

THE EFFECT OF GEORGE FLOYD ON THE NUMBER OF TRAFFIC STOPS IN NORTH
CAROLINA

by

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ABSTRACT

NIA M. WEEMS. The effect of the murder of George Floyd on the number of Traffic stops in North Carolina. (Under the direction of DR. MAISHA COOPER)

Studies have shown that there have been instances of bias within Law Enforcement agencies, and disproportionality among traffic stops involving Black drivers. These are important studies, however, there has not been extensive research on whether a widely publicized interaction involving police influences traffic patterns in other cities. This study aims to address how the death of George Floyd impacted the number of traffic stops seen among Black drivers in the state of North Carolina as well as it aims to determine if there were disproportionate traffic patterns among minority races over a span of a year using a T-test of proportions. These findings were statistically significant, which can be beneficial in strengthening the argument that there is disproportionality among races, as well as it can provide insight on how publicized interactions involving law enforcement officers have an effect across the United States. This study provides a basis for future research to potentially provide methods to decrease disproportionality in traffic stops among races in the United States.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

“I can’t breathe.” The three words that changed the scope of racism in America. The last three words that George Floyd would ever say in his life. The three words that would leave a lasting impact on policing in America. On May 25, 2020, George Floyd a 46-year-old African American man was killed by officer Derek Chauvin in Minneapolis, Minnesota (Barrie, 2020). George Floyd was killed over an assumed counterfeit \$20 bill used at the local convenience store to buy cigarettes. Around 8:00 pm, Floyd visited the Cup Foods Grocery store. Employees had assumed that Floyd had used a fake \$20 bill to purchase his items and demanded Floyd to return the cigarettes, which Floyd refused. Upon the refusal, the employees notified police, and described Floyd as being “drunk” and having a “lack of self-control” (Washington Post, 2020). Floyd suffered a heinous and unreasonable death, at the hands of officers of the Minnesota Police Department. At 8:08 pm, officers were called to the situation where the final deadly altercation occurred. Officers Derek Chauvin, J. Alexander Cheung, and Thomas Lane aided each other in restraining Floyd. After a timespan of over 9 minutes, Officer Derek Chauvin restrained Floyd by placing his knee on his neck. This allowed for the unruly, ghastly death of Mr. Floyd, who would become a face of injustice for African Americans in the United States.

In the United States, the traffic stop is the most common form of police-citizen encounter and for many citizens, it is the only way they will ever interact with police (Boateng & Howley, 2020). Within the last decade, there has been an increase in racial tensions throughout the country regarding Law enforcement and their use of lethal force against people of color. The substantial number of police killings of unarmed Black people during interactions with police proposes questions to examine what undergirds policing in the US (Byfield, 2019). Incidents like those of Sandra Bland, Philando Castile, Gabriella Nevarez, Walter Scott and George Floyd have not only

influenced the outlook that citizens have on officers, but the types of interactions that will occur with officers as well. Studies have addressed potential causes for negative interactions between police and citizens, where the topics of police training and racial bias are mentioned. Studies also investigate the sentiments of citizens who drive, and their perception of police interactions while operating a vehicle. Among those citizens, it is apparent that there is a trend in the frequency of traffic stops involving minority drivers. While the outcomes of these stops may vary (with some unfortunately resulting in deaths), there have been consistent trends where minority drivers are pulled over at a higher rate, compared to their white counterparts.

The state of North Carolina is home to 504 Law enforcement agencies. Of the 504, the largest agencies include the NC Highway Patrol, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department, Raleigh Police Department, Fayetteville Police Department, and the Greensboro Police Department. As of 2021, the state of North Carolina has had over 27 million traffic stops (Open Data Policing, 2021). Due to the unfortunate death of George Floyd in May 2020 and the preceding incidents across the nation, there has been unrest all over the country regarding police conduct during traffic stops. There have been discussions regarding the impacts of his unfortunate death on the number of traffic stops that are seen in other states and if there are identifiable biases or issues with police legitimacy regarding traffic stops (Knox & Mummulo, 2020).

1.1 Current Study

This study analyzed the current trends for traffic stops in Charlotte from “pre-George Floyd” to “post-George Floyd”. The central questions that this thesis aimed to explore include: (1) Did the number of Traffic stops in Charlotte change due to the impact of the Murder of George Floyd? and (2) Were the number of stops disproportionate by race? This study tested

whether there is a correlation between officer race and the number of traffic stops in Charlotte, NC, and if there was an increase in the number of traffic stops following a widely publicized interaction with police. The current study is of high importance due to the present racial climate that we are facing in the United States. The relationship between citizens and police, and more specific, between African Americans and police has been problematic. From one part of the spectrum of policing, some could argue that officers are simply doing their job which is to “protect and serve”. On the opposing side, some argue that officers have been shown to have some sort of bias towards minority races. Therefore, it is important to identify the factors related to the inequalities regarding the treatment of African Americans vs. other racial/ethnic groups. By identifying potential patterns and disparities seen in traffic stops conducted by the Charlotte Mecklenburg Police Department, the current study may suggest potential practices and policy implications into play to help close the racial gap and ensure equal practices across the board for police officers.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Background

Police misconduct is a recurring social issue in the United States. Police brutality is widespread, corruption is deep rooted, and discriminatory practices are viewed as a social norm (Son & Rome, 2004). Police officers are known as the “gatekeepers of formal social control” (Wolfe & Piquero, 2011). Their responsibilities include enforcing laws, protecting the public, and they are also entrusted to represent order and justice in society (Wolfe & Piquero, 2011). From this, it can be determined that citizens hold Police officers to a certain standard; that they should maintain a level of trust and responsibility, which can also be seen as integrity. These roles entail either crime control or a form of peacekeeping and order maintenance functions (Cortright et al., 2020). Because of the importance of both roles, police officers are held to an important standard. Due to their ever-present power, American police officers are often at the forefront of controversies that are related to racial discrimination (Zhao et al., 2011). Race is often seen as a constant issue in relation to the concept of policing. The historic role of policing in the United States makes the overall interactions between police and people of color problematic due to the U.S. existing as a racial state (Byfield, 2019). This has allowed for a level of distaste and lack of trust for American policing.

