Violence Reduction Strategies from the Point of View of Ferguson Residents and Protesters

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Police Violence

- Police violence raises questions about the government’s use of coercion against its citizens
  - Graham v. Conner (1989) – constitutional appropriateness of forceful police action must be based on the 4th Amendment’s reasonable standard
  - Criminal charges are rare against officers who use deadly force (Davis, 1994; Skolnick & Fyfe, 1993)
  - Blacks are more likely than Whites to report negative encounters with police (Human Rights Watch, 1998; Taylor et al., 2001)
Police Violence

• The 2015 Department of Justice report revealed that the Ferguson Police Departments (FPD) engaged in patterns of excessive use of force that is in violation of the 4th Amendment
  ▫ 90% of documented use of force by the FPD was against African Americans
The Racial Gap inVictimization

• According to the Center for Disease Control (CDC), homicide was the leading cause of death for 15- to 34-year-old Black males in 2011
  • 40% of homicide victims were African Americans males 15-34 years of age

• African Americans males were nine times more likely to be victims of homicide than White males in 2011 (FBI Supplemental Homicide Report, 2011; Smith & Cooper, 2013).
Violence Reduction Strategies

• Much effort has been put forth to identify violence intervention strategies to reduce its occurrence
• Emphasis on community-based prevention policies
  ▫ Boston Gun Project
  ▫ Community-oriented policing services
  ▫ Weed and Seed
Limitations of Violence Research

• Few studies have systematically explored if and how citizens’ race shapes strategies to reduce violence by law enforcement

• Insufficient attention has been paid to community members’ recommendations for combating community violence
Research Goals

1. Examine Ferguson residents’ and protesters’ views on how to reduce African American violence from civilians and officers

2. Explore how race influences recommendations to reduce violence
Methodology

• Qualitative in-depth interviews

• 62 Ferguson residents and protesters

• Interviews for current study took place in December 2014

• Respondents were paid $40 for their participation
Methodology

• Recruitment

1. Advertisement of study on Facebook/Twitter

2. Editor of minority newspaper in St. Louis tweeted information to more than 10,000 followers

3. Advertisement was placed in employment section of minority newspaper
Methodology

• Sample Criteria

1. Resident of Ferguson for a minimum of two years

OR

2. Take part in some form of community action following Brown’s death
Study Setting

[Map of St. Louis area highlighting Ferguson]

- Black Jack
- Ferguson
- Berkeley
- Kinloch
- St. Ann
- De Porres
- University City
- Olivette
- Creve Coeur

ST. LOUIS COUNTY

ST. LOUIS

Kirkwood
Fenton
Webster Groves
### Table 1 - Select Neighborhood Characteristics

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<thead>
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<th>St. Louis County</th>
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<td>Percent African American</td>
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<tr>
<td>Median family income</td>
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<td>Percent female-headed household with children</td>
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*Note: The source of these data is from the 2009-2013 American Community Survey and the U.S. Census, 2010*
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Recommendations for Reducing Police Violence against African Americans

- Additional training and education
- Police accountability
- Enhancing relationships between officers and communities they serve
- Compliance with officers’ directives
Additional Training and Education

Dominique: “If you've been raised in an all-White environment and all of a sudden you become a police officer and you're thrust into the Black community having no prior information or knowledge on the interaction of Black people, it's a problem .... There's no sensitivity training; there's no racial training. That should be mandatory .... Because of the interaction they have with so many people, races, and classes, they need that kind of training. That should be mandatory” (Black female)

Luke: “[Officers] could reduce violence by stop being violent in the way that they police. With that, they can maybe even start to form a different way of policing that could contribute to deescalating [problems]” (White male)
Additional Training

Toby: “[We need to] make sure our young people are trained on how to deal with them” (Black male)

Heather: “[What is necessary is] the education of kids, the talk that every Black parent has to give. I gave it to people that came to my office when I was practicing law ... you've got to know how to talk to the officer. It shouldn't be necessary but it is” (White female)
Police Accountability

