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The Impact of a Response: inner and outer perceptions of police
misconduct from law enforcement and black students at an elite
university

By

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The Impact of a Response: Inner and Outer Perceptions of Police Misconduct from Law
Enforcement and Black Students at an Elite University.

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Introduction

National and local police misconduct cases involving harassment, death, or significant injury seem to complicate the relationship between Black America and law enforcement. Black students play a significant role in this equation. Some black students experienced negative interactions with university and local police officers. As a result, portions of the public view the image of the police officer as distasteful. Consequently, calls to defund or eliminate the institution grows louder with each passing day. Police officers may feel the negative views of them from certain members of the public is unfair. More importantly, some police officers could feel that the mainstream media is misinterpreting the facts of a case the same media painted as controversial or troubling. Where does a university fall into this dynamic? More specifically, where does an elite university fall into this dynamic?

The University of Chicago is one of the most prestigious universities in the world. As with universities with substantial resources, The University of Chicago has a private police force known as The University of Chicago Police Department (UCPD). Unfortunately, UCPD has a complicated relationship with some of the black students on campus. Recent controversies over various interactions between the UCPD and University of Chicago black students led to more conversations about the purpose of policing on campus. Movements such as Care Not Cops and others led to discourse involving the elimination of policing. Furthermore, students in various open forums on campus discussed the possibility of reimagining the criminal court system by destroying the concept and existence of prisons as a form of effective punishment. At the same time, witnessing these forums, a series of questions developed.

Despite these complications, the university police force and the local police department remain. The research questions develop due to the perceived complexities of police misconduct.

How do local and national police misconduct cases involving harassment, injury, or death impact the relationship that the UCPD has with progressive student organizations? More importantly, to what degree do these controversial cases at the local and national level affect black students' inner and outer perceptions at The University of Chicago and members of the private university police force and the local police department? Lastly, with the research question in mind, these questions are used to guide the thesis project.

The hypothesis for this project tethers to the research puzzle. The puzzle in this situation is that even though black students and members of the law enforcement community may agree that a change is a need in policing and the criminal justice system in general, the disagreement will come from some of the words and terminology used to get to these changes. For example, there will be questions related to defunding the police and eliminating policing. Therefore, a logical expectation for severe or disagreement based on these phrases is connected to police reform or addressing policing in general for the greater good.

The literature review section of this paper has four components. The first component will encompass pro-police literature, even during cases of police misconduct against unarmed black people. For example, literature on what it means to be a good police officer has been around for decades. For many people in a community, there is a specific expectation that police officers behave in a certain way, no matter their race (Weitzer, 2000, p. 319). Other research indicates departmental expectations reinforce police officers' behavior from norms associated with the work involved of a police officer, which could be a source of frustration or satisfaction (Vaan Maanen, 1973 p. 43). The media coverage of police behavior is a significant talking point for pundits and news personalities.

In recent years, a deluge of research has propagated into academic journals about police reform, police abolition, and defund the police. For this reason, the discussion of police behavior occurred in multiple interviews. During the interviews, police abolition became a focal point of discussion. Therefore, the third portion of the literature review will encompass scholarship on police abolition. Akbar (2020) believes that police and prisons represent a form of disenfranchisement because these entities remove people from the political process. A person's ability to proceed with civil and social life is undermined (p. 1805). The purpose of police officers and prisons symbolizes tension in the role they play in society. Some take the position that this role is too expensive for a community to bear; for example, one perspective in defunding the police deals with recalibrating, which aims to reimagine or transform the regularly undertaking responsibilities (Eaglin, 2021, p. 127). Finally, the fourth and final part of the literature review is about the interaction the black students and police officers, which is a significant source of qualitative data for this study.

Giving key and personal insights during the research process provides the reader with a greater perspective of crucial moments for the researcher. Important moments occur in research during various stages and add to the overall experience for the researcher. For this reason, personalizing vital elements during this study is warranted. Finally, the most significant portion of this paper is the words of the interview participants. Interview excerpts connected to specific themes are discussed and analyzed in this study. For example, opinions about the initial thought of a police officer are interrogated with various degrees of intensity by the interview participants. Insights such as this are critical. The central importance of these personalized perspectives allows this study's intended goal to have an honest discussion about a prevalent issue of our time: Policing.

Literature Review

Pro-Police literature

Pro-police literature is the scholarship that did not negatively view policing, even during controversial police misconduct cases. Instead, some of the literature focused on the positive characteristics of being a police officer. For example, in a study conducted by Muhlhausen (2001), people who support Community Oriented Police Services (COPS) believe that hiring or re-hiring more police officers will help reduce the crime rate. According to Gill et al. (2014), Community Oriented Policing (COP) has three central elements: community partnership, organizational transformation, and problem-solving, leading to these entities being 'co-producers for public safety. Kleck & Barnes (2014) expounded on the deterrence hypothesis by explaining that a swift response to crime will decrease the crime rate. A school of thought that has been around for decades, as it seems, but a school of thought reinforced by unexpected events in society. Keeping the public safe is one of the assumed duties of a police officer; after the terrorist attack in September of 2001, the responsibilities of the police to keep the public safe increased evermore. Lyons (2002) believed that the public is needed for the fight against terrorism through strategic partnerships with the police and sharing information with them. The literature emphasizes better techniques added to the standard operating procedures of policing. Weisburd & Eck (2004) Enduring standard practices like randomized patrolling throughout the community, rapid response calls to services needed, and conducting sincere follow-up investigations to a crime indicate some of the central ingredients required for better policing. Indeed, these represent some typical demands from multiple communities' local police departments in terms of race. Additional demands include better police transparency, especially when so many have access to cell phone cameras, which also incentivizes members of law enforcement to increase

and not just police in a way determined by the neighborhood's demographic makeup (Bratton, 2018). In addition, hierarchical order is the organizational pattern of most police departments. As a result, training from the leaders of this hierarchy is deemed as good or necessary for solid police work. Owens et al. (2018) observe that officers' proper engagement with supervisors will decrease infractions about the unnecessary use of force.

Several articles addressed the call to eliminate policing by imploring that policing still matters in various segments of society. Butcher (2020) points out that with increased states like California, New York, and California considering the removal of School Resource Officers, some scholars consider this a risky move because of the larger reality that school shootings are still a frightening reality in America today. In this same reality, policing in multiple parts of America still exists.

The death of George Floyd added a greater impetus to question the way policing is done. Protests followed, and cautious scholars responded in kind to defund the police movement and other movements associated with eliminating policing altogether. However, Vermeer et al. (2020) view that defunding does not involve punishing police departments by taking away departmental resources but instead giving police officers the option to say no, resulting in increased job satisfaction. Innovations and community partnerships are typical for people wishing to see fundamental and structural changes within policing. For instance, Helfgott and colleagues (2016) point to an innovative solution done in 2010 by the Seattle Police Department (SPD). SPD created a 24-hour Crisis Response Team (CRT), which included members of the Crisis Response Unit of the SPD and licensed mental health professionals—resulting in removing some of the burdens that police officers must carry in doing tasks that fall out of the traditional work of policing.

Police Behavior and the Public

With the recent cases involving police officers killing unarmed black people, a committed and determined segment of the public wants to see the police defunded, meaning people want to see some funding geared towards police operations go to other parts of the community. Traffic stops represent some of these functions. For example, 4.5 million North Carolina traffic stops revealed Black people and Hispanics are stopped at a more frequent rate —driving While Black (DWB) is the common colloquial term that many in the Black community use to describe this phenomenon (Butler, 2017, p. 60). From a historical standpoint, police brutality has been an issue. For instance, even during monumental historical periods like prohibition, undercover police officers would still brutalize black people to garner specific information (Muhammad, 2019, p. 201). Ouss & Rappaport (2020) concluded that it is not the case that police behaviors are getting worse empirically; it is the case that the public has less tolerance for bad police behavior which resulted in significant victories for the claimant in federal court. One such intolerance involves gender and race-related to the historical treatment of black women in this nation and by law enforcement. More specifically, scholars illuminate how racism, stereotypes, and the dehumanization perceptions of black women informed law enforcement how to interact with them through violence and sexual assault. The focus of police brutality occurring with black men, stories involving individuals like Marlene Pinnock, by a California Highway Patrol officer, is often overlooked (Crenshaw et al., 2015; Ritchie et al., 2017).