2.2 Community Policing Practices

The emergence of community policing in the 1970s has caused a push toward moving police in the direction of improving service and community relations. Because of the push, it allows for the gap between the ideology and implementation of community policing to be bridged (Cortright et. al 2020). With community policing rising, it allows for more interactions between officers and citizens. The motive towards improving community relations and police

legitimacy reflects an interest in the peacekeeping/order maintenance approach to policing, while on the other hand the rise of the “warrior cop” and militarization reflects an interest in crime control (Cortright et al., 2020). These approaches of being a peacekeeper/order maintenance as well as crime control, have been viewed as the two primary roles of the police function in modern society (Cortright et al., 2020). Of the two “roles,” there is more emphasis on the crime control aspect of being an officer compared to the peacekeeping role. With the crime control view, most envision Law enforcement as crime fighters first, although those responsibilities are only a small portion of an officer’s daily duties (Cortright et al., 2020). While crime control and peacekeeping are the conventional primary roles of policing, the legally defined duties of Law enforcement are determined by state law (Cortright et al., 2020). In other words, state law dictates the formal role of the police.

Over time, the formal definition of crime control has evolved. In a study conducted by Ronance et. al (2005), it was found that law statutes had increased the definition of the police role. These included states adding more peacekeeping functions, as well as the crime control role such as an increase in issuing citations and search and seizure (Cortright et. al, 2020). From the crime control aspect, the most common interaction between officers and citizens is traffic stops. Traffic stops are seen as a prominent aspect of police work (Allen, 2014). It is the officer’s goal to seek, deter, and punish traffic infractions. While traffic infractions can be seen as a minor crime, researchers have argued that police should increase their attention to visible signs of misconduct, which can prevent an increase in more serious crimes occurring (Cortright et al., 2020). Policing policies and practices which determine police-community relationships guide day-to-day interactions, however, many do not lead to fatalities. Instead, they incorporate racial profiling, police brutality, and racial inequality in the criminal justice system (Byfield, 2019).

The concept of policing plays a significant role in changing the behavior of motorists and to ensure road safety (Boateng & Howley, 2020). Officers attempt to deter negative behaviors which include speeding, driving while intoxicated, and other inappropriate behavior by stopping and sanctioning drivers (Boateng & Howley, 2020). Nevertheless, while officers have the option to stop and sanction drivers, officers do not sanction all drivers equally or as severely as possible (Allen, 2014). This is because traffic enforcement is extremely discretionary and is typically not conducted under the direct surveillance of supervisors and administrators (Allen, 2014). Traffic stop trends can provide a collective understanding regarding patterns of civilian treatment during encounters with the police (Tillyer, 2021). The studies show a trend of disparities among the various races. Prior studies have shown that African Americans have been targeted at an alarming rate regarding police encounters and more specifically, traffic stops (Zhao et al., 2011). Racially biased policing is a significant issue within the criminal justice system which allows for the erosion of the established foundation of “American Democracy” and legitimacy of the police in maintaining order (Zhao et al., 2011).

2.3 Officer Conduct

While most of an Officer’s duties are more order maintenance related, the “crime-fighting warrior cop” mindset still holds a strong weight on officers (Cortright et al., 2020). Most research shows that race is a substantial predictor in traffic stops (Zhao et al., 2011). From this, studies have also shown that some police agencies have been accused of targeting African Americans (Zhao et. al, 2011). This notion of racially biased policing has been at the forefront of most cases within the “Black Lives Matter” movement, as well as the fight for equality among all races within the United States. Specifically, the Black Lives Matter movement believes that there is injustice towards African Americans. However, they do not believe that the police are the sole

instrument of oppression and social control of African Americans in the United States but instead, that it is a symptom of the overall issue (Ilchi & Frank, 2020). Due to the heinous actions of officers who are racially biased (that are notable or seen), there has been a more recent push to “defund the police,” and a call for further study into the causes of racially biased policing within the criminal justice system. What affects the officer’s discretionary sanctioning decisions in relation to traffic stops? Some scholars can attest that it is due to learned behavior, bias, extralegal and legal factors. Learned behavior/bias can be due to behavior or norms that are taught and understood among officers. Extralegal/legal factors are considered as well. Extralegal factors include suspect characteristics, and the social environment, while legal factors include the infraction that prompts the stop (Allen, 2014). Overall, research has shown that legal variables are consistently the most influential factors on police behavior (Tillyer & Engel, 2013). Studies on officer decision making and extralegal factors primarily focused on “suspect” traits (Higgins et al., 2012). Extralegal factors are defined as something that is not regulated or sanctioned by law (Merriam-Webster, 2021).

Legal factors are defined as an event, circumstance, influence, or element that plays a part in bringing about a result (Merriam-Webster, 2021). Some examples include prior legal history, current offenses, etc. Race often plays an important role when it comes to decision making, which is seen often within the criminal justice system and specifically, police agencies regarding racial profiling (Higgins et. al, 2012). Profiling involves a combination of physical, behavioral, or psychological factors that improves the probability of identifying and apprehending subjects (Higgins et al., 2012). The concept of profiling is often used (whether intentionally or unintentionally) within Law enforcement agencies. Law enforcement agencies use profiling to help conduct investigations or when searching for a specific suspect. Other times,

Law enforcement agencies abuse their power when it comes to profiling and use it in a negative fashion. Racial profiling occurs when individuals of the same race are treated in the same manner due to certain characteristics (Higgins et al., 2012). To be more specific, racial profiling involving police can be defined as a process that motivates the initiation of a traffic stop, detention, or other Law enforcement activity solely due to their race and/or ethnicity (Higgins et al., 2012). Studies have shown that there is a greater likelihood of fatality when police interact with a person of color, specifically a Black person (Byfield, 2019).

Analyses are used to predict the outcome of traffic stops. The overall goal of traffic analyses is to predict warnings, citations, and arrests through data that is collected from systematic social data (Tillyer & Engel, 2013). From this data, it can give insight to if there are trends in disparities or disproportionality. These analyses have shown that there are racial, ethnic, gender, and age disparities (Tillyer & Engel, 2013). Compared to whites, minorities are more likely to be cited or arrested in traffic encounters, with men being more likely to be sanctioned more harshly than women (Allen, 2014). Young Black male drivers were more likely to be issued a warning, and arrested, compared to other racial/ethnic groups (Allen, 2014). While race is a major contributing factor to officer stops, the individual's social environment influences it as well (Allen, 2014). From this viewpoint, one's social environment includes the officer's environment as well as the citizen. In 1968, Wilson suggested that the type of police agency whether legalistic, service-oriented, or order maintenance can affect officer decision making (Allen, 2014). This is where the sense of bias or learned behavior can come into thought, when trying to pinpoint what allows for bias or racial profiling.

