Disproportionality does not Equal Racism

Dr. John F. Fisher[1]
Christina Ritter

Abstract

At the beginning of any reform movement, the narrative defines why this reform must be conducted. After the May 25, 2020, death of George Floyd by Officer Derek Chauvin, the singular narrative created by those who oppose law enforcement is that the police are systemically or institutionally racist and that the police need to be defunded, dismantled and reorganized with some sort of social work response team. This research project addresses this singular narrative by answering two questions. First, what alternative factors could be associated with the use of deadly force? Second, of these alternatives, which explains the elevated risk of police use of fatal force faced by the African American community? The study subjects were the 1003 individuals killed during use of force exchanges with law enforcement in 2019 (as reported by the Washington Post Fatal Force Database). Using SPSS, our team analyzed data using descriptive, frequency, and cross-tabulation to seek out patterns in the use of fatal force. The results suggest two alternative factors influencing police use of fatal force. The first police perception is of the threat posed by the decedent, and the second is whether or not the decedent was armed with a gun. Although African Americans were over-represented in our sample, our findings suggest that factors other than systemic racism exist and should be explored. Law enforcement reform should not be driven by the divisive, emotionally charged narrative that disproportionate representation of Blacks proves systemic racism on the part of the police. Instead, a more comprehensive approach is in order.

Introduction

In 2019, the United States of America witnessed the death of 1003 people at the hands of Law enforcement. Tate, Jenkins, and Rich of The Washington Post (2020) track the number of fatal encounters with the nation's police officers and make their Fatal Force Database (FFD) available for public viewing. Following the murder of George Floyd on Memorial Day 2020, there were several days of protests and riots. Hank Newsome, the chapter chair of the New York Black Lives Matter Movement, stated that the riots were not just about the murder of George Floyd but because of 400 years of oppression and institutional racism (Checkpoint, 2020). Newsome is not the sole individual claiming this narrative; it is widespread among the commentators and activists protesting the murder of George Floyd. The Washington Post started tracking Law Enforcement Officers' (LEO) fatal force encounters after the death of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri (Tate, Jenkins &Rich, 2020). Using the database created by the researchers at the Washington Post, this paper intends to explore the empirical evidence to test alternative explanations for the use of fatal force by Law Enforcement.

In response to the acquittal of George Zimmerman for the death of Trayvon Martin, the Black Lives Matter Movement (BLM), created by Alicia Garza, Patrisse Cullors, and Opal Tometi, raised its voice about the death of Black men across the United States. Garza, Cullors, and Tometi created BLM as "an ideological and political intervention in a world where Black lives are systematically and intentionally targeted for demise" (Black Lives Matter, ND, para.1). The BLM suggests that Patrisse Cullors told Jake Tapper on his podcast The Lead on CNN, Friday, June 19, 2020, that the BLM are trained Marxists with the sole goal of removing President Trump from office (Schreiber, 2020). These two quotes suggest that the BLM follows the ideology of social conflict theory and is more dedicated to the philosophical changing of the American society than to protecting lives. In dedication to the social conflict theory of oppression, BLM is pushing the singular narrative that LEOs are systemically racist and targeting racial and ethnic minorities for fatal force, refusing to entertain any dissenting narrative.

---

[1] University of Texas Permian Basin, Christina Ritter, University of Texas Permian Basin

The deaths of Eric Garner (July 17, 2014), Michael Brown (August 9, 2014), Tamir Rice (November 22, 2014), Walter Scott (April 4, 2015), Freddie Gray (April 12, 2015), Laquan McDonald (October 20, 2014), Philando Castile (July 6, 2016), Terence Crutcher (September 16, 2016), Antwon Rose II (July 19, 2018), O'Shae Terry (September 1, 2018), and most recently George Floyd (May 25, 2020), all described by the narrative as unarmed at the time of their fatal encounter, has increased the support for the singular narrative that law enforcement officers are racist and target racial minorities for the use of fatal force (CNN Editorial Research, 2020). After the tragic deaths of these Black men, there have been protests and demonstrations in various cities demanding justice. Some of these protests have included chants by the participants of "No Justice: No Peace," "Pigs in a blanket, fry 'em like bacon," and "What do we want? Dead cops; When do we want it? Now" (Gutfeld, 2018& NBC New York, 2014). When the protests turn violent and the police respond, the media presents the forceful response of the police, furthering the narrative that police are violent and target racial minorities. The mainstream media outlets' interminable coverage of these events fills the viewer's mind with images of police violence, leading Americans to believe that "fatal force is a common event marked by daily activities of law enforcement killing unarmed racial minorities." The results of this paper will refute this standard narrative.