Marie: “We have to hold police accountable, we have to stop teaching them [that] it’s okay to shoot and kill and to use the least possible force available” (Hispanic female)

Dyshelle: “I feel the government needs to start giving cops the correct punishment” (Black female)

Keanu: “[What is necessary is] locking up policeman who kill .... Anytime a policeman shoots someone that’s unarmed, it should automatically go to court. [There] shouldn’t have to be a hearing” (Black male)
Police Accountability

Desmond: “I heard on the news they were talking about putting body cameras on the police officers .... I think if they do that, it will stop a lot of things. Because you will see what’s really actually happening and going on” (Black male)

Dylan: “I think the body camera idea is a very good idea. I think there will be some resistance to it on the side of the police but I think ultimately it protects both the community and the police officers. In a relatively short time, I think that’s something that could perhaps reduce violence .... I think that always recording what they’re doing could cause them to maybe act differently” (White male)
Enhance Relationships between Police and the Communities They Serve

a) Mutual respect from both parties

b) Community policing

c) Diverse police force
Respect

Tiara: “If you’re going to stop someone and they ask you why they’re being detained, what’s the harm in giving them an answer? .... You wouldn’t want to be in that predicament of someone having information and expecting you to just comply without understanding why. It’s that mutual respect” (Black female)

Molly: “You have to teach them to respect people. You have to respect law enforcement and you just have to make sure that they’re aware of all the stuff that’s going on and just make sure that they are respectful regardless” (White female)

Marcel: “There’s a way you have to talk to the police, you just can’t talk to the police like you cussing somebody out at the bus stop” (Black male)
Community Policing

Reginald: “[Law enforcement] should really get to know the citizens …. There should be a relationship. They should form relationships with the people that they protect” (Black male)

Heather: “[There was a time when] ‘Officer Friendly’ would come to the schools and kids would get to know him and just [have] human interaction …. This would help the kids be less frightened of the officers and maybe do things and advise on problems” (White female)
Diverse Police Force

Nia: “[Ferguson] changed the residency rules [so] that you can live out in Chesterfield and come back in here and police .... Officers should have to live in the communities that they serve. They need to have beat cops where cops get to know the people that they serve and not from inside their brand new $75,000 vehicles” (Black female)
Compliance

Sandy: “[If] the cop tells you to sit down, shut up, then sit down and shut up ... they’re not God, but there’s a reason they’re asking you to do something. Just do it. Do what they want you to do and then go home” (White female)

Kirk: “[You] have to comply ... and you don’t resist .... If I point a gun [at police], they’re going to shoot me” (White male)

Jaquann: “[Sometimes] the cop gets upset and they do stuff that they’re not supposed to do ... [but] if the cops ask you to do something, just do whatever they ask you to do so there won’t be no chaos, no arguing and making them mad” (Black male)
Recommendations for Reducing Civilian Violence against African Americans

• Improve neighborhood conditions
  ▫ Better quality education and jobs
  ▫ Address structural inequality
  ▫ Increase community-based programs

• Change racialized perceptions of crime
  ▫ Increase communication
  ▫ Recognize humanity in each person
Better Quality Education and Jobs

Jasmine: “[What is necessary is] making education a priority... when they’re really young like pre-school, put that priority there ... as they progress through elementary school and high school, that’s already a mindset. When they go to kindergarten, they already know they’re going to college” (Black female)

Steevie: “First off, education. They have to be educated. Second, they have to have jobs because without education or job, there’s nothing but hopelessness and crime. In these areas where there’s high crime, a high Black on Black crime, there’s also very low education and very few jobs for these people which leads to high hopelessness. It increases the crime rate” (Black female)

Trevon: “They need to put more and more and more jobs out here for everyone and raise the minimum wage to about $10 an hour. That’s what minimum wage needs to start off with, $10 an hour” (Black male)

Trevon: “It’s hard for a felon to find a job just because of his background. Just because a person is on papers, it’s hard for that person to find a job” (Black male)
Address Structural Inequality

Xavier: “[It is necessary to address] things that are conducive [to violence] like the living situations, education, housing, schooling, [and] pre-natal care” (Black male)

