An Investigation Of The Unintended Consequences Of Florida’s Stand Your Ground Law And Leadership’s Role In Both Implementing The Law And Revising It

Anthony Keel

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.nl.edu/diss

Part of the Criminal Law Commons, and the Second Amendment Commons

Recommended Citation
Keel, Anthony, "An Investigation Of The Unintended Consequences Of Florida’s Stand Your Ground Law And Leadership’s Role In Both Implementing The Law And Revising It" (2022). Dissertations. 693. https://digitalcommons.nl.edu/diss/693

This Dissertation - Public Access is brought to you for free and open access by Digital Commons@NLU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons@NLU. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@nl.edu.
AN INVESTIGATION OF THE UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES OF FLORIDA’S STAND YOUR GROUND LAW AND LEADERSHIP’S ROLE IN BOTH IMPLEMENTING THE LAW AND REVISING IT

Doctoral Dissertation Research

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of
National Louis University, Tampa
College of Professional Studies and Advancement

In Partial Fulfillment of
The Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Education
Organizational Leadership

By
Anthony James Keel

September 2022
AN INVESTIGATION OF THE UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES OF FLORIDA’S
STAND YOUR GROUND LAW AND LEADERSHIP’S ROLE IN BOTH
IMPLEMENTING THE LAW AND REVISING IT

Copyright © 2022
Anthony James Keel
All rights reserved
AN INVESTIGATION OF THE UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES OF FLORIDA’S
STAND YOUR GROUND LAW AND LEADERSHIP’S ROLE IN BOTH
IMPLEMENTING THE LAW AND REVISING IT

Doctoral Dissertation Research

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of

National Louis University, Tampa

College of Professional Studies and Advancement

In Partial Fulfillment of

The Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Organizational Leadership

By

Anthony James Keel

Dissertation Committee Approval:

Marguerite Chabau, PhD, Chair

Kathleen Cornett, PhD, Member

9/13/2022
Date
ABSTRACT

The State of Florida has become a negative representation of the Stand Your Ground Law due to the three unintended consequences which developed since that law was passed in 2005. They are the disparity of African American incarceration rates when the law is applied, the increase in justifiable homicides, and the exponential increase in concealed carry permits. The intent of this qualitative research study was to inspire the leadership of the state of Florida to actively support and participate in reexamining, reassessing, and revising the Stand Your Ground Law. The literature review suggested that the law is ambiguous because it fails to fit every possible case scenario of justifiable homicide and that there is a relationship between the law and the increase of both justifiable homicide and concealed weapon permits. Additionally, the literature review suggested that racial bias occurs when the Stand Your Ground Law is interpreted. The research design for this study utilized the phenomenological approach, which was employed to enable the usage of diversified data sources which were necessary for collecting the lived experiences and perspectives of the participants of this study.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First and foremost, praises and thanks to God Almighty, for His blessings throughout my research which enabled me to complete my study successfully. Secondly, I am extending my wholehearted thanks to my wife, Silai, for her patience and putting her life on hold so that I could complete this life’s goal. Without you Silai, I could not have made it to this victorious point. I would also like to express my sincere appreciation to my dissertation chair, Dr. Marguerite Chabau, for supporting me while conducting research and providing valuable guidance. She did not give up on me when I was on the edge of throwing in the chips. Her motivation has deeply encouraged me. Additionally, I would like to say thank you to my committee member, Dr. Kathleen Cornett. A very special thanks to National Louis University for providing me an opportunity to complete my degree after the closure of Argosy University. My thanks also to my family, friends, and coworkers for giving me words of encouragement and prayers during this difficult process.

I am exceptionally grateful to my parents, James (deceased) and Clara Keel, for their prayers, love, sacrifices, caring, and for preparing me for my future. I am very thankful for my daughters for their love, understanding, prayers, and continuing support to complete this research work. Also, I express my thanks to my sister, brother, sisters-in-law, brother-in-law, and son-in-law for their support and constant prayers.
DEDICATION

I dedicate my dissertation study to my wife, Silai, because without your understanding, support, and love, I would not have made it through this journey. A special appreciation to my loving parents, James (deceased) and Clara Keel, whose words of encouragement motivated me to achieve whatever I would set my mind to throughout my life. My sister, Phyllis, brother, Kenny, daughters Portia and Ciarra, and son-in-law Manny. I also dedicate this dissertation to my church family who have prayed and supported me throughout the process. I dedicate this study to Dr. Chabau, who has helped me through the many obstacles that were placed in front me. I dedicate this work and give special thanks to my second mom, Lois, who offered words of encouragement every time we spoke. Finally, I dedicate this dissertation to all of my family and friends who kept me motivated throughout the entire doctorate program.
**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

LIST OF TABLES ................................................................................................................................. ix
LIST OF FIGURES ................................................................................................................................. x
LIST OF APPENDICES .......................................................................................................................... xi

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION ........................................................................................................ 1
  General Statement ................................................................................................................................. 1
  Problem Background ............................................................................................................................. 3
  The Problem ........................................................................................................................................ 3
  High-Profile Homicides of Florida African American Young Men ...................................................... 8
  Purpose of the Study ............................................................................................................................. 10
  Conceptual Frameworks ....................................................................................................................... 11
  Definitions of Terms ............................................................................................................................. 15
  Significance of the Study ....................................................................................................................... 18
  Methodology ....................................................................................................................................... 19
  Chapter Summary ............................................................................................................................... 22

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW .............................................................................................. 24
  Race and Justifiable Homicide .............................................................................................................. 25
  Domestic Abuse and Self-Defense Laws ............................................................................................. 33
  The Unintended Ramifications of the Stand Your Ground Law ............................................................ 55
  Summary ............................................................................................................................................ 58

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY: RESEARCH DESIGN .............................................................. 61
  Purpose of the Study ............................................................................................................................. 61
  Research Question ............................................................................................................................... 62
  Methodology Selected ......................................................................................................................... 62
  Population .......................................................................................................................................... 62
  Instrumentation .................................................................................................................................. 65
  Process Followed ................................................................................................................................. 66
  Confidentiality and Anonymity ........................................................................................................... 67
  Focus Group ...................................................................................................................................... 69
  Data Collection and Analysis ............................................................................................................. 71
  Coding and Classifying ....................................................................................................................... 73
  Categorizing and Labeling .................................................................................................................. 73
  Reliability .......................................................................................................................................... 74
  Ethical Research ................................................................................................................................. 75
  Methodological Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations ............................................................. 76
  Conclusion ......................................................................................................................................... 80

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS ................................................................................................................. 82
  Purpose ............................................................................................................................................. 82
  Participant Interviews ......................................................................................................................... 82
  Recording Data .................................................................................................................................. 82
  Sample Description ............................................................................................................................ 83
  Participants Demographics ............................................................................................................... 83
  Triangulation ...................................................................................................................................... 84
  Results ............................................................................................................................................... 84
  Theme #1 – Purpose ............................................................................................................................. 86
  Theme #2 – Necessity .......................................................................................................................... 87
Theme #3 – Improve or Modify ................................................................. 89
Theme #4 – Reasons and Motivation .................................................... 91
Theme #5 – Right Action to Take .......................................................... 93
Theme #6 – Understanding the Law ...................................................... 95
Theme #7 – Safer or less safe ............................................................... 96
Theme #8 – Short and Long Term .......................................................... 99
Theme #9 – Requirements for Political Leadership Success .................... 101
Theme #10 – Recommendations .......................................................... 103
Theme #11 – Helps or Hinders .............................................................. 106
Theme #12 – Mitigation or Elimination ............................................... 108
Theme #13 – Equity ............................................................................. 110
Theme #14 – Concealed Weapon Carry ................................................. 115
Theme #15 – Right to Keep and Bear Arms ......................................... 117
Focus Group Results ........................................................................... 120
Summary of Findings ........................................................................... 138
Focus Group ......................................................................................... 142

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS .... 145
Discussion .......................................................................................... 147
Significant Findings ............................................................................ 148
Recommendations for the Florida State Legislators ............................... 150
Recommendations for Future Research ............................................... 153
Conclusion ......................................................................................... 156

REFERENCES ...................................................................................... 160

APPENDICES ....................................................................................... 178
LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Participant Demographics.................................................................84

Table 2. Themes of Interview Questions ...........................................................85

Table 3. Themes of Focus Group Questions.......................................................120
# LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Trayvon Martin........................................................................................................29
Figure 2. Chad Oulson ............................................................................................................31
Figure 3. Bill Creation, Advancement, and Passage Process ....................................................50
Figure 4. Stages and Steps for Transcribing ..........................................................................72
Figure 5. Q1 – Theme: Purpose ..............................................................................................87
Figure 6. Q2 – Theme: Necessity ............................................................................................89
Figure 7. Q3 – Theme: Improve or Modify ............................................................................91
Figure 8. Q4 – Theme: Reason and Motivations ..................................................................93
Figure 9. Q5 – Theme: Reasons and Motivation ..................................................................94
Figure 10. Q6 – Theme: Understanding the Law .................................................................96
Figure 11. Q7 – Theme: Safer or Less Safe .........................................................................99
Figure 12. Q8 – Theme: Short and Long Term ....................................................................101
Figure 13. Q9 – Theme: Short and Long Term ....................................................................103
Figure 14. Q10 – Theme: Recommendations ....................................................................106
Figure 15. Q11 – Theme: Helps or Hinders Law Enforcement and Judicial System ..........108
Figure 16. Q12 – Theme: Mitigation or Elimination ...............................................................110
Figure 17. Q13 – Theme: Equity .............................................................................................115
Figure 18. Q14 – Theme: Concealed Weapon Carry .............................................................116
Figure 19. Q15 – Theme: Right to Keep and Bear Arms .......................................................120
LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix A. Interview Protocol Guide ................................................................. 179

Appendix B. Individual Interview Questions ....................................................... 181

Appendix C. Focus Group Introduction and Discussion Questions ...................... 185

Appendix D. Letter of Informed Consent for Individual Interviewees .................... 188

Appendix E. Letter of Informed Consent for Focus Group Participants .................. 192

Appendix F. Recruitment Email ............................................................................ 196

Appendix G. Debriefing for Interview Participants .............................................. 198

Appendix H. Debriefing for Focus Group Participants ........................................ 200

Appendix I. Transcript Review Email ................................................................. 202

Appendix J. CITI Completion Report ................................................................... 204

Appendix K. IRB Approval Letter ........................................................................ 207
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

General Statement

The Florida Stand Your Ground Law has been an issue of contention over the 16 years of the law’s existence. The essence of the problem is that, in 2005, the State of Florida legislators, the state’s leadership, passed the law, which has been proven and supported by evidence in this study, to produce three unforeseen and unintended consequences which have far reaching effects on the citizens of the state. The three effects are (a) the disparity of African American incarceration rates when the law is applied, (b) the increase in justifiable homicides, and (c) the exponential increase in concealed carry permits. There are additional complexities of the Stand Your Ground Law which are its ambiguity, misapplication, and the interpretation of the law, all of which have affected Florida’s citizens.

The World Population Review (2021) illustrated that there are currently 38 states that have passed the Stand Your Ground Law throughout the country. Examining the Stand Your Ground Law’s disadvantages on society as a whole, Sweeney's (2016) study revealed that those laws have resulted in producing a negative impact on society. That research provided four definitive reasons for the negative impact. First, Stand Your Ground Laws disregard the common-law factor of necessity that customarily provides a check on unwarranted self-defense. Common-law is defined as “judicial decisions based on custom and precedent, unwritten in statute or code, and constituting the basis of the English legal system and the system in all of the U.S. except Louisiana” (Merriam-Webster, 2020, para. 1).

Secondly, Sweeney (2016) pointed out that the Stand Your Ground Laws have produced presumptions that undo the significant discretionary powers of judges, prosecutors, and law enforcement officers. Third, there is the possibility that Stand Your Ground Laws may have
increased violent crime. Lastly, Sweeney’s (2016) research revealed that the movement of passing a state Stand Your Ground Law has continued to experience a large degree of political success because of the method of making violent street crimes a political issue and making effective use of the public’s fear of becoming a victim, as well as the public’s mistrust of the criminal justice system.

The Florida federal and state legislative leaders play an important role in the decision-making that effects all Florida citizens. Valero (2015) illustrated the various theories of leadership and implied that public managers can choose to exercise several of them. The leadership approach a public servant presents matters, because in that environment, some methods are believed to be more successful than others. What makes some approaches more successful than others is there are three attributes that leaders must have (Valero, 2015). The first is they should possess a clear comprehension of their environment and an awareness of their own strengths and weaknesses in association to that environment.

The second attribute, according to Valero (2015), is leaders should have knowledge that there are several types of leadership styles, and one may be more appropriate to achieving success, in particular circumstances, than another. As an example, in the case of situational leadership, the leader’s style is dependent on the competence and commitment of those who follow that leader. Finally, the last attribute described by Valero (2015) is that leaders should be resolute and establish sensible goals for an organization, for the members of that organization and take the initiative in achieving those various goals.

Khoshhal and Guraya’s (2016) study confirmed Valero’s (2015) research on leadership attributes. They stated that leaders must have the ability to clearly communicate a roadmap and to inspire followers to concentrate on accomplishing their goals and possess the ability to get
exceptional achievement from average people. Furthermore, they believed that leadership is developed and learned through different experiences, rather than being an inherent or natural ability.

**Problem Background**

Florida’s brief history of the Stand Your Ground Law and the issue of justifiable homicide has become problematic throughout the state. In addition to the three main unintended consequences, the ambiguity of the law makes interpretation and implementation difficult for Florida’s law enforcement to come to the correct decision when arresting individuals who have allegedly killed another person in the name of self-defense. Furthermore, despite the ambiguities of the law, the leaders of the state, the legislators moved forward with their decision to pass the law, seemingly without fully envisioning or accommodating for any potential negative outcomes.

**The Problem**

When the law was created by conservative legislators and signed by a conservative Governor, no specific strategy or practice to implement the Stand Your Ground Law accompanied its passage. Since the implementation of the law in 2005, three issues have arisen. The first is the increased number of African Americans who are incarcerated in comparison to Whites, under that law. Based on the document titled United States Census, 2018 ACS 1 year Estimated Detailed, in the Tables regarding the state of Florida, the estimated number of White Floridians stood at 15,736,873, while the number of African Americans totaled 3,252,588. This statistic demonstrated there was a ratio of 35 White Floridians for every one African American.

The second unintended issue arising from the law’s passage is that justifiable homicide has exponentially increased within the state. According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention’s Web-based Injury Statistics Query and Reporting System (WISQARS Data
Visualization, 2020), the Florida firearm murder rate from 2006 to 2016 totaled 11,101 people who were killed. The Florida Department of Law Enforcement (2018) reported that, of the 1,303 Supplemental Homicide Reports completed in the year 2018, 125 offenses were characterized as justifiable homicide. Humphreys et al.’s (2017) study indicated that passage of the Stand Your Ground Law was associated with a 31.6% increase in firearm homicide rates and a 24.4% increase in overall homicide rates from 2005 up to 2014.

Additionally, along with the simultaneous increase in the number of justifiable homicides in the State of Florida, there has been a substantial increase in the number of Florida citizens who have obtained concealed weapon permits. The Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (2019) reported that the implementation of Florida’s Stand Your Ground Law was associated with a total of 439,218 concealed permits requested by and granted to Floridians.

The Gifford Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence (2018) leads the nation in policy organization of gun violence prevention and is committed to examining, writing, endorsing, and defending established programs and laws. The organization stated that, since the signing of the Stand Your Ground Law, the overall number of individuals requesting concealed weapons permits in the United States tripled. According to Lott (2019), of the Crime Prevention Research Center, as of September 2019, 18.66 million people possessed concealed handgun permits in the United States.

**The Cause for the Increase in Justifiable Homicide**

There are several rationales for the increase of justifiable homicides since the signing of the 2005 Stand Your Ground Law in Florida. (Every town for Gun Safety Support Fund provides reasons for those increases. The organization's purpose is to seek to enhance the understanding of the reasons for gun violence and provide the means to decrease the violence by creating innovative
research to establish evidence-based policies. Additionally, their intent is to convey that expertise in the courts and in the court of public opinion (“About,” 2020). The organization suggested that the law overturned hundreds of years of traditional self-defense policies and threatened the safety of the public. The organization additionally stated that the law also supports armed vigilantism and the authority to kill another in a public space when an individual could easily walk away from a threat.

**Gun Homicides by Race in the State of Florida**

Since the inception of the 2005 Stand Your Ground Law, several Floridians have been killed as a result of firearm use in the name of self-defense. From a racial perspective, the most recent statistics from the Florida Department of Law Enforcement Supplemental Homicide Report (2018) pointed out that 66 White Floridians were killed in justifiable homicide incidents. African American Floridians accounted for 41 of the individuals killed in that type of occurrence. However, based on the data from the U.S. Census Bureau, the estimated total population of Whites in the state of Florida stood at 77.3%, as compared to African Americans that totaled 16.9% (“U.S. Census Bureau Quick Facts, Florida,” 2019). When conducting a specific examination of Floridian Whites and Floridian African Americans who were killed in justifiable homicides incidents, the percentage of Whites killed was found to be 0.0004% of the 16,602,290 population. In comparison, the percentage of African Americans stood at 0.0005% of their total 3,651,215 population. Therefore, the number of Whites killed in justifiable homicide versus the number of African Americans killed illustrates that many more African Americans were killed, based on the ratios of the two populations. The reasoning for bringing this issue into focus in this research is that communities of color, specifically African Americans, bear the
burden of injustice that Florida’s Stand Your Ground Law unintentionally produced, due to decisions made by the State’s leadership.

Based on Ackermann et al.’s (2015) study, a significant predictor of a stand your ground incident is the race of the victim. The accused attacker is twice as likely to be found guilty in a case where White victims are involved compared to cases that involve non-White victims. The results of Ackermann et al.’s research detailed the findings that Florida’s Stand Your Ground legislation has a measurable racial bias that shows compassion to the perpetrator in convictions if the victim is non-White, which offers proof that under the law, there is unequal treatment of victims, as well as perpetrators of color. Furthermore, Ackermann et al.’s (2015) study suggested that, rather than trying to conceal the results of the Stand Your Ground Law, as was done in Florida, those states that have the Stand Your Ground Laws must produce the same analyses to see if their issues are similar to those in Florida and should remedy any injustices that are found.

Lathrop and Flagg (2017), who are both crime data reporters for the Marshall Project, revealed that when a Black man is killed by a White man in the United States, the killer frequently faces no legal consequences. The reporters’ study did not examine the perspective of an African American killing a White person and the implications of that action.

**Reasons Why Florida Citizens Own Firearms**

**The Second Amendment to the United States Constitution.** There are several reasons why private citizens own firearms. The first rationale is the 2nd Amendment to the United States Constitution. The Amendment states that citizens have the right to “a well-regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a Free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed” (U.S. Const. Amend. II.)
Self-Protection. The second reason is for self-protection. According to Ausman and Faria (2019), between 25 and 75 lives are saved using a firearm in family and self-protection incidences within the United States. Igielnik and Brown (2017) stated that about 40% of Americans said they lived in a household with guns or owned a gun themselves, and 48% indicated they were raised in a home with guns.

Deterrence of Violent Crime. Ausman and Faria (2019) were proponents of citizen ownership of firearms. They stated that “allowing law-abiding citizens to carry concealed weapons deters violent crime, without any apparent increase in accidental death” (p. 6). To substantiate their claim the researchers referred back to Lott’s book titled *More Guns, Less Crime. Understanding Crime and Gun Control Laws*. Lott (2018) utilized data from the FBI’s huge volume of crime statistics for all 3054 U.S. counties covering a total of 17 years from 1977 through 1994, although the term accidental death was not well defined. Additionally, Ausman and Faria (2019) pointed out that a gun equalizes self-defense situations for those citizens who abide by laws related to the protection of one’s family, mainly women, when they are approached on the street or when protecting themselves and their children at home.

