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# "Chickens in the Slaughterhouse" Police-Inflicted Trauma and Mental Health Consequences for an Urban African American LGBTQI+ Community

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**Abstract:** In this paper, we discuss qualitative findings drawn from a larger community-engaged project in a predominantly Black Midwestern city. Data collection for the project, which focused on the effects of policing on the city's African American community, was carried out in collaboration with Black community organizations and an independent police oversight board. Using an intersectional queer politics lens, we present findings from a thematic analysis of field observations that focused on the city's LGBTQI+ community. Major themes that emerged include the social context of Black LGBTQI+ oppression, the criminalization of the Black LGBTQI+ body, and mental health impact of policing experiences. Overall, we found that transgender and gender non-conforming experiences with police were particularly harmful. We conclude with insights into the strategies of resilience and resistance used by the community to navigate the impact police work has on their lived experience. Policy implications of our findings and the importance of queer politics to enable Black LGBTQI+ populations to access services and thrive, rather than survive are also addressed.

**Keywords:** LGBTQI+; policing; race; community-engaged research; police trauma; transgender; mental health

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**Citation:** Jauk-Ajamie, Daniela, Robert L. Peralta, and Courtney Michael. 2024. "Chickens in the Slaughterhouse" Police-Inflicted Trauma and Mental Health Consequences for an Urban African American LGBTQI+ Community. *Social Sciences* 13: 505. https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci13100505

Academic Editor: Elbert P. Almazan

Received: 20 August 2024
Revised: 23 September 2024
Accepted: 24 September 2024
Published: 26 September 2024

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## 1. Introduction

Relationships between LGBTQI+ communities (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, intersex, +the wide range of lived identities beyond heteronormativity) and police have been historically problematic in the US. LGBTQI+ populations have historically been criminalized and biased state violence against LGBTQI+ people by means of law enforcement is still a pervasive problem (Dwyer 2012; Mallory et al. 2015; Mogul et al. 2011; Shields 2021). While a shaky and contested patchwork of laws provides some protection against certain forms of discrimination, there is no nationwide statute that comprehensively and consistently prohibits gender and sexuality-based discrimination (Mallory et al. 2015; National Academies of Sciences 2020). In addition, structural oppression and social exclusion place individuals and groups in social locations that make criminalized behaviors (e.g., homelessness, sex work) unavoidable. In fact, we continue to find LGBTQI+ individuals overrepresented in the US criminal justice system (Kynn et al. 2024; Meyer et al. 2017; Mogul et al. 2011).

LGBTQI+ minorities of color have increased odds of contact with law enforcement. A recent study found that LGBTQI+ youth had 1.86 times the odds of being stopped by police (Schwartz et al. 2022). Anti-Black racism is a compounding factor of structural discrimination. TenEyck et al. (2024) found based on a large national dataset that for the general population there is no racial disparity in terms of police contact, but Black respondents are 92% more likely to experience arrest than White respondents. However, Black

LGBTQI+ individuals experience predatory policing (Gaynor and Blessett 2022; Carbado 2017) and are subsequently targeted for incarceration (Kynn et al. 2024; Mogul et al. 2011; Ritchie and Jones-Brown 2017; B. A. Robinson 2020). Carbado (2017) introduced the term "predatory policing" to refer to law enforcement practices that prioritize revenue generation over public safety and community well-being. This approach often involves aggressive enforcement of minor infractions, excessive fines, and disproportionate targeting of Black and Brown communities. These policing mechanisms simultaneously exploit and increase "hyperincarceration", a mass incarceration pattern that disproportionately targets the poor and racial and ethnic minorities (Wacquant 2010). Law enforcement agencies generally lack appropriate training to sensitively interact with LGBTQI+ citizens (Shields 2021), particularly TGNC individuals who face police bias and police harassment (Avalos and Carrillo 2024; James et al. 2016). Yet research is still scant. Owen (2021) identifies only seven studies that have explicitly analyzed contemporary LGBTQI+ perceptions of the police in the United States. These studies are mostly surveys and focus groups, and the literature calls for more research and other methodologies (Dwyer 2019; Shields 2021).

Our work contributes an ethnographic study to this emerging field and fills a gap in understanding Black LGBTQI+ experiences with police and responses to police trauma. We analyze ethnographic observation data from a community-engaged project using a theoretical framework informed by intersectional (Cho et al. 2013; Hill Collins and Bilge 2020) and radical queer politics (Cohen 1997, 2019) with a focus on making space for the voices of our research participants. Intersectional theory and radical queer politics offer powerful frameworks for analyzing qualitative data, particularly in studies related to identity, power, and social justice. Intersectionality emphasizes the overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage, and it allows us to examine how multiple identities intersect to shape participants' experiences in ways that cannot be fully understood by considering each identity in isolation. Radical queer politics extends beyond traditional LGBTQI+ issues to challenge broader systems of oppression and normative power structures. This approach encourages us to examine how various forms of marginalization interact and consider how even within marginalized groups, there can be hierarchies and exclusions. Together, these theoretical lenses helped us develop a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of our data that evidenced the urgency of centering transgender and gender non-confirming (TGNC) identities and experiences within the Black LGBTQI+ population.

Fear of police is a dominant sentiment, particularly for members of the Black community (Briere and Runtz 2024; Smith Lee and Robinson 2019; Waldron 2020). Scholars have argued that the threat of police violence or murder by the police is a form of collective trauma for the Black community (Waldron 2020) and police violence is a chronic and traumatic stressor particularly for Black men (Smith Lee and Robinson 2019). Briere and Runtz (2024) conducted a study where they asked participants how fearful they would be if the police were in their rearview mirror: most Black participants (56%) reported fear of death by police. Additionally, 31% of Hispanic, 39% of mixed-race or another race, and 26% of Asian participants reported they would be fearful of death by the police compared to 19% of white participants.

The fear of police violence and the experiences of police interactions have impacts on mental health. McLeod et al. (2020) conducted a systematic literature review assessing the mental health outcomes associated with police interactions and found that the use of force during police stops, searches, arrests, killings, and interactions with police more broadly are associated with psychological distress, depressive symptoms, anxiety symptoms, suicidal ideation, and suicide attempts. Most studies (6 of 11) in this research demonstrated a statistically significant association between negative interactions with police and poor mental health symptoms among Black Americans.

Less is known about the relationship between the Black LGBTQI+ community, policing, and mental health. Thusly, our study addresses this gap in the literature. The aims of the study, in coordination with our community partners, were to determine if associations

between police contact/perceived police bias, institutional confidence, mental health and well-being were indirectly observed via field observations of community forums and surveys. The design of the study, including measurement selection, survey development, and fieldwork methods were developed in coordination with our community partners. This process is a central facet of community-engaged research (Key et al. 2019). We used qualitative and quantitative methodological techniques to address our research questions. The specific research question of the study is as follows: Is there an association between perceptions of policing and African American, mental health, well-being, and trust in institutions? This paper only reports results from the qualitative portion of the study.

