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Exploring the Workplace Climate at Police Agencies During Civil Unrest and the Factors Influencing Officers' Participation in Black Lives Matter Protesting

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EXPLORING THE WORKPLACE CLIMATE AT POLICE AGENCIES DURING CIVIL UNREST AND THE FACTORS INFLUENCING OFFICERS' PARTICIPATION IN BLACK LIVES MATTER PROTESTING

by

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ABSTRACT

EXPLORING THE WORKPLACE CLIMATE AT POLICE AGENCIES DURING CIVIL UNREST AND THE FACTORS INFLUENCING OFFICERS' PARTICIPATION IN BLACK LIVES MATTER PROTESTING

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Old Dominion University, 2022
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Scholars have long documented the negative relationship between police and communities of color. While these findings are of great importance, research remains limited on how connected police officers are to social justice movements (e.g., Black Lives Matter, or BLM for short) and the purposes behind why they exist. Furthermore, many studies focusing on police officer experiences tend to examine officer experiences with protesters, with limited studies focusing on their experiences with other officers during civil unrest and on the factors that influence their participation in protest movements when off duty. To help fill this gap, this study utilized semi-structured interviews with police officers from two police departments located in a rural area and an urban area, respectively, to learn more about the workplace climate at police agencies during civil unrest. Additionally, the study explored if factors such as race impact police officers' comfortability in discussing BLM within the workplace, how connected they are to the issues addressed by this movement, and their participation in BLM protesting when off duty.

This dissertation attempted to answer four questions: (1) How do police officers experience the workplace during times of civil unrest? (2) What influences police officers' participation in social justice protest movements? (3) What do police officers perceive to be the effect of their decision when faced with the opportunity to participate in social protest

movements? (4) To what extent does race impact officers' experiences and participation in social justice movements? From data analysis, four themes were found from the rural police department, which included (1) police officer-first mentality among officers, (2) general lack of knowledge about BLM among White officers, (3) conflicting attitudes about BLM protesting based on duty status, and (4) negative impact of news coverage on officers' perception toward BLM. For the urban police department, three themes were found, which included (1) racial tensions among officers during civil unrest, (2) varying levels of support for BLM protesting and mobilization, with many officers showing dissatisfaction with work schedules during the unrest, and (3) racial differences in promoting BLM at the workplace and in the community. A discussion of these results is included, as well as implications for police departments, the media, and the Black Lives Matter organization.

This dissertation is dedicated to first-generation college students who are completing their degree programs. I hope that the submission of this dissertation encourages the next first-generation college student to finish what they have started.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics, in 2016, local police departments accounted for 12,000 of the 15,322 local, municipal, county, and regional police agencies operating across the United States, with 1 in 4 officers being Black or Hispanic (Brooks, 2020; Hyland, 2019). Despite this representation of agencies and officers, the intersection of race and policing remains highly controversial, especially regarding deadly force cases. Police agencies within the United States remain dominated by White males. While police-community relations have long been assessed, limited research is available on how workplace climate and police officers' race may buffer the relationship between police officers and between the police and communities, particularly communities of color, during times of civil unrest**.** Furthermore, knowledge remains limited on officers' participation in the unrest, specifically times in which they decide to join others to protest issues relating to the disproportionate killings of people of color by the police.

In the year 2020 alone, there were 1,127 police killings, with 96% of these killings occurring with the victim being shot (Mapping Police Violence, 2020). Within the Mapping Police Violence database, of those killed by police between 2013 and 2021, Whites remained underrepresented while Blacks remained overrepresented, Blacks had lower odds of showing signs of mental illness, and Blacks and Hispanics showed lower odds of being armed, relative to their White peers (DeAngelis, 2021). Findings from the DeAngelis (2021) study indicated that these odds stood true despite the victim's age, gender, year killed, or geographical location; and therefore, reflected systemic racism in U.S. policing (see also Global Bureau of Disease 2019

Police Violence US Subnational Collaborators, 2021).

While there are other nationally counted databases, such as Fatal Encounters and the Washington Post, Mapping Police Violence is the most referenced comprehensive database of police killings within the United States (Mapping Police Violence, 2020). While Mapping Police Violence is not recognized as official data, it is the only nationally counted data to rely on to keep track of police killings in the U.S., as other databases, such as the USA National Vital Statistics System (NVSS), often underreport police killings (Global Bureau of Disease 2019 Police Violence US Subnational Collaborators, 2021). While police killings disproportionately occur in communities of color, data show that the victims of these killings vary by ethnoracial and gender lines and can occur in any setting without being limited to victims being shot (Jones-Brown et al., 2020).

Due to recent events—most notably the police killings of George Floyd, Brianna Taylor, and Daunte Wright— supporters of social movements, such as BLM have engaged in protests and activism to shine a light on a growing awareness of issues concerning the American police force. Among these existing problems are an overreliance on the police in establishing racial dominance through "proactive" practices and police training that encourages "warrior-style" policing, thus leading to increased use-of-force and over-policing of communities, with a specific focus on Black communities (Cobbina-Dungy & Jones-Brown, 2021; see also Williams, 2021). In 2020, the United States saw the broadest protests in history, following the police killing of George Floyd (Metcalfe & Pickett, 2021). Despite the emergence of the BLM movement nationwide, Whites are generally less supportive of the movement, and anti-Black motivations and racial resentment can best explain Whites' comparatively lower support (Drakulich et al., 2021). According to the Pew Research Center, 83% of Black Americans express having some

support for BLM, with 58% of Black Americans expressing strong support compared to the 47% of White Americans who express support for the movement (Horowitz, 2021). Compared to Whites, 68% of Asian adults and 60% of Hispanic adults also express support for BLM (Horowitz, 2021).

Although an unexplored topic in the academic literature, police officers participating in social protest movements is not new. However, most of the existing research addresses the experience of police officers at protesting events while on duty, despite the possibility that there are police officers who show up to protest events when off duty. Most recently, it was documented that there were nearly 30 police officers across a dozen police departments who participated in the insurrection at the United States Capitol building to reject the democratically elected U.S. government headed by Joe Biden. This insurrection was primarily fomented by pro-Trump supporters on January 6, 2021, which left five people dead (Alaniz et al., 2021). The participating officers were investigated and charged for their participation in a violent and criminal event. Despite the violent nature of the U.S. Capitol riot, findings from one study indicate that a greater percentage of police officers viewed the insurrection at the U.S. Capitol as a desire for freedom and democracy than they viewed BLM protesting as a desire for positive social change (Woods & Blackmon, 2021).

Research has long documented the negative relationship between police and minority communities, particularly Black communities (Peck, 2015). While it is argued that adding more Black officers to the police force could help reconcile some issues between police and Black communities due to Black officers being a representative of their larger community (Brunson & Gau, 2011; Davis, 2021), recent research has shown that, even then, members of the Black community are dissatisfied with the performance of these officers (Benton, 2020; Williams,

2021). Scholars have responded to this finding and provided insight on the dual role that often leads to double marginality among officers of color, making them less useful to members of their communities during times of civil unrest (Cobbina, 2019). During these times when officers arrive at protests, research has shown that Black officers receive negative treatment from protestors, due to them appearing to be on the side of policing instead of their respective community (Kochel, 2020).

According to a survey given to active, full-time police officers from municipal, county, state, and federal law enforcement agencies in the United States, a majority of officers (59.38%) do not feel as though officers should participate in BLM protesting, with the remaining officers (41.63%) noting that it is their right as American citizens (Woods & Blackmon, 2021). Furthermore, Woods and Blackmon (2021) found that 61.46% of police officers believe that officers who participate in BLM protesting or had participated in the U.S. Capitol riot should be investigated and placed on administrative leave, with 74% of officers expressing that officers who participate in violent protesting should lose their badges. Overall, this study indicated that while there was not a relationship found between an officer's political affiliation and their perceptions of officer involvement in protesting, there was a significant finding regarding officer participation in BLM activities. While these findings are of great importance, these statistics are based primarily on the perspective of White male republican officers. While arguably, these statistics may reflect most officers in the U.S. due to the racial demographics of U.S. law enforcement, more information is needed to understand police opinion more broadly, as well as how connected police officers are to these social protest movements and the purposes behind why they exist. Further, a look into how race influences the relationship between police and their perceptions of BLM is needed to take a more holistic approach to providing implications for

police departments regarding topics surrounding race and policing.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The overall goal of this study is to discover the experience of police officers during civil unrest and discover the factors that influence whether they participate in Black Lives Matter protesting. Officer experiences during civil unrest was measured by how they experience the workplace in the presence of other officers and their participation in BLM protesting was measured by their involvement in protest efforts when they are not engaging in protest policing or when they are in their off-duty capacity. The current study attempted to satisfy this goal through the following four primary purposes. First, the purpose of this study is to expand our knowledge on police officers' experience during civil unrest that looks beyond the police and protesters. By doing this, we not only look at how the police experience community members and protesters during civil unrest, but also look at how police officers experience each other, which may have a large influence on their occupational attitudes and how they respond to each other, as well as the community.

The second purpose of this study is to explore the factors, if any, that exist that would encourage or discourage officers from participating in BLM protesting. Discrimination faced by Black people may also be faced similarly by Black officers when not in uniform; therefore, this study attempts to explore if these experiences lead officers to support movements such as BLM due to these officers facing similar discrimination as members of their larger racial community (Paul & Birzer, 2017). Additionally, there may be environmental or institutional barriers that these officers face socially at work during these times when paired with officers who do not support the movement. Additionally, officers' support of the BLM movement may present a conflict in their ability to have a sole commitment to protesting issues that involve the police

while currently employed. While the extant literature examines police presence at protesting events, it is typically examined from their on-duty capacity (e.g., protest policing), which does not include their participation in their off-duty time. Looking at police officers as members of the community themselves, outside their official capacity, will help us to understand how they view issues covered by the movement and how expressive they are about their views of issues that exist between the police and communities. Understanding these factors will be beneficial as it will help add clarity about the double marginality experienced, particularly by officers of color, during times of civil unrest and understand citizens' overall dissatisfaction with the police during protesting movements.

The third purpose of this study is to explore, from the perspective of officers, the perceived impact of their personal choice when faced with the decision to attend protest movements, specifically the impact they foresee this decision would have on their relationship with community members during this time. For example, when officers choose to participate or not participate in BLM protesting in their off-duty capacity, how do officers think they will be perceived or treated by community members in response to this due to their choice? Prior literature has examined the impact that protesting may leave on officers, particularly officers of color (e.g., Kochel, 2020); however, research remains limited on the extent to which officers feel as though their non-participation in BLM protesting causes tension between themselves and the community that they police.

The fourth purpose of this study is to take a comparative look into the data to explore the extent to which race impacts: (1) how officers perceive the workplace climate or social environment at work during these times, and (2) officers' participation in protesting when off duty. While doing this, the purpose is also to compare how the abovementioned objectives differ

when comparing a rural police department with an urban police department. An exploration into these four areas could provide major implications that could help resolve the documented issues that protesters have with police officers when they show up to protests in their capacity as police officers. Not only will these implications cause us to consider how the occupational culture of policing may impact the unique position of officers of color during these times, but also White officers. The purposes mentioned above translate into four primary research questions that will be qualitatively explored:

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

RQ1: How do officers experience the workplace during times of civil unrest?

RQ 2: What influences police officers' participation in social justice protest movements?

RQ 3: What do police officers perceive to be the effect of their decision when faced with the opportunity to participate in social protest movements?

RQ 4: To what extent does race impacts officers' experiences and participation in social justice movements?

DEFINITION OF TERMS

The following terms will be used throughout the study. The list below serves to provide operational definitions as it relates to the purposes of this study, as well as provide an overview of how these terms, and a few others, have been used in other studies:

Civil unrest – "Disharmony, expressive dissatisfaction, and or disagreement between members of a community" (Ballantyne, 2006).

Black Lives Matter – An organization founded in 2013, comprised of a collective of liberators, seeking to affirm the lives of Black queer and trans folks, folks with records, women, and all Black lives along the gender spectrum with the mission of eradicating White supremacy,

building local power to intervene in violence inflicted on the Black communities by the state and vigilantes (About-Black lives matter, n.d.).

Protest – "An expression or declaration of objection, disapproval, or dissent, often in opposition to something a person is powerless to prevent or avoid" (As cited in Turner, 1969 p. 816). May involve a few people or many people (Ballantyne, 2006, p.156).

On-duty officer – The period in which officers are in uniform (White, 2000) and engage in activities directly related to police work (Kappeler et al., 1998). In this study, officers are on duty when they are on the clock.

Off-duty officer – The period in which officers are not in police uniform (White, 2000) and engage in activities that have little to do with their police work (Kappeler et al., 1998). In this study, officers are off duty when they are not on the clock.

Black or African American – “A person having origins in any of the Black racial groups of Africa. It includes people who indicate their race as "Black or African American," or report entries such as African American, Kenyan, Nigerian, or Haitian.” (U.S. Census Bureau, n.d.). In this study, “Black” and “African American” are used interchangeably.

Minorities – A "subgroup of the population with unique social, religious, ethnic, racial, and/or other characteristics that differ from those of a majority group, including "African Americans, women, and immigrants among others" (Perkins & Wiley, 2014). In this study, the term “minorities” is used as an umbrella term to include racial identities that fall outside of the majority (e.g., White) racial group.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

While the literature touches on the experiences of police officers who engage in protest policing during social movements and activism efforts (e.g., Kochel, 2020), less is known about

officers and their willingness to participate in protesting about issues that impact members of the community. Additionally, little is known about how race shapes this process, as well as officers' experience in the workplace during the times when these social movements and activism efforts peak. While one study (e.g., Woods & Blackmon, 2021) did examine police officers' opinions of public protests, less is known about the factors that influence their own participation in protesting when off duty. In this qualitative study, I attempt to inform this gap in the literature. In this study, officers who do not report having attended protesting events off-duty would be of equal importance to the analysis in understanding the factors influencing their participation (in this case, non-participation), just as officers who do report having actively participated. With that stated, if no officer self-reports their active participation in BLM protesting, their perspectives will still be needed to understand the phenomena in question.

This proposed study is important as it helps us to understand the experience of police officers, specifically their decision as to whether they will participate in social justice movements, as well as how they experience being in the police department during moments of civil unrest. With an increase in resignations seen in the police profession, work that attempts to understand their experience, particularly during times of unrest, is needed, especially when considering the individual and organizational costs associated with police hiring (Hilal & Litsey, 2020). By collecting data aimed at exploring workplace climate and the factors that contribute to officers' decision-making, the current project provides theoretical and practical implications for officers and police departments.

Theoretically, double marginality and representative bureaucracy is often used to examine issues surrounding race and policing. The current study uses racial threat, cognitive dissonance, and system justification as theoretical frameworks to explore this topic more deeply.

From these frameworks, this study is expected to help us to understand the experience of White officers during times of civil unrest, specifically the experience of White officers who may or may not support movements, such as BLM. Also, this study will present new data that contribute to the literature surrounding the dual loyalty that is expected of police officers who often must choose between the police force and members of their community, which often results in double marginality (Alex, 1969)—the experience unique to Black officers in which they feel unaccepted by members of the Black community who are unsupportive of the police, as well as feeling unaccepted by their White officer colleagues (See also Kochel, 2020).

Practically, findings from this study have the potential to inform the police department's diversity and inclusion efforts. Furthermore, those inclusive environments may create opportunities for police officers to engage in discourse about social protest movements, particularly when addressing social protests that are in reaction to the intersection of race and policing. This study is also expected to provide implications that could potentially improve the retention of officers during these times, as well as provide data that helps one to understand policing from both micro (individual) and macro (organizational) levels. Collecting data for these two levels of inquiry will bring a better understanding of police culture in a way that is unique to the existing literature. In addition, by exploring these areas, this study seeks to uncover what contributes to officers being committed to and satisfied with the police profession, which studies indicate that officers that are both tend to stay in the profession longer (Ahmad et al., 2019).

These data would contribute to the literature by including the experience of White officers as it pertains to the broader topic. Second, it helps to understand the nuances in the experience of officers of color, which will help us further understand their double marginality.

Third, it allows for a comparative analysis of how race influences whether officers participate in BLM protesting off duty and comfortability with other officers during times of civil unrest. This study also allows for a comparative analysis of officer experiences and factors considered when faced with the decision to participate in BLM protesting by utilizing a sample of racially diverse officers from both rural and urban police departments.

OVERVIEW OF CHAPTERS

This dissertation includes six chapters, with the remaining five chapters summarized below:

Chapter 2 reviews the contemporary literature, which aims at expanding readers' understanding of racial views toward the police, particularly amongst populations that have received disproportionate treatment from police. Additionally, the literature review synthesizes the literature on police and deadly use-of-force incidents, Black officers' experience in the police force, and the social justice and activism movements that have taken place in response to the police. The literature review also addresses the theoretical frameworks of Cognitive Dissonance Theory, System Justification Theory, and Racial Threat Theory.

Chapter 3 includes the research design, which is qualitative and exploratory. The sample used in this study is described along with the methods chosen to recruit police officers. The process is outlined on how the researcher gained access to police departments. This chapter presents the questions the researcher used during the semi-structured interviews and the procedural process leading up to the interviews being conducted, as well as the measures that are taken to ensure total transparency between officers and the researcher.

Chapter 4 presents the findings from the semi-structured interviews with the police officers. Quotations from the participants' responses are included to illustrate, from the

perspective of the participant, the themes discovered. Data are presented from the rural police department, followed by the urban police department, with a mention of the similarities and differences that were found between the two departments.

Chapter 5 focuses on a discussion of the findings. In this section, the findings are applied to the conceptual frameworks of Cognitive Dissonance Theory, System Justification Theory, and Racial Threat Theory. The discussion illustrates how the findings from this study advance the current knowledge of the field regarding the overall topic. Finally, this chapter concludes with conclusions drawn, policy recommendations, limitations of the study, and suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

In this literature review, I provide a thorough review of the current knowledge on the dynamics between police officers and communities of color, particularly the Black community. Studies were selected in the areas most relevant to officer experiences in the police force generally, as well as their experiences during civil unrest specifically. Furthermore, studies addressing the BLM movement and its impact on communities and police agencies are synthesized. After providing this synthesis, this chapter concludes with the theoretical frameworks from which this study builds to address the primary research questions of the study.

DIVERSITY IN LAW ENFORCEMENT

Police-community relations is a debated topic in the discipline, and research has historically acknowledged that this presents a problem not only for communities falling victim to disproportionate treatment by law enforcement but also presents a problem for the reputation of police departments and how citizens view the government (Blakemore et al., 1995). More recent studies have focused on policing in the context of interacting with a multicultural society and how this calls for greater attention to how police interact with diverse communities (Chapman, 2012; Coon, 2016). Thus, many police departments have implemented diversity training to gain the cultural competence needed to interact with members of different ethno-racial groups (Blakemore et al., 1995).

While there have been efforts to increase the presence of Black officers on the force, research has shown that recruitment efforts are usually lagging in reaching the minority population, despite the push for more Black officers dating back to the 1960s (Kochel, 2020;

Wilson, et al., 2013, 2016). The lack of diversity in American law enforcement extends to all levels of policing. In examining workplace diversity in the New York City Police Department, Guajardo (2014) found that after the rank of sergeant, there were steady declines in the number of Black officers who were represented at the managerial level, which disadvantage minorities from gaining promotion (Gustafson, 2013).

Despite the diversity efforts of police departments, there are still problems with policing minority communities, and these problems stem from issues relating to police diversity (Kringen, 2015; Stergioulis, 2017). Despite the array of studies that have attempted to address diversity issues, most have produced mixed findings (Todak et al., 2018). Much of the literature revolving around diversity issues in policing focuses on police officer demographics, such as race, sex, and education. Holistically, the literature confirms the need to focus on officer characteristics when looking into matters regarding the community (e.g., Chapman, 2012).

The police force in the United States is disproportionally White and male, leaving many minorities and women severely underrepresented (Guajardo, 2014). This underrepresentation of officers from different backgrounds has led to many concerns regarding police interaction with communities that are not as represented in the demographical make-up of the police force. One of many initiatives to address the problem included Former President Obama's Task Force on 21st Century Policing. On the topic of police hiring, the literature suggests that higher visibility of officers from minority groups may increase the number of minority officers recruited into the police force (e.g., Wilson et al., 2016); however, studies have shown that in some parts of the United States, diversity is lacking at lead and supervisorial roles within the police force (e.g., Guajardo, 2014).

Research has shown that hiring standards, which are set in various parts of the country, may disproportionally impact minorities' ability to apply for these positions (Wilson et al., 2014, 2016). In their evaluation of practices used by state and local agencies, Wilson et al. (2013) found that the recruitment efforts of police departments were not as accessible to the institutions serving minority citizens as they were to White communities, which helps to explain the severe disproportionality seen in the demographics of the police force. Put differently, the more likely one sees themselves in these key positions within the police force, the more likely one is to want to become an officer (Gustafson, 2013). Literature suggests that females and ethno-racial minorities in policing often have vastly different experiences than their White male counterparts who dominate this profession, with the biggest difference in experience being faced by Black women, followed by Black males, Latina women, and White women officers, respectively (Hassell & Brandi, 2009). It was concluded that an officer's race and sex may result in officers having different experiences in policing, and when race and sex are tied together, minority women and other minority officers are likely to go through a higher amount of stress than White male officers (e.g., Hassell & Brandi, 2009).

Much police research has centered on race and policing. From the perspective of police diversity, the argument has been made that adding more Black officers to the police force will help eliminate the strained relationship between police and the Black community due to their shared connection, thus placing them in a better position to connect (Brunson & Gau, 2011; Todak et al., 2018). However, research has shown that barriers may exist that stand in the way of this argument, leading to inconclusive findings in support of this argument, which includes (1) Black officers becoming more discriminatory against Black citizens due to their adoption of organizational roles, (2) no significant relationship being found to support the notion that an

officer's race impacts disproportion in police-citizen outcomes based on race, and (3) changes in police violence only being noticeable once there are enough Black officers represented in the department (Nicholson-Crotty et al., 2017; Smith 2003). Using a sample of 84 state- and federal-level officers in measuring double consciousness among Black law enforcement officers to understand the role of race in law enforcement occupational cultures, Dukes (2018) concluded that there is a double consciousness that Black officers carry, resulting in strained behaviors. Originally coined by Du Bois, double consciousness speaks to Blacks' exclusion from full and equal participation in society, which can be attributed to racial differences that separated Blacks and Whites (as cited in Dukes, 2018). Under this definition, Black officers are viewed as being interchangeable with their surroundings and able to perform both roles as a Black person and a police officer (Alex, 1969). Cobbina (2019) further explains this concept of double consciousness through her concept of occupational socialization, where the argument is made that Black officers may have this dual loyalty to both their community and their occupation, thus positioning them to display certain behaviors toward their community to gain respect from their police partners. While it is argued that more Black officers are the solution, these studies suggest that this issue is much more complex when considering police culture.

Despite these conclusions, research shows that people believe race matters when discussing conflict between the police and communities, with many prospective officers believing that they would bring about positive changes in police relations with members of their respective communities (Todak et al., 2018). With a greater number of Black officers, it has been shown that Black citizens particularly have a greater sense of trust in the police in addition to having greater feelings of fairness (Nicholson-Crotty et al., 2017; Riccucci et al., 2018; Stergioulis, 2017; & Wilson et al., 2016). When examining police-citizen outcomes, research has

shown that despite studies showing empirical evidence in support of the threat hypothesis— that police use-of-force is often the result of an officers' perception of threat to social order coming from a citizen of a minority group—more diversified departments have not had significantly lower levels of police-caused homicides (Harring et al., 1977; Smith, 2003). The persistence of these issues, despite diversification, suggests the need to focus on factors apart from race in resolving the tension between the police and minority communities. Overall, while research addresses the benefits of diversifying the police force, existing evidence is insufficient to claim that workforce diversification in policing will solve the crisis of police-community distrust (Cobbina, 2019).

Regarding police diversity, a large amount of literature looks at Representative Bureaucracy Theory to understand diversity issues. While representative bureaucracy theory has been used in policing scholarship (e.g., Lasley et al., 2011; Riccucci et al., 2014, 2018), it has mainly focused on racial/ethnic and gender representation on the outcome concerning interactions between people working in the public workforce and community members (Vinopal, 2019). An argument that is made by Representative Bureaucracy Theory is that the more a group is represented within an organization, the more likely the organization is to have improved relationships with clients or consumers who are also members of that group (Kochel, 2020). Data in support of this finding remains inconclusive and scholars argue that issues with policing may be more complex than diversity. However, issues surrounding diversity in policing may trickle down to other areas such as how police officers, particularly women and minorities, experience the workplace.

POLICE AND WORKPLACE CLIMATE

Despite the transformations that police organizations have undergone (e.g., changes in officer demographics and community policing models), research examining contemporary police culture often reflects police acting as a family, asserting control, using “us” (police) versus “them” (citizens) mentality, heavily masculine, and having subcultural differences (e.g., officer status, value, treatment, and level of camaraderie) across job roles, ranks, and police stations (Brough et al., 2016). Despite these reflections, research remains limited when understanding how police culture influences police practice (Ingram et al., 2018).

To date, some studies have referred to the concept of police culture to describe the experiences officers have while serving in the police force. Additionally, these studies have mainly focused on how officer characteristics may be predictors of how they experience police culture. Studies that have explored how race and gender impact officer experiences have generally concluded that when it comes to occupational attitudes, Black and Hispanic officers tend to have more negative attitudes than do White officers (Gau et al., 2021). This finding suggests that race shapes experiences amongst police officers. Other research shows that police officer perceptions about police culture may vary across agencies instead of across officer demographics (Cordner, 2017).

Due to the stressful nature of police work, scholars have attempted to apply General Strain Theory (GST) to situations that police officers encounter (Arter, 2007; Bishopp et al., 2020). GST argues that there are three sources of strain, which include: (1) the failure to achieve positively valued goals, (2) the removal of positively valued stimuli from the individual, and (3) the presentation of negative stimuli (Agnew, 1992; 2006; Miller et al., 2006; Cullen et al., 2014). Studies show that there is a link between the stressors police officers have and the negative

coping mechanisms they choose (Swatt et al., 2007). In terms of police stress, it is suggested that much of this stress stems from organizational and environmental factors, with research indicating that there is reason to believe that police officers experience this stress in different ways according to their race (Bishopp et al., 2018; 2020). Regardless of how stress is experienced, both organizational and environmental factors were significantly related to police officer stress. In using GST to assess the negative affective responses to stress among urban police officers, it was found that older and minority officers were more resilient to stress than their White counterparts and when it came to the likelihood of verbal abuse toward citizens and the use of force, there was little difference between White and minority officers (Bishopp et al., 2018; 2020).

As previously mentioned, police officers dealing with organizational and environmental stress factors may experience them differently, and these experiences often vary depending on the police department (Bishopp et al., 2018). Police stress may vary depending on an officer's duty assignment. For example, officers with greater stress tend to have more deviant coping mechanisms (e.g., alcohol consumption, detachment, rationalization, and cynicism) than officers with reduced stress (Arter, 2007). Using a GST approach in their examination of 180 police officers from Northern Kentucky, Moon and Johnson (2012) found that of the three sources of strain presented in GST, the failure to achieve positively valued goals and the removal of positive stimuli were predictors of a greater negative affect, with organizational commitment showing variation depending on the type of strain one experiences. A further look into how workplace climate at police departments impact officer experiences are needed to explore this relationship.

POLICE OFFICERS' EXPERIENCE IN THE POLICE FORCE

Research has long documented the White male dominance that lies within the American police force (Morabito & Shelley, 2015). This does not come without consequence to the experience of Black officers in the force. Research confirms that Black officers differ from White officers in the force by shifts that are typically assigned, the type of training they receive, code enforcement, organizing community groups, using crime data to solve problems, and are most likely to be placed in areas suffering from concentrated disadvantage while White officers are typically placed in neighborhoods with higher stability (Sun, 2003). In terms of experience, it is shown that there are discrepancies in how officers are treated, with most White and Hispanic officers believing minorities are treated the same as White officers, despite over half of Black officers disagreeing with that statement and believing that White officers receive better treatment, even in assignments and promotions (Morin et al., 2017).

Research suggests that Black officers are not immune from experiencing the historical racial stereotypes revolving around criminality and often experience discrimination when entering spaces that are heavily occupied by Whites when off duty (Paul & Birzer, 2017). At the workplace, scholars have described the dual loyalty that exists with Black officers, which extends to their respective communities and the police force, which is that Black officers are marginalized in their own community, despite their ability to relate and be committed, and they are also marginalized within the police force when they adopt contrasting values set by the occupation and other obligations associated with police work (Cobbina, 2019). Many scholars have produced research that speaks to this unique experience of Black officers and other officers of color and thus have coined it "double marginality" (e.g., Dukes, 2018; Kochel, 2020; Wilson & Henderson, 2014). Kochel (2020) used a mixed-methods approach to understand protest

policing in Ferguson among Black officers and found that while they experienced double marginality in their efforts to maintain public safety, they were resilient to that experience. However, other studies show that the experience of double marginality is a significant predictor of "anomic" behavior while on the force, which is unfortunate for these officers of color, as police executives often choose to believe that race issues in the workplace are marginal, if existing at all (Dukes, 2018).

With this marginality occurring primarily due to Black officers being outnumbered by their White (particularly male) colleagues, Black officers lack the symbolic representation needed to have an impact in the areas of "perceived performance, trust, and fairness," particularly among Black citizens (Riccucci et al., 2014, 2018). As presented in this review of the literature, this lack of representation leaves many issues for the Black community, as well as the police force. In analyzing officers' perceptions of equitable treatment and justice, Gau and Paoline (2020) found that Black officers perceived a greater amount of inequitable treatment and that their knowledge of inequity led them to believe, to a lesser degree than Whites, that police departments are consistent in providing procedurally just policing. Research confirms that even in the media, Black officers in comparison to White officers are often depicted as being less serious and comedic, with the media ignoring the marginality that exists among these officers (Wilson & Henderson, 2014). Being depicted in this manner undermines the importance of the role of Black officers in the force, despite the identical reasons Blacks and Hispanics have for joining the force, which one study indicated is for the opportunity to help others, followed by job security, benefits, and career advancement (Raganella & White, 2004).

Despite officers' personal reasons for joining the force, research establishes how officers experience may vary based on the race and sex of an officer. For instance, in their examination

of nine dimensions of workplace experiences in the police force, Hassell and Brandl (2009) found that when compared to white male officers, experiences differed for Black women (e.g., lack of support/influence/feedback, lack of opportunity, negative physical abilities, victim of theft/vandalism, ridicule/setup, sexually offensive behaviors, perceptions of bias, and perceptions of vulgar language/jokes), Black males (e.g., lack of opportunity, other officers underestimating their physical abilities, being a victim of theft or vandalism at work, perceptions of bias, and perceptions of vulgar/offensive language), Latino men (i.e., lack of opportunity, other officers underestimating their physical abilities, and perceptions of bias), Latina women (e.g., lack of support, negative physical abilities, perceptions of sexually offensive behaviors, perceptions of bias, and perceptions of vulgar/offensive language), and White women (e.g., negative physical abilities, perceptions of sexually offensive behaviors, perceptions of bias, and perceptions of vulgar/offensive language) (p.418). In examining the nine dimensions of experience, as defined in the study, the experiences of Latino male officers were the most similar to White male officers (Hassell & Brandl, 2009).

While diversifying the force has been a long-standing recommendation to the police force, research has questioned if the socialization of these officers will be without issue (Hassell & Brandl, 2009). When it comes to how officers generally experience the workplace, research has shown that this varies depending on one being a female or a racial/ethnic minority when compared to White officers (Hassell & Brandl, 2009). Dowler (2005) notes that research is limited when it comes to understanding how the race of an officer influences their perceptions of police work. However, Dowler (2005) also points out that African American officers tend to feel as if they are more criticized than their White counterparts, with concerns over being seen as militant. Surprisingly, despite these feelings, African American officers are the least likely to

hold negative feelings about police work (Dowler, 2005), which is consistent with studies showing a higher level of resilience amongst African American officers compared to their White counterparts. Additionally, studies show a relationship between workplace climate and workplace stress (Hassell & Brandl, 2009).

Sex differences in policing are addressed through a wide range of topics in criminology and criminal justice. Much of this literature examines officers' gendered attitudes toward incidents of victimization with very little attention given to matters of supporting behaviors among officers based on gender (Rabe-Hemp, 2008). Rabe-Hemp (2008) found that while women in the police force were less likely than male officers to make threats, use physical restraints, conduct a search, or make an arrest, there was little support that women officers engaged in more supporting behaviors than male officers, which debunked the gender-responsive hypothesis formed about women in the police force. As it pertains to women in the police force, the literature largely acknowledges that women remain severely underrepresented in the police force (e.g., Lonsway, 2006; Morabito & Shelley, 2015) and often have to endure workplace stress that is rooted in patriarchy (Batton & Wright, 2018) and sexism (Murray, 2020), which causes many women in these positions to succumb to occupational socialization, where, according to one study, women often engage in behaviors reflected by their male counterparts to fit in (Deller & Deller, 2019). However, there is research that has found that there may be differences, while slight in some, in policing when considering gender (McCarty et al., 2007; Poteyeva & Sun, 2009; Rabe-Hemp, 2008). In examining occupational stress and burnout between male and female officers, McCarty et al. (2007) concluded that there were no significant differences found between these two groups; however, when factoring in ethnicity, McCarty and colleagues found that the experiences of African American women differed from the experiences

of White women.

In terms of attracting, recruiting, and retaining, police departments in the United States have long struggled with having a representative number of women and other racial minorities within their ranks (Morabito &Shelley, 2015; Wilson et al., 2016; Wilson et al., 2013), and thus causing many people who identify with these underrepresented groups to question the legitimacy of the predominantly White male force (Morabito &Shelley, 2015). In response, as it pertains to officer demographics, much literature has investigated theoretical frameworks to understand diversity in terms of race and sex through representative bureaucracy theory where it is believed that the more a demographic is represented, the more likely members of that group are to legitimize an organization (Lasley et al., 2011; Morabito &Shelley, 2015; Riccucci et al., 2018). However, despite this theoretical assumption, research has been mixed in terms of this statement, with some suggesting that women bring about positive changes in the force (e.g., Rabe-Hemp, 2008; Schuck, 2017) and others suggesting that there were no significant changes (Deller & Deller, 2019; Poteyeva & Sun, 2009). Holistically, research supports the notion that when factoring in sex in conversations on police officer differences, results may vary depending on the topic at hand. Research is growing that attempts to examine how officer experiences in the workplace may impact other issues in policing, such as officer retention.