Hunting. Results of a study conducted by researchers at the Pew Research Center showed rural gun owners are more prone than urban dwellers to cite hunting as the primary reason why they desire to own a firearm. Statistics showed 48% of the gun owners from rural areas, as compared to 34% of owners from the suburbs and 27% of the owners of urban regions, said they owned firearms for hunting (Gramlich & Schaeffer, 2019).

Misconceptions of the Stand Your Ground Law

One of the significant issues with the Stand Your Ground Law in the State of Florida is the ambiguity regarding its wording. The vagueness of the law was revealed in the recent
justifiable homicide case of an African American man, Markeis McGlockton of Clearwater, Florida. In this highly publicized case, 47-year-old Michael Drejka, who was White, used the Stand Your Ground Law as a defense in the 2018 shooting of 28-year-old McGlockton. Chapter Two of this study presents, in more detail, the reaction of law enforcement and that of the African American community to that case.

*The Reasoning for Adopting the Stand Your Ground Law*

The justifiable force laws that are found in section 776.012 and 776.013 of the Florida Statutes state that the Stand Your Ground Law was created to remove the action of duty of retreat enforced by judicial decisions. That law was also presumed to be a legal justification for the use of force in an individual’s residence, dwelling, or vehicle.

*High-Profile Homicides of Florida African American Young Men*

With the inception of the 2005 Stand Your Ground Law, there have been several cases of justifiable homicide where individuals have used the law as an alibi to kill another person. The results of this law have allowed those individuals who committed homicide in the name of self-defense to be acquitted of justifiable homicide. There are three well-publicized instances where the Stand Your Ground Law was used as a defense in the killings of three young African American men.

The first incident, as discussed earlier in this chapter, was Markeis McGlockton of Clearwater, Florida (Oliver, 2018). The second case involved Trayvon Martin of Sanford, Florida, killed on February 26, 2012, by George Zimmerman, a watch volunteer patrolling a townhouse community in Sanford, Florida (“Florida Teen Trayvon Martin Shot and Killed,” 2013). Zimmerman justified killing the unarmed teenager, claiming he was defending himself...
during a physical altercation. Initially, Zimmerman was not arrested but was later charged with second-degree murder. His case went to trial, and he was acquitted.

In the third incident, 17-year-old high school student, Jordan Russell Davis was shot and killed in 2012 by Michael David Dunn, a software developer, after an argument over loud music. The killing of Davis helped motivate the creation of the Black Lives Matter movement and produced a national discussion over the killing of unarmed Black teenagers. In 2014, Dunn was found guilty of first-degree murder after a jury trial (Momodu, 2017).

There have been several other cases in Florida where the perpetrators of homicide used the Stand Your Ground Law and were acquitted. One case of note was as follows:

In 2008, in a rough part of West Palm Beach, 19-year-old Tony Hayward shot a man he thought was reaching for a gun. Hayward was delivering newspapers with his father when he killed Jyron Miles, 22, outside a neighborhood grocery. Hayward previously had been jailed on suspicion of committing a shooting, but he told police he fired on this day because he feared for his life. Investigators found no gun on or near Miles’ body. (Times Staff Writer, 2013, Similar cases section, para. 4)

The consequences of the shooting death of Jyron Miles were that Hayward was tried in two separate trials. LaForgia et al. (2013) reported that the first trial resulted in a hung jury, which led to the second trial where Hayward was found not guilty.

In another case, a gang shootout in Tallahassee left 15-year-old Michael Jackson dead. Montanaro (2010) reported that two rival gang members were granted immunity under the Stand Your Ground Law. “A spokeswoman for Florida’s Attorney General says, in this case, the court decided whether the defendants had a right to defend themselves regardless of whether they were gang members” (para. 15).
Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to investigate the three unintended consequences of Florida’s Stand Your Ground Law as a means to induce the state’s legislative leaders to consider amending the law to eliminate those unexpected results. An additional purpose of this study was to provide facts that would allow legislative leaders to present a constructive proposal to modify the Stand Your Ground Law, so the law is clear and concise for law enforcement officers to make the appropriate judgments when justifiable homicides occur. The decisions that law enforcement officers must make are the choice to arrest a person that is considered a suspect in a justifiable homicide case, or to not arrest an individual who kills another person in an incident of self-defense.

Another purpose of this study was to solve another problem of the unexpected ramifications of the law, which is the injustice of longer incarceration stints of African Americans, as compared to White defendants involved in justifiable homicide incidents in the state of Florida. This study’s literature review offers significant evidence to support that justifiable homicide and its concomitant inequality regarding arrest and incarceration rates of Whites versus African Americans is a complex problem in the State of Florida. Lastly, a purpose of this study was to provide leaders with the facts regarding the connection between the exponential increase in gun carry permits and the passage of the law. The intention is to induce the legislators to consider the unintended outcomes that evolved as a result of the law’s implementation and to examine what can be done to mitigate them.

The Florida Senate – How an Idea Becomes a Law

Providing factual information to Florida state legislators offers an opportunity for the Stand Your Ground Law to be reexamined and reassessed. Research and data are significant, as
both can produce a solid case to policymakers, the media, and the public about a problem and the effectiveness of the proposed solution. Additionally, for the issues that exist, data illustrated the impact those problems have on people and their communities overall. Data that are dependable and factual can also assist in making a case, presented in the literature review of this research document, for a change in policy and can be significant in convincing and influencing leadership on the necessity for that change in policymaking.

**Conceptual Frameworks**

The concepts associated with the topic and the research question of this study are discussed below. This dissertation topic concentrates on five concepts. The first addresses the influence of effective leadership. The second addresses the intellectual stimulation of effective leadership; the third is leadership decision-making and the fourth concept presented addresses racial disparity. The fifth concept is self-defense laws.

Leadership has been extensively researched and analyzed throughout the 20th century and the early 21st century. A substantial role in contributing to a clearer understanding of the process of leadership was made by Northouse (2018) with the book, *Leadership Theory and Practice*, and Yukl and Gardner (2019) with the book, *Leadership in Organizations*.

Northouse (2018) defined leadership as a process that, rather than being a characteristic or a trait within the leader, is a value-based event that happens between the leader and the followers. That process of leadership suggests a leader influences and is influenced by followers, stressing collaboration between the leader and the follower. When leadership is characterized as shared, it becomes accessible to everyone, rather than being limited to the officially designated leader in a group. With that being said, this definition can certainly apply to the Florida State legislature. To make the Stand Your Ground Law less ambiguous for law enforcement officers
and the average Floridian, there are leaders within the Florida State legislators who could influence their colleagues to become change agents for reexamining and reassessing the Stand Your Ground Law, with the intent of mitigating the unintended consequences of its passage.

Yukl’s concepts of leadership have remained consistent over the last three decades. Yukl’s (1982) speech for the National Conference on Principalship pointed out:

- effective leaders were more likely to set high performance goals for subordinates, to use group methods of supervision (e.g., group meetings to discuss problems and make decisions), and to serve as a "linking pin" with other groups and with higher management. (p. 16)

Over time Yukl’s concept has continued along the same theme, as was illustrated by Yukl and Gardner’s research (2019), which pointed out that the success of a leader is occasionally gauged in terms of the leader’s impact on the quality of the group methods, as seen by outside observers or by followers.

**Concept 1: Influence of Effective Leadership**

According to Northouse (2018), the theory of the influence of effective leadership, is that, without influence, leadership does not exist. The idea of power is associated with leadership because it plays a role in the influencing process. Northouse additionally stated that power is the ability or possibility to influence. People obtain power when they can affect the courses of action, other’s attitudes, and beliefs. Professionals such as doctors, judges, teachers, coaches, and legislators are examples of individuals who are capable of influencing others.

**Concept 2: Intellectual Stimulation**

Northouse (2018) believed the second concept, intellectual stimulation, involves leadership that encourages followers to be innovative and creative and to question their values
and beliefs, as well as those of the organization and the leader. This form of leadership supports followers when they attempt to seek new methods and create innovative approaches for dealing with organizational concerns.

**Concept 3: Leadership Decision-Making**

The third concept is the process of decision-making, which is noted as complex. According to Ceschi et al. (2017), in complex settings such as organizations, a knowledgeable decision-maker needs various reasoning skills to constantly seek information to improve work performance. This process includes creating, evaluating, and mastering choices, while at the same time dealing with intellectual limitations and applying common sense to situations, prejudices and individual tendencies that can harm the achievement of task targets.

In a research study conducted by Ejimabo (2015), which explored leadership influence on decision making, leadership is not solely about the groups of individuals or the individual’s official position, conduct, influence, personality traits, motivation, set of significant objectives, or passing of authority to a subordinate and charisma. Rather, leadership must additionally be effective, strategic, constant, optimistic, as well as goal oriented and influential.

Occasionally, leadership decisions that are well-intended fail. However, when effective leaders take the time to evaluate all options and gather information, the possibility of a negative outcome typically decreases. According to Lewis (2016), in the long run, leaders must be able to know they made a conscious decision and took the right actions for the right reasons.

**Concept 4: Racial Disparity**

The United States Commission on Civil Rights reported that several significant research studies have proven that the negative depiction of minorities in the criminal justice system forms and continues the “suspicion heuristic” that causes racial disparities (2020, p. 24). One of the
most vocal organizations, a watchdog for racial inequality across the United States, is the Justice Policy Institute (JPI). That institute, a national nonprofit organization, has been vocal about racial disparities in the United States, the fourth construct in this study, and has altered the conversation concerning reforms and progressive policies that encourage justice and well-being for all people and communities (“About – Justice Policy Institute,” 2020).

According to the JIP, the U.S. criminal justice system is marked by a surprising and unjust impact on marginalized communities. A disproportionate number of people of color are arrested, sentenced, and incarcerated in comparison to White people suspected of the same offenses (“About – Justice Policy Institute,” 2020). The U.S. Census Bureau (Quick Facts, 2019) estimated that African Americans made up 13.4% of the overall population in the nation, but the Federal Bureau of Prisons points out that 37.5% of the individuals in this country’s prisons are African American. JPI’s (2020) stance is that reforms to the criminal and juvenile justice systems must include a concerted effort to decrease the disparate impact on communities of color.

**Concept 5: Self Defense Laws**

The Castle Doctrine, which will be discussed in more detail in the literature review, was designed to give citizens the right to protect themselves against an attacker within their homes. In the State of Florida, the Stand Your Ground Law was created to permit Florida citizens to protect themselves in public. Rice (2013) pointed out that the Florida National Rifle Association lobbyist, Marion Hammer, conceived the Stand Your Ground Law, which Hammer labelled the Castle Doctrine despite the fact that the Stand Your Ground Law was not limited to one’s house. Hammer depended on two Florida lawmakers, Republican State Legislator Dennis Baxley who was the main proponent of the bill in the Florida House of Representatives and former Republican Senator Durrell Peaden, who presented the bill before the Florida Senate. Rice
(2013) went on to show that Baxley and Peaden were recipients of the National Rifle Association’s largesse.

In defining the theory of law, Dogaru (2018) stated there continues to be an abundance of ambiguities, with some laws that are constantly perpetuated and magnified because laws cause confusion, yet also the desire for understanding and knowledge. Another perspective of the theory of ambiguity of the law was illustrated by Schane (2002):

The law is a profession of words. By means of words, contracts are created, statutes are enacted, and constitutions come into existence. Yet, in spite of all good intentions, the meanings of the words found in documents are not always clear and unequivocal. They may be capable of being understood in more ways than one, they may be doubtful or uncertain, and they may lend themselves to various interpretations by different individuals. (2002, p. 1)

That theory can be applied to this study because, in some instances of justifiable homicide, judgments about making arrests could not be immediately determined by law enforcement officers because of the ambiguity in the language of the Stand Your Ground Law. That outcome was evident in the 2018 shooting death of Markeis McGlockton, where Michael Drejka, the shooter, was only arrested sometime after the killing, when his culpability, which at first was denied, was then determined.

**Definitions of Terms**

The following are definitions of key words and phrases utilized in this dissertation.

**Castle Doctrine.** Reddish (2016) defined this term as a complete defense from all civil and criminal accountability when a homeowner rationally defends their home. The presumption is that individuals will use rationale when protecting their homes.
Florida’s Stand Your Ground Law. The Florida statute provides the following definition:

- a person is justified in using or threatening to use force, except deadly force, against another when and to the extent that the person reasonably believes that such conduct is necessary to defend himself or herself or another against the other’s imminent use of unlawful force. (1) A person who uses or threatens to use force in accordance with this subsection does not have a duty to retreat before using or threatening to use such force.
- (2) A person is justified in using or threatening to use deadly force if he or she reasonably believes that using or threatening to use such force is necessary to prevent imminent death or great bodily harm to himself or herself or another or to prevent the imminent commission of a forcible felony. A person who uses or threatens to use deadly force in accordance with this subsection does not have a duty to retreat and has the right to stand his or her ground if the person using or threatening to use the deadly force is not engaged in criminal activity and is in a place where he or she has a right to be. (Fla. Stat. § 776.012(1) (2), 2019)

Influence of effective leadership. The University of Florida Training and Organizational Development, Office of Human Resource (n.d.) defines the influence of effective leadership as the leaders’ ability to influence is a critical leadership skill. To influence is to have an effect on the attitudes, behaviors, opinions, and choices of others. Influence is not to be misconstrued with control or power. Rather than being about controlling others to get your way, influence is about observing what inspires followers’ commitment and utilizing that knowledge to maximize performance and positive outcomes. A leader’s capability to have influence rests primarily on

**Intellectual stimulation of effective leadership.** Reza (2019) indicated that intellectual stimulation entails the leader motivating their followers to reason through problems for themselves and to cultivate their own abilities. Intellectual stimulation also focuses on the role of leaders to test innovation and creativity among their followers. Lastly, Reza stated that followers are positively influenced to try original approaches, and their ideas are not criticized because they differ from the leader’s ideas.

**Justifiable homicide.** Justifiable homicide as defined by the Florida Department of Law Enforcement (2018) states, “justifiable homicide as the killing of a perpetrator of a serious criminal offense either by a private citizen during the commission of a serious criminal offense or a law enforcement officer in the line of duty” (para. 4). The term “serious criminal offense” is not worded in the Florida Statutes, but Chapter 784 of the statute states that assault, aggravated battery, and battery are considered misdemeanors and felonies.

**Leadership.** Leadership was defined by Northhouse (2019) as:

a process means that it is not a trait or characteristic that resides in the leader, but rather a transactional event that occurs between the leader and the followers. Process implies that a leader affects and is affected by followers. It emphasizes that leadership is not a linear, one-way event, but rather an interactive event. When leadership is defined in this manner, it becomes available to everyone. It is not restricted to the formally designated leader in a group. (p. 45)

**Leadership decision-making.** The act of decision-making on the part of leaders, as defined by Onley (2020), is exceptional leadership that is progressive and considers other points
of view. Furthermore, leaders should select the most suitable decision-making style for the existing situation. Leaders are tasked with making a choice as to what leadership style to use and also when to use a particular style. That decision requires leaders to understand their role as leaders and, also to have a clear understanding of their authority.

**Racial disparity.** Schrantz and McElroy (2000) defined racial disparity as the existing factor within the criminal justice system when “the proportion of a racial/ethnic group within the control of the system is greater than the proportion of such groups in the general population” (p. 2). Illegitimate or unwarranted racial disparity results from differential treatment by the criminal justice system of similarly situated people based on race.

**Significance of the Study**

Whether an intentional or unintentional choice, the State of Florida has been become a negative representation of the Stand Your Ground Law due to the three unintended consequences which developed since that law was passed in 2005 (Florida Department of Law Enforcement, 2018). Based on the examination of those three actions, this study might provide information and ideas to aid state legislative leaders in reexamining and reassessing the law as written in order to reduce the rate of justifiable homicide, to make the Stand Your Ground Law less ambiguous, to bring equity to incarcerating offenders and allow legislators to make better-informed decisions to meet every probable scenario in regard to the Stand Your Ground Law. This study may also educate law enforcement, as well as private citizens, on what is right and what is wrong with regards to the current wording, interpretation, and outcomes of the Stand Your Ground Law.

Another significant contributing factor that this study potentially offers is that the public will have the opportunity to become better informed about how the Florida Legislature is structured. An additional contribution this study intends to provide is a perspective of how the
Florida Legislators are appointed to office, what the responsibilities of legislators are, and the ways in which legislators, who are the representatives of the people of the state, establish laws for the people of the state to follow.

**Methodology**

**Research Question**

What are some viable solutions to modifying the current Florida Stand Your Ground Law which can eliminate the unintended consequences that have been produced by the implementation of the law?

The intent of this study was to inspire the leadership of the state of Florida to actively support and participate in reexamining, reassessing, and revising the Stand Your Ground Law. The literature review suggested that the law is ambiguous because it fails to fit every possible case scenario of justifiable homicide and that there is a relationship between the increase of both justifiable homicide and concealed weapon permits. Additionally, the literature review suggested that racial bias occurs when the Stand Your Ground Law is interpreted.

The research design for this study utilized the phenomenological approach. A qualitative methodology was employed to enable the usage of diversified data sources which were necessary for collecting the lived experiences and perspectives of the participants of this study. The selection of the participants was based on their lived experiences and consisted of people who served as state and federal legislators and law enforcement officers. The data collection process for this study entailed interviewing all participants electronically and recording what was said. Secondly, every word was transcribed, and finally, analyzed to produce accurate and reliable data.
Assumptions

Assumptions are ideas that are believed to be true, or at least possible. As Nkwake (2013) indicated, assumptions are the focal point for any concept and thus any model. Therefore, there is a necessity for assumptions to be made clear, and that all assumptions are adequate to define a phenomenon. In this study, there are five assumptions that the researcher made. The purpose of the assumptions for this study was to examine what the researcher believed to be true and to prove that the assumptions were true through data collection and data analysis. The five assumptions are as follows:

1. The judicial disparity of African Americans that reside in Florida who are arrested, charged, tried, and found guilty when the Stand Your Ground Law is used as a defense.
2. Justifiable homicides in the State of Florida is a problem that must be addressed and modified to have equal justice for all the state’s citizens.
3. The increase in concealed weapon permits in Florida is assumed to be a by-product of the Stand Your Ground Law.
4. There are those individuals who can utilize their position in society to create needed transformation.
5. The criteria for the selection of the sample was suitable and the shared lived experiences of the participants to the phenomenon added to the value of the study.

The participants in the study responded the interview questions candidly and honestly.

Limitations

According to Creswell (2002), limitations detect the possible weakness of a study. At the proposal phase, recognizing the weakness of the study before it has started is regularly difficult.
Limitations frequently connect to the methodology, then to the methods, such as the challenges associated with conducting a qualitative study and those of recruiting participants and an insufficient sample size (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Those limiting factors are applicable in this study.

There are other limitations that exist in qualitative studies when conducted through interviews. Anderson (2010) pointed out there are limitations on the anonymity and confidentiality within a study. Lastly, Choy (2014) stated the disadvantage of a qualitative study process is time consuming which can be a limitation to any study. In this study, there were four critical limitations: (a) collecting a sufficient number of participants, (b) the possibility that an issue can be sensitive, (c) the effectiveness of the research question, and (d) the appropriateness of the interview questions.

