data analysis process commence immediately after the data collection to mitigate possible data loss.

The data analysis process begins with the transcription of interviews, whereby a third party was contacted to transcribe the audio recordings. This avoided bias when transcribing the

interview's responses. After receiving the transcribed data, I uploaded it into a word document and secured it electronically. I used the following steps, procedures, and protocols in data analysis.

The first step was reviewing interview transcripts and listening to all audio recordings. Reading through interview transcripts and listening to audio recordings is important as it helped familiarize me with the gathered responses; rereading through interviews and audio was critical as it allowed me to understand better how participants responded to each question.

The second step in the data analysis process included rereading interview responses and re-listening to audiotapes. I identified keywords, terms, and phrases recurring in the data sets. Rereading and re-listening to audio tapes is an important step I was able to identify and group phrases, terms, and similar words for further analysis. The third step involved determining all repeated words, phrases, and terms. The process is critical because I assigned special codes to such terms for further analysis. The fifth step entailed generating all emerging terms, phrases, and words and categorizing each coded set of data as related to the study objective, purpose, and questions. After generating related themes to the study, the last step was writing the final analysis report and discussing how each emerging theme relates to and contributes to the study. All data generated during the study process was converted securely into an electronic device and encrypted with a unique password. The process is important as it prevents unauthorized access to the data, compromising the privacy and confidentiality of the information and participants.

### **Limitations**

**Limitations.** Patton (1999) defined limitations as potential weaknesses in a given study that are often out of the researcher's control. The first limitation of the study was the sample size, whereby all participants were drawn from only two cities in Minnesota. One problem with using



participants from a limited location is that their views and attitudes towards a given phenomenon may differ from those held by people in other locations. Such an aspect will likely limit the transferability and generalizability of the research findings to other settings.

Second, the study was limited to a small sample size selected to participate in the study. The implication is that attrition may negatively influence data saturation. Failure to achieve data saturation implies that the study results may be less reliable and non-transferable to other settings.

**Delimitations.** According to Yin (2015), delimitations are defined as boundaries within a study. Setting study delimitation is important in an investigation because it allows me to have a strategic focus when conducting the study and avoid deviating from the main purpose. One delimitation in the study is open interviews rather than including closed-ended questions, which may make some participants provide strategic responses to certain questions whose responses need to be less biased.

Second, the study was delimited by the geographical locations of the Minneapolis and St. Paul areas, which allowed only those two region participants to participate. Additionally, the study investigated how George Floyd's plea during his death had influenced activism among Black women. Therefore, the study was delimited by one race, whereby only Black women participated.

**Assumptions.** Assumptions are things that researchers consider acceptable or true in a given study. The participants were assumed to be honest and truthful with their responses during the interview session. The assumption is important because accurate responses helped me with the required data to address the research questions.

It was also assumed that the participants would be available during the interview. Participants' availability was key to reducing the attrition that could have compromised the validity and transferability of the study results. Third, it was assumed that the selected research methodology, a critical qualitative ethnographic design, would be adequate in investigating the current topic.

### **Conclusion**

George Floyd's plea to his mother before his public assassination was a catalyst for examining how Black women responded to their internal will toward activism. In the United States, a Black person is killed by a police officer more often than once weekly. Black Americans are subjected to a comparatively large rate of police murders, which puts them in danger of impaired mental health and compromised physical well-being and have financial implications. People from disadvantaged backgrounds or members of underrepresented groups are often on the receiving end of social injustice in the U.S.

To build a more equitable society in which "Black Lives Matter," we must first acknowledge the significance of the mental health of Black people as a result of systemic racism in the United States. We need to strive toward a civilization in which no one group will ever feel the loss of a member of their community in a manner that unfairly burdens them with anger, sadness, melancholy, or concern (Ladyzhinskaya, 2021). This is the society that we need to work toward creating. Overall, the study demonstrated how policing has impacted the lives of Black men and how Black women have been crucial in bringing to light issues with regard to preserving the lives, freedoms, and physical well-being of the oppressed, especially Black men.



## Chapter Four: Findings

### Introduction

As far back as I can remember, the police or "White men in blue uniforms" have been a type of "*boogy man*" in my community. I recall many incidences when the police were called to intervene in some kind of a disturbance, and **after** they arrived, all hell broke loose. Undoubtedly, I, as a Black woman and mother of two Black sons, cannot refute the fact that I am personally vested, impacted, and concerned about the life, safety, and psyche of the Black man. My father (a Black man) was my real-life hero who appeared invincible in my eyes, but he too had issues with the police, which minimized his existence and ability to stand erect and proud of who he was. I have Black brothers, uncles, cousins, and male friends who, simply because of who they are, have been marginalized and oppressed by White men with blue suits and metal badges. The murder of George Floyd by a police officer ignited the flame for this dissertation.

According to a report generated by Representative Thaddeus Jones, who used databases from *Mapping Police Violence* and *The Washington Post*, compiled by CBS News, 164 Black men and women were killed by police from January 1, 2020, to August 31, 2020. Many of the cases remain under investigation. This data is based on reported and verified cases and does not necessarily account for all incidents in which police killed a person. But based on the known cases, police have killed at least one Black person every week since January 1, and only two states — Rhode Island and Vermont — have reported no killings by police this year.

The public assassination of George Floyd on May 25, 2020, in the picturesque city of Minneapolis, ignited a whirlwind of images not often seen of the fate of Black men in a country where former President Thomas Jefferson, in 1776, wrote in the Declaration of Independence, the statement, (supposedly), "*all men [human beings] are created equal.*" For more than eight

minutes, a common-looking, middle-aged White police officer named Derek Chauvin took the liberty to decide if a man would live or die.... he chose death. He had no idea that his actions, at the time, would intensify international outrage and protests against racism and police brutality; ultimately calling for a change in how the status quo interprets the value of a Black man's life, and Chauvin eventually being found guilty of murder.

Chapter 4 presents the findings that emerged through executing the data collection and data analysis procedures described in Chapter 3. My presentation of the conclusions of this chapter is the basis for the discussion, interpretation, implications, and conclusions in Chapter 5. The research questions used to guide this study were:

RQ 1 - To what extent are/were Black women in Minnesota motivated and called to activism due to the death of George Floyd?

RQ 2 - How have the challenges Black women encountered during the social unrest sparked by the death of George Floyd inspired or altered their leadership and impacted social justice reform?

RQ 3 - How have Black women activists in Minnesota worked to end systemic racism against Black men in policing?

Data collection in my qualitative, ethnographic study involved conducting interviews with a purposive sample of six Black women who have experienced systemic racism or possess extensive knowledge about police brutality and who reside in Minneapolis or Saint Paul urban areas. The following section of this chapter describes how the data analysis was executed, including an overview of the findings that emerged. This discussion is provided to support the trustworthiness of the research through transparency about decisions I made during the analysis process.

My use of the ethnographic qualitative research method is underpinned by three critical aspects: the research design, the philosophical worldview, and the research method. Additionally, research approaches are further classified under the worldview, constituting the four dimensions; constructivism, transformative, pragmatism, and post-positivism (Cropley, 2015). As the qualitative approach can include transformative, pragmatism, and post-positivism, my adoption of a qualitative research technique includes a social-constructive paradigm. The paradigm assumes that meaning is derived from people's interactions in society. This study will use the paradigm to explain how interactions between Black men and White police are stereotypical and trigger the activism of Black women. The fundamental aspect of this approach to qualitative research is that it assesses how people make sense of solid experiences in their minds and through constructing their words (Cropley, 2015). In this context, qualitative techniques enabled me to collect information where the phenomenon under study is little known: carry out cultural exploration, a leading collection of first-hand data in a natural setup will examine the; experimental, quasi-experimental, ex-post-facto, and non-experimental designs.

This chapter includes a more detailed presentation of the findings, in which the results are organized by research question to demonstrate their alignment with the study objectives and in which evidence for all findings is provided in the form of direct quotes from the data so the reader can verify my interpretations independently. A summary of the findings concludes this chapter.

### **Data Analysis**

This section includes a high-level overview of my findings. After the one-to-one interviews with six participants, the audio recordings were transcribed verbatim into Microsoft Word documents and coded using NVivo, a professional third-party transcription service. The plan for this study presented in Chapter 3 specified an inductive, thematic procedure would be applied to

the interview data. The six-step, inductive, thematic analysis procedure recommended by Braun and Clarke (2006) was employed to bring greater clarity and precision to the analysis process. The trustworthiness of the analysis was further supported by using NVivo 12 computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software to maintain a clear record of the researcher's decisions during the analysis process. The transcripts were imported into NVivo 12 as source documents in preparation for the analysis. The analysis procedure applied to the data had six steps, as follows: (1) familiarization with the data, (2) coding the data, (3) theming the data, (4) reviewing the themes, (5) naming the themes, and (6) presenting the findings (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

In the first step of my analysis, familiarity with the data was gained by reading and rereading all six transcripts in full (Braun & Clarke, 2006). My goal was to facilitate a holistic understanding of the data where patterns of meaning could be seen. In the following analysis step, handwritten notes were also made regarding repeated words, phrases, and ideas to facilitate code development.

My second step was to code the interviews (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Inductive coding involves sorting the data into categories that emerge from the data itself. Coding took place in two phases. The first involved breaking the data into units of meaning, and the second involved building the data back up into codes corresponding to patterns of meaning in participants' responses. To break the data down, phrases or groups expressing one meaning relevant to the study topic were excerpted from the transcripts and assigned to NVivo nodes. An example of a unit of meaning was provided by P2, who stated, "I want to be safe, and not only safe from the crime that's happening, but from the police." This response from P2 introduced into the analysis the idea of the police not as protectors from criminals but as threats themselves.