This sense of bias can also be combined with the concept of occupational culture. In a study conducted by Paoline and Terrill (2014), occupational culture was defined as “the attitudes, values, and norms that are transmitted and shared among groups of individuals in an effort to collectively cope with the common problems and conditions members face” (Boivin et al., 2020). Cognitive bias is another aspect to understanding officer decision-making. The cognitive bias perspective emphasizes the importance of personal and vicarious experiences in conjunction with media depictions that form an image of individuals based on their gender, age, and race/ethnicity (Tillyer, 2021). Another aspect of this bias includes the role of suspicion, which often influences officer behavior (Tillyer, 2021). Additionally, Ingram (2007) conducted a study where he found that levels of disorganization, racial composition, disadvantage, and violent crime influenced the odds of an individual being cited (Allen, 2014). These influences in conjunction with the types of agencies can influence the formation of racial profiling or bias.

Legal Factors have been shown to have a strong effect on sanction severity in traffic stops as well. Certain traffic offenses can lead to more severe outcomes such as moving violations, unsafe driving, speeding, and driving an unregistered vehicle (Allen, 2014). These violations are more than likely to result in a citation being issued or an arrest. However, violations regarding equipment are more than likely to be issued a warning (Allen, 2014). The combination of legal factors and extralegal factors may influence an officer’s decision making regarding when, where, and how they would like to conduct a traffic stop. Studies have also shown that compared to speeding, officers were more likely to arrest drivers for moving violations, preexisting information, and special traffic enforcement (Allen, 2014).

2.4 Racial Profiling

The literature on racial profiling has experienced several shifts. The methodological shifts and content shifts have allowed researchers to create room for a complete understanding of racial profiling (Higgins et al., 2012). The historic role of policing in the US makes overall policing interactions with people of color problematic. This is because the United States exists as a racial state (Byfield, 2019). In a racial state, the social order traditionally enforced by policing is not based simply on a community's "norms of propriety". Policing policies and practices tend to enforce a social order which can also be seen as racial order (Byfield, 2019). This has a direct effect on how the officer will interact during the traffic stop. An officer's attitude, demeanor, and initiation of a traffic stop set the tone for the entire interaction (Woodhull, 1994). Another potential indication of how an officer will react or respond during a traffic stop is the citizen's perception and actions. Some research has focused on the negative side of police work which includes public perceptions, police aggressiveness, and use of force. These have been found during traffic encounters (Zhao et al., 2011). Due to the negative experiences that have occurred with police, especially between minorities and officers, citizens may be more anxious or uneasy during the interaction.

The concentration on conflict has the unanticipated consequence of diverting attention from a key aspect of officer–citizen relationships which is the prevalence of informal interpersonal relations between Black citizens and the police (McManus et al., 2019). Studies have shown that compared to their white counterparts, that the lives of Black Americans are intruded on by police. The clash between Law enforcement and the Black community is an inherent part of the criminal justice process (McManus et al., 2019). The negative stereotypes that are assigned to police, especially from a citizen's point of view stem from the historical

views/practices of police interactions. In a study conducted by Boateng and Howley (2020), there was an agreement that a citizen's displays of hostility and negative demeanor towards police can increase the likelihood of an officer responding with increased severity in their decision making. Further detail into the study shows that citizen demeanor and hostility significantly affect police decision making, specifically the decision to make an arrest or not (Boateng & Howley, 2020). For example, some racial group members may feel more targeted compared to others. In this instance, they may feel that the interactions of police are not legitimate. To be more specific, research showed that African Americans were less likely than whites to feel that traffic stops were legitimate and that the officers were acting properly (Zhao et al., 2011). At the other end of the spectrum, there is a belief that the steps officers take during the process of a traffic stop can determine the "offending" behavior of the motorists (Zhao et al., 2011). Knox and Mummulo (2020) proposed a framework to describe police-citizen encounters. With this framework, every unit of interaction that police had with citizens was the primary unit of analysis. With this approach, it proved that police records contained only a fraction of the events that occur within those interactions during an event of interest (Knox & Mummulo, 2020). This study confirmed the idea that civilian race and police bias can play a role at every stage of the traffic stop process; from the initial act of pulling them over to the decisions to question, search, arrest, injure, and potentially kill the civilian, as well as the steps in between (Knox & Mummulo, 2020). Another question regarding the causes of discriminatory and violent behavior that is conducted during a traffic stop is when exactly the behavior starts. Discriminatory actions during traffic stops are more than likely to occur within the search decision made by the police (Higgins et al., 2012).

2.5 Traffic Stop Protocols and Procedures

The process of a traffic stop occurs in steps. According to Higgins et al. (2012), the search raises the “intrusiveness” and “seriousness” of the traffic stop for the driver due to potential suspicion from a traffic violation to an implication of criminal activity. From there, the decision by the police officer to search the driver is more discretionary than the decision to arrest, but the decision must be legal. Searches must meet the legal requirement of probable cause or if it is determined that the driver has an outstanding warrant (Higgins et al., 2012). According to Cornell Law School’s Legal Information Institute (2021), probable cause is a requirement found in the Fourth Amendment that must usually be met before police make an arrest, conduct a search, or receive a warrant. Additionally, courts find probable cause when there is a reasonable basis for believing that a crime may have been committed (for an arrest) or when evidence of the crime is present in the place to be searched (Legal Information Institute, 2021). Under exigent circumstances, probable cause can also justify a warrantless search or seizure (Legal Information Institute, 2021). The legal requirement for probable cause is the observation of some sort of evidence. However, during a stop, the driver has the voluntary right to consent to a search which in turn eliminates the need to establish probable cause. While the evidence of discrimination may or may not be present in the decision to stop drivers, it can be evident when the police determine that a search may be necessary (Higgins et al., 2012). Because of this, the reasoning of the search and its validity comes into question. Research has shown that a clear-cut way to address racial profiling comes from the thorough consideration of the decision to search drivers after the traffic stop is made (Higgins et al., 2012).

While some behaviors of police during traffic stops can be justified, such as searches due to probable cause and arrests, some questions may arise for officers in how they conduct their

interactions with citizens. While no individual wants to hear that they have committed a violation, it becomes apparent that an individual can become more defensive during a traffic stop (Woodhull, 1994). To be successful, Law enforcement officers must develop a variety of people skills, with individuals with diverse backgrounds (Woodhull, 1994). These backgrounds include racial and social.