*Delimitations*

Based on Theofanidis and Fountouki’s (2019) study, delimitations are the limitations deliberately specified by the researcher. The researchers set the boundaries of their work to ensure that the study target and objectives remain accomplishable. Creswell and Creswell (2017) stated being knowledgeable about the delimitations of a research study may assist in defining the boundaries of that study.

This study contained of five delimitations: (a) the population sample of the participants, (b) the theoretical viewpoints may be accepted by the researcher in comparison to preconceived concepts that the researcher believed to be true, (c) methodology will be confined to the boundary of the research problem, (d) the researcher’s lack of objectivity, and (e) the use of Zoom technology.
Chapter Summary

This chapter introduced information on the disproportionate rate of African Americans incarcerations when the law is applied, the increase in justifiable homicides, and the rapid increase in concealed carry permits. Over the last 15 years, studies on these topics have been conducted by various researchers. Through an analysis of the Stand Your Ground Law, that self-defense law was found to produce unintended impacts on society, both within the state of Florida and within the United States, as well. The enactment of Florida’s Stand Your Ground Law by the state’s legislative leadership has produced an increase in the firearm homicides rates as well as the overall homicide rates. An additional effect of Florida’s Stand Your Ground Law has been the increase in the concealed weapons permits.

This chapter also presented that the primary cause for the upsurge in justifiable homicide is that the Stand Your Ground Law toppled centuries of conventional self-defense guidelines and jeopardized the security of the public. For this study, Florida’s White population and African American population were given a closer examination of the justifiable homicides that each group has encountered. From a racial perspective, there has been a larger percentage of African Americans in the state of Florida killed in justifiable homicide incidents based on their population, as compared to the White larger population in Florida.

The data collected for this study showed the inequality of Floridian African Americans that are detained, arraigned, tried, and prosecuted when the Stand Your Ground Law is used as an alibi. This study has the potential to highlight the burden placed on people of color, particularly African Americans, who have faced injustice due to the Stand Your Ground Law.

The ambiguity of the Stand Your Ground Law is also an issue in the State of Florida, due to the lack of clarity in the law when justifiable homicides have occurred, as in the cases of the
high-profile shootings of African Americans. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to examine the unintended outcomes of the law as a means to urge legislative leadership to reexamine and reassess the law, for possible way to mitigate those unexpected outcomes and revise the law. This approach would also allow law enforcement to make sound judgments on incidents of alleged justifiable homicides when instances of justifiable homicides occur.

The topic of this study focused on five concepts which are the influence of effective leadership, intellectual stimulation of effective leadership, leadership decision-making, racial disparity, and self-defense laws. What makes this study significant is that the data and concepts could potentially provide legislators a clearer insight into revising the Stand Your Ground Law. Secondly, a significance of this study is that it would bring more clarity and equity to an ambiguous law and lastly, the study would permit law enforcement to make decisive decisions for every circumstance when the Stand Your Ground Law is used as a defense.

The following segment of this document, Chapter Two, offers a review of the literature. The literature is separated into subsections, comprising of Justifiable Homicide, Domestic Abuse and Self-Defense Laws, History of Self-Defense Laws, Court Cases that Set the Groundwork for Self-Defense Legislation and Concealed Firearms. Chapter Three details the methodology and the research design utilized in this study. Chapter Four covers the data collected. Finally, Chapter Five offers the conclusion of the findings and recommendations for future research.
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter illustrates what has previously been written about justifiable homicides in the State of Florida, justifiable homicides in the United States, laws that govern self-defense, the Stand Your Ground Law, and leadership’s potential role in reexamining and reassessing the unintended consequences of the law’s enactment.

Furthermore, the literature review illustrates the three effects of Florida’s justifiable homicide law, which are: (a) the disproportionate rate of African Americans incarcerations when the law is applied, (b) the increase in justifiable homicides, and (c) the rapid increase in concealed carry permits. Additionally, the literature review focuses on the intricacies of the Stand Your Ground Law, such as the ambiguity of the law, the misapplication, and the interpretation of the law which have affected the citizens of Florida. Lastly, the literature cited in this review concentrates on the ability of leadership to reduce the rate of justifiable homicides in the State.

Furthermore, the literature illustrates a result of Florida’s justifiable homicide law, which is the increasing frequency of requests for concealed weapons permits. The literature cited in this review concentrates on both the effects and outcomes of the increases in both justifiable homicides and concealed weapons permits and the ability of leadership to reduce the rate of justifiable homicides in the State.

The ultimate goal of this literature review is to explore the research to provide Florida State legislative leadership with research-based facts that would motivate the reexamination and reassessment of the current the Stand Your Ground Law. An additional aim of this study is to induce the legislative leadership that the Stand Your Ground Law as currently written is
ambiguous, so that, in the future, when justifiable homicides occur, the law is clear and succinct in order for law enforcement officers to make necessary decisions.

**Race and Justifiable Homicide**

Ackermann et al. (2015) examined the relationship between the conviction of the defendant and the race of the victim in Stand Your Ground cases in Florida from the period of 2005 to 2013. Ackermann et al. utilized a regression analytic approach, which was defined by Gallo (2015) as a mathematical method of sorting out which variables have an impact. Ackermann et al.’s data were derived from the *Tampa Bay Times* Stand Your Ground database that contained 237 cases. The researchers also utilized online court documents and news reports to supplement their analyses, then selected those cases that ended in a conviction as the outcome. The research team created logistic regression models that utilized vital bivariate predictors as topics. They included whether or not the defendant could have withdrawn from the circumstances, the race of the victim (non-White, White), who initiated the confrontation, whether or not the defendant followed the victim, and if the victim was armed or unarmed. The information revealed the victim’s race was an important predictor of the outcome of the cases in this data set. Upon controlling other variables, Ackermann et al. found the defendant was two times more likely to be convicted in a case that involved White victims in comparison to those defendants involving non-White victims. The outcome portrays and supports a troubling message, that Florida’s Stand Your Ground Law has a measurable racial bias that uncovers leniency in convictions when the victim is non-White. Their data provided evidence of unequal treatment under the law.

Lathrop and Flagg (2017), who are both crime data reporters for the Marshall Project, revealed that when a Black man is killed by a White person in the United States, the killer
frequently faces no legal consequences. In one in six of those killings, there is no criminal sanction, according to a new Marshall Project examination of 400,000 homicides committed by civilians between 1980 and 2014. That rate is far higher than the one for homicides involving other combinations of races. In nearly 17% of the cases, Lathrop, and Flagg (2017) found that when a non-Hispanic civilian killed a Black man over the last 30 years, the homicide was classified as a justifiable homicide, which is the term used when a civilian or police officer kills an individual in self-defense or committing a crime. In comparison, the Marshall Project illustrated that law enforcement categorized less than 2% of homicides perpetrated by civilians as justifiable. The disparity continues throughout various cities, different ages, different weapons, and various relationships between the victim and the killer.

To comprehend the gaps, The Marshall Project acquired several data sets from the FBI and analyzed different combinations of victim and killer. Two categories of justifiable homicide were stated: felon killed by or police or by private citizen. The individual killed is presumed to be a felon, because “the homicide could be justified only if a life was threatened, which is a crime” (Lathrop & Flagg, 2017, para. 3). This literature review provides documented evidence that since the Stand Your Ground Law was created, the law had produced the unintended outcome, which was the disparity between African Americans compared to Whites when the Stand Your Ground Law was applied. However, the increase in justifiable homicides in Florida has become just as problematic for the state of Florida.

**Statistical Reports of Justifiable Homicide**

The Florida Department of Law Enforcement (2018) stated that 1,303 Supplemental Homicide Reports were finalized in the year 2018. A total of 125 offenses were characterized as justifiable homicide; 1,107 were described as homicides, and 71 were cases of negligent
manslaughter. In comparison, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI; 2017) reported that, within the entire United States, there were a total of 782 justifiable homicides in 2017. Of those homicides, 429 felons were justifiably killed by law enforcement officers and 353 people justifiably killed by private citizens during the commission of crimes.

Some argued that the FBI statistics are debatable. Cramer (2015) stated that if the FBI’s justifiable homicide table were the only data in existence, it would be thought-provoking to determine whether the FBI’s description minimizes actual defensive killings. Cramer (2015) further stated that to obtain more data on how many citizens kill criminals every year, justifiable homicides, as well as sudden combat excusable homicides, must be considered. In the most recent research concerning FBI reporting, Nathan (2018) noted, “While UCR crime data published by the FBI is usually considered to be the official measure of crime in the United States, these data have limitations that should be considered when using them to evaluate crime trends” (p. 22).

From a racial perspective, what is significant to this research study is to fully understand who was killing whom in justifiable homicides incidences within the state of Florida. According to the FBI’s Supplemental Homicide Data Reports (2018), there were 26 separate cases where African Americans justifiably killed another African American. In comparison, 15 Whites killed African Americans in separate occurrences. When the victim was white, and the offender was also white, there were a total of 57 homicides that were considered justified. But when the victim was white, and the offender was African American, there were only six incidents of justifiable homicide. Justifiable homicides occurred during civilian conflicts and also involved law enforcement. The FBI’s data also illustrated there were 10 African Americans and 26 Whites killed by police in Florida in 2018 alone. As mentioned in Chapter One, the resource, The U.S.
Census Bureau Quick Facts, Florida (2019) pointed out that the estimated total population of Whites in the state of Florida stood at 77.3%, compared to African Americans that totaled 16.9%. This data supports and proves that there is a disproportionate number of African Americans killed, in relation to the White state citizens.

Furthermore, the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights (2020) pointed out that in homicide cases where the victim is White and the shooter is African American, the case is ruled to be justified 1.2% of the time. In homicide cases where the victim is African American, and the shooter is White the case is ruled justified 11.2% of the time, which totals to ten times more probable if the shooter is White and the victim is African American, than if the shooter is African American and the victim is White. That commission also stated that disparity increases when the Stand Your Ground Law is used as a defense.

**Incidents of Justifiable Homicide in the State of Florida**

There were three justifiable homicide incidents in the State of Florida that drew national attention within the timeframe from 2012 to 2018. A description of each is provided.

**Trayvon Martin.** The most significant of the three was that of a 17-year-old African American male, Trayvon Martin (Figure 2). Torres et al. (2017) stated what made this incident significant was that the core of the contentious conversations on the shooting and death brought about a broader debate about the meaning and salience of race in the modern United States. Some took Martin’s death to be an undisputable injustice and proof of the deadly consequences of present-day racism.
Jackson (2015) stated:

When Trayvon Martin was fatally shot by George Zimmerman in a Florida suburb, the incident stimulated national outrage and attention towards Florida’s Stand Your Ground Laws. A great deal of publicity concentrated on how the law legalizes racial profiling by justifying the ‘defendants who kill racial minorities based on reasonable fear.’ (p. 154)

George Zimmerman’s trial, as Torres et al. (2017) illustrated, began on June 10, 2013, where the shooter faced second-degree murder charges and manslaughter. After killing Martin, “Zimmerman faced a six-week trial on murder charges. The trial ended in a complete acquittal on July 25, 2013” (Ross, 2016, p. 5).

Markeis McGlockton. The second incident occurred in Clearwater, Florida, and was caught on video (Jonsson, 2017). Markeis McGlockton, a father of three children, pushed Michael Drejka, a White man, to the ground. Drejka pulled out a handgun and shot once. McGlockton died after stumbling away. Varn and Sullivan (2019) stated Drejka was recently convicted of killing McGlockton. The argument that resulted in McGlockton’s death was over a handicapped parking spot at a convenience store (Oliver, 2018). One day after the shooting, the Pinellas County Sheriff reviewed the case and interpreted the Stand Your Ground Law to say
that Drejka could not be charged under the law. The Sheriff also noted that the incident should not be deemed a racial issue, as the high-profile attorney Ben Crump had implied after the fatal shooting of McGlockton.

Additionally, the Sheriff’s rationale for not arresting Drejka was due to the State Attorney of Florida’s responsibility of assessing the case (Hollenbeck, 2019). The role and function of the attorney general detailed assurances regarding the defense of Florida statutes constitutionality, which were enacted by the Florida Legislature (Hollenbeck, 2019). The attorney general also has the authority to provide formal legal opinions when requested by various public officials regarding questions that are associated with the application of Florida State law.

In response to the African American community’s outcry, that case was later reviewed by Florida’s State Attorney’s Office, and Drejka was charged, tried, and found guilty of manslaughter (Burton, 2019). Through this judicial process, Drejka was eventually sentenced to 20 years in prison in October of 2019 for shooting and killing McGlockton (Varn, 2019).

Chad Oulson. The third incident of significance was the January 2014 shooting of Chad Oulson (Figure 2) by 71-year-old Curtis Reeves. Levenson (2017) reported that Reeves confronted Oulson in a Tampa movie theater because Oulson was texting during the previews prior to the beginning of the actual movie. In 2014, Reeves was released on a pretrial bond. Reeves requested to have his ankle monitor removed with the ability to go wherever he desired, but the request was denied by Judge Kemba Lewis Sullivan (2019). The University of South Florida News reporters reported that Oulson’s trial date was set for October 2020 (Lisciandrello & Schreiner, 2020). But the trial did not start until February 2022 and in the same month a jury found that Curtis Reeves was not guilty of the death of Chad Oulson. Reeves’ attorneys were successful in their argument of self-defense and did not use the Stand Your Ground Law as a
defense. The lawyers highlighted that an attack on an individual over 65 in the state of Florida is considered a felony and maintained that Reeves utilized justifiable force (Oquendo et al., 2022).

**Figure 2**

*Chad Oulson*

![Chad Oulson](image)

**Additional Justifiable Homicides in the State of Florida**

There were other incidences of justifiable homicide that drew less notoriety than the Trayvon Martin, Markeis McGlockton, and Chad Oulson killings. However, those lesser-known cases demonstrated the various other reasons why people have been shot and killed with firearms in the name of justifiable homicide. Some examples that follow indicate the variety of reasons used as justification for killing someone: (“15 Shocking Florida Stand Your Ground Cases,” 2013).

1) Timothy McTigue and Michael Palmer. In 2007, in the city of Riviera Beach, Florida, Timothy McTigue and Michael Palmer got into a fight. McTigue claimed that Palmer attempted to drown him. While climbing out of the water, McTigue fired his weapon, hitting Palmer in the head. Despite killing Palmer, McTigue was later acquitted.
2) Ralph Wald and Walter Conley. In 2012, a 70-year-old man from Brandon, Florida, Ralph Wald, caught his wife and his ex-neighbor, Walter Conley, having sex. Wald claimed, after shooting and killing Conley, he did not recognize Conley and believed a stranger was assaulting his wife.

3) Kenneth Allen and Jason Rosenbloom. Another case presented in the research was about two Clearwater neighbors. In 2006, Jason Rosenbloom and Kenneth Allen got into a verbal argument over trash bags. Allen was angry that Rosenbloom placed eight trash bags on the curb instead of the permitted six trash bags. When Rosenbloom walked toward Allen, Allen fired his firearm, striking Rosenbloom once in the chest and once in the stomach. Allen claimed Rosenbloom attempted to enter his residence. Police believed his self-defense claim, and he was not charged.

4) Jermaine McBean and Sheriff’s Deputy Peter Peraz. Hanna (2018) reported that in 2013, Broward County sheriff’s deputy Peter Peraz shot and killed a Black man whom he stated pointed a weapon in his direction; the weapon turned out to be an unloaded air rifle. Peraz was indicted by a grand jury for manslaughter, which was punishable by 30 years in confinement, for the death of 33-year-old Jermaine McBean, who was an information technology engineer. Witness testimony was rejected by the trial judge. Peraza argued that he should be given pretrial immunity through Florida’s Stand Your Ground Law, and the case never went to trial.

Hanna (2018) further stated the Supreme Court of Florida ruled that the use of deadly force can be justified by Florida police officers, and they can also pursue immunity from prosecution through Florida’s Stand Your Ground Law similar to any other citizen in the state. Immunity is a primary feature of the Stand Your Ground Law. The law enables judges to give an
individual immunity from prosecution if the law discovers there are certain facts that are favorable on behalf of the killer in a pretrial hearing, which permits a suspect to avoid a trial completely in a questionable shooting.

**Domestic Abuse and Self-Defense Laws**

*Study of Domestic Violence*

Jackson (2015) reported that domestic violence is a widespread and critical problem in today’s society. Women continue to suffer severe abuse by their intimate partners. Given the obstacles to retreating safely, there was a rationale for some women to choose to stay in such relationships. Despite a woman being in an abusive relationship and making the decision to end the partnership, there may come a time when the abuser assaults her with enough deadly force to threaten her life, compelling her to use deadly force in defense.

Jackson (2015) further stated that when a woman’s only alternative is to use deadly force, the Stand Your Ground Laws are frequently implicated both in legal defenses and in prosecutorial decisions. Such laws can be significant tools for women to declare self-defense successfully. According to Jackson (2015), an argument can be made regarding that type of justifiable killing, as it is sufficiently protected under fundamental self-defense principles. Thus, there is no need for the additional privilege to stand one’s ground.

Jackson (2015) also found that certain favorable Stand Your Ground Laws can offer protection from prosecution, meaning the defendant has no exposure to the fact finder’s examination of whether the deadly response was “reasonable” under the circumstances. In conclusion, Jackson (2015) stated that judges and jurors, together, examine impartial reasonableness through prejudiced lenses. Those prejudices comprise stereotypes, male
normativity, the tendency to blame the victim, and myths about domestic abuse which are disadvantageous to women, especially those who survive domestic abuse.

Prickett et al. (2018) examined the relationship between firearm ownership in two-parent families with a male partner having high-conflict arrest histories and state laws that prohibit firearm ownership for convicted offenders of misdemeanor crimes of domestic violence. The researchers determined that residing in a state with laws that banned firearm possession for convicted misdemeanor crimes offenders of domestic violence reduced the chance of firearm possession among families with males that are high conflict by 62%.

The Giffords Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence (GLC; 2018) illustrated, on the center’s website under the heading of Domestic Violence and Firearms in Florida that, in the state of Florida, there is no law prohibiting people who were convicted of a misdemeanor of domestic violence from possessing or purchasing a firearm or ammunition. However, Florida law mandates that the Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE) review accessible records to deter the same individuals who are prohibited by federal law from owning firearms. That requirement makes passing a background check very difficult, which is necessary prior to purchasing a firearm through a licensed firearms dealer.

Additionally, Florida law mandates that the FDLE review accessible records to stop individuals who have had a verdict of guilty suspended on any minor crime of domestic violence from passing the background check. The exceptions are in the case where a total of 3 years had passed since probation, or any other guidelines that were made by the court were satisfied or expunged an individual’s record.

Jackson (2015) stated the time had come to update the Stand Your Ground Laws with the defenseless demographic of women experiencing domestic violence in mind. The most impartial
way for that law to work is to give immunity from criminal prosecution to those who protect themselves in their homes against abusive cohabitants and to create a legal presumption of fear in a defendant who has suffered a history of domestic abuse.

Since Jackson’s (2015) study, modifications have been made to the Stand Your Ground Law. The most recent changes to the law, as Solomon and Varn (2019) reported, occurred in 2017 and 2019. In 2017, the Florida Supreme Court ruled that switching the burden of proof from the defense to the state in stand your ground cases are not retroactive. However, in December of 2019 in the Florida Supreme Court case of Love v. State (Love v. State, no.sci-747, 2019), the court declared that, in cases occurring prior to 2017 stand your ground could be used as a defense. Love vs. State will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

**Significant Domestic Abuse Incidents in the State of Florida**

There were two notable incidents of domestic abuse involving African American women in the State of Florida. Both used the Stand Your Ground Law as a defense.