As a result of current and historical interactions with the police, the defunding of the got police has multiple meanings. For example, these meanings could include reducing or eliminating funding for the police, prioritizing community resources with funding from the police and altering the roles and responsibilities of the police, and setting reprioritizations of

tight budgets to help improve officers' behavior (Eaglin, 2021). These talking points have become interdisciplinary because both feminist and social work scholars have opined on this issue. Jacob and colleagues (2021) articulate how white supremacy created and maintained the allegiance that social work has with law enforcement thanks to the role that white supremacy created and maintained. The defunding of the police movement represents an opportunity for the field of social work to divest from policing, highlight social welfare intervention models which operate independently from the clutches of law enforcement (p. 38). Under the eyes of some black feminists, defunding the police means the opportunity to create actual structural changes by creating health care spaces as black communities continue to see hospitals leave the community (Barlow & Johnson, 2020).

Police Abolition

However, the subject of police abolitions has been around for years, with roots stretching back to the 1700s. In recent years, police abolition has been growing louder at almost deafening decibels, and the liberal approach to abolition gears towards stepping away from retributive and punitive forms of justice (McDowell & Fernandez, 2018). Some scholars call for the abolition of some critical features of what they refer to as a police state. For instance, as long as this society expresses the notion that probation and the parole system are necessary for effective means of justice within the criminal justice system, the police state will remain in a strengthened position (Angle, 2014). At times, some may wonder about the exact meaning of the term 'abolish the police.' At times, the answer is straightforward because some people have held that even politicians like Joe Biden want to keep police funding. His democratic brethren want to establish ways to make it easier to prosecute the police; some still feel that the institution of policing needs to be eliminated (Kaba, 2020).

Naturally, the response from police supporters or even neutral parties that question the notion of police abolition is typically resolute and stringent by speaking to the historical precedents of police abolition. To expound, Paul H. Robinson (2020) emphasized that the revolutionary period of the 1960s had a strong appetite to abolish the police institution. As a result, non-punishment communes like Drop City, a place where artistic expression is nourished and satiated, but eventually, the residents got tired of the rampant thievery that occurred here. In the literature on police abolition, some scholars want to take a slightly different approach through implementing and considering another term. Disbandment is the term, which means the legal dissolution of an agency, ceases to exist, and eliminating these jobs.

When members of the public do express anger or concern on the way a police agency operates, the members of the public should ask "not only whether their work can be done better, but whether it should be done at all, and by whom" (O'Rourke et al., 2021). Police disbandment is not a new phenomenon, and it does have practical application. A local government must decide if a police agency officially sanctions a police agency. If a town exists without an incorporated police agency, the policing in this location is done by agencies operating under higher government levels (King, 2014). Some towns exist without the traditional notion of policing, in which outside entities assume the roles and responsibilities of policing. There could be a quantitative explanation for disbanding police agencies because police agencies shown to be ineffective in dealing with crime are more likely to be dissolved as a result (King, 2014). Racism existing at the institutional level examined by a department on the higher levels of government could also begin the process of police disbandment. For example, after the death of Michael Brown, Eric Holder, the Attorney General during the Obama Administration, criticized the Ferguson Police Department for its treatment of its black citizen. With the Justice Department's

report of its findings and recommendations, citizens still believed that nothing of substance would truly change within the Ferguson Police Department. There were also members of this department that did not put too much energy into reviewing the reports (Chaney, 2015).

Black Students, Black Female Police officers, and the police

In recent years, the relationship between black students and police officers has been contentious. The literature highlighted indicates a perception that campus police are not legitimate representations of the police, but this is not the case because two-thirds of campus police are sworn in for duty; this means that campus or university police people do have arresting power (Allen & Jacques, 2020). For instance, Jenkins et al. (2021) magnified an incident at Yale University in which a white graduate student called campus police because a Black graduate student was sleeping in a standard room for the residential hall. An anonymous employee at Smith College called campus police on a Black graduate student because this student looked out of place from the employee's perspective. The reactions of others from a white university against black students attacked the sense of belonging these black students had for their current institution of higher education. The literature also examined the perception from different races for police misconduct cases that involved the use of force, which revealed the Black people were more likely than whites to have more negative sentiments about the police (Girgenti-Malone et al., 2017). The dynamics of social media stories about police misconduct, police militarization, and public concern for police misconduct bring the effect of the subject's race to negation. It is also possible that the social media exposure that the youth have toward controversial cases of police misconduct may have a more significant personal impact on students of color than on white students (Girgenti-Malone, 2017).

The experience of black female college students and black female police officers was also a central focus in the literature review. Unfortunately, specific studies involving Black female college students and their interactions with campus police and the local police department were sparse. The one study that briefly talked about the experiences of Black female college students was a study by Nordberg and her colleagues (2018). In this study, black women were more likely than their male counterparts to identify with Black female victims of police misconduct like Sandra Bland. Black women were also less likely to express substantial fear of the police than their male counterparts. However, there is still a fear of police encounters that Black women have because it often involves instances of sexual harassment. Therefore, the experiences of Black women and police officers are examined through a wider lens. Sexual harassment by police officers was the common complaint of many young African American women. Poor young minority women are most vulnerable to sexually abusive practices by police officers (Brunson & Miller, 2006).

Gabbidon and colleagues (2011) assume that Black women and men will have different experiences. There is a likelihood that Black women and Black men will have different experiences with the police. For instance, since battered Black women receive fewer police services like arrests when they have children, police officers fail to open doors for social services available to these Black women as a result. So, when the police do not take action on their behalf due to a lower quality of the response, the entire Black community compromised to a degree (Robinson & Chandek, 2000). Lindsey (2017) paints a larger pattern of state-sanctioned violence against Black girls in places like a school where they will experience differential treatment due to misrecognition and excessive use of force.

The Equal Employment Opportunity Act of 1972 eliminated agility tests, interview techniques that harmed women, and written tests that detrimentally affected non-white candidates. Affirmative action guided police departments nationwide for more equitable practices, which resulted in more black women as police officers representing almost a third of all female police officers. In contrast, black men only represented 12.5 percent of all male police officers by 1986 (Martin, 1994). Black male police officers tend to distance themselves from Black women police officers because Black male police officers fit into the masculine paradigm of white male police officers due to being street smart and tough. Crucially, black male police officers mentoring Black female police officers are at risk of ostracization and alienation by their white male counterparts (Dodge & Pogrebin, 2001). The threat of ostracization is especially acute with the experiences of Black women police officers. For instance, Mark Pogrebin and his colleagues (2000) conducted a qualitative study featuring 21 Black female police officers. They found that some of these officers felt they were a double minority because they experienced oppression because of their race and gender. The intersectional dynamics from this statement alone underscores the types of discrimination a black police officer will go through in a specific environment. Unfortunately, the hostile environment here is the police departments nationwide.

