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# THE SYSTEMIC ISSUES ASSOCIATED WITH VIOLENT CRIME IN PREDOMINANTLY AFRICAN AMERICAN COMMUNITIES

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THE SYSTEMIC ISSUES ASSOCIATED WITH VIOLENT CRIME IN  
PREDOMINANTLY AFRICAN AMERICAN COMMUNITIES

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A Project  
Presented to the  
Faculty of  
California State University  
San Bernardino

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Social Work

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by  
Abraham Coles II  
June 2018

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to investigate the issues associated with violent crime in African American communities. The study discusses the theory of racism as a key factor in the societal conditions African Americans live in the United States. The researcher explains the methodology used. The study is a qualitative study, based on interviews of eight participants answers to twenty questions. The study discusses the research sites, who participated in the research study, and how the participants were selected. The study outlines the sampling method and why this method was chosen. The descriptive statistics of participants in the study sample are reported in Table 1. Themes were identified and reported (e.g. racism and drugs/gangs). Implications for micro and macro social work practice were identified, including the need for social workers to think about the impact the environmental conditions, foreign to the experience of social workers, that may influence client behaviors.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT .....	iii
CHAPTER ONE: ASSESSMENT .....	1
Problem Focus and Literature Review.....	1
Introduction .....	1
Research Focus.....	2
Paradigm and Rationale for Chosen Paradigm.....	4
Literature Review .....	5
Theoretical Orientation.....	7
Potential Contribution of Study to Micro and/or Macro Social Work Practice.....	8
Summary .....	8
CHAPTER TWO: ENGAGEMENT.....	10
Initial Engagement of Study Site Gatekeepers and Preparation for Study .....	10
Introduction .....	10
Study Site .....	10
Engagement Strategies for Gatekeepers at Research Site .....	11
Self Preparation .....	12
Diversity Issues.....	13

Ethical Issues.....	14
Political Issues .....	15
The Role of Technology in Engagement.....	16
Summary .....	16
CHAPTER THREE: IMPLEMENTATION .....	17
Methodology .....	17
Introduction.....	17
Study Participants.....	17
Selection of Participants .....	18
Data Gathering .....	19
Phases of Data Collection.....	20
Data Recording.....	20
Data Analysis.....	21
Termination and Follow Up.....	21
Communication of Findings and Dissemination Plan.....	22
Summary .....	22
CHAPTER FOUR: EVALUATION.....	23
Introduction.....	23

Sample Description.....	23
Data Analysis.....	25
Data Interpretation .....	25
Victimization.....	26
Perpetration .....	26
Drugs and Gangs.....	27
Family Life .....	27
Racism .....	28
Resources .....	29
Implications of Practice .....	30
Micro Practice .....	30
Macro Practice.....	30
Summary .....	31
CHAPTER FIVE: TERMINATION AND FOLLOW-UP .....	32
Introduction.....	32
Termination of Study.....	32
Ongoing Relationship With Study Participants.....	33
Communication of Findings and Dissemination Plan.....	33
Summary .....	33



APPENDIX A: DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS: including informed consent, questions, debriefing, IRB approval .....	35
REFERENCES .....	41

## CHAPTER ONE

### ASSESSMENT

#### (Problem Focus and Literature Review)

##### Introduction

This project focused on the devastating impact violent crime (murder, nonnegligent manslaughter, forcible rape, robbery, and aggravated assault) within predominately African American communities has had, and continues to have on these communities, and the societal issues that contribute to this phenomenon. This chapter also justified using the critical theory paradigm. Although other paradigms could be effective in addressing the topic, the researcher offers a full-throated endorsement of critical theory being the most effective and comprehensive paradigm to understand and address the focus of the research. A literature review was conducted to examine previous research on the impact of violent crime within predominately African American communities and issues associated with this crime. The theoretical orientation of the study was racism. The researcher believes, and the literature and data shows, that several factors contribute to the state of empowerment, (increased authority for self-determination and political, social, and economic power), or lack thereof, of groups of people, (e.g. race, ethnicity, culture, sex, religion, color, nation of origin, etc.). This study discussed the critical role racism plays and some of the negative effects associated with a population having the unfortunate

distinction of being oppressed. Finally, this chapter explored how the results of this research has the potential to contribute to the practice of social work on both the micro and macro levels of social work.