**Marissa Alexander.** The first incident involved Marissa Alexander, from Jacksonville, Florida. The Marissa Alexander Justice Project (2017) explained that in August of 2010, Alexander was arrested and charged with aggravated assault for firing one warning shot after her estranged husband attacked her. Alexander was later sentenced to 20 years in prison in 2012 under Florida’s strict minimum mandatory sentencing guidelines (“Timeline,” n.d.). Her case was later overturned in 2013 by an appellate court because the jury received flawed instructions. Alexander was released on bail in November of 2013 and was obligated to remain on house arrest. After a long path of struggling for her freedom, Alexander accepted her initial 3-year plea deal agreement by completing her sentence of 65 days in the Duval County Jail.
**Tashara Love.** The second currently pending Florida incident is a justifiable homicide case. Thompson et al. (2019) stated that in 2015, Tashara Love was charged with attempted second-degree murder with a firearm for allegedly shooting Thomas Lane outside of a nightclub. Love put Florida’s Stand Your Ground Law into effect by declaring she had immunity from prosecution because she shot the victim while protecting her daughter. Through this legal process, the court conducted a hearing to decide on whether Love was safe from prosecution because she defended her daughter. The judge decided with Love that the State of Florida was unsuccessful in carrying its burden to demonstrate that she did not act in self-defense by convincing and clear evidence. Yet, the state denied Love’s assertion of immunity because it determined that the amendment designated the burden to the State was unconstitutional.

Ms. Love appealed the court decision by requesting a writ of prohibition (Proctor, 2019). A writ of prohibition permits an appellate court to stop a lower court from utilizing jurisdiction in an action (“The Florida Bar,” 2020). In most cases, a writ of prohibition cannot be used to resolve an act that has already occurred. In this case, the appellate or appeals court decided in her favor stating that the amendment was constitutional because the legislative body of Florida has the authority to assign the burden of proof to the state.

The Third District of Appeal denied Ms. Love’s request because the court found the Stand Your Ground amendment did not relate “retroactively” to hearings for offenders charged with conduct that occurred prior to the amendment’s effective date. As of January 10, 2020, the Florida Supreme Court Docket (2020) declared that cases occurring prior to the 2017 change to the Stand Your Ground Law could be used as a defense. According to Case Docket, Case Number SCI18-747, Tashara Love vs. State of Florida:
At the time of this study, Tashara Love is awaiting a trial. Section 776.032(4) is a procedural change in the law and applies to all Stand Your Ground immunity hearings conducted on or after the statute’s effective date. In Love, the pretrial hearing took place after the effective date of section 776.032(4) and should have been conducted under the new standard. Accordingly, we quash Love and remand for further proceedings consistent with this opinion.

**History of Self-Defense Laws**

The right to engage in self-defense has a long, storied past. As Ward (2015) stated, there are those political critics that assume that the Stand Your Ground Laws are new to the action of self-defense, and the Stand Your Ground Law is the current creation of a zealous nationwide lobbying campaign by the National Rifle Association (NRA). The no retreat Stand Your Ground and the duty to retreat methods have long coexisted in the legal doctrine of the United States. According to Rothman (2017), the two methods date back to the seventh century and are historically ingrained in English common law doctrine. Initially, the English common law was founded on the sacredness of human life, and the King was the sole person authorized to take an individual’s life. If someone attacked another person, the individual being attacked was supposed to withdraw to the wall behind their back prior to defending themselves with force.

**Castle Doctrine.** Reddish (2016) stated the Castle Doctrine is also a complete defense from all civil and criminal accountability when a homeowner rationally defended his or her home. Recognized presently in state laws, the Castle Doctrine is largely based on a presumption of rationality when protecting the home.

**Knock-and-Announce Rule.** Another form of this law is the knock-and-announce rule, which is required by the U.S. Constitution for conducting a reasonable search or seizure that
usually mandates that law enforcement officers must make their presence known prior to serving a warrant (Reddish, 2016). However, the Supreme Court in Hudson v. Michigan concluded that the Constitution does not require the exclusion of evidence to resolve knock-and-announce violations.

**Issues of the Castle Doctrine and the Knock-and-Announce Rule.** Reddish (2016) stated the two doctrines have changed in such a way that they send an unreliable message to homeowners: the Castle Doctrine permits homeowners to defend their “castle,” but the absence of a meaningful solution for violations of the knock-and-announce rule has weakened any legal justification for police to respect that castle. In 1995, the State of Utah passed a Stand Your Ground Law that was extensively modified in 2005. That same year, Florida approved a similar law, which developed into the basis for a model law adopted by the American Legislative Exchange Council (RAND Corporation, 2020).

According to the Florida Senate Website Archive (2005), the Florida State Senate passed the Protection of Person/Use of Force (Senate Bill 436) on March 23, 2005. The vote was unanimous, zero nays to 39 yays. In April of the same year, Senate Bill 436 passed the Florida House by 20 nays to 94 yays. Senate Bill 436, the “Castle Doctrine,” was signed into law by Governor Jeb Bush on April 26, 2005 and took effect on October 1, 2005. A study by Humphreys et al. (2017) revealed:

From 1999 to 2014, the average monthly justifiable homicide rate in the state of Florida was 6.6 percent of all homicides. Ten years following the passing of the self-defense laws, the median monthly rate of justifiable homicides expanded from 0.2 deaths per 100,000 population (from 1999 to 2005) to 0.04 deaths per 100,000 population. Justifiable homicide made up for an average of 3.4 percent of the total homicides
between the period of 1999 to 2005, and an average of 8.7 percent between the years 2006 and 2015. (p. 1523)

Ukert et al. (2018) found that Florida relaxed the limitations on the use of deadly force in self-defense with the Stand Your Ground Law. Ukert et al. (2018) also examined how and whether the impact of the Stand Your Ground Law of Florida differed, based on the economic and demographic conditions of each of the state’s counties. Utilizing the Florida Universal Crime Reports on firearm homicides and homicides from the years 1999 to 2014, they found the impact significantly differed by unemployment, county urbanization, and pre-law homicide rates. The greatest increases in firearm homicide and homicides happened in proportionally wealthier, safer, and suburban counties that were less ethnically diverse.

Ukert et al.’s (2018) findings illustrated the Stand Your Ground Law may have had unintended effects and also had increasingly affected the suburbs of counties assumed to be safe and economically successful. Furthermore, those researchers found the yearly cost of the Florida law was about 240 extra homicides in 2006 alone. They explained additional unexpected outcomes to the law: “the costs of human life lost does not include harm experienced by individuals who survive homicide attempts, which may also have considerable costs (human and economic) to individuals, families, and innocent bystanders over an extended period of time” (p. 73).

That effect on society also coincides with Sweeney’s (2016) study which was mentioned in Chapter One. Sweeney (2016) pointed out that the Stand Your Ground Law produced a negative impact on society in the following significant ways:

(1) Disregarding the common-law factor of necessity that customarily provides a check on unwarranted self-defense.
(2) The Stand Your Ground Laws have produced presumptions that undo the significant discretionary powers of judges, prosecutors, and law enforcement officers.

(3) The possibility that Stand Your Ground Laws may have increased violent crime.

(4) The movement of passing a state Stand Your Ground Law has continued to experience a large degree of political success because of the method of making violent street crimes a political issue and making the best use of the public’s fear of becoming a victim, as well as the public’s general overall mistrust of the criminal justice system.

In addition to the effects of the Stand Your Ground Law in the State of Florida, Ukert et al. (2018) also found that the state’s law contributed to an unexpected increase in homicide, such as with clubs, knives, and other cutting instruments and gun-related homicide. Those researchers analyzed whether the impact of the Florida law varied across counties’ demographic and geographic characteristics. Florida is different, given the continuing urbanization and the migration of people from other states into the state, which produces a unique mixture of highly urbanized and rural counties. Ukert et al. (2018) assessment found that people who live in more demographically similar suburban counties composed of people who lived in higher-income homes may have increased the contact in conflicts in the circumstance in which residents would have earlier notified law enforcement or initially avoided a conflict.

Ukert et al. (2018) also stated the usefulness of the Stand Your Ground Law is based on an individual’s viewpoint of fear and whether individuals have any experience in preventing conflicts. This concept is a significant element in contributing to the increase in firearm homicides in counties that are in the suburbs. Those researchers discovered that there was a decreased effect on urban counties or rural areas because conflict must have a victim and a perpetrator without the presence of law enforcement. Furthermore, their last analysis found that
there are more law enforcement officers available during daytime, which may decrease the possibility for individuals to be involved in a conflict that can intensify by using deadly force. Rural communities may lack the same opportunity for conflicts that end with deadly force in small, dense populations.

Court Cases that Set the Groundwork for Self-Defense Legislation

In 2000, Kopel examined “each of the Self-Defense Cases from the 1890s, as well as a 1921 case, which was Brown v. the United States, that resolved one issue on which the Self-Defense Cases had created some ambiguity” (p. 293). Several court cases in the United States contributed to the Castle Doctrine and Stand Your Ground Laws. In the self-defense case, Beard v. United States of 1895, the judge explained that a person does not have to run from an attacker. Indeed, the tendency of the U.S. consciousness appears to be extremely against the rule that mandates a person to run when attacked. In refusing a duty to run or retreat, the Supreme Court was following a very strong tendency from the 19th-century state courts, which was a trend to disavow the medieval English doctrine that made retreating to the wall necessary.

The Chief Justice, in the case of Wallace v. United States from 1893-1896, stated that, even if the accused had been legally wrong in threatening to use a gun to force an aggressor in leaving his property, the accused had the right to protect himself from a deadly attack. Kopel (2000) stated the Chief Justice made it clear that carrying a gun was a rational response to threats. In the defense case of Rowe v. United States, the Court’s decision explained that several state courts previously held that an individual who initiates a fight may resort to self-defense if he retreats from the fight, and the attacker then attacks him. Additionally, the justice of this case further explained that the accused’s withdrawal amounted to a good-faith retreat.
Since Kopel's (2000) research was conducted, Teigen and McInnes (2018) stated that changes have occurred, throughout the United States and, specifically, in the state of Florida. That state’s passage of the Stand Your Ground Law in 2005 is closely associated to the Castle Doctrine. The Stand Your Ground Law differs from the Castle Doctrine because the law permits an individual to remain, rather than retreat if that person is not engaged in unlawful activity, to stand their ground and meet force with force,

including deadly force if they reasonably believe it is necessary to do so to prevent death or great bodily harm to themselves or another or to prevent the commission of a forcible felony. That practice is the opposite of the Castle Doctrine, which only allows an individual to defend themselves in their place of residence. (National Conference of States Legislatures, 2018, para. 2)

Concealed Firearms

The issue of concealed weapons in the state of Florida has been controversial, especially with the enactment of the 2005 Stand Your Ground Law. One of the leading organizations that is in the center of the discussion concerning concealed weapons is the Gifford Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence (LCPGV). The law center explained in “Our Mission” (2018) they are the United States’ leader in policy organization and are committed to investigating, writing, making bills or other proposals into law and defending tried and tested programs and laws. The goal of the law center is to prevent gun violence and save lives by modifying policies, shifting culture, and challenging an unbalanced scale of justice. The LCPGV website is expansive, containing a large volume of information regarding federal and state gun laws, statistics, recent news, and publications.
Under the headings, Gun Law, Federal Laws, Guns in Public and Concealed Carry (2018), the law center pointed out that the carrying of concealed, loaded firearms in public spaces can rapidly intensify everyday encounters into lethal altercations, producing tragic and permanent harm to innocent lives. The LCPGV findings also corresponded with Sweeney’s (2016) study on the Stand Your Ground Law which provided evidence that the law produced a negative impact on society. Those hazards are amplified when the authorizing standards for concealed carry are weakened.

Despite the risk to public safety, there is a continuance on the part of gun lobbyists to drive proposals that would remove or weaken the permitting requirements for carrying concealed firearms in public. Carter and Binder’s (2018) study pointed out there is a gap in research concerning the relation between firearm violence and conceal gun carry. They stated that socioeconomic measurements over time and the suggested fear of crime, which was not directly measured, may be associated with an individual’s obtaining a concealed carry license. Their research examined whether a large-scale relationship exists between both permits and concealed carry firearm applications in violent crime that is committed with a firearm. That study utilized county-level data from Florida, comprised of concealed carry applications, violent crime, socioeconomics, police employment, firearm, and political subcultural variables across two chronological periods, utilizing both years in county fixed effects models. The findings of their study pointed out a positive relationship between crimes, specifically, those perpetrated with a firearm and concealed carry applications and permits. Carter and Binder (2018) concluded that there is a definite connection between concealed carry applications, permits issued and firearm violence.
According to Mower (2018), because of the way the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Service manages concealed permits may appear unusual, in a majority of other states that responsibility belongs to the courts or law enforcement. In 2002, the State of Florida Division of Licensing, which had been responsible for the concealed weapons program, was quietly moved by lawmakers, under the influence of the NRA, from the Department of State to the state’s Department of Agriculture. Mower stated that the declared underlying purpose of that transition was to make the program accountable to an elected official.

According to the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (2020), Florida has a total of 2,211,431 valid concealed permits. Individuals who possess those permits are generally in the following professions: private investigators; security officers; firearm instructors; recovery agents who are managers, interns, and instructors; circuit and county judges; retired law enforcement; correctional officers; and consular security officials.

Since taking over the concealed weapons program duties in 2002, Florida’s Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDAC) had an issue with the state’s concealed-carry permit process (2017). This was during the tenure of Adam Putman, who served as the Agriculture Commissioner. In an investigation of the department, the issue that was discovered was that, for over a year, the state of Florida neglected to carry out national background checks on tens of thousands of requests for concealed weapons permits which permitted individuals with mental illness or people with drug addictions to carry firearms in public.

The concealed weapons permit process in Florida improved when Nikki Fried became the Commissioner of FDAC. During her time as the Agriculture Commissioner, the department had significantly reduced the number of initial review times for concealed weapons permits with
prior prosecution or arrest by 70%, from 88 down to 25 days (Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, 2019). Those who had no prior issues were reduced 98% in the same year, down from 50 in January of 2019 to one day. The department’s data illustrated that the processing rate by the preceding administration made incorporating major modifications in the Division of Licensing necessary (Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, 2019).

Based on information as of August 31, 2019, from FDAC (2020), the concealed weapon or firearm license holder profile revealed that, when viewed by age and sex, 73% of men possessed an active license, as compared to 27% of women. When categorized by age, people between the ages of 51 and 65 possess the greatest number of active licenses. The department also reported there were 437,423 men and 183,293 women licensed to carry (FDAC, 2020). The age group with the second-highest active licenses was 66 and up, where men totaled 407,643 and women totaled 109,999. The age group of 36 to 50 consisted of 365,226 men and 146,718 women. The age group with the least number of active licenses was 18 to 35, consisting of 284,967 men and 107,115 women (FDAC, 2020).

Lott (2018) pointed out that the Crime Prevention Research Center found, regardless of the outlooks of many after the 2016 elections, there continued to be an increase in the number of concealed handgun permits issued in the United States. The number of concealed handguns permits dramatically increased to over 17.25 million, reflecting a 273% increase since 2007. The percentage of U.S. adults who have permits stands at 7.14% (Crime Prevention Research Center, 2018).

The Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (n.d.) stated to be eligible for a concealed weapon license in the state, individuals must meet specific criteria set forth by
that department. In order to be qualified for a Florida concealed firearm or weapon license, an individual must be 21 years of age or older, be able to exhibit proficiency with a firearm, reside in the United States, and be a U.S. citizen or considered a permanent lawful resident alien by the Department of Homeland Security, U.S. Citizenship, and Immigration Service. An exception exists for those individuals who are serving overseas in the U.S. armed forces.

There are conditions that would warrant an individual ineligible to receive Florida concealed weapon license. They are:

- The physical inability to handle a firearm safely.
- A felony conviction (unless civil and firearm rights have been restored by the convicting authority).
- Having adjudication withheld or sentence suspended on a felony or misdemeanor crime of violence, unless three years have elapsed since probation or other conditions set by the court, have been fulfilled.
- A conviction for a misdemeanor crime of violence in the last three years.
- A conviction for violation of controlled substance laws or multiple arrests for such offenses.
- A record of drug or alcohol abuse.
- Two or more DUI convictions within the previous 3 years.
- Being committed to a mental institution or adjudged incompetent or mentally defective.
- Failing to provide proof of proficiency with a firearm.
- Having been issued a domestic violence injunction or an injunction against repeated violence that is currently in force.
• Renouncement of U.S. citizenship.
• A dishonorable discharge from the armed forces.
• Being a fugitive from justice. (Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, n.d.)

**Florida Statue F.S.S.790.001 (2) Concealed Firearm**

To better comprehend the state law regarding concealed firearms, the Florida Statutes provide the guidelines for each citizen who carries a concealed weapons permit. That Statue also provides a definitive explanation of concealed firearms. Subsection 2 of the Florida Statute states:

Concealed firearm means any firearm, as defined in subsection (6), which is carried on or about a person in such a manner as to conceal the firearm from the ordinary sight of another person. ‘Firearm means’ any weapon, including a starter gun) which will, is designed to, or may readily be converted to expel a projectile by the action of an explosive; the frame or receiver of any such weapon; any firearm muffler or firearm silencer; any destructive device; or any machine gun. The term does not include an antique firearm unless the antique firearm is used in the commission of a crime. (790.001(2) (6), 2019)

**Legislative Leadership’s Role in the Passage of the Stand Your Ground Law**

Florida’s leadership plays an important part in the phenomena of the unintended consequences of the Stand Your Ground Law. One example is when Crowe (2018) pointed out that the NRA and the lawmakers responsible for drafting Florida’s “stand your ground” law rejected a local sheriff’s claim that the legislation prevented him from making an arrest in a high-profile shooting death. Pinellas County Sheriff Bob Gualtieri chose not to arrest Michael Drejka
after the 47-year-old shot and killed an unarmed man during a dispute over a parking space. Crowe reported that, in explaining his decision to make no arrest, Gualtieri stated Florida’s “Stand Your Ground Law” empowered Drejka to shoot Markeis McGlockton in self-defense after McGlockton shoved him to the ground.

Drejka’s empowerment in this case derived from both using the Stand Your Ground Law as an alibi, and his history with multiple uses of gun violence and that Drejka was not charged in any of those three incidences (Hutchison, 2018). The first involved Drejka threatening an African American man because the man’s car was parked in a handicapped space which was at the same store where McGlockton was shot and killed for doing the same thing. The victim’s supervisor informed detectives that Drejka called to complain about the employee. Drejka told the supervisor, “He was lucky that he didn’t blow his employee’s head off.” In the second situation, which occurred in 2012, the Pinellas County Sheriff’s deputies received a report from an 18-year-old man who stated that Drejka brandished a black handgun during a road rage incident. The third incident that also happened in 2012 involved a woman who was driving in a school zone. The woman told police that Drejka, who was driving a black Toyota truck, pointed a gun at everyone in the vehicle. When questioned by police, Drejka denied that the incident occurred, and the police did not make an arrest. In all three incidences, Drejka was not charged with having committed a crime.

To present a proposal that examining the unintended consequences and modifying the Stand Your Ground Law is essential, understanding the responsibilities of the Florida State Legislature and how the legislature is structured is beneficial. The legislature is comprised of the upper house, or the Florida State Senate and the lower house, or the Florida House of Representatives (Florida State Legislature, 2020). Both must create and pass laws for the
betterment of all Florida citizens. Legislators have parameters on their time as policymakers, and this is due to term limits. State Senators can be elected for up to 8 years, which is two terms, and House members may be elected for up to four terms, which is 8 years (Florida State Legislature, 2020). There is a total of 40 members of the Florida Senate and 120 members of the Florida House.