It is understandable and expected for people to call for justice when police use fatal force against unarmed individuals. However, with each law enforcement use fatal force on a member of the racial minority (justified or not), the narrative that law enforcement is systemically racist increases, and the calls for defunding or dismantling the police also increase.

Literature review

Social Conflict Theory, first introduced by Karl Marx (Marx & Bender, 1986) and expanded by William Bonger (1916) into criminality and economic conditions, suggests the powerful elite uses the police to protect their interests and property from the underclasses. This theory proposes that the "haves" will take any action to prevent the "have-nots" from obtaining an increased standing within the economic community. Bonger (1916) suggested that this attitude is to protect the White majority in power, and they will use the police to control the actions and behaviors of racial minorities. Unfortunately, the media has created narratives through public discourse (news, movies, television) that depicts a perception to Whites that African-Americans are criminals and monsters that need to be controlled through the use of force and mass incarceration to control racial minorities (Mancini, Mears, Stewart, Beaver, & Pickett, 2012). This narrative has also influenced the minority community to believe that the White majority is oppressive in its response to the criminality committed by minorities (Hannah-Jones, 2020).

There exists literature that supports the idea that since 1619 the African American population has suffered at the hands of slavery, Jim Crow laws, racial profiling, and now mass incarceration, ensuring a system of white supremacy throughout the United States remains in force (Hannah-Jones, 2020). Furthering the systemic racist narrative, Aymer (2016) reports that African American men have suffered generational trauma over the centuries of physical, sexual, emotional, and psychological abuse committed by the white supremacists who have historically targeted racial minorities. Michelle Alexander (2012) has suggested that the systemic racism found in America during Jim Crow has transferred its institutional hate to the system of mass incarceration of the African American male population. One in three African American men is under some sort of correctional supervision, which supports the narrative that Michelle Alexander has put forward that America is attempting to maintain Jim Crow and that institutional racism exists in this country. The New Jim Crow narrative is placed at the forefront of the people in this country to show that the criminal justice system is racist (Alexander, 2012 & Hannah-Jones, 2020). This systemic racist narrative has been repeated in social media and accepted as reality regardless of other explanations leading to African-Americans' disproportional incarceration. One such reason could be individual responsibility and the choices made by the criminal.

A 2017 study by James W. Buehler found that most people killed by Police were White. He further contends that the majority white death count is not supported if the measure is based on deaths per million by race. For death per million, non-Hispanic African Americans and Hispanics are killed at 2.8 and 1.7 times more often than their White counterparts (Buehler, 2017). Buehler's (2017) results support the narrative that racial minorities are killed more often than Whites, suggesting the narrative that law enforcement is racist at the core to protect the interests of the White majority.

Thaler and Sunstein (2008) developed the Nudge Theory, also known as libertarian paternalism, suggesting that social behavior can be modified by introducing choice architecture. Nudge theory was first presented to encourage people to change their attitudes, beliefs, and practices in diet and food choices.

It is the idea that society can be "nudged" into making the correct (or desired) decisions and actions if the preferred information is placed in front of the individual through the media to such an extent that the desired choice or behavior is accepted as truth regardless of contradictory evidence (Thaler and Sunstein, 2008).

In their original study, Thaler and Sunstein (2008) showed that by placing information in front of the observer, their worldview could be fundamentally changed to support the chosen narrative. For example, pushing the media stories identifying every incident where an unarmed racial minority is killed by law enforcement will enhance the narrative that cops are racist.