### Research Focus

The focus of this research is the devastating impact violent crime within African American communities has had, and continues to have on these communities, and the societal issues that contribute to this phenomenon. Nationally, African Americans make up 50% of murder victims, while only accounting for 13% of the U.S. population (Curry, 2016). Per the FBI, African Americans were responsible for 4,149 murders and nonnegligent manslaughters, 49.7% of these violent crimes (Violent Crime, 2012). On the other hand, Whites were responsible for 4,000 murders and nonnegligent manslaughters, 48% of these total crimes (Violent Crime, 2012). These rates among African Americans are concerning, considering that African Americans only make up 13% of the U.S. population. According to the website *neighborhoodscouts.com*, San Bernardino, CA has a crime index of 2. In other words, San Bernardino, CA is safer than 2% of other cities in the United States. They also report the chances of a person becoming a victim of violent crime in San Bernardino, CA is 1 in 65. That is in comparison to the 1 in 235 in the entire state of California. The rates per 1,000 residents of murder in San Bernardino is .20; rape is .51; robbery is 4.78; and assault is 9.97. That is in comparison to the U.S. murder rate of .05;

rape is .39; robbery is 1.02; and assault is 2.38 (San Bernardino, CA Crime Rates, 2017).

The median income in San Bernardino, CA is \$37, 047, while the median household income across the United States is \$53, 657. 33.4% of residents live below the poverty line (San Bernardino, CA Crime Rates, 2017). Minorities are the majority population in San Bernardino, CA. In fact, African American and Hispanics make up almost 75% of the entire population of San Bernardino, CA (San Bernardino, CA Crime Rates, 2017). One example of the local scope of the issue can be seen when analyzing the San Bernardino, CA neighborhood of East Highland Ave/North Waterman Ave. Forty-four-point eight percent of this largely African American neighborhood live below the federal poverty line. That is a higher percentage than more than 87% of all other neighborhoods in the United States (San Bernardino, CA Crime Rates, 2017). Another concerning statistic is that 3.3% of residents from this neighborhood are currently incarcerated for various crimes.

Unfortunately, these statistics show the need for crisis intervention among this population. This research explored how this crime has impacted the lives of those directly affected by it. It also examined the context in which this violence occurs. For this paper, those affected by the effects of violent crime are residents of the afflicted community. Some of the contextual issues associated with this crime are, socioeconomic status, family structure, and employment issues, (Wacquant, 1998). The ideological position of the researcher is that individual

and structural racism that has persisted in our society since its inception, is at the root of this problem. In terms of assessment, as a macro practice issue from a critical theory paradigm, one of the most important questions is, “What action must be taken to address violent crime in African American communities that will then empower citizens in those communities?” By exploring a broad open-ended question like this, we developed others for participants of the study.

### Paradigm and Rationale for Chosen Paradigm

Critical theory requires a researcher to embrace and promote their values as they engage the research site. For this reason, this paradigm was best suited for the problem this research was aimed at addressing. As someone who would like to affect change in this area, and has strong views on this, and related subjects, it seemed natural to use this approach. Unlike positivism and post positivism, critical theory researchers approach the problem with a strong world view, believing we all view human situations influenced by some ideology. In this case, the world view of the researcher is that the problem of violent crime in African American communities is a byproduct of systemic racism and classism. A powerful assumption of critical theory is that oppression is multifaceted, and if one aspect of oppression is the focus at the expense of others, then the ways in which they are connected may be overlooked. This theory adopts an ideological approach, in this case racialist oppression. This theory attempts to address oppression by those with power and empowerment of those without power. It requires the researcher to not stand outside of the research and conduct

research on their participants, but instead to conduct research with their participants, Morris (2006). This theory also requires the researcher to engage participants at the research site using the “teaching-learning” process to understand if the ideological perspective needs refinement, should the pool of participants be expanded or narrowed and recognizing what themes emerge regarding the ideological perspective and the power relationship.

### Literature Review

The literature review was an important aspect of the research project. From a critical theory paradigm, the study began with a review of literature of the researcher’s ideological perspective. The second part of the literature review focused on the systemic issues associated with violent crime in African American communities. The literature regarding racism suggests that “ghettos” were created and expanded because of White’s hostility and racial animosity towards Blacks demanded they be barred and expelled from White residential neighborhoods. Double rejection (rejection based on class and race) has been shown to be at the root cause of housing blight, mass underemployment, family instability, endemic economic and physical instability that pervades and characterize the ghetto, (Wacquant, 1998). Wacquant studied the work of W.E.B Du Bois regarding segregation in New York and Ruth Gay regarding the historical disenfranchisement of Jews and arrived at the conclusion that these ghettos were meant to keep “undesirable” Blacks away from Whites. Per Jerome Schiele (2005) of Norfolk State University, research also shows us that cultural

oppression on African Americans has produced the following three risk factors: 1) cultural estrangement; 2) attenuation of Black collectivism; 3) spiritual alienation. The results of these risk factors are the diminishment of African American's ability to prosper in the U.S. Involuntary entry into the United States and prolonged intergenerational captivity renders history and cultural traditions of African Americans vulnerable to vilification from cultural oppression, (Schiele, 2005).