Below, we first briefly summarize the literature on LGBTQI+ and policing and highlight implications for mental health as important empirical concepts for our work, and then turn to the theoretical framework that guides our analysis. After discussing our methods, we present major themes that emerged from our analysis of LGBTQI+ perceptions of police. We conclude with insights into the strategies of resilience and resistance used by the community to navigate the impact police work has on participant lived existence. We also discuss policy implications of our findings. We highlight the importance of radical and intersectional queer politics to push back against police-inflicted violence toward Black LGBTQI+ populations and to heal trauma through access to LGBTQI+-appropriate services.

### *1.1. The Relationship between the LGBTQI+ Community and Policing in the US*

Law enforcement has a long history of harshly policing codified heteronormative sexual and gender norms in the US. It was not until 2003 that all laws against same-sex sexual activity were invalidated (Weinmeyer 2014). In 2004, beginning with Massachusetts, states began to recognize same-sex marriage. In 2015, same-sex marriage became national law when in the case of Obergefell v. Hodges, the Supreme Court held that same-sex marriage was a fundamental right for the conservatively estimated 9.5 million LGBTQI+ Americans (Mallory et al. 2015). Law enforcement agencies have started to recruit police cadets in the LGBTQI+ community (Elkins 2021). Departments have begun to offer LGBTQI+ sensitivity training, with some providing LGBTQI+ liaisons (Hodge and Sexton 2020). However, research finds that profiling, discrimination, and harassment of LGBTQI+ individuals at the hands of law enforcement officers is still a pervasive problem in the US: trust in police is at best strained (Dwyer 2012; Gaynor and Blessett 2022; Goldberg et al. 2019; Mallory et al. 2015).

While laws about same-sex relationships have been changed and same-sex families have become more mainstream, transphobic attitudes and the over-policing of individuals who transgress norms of "appropriate" gender presentation are rampant (James et al. 2016, 2024; Jauk 2013). In the face of a surging wave of anti-transgender laws, (TGNC) individuals have arguably become a new target of state persecution. An independent research organization tracking bills that impact trans and gender-diverse people across the United States identifies 47 anti-trans bills that have passed in 2024 alone (status July 2024) and tracks a total of 621 bills in 2024, more than any other year on record, which makes 2024 the fifth consecutive record-breaking year for a total number of anti-trans bills considered in the US. An unprecedented 63 bills are currently being considered at the federal level.[1]

LGBTQI+ individuals continue to experience abuse and mistreatment by law enforcement because of sexual or gender identity (Gaynor and Blessett 2022). Law enforcement remains an institution that is characterized by toxic masculinity; its core tenets are reinforced by police unions across the country (Carlson 2020). Research, court cases, and reports show a range of disproportionate verbal harassment, physical assault, and sexual assault for people of color and transgender individuals (Goldberg et al. 2019; James et al. 2016). A recent study by Lambda Legal surveyed 2546 LGBTQI+ people and people living with HIV nationwide about their experiences with police, courts, and detention (Frazer et al. 2023). Over half (57%) of the survey participants had at least one face-to-face encounter with police in the past five years. Of those, nearly half (45%) reported that police engaged in misconduct, such as accusing them of an offense they did not commit (31%), verbally

assaulting them (25%), or sexually harassing them (13%). People of color (58% vs. 37% of white participants), particularly those who were Black (71% vs. 40% of all non-Black participants), were more likely to indicate that they experienced police misconduct, as were those who were living with HIV (61% vs. 38%), those who were not citizens (76% vs. 40%), and those who were TGNC (56% vs. 40%) (Frazer et al. 2023).

Police misconduct against LGBTQI+ populations is difficult to track. The New York City Civilian Complaint Review Board (CCRB 2016) conducted the first quantitative and qualitative assessment performed by a police oversight agency in the United States. The CCRB analyzed allegations of misconduct in 466 complaints filed from 2010 through 2015. After removing allegations that could not be substantiated (discourtesy and verbal harassment being the most common allegations that were difficult to prove), the Review Board (CCRB) substantiated 74 (8%) allegations of misconduct. Public space was the most common location for police misconduct and race played a significant role in the misconduct. When data on victims or alleged victims with unknown ethnicity were removed, 49% of police harassment victims were Black, 34% Hispanic, 16% White, 1% Asian, and less than 1% American Indian (CCRB 2016).

Negative perceptions and experiences of policing also impact trust in the police within LGBTQI+ communities. In the large Lambda Legal study mentioned above, those who had face-to-face contact were less likely to trust the police than those who did not—32% of those who had contact stated they did not trust the police at all, compared to 19% of those who had not had contact (Frazer et al. 2023). Shields (2021) conducted a study to examine under what circumstances LGBTQI+ individuals would or would not seek police assistance and to explore their rationale for not interacting with police. Shields (2021) found that out of 43 participants who discussed police contact, one-third stated they would never seek police assistance. The remaining two-thirds stated they would seek police assistance under specific circumstances such as a medical emergency (32%), in a violent incident (28%), or when there is harassment or threat (24%); others were vague and stated it depended on the situation (19%). Many participants viewed police involvement as a "last resort" effort only reserved for life-or-death situations. For those who did not want to call the police, participants discussed generalized concerns such as prior negative experiences with police or general doubts about the police's ability to be helpful.

However, some participants reflected on how their LGBTQI+ identity directly impacted their rationale for not calling the police, such as fear the police would not take their complaint seriously due to their gender and sexuality, especially in situations such as intimate partner violence or bias against LBGTQI+ members, fear that they will be treated different than cisgender and heterosexual individuals, and perceptions that police are not reliable for assistance. Specifically, TGNC individuals feared being mistreated, misgendered, or labeled as sex workers. Taken together, Shields' (2021) work highlights participants' beliefs about avoiding police except for specific circumstances, their negative opinions and perceptions of police, and their experiences of negative encounters with police. These data support recent research on this issue (Jachimowski et al. 2024).

The 2022 United States Transgender Survey is the largest survey ever conducted to examine the experiences of binary and nonbinary transgender people in the United States, with an unprecedented 92,329 respondents. Nearly half (47%) of respondents reported that they would feel "very uncomfortable" asking the police for help if they needed it, and 26% reported feeling "somewhat uncomfortable". Ten percent (10%) of respondents reported feeling "somewhat comfortable", eight percent felt "very comfortable", and ten percent felt "neutral" about asking the police for help when they needed it. Sixty-two percent (62%) of respondents reported that they were "very uncomfortable" or "somewhat uncomfortable" asking for help from the police when needed because of their gender identity or expression (James et al. 2024). Looking at the results from the first earlier wave of this survey for Black respondents only, rates are significantly higher. Here, 67% of Black respondents said they would feel somewhat or very uncomfortable asking the police for help (James et al. 2016).