In my second coding phase, excerpts from the transcripts with similar meanings were grouped by assigning them to the same NVivo node. Each NVivo node represented an initial code. Each node was labeled with a brief, descriptive phrase that summarized the meaning of the data assigned to it. To illustrate my process, it may be noted that in the context of discussing why P2 and other members of her community did not call the police to register noise complaints, even though they disliked when people in their community played music at a disruptive volume, P4 said, "We're not gonna call the police to say, you know, we got a noise problem here because we don't want anybody to get shot. We know how it can be escalated." Like the previous quote from P2, this response from P4 indicated the idea that police were viewed in the participants' communities as threats rather than as protectors. P4's response was assigned to the same code as P2's response, and the code was labeled, 'police as threats instead of protectors.' 141 relevant excerpts from the transcripts were assigned to 18 initial codes. Table 1 indicates the initial codes and the number of transcript excerpts assigned to each.



**Table 1***Initial Codes and Their Frequencies*

Initial code (in descending order by <i>n</i> of data excerpts assigned)	<i>n</i> of participants contributing ( <i>N</i> =6)	<i>n</i> of data excerpts assigned ( <i>N</i> =141)
Demanding change	4	18
Police as threats instead of protectors	5	16
Coalition-building	5	14
Racial oppression is systemic	4	10
George Floyd murder as a microcosm of racist policing	6	9
Police training is not enough	5	9
Working with the police	2	9
Stress of oppression as an obstacle to activism	5	8
Calling for accountability	4	7
Discrimination perpetuates financial inequity	4	7
Some officers may not be trainable	4	7
Training should strengthen service orientation	4	6
Pervasive resistance to challenging racism	2	5
Systemic racism has economic roots	4	5
Police indifference to communities of color	2	4
Black officers may oppress their own community	3	3
Training officers can bring change	2	2

Initial code (in descending order by <i>n</i> of data excerpts assigned)	<i>n</i> of participants contributing ( <i>N</i> =6)	of <i>n</i> of data excerpts assigned ( <i>N</i> =141)
Working with government stakeholders	2	2

The third step of the analysis involved theming the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Related codes were clustered to form themes. In NVivo, the related codes' nodes were grouped as child nodes under the same parent node. The parent node represented the preliminary theme. As an illustration of how this process was conducted, the code 'police as threats instead of protectors' was grouped with five other codes, including but not limited to 'discrimination perpetuates financial inequity,' 'George Floyd murder as a microcosm of racist policing,' and, 'systemic racism has economic roots.' These codes were identified as related because they all indicated conditions that motivated the participants to engage in activism in the wake of George Floyd's murder. Overall, three themes were formed from the 18 codes. These themes were given preliminary labels pending their naming in Step 5 of the analysis. Table 2 indicates how the initial codes were grouped to form the three preliminary themes.

**Table 2**

*Grouping of Codes into Themes*

<b>Preliminary theme</b> (in descending order by <i>n</i> of excerpts assigned) Initial code grouped to form theme	<i>n</i> of participants contributing ( <i>N</i> =6)	<i>n</i> of data excerpts assigned ( <i>N</i> =141)
<b>Motivations for activism</b>	6	51
Discrimination perpetuates financial inequity		
George Floyd murder as a microcosm of racist policing		
Police as threats instead of protectors		

<b>Preliminary theme</b> (in descending order by n of excerpts assigned) Initial code grouped to form theme	<i>n</i> of participants contributing ( <i>N</i> =6)	<i>n</i> of data excerpts assigned ( <i>N</i> =141)
Police indifference to communities of color		
Racial oppression is systemic		
Systemic racism has economic roots		
<b>Forms of activism</b>	6	50
Calling for accountability		
Coalition-building		
Demanding change		
Working with government stakeholders		
Working with the police		
<b>Challenges to activism</b>	6	40
Black officers may oppress their community		
Discrepant data. Training officers can bring change		
Pervasive resistance to challenging racism		
Police training is not enough		
Some officers may not be trainable		
Stress of oppression as an obstacle to activism		
Training should strengthen service orientation		

The fourth step of the analysis consisted of reviewing the themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The themes were examined by comparing them to the original data to check that they accurately reflected patterns in the participants' responses. The themes were also cross-compared to ensure that they were sufficiently distinct from one another to justify their separate presentation.

The themes were named in the fifth step of the analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Naming the themes involved two procedures. The data assigned to each theme was reviewed to assess its significance to the category indicated in the preliminary theme label. The significance of the data was then summarized in a propositional phrase. Table 3 indicates how the preliminary themes were named based on this assessment of the significance of the data assigned to them.

**Table 3**

*Naming of Themes*

Preliminary theme label	Finalized theme name
Motivations for activism	Black women were called to activism by contextualizing the murder of George Floyd within a broader awareness of systemic racism
Forms of activism	Black women have worked through coalition-building, calling for accountability, and demanding change
Challenges to activism	Recognizing the limitations of police reforms has motivated calls for more comprehensive change

The sixth step of the analysis consisted of presenting the findings. The findings were presented by writing Chapters 4 and 5 of this study. This section of Chapter 4 has included a high-level overview of the findings, and my primary focus of the data collection will be the use of emerging themes. The following section, Chapter 5, is a more detailed presentation of the findings.

**Presentation of Findings**

To demonstrate the alignment of the findings with the study objectives, this presentation is organized by my research questions:

RQ 1 - To what extent are/were Black women in Minnesota motivated and called to activism due to the death of George Floyd?

RQ 2 - How have the challenges Black women encountered during the social unrest sparked by the death of George Floyd inspired or altered their leadership and impacted social justice reform?

RQ 3 - How have Black women activists in Minnesota worked to end systemic racism against Black men in policing?

Under the heading for each research question, the theme used to address that question is presented, with quotes from the data as evidence. Table 4 summarizes how the themes were used to address the research questions.

**Table 4**

*Themes Addressing Research Questions*

Research question	Theme used to address research question
<b>RQ 1</b> - To what extent are/were Black women in Minnesota motivated and called to activism due to the death of George Floyd?	<b>Theme 1</b> - Black women were called to activism by contextualizing the death of George Floyd within a broader awareness of systemic racism
<b>RQ 2</b> - How have the challenges Black women encountered during the social unrest sparked by the death of George Floyd inspired or altered their leadership and impacted social justice reform?	<b>Theme 2</b> - Recognizing the limitations of police reforms has motivated calls for more comprehensive change
<b>RQ 3</b> - How have Black women activists in Minnesota worked to end systemic racism against Black men in policing?	<b>Theme 3</b> - Black women have worked through coalition-building, calling for accountability and demanding change.

## **Research Question One**

RQ1 was focused on the extent to which Black women in Minnesota were motivated and called to activism due to the death of George Floyd. The findings indicated that the participants were motivated to activism not only by the death of George Floyd but by how George Floyd's death was representative of broader patterns of systemic racism and oppression. The following theme addressed this question:

***Theme 1: Black Women Were Called to Activism by Contextualizing the Death of George Floyd Within a Broader Awareness of Systemic Racism.***

All of the participants expressed their understanding of racism as a systemic phenomenon rather than an attitude held by individuals in isolation. P5 addressed the historical roots of systemic racism and the inequities it produces in referencing the legacy of slavery:

I think that racism is a huge part of why we have so much suffering in our community. Race and socioeconomic status are indelibly linked, you know, connected, due to the history of slavery in this country. The economic and socioeconomic barriers that have been put in place for the majority of African Americans . . . the masses of Black people in major cities across the country have never been able to catch up economically with their White counterparts.

In drawing a connection between the inequities surrounding systemic racism and crime, P5 referred to black markets as emerging where other economic opportunities were lacking: "Because of the poverty, you have a percentage of the population that might engage in underground, or black-market, activity." P3 also expressed an understanding of racism as a systemic phenomenon that

transcended not only the person, but individual institutions such as police departments, noting that multiple systems were engaged in oppression: "We're dealing with families who have been oppressed in the community, not just by the police. We spent much time talking about the police, but oppressed by more systems than the police, including the educational system." However, systemic racism also inhered within and was perpetuated through the attitudes of individuals in the dominant group; P1 noted:

The impact that systemic racism has in our community goes back to the idea of Whiteness . . . If you are White, you believe that you are privileged and that you are special, and that . . . a person who is not a Caucasian is a non-human who is below you.

The participants described systemic racism as having economic roots and, more specifically, as having roots in the profit motive of the dominant group. P2 stated, "If racism were not profitable, it would not exist." P2 added about the operation of the profit motive in the history of slavery, "If you enslave somebody based on the color of their skin to get free labor, that's an economic impact." P2 referenced the Thirteenth Amendment dispensation for involuntary servitude as punishment for a crime in noting how the profit motive continued to operate in systemic racism in a manner that tied in with policing: "People don't realize that even though there's no longer slavery in the sense of the 1800s, there's still prison slavery . . . they're moving their manufacturing processes to a prison where they only have to pay 10 cents an hour." P1 expressed the perception that Black people did not receive credit for their contributions to the founding and development of the country when they were being exploited for profit: "That's the impact of racism: it's not in the textbook, who laid the railroads." P1 added that as a result of this withholding of credit and intergenerational trauma, Black people were vulnerable to internalizing racist claims of their incapacity: "We carried

generational trauma, and we do believe that when somebody says, you ain't got no brain, or you can't do this, you've been traumatized so much that you begin to believe it."