The literature review conducted on the problem focus highlighted the three similarities shared amongst most violent criminals in American cities: 1) they were born in American hospitals; 2) they attended American schools; 3) they were reared by American adults (Lykken, 2000). Although the percentages of violent crime are not comparable between Blacks and Whites, some of the root causes are the same, (e.g. illegitimacy). The violent predator who has had a successful childhood is rare, (Lykken, 2000). One study, (Sampson, 1987), showed a correlation between a higher likelihood of criminal behavior and being reared in female lead households among Blacks and Whites, Lykken (2000). That being the case, Lykken (2000) suggests that since most of these perpetrators would have been law-abiding, non-violent individuals, if not for their circumstances throughout their early development, should they not be considered victims as well? This concept deserves serious consideration.

## Theoretical Orientation

The chosen theoretical orientation for the present research study was Critical Race Theory (CRT; Kolivosky, Weaver, Constance-Huggins, 2014). This perspective was used to accurately assess the societal context in which violent crime in some predominately African American communities occurs. Crime does not occur in a vacuum. Societal conditions play a major role in when, where, how and why crime occurs. Like crime, the reaction to crime does not happen in a vacuum (e.g. policing, policy making, etc.). CRT posits that many societal ills are rooted in racism. CRT states that racism is woven throughout society. Not only is racism an individual problem, but institutional. People of color are oppressed by a power structure of white supremacy and white privilege. One idea of powerful White elites, particularly politicians, is to use crime and the perceived threat of “out-of-control” crime to acquire and maintain power over people of lower economic status (Schichor, 1980). “Labeling” is a tactic identified by theorists as a strategy that, rather than help to identify solutions to issues such as violent crime within some African American communities, it highlights and labels the problem/people, giving the powerful someone to blame and rally against instead of those affected being rallied for (Schichor, 1980). This is part of the societal context in which violent crime occurs in some predominately African American communities. Part of this research explored the effects oppression has on the powerless as well as whether their behaviors are pathological, “normal” reactions, or something else. This research conducted from a CRT orientation



allows us to analyze the different institutions and role-players, identified in the literature and by participants of the study that may contribute to societal conditions that may or may not illicit certain behaviors (Schichor, 1980).

### Potential Contribution of Study to Micro and/or Macro Social Work Practice

This research has the potential to have a significant impact on the practice of micro and macro social work. At the micro level of social work, this research can help social workers understand the effects of violent crime within predominately African American families on individuals and their families. At the micro level, this research can help social workers understand societal issues that contribute to violent crime in some predominately African American communities. At the macro level, a better understanding of these issues can lead to the advocacy for, and implementation of programs, policies, and laws which have the potential to reduce violent crime in these communities. Individuals and communities will be empowered to challenge the “status quo” and current power structures to ultimately achieve true freedom and equality.

### Summary

Chapter one outlined the assessment phase of this research project. It identified the focus of this research. It presented the critical theory paradigm that is used and explained a rationale for using this paradigm. Chapter one explored the Literature Review process and how literature will be used to understand the focus of this paper. The theoretical orientation was discussed and the potential

contribution this research could have on the practice of micro and macro social work.

## CHAPTER TWO

### ENGAGEMENT

(Initial Engagement of Study Site Gatekeepers and Preparation for Study)

#### Introduction

Chapter Two addresses the engagement phase of this research study. This chapter addresses the research site, engagement of the gatekeepers, self-preparation, diversity, ethical issues, political issues, and technology.

#### Study Site

##### (Engagement Strategies for Gatekeepers at Research Site)

As a critical theory researcher, engagement began with the presentation of the problem statement to the research site gatekeepers and participants. Engagement in this community entailed visiting a local church and barber shop. Gatekeepers of the research site were engaged to aide in the access of the site and the participants within it. These gatekeepers included business leaders and clergy members. Through this engagement, the research focus/problem statement were refined.