Reasons Police Officers Leave The Force

Research has shown that officers who report having more stress on the job are less satisfied with their job (Hassell et al., 2011). In interviewing officers who have been involved in an incident where someone suffered an injury or was killed, Regehr et al. (2003) noted that no officer was unaffected by the process that had taken place in response to the incident. Thematically, consequences fell under six categories: the event, public inquiry, organizational

response, outcome, family response, and the media. Notably, Regehr et al. (2003) point out that officers encountering this process experienced a loss of commitment, with them feeling humiliations and presumed guilt from media outlets. Further, when it comes to the protesting that occurs after these events, studies show that around this time officer resignations tend to increase, with fewer resignations being due to retirements and involuntary separations (Mourtgos et al., 2021). In their examining of Atlanta police officers, Hoffman et al. (2021) found that while tensions (e.g., the Ferguson Effect) associated with high-profile officer-involved shootings were felt the strongest by White officers, Black officers were more likely than their White counterparts to indicate that they would leave the police profession if offered better pay. Research indicates that police agencies should emphasize "leadership training, clear and transparent processes, permanent light duty assignments, shift flexibility, improved morale, and personal wellness"—all of which data show can improve the length of time in which officers stay active in the police profession (Hilal & Litsey, 2020, p. 73).

POLICE AND COMMUNITIES OF COLOR

To better understand the relationship between the police and African Americans, progressive scholars have made the deliberate attempt to trace the origins of policing. Instead of starting with Sir Robert Peel to explain police origins, these scholars have instead focused on the historical legacy that traces back to slave patrols (e.g., Barlow & Barlow, 2000; Brown, 2019; Jones-Brown, 2020; Davis, 2021). Progressive scholars have also attempted to address the long-standing controversy over whether one should use quantitative or qualitative methodologies to assess the empirical status of criminological issues (Higgins, 2009; Tewksbury, 2009). While we see both types used in policing research, the discipline has generally seen a disproportionately lower number of qualitative studies in comparison to quantitative studies, which is especially the

case in top criminal justice journals (Copes et al., 2020). This lack of qualitative data causes concern over the meaning-making of the quantitative data that exists.

There is extant literature examining the relationship between race and policing, with many studies empirically focusing on how statistically significant race is on citizens' overall experience and satisfaction with the police in the United States (Brown, 2019; Dowler & Sparks, 2008). In 2016, the Pew Research Center published a report entitled *The Racial Confidence Gap in Police Performance*, which indicated that U.S. citizens' perception of the police varied significantly by race (Morin & Stepler, 2020). In contrast, while police officers tend to rate their relationships with White communities as more positive than their relationships with Black communities, it is shown that Black officers tend to view police-community relations less positively when looking at how police officers interact with members of the Black community (Morin et al., 2017). The literature continues to address the relationship between police and people of color, with many studies indicating feelings of perceived bias among people of color when it comes to the police (Berg, 2016; Pryce et al., 2021). More recently, results from a nationwide survey showed that Black citizens were more fearful of death or being hurt by the police during contact, with half of the Black citizens indicating that they would rather be robbed or burglarized than having unwarranted police contact (Pickett et al., 2022). Past experiences with mistreatment served as a mediator between the existing racial divide in the fear of the police (Pickett et al., 2022).

Research has documented that communities of color may experience this bias from police officers through both direct and vicarious experiences (Brunson, 2007; Pryce et al., 2021), and this can stem from issues revolving around structural disadvantage and negative police encounters (Bell, 2016; Berg et al., 2016; Brunson, 2007; Haider-Markel et al., 2017). Due to

these experiences, whether it be directly or vicariously experienced, communities of color are most likely to express dissatisfaction with the police in comparison to their White counterparts (Dowler & Sparks, 2008), with research showing a small percentage of Black members who believe that the relationship between the police and communities of color cannot be repaired (Pryce & Chenane, 2021). In terms of citizens' fear of the police, research has also found that citizens may not always be fearful of the police. However, citizens may adopt behaviors that fall within respectability politics in efforts to minimize unfavorable interactions with the police, which is often due to citizens' understandings of the presumption of guilt or the threat they may pose to officers due to their race (Cobbina-Dungy, 2021).

While African Americans are hit the hardest with punitive policies in comparison to other racial groups, they remain in support of punitive policies if they believe fairness is present in the way the individual is treated (Johnson, 2007). Theoretically, this provides empirical support in favor of procedural justice theory, which states that people are more concerned about the process rather than the outcome. Put a different way, "African Americans who believe the criminal justice system is racially biased are less likely to favor punitive policies" (Johnson, 2007, p. 12). While Whites are shown to support punitive policies at a greater percentage than African Americans, research suggest that this percentage is not significantly different from the percentage of African Americans who support punitive policies (Johnson, 2007).

The literature suggests that there may be varying ways in how African Americans cope with legal cynicism across demographic variables, including gender (e.g., Bell, 2016; Brunson et al., 2019) and age (e.g., Bell, 2016; Kerrison et al., 2017). Studies suggest that males and females may have different interpretations of legal cynicism and may also have differences in deciding which situations are necessary for them to call the police. Additionally, males likely adopt self-

help strategies to cope with the legal cynicism built toward the police (Brunson, 2019). These self-help strategies adopted by males include criminal or deviant acts to protect themselves due to an increased fear of victimization in their communities.

In exploring legal cynicism among mothers, Bell (2016) explored the situational trust that is built among women in poor urban neighborhoods. Additionally, Bell (2016) found four distinct areas of how urban African American mothers use police service—officer exceptionalism, domain specificity, therapeutic consequences, and institutional navigation. Bell posits that although African American women are less likely to have negative encounters with the police than African American men, they often share the same cynical feelings toward the police (see also Brunson & Miller, 2006). Goff et al. (2014) found that African American boys are typically stripped of their childhood and viewed as less childlike than their White counterparts. Also, the media not only criminalize the victimization of African American youth but also refer to youths of color as men and women instead of children (Epstein et al., 2017; Goff et al., 2014), and research suggests that youth are not immune from these experiences (Sharp & Atherton, 2007). In the following sections, the Black-White differences are addressed in the context of fatal police killings.

Arrests

There are existing studies that explore and examine the relationship between police and communities of color, particularly criminal outcomes, such as the likelihood of arrest. Research documents that people of color are more likely than their White counterparts to be arrested (Grothoff, 2011; Kochel et al., 2011). Other research suggests that an officer's decision to arrest could be more contextual than individual, with no major differences found in the prevalence between Whites and Blacks in arrest when area variations are controlled for (Zhang & Zhang,

2021). Furthermore, Zhang and Zhang (2021) show that stops that are made in areas concentered with Black and other racial minorities may lead to a higher likelihood of arrest than in more racially diverse neighborhoods.

When looking into officer demographics, research confirms that not only are there racial differences in officers' decision to arrest— with White officers being most likely to make an arrest— but the likelihood of arrest increases for Black suspects when the deciding officer is Black (Brown & Frank, 2006). Additionally, when the racial composition of police departments is taken into consideration, research shows that departments with a larger number of Black officers are more likely to arrest both Black and White citizens for aggravated assaults when compared to agencies with a fewer number of Black officers (Eitle & D'Alessio, 2005). When accounting for use-of-force arrests, the likelihood of the encounter leading to an arrest decreases for both White and Black officers (Headley & Wright, 2020).

Research has shown that crime rates within a community are the strongest predictor of police arrests (Chappell et al., 2006). Yet, when looking at the impact of these arrests, it is shown to have little impact on citizens' fear of crime and victimization, as well as their confidence in the police (Hauser & Kleck, 2016). Therefore, it is suggested that police departments should not focus solely on adding more officers to the force and increasing the number of arrests that are made, but instead, they should build positive relationships with community members for the greatest impact on police-community relations (Hauser & Kleck, 2016). While the Chappell et al. (2006) study did not find that organizational factors had the greatest influence on arrest decisions, Novak et al. (2011) found that female officers were more likely to arrest in the presence of a supervisor than around their peers, which suggests that arrest decisions may be tied to being in the presence of others on the force.

When looking at arrest rates across communities, research informs us that differences in arrest rates due to crime may vary based on the level of cynicism present within communities towards the police. According to one study, neighborhoods with higher levels of legal cynicism towards the police tend to be the neighborhoods where crime is least likely to lead to an arrest due to citizens' cynicism, which may cause these crimes to go unreported and thus leading these crimes being unsanctioned (Kirk & Matsudo, 2011). Furthermore, Kirk and Matsudo (2011) found that within these neighborhoods, collective efficacy was the mediator between legal cynicism and likelihood of arrest, which residents of higher cynical neighborhoods were the least likely to engage in. There are documented reasons for how citizens' legal cynicism may serve as a barrier to collective efficacy, such as citizens having a distrust in the system to rehabilitate offenders before release, having lack of trust in receiving protection from the police when helping the police to stop crime from occurring in their neighborhoods, and having a relationship with offenders who may protect and offer the basic necessities needed by people who reside in higher cynical neighborhoods (Kirk & Matsuda, 2011). When looking specifically at communities of color, and there are arguably many recommendations that have been made to address issues leading to cynical views, particularly those of the police. To determine if college education makes a difference, research shows that college-educated police officers tend to be goal-oriented, and thus making it difficult to see positive effects of education on arrest rates during traffic stops (Rosenfield et al., 2018). Also, when looking at agencies with greater community-oriented activities, it is shown that they also have greater arrests, particularly for violent crime (Tillyer, 2017).

Arguably, many of the police practices adopted by agencies across the United States stem from the War on Drugs, which had disproportionate impacts on Black and Brown communities.

Police practices such as traffic stops have been shown to also impact these communities, and research also shows that Black drivers are most likely to be stopped when compared to White drivers in predominantly White neighborhoods, with stops of White drivers by White officers being more likely to result in a search in predominately Black neighborhoods (Rojek et al., 2012). In addition to the racial divides in officers' decision to arrest, skin color is also a factor win the likelihood of arrest for White citizens, which research shows remains constant for Black men regardless of their skin tone, with White men with lighter skin having a lower chance of arrest (Branigan et al., 2017). Johnson (2009) found that officers who made the most drug-related arrests had the perception that those arrests would be rewarded by their department and thus was seen as a priority. In addition to race and skin color, criminal histories have been found to make suspects 29 times more likely for arrest than suspects without criminal histories, with Black suspects who victimized White community members three times as likely to be arrested (Stolzenberg et al., 2021).

In recent years, studies have attempted to explain whether technology, such as body-worn cameras, could lead to police accountability and improve police-community relationships. However, findings show that despite the use of this technology, there remain racial disparities in enforcement for White and Black citizens (Pyo, 2020). In addition to racial disparities, Ritchie and Jones-Brown (2017) posit, in their analysis of policies from 36 police departments, that there is low police regulation when it comes to addressing racial profiling, interactions with women, and LGBT populations. It is possible that this low regulation serves as a driver to low police accountability when using force with citizens.

Use-of-Force

Studies document that nearly two percent of instances of police encounters go badly, making police use of deadly force a rare event (Kesic et al., 2012; McLean et al., 2022; Nix, 2017). When controlling for race, African Americans have a greater chance of facing police violence than do Whites, and scholars have called for the consideration of perceived threat in the analysis of use-of-force incidents (Brown, 2019; Rhodes et al., 2020). Research confirms that the leading cause of death for young men in the United States is police violence, with one in 1,000 Black men killed by the police (Edward et al., 2019). Additionally, police violence is shown to be more prevalent across populations between ages 20 and 35, with Black, American Indian, and Alaskan Native people being more likely to be killed by the police than their White counterparts (Edwards et al., 2019). Police use of force is a public concern in the United States due to the high-profile cases which sparked the emergence of the BLM movement (Jennings & Rubado, 2017; Menifield et al., 2018; Van Craen & Skogan, 2017).

Holding police accountable for how their actions lead to the loss of life in communities of color becomes complicated with no government-collected data that one could use to analyze these events (Brown, 2019). Much of the research covering the predictors of police use-of-force tend to rely heavily on narrative literature reviews (Bolger, 2014), and thus leaves many empirical questions unanswered regarding police use-of-force, particularly between the police and communities of color. From a historical analysis of police use of force within communities of color, scholars have argued that Blacks face police use-of-force at disproportionately higher rates than their White counterparts, even in the equal presence of legal and other factors (Brown, 2019; Jones, 2017). Research suggests that adding more officers of color, particularly Black and

Hispanic, should for some departments lower the killings of members of Black and Hispanic communities (Gaston et al., 2021).

Studies examining the effect of race on use-of-force cases remain inconclusive. Utilizing a created dataset of police use-of-force cases in 2014 and 2015, Menifield et al. (2018) found that White police officers were no more likely to use force than Black officers. This finding may be surprising due to the arguments made to increase the racial representation within the police force to help curb the number of Black deaths at the hands of the police. Other scholars have argued that there may be promise in this perspective, with increasing the racial representations in the police force likely to improve encounters, but only if the Black representation is sufficient will changes be noticed (Nicholson-Crotty et al., 2017). Despite these findings, White police officers are found to be more coercive toward Blacks (Paoline et al., 2016). Additionally, Paoline et al. (2018) found that the suspect's race had no impact on Black police officers' use of force and that there were no differences in the resistance from suspects based on the race of the officer during encounters when force is used. Wu (2020) showed that police shootings were 50% higher in areas led by White police chiefs than in cities led by Black police chiefs. Sheppard and Stowell (2021) found that areas with high levels of concentrated disadvantage tend to have lower levels of crime reporting following a police fatal interaction than more advantaged neighborhoods.

There are many questions as it pertains to the reporting of use-of-force cases by police officers, with research showing that police officers accept the use of unnecessary force for fleeing suspects; however, they do not accept the use of physical force (Phillips, 2010). However, these findings showed that these encounters are not likely to be reported when criminal activity is suspected (Phillip, 2010). In their examination of the relationship between police agency policies and officer-involved gun deaths, Jennings and Rubado (2017) found that

one policy mandating police officers to report any instance where guns are pointed at a civilian was associated with lower rates of gun deaths.

In analyzing police shootings in St. Louis, MO, between 2003 and 2012, Klinger et al. (2015) found that neither racial composition and economic disadvantage increased the occurrence of police shootings, nor did police shootings occur more frequently in communities with the highest levels of crime. Contrary to these results, other research shows that suspects' likelihood of being victim to an officer using force increases when the encounter occurs in disadvantaged neighborhoods and in those with higher homicide rates (Terrill & Reisig, 2003). In their investigation of the impacts of a global pandemic and George Floyd's death on crime and other areas of police work, White et al. (2022) found that in one city, after the death of George Floyd, not only did citizen calls for service and traffic incidents drop, but there were also declines in officer proactivity, except in November 2020, when it increased along with officer use-of force which continued in the summer and fall of 2020.

Other studies show that not only do use of force incidents tend to occur in predominantly Black neighborhoods, but the level of force also tends to be higher, with decreasing rates of these incidents occurring in communities that are more racially diverse (Lautenschlager & Omori, 2018). Examining systemic racism in police killings, DeAngelis (2021) concluded that relative to their Black and Hispanic peers, Whites were perceived as more dangerous and a greater threat to the safety of police, despite their underrepresentation in the Mapping Police Violence database from 2013 to 2021. In addition to having lower odds than Whites in showing signs of mental illness and being harmed, data reflect that Blacks had higher odds of fleeing from the police (DeAngelis, 2021). Considering these findings, a group of social activists and organizers has come together to increase police accountability within the Black community and bring to the

forefront long-standing issues that should be addressed to resolve the racial tensions between the police and communities.

RURAL VS URBAN POLICE DEPARTMENTS

Historically, the literature has remained limited in understanding how rural police departments police their communities in comparison to urban police departments (Crank, 1990; Christensen & Crank, 2001; Johnson & Rhodes, 2009; Violanti et al., 2012; Weisheit et al., 1994). However, existing research shows that rural and urban police departments have differences in many areas of police work including staff shortages, community interactions, policing styles, attitudes, and workplace experiences, among others (Barrett et al., 2008; Husain, 2019; Mrozla, 2021; Weisheit et al., 1994). What is suggested by the literature is that there remain stark differences between rural and urban departments and the over-emphasis placed on urban police departments in research may be misleading when trying to understand the organizational and environmental processes that impact officers in departments located in rural settings (Crank, 1990; Christensen & Crank, 2001). In their examination of police work and police culture in non-urban settings, Christensen and Crank (2001) concluded that while generally, themes identified for non-urban departments tended to be aligned with themes identified from urban settings, there remained differences that were more nuanced than bold between non-urban and urban police departments.

Non-urban and urban departments are similar in terms of their concern about increased crime, advances in technology, and traditions (Christensen & Crank, 2001). However, there remain differences in non-urban and urban departments in terms of how being on patrol looks for officers in non-urban settings in comparison to officers in urban settings, the main focuses relating public order problems and public relations, and officer safety, with non-urban officers

being less concerned over unpredictable elements of their work (Christensen & Crank, 2001). In light of these similarities and differences, higher levels of group cohesion and citizen cooperation tend to be seen in rural police departments, with little differences seen in officer attitudes regarding order maintenance and aggressive enforcement by department type (Sun & Chu, 2009). Surprisingly, in their examination of 298 departments drawn from the U.S. Public Safety Officer Benefits database, Violanti et al. (2012) found that suicide rates tend to be higher for officers in rural settings than for officers in urban settings, with many of these suicides occurring during officers' off-duty time. This finding is surprising due to the general consensus of higher levels of group cohesion among rural officers. The reasons for this finding may be attributed to the lack of mental health services available to assist rural officers due to lower budgets, increase in workload or danger due to fewer officers assigned to a shift, and their higher levels of visibility in the community, with them being seen as officers whether on or off duty (Violanti et al., 2012).

There is research that suggests differences in how officers experience the workplace. Since the pandemic, rural departments may have some advantages such as increased training, but they may face disadvantages in the fact that they may not have the materials needed to effectively do their jobs (e.g., officer shortage or personal protective equipment) (Mrozla, 2021). In addition to these advantages, officers working in rural departments tend to show lower levels of depression, anxiety, and stress, with urban officers showing higher levels in each of these areas (Husain, 2019). This can be due to several factors including the proportionate increase in order maintenance calls that urban police officers receive (Johnson & Rhodes, 2009). While urban departments tend to receive more order maintenance calls, it is shown that rural departments tend to see service calls proportionally more than urban departments, with both

types of departments showing similar proportions of calls relating directly to law enforcement, although for more serious offenses for urban departments (Johnson & Rhodes, 2009).

Findings support the notion that rural agencies tend to engage in practices that are more aligned with community policing (Weisheit et al., 1994). In terms of their relationship to the community, rural police departments tend to have certain advantages over urban departments due to reasons including their ability to produce more personal connections with citizens and the frequency with which they interact with citizens (Weisheit et al., 1994). It is found that urban residents tend to have lower levels of trust in the police than do rural residents regarding the outcome-based performance of officers, with many of their views on the police being influenced by the media and political ideology (Wang & Sun, 2020). In surveying officers from both rural and urban police departments in the Commonwealth Virginia on their awareness of biased-based policing within their own department or in others, Ioimo et al. (2011) concluded that there remained differences between White and minority officers including whether training was sufficiently held, whether bias-based policing was practiced in Virginia, and police-community cooperation. Other findings indicated that rural officers tend to appreciate more training and policies regarding bias-based policing and feel as though these data should be tracked (Ioimo et al., 2011). While urban officers tended to see bias-based policing as more of an issue for their department than rural departments, bias-based policing was reported to be present at both (Ioimo et al., 2011).

Research also indicates that there may be differences that exist when accounting for policing styles based on departmental classifications. In utilizing a use-of-force scenario with urban, suburban, and rural officers, it was found that urban officers' reactions were more aligned with a watchman style, rural officers' reactions were more consistent with the law, and suburban

officers were in the middle, meaning that in some way suburban departments were similar to both the urban and rural departments (Barrett et al., 2008). Overall, research show that while there are some similarities between rural and urban departments, there is a great need for research to continue examining the differences in order to bring about more useful implications that can be applied to police departments, regardless of size.

BLACK LIVES MATTER

Due to the disproportionate killing of unarmed people of color, there has been an emergence of social movements and protests that have attempted to address unresolved concerns between communities of color and the police (Cobbina, 2019; Cobbina-Dungy & Jones-Brown, 2021). It is argued that in 2013, the United States witnessed protesting in a manner that had not been seen in the country since the 1960s, and while police killings are a historic event within the United States, the killing of Trayvon Martin in 2013 led to one of the main social movements for police accountability—Black Lives Matter, which started with three Black women—Alicia Garza, Patrisse Cullors, and Opal Tometi—in response to the acquittal of George Zimmerman, Trayvon Martin's murderer (About - Black lives matter, n.d.; Jones-Brown et al., 2020; Williamson et al., 2018). Protesters and activists who engage in BLM protesting often do so due to these killings and the indictments officers receive.

BLM protests are likely to show up in places where people are victimized by the police (Williamson et al., 2018). In 2020, the BLM protest participation increased far beyond previous years, with the recent COVID-19 pandemic having little impact on people's decision to participate (Cobbina et al., 2021). In their examination of risk-taking and motivation to participate in the 2020 March on Washington, Cobbina et al. (2020) found that Black protestors were more concerned about the threat of being killed than the Covid-19 virus, while White

protesters' motivations for participating came from their recognition of being a part of a privileged group that benefits from structural racism. While people have different considerations for engaging in protests, research shows that those who are the most committed toward the goals of the protest are most likely to continue their engagement in protesting despite police officers' use of repressive tactics (Cobbina et al., 2019). In contrast, those who are less committed to the goals of the protest are more likely to choose other forms of civic engagement.

Before the BLM movement, one of the main suggestions that emerged was the possibility of adding more officers of color to the force to resolve some of the tensions between police and communities of color (Nicholson-Crotty et al., 2017). While studies, especially those grounded in representative bureaucracy theory—the idea that an organization should socially and demographically reflect the community in which it serves to reflect better relations with community members and that organization—support this claim (Brunson & Gau, 2011; Riccucci et al., 2018), others suggest that the issue with policing is far more complex than adding more Black officers to the force (Cobbina, 2019), with still others showing evidence that some residents are not able to tell the difference between White and Black officers in terms of improvement in outcomes (Benton, 2020). Largely, findings have been inconclusive, despite research that indicates differences in the decision-making process between Black and White officers concerning arrests (Brown & Frank, 2006).

Public Support of BLM

Studies show that while there are people who support the BLM movement, there are others who oppose it, with many studies showing how demographic factors serve as predictors of one's support of the movement (Baranauskas, 2022; Corral, 2020; Updegrove et al., 2021; West et.al., 2021). Additionally, during civil unrest, some people who are in opposition to BLM may

be in support of or prefer the phrase “All Lives Matter (ALM).” ALM emerged in opposition to BLM, despite the premise of BLM being that all lives matter. Supporters of BLM argue that all lives cannot matter until Black lives matter, and data on police killings have suggested differential treatment toward Blacks when compared to Whites, which adds legitimacy to this argument (see DeAngelis, 2021). It is shown that one’s preference for ALM stems from their implicit racism, colorblind ideology, and narrow definitional boundaries of discrimination (West et al., 2021). However, explicit racism, group narcissism, and right-wing political orientation were shown not to account for one's preference for ALM over BLM (West et al., 2021). When looking at one’s support for law-and-order policies at protest events, political bias, mediated by perceptions of protester violence, is shown to support one’s support for the implementation of law-and-order policies during these events with citizens who view left-leaning online news media being less supportive of these policies and citizens who view right-leaning online news media being more supportive of these policies (Baranauskas, 2022).

Within the context of racial threat, Updegrove et al. (2018) utilized a nationally representative sample of 2,114 people from 33 states and the District of Columbia and discovered that older, republican, conservative men were more likely to oppose BLM, while Blacks and others who witnessed racial bias were less likely to oppose BLM. Furthermore, it has been shown that people who are in support of the confederate flag were less likely to perceive bias within the criminal justice system, less likely to perceive anti-Blackness among police officers, and more likely to view the police as friends (Updegrove et al., 2021). When accounting for police officers’ perceptions of the movement, one study showed that most police officers tend to view BLM as being motivated by hatred for the police and authority, with very few officers believing the organization is motivated by positive social change (Woods & Blackmon, 2021). In

contrast, it is also shown that there are racial divides among officers when it comes to police accountability, with more Black officers believing accountability to be a motivator of protesting events to a greater extent than their White colleagues (Morin et al., 2017). While most officers tend to see demonstrations as due to long-standing bias against the police, with about 67% of officers believing that police-involved events that spark demonstrations are isolated events that do not speak to the issues present within their own department, these feelings vary by race (Morin et al., 2017). When factoring in race, it is shown that over half of Black officers believe that these events point to larger structural issues in policing, with about 27% of White officers agreeing and more Black women agreeing with this than Black men in law enforcement (Morin et al., 2017).

While studies such as those mentioned examined citizen perceptions toward the BLM movements, research has also attempted to examine public fear of protesters, as well as their support for protest policing. Research shows that, generally, the public is not fearful of protesters and that their fear is often dependent on protest tactics (e.g., damaging property and assaulting citizens, carrying firearms, and delaying traffic), which then influences their support for repressive police tactics (Metcalfe & Pickett, 2021). Research shows that people with higher racial resentment tend to support police repression towards protests aimed at advocating for the rights of racial minorities and those with lower racial resentment tend to reject police repression (Metcalfe & Pickett, 2021). Other research shows that if the debate of a protest is legitimized in news articles, then people tend to be more supportive of protesters with criticism directed toward the police, while articles that frame the protest as a riot or confrontation tend to make people less supportive of protesters and less critical of the police (Kilgo & Mourão, 2021).

News media outlets are also found to be influencers in one’s support and perception of

BLM, with evidence showing how media can broadcast a false narrative of events and alter citizens' attitudes. For instance, research show that media may still reflect a protest event as violent despite the presence of fringe groups that are violent and attempt to delegitimatize protestors' constitutional rights (Reid & Craig, 2021). In contrast, citizens who view online news media are less likely to support law-and-order policies and that their perception of protester violence is the mediator between their support or nonsupport of these policies (Baranauskas, 2022). Most data exploring public support for BLM tend to look at it from a Black versus White standpoint; however, research shows that while Hispanics tend to be not well informed about BLM, once they are, they tend to be in support of the movement and what it stands for (Corral, 2020). Largely, the research shows that Whites are at the bottom of the scale with their support for the movement. While it is important to examine public support for BLM, there is a growing interest in the impact BLM has had on police agencies in the United States.

BLM's Impact on Police Agencies

Research suggests that high-profile incidents have resulted in policing being a harder profession to be a part of, with larger departments being the most affected by these incidents and most likely to make modifications to existing policies regarding use-of-force (Morin et al., 2017). Regarding protest efforts, another pivotal moment in the protest history was the police killing of Michael Brown, which subsequently came with what scholars have referred to as a "Ferguson Effect." During this time, claims were made that de-policing occurred because of civil unrest, which caused police officers to police in fear—that is, engage in less proactive policing—which many believed led to the increase in crime rates (Pyrooz et al., 2016; Rosenfield & Wallman, 2015). Specifically, during this time fewer enforcement actions were seen from police officers in certain areas, particularly concerning low-level offenses with smaller increases in

enforcement post-Ferguson (Slocum et al., 2020). Despite the claims made concerning a "Ferguson Effect," some scholars have shown that there is no evidence to support this claim (Bollinger, 2018; Pyrooz et al., Rosenfield & Wallman, 2019; 2016; Skoy, 2020). Skoy (2020) finds that not only is there no evidence to support this claim but finds decreased fatal interaction between the police and communities of color in the month proceeding BLM protest. Using arrest and homicide data from 53 large cities between 2010 and 2015, Rosenfield and Wallman (2015) concluded that the decline in arrest rates (stemming from de-policing) had no bearing on the spike of homicides across offenses and any year during this time. Looking at BLM's impact on citizens, there has been a decrease in pro-White attitudes during the BLM movement in comparison to before the movement. How citizens viewed the police had disproportionate impacts that were significant to Black versus non-Black communities, with non-Black community members' views of the police largely remaining the same (Kochel, 2017).

When focusing on the impact of civil unrest on policing, particularly the "Ferguson Effect," one study showed that the negative publicity that came because of the police killing in Ferguson, Missouri, changed the extent to which police officers were willing to partner with the community (Wolfe & Nix, 2016). This study was instrumental in turning the focus of the Ferguson Effect from crime rates to other factors, particularly self-related and job-related factors, that served as explanations of de-policing during this time. Despite the decrease in community partnerships, other research shows that some benefits come along with the BLM movement. For instance, one study showed a 15% to 20% decline in officer homicides between 2014 and 2019 in places that have experienced BLM protesting (Campbell, 2021). The decline in lethal use-of-force during this period was most prominent in areas where BLM protesting events were large

and frequent, and expansions in police body-worn cameras, community policing, and de-policing may serve as partial explanations for this decline (Campbell, 2021).

While police responses to civil unrest are typically studied in areas where officer-involved shootings are most likely to occur, research suggests that police departments elsewhere are impacted, even in jurisdictions distant from the department/s involved (Jurek et al., 2022). During this "distal crises," police in other jurisdictions tend to rate local and national media as less impactful or legitimate in the immediate aftermath of officer-involved shootings and thus lowers the police department's relationship with media outlets (Jurek et al., 2022). While BLM appears to have an impact on police agencies, unjustified police killings continue to persist. As a result of high-profile police killings, many activists have made calls to defund the police.

DEFUND THE POLICE

One of the latest recommendations made by protestors is a call to Defund the Police (DTP), where protestors, social activists, and public scholars are advocating for reallocating or redirecting funding resources away from police departments to social service agencies to include other professions such as social work in handling issues that are typically dependent solely on the police, more specifically mental health, substance abuse, and homelessness issues (Jacobs, 2020). Nationwide, only 5% of 911 calls have anything to do with violence. Most arrests are for low-level, non-violent activities (Lum et al., 2021; Ray, 2020). These activities are often symptoms of underlying issues of drug addiction, homelessness, and mental illness, which many argue should be treated by healthcare professionals and social workers rather than by the police (Cobbina-Dungy and Jones-Brown 2021; Lum et al., 2021). While there is a well-established literature on the BLM movement, dating back to 2013, the literature on Defund the Police is beginning to grow, with not too many studies existing yet on the topic. However, there is much

commentary on the topic that are grounded in evidence-based research (e.g., Henderson & Yisrael, 2021; Ray, 2020).

In terms of understanding public support for DTP, terms such as *defund*, *disband*, and *abolish* are used interchangeably; however, there are notable differences that separates DTP from many of the assumptions that are made regarding its intended purpose (Bilal, 2020; Cobbina-Dungy et al., 2022). One common myth that is shared about the DTP is that is means abolishment, despite there being at least 13 cities that are defunding their police departments without abolishing their police (Henderson & Yisrael, 2021; Ray, 2020; McEvoy, 2020). Other myths that exist regarding DTP are that taking funding resources away from the police will cause greater disorder, that the police are needed to protect the public from violence, investment in community programming will not address issues, that the police should remain as they are if the goal is to continue preventing crime, that education is not important for officers to have, and that there is no research existing that supports the arguments presented by people who are in support of DTP (Henderson & Yisrael, 2021).

Despite the myths that exist, it is important to understand what DTP seeks to accomplish. First, the Defund the Police movement argues for the need to allocate resources to other areas (e.g., education, healthcare, housing, employment opportunities, youth services, and community resources etc.) that could serve as alternatives to policing by addressing the root causes of crime (Defund the Police, 2020). By reallocating funding, it should decrease the instances of Black people being murdered or brutalized by law enforcement primarily though providing enough services to aid in decreasing the interaction between police and members of the Black community; therefore, providing a lesser reliance on formal control. Second, the movement argues that the United States should remove outdated laws that do not prioritize public health and

social support. Third, they argue that funding should be reduced from police agencies, specifically funding that allows police to purchase militarized weapons and technologies, to reallocate to non-violent options to address key social problems and that policymakers should follow suit with the above arguments (Defund the Police, 2020). According to this movement, if these things are prioritized, then citizens would not need to over-rely on the police.

Research has attempted to explore how protesters' views of defunding the police may be shaped by their level of commitment to movements, such as BLM. Examining attitudes amongst protesters, Cobbina-Dungy et al. (2022) found that new and tourist protesters (participated in protest fewer than three times) had reservations toward defunding, with these reservations being due to the perception of problematic outcomes and anarchy in handling violent crime, while there remained few intermittent (participated in three or more protests) and revolutionary protesters (protested daily or every other day) that viewed the police as being ineffective and believed in doing away with police (Cobbina-Dungy et al., 2022; see also Cobbina, 2019). Of these differences, it was noted that race tended to not weigh heavily in the DTP discourse (Cobbina-Dungy et al., 2022).

Analyzing calls from nine U.S. police agencies, Lum et al. (2021) concluded that a lengthy number of calls police departments received could not be handed off to any other agency without funds being reallocated to other organizations to take the responsibility away from police. This finding supports the argument that resources should be allocated that can serve as an alternative to policing. It is noted by Cobbina-Dungy and Jones-Brown (2021), the police are relied on to address issues stemming from economic and structural violence, and that it will be beneficial to instead reallocate a portion of policing budgets to organizations addressing issues surrounding "unemployment, underemployment, poverty, homelessness, poor-quality schools,"

among others (p. 10). Overall, research supports the argument that adding resources to address public health and social support may help to solve issues within the Black community, and other communities of color. Despite these suggestions, when looking into how police officers view inequality, they are more likely than the public to believe that the necessary changes have been made to address inequality, with about 92% of White officers and 29% of Black officers believing that the necessary changes have been made to address inequality (Morin et al., 2017).

Despite the push for police agencies to decrease their spending by redirecting and reallocating funds, there have been cities that decided to instead increase their police spending, in spite of the protesting that occurred post-Floyd where calls were made to defund the police. Indeed, police spending has increased or stayed the same for more than half of the existing U.S. police cities, according to an analysis conducted using the 2021 budget for 34 of 50 cities in the U.S., with reasons for this including residents' push for spending being made too late to impact budget, prior negotiations made by unions, and the anticipated tax revenue anticipated during the coronavirus pandemic (Holder et al., 2020). In their examination of budgets, Holder et al. (2020) looked at two major funds driving police spending – police funds (e.g., major equipment purchases) and general funds (e.g., headcount and salaries), with decreases in general funds meaning fewer cops, which is more in tune with the defund the police as it replaces these cops with needed social services to address crime within communities.