2.6 Driving While Black in North Carolina

The “Driving while Black” phenomena stem from the popular perception that police officers target African Americans for traffic stops and are therefore more likely to search an African American’s vehicle (Legal Information Institute, 2021). Disparity and disproportionality can coincide. A “disparity” refers to adverse treatment of members of certain groups in the absence of evidence that such treatment is warranted or deserved (Decker, 2004). However, disproportionality refers to something that is out of proportion, or unequal to another (Merriam-Webster, 2021). This heightened interest in driving while black phenomena stemmed from the journalistic works of Gary Webb. Due to his exposes of the driving while black phenomena in the 1990’s, this led to more light being focused on the interactions of Police and African Americans. This became clear in 1999, when Black and brown drivers were subjected to systematic profiling as part of the war on drugs (Baumgartner et al., 2016). This also stressed the degree to which the previous police focus on safe driving was switched to focus on a needle-in-the-haystack search for drug couriers and reliant on behavioral and racial profiles (Baumgartner et al., 2016). Since 1996, it was decided that there are legal justifications behind an officer’s ability to conduct a stop. The US Supreme Court decision in *Whren vs. United States* (1996) decided that any form of traffic violation was a legitimate reason to stop a driver, even if the claimed violation was a clear pretext for the officer’s desire to stop and search the vehicle for

other reasons such as general suspicion (Baumgartner et al., 2016). Due to this case, it allowed instances of racial bias to be brushed over or labeled as an officer simply doing his/her job.

Due to the astonishing amount of traffic stops in the state of North Carolina, it is with great interest to determine what percentage of those involved African Americans. North Carolina mandated the first collection of demographic data on all traffic stops during a surge of attention to the phenomenon of driving while black in the late 1990s (Baumgartner et al., 2016). Although bias is theoretically continuous, average behavior fits into two distinct groups, where 30–40% of officers are in the group that exhibits a relatively high propensity to stop black drivers (Abrahams, 2020). Research has shown that there has been an increase in racial disparity regarding traffic stops. According to the study conducted by Baumgartner et al. (2016) based on a study with over 18 million traffic stops in North Carolina, there were dramatic disparities in the rates at which black drivers, specifically young African American males, were subjected to a search and arrest compared to their white counterparts. The frequency and intensity of racial disparity tends to increase over time, as seen in more recent cases. African American drivers are much more likely to be searched or arrested than whites following each type of stop, except in the case of driving while impaired (Baumgartner et al., 2016).

According to Baumgartner et al. (2016), research has shown that African Americans are 200% more likely to be searched and 190% more likely to be arrested after being pulled over for a seat belt violation, 110% are more likely to be searched or arrested following a stop for vehicle regulatory violations, and 60% are more likely to be searched or arrested after being stopped for equipment issues compared to their white counterparts. While probable cause and suspicion has been the benchmark for conducting a stop, evidence has shown that this is inaccurate in determining if one has been engaging in criminal behavior. The increased reliance on

probable cause to search Black People has been found to not be associated with accurate assessments of their likelihood of Black people engaging in criminal behavior (Baumgartner et al., 2016). The increased racial disparities in probable cause searches over time tend to be unjustified in terms of any increased likelihood of finding contraband (Baumgartner et al., 2016). So, from this finding, it can be determined that the stops are due to racial bias, not an actual or justified probable cause with confirmed evidence.

It is evident that there is a disconnect between African Americans and officers due to issues of racial disparity in traffic stops. African Americans and White Americans perceive, relate, and experience Law enforcement officers (Baumgartner et al., 2016). Research has shown that African American drivers' sense that traffic stops are due to bias not legitimacy. Due to this, African Americans do not show a difference in attitudes about the lawfulness and appropriateness of the traffic stop or the behavior of the officer, compared to their white counterparts (Baumgartner et al., 2016). For most White Americans, a speeding ticket is more so viewed as unpleasant and unwelcome, yet understandable (Baumgartner et al., 2016). However, African- American drivers have a sense of when the stops are pretextual. These pretextual stops cause feelings of humiliation and threat as well as questions as to if the stop was justifiable in the first place (Baumgartner et al., 2016). This subsequently reduces the driver's sense of belonging in the community, the belief they are equal citizens, and the sense that African Americans are awarded the same level of respect and protection by the police as whites (Baumgartner et al., 2016).

2.7 Police and Community Relations

The relationship between a community and their Law enforcement agencies should be built on a foundation of trust and a sense of belonging. In the wake of some of the recent deaths,

social and political pundits as well as community organizers have mentioned the lack of trust between policing agencies and local communities. To be more specific, the focus was particularly on low-income neighborhoods composed primarily of African Americans and Latinos (Byfield, 2019). Due to the trends in racial disparity, minority members of a community as well as members of a community that are more subjected to crime feel less trustful of the police compared to White Americans (Baumgartner et al., 2016). This sense of trust stems from daily interactions between police and citizens of a community. From a citizen standpoint, the feelings of trust towards police are related to neighborhood crime rates (Baumgartner et al., 2016). There is an increase in trust because the officer's duty is to help solve the problem at hand, not worsen it. Another crucial factor is the nature of the interactions between the officer and citizen as well as the citizen and their municipality.

This is commonly seen from the municipal side of business within a Law enforcement Agency as well. Social Pundits and Organizers have mentioned the idea of providing better training and equipment for surveillance of the police (Byfield, 2019). Unfortunately, the narratives about repairing this trust or providing standardized training and cameras directed at the police focused on the incidents involving fatalities, however, the issue at hand is far deeper than one of trust, training, or surveilling the police (Byfield, 2019). Those who are residents in an area that is more "high-risk" or "high-crime" face bias from their local government as well. In some cases, the concept of "quotas" is discussed in police literature. In a March 2015 study conducted on the Ferguson Police Department, results had shown that the local city officials had put extreme pressure on Law enforcement Agencies to exploit the pockets of their minority citizens (Baumgartner et al., 2016). City officials had put great force on the police department to

raise city revenue by issuing traffic citations. These efforts were strongly directed (disproportionately) toward the minority community.