The research sites included two different locations within the community of study. The first site was a church in San Bernardino County, California which serves the African American community. The church meets every Sunday for regular worship services and every Wednesday for regularly scheduled bible study meetings. The second research site location within the community of study

was a barbershop serving the African American community in San Bernardino county, California. The barbershop and the church are open to the public during their normal operating hours. Knowing about the culture of the study participants is very important in this circumstance. Churches and barbershops are often used as socializing events. It is very often where ideas and opinions are exchanged. There is often a free flow of honest, authentic communication at these locations (Wells-Wilborn, 2016). Churches and barbershops have historically played powerful roles within the African American community. For more than three decades, this researcher has witnessed these roles. For this reason, these are the locations that were chosen. Barbershops are busy Fridays and Saturdays as people groom themselves for the weekend events, including church services as observed by the researcher (Wells-Wilborn, 2016). The barbershop as well as the church contain African American men, women and children; barbers, customers, clergy and parishioners who all have a stake in the welfare of the community.

### Engagement of the Gatekeepers

The plan for engagement with the gatekeepers was to first arrange meetings with each of them to discuss the research focus. They were informed of the goal of the research (the empowerment of individuals and communities to reduce violent crime, achieve self-determination, political and economic power and racial equality). They were also informed of the role they will be asked to

assume (as participants and recruiters). They were also advised of the parameters of the project (participation was voluntary, anonymous, and was recorded), including informed consent, and explained the reasons the researcher believes this research is important. They were informed that the researcher believes this research is important because of the devastating impact this problem is having on a subset of Americans in our society.

### Self-Preparation

Issues of crime can sometimes be a sensitive issue within a community. In conducting research, especially on sensitive topics regarding human subjects, a researcher must be aware of the feelings of those involved. It is important for a researcher to have the trust of those who are to be engaged. This was achieved by the researcher preparing themselves with current knowledge of the research focus, as well as the historical context associated with the issue. This history is based on the idea that racism has been existing so long that it is exhibited through social structures and institutions and has become normalized (Kolivosky, Weaver, Constance-Huggins, 2014). Participants were assured at the outset of the project that their participation and time is valued, that their experiences and input is important, will be listened to and recorded accurately. The researcher also educated himself on the diversity of study participants so that those differences were acknowledged and respected. These issues include bias, education level, socioeconomic status, culture, religion and life experiences.

Specific issues like transference could have arisen when the researcher reached for nuance when discussing sensitive issues. Participants could have believed the researcher was in some way an extension of the oppressor. The researcher prepared himself for this by committing himself to developing a strong rapport with participants allowing for the building of trust. This was done by being honest and forthright with participants. Another issue which could have arisen during this process was collusion. Although the researcher has an ideological perspective, and was in intense involvement with participants, he must be able to maintain boundaries. This was best achieved with familiarity with the NASW Code of Ethics and continuous consultation with professionals and colleagues.

### Diversity Issues

Diversity issues are always an important cross cutting issue in any research project. Diversity of study participants must be recognized and acknowledged throughout the process. Study participants have unique characteristics and these characteristics were considered by the researcher. These characteristics include socioeconomic status, education level, culture, religion, and life experiences. This is done by taking time to know who each of our participants are. We must find the answers to a series of questions to do so. What is their history? What are their demographic characteristics? What are their cultural norms? What is their history in the involvement in research projects in the past? What is their history with members of the researcher's socioeconomic

group? The researcher made every reasonable attempt to respect the diversity of participants, whether it be differences in age, ethnicity, gender, the use of certain language, norms about appropriate behavior, differences in perspective, differences in perceived power, differences in norms about appropriate behavior and differences of experiences (Morris, 2013).

### Ethical Issues

As an ethical social work researcher, one of our first responsibilities to our clients (in this case our study participants) is to do no harm. This research was conducted with the best interest of the participants in mind. Each phase of this project was conducted in accordance with the answer to the question; what is the ethical thing to do? This was done by considering moral values (what is the “right” thing to do), competency values (staying knowledgeable about best practices within social work research allows us to intervene in the most efficient and effective ways) and terminal values (*personal values*: guided by what it is a person hopes to achieve for themselves and *societal values*: decisions based on what a person hopes society to be). These questions were answered by screening potential participants. The researcher acknowledges that he is in a position of power and respected the dynamics of the relationship with participants and took great care not to exploit that relationship. All stakeholder privacy and confidentiality were maintained. Participants were informed of the researcher’s position about the research and will be informed of the research findings.