In describing systemic racism and economic and racial inequities as linked, the participants also expressed the perception that the perpetuation of systemic racism was incentivized for the dominant group by the perpetuation of economic inequity. P1 said of the effects of racism on Black communities in Minneapolis, "It's deprived us economically. It created high housing gaps. It's created the income gaps." P4 referred to segregation as a systemic phenomenon that privileged White communities: "The housing, making sure that we are in certain areas, that we're not able to buy a house . . . the systems are in place to keep us separated, and to keep them in a position of privilege." P6 said of Black communities in Minneapolis that systemic racism resulted in economic deprivation: "We would be a lot more independent financially if we weren't so oppressed. Our kids would be doing much better academically; our families would be in better positions to help their children."

The participants reported that they perceived policing in their communities as an enactment of systemic racism. P2 perceived the origin of policing in her community as springing from the oppressions of slavery:

I felt like policing was from a racially biased perspective. But I have felt that policing is all about containing the masses. You know what they originally were designed for, to keep the slaves in and keep them from invading other parts of the city.

P5 also suggested that the policing of Black communities in Minneapolis was inherently oppressive and that social institutions that were authentically dedicated to the prevention of crime rather than



the oppression of communities of color would emphasize social reform over control and retributive justice:

We know that if there is a sincere effort to stop crime, then the real focus is going to be on alleviating poverty, creating jobs and opportunities, and strengthening the public education system. But that is never the focus. The focus is always on punishment and militarization and bringing more weaponry, surveillance, tools, etc., into already vulnerable communities, and I see that as a manifestation of racism.

The participants reported that members of their communities experienced policing as a threat to their safety and well-being rather than as a source of protection. P1 related an anecdote about two Black males of her acquaintance who encountered the police under circumstances in which the police would be expected to offer protection but in which the actions of the officers were instead oppressive and threatening:

They're on their way to the party they get halfway. People are running from the party because of a gunshot. Well, so they turn around and leave. Well, as they were leaving, the police pulled up the squad car and called them over, and questioned them. They attempted to explain: "We did not enter the premises. We were on our way to the premises," they're telling them. [The police said,] "You're not telling me the truth. Who did it?" you know, it's like an investigation. Okay, from that encounter, whenever he was seen on the street walking, these same two officers would harass him.

P2 said that she took care in maintaining her car to ensure it was compliant with all applicable laws because -

She knew that there was a possibility that if she got stopped, oh, a genuine possibility that she could be killed. And so, that's how I consistently teach my child and grandchildren . . . that even if you do adhere to the laws of the land, you still could die.

P2 added that children in her community were raised to be wary of the police: "We have to train our sons and our daughters now—because they're assaulting our daughters at the same rate that they're assaulting our sons—don't get in an encounter with the police." P2 added about the training provided to children in her community, where the police were viewed as a threat to public safety, "If your child gets lost, you can't even tell them to go to a police officer." P3 expressed that encounters with police were viewed in her community as carrying the danger of receiving a criminal conviction that could limit opportunities for the rest of the individual's life: "They [police] have historically been a part of keeping people out or creating records for people that impact their lives for the rest of their lives."

P4 expressed that members of her community saw the police as a threat to their lives rather than as a source of civil order, saying that even though most members of her community did not like it when neighbors played music at a loud volume, "We're not gonna call the police to say, you know, we got a noise problem here, because we don't want anybody to get shot. We know how it can be escalated." P4 added of minor disruptions and complaints generally, "Black folks tend not to call about these smaller issues because they don't want anybody getting killed." P5 said that in her position as a lawyer, she frequently received complaints about police behavior from community members. Those complaints "Range from how they [the police] talk to people up to alleged murder of people. And so, of course, it has produced a great amount of trauma in our community." P5 added the negative effects of her community's experience of policing as a threat to safety and well-

being rather than as an assurance of civic order, "Sometimes it's multi-generational trauma that has occurred. It also has produced fear in many people, fear of law enforcement, anger, frustration, and a sense of hopelessness."

The participants perceived the death of George Floyd as occurring within the context so far described under this theme, in which racism was systemic and rooted in the profit motive and in which policing was an enactment of systemic racism that members of their communities experienced as a potentially lethal or life-ruining threat rather than as a source of civic order. The participants, therefore, did not perceive the death of George Floyd as an isolated injustice but rather as a particularly salient manifestation of systemic racism that called for action, but action on a systemic level rather than action dedicated solely to seeking justice in George Floyd's death.

P2 said of George Floyd's death,

It felt like all the injustices that we've had to go through was all rolled up into that man dying . . . it was like all of our injustices were rolled up into that man's [Chauvin's] knee, and that's what it feels like every day to Black people.

P5 compared George Floyd's death to the historical atrocity of lynchings: "When I saw that video [of the murder,] I started to weep, tears started streaming down my face. I, of course, felt that I witnessed a lynching, a murder." P1 said of her experience of watching the video of George Floyd's death that she was particularly struck by the contrast between the victim's humanizing cry for his mother and the police officer's coldness and lack of compassion, which she perceived as enactments of the dehumanizing influence of systemic racism:

He's calling for his mother . . . In our community, the children know, "Mama is my last hope. Mama will protect me if I call Mama's name. She'll do it; she'll take care of it; she'll fight the demon" . . . But Chauvin, he couldn't even respond. None of that reflected on him [affected him], and it was just as the Asian officer was, "Keep back . . . We are killing the Black man, so keep back." So, he's indoctrinated, too. That's how entrenched and deep racism is.

P2 added that after watching the video of George Floyd's death, she was motivated to reflect on the pattern of injustice that the killing instantiated: "I think of all my cousins and what they've had to endure—my Black male cousins, and what they've had to endure at the hands of police." P3 said that during the traumatic experience of watching the video of George Floyd's death, she immediately began to wonder at Chauvin's lack of accountability was systemic rather than an individual issue: "I wanna cry, but I'm screaming at this cop [in the video], and then I'm thinking . . . why is the cop that's facing the crowd not telling this cop to get off? Where are the supervisors?" Thus, George Floyd's death had a motivating effect on participants. Still, they perceived the death as a manifestation of a systemic problem, resulting in the solutions they sought being systemic.

Thus, the participants indicated that they were called to activism by the resonance between the death of George Floyd and broader patterns of systemic racism. One point that participants noted repeatedly was that racism is systemic in that its most harmful manifestations subsist in social patterns that transcend individuals rather than in the attitudes of individual people. The participants also noted that systemic racism was institutionalized and continues to be perpetuated for economic reasons and that systemic racism is, therefore, inseparable from racial and economic inequities. In policing, the participants described systemic racism as enacted in police indifference

to communities of color and the perception of police within those communities as threats rather than protectors. All of these societal patterns were manifested in the death of George Floyd at the hands of a police officer, the participants said, and this is why the participants did not regard that death as an isolated incident but rather as part of a pattern that needed to be addressed through grassroots advocacy for systemic change. Theme 2 is presented to acquaint the reader with the challenges the participants faced in their activism.

### **Research Question Two**

RQ2 was: How have the challenges Black women encountered during the social unrest sparked by the death of George Floyd inspired or altered their leadership and impacted social justice reform? The findings indicated that the participants encountered significant challenges at the level of police reform and that these challenges reinforced their resolution to seek systemic rather than isolated reforms. The theme used to address this question was:

#### ***Theme 2: Recognizing the Limitations of Police Reforms Has Motivated Calls for More Comprehensive Change***

Most of the participants indicated that they did not believe reform within police departments alone, such as through modifications to police training, were sufficient to address oppressive policing in their communities. One participant provided discrepant data indicating that reforms in police training might bring about the needed changes in the relationship between the police and her community. As other challenges to their activism, the participants cited the stress of oppression as an obstacle that prevented many members of their communities from looking beyond immediate threats and needs to seek systemic solutions. Two participants also reported pervasive resistance to challenging or discussing racism. Some participants expressed the further perception that Black police officers, who might be expected to ally with communities of color

against police injustice, might, in some instances, behave more unjustly than their White colleagues.

Five participants indicated that one of the challenges to their activism was the perceived inadequacy of reforms to police training as an effective means of alleviating the oppressive nature of policing in their communities. P1 perceived training for police as inadequate because "Derek Chauvin had been trained and was a training officer. Wow! So, if you don't have it in your heart to love people, one will still abuse, disrespect, [and] criminalize innocent victims." As a result, P1 added, "Training will not help it. It's just not." P2 suggested that systemic racism and its associated oppressions created a mindset in police officers that only systemic change could correct: "Unless this country, as a whole, decides to address racism and the historical oppression and economic divisiveness, then [police] are not going to be in the right mindset." P3 believed that training could not correct the characters of malignant personalities on the police force who caused harm: "I don't know how you can train a person to be a good person once they're an adult . . . if they're an abusive person, they're an abusive person. If they're a racist person, they're a racist person." P5 believed that police trainers would only perpetuate current police culture, no matter how the curriculum might be modified: "If you're talking about a department that has a wayward culture, and all of your trainers are people who are internal to that culture, then you're going to continue to perpetuate that culture." P4 expressed a similar perception of the need to ensure that trainers did not perpetuate racist cultures in police departments, saying, "You have to be careful who's training. They say, 'Who's training the trainer?'" P5 perceived better screening in police hiring practices as a potential, partial solution to weed out malicious actors: "Many police departments do not screen for police officer's involvement in the Ku Klux Klan or White supremacist groups . . . some officers intentionally engage in practices connected to White supremacy." As a result of these inadequate

hiring practices, P5 said, "You have officers who, no matter how much training they receive, will never be fit to be a law enforcement officer." P6 believed mandatory training would not influence officers who did not enter the training with a mindset that favored respectful treatment of citizens: "If that human spirit is not right, people will just go through things, just to go through it. If it's mandatory that I have to go through this [training], then that's what I'll do."

P5 provided partly discrepant data indicating that training provided by independent contractors, coupled with an effective system for ensuring accountability, might significantly reduce oppression in policing. P5 said -

Something that, I think, could make a difference concerning training [is] having a high-quality training program where there's checks and balances and accountability, and ensuring that officers have learned the lessons, that they're applying the lessons on the job.