Hypothesis/Arguments

The first research question asks how national and local police misconduct cases impact the relationship with black students at The University of Chicago and the Chicago Police Department (CPD). The first argument is that the relationship between the CPD, UCPD, and black students at The University of Chicago will become more contentious over time. As a result, lines of demarcations drawn from both sides, which will force high-ranking individuals from the corridors of power at The University of Chicago, or people in positions of political

power in city government. Also, hypothetically speaking, some members of the Chicago Police Department may feel as if they are under attack from various student organizations, college professors, university leadership, and the news media. Strong feelings of resentment may be the result. In the same instance, black students may feel like local law enforcement is harassing or intimidating them more due to this increased scrutiny by the public and the news media due to controversial cases of police misconduct.

The second question asks to what degree national and local controversial police misconduct cases affect key stakeholders' inner and outer perceptions. Inner perception means the way someone sees themselves, and external perception is how people look at other people or groups. Controversial cases of police misconduct will make some of the members of the local police department have increased levels of stress. Some may even have or is in the process of changing careers. Black students who engage in protests may feel that they are on the right side of history because they address the evils of systemic racism within law enforcement. Some of the members of both groups could see one another as the enemy. Lastly, the response from leadership at the university in controversial cases of police misconduct will spark specific sentiments. Both sides will be disappointed because they will feel that the reaction did not go far enough and lacked the language of allegiance to their side.

Research Methods

Personal Perspective

The research design for this paper includes qualitative methodologies—data collection through semi-structured interviewing. The interviews took place in a one-on-one setting virtually over Zoom. Due to the global pandemic, group interviews and participant observation of specific research sites were not possible. During the interview, the questions were open-ended.

Successfully avoided leading questions at all costs and the inquiries related to controversial police misconduct cases and these cases' inner and outer perceptions. Specific cases are the inspirations to some of the questions, and during multiple instances, the interviewee draws the answers from these cases.

Seeking out participants for this research project quickly morphed into one of the most arduous portions of this effort. After attending a meeting with a graduate student organization, most of the participants came from these spaces. Utilized a brief paragraph for the email featuring a basic introduction and a concise explanation of the research purpose. Only one student agreed to participate in this research project at that time. Personally sent multiple emails to The University of Chicago Police Department (UCPD). The UCPD responded to the emails initially but did not respond to subsequent correspondences. I talked to the Faculty Advisor about this issue, he suggested reaching out to two current police officers and one former police officer of the Chicago Police Department (CPD).

Research Methodology: Qualitative Research

The primary source of gathering data was qualitative interviewing because it provided one of the best options for collecting the human element perspective in controversial police misconduct cases. The human element perspective, for this study, is described as an emotion, memory, or experience connected to the lived experiences of the research participants regarding controversial cases of police misconduct. Multiple elements of lived experiences, for example, are illuminated in various portions of the interview. The thematic analysis component of this paper will illustrate this.

The Interview Questions

14 semi-structured interviews were utilized for this study. The interview participants would answer the initial question: What does the word police mean to you? What are some of the first things that come to mind when you think or see the police? There were other variations to this question, but all the participants would answer it and go in the direction they wanted. Based on how these individuals would answer the first questions, it served as a guide in either asking a follow-up question or a question from the question bank that was closely related to some of the themes, issues in their answers. Here is a sample of some of the interview questions:

- How would you characterize the response from university leadership after national and local cases of police misconduct?
- Why are so many people talking about police reform at the local and national levels?
- How does this make you feel that there is a continuous discussion of police reform?
- What does defund the police mean to you?
- What are the consequences or benefits of defunding the police?
- What is your opinion on police abolition?
- Does the recent murder of a doctoral student change the discussion of defunding the police? Why or why not?
- What is the relationship between the black students and the private and local police departments on this campus? This city?
- Is the perception of policing based on one's political leanings?
- What is your opinion of campus/city leadership's responses to police misconduct?
- What is your definition of police brutality? Do town hall meetings help with this definition?
- How do televised acts of police misconduct impact your perception of being a police officer?

Data Analysis: Demographics of Interview Participants and Communication Process

Name (Pseudonym)	Current Academic Level/Profession	Race and Gender	Interview Duration	Interview Date (Chronological Order)
Jermaine	Doctoral (Religious Studies)	Black Male	58:58	5/7/21
Omar	Freshman	Black Male	1:01:29	5/10/21
Jerrod	Police Officer	Black Male	1:07:55	5/11/21
Haden	Former Police Officer/Law Student	White Male	1:51:03	5/16/21
Juanita	Police Officer	Black Female	1: 35:59	5/21/21
Erika	Graduate Student (Public Policy)	Black Female	1:10:51	5/23/21
Serenity	Incoming Law Student	Black Female	1:22:06	5/30/21

Deion	Graduate Student (Social Work)	Black Male	1:25:16	5/31/21
Harmony	Medical School Student	Black Female	41:44	6/5/21
Aurora	Doctoral Student (Social Work)	Black Female	1:04:17	6/6/21
Jamar	Graduatel Student (Public Policy)	Black Male	55:28	6/8/21
Ashley	Recent Graduate, B.S., Economics	Black Female	56:13	6/9/21
Darius	Doctoral Student (Religious Studies)	Black Male	1:01:24	6/16/21

After a conversation with the faculty advisor regarding the difficulties in securing an interview with members from UCPD, several interview participants were suggested. During late winter of 2021, sent several emails to potential interview participants. The email contained information that explained the nature of the research project. Luckily, all three of these individuals agreed to participate in this study. To protect the police officers, they were given pseudonyms, Jerrod, Haden, and Juanita. Juanita is an African American woman in a leadership position in the Chicago Police Department. Additionally, Juanita is the only female police officer interviewed for this study. Jerrod, an African American male is a current Chicago police officer as well. Lastly, Haden, is a Caucasian male, in law school, and is a former Chicago police officer.

In the late spring semester of 2021, sent several emails to potential interview participants. Some of the individuals were part of a minority graduate organization at The University of Chicago. The email contained information explaining the nature of the research project. Luckily, the eight more individuals agreed to participate in this study, which included five black women, and 4 black men. The academic information for the black women includes a recent graduate with a bachelor's degree in economics (Ashley), a medical school student (Harmony), a graduate student in public policy (Erika), a law student (Serenity), and a doctoral student in social work (Aurora). The academic information for the black men includes a freshman who hasn't decided

on a major (Omar), a graduate student in public policy (Jamar), a graduate student in social work (Deion), and a doctoral student in religion (Jermaine). An opportunity arose, during a gathering with friends. Here, a black male doctoral student (Darius) in religious studies agreed to participate in this study. Therefore, a total of five black male students interviewed for this study. In fact, 13 people participated in this study, 6 women and 7 men.

Findings: Central Themes and Interviewee Perspectives

Good Policing

Policing was the central topic in this study. Therefore, controversial cases of police misconduct discussed during the interviews with the current and former police officers. Jerrod and Juanita, two current police officers, and the former police officer and a current law student in Haden, all believe that bad policing is terrible for the image and institution of policing. Jerrod is the first police officer interviewed for this study. He is a veteran police officer of CPD. About eight minutes into the interview, Jerrod began talking about good policing. He gave a detailed response:

I've always wanted to be good police. And I think that notion of good police is, is multifaceted. There can be more multiple types or different types of good police officers. The type of good police I wanted it to be was a proactive police officer who ensured communities' welfare. What I mean by that is that when folks go to bed at night, when they wake up in the morning, because I was on their street or in their neighborhood or their community that evening. As a consequence, that neighborhood is much safer than when they wake up in the morning. And then when it was before they went to bed.

The assurance of public safety is a fundamental component of his definition of a good police officer from his perspective. Juanita, who been on the job for over 15 years, shared a similar answer when the question asked about good police officers:

I just wish the department did a better job showcasing officers working so tirelessly in these communities outside of their normal work schedules. You know, we have an officer they call him the preaching police. So, he's a minister, outside of being a police officer, and he holds ministry on the streets. He's out here praying for people. He's out here service in the community having all types of different prayer circles, and he volunteers at food pantries and giveaways; I mean, he's just all over the place.