2.8 Theoretical Framework

An important concept that can be used to describe the attitudes and norms of the police officers is social identity theory. With Social identity theory, it is suggested that attitudes are acquired and expressed in social contexts, and this allows the boundaries between social groups to be defined (Boivin et al., 2020). Regardless of opinions on how police subcultures are viewed, (whether as monolithic and static), all depictions of police culture have a strong “us versus them” mentality (Boivin et. al, 2020). This is important to take into consideration regarding the overall view of the police. While some actions are not feasible to take against others, it is important to understand the perspective of an officer as well. Studies have shown that the “us versus them” mentality stems from the fact that officers are authorized by law to use physical force when necessary (Boivin et al., 2020). Apart from what is taught during Law enforcement training, there are instances where officers are taught different methods within the Police subculture (Chappell & Piquero, 2004).

According to Maskaly and Donner (2015), the police subculture is so dominant and influential that officers are compelled to adapt to those methods that are taught. This could be used to justify the negative instances where police are shown to be engaging in unacceptable behavior. Police subculture may facilitate negative behavior by transmitting beliefs, values, and manners of expression that differ from what is deemed as “acceptable” behavior (Chappell & Piquero, 2004). Due to the influence of peer pressure as well as the desire to be accepted, in most cases officers will adapt to the police subculture, whether it is morally right or wrong. The organizational structure of a police department is so influential that regardless of one’s own

individual beliefs or oppositions, the individuals will feel compelled to adapt to those beliefs of the majority. This is due to the concept of a normative order, which refers to a set of generalized rules and practices that are oriented around a common value (Chappell & Piquero, 2004).

The introduction of the police subculture occurs when new officers or personnel enter the workforce. In most cases, the “newbies” shadow the veterans or more experienced officers, which potentially allows them to be exposed to unacceptable learned behavior. Modeling has its strongest influence on a person’s initial decision to engage in delinquent behavior, and it has an influence on continuation and interruption of behaviors (Maskaly & Donner, 2015). Because of the concept of modeling, officers are encouraged to model their behavior after a more experienced officer. Another lesson that is taught among Law enforcement officers is how to view others outside of the agency. Some officers hold the belief that policing is about the “thrill” or sense of power that the job gives which refers to the action, adventure, excitement, and the use of force (Maskaly & Donner, 2015). Law enforcement officers are trained to view every person and every situation as a potential threat. Due to this lesson, this can cause a sense of unease for officers during traffic stops. This leads to an “us versus them” mindset. This mindset gives the notion that Law enforcement officers are seen as the “good guys,” while the rest of society is seen as being “dangerous” (Maskaly & Donner, 2015). Therefore, more insight is given as to why officers may have a more stern or aggressive mindset towards motorists or citizens in general.

This aggressive mindset is encouraged within the police subculture. The subculture respects authoritative and aggressive personalities (Maskaly & Donner, 2015). The authoritative and aggressive personalities that some officers exhibit manifest through interactions with citizens and specifically in this case, motorists. Some of these authoritative and aggressive actions come

in the form of a sense of arrogance, entitlement, and the deadliest of them all, excessive force. In the more notable cases that involved traffic stops (ex. Keith Lamont Scott, George Floyd, Sandra Bland, etc.) the officers resulted in using excessive force, which led to the demise of those individuals. “Excessive force” is defined as force that exceeds what is objectively reasonable and necessary in the circumstances confronting the officer to subdue a person (Chappell & Piquero, 2004). Along with minorities (specifically African Americans) who may feel as though they are the “black sheep” of society, Law enforcement officers have been known to have their own form of group for support. This is seen as a police subculture. Interacting with diverse types of motorists is a part of these diverse types of motorists, these include both “difficult” and “law abiding” types. Working with both types of motorists gives officers actual opportunities to interact favorably with the public (Woodhull, 1994). Although motorists can be difficult, officers should maintain professionalism and uphold the standards/rules that are taught during their Law enforcement training and within their agencies. Depending on the encounter, some officers may view that the use of excessive force is justified. Excessive force is to be used only when necessary and to the extent that is required for the officer to complete their duty (Chappell & Piquero, 2004). But what actions could be deemed as “excessive”? Excessive force includes (but is not limited to) the actions of unjustified shootings, rough treatment, severe beatings, and fatal chokings (Chappell & Piquero, 2004). In all the widely publicized traffic stop encounters, the officers have used excessive force. These instances have led to a sense of civil unrest and a push for reform in Law enforcement policies. In the case of George Floyd, he experienced police brutality from all the officers involved.

2.9 Rationale for Study

Over the past two decades in the US, the rash of police killings of unarmed Black people during interactions with police moves one to examine what undergirds policing in the US. With the spotlight on the interactions of police becoming more apparent, it is important to analyze how the actions of other officers may impact the actions of those within the Charlotte Mecklenburg Police Department. Although this trend is not new, the disproportionate police violence towards racial and ethnic minorities has earned international attention in more recent years (Dukes & Kahn, 2017). High-profile police violence which in most cases involve unarmed racial and ethnic minorities, have not only incited racial tensions, but have led to wide-spread protests and drawn intensive media coverage (Dukes & Kahn, 2017). With the incidents of police violence increasing, along with the discomfort and dissatisfaction for those involved, it is important to address these issues to potentially implement future policies for Law enforcement Agencies. The purpose of this study was to analyze the current trends for traffic stops in Charlotte from “Pre-George Floyd” to “post-George Floyd”. This thesis will test whether there is a correlation between officer race and the number of traffic stops in Charlotte, NC, and if the number of traffic stops following a widely publicized interaction with police increases.

Amid heightened racial tensions throughout the country regarding Law enforcement’s use of lethal force against African Americans, the city of Charlotte experienced a civil uprising in the aftermath of the shooting of Keith Scott (Benson & Boaz, 2018). It was the afternoon of September 20, 2016, when the deadly altercation between the Charlotte Mecklenburg Police Department and Keith Lamont Scott occurred. The police arrived in the village of College Downs, an apartment complex near the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, searching for someone with an outstanding warrant. During their search for the wanted individual, they

observed Keith Lamont Scott sitting in his vehicle (Benson & Boaz, 2018). While Scott was not the initial person of interest, he was seen smoking marijuana by the officers and when he had stepped out of his vehicle, he was seen holding a weapon. At approximately 3:54 p.m., Officer Brentley Vinson had shot and killed Scott. Keith Lamont Scott was the 173rd African American to be fatally shot by Law enforcement in the United States in 2016 (Benson & Boaz, 2018). During the months preceding Scott's death, several high-profile shootings had taken place in various cities, such as Philando Castile in Falcon Heights, Minnesota and Alton Sterling in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Due to his daughter's Facebook Live post regarding her feelings surrounding the death of her father, the news of the event spread throughout the city of Charlotte and across the country (Benson & Boaz, 2018). Since 2016, several high-profile cases have happened involving negative interactions with police and minorities. As previously stated, these cases include Sandra Bland and Philando Castile which both occurred in 2016, as well as more recently Daunte Wright.