Compared to the year 2020, there is a growing number of Americans who favor more police spending within their respective areas, with older citizens being more likely to support increasing police spending and younger adults being more likely to support decreasing police spending (Parker & Hurst, 2021). According to Parker and Hurst (2021), Whites and Hispanics are more likely than Blacks and Asians to want this increase. Additionally, republicans and

republican-leaning citizens are more likely to support increasing police spending (61%), with a majority of democrats and democrat leaners (40%) expressing that it should stay the same, with other democrats (34%) saying it should be increased, and 25% of them saying it should be decreased (Parker & Hurst, 2021).

Regardless of budgets increasing or decreasing police spending, these documents are considered to be living documents, which can be amended, even after receiving approval, and thus increasing the difficulty in fostering sustainable change (Holder et al., 2020). Furthermore, it is noted that decreasing police budgets does not necessarily mean that there will be a decrease in police spending due to the fact that police influence or reliance is heavily present in the services (e.g., 911 mental health response program) that funds are moved to (Farrick, 2020; Owens, 2021). For instance, in areas such as Philadelphia, city spending has gone to expenses connected to overtime for protests, settlements, and lawsuits connected to police behavior at protesting events (teargassing protesters and civilians (Owens, 2021). Therefore, when the redirection of funds is taken at face value, one may think change is occurring in police spending while in actuality the goal of less reliance on police remains undermined.

Areas that have either voted to defund or have defunded their law enforcement departments are Minneapolis, MN ($1.6 billion), New York City, NY ($1 billion), Cook County, IL (not yet specified), Portland OR ($15 million), Austin, TX ($150 million), Baltimore ($22 million), MD, Los Angeles, CA ($150 million), San Francisco, CA ($120 million), Oakland, CA ($14.6 Million), Milwaukee, WI ($16 million), and Philadelphia, PA ($33.3 million), Seattle, Washington ($3.5 million), Hertford, CT ($1 million), Norman, OK ($865,000), Salt Lake City, UT ($5.3 million) and Washington, DC ($15 million) (American Police Officers Alliance, 2021; Henderson & Yisrael, 2021; Jordan, 2021; Navratil, 2021; Richman & Wenger, 2020). In these

areas, reallocated funds have been invested into family services, anti-violence programming, community health programming, food access, abortion access programs, opening recreation centers on Sundays, increasing trauma services, offering Black-owned businesses forgivable loans, homelessness prevention, homelessness services, and education (American Police Officers Alliance, 2021; Henderson & Yisrael, 2021; Jordan, 2021; Navratil, 2021; Ray, 2020; Richman & Wenger, 2020).

Similar to the empirical evidence on DTP, the impact of reallocation currently remains unknown; however, there is research existing that supports the main goals of DTP by suggesting that (1) investment in education should help decrease the prison population, (2) that the police may not be the answer to solving crime, considering the percentage of unresolved crime each year, (3) that people with access to educational programs are less likely to encounter the criminal justice system, (4) that many police practices do not serve to prevent crime but rather react to it, (5) college-educated officers are most likely to choose other methods of gaining compliance than use-of-force, and that (5) increased spending is not the answer to solving crime (Bump, 2020; Henderson & Yisrael, 2021; Jones-Brown et al. 2013; Lochner & Moretti, 2004; Ray, 2020). According to the evidence cited above, there is much evidence-based research that stands in support of DTP. The section below examines theories that are relevant to this study and synthesizes existing studies examining race, policing, and protesting that utilized similar theoretical approaches.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Many studies have utilized the concept of double marginality to examine topics related to police officers' experiences, as well as representative bureaucracy theory when in studies focusing on the representation of women and minorities in police departments across the United

States. While these studies were geared toward addressing topics relating to diversity within the police force, this study utilizes three theories: Festinger's Cognitive Dissonance Theory, System Justification Theory, and Blalock's Racial Threat Theory, as conceptual frameworks to gain an understanding of the experience of police officers during times of civil unrest and the factors that influence their participation in BLM protesting events.

Cognitive Dissonance Theory (CDT)

Leon Festinger created Cognitive Dissonance Theory (CDT) in 1957, which focuses on the inconsistencies, or dissonance, that may occur between one's knowledge or beliefs and one's behavior (Cooper, 2007; Festinger, 1957). In terms of definitions, Festinger argued that when one's knowledge and beliefs are in line with what one does, this is known as consonance. Alternatively, when one's knowledge and beliefs are not in line with what one does, this is known as dissonance. Literature documents several contradictions that exist within the institution of policing. For instance, most police departments remain predominately White, even in areas where racial minorities are the majority (Davis, 2021). Also, police leaders tend to inform their officers to do one thing, with their own behaviors being influenced by political advancement, inconvenient truths, and structural racism (Davis, 2021). Knowing this, it is not surprising how officers may find themselves having thoughts and attitudes that do not transition to their behavior in moments when movements are mobilized in opposition to the police.

Currently, the concept of occupational socialization is covered in the policing literature and discusses this socialization process among police officers who join the force and how this may place them in positions to conform to the culture that is already established (Cobbina, 2019; Davis, 2021). To date, there appears to be no empirical study examining police officers' support of the BLM movement, but one may assume that there are police officers who support the BLM

movement. One could also assume that police officers may exist that not only support movements, such as BLM, but also aid in the planning of protesting events and participate in these movements. When on duty, officers may not have the option of declining when instructed to police a protest. According to Festinger and Carlsmith (1959), this would place them in a position of forced compliance, which may come with the consequence of them having to stray away from their personal beliefs and attitudes to conform to other beliefs and values that are more in line with the actions they are expected to perform. This leads to cognitive dissonance being a byproduct of the strain experienced during civil unrest.

Research suggests that cognitive dissonance is present more frequently among police officers of color (Harr, 2005). It is shown that Black and Asian police officers are often excluded from full participation in the police force and often succumb to White police occupational culture, with those with greater dissonance leaving the force (Harr, 2005; Holdaway & Barron, 1997). According to research, Black and Hispanic officers tend to be the least likely to support doing what they view as "right" when department rules must be broken in the process with White officers being most likely to stand for what they view as "right," despite having to break department rules to do that (Morin et al., 2017). In examining the impact of emotional labor and value dissonance on police officer burnout, Schaible and Gecas (2010) found that officers in departments with greater levels of cognitive dissonance experienced higher rates of burnout. It was found that the more an officer feels that their values are shared with colleagues, the more they are to exude confidence in their authority as an officer (White & Schafer, 2020). When examining the workplace experience of officers, particularly officers of color, having their values reflected within the police department may be an influencer on how open they are to social

activism participation. Furthermore, it promotes the creation of an environment where they can openly express their concerns with the police force without fear of retaliation.

System Justification Theory (SJT)

Advanced by Jost and Banaji in 1994, Systems Justification Theory (SJT) was formulated to explain how some people become not only victims of an unequal system, but also supporters of such a system. Operating to explain the social psychology of social phenomena through group or cultural level of analysis, SJT "posits a general human tendency to support and defend the social status quo" (Jost & Banaji, 1994 p. 1123). Evidence for SJT suggests that not only are people encouraged to be favorable towards their group but also toward the current social system and status quo (Jost et al., 2004). An example of SJT can include one (1) rationalizing the status quo, (2) having a preference to be paired with members of more advantaged groups, as well as (3) placing stereotypes on people who are seen as a threat to the social system (Blasi & Jost, 2006). It is the social system in which people belong to that often seeks to maintain the status quo (Blasi & Jost, 2006).

SJT is concerned with understanding why people tend to engage in behaviors that appear to be contradictory. In the context of this study, one may ask, why is it that people defend institutions (e.g., policing) that are oppressive toward their racial group or why is it that officers who are aware of the injustices that are perpetuated by the police choose not to protest against issues, such as police killings? According to Jost and van der Toorn (2012), SJT can be manifested in several ways including stereotyping, unconsciously, or serving underlying needs whether it be epistemic, existential, or relational. In other words, people tend to defend the status quo because it brings a sense of certainty, security, and social acceptance and thus causing

people to not only feel good about themselves and the social organizations to which they belong, but also in the social system despite its ability to hurt others or themselves (Jost, 2020).

While criminological research has examined the unique positions of Black officers serving in the U.S. police force, research also shows how there may be associated dangers advocating for the Black community while serving on the force, which places Black officers in the position of supporting a racially based status quo to prevent having to face consequences that are life-threatening or career ending (Cobbina, 2019; Davis, 2021). In this sense, their non-participation protects them from facing organizational consequences, but heightens the consequences they face from their communities. This decision-making process is often influenced by minority officers' desire to impress their fellow White officers in the police force and uphold White supremacy (Williams, 2021).

While police research has primarily looked at police relations with minority communities through the lens of double marginality, social justification theory can be utilized to better understand the factors influencing their participation in social justice movements, which is a useful theoretical framework to utilize to understand protesters' relationship with the police when these events happen and officers, particularly officers of color, are met with hostility towards their racial group. Therefore, systems justification may help us to understand how officer participation in protest movements may be shaped by officer compliance with such a system, amidst protests in retaliation of unequal harm done to communities of color.

Racial Threat Theory (RTT)

The two prior theories, cognitive dissonance, and system justification theory, speak to the individual-level accounts of how people make decisions to engage in certain behaviors. However, when speaking to the aftermath or consequences of these cognitive processes, studies

have shown how the adoption of these cognitive processes, especially when operating within institutions, may lead to the formation of a group position, whether it be intentional or unintentional. Racial Threat Theory was introduced in the 1967 work of Huber Blalock. In his book, *Toward a Theory of Minority-Group Relations*, Blalock sought to provide a theory that could account for macro-level discrimination toward minority communities (Feldmeyer & Cochran, 2019. Research shows race to be a predictor not only in how officers perceive the workplace but also in their interactions with protestors during protesting events (Gau et al., 2021; Kochel, 2020). These two areas of exploration are understudied, despite research providing empirical support for the racial threat hypothesis when examining the relationship between police officers and minority communities, particularly Black and other communities of color (Davenport et al., 2011).

Relying heavily on group position, this theory builds on work established in the areas of racial prejudice, which is viewed as a macro-level group position often predicated on superiority, subordination of alternate race, and suspicion towards subordinate race (Blumer, 1958). Criminological work examining racial threat theory largely uses the central hypothesis that the larger the number of minorities present in a situation, the larger the threat they pose to the majority population. The greater the number of minorities, the more susceptible they are to mechanisms rooted in discrimination and social control (Feldmeyer & Cochran, 2019). In contrast, the lower the number of minorities present, the less likely they are perceived as a threat (Feldmeyer & Cochran, 2019). Therefore, under racial threat theory, police-minority relations are not viewed as a group of individual attitudes toward a group, but rather how a group perceives another group, which is perceived to be subordinate (Blumer, 1958).

Research examining the BLM protesting shows that Blacks, to a greater degree than Whites, tend to be dissatisfied with police performance at protesting events, suggesting differences in how groups (e.g., racial groups) may vary in their support for how police officers handle these peaceful events (Pryce & Gainey, 2021). Research also confirms that from 1960 to 1990, protests led by African Americans were more likely to garner police presence, with police being more likely to arrest Black protesters, and engage in repressive police tactics with Blacks to a greater degree than with other racial groups (Davenport et al., 2011). In a more recent exploration on racial identity on protest evaluations, Peay and Camarillo (2020) found that protests consisting of all-Black protestors were perceived to more likely end in violence compared to protests consisting of more racially diverse protests, despite these protests being peaceful (see also Metcalfe & Pickett, 2021). Despite claims that adding more officers of color to the force will resolve these problems, it has been shown that officers, regardless of background, tend to perform similarly in their police duties (Smith, 2003).

Protesting events focused on issues revolving around racial justice are often framed as a threat to public interests despite their nonviolent characteristics (Reid & Craig, 2021). Examining perceptions of race, crime, and policing among Ferguson protesters, Cobbina et al. (2016) discovered that while people of color did not associate themselves or members of their racial group with crime, they believed that the police did. Citizens' belief that the police viewed them as being connected to crime, suggested that they also believed they would be treated as criminals by police officers.

While conducting a review of the literature, I was interested in examining the current research to identify gaps in the literature that remained surrounding race, policing, and protesting. After reviewing the literature, I concluded that (1) although research largely

examined police-community relations during civil unrest, research was severely limited in understanding how police officers experienced each other during civil unrest, and thus took the *us versus them* approach that is commonly used to explain the relationship between police and communities, (2) there was no existing study (to my knowledge) that explored police involvement in BLM protesting outside of being an officer, and (3) there was a need for a study that contributed to our knowledge on existing concepts such as dual loyalty and if this could ever be achieved without a sacrifice being made to officers' personal beliefs. When building the methodology, it was my goal to build upon prior knowledge known about law enforcement and their involvement in protesting during the unrest. It was through synthesizing the literature where the theoretical framework was built, that questions started to appear to me that have largely been unaddressed in current literature. In the next chapter, I delve into understanding the current study, and the procedures and steps taken will ultimately answer the primary research questions identified in chapter one.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

RESEARCH DESIGN

Utilizing qualitative semi-structured interviews, the current study examined police officers' workplace experiences during civil unrest, their participation in social justice movements while off duty, the perceived effect of their decision to participate or not in BLM protesting, and the extent to which race influences their experiences and participation. Qualitative methodology was an appropriate method to use to answer the research questions and to gain an in-depth insight into the lived experiences of officers during periods of civil unrest and the factors influencing their willingness to participate in social activism. Rabionet (2011) described qualitative work as "a flexible and powerful tool to capture the voices and the ways people make meaning of their experiences" (p. 563).

Empirical qualitative studies focused on social justice issues are typically conducted with marginalized or oppressed populations (Aydarova, 2019). Similarly, when looking at qualitative work surrounding the civil unrest and BLM, this body of literature also focuses mainly on the perspectives of community members. The current study engaged in what Aydarova (2019) calls "studying up for social justice," which includes the voices of those perceived to be in power. As stated by Aydarova (2019), "If scholarly investigations do not examine the oppressors' voices, experiences, and practices more consistently, the pursuit of liberation and alternative futures that could be more just for all will be greatly undermined" (p. 34). Further, Jones-Brown and Williams (2021) contend that it is necessary to elevate the voices of people impacted by law enforcement, which includes people who are inside of law enforcement themselves who are also impacted by law enforcement.

Research on police and race issues is typically conducted in large metropolitan areas (Iwama et al., 2021). Despite the research that has been done in larger police agencies, there has been a call for more studies to include small and midsize law enforcement agencies due to the complexity of the issues that they face as well (International Association of Chiefs of Police, 2015; Iwama et al., 2021). Additionally, it is confirmed that police departments located in smaller towns tend to be different in many ways from police departments located in larger towns (e.g., higher crime clearance rates, more in tune with community policing, etc.) (Falcone et al., 2002). Therefore, this study investigated the experiences of police officers from both a rural police department and an urban police department, particularly their experiences with expressing their views of BLM movements while reporting to the workplace and the perceived effects associated with their participation. Both departments are in Hampton Roads, Virginia with the rural police department being categorized as a smaller police department that serves a smaller service population and the urban police department being categorized as a mid-sized department serving a larger service population.

In gaining access to police departments there were a host of things I had to take into consideration. Nationally, it is found that in establishing police practitioner-researcher partnerships, only about 32% of agencies are willing to participate in these partnerships (Albert, 2013). It has been shown that scholars often have difficulty in establishing these partnerships, particularly when pursuing projects that are centered around matters of civil unrest (Albert, 2013). Scholars have argued that establishing practitioner-researcher relationships often calls for additional steps to be taken to establish relationships with police agencies. Additional steps include highlighting how the research adds value to the agency, promoting rather than criticizing the agency, and how the knowledge and expertise of the officers will be taken into consideration

during the project (Alpert et al., 2013; Fleming, 2010). The sampling strategy used in this study considered these issues to aid in recruiting officers to participate in the study. Institutional Review Board approval for this study was granted in May 2021 by Old Dominion University (Case #1757266-1). The combined recruitment and data collection period of the current study spanned over a year, with data analysis starting during this time. This process is explained further in the sections provided below.

SAMPLE

Due to the phenomenological nature of this study, a sample of police officers was utilized to gain insight into their lived experiences regarding the social environment at work during civil unrest. While the present study aimed to provide data to display the factors influencing whether police officers participated in social justice movements off duty, it was not a requirement that officers had to attend a protest off duty to participate in this study, as they would still be able to give insight into why they chose not to participate. Police officers were recruited from two police departments that were selected using convenience sampling. Due to the likelihood of partnering with police agencies, it was decided to use two departments that had an already established practitioner-researcher partnership with Old Dominion University. Using a convenience sample of both a rural police department and an urban police department was useful in providing a comparative analysis between rural and urban settings. To participate in the current study, participants had to be at least 21 years of age, a current police officer with a minimum of 1.5 years of police experience (i.e., the George Floyd protests took place in the summer of 2020), and employed at one of the two agencies included in this study.

The rural police department is located in an area with a population of 94,960 citizens and has 180 full-time sworn officers. About 76% of the officers are White, 21% are Black, and 3%

are Hispanic. The rural police department is in an area where the citizens' racial demographics are 52% White, 43% African American, 2% Asian, 1% other races, and 3% two or more races. The urban police department is in an area with a population of roughly 242,742 citizens and has 601 full-time sworn officers. About 70% of the officers are White, 20% are Black, 6% are Hispanic, and 4% are Asian. The urban police department is in an area where the citizens' racial demographics are 47% White, 41.1% African American, 4.7% two or more races, 3.7% Asian, and 3% some other race.

Both departments in this study are in a geographical location where the organization, BLM 757, LLC reports on local protesting events that are occurring within the seven cities of Hampton Roads, Virginia: Norfolk, Portsmouth, Newport News, Chesapeake, Hampton, Virginia Beach, and Suffolk. While other BLM organizations may exist, many of the protesting events occurring across Hampton Roads, Virginia were organized by the BLM 757 organization, as referenced in many of the news articles reporting on protest events (Bozick, 2021; Vargas, 2020; Vera & Allassan, 2019). Additionally, BLM 757 provided the most comprehensive listing of protest-related events.

A count of how many protest-related events that have occurred in these areas was done using information that was presented on the BLM 757's Facebook page, which appeared to be the most-followed account including protest-related information for the area with over 30,000 followers. This page included information regarding protesting events, marches, and meetings posted to inform the public. Aside from the protesting events that occurred in the 757 area, members and supporters of BLM 757 also traveled to protesting events that occurred in areas outside of the geographical location of the departments included in the sample. Considering the requirements for officers to be in the police profession for at least 1.5 years (e.g., George Floyd

protesting events), protest events that were created after May 26, 2020, were searched to provide an overview of protests that occurred between May 26, 2020, and January 30, 2022, when the data collection for the current study concluded.

Since the police killing of George Floyd, the Hampton Roads region has seen 51 protest-related events that were hosted by the BLM 757 organization, with two protest events occurring in multiple areas simultaneously. In 2020, there were a total of 23 protesting events, followed by 28 in the year 2021. Specifically, the most protesting was seen in Virginia Beach (n=31), followed by Hampton (n=8), Norfolk (n=6), Newport News (n=3), and Portsmouth (n=1), with some events occurring online (n=2). Aside from the BLM meetings and protesting events that had taken place within the Hampton Roads region, BLM protesters also arranged events or traveled to protesting events that were held in other areas, including Williamsburg, VA; Richmond, VA; Washington, DC; Waverly, VA; Glen Allen, VA; Charlottesville, VA; and Arlington, TX. It is important to mention that this count of protest activity in the Hampton Roads area was based on the protesting events that were organized by the BLM 757 organization and thus may not represent the protests potentially held by citizens outside of the BLM 757 organization.

Starting on May 29, 2020, multiple protesting events had taken place shortly after the George Floyd killing. Later, there was also a “Justice for Breonna Taylor Protest” that occurred. Other protesting events, aside from general issues citizens had (e.g., police accountability, citizen oversight boards, body-worn cameras, community violence, etc.), were also held for Donovan Lynch (Virginia Beach police-involved shooting), DeShayla Harris (Virginia Beach police-involved shooting), and Ebony Holmes (police brutality event in Norfolk, VA). For many of the protesting events on this site, protest organizers instructed people attending the protest to bring

noisemakers, drums, good intentions, and well wishes. Funds were also collected using their cash app.

Within the 51 meetings that are documented in this study, other BLM gatherings included peace caravans (e.g., caravanning through community and spreading love), community dialogues, coat drives, anti-bullying and suicide prevention walk, lobby days where BLM 757 members could speak out, food drives, thermal/jacket/blanket drives, toy drives, mentoring programs, prison outreach program, political literacy programs, "know your rights when approached by the police" blog, and veteran assistance programming, community healing events. The Facebook page not only served as an information hub regarding local protesting events occurring, but also served to recruit activists, mentors, volunteers, reporters, writers, bloggers, and interns, with training available for anyone interested in fulfilling these roles. All events were open to the public, and a detailed list of protest-related meetings can be found in the appendix.

While research does exist about the experiences of police officers during times of civil unrest, it remains limited. Conducting interviews with police officers provided data that reflected the nuances of their position during current protest movements, not only as members of the police force but also as members of the community in which these social movements and activism are occurring.

RECRUITMENT

To begin recruitment, it was necessary to secure access to the agencies chosen for inclusion in the study. To do this, the Chiefs of Police of two local police departments were initially contacted by email starting in April 2021, with a mention of me initially being exposed to them during a panel discussion between the Hampton Roads, Virginia Chiefs of Police held during the 2021 Law Enforcement Summit hosted by Old Dominion University in January 2021

(my attendance at this summit continued in 2022 to maintain visibility). Additionally, any pre-existing research partnerships between Old Dominion University and the police department were mentioned with the goal of displaying an already established partnership and trust between the police department and the academic department to which I belonged. The contact information for the two police chiefs was located on the webpage of the police departments included in the study. The initial reason for reaching out to the police chiefs was two-pronged. First, the goal was to build rapport by asking the chiefs about issues they thought were relevant to the overall topic revolving around policing and protesting. Building rapport allowed me to gain insight into how this study could translate from research into practice. Second, the goal of reaching out to the police chiefs was to gain permission to present this study opportunity to their officers.

By placing the police chiefs in the position of a practitioner-expert, it allowed access to their agency due to the police chiefs seeing the usefulness of the study, especially after having a conversation where the ideas for the study came from both the practitioner and the researcher. This was pivotal in the development and the revisions that went into the interview protocol, which was designed to collect data that would be beneficial for both theory and practice. Research shows that shared outcomes can be achieved that can leave benefits for both theory and practice by increasing exposure, knowledge, and understanding from both sides (Iwama et al., 2021). Using this approach helped to gain access to an agency that may have otherwise declined access.

After obtaining verbal approval to present the study details and to recruit potential study participants, a letter of support was requested and received from the police chiefs for Institutional Review Board approval purposes. Before providing a letter of support, each police chief requested a copy of the interview questions. Before data collection started, the questions

included in the protocol had to receive approval from the police chief. While recommendations were made by the chiefs for specific questions to be added to the protocol, none of the chiefs requested for any questions to be removed.

Upon providing the interview protocol to the chiefs and receiving final approval from each chief, the dates and times to visit the departments were agreed on, which allowed the officers to be presented with information about the study. Additionally, an informational handout was sent out via email to officers as well, including information on how to participate. The email also included information regarding an incentive, with participating police officers having the opportunity to receive a $25 gift card for their participation in the study, which the officer will have the personal choice to accept or decline. This portion of the process was conducted between May and June 2021 with the police captains and logistics staff. The rural police department declined the incentive for their officers' participation in the study, stating that accepting such payment would be a conflict of interest to their department as they viewed their officers' participation in the study as service to the community. Additionally, they stated not wanting to complicate the relationship between their police officers and the researcher when engaging in their day-to-day duties (i.e., traffic stops). In addition to allowing their officers to receive compensation, the urban police department also allowed their officers to use their volunteer hours to participate in the study.

While all officers from the urban police department were offered an incentive, not all officers accepted. Those who did not accept considered their interview with me to be out of their own free will and service to the community. Other officers requested that the $25 gift card be added to an existing fund at their department. Despite the rural police department declining compensation for their officers, there were no noticeable differences from the rural police

department that indicated more difficulty in recruiting than from the urban police department. However, one common reason for non-participation given by officers was concerning their apprehensiveness to participate due to the nature of the study (e.g., interviews regarding political movements or political talk), which were conversations officers widely reported not being the fondest of due to the perceived hostility or discomfort (e.g., between police officers, between police and the community, between police officers and researchers) that could potentially arise from engaging in such conversations.

When meeting with the police chiefs, it was mentioned to me that officers in the past had been skeptical about participating in research conducted by the agency due to their distrust of promises of anonymity and confidentiality. Keeping this in mind, an online booking software was used for interested officers to book the day and time of their interview. In this online form, officers were also encouraged to use pseudonyms to ensure anonymity. While this was seen as an answer to keeping police officers' participation hidden from police leadership, this method of recruitment yielded low interest from both departments and led to the police captains sending another email asking if any interested officers would sign up with the police captain, who then would secure a space and time for the interview to take place.

Snowball sampling technique was also used to recruit participants, where officers who initially chose to participate in the study aided in the recruitment process by referring colleagues who they thought might be interested in participating. Snowball sampling is a method that is typically used when attempting to speak to one's immediate social environment, and thus relies on participants to lead the researcher to more people who are in close proximity to the participant, causing a continuous cycle of recruitment to take place (Goodman, 2011). While snowball sampling is widely utilized to recruit hard-to-reach populations, its usage also expands

to include populations that are arguably not considered to be hard to reach (Goodman, 2011). Despite the visibility of police officers in communities, studies show that police officers (e.g., senior policewomen, police generally, police when researching sensitive topics, etc.) can be categorized as a hard-to-reach population (see Belur, 2019; Brown et al., 2018; Kopak, 2014), and recruiting them for research can be an extremely difficult (see also Samuels-Wortley, 2022). Therefore, snowball sampling was perceived to be appropriate in recruiting participants for the current study. Using this sampling approach increased the sample size by increasing the legitimacy of the study, after participating officers encouraged their co-workers to also participate by vouching for the study.

SAMPLE DEMOGRAPHICS

The table below displays the descriptive statistics for officers recruited from both the rural and urban police departments. Next, a breakdown of officer demographics, by department, is provided.

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of participants (*N= 31)*

Variable		**Total Sample**	
		N	**%**
Race			
	Black	12	38.7
	White	15	48.4
	Hispanic	1	3.2
	Asian	2	6.5
	Two races or more	1	3.2
Sex			
	Male	26	83.9
	Female	5	16.1
Age			
	Mean	42	
	Range	24-60	
Time in L.E.			
	Mean	17	
	Range	2-31	
Commute			
	Yes	17	54.8
	No	14	45.2
Education			
	H.S. Diploma	6	19.4
	Some College	6	19.4
	Bachelor's degree	13	41.9
	Postgraduate or professional degree	6	19.4
Political Affiliation			
	Democratic	8	25.8
	Republican	1	3.2
	Conservative	1	3.2
	Independent	3	9.7
	Libertarian	1	3.2
	None provided	17	54.8

Of the abovementioned descriptive statistics, 46% of the sample was White men (n=14), 29% Black men (n=9), 10% Black women (n=3), 3% White women (n=1), 3% Hispanic men (n=1), 3% Asian women (n=1), 3% Asian men (n=1), and 3% two races or more (n=1).

Rural Police Department

There was a total of twelve officers who participated in the interview from the rural police department. All twelve officers were sworn officers, with approximately 67% (n=8) of the officers indicating that they resided in the same city the department was in and 33% (n=4) indicating that they commuted to work. This sample of officers varied in their racial background, with 75% (n=9) of the officers being White, 17% (n=2) of the officers being Black, and 8% (n=1) of the officers being two races or more. Regarding education, 25% (n=3) of the officers reported having a high school diploma, 33% (n=4) reported attending some college, 25% (n=3) reported having a bachelor's degree, and 17% (n=2) reported having a master's degree. Out of the participating officers, 50% (n=6) reported having no political affiliation, with 17% (n=2) politically identifying as Democrat, 17% (n=2) as Independent, 8% (n=1) as Republican, and 8% (n=1) as Libertarian. The average age of participating officers was 40 years of age (range 24-57 years old), with an average of 14 years served in law enforcement.

Table 2. Demographic characteristics of rural officers (*N= 12)*

Variable		Total Sample	
		N	**%**
Race			
	Black	2	16.7
	White	9	75.0
	Two races or more	1	8.3
Sex			
	Male	11	91.7
	Female	1	8.3
Age			
	Mean	40	
	Range	24-57	
Time in L.E.			
	Mean	14	
	Range	2-26	
Commute			
	Yes	4	33.3
	No	8	66.7
Education			
	H.S. Diploma	3	25.0
	Some College	4	33.3
	Bachelor's degree	3	25.0
	Postgraduate or professional degree	2	16.7
Political Affiliation			
	Democratic	2	16.7
	Republican	1	8.3
	Independent	2	16.7
	Libertarian	1	8.3
	None provided	6	50.0

Sixty-seven percent of the rural sample was White men (n=8), 17% Black men (n=2), 8% White women (n=1), and 8% two races or more (n=1).

Urban Police Department

There was a total of nineteen officers that participated in the interview from the urban police department. All nineteen officers were sworn officers, with approximately 32% (n=6) of the officers indicating that they resided in the same city the department was in, and 68% (n=13) indicating that they commuted to work. This sample of officers varied in their racial background, with 32% (n=6) of the officers being White, 53% (n=10) of the officers being Black, 10% (n=2) of the officers being Asian, and 5% (n=1) of the officers being Hispanic. Regarding education, 16% (n=3) reported having a high school diploma, 10% (n=2) reported attending some college, 53% (n=10) reported having a bachelor's degree, and 21% (n=4) reported having a master's degree. Out of the participating officers, 58% (n=11) reported having no political affiliation, with 32% (n=6) politically identifying as democrat, 5% (n=1) as conservative, and 5% (n=1) as independent. The average age of participating officers was 44 years of age (range 29-60 years old), with an average of 17 years served in law enforcement.

Table 3. Demographic characteristics of urban officers (*N= 19)*

Variable		**Total Sample**	
		N	**%**
Race			
	Black	10	52.6
	White	6	31.6
	Hispanic	1	5.3
	Asian	2	10.5
Sex			
	Male	15	78.9
	Female	4	21.1
Age			
	Mean	44	
	Range	29-60	
Time in L.E.			
	Mean	17	
	Range	5-31	
Commute			
	Yes	13	68.4
	No	6	31.6
Education			
	H.S. Diploma	3	15.8
	Some College	2	10.5
	Bachelor’s degree	10	52.6
	Postgraduate or professional degree	4	21.1
Political Affiliation			
	Democratic	6	31.6
	Conservative	1	5.3
	Independent	1	5.3
	None provided	11	57.9

Thirty-two percent of the urban sample was White men (n=6), 37% Black men (n=7), 16% Black women (n=3), 5% Hispanic men (n=1), 5% Asian women (n=1), and 5% Asian men (n=1).

INTERVIEW SETTING

As officers were recruited from both the rural and urban police departments, the next step was to find locations for the interviews to take place. During the data collection phase, interviews were held in multiple settings, depending on which department's officers were being interviewed at the time. For the rural police department, the interviews were held in a private conference room located at the police department (n=9), which was secured by the police captain. The remaining interviews at the rural police department had taken place by telephone (n=3). For the urban police department, the interview setting was the researcher's university campus, where officers used their volunteer hours to drive to the location site to participate in the study (n=4). As for the remaining interviews from the urban department, interview settings were mixed, with some interviews taking place in-person in a private meeting room located at different police precincts (n=11), audio-recorded via telephone (n=3), and through zoom video conferencing (n=1).

For the in-person interviews held with urban police officers, the setting varied due to the various ways officers were recruited for the study. Outside of officers reaching out to express their interest, I was initially introduced to officers at numerous departmental community outreach events (e.g., local animal shelters and food distribution events). During this introduction, I would then give officers details about the study, which would lead to the scheduling of an interview in a format most feasible to the officer if they decided to participate. Some interviews at the urban police department had to be conducted virtually (e.g., via zoom) or

by telephone due a spike in COVID cases at the police department, resulting in the restriction of in-person meetings during a certain period. Regardless of the interview setting, interviews remained semi-structured, which allowed for probing to occur, and the same transcription and analysis process was followed for each interviewee.

DATA COLLECTION

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with officers who were interested in participating in the study. By conducting semi-structured interviews, I was able to engage in a conversation with the officers guided by the interview protocol (Bhattacharya, 2017). Data collection spanned about 6-7 months at each department, with data collection initially starting with one department at a time. Data was first collected from the rural police department beginning in July 2021, with the last interview from the rural department being conducted in January 2022 (about 6 months). Shortly after data collection concluded at the rural police department, interviews were transcribed and analyzed. While engaging in ongoing recruitment efforts at the rural police department, interviews at the urban police department had taken place starting in August 2021, after a memorandum was sent electronically to officers via email. Interviews at the urban police department concluded in March 2022 (7 months). Like the rural police department, interviews from the urban police department were transcribed and analyzed. After this process, I examined similarities and differences between the two police departments.

An interview protocol was used to guide each interview. Each interview started with the collection of demographic data that would aid in discovering any trends in responses according to officer (a) race, (b) sex, (c) age, (d) time served as a police officer, (e) sworn/unsworn, (f) commute to work, (g) education, and (h) political affiliation. The questions included in the interview protocol were organized into five sections that were geared toward tapping into

participants' views about protest movements: (1) their experience being a police officer, particularly during BLM protesting, (2) how they have participated in these movements, as well as their reasoning behind non-participation, (3) their thoughts on the impact, whether organizational or community-wise, associated with their choice between the community and the police, (4) their experience in the workplace with other officers during BLM protesting, and (5) their thoughts on officer presence at protesting events and recommendations they had for resolving issues between the police and communities. The fourth research question aimed to provide an answer to give clarity on the extent to which race impacts officers' experience at the workplace and participation in BLM protesting when off duty. Overall, the questions presented in the interview protocol were geared toward informing our knowledge on questions that have remained unanswered regarding police officers' experiences during unrest. Each of these questions corresponded with a primary research question and is reflected in the chart located in the appendix. The fourth research question aimed to provide an answer to give clarity on the extent to which race impacts officers' experience at the workplace and participation in BLM protesting when off duty. Overall, the questions presented in the interview protocol were geared toward informing our knowledge on questions that have remained unanswered regarding police officers' experiences during unrest.

Data collection took place from July 2021 (preliminary data stage) to March 2022, with initial conversations regarding gaining access to each police agency beginning in April 2021, after initially being exposed to the chiefs of police in January 2021. Initial interviews were conducted with only one department at a time, due to the distance between each agency and Old Dominion University, where the researcher was based. Each interview was audio-recorded and lasted anywhere from 30-45 minutes. The data collection continued until data saturation was met

at each department, at which point the interview process concluded.