With her statement, she referenced the ideal example of a good police officer by personalizing this reference by discussing someone she knows and admires. Juanita emphasized a wish for her department to do a better job highlighting the excellent work that some police officers do year-round with a practical implication of making the image of police officers better. Haden said the following about bad apples within the police department:

Good people do bad things; bad people do great things, you know, it's oh, and to call it that kind of binary here, either a bad guy or a good guy is kind of what police have done for a long time. You know, they catch bad guys. You're either a bad cop or a good cop. And I really don't think that that's the case. I think that there's a spectrum.

The response from the former police officer was unique because he recognizes that the terms bad and good apples are binary in a sense. He is illustrating here that the world of policing is not binary and is more complex. It is as if that the cases we see on TV simply tell one level of police altercation. Elizabeth Hinton (2021) touches on the genealogy of bad apples within the police department by detailing how police departments changed the definition by focusing on most

police officers being good and a bad cop; the proverbial bad apple will not spoil the bunch (pp. 125-127).

The two black police officers, Jerrod and Juanita, had similar perspectives regarding policing, especially regarding the societal and personal expectation for police officers to do good for their community. Good in this instance could mean charitable works or doing the job as a police officer to make people in the respective communities experience a tangible feeling of safety. Haden answered the question differently. He recognizes that there can be malicious police officers who do their job in a corrupt and at the same time, there could be great police officers with a sterling reputation that made an unwise decision and caused a national outcry in the process. The student interviews would offer a different take.

The Student Perspective of Police Image

All ten students interviewed for this study were asked variations of the following question: What comes to mind when you think of the police? Most of the responses were consistent. Omar, a first-year student at The University of Chicago, says the following:

Brutality. Honestly, I don't think about policy without thinking about police brutality.

When your institution has rooted in state patrols, you don't really get too far from it; you have to figure it out. You have to figure it out by doing it in different ways, like mass incarceration.

His response spoke of the general lack of trust he has towards police and further explained that this mistrust is based on the historical genesis of policing in this country. Jamar, a graduate student in public policy at The University of Chicago said the following about what his initial thoughts would be if he thought of police:

I think my mind immediately goes to police brutality. And I just think of, like so many people who like, live in fear of like, oh, man, I think about how, whenever I walked past a police car, or at least person, like my, like, gut reaction is not like, oh, they're gonna keep me safe. It's like, oh, I better make sure that I'm not doing anything suspicious, or that could be perceived as suspicious, or that would draw their attention in any sort of way. And like, so that's, that's what comes to mind.

Like the undergraduate black male student mentioned earlier, his mind automatically goes to police brutality upon the initial thoughts or ponderings about police and policing in general. The other student, a black woman, Ashley, recently graduated from The University of Chicago, said this about the first thoughts that come to mind when it comes to policing:

Like the role of an aggressor, it's not someone who like is kind of bent on having authority over a situation that, like, whatever costs, is like the initial thought that I have when I think of policing. Even the term policing to me has like a negative connotation because it's something it's almost like it's something like it's correcting of something policing of like bad behavior or something like that. So even the word itself just sounds kind of negative to me.

Ashley included several key terms in her response. For example, authority is a natural synonym for policing, especially to historically marginalized groups. For this reason, marginalized groups in society may see the authoritative power of the police as a threat to freedom and life. Another term utilized by the student in her initial description of a police officer is the aggressor or being in the role of aggressor. Aggressive policing could encompass multiple situations with police officers, like rude altercations during a traffic stop. Serenity, an incoming law student from The University of Chicago, said the following:

Badges and guns, I'd say probably one of them if we're talking from an image person perspective, that's the first thing that comes to mind. I also just finished reading this book called Slavery by Another name by Douglas Blackmon, and it talks about the origins of a lot of our justice system, particularly in the south, and how they were basically formed to re-enslave black people through peonage, and basically falsified debts that were basically upheld by this whole entire system of law.

In this instance, she uses a recent book she read to add to her perceptions about policing. Just like Omar, Serenity utilizes some historical reference points, which this book entails to add to her perspective of policing. Also, the first words she used in describing her initial perception of policing are badges and guns. A badge is symbolic of having authority under a specific space, institution, or both. Guns, in multiple instances is a symbol of violence or a tangible threat of violence. The authority that police have involves upholding the law.

Furthermore, under the eyes of some, maintaining the structure and mechanisms of the criminal justice system represents an inference with the conversations with Omar and Serenity. Serenity also talks about guns. The modern-day imagery of police officers with a gun is connected to a person's power and authority, which compels a suspect to stop for fear of losing his or her life and having the legal authority to inflict injury or death to the suspect in question. Harmony, a medical student at The University of Chicago, said the following:

For me, one of the first things that come to mind is surveillance. I think about policing just be some type of external entity watching people. It makes me feel upset that that's my perspective of policing, although I know naturally by the book, like policing is supposed to be protective, or it's supposed to be this institution that is keeping people safe.

Once again, surveillance, which is another synonym for power and authority is in her response to her initial feelings regarding the initial perspectives of policing. Due to the police's power with surveillance, she does not feel that she can trust the police due to their actions associated with surveillance. For example, she brought out how in specific neighborhoods, constant surveillance is occurring left. She understands that protection is the embedded synonym attached to policing, but surveillance is affecting her trust in police systems.

Police Officers Addressing Controversy

During the interview, controversial cases of police misconduct made an appearance. The question's intent involved exploring how the public perception of police misconduct had on police officers in general. More specifically, how the outer perceptions of policing as an institution of policing, after a controversial case, have on how police officers perceive the related elements connected to this question. Juanita said the following as it relates to police misconduct:

You know, I still love my job, I still like what I do. But that doesn't mean everybody has the same agenda are the same intentions, you know, so you have to really, you know, watch and observe people at how they police, you know, because all policing isn't the same, you know, you may encounter me and be like, I like the her, you may encounter somebody else and be like, I don't really care for him, you know, just based off of that encounter.

Even with the ongoing controversies of the police, she still loves her job. However, Juanita understands good police officers and want policing in the correct method. Therefore, it is incumbent for other police officers, especially some of the newer police officers, to pay close attention to how someone polices. Jerrod said the following about controversial cases of police misconduct and media representation on this issue:

"I really don't have too many qualms with the media when it comes to covering policing. I'm not gonna say cover more good happy stories of police. I will just say cover the stories accurately and fairly, whatever they may be, the good and the bad. If a cop shoots someone, cover that story fairly and accurately if it's done maliciously. And without legal justification, cover it that way. But if it's good shooting, meaning that, you know, this officer to protect the life of other people in the surrounding areas to ensure the welfare, that community, if it's done in that capacity, tell it that way. It's when the criticism becomes unfair that becomes really problematic."

During this portion of the interview, Jerrod believes that police officers are not beyond reproach, meaning if police officers are misbehaving, they should be held accountable. At the same time, he believes the media must cover shootings or encounters with a police officer in an equitable manner because if the media does not do this, the results of this decision by the media in ways they cover publicized cases of police encounters may become problematic. Haden offers this take on the issue of publicized cases of police misconduct:

A lot of the other problems within the criminal justice system, aren't necessarily getting worse. And I from the ground, I see it the opposite way, I think it's getting a lot better. Like I don't know, I know, in the past, there were corrupt officers who were robbing drug dealers and planting guns on people and, and you know, taking bribes and doing all the stuff that you read about in the books and the history books, because it happened.

Haden went on to say the following:

But nothing like that is happening today. Then there are where everybody has got a body camera on. We're hiring the right people-ish. We're training to the extent that we've never trained before. And we've got supervision and eyes on each other like we've never

had, and we've got basically national attention on police behavior and police conduct that really is changing police culture and the way that police behave.