In fatal encounters with police, racial and ethnic minorities, and people of color in the United States are more likely to die in police custody or at the hands of police (Dukes & Kahn, 2017). More specifically, people of color are more likely to experience both threats and actual usage of lethal force during a police encounter (Dukes & Kahn, 2017). The amount of lethal force that is used during a police-citizen encounter involving ethnic and racial minorities can range from low levels to elevated levels (Dukes & Kahn, 2017). Data has shown the disproportionality of the amount of lethal force used to African Americans. In 2015-2016, 405 unarmed individuals were killed by Law enforcement in the United States, where about 30% of those individuals were African Americans (Dukes & Kahn, 2017). This data came as a shock, because African Americans comprise 12-15% of the United States population (Dukes & Kahn,

2017). The data shows disparate patterns in disparities in police violence against racial and ethnic minorities. While these disparities are seen to be excessive and unjustified by the targeted groups and others in society, it is important to explain why these disparities exist, and what can be done to fix this problem.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN

3.1 Research Question & Hypotheses

The purpose of this thesis was to examine Traffic stops in the University City and South Division areas of Charlotte. More specifically, the study will examine the impact of George Floyd's death on traffic stop patterns. In addition to this question, the following hypotheses will be tested:

Research Question 1: *Did the number of traffic stops in Charlotte change after the Murder of George Floyd?*

Hypothesis 1: *The number of traffic stops will increase overall, after the Murder of George Floyd.*

Research Question 2: *Were the number of stops disproportionate by race?*

Hypothesis 2: *The number of Traffic stops of African American drivers in the University Area was impacted after the death of George Floyd.*

3.2 Data

This study utilized traffic stop data from the Charlotte Mecklenburg Police Department from January 2020 to August 2021. The Charlotte Mecklenburg Police Department is the largest metropolitan police department between Atlanta, Georgia, and Washington D.C. The CMPD produces a Data set that provides information on the number of traffic stops that occurred in the city during a specific period. In addition to this, it breaks down the number of traffic stops into specific categories. This data is available for free to the public. In total, the Charlotte Mecklenburg Police patrol has 13 divisions. For this specific thesis, I will be focusing on the University and South Divisions in the city of Charlotte.

For this study, a t-test of proportions will be used. This method is more suitable for this study because it will allow us to see whether there is significance associated from a widely publicized interaction with police or if it is normal police behavior. The variables used in this study are Driver Race and the number of traffic stops per month. For the study, the independent variable will be Driver Race while the Number of traffic stops per month will be the dependent variable. Driver Race includes the races of White, Black, and Other (which includes Asian, Native Americans, and Pacific Islanders). The dependent variable will be split up into four time periods. Time period one or "T1" will represent the period before the death of George Floyd which is January 2020- May 2020. Time period 2, "T2" represents June 2020- October 2020. Time period 3, "T3" represents November 2020 to March 2021. Time period four, "T4" represents April 2021- August 2021. More specifically, the t-test of proportions will use all the proposed time periods, for the University City and South Divisions of Charlotte. This will be used in hopes to determine if there was a form of significance regarding bias before his death ("T1" to "T2"), an immediate difference directly after his death ("T2" to "T3") and if his death had an overall long-term increase on the numbers traffic stops ("T2" to "T4").

DATA TABLES**Table 1:
Officer Characteristics**

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
	(n)	(%)
Race		
White	12,537	81.47
Black	686	4.40
Other	2,164	14.06
Sex		
Male	14,223	92.43
Female	1,164	7.56
Years of Service		
Minimum	1.00	
25 th Percentile	5.00	
Median	13	
Mean	12.78	
75 th Percentile	20	
Maximum	32	

Notes: Total (n): 15,387

Table 2:
Driver Characteristics, South Division

Variables	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Race		
White	9,828	63.87
Black	4,309	27.20
Other	1,250	8.12
Sex		
Male	14,223	92.43
Female	1,164	7.56
Ethnicity		
Non-Hispanic	13,603	88.40
Hispanic	1,424	9.25

Notes: Total (n)= 15,387

Table 3:
Number of Traffic Stops per month, South Division

Time Period	Frequency	Percentage
	(n)	(%)
T1 (2020)		
January	980	6.30
February	735	4.70
March	573	3.70
April	134	0.87
May	332	2.15
June	200	1.30
T2 (2020)		
July	533	3.40
August	530	3.40
September	652	4.20
October	624	4.05
T3 (2020-2021)		
November	739	4.80
December	567	3.70
January	972	6.31
February	943	6.12
March	1182	7.68
April	601	3.90
May	574	3.70
T4 (2020-2021)		
June	659	4.28
July	524	3.40
August	573	3.30
September	890	5.78
October	489	3.17
November	609	3.96
December	772	5.02

Notes: (n)= 15,387

Table 4:
Stop Data, South Division

Variable	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Driving While Impaired	21	0.13
Investigation	111	0.72
Safe Movement	537	3.48
Seatbelt	20	0.13
Speeding	7,159	46.5
Stoplight/sign	1,804	11.7
Vehicle Equipment	1,891	12.3
Vehicle Regulatory	3,674	23.8
Other	170	1.1
Result of Stop		
Arrest	182	1.18
Citation Issued	5,892	38.29
Verbal Warning	258	1.67
Written Warning	965	6.27
No Action Taken	258	1.67

Notes: (n)= 15,387

Table 5:
Officer Characteristics, University City

Variables	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Race		
White	735	6.17
Black	1241	10.42
Other	9929	83.40
Sex		
Male	11028	92.63
Female	877	7.366
Years of Service		
Minimum	1.00	
25 th Percentile	3.00	
Median	7.00	
Mean	11.29	
75 th Percentile	15.00	
Maximum	34.00	

Notes: (n)= 11,905

Table 6:
Driver Characteristics, University City

Variables	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Race		
White	735	6.17
Black	1241	10.42
Other	9929	83.40
Sex		
Male	11028	92.63
Female	877	7.366
Years of Service		
Minimum	1.00	
25 th Percentile	3.00	
Median	7.00	
Mean	11.29	
75 th Percentile	15.00	
Maximum	34.00	