Confidentiality and dissemination of research findings are discussed later in this proposal.

### Political Issues

As a critical theory research project, politics are infused in this type of research, beginning from the sensitivity of the research subject and the ideological position taken. The researcher and the study participants are in a partnership to act to address violent crime in some African American communities. The politics of such a study is in the reaction to the study. When sensitive topics are brought forth with an ideological position that challenges the power structure and seeks to empower those without power, strong emotions and views are elicited. The researcher attempted to prepare participants for these responses throughout the engagement phase and continually consulted with the participants to devise strategies for ways to effectively cope with the range of responses. This was done by giving participants options on where they were most comfortable to be interviewed. Also, by reaffirming the participants that they are in control of the interview and can discontinue it at any time.



## The Role of Technology in Engagement

The engagement phase of this research study was conducted using face-to-face interviews and an audio recording device. Technology played a critical role in this project. Aside from communicating with stakeholders by way of telephones, virtual meetings through applications like Skype, Fuze and others was used to communicate from distance while still allowing stakeholders to see each other.

### Summary

Chapter Two addressed the Engagement phase of this research project. This section outlined the steps the researcher would take to prepare themselves for engagement with the gatekeepers and participants of the study and the study site. Chapter Two also addressed the issues of diversity, ethics and politics that undoubtedly played a role throughout the progression of this study. Finally, the role of technology was addressed and how the researcher used technology during the project to communicate with stakeholders was defined.

CHAPTER THREE  
IMPLEMENTATION  
(Methodology)

Introduction

Chapter Three discusses the Implementation phase of the research project. In this section of this paper study participants and the selection process of those study participants are discussed. This section also elaborates on the data collect. It outlines the process of data gathering, data collection, data recording, and data analysis. Lastly, this chapter outlines how the project was terminated, follow-up, and how the findings were communicated and disseminated.

Study Participants

Participants for this study are stakeholders within the community that are most immediately affected by violence. These individuals include perpetrators of violent crime, community leaders and activists. For the purposes of this project, violent crime is defined as murder and nonnegligent manslaughter, forcible rape, robbery and aggravated assault. Perpetrators are defined as individuals who acknowledge committing one of the above identified violent crimes, whether they were convicted of these crimes or not. Community leaders are defined as individuals who have taken leadership roles in improving economic and social

conditions of their communities. These individuals may include clergy, business people and others. Other stakeholders will be those individuals indirectly affected by violent crime (i.e. close family members/friends of those directly affected and community residents). The participants assessed were those willing to participate in the study. As the text states, the participants are affected by the oppression, they are willing to engage in the study, they understand the ideas, they have the time, they are willing to dedicate themselves to action strategies for empowerment and are willing to change ideas (Morris, 2013). This is the criteria that was used to recruit participants. Participants for this study were chosen through the method of purposive sampling. The method of purposive sampling was maximum variation sampling; this way we had the possibility of obtaining a wide-ranging perspective within the affected community. The researcher and gatekeepers chose select community leaders (e.g. pastors of churches, business leaders, and community members). The participants were selected in this manner because we could engage those who have been impacted by high rates of violent crime, (directly and indirectly), and who have knowledge of the issue.

### Selection of Participants

Eight participants were chosen for this study. To conduct this research, purposive sampling was chosen as the most effective sampling strategy available to elicit the appropriate information to be used in this project. The specific form of purposive sampling used was maximum variation. This method was chosen

because it allows for several different perspectives within the chosen participant population. Gatekeepers were used to help identify those who have been more directly affected by violent crime than others. The pool of potential participants was informed about the study from gatekeepers of these sites and the researcher. The researcher interviewed the chosen community's gatekeepers for recruitment, then residents concerning violent crime, who were willing to speak honestly and openly about the topic of the proposal and their association with the issue. Each person with the characteristics that were relevant to the study (i.e. those affected by violent crime, those who were involved in committing violent crime in the past, and community leaders and activist involved in local efforts aimed at reducing these crimes) were encouraged to participate in the study.

### Data Gathering

Data for this study was gathered qualitatively from participants of this study through face-to-face interviews. The data collection method consisted of one-on-one, audio recorded interviews with participants. As a critical theory study, this is not a project where the researcher sits outside of the process but engages with the stakeholders to form a hermeneutic dialectic circle. The interview guide is presented in Appendix A. The questions were field tested with other industry professionals.