Three participants indicated that an obstacle to police reform was that officers of color, who might otherwise be considered allies to communities of color, often behaved unjustly. P2 said, "The unfiltered truth? I'd rather be stopped by a White officer most of the time. I mean, think back to the scene in *Boyz n the Hood* [1991 film], the Black [officer] is the worst officer." Regarding why officers of color might behave oppressively toward citizens of color, P2 expressed the perception, "They want to ensure that their gang-in-blue members know they're part of the gang in blue." P3 expressed a similar perception, saying, "I think some Black officers, they may overcompensate when they respond to calls in their very own community . . . we become the harsher ones, all Black cops."

Four participants expressed that the direct stressors associated with being oppressed were an obstacle to their activism. This oppression kept many members of their communities focused on immediate threats and needs rather than on the distant goal of social justice. P2 said, "If you

got to worry about, 'Where am I going to sleep tonight?' you're not gonna even have the strength to combat the economic racism, police brutality." P3 spoke of how the effects of trauma and strategies for coping with trauma impeded the will to advocate for racial justice among some community members:

Systems in place continue to try to keep us in this containment zone to suffer through those things that they have put into our community . . . We're not always doing the best that we can, at times, to pull ourselves up and out of it as well, and a lot of that is depression, right? And what do we feed the depression with? Drugs. That's a big part of our outcome, feeding that mental health issue.

P5 observed, "It's really hard to get people who are suffering and struggling to stand up and fight cause most people are in survival mode, just trying to figure out how to put food on a table." P5 added that oppression was often manifested in ways that impeded resistance to oppression: "Chemical dependency, homelessness, cycling in and out of the criminal justice system—all those things are manifestations of oppression, along with feeling a sense of helplessness and hopelessness with regards to changing things and taking on systems that perpetuate."

Two participants described pervasive societal resistance to challenging racism as an obstacle to activism. P5 described some White people as resistant to discussions of racism: "I see amongst some White people concerning Black people, what I typically see are people who are uncomfortable when we are challenging systems of oppression when we're calling out racism." P5 added of this resistance to activism, "I do think it is a pervasive mindset." P6 recalled a form of resistance to Black Lives Matter that shadowed that movement as it gained prominence in her community: "When I think we started seeing the Black Lives Matter rise, right, people had signs created, and people were placing them in their yards: Police Lives Matter." P6 said that the



justification she had received from people who posted Police Lives Matter signs was, "It's not that I'm against being Black Lives Matter. It's just that I know how important police are," to which P6 would respond, "But right now, we're in a campaign of trying to elevate the value of Black lives that we're losing every day somewhere, and right here in this community."

Thus, most participants indicated that they did not believe reform within police departments, such as through modifications to police training, was sufficient to address oppressive policing in their communities. One participant provided discrepant data indicating that reforms in police training might bring about the needed changes in the relationship between the police and her community. As other challenges to their activism, the participants cited the stress of oppression as an obstacle that prevented many members of their communities from looking beyond immediate threats and needs to seek systemic solutions. Two participants also reported pervasive resistance to challenging or discussing racism. Some participants expressed the further perception that Black police officers, who might be expected to ally with communities of color against police injustice, might, in some instances, behave more unjustly than their White colleagues.

### **Research Question Three**

RQ3 was: How have Black women activists in Minnesota worked to end systemic racism against Black men in policing? The findings indicated that the participants worked several ways to end systemic racism in policing. The theme to address this question was:

***Theme 3: Black Women Have Worked Through Coalition-Building, Calling for Accountability, and Demanding Change.***

Most participants cited each of the three ways they worked to end systemic racism against Black men in policing:

1. They engaged in coalition-building at the neighborhood level through efforts to engage neighbors and local faith communities in activism.
2. They engaged in demanding change through peaceful protest.
3. They engaged in calling for accountability for the police.

Five participants reported that they worked to build activist coalitions at the level of their neighborhoods. P5 said that coalition-building was necessary to harness the resources that already existed in the community and that to bring about systemic change, it was necessary for stakeholders to "Stop working in silos. We have to stop working as silos. The beautiful thing about the community is we have everything already there . . . We just don't join all of them together and work together, create teams." As resources already existed in her community, P5 cited organized sports, schools, and community associations such as the YMCA. P6 also spoke of the need for neighborhood coalition-building: "I think that we should try to get to know our neighbors, too, even though we gentrified, but all of them." P6 added that the purpose of increasing community integration was so that "Wherever we are able. whatever our talents are, use them for the better good of the community." P6 said, "We decided to organize a peace and love circle to build community cohesion. We extended that invitation to the entire community as wide as we knew how to, and the city did catch onto it."

P1 worked to engage faith leaders in advocacy for equitable policing by raising awareness among them: "Some of the ways are for a lot of us who are in a part of the faith-based institution is making our Pastors, our leaders, our Rabbis, etc., aware of what's going on." P3 spoke of trying to raise awareness of broader systemic injustices among White allies who were narrowly focused on policing: "White people come . . . They only show up when the police are involved because

they believe that's our only problem with systemic oppression or abuse of the systems. I'm trying to get them to understand."

Four participants indicated that they demanded change through peaceful protest and resistance. P2 said of Black Lives Matter, "I did participate in some of the protests, But I'm telling you something, when they shut down highway 94, that was impressive to me." P4 said that as an activist, peaceful protest was necessary to draw attention to issues: "You got to call attention. You got to be out marching. You got to organize. You've got to do the necessary things to bring attention to this crap that's going on." P5 recalled speaking out against a specific instance of injustice when she observed a White police officer "Pull up and grab a young Black boy who looked like he was about ten years old, grab him by the front of his t-shirt and lifted him and slammed him on the police car." P5 described her reaction as peaceful but confrontational verbal intervention:

I rolled down my window, called out to the officer about his conduct toward the child, and told him to take his hands off the child. And the officer said, "Well, Ma'am, you don't know what he did," and I said, "I don't care what he did. There is a system of justice that can address what he did if he violated the law. But you don't have the right to abuse and assault him physically."

P5 added that before George Floyd's death, she had been active in demanding systemic change: "I had already been out on the front lines for many years . . . trying to raise the alarm, along with many other activists and organizers and families who have lost loved ones to police violence."

Four participants indicated they worked to end systemic racism in policing by calling for accountability. P2 reported -

I became a significant activist in the community to address some of these [policing] issues, to call for police reform. We were part of the Twin Cities Community Against Police

Brutality and were instrumental in getting the Civilian Review Board started [for policing oversight].

P3 called the Chief of Police after watching the video of George Floyd's death to demand accountability: "As soon as I saw this video, I called the chief, and I said, "You better get out of your bed and deal with this". . . I said, 'You need to go on Facebook and watch this video.'" P5 said she was " an activist on the front lines, calling out instances of police violence and calling for accountability." P5 said that after George Floyd's death, "We held a press conference. I spoke . . . We commended the chief for his decision [to fire the officers involved in Floyd's death]," and P5 added, "I felt the need to also at that moment call out the fact that those officers needed to be criminally charged." P5 said that in the wake of the criminal convictions of those officers, "We can't just be comfortable and complacent because Derek Chauvin was convicted along with the other three officers. We have to continue to push until we see widespread systemic change."

### **Summary**

Three research questions were used to guide this study. RQ1 was: To what extent are/were Black women in Minnesota motivated and called to activism due to the death of George Floyd? The theme used to address this question was: Black women were called to activism by contextualizing the death of George Floyd within a broader awareness of systemic racism. The participants indicated that they were called to activism by the resonance between the death of George Floyd and broader patterns of systemic racism. One point that participants noted was that racism is systemic in that its most harmful manifestations subsist in social patterns that transcend individuals rather than in the attitudes of individual people.

The participants also noted that systemic racism was institutionalized and continues to be perpetuated for economic reasons and that systemic racism is, therefore, inseparable from racial

and economic inequities. In policing, the participants described systemic racism as enacted in police indifference to communities of color and the perception of police within those communities as threats rather than protectors. All of these societal patterns were manifested in the death of George Floyd at the hands of a police officer, the participants said, and this is why the participants did not regard that death as an isolated incident but rather as part of a pattern that needed to be addressed through grassroots advocacy for systemic change.

RQ2 was: How have the challenges Black women encountered during the social unrest sparked by the death of George Floyd inspired or altered their leadership and impacted social justice reform? The theme used to address this question was: recognizing the limitations of police reforms has motivated calls for more comprehensive change. Most participants indicated that they did not believe reform within police departments, such as through modifications to police training, was sufficient to address oppressive policing in their communities. One participant provided discrepant data indicating that reforms in police training might bring about the needed changes in the relationship between the police and her community.

As other challenges to their activism, the participants cited the stress of oppression as an obstacle that prevented many members of their communities from looking beyond immediate threats and needs to seek systemic solutions. Two participants also observed pervasive resistance in society to challenging or even discussing racism. Some participants expressed the further perception that Black police officers, who might be expected to ally with communities of color against police injustice, might, in some instances, behave more unjustly than their White colleagues.

RQ3 was: How have Black women activists in Minnesota worked to end systemic racism against Black men in policing? The theme used to address this question was: Black women have

worked through coalition-building, calling for accountability and demanding change. Most participants cited each of the three ways they worked to end systemic racism against Black men in policing. First, they engaged in coalition-building at the neighborhood level through efforts to engage neighbors and local faith communities in activism. Second, they engaged in demanding change through peaceful protest. Third, they engaged in calling for accountability for the police, including criminal charges for officers who assaulted or murdered members of the community and formal civilian oversight of policing (e.g., through the Civilian Review Board reported by P2).