Haden, a current law student in Chicago, acknowledges the bad actors in policing exists.

However, to some extent, controversial police misconduct cases are misrepresented in terms of how often this misconduct occurs. Haden believes social media exacerbates police misconduct cases due to the shared and repost features. He also believes that police culture is changing for the better because of the amount of national attention and public scrutiny focused on the conduct of police officers.

Perspective of Police Misconduct from Doctoral Students

Several doctoral students took part in this study, two black men, Darius, and Jermaine, and one black female, Aurora. Aurora, is working on her doctorate in social work and shared a personal account of police misconduct:

The police came up and said someone was shouting for help. I told them that I didn't need any help, I was fine. The next thing I knew they're pulling me and the other person out of the car. Then told me I had to go home and the person who I was with had to wait until their parents arrived, even though they were older than 21. I told them that I didn't feel comfortable leaving the scene. And then they said that I either had to leave or that I was going to go, and so then I had to spend the night in jail.

A question also asked about the feelings of the black male that was with her, and she said the following:

His response was more like, just comply and like, let's get it over with, and let's all just go home. So, his response was, like, let's just do whatever they say. And like, um, and this situation as fast as possible. I'm not doing it just because you told me to do it unless you

give me a good reason. I'm not doing it because I fear for his life and things like that.

Two very different reactions.

In each instance, Aurora expressed more concerned about her friend's wellbeing. She did not want to leave him alone with the police officer for fear of his safety or the presumed harm that would come to her friend, a young black male. Her friend's response was more focused on compliance with law enforcement so both could get home safely; as she mentioned before, two different responses from a personalized example of police misconduct. Another doctoral student, Jermaine, pursuing a doctorate in divinity, said this personalized example of a usual form of police misconduct:

He's particularly very dark skin, you know, kind of pretty stocky and strong. But what's particularly sad, he would be pulled over by the police much more often, and he would go to court and get in fact, he told me we go to court frequently, and he would get them I guess, expunged. Guess the judge himself realized that some of these stops were unnecessary and frivolous. Realizing that my uncle so much of his life is characterized by sort of daily occupation of discrimination of which the police are, or at least have been at times of significant, was really eye-opening.

Personal accounts of police misconduct were more palpable to this interview participant because it involved a family member. His uncle was the magnetic component of this dialogue. Jermaine's uncle faced discrimination from police officers. Afterward, his discrimination was recognized by a court of law by expunging the arrest record or involvement with police officers as a result. In a sense, this could be considered a Pyrrhic victory due to the resounding emotions still presently felt by Jermaine. Another doctoral student in the religious field, Darius, said the following

speaks to how his perception of policing changed after the Trayvon Martin altercation with George Zimmerman and the notion of policing:

He was a wannabe cop. A wannabe cop. He was a neighborhood watch person and just assumed that the kid was up to no good and was dangerous and stalked the kid. And when the kid noticed what was happening, he turned around quite naturally to defend himself. And that was taken as justification for the guy who was stalking him in the first place to shoot him dead. That case changed my life in a certain way. In that I had. I mean, I also remember Rodney King. But it didn't seem like a systemic problem. From the day I heard about the Trayvon Martin situation. It completely changed my own relationship to police. It's not just with respect to my community at large, but myself as an individual. Yeah, and there have been countless numbers of reasons to justify that.

The story of Trayvon's altercation with George Zimmerman changed Darius's perception of the police. Even with the highly publicized Rodney King trial, he did not necessarily believe there was a systemic issue in the institution of policing. The Trayvon Martin story changed his perspective on this issue. Darius spoke with so much emotion during his depictions of George Zimmerman. For instance, he used the phrase "wannabe cop" to illustrate the dubious desires of a common citizen to exercise the power of law enforcement.

Solutions for Misconduct: Defunding the Police

The current police officers, Juanita and Jerrod, and the former police officer, Haden and the students gave a range of opinions on sensitive topics like defunding the police and police abolition as viable solutions to police misconduct. Juanita, the black female police officer said this about defunding the police:

People thought it meant to abolish the police, you know, but for others, when you say defund the police, yeah, they're saying taking resources from one entity to put it into another. As far as social services, things of that nature, I don't have a problem with it, but put it in the right hands of the right social service agencies.

In this response, she emphasizes that if resources are taken away from police departments, placing these resources in capable hands is a must. Juanita is not against defunding the police because of the possible social benefits involved. However, the phraseology of defunding the police make some, especially within the law enforcement community believe that it meant to eliminate policing in this country. Jerrod, said the following:

Come up with a plan that actually works. Being trained in mental health or domestic violence is helpful. But I gotta tell you, stuff can hit the fan real quick. You pull up to a mental health situation. He's got a gun. Now what? Because that's the reality. Well, think that these mental health issues are just like, oh, this person's having this mental health episode, which is true. They turned violent like this. And we can that can be lost on us.

Based on these comments, Jerrod is not entirely against the goals in defunding the police. Yet, he felt practicality is warranted in these conversations. He presented a scenario in which critical questions are asked. Questions like what to do if the mental health professional encounters a violent situation? Proper training would be the response. However, the image of a mental health professional with a gun could be a picture that too many in the public will not accept. Haden, a white male, a former police officer, said the following about defunding the police:

The vast majority of police officers agree with the underlying premise, which is to let the police be the police. Let law enforcement enforce the law, but invest in social services, invest in communities, and put that money that is being spent on police because we need

more police officers because we have more mental health calls. Logically, to me, it follows that I'm going to have to respond to fewer mental health calls. And if we're responding to fewer mental health calls, we need fewer police, which frees up that budget space.

His perspective is unique because it expresses a basic desire, according to him, of many police officers, which is to 'let the police be the police' which also has multiple meanings. Suppose the police can operate based on what best fits their job description, leading to more room in the budget for more social-related services. Haden sounds like he is not against some of the philosophies of defund the police. However, in each of these responses by Juanita and Darius one former police officer seem to not be entirely against the philosophy and purpose of the defund the police movement. The question about defunding the police was brought up to students as well. Deion, a graduate student in social work, said the following:

I want to affirm my peers that have these different ways of engaging with this conversation. And I think it's fruitful to, to get a lot of various lenses of how to handle this situation. Again, like I noted, before, we continue to do the singular narrative thing, we're just gonna reinforce the same stuff because someone's gonna feel marginalized, someone's gonna feel like they're not heard. And nine times out of 10, it falls back on the same group of people anyway, where it starts off like this gray thing, and then it gets co-opted by whatever privileged identity is in that space.

His answer was non-committal in a sense because he did not take a strong position that defunding the police was the right action to take. However, he did say he wanted to support his peers who are fostering this conversation, which sounds like if there is enough momentum for defunding the police to be part of the new reality in this nation, he will support the voices that

brought about this commonality. Haden, on the other hand believes that defund the police movement involves horrible marketing. He expounds on this rationale with the following response:

Defund the police. I think they come from a great place. And I think they've got a lot of great ideas and a great base with a horrible marketing strategy. And as long as we can get on the same page, I'm so for having social workers respond to mental health calls. And so for looking at, okay, here's a list of all the calls for service that we send police to, which ones of these don't we have to send them to, you know, let's get rid of this one. And when you're taking that burden off the officer shoulders, the average officer who might scoff at you because you're a reformer, is gonna be like, Yeah, I like him. I like what he's doing, you know?