Dylan: “Violence isn’t something inherited. It’s something that’s learned and some people may feel that it’s the only thing they can resort to if they don’t have other options” (White male)
Address Structural Inequality

Nia: “You go to any community where they don’t have these problems, you look at the things that they have. You look at a Target store, you look at a children center, you look at a YMCA where people can afford to go .... You’ve got to have an opportunity to send them places to keep them safe, that’s why you have youth centers ... parents know that if kids don’t have anything to do, what are they going to do? Get into trouble. That’s what they’re going to do. That’s in white communities, yellow communities, red communities. Every community you have to have something for kids to do or they will get into trouble” (Black female)
Address Structural Inequality

Alexis: “[T]he first thing is you have to acknowledge that there is a problem with the perception from all aspects of the way that Black people are received. You can’t address an issue if you don’t even acknowledge it’s there. You have to first acknowledge it” (Black female)

Eric: “[While] we need to cancel the 93% of Black on Black crime that’s completed [and] that’s done by our Black people ... the great percentage of White homicides are [also] committed by other Whites”

“[U]ntil we can adjust the mentality of American people across the board we are not gonna get rid of neighborhood crime” (Black male)
Communication

Jake: “There is quite a strong prejudice on the Black side against Whites. Then of course there’s racism with Whites on Blacks. It’s going to have to be a both sides coming to the table kind of thing” (White male)

Dyshelle: “Conversations need to be held. We need to step outside of Black conversations and talk more to White people and see how they feel, because some White people feel like we’re the racists. They feel like, ‘Okay, we didn’t enslave you guys. It was our ancestors, so why do you guys still look at us that way?’ Then they on the defensive and Black people are like, ‘Well, ya’ll did this, but we’re still getting punished every day just because the color of our skin’ .... I think conversations need to be held” (Black female)
Humanity & Respect

Luke: “We have to see and believe the human[ity] in each other” (White male)

Malik: “We have to start seeing ourselves as human beings” (Black male)

Raymond: “We [need to] look at each other as human beings ... as people and try to do things in a positive light” (Black male)
Recommendations for Reducing Violence against African Americans

**Police Violence**

- Additional training and education
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- Enhancing relationships between officers and communities they serve
  - Respect
  - Community policing
  - Diverse police force
- Compliance with officers’ directives

**Civilian Violence**

- Improve neighborhood conditions
  - Better quality education and jobs
  - Address structural inequality
  - Increase community-based programs
- Change racialized perceptions of crime
  - Increase communication
  - Recognize humanity in each person
Recommendations for Reducing Police Violence against African Americans

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Recommendations for Reducing Civilian Violence against African Americans

White/Black Recommendations

• Improve neighborhood conditions
  • Address structural inequalities

• Increase communication

• Humanity/Respect

Black Recommendations

• Improve neighborhood conditions
  ▫ Quality education and jobs
  ▫ Increase community-based programs

• Change racialized perceptions of crime
  ▫ Increase communication
  ▫ Humanity/Respect
Policy Recommendations

• Additional Training/Education
  ▫ President’s Task Force recommended:
    • Higher levels of education and training that continues throughout an officer’s career
    • Engage community members in the training process

• Body Cameras
  ▫ Footage is still up for interpretation
  ▫ Research shows officers wearing body cameras have fewer incidents of use of force and fewer civilian complaints than officers not wearing cameras (Ariel, Farrar, & Sutherland, 2014)
Policy Recommendations

• Community Policing
  ▫ Should be rooted in procedural justice
  ▫ Success is also dependent on formal/informal policies of the police leadership
  ▫ President’s Task Force recommended that community policing be infused throughout the culture and organizational structure of law enforcement agencies
Policy Recommendations

• Respect
  • President’s Task Force highlighted the need for police departments to adopt policies directing officers to speak respectfully to individuals

• Diverse police force
  ▫ Effectiveness of residency incentives
  ▫ More women in the police department

• Structural Inequalities
  ▫ Address core issues of poverty, education, health, and safety
Thank you!
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