### Phases of Data Collection

The data collection process began with the acquisition of knowledge. This was achieved through the literature review. After gaining entrance to the research site, the researcher continued the data collection process through face-to-face interviews. Interview questions were developed in consultation with stakeholders and other professionals familiar with the focus of this study. The questions were a combination of open-ended and closed-ended questions, crafted with the intent to illicit specific information from participants. Interviews were conducted where participants felt comfortable and relaxed, allowing for the maximum opportunity to receive honest feedback. Interviews were conducted separately to avoid undue influence from the responses of others. However, they were informed of common themes that emerged during other interviews to compare whether these are in fact common themes or individual perceptions.

### Data Recording

Data from interviews was recorded with the use of technology. Each interview was audio recorded with the interviewee's knowledge and consent. If the interviewee did not want the interview audio recorded, the interviewer took notes. It was the researcher's preference to audio record the interviews for the benefit of accuracy, which is in the interest of the researcher and the participants.

The researcher kept two journals, one to reflect their own thoughts and feelings throughout the process, and the other to document the progression of the project throughout the “looking” and “action” phases of the study.

### Data Analysis

As a critical theorist, the evaluation stage of this study was an expansive process of qualitative analysis. The questions asked of participants were: 1. *What job do you have? What jobs do your relatives have? What jobs do your friends have?* These questions helped determine the class position of the study participants. 2. *What organizations do you belong to? What organizations do your relatives belong to? What organizations do your friends belong to?* These questions showed what community links to power study participants have as well as their links to actions through these organizations. 3. *What businesses do you use? What businesses do your relatives use? What businesses do your friends use?* These questions helped establish the economic power of the study participants.

### Termination and Follow Up

Termination of the study was done by engaging the participants of the study to jointly craft a statement for empowerment. Study participants and the gatekeepers involved were included in a celebration of the work done and thanked for their time and participation. The researcher keeps an ongoing

relationship with stakeholders and participants of the study. This is accomplished by visits to the research sites. This is also done using video conferences, email communication and telephone calls. Afterwards, there was a celebration of the chosen action.

### Communication of Findings and Dissemination Plan

The research findings will be disseminated through university publication by California State University San Bernardino ScholarWorks where the research study will be stored electronically. However, before this stage of the research project, findings were disseminated and discussed through community meetings with stakeholders throughout and after the research process. A formal written report was drafted and discussed with the stakeholders and research site.

### Summary

Chapter Three discussed the participants involved and how those participants were selected. Also discussed was the data being looked for, data gathering, data recording, the phases of the data collection process and how data was analyzed. Lastly, the chapter outlined termination and follow-up procedures and how the findings were communicated and disseminated.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### EVALUATION

#### Introduction

This chapter reveals the analysis and results of the findings of what the systemic issues are associated with violent crime in African American communities. The descriptive characteristics of the study sample are detailed in this chapter, displaying who participated in the study and how they relate to the findings. This chapter also discussed how the data collected was analyzed. Then, the researcher offers an interpretation of what the analysis of data collected revealed. Finally, the chapter discussed the implications of this research on micro and macro social work practice.

#### Sample Description

**Table 1.** Descriptive characteristics of study sample

<b>Variable</b>	<b>N (%)</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>S.D.</b>
<b>Age</b>		43.75	11.31
<b>Sex</b>			
<b>Male</b>	3 (37.5%)		

**Table 1.**



**(continued)**

<b>Female</b>	5 (62.5%)
<b>Race</b>	
<b>African</b>	6 (75%)
<b>American</b>	
<b>Hispanic</b>	1 (12.5%)
<b>Other</b>	1 (12.5%)
<b>Employment</b>	
<b>Employed</b>	7 (87.5%)
<b>Unemployed</b>	1 (12.5%)
<b>Education</b>	
<b>High School</b>	4 (50%)
<b>Some College</b>	2 (25%)
<b>College Grad</b>	2 (25%)

Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of the study sample. The average age of participants for the sample was 43.75. Most of the study participants were women (62.5%). The sample was overwhelmingly African

American (75%), while Hispanic and Other was both 12.5%. Almost all the participants were currently employed (87.5%). 12.5% of the study participants were not currently employed. Education levels varied amongst participants. Most of the participants did not have any formal education past high school (50%). Study participants who either had some college or were college graduates was one quarter (25%) respectively.

### Data Analysis

The data for this study was analyzed using thematic analysis. The data was coded and examined to identify potential themes. A list of initial codes was created. The codes were sorted into many potential themes. Common themes were identified and labeled. Participant's interviews were coded by the author/researcher. These codes were created in Microsoft Word.