Solutions for Misconduct: Abolish the police

Police abolition is a topic that has been gaining notoriety in recent decades, both in academic circles and beyond. Throughout multiple interviews, police abolition came into sharp focus. When asked about the possibility of police abolition, Jamar said the following:

I also think that more broadly, we're also not having the right conversations around policing yet. I mean, we're starting to, I think, with the Chauvin trial, and like all of the protests that have happened over almost the past two years now. I think we're starting to have the right conversations. I think the people that are advocating for abolition, or like really sort of like moving that conversation forward and challenging people's conceptions about what policing is and all that. For me, I definitely think that the conversation needs to start. Maybe from like a restorative justice perspective, and from like, a social work perspective.

Jamar felt the conversation around police abolition was needed, especially considering the Chauvin trial, which is the officer responsible for the Death of George Floyd, which also led to nationwide and international protests about police brutality. Discussing police abolition as a response to controversial cases of police misconduct existing locally and nationally offers an opportunity to talk about other police and criminal justice reform dynamics. This centers solutions that work in restorative justice, which is different from retributive forms of justice, focusing on punishing the perpetrator (Douglas, 2017). Serenity, feels strongly about the issues of prisons, which by extension, is tethered to the police. She offers the following view:

And so, we use prison as the sort of catch-all for social problems rather than addressing the underlying social problem that actually exists there. And so yeah, I think we all stand, we all have something to benefit from the abolition of prisons and policing as we know it. Once we do away with these cultural issues, for social problems, then we can actually address the social problem, like homelessness, for example. Homelessness is something that has been criminalized in a lot of ways. But instead of coming up with real solutions for homelessness, we just come up with ways to incarcerate homeless people. And until we do away with this sort of catch-all solution, we're not really going to invest in true solutions for those issues.

Serenity is a staunch prison abolitionist and firmly believes that multiple people would benefit from the elimination of prisons in this society. The criminalization of the homeless represents a direct consequence of the existence of prisons. Therefore, Serenity believes that eliminating prisons gives us the greatest chance to address social issues like homelessness in a different way.

Aurora, a black female doctoral student answered the common ground between police abolition and defunding the police:

But the difference between people who are just saying defund the police and people who are saying I'm a prison abolitionist is that there has to be more work afterward. Like you can't stop by defunding the police. It's then we, we've reformed this one part of the system, but we're still working towards abolishing the whole thing where other people who only have the idea of defunding the police. And see that as the endpoint.

Her response was connected to other significant issues tethered to police abolition, like criminalizing the poor and the unwillingness of elected leaders to produce solutions that exist outside of the incarceration box. She mentions both police and prison abolition in her response because these two entities are birthed from the same root. Solving the problems of mass incarceration through proper rehabilitation of criminal offenders may help solve the quandaries related to controversial cases of police misconduct because policing and the prison industry exist in a symbiotic relationship. In her response, she highlights how the work still needs to continue, even if police abolition is successful. In addition, she also highlights that even if reform happens and is successful in one part of the system, other parts need addressing. In a way, her statement necessitates abolition. One of the police officers, a white male, offered more solutions to fix some of the issues associated with policing, often highlighted by controversial cases of police misconduct, and ultimately believed that the police is still necessary. He said the following:

I don't subscribe to abolishing the police. I do, however, subscribe to a way in which people, regardless of race, demographics, color, skin, disability, economic status, all benefit from the same type of policing. I do subscribe to the notion that police officers need to do a better job and working in conjunction with community partners, mental health advocates, and workers in many different organizations. I do subscribe to the notion that there need to be experts responding to certain emergencies versus police

officers. But to abolish the police, I don't subscribe to that notion. Because reality remains. There's people out there that intend to do bad things. And they need to be met by folks, we're willing to protect them and that at worst, lay down their life to them.

Haden strongly felt that since bad people still exist, policing needs to exist to quell some of the harmful criminal elements in society. The response to these perpetrators must also involve a police officer willing to put their lives on the line, which Haden believes should be the universal standard of policing.

Erika, a graduate student in public policy, is skeptical about police abolition in the following statement:

Realistically, white people are not going to go for abolishing the police. Like, they simply are not like, Girl it's not gonna happen. In terms of like, defunding, I'm very much in favor of investing in communities and investing in social work. Like pay social workers a living wage because they are actual people who have actual families, and you provide, and they are providing a service to the community that they make the community better.

Erika isn't against the idea of police abolition. However, she believes that white people in this society will not support the idea of police abolition. One of the reasons inferred by Erika's statement is that people want to feel safe, and Erika believes that she should feel safe enough to call the police and not feel worried about someone dying in the process. She also believes that defunding the police is something to get behind because it involves funding social services, which could provide social service professionals a living wage.

Perspectives on the Response of Leadership

The actions of individuals in various levels of leadership morphed into one of the key topics during the interviews. Harmony, a medical student said the following about a black man and a black woman who in perceived powerful leadership positions in Chicago:

It doesn't actually give me hope that things are going to happen as much. Because I think about the reason that people as black people were able to get to these spaces is because of some more conservative agendas. And since Lori Lightfoot been in office, she's continued to expand the budget of Chicago to make this huge, large new training facility where officers are going to become better police officers, instead of actually investing in the community. I don't feel having a black man as the police chief helps significantly. But again, I think about how much can really be done within a system. You know, what sacrifice he even has to make to get to those positions? And what things will he just not be able to do, because he's working within a broader system where he can't be a renegade and just change the whole thing by himself."

In her response, she gives specific examples of why she does not trust the mayor of Chicago, Lori Lightfoot, even though this mayor happens to be a queer black woman. Harmony justifies her position on the mayor by highlighting her actions, which she believes has been one-sided. Harmony expounds by illustrating how the mayor gone out of her way to support Chicago police officers. The support of police officer comes with a cost because Harmony believes these efforts by the mayor should go to more investments in disenfranchised communities. Harmony also gave sharp remarks about the Superintendent of Police, David Brown. She questions what this police chief had to go thorough to attain this powerful position of leadership. An inference is made that this sacrifice to attain power may have too much of a cost, which reinforces the position of Harmony, and possibly others, that this position of power may have elements of

fallacy. One of the biggest reasons why Harmony and other believe in these critiques is based on the lack of systemic change occurring in the CPD. Jerrod offers this opinion on the actions of leadership during controversial cases of police misconduct:

Now, it's all the same police nationalist; it's all the same until you get a leadership within an individual the departments to be on board with the politicians of that city or town and municipality all be on the same page and really moving to a more progressive mindset. Or they're all the same.

The police officer here wanted to see leadership that is more responsive in a progressive sense and coming together with the politicians to address controversial cases of police misconduct. After giving his statement, an inquiry was made about what his definition of progressivism is to him, and he said the following:

It means let me tell you this, regardless of your political beliefs, I don't know what they are. It's not. It's not relevant. But what I will say is there is a reason that all the police union in, United States endorsed President Trump. Right? If that gives you an indication of the similarities between the departments, regardless of region or state.

In his response, he starts by saying that political beliefs are not part of the issue here, but rather pay attention to whom the police unions and the Fraternal Order of Police tend to support, which is former President Trump. Which brings up a more prominent issue; when it does come to controversial cases of police misconduct, who is the leadership that the police will listen to in addressing this issue? Juanita gave her perspective on the precarious position of female leadership within the police department:

Not currently, no, we lack female leadership within the department, especially within an exempt rank. We lack, female leadership there, they're starting to give us a couple of

apples. We give you one or two, just hush them up. We had one black female. She just retired. And they did her so wrong. Getting her up out of there. Things that she had really no control over. Her job was to make sure that people were complying with particular things in the consent decree. The people who she was relying on to get the job done, most of them were white, white males. And if they, you know, they don't do it, they didn't get canned. She got canned because they weren't doing what they were supposed to do.

In her response, Juanita spoke on a consent decree, which includes federal oversight of the CPD. This portion of the interview illustrates how white male police officers were slow to adhere to the consent decree, which responded to nationwide protests of police violence. Unfortunately, the black female police officer in a leadership position lost her job due to the slow response to reform that some individual police officers perpetrate, especially white male police officers.