Every representative from the Senate and the House plays a significant role in affecting how laws are passed and those that are not passed. Every 60 days, the Florida Legislature meets to focus on the needs of the state. Bills are filed by Senators and Representative for review during the session ("How a Bill Becomes a Law: Florida," 2020). Based on the chart prepared by the Florida Senate on “How an Idea Becomes a Law,” as illustrated in Figure 3, the process of how concepts and beliefs are turned into a law is arduous and detailed. Initially, the concept of law is developed by a legislator or a citizens group. The Representative notifies the House Bill Drafting Services and asks that a bill be drafted. The Representative supplies extensive directions or a basic idea of the law.

Upon a bill being filed, the bill is submitted to a number of committees to be assessed by smaller groups of members. During this committee process, it is reviewed and debated, and amendments and modifications can be included in the bill. This process permits the proposal to be carefully reviewed and debated by the lawmakers, the public, and those specific people who will be affected by the bill. Following the committees passing, the bill is presented to the full chamber of the Senate and House for a vote ("How a Bill Becomes a Law: Florida," 2020).

There are several options that the committee members have when considering a bill. They can endorse the bill. They can deny the bill, or they can elect to amend the bill. When a committee defeats a bill, the idea will not advance and is finished for the rest of the session. In
the case where the bill is passed by each of the committees to which it is designated, it is free to be voted on by the complete body of members. For a bill to pass, it must receive a majority of votes in that chamber. Before a bill becomes law, it must be passed by both chambers ("How a Bill Becomes a Law: Florida," 2020). Figure 3 depicts the bill creation, advancement, and passage process.

**Figure 3**

*Bill Creation, Advancement, and Passage Process*

Scenario Planning as a Leadership Decision-Making Tool

Creating and passing a law is often a lengthy process that rarely includes envisioning the outcomes of the law once it has been implemented. A useful tool that could assist legislative
leaders in making sound decisions is the utilization of the scenario planning process. Volkery and Ribeiro (2009) pointed out that this concept could possibly prepare public policy for surprises and uncertainties of future developments and improve the management of difficult decisions involving opposite societal interest.

Volkery and Ribeiro (2009) also explained that the scenario planning concept is composed of five phases which are: (1) identify that there is a problem; (2) call attention to the societal relevance of the problem and emphasized the need for a reaction from the political system; (3) Measure the weaknesses and strengths of various problem-solving strategies, make an eventual selection, and prepare the definitive shape of the measure; (4) Implement the measure into a realistic action; and (5) Determine the results of a policy measure and assess to which degree the policy produces based on the policy goals and if there is a necessity, re-create or terminate the measure, which would establish a new cycle.

Uzonwanne (2015) stated all decisions are the result of a solid process that is inspired by large forces. Decisions can be seen as a chronological process involving many steps that allow administrators and decision-makers to analyze each factor in a typical progression that makes a path for the decision. The administrator, or decision-maker, must first create particular objectives and goals, assess outcomes, and then identify the issues of obtaining the objectives and goals. In the case of Florida’s legislators, the Stand Your Ground Law objective was to provide Florida citizens the tool to defend themselves from an attacker, but there were no other specific goals set or assessments of outcomes to produce positive results.

Lastly, the decision-making process depends tremendously on the significance of foundational strategies which aids in problem solving. Llopis (2013) stated,
Leaders have a strategy that serves as the foundation for how the problem will be approached and managed. Make the problem-solving process more efficient by recognizing that each problem has its own nuances that may require a distinct strategy towards a viable resolution. (n.p.)

**Florida Governor’s Role in the Stand Your Ground Law**

The legislators passed the Stand Your Ground Law through both the House and the Senate in 2005. The presiding governor during this time was Governor Jeb Bush who signed the final version into law. Based on a New York Times article written by Goodnough (2005), Governor Bush, a Republican, said he supported the measure because when people face life-threatening situations, “to have to retreat and put yourself in a very precarious position defies common sense” (p. B11).

Woodall (2017) reported that on June 9, 2017, Governor Rick Scott signed an amended Stand Your Ground Law, passed by the legislators, that rather than clarifying the current law, created less difficulty for defendants in Florida to positively claim they were defending themselves when they committed violence. Prior to the passage of the revision to the law, defendants had to provide evidence that they were using force to protect themselves. The new legislation moved the burden of proof to prosecutors in pretrial hearings instead of defendants proving that force was utilized lawfully.

According to Gancarski (2018), after the killing of Markeis McGlockton in Clearwater, Florida Governor Rick Scott maintained his stance of leaving the decision of Stand Your Ground in the hands of Sheriff Gualtieri. Governor Scott stated:
The case that just happened in the St. Pete area, you feel so sorry for the family. You hate anything like that happening. I know that the Sheriff is going to look into that. And ultimately, the State Attorney will make a decision on that. (para. 3)

Governor Scott made no statement regarding what action should have been taken or not taken against Michael Drejka, the killer of McGlockton. The State Attorney for Pinellas County, Bernie McCabe, as Hutchison (2018) reported, decided after 12 days from the date of the shooting to file charges against Drejka. The State Attorney’s decision was based on obtaining investigative reports on the incident from the office of the Pinellas County Sheriff. There were those that voiced their concern about Sheriff Gualtieri’s decision not to make an arrest. Immediately after the shooting death of McGlockton, there was a controversy surrounding the Stand Your Ground Law in Florida.

Vassolo (2018) reported that 50 Florida state leaders were asked whether the Florida lawmakers should conduct a special session to address the Stand Your Ground Law after Black leaders condemned the law. A majority of the group that were comprised of leaders from educational, legal, and political fields noted that the legislature should hold a special session. The special session was rejected by the Florida Legislature because the measure needed three-fifths support of the Senate and the Florida House to pass. Thirty-six percent said no, and 11% were unsure. The repeal would have mirrored the Castle Doctrine where an individual could defend themselves at their place of residence, as compared to also defending themselves on the street. The divide was down ethnic and racial lines. African American influencers, who made up a quarter of the group, agreed unanimously that the law should be reviewed. A few influencers who chose to say no believed there was a necessity to examine the law, however, not at the time of a special session.
Republican Legislators and NRA Lobbyist Role in the Stand Your Ground Law

Republican legislative leadership played a part in formulating the Stand Your Ground Law. Spies (2018) reported that deceased former Republican Senator Greg Evers worked side by side with the long-time, influential Florida gun lobbyist, Marion Hammer. Hammer, who the National Rifle Association NRA-ILA (2020) described as holding a position of a lobbyist for that Association and was a former President of the NRA from 1995 to 1998, is currently a member of the NRA board and also has served as the executive director of the Unified Sportsmen of Florida since 1976. In the State of Florida,

The NRA has consistently trumpeted Stand Your Ground Laws as expanding the “constitutional right to self-protection. In contrast, the Brady Center to Prevent Gun Violence, dubbed it the “Shoot First” law, and noted that the “sensible requirements” of self-defense law to “minimize conflict and protect life” were undermined by Stand Your Ground Laws. However, it seems that the legislative history of the Florida law is rooted more in curbing “overzealous states attorneys” rather than any genuine concern rooted in safety. Even then, however, there was scant evidence supporting that claim. (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 2020, p. 5)

Bell (2019) supported that claim by also illustrating that:

By the mid-2000s, there was a large push by the National Rifle Association (NRA) to codify SYG laws, with an emphasis on the South and on Florida in particular. The NRA was reported to have contributed thousands to political campaigns of Republican lawmakers in Florida, in an effort to encourage these lawmakers to back the passage of the state SYG bill. In fact, Senator Durell Peaden, the sponsor of Florida’s SYG bill, was one of the senators who benefited from such contributions, receiving $1,000 in direct
donations from the NRA during the 2000 election cycle. Overall, more than one third of the 114 Florida lawmakers who co-sponsored the passage of the SYG bill were recipients of NRA money. (p. 910)

The Unintended Ramifications of the Stand Your Ground Law

The 2005 conservative Florida State Legislators, along with the NRA’s creation of the Stand Your Ground Law, has been problematic and not without fault. Based on Cavazos (2015) study, the initial intent of the Florida Stand Your Ground Law was to allow people “who were faced with confrontation to meet force with force, without a duty to retreat” (p. 223). Since the 2005 enactment of Florida’s Stand Your Ground Law there have been negative ramifications such as: the disparity of African American incarceration rates, the increase of justifiable homicides, and the increase in concealed carry permits. Because of negative issues such as these, Cavazos (2015) indicated that the Stand Your Ground Law has produced a misapplication, unintended confusion, and interpretation of the Stand Your Ground Law which has galvanized the public’s cry for justice and fairness. Justice necessitates the need for revision. “In the alternative, the law should be revised in a manner that avoids unintended, disparate outcomes and interpretive confusion” (p. 264).

Leadership

Leadership plays an integral part in providing direction, vision, and change, in all organizations, whether large or small, or for-profit, non-profit or GMO, or in local, state or a country’s government. Leadership, rather than simply an innate quality that is automatically acquired, is comprised of skills, attitudes and activities that can be learned. “In order to be a good leader, one must have the experience, knowledge, commitment, patience, and most importantly
the skill to negotiate and work with others to achieve goals. Good leaders are thus made, not born” (Amanchukwu et al., 2015, para. 1).

When individuals are elected to a federal or state legislative position, they must possess certain leadership qualities to be successful and provide exceptional service for the common good of their constituents. The expectation of elected leaders, according to Williams (2014), is to create strategies to form effective communication and engagement of all staff members. From another viewpoint, Novak (2018) stated that individuals elected to a public office must have the leadership ability to manage differences in ways that advance the agenda, establish trust, and establish a civic culture of common respect that makes progress a possibility. Novak (2018) noted that leadership from the elected official standpoint is having the capability to manage various differences in ways to advance the agenda forward, form trust and establish a civic culture of common respect that makes progress attainable.

Additionally, Novak (2018) detailed that there were three leadership requirements for elected officials to be successful. The first is to overcome confirmation bias. This type of bias occurs when a person seeks to confirm what they believe, so much that the bias is out of alignment with their own beliefs. In order to overcome that, the leader must utilize self-awareness to identify their bias and seek examples that oppose their own prejudice and also pursue ways to connect parties which can lead to positive results.

Novak’s (2018) second leadership requirement is engaging in productive conflict. Productive conflict involves acquiring better solutions and maintaining an open mind while working together as a team. The best decisions arise when all viable points of view are considered. The third leadership requirement Novak detailed is adopting a strong and positive mindset to resolve difficult problems. In that situation, the leader chooses to believe that change
is a possibility, that parties which are unable to always agree on the same issues can work together and have trust in positive objectives which can stimulate new solutions to difficult problems that America faces.

In order to bring a solution to the problem of the injustice of longer incarceration stints of African Americans, as compared to White defendants involved in justifiable homicide incidents in the state of Florida and increased justifiable homicides rates throughout the life span of the Stand Your Ground Law, there must be some leaders who would want to take a stance for those lacking the advantage of speaking on their own behalf. Those leaders would take on the responsibility of engendering societal change and ensuring that there is equality for all as the United States Declaration of Independence states:

> We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness. That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed.

(National Archives, 1776, para. 2)

The question is whether Florida’s legislators have demonstrated the attributes of the conceptual frameworks of influence of effective leadership, intellectual stimulation and leadership decision making that are discussed in this study. Have they used their public office as a platform to incorporate change? Have they also considered new ideas which led to their own individual visions and taken proactive steps to eventually modify the Stand Your Ground Law and those issues that are associated with the law? Furthermore, each legislator can engender change by utilizing their influence. The literature analyzed and used in this study, along with the study’s findings are intended to provide possible tools for the state’s legislative leaders to expand
their work on reexamining and reassessing the Stand Your Ground Law in the state of Florida, for the purpose of revising the law.

Summary

Since the inception of Florida’s 2005 enactment of the Stand Your Ground Law, that law has become problematic as seen by the inequity in incarceration over the last 15 years, the increased number of justifiable homicides, and the increase of concealed weapon permits. A primary reason for the increase of justifiable homicides is the overturning of traditional self-defense policies. The law has been an issue for Florida’s citizens and of particular concern to the African American community. Even though there were more Whites involved in justifiable homicides than African Americans, the ratios of those involved are out of proportion to the numbers of White and African American state citizens. Additionally, African Americans have been sentenced to longer incarceration times than Whites for committing the same act. With the shooting deaths described in high-profile cases where the Stand Your Ground Law was used as a defense, Florida has become the focal point of the issue of standing your ground and justifiable homicides and has drawn the attention of the rest of the United States.

This examination of Florida’s Stand Your Ground Law has the potential to contribute significantly to the needed clarity of the law, how the law is interpreted, and how future self-defense cases are judged. Additionally, this study examined the ambiguities that are continually maintained and overstated as seen in the Stand Your Ground Law. Lastly, this research study’s concepts of the influence of effective leadership, intellectual stimulation, leadership decision-making and racial disparity support the expressed ideas and concepts behind what type of leadership is needed to make changes, and the inequity that African Americans experience.
The overall goal of this study was to explore the most suitable and productive leadership practices and strategies that could potentially be implemented to resolve the three unintended consequences that arose since the law’s passage in 2005. The first problematic outcome to be resolved is to help examine and end the injustice of longer incarceration stints of African Americans as compared to White defendants involved in justifiable homicide incidents in the state of Florida. The second intended outcome of this study was to find the means to decrease the number of justifiable homicides in the State of Florida. The study’s final purpose was to bring to light the exponential increase in concealed carry permits and to explore the effects of that phenomenon which evolved as a result of the law’s passage.

Due to the complexity of this study and the different issues that are addressed, the participants in this study are a valued asset and will play an important part because each participant can provide input, such as recommendations to modify or improve the Stand Your Ground Law, based on their previous lived experiences with the law. In order for the state’s leaders to accomplish the goals they seemingly strive for, regarding the Stand Your Ground Law, they must engage with each other to establish exact and precise language that leaves no doubt about guilt and innocence. The intent is that the research findings from this study offer them tools for initiating and continuing those efforts. This study also has the potential to assist researchers in conducting additional studies that would further enhance the clarity and equitable implementation of the Stand Your Ground Law. Lastly, there is evidence to support the value of examining Florida’s Stand Your Ground Law utilizing a qualitative research method. Previous research on this subject also revealed gaps that make this research even more significant. Based on the literature review for this study, there was no evidence indicating that previous researchers conducted individual and focus groups interviews to devise recommendations for effective
means to assess and revise the Stand Your Ground Law in the State of Florida. The following chapter, Chapter Three describes the methodology as well as the research design which was implemented in this study. Additionally, this chapter will determine the best course of action to address the research question.
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY: RESEARCH DESIGN

The objective of this chapter was to present the research methodology for this qualitative phenomenological study. As discussed in Chapters One and Two, there is a significant problem with the issue of racial disparity that exists between the incarceration time between Whites and African Americans who are found guilty in justifiable homicide incidents and there is judicial disparity of African Americans that reside in Florida who are arrested, charged, tried, and found guilty when the Stand Your Ground Law is used as a defense. Additionally, there is a disparity between the number of Whites and African Americans killed in justifiable homicide incidents, which is disproportionate to the numbers of each group in the state’s population. There has also been a large increase of the number of justifiable homicides in the State of Florida since the Stand Your Ground Law went into effect in 2005. In addition to the progressive rate of justifiable homicides, there has been an increase in the number of Florida citizens who have obtained concealed weapon permits corresponding to the increase of justifiable homicides.

Additionally, the ambiguity of Florida’s Stand Your Ground Law is problematic for law enforcement because of the constraints of interpreting the law accurately. McCormick (2015) also pointed out that what makes the Stand Your Ground Law ambiguous is the removal of the duty to retreat. That ambiguity has allowed the Stand Your Ground Law to change from a justified self-defense law which was a “more objective interpretation of the law by legal actors into a more subjective one” (p. 3).

Purpose of the Study

Since the passing of Florida’s Stand Your Ground Law in 2005, when the law was created and passed by conservative legislators, no specific strategy or practice to implement the Stand Your Ground Law accompanied its passage. As time has progressed, unintended
consequences have appeared and increased in numbers and effects. An additional purpose of this study was to offer facts that would allow leaders to reexamine and reassess the current law, as a mean to then examine and possibly revise the Stand Your Ground Law so that it is clear and concise for law enforcement officers to make the appropriate judgments when justifiable homicides occur.

**Research Question**

What are some viable solutions to modifying the current Florida Stand Your Ground Law which can eliminate the unintended consequences that have been produced by the implementation of the law?

**Methodology Selected**

The selected and most appropriate research design for this qualitative study was the phenomenological approach. Creswell and Creswell (2017) defined that form of research as an examination based in psychology and philosophy where the researcher illustrates the lived experiences of people about a phenomenon. The data gathered from the study’s participants, through the process of interviewing them, were intended to illustrate the exceptional experiences and descriptions contributed by each individual. Their viewpoints and experiences could provide different perspectives from those who may favor or oppose the Stand Your Ground Law.

**Population**

The participants for this study were comprised of three legislators, and a former Florida law enforcement officer, a defense attorney, and a civil rights attorney. The majority of participants for this study were selected based on television news accounts and social media news reports which spotlighted their experiences. The remaining individual participants were selected because of the researcher’s personal association with them.
Sampling Approaches and Methods

According to Sergeant (2012), the determination of the sample size was based upon the number of participants that were necessary to completely describe every vital element of the phenomenon that was being researched. This determination means that the sample size is adequate when a focus group or interviews result in the identification of no new ideas, an endpoint known as data saturation. Purposeful sampling is a practice broadly used in qualitative research for the selection and identification of information-rich cases for the most efficient use of limited resources (Palinkas et al., 2015). For this study, purposeful sampling was the method utilized to obtain participants. The intention of utilizing purposeful sampling as a means to gain study participants was to ensure, as much as possible, that the data collected from them reflected the perceptions and views of those who were familiar with the law.

Seven participants from the state of Florida were invited and agreed to take part in this study. They were gathered through their professional websites, as well as social media websites. All participants were contacted through a recruitment email (Appendix F) and business telephone numbers posted on their respective websites. Each participant was emailed a letter of consent providing details regarding the study and stating that, if they are willing to participate, their signature was required on that letter (Appendix D). That letter was signed and returned to the researcher before the interviews were scheduled. Each individual interview was planned for approximately ninety minutes to allow for thorough dialogue in order to obtain the primary elements of the research throughout all the aspects that were examined. During the individual interview session with Participant 3, there was a technical issue that did not allow the data to be saved. A rapid response was taken once the error was initially discovered. This involved forwarding a second email request to the participant to answer the interview questions again but
via email. The reasoning for this action was due to Participant 3’s busy schedule. The participant responded to the email request and answered the questions promptly. Despite this error, there was not a significant effect on this study.

At the completion of the interview, each participant was asked if they would take part in a focus group. If they chose to participate, a collectively feasible and agreed upon day and time was coordinated to obtain a timeframe that the focus group was to be conducted. Furthermore, after the completion of the individual interview sessions, participants were offered the opportunity to review their transcripts. For this study, the guidance of Hagens et al. (2009) was followed. According to those researchers, the review of the transcripts entails the researcher forward a copy of the verbatim transcripts to the participants, so that each one can verify for accuracy, correct inaccuracies or errors and provide clarifications. An email (Appendix I) providing instructions for the participants, was forwarded along with the transcripts to be reviewed. Upon the receipt of the transcripts, the participants had one week to review, sign, and return the approved transcript to the researcher. A non-response within seven (7) days was taken as a confirmation of satisfaction with the original transcript. After the timeframe, none of the seven participants requested a change in the transcripts.