Data saturation was determined once I reached the period in which no new information was being presented by study participants (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Saunders et al., 2017). While there is no one-size-fits-all approach to reaching saturation, it has been observed that approaches such as data triangulation could aid one in reaching data saturation when conducting qualitative studies (Fusch & Ness, 2015). For the current study, engaging in such methods (e.g., the use of focus groups to interview more officers at a time in comparison to one-on-one) seemed to be inappropriate due to the sensitivity of the topic and the potential for all participants to not carry the same feelings, even within their racial group. Furthermore, due to factors such as police culture, the decision to only engage in one-on-one, semi-structured interviews was made to prevent officers from facing any retaliation from other officers while in the line of duty (e.g., partner not having the back of another partner). Making such decisions aimed to increase officers' trust in participating in the study by showing them that their safety and protection were at the forefront of the data collection process.

Participating officers expressed their interest through methods I believed would get me the largest sample I could get (e.g., individual interviews and snowball sampling), which is the position many qualitative researchers find themselves in when recruiting (Bernard, 2012). In terms of data saturation, methods such as treating practitioners as practitioner-experts were used to get past the “gatekeepers” who were the decision-makers to the type of access I had to officers, which was critical to the data saturation process (Holloway et al., 2010). The data derived from the sample included in this study were determined to be of high quality and sufficient to answer the research questions, and therefore were seen as meeting the criteria for being rich (detailed and nuanced) and thick (large in quantity), which is what qualitative

researchers are urged to pursue to reach data saturation (Burmeister & Aitken, 2012; Dibley, 2011).

In terms of sample size, this study intended to garner enough officer interviews to the point where nothing new would emerge in the data collection process, which is typically around 20 or so people (Green & Thorogood, 2009 [2004]; Mason, 2010; Marshall et al., 2013). In addition to these criteria, attention was given to what constituted the sample and I aimed to have representation across race sufficient enough to speak to the overall purposes of the study, which was also important when considering sample size and saturation. This study did pull officers from two separate police departments and therefore consisted of two samples: rural police officers and urban police officers. That stated, data saturation was sought twice within this research process with data from each agency being saturated.

According to Guest et al. (2006), data saturation can occur after just six interviews depending on demographic factors of the larger sample. That stated, I initially started interviewing with six interviews as a beginning goal; however, data collection did not conclude until no new information was presented, which was later than six for each department (9 from rural and 12 from urban), and even then, additional interviews were conducted to ensure that nothing new emerged in the data collection process, as well as to ensure that there was enough racial representation in the larger sample to speak to certain concepts (12 rural/19 urban interviews). Through these methods, I aimed to provide enough information which could lead to successful replication and to the point where data saturation is achieved (Guest et al., 2006; O'Reilly & Parker, 2012; Walker, 2012).

Before data analysis, each interview recording underwent transcription. For transcription, I utilized an online professional transcription service (Temi), which was self-funded and cost

approximately $.25 per minute of recording. For audio recordings rated as “good quality” (e.g., little background noise, clear speaker(s), and minimum accents) the transcription service acknowledged that the transcript should be 90-95% accurate, and thus leaving more time to be dedicated to the data analysis process described in the section below.

ANALYTIC STRATEGY

To analyze data, I relied on the six steps of thematic analysis (see Braun & Clarke, 2006). After transcription, I read each text transcript to re-familiarize myself with the data, which was the first phase in analysis. While reading through each transcript, I highlighted areas where there seemed to be inaccuracy in the transcription, with a specific focus on responses in direct relevance to the research questions. After identifying these areas in each transcript, I listened to the recording while following along with the corresponding transcript to check for accuracy until all errors were checked. Afterwards, qualitative data were then imported and managed using NVIVO. In importing the transcribed interviews, data were separated into two folders with one folder including interviews from the rural department and the other folder including interview data from the urban department.

During phase two of data analysis, I reviewed and coded the transcribed interviews. Next, data were organized through the development of codes, which helped organize the qualitative data and aided in making sense of the data in relevance to the primary research questions (Tuckett, 2005). As each transcript was reviewed, data was moved into the appropriate code that best captured what the data were saying. Phase three of data analysis was the development of themes. After engaging in line-by-line coding for all transcribed data, the next step was to divide the codes to form categories. The categories were utilized to discover emergent themes (or patterned responses) relevant to the primary research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In this

process, codes were analyzed to discover which codes may be combined.

Phase three of data analysis was to identify themes—which Braun and Clarke (2013) argues is not based on quantitative measures (e.g., common responses greater than or equal to 50% would be a theme, but if common responses were less than 50%, then it would not be a theme)— but rather on the importance of the responses in relevance to the overall research questions, which Braun and Clarke (2006) noted as "keyness" to a theme. In this process, a thematic map was generated to understand the relationship between themes, as well as between sub-themes. To increase transparency, this study provides readers with some indicator on the frequencies of participant responses when analyzing the data from the rural and urban police department, with 1-3 common responses indicating "few," 3-6 indicating "many," and greater than 51% of respondents who shared common responses indicating "most." All participants answered all questions asked during the interview, so there was not a time that indicated no response.

After an initial set of themes appeared in this process, phase four was to review the themes. At times, reviewing themes revealed that there were not enough data to support the existence of one of the existing themes, which then was removed so that only relevant themes were displayed. Phase five included naming and defining themes. For themes that were large and complex, they included sub-themes which helped to add structure. In the final phase of the analysis, I provided a qualitative report of the findings. In the final write-up, participant responses were included and aided in one's understanding of how each theme came about during analysis. The responses that are included in the report of findings captured the essence of the overall themes. While analyzing the data and identifying the themes that emerged through it, I then explored the data to see how it applied to each department individually, and then conducted

a comparative analysis to see where responses were similar or different based upon the rural and urban designations.

ESTABLISHMENT OF TRUSTWORTHINESS

In using qualitative methodology for this study, it is necessary to include information regarding how I established trustworthiness as it pertained to the data collection and analysis portion of the study. It is widely accepted that for qualitative work to be rigorous, qualitative researchers should include enough detail about the research process so that the findings are seen as credible (Nowell et al., 2017). In discussing how I went about this, I use the criteria set by Lincoln and Guba (1985) and provide greater detail about how I established trustworthiness through establishing credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability, and reflexivity (see too Nowell et al., 2017).

Credibility

Credibility is established when the researcher's interpretation of the data is aligned with the views of the respondent (Tobin & Begley, 2004). In establishing credibility, I engaged in avenues provided by Lincoln and Guba (1985), which included prolonged engagement and peer debriefing. Data collection began in July 2021 and concluded in March 2022. This extended time with police departments allowed me to gain a better understanding of police work and officers' collective views on topics relating to the study. During this time, I met with police chiefs, police captains, and administrative staff to better understand police culture. The data collected in this study will not only be accessible to me but also to the chair of the dissertation committee, which will allow multiple periods in which we can both individually and collectively examine the data to ensure that we have come to the same interpretations and conclusion drawn from it. Where there is disagreement, this will allow the opportunity to debrief until we reach a consensus. In the

preliminary phase of the study, there was in-person debriefing about the data between my dissertation supervisor and me. Also, to ensure that my interpretation of the results is in line with respondents' views, I checked for clarification throughout each interview confirming that my interpretation of the respondents' thoughts was correct.

Transferability

Transferability, metaphorically referred to as external validity, is concerned with how findings from a study may be applied to places beyond where the data were collected (Malterud, 2001). In other words, transferability concerns how generalizable the findings are to other sites (e.g., police departments). Although no study can provide findings that are universally transferable, steps were taken to ensure the adequate amount of transferability; therefore, how transferrable the findings are depends on the specific police department (see Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To ensure an adequate amount of transferability, this study utilized a varied sample, which considers the people the findings are about, as well as the phenomena (racial relationships and participation based on race (see Malterud, 2001). To aid in this process, this study included thick descriptions so that agencies can have enough information to make such a decision. Thick descriptions were utilized for explaining participants, the procedures taken, results (e.g., participant responses), and discussion (see Ponterotto, 2015). According to Ponterotto (2015), "the use of thick description leads to thick interpretation, which in turns leads to thick meaning of the research findings for the researchers and participants themselves, and for the report's intended readership" (p.543).

Dependability

If a qualitative study is logical, traceable, and documented, then the study has established dependability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In explaining the research process, I start from the very

beginning from when Institutional Review Board approval was sought to the initial email sent to police chiefs requesting a meeting to discuss the broader topic, which eventually led to the further creation of this study. As well, raw data from each interview were kept in a password-protected folder. Providing information about the methods in chronological order allows the reader to see for themselves how access to police departments was gained and the processes followed to recruit police officers. In addition to providing this information in detail, I also have a password-protected folder, which includes all correspondence between the agency and myself during the research process, enabling one to visually see how I went about collecting data. Storing this information, both on my laptop and documented in this study, allows for the research process to be audited, if necessary.

Confirmability

Confirmability is reached once credibility, transferability, and dependability are established, or once it is established that the researcher's interpretation of the findings comes directly from the data (Guba & Lincoln, 1985; Tobin & Begley, 2004). In this process not only do I provide sufficient data on how decisions were made in the process, which gives readers the opportunity to review the theoretical and methodological issues included in the study and my rationale for reaching each decision made in the process (Koch, 1994), but I also provide qualitative data reflecting how I came to creating such themes presented in the study.

Reflexivity

Reflexivity is concerned with documenting the "daily logistics of the research, methodological decisions, and rationales and to record the researcher's reflections of their values, interests, and insights information about self" (as cited in Nowell et al., 2017). Throughout the research, I provide reasoning, supported by citations, on each decision made in the research

process. Additionally, throughout the process, I have taken notes on personal observations made throughout the research process, which may have impacted the results and overall willingness to participate, which is discussed later in the study and used to provide recommendations on how to move forward with research with police officers around topics relating to race and policing.

POSITIONALITY STATEMENT

To engage in ethical qualitative research, it is argued that much attention should be focused on the researcher's positionality, reflexivity, and how knowledge is produced (Darwin Holmes, 2020). When building this study and engaging in the research process, there were many moments available to consider the various ways my positionality impacted this process. Positionality is described as being integral to the qualitative research process and defined as "an individual's world view and the position they adopt about a research task and its social and political context" (Darwin Homes, 2020, p. 1). Reflecting on my positionality aided in my efforts to minimize bias and partisanship in my decision-making (see Rowe, 2014).

As a community-engaged researcher who engages in research that advocates for marginalized populations, I am well informed about the issues that disproportionately impact people of color, particularly issues stemming from larger topics such as race and policing. As an academician, participant concerns regarding the intentionality behind research and confidentiality were also well understood. While my relationship with the participants was neutral, symbolically, I am a Black male researching police officers, and assumptions could have been made that I would be partial toward police – partial in ways that included the chosen sample, data collection, and analysis. With the sample primarily including White police officers, this partiality was removed. Additionally, I viewed the police as being members of the community themselves, which helped me to stay neutral, as well as discussed personal

observations with my dissertation committee chair, which helped me to remain neutral throughout the process.

It is noted that components of one's positionality can stem from one's gender, race, and skin color, and therefore be categorized as fixed (Darwin Holmes, 2020). My identity as a Black male connects me with a much larger population that I can identify with that have fallen victim to police killings and have been at the center of aggressive crime control efforts (Cobbina-Dungy, 2021), and thus have sparked movements that this study has a specific focus on, such as BLM. These factors were considered during this study. Taking this into consideration, I cannot with confidence say that this had no impact on how the research was conducted, its outcomes, and results. From both police departments included in this study, the racial demographics of each were primarily White and male. I did not doubt that would make some officers reluctant to talk to me due to their assumptions towards my beliefs regarding policing as a Black male in the United States. While this was seen as a limitation, my identity was also seen as an advantage as it would encourage more officers of color to come forth and participate in the study, and thus my identity would serve as a recruitment tool.

Being an outsider (e.g., not a police officer or affiliated with a police department) researching police officers, there were a few advantages that I did not have access to. Merton (1972) notes that these advantages may include: (1) being “one of us (police officer)” in the police force and thus garnering greater access, (2) ability of the insider to ask questions based on their own knowledge of police culture, (3) being more trusted by participants and thus gaining more truthful answers to questions, (4) being in a position to secure more truthful responses, (5) ability to not face disorientation due to culture shock, and (6) ability to understand certain language and non-verbal cues (see also Berger, 2015). It was these advantages associated with

being an “insider” that I had to consider as an “outsider,” which influenced the way I went about gaining access to departments and the extra precautions taken in conducting this research, as described earlier in the chapter.

CHAPTER IV

QUALITATIVE FINDINGS

In this study, I was interested in discovering how police officers experienced each other during civil unrest, as well as the factors that influenced their off-duty participation in Black Lives Matter Protesting. Specifically, the goal was to explore how officers perceived each other during BLM protesting, the influences of their off-duty participation in protesting, the perceived impact of their participation or non-participation, and the extent to which race influenced both their experience and participation in the BLM movement. In examining these four differences, I attempted to explore these areas while comparing a rural police department to an urban department. A total of 31 interviews were carried out, and all officers were categorized as sworn officers who have served a minimum of 1.5 years in the police force. The thematic findings discovered from each police department are described below. First, thematic findings from the rural police department are presented. Second, thematic findings from the urban police department are presented. Finally, a comparison of findings for each department based on their rural or urban designation are provided to conclude the chapter.

RURAL POLICE DEPARTMENT

Of the participating officers, none from the rural police department self-reported their off-duty participation in protesting. However, all the participating officers did self-report having to police a protest while on duty, with only one officer expressing a desire to participate, although he had not done so at the time of his interview. Officers largely reported being at a department that has not seen too much protesting in comparison to other police departments in the geographical location. While no officer participated, their responses remained important to

the goal of this study as their decision to not participate was still important to answer the primary research questions. Additionally, their participation in the protest as police officers may have influenced whether they would have wanted to participate during their off-duty time.

According to the participants, there were no existing departmental policies that restricted them from taking part in protesting events off duty as long as they were following the law (e.g., no destruction to property, looting, violence, etc.) during their participation. However, during their off-duty participation, it was required that officers disassociate themselves from their police department, meaning that they could not reveal their association with the police department during their participation in a protest. Taking part in a protest while failing to abide by these rules could cost officers their job. In terms of their on-duty and off-duty protest participation, nearly half of the officers reported being completely detached from work while other officers reported mirroring who they are while on duty. Regardless, neither of these identities accommodated their willingness to participate in BLM protesting as while on-duty their role as police officers came first, and while off-duty they preferred to engage in activities that did not remind them of work.

The themes discovered from the rural police department reflect on the social environment at work, as well as the factors that influenced rural officers' participation in protesting while on duty. In interviewing officers from the rural police department, four dominant themes appeared that were in direct relation to the primary research questions, which included (1) lack of knowledge about the BLM movement, (2) negative attitudes regarding BLM protesting events, (3) impact of news media coverage on their perceptions of the BLM movement, and (4) a greater connection to the BLM movement among Black and mixed-race officers. In each theme, there was some overlap, which helped to understand the phenomena being studied.

“We're Police Officers First” – Workplace Climate

Most officers from the rural police department reported a positive work environment during the unrest. However, qualitative data revealed there were methods taken by the officers to maintain a positive work environment, which often meant having this separation between their personal feelings regarding events that led to the spark of BLM protesting and them doing their jobs as police officers, which according to the participating officers, should not be mixed. According to many officers, these two often did not intersect and thus led to them placing their identity as a police officer before any personal beliefs or attitudes they carried that could impact them from doing their job as police officers. Placing their identity as police officers at the forefront helped them to maintain a good working relationship with each other. Additionally, officers from the rural police department largely reported avoiding conversations, or "political talk," that could lead to a disagreement with other officers or hostility.

> “I think that the stance is pretty general across the board. I mean, we're police officers first, so the responsibility of having this job, it's, you know, you can't really be on a side, but we're here to protect the citizens.” *(Black, White, and Native American male, 39, 14 years sworn officer)*

While many officers opted to not talk about their feelings regarding events that led to BLM protesting, for the ones who did speak on it, officers typically adopted a stance that allowed them to be open to hearing other officers who may have had different opinions from their own. Adopting this mindset became easy for many of the officers as they often viewed each other as family, despite their differences of opinion. As one officer stated:

> “You know, joining the police force, joining the fire department, you have just now been adopted into a family, the biggest family you'll ever be a part of brothers and sisters worldwide. And you have to realize that some people will be sensitive. Some people won't be sensitive, but you have to be open-minded in the ways of their beliefs.” *(White male, 39, 2 years sworn officer)*

During the interview, there were moments when participating officers reported running into other officers who had different opinions about civil unrest; however, while it was acknowledged that these thoughts differed from their own, these officers considered how officers' mindsets versus their experience played into how one perceived these events. Regardless of the times when police officers would share their thoughts toward the civil unrest occurring, one general rule among participating officers was that they should stay away from conversations that involved what they called “political talk.” Not engaging in political talk was their way of keeping peace with other officers while at work. While most rural officers reported not engaging in such conversations while at work, few participants did report formally engaging in professional conversations when protesting occurred in their area due to incidents that occurred at other larger departments within their geographical location. During these times, the conversation was typically geared toward assessing themselves as a department and how the unrest could potentially impact their department in terms of police-citizen interaction. In the case that other officers shared their thoughts, officers on the receiving end would listen without any meaningful engagement in the conversation. For instance:

> “I try not to cause again, and I could go back to like the perception of my coworkers. I don't know everyone's opinion. I don't want to have a rift between me and a coworker. But I was also always raised, you don't discuss politics, you don't discuss religion. Finances. So, I never really discussed those things. And it's become more of a hot topic. So, when officers do discuss with me or even citizens… it'd be a one-way conversation where they'll say what they're feeling. I let them vent and okay. Yeah. Oh, yep. Yep. Yep. And I don't really comment because again, part of how I was raised, you don't discuss those things.” *(White male, 34, 11 years sworn officer)*

Regardless of how officers felt about the unrest that was occurring, they tended to keep their beliefs regarding it away from work, despite them having to deal with the aftermath of such unrest at work. By not talking about it, or disengaging in conversations regrading it, they

maintained an environment, which they believed allowed them to be the most effective at protecting citizens during these times.

The police department provided a space to officers in which it was common practice for officers to engage and build relationships with people where otherwise there would have been no relationship formed. This was apparent in their thoughts regarding engaging in these conversations at work versus away from work. At work, officers believed that engaging in conversations regarding unrest would impact their effectiveness to provide services to citizens in harmony with their partners.

> "Obviously, other police officers, they're your peers. I mean, we're going to work together to do whatever we got to do. I mean our department and like any other police department, you're gonna have a wide variety of age, sex, political affiliation, I mean, whatever experiences and therefore you're going to get a lot of different opinions and all that kind of stuff. So, when it comes to getting work done, I think we're, we tend to be on the same page or, you know, do what we gotta do, but okay. Obviously outside of work that may change." *(White male, 42, 16 years sworn officer)*

For another officer, his response indicated that the discussion of politics could stop officers from being as close as they would have been if politics were not discussed.

> "I choose you to be my friend, not because of your political involvement or your personal beliefs. We have something in common that we share, or we've known each other for X amount of years, or we were coworkers. So, my rule of thumb is politics are off the question. It just like I went to a barbershop and get a haircut, and there was a sign up. We can talk about sports, we can talk about family, but we cannot talk about politics because politics and other things like that tend to find people. Do we need to have those conversations? Yes. But there's a place and a time for it. I'm not in a position to tell someone that their thought process is wrong." *(Black male, 48, 24 years sworn officer)*

This code-of-silence that police officers carried about politics appeared to work in terms of them working in harmony with other officers. While in this process, officers had to keep their attitudes and beliefs away from work, which in turn caused them to adopt practices that accommodated

police culture, even at the expense of their personal value system or their curiosity about BLM or the protesting that occurs due to police-involved fatal interactions as mentioned:

> "That's one of the things as a big downfall… I think police officers in general, they have their own diffusion mechanisms and their own ways of dealing with things. So, you and I may not be able to openly talk about the situation, but the next person, you know, freely talk about it, hopefully, you know, in a well-communicated kind of way, but I think that affects a lot of people on the way they're afraid to come out and speak, they're afraid to ask questions." *(White male, 39, 2 years sworn officer)*

While most of the officers expressed that they did not engage in these conversations personally at work, many officers expressed that they felt as though they could comfortably, despite them also indicating that they have not engaged in these conversations with their colleagues, except professionally when discussing how the overall department would respond to such incidents. The participants' response above did suggest that there were questions that police officers may have while at work but may not feel comfortable asking due to their overall knowledge of BLM. This is discussed in the first major theme below.

"I Don't Think We're Enough Educated" Lack of Knowledge on BLM

Racial Gaps in Knowledge of and Connection to BLM

One theme that appeared from the analysis was a lack of knowledge about the Black Lives Matter movement and this theme was the most evident when interviewing White officers. It was apparent that officers' knowledge and interest in the BLM movement did not expand past their involvement in it as officers. Since officers realized that their primary source of education about BLM came from news media, most felt as though they were not educated enough about the movement to consider themselves to be knowledgeable about it due to the news being skewed. Despite research connecting how impacted White officers are by protesting, it was surprising how most of the officers reported not being as educated as they felt they should have been regarding BLM. In terms of what officers did know about the movement, this came from news

media or informal conversations held with other police officers within their social circles when off-duty. Overall, not only did White officers from the sample feel as though they were not educated enough about BLM, but their perceptions of how knowledgeable other officers were also were low. As stated by one participant:

> "I don't know enough… I don't know the where, when, and why. Your outlook could be different from the next person… you may have these beliefs in this little subject and that person's gonna have it in this subject… I don't think we're enough educated on the movement." *(White male, 39, 2 years sworn officer)*

Aside from admitting to not being as knowledgeable, the knowledge officers did have, officers largely realized that it came from biased sources. From participant responses, it becomes evident that while at this point most officers have read what media sites had put out there, they knew they were reading from the perspective of another person who had their biases toward the movement.

> "I probably am not as informed as I should be. I mean, I read stuff, so obviously you're going to get the angle from whatever media site you're reading... I mean, I try to read up what I can to get at least a general idea, because you're going to hear people say on Facebook and stuff that are criticizing it, but of course, they don't really know the whole thing." *(White male, 42, 16 years sworn officer)*

News and social media also influenced how officers understood the movement, and the media did not always reflect on BLM objectively and therefore caused officers to carry mixed emotions about the movement and its intended purposes.

Despite police officers' awareness of how little knowledge they had regarding BLM, this did not change their decision to not talk about BLM at work, primarily due to avoiding conflict with any officers who may have taken offense to what they had to say. Talking about BLM, considering their perceived knowledge on the topic was equated to bringing conflict, which they attempted to stray away from. In one participant's response, he mentioned how the protesting he has seen in his jurisdiction differed from what was seen at another police jurisdiction. This

participant was confused as to why this was the case in these areas if the protesting was being organized by the same protest groups. As mentioned,

> "I don't like to discuss it with people because I just don't want the conflict. There's enough conflict at work. So, I don't want to get in an argument with you about my opinion versus your opinion. But I feel like it's kind of changed my opinion of it a little. I can see the peaceful side of it. And when [we have] protests, I mean, to me, that's a prime example of how it should be as opposed to [another nearby location], you know, they had out of control, protest, burn, burning businesses. That's to me that's that extremist terrorist part of it, but then we've got the same umbrella group protest… I don't understand the difference, like why we don't have the problem here and they have the problem there. Is it two different groups under the same umbrella?" *(White male, 34, 11 years sworn officer)*

As mentioned in the methodology, most of the protesting events that were held in the Hampton Roads region were held by one organization. In this response, it was apparent that this officer was aware of this but was less knowledgeable about the reasoning why protesting in his area was different (e.g., protest tactics) when compared to other surrounding areas. However, this was not surprising, as the literature confirms that police officers located in rural settings tend to have greater interactions with their citizens (Sun & Chu, 2009).

In terms of officer participation in protesting while off-duty, it was found that this could have been attributed partly to officers gaining knowledge about the movement from sources other than the primary source for learning about BLM—the BLM website. In describing his thoughts about BLM this same officer went into further detail about his knowledge of the movement and how these thoughts originated:

> "No, I would tell you, I don't. I know I don't. Because like I told you, my original thought behind it was, this has been labeled the terrorist group. But I don't even know where I heard that. I know I've talked about it with one of our retired lieutenants at our church. The church was doing a Black Lives Matter movement and there's a lot of retired police officers at our church. And they were all up in arms and talking about, I can't believe they'd support this… and that was my opinion as well… But I, I also don't, I don't care enough to do the research to, it's not affecting me. I'm not joining a pro-Trump movement. I'm not joining the black lives matter, but I'm just not my focus, you know, so it doesn't really affect me." *(White male, 34, 11 years sworn officer)*

In this response, not only do you see how this officer admitted to not having a firm knowledge base, but because he was not as connected to the movement, he did not feel the need to gain a better understanding of it. Specifically, because he was not affected, he did not do the research. This was not only the case for BLM but also any other group in which the officer felt as though it did not impact him. When interviewing the officers in the study, there was not only this lack of connection with this officer, but it was a gap in how connected officers were to the movement, with White officers being less connected to the movement than Black and officers of two races or more.

In addition to officers realizing how knowledgeable they were about BLM, sentiments did not change when giving their perceptions about how knowledgeable their co-workers were to the movement. As stated by one participant:

> "I would say the majority are not overly knowledgeable. I would say the majority of officers just know about what they hear talking points in the media. There are, there are a couple that know more. And I think it's more obvious because those are the ones that, you know, are often more easily able to facilitate a discussion about what's going on." *(White male, 42, 16 years sworn officer)*

From this statement, it was evident that officers relied heavily on the media to form their perceptions of the BLM movement. Because of this, some officers from the rural department found it difficult understanding the movement past their own experiences with it and what they viewed on television. As put by another officer:

> "The ones that I know and work with and know the most, I would say probably not that knowledgeable, and there's a couple that like myself to kind of follow things and, you know, listen to different, you know, news outlets and sources and whatnot, and try to keep a pulse on it. But I would honestly say, I don't know that there's much of a drive to know, you know, for the officers around here. A lot of them want to come to work, work their job, you know, do their job here and then go home at the end of the day, not too interested in political movements." *(White male, 34, 4 years sworn officer)*

The above response shines a light on how disconnected officers are to learning about BLM. As mentioned by many of the officers, while BLM protesting occurred in their area under the supervision of the rural police department, it was not comparable to the BLM protesting that are seen in other areas. This could be a possible explanation as to why officers did not see a need to learn or participate in BLM protesting, at least in their specific area. In terms of their involvement in protesting generally, their non-participation tended to involve their limited knowledge about the movement and their perceptions of the movement garnered from various sources that did not paint the most positive picture of BLM.

Greater Connection to BLM Movement among Minority Officers

Black officers in this study did have a greater knowledge base about the movement than White officers. Furthermore, Black officers were also more connected to the movement. However, Black police officers' knowledge about the movement came more from their lived experiences with being discriminated against, than from being educated on it. Most surprising, while being more knowledgeable and connected to the movement due to lived experiences, Black officers were no more likely to participate in BLM protesting than White officers from this sample. In other words, findings from the rural police department indicated that a greater connection to the movement did not serve as a predictor of greater levels of participation in BLM protesting. Police officers' non-participation seemed to be a theme that cuts across race, with all but one White officer indicating that they would be interested in participating off-duty.

When asked about their connection to BLM, the responses below explain the views of two participating officers who categorized themselves as either Black or minority:

> "[I'm] a hundred percent connected; to the law enforcement side to being a black male. There's no way to not be connected to that. There's no way." *(Black male, 44, 22 years sworn officer)*

> "I mean, I feel pretty connected, being a police officer. I'm also a minority. You know, that's my connection right there. I see it in social media, I see it on the news, you know, it's everywhere, we talk about it at work. So, I mean, I feel like I have a connection to it." *(Black, White, and Native American male, 39, 14 years sworn officer)*

When these same two officers were asked about their participation, all indicated that they have not participated and did not have the intention to. Below is the response from the remaining Black officer from the rural police department:

> "Well, I'll say this much. I'm an African American man. My family is multicultural. At the end of the day. I'm no different than the man or the other person or the woman, or whoever it is it could be that could be negatively impacted by a police officer or friend... anyone in public service. Do I know there's a disparity in the way people are treated in some places? There are, yes. Do I understand that a group of people may have a perception issue with African American people? I know that exists, yes. Have I encountered people during the course of my employment that I've worked with that had their own beliefs that were in opposition to what the true meaning or how we truly represent it? Yes. But I don't agree with everything that the Black Lives Matter movement stands for. I truly don't… And to say that, to focus on one group of people and that their lives matter again, I was raised that you treat everybody the same way and all people's lives are valuable, or they matter they're important. And I think we get back to things that divide us, and we should be really... I should be just as concerned about you if you were not African American and my neighbor as I would the other way." *(Black male, 48, 24 years sworn officer)*

His other grievances regarding the movement came from his perception of an opinion that was given by the movement regarding the absence of a father in the home. As explained:

> "When you look at some of the platforms they have... I was raised in a home, my mother worked, my grandparents assisted in our raising our rearing, my dad wasn't in the home. And I know a portion of their platform speaks to the absence of men in homes. And it gives an opinion on what they think about that. And in other areas, they influence, I am of the opinion that there should be a male figure in the home. A woman can raise or rear a child from that person's perspective. But I do believe there needs to be a male figure to give a male perspective. And that's a part of, one of the things that I kind of have a struggle with the organization itself and the movement that they've engaged in. Because honestly speaking, I know my grandfather took care of what my dad didn't do, and I'm extremely grateful for that, but I only wonder what life's like for children who didn't have, or how they felt about the absence of their father. That's, that's significant to me." *(Black male, 48, 24 years sworn officer)*

While it was apparent that Black officers could connect more, it was noticeable that many white officers showed hesitation when providing an answer to their level of connection to the issues brought forth by the movement. However, few white officers indicated that many of the issues brought forth by the BLM movement they could also connect to. As stated by a White officer:

> "… from a, a large-scale perspective, we look at this and we say Black Lives Matter movement, and I get it 100% not taking anything away from anybody, but if you dig just a little bit deeper, it's a lot of humanitarian, modern issue, and undertones there that can go beyond black lives matters. Like I said, I'm not taking anything away from the naming or anything of that nature, but I, think it goes a little bit deeper than black lives matter. So, I think there's a little more connection there cause at the end of the day, from my perspective and with my upbringing and my background it's a, a lot of issues where I can connect to, and granted my skin tone may not be the same, but there's a lot of this same issues there that I can 100% relate to." *(White male, 32, 10 years sworn officer)*

Overall, the findings indicated that most white officers commonly reported not being knowledgeable about the movement, with one white officer reporting being more knowledgeable now than he was when the movement first started. As one officer stated, "I'm definitely more knowledgeable now than what us at the beginning of this now…I believe wholeheartedly that a lot of this that is being brought out [injustices faced from the police] needs to be brought out" *(While male, 57, 26 years sworn officer).* Another white officer reported having an interest in attending a protest, which was a rare response from the rural department. When questioned on whether officers believed their choice to participate or not in BLM protesting impacted their relationship with community members, another officer stated, "They need to see support. Why not all of us go to one, if we're all available to go on a shift…I think that, yes, it will impact their beliefs on us if we don't show support" *(White male, 39, 2 years sworn officer).* While all Black officers reported being connected to issues addressed by the BLM movement, none self-reported having attended one in their off-duty capacity or having the intention of attending one. Overall, this finding indicated varying levels of knowledge regarding BLM, and being more connected to

the issues addressed by the BLM movement changed little regarding their participation in protesting. Furthermore, participation in the protesting events felt much like work to the officers and thus also discouraged their participation.

Racial Differences in Beliefs About other Racial Groups

While it was found that Black or other minority officers had a greater connection with the movement due to their experiences with discrimination, when it came to asking participants the extent to which they believed race influenced how their colleagues viewed BLM, Black officers in the study felt as though they would have a different view of BLM than their white counterparts. In contrast, White officers explained a different story, which was that White officers believed that Black officers were not any more or less likely to be in support of it than white officers were when looking at the agency at large. This was interesting as one may have assumed quite the opposite, which would be the belief that they would be more supportive due to their experiences. As put by some officers:

> "I would have to say that [race] probably have some impact just like your upbringing can impact your thought process, the way you view things. You take two people. One person is raised in a rural environment compared to somebody raised in an urban or city environment. There are differences in the thought process." *(Black male, 48, 24 years sworn officer)*

> "I think Black officers are more open-minded to it because of their experience." *(Black male, 44, 22 years sworn officer)*

> "I don't think so… People would have expected African American officers would sympathize and they'd be like, no, I can't stand that group. I don't understand why people support it. So, I don't think race really plays into it at all." *(White male, 34, 11 years sworn officer)*

> "Not from what I've seen, like my direct supervisor is African American, but he doesn't support the Black Lives Matter, at least as far as the organization, you know?... I have white officers that work for me that are supportive of it." *(White male, 32, 10 years sworn officer)*

Overall, what the above data indicate is that according to officers, race alone may not be as significant to one's support of the movement. When it came to their perceptions on the influence

of race, Black officers tended to believe they would be more supportive than White officers in their perceptions of the movement. However, when asking about the extent to which race impacts how supportive one is to these movements, most officers also reported believed that when it came to the police, race alone was not the deciding factor to one's support. Instead, officers across race reported other factors such as upbringings, thought process, and the living environment in which one was brought up, despite the greater knowledge and connection associated with Black officers.