Hyperincarceration is another public health problem in relation to LGBTQI+ experiences with criminal justice systems. LGBTQI+ people are incarcerated at a rate approximately three times higher than the already staggering overall U.S. incarceration rate, which is the highest in the world (Meyer et al. 2017). The highest incarceration rate occurs for TGNC people: 47% of Black transgender people, and more than one in five (21%) transgender women overall, are incarcerated during their lifetimes in the world's largest transgender sample (Grant et al. 2011). Data from the recent Lambda report also show hyperincarceration patterns. Over three in ten (31%) had been detained in prison, jail, immigration detention, or juvenile detention in the past five years, including those who were currently detained in prison or jail (17% of all participants) (Frazer et al. 2023).

The harsh realities of police harassment impact the mental health of LGBTQI+ community members. Members of the LGBTQI+ community (35%) are more likely than cisgender and heterosexual (20%) individuals to report fear of being killed by the police. The fear of being killed by police was most prevalent among Black individuals, LGBTQI+ community members, and those who self-reported prior experiences of police aggression (Briere and Runtz 2024). This highlights the relationship between police interactions and negative mental health outcomes, adding to the already strained mental health of LGBTQI+ US Americans to which we now turn.

### *1.2. LGBTQI+ Communities and Mental Health*

Members of the LGBTQI+ community experience notable mental health disparities when compared to non-LGBTQI+ individuals. For LGBTQI+ youth (age 13–24), specifically LGBTQI+ youth of color, non-binary individuals and transgender individuals report greater suicidal ideation and risk, anxiety symptoms, problems with self-esteem, and depressive symptoms (Aranmolate et al. 2017; Hailey et al. 2020; Meanley et al. 2021; The Trevor Project 2023). This population also reports more barriers to accessing mental health care (The Trevor Project 2023). In particular, LGBTQI+ adults are more likely to use substances (e.g., alcohol, illicit drugs, marijuana) (Caba et al. 2024) and evidence points to increased rates of alcohol use disorder (Peralta et al. 2019); they are also more likely to experience major depressive disorders, serious thoughts of suicide or attempt suicide, and serious mental illness compared to those who identify as heterosexual (SAMHSA 2023). LGBTQI+ individuals of color navigate both LGBTQI+-based discrimination and racism that can be overt or more subtle such as microaggressions (Cyrus 2017; Nadal et al. 2017; Satuluri and Nadal 2018; Sutter and Perrin 2016); the cumulative impact of discrimination has direct associations with mental health outcomes. The intersecting burden of racial and sex/gender discrimination is compounded by familial rejection (DeChants et al. 2022). Research has documented the risk of housing insecurity (B. A. Robinson 2018) among members of the LGBTQ+ community experiencing strained familial relations due to gender/sexuality status, which is likely a major stressor contributing to negative mental health outcomes.

Additionally, researchers have explored the multiple privileged and disadvantaged identities of LGBTQ members (Budge et al. 2016). They found that some transgender individuals held privileged identities such as socioeconomic, educational, and racial identities (Budge et al. 2016). Despite their privileged identities, transgender individuals still reported higher than expected negative mental health outcomes such as anxiety symptoms. This is consistent with other literature suggesting transgender individuals navigate a greater prevalence of mental health disorders such as mood and anxiety disorders, eating disorders, and substance use disorders, and they have a greater prevalence of engaging in self-harm and experiencing trauma compared to their cisgender counterparts (Pinna et al. 2022).

While much of the literature on LGBTQI+ focuses on problematic mental health outcomes, some scholars have utilized a strengths-based approach to understand the unique personal and collective strengths members of this community have (Perrin et al. 2020). Perrin et al. (2020) found factors such as LGBTQI+ members' pride in their identity, their self-esteem, resilience, sense of social support, and community consciousness have positive effects on health behaviors. Likewise, community strengths such as a sense

of acceptance within their community are strengthened through the community's open, honest, and vulnerable communication which ultimately impacts their well-being (Hudson and Romanelli 2020). For example, LGBTQI+ members of color discussed how feeling safe and accepted within their communities led to a feeling of interconnectedness and sharing of resources which then led to advocacy and collective action (Hudson and Romanelli 2020), highlighting the strengths and power of the LGBTQI+ community.

## 2. Theoretical Framework

In examining the experiences of Black LGBTQI+ community members, we are operating within an intersectional theoretical framework, and thus the core insight that power relations of race, class, gender, sexuality, and other status and identity markers are not mutually exclusive but interrelated and mutually shaping one another (Hill Collins and Bilge 2020; Cho et al. 2013; Crenshaw 1991). Intersectionality has become the prime lens in sociology for understanding and explaining complexity in the world and human experiences. Since the context of police violence and the data collection took place in the space of community organizing and political formations of resistance against police violence, we look specifically to radically inclusive concepts of queer politics to make sense of our data.

In her landmark article "Punks, Bulldaggers, and Welfare Queens", Cathy Cohen (1997) interrogates the radical potential of queer politics. Starting her theoretical reflections from the experience of racism in lesbian and gay communities, she calls for radical and transformative queer politics that does not center on a homogenized (sexual) identity but on one's relationship to power and one's position within a system of racial capitalism. As introduced by C. Robinson (1983), racial capitalism is the notion that racialized exploitation and capital accumulation are mutually constitutive. Concretely, it means that predominantly white people and institutions use nonwhite people to acquire social and economic gain. We need a nuanced view to theorize race and class within queer movements and allow for intersectional queer politics that do not normalize the idea of stable and static sexual and gender identities. In this context, Cohen (1997, 2019) takes issue with the assimilationist tendencies of LGBTQI+ movements that have been built around the dichotomy between those deemed queer and those deemed heterosexual without challenging heteronormativity. These assimilationist practices often displace queer activists and marginalize them in established LGBTQI+ organizations, and in fact, sometimes emulate a heteronormative (family) idyll that remains unpolitical because it is less transgressive.