Voices that reject the narrative that law enforcement (as a whole) is racist are attacked as being wrong regardless of what the empirical evidence shows (Hudson, 2015). Janis (1983) suggests that groupthink is a phenomenon that can lead the in-group to make bad decisions. Groupthink claims that all conflicting information is ignored and canceled once a narrative is adopted, regardless of any dissenting evidence. Voices or opinions that oppose the accepted narrative are attacked and dismissed. The in-group accepts the chosen narrative, is blind to any alternative narrative, and will only accept information that supports that chosen narrative (Janis, 1983). If a member of the in-group fails to promote the preferred narrative, they will be punished even more severely than those of the outgroup (Glaeser & Sunstein, 2008). Sean Hannity and other conservative voices have coined this phenomenon as "eating their own" (Nelson, 2020). Commentators from Fox News suggest that to enforce their chosen narrative, the political left in-group is turning on each other even more severely than members of the opposition. The conservatives practice punishing their in-group members who do not comply with the chosen conservative talking points. The political polarization in this country is creating a climate where people will only accept one single narrative at the expense of everything else, contrary to any dissenting evidence (Fisher, 2015).

An article for Global Sports Matter Tower (2018) celebrated that the NBA was the most diverse professional sport, with 80% of the players being people of color. The NFL brags that over 70% of their players are also people of color (Tower, 2018). In this narrative, the disproportionate number of racial minorities in professional sports is celebrated as diversity and shows the advancement of African Americans in society. Any voice that dissents from the narrative that police are racist and criticized as a protector of white supremacy should be canceled.

This research project intends to test the narrative that there is systemic and institutional racism in the decisions of law enforcement officers to use fatal force based on race. We hypothesize that racism is not the sole element that explains the reality that African American community members face an elevated risk of being killed by law enforcement. The Washington Post's Fatal Force Database was used to answer two questions to address this hypothesis. First, what alternative factors could be associated with the use of deadly force? Second, of these alternatives, which explains the elevated risk faced by the African American community?

Methodology

To test the narrative that law enforcement officers target racial minorities, specifically African Americans, for the use of fatal force, Tate, Jenkins, and Rich's Washington Post Fatal Force Database (FFD), last updated June 15, 2020, was used in our analysis. The FFD identified 1003 officer-involved shootings resulting in death. In addition, the FFD recorded the decedents' name, date of death, manner of death, age, gender, race, and city and state of the deadly encounter. Furthermore, the FFD indicated if the decedent showed signs of mental illness, was armed, fled, or posed a threat. Lastly, the FFD reported if police body cams were used during the fatal-force encounter. Unfortunately, 144 cases (14.4%) of decedents' races were missing in the Washington Post's FFD. Our research team filled in all but 66 cases (6.6%) of the missing racial data. Finding the missing data was completed by scouring the internet, news, and social media sources. If this search failed to identify the information, the research team reached out to the original media reporter or the law enforcement agency (police department, sheriff's office, or district attorney's office) to file an open records request to identify the race of the deceased.

Race: Values were identified as Asian, Black, Hispanic, Native American, Unknown, Other, and White. The collection of the race was determined by data defined by the media reporters, police reports, or self-identified on public social media accounts.

Armed: Values identified in the FFD included nearly forty weapon types ranging from firearms to improvised weapons. Our researchers organized these weapon types into 11 broad categories. Being armed in this project is not limited to a firearm, but any type of weapon that could cause physical bodily harm to an officer or another member of the community.

Unarmed: This project has defined unarmed as not having a weapon at the moment of the fatal force event. It has to be mentioned that just because the decedent did not have a physical weapon as listed above, it does not mean that the decedent was not a threat. For example, Michael Brown stood 6'4" and weighed 292 pounds, and he physically assaulted Darren Wilson when he was shot and killed (Wyllie, 2014).

Police are permitted to use fatal force if they reasonably believe their actions are required to save human life, including their own. Therefore, although the decedent is listed as unarmed, it does not mean they had not posed a significant threat to the police officer or another citizen.