In Chapter 5, I will share more of what I discovered in these emotional and thought-provoking interviews and what I will recommend moving forward.



## **Chapter Five: Discussion**

### **Introduction**

The problem of practice addressed in my study was the activism of Black women, which had been long established and was most recently more publicized through the events surrounding George Floyd's death. When George Floyd pleaded for his life and called out for his mother while police officer Derek Chauvin penetrated his knee on his neck, causing his death, the world's soul gasped in horror and disbelief from the video footage, it can be seen and heard that Floyd was pleading with the police officer to let him go because he could not breathe and was in great pain. Shockingly, the police officer did not listen to Floyd's pleading, leading to a protest by bystanders (Chadwick, 2020). The evolution and participation of Black women in community activism is a form of educational leadership that ensures a process of engagement, guidance, and the use of talents and energies of individuals, communities, and systems toward achieving standard practices that support and sustain the life and liberty of others.

The purpose of this qualitative research study was to explore how Black women responded to regulatory systems such as policing, which enabled, supported, and endorsed officers who perpetrated their racism on Black men, and how the death of George Floyd, specifically, had impacted the social activism of Black women. My qualitative research was informed by ethnographic qualitative research methodology to investigate how Black women in Minnesota responded to the call to action due to the murder of George Floyd. Taxis and Barber (2003) reported that ethnography focuses on individual behavioral patterns, perceptions, and beliefs on how they influence their interactions and how they evolve within a given culture.

With a small Minnesota Black population of 6.4%, the primary participants for my study were six Black women in the urban areas of Minneapolis, and Saint Paul, Minnesota. As I conclude



this work, I begin by honoring and thanking the six participants who have shared so much of themselves throughout the process. Their insights and generosity have encouraged my growth and development as an activist, and I hope, through this writing, that their narratives will also shape other activists' thoughts. A criterion-based/purposive sampling technique was used to identify the participants, who were selected according to criteria relevant to the research questions. Interviews were used for data collection. To be included in the study, participants were to meet the following criteria for exclusion and inclusion: They must have been Black females, they must have been 25 years and older, and lastly, they must have resided in the Minneapolis or Saint Paul, Minnesota areas.

After the one-to-one interviews with six participants, the audio recordings were transcribed verbatim into Microsoft Word documents. The thematic analysis procedure recommended by Braun and Clarke (2006) was employed in this study. The first theme was: Black women were called to activism by contextualizing the death of George Floyd within a broader awareness of systemic racism.

The findings indicated that they were called to activism by the resonance between the death of George Floyd and broader patterns of systemic racism (systemic oppression). One point that participants noted was that racism is systemic in that its most harmful manifestations subsist in social patterns that transcend individuals rather than in the attitudes of individual people. In policing, the participants described systemic racism as enacted in police indifference to communities of color and the perception of police within those communities as threats rather than protectors. The second theme was: recognizing the limitations of police reforms has motivated calls for more comprehensive change.

Most participants indicated that they did not believe reform within police departments, such as through modifications to police training, was sufficient to address oppressive policing in

their communities. The findings indicated that reforms in police training might bring about the needed changes in the relationship between the police and the community. Police training should include cultural diversity training and mentorship programs for police officers. In addition, cultural diversity and integrity tests should be fronted during police recruitment and diversity in the recruitment process.

As other challenges to their activism, the participants cited the stress of oppression as an obstacle that prevented many members of their communities from looking beyond immediate threats and needs to seek systemic solutions. This indicates that Black women activists were oppressed for their cry for the rights of Black men against police assault and killings. Two participants also reported pervasive resistance to challenging or discussing racism.

Some participants expressed the further perception that Black police officers, who might be expected to ally with communities of color against police injustice, might, in some instances, behave more unjustly than their White colleagues. The findings imply that Black police officers were not helping stop police injustices against their fellow Black men but instead participated in the systemic humiliation of Black men.

The third theme was: That Black women have worked through coalition-building, calling for accountability and demanding change. Most participants cited each of the three ways they worked to end systemic racism against Black men in policing. First, they engaged in coalition-building at the neighborhood level through efforts to engage neighbors and local faith communities in activism. Second, they engaged in demanding change through peaceful protest, and resistance involved in demanding change through peaceful protest and resistance. P2 said of Black Lives Matter, "I did participate in some of the protests, But I'm telling you something, when they shut down highway 94, that was impressive to me." P4 said that as an activist, peaceful protest was

necessary to draw attention to issues. Third, they engaged in calling for accountability for the police to be held responsible and own up to their mistakes and stop killing Black men. Chapter 5 presents overall contribution, implications, and recommendations for practice, implications and recommendations for policy, and recommendations for scholarship and conclusion.

### **Study Contributions**

The interpretation and contribution of findings will be discussed based on research questions and their respective themes, as described below.

### **Research Question One**

RQ1 was focused on the extent to which Black women in Minnesota were motivated and called to activism due to the death of George Floyd. The following theme was used to address this question:

#### ***Theme 1: Black Women Were Called to Activism by Contextualizing the Death of George Floyd Within a Broader Awareness of Systemic Racism***

The findings indicated that activism was triggered by the resonance between the death of George Floyd and broader patterns of systemic racism and that racism is systemic in that its most harmful manifestations subsist in social patterns that transcend individuals rather than in the attitudes of individual people. The findings imply that systemic racism contributes to the need to engage in activism among Black women, especially after the death of George Floyd. These findings contribute to previous literature findings of Buchanan and Bui (2020), who indicated that in the recent past, the United States has been grappling with systemic racism in the criminal justice system, whereby police violence has become a prevalent issue in citizens' social lives. Notably, Buchanan and Bui (2020) stated that civilians are vulnerable to deaths resulting from police officers' interactions and are projected to be larger in the U.S. than in any other country.

The findings contribute to the understanding that more policies regarding anti-racism are needed to curb excessive use of force by the police force, a task which can be accomplished by activists who behold the atrocities police afflict Black people with. According to Ladyzhinskaya (2021), encounters with racism and prejudice are fundamental components of Black identity in the U.S., and the prospect of other Black people being indirectly traumatized by the sight of police violence against Black people can be distressing. That is to say, exposure to excessive use of force has physiological and psychological implications, such as an elevated risk of cardiovascular events, an increased fear of victimization, and the sensation of being discriminated against because of one's race (Ladyzhinskaya, 2021). The findings have contributed to the past literature findings of Ladyzhinskaya (2021) above by establishing the need for activism to protest such atrocities against Black people.

From the findings, systemic racism is institutionalized and perpetuated for economic reasons, and systemic racism is inseparable from racial and economic inequities. In policing, systemic racism is enacted in police indifference to communities of color and the perception of police within those communities as threats rather than protectors. All of these societal patterns were manifested in the death of George Floyd at the hands of a police officer. Floyd's death was not an isolated incident but rather part of a pattern that needed to be addressed through grassroots advocacy for systemic change, which calls for activism for systemic change. Ladyzhinskaya (2021) stated that unarmed Black men are more likely to experience police brutality and harassment than their White counterparts and are likely to afford protection against police use of force. Considering all this evidence, police brutality against Black people has been heightened by the systemic racism that has permeated the criminal justice system for decades (Ladyzhinskaya, 2021). This, in turn, suggests that Black people are more likely to experience police harassment

than Whites, limiting access to equal justice. These results contribute to the policy change by indicating the need for activism, which may call for justice through systemic change among police in the United States.

Reports indicate that Black people have disproportionately been affected by police killings in U.S. history, as manifested in the death of George Floyd at the hands of a police officer. According to Buehler (2017), there is strong evidence that the number of unarmed Black males brutalized by police officers is higher than their White male counterparts of the same age due to systemic racism in the criminal justice system and police structure. The killing of George Floyd by a White police officer spurred activism, with many protesters across the U.S. calling for an end to systemic racism against people of color (Tillery, 2019). More specifically, activism because of Floyd's death and the call to end police brutality against Black people has attracted people from diverse backgrounds who share solidarity with the victims who have died at the hands of White police officers and are ready to become activists to end such heinous actions by the police force against people of color. Five participants reported that they worked to build activist coalitions at the level of their neighborhoods. P5 said that coalition-building was necessary to harness the resources that already existed in the community and that to bring about systemic change, it was necessary for stakeholders from diverse racial backgrounds to stop working in silos and start working in solidarity to end systemic racism against the minority groups such as people of color and other race including Hispanic.

As a result, racism forms a significant part of success and well-being in the United States (Sandell & Cook, 2020). Blacks, Latinos, American Indians, and other communities of color are devalued and disadvantaged by policy and culture. The findings have contributed to the previous

literature by establishing the need to end systemic racism through activism actions of calling on the authorities against such heinous acts against minority communities.

### **Research Question Two**

RQ2 was: How have the challenges Black women encountered during the social unrest sparked by the death of George Floyd inspired or altered their leadership and impacted social justice reform?

### ***Theme 2: Recognizing the Limitations of Police Reforms Has Motivated Calls for More Comprehensive Change***

There is doubt that the reform within police departments, such as ~~through~~ modifications to police training, is sufficient to address oppressive policing in minority communities. However, reforms in police training might bring about the needed changes in the relationship between the police and the community. These findings concur with the past literature findings of Schwartz and Jahn (2020) in finding that a large section of the minority groups still undergoes suffering while facing the effects of concentrated disadvantage. Schwartz and Jahn (2020) indicated that various suggestions that can be considered include; officers should complete a thorough background check upon entering the Police Academy or the force, including polygraph and psychological examinations, and there need to reorganize police training for it to address cultural differences in the behavior of various trainees, like how to work with individuals that are mentally compromised. In addition, when to use reasonable excessive force as well as how to use better strategies and communication techniques, and lastly, police leaders need to prioritize practical training, encouraging officers on the importance of fostering positive relationships with the general public irrespective of their color (Schimmack & Carlsson, 2020).