Notes: (n)= 11,905

Table 7:
Number of Traffic Stops per Month, University City

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
	(n)	(%)
T1 (2020)		
January	1030	8.65
February	639	5.36
March	406	3.41
April	99	0.83
May	309	2.60
T2 (2020)		
June	101	0.84
July	376	3.14
August	437	3.67
September	346	2.90
October	715	6.00
T3 (2020-2021)		
November	452	3.40
December	494	4.14
January	575	4.83
February	549	4.61
March	835	7.01
T4 (2020-2021)		
April	539	4.52
May	553	4.64
June	523	4.40
July	634	5.32
August	484	4.06
September	440	3.70
October	437	3.67
November	412	3.46
December	520	4.37

Notes: (n)= 11,905

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

The purpose of this research study was to examine if the death of George Floyd had any impact on traffic patterns in the University City and South divisions of Charlotte. The t-test of proportions was used in hopes to determine if there was any statistical significance among the races in the various time periods. The time periods were split into four, (T1-T4). The t-test of proportions will use all the proposed time periods, for the University City and South Divisions of Charlotte. This will be used in hopes to determine if there was a form of significance regarding bias before his death ("T1" to "T2"), an immediate difference directly after his death ("T2" to "T3") and if his death had an overall long-term increase on the numbers traffic stops ("T2" to "T4"). After completing the t-test of proportions, there was some statistical significance shown.

4.1 T-Test of Proportion Tables

Table 8:
T-Tests of Proportions, by Time Period, South Division

Time Period	White	Black	Other	Total
(T1)	1,762	746	246	2,754
(T2= T1xT2)	1,664	682	193*	2,539
(T3= T2xT3)	1,242	2,829*	332	4,403
(T4=T2xT4)	1,821*	847*	263	2,931

Notes: T2: Difference between T1 and T2, T3: Difference between T2 and T3, T4: Difference between T2 and T4. For this analysis, the number of stops by race are being compared by columns in order to test statistical significance.

*= $p \leq 0.05$

These findings show that there was significance during the different time periods for the South Division of Charlotte. For this t-test, it was conducted using the columns. So, in order to determine if there was statistical significance, each of the time periods were tested by using a “difference” between periods. There was statistical significance in drivers listed as other regarding the T2 variable. Black Drivers had significance during the T3 variable time frame, while there was significance in both White and Black drivers within the T4 variable. The asterisked values had a p-value ≤ 0.05 . The purpose of the T-test of proportions was to determine if there were patterns of disproportionality before the death of George Floyd, during the period directly after his death, and finally, almost a year after his death. The South Division of Charlotte was used as a comparison to the University City Division, in order to see if there was a pattern of disproportionality across the Charlotte area, not just one specific area.

Table 9:
T-Tests of Proportions, by Race, South Division

Time Period	White	Black	Other	Total
(T1)	1,762	746*	246*	2,754
(T2)	1,664	682*	193*	2,539
(T3)	1,242	2,829*	332*	4,403
(T4)	1,821	847*	263*	2,931

Notes: This chart represents differences between races for each period. In this instance, the differences among races are being measured within the rows. So, White is being compared to Black, and White is being compared to Other as well. This is in hopes to determine if there is disproportionality among the number of traffic stops seen among drivers who are defined as Black or Other. $*=p \leq 0.05$

These findings showed significance between the races during the various time periods. For this specific t-test of proportions, the goal was to find the difference between races. For each time period, White drivers were compared to drivers of both Black and Other races. For the time periods, Black and Other drivers had values that were statistically significant. From this, it can be determined that there is disproportionality among Black and Other drivers in the South Division of Charlotte.

Table 10:
T-Tests of Proportions, by Time period, University City

Time Period	White	Black	Other	Total
(T1)	527	1,798	153	2,483
(T2= T1xT2)	552*	1,270*	153*	1,975
(T3= T2xT3)	677*	1,980*	54*	2,905
(T4= T2xT4)	599*	1,891*	243*	2,733

Notes: T2: Difference between T1 and T2, T3: Difference between T2 and T3, T4: Difference between T2 and T4. For this analysis, the number of stops by race are being compared by columns in order to test statistical significance within each time period. (White x Black, White x Other)

*= $p \leq 0.05$

These findings show that there was significance during the different time periods for the University City division of Charlotte. There was statistical significance in all the races of the drivers regarding the T2, T3, and T4 variables. This is interesting to note, because the University City area has a more diverse population, and the death of George Floyd may have impacted the total number of traffic stops.

Table 11:
T-Tests of Proportions, by Race, University City

Time Period	White	Black	Other	Total
(T1)	527	1,798*	153	2,483
(T2)	552	1,270*	153*	1,975
(T3)	677	1,980*	54*	2,905
(T4)	599	1,891*	243*	2,733

Notes: This chart represents differences between races for each period.

*= $p \leq 0.05$

With these findings, there was in between statistical significance seen in all the time periods. For T1, the number of Black drivers were disproportionate compared to the other races. For each time period, White drivers were compared to drivers of both Black and Other races. Among the other time periods, both Black drivers and Other raced drivers were disproportionate compared to their white counterparts. This is important to note as well, because it shows that there was a presence of disproportionality among races in the University City division.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

The purpose of this thesis was to determine if the murder of George Floyd influenced traffic patterns in the city of Charlotte, as well as if the number of stops within the city were disproportionate by race. The proposed research questions were based on previous research that due to racial bias, there is disproportionality among the amount of traffic stops seen among Black and brown drivers. Overall, there were statistically significant findings present between races during the different time periods of this study in the University city, and South divisions of Charlotte. Therefore, it can be determined that there is disproportionality between the number of stops involving Black and other minority raced drivers compared to their white counterparts. In relation to the death of George Floyd, there was an overall increase in the number of stops in the two divisions, with a strong overall increase of stops involving Black drivers. Out of the four time periods, T3 had the highest overall increase in traffic stops, which can be determined as a medium-term George Floyd effect. During the T3 period, there were 2,828 stops that involved Black Drivers, which was the highest out of the race categories. Compared to the other time frames, T3 had the highest number of stops overall, totaling 4,403. Surprisingly, the total number of stops had returned to “pre-George Floyd” rates, like the number of stops seen in T1. T3 is also significant because it is the period that is several months after George Floyd, as well as during the phase 2 of reopening during the COVID-19 pandemic. This is important to note, because as of 2021, African Americans comprise 35.2% of the city of Charlotte, and 33.0% of Mecklenburg County (United States Census Bureau, 2021). From this statistic, this further supports the presence of disproportionality and potential bias among traffic stop interactions in Charlotte.