Our team added two new variables related to this data field. First, the team added an armed measure variable where cases from categories 1 - 9 were assigned a value of 1, and cases from category ten were assigned a value of 0. Cases from category 11 (unknown) were assigned no value (excluded). This measure identified encounters where the decedent was armed. Second, our team added a variable titled gun measure, where cases from group 1 were assigned a value of 1, and cases from categories 2 - 10 were assigned a value of 0. Cases from category 11 (unknown) were assigned no value (excluded). This measure identified encounters where the decedent possessed a firearm.

Table 1: Description of Armed Categories

Category of weapon	Description
1. Firearms	Handguns, long guns, rifles
2. Edged Weapons	Knives, axes, hatchets, swords, box cutters, machetes, razors, scissors
3. Tasers	Tasers only
4. Vehicles	Vehicles only
5. Other Sharp Objects	Ice picks, beer bottles, garden tools, screwdrivers, other sharp objects
6. Blunt Objects	Barstool, baseball bat, baton, chair, chain, crowbar, flashlight, hammer, piece of wood, rock, shovel, walking stick, wrench
7. Pneumatic Weapons	Pellet gun, B.B. gun, air pistol
8. Other Weapon	Wasp spray, unknown
9. Toy Weapon	Toy gun
10. Unarmed	Did not have any type of weapon
11. Undetermined Weapon	Unknown weapon

Threat Level: The FFD contained three entry types (attacking, other, or undetermined). Our team added a new variable related to this field. The new variable was titled attack measure, where cases with the entry "attack" received a value of 1, and cases with the entry "other" received a value of 0. Cases with the heading "undetermined" were assigned no value (excluded). This measure identified the decedent's encounters attacking the law enforcement officer.

For the statistical evaluation of the FFD, Statistical Package for the Social Scientists (SPSS) was employed to generate descriptive statistics, frequencies, cross-tabulations, and mean comparisons through independent case t-tests.

Results

The FFD contains 1003 cases of fatal police-involved shootings for the year 2019. These cases include 960 male decedents and 43 female decedents. Of the cases where the decedent's age is known, the average age is 38 (SD = 13.3). After the contributions of this research team, 937 cases have a known race (66 unknown). Table 2 contains the racial frequencies for the 2019 cases. This table indicates that 452 White decedents and 266 Black decedents represent 26.5%of the known sample. Although there are more Whites killed by law enforcement in 2019, table 2 indicates that the proportion of African Americans is overrepresented by nearly double the general US population, which stands at 13.4% (U.S. Census Bureau, 2019).

Table 2: Frequencies for Races

Races	Asian	Black	Hispanic	Native American	Unknown	Other	White	Total
Frequency	21	266	176	13	66	9	452	1003
Percentage	2.1	26.5	17.5	1.3	6.6	0.9	45.1	100

To support the hypothesis that racism is not the sole factor that explains the disproportionate number of African Americans in the FFD, this research team sought to identify alternative factors related to the use of fatal force, which could explain the disproportionate representation of Blacks. The FFD provided three alternative factors that were statistically evaluated by our team. First, threat level (the decedent was attacking the police), second, armed (the decedent armed with a weapon), and third, firearm (the decedent armed with a gun).

Table 3: Threat Levels

Threat	Frequency	Percent
Attack	693	69.1
Other	278	27.7
Unknown	32	3.2
Total	1003	100

The FFD lists 906 cases where a threat level was determined. Table 3 contains the frequencies for the 2019 cases. Of this known sample, 693 decedents (69.3%) were deemed to be attacking the police.Two hundred seventy-eight (27.7%) of the decedents posed some other threat.

Table 4: Threat Levels by race

Threat	Asian	Black	Hispanic	Native American	Unknown	Other	White	Total
Attack	12	193	108	6	46	5	323	693
Other	9	63	64	4	19	4	115	278
Unknown	0	10	4	3	1	0	14	32
Total	21	266	176	13	66	9	452	1003

Table 4 contains a cross-tabulation that segments the threat level by race. Of the known sample, 193 black decedents (75.4%) were deemed to be attacking the police. Even though this percentage was higher for the Black decedents, our independent cases t-test did not indicate significance ($t(904) = 1.66, p = 0.10$). Without a significant relationship between threat and race, it cannot be determined that race is related to the use of fatal force. However, this factor involved 7 out of 10 cases and could not explain the overrepresentation of African American decedents.