"Whether I Like It Or Not" Conflicting Attitudes About BLM Protesting

While engaging in interviews, a common response from most officers was that they were police officers first, meaning that their personal feelings toward BLM protesting events were not at the forefront when being assigned to police protesting events occurring in the area. At various points of interviewing, most officers reported that their job was to ensure that citizens' rights were protected. While this was reflected in the beliefs of most officers, many mentioned comments that illuded to their preference to work protest events that were peaceful in comparison to protest events that were not. As put by one officer, "if everybody is doing it peacefully and you know, I mean, sure. Go ahead. Speak your mind. I got no problem with it" *(White male, 48, 24 years sworn officer).* For rural officers, protesting was a constitutional right of citizens, and their role was to ensure it was granted to citizens. For instance, as one officer put it, "It's important that from a protest perspective that we realize that everyone has first amendment rights. To let their voice be heard" *(White male, 26, 15 years sworn officer).* This echoed officers' general feelings toward the protesting events. Therefore, during policing protest events, most officers tended to act as if their interactions largely went well and recounted numerous times when they worked with protest organizers to host this event in their area with

many of these protesting events turning out to be peaceful. For example, an officer stated, “We had really good discussions with our protestors” *(White female, 24, 3 years sworn officer).* Engaging in these discussions with protest organizers allowed for officers to aid in the planning and administration of these events. In explaining the role of the police in protest planning, one officer stated, “we'll help you or recommend you go maybe just this far, and then you can kind of stop here and we'll block traffic for you and all that kind of stuff” *(White male, 42, 16 years sworn officer).* What was found within this theme was that although the officers reported having positive interactions with protest organizers in their on-duty capacity, their attitudes tended to change when they were asked questions relating to the movement detached from their identity as officers. Because no officer from the rural police department reported off-duty participation in the movement, their attitudes toward the movement were shaped by their on-duty participation as police officers. In explaining his stance on policing protest, one officer stated:

> “Some people have a difference of opinion about the true meaning of [BLM], or how things are operated. But honestly speaking, that's not for me to worry about once I've been given my assignment, my responsibilities, regardless of who they are, where they're from, and what their message is. My job is to ensure that they are able to have their free speech as safe as possible, whether I like it or not.” *(Black male, 48, 24 years sworn officer)*

The response from the officer above suggested that while there may have been differences in opinion about BLM, when on-duty, officers assumed their position of making sure protesting events were safe and that protesters had the opportunity to protest through free speech. To most rural officers their job as to protect this right, regardless of their opinion of BLM.

Interactions with Protesters (on-duty)

While police officers from the rural police department mentioned working with protest organizers to host protesting events, they did mention that their area had not seen as many of these events as larger surrounding areas. Additionally, officers reported that other than peaceful

protesting within their area, they have not experienced rioting, looting, and other activities that other police departments across the county may have seen. However, when their area did face these events, they reported working with protest organizers to host these events. What the finding from this theme indicates is that while police officers had positive experiences with protest organizers, there were times when they ran into issues with protestors, with many of their negative interactions coming from counter-protestors, those who came in opposed to the BLM protesters. One officer explains how their conversation with protesters typically goes when planning protesting events:

> "We always, you know, concern ourselves cause we don't wanna be judged by Minneapolis, Minnesota, or Los Angeles, California, or Chicago, or any place for that matter. We wanna be judged by what our record is and what we do here in our city and the protests that we've had. We've had to be, you have been peaceful… the way we've handled that is we communicate with our community. You know, we communicate with protests organizers prior to the event and say, look, man, what are you? What, what are you trying to achieve? And how can we help you do it without anybody getting hurt without property being damaged? How can you best get your point across peacefully? And we do that through open communication. You know, it's just, we find out what we hear about an event who's organizing the event and we try to touch base with that, you know, that man or woman and say, look, what are you trying to achieve? And how, how can we help you do it in a way where nobody gets hurt, nobody gets arrested and no property advanced. Okay. And that worked well for us cause we have a really good working relationship with our community here." *(White male, 57, 26 years sworn officer)*

Because police officers had the opportunity to reach out to protest organizers, and assist in the planning, most officers felt as though this aided them in being able to have better control of protesting and better interactions with citizens. While police officers largely recalled not having to police protesting events that were not peaceful, there was a time when counter-protesters arrived and caused some issues. It was in these moments when officers had to insert themselves to gain control. In speaking about the protesting that occurred shortly after the murder of George

Floyd, one officer recounted an experience where an issue was present due to the presence of counter-protesters:

> “None of our response teams have ever had to get involved in [in our area]. We've been really fortunate that everything's been peaceful. We had one protest where it started getting a little hinky, but it wasn't even the protesters towards us. It was counter-protesters showing up, riling up the protesters…Major actually walked over and was like, "look, man, I understand you're out here trying to support us [police], but we've not had a problem until you showed up with your people and you're making things difficult." And they were like, "oh, fair enough. We'll leave." And that was the end of it. Had a couple people show up after the George Floyd one.” *(White male, 34, 11 years sworn officer)*

While interviewing rural police officers, many of the officers reported supporting protest mobilization, meaning that they understood the importance of protest events happening in places that incidents leading to the spark of BLM protesting did not occur in. However, there were times that despite their ability to understand mobilization, they experienced difficulty in hearing the comments from some protesters, despite their department's relationship with the surrounding community. Simply put, officers sometimes experienced issues with people who had issues with the institution of policing but did not separate the rural officers from officers of departments where these issues were larger and more frequent. As put:

> “They [protestors] may say some things that they may not truly mean that may hurt you. So, you deal with that aspect too, or, or how you're viewed at that moment because, at the height of the protests, people were inflamed with the police. I recall in one of our events, a citizen made the comment that "I'm not mad with your department because your department does a good job at community relations and transparency and those things, I'm just mad with the police." Well, when you say police, do you mean collectively? Who do you mean? Because if we're [the PD] not doing the things that you're protesting about, then what are you protesting about? So that's where I struggle at times with, with people having an understanding of what you are promoting and involved in before you take that leap to do it [protest].” *(Black male, 48, 24 years sworn officer)*

While interacting with protesters, officers also reported interacting with youth who also wanted to participate in the protesting, particularly during the George Floyd protesting events. During these times, officers would find themselves engaging in conversations and informing people that

they too disagreed with certain acts committed by the involved officer. While many of the officers recalled working well with the community, one officer recalled a time where a conversation he had with a young girl (age not identified) interested in protesting left her shocked that police officers could take similar positions on issues that involved the police. In one example, an officer provided a detailed account of a conversation he had with a young girl who wanted to engage in the BLM protesting regarding the murder of George Floyd:

> "The first protest we had after George Floyd and I'm sitting around the precinct, like I said, a couple of us just hanging out waiting, and this young girl showed up with her mom and the mom's like, well, she has a question for you. I'm like, "go ahead, what's your question." "I want to protest and what do I need to do?" And we're immediately like you can go talk to the Sergeant because that's not our thing. But then we start talking to her about, "well, what are you protesting?" And she's like, "well, George Floyd." I said, "you realize that we don't agree with that either." And she was like taken aback, so bad police officers make our job more difficult. And she was like completely shocked that we didn't agree with the actions of another police officer. It's not a blanket support system. You do bad. we want you arrested as well. And she was just kind of surprised by that. She came in very defensive and then wound up like talking or laughing, joking, having a good time because she had this preconceived notion that we would all support this. And once we talked, she was like, "oh wow. I didn't really look at it that way." *(White male, 34, 11 years sworn officer)*

This is an example of how officers felt regarding protesters and their issues with police. Responses from these officers indicated that the police were often viewed as being on each other's side so much to the point where some community members and protesters were stunned that some officers may agree with what they were protesting about. As it related to being stunned, there was one officer who recalled being amazed at the protesting events organized by youth in the community. As this officer stated, "I think the biggest one we had was set up by a 16-year-old, which was crazy to me that a 16-year-old had that much impact on people… she started speaking and I was like, wow" *(White female, 24, 3 years sworn officer).* Experiencing this event while on-duty, shaped the perception of this officer as it pertained to BLM. While

there were positive interactions between police and protesters, there were also people participating in protest events that officers felt was not as genuine and therefore caused officers to form other opinions about BLM protesting.

Perceived Performative Activism among Protesters

Interactions with protesters tended to be the same for both Black and White officers with few differences being reported in terms of how officers experienced organizing BLM protest events with protest organizers. When it came to their perceptions of the movement, this also stood true, despite the greater connection established between minority officers and BLM. Across race, officers felt as though some protestors were in attendance that had agendas that did not align with the goals of the protest; therefore, there was a perception of performative activism occurring among protesters, according to findings. It is important to note that the officers' perception of performativity did not mean that the protest being conducted was not peaceful. However, police officers questioned if there were other avenues sought by protesters, aside from protesting that would lead to what they perceived as better outcomes. In explaining how he felt about some of the participating protesters, one officer stated:

> "… people are in the movement that don't care about the movement... Kind of want to be, chance to be seen, be heard, whatever, be loud, kind of get a free pass to do whatever they want… I don't mean just African Americans. I mean, white, black, you name it, and it'll incite a riot sometimes. Not all the time, but that's the only issue when the larger, the amount of people you have, the propensity for something to go wrong." *(Black male, 44, 22 years sworn officer)*

Here, this officer describes how he felt regarding the purposes behind why some protesters decided to engage in activism. For this officer, he felt as though some people were there to receive a pass to do whatever they wanted, and the larger the crowd, this officer believed, the more likely this was to be the case, which would then ruin it for the people who were there for more legitimate reasons. While his views of BLM did not align with it being performative, he

felt as though there were protesters who were, in the name of BLM. For many officers, this contributed as a factor that influenced their participation in BLM protesting, as they viewed protesting events including these types of protesters as inevitable. Therefore, to protect themselves from being a part of a protest that could go violent, their immediate answer was to not participate at all. This was the case for many officers. One officer gave an example of an act he was asked to do while policing a BLM protest event and explains his reaction:

> "…There was a minister that wanted everyone to take a knee in the middle of the street… I didn't, and I got asked about that. Why didn't I?... I provide for my family. I'm not here to participate in the March… I'm not getting on my knees and putting myself in the middle of no street. I'm not here for entertainment. I'm not here to be a spectacle or to be on the front page of somebody's newspaper. I'm here to make sure that whatever you choose to do, you have the opportunity to do it safely… I think differently about being a public spectacle… what truly happens is what you do by yourself and that's never been something that I want to be a part of, just to be doing something because the next person's doing it now." *(Black male, 48, 24 years sworn officer)*

In this response, the officer suggested what many officers felt, which was that while collective action was being taken by protesters to address policing issues, nothing seemed to happen from what officers could see that was being done outside of issues people held with the police (e.g., community violence and development), and thus created feelings of performativity among officers, most strongly and consistently among Black officers.

Despite many officers agreeing that there were protesters in attendance that hindered the movement, their general thoughts toward the movement were that there was some good that could come from it. However, the good that could come from the movement would be diminished by the presence of people who used the movement to promote other agendas that often violent. As put by one officer

> "It's like everything else that we do. There's a lot of good people out there… that are trying to make a difference, a real difference and you have a lot of people out there who are just playing opportunists, you know… people [who] use the movement for their own personal gain. That's what hurts it, you know, that's what hurts the movement I've been

> involved with a lot of. There's a lot of people out there like that, that are smart and know that sometimes the best way to make change is through peace." *(White male, 57, 26 years sworn officer)*

There was one white officer in the study that referenced the civil rights movement and how moments existed when one person would speak to a crowd and the message would be clearer to receive. Specifically, he referenced Dr. Martin Luther King and his speeches given to crowds of people. In this comparison, he spoke about BLM protesting events where everyone voicing their concerns collectively could cause more difficulty in getting the message across:

> "Yes, we see your signs. Okay, cool. And that goes for, you know, rallies with me, you know... and brotherhood or KKK, you know, I honestly think that's a joke. I don't know why they do it. It's stupid. It really is. But in the same sense, people may look at Black Lives Matter and go, why are they doing that? That's dumb. I think that instead of having a bunch of signs up, make it more presentable, make a nice banner, have a podium, have someone speaking, not a bunch of people yelling how in the world can I hear you and hear your beliefs? When I got 10 million people yelling around me, why can't we just have one person speaking? And then certain people, if they would like to say something like give him a mic, you know, give them something, get them up on that podium. Why do we need a bunch of people with signs, yelling things? How in the world, can you hear everything that everyone's yelling? I could be saying, I want breakfast. And you would think I'm talking about Black Lives Matter." *(White male, 39, 2 years sworn officer)*

Aside from perceived performative activism, one thing that emerged within this theme was officers feeling as though the BLM movement was biased, which connected to their lack of knowledge regarding BLM; specifically, officers not understanding the movement. For the officers who did understand the BLM, which was most Black officers, they rejected the movement due to BLM protesting not occurring during times when violent crime was occurring more frequently within communities than it was with community members being killed at the hands of the police. While few officers made this comparison, it was mentioned as a reason why they did not participate in protests, with few officers also recommending that community issues (e.g., community violence, drugs issues, etc.) by BLM, aside from police killings.

“Show What Gets Ratings” Impact Of Media Coverage On BLM

Perceived as Violent Event

The final theme that emerged from the data was the impact of the media on officers' perception of BLM protesting events. In the first theme, officers reported having a lack of knowledge toward the movement, which the knowledge they did have often came from the media. In particular, social media was where many officers in the study received knowledge about the movement. In this theme, not only did the media impact how officers perceived the movement, but there were also several accounts as to how news media coverage influenced how violent BLM was perceived to be by police officers, even officers in a community where they mostly agreed to having positive relationships with the protest organizers. In the sample, while most officers agreed that news media tended to show a disproportionately higher amount of coverage of the violent aspects of different protesting events occurring across the country, these were often the only information officers had to rely on before showing up a protesting event. It was found during the analysis that this had both a positive and negative impact when it came to rural officer perceptions of BLM. On the one hand, it presented officers with an opportunity to discover differently when showing up to protesting events within their community that did not reflect what was shown on news media. As one officer put it:

> “… The news is going to show what gets rating. They showed a lot of violence, a lot of things being destroyed cities being burned down… then when we had them here, at least in this city, I loved it. That's the way the media will swing it because that's what people are going to watch. We didn't have any of those issues here.” *(White female, 24, 3 years sworn officer)*

On the other hand, news media coverage of BLM protesting events caused officers to prepare themselves to enter environments described as hostile. This had the potential to be detrimental to BLM protesting regarding how officers showed up and their ability to adjust to the reality of the

ensuing protest. What many officers reported was that there were times when they would be at the police department and receive reports from media coverage depicting BLM as violent. Although this may not have been their specific area, it influenced how they planned to initially arrive at the events within their area. As put by one officer:

> "Watching videos and we're all guilty of it at times when you're showing up to something that you're told is … volatile. And then you get that very standoffish officer who's ready to do some sort of dynamic action because they're [protesters] tearing down cars or what have you. But then you get there, and some officers have a hard time bringing it [nerves] down and I feel like just the nature of what the media puts out kind of gets officers up there… we're sitting around and they're like here guys put together all these zip cups and I'm thinking this is going to be out of control." *(White male, 34, 11 years sworn officer)*

Police officers noted their lack of confidence in the news; however, sometimes these media outlets were the only thing they would have to rely on before experiencing for themselves the dynamics of the protest. Officer responses were consistent with what previous studies have confirmed, which is that media coverage plays a role in how violent BLM is often perceived (Baranauskas, 2022; Reid & Craig, 2021). One recent study found that those protests anchored to racial justice issues are more often framed as a threat to the public interests, primarily by major media outlets such as New York Times and the Washington Post, and therefore play a role in exacerbating state repression (Reid & Craig, 2021).

Other Negative Effects

Outside of the way officers arrived at these protest events, it was noted how news media coverage of BLM protest events impacted officers' anticipation of something bad about to happen, based on what they saw in the media that reflected what could happen at such events. Therefore, while they did not report seeing any violent protests in their area, they now had the anticipation of protests becoming violent, despite its non-occurrence. Findings within this theme indicated that not only were officers hesitant about attending a protest for themselves, but also

their families. Their non-participation in protesting kept them out of trouble. When being asked if he has ever participated in a protest movement, one officer stated:

> "I have not, and it's not due to where I feel something's not important. But I just seen that typically most protests never end well for whatever reason... there's somebody in it... it just never ends well. So, for sake of me [and], my family, I'm kind of simple, you know, keep it to ourselves, you know, I mean friendly with everybody, but certain areas, I try to look at the potential for an issue to happen. I avoid these areas. I've always just kind of went by that and it's kind of kept me out of trouble, safe. I mean, I'm all for people having protests, but they never really a hundred percent go [good]... sometimes they do... but sometimes it's just this modern-day society. It's just, you just don't know people's intentions." *(Black male, 44, 22 years sworn officer)*

For the one officer who did state that they would attend one, this participant had not yet attended a protest due to him being a newer member of the police force. When questioned on his protest attendance, this officer stated "I have not. It hasn't been brought forward" (*White male, 39, 2 years sworn officer*) When asking this specific officer if he would participate in a protest, his answer reflected what most officers, regardless of race, associated with BLM, which was that it could turn violent. Again, we see that there was this preconceived notion of violence that was attached to the BLM movement, mainly due to media, and unless officers had the opportunity to experience different, these were the feelings they most likely had toward BLM. The media influenced not only their view of the movement but also their participation. One White officer stated that he would participate. However, it was evident through his response that the reservations he had with his participation were shaped by the media, considering that what he was worried about never occurred within the area he policed. As he put it:

> "Um, I think in a progressive manner, wanting to get more educated on the situation. Absolutely. I would say that, you know, I'm not going to bring my friends because I'm worried imma get hurt, but I hope I would be there to help make a change. I hope I would be there to help get an understanding from both sides of the parties." *(White male, 39, 2 years sworn officer)*

Overall, findings indicated that officers' participation in BLM protesting was largely shaped by what they saw in the media. While there were observations made during their on-duty participation that steered them away, they also anticipated bad things happening because of what has occurred in other areas and shared through news media outlets. This caused officers to not only be concerned for themselves should something go wrong, but also caused them to think about their friends and family when deciding whether to participate. Even for the one protester who stated that he would be interested in participating to learn more about the concerns of the community, there appeared to be a concept of dangerousness associated with the protest that caused him to decide to not bring along others with him.

While exploring the rural police department, four major themes were apparent. First, most officers from this department reported good work experiences during unrest with one another; however, this was at the expense of them taking measures to ensure that the work environment remained positive such as disregarding their thoughts and attitudes about BLM and keeping certain topics off the table when engaging in conversations with other officers. Second, it was also found that most White officers self-reported having low knowledge of and connection to BLM, despite their involvement in it as police officers. Third, while police officers worked well with the organizers of protesters, many of the participating officers reported negative attitudes toward protesters that were in attendance for what they perceived as personal gain. Fourth, that most White officers reported relying on the media to inform their knowledge on the movement, which did not always give an accurate account. The role of the media was two-fold as it also informed how they arrived at protesting events, which most officers reported being different (e.g., less violent, peaceful, etc.) than what the news depicted. Most officers have not

participated in a BLM protest before their participation in this study, with few indicating that they would with reservations.

URBAN POLICE DEPARTMENT

Of the participating officers from the Urban police department, none reported their off-duty participation in protesting. Furthermore, while most of the officers reported being involved in protesting in terms of their duty as police officers, few of the participating officers were in positions that did not require them to be on the frontlines during this time. However, one of the officers who reported not being on the front lines reported participating in peaceful marches hosted by Black Lives Matter organizers. At this department, officers' knowledge of the rules on protest participation was mixed. However, overall, officers reported that they could participate in social justice movements if they were not affiliated with their police department. In addition to this, officers also had to be watchful over their social media posts as well, particularly if it was mentioned anywhere that they were affiliated with the police department. In these instances, any opinions, thoughts, or beliefs could be associated with their police department and thus could risk their employment. While this was the consensus, it was also mentioned by a few officers that although it was encouraged that they did not affiliate themselves with their police department, they felt as though they had to be watchful, even in their off-duty time. As stated by one officer:

> "Well, again, the biggest thing to remember as far as that goes, is that whether over on duty or off duty, we still represent the city that we work for. We represent the citizens that we serve. And more importantly, we represent ourselves. So, when people are able to tie you to a uniform, it really makes things a little bit different. And that's something that we as law enforcement officers have to keep in the back of our minds at all times because what you do outside of work can always affect you at work. So, the rules are pretty clear, you know, you have your rights as a citizen, however, there's a line that you cannot cross as it relates to being a police officer because one of the most important elements in that whole equation that involves police officers is being able to be objective and open-minded and not be biased." *(Black male, 51, 22 years sworn officer)*

While some officers carried the belief that they could participate as long as they were off-

duty, there were some that did not make this distinction and also used their off-duty time to abide by the rules of the police department. Statements such as "No, I don't think you can participate one way or the other… and the reason being you have to be neutral… You're a police officer" *(Black male, 54, 25 years sworn officer).* Statements such as this showed how for many officers, their off-duty behavior had to reflect their on-duty behavior, and this was based on their beliefs that what they did off duty could easily be connected to their identity as an officer. Because of this, most officers accepted that it was best to adapt the position of the officer above, which was "You can't intertwine and mingle the two [BLM participation and being a police officer]." According to the responses, there were also officers who were not aware of the written rules governing officers off duty time, but instead mentioned what they perceived to be the unwritten rules within the force that discouraged officers from participating. As one officer noted how other officers may react to finding out someone participated, for instance, he described the rules as being "kinda underwritten like, oh man, why he gonna deal with them if he's supposed to be with us" *(Black male, 43, 22 years sworn officer).* Overall, what most of the officers indicated was that the rules allowed them to participate, but only with them being completely disassociated from the department. For a few officers, while unwritten, it was best practice to not be associated with the protests as it was seen as choosing sides.

“There Is Tension” – Workplace Climate

When questioning participants about the workplace climate, what was found is that answers from White and Asian officers tended to stray away from race and focused on other issues that impacted the social environment at work (e.g., low morale, work schedules due to protesting events, officer retention) but had little to say about their interactions with other officers during times when BLM protests are occurring. From three different White male

officers, their responses concerning the social environment were as follows: “Well, I think following the protests and quite a busy summer, COVID also, you know, kind of being a factor. You know, we're definitely seeing a lack of or a decrease in morale” *(29, 7 years sworn officer).* Their perception of the social environment was due to the decrease in morale and from their view resulted in officers leaving the department. As stated by another White male officer, “You see the social environment, right now you see a ton of officers leaving. Since 2018, we've lost 268 officers. People are looking for an exit. They don't think that they're appreciated; they think that they're expendable” *(39, 15 years sworn officer).* Being overworked during the unrest was seen as having detrimental impacts by While male officers and seen as a driving factor to people leaving. As put by one officer, “an overworked department that then works more, it's difficult to keep morale up and to kind of keep people going" *(30, 5 years sworn officer).* While each of these concerns regarding the workplace was also mentioned by Black officers, it tended to stop here when interviewing White officers. As stated by one of the white male officers, "We try to stay away from any kind of political conversations. I mean, the police department itself wishes for us to not really dive down into too many politics or personal thoughts" *(29, 7 years sworn officer).* This sentiment was echoed by most of the participants across race; however, officers, particularly Black officers, often engaged in political conversations, but only with other officers within their racial group.

Perceptions of the social environment were glaringly different when interviewing Black officers, as it was mentioned several times while interviewing Black officers that there was tension present among officer groups, which was typically based on one being White or Black. During interviews, participants agreed that there were good officers who were employed at the urban police department; however, it was also commonly reported by most of the Black officers

that, generally, there remained racial divides, in their view, particularly regarding BLM. What findings indicated was that Black officers felt as though they had a greater support for and connection to BLM, with Black officers feeling as though White officers supported and were connected to BLM to a lesser degree. In explaining the social environment at work during civil unrest, one Black officer explained:

> "I think there's always a certain degree of being on edge. And I think when you have a situation like with George Floyd, there was no question what the issues were. There was no question what people were fighting for. So, I think you had some people who completely understood what was going on. And of course, they're like, I can certainly understand why they're out here… And then you have those that don't quite understand the significance. And, and I say that from a perspective of a being a Black man, you see that type of incident occur, and most of us think to ourselves, you know what, that could have been me. That could have been somebody that I know that could have been one of my loved ones. So there, in my opinion, there are people that are able to relate more to the situation than others, but in any event, we all were able to work together to get everything accomplished. And I'm proud to say that [our city] during all the situations of unrest that we saw around the country, we did not see a single incident of violence in our city." *(Black male, 51, 22 years sworn officer)*

Overall, these racial differences often resulted in tension being present in the department and this tension was displayed by Black officers often sharing their thoughts about BLM with other Black officers. Similarly, White officers would do the same, except in cases where they engaged in these conversations with Black officers, which, based on the data, rarely occurred.

Due to the racial division in views of BLM, there was often tension between Black and White officers, and this tension was based on Black officers feeling as though Whites officers did not acknowledge the significance of BLM. Also, Black officers reported many of their White officers feeling as though BLM was did not include White lives. There was one participant who recounted her experience in trying to educate a fellow White officer about BLM. In her words:

> "There's one police officer in this department, he's a supervisor as well, doesn't look like me, but we have very honest conversations. Because I'm so passionate about it, we had talked about spearheading a group to put together a team, a diverse team to ensure that

> we have these discussions and put things in place to eliminate issues that might come up…I remember us having a conversation about Black Lives Matter and we were going to put it out…We got a lot of feedback about officers wanting to participate, but I felt like we needed to have a conversation, and to have a conversation, you gotta know the history. I was putting together a PowerPoint. I was like, we were talking about black lives matter, and he was speaking for his, for people that look like him, and he was like, people have issues with that. Because again, like I said, they're thinking, yeah, Black lives matter, but mine does too. And so again, that's just certain people, they feel how they feel… We have had a knee on our neck for a long time, but for them, it's just like, I didn't do that to y'all… that's not me. So why can't we get past it? And so again, for me, it's just like, well, you have to acknowledge it to move forward, and you don't even want acknowledge it because it's uncomfortable and it hurts." *(Black female, 45, 19 years sworn officer)*

Although participants noted that there remained subcultures among officers, there were times when White officers became vocal about issues within the department that were based on race. Findings indicate that subcultures existed within the urban police department, and these subcultures were racially divided:

> "So, I'll refer my, my response to after the George Floyd incident. I mean, because it was always there, there is this police culture where we're all one, but there's subcultures within the police department and those subcultures are racially divided. I'm just gonna keep it real with you. It might have started kicking in after Trump became president because what I started seeing is a lot of the white officers being more vocal in their feelings about things. As an example, we had to push to try to recruit more minority officers, women, and minorities, and the white officers felt that as an attack on them and would make comments openly about automatic disqualifier being Caucasian. Just things like that, operation whiteout like they were being done with, because the need to have our police departments reflect what our community looks like was like an attack on them to remove them from the equation when in fact it wasn't. It's difficult, I'll say here, I love the fact that we, as black officers recognize that our stresses and our strains are different from our other counterpart and the impact that race and policing – that the conflict between the two affects us. I won't say more because I don't wanna minimize what white officers feel." *(Black female, 48, 21 years sworn officer)*

The above response summed the feelings of most Black officers at the urban police department, which was that there were racial divisions that existed at the police department. While many officers agreed that there were not many Blacks represented in the police force in comparison to

their White counterparts, this particular officer noted an instance where efforts to address this was alarming to others within the police force. the officer recounts the reaction of White counterparts when the department tries to engage in efforts to increase the diversity of the department. What the above statement suggests is that the same reaction officers often had toward movements such as BLM and their perceived exclusion from their lives mattering, they also felt as though diversity efforts were made to exclude them, based on this response. From this response, it was noted that White officers became more vocal during the Trump presidency. Later, this officer also recounted a previous conversation with a white officer within her department and how this officer felt shortly after the unrest due to the killing of George Floyd:

> "I had a conversation with one [a white officer] who felt like after George Floyd, that everybody of color that he interacted with thought that he was the one that had his knee on the neck, and that impacted him. You know, it impacted him. I can't say not as much, or maybe more because I can't tell what he's feeling, but I recognize the divide is there." *(Black female, 48, 21 years sworn officer)*

What was suggested through the above interactions between Black and White officers was that White officers felt as though they were being either excluded from BLM or penalized for being a member of the White race when it came to civil unrest. It was through these interactions where Black officers noted that racial differences existed between the views of White and Black officers.

White officers shared how they believed they were perceived by others during the unrest. For one White officer, he gave an example of how he believed many people grounded their perceptions of White officers in what he phrased as perception, not reality. For one White officer:

> "I think it's all perception. I think it's perceived that I can't understand Black Lives Matter because I'm not Black. I think Black officers have just as difficult a time because I think that they might be viewed as someone who isn't who doesn't support their own. But it's all perception because there's Black officers, White officers, Asian officers, and Hispanic

> officers. It goes through every spectrum. I think that you look at pictures in the fifties of all-white police departments and you're coupling that with now…I think that's an unfair thing to do that because yeah, there probably was one idea for that, you know, but now it is so multicultural, so multifaceted that, you know… I would say that again, going back to it, the perception is always there off the job." *(White male, 30, 5 years sworn officer)*

Here, the views of the White officer varied from those of his minority colleagues. However, what was clear was that he did not agree that the police department should be viewed in the same light as it did in the fifties. Because of the increase in representation in police departments since the fifties, he felt as though it should not be assumed that he did not understand BLM.

Racial Group Solidarity

Participating officers shared stories that indicated that a lot of their thoughts and observations garnered within the police department were kept under wraps. In the previous finding, it was found that tension existed within the police department, with Black officers feeling as though White officers could not or did not want to understand the unrest that was occurring. Due to this, police officers, particularly Black officers, often stayed within their racial groups when discussing matters relating to the unrest. The concept of keeping things under wraps is qualitatively different as this behavior not only occurred between officers but even when officers engaged in activities outside the police department. On the one hand, keeping things under wraps was interpreted as police officers suppressing their feelings to uphold the mission of police work, and on the other hand, this represents officers' willingness to only share their thoughts and observations with people with whom they had an established trust relationship, which was typically members of their racial group. When questioning the urban officers on how they perceived the social environment at work during times of civil unrest, one officer stated:

> "Unfortunately, I have to say this. It was kind of kept under wraps. It wasn't, it wasn't as vocal as you would think. it should be with Caucasians and African Americans. The

> African Americans, we had, we've had our fair share of conversations, but when it's time to really put it out on the table, it's kind of, not much spoken about." *(Black male, 50, 18 years sworn officer)*

When discussing their experiences with white counterparts during the unrest, one Black female officer shared her take on where White officers are often confused about when interpreting what BLM means, "if you listen to what it's saying, nobody says white lives don't matter. We're saying for all lives to matter, black lives have to matter too, and it's just that little piece that I don't feel they [White officers] get" *(48, 21 years sworn officer).* Keeping things under wraps expanded past the level of officers being able to engage with other officers, but at times could be life-threatening to officers. In a later response, one officer speaks to the experience of not being able to share observations made on the behaviors of White officers in the police force. Here, she speaks to how important it is for the department to first address issues that exist within before addressing the external issues that exist between police and communities:

> "It hurts me because I'm gonna tell you this, Black officers have seen some things that their counterparts have done that don't line up with what we should be doing. I carry myself because I'm a very religious person and I don't want karma coming for me and I'm not gonna be judged on some foolishness when I get upstairs with God, I'm, I'm gonna treat everybody equally. Your race has nothing to do with it. But there's some things that I can guarantee you, every black officer has seen and knows it wasn't right, but you can't speak out because then you become a target and being a target as a black officer… what that means is if I go on a high priority call where there's a gun involved and the person, they don't care. If I'm a black officer, they just see the uniform and they wanna kill me. I ain't got no backup. I have nobody there to help me, so I'm on an island by myself and that's not a place you want to be in today's society responding to calls for service. So it's very difficult, but the racial divide is there. I've personally said, you know, everybody's talking about having these conversations with the community about race and color and policing. When in fact, cuz my mama said, you always take care of home first. You gotta make sure you had those conversations in-house first. Because you can't expect people to go out and be procedurally just when they're not feeling it in-house either." *(Black female, 48, 21 years sworn officer)*

According to the above officer, her and other officers' ability to speak out was complicated, and if they were to remain in police work, officers had to often abide by these unspoken rules, which

was suggested by the above quote that you keep things under wraps, even if you did not agree with it.

Due to the tension that existed within the police department, it was imperative to officers that they chose their social groups wisely, meaning that they had to be cognizant of who they called friends and being able to separate them from people they worked with. For most of the officers in the study, particularly minority officers, they tended to hang around each other and used their off-duty time to discuss some of the issues they were experiencing within the police force. While interviewing one officer, this was stated:

> Interviewee: “I'm just generally a private person. but do have associates in this department and I say that because I don't use friend loosely. Like if you're my friend, you're my friend. Like we, off duty, you know, [spend] time together. I can only say I share that with maybe two hands, but really more so one hand because I don't trust everybody. And I know everybody that smiles in your face is not your friend.” *(Black female, 45, 19 years sworn officer)*
>
> Interviewer: “Is this with people who look more like you?”
>
> Interviewee: “That would be the correct assumption.”

What is interesting about the racial group solidarity that existed is that this solidarity persisted for minorities, even as the rank of certain officers increased. Simply put, regardless of an officer's rank, they tended to engage in conversations with other officers; however, they would save their true thoughts about issues existing within the department and the unrest occurring with other officers. When interviewing one of the police captains, he explained how he usually participates in these types of conversations with people who look like him. First, he speaks about how this is the case, as many White officers do not come to him to discuss it. Second, he speaks to how Black officers may use each other as a resource during these times.

> “That's pretty much something I would keep to myself or with a certain group of people because the [Black] people that work under me are comfortable coming in and sharing their opinions on a matter with me. The general consensus for the people that work under

> me is probably that black lives matter is a negative thing. And I'm thinking that for their African American counterparts, their views are going to differ greatly on that organization. So, I don't think it's something they talk about… I would think they're probably going to talk amongst themselves with other African American officers because when I have that conversation about this, it's generally going to be with other people who look like me because when I have this conversation with people who don't look like me, there's a level of tension there. I truly believe you cannot address a problem that you don't acknowledge exist. So, I think some of my coworkers probably have pain saying [that a problem exists between police and communities]." *(Black male, 57, 30 years sworn officer)*

From this response, it is apparent that the interactions between officers remained intra-racial, instead of interracial, as it related to matters revolving around the unrest. This intra-racial communication among officers persisted, even among Black officers with higher ranks within the department.