For this study, individual semi-structured interviews, and a focus group, both utilizing open ended questions and conducted through Zoom technology, were the most appropriate approaches to gather data (Appendix B and C). Furthermore, Wholey et al. (2010) indicated that what makes a question effective is what information the individual who responds to the question believes to be useful. Interview and focus group questions must be understandable and easy to answer. Creating questions must be carried out with the target respondents as the key focus. Also, there must be an anticipation of the target respondents’ openness to different types of
question formats and their eagerness to offer replies to open-ended questions. The interview process in this study met all the criteria Wholey et al. (2010) detailed.

**Instrumentation**

Zoom interviews were performed to collect research data from a small population. The justification for utilizing this type of interview format was to stimulate an open dialogue between the researcher and the interviewees, where they could provide their own personal viewpoints and lived experiences. DeJonckheere and Vaughn (2019) stated:

- Overall, semi-structured interviewing requires both a relational focus and practice in the skills of facilitation. Skills include:
  - (1) determining the purpose and scope of the study
  - (2) identifying participants
  - (3) considering ethical issues
  - (4) planning logistical aspects
  - (5) developing the interview guide
  - (6) establishing trust and rapport
  - (7) conducting the interview
  - (8) memoing and reflection
  - (9) analyzing the data
  - (10) demonstrating the trustworthiness of the research; and
  - (11) presenting findings in a paper or report. (p. 1)

The guidelines provided by those researchers were followed during the interview process and the reporting of findings portion of this study.
Prior to the individual interview sessions, interviewees received a copy of the questions that would be asked so they could clearly see what the substance of the interview was about, think about their willingness to participate and be better prepared to answer questions. Also, at the start of the individual interviews and focus group session, the protocol guide (Appendix A) was read for all participants to ensure that everyone fully understood the interview and focus group processes.

**Process Followed**

Individual Zoom video conferencing interviews were conducted, due to COVID-19. Earlier in the proposal stage of this study, a voice recorder was to be utilized as a backup to the cloud-based teleconferencing application Zoom, but the option to use Zoom solely appeared to be the more favorable option. Throughout the individual interviews and focus group sessions, Zoom was the only tool used to record video and audio recordings. Prior to each interview, each participant received a Letter of Consent (Appendix D) to inform them of their rights to confidentiality and anonymity under the Institutional Review Board guidelines of National Louis University. Creswell and Creswell (2017) pointed out that disclosing participants’ information should be avoided to prevent harm to them. By maintaining participants’ confidentiality and anonymity, the researcher permits participants to preserve possession of their opinions and wield their independence in decision-making.

In preparation for the focus group session, each interviewee who was individually interviewed and volunteered for the focus group received another copy of the individual questions for that portion of the data gathering and a copy of the focus group questions. The reasoning behind providing another copy of the individual interview questions served a twofold purpose. First, the interviewees were able to refer back to those questions. Secondly, there could
have been weeks between the individual interview and the focus group session, which may be vaguely remembered or forgotten. During each of the individual interview and focus group sessions, the researcher read each question to the participants as a means to ensure that participants fully understand each of them.

Confidentiality and Anonymity

The process of data collection was a significant factor in producing an exceptional research study. Paradis et al. (2016) explained that how data collection is utilized and what explanations the information can create are determined by the analytical approach that is applied by the researcher. For this study, to begin the process of collecting data, participants were first informed of their rights to confidentiality and anonymity. The protection of the participant’s identity is of the upmost importance. Creswell and Creswell (2017) pointed out that when qualitative research is conducted, the researcher uses pseudonyms for people and places, to safeguard the identities of the participants. Pseudonyms safeguards both the confidentiality as well as the anonymity of participants.

Saunders et al. (2015) described anonymity as a form of confidentiality, which keeps the identities of participants’ secret. However, confidentiality also involves maintaining the privacy of participants and everything that is said. Confidentiality and anonymity are only accomplished by the researcher choosing not to disclose parts of the data such as the participants’ name, address or any other personal or identifying information, and anything that the participants may state in their interviews.

In this study, the researcher followed the guidelines for maintaining confidentiality and protecting anonymity set forth by National Louis University for both the interviewing and the focus group sessions. The audios, videos and transcripts will be viewed only by the researcher.
Secondly, the electronic data are stored on a password protected external hard drive, which is secured in a combination-lock safe. Any hard copies related to the participants are kept in a locked file cabinet. Lastly, all paper and electronic files will be retained for 3 years after the study is completed, then fully destroyed.

At the same time, participation in the focus group entailed a slight risk of loss of confidentiality and anonymity; therefore, in the debriefing of the focus group discussion, the participants were asked to respect everyone’s need to feel comfortable with having participated by maintaining everyone’s comfort level through their upholding confidentiality and anonymity.

Saunders et al. (2015) also stated that a perfect viewpoint of anonymity is that an individual will never be visible from the data produced about them. In this study, anonymity was set and maintained by assigning each participant a number, such as P1, P2, and so forth, and reporting each individual’s findings using only that identification.

Additionally, in the case of this study, the above requirements suggested by Creswell and Creswell (2017), DeJonckheere and Vaughn (2019), Palinkas et al. (2015), and Sergeant (2012), were enhanced through the application of those of the National Louis University IRB committee. Those criteria are:

1. Ensuring the values of anonymity, confidentiality and respect for person is significant to conducting research.
2. Participants will be confident that their data and personal information will be securely retained in both digital and written formats solely by the researcher.
3. Participants risks and where they occur, will be reduced and are sensible in relation to expected benefits.
4. Participants will be equally selected.
5. Informed consent documentation will be obtained from each participant.

6. To ensure the privacy and safety of the participants, measures will be taken to monitor collected data.

7. Participants will be given a sufficient enough explanation of the study to allow them to decide whether to participate or not.

8. Participants will be informed of the degree their confidentiality will be preserved.

9. Participants will be notified that their participation is voluntary and their termination or refusal to participate will not result in no harm to the participant; and

10. Participants will be free of undue influence and coercion.

Archibald et al. (2019) stated that a key benefit of Zoom is its capability to securely record and store discussion sessions without using third-party software as an alternative. This feature is particularly valuable in research where the protection of data is necessary. All interviews were recorded and transcribed utilizing those features of the qualitative research software, ATLAS.ti. Furthermore, each participant was informed that the researcher would be the only person to hear the voice recordings and view the transcriptions, so that confidentiality and anonymity are strictly maintained.

**Focus Group**

Additionally, for this study, a Zoom interview with a focus group was conducted. Since only one of the original individual interviewees accepted an invitation to participate in the focus group, seven other individuals were invited to participate in the group, which they all accepted.

The justification for utilizing a focus group, consisting of eight interview participants (Creswell & Creswell, 2017) is two-fold. First, as a follow up step to the individual interviews, the intention was to stimulate an open dialogue between the interviewees with the researcher
guiding the conversations in order to further obtain opinions, ideas, and knowledge of the phenomenon of the study, as a means to provide recommendations to state legislators for the most effective means to reduce unintended consequences that were produced by the Stand Your Ground Law.

The questions for both the interviews and the focus group session were open-ended and semi-structured and are few in number (Appendix C). They were intended to obtain opinions and views from the participants. Upon the start of the focus group session and until the completion, the Zoom application was utilized to record, then later transcribed utilizing the qualitative research software, ATLAS.ti.

Following the completion of the focus group interview session, participants were given the opportunity to review their transcripts, which involved forwarding an exact copy of the transcript to each member in order to validate the document for accuracies, correct errors, and offer clarifications. An instructional email (Appendix I) was forwarded along with the transcripts. After receiving the transcripts, the participants had the choice to return any suggested revisions, not make any changes, or respond. Upon the completion of the focus group interview session, the participants displayed an appreciation for the opportunity to take part in a discussion such as this study. Also, after the session ended, all participants were informed that there was a timeframe of seven days to return feedback. A non-response within seven days was taken as a confirmation of satisfaction with the original transcript. None of the eight focus group participants made any changes.

**Debriefing for Research Participation**

All participants were asked to engage in a debriefing, immediately following each interview (Appendix G) and focus group session (Appendix H). The intention of the debriefing
was to remind the participants of their rights and how any risks were mitigated, with regards to providing information for this study and to provide them an opportunity to ask any questions they had that may have arisen.

**Data Collection and Analysis**

After the individual interviews and focus group interviewing process, the ATLAS.ti software was used to collect the participants ideas and recommendations. Based on the ATLAS website, the software is a strong workbench for the qualitative analysis of huge bodies of graphical, textual, video, and audio data. The software guidelines and the recommendations used by Zakaria et al. (2015), who illustrated the practical use of the software at a conference in Berlin, Germany, were employed (“ATLAS.TI., 2020”).

Following the guidelines of stages and steps for transcribing, as seen in Figure 4, after collecting all audio and textual data from the study participants, the recorded information was then transcribed using the ATLAS.ti software. This process was accomplished by first loading the video and audio files into the software program. The next step involved creating a new text file and linking that file to the multimedia file. The multimedia file and the text file can be shown side-by-side, which made the process simpler to manage documents and the researcher can simultaneously see and work on transcribing the data.
For this study, Bengtsson’s (2016) method was applied to coding, classifying, categorizing, and labeling the data. That process consists of four stages, which are decontextualization, recontextualization, categorization, and compilation.

**Stage One**

Decontextualization consists of breaking down the transcribed text into smaller, meaningful units to fully understand the subject matter. Every recognized meaning unit will be labeled with a code, which should be relatable to the context. This process is identified as the open coding process.
**Stage Two**

Recontextualization occurs when meaningful units have been recognized, then there is a verification that every facet of the subject has been related to the objective of the study.

**Stage Three**

In the categorization stage, categories and themes are labeled.

**Stage Four**

Compilation occurs when there is a final examination of the content, during which the researcher should carefully think if the new findings relate to the literature and whether or not the literature is reasonable and logical. However, for this study, this researcher verified the literature review and determined that the content is closely related to the case.

**Coding and Classifying**

Coding permits the researcher to concentrate on the specific characteristics of the data and to simplify the data. Vogt et al. (2014) noted that the researcher must code observations concerning the interviewees. Nowell et al. (2017) indicated that qualitative coding involves the process of reflection and a method of interconnecting with and thinking about data. For this study, coding was accomplished by designating phrases or words to categories.

**Categorizing and Labeling**

Categorizing and labeling are methods of designating coded themes and data names. The purpose is to condense and readjust coded data into groupings that are manageable for the researcher. Upon completing the individual interviews and focus group session, which were recorded, transcribed, and uploaded into ATLAS.ti, every section of transcribed text was thoroughly reviewed and grouped through the categorization and labeling of the sections to decide the substance of the text, through the qualitative research software.
Explanation of How Analysis and Collection of Data Overlap

Creswell and Creswell (2017) maintained that qualitative data analysis mainly involves classifying persons, events, and things and the properties that describe them. For this study, the researcher ensured that the participants’ interviews, recordings, transcriptions, and the analysis of the data collected were completed and then coded to achieve the clarity of description those researchers stated is necessary. Following the coding of the data, the essential codes were reviewed to eliminate overlapping and redundancy. Upon the completion of that task, the codes were grouped into subjects that have common concepts. The codes were then designated into three categories which are: surprising codes, expected codes and unusual codes. This stage assisted in guaranteeing that qualitative findings will represent diverse viewpoints of the participants.

Reliability

The reliability of a study is significant because, as Nowell et al. (2017) stated, when readers lack clarity about what assumptions informed the study’s analysis or how researchers analyzed their data, assessing the trustworthiness of the research process is problematic. During the data analysis, the researcher is the catalyst for analyzing, theming, making judgments about coding, recontextualizing, and decontextualizing all data. Those researchers stated that every qualitative research method has specific procedures for documenting, conducting, and evaluating data analysis processes, but the responsibility of the individual researcher is to guarantee trustworthiness and rigor. Trustworthiness assures the readers, as well as other researchers, that the research findings are worthy of consideration. In order to achieve that trust, the researcher “must demonstrate that the data analysis has been conducted in a precise, consistent, and
exhaustive manner through recording, systematizing and disclosing the method of analysis with enough detail to enable the reader to determine whether the process is credible” (p. 1).

Triangulation was the favored method to produce reliability for this study. According to Carter et al. (2014), there are several useful tools within this approach, and they are comprised of: (1) theory, (2) environmental, (3) investigator, and (4) methodological triangulation. Methodological triangulation is the most preferred approach of the four types. It entails utilizing more than one method of collecting data about the same phenomenon. Therefore, for this study there were individual interviewees who were afforded the opportunity after the interview to take part in a focus group discussion based on the issues that are brought forwarded in the individual interviews. Fusch et al. (2018) pointed out there was another means of triangulation which is the between-method. This method entails triangulating the data from multiple data collection interviews, focus groups and observations. For this study, that method of triangulation was offered to both the participants of the individual interviews and the focus group, with the opportunity to review their transcripts upon the conclusion of the interview process.

**Ethical Research**

The key factor to ethical research is the safeguarding of the participants by the researcher. As stated in Yip et al.’s (2016) study, the primary responsibility of human participants in research is to provide source data. Additionally, Yip et al. (2018) indicated that researchers have an obligation to protect the health, right to independence, dignity, integrity, confidentiality, and privacy of personal data of research subjects.

The participants in this study were informed that their information, collected in both digital and written form, would be securely controlled by the researcher. The Privacy and Confidentiality (2019) protocols limit the need to gather and maintain specific data about
research subjects. When feasible, information should be gathered anonymously, or the identifiers must be withdrawn and destroyed as quickly as time permits and access to research information must be founded on a "need to know" and least essential standard. As discussed earlier in this chapter, all tasks regarding confidentiality and anonymity were accomplished to meet the established protocols.

Ethical research also involves the participant’s trust in the researcher’s ability to manage data. According to Horn et al. (2011), the concern of privacy influences trust and usually, research participants want to be kept abreast of who has access to their data, for what purposes and who will make decisions on issues. Participants must be assured that they can trust their samples and data are secure, are being utilized according to research protocols, and are managed with care. To meet Horn et al. (2011) criteria on privacy and in order for this researcher to build trust with the participants of this study, there was open communication between the participants and the researcher, so there was no doubt regarding the researchers’ actions.

Methodological Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

Assumptions

Creswell and Creswell (2017) stated that research methods are procedures and plans for conducting studies which cover the phases from wide-ranging assumptions to thorough methods of the collection of data, analysis, and interpretation. The assumptions that were made from this research study were that justifiable homicides in the State of Florida are a problem that must be addressed and modified to have equal justice for all the state’s citizens.

Secondly, the increase in concealed weapon permits in Florida was assumed to be a by-product of the Stand Your Ground Law. Thirdly, there were those individuals who can utilize their position in society to create needed transformation. Fourthly, the researcher made the
assumptions that the criteria for the selection of the sample was suitable and the shared lived experiences of the participants to the phenomenon added to the value of the study.

Lastly, there was an assumption that the participants in the study would respond to the interview questions candidly and honestly. Those assumptions could only be proven or disproven by the interviewees in this research study who had the primary purpose of significantly contributing and adding value through each of their individual, personal experiences and knowledge of justifiable homicide and the Stand Your Ground Law.

**Limitations**

This research was bounded by four limitations. Since there is a small number of participants who have experienced the implementation and/or the effects of the Stand Your Ground Law, the first limitation is that collecting a large number of participants for an interview on such a controversial topic would be impossible. Secondly, Elmir et al. (2011) pointed out another limitation to this type of study was the possibility that an issue can be sensitive, and some issues may have a greater chance of causing stress than other issues. Therefore, to mitigate this limitation, during each interview, the researcher paused and waited for a response after each question was asked. If the participant continued to remain silent, the question was restated. If a participant continued to hesitate to respond, they were reminded that they have the right to withdraw from this interview and limit participation if they felt uneasy providing answers. Lastly, to mitigate any sensitivity on the part of the participants, upon the completion of the interview session, participants were fully debriefed (Appendix G).

The third limitation was the effectiveness of the interview questions. The limitation of the effectiveness of eliciting truthfulness from the participants during the interview process was reduced by presenting clearly delineated questions so that the participant fully understood the
direction the research was heading. That limitation refers to the occurrences of acquiescence bias, which “occurs when interviewees agree with what they think the interviewer wants to hear instead of giving their unbiased answer, can often prevent interviewees from sharing all relevant information” (Duke Global Health Institute, 2018, para. 4). To alleviate that limitation, empathy, sympathy, and sincerity must be shown and no accusations are to be made. Also, the researcher asking the questions must speak quietly, slowly and begin with a direct observation such as “I appreciate you agreeing to speak with me” (Psychologies, 2015). These considerations were utilized in this study while interviewing each participant which made discussions more comfortable as well as building a foundation of trust between myself and the participants.

The fourth limitation is the appropriateness of the interview questions. This limitation was alleviated by both carefully constructing the queries and listening carefully to what was being said by the participants. Bolderston (2012) noted that while more attention is put on writing appropriate questions, the primary skill that is necessary for the interviewer is to be a good listener. When examining the final transcript, for instance, the perfect example was largely uninterrupted sections of text, illustrating the participant had spoken a majority of the time.

**Delimitations**

The first delimitation was the population sample of the participants. The emphasis on a specific population of only Florida and Georgia Federal and state legislators, law enforcement officers, a defense attorney, and a civil rights lawyer is a delimitation of this study. The intent was to concentrate on this population and to take their lived-experiences and the data from the literature review to form a credible rationale to change the Stand Your Ground Law.

The second delimitation was the theoretical viewpoints that were accepted by the researcher in comparison to preconceived concepts that the researcher believed to be true.
Latham (2019) stated that qualitative researchers are urged to make their analysis and thinking specific, so that others can follow their conclusions and paths. Secondly, the researcher has the responsibility to create the method of research so that the research will “do no harm.”

The third delimitation was that the methodology was confined to the boundary of the research problem. The limited perspectives that were presented by the research, also overlooks other problems that could possibly occur as part of the study. Another possible option for this study would have been to interview individuals in one generalized field, such as law enforcement; however, that approach would only capture one perspective and could possibly have created a one-dimensional study. The fourth delimitation is the researcher’s lack of objectivity, which was challenged because of the topics of racial disparity, justifiable homicide, and carrying a weapon. Creswell and Creswell (2017) mentioned that objectivity can also be obtained by other than conventional methods.

Objectivity and truthfulness are critical to both research traditions. However, the criteria for judging a qualitative study differ from quantitative research. First and foremost, the researcher seeks believability, based on coherence, insight and instrumental utility (Eisner, 1991) and trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) through a process of verification rather than through traditional validity and reliability measures. (Creswell & Creswell, 2017, p. 204)

The fifth delimitation is the use of Zoom technology which was utilized in this study to interview participants and to collect data. According to Archibald et al.’s (2019) study of the Zoom technology, in spite of finding Zoom to be user-friendly and intuitive, 88% of participants in a study underwent some level of difficulty in entering a meeting. Predictable technical problems included outdated hardware, low Internet bandwidth, or reduced webcam and/or
microphone functionality. Participants were more likely to experience these difficulties than the researcher. Possibly indicating differences in knowledge with Zoom or access to dependable, high-speed Internet.

**Conclusion**

The intent of the methodological approach utilized for this phenomenological study was to gather data from the participants, in order to answer the research question, which is: What are some viable solutions to modifying the current Florida Stand Your Ground Law which can eliminate the unintended consequences that have been produced by the implementation of the law? Additionally, the intent of this research project was to provide solutions for the complex problem as described in Chapter One.