Table 5: Frequencies by Armed type

Gun	Edged Weapon	Taser	Vehicle	Sharp Object	Blunt	Pneumatic Weapon	Other Weapon	Toy Weapon	Unarmed	Unknown
599	173	5	62	11	25	6	2	25	55	39

Table 4 contains a cross-tabulation that segments the threat level by race. Of the known sample, 193 black decedents (75.4%) were deemed to be attacking the police. Even though this percentage was higher for the Black decedents, our independent cases t-test did not indicate significance ($t(904) = 1.66, p = 0.10$). Without a significant relationship between threat and race, it cannot be determined that race is related to the use of fatal force. However, this factor involved 7 out of 10 cases and could not explain the overrepresentation of African American decedents.

Table 6: Armed type by race

Armed	Asian	Black	Hispanic	Native American	Unknown	Other	White	Total
Gun	8	177	95	4	41	6	268	599
Edged Weapon	5	37	38	3	10	1	79	173
Taser	0	3	0	0	0	0	2	5
Vehicle	1	18	8	1	5	1	28	62
Sharp Object	0	1	2	1	2	0	5	11
Blunt Object	2	5	10	1	2	0	5	25
Pneumatic Weapon	0	2	0	0	1	0	3	6
Other Weapon	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2
Toy Weapon	0	4	4	0	2	0	16	26
Unarmed	4	14	11	1	0	0	25	55
Unknown	1	5	8	2	3	1	19	39
Total	21	266	176	13	66	9	452	1003

Table 6 contains a cross-tabulation where the armed state was segmented by race.

Of the known sample, 247 Black decedents (94.6%) were determined to be armed. Even though this percentage was higher, our independent cases t-test did not indicate significance ($t(899) = 0.59, p = 0.55$). While this factor was involved in 9 out of 10 cases, it also could not explain the disproportionate percentage of Black decedents. The FFD contained 558 cases (61.9%) where the decedent was armed with a gun (see Table 5). Of this known sample, 177 Black decedents (67.8%) possessed a firearm (see Table 6).

Our independent cases t-test indicated that this higher percentage of being armed was significant ($t(899) = 2.33, p = 0.02$). In addition to being involved with 6 out of 10 cases, this factor is linked to African Americans being armed with a gun and using fatal force. This factor also accounts for the overrepresentation of African Americans to be killed by law enforcement officers.

Discussion and Conclusion

When a fatal force encounter occurs, the decision to use fatal force is evaluated by the media and members of the public. The narratives presented by the media intend to influence the opinion of the general public to adhere to one specific narrative. During the calendar year 2019, there were 1003 individuals killed by law enforcement, an average of 2.75 deaths per day across the country. The current active narrative explains that law enforcement's daily "killing of citizens" is caused solely by systemic institutional racism. This fixation on a single narrative leads to a restricted public discourse of a fundamental and complex social problem. Our team used the data in the FFD to identify two alternative explanations associated with the 2019 fatal police shootings. Each of these influences on the use of fatal force presents unique avenues for future research and potential means of mitigation.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation's Uniform Crime Report (2019) reports that there are 10 million arrests made in any given year. The Washington Post has been tracking the number of people killed by police since 2015, identifying around 1000 fatal events each year. Thus 1,000/10,000,000 shows that .01 of 1% of arrest events end in the use of fatal force, suggesting that fatal encounters with law enforcement, even though averaged at 2.75 a day, are an infrequent and uncommon event. Because these 10 million arrests only account for the arrest encounters and do not count every other encounter with law enforcement (citations, service calls, non-arrest events), the number of fatal encounters is even rarer than identified above. This ratio of .01% indicates that the use of fatal force is not a common event and rejects the narrative presented by the supporters of the BLM.