In contrast to this approach, Cohen (1997) suggests that the goal of queer politics extends beyond the sexual arena and focuses on how identities of race, class, and/or gender "either enhance or mute the marginalization of queers" (Cohen 1997, p. 448). With Cohen (1997, 2019) we emphasize a commitment to a *range* of sexual and gender identities, and are interested in examining our data through an intersectional lens that recognizes how numerous systems of oppression, including race and class, interact to structure and police the lives of people (Cho et al. 2013; Hill Collins and Bilge 2020). Through this lens, we can look at concrete forms of exploitation and violence rooted in state-regulated institutions such as law enforcement but can at the same time attend to the differential privilege that occurs within and between members of LGBTQI+ communities.

## 3. Methods

### 3.1. Background of the Study

Our study took place in a Midwestern city of about 350,000 inhabitants. Like many American cities, policing continues to be a source of concern within the Black community in our study location. The city is known nationally for its need for police reform, having been investigated by the U.S. Department of Justice. Police brutality and mistreatment by police have affected large swaths of the African American community. Citizens cited antagonization from the police based on race, gender identity, and sex. In the face of these adverse conditions, citizens decided to make legislative efforts to allow their voices to be heard. The city's Division of Police agreed to a consent decree with the U.S. Department of

Justice to allow federal oversight in reducing excessive force, addressing racial bias, and repairing relationships with residents. Consent decrees are legally binding contracts and the federal government's most widely used tool to improve abusive policing in cities. Per the decree, our city under consideration is required to enact dozens of changes, including enhanced training, internal investigations, and de-escalating situations involving mental health and substance abuse.

A community-driven police commission was formed through a ballot measure in addition to state-sponsored mechanisms that had fallen short of the community's expectations for genuine change. The commission decided to offer direct correspondence with community members so that civil society input might help policy change efforts better reflect the needs and desires of the community. To achieve these goals, the commission held forums inviting community members to openly communicate their frustrations and concerns. These forums were the site of data collection for a study on the relationship between policing and health and well-being outcomes based on race (for information on community-engaged research design, see (Fritz and Rhéaume 2014; Key et al. 2019). The four central domains under examination in the larger study were Perceptions of Policing, Mental Health, Trust in Systems (Institutions), and Well-Being.

In the beginning of 2023, the second author was contacted by a community engagement coordinator acting on behalf of an independent community police oversight board with a request to conduct a study examining the association between police contact and mental health and well-being among the city's African American community. The IRB approved research project was a mixed methods study, including survey research methods and qualitative analysis of participant participation from five (5) public community forum conversations, specifically designed for women, men, adolescents, and LGBTQI+ communities in addition to a final forum for the full community. The overarching research question of the study was as follows: *Is there an association between perceptions of policing and African American, mental health, well-being, and trust in institutions?* The project had a comparatively high level of community engagement as our partners not only shaped the research questions and aims but were also present during data collection and provided input during qualitative data analysis meetings. This paper focuses solely on the analyses of qualitative data from the project shedding light on the impact of police-inflicted trauma on the mental health of Black LGBTQI+ citizens.

### *3.2. Data Collection*

Data collection for the larger project occurred between March 2023 and July 2023. The interdisciplinary, multi-racial and multi-ethnic research team consisted of three faculty members, two graduate students, and one undergraduate student. The team collected survey and observational data from participants attending the five public forums. The fifth and final event was open to all community members. The African American community shared flyers about the forums as a recruiting tool. Notably, the original plan was to have four community forums (women, men, adolescents, and a final all-inclusive event), but community members saw the need for a focus on LGBTQI+ individuals, citing their intersectional location and a lack of sense of belonging to the other groups. The fact that the LGBTQI+ event was generated from the community highlights the importance of listening to the community and amplifies the purpose of community-engaged research.

In this paper we focus on the qualitative observation data collected at the community-driven LGBTQI+ event, collected at the LGBTQI+ center in an urban neighborhood. The center was a spacious and airy multi-story building with large window views of a central shopping and dining street in this lively part of the city. The executive director, who had come to greet the research team on the day of the event, shared how important it was to the community that "they are out and very visible right now as the center started approximately 50 years ago in the basement of the same location". It holds symbolic value for the LGBTQI+ community in the city to be out and visible in this chic, modern, and prominent location. The director explained how a lot of yellow and bright colors are used

in the building intentionally, emphasizing the presence of light in the rooms marked by transparent, large glass walls. The design symbolizes a coming out of the shadows and a taking up of urban space, as a large window faces the bustling street.

Six field researchers (of which two identified as gay and one as pansexual) were present to engage in non-participant observation and gather copious field notes from the LGBTQI+ community event based on an agreed-upon observation guide (Roller and Lavrakas 2015; Tracy 2020). The observation guide defined key points of observation and the topics of interest, acted as a reflection tool, and provided a shared understanding of research questions, observation foci, and rigor in data collection.

The event brought into conversation 3 panelists (two nonbinary presenting community organizers of color and one mental health provider of color) and 14 community members, including members of the Community Police Commission (CPC). All handwritten fieldnotes were transcribed and expanded into ethnographic fieldnotes within 36 h (Emerson et al. 2011). The observational data collection was designed to protect participant identity from being disclosed. While names and other identifying information was not collected, observers documented topics and perspectives from participants without referencing their identities. Our qualitative data are not associated with the survey data. Fragments of quotes were captured yet completely de-identified, and we use fictitious pseudonyms for individuals throughout this paper (Emerson et al. 2011; Tracy 2020).

### 3.3. Data Analysis

All fieldnotes and post-observation reflections were entered into a digital dataset utilizing Dedoose qualitative analysis software (version 9.0.90). The analytic strategy for analyzing these data was based on reflexive thematic analysis (Terry and Hayfield 2021). Reflexive thematic analysis is an inductive data analysis strategy that aims to extract emerging themes researchers may not have considered in advance. Thus, (constructed) themes emerge from the data generated through condensing initial codes in iterative coding processes. We established inter-coder reliability by independent coding of material in a first round of data analysis and theory memos that were individually written. Initial individual codes and theory memos were compared in data interpretation workshops. The research team then engaged in focused group coding (with at least two researchers) to address the study's aims and main domains. We utilized Cohen's (1997) recommendations to understand that the community forums we analyzed were made up of multiple intersecting identities which were noted in the coding process. Members of community partners were invited to participate in our online coding meetings so that community members could offer their valuable input. In September 2023, the research team met in person with members of our partner organizations (CPC, Black Lives Matter) to workshop emergent codes and construct more significant themes for the study.