There were a total of seven individual interview participants for this study, comprised of three legislators, a former law enforcement officer, one defense attorney and a civil rights attorney. Additionally, the focus group comprised of eight Florida citizens. The most suitable approach to collecting the necessary data to answer the research question was to conduct semi-structured interviews.

The instrumentation utilized to aid the researcher through the interview process was the video conferencing tool of Zoom, which stimulated an open dialogue between the researcher and the interviewees, where the latter provided their own personal viewpoints and lived experiences. Other communications with participants were via email and each participant was informed of their rights to confidentiality and anonymity under the Institutional Review Board guidelines of National Louis University.

The groundwork and implementation of this study was an immense undertaking in every phase of the process. The participants’ input was intended to bring significant value to the study
based on their lived experiences. In a research study such as this, where the discussion is essentially about life and death, one of the most important elements of executing the proposed methodology was to adhere to the guidelines of ethical research. In this way, the participants of the study were provided with the environment in which they could remain truthful in their answers because a high level of ethical behavior and trust has been established between them and the researcher. In Chapter Four, the data were examined to verify trends, associations, and concepts introduced as findings.
CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Purpose

This study illustrates the analyzed data gathered from an investigation of the unintended consequences of Florida's Stand Your Ground Law and leadership's role in both implementing the law and revising it. The participants responded to the topic, the unintended consequences of Florida's Stand Your Ground Law, and what action should be taken. Chapter Four also provides the findings of the data gathered that addressed the research question: What are some viable solutions to modifying the current Florida Stand Your Ground Law which can eliminate the unintended consequences that have been produced by the implementation of the law?

Participant Interviews

The individual interview and focus group questions were derived from the research question. The themes for this study were based on the individual interview questions which established the categories and the labels. The data from the individual interviews and focus group were collected over a 5-month period from October 2021 through February 2022. Both were conducted by utilizing Zoom communication due to travel limitations and safety concerns of COVID-19. The participants in this study were present and past Florida representatives, a city government representative, a former Florida law enforcement, a former FBI agent a Florida defense attorney and a civil rights attorney. The duration of each individual interview, consisting of 15 questions, averaged 65 minutes (See Appendix B).

Recording Data

Semi-structured interviews were performed to gather participant input, via audio utilizing the Zoom internet conferencing technology. Additionally, all recorded data were digitally transcribed also using the Zoom teleconferencing software. The qualitative data analysis
software ATLAS t.i. 22 was utilized to efficiently analyze participant data and organize information.

Sample Description

Data were collected from seven people who met the conditions to participate in this study. Each participant was recruited by email and telephonic inquiries. The individual interviewees had the capability to provide recommendations to the Florida State legislative leaders based on the various positions that they maintain within the state. The recruitment process was very problematic due to the scheduling conflicts, the topic of the study, and the decommitment of interviewees.

Participants Demographics

Each of the seven participants resided in the State of Florida. The chosen sample comprised of five males and two females. The sample was also represented by race. The individuals who were part this demographic had considerable knowledge of the Florida Stand Your Ground Law and did not consent to use their names. Additionally, individual interviewees held positions in state and local government, law enforcement, and the legal field. With a demographic such as the one provided in this study, there is a potential to provide future viable solutions to modify the current Florida Stand Your Ground Law as the law is currently written. Table 1 illustrates the participant demographics that were selected to take part in the individual interview process.
Table 1

*Participant Demographics*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Race</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Black</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Black</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Triangulation**

According to Caillaud and Flick (2017), utilizing focus groups with a view to triangulation allows more than merely making the data more thorough; triangulation also provides a clearer understanding of a phenomenon which is under study. Creswell and Creswell (2017) pointed out that triangulation is one of several methods of data collection and analysis that reinforces reliability as well as internal validity. For this reason, a focus group was established. The focus group questions are located in Appendix C.

**Results**

Upon completing the interview and focus group transcripts, the following themes, and findings were developed from the research.
Table 2

*Themes of Interview Questions*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Related Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Purpose</td>
<td>Q1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Necessity</td>
<td>Q2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improve or modify</td>
<td>Q3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reasons and Motivations</td>
<td>Q4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Right Action to take</td>
<td>Q5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding of the law</td>
<td>Q6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safer or less safe</td>
<td>Q7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short term and long term</td>
<td>Q8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Requirements for Political Leadership Success</td>
<td>Q9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommendations</td>
<td>Q10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helps or hinders</td>
<td>Q11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mitigation or elimination</td>
<td>Q12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equity</td>
<td>Q13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concealed weapons carry</td>
<td>Q14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Right to keep and bear arms</td>
<td>Q15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The following results are grouped by these themes: purpose, necessity, improve or modify, reasons and motivation, justification, right actions to take, understanding the law, safe or less safe, short term and long term, requirement for political leadership success, recommendations, help or hinder, mitigation or elimination, equity, right to bear arms.
Theme #1 – Purpose

The reasoning for presenting the purpose of the Stand Your Ground Law is that the purpose provides a first glance of the different interpretations and perspectives from Floridians on why the law exists and how the law is applied.

Interview Question 1: What do you believe the purpose of Florida’s Stand Your Ground Law is?

The seven participants’ viewpoints (see Figure 5) illustrated there was a general commonality of the purpose of the Stand Your Ground Law, which was to allow the use of self-defense, and eliminate the duty to retreat. Participant 5 believed “the Stand Your Ground Law, expanded what has been known as the castle doctrine” (Participant 5, Zoom communication, December 10, 2021). Participant 4 stated,

Well, the real purpose was to be to allow you to protect yourself. Should you feel endangered that somebody was going to do some great bodily harm to you is what they say the law is for. However, hasn't quite been that way, but that's what it's supposed to be. You know, it gives you justification for shooting somebody if somebody is threatening you with great bodily harm and you believe that they're going to hurt you, so you get to do something to them first, if they are aggressive towards you. So that's what they say. That's hasn't quite been really why it is. (Participant 4, Zoom communication, December 7, 2021)

Participant 1 differed slightly in her response, noting that there was a judicial purpose for the law. She expressed that, “the purpose of the law is to spell that [the purpose] out as clearly as possible so that the law can be used in court” (Participant 1, Zoom communication, October 2, 2021).
Figure 5

Q1 – Theme: Purpose

Theme #2 – Necessity

Necessity in this study denotes whether Florida’s Stand Your Ground Law is indispensable or required for citizens within the state.

Interview Question 2: Do you believe that Florida’s Stand Your Ground Law is a necessary law to ensure the self-defense of Florida citizens?

There was consensus among the individual interview participants (see Figure 6) that the Stand Your Ground Law was not a necessity for the state of Florida. An example of one of the responses is found in a frank discussion with Participant 2. He stated:
No, I think that justifiable homicide laws looks at the totality of the circumstances and there's other ways of empowering the citizens. Does that mean it would be easy on them if you were to use legitimate self-defense and maybe it would be expensive. But I don't necessarily think it's necessary. I would just say having a law that assesses the reasonableness without having the invitational part of the law. It's almost like you know, as we discussed earlier, all these people have these CWP s (concealed weapon permits) and now they add this law and it's not disincentivizing engagement and I think that's what the law of self-defense should be about is you know, when your back’s against the wall you don't have other choices, I feel like the stand your ground scenarios that we see people have, have tons of other choices. And so, it just excuses you from considering the choices and doing heavy lifting and deciding, is it absolutely necessary to deploy this high level of force to protect myself. I don't like this idea; it almost feels like err the side of shoot or attack or you know come at somebody. I don't think that self-defense; it's about defending yourself, not about aggression and I think that this law promotes aggression, that's what I think. (Participant 2, Zoom communication, October 16, 2021)
Theme #3 – Improve or Modify

Improve or modify in this study refers to the Florida State legislators taking some course of action to make the Stand Your Ground Law better by modifying the wording in the law.

Interview Question 3: Do you believe Florida legislative leaders should improve or modify the Florida Stand Your Ground Law?

The participants’ feedback from question 3 (see Figure 7) illustrated that five of the seven participants, Participants 2, 4, 5, 6, and 7, maintained that the Florida legislative leaders should revise, modify, or repeal the current Stand Your Ground Law. Participant 1 did not believe that the law should be modified. Whereas Participant 3 thought there were more important issues to legislate than Florida’s Stand Your Ground Law (Participant 3, via email communication,
October 30, 2021). Participant’s 6 perspective was that he believed the law should be repealed because the law was one-sided if there were not any witnesses. He stated:

I think the law should be repealed for the cases that you identified earlier; it was also another case of a man who was upset with his neighbor. I think there was some noise outside and they got into a verbal altercation. He went inside got a gun, you know the neighbors dead and he attempted to use the stand your ground defense as a shield. In that case I don't believe it applied, but the reality is whenever that defense is used in court, you're always missing a witness and that witness, the person that's dead, they don't get an opportunity to tell their side of the story, so you're only hearing one side of it and that lends itself to a lot of bias, in my opinion, because the defendant at the time can say whatever they need to say to get off. And there isn't really anybody that maybe, unless there was some eyewitnesses there that can refute it, but the most important eyewitness in a case like that would be dead. So, I think it should be repealed. (Participant 6, Zoom communication, December 21, 2021)
**Theme #4 – Reasons and Motivation**

Reasons and Motivation in this study refers to the possible rationale of Florida State legislative leaders to enact Florida’s Stand Your Ground Law in 2005.

**Interview Question 4:** What do you believe were the Florida State legislative leaders’ reasons and motivation for passing the Stand Your Ground Law in 2005?

Question number 4 brought different responses from each participant (see Figure 8). Participant 1 stated that, “I think they just wanted to make it clear that you have a right to defend yourself and to perhaps pass a law that explains that” (Participant 1, Zoom communication, October 2, 2021). Participant 6 expressed that he did not believe that there was a nefarious intent (Participant 6, Zoom communication, December 21, 2021). Participants 2, 3, and 5 suggested that the law was passed to support citizens, for more votes and expand what’s been known as the
Castle Doctrine. Participants 4 and 7 provided different answers when they were asked this question. Participant 4 expressed:

I cannot tell you what they were thinking. I wasn't in the Legislature, so I really don't know what their rhyme and reason was. Nor do I know their conversation in 05. I mean, but basically, they said, you know, this will allow legal protection for anybody that reasonably believed that they were being threatened reasonably. Not that absolutely there's somebody threatening my life and I may be killed, but a reasonable threat. So, and you know, I could meet it with force, I don't have to retreat, but I can go to that battle, and I mean, I honestly cannot tell you what they could have possibly been thinking. You know, we have so many people who believe that you have every right to have that gun, and this just gives you one more opportunity to carry it and have it with you all the time. And if you notice we're constantly pushing back against any gun laws that will not only restrict your gun carry, but to protect you from simple things like this happening, a man with some trash being killed, a man over a parking space being killed. Just dumb stuff.

(Participant 4, Zoom communication, December 7, 2021)

Participant 7 answered the question by providing the following statement,

I'm not sure. I can't really answer that; I wasn't around in 2005 focused on the issue back then. It may have been from a good faith, but mistaken belief that the law was necessary. I've heard stories about a case that may have prompted stand your ground. But I don't know if the stories are apocryphal or not. But I can't speculate whether they had a good faith, but mistaken belief or they were doing it for political reasons, back in 2005.

(Participant 7, Zoom communication, January 5, 2022)
Figure 8

Q4 – Theme: Reason and Motivations

Theme #5 – Right Action to Take

Right action to take in this study is in regard to whether the Florida State legislators taken the correct measures in enacting the Florida Stand Your Ground Law.

Interview Question 5. Had the Florida state legislative leaders taken the right action by passing the law?

Five of the seven participants (see Figure 9) believed that the Florida state legislative leaders had not taken the right action by passing the law in 2005. There was one participant out of the seven, Participant 1, who believed that passing the Stand Your Ground Law in 2005 was the correct action to take. She noted:

I think so, I think it's good to have something spelled out. That says, this is what is lawful, and this is what is not, and I think that only helps now like you said it can be confusing as applied, and you know, crazy situation might arise, or what if something
arises and it's not caught on camera. And there are gray areas which is with any law, not just self-defense type laws, any law. But I think it's good that they have acknowledged that this is an issue, and they have acknowledged that they want to spell out how people are allowed to defend themselves and make that somewhat public knowledge and make it available for the court system and judges and lawyers to be able to apply the law if a case gets to court. (Participant 1, Zoom communication, October 2, 2021)

Participant 3 remained neutral. He conveyed that,

I don’t think it’s a big deal either way. It’s reasonable to argue that someone shouldn’t have to run away from a threat and retreat as much as possible for defending themselves. However, a duty to retreat, outside the home, is also fine. (Participant 3, via email communication, October 30, 2021)

Figure 9

Q5 – Theme: Reasons and Motivation
Theme #6– Understanding the Law

Understanding within the framework of this study refers to the Florida State legislators’ overall knowledge of the Stand Your Ground Law. Understanding was the sixth theme utilized in this study.

Interview Question 6: Do you believe the current Florida state legislative leaders have a thorough understanding of Florida's Stand Your Ground Law?

Once again there was another set of responses where the participants provided different viewpoints (see Figure 10). Four out of the seven participants, Participants 2, 5, 6, and 7 believed that the Florida State legislative leaders did not understand Florida’s Stand Your Ground Law. Based on Participant’s 5 opinion, the legislators did not fully comprehend the Stand Your Ground Law. He pointed out:

They don't because they have no scenario-based experience. All they have is law and constituency. They don't have the individual experience to understand the dynamics of, you know, they would have had to go through some simulation understanding to have a better approach towards making these decisions and in fairness to them most people don't have that level of understanding.

Participants 2 and 3’s perspectives were different than the views of the other participants. Participant 3 responded with, “I have no idea” (Participant 3, via email communication, October 30, 2021). Additionally, Participant 1 expressed:

I feel like they may not have a thorough understanding, but I feel like they have all the knowledge at their fingertips, if something arises that they would look into it. I guess I don't know, I don't know what they know so I have to, I'm hoping that they have a thorough understanding or the ability to familiarize themselves should they need to, but
I’m more concerned about I’m kind of the legislature’s creating a lot of courts that are using a law applying the law. (Participant 1, Zoom communication, October 2, 2021)

**Figure 10**

**Q6 – Theme: Understanding the Law**

![Diagram showing participant responses to Q6](image)

**Theme #7 – Safer or Less Safe**

Safe or less safe in this study refers to what each participant believes about the safety of the Florida Stand Ground Law.

**Interview Question 7:** Do you believe that the State of Florida is safer with the Stand Your Ground Law or is the state less safe?

Each participant was asked the question whether the State of Florida was safer with the Stand Your Ground Law or is the state less safe. Five of the seven participants believed that the
state was less safe (see Figure 11). Those participants were Participant 2, 4, 5, 6, and 7.

Participant 4 expressed:

The state is less safe because we have this Stand Your Ground Law. More people have guns. It’s guns, even when they don’t intend to. There’s more people going into hospitals to the emergency rooms from being shot. I understand it’s about a twenty two percent increase in gun deaths in homicides. So, what did we accomplish by creating stand your ground other than allowing more people to have possession of these guns? So, I can say I got it for my own protection, and should I need to use it, I can. I don’t have to back down. I have to retreat it all. I have a gun. (Participant 4, Zoom communication, December 7, 2021)

Participant 5’s response was somewhat similar to Participant 4’s. According to him the state may appear safer but realistically the state is less safe. He answered this question by stating, Well, I think there's, you know it's like anything else there's perception and reality, I think there's a perception that it's safer, but I think the studies show that the reality is otherwise and safer has to be in context to you know, do we have a better outcome and the better outcome in this case is life and anything that would be measurable that shows we have less living people. Based on deadly force whether it's a gun or otherwise would counteract the perception of are we safer. (Participant 5, Zoom communication, December 10, 2021)

Participants 1 and 3 believed that there was no significant change. Participant 3 noted that the Stand Ground Law did not make Florida a safer state. According to this participant, I think for most people, there is no difference. You still can only resist with deadly force if you are faced with deadly force. Most people will never be in that situation. Those few
that are in such a situation are likely not contemplating the effect of the Stand Your Ground Law in that moment when they decide what to do next. (Participant 3, via email communication, October 30, 2021)

Participant 1 expressed that she did not see a change in the safeness of Florida’s Stand Your Ground Law. She pointed out that,

I think it's the same. I’m not super knowledgeable on these issues, but I just don’t see that the stand your ground is a huge departure from the castle doctrine. And I just feel like you've always been able, I can't think say back in 1997 before the Stand Your Ground Law was implemented. If somebody came up to me and it was a gun in their hand, they were going to shoot me and I happen to have a gun and I shot back, and of course this isn't a perfect world, where everyone's witnessing it, you got 10 eyewitnesses who see that this person approached me first. I feel like I still would have you know hope that if I shot that person that I wouldn't be found guilty of anything, because I was defending myself. I just don't know that Stand Your Ground Law has changed that. So, I feel like it's the same. I'm not aware of it, changing, making it more safe or less safe. (Participant 1, Zoom communication, October 2, 2021)
Theme #8– Short and Long Term

Short and long term for this study refers to what do the participants believed to be the state of the Stand Your Ground Law in the near future and long term is over a course of years.

Interview Question 8. What could be the possible short-term and long-term effects of maintaining the Stand Your Ground Law as it is currently written?

When each participant was individually asked question number eight, Participant 1 and Participant 3 stated they believed that the Stand Your Ground Law should continue to be utilized (see Figure 12). According to Participant 1,

Well, I think you're more aware, because of all your research you're more aware, of the gray areas that you've explained that are problems for the law. So maybe if you could tell me what those are specifically because I don’t, I just think short term and long term if you just maintain it, as is, it's been like you said it's been in effect since 2005. With few
probably very few modifications. I just feel like it's going to continue being used in court as a self-defense mechanism, just as it has been. (Participant 1, Zoom communication, October 2, 2021)

The remaining participants, Participants 2, 4, 5, 6, and 7 agreed about the negative short-term and long-term effect of maintaining the Stand Your Ground Law as it is currently written. From Participant’s 2 vantage point, he believed that, despite having the Stand Your Ground Law as a self-defense law, shootings would continue. He stated,

    Short and long term we're gonna have more shootings and force usage under the moniker of, I was justified, is going to be less de-escalation of conflict, less people coming to peaceable terms, and I think it's going to promote violent confrontations, as your example that we just talked about, over the stupidest of things. So, as its currently written, people feel empowered to choose conflict, and I think that is a poor legislative tool if that's what's happening and that's what the case is shown. People choose conflict with this backing them up. (Participant 2, Zoom communication, October 16, 2021)
Theme #9 – Requirements for Political Leadership Success

This theme allowed the participants to provide their opinions and ideas on what the necessary traits are for political leaders to be successful.

Interview Question 9. What do you believe are the three leadership requirements for an elected official to be successful?

For this specific question, the participants provided several different answers on the three leadership requirements for an elected official to be successful (see Figure 13). The responses produced key words and phrases, such as knowing what is right and what is wrong, responsibility, transparency, trustworthy, reliability, commitment, a good listener, and integrity. Six of the seven participants believed that elected leaders should have specific leadership traits to
be successful. Those participants with these viewpoints were, Participants 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, and 7.