The current narrative promoted by the mainstream media, the BLM, and their allies is that law enforcement uses fatal force often and targets racial minorities more often than their White counterparts (Buehler, J. W., 2017 & Checkpoint 2020). The media, leaders of the BLM, ANTIFA, national celebrities, and some members Democratic Party would like people to believe that the law enforcement agencies are systemically racist at their core and should be defunded or dismantled. The "law enforcement officer is racist" narrative is supported by research that shows African Americans are disproportionally over-represented in the numbers of decedents found on the Washington Post FFD (Buehler, 2017). In the 2019 FFD, 26% of those killed by law enforcement were African American, while only 13% of the general population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2019). Although more Whites are killed by police every year, the narrative presented by those claiming law enforcement is racist. It should be defunded states that because African Americans are disproportionately over-represented, law enforcement is systemically racist and need to be defunded. The researcher could stop here, stating that the narrative is correct and that there exists systemic racism in the U.S. criminal justice system. "The number of African Americans killed by police is twice that of their representation of the general population. Whereas the African American population makes up around 13% of the general population, they make up 26% of those killed by police."

However, following this logic, it supports that because of the racial composition of the NFL(over 70%) and the NBA (over 80%)majority of African American players that these professional sports are also systemically racist and should be defunded and dismantled (Visual.ly, ND). It is unthinkable to believe that anyone would support a narrative that professional sports are systemically racist because of the overrepresentation of African American players. The disproportional over-representation of African Americans within professional sports is celebrated as racial diversity (Visual.ly, ND). The definition of diversity means that there exists a condition of having or being composed of differing elements; in this case, people of different racial backgrounds.
Following the logic applied to law enforcement's fatal force, there should be no more than 13% of the professional sports rosters filled with African Americans supporting the racism within professional sports. Because professional sports are not considered racist, the conclusion suggests other explanations for the disproportionality, for example, skill and talent. Hence, although this project did not test racism within law enforcement, the narrative that disproportionality proves the narrative of racism can be rejected. Following Irving Janis' (1983) groupthink theory of mind guards, pointing out that professional sports are also disproportionately represented by African Americans would be racist in itself because this argument is a red herring intended to deflect from the racism found within criminal justice.

If society wants to seek to reform the criminal justice profession, the presented narratives for reform need to be based on empirical evidence and supported by statistical data, not emotion. When a narrative is based on emotion, it becomes necessary to cancel or silence dissenting voices (Glaeser, Sunstein, 2008). For example, suppose the narrative that law enforcement is systemically racist and the advocates of the narrative only focus on these rare, tragic events ignoring or dismissing alternative voices. In that case, the social conflict theorist can increase the division between the races and the socioeconomic classes (Bonger 1916). Using choice architecture, the social conflict theorist can increase division and polarization within the nation, increasing the violence and division within the country (Thaler, Sunstein, 2008). The mind guards are protectors of the chosen narrative and are responsible for canceling dissenting voices (Janis, 1983). The exclusive narrative that law enforcement is racist is false, and other explanations for the disparity were identified, explored, and discussed in this project.

As tragic as any person has a fatal encounter with law enforcement, there are alternative explanations for using fatal force as systemic racism. These include; perceived threats to law enforcement and the decedent being armed with a weapon. This study has shown a significant relationship between African Americans being armed with a firearm and the use of fatal force by law enforcement, which provides an alternative explanation for the disparity in the number of decedents. Additionally, lt. Randy Sutton of *Wounded Blue* stated on July 9, 2020, on Fox News that in 2019 there was 57,000 law enforcement physically assaulted, suggesting that 1.7% of these assaultive encounters ended in the citizen's death. Thirty-nine times the officers were feloniously murdered (Sutton, 2020). This evidence suggests that police enter every situation with a heightened sense of nervousness about a force encounter.