Officers' Rank on Social Environment

When interviewing officers, one observation was that officers' rank tended to dictate the extent to which officers felt as though they could confront social issues faced at work. Despite their rank, they still experienced the feeling of being outcasts despite having White officers work under them. Socially, there were events associated with BLM (e.g., protesting or marches) that officers may have not participated in due to how officers may respond to them after discovering their participation. What was evident within this theme was that officers' willingness to discuss their thoughts regarding BLM openly at work, or openly participate in BLM protesting, was largely dependent on their overall ranking status as an officer. Simply put, it was found that officers of higher rank were more likely to be involved in protesting movements or express that they would than lower-ranking officers. This was largely due to higher-ranking officers, or close to retirement officers, being at the stage of their career where they no longer felt it would be a barrier in their remaining time at the department. While rank did come with this privilege, rank did not stop these officers from experiencing a social environment similar to that of lower ranks

within their racial group. In explaining why some issues exist between the police and people of color, one officer reflected on the training academy that incoming officers must go through. In his critique of what incoming officers are taught, he explains how officers at work may react to discovering that a fellow police officer attended a march, particularly one that is up for the next rank:

> "Do I feel like we needed that movement? Yes. But I don't... We are taught this job. You know, when we come out of the academy, we know nothing about law enforcement, unless we were prior law enforcement before we got here. When you are taught by your training instructor, that it's okay to violate certain individual rights or pull someone over because of their skin color, it has the tendency to stick with you. That movement [BLM] brought these things to light, and it was good that it was brought to light. However, even after the movement, do we still have those same problems? Yes. Because now you still have younger officers coming out of the academy and they're being taught by senior guys, and they're being taught the wrong way... And being young, you're in a career that you love, you now can stand on your own. You have a tendency to be afraid to speak up… I think it's, it's where they stand within the department... Let's just say we having another movement, we're having a March and there's an officer that is a Sergeant, but is up for the next rank, which is Lieutenant. There'll be a lot of doubt in his mind whether he, that it would be the right thing to do, based on if I do this, will I get passed over? Will I not make the rank of Lieutenant? Because now everybody is saying, oh, you know, you just promoted a man to Lieutenant that that was in the Black Lives Matter movement, marching." *(Black male, 60, 31 years sworn officer)*

From this response, it is clear how affiliation with BLM could hinder one's mobility at work, and thus can serve as a barrier to one's participation in BLM. While explanations like this were given by most of the officers, particularly Black officers, some officers in senior positions echoed this very sentiment. As also mentioned by this same officer:

> "You gotta understand this, you're questioning a 31-year veteran, age 60. That pretty much been through it all and seen it all right. And don't much bother me at this stage of my career, but you still not gonna mistreat others around me and you're not gonna mistreat me. So, my answers may not be that of a 30-year-old or a 10-year veteran that you interview, you know they still got a lot to push forward to, and they may feel if I do B or C, it may be pushback on me" *(Black male, 60, 31 years sworn officer)*

Another officer further explained how his age and time in the department may have generally

dictated the types of decisions he would have made. In doing this, he speaks on the representation of Blacks in higher ranking roles in the department and the issues that persist for them, even in higher positions:

> "There are two Black captains on the police department, we're it. Our supervisor is a black female. They couldn't have made a better choice. Okay. we have one another, we have two black assistant chiefs, both good choices, our chiefs, black male, great choice. But the five of us are still unicorns. Don't be confused... Throughout my life, everything I've done has been a challenge while I was in the military here. Every time I walked in the room, nine times out of 10, I was the black guy that was in the room. I was the one by myself. So, I expect it every day. So, it doesn't throw me off. You walk in with your head held high, and you do what you have to do and the chips fall where they may. Some people aren't going to like me because of the color of my skin. When I was 29, I might have tried to change that. At 57, I don't [care] if you don't like me, cause the color of my skin, That's your problem. And you deal with it. I'm not gonna try to – I feel like nine times out of 10, my contemporaries are going to be pretty set in their views anyway… If I walk in and you're watching Fox News and you've been watching it all day, I figure there's not a thing I can say [that] is gonna change your opinion." *(Black male, 57, 30 years sworn officer)*

Also, within this response, we see the reliance on the media to inform the opinion of officers about people of color. Again, while rank did bring some privileges such as being a part of the conversation when issues would arise, officers such as this one note that their behaviors at various times of the ranking process were very much regulated by the social environment they would return to after making such decisions. This same officer later shared, "I'm always in charge and I always have to think about things fairly and equitably, but I never get a chance to forget that I'm that black guy occupying that space." One Black female officer explained her comfort level in expressing concerns or thoughts toward BLM at work. This participant was recently promoted and is currently in her probation period within this new role:

> I'm pretty comfortable. I've been a little apprehensive because I'm on probation. Again, I've recently been promoted. I'm the highest-ranking black female officer in the department. I've made history twice up the ranks and achieved rank that no other black female was able to do in the history of this department… Probation always makes me nervous because they can let you go at any point, even though I got my 20 years in, I

> don't mess with it… I still kind of shake the bushes, but I ain't cut 'em down here a minute because of that aspect. I know that there are some contentions in this department about my promotion. I know that there's been some things done to try to hinder that process… it's sad and it's hurtful… So for the rank of Sergeant, Lieutenant, and Captain, because I was never a corporal, they didn't have that rank, when I started testing, I was number one on the list, and for the people that I put my life on the line for, for y'all to be wrong... Cause they wouldn't say it to my face because I still got a lot of Brooklyn in me for y'all to be running around talking about I cheated, we all in the same room, taking the same test that somebody had to have given me the answers because of what I look like. You don't think that I'm smart enough to make the grade to, oh, to get higher than you got? So, for that to happen, it had to be some deception somewhere in there. And those are the things that are deeply embedded in police culture. *(Black female, 48, 21 years sworn officer)*

For this participant, she echoed the statement from her Black male colleague, which suggested that people going up for ranks within the department would be apprehensive in deciding to speak up in favor in Black Lives Matter. Being apprehensive about speaking up came with social consequences at work where Black officer felt as though speaking up for Black lives taken by the police or their own lives without sacrificing their ability to meet other goals within the force. Therefore, the workplace experiences quoted above made even higher raking officers support others within their own racial group.

More than half of the participating Black women from the urban police department relied on their faith to help them navigate the social environment at work. As put by the Black female officer quoted above, “I'm a very religious person and I don't want karma coming for me and I'm not gonna be judged on some foolishness when I get upstairs with God.” What the findings overall indicated is that while Black officers generally had their mechanisms of navigating the work environment during civil unrest (obtaining rank, establishing support groups with other officers who looked like them), Black women, according to the findings, found religion to help them stay true to themselves despite feeling as though they were positioned on the scale when it came to the levels of social rank. As stated by one of the Black women who participated:

> "I feel like I've had a unique experience as a black female in law enforcement when I came on. And even now it's gotten a little better, but there were not a lot of black females. And I'm always cognizant of what I call the levels or the playing field. You have white male, black male, white female, and black female. And I have felt at the bottom of that. I have been very grateful though, I'm a woman of faith. And that is at the forefront of who I am. So, I'm never afraid of adversity. And so, it has been challenging because I'm just at the point now at my rank of Lieutenant of having a seat at the table before I didn't have a seat at the table. So, I remember coming on and I mean, you know, it's small, but for me, small things matter walking into the building and I'm one of, I was raised good morning, you know, speak and officers that don't look, look like me, and I'm like, I'm wearing the same uniform as you are, you could at least respect me as a person. And so, like I said, though, I feel like because of my faith, God has placed certain people that have helped me along there have been some very good people that I worked alongside that have been willing to mentor me and helped me along the way, but I never shy away from who I am." *(Black female, 45, 19 years sworn officer)*

In the above response, this officer recounts the challenges faced when she first entering the police force, which were far greater than what she experiences currently being a ranking officer. Since this officer is now at a higher rank, she felt as though she was in a better position now than she was when she first entered the police department.

While it is important to note how even higher-ranking officers experienced the workplace socially, it is equally important to highlight the experience of officers who did not rank as high. These officers felt as though their ability to enact change within the department was low. While this particular officer has spent several years at the department, his role, he believed, did not allow him to be the voice he felt he needed to be to become part of the change. As put by a Hispanic male officer:

> "There's a lot of stuff that bothers me [issues existing between police and communities], the injustice that happens. And because I know I can't at my level, I can't do, or I can't make that difference to make that change. And then the predicament I'm in, that I'm in this specialized place. There's, there's not much I can really do. So, for me, it's a choice to rather stay away and stay out of it." *(Hispanic male, 54, 18 years sworn officer)*

This sentiment became of huge importance as when discussing BLM and how connected this officer felt to the issues addressed by the movement. As this officer later shared, "[I'm]

definitely connected because as a Hispanic of course, as you may know, we also get the short end of the stick. We're not treated fair either." However, during this analysis, it was shown how the intersection of role, race, and gender impacted their workplace climate and therefore caused offices to professionally associate with all officers, but personally stand in solidarity with only those officers they felt as though they could trust due to the tensions, whether spoken or unspoken, that existed within the workplace.

"You Just Do What You Know Is Right" Support For Protest

Off-duty/On-duty Protest Participation

While there were factors found that prevented most officers from participating in BLM protesting (e.g., rank, officer safety while in the line of duty), minority officers collectively showed support for protesting in their responses, despite their non-participation. While none of the officers participated in protesting off-duty, few indicated that they would, with one indicating that they have participated in a march. Most urban police officers, specifically Black, understood the message that was being spread by the protesting and supported protesting despite their non-participation. When questioned on the policies that governed officers' off-duty participation in protesting, one officer stated, "So there's a policy on, like, political movement, but I'm gonna tell you it's frowned upon" *(Black female, 48, 21 years sworn officer).* To these officers, while most agreed that doing what they knew was right was a good route to take, they also understood that it could have potentially come with undesirable consequences, which often required them to choose a side. Most of the urban officers agreed that not choosing sides was a difficult task, especially for minority officers in the police force. As stated:

> "I'm not just a police officer. It's not challenging that I can't do my job, it's challenging because of my background and who I am, and where I'm from. I'm not a Virginia native I'm an army brat. My last experience and where I believe my growth came from was being in the projects in Brooklyn. The experiences that I went through with that and some

> experiences that I had in my life that truly impacts me that there's no division for me… they're all intertwined as one. I have black sons, brothers and being realistically engaged in the community and being from the community. My concerns are the same as black lives matters concerns, even though I'm a police officer if that makes sense." *(Black female, 48, 21 years sworn officer)*

To most of the officers, being a member of the police force was different than any other job where a person could clock out of work and be done with it, but rather a job where even in your off-duty time you were still active in. Due to this participant not wanting false narratives to spread that could get back to the police department regarding her participation, she felt as though her remaining neutral during protesting was good for her and felt that she had the greatest influence by taking that position. However, she could relate to BLM in the sense that she shared a racial identity, although intertwined with her identity as a police officer. During the interview process, most minority officers agreed that it was difficult having to choose sides when it came to their community and the police force.

With most of the officers supporting the idea of protesting, very few could say that they had participated in a protest off-duty. During the interview, officers were questioned whether they believed this decision would impact their relationship with community members. While most of the officers stated that they did not experience any negative impacts from their non-participation from their social circles, the people they associated with were often in the position to understand their unique position. Also, many of these officers reported being connected to people who were a part of the BLM movement, with those people knowing their (the officer's) position during the unrest. While officers reported not attending a protest and remaining neutral during civil unrest, officers' responses also indicated that if they were not in the police force, this decision may have been different; however, due to their membership in the police force, they had the consensus that even their actions during their off-duty time could leave major influences on

them for when they are back on-duty. As stated by one Black male officer, "Now, if I retire and I'm no longer wearing a uniform, I may feel differently. But right now, I don't feel as though it's in the best interest of the city." This officer further elaborated:

> "If the people in Washington don't change the way they operate, that's where it starts at that foundation level right there… They can't see anything right now because when Donald Trump was in there and he was saying all the things he was saying and doing all the things he was doing, African Americans sat back and thought he was the greatest thing to help them and turns out it might not have been that way. You know, the January 6th event, who would ever storm the capital building, really? I would've never went to that. And there were police officers there that got arrested. See, and that's a perfect example of why you don't cross boundaries. You have to stay neutral regardless of what your feelings are. Me, I'm just not gonna go there." *(Black male, 54, 25 years sworn officer)*

For this officer, officers' participation in the insurrection at the U.S. Capitol building served as a prime example of what could be a consequence of off-duty participation in protesting. To him, crossing boundaries by attending BLM protesting events off-duty could connect to his identity as a police officer and bring undesirable consequences.

Although officers had their reservations about off-duty participation in BLM protesting, they did have an experience with watching the impact of officers showing support for the movement while on duty, which in this case was the police chief. One of the Black women that participated in the study recalled how the police chief marching with the BLM organizations sparked a negative reaction from officers who were not Black within the police department:

> "If you remember, when the protests first started there was a picture floating around with our police chief holding the Black Lives Matter sign. Whew. It angered a lot of people who didn't look like me… On that poster was a name of an individual who was involved in the officer-involved shooting that the chief was holding the sign. But when you listen to why the chief did what he did, some can't understand that it saved this city from looking like Minneapolis, because what they were coming to the precinct to do was tear it down. And when they got to the precinct, it was one officer standing on those steps and that was the chief… I [protestor] talked to you [police chief], they said, well, can you march with us? And he [police chief] was like, yeah." *(Black female, 48, 21 years sworn officer)*

Such a negative reaction from the department and community members to participating officers, it was believed, could place officers in jeopardy. So much to the point where she would rather remain neutral. As she later stated:

> "I would wear a shirt [that] say black lives matter, but I know the reaction, especially being a part of the executive staff, that would impact the department, which means I can make it worse for officers who [are] on the street that look like me." *(Black female, 48, 21 years sworn officer)*

Participating or representing BLM placed officers in a position where they felt like their participation not only had an impact on them, but also on other officers in the department. What was found was support for and willingness to express their support for BLM but being faced with the decision of whether the aftermath of such decision could be negative attention to them and their other counterparts. However, what was suggested by this response was that the police chief's participation in the march prevented the march from escalating to what the officers distinguished as a protest. There was only one officer who self-reported participating off-duty in a BLM-hosted march. This particular officer noted that most of his involvement in the protesting was not on-duty because of him being assigned to an investigation unit, which was not usually called on to assist in policing these types of protest. He provided his understanding of what separated a BLM march from a protest:

> "A march, in my opinion, just comes off more peaceful. Hey, we're not here for any drama. We don't want any violence. We just wanna bring awareness to the issue we want to march. We want to get as many people out as possible and make our point. Protest, I think you almost get to we marched enough. Okay. You're still not listening. It's still happening. I don't agree with obviously, you know, tearing down the city, but we have to do something to get y'all's attention because the marches aren't working, you know? And so, I understand the protests. I really do. I don't agree with them all the time, but I understand why they happened." *(Black male, 43, 22 years sworn officer)*

This officer reported having three sons, who keep him busy during his off-duty time; however, he was able to take his family to a march. He stated, "The protest normally ran into something.

They were doing a couple of the marches though… I brought my kids out, brought my wife out and we walked together with, you know, the people and, and took our stance that way." In the sample, while most participants supported BLM events, very few, particularly this officer, reported that they participated. However, there were also few officers nearing their end of tenure (e.g., close to retirement) at the police department who saw their participation as a possibility.

As established, the preference of most of the officers was to remain neutral as long as they were in the police force, but for the ones who were close to finishing their time, particularly older Black males, they mostly reported being willing to participate in protesting while still in the police force during their off-duty time. One of the participating officers reported spending a significant amount of his off-duty time with his grandchildren, which prevented him from being in a position to attend a protest. As stated by this officer, "I would sit here and tell you that if a member of the organization or some of the members that participated had come to me and say, 'hey, do you mind marching with us?' 'Yes, I'll be right there.'" He further explained:

> "I have no problem with it because there's a message to the madness. It's not just done to be seen. There is a message to the madness, and it needs to be heard and it needs to be continued, continued to be heard. You know, for you, your son, and his son, it needs to be heard. Sometimes you just do what you know is right. And you don't worry about nothing else. And it is really not a position that you're being put into. You just look at it like this is the right thing to do. And I can't worry about your feelings. You know, I can't worry about, you know, that you feel like, because I'm a policeman, I shouldn't be doing it where you tell me as a policeman, why not? You know, we get, we had a chief that got beat up, Really beat up on over a situation that occurred during the movement. And they just couldn't grasp why he did it. And when you try to tell them that throughout the country, you had marches with buildings were burnt, cars overturned just mayhem, and out of all the marches that we had, demonstrations in [our area], not one brick was thrown, not one, one cup was burnt. That's why he did what he did. They just don't seem to want to understand." *(Black male, 60, 31 years sworn officer)*

Although this participant reported that he would participate in a protest while off-duty, he did have some concerns that although this had not happened in his area, there was always the potential for protests to go awry. This officer felt that some may not set good examples of how to

get a message across, which according to many officers did not account for all protesters in attendance. The officer reported that those types of protesting events were not ones he wanted to be a part of, and he believed that the chief's conversation with some of the BLM organizers had an impact on him not experiencing these issues in his area. As he stated, "I commend our chief because he let the organizers know your name is on this. The first sign of vandalism that we have in this city, I'm gonna hold you accountable." Due to not many of these events going badly, this officer was more prone to attend.

Support for Mobilization

Officers supported the idea of protest although they were not likely to participate, especially while serving as a police officer; however, findings indicated that some officers' support for protesting events only extended to the areas where incidents had taken place. In other words, some officers did not support the idea of protest mobilization where protest events would be held in areas despite police-involved incidents occurring at other police departments. To be more specific, White and Hispanic officers were less likely to support the idea of mobilization with Black and Asian officers being more likely to support mobilization. Most officers who reported an understanding of mobilization made supporting statements such as "I'm okay with that. As long as there's order" and "just because something happened in Minneapolis or just because something happened, it doesn't mean that it doesn't affect people here." Furthermore, officers largely supported mobilization due to their belief that people could relate to issues that occur elsewhere.

For police officers who did not support mobilization, few reported it is due to people assuming that officers in their areas may agree with the injustice that has taken place in another place of the world. To one White male officer, he felt as though people failed to have

conversations with the police when these types of events occur and viewed policing as being the only profession he knows where people would express their dissatisfaction within their hometown sparked by an issue that happened elsewhere. In his own words:

> "No one's out here asking other officers what they thought about it. I have not talked to a single officer, watched that video [George Floyd], and said, oh yeah, that's good. No, we're all sitting there going, what the hell are they thinking? And this is the only profession I know where, I mean, you could have a bad doctor out in LA. They're not gonna judge doctors over in New York the same way because of that doctor in LA. But a cop in LA does something wrong, every officer in the country is judged the exact same way. So, they're protesting for something that happened up in Minneapolis, down here. What did [our] PD have to do with what happened up in Minneapolis?" *(White male, 39, 15 years sworn officer)*

This finding indicated that although issues may have existed in police departments leading to the emergence of BLM protesting events, officers, in this case mainly White and Hispanic, did not view these as being larger problems perpetuated by the institution of policing, but rather an issue that some police departments experienced that were unique to them. Due to this, their support and understanding of BLM protesting decreased when they would see protesting events in their area due to issues in areas like Minneapolis. As mentioned by a Hispanic officer:

> "I've always wondered about that one. That's where I put myself. Remember when I first started talking to you, what matters is what happens here for me because this is where I work. Yes, it's very unfortunate that somebody else in another state, something bad happened to them, but it's, to me, you know, whatever state it is, they have to take care of business there. To me, [our area] has taken care of business, that [our area] is very transparent with the police department…That's why this is America because you can express your opinion. Obviously, I don't know if the people that protest actually know the person that, you know, something bad happened to 'em and that's why they're protesting. And sometimes again, there's always the good and the bad, but the good is they're going to protest one bad person, or a group is gonna go there just to what do you call that? Just to ruin everything for everybody else." *(Hispanic male, 54, 18 years sworn officer)*

Along the same lines, some of the other participating White officers stated that "most police officers, you know, get pretty frustrated with that. But again, you know, a lot of it is I think, you know, we do somewhat of a knee jerk reaction" *(29, 7 years sworn officer).* It was clear that for

many officers, particularly White, these incidents were seen as isolated events. As put by another officer: "I think that stings and that hurts us because we are standing there for the senses of someone else" *(30, 5 years sworn officer).* These collective responses from White and Hispanic officers differed greatly from the other participants, who happened to be Black.

For Black officers, not only was mobilization necessary, but it also helped to address issues that were viewed as larger and applied to more police departments, outside of the ones where this event had taken place. While some of the officers could relate to the White officers in the sense that issues that have taken place locally in other areas should also get attention, most support the idea of mobilization and did not see race and policing issues as being isolated events. In using the murder of George Floyd as an example, one Black woman explained:

> "Personally, I'm always like, I understand it's support because you know, you with George Floyd, you had people in other countries support because it's not just the George Floyd, the person, you know, while we lost somebody and his family lost him, it's the systematic racist agenda that goes on everywhere. So, I understand the concept, you know… Sometimes I'm like… when this stuff happened in Richmond, you are only an hour and a half away, go let them fill some of this fire, but then I understand, it's almost like unity. It's not like we are coming for you now, it's just that we are here. We feel what they are feeling. So, we're gonna support them in our protests. As I say, united we stand, divided we fall." *(Black female, 48, 21 years sworn officer)*

To most of the participating officers, citizens did have the freedom of speech, and many of the mobilized protesting events that had taken place in their area, many officers instead viewed as a preventive measure taken by BLM organizers to get ahead of issues that could potentially occur in their areas. As mentioned by one Black female officers, "sometimes people just being proactive, it doesn't have to happen where it directly affects you." Additionally, the mobilization of protest could be seen as a way to change larger policies impacting policing and communities. As this officer explained:

> "A lot of times when stuff happens in law enforcement, which is a bad thing that happens, a good thing can happen somewhere else. Like with the Eric Gardner situation,

> policies are changed overnight. We, look into the way we police and that's probably why we've come to where we are in 2022, with a lot of changes when it comes to how we deal with people, how we make certain arrests, how we handle situations, police pursuit, everything that I think is important. Starting off I feel like we didn't take into consideration as much human life when you're dealing with stuff like a police pursuit or you're trying to arrest somebody… or when somebody dies because somebody doesn't wanna stop their vehicle. So, unfortunately, when stuff happens in other places, we do get ahead of it. And then people do it, do affect us. And it's a good thing that it does because, you know, maybe it's a good thing it happened somewhere else, but we know it's not gonna happen in [our area]." *(Black female, 39, 16 years sworn officer)*

While police officers mentioned that there were times when they had to arrest protesters at these events, there were usually no issues as long as the protest remained peaceful and lawful. As she stated, "Did we have some people that we arrested? Sure. Cause there's always two or three in a bunch that's gonna try to make it worse; if you do it with dignity and lead people with respect, you have no problem." For many officers they understood the outrage; however, they were still expected to ensure that the event did not lose control. For other officers, one important part of the protest was to also find out what methods could be taken to ensure that the purpose of their protest was fulfilled. One Black woman officer shared some of the advice she gives to protesters regarding the next steps. This sentiment was also a common question many of the Black officers shared in relevance to whether the protesting events in their areas were fulfilling their intended purpose. In explaining her thoughts about mobilization, this officer shared:

> "I don't disrespect that because again, I tell people all the time, you can't tell me how I'm supposed to feel, if that's your cause and you wanna stand on that, absolutely, but do it with integrity. I have told people if you are gonna do something, do it in a respectful way because you'll get that respect. But what if you are out here and you cussing the police out and we are here to protect you and you treating us a certain way, well then you're not gonna get what you're looking for. If what you're looking for is attention and you know, to be heard – so I have told these people in these groups this too like protesting is fine, but what's the next step? What are we doing next? Like, I can get out here and I can protest every day, but what are you doing behind the scenes? Are you writing congressmen, or do you know what the laws are like? And so, I always make sure I say, okay, what's the next step because you can protest. But at some point, you gotta start

> doing some additional work if you're really trying to scratch the surface of your cause." *(Black female, 45, 19 years sworn officer)*

While Black officers were largely supportive of the idea of protesting occurring in their area due to events from other areas, this did have impacts on their personal lives as many times they were called to police these protest events. In this case, while they could support the cause, they faced dissatisfaction in other areas due to the mobilization of BLM protesting events, such as their work schedules, which often sacrificed their off-duty time.

Work Schedule

Observations made about the impact of protesting on work schedules were consistent regardless of officers' race. What was found is that most officers reported being called last minute to work due to protesting events, which often occurred on the weekends, times when many officers reported having reserved for family, which was the most common sacrifice made by officers during civil unrest. During interviews, most of the officers reported that the protesting events held in the urban area were nonviolent and at times made them question their presence at these events, considering that no crimes were being committed.

> "With the protests, you know, a lot of officers, including myself, were getting detailed almost every weekend, and a lot of it was on last-minute notice. So, it was definitely a strain on the family and like your home life, and it's important to have a home life, no matter what occupation you're in. And so, it was very difficult to manage, last-minute command decisions of, hey, you have to be here… and then for most of the protests, they were very nonviolent and very productive in that nature. However, our presence sometimes seems that was our biggest issue as far as the police go, is that I'm here, but, you know, if no crime is occurring, then you know, my presence is only sometimes fueling the fire, so, right. Kind of an interesting give and take, but I, I will say, yeah, the weekends and the last-minute notice for some of these events was, was difficult." *(White male, 29, 7 years sworn officer)*

For this officer, admittedly most of the BLM protest events were nonviolent; however, he perceived that police presence at these protest events would make events escalate. By this, the

officer felt as though he should have not been called in to work on these weekends if the likelihood of violence occurring at these events were low. Later, this officer gave an example of how a lot of officers would be called for a protest that did not appear to be a threat: "We've been pulled away for 10 people walking down the street, that are peaceful, that aren't causing an issue." What made officers even more dissatisfied with their work schedules during these times was the fact that many of these calls were last minute. Many other officers shared their thoughts with another, with an officer stating, "It's hard to that when you've been up for 28 hours and you're wondering, this is the fourth weekend in a row that I'm not gonna see my family because I have to work" *(White male, 30, 5 years sworn officer)* and another officer stating, "It is taking a toll on my son, my wife, my family in general, and professionally, it's taken a toll on me that, you know, we have so much to do and so little time" *(Black male, 54, 25 years sworn officer).* For many officers at the urban police department, they reported working many weekends when the protest events would occur, and for many this was the very reason why some did not participate off-duty, considering that this was very much considered as work.

> "I have not, reasonings behind it you know, you work enough, you see enough that number one, when most of them were going on, I had to be a part of them <laugh> on the other side. So, I think that when you see it on, on certain sides, you kind of go, I think you can, you can be very happy that people can express their opinions and constitutional rights. However, I don't want to get pulled into something because kind of like a doctor, you have somewhat of an obligation to help. If something goes wrong. If you know, someone passes out right next to you, and you're a doctor, you're a nurse, you're gonna feel some moral obligation to do something about that. You're gonna have to enact yourself… But at the same time any cop, in his head going, you know, what, if a car comes through here, right. What if someone gets shot, what if someone starts doing an act of violence? Do you, do you jump in? And then how does that look? You know, how does that appear? So, you know, I never took part in one other than working it in uniform." *(White male, 30, 5 years sworn officer)*

Here, the officer speaks to the position he would be in if he was to attend a protest off duty. From his response, it was apparent that he would feel obligated to step in once he notices something

that is occurring that should not be occurring. This was a conflicting role for the officer as it was difficult for him to know what his role would be at this protest, considering if certain things were to happen and inserting himself during these times in the protest may lead him to feel like he is at work.

While officers, across race, felt the same concerns, that their family life had taken a hit due to their expected presence at these events, there were many officers, particularly African Americans, who felt the moral obligation to be at these events to ensure that things happened equitably for the protesters. One Black male officer, in particular, felt that there were times when he would not have been so sure this would be the case, should certain officers have opted out of on-duty participation in the BLM protesting events.

> "Although I can agree with what they're protesting, it's still a physical thorn in my side because that's one more time I have to put my wife off, and in this profession that becomes uncomfortable anyway, because it happens so very often for whatever the reason, you know, so telling your kids, telling your wife that you're not going to be there for those events that most fathers and husbands can be there for, you start to feel a certain degree of guilt about that. And so, it's inconvenient, but I also know, like I said, I know it's necessary. One of the things that I believe is as an African American police officer, you realize that you have an obligation to be present, to ensure things do happen equitably. So, and I've seen that throughout my career. Not that it's always a problem, but there have been times where I'm not sure if somebody else wasn't there, things would've gone fairly." *(Black male, 57, 30 years sworn officer)*

Not only was this noticed by officers on the front lines who were participating in the protest, but even other officers working within the department in units that were not called during these times noticed the negative impact this could have on officers who had to be present at these events.

> "See, for me, it's different because being here, me and my guys, aren't gonna be called for that for the most part. But for the guys who are they working, the 12-hour shifts, right? You may be at the end of a shift, and then we learn that a protest is going on and we need everybody from C and T. Well, that may be half the squad. They just worked all night. Now they have to stay over and cover that. So, it's just, it's tough on them. It's tough on

> the body. It's tough on the family and we've backfilled." *(Black male, 43, 22 years sworn officer)*

Due to officers leaving the department, this placed a strain on the remaining front-line police officers as this increased their chances of having to be called to police a protest. This left many consequences (e.g., officers being taken away from family, low morale, etc.) and resulted in even more officers leaving the police department. As stated by one officer:

> "We were having officers leaving left and right, going to other departments going to other states, you know, Florida taking a lot of police officers. So, to be perfectly honest with you, I don't think any police officer, especially in [our area] had much of an opportunity to attend any kind of protests or you know, political… it was a very tough summer, I think almost every event I was detailed; therefore, it's kind of good point to see about me going off-duty when, you know, we're all detailed every time, so." *(White male, 29, 7 years sworn officer)*

Here the police officer brought light to how police officers may not be in the position to participate in protesting events when off-duty, especially when accounting for departments that were short on officers as his department's. In this case, attending a protest event off duty did not appear to be the most desirable way to spend their weekend, with no indicator on the next weekend they would be detailed due to the shortage.

"I've Been On The Other Side" – Other Ways of Promoting BLM

Police officers, particularly Black officers, from the urban police department reported being presented with numerous opportunities to promote BLM, aside from BLM protesting. However, many of the ways they went about speaking up for the Black community echoed the same message of BLM. This theme was evident as the participants shared their stories of the different activities that they engaged in to ensure that other police officers could see the injustice that are faced by Blacks at the hands of the police. The qualitative findings suggest racial differences within this theme. While there was overlap between the many ways officers went about promoting BLM, the findings were nuanced, based on one's race and gender. Specifically,

for the White male officers, there was no identified way in which they promoted BLM, with one officer stating: “I mean, I haven't found anything that I feel is worthwhile protesting" (White male, 39, 15 years sworn officer). However, the other officer did indicate wanting to self-educate himself about the communities he policed, to be more effective for those communities. For the Hispanic male officer, while he had expressed support for BLM, his way of activism, as reported, only expanded to the Hispanic community. The Asian officers supported BLM in terms of their capacity as police officers but did not discuss any methods taken during the interview to promote BLM. The boldest forms of engaging in acts that promoted BLM came from Black men and women, with many of these participants being connected to areas that suffered from over-policing. Simply put, it was found that when it came to urban police officers engaging in any act that promoted the goals of BLM, from least to greatest, the data suggested it went in the order of White men, Hispanic men, Black males, and Black women. The sections below explain how Black men and Black women went about promoting BLM, aside from BLM protesting.

“Had That Talk” Black Male Officers

For the Black male officers who participated, they reported coming from areas that were plagued with police presence that was not accommodating to people of color. Their experience with unfair police treatment is what pushed many of them into the police force and made them want to be the change that they did not see growing up. In this theme, there were numerous talks that Black male officers engaged in that were their own identified ways of promoting BLM, which included them engaging in talks with their sons, kids, and parents in low-income communities, and other officers with whom they shared the police force. As officers entered the police force, they used their voices to bring about social change. For one officer specifically,

since joining the police force, he has been able to train younger officers entering the force, which he sees as rewarding. As he put it:

> "It [speaking up] wasn't a problem with me because I had lived that, you know, my reason for being a police officer is what I saw growing up in the housing projects. You know, and an old guy told me one day that if you can't beat him, you join him. And when I became 29, I decided to, you know, well let me get his law enforcement thing a try… and not knowing that it would end up being my calling. And I truly felt that all of all the things I didn't like this was my calling because he put me into places where I could help the younger officers and let 'em know that this is how you do the job. This is not how you do the job. You don't want to go do it this way because you don't wanna go home to your family and tell them that you lost your job behind something that you shouldn't have done." *(Black male, 60, 31 years sworn officer)*

Here, the officer was able to use his voice after being placed in a position where younger officers were under his leadership. For this particular officer, he believed that making better police officers started with training and that was where he felt as though he could fulfill his mission of making better police officers. This officer felt as though these training engagements provided an opportunity where he could train with younger officers on the correct ways to go about policing and the consequences that could arise if going about it in alternative ways. For other Black male officers, especially those mentioning having minor children, they reported not being able to stop thinking of their kids when an event had taken place that was seen as questionable, illegal, or criminal, with many indicating that they thought of their sons, especially if the incident involved a young Black man. In these cases, Black male officers, particularly the ones with children, would have to consider how their fatherhood factored into how they went about engagement between their children and the police. One Black male officer explains what he has his son do to increase his safety, especially in the case where he is stopped by a police officer:

> "I have my son carry one of my business cards with him at all times. And yes, we have had that talk that so many black parents have with their children that wish they didn't have to, but it's a reality, you know, I talked to my son about appropriate behavior when you're dealing with the police, should you be put in that situation? And, you know, I

> stress upon him that on the street is not the place to argue. You do what you need to do to get home. And let me worry about the argument part after that. So, it definitely does affect me as a person so much so because of my son." *(Black male, 51, 22 years sworn officer)*

For many of the Black male officers, it was hard to negate the fact that they were Black men when looking at instances of injustice, and many times when incidents would occur, they would have to use the lens of a police officer, as well as a Black man, to interpret certain events. As stated by one of the Black male officers, "I'm looking at it trying to filter it through the lens of both the black man and the police officer. I can't turn off the black man part of me, just try to look at it through the police lens" *(43, 22 years sworn officer).* Officers' ability to relate to people came from many of the Black males who self-reported coming from low-income communities. As stated by one Black male officer:

> "I grew up in poverty and I grew up being afraid of the police, so when I go out in the community, I make sure, I speak to people, try to interact as much as I can hang out with the kids, talk with the parents, try to give them, try to find resources for them to get out of this type of environment. So, and I also try to teach 'em how we are to be better police officers for them and as well as them being better citizens for us." *(Black male, 50, 18 years sworn officer)*

This officer believed that his talk with kids and parents helped to make a difference in the interaction between police and communities. Later, this officer explained how he also grew up not trusting the police. He recalled growing up hanging out with his friends and how they would meet on the corner of the street, only to be perceived as criminal. As he later stated, "law enforcement believes that everybody that on the corner is out there selling drugs and doing bad. So now their demeanors, when they approach us, the ones that I've dealt with, their demeanors were really negative towards us." Because of this experience, this police officer tried to change the way law enforcement viewed boys who resided in low-income communities, particularly by not criminalizing their ability to congregate on street corners without evidence of wrongdoing.