## 4. Results

### 4.1. The Social Context of Black LGBTQI+ Oppression and the "Double Burden" of Discrimination

Within the context of US culture, research documents the marginalization of the LGBTQI+ community, especially among racial and ethnic members of the LGBTQI+ community (Lin 2022). LGBTQI+ folk experience acceptance relationally and often it is context specific. LGBTQI+ folk are rendered invisible or hypervisible by the police, family, the community, and other significant institutions. This raises the question of where do LGBTQI+ people turn for acceptance and support if it is not available in one's family or other community locations? Thus, major social institutions have a role in the oppression of ethno-racial minority members of the LGBTQI+ community. Below, we provide evidence of the discriminatory nature of major social institutions: the police, the family, and the community. The narratives we collected suggest that "Policing", "Family", and "Community" can be problematic spaces for Black queer citizens. According to participants, police make public spaces feel unsafe. Given the absence of a safe space in the family, this often means

nowhere is safe. In addition, we also found that LGBTQI+ people lack access to mental health providers with expertise in working with LGBTQI+ communities.

The lived experiences of our participants were rooted in a social context of oppression and marginalization. While racism was repeatedly discussed as a public health crisis by participants, being of LGBTQI+ status or perceived status presented compounding life challenges. Our LGBTQI+ participants noted that racism and gender discrimination were intertwined and described as a "double burden of discrimination" by participants (also referred to as "double discrimination"). We found that persons were singled out for being Black and also discriminated against because of their LGBTQI+ status not only by police officers but also by family members. To illustrate this, one participant noted "we must be mindful of the fact that experiencing one type of oppression does not mean you fully understand other types of oppression—to be black [is] one thing, to be queer and black is another". Given this social context, an intersectional lens was pertinent for the analysis of our data (Cho et al. 2013; Crenshaw 1991; Hill Collins and Bilge 2020). Participants made clear that an intersectional analysis was needed to understand the lived experience of the Black LGBTQI+ community. One participant noted: "queer identity needs to be understood". LGBTQI+ participants emphasized that scholarship on Black historical trauma is important and available, yet a Black LGBTQI+ historical context needed scholarly attention.

The "double discrimination" problem was mentioned predominantly in instances of police interactions. For example, LGBTQI+ Black individuals reported being "misgendered". Being "misgendered" refers to being addressed with inappropriate gender pronouns based upon sexist/heterosexist assumptions about identity. This double burden was brought up when participants discussed the intersection of being Black and "looking suspicious" in terms of gender presentation. Participants noted that a gender presentation that is non-binary, gender-transgressive, or not discernable as cis-gendered by police, citizens, and communities was reacted to with suspicion, ridicule, and aggression. Police violence toward non-gender conforming individuals can be understood as a form of gender violence because transgressive gender identities and presentations are problematized, misunderstood, and disrespected by state authority with important variations informed by LBGTQI+ status (James et al. 2024; Jauk 2013). One participant noted the gendered and sexualized complexities were associated with violence vulnerability: "A cisgender black person can go home and feel safe, Black and queer don't have this option; they are vulnerable".

Participants alluded to the fact that Black and queer individuals are more prone to police violence not only because they are Black but also because they "look suspicious" to police and to community members as well. The literature suggests there has been a rise in calls to the police from white individuals who perceive Black peoples' behavior as "suspicious" (McNamarah 2019). On several occasions, it was mentioned that policing is not only conducted by police but by members of the general community. Participants said community members at large act as "pseudo" or "para" police by calling in "suspicious" activity, which increases the risk of police interaction. While pseudo-police who call the police on LGBTQI+ members can be of any racial and ethnic group, queer Black folks in the city often perceive a concrete loss of their community of origin because of this informal public policing behavior.

In regard to familial rejection, one participant discussed how queer Black people's "social spheres get smaller and smaller the more they 'come out' due to public and familial discrimination. For those who go through [gender/sex] transition—they become even less acceptable, which stunts their social growth". A major coping mechanism for anti-Black violence we find in our larger data set and in the literature is church community-belonging and faith-based self-help groups (Sorett 2022; White et al. 2020). The Church often exists as an extension of the family. Yet, they are often spaces of homophobia and transphobia. One participant noted: "The Black community is hiding behind religion to protect their behavior, [but it is] hard to protect their neglect of their queer brothers

and sisters". The quote illustrates that the protections offered by faith institutions are not available to the Black Queer community. In fact, faith-based institutions often target LGBTQI+ individuals with religious-based anti-queer teachings and attitudes (Sorett 2022). One participant shared their inner struggles and the contradictions thereof between faith and queer acceptance when they noted they had a transgender child. She shared that religion has a solemn place in her life and her community's life, and people are "not able to throw that away to be fully accepting of them. How do we deal with 'disrespecting God'? This issue tears families apart". When Black LGBTQI+ folks are rejected by their family and community, the economic and livelihood implications can be significant. Housing options provided by family members may no longer be an option which results in a higher risk of being unhoused thus making the Black Queer community vulnerable to near constant police surveillance.

We know that for African American LGBTQI+ youth, social support is an essential form of coping in a racist milieu (Hailey et al. 2020). Specifically, social support in the form of developing a sense of community through either chosen or created families, including other LGBTQI+ peers or elders, is an important form of coping for queer adolescents to navigate the many stressors of inequality (Hailey et al. 2020). Yet, members of the Black LGBTQI+ community often find themselves marginalized by not only their own families but also the larger LBGTQI+ community. Members of the Black LGBTQI+ community can find themselves excluded from the white-dominated queer community and may not identify with white-centered queer spaces. Oftentimes, TGNC folk are erased explicitly from the LGBTQI+ community and its history through misgendering. Our participants reported that they are not only pushed out from their families, but they are also marginalized in the white-dominated LGBTQI+ community and its past. Participants emphasized that although they know that queerness has a history in the US, the full history is less known. One participant said: "we lost queer elders to HIV, Aids, policing, and suicide. We are pushed to the margin, and they expel us, and we are to be grateful for the few liberties that are really just decencies". In this context, participants noted that the erasure of Black LGBTQI+ deaths is an ongoing process due to a lack of accurate death, murder, and manslaughter reporting, which makes it impossible to accurately track the scope of violence against the Black trans community. One participant summarized: "Black/trans/queer individuals are not being remembered accurately in death". Several participants expressed they experienced re-traumatization of police-inflicted violence and gendered violence more broadly because there is a lack of accurate death/murder/manslaughter reporting. The community is well aware that "there is a problem with tracking the scope of violence against the Black trans community", so "Black/trans/queer individuals are not even being remembered accurately in death". Misgendering in the context of crime and mortality statistics is not only harmful on a psychological level but also leads to skewed reporting on LGBTQI+ victimization. Another participant noted: "It's hard to get an accurate count because of the misgendering of folks", which is most relevant for trans individuals.