Some of the graduate students were asked how they felt how leadership responded to controversial police misconduct cases. After asking if more black women were in a position of leadership within police departments would be beneficial. Aurora said the following:

I would honestly want no part of that. All right. I don't believe that the solution is, quote, unquote, diversity, just making the police force more diverse, putting a black woman in a leadership position because it doesn't fundamentally change what police do, which is protect property rights and punish the poor. And protect the interests of white people. None of that changes just because a black woman is leading it. In fact, it makes it more scary. It just hides the oppression under a black woman figurehead.

The student's response is consistent with the sentiments she expressed throughout the interview session. She feels that the police system designed to protect the powerful and punish the poor. A system like that is antithetical to a functional society. It is dangerous to some of the most

vulnerable members of that society, which is a group of people who have experienced obscene levels of marginalization throughout the history of this country.

Discussion: Research Questions, Arguments, and Limitations

The First Research Question

The study required two research questions. The first research question asks how national and local police misconduct cases impact the relationship between black students at The University of Chicago, UCPD, and CPD. The argument here is that the relationship between UCPD, the Chicago Police Department, and black students from The University of Chicago would deteriorate. Since members of UCPD did not participate in this interview, the focus of the interview questions remained on individuals from the CPD. As the interviews have indicated, all the black students do have apprehension regarding the police. The apprehension consists of several factors. One of the factors includes previous interactions with police officers. For example, two of the doctoral students, Aurora and Jermaine, talked about how the interaction with police officers negatively impacted them due to someone they knew and cared about having a bad experience with police officers. Jermaine described how his uncle, due to his size and dark complexion, would regularly experience discrimination with law enforcement. Aurora describes her firsthand experience involving the way police officers treated someone romantically involved with this person. She expressed fear for his life if she were to leave the scene and go home as law enforcement wanted her to do, but she refused.

Gender

Several pieces of scholarship describe the unique position gender plays in police interactions with black people. Krenshaw (2014) articulates that even when black women are present in police brutality on black people, these experiences center on black men. In multiple

instances during the interviews, when some of the black women were asked about their interactions with the police, they stated similar responses. These responses almost always connected to an experience primarily involving the police interaction with a black man they know. Ashley discussed her interaction with police from people she knows, and Aurora recalled her interaction with the police. She refused to leave the scene because she feared for the other black man's life. Only one of the participants, Erika, discussed how some of the police officers would flirt with her and her friends.

Officers Understand the Frustration

On the other hand, the police officers were sympathetic on why members of the black community, including black students, were upset with some of the controversial police misconduct cases. One of the police officers, Jerrod, understood the history of interactions that the police had with members of the black community. He viewed this history as abhorrent and believes that profound change needs to occur to get the trust of this community back. Haden, a white male, and a former Chicago police officer believes bad police officers exist, but the answers we seek are complicated. Haden pushes back on the binary choices of good cops and bad cops because, as he illustrated, a person viewed as a bad cop could make the wrong call but have good intentions. For this reason, Haden believes cops deserve protection if they have good intentions behind those actions because nobody, as Haden believes, believes is perfect. However, as Hinton (2021) lays out, frustrations with the way police departments handle bad apples could lead to riots and rebellions because people within the black community feel that political and policy leaders do not hear their voices.

Addressing Policies and Legal Doctrines

During multiple interviews, qualified immunity, a legal doctrine that protects public officials and the police, morphed into a central topic. Haden, the former police officer, understood people's frustrations with police officers committing atrocious acts and receiving little punishment for these acts. He even understands why so many people wanted to see the elimination of qualified immunity. However, he believes officers should be protected if they have good intentions behind the controversial actions in question. Also, Haden believes eliminating qualified immunity will cause many people to choose law enforcement as a viable career path. The black students offered a different perspective on qualified immunity. Many believe it was ridiculous for police officers to go unpunished for controversial acts of police misconduct.

A doctoral student in the religion field, Darius spoke with passion about his frustration on the Trayvon Martin situation and case. He felt it was bad enough to have Zimmerman posing as an official member of law enforcement. However, it was significantly worse for this person to go unpunished for the killing of Trayvon Martin. Legal scholars debated multiple issues related to qualified immunity. For example, Baude (2017) mentions that intent must be established by the person, or a police officer in this case, for the non-applicability of qualified immunity. For example, it must be shown that a police officer willfully violated a person's constitutional rights, and there was not anything reasonable about the officer's harmful acts on the individual. The issue with the removal of qualified immunity from a public official and law enforcement is the issue of the high standard needed for this to occur.

Police Reform

During the interviews, many of the participants illustrated the multiple dimensions of policy reforms. The two current police officers, Jerrod, and Juanita understood why movements

like Defund the Police a constant presence were. Juanita believes that if the good work of police officers were highlighted to the community, the Defund the Police movement would not have as much fuel. Haden, the former police officer, believes that many police officers have an automatic dislike of reformers and academics because they believe these forces want to end their livelihood and prevent them from providing for their families. All three of these individuals categorically opposed police abolition due to the basic need of protection the ordinary citizen will always demand. Police reform is a decades-long historical talking point. For instance, Hinton (2021) maps out the multiple attempts of police reform throughout the nation, resulting in the black community still having reservations about the local police department due to recent and non-recent history.

All the black students wanted some police reform. Unsurprisingly, many of them differed on the types of reforms needed. Serenity, an incoming law student, and Aurora were for police and prison abolition. These two individuals believe the system of policing and prisons in America has created more harm than good. Additionally, the criminalization of certain groups like poor people underscores the damaging effects in the relationship between policing and the prison industrial complex. For example, financially incentivizing arrests lead to imprisonment to occur, thus fueling the need to create more prisons, often with profit-driven motives. Serenity highlights this point from the way prisons devolved from their original purpose, which is to help offenders become rehabilitated into productive members of society.

Jamar believes that the right conversations around police and criminal justice reform are not taking place and does not want to see a world where people are not punished for their crimes. For this reason, legal scholars like Akbar (2020) believe that reform is not working, and prisons should be abolished for actual change within the justice system to occur. Erika endorses this

sentiment because she wants to feel safe. To some degree, she believes police may have the potential to do that if the right reforms like defunding the police and investing in social service programs occur. Deion did not have an exact response on how he felt about prison and police abolition and defunding the police. However, he wants space for his peers to have this conversation, and he will listen accordingly.

The Second Research Question

The second research question ask to what degree national and local controversial police misconduct cases affect key stakeholders' inner and outer perceptions. The police officers were asked why they wanted to be police officers. The answers were based on variations on a common impetus to make their communities a better place. It was essential to understand the internal motivations for wanting to become a police officer. Therefore, questions about why these officers wanted to become police officers were asked to all three of these individuals.

Another question asked to police officers was the role the media played in covering controversial police misconduct cases. Jerrod felt the media does not always tell the whole story because there are some cases where the police shooting was justified. He emphatically felt that if the media continues not to tell the whole story, it could become a dangerous situation. This statement felt like an ominous warning because Jerrod's central argument here is that misinformation presented by the media could create a dangerous situation for multiple people. For instance, after watching a news program featuring misinformation, the viewer, a police officer, or a black civilian may incur negative emotions. These negative emotions could spill over lethally if both police officers and civilians encounter one another. Johnson (2018) believes news anchors covering police shootings should remain neutral, but they do not because large news organizations like CNN are not fair and neutral while covering these cases.