In contrast, some participants indicated that police training does not affect police brutality against people of color because systemic racism is institutionalized. This is contrary to previous literature findings that the justifiable use of force by police officers makes civilians draw their conclusions. News media depictions often influence such results and the longstanding stereotypes that spread victim-blaming (Schimmack & Carlsson, 2020). According to Zoorob (2020), police officers who have nurtured and manipulated these attitudes and perceptions, which have been ingrained since slavery, are also quick to release the medical reports or prior-arrest records of victims in a bid to "somehow" justify the killing of individuals by police. Similar findings are shared by Shalal (2020). The results also indicated that police training might change the police force by enhancing the relationship between police and the community. Stuart (2016) found patterns of behavior in a large police department whereby a small number of police officers recorded being involved in use-of-force incidents frequently.

These findings also support past research findings of Tillery (2019), who studied Criminal Justice and Behavior and alludes that educated, more experienced officers are less likely to use force unjustifiably. Violence in police departments is heightened by inadequate training programs and a lack of accountability (Salter et al., 2018). Further, the findings indicated that the stress of oppression is an obstacle that prevents many members of minority communities from looking beyond immediate threats and needs to seek systemic solutions. The challenges included pervasive resistance in society to challenging or even discussing racism. In addition, Black police officers, who might be expected to ally with communities of color against police injustice, might, in some instances, behave more unjustly than their White colleagues towards people of color. The findings imply that although there may be the possibility of ending systemic racism and injustices against

Black people by the police, an obstacle such as pervasive resistance and Black police officers brutalizing Black people is likely to prevent it.

These findings are consistent with previous literature findings of Cunningham (2020) and Graham et al. (2019), who stated that the public may strongly prefer White over Black police and may not be mindful of their systematic prejudices but resist change. Westmarland and Rowe (2018) revealed that the justice system should end racial oppression in the U.S. to promote peace and improve the lives of Americans for a better global understanding and recognition. Corrupt behaviors and other negative perspectives witnessed in the justice system must be terminated for effective service delivery to the citizens of the United States. The findings have contributed to the past empirical literature by revealing that reform within police departments, such as through modifications to police training, may not address oppressive policing in minority communities.

### **Research Question Three**

RQ3 was: How have Black women activists in Minnesota worked to end systemic racism against Black men in policing?

### ***Theme 3: Black Women Have Worked Through Coalition-Building, Calling for Accountability, and Demanding Change***

Black women have worked through coalition-building, calling for accountability and demanding change to end systemic racism against Black men in policing. There are three ways Black women have worked to end systemic racism against Black men policing. First, they engaged in coalition-building at the neighborhood level through efforts to engage neighbors and local faith communities in activism. Second, they demanded change through peaceful protest, and lastly, they called for accountability for the police force. The findings imply that Black women activists fought for the rights of Black men by calling for accountability and demanding change through peaceful



protests. The results are consistent with the previous literature findings of Keisha (2021), who found that for many decades since the social movement and emancipation of women, Black women have been instrumental in pioneering innovative social activism strategies to bring the country to the attention of systemic racism in policing that Blacks encounter often.

The findings also support the prior literature findings of Keisha (2021) in that Black female activists have continued to lead social activism against police brutality and excessive use of power when policing Black communities. For instance, in the 2019 killing of Lexington, Kentucky resident and Emergency Medical Technician Breonna Taylor in her home, Black women, including Taylor's mother and sister, used the concept of social activism to bring national attention to the death of Taylor (Keisha, 2021). Black women activists continue to bring attention to police violence, mainly focusing on the vulnerability of Black women and race (Gorn, 2018). These previous literature results concur with current study findings indicating that Black women have worked through coalition-building, calling for accountability and demanding change to end systemic racism against Black men in policing. Equally, in the early 1980s, activists Mary Burps and Veronica Perry, both Black women living in New York City, spearheaded and led initiatives to counter police violence among Black communities (Keisha, 2021). The findings have contributed to the previous literature by establishing that Black women activists fought for the rights of Black men by calling for accountability and demanding change through peaceful protests.

### **Implications for Practice**

Social activists may use these findings to create and implement policies regarding the rights of Black people against police brutality in the United States. The findings provide information that may be used to address the systemic racism perpetrated against Black people in the United States. Black women activists may use these findings to understand how police have used stereotypes and

racism in policing to dehumanize and brutalize Black people, specifically Black men, and come up with appropriate demands to the authorities to stop such heinous actions of brutalizing Black men in policing.

The local, state, and federal government may use these findings to implement various police training programs to prevent police brutality and systemic racism within the police force, especially against Black men. Graham et al. (2020) noted that the death of George Floyd has fortunately reignited activism in many regions across the world of ordinary folk not often seen in protest movements, calling for the need to end racism in policing in the United States. My interviewees concurred with the researcher that George Floyd's murder reignited activism.

The study findings provide policymakers, communities, and law enforcement officers with valuable information about the need to improve their interactions by fighting the historical prejudices against Black people through police training programs regarding the need for racial diversity to end systemic racism in the United States. Schwartz and Jahn (2020) indicated that various suggestions that can be considered include; officers should complete a thorough background check upon entering the Police Academy or the force, including polygraph and psychological examinations, and there need to reorganize police training for it to address cultural differences in the behavior of various trainees, like how to work with individuals that are mentally compromised.

### **Recommendations for Practice**

Social and rights activists should use these findings to establish training and mentorship programs, such as cultural awareness, sensitivity, and diversity training, as well as training on the use of lethal force, when necessary. by police officers. Zoorob (2020) suggested that police officers who have nurtured and manipulated these attitudes and perceptions, which have been ingrained

since slavery, are also quick to release the medical reports or prior-arrest records of victims in a bid to "somehow" justify the killing of individuals by police.

Black women fighting for the rights of Black men against systemic racism should use these findings to implement various demands through protests in their call for police accountability regarding police brutality against Black men in the United States. Black women activists continue to bring attention to police violence, mainly focusing on the vulnerability of Black women and race (Gorn, 2018).

### **Implications for Policy**

Policymakers may use these findings to implement policies to prevent heightened systemic racism against Black men in the United States. There has been mistrust between Black men in the U.S. and law enforcement officers in society for an extended period. Therefore, by recognizing the cause of systemic racism and the injustices within the criminal justice system, the study findings may assist in promoting trust and cooperation between law enforcement officers and Black males, thereby deterring illegal activities. The policy should include holding the police accountable for killing innocent civilians, especially people of color, who are usually significant targets by the police. Government can also use these findings to establish policies to reduce systemic racism against minority communities by the police. Government can also use these findings to develop policies to reduce systemic racism against minority communities by the police.

The study findings may positively contribute to social change by providing critical information to inform policy reforms by encouraging law enforcement officers and Black males to cooperate. In this way, the study findings may be of great importance to policymakers. It may help police officers appreciate the extent to which police brutality against Black males is specific to this group and initiate appropriate strategies that can be used to address the historic systemic

racism in policing. Moreover, the study findings may help policymakers better understand factors contributing to systemic racism in policing against Black people in the United States and the use of deadly force by police against them from the victims' perspective.

### **Recommendations for Policy**

Policymakers should use these findings to promote a positive social change that may be affected by creating a public policy that requires compulsory annual ethics training, cultural sensitivity training, and annual training for all law enforcement officers to improve their relationship with Black men. In turn, this may support the finding of an appropriate method that can be used to treat Black males fairly and respectfully while simultaneously effectively mitigating death, violence, and crime.

### **Implications and Recommendations for Scholarship**

Further research are needed to establish the differences between officers' behaviors based on experience and training (Singer, 2017). Researchers should use these findings to add to the literature by examining the need for police training and its effect on reducing police brutality against Black men.

Further research should be conducted in different locations to add more Black women's perspectives in urban and geographical areas to permit the transferability of study findings. The study was limited to the geographical locations of Minneapolis and St. Pual urban areas, implying that only that region's participants would participate.

Additionally, the study investigated how George Floyd's plea during his death influenced activism among Black women. Therefore, the study was limited to one race, whereby only six Black women participated; However, they did offer great insight but can not speak for every Black woman in Minnesota, thereby restricting the transferability of findings to other races.

## **Conclusion**

The problem of practice addressed in my study was the activism of Black women, which had been long established and was most recently more publicized through the events surrounding George Floyd's death. The purpose of my qualitative research study was to explore how Black women responded to policing and regulatory systems which enable, support, and endorse policing that have systematically impacted the lives of Black men and how the death of George Floyd, specifically, had impacted the social activism of Black women.

The findings indicated that Black women were called to activism by the resonance between the death of George Floyd and broader patterns of systemic racism (systemic oppression). The findings showed that racism is systemic in that its most harmful manifestations subsist in social patterns that transcend individuals rather than in the attitudes of individual people. The results also demonstrated that systemic racism was institutionalized and continues to be perpetuated for economic reasons and that systemic racism is, therefore, inseparable from racial and economic inequities. In policing, systemic racism is enacted in police indifference to communities of color and the perception of police within those communities as threats rather than protectors.

There is pervasive resistance in society to challenging or even discussing racism. Some participants expressed the further perception that Black police officers, who might be expected to ally with communities of color against police injustice, might, in some instances, behave more unjustly than their white colleagues. Black women have worked through coalition-building, calling for accountability and demanding change. Systemic racism against Black men in policing can be ended. First, they engaged in coalition-building at the neighborhood level through efforts to engage neighbors and local faith communities in activism. Second, engaging in demanding change through peaceful protests, and lastly, third, engaging in calling for accountability for the police. It

is imperative to put police actions into question whenever the rights are violated based on systemic racism against the Black population.