### *4.2. The Criminalization of the Black LGBTQI+ Body*

Our observations revealed the process by which LGBTQI+ African Americans were socially controlled vis-a-vis their bodies. Respondents provided vivid accounts of how their racialized bodies were suspect thus inviting police contact. The field note below points out how the systemic issue of racialized policing, steeped in historical context, renders the African American body vulnerable to police violence. Our paper title is derived from an in vivo quote from one participant in the excerpt that follows. The quote speaks to the historical context that informs the relationships between police and African American community members.

> Now a woman I call Noel (bright-orange dress, large ornamental earrings) self-identifies as a transgender woman and also mentions that she's older in age, speaks up powerfully, and projects loudly; she speaks probably for around five minutes in a well-crafted, very emotional speech that at some point brings

> herself to tears. She states that what is being said in the room makes her have almost a visceral response. There are so many layers of marginalization, and "at the centerpiece of all these layers are white men with money". She says, "America remains a plantation nation." "Black is being used as a proxy by the police. It is still the capitalist system that uses race as a secondary proxy and organizing principle in this nation" (the audience has a loud response at this point; I hear several "yes"). She says, "you ask what is the impact of police on black population? It is the impact of the slaughterhouse on chickens". (Fieldnotes, DJA, 22 June 2023)

Just as the participant above, several participants are keenly aware of structural oppression in the context of racial capitalism and its many implications in the lives of Black LGBTQI+ folks as causes. The biographical story Noel continued to share in her comment was a story of workplace discrimination and how she continues to fight for equal pay with no success. "I have been to therapy", she says. "No amount of therapy will help me, this is not limited to police, it is in the public sphere". Noel here summarizes what we see emerge in many of the participants' narratives: Black LGBTQI+ bodies and lives are direct and conscious witnesses to the linkage between capitalist racism and increased exposure to state violence through policing (Alexander 2012; Muhammad 2010). The criminalization of the Black LGBTQI+ body is a function of racial capitalism, and the over-policing and mass incarceration of Black bodies are the practical ramifications of these larger social mechanisms (Alexander 2012).

Structural discrimination breaks down into concrete factors such as the criminalization of sex work, as well as poverty and homelessness, placing the queer community at greater risk for surveillance and arrest. The social marginalization becomes a conduit for Black LGBTQI+ individuals to become more visible to law enforcement and prone to police interaction and police bias as "queer folk and especially queer Black people are considered suspicious and profiled as potential sex work[ers]", a phenomenon that has been named "walking while trans" in our data and also in the research literature (Carpenter and Marshall 2017; Gill-Peterson 2023). "They have less resources to protect their privacy", says a participant, alluding to the fact that the coinciding of heightened visibility and lack of privacy put LGBTQI+ community members at risk of police interaction (and police violence). The narratives of lived experiences are reflected in national data: white youth are underrepresented among unhoused LGBTQI+ youth and confined youth populations; Black youth are overrepresented among both groups. Black youth made up just 14 percent of the total youth population in 2014, but 31% of unhoused LGBTQI+ youth population that year and 42% of the confined youth population in 2015 (Griffith 2019).

The criminalization of "walking while trans" relates to a persistent theme we find throughout all narratives, which is the fact that contemporary urban policing criminalizes gender and racial/ethnic minority status more so than normative identities. It is the visual "suspiciousness"—be it a darker skin tone or a gender presentation that is perceived as non-normative—that exposes participants to more negative experiences and subsequent police-inflicted trauma. However, the police are not the only institution that engage in gender policing, as one of the participants, "AJ", made clear. AJ is a non-binary person in their twenties and self-identifies as a "light-skinned" Black community activist with a college degree. AJ points out that their chest and shape are feminine, and often, they are assumed to be lesbian but not gender nonconforming. AJ confirms that their self-presentation is non-normative and attracts attention and states that "queer people look as if they do not belong, and people assume they are suspicious". They understand that the purpose of law enforcement, per definition, is to uphold norms and "police are there to police everything that looks out of place and to protect the status quo", which emphasizes the need to rethink the concept of gender violence more broadly (Jauk 2013).

Police violence and police-inflicted trauma are experienced in these interactions through intentional misgendering (addressing a person with the "wrong" pronouns), verbal harassment as well as invasive searches. One participant said: "bodily invasion

equals trauma". Police in the city are described by participants as engaging in perverse and sexually violent behavior against the Black trans community "out of fear, curiosity, and for power reasons". "The usual protections for cis and hetero people aren't available protections for queer and non-conforming people due to sex/gender discrimination and marginalization", said a participant, clearly naming patriarchy as the system of social control that structures the LGBTQI+ community's experience.

The transgender experience is particularly traumatic as trans-identified individuals are facing solitary confinement upon incarceration due to the lack of appropriate carceral housing options (Coppola 2023). Participants understand the "reasoning" to use this form of imprisonment is to "limit violence" against the black/queer/trans community from other inmates but contend that incarcerated trans individuals are not necessarily safe from violence experienced by corrections officers. Participants note that jail, prison, and solitary confinement hinder social adjustment and social support for the Black/Queer/Trans community, which has been confirmed by the emerging literature. Especially for transgender women, solitary confinement or being placed in a special unit does not reduce sexual harassment, abuse, or strip searches by staff, and it severely jeopardizes mental and physical health (Brooke et al. 2022; Coppola 2023).

Additionally, participants at the event developed a nuanced picture of the workings of racism and sexism paired and enforced though state-sponsored sanctions and violence. Along the lines of intersectional thought that contends the simultaneity of privilege and oppression (Crenshaw 1991; Hill Collins and Bilge 2020), several participants alluded to the fact that "Black people become part of the system and carry out the oppressive behavior on behalf of white supremacy . . . they try to become them", as an older participant summarizes. This points to the fact that neither Black nor LGBTQI+ police officers are a guarantee for police culture to change as power structures are seen as rooted in the political system (see also Cobbina 2019). "We have to look up to black officials, but they do the same thing to me as the whites. We have very few allies", said a participant in their 60s. They particularly criticized the "hypocrisy of the situation [that] black democrats progressives are being a party to the problem". The participant became emotional and shared they were motivated to attend the event so they could bring about change by sharing their experience and "make life better for the other for the new generation".

### *4.3. Mental Health Impact of Policing Experiences*

Direct exposure to intentional misgendering, verbal harassment, and invasive searches has a direct impact on long-term mental health according to participants. Participants described knowing other LGBTQI+ members who experienced negative encounters with police, such as being accused of soliciting or criminalized for sex work. They perceive these encounters as a source of trauma, and they associate mental health consequences such as pervasive fear and anxiety with these traumatic experiences (Briere and Runtz 2024). The community is aware of how indirect and direct exposures to policing behaviors are sources of trauma. Discriminatory policing (i.e., unnecessary aggression, over-policing) and the greater likelihood of being stopped, searched, and shot are examples of discriminatory policing (Pierson et al. 2020; Hoekstra and Sloan 2022). The mental health implications associated with these exposures have been found to meet the criteria for trauma as specified in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 5th edition (DSM-5) and to result in PTSD (Smith Lee and Robinson 2019; Heisler et al. 2021) as participants noted. This points to the higher rates of fear of police among this already marginalized community.