In addition to Social Learning theory, there are other plausible reasons as to why there was disproportionality among the number of minority drivers in Charlotte compared to their

white counterparts. One aspect is the concept of class structure. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the United States was on a nationwide lockdown. Because of this, most of the working citizens were either working from home or had unfortunately been laid off. While the individuals who had jobs were able to maintain themselves during the beginning of the pandemic, others were not. During the peak of the pandemic, food delivery services such as Doordash, Grubhub, and Ubereats became more popular. People who needed income often relied on those services as their source of employment. It is plausible, that more black and other minority drivers were on the roads to earn money. This could be a cause as to why the number of traffic stops involving minority drivers is higher than their white counterparts.

Another plausible reason as to why there were more stops involving black and other minority drivers is due to police procedure. With officers pulling over drivers for smaller traffic infractions, it can lead to those minor stops disproportionately aiming at minority drivers as well as it does little to nothing to combat or end serious crimes. In addition, smaller traffic infractions do not show to improve public safety and can in some cases lead to deadly interactions with police. With police procedure, this further supports the notion of police subculture. By officers pulling over more drivers, they could be receiving approval from their peers, as well as within the police department. This can bring a sense as if the officers are being “graded” for approval which in turn can increase the number of stops those officers are conducting.

5.1 Limitations

Throughout the timeline of events before and after the murder of George Floyd, we were faced with the global COVID-19 pandemic. Because these two events were occurring simultaneously, we cannot acknowledge one event while ignoring the other. With the COVID-19

pandemic, North Carolina was on lockdown for a brief period before George Floyd's death. Although the death of George Floyd occurred in May, the trends in the traffic stop data could have been impacted due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Due to the premise of COVID-19, there is a chance that the data collected could have some limitations. From March 12th, 2020, where the beginning of lockdown restrictions occurred, until the opening of Phase 2 occurring on July 17th, 2020, there would be fewer drivers on the road. On May 8th, Phase 1 of reopening the state would be instituted at 5pm. Phase 2 of the reopening of North Carolina did not begin until July 17th, 2020. Other than essential personnel going to work, or delivering food options, the true number of traffic stops that could have occurred could have decreased.

In the University City area, it is home to the University of North Carolina Charlotte which is the second largest university in the University area. The Faculty, Staff, and Students at UNCC were affected by the pandemic as well. On March 11th, 2020, the UNC (University of North Carolina) system had extended their spring break and imposed online classes for all schools. Due to this, UNCC had begun their transition from off campus to being fully remote. Due to the students leaving because of the pandemic, this could have impacted the true number of traffic stops that could have occurred. In addition to the COVID-19 Pandemic being a potential limitation on data analysis, the types of areas in Charlotte (regardless of the pandemic), can have an impact on the number of traffic stops that have occurred in the area. Compared to the southern area of Charlotte, the University city area tends to be more diverse. The South division area of Charlotte has a higher presence of Whites, compared to their racial counterparts. For the University Area, (with a higher level of diversity), there were more stops involving Black drivers than other races in the T3 period as well. This is interesting to note because it can bring into question whether COVID-19 profoundly influenced the number of Traffic stops, or if the

police did not change their methodology due to a widely publicized interaction regarding Law enforcement.

5.2 Policy Implications

Future policies and more extensive studies can be put into place to help strengthen the argument of disproportionality among races, decrease the overall presence of disproportionality among the various racial groups, and to improve Police-citizen interactions. The results of this study serve as a starting point into deeper, stronger arguments for the need for police-citizen reform. One important factor that impacted the data set used in the study was the lack of an identifiable factor for the officers who conducted the stops. With the data, there was not an identifiable method (such as a badge number) to identify the officers in the division. Due to this, there is a high possibility that the officers in the police department may have made multiple stops. In addition to this, in most cases, Traffic officers are responsible for conducting motorist interactions/stops. Because of this, an identifiable method could be put into place to identify the officers who conducted the stop, to make the study easier to understand regarding officer involvement. Aside from the lack of an identifiable method for officers, the data set could be more specific, regarding when the stop occurred, not just the month and year. Not only will this make it more effective for future studies in research, but this will eliminate the sense of secrecy that is seen among police that involves public matters. This will also benefit police-citizen interactions in the future, because it allows a sense of transparency between officers and the citizens that they are required to protect. Based on the results of the study, further laws and policies could be put in place that can require diversity and microaggression training for officers, and police-citizen programs that can improve the overall relationship between the two parties.

5.3 Future Study

Due to the results from this study, it would be beneficial to expand on this in the future. Ideally, the study would be conducted over a span of at least 2 years, have extensive data stemming from two years prior to the year the study will be conducted, and would expand across the state of North Carolina and their corresponding law enforcement agencies. The data sets would contain in-depth Officer and stop data, to have a stronger analysis regarding the relationship between the officers and the drivers they pulled over. For example, the officer data will include a badge number, officer characteristics such as their race, age, years of service, and rank while in the force. Regarding the stop data, it would have the actual date that the stop occurred, along with the corresponding driver characteristics that were included in the stop data previously. The study will use a t-test of proportions to determine if there is disproportionality among the races across the state. The study would also include a comparison between the period before a widely publicized incident occurred (a more extended period before the event), and the time after the incident occurred. With a more extensive study, this can help support the prevalence of disproportionality, as well as giving insight on the overall trends of North Carolina as a whole.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

The prevalence of disproportionality of traffic stops among Black people in the United States is an ongoing issue. This disproportionality relates to bias, and racial profiling, which is often seen within law enforcement agencies. This bias will lead to an overall increase in traffic stops among minority races. As a long-term effect, the disproportionality can increase in certain cases, for instance, following a widely publicized event involving police, as seen with the death of George Floyd. With more research study, and corresponding policies, criminal justice officials will be able to not only identify the problem that causes this disproportionality, but also have methods that can be used in the future to create a sense of change. From these studies and results, the rate of disproportionality should begin to decline, and the police-citizen relationships should improve over time. If we do not continue research on these issues, as well as find methods to improve the relationships between citizens and police, we cannot have a sense of change, and these same issues will continue or possibly worsen as time progresses. As Dr. Martin Luther King jr. stated, “Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere”. So regardless of one’s beliefs, everyone should be treated equally, and officers should uphold themselves to the proper standard, “to protect and serve”.

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