The data in the FFD indicated that 7 out of 10 decedents were attacking the police. The increase in citizens confronting law enforcement indicates feelings of hatred and mistrust toward members of the law enforcement community. Getting officers out of their patrol cars and interacting with the community is paramount to healing the wounds between the people and the police. Future research could focus on the reasons behind negative public perceptions of police. With 57,000 physical assaults annually against law enforcement (Sutton, 2020), there is a lack of respect toward law enforcement across the country.

There are 156 officers assaulted every day across the nation (Sutton, 2020). The National Institute of Justice (2020) reports two primary explanations for the use of excessive force on the part of law enforcement: fear and lack of training. The lack of training and the knowledge that 156 officers are physically assaulted daily could increase the level of fear among law enforcement, causing a quicker reliance on fatal force. The fear of injury or death among officers is an area of future research.

Over 90% of individuals killed by police were armed with a weapon. As the evidence shows, there is no significant relationship between the types of weapons used by Whites, and they will still have fatal force against them. However, when law enforcement encounters an armed African American, there is a strong correlation between the use of a firearm as opposed to any other type of weapon. The results show that law enforcement differentiates between the choices of weapons used by racial minorities.

The data in the FFD indicated that 4 out of 10 cases involved decedents who were either unarmed or armed with a weapon other than a firearm. There is an opportunity to reduce the number of fatal force encounters by implementing more effective, less lethal tactics. Future research efforts could focus on the thought processes behind an officer's decision to draw a gun and the ultimate decision to pull the trigger.

The data in the FFD indicated that 6 out of 10 cases involved decedents who possessed a firearm. Controversial policies like stop and frisk can reduce the number of illegal firearms in the community. Nevertheless, at best, these policies only address the symptom of a significant social problem, an illegally armed populous. Future research could focus on the reasons citizens decide to carry a firearm illegally.

Reform of the use of force policies of the nation's criminal justice agencies is a discussion that needs to be held. Although fatal encounters are infrequent, 1003 deaths by police are too many. Ninety percent of fatal force encounters are justified because the decedent was armed with a weapon. The remaining 10% of incidents give room for additional training of law enforcement in an attempt to decrease the reliance upon fatal force. All discussions on law enforcement reform must be founded on research-based empirical evidence, not emotional narratives of the choice architect that would attempt to shift policy in one direction or another. Starting the reform discussion on the 10% of incidents where no threat or weapon was involved, criminal justice practitioners must work harder to attempt to de-escalate violent encounters. Training law enforcement in de-escalation skills is a place to start reforming law enforcement practices. Automatically assuming that law enforcement is racist and targets racial minorities for fatal force only exacerbates the mistrust between the criminal justice profession and the public.

Reference

Alexander, M. (2012). *The New Jim Crow*. New York, NY: New Press.

Aymer, S. R. (2016). "I can't breathe": A case study—Helping Black men cope with race-related trauma stemming from police killing and brutality. Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment, 26(3-4), 367-376. doi:10.1080/10911359.2015.1132828

Bonger, W. A. (1916). *Criminality and economic conditions* (H. P. Horton, Trans.; E. Lindsey & F. H. Norcross, Eds.). Boston: Little, Brown, and Company.

Buehler, J. W. (2017). Racial/Ethnic Disparities in the Use of Lethal Force by U.S. Police, 2010–2014. American Journal of Public Health, 107(2), 295-297. doi:10.2105/ajph.2016.303575

Checkpoint. (2020, June 02). George Floyd protests after 400 years of oppression - Black Lives Matter leader. Retrieved June 02, 2020, from https://www.rnz.co.nz/national/programmes/checkpoint/audio/2018748958/george-floyd-protests-after-400-years-of-oppression-black-lives-matter-leader

CNN Editorial Research. (2020, May 31). Controversial Police Encounters Fast Facts. Retrieved June 02, 2020, from https://www.cnn.com/2015/04/05/us/controversial-police-encounters-fast-facts/index.html

Federal Bureau of Investigations. (2019, September 13). Persons Arrested. Retrieved June 25, 2020, from https://ucr.fbi.gov/crime-in-the-u.s/2018/crime-in-the-u.s.-2018/topic-pages/persons-arrested

Fisher, J. F. (2015). Social Change: Ending Hate. Retrieved June 28, 2020, from https://www.academia.edu/3559491/Social_Change_Ending_Hate

Glaeser, Edward L., and Sunstein, Cass R. (2008). Extremism and Social Learning. Faculty Research Working Papers Series. John F. Kennedy School of Government; Harvard [retrieved online 1-2-09] http://web.hks.harvard.edu/publications/workingpapers/citation.aspx?PubId=5383.