Most participants indicated that they did not believe reform within police departments, such as through modifications to police training, was sufficient to address oppressive policing in their communities. The findings indicated that reforms in police training might bring about the needed changes in the relationship between the police and the community. Like other challenges to their activism, the stress of oppression is an obstacle that prevents many members of the communities from looking beyond immediate threats and needs to seek systemic solutions.

As a Black woman, mother, and professional, I am committed to continuing to be influential in all that I do, big or small, that will impact how Black men are policed in this society, my personal life, my community, and systemically. I know from experience that my voice is the strongest weapon I have against oppressive systems. At a minimum, my next steps will be to inform the communities of Minneapolis and Saint Paul, Minnesota, of my findings and publish and publicize the research results. I believe activist groups and individuals will benefit from this research's findings. Because the life, liberty, and existence of Black men are in jeopardy. This study will aid in shining the light on systems that compromise their existence. The six participants have committed to participating in a community forum after completing the dissertation to discuss the research and findings. This will add another layer of transferability, authenticity, and invaluable knowledge.



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### Appendix 1: IRB Application

**Use this form to answer evaluation criteria 1-9 of the Protocol Guidelines**

<b>Evaluation Criteria</b>	<b>Answer Questions Here</b>
Subjects	Black females, 25 years or older, who reside in the urban areas of St. Paul or Minneapolis, Minnesota.
Purpose Statement	The purpose of this study is to investigate the motivation of Black women to lead during social unrest and the impact of policing on Black men and one-on-one interviews to collect relevant data.
Methods, Procedures, and Analysis	This study will be conducted using interviews. The interviews will be recorded on Zoom. Eligible participants will be presented with the Informed Consent Form. If consent is given, the participant will answer demographic questions. A secure electronic Dropbox or Google Doc will be provided to protect the anonymity of the participants.
Risks	The risks of participating in this study are no more than what is experienced daily.
Benefits	While there are no benefits to the participants in this study, the results may help practitioners better understand participants' perceptions of policing, social activism, and Black women's leadership.
Costs to the subjects	None
Informed Consent	Participants will indicate they have read the consent form and agree to participate by selecting 'yes' on the consent form page. Those who do not consent to the study will not continue to participate.
Deception	None
Privacy	All data will remain anonymous, and no names will be associated with any data resulting from this study. Data in digital form will be keyed on an external hard

	<p>drive. No data will be collected from participants who opt out during the research process; their data will be destroyed. No personal information will be collected other than basic demographic descriptors. The online survey system will not save IP addresses or identifying information. Data will be kept on a password-protected computer and will be destroyed after the completion of the research</p>
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**Email:** hennenburr@csp.edu

4. Please list co-investigators:

None

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5. Approximate length of project: 0 years 6 months

**[Protocol must be renewed annually]**

6. Will this research be conducted at a location other than CSP?

     No        X   Yes: *If yes, attach approval documentation when needed.*

Identify the location of the study: Urban areas of St. Paul and Minneapolis, MN

7. Subjects (*please estimate numbers*):

<u>    </u> patients as experimental subjects	<u>    </u> prisoners
<u>    </u> patients as controls	<u>  5-7  </u> normal adult volunteers
<u>    </u> minors (under 18) not English	<u>    </u> persons whose 1 <sup>st</sup> language is
<u>    </u> CSP students/faculty/staff	<u>    </u> physically challenged
<u>    </u> pregnant women, unborn children	<u>    </u> other _____
<u>    </u> mentally disabled respondents	

8. Procedures: [*Attach relevant materials such as questionnaires, interview schedules, consent forms, etc.*]

<u>    </u> survey questionnaire	<u>    </u> investigational device
<u>  X  </u> interview, phone - in person	<u>    </u> placebo
<u>    </u> medical or other personal records	<u>    </u> payment of subjects
<u>  X  </u> filming, taping, recording	<u>    </u> observation
<u>    </u> participant observation	<u>    </u> anthropological fieldwork
<u>    </u> psychological intervention	<u>    </u> incomplete disclosure of purpose
<u>    </u> blood, tissue, secreted samples	<u>  X  </u> consent and/or assent forms
<u>    </u> other _____	

9. Do you have any apparent conflicts of interest in this research?

No  Yes: *If yes, attach the completed Conflict of Interest (COI) Disclosure Form*

10. I have read and understood the Belmont Report on Ethical Principles and Guidelines for protecting human subjects. This is available at <http://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/regulations-and-policy/belmont-report/>

*Ella L. Gates-Mahmoud* \_\_\_\_\_ October 7, 2022 \_\_\_\_\_  
Principal Investigator's Signature Date

11. While students may be listed as principal investigators, advisors shoulder the responsibility for students engaged in independent research. The IRB expects that advisors have reviewed the proposal, and accept the roles and responsibilities required to oversee the conduct of this research, prevent harm to subjects, and foster benefits to the subjects.

*Dr. Jana Hennen-Burr* \_\_\_\_\_ 10-10-22 \_\_\_\_\_  
Advisor's Signature Date



## Appendix 2:

# Consent and Assent Form

I am asking you to participate in a research study titled "*A Qualitative Critical Ethnographic Case Study: The Murder of George Floyd – Examining the Impact of Policing Black Men and Grassroots Activism: How Both Influence the Will of Black Women to Lead.*" I will describe this study to you and answer any of your questions. This study is being led by me as an Education doctoral candidate at Concordia University in St. Paul, MN. The Faculty Advisor for this study is Dr. Jana Hennen Burr of Concordia University, St. Paul, MN.

### **What the study is about**

The purpose of this research is to ascertain the extent to which Black women residing in the metroplex of Minneapolis and Saint Paul, Minnesota, were prompted to act as a direct result of Floyd's death due to police misconduct.

### **What we will ask you to do**

I will ask you to verbalize your opinions and reactions to the death of George Floyd, policing, and the activism of Black women. Interviews are expected to be less than an hour in length, and questionnaires and surveys will be in short form and will take less than 10 minutes to complete electronically.

### **Risks and discomforts**

There are no legal, physical, social, or economic risks associated with participating in this study. However, due to the subject matter, there may be some emotional risks (e.g., feelings of sadness or anxiety).

### **Benefits**

Probable indirect benefits of participation may provide an experience that may lead to a better understanding of oneself, the activism of Black women, and policing. Information from this study may benefit other people as well as systems of policing now or in the future.

### **Incentives for participation**

Participants will not receive any incentives for participating in this study.

### **Audio/Video Recording**

Audio and/or video recording devices (such as Zoom) will be used to accurately document responses from the participants. Upon completion of the research, the recordings will be destroyed.

Please sign below if you are willing to have this interview recorded (audio and/or video).

- I do not want to have this interview recorded.
- I am willing to have this interview recorded:

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### **Privacy/Confidentiality/Data Security**

All data will only be accessed by me, and participants will remain anonymous. No names will be associated with any data resulting from this study. Data in digital form will be keyed on an external hard drive. No data will be collected from participants who choose to ‘opt out during the research process; their data will be destroyed. No personal information will be collected other than basic demographic descriptors. The online survey system will not save IP addresses or identifying information. Data will be kept on a password-protected computer and will be destroyed after the completion of the research. I anticipate that your participation in this survey presents no greater risk than everyday use of the Internet. Survey(s) and questionnaires [is/are] being conducted with the help of Survey Monkey and are not affiliated with Concordia University – St Paul, MN, and with its own privacy and security policies that you can find on its website [www.surveymonkey.com](http://www.surveymonkey.com). I anticipate that your participation in this survey presents no greater risk than everyday use of the Internet. Please note that email communication is neither private nor secure. Though I will take precautions to protect your privacy, you should be aware that information sent through e-mail could be read by a third party. Your confidentiality will be kept to the degree permitted by the technology being used. I cannot guarantee against the interception of data sent via the internet by third parties.

### **Sharing De-identified Data Collected in this Research**

De-identified data from this study may be shared with the research community at large to advance science and health. I will remove or code any personal information that could identify you before files are shared with other researchers to ensure that, by current scientific standards and known methods, no one will be able to identify

you from the information we share. Despite these measures, I cannot guarantee the anonymity of your personal data.

**Future use of Identifiable Data or Specimens Collected in this Research.**

Your information or biospecimens will not be used or distributed for future research studies.

**Taking part is voluntary.**

Your involvement is voluntary, and you may refuse to participate before the study begins, discontinue at any time, or skip any questions/procedures that may make you feel uncomfortable, with no penalty to you before withdrawing or your relationship with the university or other organization or service that may be involved with the research—completing all research materials (e.g., answering all survey or interview questions) is required for participation. You can choose not to participate if you are uncomfortable with these conditions.

**If you have questions**

The main researcher conducting this study is **Ella Gates-Mahmoud**, a graduate student at Concordia University, St. Paul, MN. Please ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you may contact Ella Gates-Mahmoud] at gatesmae@csp.edu or at (612) 876-4186 (voice messages only). If you have any questions or concerns regarding your rights as a subject in this study, you may contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for Human Participants at 651-641-8723 or access their website at:

<https://www.csp.edu/institutional-review-board-irb/>

If you want a copy of this form or some other information sheet,

Sign here: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Statement of Consent**

I have read the above information and have received answers to any questions I asked. I consent to take part in the study.

Your Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Your Name (*printed*) \_\_\_\_\_

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

\_\_\_\_\_

The printed name of the person obtaining consent\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

The researcher will keep this consent form  
for three years beyond the end of the study.