Participants are aware of the impact these negative experiences have on their mental health, and several participants expressed a desire to seek mental health resources. However, participants viewed the mental health resources available to them as a "sprinkle of options" given the lack of "culturally competent" and "inclusive" care. Participants described barriers to accessing mental health treatment consistent with the prior literature: cost of mental health treatment; concerns about stigma; providers' lack of knowledge about the LGBTQI+ community's unique mental health needs; and the lack of services specifically

for their community (Eliason and Hughes 2004; Shipherd et al. 2010; Peralta and Jauk 2011; Williams and Fish 2020). Participants are keenly aware of when providers claim to be "inclusive" yet lack knowledge about their community, as exemplified by one participant's statement: "They want to say they are inclusive. . .but when you go in there you're treated like it's a phase like this is something you're going through that will change." Several participants described having to "teach their therapist" about pronouns (and often were misgendered) or teach therapists about their gender identity. As one participant reflected, "How much can you care about my well-being when you can't even get my basic identity qualifiers right?" Participants also recalled instances of "invasive questioning" in therapy, such as being asked about their "sexual life in unnecessary length" when this was not related to their presenting concern for treatment. Given these negative experiences, it is unsurprising that participants actively seek providers who are "demonstrated allies" or "vocal" allies that explicitly state their allyship and their knowledge about working with this community. Unfortunately, many of these "demonstrated allies" are not available for them in the mental health providers within their city.

Participants reflected on other ways they seek support for their mental health. They described the importance of relying on themselves as one participant stated they learned to navigate these negative experiences with mental health providers by becoming "a very strong self-advocate". This points to how members of the community must take the additional burden of mental health support on themselves due to a lack of mental health providers who have the skills to support them. Participants also described a need to serve as their own source of support given the lack of support within their racial community, such as within Black churches or their Black families, citing how these spaces are not "necessarily safe" for Black LGBTQI+ members. Black LGBTQI+ members may utilize more informal support for their mental health needs (Worrell et al. 2022).

Lastly, there is also an emotional cost and burden associated with engaging in activism work, especially for those of minority backgrounds, specifically transgender and non-white individuals (Pepin-Neff and Wynter 2020). The participants highlighted this as they described the work associated with reporting these negative experiences and working to educate others as "emotionally, physically, and psychologically draining". They shared that there is a level of "courage" needed for members of their community to report these negative experiences, yet when they do report, they are often met with "problematic binary forms" (i.e., official documents or forms that only use she/her or he/him language), or they are consistently and incorrectly referred to as "ma'am" or "sir". They acknowledged how these can appear seemingly subtle, but navigating these encounters over and over can have a cumulative impact (Arora et al. 2022).

## 5. Discussion

In this paper, we documented the many ways the Black LGBTQI+ participants found themselves living with a "double burden" of discrimination at the intersection of being Black and queer-identifying and queer-presenting. Homophobia and transphobia in a racialized capitalist context severely restrict employment and housing options, including limiting the support from communities of origin. Participants are keenly aware of structural oppression and of how factors such as the criminalization of sex work, poverty, and lack of shelter place the LGBTQI+ community at risk of direct police violence. The lived experiences we found empirically substantiate Cohen's (1997) calls for queer politics that reflect accounting for differences and solidarities within the queer community and stand up against the victimization of Black trans individuals. Our data show what participants have called the "double burden" of being Black and queer, is even more complex and harmful when it becomes what we might call the "triple burden" of being Black, queer, and looking "suspicious" in terms of gender presentation. This intersectional lens helps to differentiate and develop more focused harm reduction and repair policies and practices.

### 5.1. Policy Recommendations

To effectively address the multiple ways in which gender identity and presentation, sexualities, and race are intersectionality policed, law enforcement needs strong departmental policies that provide guidance on nondiscrimination when responding to requests for service, forms of personal address and search, and detention practices consistent with gender identity, confidentiality, and access to gender-affirming medical treatment while in police custody. Ritchie and Jones-Brown (2017) examined the policies of 36 police departments across the United States, including a majority of the nation's top 30 law enforcement agencies based on the number of officers on the force. Each of the 36 departments in the sample had a policy prohibiting racial profiling. However, just over a quarter ($n$ = 10) prohibited profiling based on gender and sexual orientation; only 14% ($n$ = 5) prohibited profiling based on gender identity or expression. We found that the police department in the city in which the study took place has an anti-discrimination policy including gender identity in place. The community and oversight board need to ensure it is being circulated, promoted, and enforced. Training of police officers (including support staff such as dispatchers) is necessary and we suggest that training include local LGBTQI+ professionals and activists who should be remunerated for their expertise.

The fear of police harassment and entrapment is traumatizing to participants who already face a lack of adequate mental health resources. Participants noted the barriers to services and the limited number of affirming services available. Funding mechanisms and start-up initiatives need to be provided by the city to increase the number of LGBTQI+ providers. This does not necessarily mean that these providers need to be queer or Black identifying, but it does support the need for mental health providers with a specialized focus on LGBTQI+ affirming care. To address the systemic problem of police-inflicted trauma on the LGBTQI+ community, it will be necessary to build coalitions with folks outside the LGBTQI+ context. Cohen (1997) called for an analysis that interrogates heteronormativity and extends coalition work to heterosexuals that live outside heteronormativity. Cohen makes clear that she is "not willing to embrace every queer as my marginalized political ally. In the same way, I do not assume that shared racial, gender, and/or class position or identity guarantees or produces similar political commitments" (Cohen 1997, p. 458). Along the lines of Cohen (1997, 2019), we argue here for a destabilization of identity categories and the development of broad coalitions to mitigate the harm done through police violence and systemic discrimination. We need a "queer politics of positionality" (Cohen 2019, p. 143), that is less defined by bodies and practices, but instead embraces solidarity and coalition building on a broader level. Broad coalitions are also necessary to reach beyond the city and fight back against the repressive transphobic state and reach beyond the state to cause change on a federal level. A federal Equality Act would have provided comprehensive protection of LGBTQI+ individuals but stalled (Migdon 2024), and instead, large parts of the US are focused on anti-transgender legislation (American Civil Liberties Union 2024).