Gutfeld, G. (2018, November 28). Gutfeld: Time for the GOP candidates to call out cop haters. Retrieved July 09, 2020, from https://www.foxnews.com/transcript/gutfeld-time-for-the-gop-candidates-to-call-out-cop-haters

Hannah-Jones, N. (2020). The 1619 Project - The New York Times. Retrieved June 10, 2020, from https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/08/14/magazine/1619-america-slavery.html

Herstory - Black Lives Matter. (n.d.). Retrieved June 2, 2020, from https://blacklivesmatter.com/herstory/

Hudson, R. (2015, May 28). I'm a black ex-cop, and this is the real truth about race and policing. Retrieved June 03, 2020, from https://www.vox.com/2015/5/28/8661977/race-police-officer

Janis, I. L. (1983). *Groupthink: Psychological studies of policy decisions and fiascoes*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Mancini, C., Mears, D. P., Stewart, E. A., Beaver, K. M., & Pickett, J. T. (2012). Whites' Perceptions About Black Criminality. *Crime & Delinquency,61*(7), 996-1022. doi:10.1177/0011128712461900

Marx, K., & Bender, F. L. (1986). *Karl Marx: The essential writings*. Boulder: Westview Press.

National Institute of Justice. (2009, August 3). The Use-of-Force Continuum. Retrieved July 09, 2020, from https://nij.ojp.gov/topics/articles/use-force-continuum

National Institute of Justice. (2020, March 05). Overview of Police Use of Force. Retrieved July 15, 2020, from https://nij.ojp.gov/topics/articles/overview-police-use-force

NBC New York. (2014, December 15). Video Shows NYC Protesters Chanting for "Dead Cops." Retrieved July 09, 2020, from https://www.nbcnewyork.com/news/local/eric-garner-manhattan-dead-cops-video-millions-march-protest/2015303/

Schreiber, S. (2020, June 21). BLM Founder Admits Movement is about Stopping Trump, Unearthed Interview Reveals BLM is a Marxist Front. Retrieved June 25, 2020, from

https://thejewishvoice.com/2020/06/blm-founder-admits-movement-is-about-stopping-trump-unearthed-interview-reveals-blm-is-a-marxist-front/

Sutton, R. (2020, July 09). NASCAR driver and 'The Wounded Blue' partner to support law enforcement. Retrieved July 13, 2020, from https://video.foxnews.com/v/6170268794001Tate, J., Jenkins, J., & Rich, S. (2020, April 16). Fatal Force: 2019 police shootings database. Retrieved June 15, 2020, from https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2019/national/police-shootings-2019/

Thaler, R. H., & Sunstein, C. R. (2008) *Nudge: Improving Decisions about Health, Wealth, and Happiness*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Tower, N. (2018, December 12). In an ethnic breakdown of sports, NBA takes lead for most diverse. Retrieved July 09, 2020, from https://globalsportmatters.com/culture/2018/12/12/in-an-ethnic-breakdown-of-sports-nba-takes-lead-for-most-diverse/

U.S. Census Bureau. (2019). U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts: United States. Retrieved June 25, 2020, from https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/US/PST045219

Visual.ly. (n.d.). Racial Diversity in Professional Sports. Retrieved June 28, 2020, from https://visual.ly/community/Infographics/sports/racial-diversity-professional-sports

Wyllie, D. (2014, November 24). *Why officer Darren Wilson wasn't indicted*. Police1. Retrieved from https://www.police1.com/ferguson/articles/why-officer-darren-wilson-wasnt-indicted-b3DTGpEkDemKS2P5/