The most common approach that officers had taken during the unrest had taken place at the police department with other officers. While it was established that officers tended to engage in conversations with their racial groups, there were times when officers engaged in conversations, particularly with their White male counterparts relating to the unrest. At this moment, they viewed it as an educational moment for the White officers who wanted to learn more or get an honest opinion from an officer they felt would be open and honest with them. In explaining this moment with those officers, one Black male officer reflected on the conversations he had with White officers who wanted his take on the police killing of George Floyd:

> "When it first happened, you couldn't hide from it, and I didn't have a problem talking about it because there were those on the other side of the fence that needed to be educated. It wasn't about how a certain race had been oppressed for so many years and they're tired of going through it, it was about if you didn't understand what that officer did to Mr. Floyd, you have no business with a badge over your heart, and that was a lot of the conversations I had back then was based on that, trying to get them to understand, if you can't see what happened, if you can't see what's happening, then you need to research your soul and see if this career is for you… Because my question to those is, so how long was he supposed to keep him on the ground with a police unit? So at what point was he gonna pick him up and put him in that vehicle and transport them to where he had to go. And they were the conversations that I've had with the few that actually approached me about it… I walked in the room, they basically walked up and asked me, how do I feel about the situation, and I pretty much asked them, do you want the version from my heart? Or do you want the political version? And when they tell me, you know, we want you to speak for your heart because your old school and you not gonna shortchange. I just asked them, how would you accept that if I did it to your mother, your sister, or your wife? Take a man figure out of it, how would you feel about me if I did it, that same incident to your mother, your sister, or your wife?" *(Black male, 60, 31 years sworn officer)*

For this officer, his approach was to make it personal to officers by replacing the victim's name with the family member of a White officer. Furthermore, this name was not only replaced by any family member, but one most likely to be the name of a female that they were close to. Overall, through these different talks, officers had shown their way of engaging in other forms of promoting BLM, although not in the form of a protest. While Black men and women participants

engaged in various talks with people, there were some differences found in their promotion of BLM.

"Internal Changes" Black Female Officers

Three Black women officers participated in the study from the urban police department. During questioning these women about their experiences in the police force and the factors that influenced their participation in BLM protesting, one apparent thing that stood out in the qualitative data is that each of these women had varying ways of promoting BLM, although they have not participated in BLM protesting. One interesting thing to note is that to reach Black women, I had to be connected to them through another Black woman. During recruitment, it was told to me that Black women, particularly at this department, did not participate in research. However, through the snowball approach, I was able to gain access to women through the recommendations of other Black women, which became apparent in other areas of the research process (e.g., being connected to Black and other officers of color though Black participants and being connected to White officers thorough White participants), which confirmed the racial division that was being echoed in previous themes. These three women, who also identified themselves as mothers, expressed a sense of responsibility to members of their community and other Black women within law enforcement to set a good example. As mentioned by one of the women:

> "That's why I say I take a lot of responsibility, and as an officer being a black female and now being a black female with some rank you know, there's not a lot of African American women and law enforcement, so I try to set an example, you know as I move up, like sometimes we gotta know what battles to fight… pick and choose our battles. It was something taught to me as a young officer. I started at 21, it's like pick and choose your battles. So, I mean, you can do both, you know what I'm saying? You could, you can support both movements. All you gotta do is be willing to speak on stuff and you don't have to speak publicly. But if I speak to somebody who like, it is just having a conversation, like if I'm at work and I feel like somebody's saying something completely

> left field, and I have that conversation, I bring it to an understanding and we can agree to disagree, but they listen." *(Black female, 39, 16 years sworn officer)*

Through this sentiment, it was also apparent that through picking and choosing their battles, there were moments when Black women could speak out against events that have taken place, as well as moments when they interacted only within their social circles. What was also seen in this response was the fact that rank made speaking up a lot easier for some Black women, which happened to be all three who participated in the study. As stated by this officer, "making rank puts me in the position where I can do something and be responsible for other officers and their decisions that they're making because… when people should fear you, that was the wrong approach." For other Black women, being from the community they sometimes police helped them in their interactions with community members, which helped them to address crime occurring within communities where Black lives were taken. As put by another Black woman officer:

> "I went to a homicide in one of our communities, it's one of our high crime areas, predominantly black low income. And I'm on the scene. I see two young ladies outside and in close proximity to where this man died. And I just, because me, I'm a people person. I just go over to talk to him because I understand, first of all, you don't ask me for no information, cause I've been asked for information on crime. You really think I'm gonna sit here and tell you what happened with all these people looking at me so I can be labeled the snitch that, that ain't gonna happen… So, I merely walked over to 'em and just, you know how y'all doing. I just came over to see how, how you doing this is a little close to home. I just wanted to check on you. And they were admirable. They were apprehensive… Then they said, well, at least you were a lot nicer than the other officer. I said, look at here. I, I don't, I don't play with karma. A girl ain't never coming for me, so I treat people how I wanna be treated. I just wanted to check on you. You know, I seen y'all sitting here. Y'all so close to where this happened. I just wanted to make sure y'all were okay. So, I said, I'm not gonna take up any more of your time. I said it have a good night. I took four steps away from them. They called me back. They said, ma'am, you know what? You were so nice to us. Lemme tell you this." *(Black female, 48, 21 years sworn officer)*

According to the participants, because she had once lived in similar communities reflective of where residents who are more cynical of the police resided, she understood what they were dealing with. As she stated, “I've put a complaint on the police officer, New York who treated me just, just horribly after I was a victim of a violent crime.” Her experience with being in this type of position influenced how she interacted with community members.

The participating Black women felt as though they had to set examples both within the police department and for people in the community. They had varying ways of promoting BLM (e.g., participating in panels, wearing ethnic hairstyles to work, taking precautions with their children, correcting misinformation). Sometimes the actions of these Black women were small changes, and at other times their actions were an expression of them being their true selves in spaces where it was not accommodated. For one Black woman, she expressed herself at work through her hair. In her experience with doing this, she often received feedback from co-workers that hinted that others may be uncomfortable around her when wearing those hairstyles. In her own words:

> “It's been times when I would wear my hair big, not like Pattie LaBelle, but you know… just being who I am. I've never been afraid to have ethnic hairstyles or whatever the case may be. And I've had people, you know that look like me say, well, you know to some people that may be offensive or may make them uncomfortable. And I'm like, I have to be me because there's a little girl out there that looks like me that will see me and say, wow, if that is their goal to be a police officer, if she did it, I can do it, so I'm always cognizant of my steps and what I'm putting out. I'm a woman of faith, without me saying that I hope people will get that… Like I said, I'm very intentional and I do not shy away from being who I am and letting people know who I am.” *(Black female, 45, 19 years sworn officer)*

While one way of promoting BLM was through her ethnic hairstyles, other women were more vocal and spoke up for the movement during times when it was discussed around her by officers. This officer noted that sometimes officers may come to work and engage in conversations using information they collected from the Internet. At times, this particular officer found it fitting to

correct any misinformation that may have been gathered by the officers. In her response, she gave one example of how she went about engaging in these conversations:

> "I remember back after Trayvon Martin happened, I was in a car with an officer, and then the stuff he was telling me about the case, I'm like, this is crazy. Like, where did you get this information from? And then once I started giving them facts and showing them that you could actually go on the internet and find like the transcripts from the police reports and the dispatcher information, you know, and he's been a cop longer than I've been a cop. I'm thinking like, you should know better than just to believe what we read or what the media tells us. We should do my own research, but still, I try to keep my opinions to myself unless a comment is made in front of me. that I know, like, I, I have an opinion about, and I know that what they're saying, you know, kind of like sometimes you wanna correct. Somebody's like just their opinion or even if they got wrong information, is you feel like it's your job to set 'em." *(Black female, 39, 16 years sworn officer)*

Not only did this officer reserve this for officers within her department, but also for citizens that had certain views of law enforcement. She believed in showing others a different side to law enforcement. As she later stated, "a lot of people don't know I'm the police until I tell 'em I'm the police. And then it's like, no way, you know, you're too cool." She stated that along with this she would hear comments from citizens saying that she did not look or sound like the police. She explains the duality of her role as a law enforcement officer:

> "So, it's like, so the two, the dual roles are important because if I'm just standing on one side, you like I said, you just put yourself in that box, you know what I'm saying? The thing outside the box and be able to speak on both sides of black lives matter. And then, the blue lives matter, but then come into an understanding, you know, that I always explained, I have four brothers and one of 'em is doing time. Three of 'em has spent time in jail, you know, but like I said, we've been African American our whole lives. And, you know, we've been in communities where we have been targeted." *(Black female, 39, 16 years sworn officer)*

This officer did not feel as though she was too far disconnected from the community that takes issue with the police. However, being in her position, she felt as though she could be a part of the group of officers that shows the potential for supporting two movements at the same time. There were numerous accounts of these women talking with their White counterparts and educating

them on topics relating to the unrest. As stated by another Black woman officer:

> "So, there's a white female that we work with. She wasn't law enforcement, but she was in the department, and when the whole George Floyd thing came out and the whole black lives matter, she had posted some stuff on social media about all lives matter in response to now all black lives don't matter, but she called me and she said, "Hey, can you go do me a favor? Go look at my post on social media and tell me what you think." "You really wanna know what I think?" she was like, yeah. Said not a good look. I said it's not good…What you're doing is dismissing the fact that you say all lives matter, but you don't wanna independently acknowledge that black lives matter. Nobody says you don't matter. So, we had this hour and a half dialogue, and she thanked me. She said, you know, I really appreciate you. And she proposed to him. She said it makes sense to me. She says, I don't know because I, I haven't lived it. I haven't experienced, I don't see what you, you see, and I'm just so appreciative that I can sit here and talk to you and get an understanding." *(Black female, 48, 21 years sworn officer)*

Similar stories like this were something that all Black women officers who participated in the study recalled at least once during interviewing. Furthermore, they all experienced engaging in such dialogue with White male officers, and in this case, people who worked for the department, although not as a police officer.

All the Black women who participated felt as though they were very connected to the movement. Since each of them identified as mothers, there were numerous steps taken to ensure they were not in positions similar to mothers who buried children killed by police. These women did this by not only having conversations with their children about the police, but one also even reported supported their children in their own decision to participate in BLM protesting in spite of their mother being a part of the police. One Black woman, in particular, felt as though she was not exempt from experiencing some of the same trauma that must have been felt by the families of Trayvon Martin or Sandra Bland. For this woman, she reported having 22-year-old twin sons with one of them recently moving out. She shared stories about how she worries about each of her children each time they leave the house and takes extra precautions to ensure their safety, especially if he were to be stopped by a police officer.

> “He [my son] told me about an incident where he got stopped. And so, what I've done, my business card gets taped to the back of my boy's registration. And he got stopped for not having his lights on. And he told me, he called me. He said, mom, you know, your card works. He said, but what bothered him was the conversation changed because all cops are nosy... the officer asked him, what is this? Oh, that's my mom's business card. And since I was a higher-ranking officer, when he came back, he, my son said the whole conversation had changed. This white officer said, hey buddy, oh, now I'm buddy, because you, you know, my mother's affiliation to me and to, to, to law enforcement, I'm buddy. Now, before you were asking me if I'm drunk, if I'd been drinking, so we going down a route of DUI and I'm on my way to work six o'clock in the morning.” *(Black female, 48, 21 years sworn officer)*

In this statement, it is shown how although this officer was in the police force, she was aware of the injustices and the prejudices that are held between the police and Black youth. In this case, she used her position of higher rank to ensure that her children were treated with caution in cases where they are stopped by the police. Later in the interview, she also stated how she would be on the streets informing people of the steps they could also take when they feel as though they have been done wrong. As put by this officer, "I've been the voice on the street telling people you ain't gonna win this one… go to court and fight it. Bring your witnesses with you because winning on the street gonna get you locked up.” According to this officer she feels as though engaging in this line of work is her assignment from God. As explained:

> “I feel like this assignment that God has given me is an opportunity to kind of shift that paradigm on blacks and policing and bringing 'em together. That's why I'm still here. If you look at the statistics police departments across the nation are losing officers. Like you wouldn't believe it. We, we are down, nobody gonna tell you, 194 officers… I made a promise to God, whatever my assignment is or what my purpose is, I am ready. And that's when I noticed the change in my career path kind of started, went in the direction that it's going. So I truly believe there's some, there's a lot of work that has to be done with law enforcement, as it relates to the Black community, because the history is not good. You can't refute history. And you know, some people say, oh, well, you weren't around when it was going on. History is embedded in who you are, and you can't tell me because I didn't personally feel enslaved that I don't feel the effects of slavery, because I do.” *(Black female, 48, 21 years sworn officer)*

It was this promise this officer made to God that she believed kept her in policing, despite her

knowing the harm that has been inflicted due to the injustices brought forth by the police.

Although these women reported how they have promoted BLM within the police department and even within the community, the question remained on how they believed this impacted their relationship with other people within their social circles. What was evident is that these women felt as though it had little impact within their social circles because those people understood their unique positions as Black women in law enforcement, as well as their stance on BLM. As stated by one officer:

> "I get respect from friends and family and it's not like not participating, but then it is like you are because I might not be out there holding a sign, but like everybody that I work with, you know, kind of like know my stance. Like I might not be out there holding a Black Lives Matter sign, but I'm gonna tell you why black lives matter or why black males might fear the police, or why we might have a reaction the way we do when a police [officer] get behind us. I mean, after 16 years, if I get pulled over like I'm holding my breath to see what personality walking up to my window too. So, you know, it's important. So, I, I think I do, I think you know, it might not participate the way some people may like you're not out there holding sides, doing this there's other ways, you know?" *(Black female, 39, 16 years sworn officer)*

For this particular officer, she stated that events such as the Michael Brown incident are what led her to think about the leadership within law enforcement, specifically, how she could move up the ranks to be in the position to be responsible for the actions of other officers. Also, being a mother of two daughters allowed her to support them as they decide to protest on their own. When questioned on whether she has participated in a movement during her off-duty time, this officer stated:

> "I have not. I haven't. I do work a lot, but I do like... I have a 22-year-old daughter and an 18-year-old daughter. So, I encourage them. Like if you want freedom of speech and you wanna get out there, I encourage them to do it. You know, they wanna do for me, I have that responsibility of you know it's kind of like you serve two purposes. So, you kind of like, I don't wanna be biased towards anybody when I go out in the community I'm dealing with, you know, both sides of people. I wanna be able to dialogue with both of them and not like I'm already choosing sides." *(Black female, 39, 16 years sworn officer)*

This was a common position that officers, particularly Black officers, were in at the urban police department. However, because of who they were to the outside community, many reported still being able to have the respect of their peers while appearing to others as being on the wrong side. For one of the participants, she believed that the most important thing she could do was stay approachable, and she believed that most people understood the position she was in. As she put it:

> "I don't think it impacts it. I think just being approachable, cause I'm approachable. You see me this, I talk to you all day long and I under, I think they understand the divide of why I'm not on the front lines with you during black lives matter. I think there's benefits in having people, other places in society to help spread that message without having them stay ending on the front lines. One of my I used to be a seven-city diva and it's just a group of women who do community outreach and engagement and empower each other. And one of the sisters from there she's actually heavily involved in black lives matter, but I know her because I've spent so much time with her, and I know her heart and I know where she's at that. I don't think that she's out there trying to stir up some rhetoric to create a situation with violence between blacks and whites. Like I know her, and I know what she stands for, what she's about. So, I haven't openly clicked the like I officially support you, but I do for her because I know who she is and what she's about and what she's trying to come, just because of the years I've spent with her doing engagement and outreach and empowerment sessions." *(Black woman, 48, 21 years sworn officer)*

Overall, what this theme indicated is that these women were involved in the community outside the police department in ways that made them feel as though their involvement with BLM was active, but in forms different from BLM protesting. What was also found was that the action of participating in BLM protesting in their off-duty capacity often made them feel as though they were choosing a side, and this not only came with social consequences (e.g., tension within the department, potential to not have backup during service calls), but also professional ones (e.g., not being able to advance to next rank or keep current ranking status). Therefore, these women chose the path of remaining neutral as it pertained to the public's eye, while also engaging in various activities that promote the same messages as BLM and calling attention to the injustices

faced by people of color. While BLM was promoted differently based on the race and gender of participants, findings indicated that while Black women viewed themselves as being at the bottom of the social ladder within the department, they showed the greatest in terms of the promotion of the BLM movement. Findings also indicated that White men were the least likely to promote BLM.

RURAL VS URBAN COMPARISON

From the data analysis, four themes were found from the rural police department, which included (1) police officer-first mentality among officers, (2) general lack of knowledge about BLM among White officers, (3) conflicting attitudes about BLM protesting based on officers' duty status, and (4) negative impact of news coverage on officers' perception of BLM. For the urban police department, three themes were found, which included (1) racial tensions among officers during civil unrest, (2) varying levels of support for BLM protesting and mobilization, with many officers showing dissatisfaction with work schedules during the unrest, and (3) racial differences in promoting BLM at the workplace and community.

At both departments, the overall rule was that officers could participate in BLM protesting but could not reveal their association with their department. However, when considering urban officers' interpretation of the rules, they appeared to be stricter at the urban police department with unwritten rules about officers' participation. During interviewing, there were examples brought forth by urban officers that reflected this policy not protecting their off-duty participation such as the police chief participating in the BLM march and the officer who in his off-duty time donated to the Kyle Rittenhouse fund and was later terminated. Due to this, officers paid more attention to the unwritten rules than what was written. While most officers from the rural department generally reported the same rule regarding BLM participation, urban

officers were more likely to report different rules pertaining to protest participation, with some officers expressing that they could participate, and others expressing that they did not believe that they could. None of the rural police officers reported participating in a protest. Similarly, none of the urban police officers reported participating in a protest, with one officer indicating that he participated in a BLM march. Within both departments, there were similarities and differences. While some of these comparisons were showed the rural and urban department as being obviously different, there were some findings that overlapped and came with nuances unique to the rural or urban designation. The sections below provide a comparison of these findings, with a specific focus on the two main areas of focus for this study: workplace climate and factors influencing BLM participation.

Workplace Climate

While many of the themes from the rural and urban police departments overlapped, these themes became nuanced depending on their rural/urban designation. From the results, it was shown that when discussing the workplace climate, there were differences that separated the rural police department from the urban police department. First, the workplace climate at both departments was different, with the rural department showing fewer signs of racial tensions than the urban department. There was a choice amongst both the rural and urban officers to remain neutral and hold the belief while on-duty, they were operating in their official capacity. Rural officers viewed their racial identity and their police officer identity as being distinct, while urban officers viewed these identities as being intertwined. Rural officers also were more likely to place their thoughts and beliefs behind their identity as police officers, while for urban officers, these identities were often placed at the forefront and sometimes impacted their ability to be social with other officers whose thoughts and beliefs did not align with their own. Due to this, it

was clear that there was more racial tension reported from the urban police department; however, there was a lesser disconnection between their police work and their racial identity. Racial divisions did not run deep in the subculture of the rural department, based on officer responses. Rural police officers reported being equipped to have such conversations due to the police officer-first mentality, which according the data allowed them to engage in such conversations without tension being present.

In terms of officers' knowledge of BLM, one similarity among the rural and urban departments was that Black officers were the most likely to have a firm knowledge about the movement, with many of the rural White officers reporting that they did not nor did they think they had a firm knowledge or that their colleagues did either. For the urban officers, while Black officers reported being knowledgeable, they did not believe their White colleagues were not; however, they did believe their knowledge was misdirected from media and could not get past the BLM from ALM movement, which contributed to the racial tensions that existed within the department. According to the findings, this contributed to White officers and Black officers congregating within their racial groups.

While the duty status tended to determine officer support for the rural police department, it did not weigh as heavily at the urban department. Instead, urban officers' support for BLM protesting was influenced by race, as well as protest mobilization, and work schedules. Specifically, rural officers tended to support these protesting movements in their operation as police officers, but in their off-duty time viewed these movements negatively. Urban officers supported the right to protest; however, they showed racial differences in their support for protest mobilizing, with work schedules impacting both Black and White officers on the front line. The impact of media coverage on officer perception of BLM impacts both the rural and urban police

departments, although not in similar ways. For the rural police department, news coverage impacted officer perceptions on BLM protesting (e.g., broadcasted as being violent), whereas, for urban officers, news coverage was more prevalent on how they understood the events that sparked BLM protesting as many of the urban police officers across race tended to view protest events as being peaceful. However, for both departments, the media did impact their perceptions of BLM protests elsewhere.

Social cohesion was greater at the rural police department when compared to the urban police department, as officers tended to stay away from political talk and conversations. However, when conversations did occur interracially, at the rural department, officers, regardless of race, were least likely to use these moments to educate or engage in discourse about the topic, but rather to hear the thoughts of other officers. At the urban police department, political talk was more likely to occur; however, it often occurred intra-racially instead of with officers of the same racial group. These conversations at times became interracial with urban officers using these moments to engage in discourse about the movement. Generally, both sets of officers supported citizens' right to protest; however, rural officers seemed to be more supportive of mobilization than urban officers, but work schedules often had an impact on urban police officers being less supportive than urban. Lastly, rural police officers were likely to engage in activities that promoted BLM, as they kept their work lives separate from their personal lives. For urban officers, they were more likely to engage in these types of activities; however, this was based on the officers' race within this department type, which also contributed to the workplace climate. Most notably, officers' rank tended to play a larger role at the urban police department than it did at the urban department across thematic findings.

Factors Influencing BLM Participation

In terms of protest participation, some differences were discovered between the rural and urban police departments. For rural officers, they tended to not participate in BLM protesting due to their lack of knowledge about BLM, their perception that some protesters were untrue to the movement, faulty media coverage, and their ability to support their families by maintaining their careers. For urban officers, they tended to not participate in BLM protesting due to rank promotion, job security, safety, and having to police many of the protests due to officer shortage. While both department types reported not seeing many protesting events in their areas, officers from the urban police department showed a greater desire to participate than rural officers. Also, officers from the urban police department were more likely to engage in BLM activities than rural officers. Regardless, at both departments, officers felt as though doing this was a display of their positionality and made them feel as though they were choosing sides.

While not present enough in the responses, officers expressed concern about BLM protesting occurring when police killings occur, with almost none being seen when killings occur that do not involve a police officer. When these types of comments were stated in the interviews, it tended to come from minority officers. For instance, one Black male officer from the rural police department stated, “Timmy killed John and they live in the same block… but we have an incident involving a public safety official injuring, the whole neighborhood, the whole community, the whole city our region has an uproar about one incident” *(48, 24 years sworn officer).* Similarly, an Asian male officer from the urban police department asked, “I don't know if it's because I don't see it, or I don't hear it from the news. If there's a crime on Black and Black, not just a police officer, where are they?” *(43, 20 years sworn officer).* These comments suggest

that officers had taken issue with BLM appearing to cover only deaths at the hands of police instead of civilians.

In terms of participation, urban police officers reported more organizational barriers preventing their participation in protesting, while rural officers reported their participation as more of a personal choice. One similarity at both departments was that officers who participated in the protest during their off-duty time could not openly identify with their police department. However, the urban police department tended to have stricter rules that expanded to what an officer could post on their social media accounts, therefore showing a greater regulation of off-duty time for urban than rural officers. According to the responses, there were also more unwritten rules at the urban police department in comparison to the rural police department, with an issue of retaliation against officers for engaging in protesting events when responding to service calls. Despite their greater restrictions in protest participation, urban officers were more likely to participate in their off-duty time than rural police officers, based on the data. On duty, both of these departments mentioned that they did not show up to protesting events in riot gear and often were stationed nearby in case they were needed. Rank, whereas important and cut across themes at the urban whereas, at the rural, it tended to not have major impacts on the workplace climate nor factors influencing nonparticipation.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study came with four primary research questions in an effort to examine the workplace climate during civil unrest and the influencing factors on officers' participation in BLM protesting. Specifically, I was interested in learning how officers within the force experience each other during civil unrest with a specific focus on race, as well as departmental designation (e.g., rural/urban). The four areas these questions sought to answer were concerning the workplace climate, influencing factors on off-duty BLM protest participation, the perceived effect of officers deciding whether to participate or not, and the extent to which race impacts both workplace climate and officer participation. The four primary research questions that correspond to each area of exploration are listed below. Following this list will be a detailed answer to the listed research questions which cover each major study focus.

RQ1: How do officers experience the workplace during times of civil unrest?

RQ 2: What influences police officers' participation in social justice protest movements?

RQ 3: What do police officers perceive to be the effect of their decision when faced with the opportunity to participate in social protest movements?

RQ 4: To what extent does race impacts officers' experiences and participation in social justice movements?

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

As it pertains to workplace climate, findings indicated differences in how officers from rural departments may experience the workplace when compared to their urban counterparts. Officers from the rural police department reported more social cohesion with one another;

however, this social cohesion came at the expense of these officers having to keep their thoughts and attitudes about the civil unrest either to themselves or be willing to discuss these with people who had opposing views while not letting it impact their police work. In the rural department, most of these officers placed their identity as police officers ahead of their personal identity, as it was seen as irrelevant to fulfilling their duties as police officers. The urban department varied greatly from the rural police department, as the findings indicated lesser social cohesion and greater racial tension during these times with officers only engaging in conversations with people within their racial group, whose views were more likely to align with their own. Whenever urban officers reported engaging in these conversations, it was often seen as having to correct their White colleagues after being at odds over whether BLM was a diminishment of White lives. Due to this, these officers, in their off-duty capacity, had conversations with each other to keep the racial tension present at bay. Regarding their occupational attitudes, many officers from both the rural and urban departments reported adhering to their identity as police officers while at work, with about half of the officers saying that they do not mirror who they are as police officers in their off-duty time and the other half saying the opposite. However, in their interactions with fellow officers, it was more interracial at the rural department and intra-racial at the urban.

To address the second research question regarding officers' participation in BLM protesting, findings indicated that it was mostly accepted that when at work, officers accepted the identity as a police officer first and kept themselves from openly expressing their personal feelings with their colleagues. While discussions were more frequently held between rural officers in the context of how they could make sure their department stayed away from experiencing some of the same issues stemming from the unrest, urban officers often looked at issues stemming from the unrest to be problems associated with the involved department. This

finding was complex as this stance was only common amongst White officers, with many minority officers seeing these issues as larger issues that related even to their department. With this division between seeing these police-involved incidents as isolated events or events that pointed to larger structural issues within policing, this also contributed to the racial tensions, stemming from the differences in beliefs about BLM and whether these protest events had a justification for occurring in their area, despite happening elsewhere. In terms of their off-duty participation in BLM protesting, what was found was that rural officers, as well as urban White officers, were most likely to view these events as being violent, despite them reporting that most of these events were peaceful in their area. This was mainly due to the overreliance on news media to inform their knowledge about the movement, which was common across race for rural officers. While the media also played a role in how knowledgeable urban officers were about the movement, the news tended to only inform the knowledge of White officers, which also contributed to the racial tensions that existed within their department concerning the phrase Black Lives Matter.

Officer participation in BLM protesting at the rural department seemed to be more of a personal choice than for urban officers, who reported more organizational factors that served as barriers to their off-duty participation. For rural officers, their nonparticipation was based on many of their officers self-reporting that their off-duty behavior mirrored their on-duty behavior, their lack of knowledge about or being miseducated about BLM, and their views of BLM being different from what they experience while policing peaceful protests. For urban officers, while findings from this department were not boldly different than their rural counterparts, it was nuanced with urban officers' nonparticipation being based on preventing racial tension from rising at work, and not being able to openly support BLM in the public due to environmental

(e.g., social conflict, safety concerns, making work experience worse for Black officers) and institutional barriers (e.g., being promoted to the next rank, off-duty regulations). These findings suggested that the removal of these barriers may reflect a higher tendency for urban officers to participate in BLM protesting than rural officers.

Overall, at both departments, what was found was that most White officers did not feel as connected to BLM when compared to their Black counterparts; therefore, the non-participation of most White officers may be attributed to their lesser connectivity to BLM. However, when discussing Black officers' connection and off-duty participation to BLM, it was complex. While urban officers had alternative forms of promoting BLM, engaging in alternative forms of promoting BLM went unreported by Black rural officers, which can be due to most urban officers reporting bad experiences with the police before joining the force and therefore having a greater connection with the issues brought forth by the movement.

Regarding the third research question on the perceived impact of officers' participation in BLM protesting, what was found is that officers only reported facing negative interactions with protesters and people they did not know for their nonparticipation. This finding was consistent across race and departmental designation. However, this finding was based on whether the officers were talking about their relationship with the general community or with people within their social circles, including those within their circles who supported or participated in BLM protesting. In terms of their relationship with people they knew, most rural and urban officers reported not having any negative impacts due to their non-participation either by people knowing their stance about Black lives and their unique position as police officers during BLM protesting or by respecting their differences of opinion about BLM. In terms of the community, Black urban officers reported experiencing double marginality, which was due to the already existing

racial tensions within their department and with citizens they did not personally know. At the rural department, while Black officers did not report these experiences, White officers reported their Black colleagues having negative interactions with protestors due to them being in policing; however, according to the data within this study, double marginality was experienced more by urban officers due to their marginalization within the police force, which was not reported among rural officers, which may be attributed to the number of Black officers sampled from the rural department.

The final research question was related to the extent to which race impacted both officers' workplace experiences and participation in BLM protesting. What the findings indicated was that race matters when looking into how officers experience work and their considerations when faced with the choice to engage and participate in BLM activities. What was evident through the data is that these findings regarding the impact of race become complex when coupled with gender, with many Black women experiencing being at the bottom of the social ladder at work, but yet the most likely to promote BLM while at work. Also, looking at racial differences for officers across races tended to differ depending on the type of police agency, which suggests that officers from a particular racial background may be more nuanced. From both departments, White officers tended to report experiencing fewer issues, compared to their Black counterparts, during the unrest. This was not surprising due to their racial representation in both departments; however, many White officers from both the rural and urban departments reported issues that they viewed as larger and more prevalent (e.g., morale, officer retention, work schedules) than the unrest, which suggested that BLM was not viewed as a pressing issue for their particular department. In contrast, for the Black officers, their experiences with the workplace tended to be based on the racial tensions within the department and the lack of knowledge about BLM

amongst their white peers, which were different from rural officers who showed more tolerance for their White officers whose views differed from their own.

Most officers from both departments, regardless of race, viewed participating in protesting as choosing sides and therefore most remained neutral. What the finding indicated was that there were not many Whites who intended to participate in BLM protesting off-duty across departments, with few Blacks from the urban indicating that they would participate, which was common among urban officers retiring. What the finding suggested within the urban department was that race when coupled with time in the police force was a better predictor of how likely urban officers were to participate in these movements. In other words, older officers or officers closer to retirement had a higher likelihood of expressing a desire to participate than younger officers or officers just entering the police force. Additionally, race coupled with rank was a better determinant of how likely urban officers were to participate in other forms of promoting BLM, aside from participating in BLM protests. Simply put, officers with higher rank were the most comfortable in promoting BLM within the workplace than officers of lower rank.

For the rural department, race tended to not weigh heavily as it did in the urban police department, with participation in BLM not likely, except for one White officer. Overall, what the finding indicated was that for most White officers from either department, there did not exist a desire to participate in BLM off-duty, with Black officers also not showing this desire from the rural department. As for the Black officers from the urban police department, they were faced with barriers that were unique to them due to participation but could not for fear of the consequences. The urban department's findings indicated that lower ranking Black officers were less likely than higher ranking Black officers to express this desire, which according to the

findings could be attributed to the perceived consequences of such desire, which according to the findings from the rural department was less of a concern.

THEORETICAL CONNECTION

Once data analysis was completed, what became apparent regarding officers' off-duty participation in BLM protesting was that there was an inconsistency found between what most officers thought and their attitudes about officer participation in BLM protesting, and what they ultimately decided regarding their participation in the movement. This inconsistency seemingly placed officers in a conflicting position of being both victims and supporters of an organization that seemed to not be aligned with their personal values. In this study, the goal was to view police officers as being members of the community themselves and thus holding the same rights to protest matters that they view as against their values. Despite this effort, officers collectively viewed themselves as having a job, which made them think of themselves as being distinct from citizens and not having that right, which they often viewed as choosing sides. In this section, I use cognitive dissonance, system justification, and the racial threat hypothesis to make sense of the major findings of the current study.

Cognitive Dissonance Theory (CDT)

Regardless of department, most of the rural and urban officers admitted to understanding protest activity and supported citizens' overall right to protest. While urban officers were more likely than their rural counterparts to view mobilized protests in a negative light, the consensus was that most officers realized the injustices that occur between police and communities, neither set of officers viewing their department as having negative relationships with the community in comparison to surrounding areas. What this study found was that although officers were supporters of people having the right to protest due to the victimization of people of color by the

police, and while officers themselves held similar views of not trusting the police, especially in the stories of Black officers, none of the officers participated in BLM protesting for the exception of one urban officer. Further, only one White rural officer and two Black urban officers expressed a desire to participate in BLM protesting. According to CDT, when one's behavior is aligned with what they do, this is known as consonance, whereas when it does not, it is known as dissonance. While there were other forms of promoting BLM among urban officers, the position of many of the rural and urban officers was to remain neutral, which often translated to meaning that despite their support and understanding of BLM, they were not willing to choose the side most aligned with their views, but rather had to align themselves with a position where they did not risk their livelihood as a police officer.

While both rural and urban officers largely viewed off-duty participation as choosing sides, they did not view the decision to remain neutral as choosing sides. However, when reflecting upon the findings, it was discovered that officers employed at the rural department had higher levels of cognitive dissonance than officers from the urban department. Simply put, most officers from the rural department, regardless of race, seemed to have values more aligned with BLM with this being divided by race when looking officers from the urban department. However, rural officers were the most likely to not engage in BLM protesting, nor other forms of promoting BLM as shared by Black officers from the urban police department.

Regarding workplace climate, tension was most likely to be present at the urban department, despite officers' non-participation in BLM protesting. For the urban department, each racial group tended to engage in behaviors that were most aligned with their personal beliefs. (e.g., White officers not participating in protesting that took issue with BLM or Black officers engaging in other forms of promoting BLM, aside from protesting). Overall, under the

framework of cognitive dissonance, both rural and urban officers suffered from cognitive dissonance to a certain extent, with dissonance being present regardless of race at the rural department and mostly among Blacks at the urban for remaining neutral. Dissonance was more present at the rural police department with higher levels of consonance being found at the urban where officers knowledge and beliefs were aligned with what they did.

Overall, what the findings reflected, though the framework of cognitive dissonance, is that both rural and urban officers were socialized to abide by rules and regulations set forth by their department, although the case is more for urban officers than rural. When it came to occupational socialization, this was found to impact both rural and urban officers with rural officers deciding to place their identity as a police officer first, which also adopted thoughts and attitudes that were more aligned with the police than their own. Urban officers were socialized through their compliance with the rules and regulations of the department; however, not as much as rural, which contributed to the racial tensions that existed.