The perceptions of the students remained the same in varying degrees. One instance of this perception was Trayvon Martin. Darius, Darius, an older black man from the northeast pursuing a doctoral degree in the religious field, felt his perception of police officers changed after he heard about the Trayvon Martin case. Darius viewed the wrongness with a system where a volunteer police officer would feel emboldened enough to act as a police officer attempting to apprehend a perceived suspect. Inwardly, Darius felt angry and vulnerable to the young in his family or outside of his family. The vulnerability multiplied due to the possibility that young black men like Trayvon may encounter a person like George Zimmerman and could potentially and consequently lose their lives. Erika, a black female graduate student in the public policy field, considered the militarization of the police and the support of the United States military of the police as well makes her perceive the police and their supporters as dangerous individuals. She felt that way after watching a protest in Washington, D.C. The protests were responses to controversial cases of police misconduct happening nationwide. She felt that for the government to respond with force touches on how they perceive black protesters as a threat.

Addressing the Main Argument

The central hypothesis or main argument is that both police officers, former police officers, and black students at The University of Chicago would feel disappointed with the way leadership responded to controversial police misconduct cases. The disappointment is exacerbated by the perceived side leadership chooses. Several police officers felt that the Fraternal Order of Police and the police unions have significant power in how reform can take place for multiple police departments throughout America in a meaningful way. Jerrod argues it is critical for police officers to know the community and be from the community they are policing. He thinks it is an "uphill battle" until that occurs. Multiple benefits accrue from how

leadership within police departments can help foster better policing by hiring people from that community. The term subject-matter expert was brought up in this excerpt of the interview to highlight a desire for what these black police officer wants to see more of from his police department. This suggests a level of non-responsiveness for instituting fundamental change within the police department, which could potentially answer some of the critiques of protestors, like police departments being a bastion for institutional racism, in a productive manner showcasing that police departments are willing to do. Jerrod, who has been an outspoken critic of the Fraternal Order of Police, and police unions, had one of the most jarring moments of all of the interviews. He pointed out to whom the FOP and the police unions tend to support from a political standpoint, which is republicans. He also points out the laws created in congress tend to take the teeth out of meaningful police reform. For example, Scheiber, N., Stockman, F., & Goodman, J. D. (2020) describes the way police reforms will zealously defend the rights of police officers involved in misconduct cases. Actions such as this are probably one reason why the word reform is a dirty word in some police spaces, as Hades alluded. This represents one of the biggest reasons why some police officers and members of the public will feel disappointed by leadership's response to police misconduct cases.

The students are not satisfied by leadership response to controversial cases of police misconduct. In multiple instances during the interview, the students lambasted influential political leaders like the mayors of large cities. For example, Erika felt that one mayor from Atlanta, Keisha Lance Bottoms, only appeared at protests for publicized photos. After the mayor leaves, the police officers would continue battering the protestors. A doctoral student, Aurora, considered the gender and race of a person in a leadership position as a circumstance that does not amount to actual change. For instance, Aurora articulates how Chicago mayor, Lori Lightfoot

continued to financially support the local police department because the mayor, a black queer woman, a former police officer. Serenity, an incoming law student, views this brand of identity politics as a colossal failure. She feels this way because so many make the mistaken assumption that if one person in a leadership position is part of a group, naturally, this means that actual change will occur.

Limitations

Gender

Several limitations were made evident during various parts of this project. One of the most significant issues was on the topic of gender. In so many cases, the women in this study would always mention how policing affected them through a person they knew, usually a black male. Having thorough interviews about the interactions that black women encountered with police officers was a subject matter, which was unfortunately beyond the scope of this study. One reason this was the case was due to the page limitations of this project and the goal of keeping the research questions as narrow as possible. The other limitation in terms of gender for this study was the treatment of black female leadership during controversial police misconduct cases. A consent decree was brought up during the interview with the black police officer. The enforcement of this decree by the black female police officer, which also weighted the federal government, was met with resistance from white male police officers, which eventually led to the black female police officer being in a leadership position her job. A fervent desire to ask multiple questions about other experiences black female police officers in leadership positions faced during times of controversy. How did their black constituents and black colleagues judge their performance in a leadership role? What other barriers did they face before and during their leadership roles? Again, these questions were beyond the scope of this study? In addition, the

role masculinity plays in black men and police officers' interaction with one another. No substantive question about masculinity was addressed during the interviews because it would be beyond the scope of this study. These questions could be about emasculation, black masculinity, white masculinity, fatherhood, and the boyfriend or husband role in a relationship.

Qualified Immunity

The legal doctrine called qualified immunity came into view up in several areas of this paper. With the controversy surrounding qualified immunity, the number of questions asked about this doctrine proved to be too insufficient and beyond the scope of this paper. Some of the interview participants did not know enough about qualified immunity. For example, the two law students, Haden and Serenity, provided detailed responses about their opposing positions with qualified immunity. Haden believes that if qualified immunity were eliminated, fewer people would pursue a career in law enforcement. Serenity believes qualified immunity represents an impediment in holding all people accountable for their actions, which is why she is for police and prison abolition. Questions related to the legality of qualified immunity in multiple forms are beyond the scope of this study.

Limited Participation from Intended Subjects

The original intent of this study involved interviewing law enforcement officials from UCPD. Through multiple failed attempts in communicating with leadership from the UCPD and Campus Safety at The University of Chicago, I decided to pursue contacts of the thesis advisor from the CPD. Still felt a missed rich opportunity in comparing the interview responses from the local police department and the UCPD. Due to the proximity the black students have with the CPD officers; the attainment of rich qualitative data still occurred.

Suggestions for Future Research

Due to the limitations of this study, there are several suggestions for future research. A study about the differences and similarities that black men and women face during controversial police misconduct cases. The focus of this study could be on some of the most visceral cases of police brutality occurring for the past ten years. By focusing on this approach, content analysis on social media could be more congruent to the researcher's needs. Twenty black students, ten men and ten women should probably be the number of participants needed for this study.

Another suggestion for future research is to focus on the role that qualified immunity has played in some black students' decision to go to law school. By examining this legal doctrine related to the motivations that current black law students have in qualified immunity and related subjects in law school can help get a more focused answer about the legality of qualified immunity. Twenty black students, from at least five law schools should be the desired number. Next, examine the multiple dimensions of black masculinity and how these dimensions of black masculinity impact black male students' interactions with public and private police forces. Exploring the motivations of police and prison abolitionists from elite universities could be a study worth exploring. The study should include at least ten elite universities, twenty interview participants, ten students, and ten professors passionate about police and prison abolition. In addition, ten police officers, either from the university or working in the local police department, should participate in this study to provide a needed comparison and contrast opportunity. Finally, another suggestion for future research is the perception that white students at elite universities have of controversial police misconduct cases, which may be a source of rich qualitative information that could provide unexpected results, with at least twenty students from these institutions partaking in this study.

Conclusion

With elements of the hypotheses and the research questions proven, as mentioned above, why should anybody care? People should care because it will allow us to answer the challenging questions about private police forces at elite universities and their relationships with historically marginalized groups like black students. Images of police officers evoke painful cinema within the minds of black students at elite universities and beyond, which in some cases, can complicate the trust they have toward the law enforcement community. Understanding why these differences exist can also help us understand why law enforcement and black students at elite universities have external and internal perceptions of one another. More specifically, especially during publicized local or national police misconduct cases, which was illustrated through multiple interviews. These perceptions illustrate the tension around and the reaction of the word reform from some law enforcement community members, which is highlighted in these interviews with the police officers and former police officers. Interrogating the meaning of police misconduct and getting qualitative information on the lived experiences of harmful police interactions represented some of the goals for this paper and the accomplishment of these goals. In addition, an examination of some of the solutions posed by students, which included defunding the police, police and prison abolition, and meaningful reform, led to tough but necessary conversations during the interview. The hope is for these conversations to continue with fair-minded individuals with a collective goal of living in a better world with better policing, which will lead to better forms of justice for all.

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