### Data Interpretation

Several themes emerged which include: 1.) victimization, 2.) perpetration, 3.) drugs/gangs, 4.) family life, 5.) racism and 6.) resources.

## Victimization

Several interviewees noted victimization as a concern in their community. One mentioned: "...And, one of the other Mexicans left, he went to the car and got a pistol...and, you know, he came around and pointed the gun at me...and it's by the grace of God they didn't shoot" (Participant 4, Feb. 2018).

Another interviewee similarly mentioned:

Definitely, I mean there's been a lot of situations with a lot of my loved ones, first cousins and the list goes on...second, third you know just family in general. I mean that have been victims to society whether it be drive-bys, whether it be time in prison or whether it be just misunderstanding (Participant 2, Feb. 2018).

## Perpetration

Several interviewees noted committing or knowing someone who had committed violent crime. One mentioned:

Yes, the friends as well. Like I said, we all are a product of our environments. So, whether we follow along those lines, depending on, you know, the crowd in which we congregate with, they may fall under that category (Participant 2, Feb. 2018).

Another similarly mentioned: “I had a friend who committed a bank robbery, at probably the age of about nineteen years old” (Participant 5, Feb. 2018).

### Drugs and Gangs

Several interviewees noted drugs and gangs being a problem in their community. When asked if gangs were a problem in her neighborhood, one stated, “Very much so.” When asked if drugs were a problem in her neighborhood, she said, “Very much so, that’s the main problem” (Participant 1, Feb. 2018). Another similarly mentioned: “...I believe drugs are the main factor” (Participant 3, Feb. 2018), in terms of contributing to violent crime.

### Family Life

Several interviewees noted family life being a problem in their community. One mentioned:

We teach our kids from out our homes between right and wrong and from there, changing one person, changes generations. I can’t change the world in what is out there, but I can change what’s in my home and our belief systems and those are the things that I would pass on to generations (Participant 8, Feb. 2018).

Another respondent similarly mentioned: “I think that's where this country kind of fall short, as far as the parenting and the leadership and the structure that they're getting within our households” (Participant 2, Feb. 2018).

### Racism

Several interviews noted racism as a problem in their community. One mentioned:

Uh, dealing with law, law...law enforcement. Um, I feel like that made me a victim, due to my skin color. I've been attacked by the law on several occasions, for whatever purpose or reasons, still don't know to this day...um, just a lot of things in general as far as a victim of crime, but mainly was the law (Participant 6, Feb. 2018).

Another similarly mentioned:

I would want a better way, but at times I feel as though being here I can kind of relate to the things that's around me because if I lived somewhere else I might be criticized or I might be subjective to some type of, if you will, uh, racism because I'm living in their community (Participant 2, Feb. 2018).

## Resources

Several Interviews noted a lack of resources as being a problem in their community. When asked what she attributed the high rate of violent crime in African American communities to, one mentioned: “The lack of resources. The lack of education. The lack of equality. And, uh, the lack of jobs” (Participant 5, Feb. 2018). Another similarly mentioned:

You know, you put more liquor stores in the area than you do a recreation park. You put a lot of stuff that's not too beneficial to have young men and young women want to be driven, you know, for a certain desire and it's like limited on trying to really make yourself of something (Participant 6, Feb. 2018).

## Implications of Practice

### Micro Practice

Context must be acknowledged when working with individuals and families from these communities. Issues related to context include trauma experienced outside of the home. This trauma must not only be recognized in those who are victims of violent crime, but family members of victims and those who witness violent crime.

Practitioners must enter client-therapist relationships with cultural humility. They must understand how to link their knowledge and expertise and the client's life and experiences. They must also employ rigorous efforts to build rapport as part of their goal of achieving maximum effectiveness.

### Macro Practice

The lack of leadership in and out of the home has provided the need for mentorship in African American communities. Leaders, including social workers, can help organize community members around issues they are affected by. Leaders can also help to promote safety and accountability in these communities.

Social workers must do more to advocate for policies focusing on safety in these communities. One example of these policies is community policing.

Greater trust between police and citizens can help to create a partnership with the shared goal of safety within the community.

Finally, empowering citizens is vital. Access to higher education, job training and job placement programs should be part of this empowerment. These aspects of self-determination can help in attempting to stop violence in these communities.