While urban officers remained neutral during times when BLM protesting occurred, they engaged in other forms of what they believed promoted BLM and therefore led to findings indicating less dissonance. According to the data, their dissonance stemmed from the fear of retaliation if they were to participate (e.g., promotion status and safety while in the line of duty). At both departments, what was found was a level of conformity among officers from both departments where officers went through what Festinger and Carlsmith (1959) reference as forced compliance when policing a protest while on duty, with this continuing even in the off-duty time of urban officers, where they had to remain neutral concerning the unrest in the public's eye by straying away from their views so that they would be seen as being neutral.

System Justification Theory (SJT)

System justification can be a useful framework to understand the findings from the current study and the dissonance that occur among rural and urban officers. System justification is concerned with understanding how people can not only be a victim of a system but supporters of such a system, which is useful especially when accounting for the experience of Black officers and other officers of color. Although many Black officers reported being victim to unjust police behavior at some point in life, now that they were in the position of police officers themselves, they often took the stance of police officers while on-duty. The communications of their beliefs about BLM related events remained neutral, which arguably in itself took the side of policing, at least from the eyes of community members as evident in their responses regarding the perceived impact of their nonparticipation in terms of their interactions with community members. What the findings indicate, in conjunction with the cognitive dissonance framework, is that officers, particularly minorities, were often placed in the position where they defended both movements, according to their responses. On one hand, they had support for BLM, on the other hand, they had support for the police.

What the findings indicated was that there were varying levels of system justification among officers. Both rural and urban officers had their varying reasons for remaining in a police system that disadvantaged them and their racial group. For some officers, they wanted to be a part of the change in policing. For others, they made statements indicating that it was a part of their calling. What is important to note is that for White officers from either department, there were no identified ways in which they felt disadvantaged, aside from their work schedules during civil unrest and therefore SJT is used to understand the lived experiences of Black officers, whereas cognitive dissonance spoke to both.

SJT proposes three ways system justification can be present including (1) rationalizing the status quo, (2) having a preference to be paired with more advantaged groups, and (3) stereotyping people who are a threat to the social system. Both rural and urban officers had various ways of reflecting SJT. For some officers, the status quo was rationalized by officers taking the position of being neutral and objective during times of unrest, which did not allow them to choose any side, regardless of what side they felt was right. For Black urban officers specifically, although they engaged in other forms of promoting BLM, they reported communicating to citizens that they go through methods that required them to handle their issues through a system (e.g., courts) in which citizens carried legal cynicism for, which is an example of how people cannot only be favorable toward their group but also favorable toward the social system and status quo (Jost et al., 2004). For White urban officers, they rationalized the status quo through their discourse regarding BLM versus ALM. Due to these officers working for a system that seeks to maintain the status quo, these officers were often able to rationalize certain behaviors. By making the argument that BLM excluded White lives, these officers minimized the experience of Black people, which is that they are disproportionately killed at the hands of the police and thus upheld the status quo by not looking at police-citizen interaction as race based, but as being an issue that is not unique to any specific race. Lastly, some Black urban officers used their positions of authority to keep their children safe when interacting with the police, which reflected the advantages of being paired with more advantaged groups.

In summary, when looking at rural and urban officers, I find that officers' instinct to defend the status quo stemmed from the idea of forced compliance, and officers defended the status quo primarily through “playing it safe.” For rural officers, they felt that BLM movements would become violent, whether by protesters or counter-protesters, which influenced their non-

desire to participate to keep their job security. For urban officers, they feared retaliation from their job that could risk their job security, rank promotion, and safety while in the line of duty, which contributed to their non-desire to participate, unless they were close to retirement. For officers at both departments, engaging in behaviors (e.g., neutrality or objectivity) brought certainty, security, and acceptance among the force-at-large and made them content with not having to choose one side over the other.

Racial Threat Theory (RTT)

Racial threat theory has typically accounted for the macro-level discrimination toward minority communities (Feldmeyer & Cochran, 2019). For this study, racial threat theory is applied to the findings to help us to understand the role of race in the context of the workplace climate. Previous research has indicated that race plays a role in the experience of officers within the force, whether it be by workplace climate or officer on-duty participation in BLM protesting (Gau et al., 2021; Kochel, 2020). Additionally, when looking at the impact of Black officers within the police force, research shows that there must be sufficient representation within departments for the community to see the change reflected in the police force due to the addition of more Black officers (Nicholson-Crotty et al., 2017). For both the rural and urban department racial threat theory can be applied in the context of the media's influence on perceptions the officers carried about the movement and protesters (Black and White officers for rural and White officers for urban), although their negative views were more so geared toward protesting events outside of their areas than within. However, when looking at the urban department specifically, the racial threat hypothesis can be applied to understand the experience of Black officers and how their representation within the force, if increased, would serve as a threat to the social

structure of the organization, which was suggested in the lived experiences of Black urban officers.

What the data reflected is that Black officers had to carry the same group position as their White colleagues as it pertained to their personal beliefs about discussing BLM-related events publicly. For the urban police department, there were examples documented in the findings that reflected the consequences of going against the group position (e.g., backlash from other officers or being fired). Based on the data from this study, carrying this same group position appeared to be easier for rural officers, considering their prioritization of the police officer first identity, but not as easy for urban officers urban officers, with group position even being adopted by officers who engaged in promoting the message of BLM due to their fear of retaliation and making it harder for the officers of their racial background, which according to reports are not reflective of the racial community population. While being of higher rank had its advantages among urban Black officers, they often expressed still being undermined by White colleagues due to the subordination and suspicion toward their race.

As referenced in criminological work that uses racial threat theory, it's the belief that the larger number of minorities present, the larger the potential is for a threat to the larger population. Within the thematic findings, it was discovered that some racial tensions stemmed from efforts made by the urban department to increase the minority representation of officers. During this period, White officers, who were already overrepresented in the police force, felt as though they were being replaced and thus were opposed to this action, based on the views of Black officers. Considering this, the social environment at work for Black officers were reported to be more severe than White officers who tended to reported more organizational concerns impacting officer morale. Feldmeyer and Cochran (2019) posit that the more minorities present,

the more they are to face discrimination and control, with the opposite taking place when there are few minorities present. Regardless of ranking status, most minority officers reported being "unicorns" within the department, with few Black urban officers expressing that their White colleagues often felt offended by efforts to increase their representation to better reflect the community. What research shows is that protesting is often viewed as threatening to public interests or the status quo (Reid & Craig, 2021); therefore, findings indicated that Black officers, who were the most likely to support and understand BLM, could have very well been viewed in the same manner, with White urban officers referring to BLM as being involved in race drama. Overall, what the findings indicated is that although Black officers upheld the status quo of policing, they were knowledgeable of their victimhood with the police. Therefore, the presence of more Black officers with this experience could serve as a threat to the interest of the police by increasing their comfortability in expressing their true thoughts and beliefs regarding BLM.

RELATED RESEARCH

This study builds upon prior studies that have examined police experiences during BLM protesting and police involvement in BLM protesting. While numerous studies have attempted to look at officers' participation in protest policing (e.g., Kochel, 2020), these studies focused on the on-duty experience with limited to no information regarding off-duty experiences. For other studies that have, (e.g., Woods & Blackman, 2021) the sample speaks to the majority (e.g., White) police population, which is useful; however, questions often remain unanswered concerning the racial variance that may exist for officers who do not fall within the majority group, especially as it pertains to their attitudes. While some findings were consistent with prior literature, there were also some surprising findings which I attempt to explain in the following paragraphs.

When examining police officers and their feelings toward officers who attend BLM protesting events, research has indicated that largely there are negative feelings toward this, with the majority of U.S. police officers feeling as though officer participation should lead to investigation and officers being placed on administrative leave and termination for officers who attend protesting events that become violent (see Woods & Blackmon, 2021). While the above findings are not surprising, considering that many of the sample of the above study was White and male, the findings from the current study do add clarification to officers' hesitancy in participating in BLM protesting. This study found that Black officers who participated in the study had higher cognitive dissonance compared to their White counterparts.

Regarding officer experiences within the force during times of civil unrest, Kochel (2020) found that during civil unrest, officers faced criticism from friends, family, on social media, and/or public, but considerable support from colleagues and supervisors. While findings from the current study were consistent in terms of the criticism received from social media and the public, this study provided different results regarding the criticism they receive from their friends, family, colleagues, and supervisors. What current findings indicated was that officers had supportive friends and family, with little emotional support coming from colleagues and supervisors unless they were Black. There are possible explanations for this difference in my findings compared to those of Kochel (2020), with one possible explanation being that interviews in the current study were not conducted in a setting where high-profile police killings have occurred; and therefore, may not have caused family and friends to link these issues to these officers in comparison to the friends and family members of officers who were members of areas where these incidents have occurred. Another possible explanation is that officers in this study reported their friends and family being aware of their stance regarding BLM, which was

accepted by many of their family and friends, as well as their unique position in the police force, which have not been discussed in prior literature.

Findings were consistent with previous literature that has stated that police departments tend to have certain characteristics, such as acting as a family, using the "us" versus "them" mentality, and being heavily masculine. The findings gave depth to understanding each of these concepts as "family" often required a trade-off to be apart, "us" versus "them" often occurred between officers dependent upon racial background when exploring the workplace climate (urban officers), in addition to community members, and the department being heavily masculine often shaped the experiences of women within the force. From the findings, I find these work environments existed in varying levels for both departments, although not to the extent to which either department could not partner with the community. In terms of subcultural differences, scholars such as Brough et al. (2016) have expressed how there are subcultural differences among police departments. What was found in the current study was that there were differences found that varied by race, gender, age, time served as a police officer, rank, and departmental type (rural versus urban) (see also Cordner, 2017). Overall, the findings brought light to how data conducted using a single departmental classification may not produce findings that can be generalized or applied to departments that have a different classification. For instance, in the current study, rural Black officers adopted different coping strategies to navigate the workplace climate than did Black rural officers.

When reviewing the literature, the evidence has been mixed as it pertains to the racial groups in experiences within the police force. On one hand, research indicates that White males and Hispanic males tend to share the same experiences at work (Hassell & Brandl, 2009) with other research also indicating that Blacks and Hispanics tend to have more negative attitudes

than White officers (e.g., Gau et al., 2021). What the findings from the current study indicated is that while Blacks and Hispanics carried similar feelings concerning the workplace climate and police interactions with their community, Hispanics were more likely to think there was nothing that could be done about it without being assigned to the right ranking position to bring about change.

Findings were consistent with prior literature that discuss the experience of Black officers when off-duty as it pertains to discrimination (e.g., Paul & Birzer, 2017). What this study showed was that because of their similar experiences and ability to connect with the community due to past experiences with the police, officers were in the position to better understand BLM and why protesting occurred, which was commonly understood among Black officers. Previous research finds that these officers are less likely than their White counterparts to believe that police engage in procedurally just policing, due to their knowledge and lived experiences with inequality (Gau & Pauline, 2020; Ioimo et al., 2011).

The findings of this study provide empirical support for claims made that police officers may be forced into the position of support a racially based status quo because their decision to participate in these efforts could cost their life and career (see also Cobbina, 2019; Davis, 2021). In this study, it was found that urban officers were cautious of the retaliation they may have faced from their departments if they decided to participate in BLM protesting; and therefore, decided to remain neutral. This finding is important and provides the evidence needed to understand previous findings indicating that most police officers believe officers should not participate in BLM protesting (e.g., Woods & Blackmon) by providing, from officers' voices, on the reason this may be. What this study showed was that the obvious way of navigating the workforce and making rank for these officers was to go through the process of occupational

socialization and engage in efforts to promote BLM in ways that are not seen to the public's eye. Consistent with previous findings that Black officers tend to have higher levels of cognitive dissonance (e.g., Harr, 2005), through the findings of this study, it is not as shocking why this may be the case. Additionally, this study provides empirical support for how officer decisions, even in their off-duty time can be influenced by political advancements and structural racism.

This study offers a potential explanation to findings that indicate dissatisfaction between Black protesters and the police regarding the way they police peaceful protests (e.g., Pryce & Gainey, 2021). In the study, many officers were influenced by news media, which made officers, particularly rural officers, perceive these events as violent, and thus influenced officers' approach to protests that were reported by most officers to be nonviolent. As evident in these findings, once officers have been told that an event is volatile, it can be difficult bringing some officers back down, which could serve as an explanation as to how the media plays into how protesters are perceived by the police and contribute to police-protester interaction during their on-duty participation, which expands upon existing literature that has found this to be the case amongst the general public (e.g., Reid & Craig, 2021). The findings also delved deeper into findings that exist regarding departments that often deal with the aftermath of decisions made by police departments in outside areas and how this impacts police relationships with media outlets (Jurek et al., 2022). However, the findings suggested that the media remains one of the primary sources of information for officers when preparing for the succeeding, despite their low-rating for news media depicting an accurate account of officer-involved shootings.

Due to the experience of Black females in law enforcement being the furthest away from the experience of their White male counterparts (Hassell & Brandl, 2009), it is not shocking that it was found that Black female urban officers engaged in the promotion of BLM to a greater

extent than their other colleagues. Previous research has examined the experience of women in the police force and indicated their experiences with patriarchy and sexism (e.g., Batton & Wright, 2018; Murray, 2020). What this study found also was that their experiences were not only based solely on race but race and gender, which expands upon what previous research has found. The findings from this research suggest that while women do have to engage in occupational socialization (e.g., Deller & Deller, 2019) just as their male counterparts, there may be variance in terms of the extent to which they are socialized due to their role in promoting BLM within the workplace during the unrest.

As suggested by Christensen and Crank (2021) the findings that were compared between the rural and urban departments were not so much bold as they were nuanced. Consistent with Sun and Chu (2009), the rural officers in this study tended to have higher levels of social cohesion than their urban counterparts. Additionally, there were differences in staff shortages, community interactions, attitudes, and workplace experiences (Barrett et al., 2008; Husain, 2019; Mrozla, 2021; Weisheit et al., 1994). These findings extend previous research findings in the following different ways. First, previous studies that have examined the double marginality experienced by Black officers have focused solely on the perspective of Black officers instead of including a comparative race group to confirm the racial differences that exist. Overall, findings from this research were found to extend previous research; however, as with any study, the limitations of this study could have very well influenced the findings and therefore is outlined below.

LIMITATIONS

As with any study, this study comes with its set of limitations. First, from a department level, this study did not include a random sample as the two police departments included in the

study were conveniently sampled due to already established practitioner-researcher relationships being formed with the two agencies and therefore the findings may not be generalizable to all police departments located across the seven cities located in the Hampton Roads, Virginia area. Second, in addition to the limitation above, due to the qualitative nature of this study, the results may only apply to the officers within the areas included in the analysis, and therefore may not be generalizable due to self-selection bias.

The third limitation is that officer responses may not reflect their true thoughts about the BLM movement or Black lives. Due to my being a Black male, some participating officers may did not feel comfortable participating in this study or be forthcoming with their true feelings. Also, due to the nature of the topic, police officers may have been suspicious about their participation, which may have influenced the number of study participants. To address this, I asked if nametags could be removed, before the interview, to increase confidentiality and to ensure that officers were comfortable in giving their honest answers to the questions. Also, I relied heavily on participating officers, through the snowball sampling approach, to encourage their fellow officers to participate, based on their own experience with participating in the interview. In utilizing the snowball sampling approach, it was discovered that once started with an officer of a particular racial background, I was most likely to keep getting officers of that same racial background, which added legitimacy to the racial divides found, especially at the Urban Police Department. In these cases, I had to actively seek participants of different racial backgrounds by requesting that officers recommend another officer from diverse racial background aside from their own.

The fourth limitation is regarding the interview setting. Some officers may have not been willing to participate in an interview conducted at the police department. In the same token,

some officers may have been reluctant to travel to an approved location on campus. During the recruitment phase of the study, the urban police department reported other issues that could have led to low interest in participating such as police culture, departmental shortages, officers being stretched to fulfill other tasks, with some being unwilling to participate due to it not being seen as a high priority when balanced with their tasks. To address this limitation, I provided officers the opportunity to participate in audio-recorded phone interviews, which may make them feel more anonymous and potentially more forthcoming with their responses.

Fifth, while I did not record police officer names or expose demographic information that could lead to the uncovering of their identities, it is possible that some officers had chosen to not participate due to having to go through police leadership to schedule an interview with me. While this can be seen as a limitation, it was also seen as an advantage as it connected me with the officers who did participate who saw me as more legitimate with having been connected to them from "one of them." The sixth limitation is regarding the racial representation of the sample, particularly in the sample from the rural department. White male officers are overrepresented in the sample, with minority and women officers being underrepresented. While this may be due to their relative representation in the police departments included in this study, efforts were made to recruit other members of these groups; however, the number was low due to the voluntary nature of the study. While only three participants categorized as nonwhite, I have reason to believe that their answers represent the members of the larger population of officers within that department. While this can be viewed as a limitation, it provided an opportunity to explore this topic with a sample of officers (e.g., White and male) who are qualitatively understudied concerning their experiences during civil unrest and their participation in social justice movements. Learning about their experiences can be of great importance for scholars and

community members to know as an attempt to provide solutions for issues revolving around race and policing, in the context of BLM.

Studies that have collected data using police officers have largely been quantitative, with police departments relying primarily on “big data” to assess their performance (Davis, 2021; Samuels-Wortley, 2022). Limited studies revolving around race and policing are qualitatively conducted using police officers as the sample. The seventh limitation is concerning the chosen method used for analysis. Due to the qualitative nature of this study, this may be a possible explanation as to why some departments did not participate, due to the perceived subjectivity stemming from their own methodological bias and heavy reliance on quantitative data. However, for this study, the research questions influenced the methodological choice. Due to workplace climate during civil unrest and factors encouraging or discouraging off-duty participation in protests being an understudied area, the qualitative approach was necessary as it allowed an exploratory approach, which can later provide data needed to build quantitative and more generalizable knowledge of the topic. Despite these limitations, the findings are useful in understanding the workplace climate during civil unrest and the factors influencing participation in BLM protesting. Despite these limitations, the findings from this study are useful in terms of the implications that can made for police departments, media, and the BLM movement.

IMPLICATIONS

While police officers were interviewed, the current study provides implications that can be recommended not only for law enforcement, but also the media and BLM. While some of the implications are specific to a particular group, there are suggestions in which collaborations may be formed to address key issues identified in the results of this study. While this study was interested in the workplace climate and the factors that influenced officers' participation in BLM

protesting, what one implication addresses are the policies that exist that prevent officers from participating in BLM protesting. Information regarding policies governing officer participation in BLM protesting is largely unknown, even to the general public. What this research, as well as previous research, has suggested is that there are mixed views among police officers on whether officers should be able to participate or not in BLM protesting, with the vast majority of officers feeling as though they should not (see also Woods & Blackmon, 2021). It was also found in this study was that not all officers carry the same knowledge base of these rules and regulations as it pertains to their off-duty participation; therefore, it is recommended that police departments go over this information with officers, especially during times when civil unrest is occurring to ensure that officers know what these restrictions are. While this is recommended, it is also suggested that police departments review these policies to ensure officers are granted their constitutional rights as citizens to protest, and receive protections associated with such participation. Further, that these policies are not grounded in colorblind ideology and recognizes how they may have different impacts on officers based on race and may contribute to double marginality among officers of color. For instance, Black officers have been cited as experiencing greater negative comments than White officers during protest events due to them representing the police force during unrest when protest events are occurring (see Kochel, 2020). In this study, most of the officers had reported that they were to remain neutral during these times and keep their personal feelings to themselves, which were found to have profound impacts on the double marginality of Black officers when compared to White officers in the sample, and thus having different impacts on officers, although such policies were seen as a one-size-fits-all.

In terms of police presence at BLM-related events, it is recommended that police departments humanize their initial presence at protesting events. Both departments in this study

reported being on standby if a protest was to become violent; however, the initial officers that showed up to protest events were in regular attire without the protective riot gear that some departments may initially arrive at events wearing. According to responses given from officers, it is suggested that changing police presence at protesting events will have a more positive impact on how protestors react to police presence, which in turn may provide better experiences between the police and communities during the unrest and potentially impact officer views on BLM protest events. This is important as their perception of the movement while on-duty may influence if they participate or not in BLM protesting.

Finally, for police departments, it is recommended that police departments increase their efforts in adding more women and minority officers to the police force. With this recommendation, it is encouraged that there is investment from the government for these efforts to be made. While previous research has shown that increasing minority representation alone may not influence police-citizen interactions initially, what was suggested by the current study is that it should influence the workplace experiences of women and minority officers who are often members of predominantly White departments or departments that are not racially reflective of the communities they serve, which was the case for both departments included in this analysis. While previous work has made the argument for sufficient representation to be present for changes to occur (e.g., Nicholson-Crotty et al., 2017), this study showed a need for spaces to be created within the police force, especially during times of civil unrest for officers to engage in discourse as it pertains to the movement.

What this research suggested is that officers, particularly White officers, were largely unknowledgeable about BLM and while conversations did occur between White and Black urban officers, they were minimal, with racial divides existing. Engaging in discourse about BLM may

provide an opportunity for more quality education to occur, where otherwise officers would only rely upon media to inform their knowledge. The media's framing of BLM protesting events was reported to be among the top reasons for officers to show up to protesting events expecting violence to occur. What officers from both the rural and urban department mentioned was that most violence that occurred at these events were due to the presence of counter-protesters. It was evident from the findings that the concept of dangerousness was associated with BLM, despite what current data reflect, which according to officers was due to media not reflecting an accurate picture of these events. Overall, what data show is that during summer 2020 and the year following George Floyd protests, an overwhelming number of BLM protest events (94%) were peaceful with only few of them (6%) including tactics leading to nonpeaceful protesting (e.g., violence, clashes with police, vandalism, looting, or other destructive activity) (Kishi & Jones, 2020; Kishi et al., 2021). Therefore, it is suggested that officers and departments be more critical of news media and how BLM events are framed to inform their knowledge about the movement, as well as how officers arrive to protest events. Additionally, it is recommended that news media distinguishes protesters from counter-protesters when reporting on violence that occur at some BLM events.

In terms of the collaboration that could occur between the BLM organization and police departments, it is recommended that BLM members collaborate with the police to conduct training on effective ways to police BLM protesting events, as well as training about the organization to counter what officers gather from news media. In this study, there were a few officers who showed dissatisfaction toward the movement, particularly with the movement not being as visible and mobilized during times when killings are happening within communities, which participants indicated were more prevalent than police killings. It is also recommended

that BLM organizers be invited to aid in the recruitment of minority officers in the police force, as much research has indicated the lagging recruitment efforts as it pertains to making information regarding recruitment accessible to minority communities (Wilson et al., 2013, 2016). Lastly in terms of how BLM and police agencies could partner, is to find ways officers, regardless of race may participate in BLM protesting without their participation being seen as a conflict of interest. Considering recommendations, it is important for future work to continue in this area to gain knowledge on the complexity associated with civil unrest.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

When examining civil unrest, it would be beneficial for future research to examine the attitudes of non-sworn officers. Since sworn officers are typically called to duty during protesting, much research centers on uncovering issues surrounding the involvement of sworn officers. Focusing only on the attitudes and experiences of sworn officers may exclude a very important segment of the police population who is likely involved in the administration of these events as it pertains to officers' involvement. Also, it would be helpful to understand how non-sworn officers perceive the workplace and whether race also influences how they experience work during civil unrest. In this study, the media was a source of information regarding BLM and the protests that occurred throughout the United States. Scholars interested in race and policing should advance the scholarship on the media in perception formation among officers. In terms of the media, it would be interesting to know the impact of various media platforms (e.g., social, news, etc.) on officer perception toward social movements, such as BLM. By advancing this knowledge, we are also aware of how media may present skewed pictures of reality, which this study found to be the case for news media coverage on the perception officers carried about BLM.

There is a need for future work to build generalizable knowledge regarding officers' perceptions of movements such as BLM across races. Furthermore, it would be interesting to examine the role of rank when examining these perceptions. While current literature attempts to explore this, it is heavily based on the perspective of White men, which is useful but is limited in explaining racial differences. Future work may explore how police culture may contribute to the cognitive dissonance of officers and place them in positions of conflict when having to police communities. This may help us to understand the causes of double marginality experienced by members of the police force as well as the social learning process that occurs among officers. Scholarship should extend the protest policing literature by comparing police experiences in jurisdictions where killings are least likely to occur to jurisdictions where high-profile incidents occur often. These findings may be useful in designing and evaluating a training program, which will equip police leadership and police officers with the needed skills to practice sensitivity to the issues experienced by community members while balancing that with the goal of public safety, particularly during civil unrest.

Future work may also compare how police officers prepare for certain events (e.g., basketball game, football game, etc.) in oppose to others (e.g., BLM protest). Studies as such will help us understand the extent to which factors (e.g., crowd, organizers) influence how officers arrive to these events in oppose to others. Lastly, while the current study explored the perceptions of officers in rural and urban contexts, it would be interesting for future studies to examine how the perceptions of protesters and community members may vary regarding their perceptions of officers during civil unrest within the same rural and urban contexts. Findings as such may help us to understand how BLM protesting events could vary depending on the type of area in which the protest is located and if the perceptions of protestors change depending on that

specific area. Work as such will help us to find the ways in which we can better facilitate civil unrest and work together to enacting positive social change within the police force and with community members.

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APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Demographic questions:

Race:

Sex: □ Male □ Female

Age: _____

Time served as police officer: _____

Officer type: □ sworn officer □non-sworn officer

Do you live in the city you police? □ Yes □ No

a. If no, how far do you commute to work? _____

Education:

□ High school diploma/equivalency □Some college □Bachelor's degree □Postgraduate or professional degree

Political Affiliation:

□ Democrat □Republican □Independent □Other _____

I am going to begin by asking you a few questions about your experience as a police officer, particularly during BLM Movements.

1. What is your experience like being a police officer during times of civil unrest? Does this experience change depending on you being on-duty/off-duty?

2. How would you explain the social environment inside of the workplace when there is civil unrest? (e.g., BLM protesting)

3. How comfortable do you feel with discussing your thoughts regarding events that lead to BLM protesting with other officers at work?
    a. In what ways are these conversations typically brought up?

4. In what ways, if any, are you impacted by the BLM protesting that occurs? Would you say this impact only occurs when the protest is within your jurisdiction?

Now, I am going to transition by asking you questions about how you participate when these movements are going on.

5. Does your department have policies that address officers' ability to participate in protesting? If so, what are they?

6. Have you ever participated in a BLM protest? Was it on duty or off-duty?
    a. If off duty, what influenced you to participate (or not participate)?
    b. How did this experience influence your perception of the movement?

7. How connected do you feel to the issues addressed by the BLM movement?

In the next set of questions, I would like to know your thoughts on the impact of having to choose between the force and the community you serve.

8. As someone who has this dual membership in both the police force and the community you serve, what position do you feel that this dual membership places you in during these movements?

9. What effect, if any, do you believe your choice to participate or not participate in these movements has? (e.g., beneficial, or consequential)

10. How does your choice to participate or not impact your relationship with other members of the community?

Now, I would like to ask you some questions about the climate of the workplace during moments of civil unrest.

11. Do you and other officers tend to have the same stance toward social movements, such as BLM? What is your stance?
    a. How do you handle a disagreement with other officers relating to this?

12. To what extent would you say the race of an officer plays into how one perceives movements, such as BLM?

13. In what ways do you seek solidarity with other police officers during these times?
    a. What about the community?

14. How knowledgeable do you believe your colleagues are regarding movements such as BLM?

We will now wrap up with a couple of questions regarding the overall topic and any recommendations that you may have.

15. During BLM protesting events, police often show up in protective gear to protect themselves. Would you make any changes to how the police show up to these events? Why or why not?

16. What are your thoughts regarding protesting events that occur within your jurisdiction that stem from events outside your jurisdiction?

17. What recommendations do you have that you believe will aid in healing the relationship between the police and communities?

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS WITH RESEARCH QUESTIONS

RQ1: How do officers experience the workplace during times of civil unrest?

1. What is your experience like being a police officer during times of civil unrest? Does this experience change depending on you being on-duty/off-duty?

2. How would you explain the social environment inside of the workplace when there is civil unrest? (e.g., BLM protesting)

3. How comfortable do you feel with discussing your thoughts regarding events that lead to BLM protesting with other officers at work?
    a. In what ways are these conversations typically brought up?

4. In what ways, if any, are you impacted by the BLM protesting that occurs? Would you say this impact only occurs when the protest is within your jurisdiction?

5. Do you and other officers tend to have the same stance toward social movements, such as BLM? What is your stance?
    a. How do you handle a disagreement with other officers relating to this?

6. To what extent would you say the race of an officer plays into how one perceives movements, such as BLM?

7. In what ways do you seek solidarity with other police officers during these times?
    a. What about the community?

8. How knowledgeable do you believe your colleagues are regarding movements such as BLM?

RQ 2: What influences police officers' participation in social justice protest movements?

9. Does your department have policies that address officers' ability to participate in protesting? If so, what are they?

10. Have you ever participated in a BLM protest? Was it on duty or off duty?
    a. If off duty, what influenced you to participate (or not participate)?
    b. How did this experience influence your perception of the movement?

11. How connected do you feel to the issues addressed by the BLM movement?

RQ 3: What do police officers perceive to be the effect of their decision when faced with the opportunity to participate in social protest movements?

12. As someone who has this dual membership in both the police force and the community you serve, what position do you feel that this dual membership places you in during BLM protesting?

13. What effect, if any, do you believe your choice to participate or not participate in these movements has? (e.g., beneficial, or consequential)

14. How does your choice to participate or not impact your relationship with other members of the community?

Additional Questions

15. During BLM protesting events, police often show up in protective gear to protect themselves. Would you make any changes to how the police show up to these events? Why or why not?

16. What are your thoughts regarding protesting events that occur within your jurisdiction that stem from events outside your jurisdiction?

17. What recommendations do you have that you believe will aid in healing the relationship between the police and communities?

APPENDIX C

757 PROTESTING EVENTS

BLM 757 meetings and protests post-Floyd (N= 51)

Date, Name, and Location

2020

5/29/2020- #BlackOut757 - Standing in Solidarity Against Police Brutality, Hampton, VA & Norfolk, VA
5/31/2020- #BlackOut757 Shut Down the Oceanfront, Virginia Beach, VA
6/5/2020- I Am Not a Statistic - Peace Rally & Memorial, Hampton, VA
6/14/2020- #FreeMatthewRushin Autism Awareness March, Virginia Beach, VA
6/29/2020- City Hall Sit-in, Norfolk, VA
7/4/2020- Shut Down the Oceanfront 2.0, Virginia Beach, VA
7/10/2020- 757 Unity Peace March Hampton, VA
7/21/2020- Lift Every Voice - Virginia Beach City Council Meeting, Virginia Beach, VA
7/23/2020- Remove the Confederate Monument Meeting, Virginia Beach, VA
8/1/2020- Military Sexual Trauma Nationwide Protest, Newport News, VA
8/18/2020- Lift Every Voice - Virginia Beach City Council Meeting, Virginia Beach, VA
9/5/2020- Day 100 - Shut Down the Oceanfront 3.0 - Good Trouble, Virginia Beach, VA
9/19/2020- Shut Down the Oceanfront 5.0 - Something in the Water, Virginia Beach, VA
9/23/2020- Justice for Breonna Taylor Protest, Norfolk, VA
10/20/2020- Enough is Enough Protest, Virginia Beach, VA
10/20/2020- Lift Every Voice - Virginia Beach City Council Meeting, Virginia Beach, VA
10/31/2020- Halloween Protest, Virginia Beach, VA
11/8/2020- Vigil & Prayer for Healing across America, Hampton, VA
11/15/2020- Youth Prayer Sit-in, Norfolk, VA
11/23/2020- covid 19 Virginia Beach Jail Protest, Virginia Beach, VA
12/16/2020- BLM757 vs The City of Virginia Beach, Virginia Beach, VA
12/21/2020- Lynnhaven Mall Protest, Virginia Beach, VA

2021

3/20/2021- Protest for Police Accountability, Virginia Beach, VA
4/3/2021- #ProtestSaturday Occupy the Oceanfront, Virginia Beach, VA
4/12/2021- Donovan Lynch Press Conference, Online Event
4/17/2021- #BlackOut757 Occupy the Oceanfront, Virginia Beach, VA
4/20/2021- Press Conference and Citizens Review Panel City Council Meeting, Virginia Beach, VA
4/22/2021- State of Emergency 757 w/ Shaun King, Online Event
4/30/2021- Justice for DeShayla Harris Press Conference, Virginia Beach, VA
4/30/2021- Pink & Black March for DeShayla Harris, Virginia Beach, VA
5/4/2021- Virginia Beach Council Meeting, Virginia Beach, VA
5/24/2021- Pack the Courtroom - BLM 757 vs The Virginia Beach Police Department, Virginia Beach, VA
5/29/2021- Protest Saturday: Operation Oceanfront, Virginia Beach, VA
7/4/2021- 4th of July Protest, Virginia Beach, VA
7/10/2021- BLM757 5 Year Anniversary - 757 Unity Peace March, Hampton, VA

7/10/2021- 757 Protest Against Gun Violence, Hampton, VA
7/27/2021- Peace Train - Say No to Violence Community Walk, Newport News, Hampton, Portsmouth, Norfolk
8/6/2021- #JusticeForEbony Protest for Police Accountability, Norfolk, VA
8/16/2021- Citizens Review Board w/Subpoena Power Rally, Virginia Beach, VA
8/26/2021- Press Conference & March for DeShayla Harris, Virginia Beach, VA
9/5/2021- #SayHerName 6 Year Anniversary March for India Kager, Virginia Beach, VA
10/2/2021- Pull Up Against Hate 757, Virginia Beach, VA
10/4/2021- Pack the Courtroom for JaPharii, Hampton, VA
10/8/2021- Pull Up on a Racist 757 - Black Friday, Virginia Beach, VA
10/26/2021- 757 Day of Protest - Detox Virginia Beach, Virginia Beach, VA
12/4/2021- #SayHerName - Justice for DeShayla Harris Protest, Virginia Beach, VA
12/18/2021- Stop the Violence Community Walk, Newport News, VA

VITA

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M.S.	Criminal Justice, Virginia State University (2019)
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Publications

Dodson, K. & Ruffin, J. (forthcoming 2022). Justice-involved populations with disabilities: Examining inequalities during incarceration and reentry. In E. M. Ahlin, O. Mitchell, & C. Atkin-Plunk (Eds.) *Inequalities in Sentencing and Corrections among Marginalized Populations*. (7th ed.). Routledge.

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Selected Scholarly Presentations

2021 Ruffin, J. & Martin, K. (2021). "Exploring the Role of Barbershops in Developing Collective Efficacy in Marginalized Communities." Annual Meeting of the American Society of Criminology, Chicago, IL.