### 5.2. Resilience and Resistance

Considering multiple threats, participants showed resilience and resistance, pointed to ways forward, and offered concrete policy recommendations. The concept of resilience has been complicated in the context of anti-racist research, as traditional resilience research is often "color-blind" and can put the blame on racial and ethnic minorities for not coping appropriately with racial oppression (Sims-Schouten and Gilbert 2022). We look to avoid a reductionist, moralistic, and isolated notion of resilience that rests upon the compliance of individuals as the narratives speak to a deep understanding of structural oppression, political awareness, and social science that is utilized as a tool for transformation. One of Cohen's (1997, p. 451) criticisms is that queer activists seem to operate in a historical and ideological vacuum and focus on "queer" issues while racism, sexual and economic exploitation are not addressed, thus a queer revolution is missing. Many of our participants were very articulate about the state of racial capitalism that places them at risk of violence and forces them into states of surviving, rather than thriving.

We noted above that participants are keenly aware of structural oppression in the context of racial capitalism and its many implications in the lives of Black LGBTQI+ folk as causes. Social science terminology has seeped into the community and participants use these tools to advocate on their own behalf. For example, terms such as "intersectionality" (Crenshaw 1991; Hill Collins and Bilge 2020), "social determinants of health", (Office of Disease Prevention and Health 2024) and "weathering" (Geronimus 2023) were used throughout the conversation forums and applied to the specific urban context. Research findings have made their way back to the community who makes sense of their experience in more empowering ways. For instance, one participant used the term "weathering" and discussed how stressors can alter one's DNA (Geronimus 2023). Participants connected the concept of weathering to the familiar proverb "black don't crack" and argued that this proverb may be inaccurate as the chronic stressors the Black community faces may impact their bodies physically and mentally. They highlighted the need for addressing social determinants of health in their community. This reflects how participants made meaning of constructs from the literature and applied these constructs to their own lived experiences.

One participant reflected on the "burdensome" nature of consistently having to educate others, especially in situations where they have already been victimized, and they are then interacting with those who are supposed to help, and stated, "The burden of patience and kindness shouldn't lie on the oppressed". This exemplifies why many participants described feeling "exhausted, hopeless, and despair" about reporting their negative experiences to officials. One participant summed this up by asking the audience, "Why would I want to go through that?". Yet, panelists at the LGBTQI+ forum "went through that" and thus opened a space for community members to share their experiences, and to educate allies that were present at the forum. Such actions are important steps necessary for social change to occur. A participant commented publicly that he was not aware of the issue of misgendering and thanked the panelists for the education. An employee of the city who works for the Office of Professional Standards (OPS) directly took notes and promised to change the official police complaint form to include more options for gender identification and proactively gathered contact information to further consult with the panelists on improving processes. These examples highlight how education can be used as a tool for social change.

### *5.3. Limitations and Strengths*

This study was exploratory in nature; thus, it is important to discuss the limitations of the study. As a qualitative community-engaged project, we drew on a small convenience sample that captures mostly already engaged and politically active Black community members. While we did rely on Cohen (1997) to look at a range of identities among participants, socio economic class is a critically important facet of inequality that needs to be further examined. Future studies must enhance recruitment efforts by including hard to reach Black and LGBTQI+ communities to represent a broader spectrum of the city's population, including at-risk youth, unhoused populations and the formerly incarcerated. Another limitation is that our study was not specific to police violence against the LGBYQI+ community, yet our findings clearly showed that more research needs to be done that focuses on police-inflicted violence against transgender individuals. It would be necessary to follow up with in depth interviews to more accurately capture the impact of police interaction and police violence as well as the needs of LGBTQI+ individuals. This emerging qualitative research is part of a larger study that included surveys and scales on experience of police violence, substance use, and mental health, but are beyond the scope of this study. Future studies should include quantitative data and random sampling methods to ensure a wider range of perspectives and allow for more robust evidence and opportunities for triangulation of data.

Our aim to utilize systematic data collection techniques at the events yielded helpful and informative data. The use of multiple researchers at each event and the group coding process provided checks on theme development and interpretation of the qualitative

data. The goal of qualitative research is not to test hypotheses or to establish statistical patterns but to explore issues and concerns, and to provide in-depth insight about the lived experience of participants that may not be captured by surveys. Also, because the researchers only *observed* the events, they did not influence or manipulate the flow or content of conversations which is an advantage that ensures that the findings are grounded in the specific social and cultural settings as they naturally unfolded. In such a setting, participants are the drivers of what topics and concerns they want to highlight in a conversation. Another strength of qualitative work was that each observation was analyzed by different researchers who then discussed the codes and agreed upon the major common themes and sub-themes. This process facilitates intersubjectivity and a shared interpretative understanding of the meaning of interactions of individuals. The method of collaborative coding is useful for exploring nuances of sensitive topics and utilizes the researcher's backgrounds for generating theory and findings. Because the research was diverse in terms of ethnicity, race, nationality, gender, and sexuality, our unique viewpoints provided significant insight into the analytic process. Finally, qualitative data collection really offers an opportunity to directly collect policy recommendations "from the ground" and amplify voices and lives that are most affected by policing in our target city.

Overall, we see community-engaged research and innovative participatory formats such as the conversation forums as a way forward for understanding the lived experiences of marginalized communities. The question for researchers must be how we can better understand the social processes of resilience and resistance that community members use to navigate the impact of police violence. A concluding remark for this paper and a starting point for social change, is, in the words of a panelist: "Light a fire under your own ass".

**Author Contributions:** Conceptualization, D.J.-A. and R.L.P.; methodology, R.L.P., D.J.-A. and C.M.; software, D.J.-A.; validation, R.L.P., D.J.-A. and C.M.; formal analysis, R.L.P., D.J.-A. and C.M.; investigation, R.L.P., D.J.-A. and C.M.; resources, R.L.P.; data curation, R.L.P.; writing—original draft preparation, D.J.-A., R.L.P. and C.M.; writing—review and editing, D.J.-A., R.L.P. and C.M.; supervision, R.L.P. and D.J.-A.; project administration, R.L.P.; funding acquisition, R.L.P. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

**Funding:** This study was provided by The Woodruff Foundation.

**Institutional Review Board Statement:** The study was conducted in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki, and approved by the Institutional Review Board of The University of Akron (protocol code 20230305-C approved on 13 April 2023).

**Informed Consent Statement:** Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study.

**Data Availability Statement:** Data unavailable due to privacy or ethical restrictions.

**Acknowledgments:** We thank the attendees of the public forums, our community partners, Juan Xi, Auriel Jasper-Morris, and Noah Smith for their research support and Kathryn Feltey for valuable comments on earlier drafts of this manuscript.

**Conflicts of Interest:** The authors declare no conflict of interest.

## Notes

[1] For updated numbers, see https://translegislation.com/ (accessed on 1 September 2024).

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