### Summary

Chapter Four described the descriptive characteristics of the study sample. The chapter described the data analysis process, including how data was coded (using thematic analysis), who created the codes, and what program was used. The chapter then discussed the researcher's interpretation of the data and its implications on micro and macro social work practice.



## CHAPTER FIVE

### TERMINATION AND FOLLOW-UP

#### Introduction

This chapter discusses the methods the researcher used when terminating the study. The chapter also includes how findings of the study will be communicated to the study participants. The researcher also discusses whether or not there will be an ongoing relationship between the researcher and the study participants. Finally, the chapter ends with an explanation of the dissemination plan of the study.

#### Termination of Study

Termination of the study was done by engaging the gatekeepers involved in the study and thanking them for their time and cooperation. Gatekeepers were also thanked for their efforts in the recruitment of study participants. The participants of the study were engaged and thanked for their time and participation. A copy of the Informed Consent form was given to each participant to retain for their records. Each participant has the researcher's and research advisor's contact information.

### Ongoing Relationship with Study Participants

The researcher anticipates an ongoing relationship with some of the study participants. The relationship is based on the fact that the researcher plans to visit the research sites occasionally and anticipates interacting with study participants. These visits to the research sites by the researcher are not in connection with the study.

### Communication of Findings and Dissemination Plan

Findings will be communicated and discussed through telephone calls, email communications, and video conferences with stakeholders throughout and after the research process. A formal written report was drafted and discussed with the stakeholders and research site. The research findings will be disseminated through university publication by California State University San Bernardino. The study will be available in the Thesis Repository at California State University San Bernardino. Additionally, study findings will be presented at CSUSB's School of Social Work 2018 Annual Poster Day.

### Summary

Chapter 5 discussed the termination of this study, including how gatekeepers and participants were thanked for their input and left with the Informed Consent form and contact information of the researcher and research advisor. The chapter also discussed the researcher's future relationship status

with the participants of this study. Finally, Chapter Five outlined how the findings of the study would be communicated to stakeholders and others by the researcher. The Chapter concluded with an explanation of how the report would be disseminated, including through university publication.

## APPENDIX A

### DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS:

including informed consent, questions, debriefing, IRB approval



## INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Have you ever been a victim of violent crime in your community?  
Has someone in your family? Have any of your friends?
2. Have you ever been a perpetrator of violent crime in your community? Has someone in your family? Have any of your friends?
3. Are you currently working? If not, how long have you been unemployed?
4. How old are you?
5. What is your ethnicity?
6. What is your income level?
7. Do you know the reason you were targeted for the crime, or what was the reason behind you committing the crime?
8. Do you enjoy living in this neighborhood?
9. Would you leave this neighborhood if you had the means? Why or why not?
10. Has living here affected how you view yourself?
11. What do you attribute the rate of violent crime to?
12. What job do you have? What jobs do your relatives have? What jobs do your friends have?

13. What organizations do you belong to? What organizations do your relatives belong to? What organizations do your friends belong to?
14. What businesses do you use? What businesses do your relatives use? What businesses do your friends use?
15. What is your family structure?
16. What is your education level?
17. Are gangs a problem in your neighborhood? Are drugs a problem in your neighborhood?
18. What factors do you believe contribute to violent crime?
19. What is the most important change that can help reduce violent crime?
20. Do you have any questions for me?

Developed by: Abraham Coles II

## DEBRIEFING STATEMENT

This study you have just completed was designed to investigate issues associated with violent crime within African American communities. This is to inform you that no deception was involved. I would like to thank you for taking the time to participate in this study. If you have any questions about the study, please feel free to contact Dr. Herbert Shon at (909) 537-5532. For more information about the research used for this study, please access the resources listed in the "Reference" section.



**CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, SAN BERNARDINO**  
**SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK**  
***Institutional Review Board Sub-Committee***

Researcher(s): Abraham Coles

Proposal Title: The Systemic Issues Associated with Violent Crime in Predominately African American Communities

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# SW1780

Your proposal has been reviewed by the School of Social Work Sub-Committee of the Institutional Review Board. The decisions and advice of those faculty are given below.

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Proposal is:

approved

to be resubmitted with revisions listed below

to be forwarded to the campus IRB for review

Revisions that must be made before proposal can be approved:

faculty signature missing

missing informed consent  debriefing statement

revisions needed in informed consent  debriefing

data collection instruments revision

agency approval letter missing

CITI missing

revisions in design needed (specified below)

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Committee Chair Signature

9/25/17

Date

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