### Appendix 3: Invitation to Participate

## CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY, ST. PAUL

### Informed Consent for a Research Study

#### Study Title:

*"A Critical Qualitative Ethnographic Case Study: The Murder of George Floyd – Examining the Impact of Policing Black Men and Grassroots Activism: How Both Influence the Will of Black Women to Lead."*

You are invited to participate in a research study entitled "*A Qualitative Critical Ethnographic Case Study: The Murder of George Floyd – Examining the Impact of Policing Black Men and Grassroots Activism: How Both Influence the Will of Black Women to Lead.*" Concordia University doctoral candidate Ella L. Gates-Mahmoud is doing the study. Below you will find answers to the most commonly asked questions about participating in this study. Please read this document and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to participate in this study.

#### **Why are the researchers doing this study?**

This research aims to ascertain the extent to which Black women residing in the metroplex of Minneapolis and Saint Paul, Minnesota, were prompted to act as a direct result of George Floyd's death due to police misconduct.

#### **Why have I been asked to be in this study?**

The participants selected for this study are Black women over 25 who reside in Minneapolis or St. Paul, Minnesota.

#### **If I decide to participate, what will I be asked to do?**

If you meet the criteria and agree to be in this study, you will be asked to do the following:

- Participate in a one-on-one interview. The interview will last less than an hour. Interviews will be conducted via Zoom and will be audio recorded and transcribed.

#### **What if I decide I don't want to be in this study?**

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. If you decide you do not want to participate in this study, please feel free to say so and do not sign this form. If you decide to participate in this study but later change your mind and want to withdraw, simply notify me, and you will be removed immediately. You may withdraw from this study at any point; however, once data is aggregated into larger themes, withdrawal of your interview data will no longer be possible as it will have informed the analysis. Your decision of whether or not to participate will have no negative or

positive impact on your relationship with Concordia University, St. Paul, or the researcher involved in the research.

**What risks (dangers or harms) do I have if I am in this study?**

The risks associated with participation in this study are none.

**What are the benefits that may happen if I am in this study?**

This study offers no direct benefits to study participants. Indirect benefits include increasing the awareness of how policing and racism impact the activism of Black women.

**Will I receive any compensation for participating in this study?**

No financial compensation will be given for your participation in the study.

**What will you do with the information you get from me, and how will you protect my privacy?**

We will make every effort to de-identify all data. When we write up the study, we will only use pseudonyms for participants in interview transcriptions and memos we write. We will delete audio or video recordings once the interviews are transcribed. We will keep all digital data in password-protected folders on password-protected computers. We will keep one document that links the real names to the pseudonyms—this document will be password-protected and deleted when the study is complete.

**Could my information be used for future research?**

No, your data will not be used or distributed for future research purposes, even if de-identified, without your further consent.

**Are there possible changes to the study once it gets started?**

If the researcher learns about new findings that might influence your willingness to continue participating in the study during this research study, they will inform you of these findings.

**How can I get more information?**

If you have any questions, you are welcome to ask them before you sign this form. Please also feel free to contact me at [gatesmae@csp.edu](mailto:gatesmae@csp.edu). Suppose you have questions or concerns regarding the study and want to talk to someone other than the researcher. In that case, you are welcome to contact the Concordia University Institutional Review Board at [irb@csp.edu](mailto:irb@csp.edu).

Please keep a copy of this form for your records.

**Statement of Consent:**

I consent to participate in the study and agree to be audiotaped or video-recorded.

My signature indicates that I have read this information, my questions have been answered, and I am at least 18 years of age.

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Signature of Participant

Date

---

Printed Name of Participant

*Ella L. Gates- Mahmoud*

October 10, 2022

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Signature of Researcher (Electronically)

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Date

#### Appendix 4: Research Questions

Area of focus	Policing Questions
	<p>1. Research says that US civilians are more vulnerable to death resulting from police officers' interactions. There has been an increase in the number of civilian deaths caused by police officers (Buchanan &amp; Bui, 2020; Brown, 2017). Police brutality against Black people is higher than that of other races in the US (Brown, 2017; Buckler and Higgins, 2016). <b>What has been your experience or exposure to policing within your community?</b></p>
	<p>2. Research documents that exposure to excessive use of force by police has physiological and psychological implications, such as an elevated risk of cardiovascular events, an increased fear of victimization, and the sensation of being discriminated against because of one's race (Ladyzhinskaya, 2021 and Edwards, 2018 and Miller &amp; Garran, 2017 and Milkman, 2017). <b>How has policing impacted you and your community?</b></p> <p>3. Research indicates that educated, more experienced officers are less likely to use force unjustifiably (Tillery, 2019). It is important to recognize the surge in violence against Black males in the United States by police officers (Schimmack and Carlsson, 2020). Further research is needed to establish the differences between officers' behaviors based on experience and training (Singer, 2017). <b>What impact would more</b></p>



	<b>training or education of officers have on your community?</b>
	<p>4. Research documents that Black women activists and survivors of police brutality have maintained a steady resistance informed by incidences of police brutality against African Americans, and Black women have been instrumental in pioneering innovative social activism strategies to bring the country to the attention of systemic racism in policing that African Americans (<i>Keisha, 2021</i>). <b>What are some ways you or other Black women in your community have addressed racism in policing?</b></p>

<b>Area of focus</b>	<b>Racism Questions</b>
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	<p>1. Research indicates that race is an indispensable factor that society needs to talk about openly without fear of being dubbed a racist (<i>Hargons et al. 2017</i>), and race is a significant factor in the criminal justice system (<i>Umberson, 2017</i>). It also documents that the public may strongly prefer White over Black police and may not be mindful of their systematic prejudices (<i>Cunningham, 2020; Graham et al., 2019</i>). <b>What has been your experience or knowledge of these findings?</b></p> <p>2. Research says that racial profiling and police brutality negatively influence Black victims' mental health and psychological well-being (<i>Claus et al., 2018</i> and</p>
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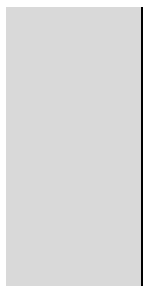
*Edwards, 2018*) and is still the main problem propelling police violence. Police leaders should consider evidence-based practices to implement solutions to reduce police brutality incidents over time (*Schimmack and Carlsson, 2020*). **How will policing change if they are trained differently?**

3. Research documents that the history of the United States has been tarnished by racism since colonization when the slave trade was very high among the Indigenous landowners. People of African origin were enslaved during the colonial days due to racism (*Tyler, 2017*). As documented, Black Americans and other minorities in the United States have been disadvantaged significantly (*Schwartz & Jahn, 2020*) historically due to their origin and skin color, limiting their access to key resources such as healthcare, education, and employment (*Mayorga and Picower, 2018*). **How has racism impacted you or your community?**

4. Research says that White privilege, the inherent advantages possessed by a white person based on their race in a society characterized by racial inequality and injustice (*Cheung, 2020*), is an undetectable and habitually unnoticed condition that has emphasized the distance between Black and White groups (*Buechler, 2017*). **What has created the gap between Blacks and Whites?**

## Activism Questions

	<p>1. Research indicates Black women have shown up and are present in the fight for equality regarding the survival of Black men in our society. Massive protests have been fueled by grief, fury, rage against injustice, institutionalized racism, and frustrations at the police system's pervasive brutality against those it deems unworthy (<i>Buchanan &amp; Bui, 2020</i>). Black women were moved to respond to the death of George Floyd. <b>When George Floyd cried out for his Momma, the world's soul was moved. How did his death affect or impact you?</b></p>
	<p>2. Research states that racial oppression has a severe impact on women, in particular, Black women resulting from pre-existing unequal gender relations in our society (<i>Cunningham, 2020</i>), and those chronic stressors linked to systemic stress against Black women directly influence their psychological well-being (<i>Cheung, 2020</i>). <b>In what ways have you or your community exemplified the results of being oppressed?</b></p>
	<p>3. Research shows that Black women worldwide have become internally motivated to participate or engage in activism as the only way to end the historical racism (<i>Claus et. al., 2018</i>) against Black people (<i>Haner et al., 2019</i>) and the Black Lives Matter (BLM) organizers have tirelessly been working to initiate drastic changes in the criminal justice system toward ending racism against Black people for many years (<i>Henderson and Louis, Jr., 2017</i>). <b>What is your experience and opinion of Black Lives Matter?</b></p>



**Appendix 5:**  
**IRB Approval**

TO: gatesmae@csp.edu  
CC: Humans Subjects Review Committee File

The IRB Human Subjects Committee reviewed the referenced study under the exempt procedures according to federal guidelines 45 CFR Part 46.104d (2): RESEARCH THAT ONLY INCLUDES INTERACTIONS INVOLVING EDUCATIONAL TESTS (COGNITIVE, DIAGNOSTIC, APTITUDE, ACHIEVEMENT), SURVEY PROCEDURES, INTERVIEW PROCEDURES, OR OBSERVATION OF PUBLIC BEHAVIOR (INCLUDING VISUAL OR AUDITORY RECORDING).

**Study Number:** 2022\_097

**Principal Investigator:** Ella Gates-Mahmoud

**Title:** A Qualitative Critical Ethnographic Case Study: The Murder of George Floyd – Examining the Impact of Policing Black Men and Grassroots Activism: How Both Influence the Will of Black Women to Lead

Classification:  Exempt  Expedited  Full Review

Approved

Approved with modifications:  [See attached]

Declined  [See attached]

Upon receipt of this letter, you may begin your research. Please remember that any changes in your protocol need to be approved through the IRB Committee. When projects are terminated or completed, the IRB Committee should be informed to comply with Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Regulations, Title 45 Code of Federal Regulations Part 46 (45 CFR 46). If you have questions, please call the IRB Chair at (651) 641-8723.

October 20, 2022 *A signature, Chair Human*

*Subjects Review Committee*