Participant 5 summarized the question by stating,

They need to be trustworthy based on truth and trustworthy based on the truth and right reliability of their office truth, a trust by itself is one thing, reliability is something different. And truth has to be, you know, a sense of community truth, not their version of a truth so to be trustworthy and to be reliable, based on truth and services is one element. The second one is they need to be committed they can't, you know, get into these positions and do it for their own ego or their own posturing or their own ideals. And the last one, they need to care they need to care about you know their community, they need to care about the system. You know, basically their inner circle their outer circle all areas of influence and concern, they need to be caring for so if they're trustworthy committed and caring to me. Those are the three basic requirements. (Participant 5, Zoom communication, December 10, 2021)

From Participant 3’s viewpoint, political success was not associated with leadership.
Figure 13

Q9 – Theme: Short and Long Term

Theme #10– Recommendations

Participant recommendations for this study refers to the suggestions or proposals provided by the individuals during their interviews which could later be forwarded to the state legislators for consideration.

Interview Question 10. What recommendations would you make to Florida legislators to reduce the unintended consequences of: (a) the disparity of African American incarceration rates when
the law is applied, (b) the increase in justifiable homicides, and (c) the exponential increase in concealed carry permits.

Upon the completion of the individual interviews, three of the seven participants (Participant 1, 2, and 3) had no specific recommendations they could provide to legislators (see Figure 14). But they were still able to express their opinions on the unintended consequences of the Stand Your Ground Law. Participant 1 said:

I don't know that I can comment on that because I don't think the Stand Your Ground Law impacts the sentence. I think it impacts that conviction. So, if you said, maybe the disparity of American African American conviction rates when the law is applied, I think that is about just racial like training officers appropriately and giving them exposure to all different cultures that kind of cultural training that officers have to go through, to make sure. (Participant 1, Zoom communication, October 2, 2021)

With regard to the justifiable homicide increase, she stated that she did not think that there was a problem with a justifiable homicide increase because “I just don't know why there would be an increase in them unless people are more like you said, just more likely to carry firearms.”

Participant’s 1 viewpoint on the increase of concealed carry permits illustrated that she did not know that she had an issue with the increase in concealed carry permits. She stated:

because that means that you have to go through some training to get the concealed carry permit it's not like you're just buying and keeping it in your home which you don't need any training to do or any kind of certification. (Zoom communication, October 2, 2021)

Participant 3 presented three points:
One, I don’t know how to fix this disparity. Two, an increase in justifiable homicides isn’t necessarily bad. I would be more concerned with an increase in overall homicides. If the overall amount remains the same but more are labeled justified, that could be a sign of a more just system. Three, I don’t see a problem with increases in concealed weapon licenses. The people who obtain these licenses take great effort to follow the law – going to a PD for fingerprints, completing an application, submitting the application with the prints and a photo, submitting themselves to a background check, gun safety class, etcetera. This is not a dangerous population; their rate of violent crime is less than the general population.

Participants 4, 5, 6, and 7 provided recommendations as well as their viewpoints on the unintended consequences. Participant 4 expressed the belief that legislators must give the ability of discretion back to the judicial system. Secondly, individuals should be sent to drug treatment instead of being incarcerated. Participant 5 believed that legislators should create five subcommittees to strengthen family, faith, industry, and education which would lessen the government impact. From Participant 6 viewpoint, he believed that the concealed carry permit process should not be as easy as it currently is; the process should be more thorough. Participant 6 was also of the belief that the Florida Stand Your Ground Law should be repealed and there should be a requirement to arrest individuals who discharge a firearm regardless of the circumstances. Lastly Participant 7 stated that legislators “should do away with Stand Your Ground Law, but as a middle ground so that they could undo the changes that they passed in 2017.”
Theme #11 – Helps or Hinders

This theme, helps or hinders, refers to the Florida Stand Your Ground Law as a useful tool to law enforcement and the judicial system or a hindrance to the two separate components of law in the state of Florida.

Interview Question 11. Do you believe that the Stand Your Ground Law helps or hinders Florida’s law enforcement officers from making arrest and the judicial system from making sound judicial decisions?
For this question, contrasting viewpoints also were provided. Those who believed that the Stand Your Ground Law hindered law enforcement and the judicial system were Participants 2, 4, 6, and 7 (see Figure 15). Participants 1 and 3 were of the belief that the law did not hinder the two entities. One of the participants that strongly believed that Stand Your Ground Law was a hindrance was Participant 2. He stated,

I think that it hinders law enforcement officers from making on scene arrests, because they're worried that maybe there is the affirmative defense under the Stand Your Ground Law and that they have to assess it and so they're reluctant to make an arrest until they have more data. Doesn't mean they won't make an arrest, but they have to do some retrospective looking to see what the shooter’s perspective was and whether or not the state attorney is going to be able to prove that they weren't standing their ground right. So, um I think that is going to maybe hamper their arrest decisions. If I am a police officer chief, I’m going to tell them look, we don't know enough to know whether or not this is, you know, a justifiable homicide or not. We don't want to be arresting people that are engaged in justifiable homicide.

And when the judicial system, well, it's got our prosecutors trying to prove what. Whether a person was reasonable in their use of force and that's not an easy burden and so I think that those can still be sound decisions, but I think it is a big burden on both of those groups to do, probably, more work up before for the courts more workout than they would normally do for a typical criminal case before trial and for the cops more of a workout than they did before a typical case that when they made that arrest.
Figure 15

Q11 – Theme: Helps or Hinders Law Enforcement and Judicial System

Theme #12 – Mitigation or Elimination

Mitigation or elimination for the purpose of this study indicates whether the wording in the Stand Your Ground Law should be reduced to simplify the law or should the Florida Statute be removed from the Florida list of statutes.

Interview Question 12. Can the current unintended consequences of the law be mitigated or eliminated?

The feedback that was provided by the individual interview participants illustrated that six of the participants, Participants 1, 2, 4, 5, and 7, believed that the current unintended consequences should be mitigated or eliminated (see Figure 16). Participant 6 noted that he believe that the Stand Your Ground Law could not be mitigated; he believed that the law was broad and when the law is applied, the law permits much room for loopholes. He went on to say:
I mean, in my opinion, the law allows for a lot of opportunity for a potential defendant to just walk, based off the claim of being in fear of their life and feeling like somebody was going to kill them. That's, to me, that's a low bar. To gain a right to shoot someone I just don't like. So, I don't know that it can be saved, without a full repeal. And unfortunately, with the makeup of the legislature that's just not going to happen. (Participant 6, Zoom communication, December 21, 2021)

From Participant 3’s perspective, he was uncertain what unintended consequences were from the law (Participant 3, via email communication, October 30, 2021). Participant 1 focused more on unintended consequences of concealed carry permits. She stated:

You have brought to my attention that there's more concealed carry permits in the state of Florida now. Yes, which is an unintended consequence. I mean, I guess, the only way to eliminate that or mitigate that would to be make it harder to get a concealed carry permit, so I think that would be, presuming that you know, the only reason why more people have concealed carry permits are because of the Stand Your Ground Law and I don't know that's true, I mean maybe we're living in more violent times or firearms are more accessible. But if really if you were just saying that cause and effect like since stand your ground has been in place now more people have concealed carry. I think the only way to mitigate that would be to make it harder to get your concealed carry permit. Make it some additional coursework that you need to do, or something else. Just something that makes it a little more difficult, probably more education or more training before you can be awarded the permit. (Participant 1, Zoom communication, October 2, 2021)
Theme #13 – Equity

Equity in this study refers to fairness or the lack of fairness when the Florida Stand Your Ground Law is applied in cases where justifiable homicide is presumed.

Interview Question 13. In your judgment is the Florida Stand Your Ground Law equitable for all races? If yes, describe how the law is equitable for all races, if no describe how the law is inequitable for all races.

The reactions from this question illustrated that a majority, four of the seven participants, Participants 2, 4, 5, and 6 believed that Florida’s Stand Your Ground Law was not equitable for all races, specifically African Americans (see Figure 17). Participant 2 pointed out:
No, it's not equitable; we know the statistics show that more African Americans are disproportionately impacted. I don't have the exact stats but it's just not equitable and it doesn't necessarily surprise me, I mean there's plenty of inequities in the criminal justice system. (Participant 2, Zoom communication, October 16, 2021)

The researcher followed up with the question:

Would you say this law was meant for that purpose to not be equal or mainly for people of color to put them in the position that if they fire or use a firearm that they would go to jail, but basically was this law made for derogatory terms, as far as the African American. (Researcher, Zoom communication, October 16, 2021)

Alright that's a great question. Here's what I’m going to say: as a white person I am too ashamed to say that the answer to that can be yes. Because that just bothers me so much, but the more I learned about race and disparity and these books I read and the things I study in the systematic… just discrimination, I think it's entirely possible. Whether or not, that people were making a conscious decision, or they were just making a decision grounded so deeply on implicit bias, they never have any idea that that's going to be the outcome that I don't know but I leave room for the possibility that there are people that are like hey, we need to protect our White selves from dangerous black people. We're going to implement this law, I actually believe that some of the people that voted for it could have thought that, yes, unfortunately. Do I think that that's how it got enacted no. But do I think it's predictable that this could be a hall pass for white people that are scared of black people, yes. I think that that could have been predicted. (Participant 2, Zoom communication, October 16, 2021)

From Participant 4’s standpoint, she expressed:
We know it's not, because rarely would we black people get off with a stand your ground defense if they had shot a white person and there was nobody there. Oh my God, forget about it. And there was no witness. And even when witnesses are present, take Clearwater. He's [Micheal Drejska] the one that shot that man [Markeis McGlockton]. It wouldn't have been you Stand Your Ground. It would have never allowed it. So, it's not equitable. But neither is the citizen equitable. Neither is court equitable. If you ever go into a juvenile court, you get an opportunity to see how black juveniles are treated as opposed to their white counterparts. How many more times they get to go home than the black kid gets to go home? How many times he’s sent back to juvenile as opposed to the white kid? So, none of this is equitable. And, you know, as elected officials, we cannot pretend like we don't know it, and we have to be willing to stand up and say something. We can't stick our head under the rug and pretend like all is well, everything's fair and equitable, just as health care is not equitable. Home ownership is not equitable. We have to be honest and realize that it is not and not pretend like it's something that is not because it's not. (Participant 4, Zoom communication, December 7, 2021)

Participant 5 believed the method of how the law is applied is a direct result of the absence of racial equity. He noted:

So, I think, like any law, the application and equitableness of it comes down to two things, is it correctly applied or incorrectly applied, and for that reason the subjectivity you know, has to be removed. You know, if it's a Caucasian person on a Caucasian person, or, you know another race or ethnicity; on the same race or ethnicity it typically doesn't get as sensationalized as it is. If it's two different races or two different ethnicities against each other, and so, when you boil that down it comes down to the facts. And I
think the other inequitable side of this thing is the criminal justice system, you know you
got humans shooting humans, and then you have humans judging human so it's almost
impossible to get a sense of equity across all systems, other than applying it to the merits
of the law and in the previous cases. So, you know the answer overall, is no. But I think
it's like any laws, it’s as good as it's ever going to be unless the laws change to reduce
disparities in the application of the law by any individual. (Participant 5, Zoom
communication, December 10, 2021)

Participant 6 expressed,

I would say no just based off of some numbers, I saw many years ago, I think the most
high-profile cases that we're familiar with the use of the Stand Your Ground Law do
involve African Americans. Especially those who've been shot by white people but I’m
pretty sure those drug dealer cases and others involved people of all races and not just
black or just white. So, I’m sure there's an inequity there I just don't have the numbers in
front of me to prove that. (Participant 6, Zoom communication, December 21, 2021)

Based on Participant’s 1 opinion, she stated that she believed the law as it reads is
equitable for gender and race.

If someone attacks you with non-lethal force, you can respond with non-lethal force; if
someone uses deadly force you can return with deadly force. So, the way it's phrased is
equitable. The problem is, probably as it's applied in court when you're dealing with real
biases and real people, and you might have a juror who is biased against a minority
defendant. Those types of things, though I don't think it's the law that's inequitable, I
think it's the real-life people that are applying the law that have the problem and they're
not equitable at the time. (Participant 1, Zoom communication, October 2, 2021)
Participant 3 stated:

I have no idea if it is equitable. However, given that it offers more options to the defense and places greater burdens on the State, I would expect it to benefit any group that has a higher likelihood of contact with the criminal justice system. (Participant 3, via email communication, October 30, 2021)

Lastly, Participant 7 believed that, even if the Florida statute was repealed, racial inequalities would exist. He noted:

I do think that the law is equitable, because the law as written applies equally to everybody. In the problems that we've had in terms of racial disparities in how self-defense is applied predates stand your ground and would continue to exist, even if stand your ground was repealed. So, I don't think repealing stand your ground does away with some of the racial disparities, we have, and how law enforcement, prosecutors, Community members, jurors view somebody's use of self-defense. (Participant 7, Zoom communication, January 5, 2022)
Figure 17

Q13 – Theme: Equity

Concealed weapons carry for the purpose of this study refers to how the increase of concealed weapon carry permits could be an unintended consequence of the Stand Your Ground Law.

Interview Question 14. Within the State of Florida, firearms are the primary contributing factor of deaths in a majority of justifiable homicide incidents. How can legislators address the unintended increase of conceal weapon carry permits?
The responses that were provided by the participants revealed that most of them recommended methods to address the unintended increase of concealed weapon carry permits. Participants 1, 2, 4, 5, and 6 recommended making the process of obtaining a permit more difficult, implement screening techniques, more rapid background checks, more legal comprehension, include additional elements to classes that already exist and make obtaining a concealed carry permit more expensive (see Figure 18). Participant 3 did not see how concealed weapons carry permits were associated to the unintended consequences and Participant 7 believed that the increase of conceal weapon carry permits was intended.

**Figure 18**

*Q14 – Theme: Concealed Weapon Carry*
Theme #15 – Right to Keep and Bear Arms

Right to keep and bear arms, or the 2nd Amendment, in this study represents the different insights of a small sample of Floridians who are in favor of the 2nd Amendment. Additionally, this theme refers to the negative ramifications that are byproducts of the 2nd Amendment.

**Interview Question 15.** What is your opinion of the Second Amendment, the right of people to keep and bear arms?

The answers that the participants provided for this question revealed that all of them believed in the right of citizens to keep and bears arms. Participants 2, 4, 6, and 7 were of the opinion that the 2nd Amendment presented issues within the society (see Figure 19). Those issues that they named were assault rifles, not enough limits, misapplication of the 2nd Amendment and the misinterpretation of the law. Two examples of the responses on these issues were from Participant 2 and Participant 4.Participant 2 noted,

I think it's as robust, as ever. I think you know if I was an originalist and I went back to the terms of the second amendment, you know it was an important right. I think we look at how England tried to you know, limit the rights of the colonists, that is a pretty important right, but I think that I don't have a problem with limitations on it, because to me firearms are scary and you know I personally don't use firearms. I don't have a CWP, (concealed weapons permit); I thought about getting one. (Participant 2, Zoom communication, October 16, 2021)

Participant 2 said that he believed the 2nd Amendment was an important right. He did not have a problem with limiting the right on issue such as assault rifles. Participant 2 asked the question, Why is there a need for an assault rifle? “I don't see why you need special silencers. I have no empathy for the gun industry. And you know I’m not saying that there are some
economic engines that we can't afford to shut down or limit” (Participant 2, Zoom communication, October 16, 2021).

In Participant’s 4 opinion, she believed that all people had the right to bear arms because this right was the law.

So, I cannot stop you from getting concealed per minute, but I can definitely pass laws that'll make it a little bit more difficult for you to get that get possession of that firearm. But are legislators willing to take that extra step? No, we didn't want to raise the limit on kids having an opportunity to be able to buy a firearm. We didn't want to pass the red flag law that says I need to be checked out just in case I'm crazy or allow the judge to take away his firearms because he has a problem, and he doesn't deserve to have one. We don't want to do any of that. We don't want to take away the assault rifles. We don't want to ban the bumper stock things that you put on your gun to make it high powered. So, there's so many things that we could do. For people who can carry a weapon, you if you want to carry, that's your business, but we need to ban these submachine guns and street sweepers. That is not what we need on our streets. That's what military use.

She went on to say, there are weapons of war in our communities and the Florida conservative legislator do not want to do anything to change this situation. So, there are things that we could do. I think we need to take away the gun show loopholes where you walk in and buy.

( Participant 4, Zoom communication, December 7, 2021)

Participant 1 illustrated her opposing viewpoint by stating that, she believed the 2nd Amendment was important, because in the beginning the Amendment was used to protect citizens from the government and prevents the government from having absolute power over
citizens. “So, I agree with everybody having the right to bear arms within the confines of the law…can’t be a convicted felon or mentally ill, so I agree with that amendment, certainly, that people should have the right to bear arms” (Participant 2, Zoom communication, October 16, 2021). Additionally, Participant 3 expressed, “I am in favor of the 2nd Amendment. I am also in favor of reasonable restrictions (of which there are already many) on the exercise of this right” (Participant 3, via email communication, October 30, 2021). Lastly, Participant 5 stated:

So, I think, like any law, the application and equitableness of it comes down to two things: is it correctly applied or incorrectly applied, and, for that reason, the subjectivity you know, has to be removed. You know if it's a Caucasian person on a Caucasian person. Or you know another race or ethnicity, on the same race or ethnicity it typically doesn't get as sensationalized as it is. If it's two different races or two different ethnicities against each other, and so, when you boil that down it comes down to the facts. And I think the other inequitable side of this thing is the criminal justice system, you know you got humans shooting humans, and then you have humans judging humans, so it's almost impossible to get a sense of equity across all systems, other than applying it to the merits of the law and in the previous cases. So, you know the answer, overall, is no. But I think it's like any law; it’s as good as it's ever going to be unless the laws change to reduce disparities in the application of the law by any individual. (Participant 5, Zoom communication, December 10, 2021)
Focus Group Results

The focus group was comprised of eight participants and the researcher which provided a greater in-depth discussion that assisted in answering the study’s research question: What are some viable solutions to modifying the current Florida Stand Your Ground Law which can eliminate the unintended consequences that have been produced by the implementation of the law? The themes of the focus group questions are illustrated in Table 3.

Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Related Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thoughts on the controversy</td>
<td>FG1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proponent or opponent</td>
<td>FG2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vigilantism</td>
<td>FG3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authority</td>
<td>FG4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivated to clarify</td>
<td>FG5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommendations</td>
<td>FG6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equity</td>
<td>FG7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Thoughts on the Controversy

Interview Question 1. What are your thoughts on the controversy regarding Florida’s Stand Your Ground Law? (FG1).

The first focus group question allowed the participants to communicate their personal opinions on the controversy of Florida’s Stand Your Ground Law. Six of the eight participants responded. Throughout this question, a majority of the individuals in the focus group had much to say and there were varying thoughts on the law. Some of the participants’ responses were as follows:

My issue with the law is that it looks at danger from the viewpoint of the person that lived. That it allows the person that lived to tell the story without looking at the circumstances from a 10000-foot level, even 1000-foot level view. (Participant 5, Zoom communication, February 12, 2022)

That participant stated, “more people are inclined to possess firearms and carry firearms with them because of the Stand Your Ground Law. That's the only reason why I could think that increase in firearm related deaths would happen” (Participant 7, Zoom communication, February 12, 2022). Participant 6 noted, “I hate to say it, it has to be in a broad term and the ultimate or the ultimate people that make the decision, whether it was justified or not” (Participant 6, Zoom communication, February 12, 2022). Another participant noted that “controversy surrounding this law is really due to citizen’s virginal views of the law, and it contributes to the vagueness of the law” (Participant 8, Zoom communication, February 12, 2022). Additionally, two of the statements that canvas the scope of this question were from Participant 1 and Participant 4. Participant 1 responded:
I don't have a problem with the law being in place per se. My issue is with the implementation of the law. I think the intent of the law was good and that, you know, I believe people should have the right to protect themselves and their property when it comes to, you know, certain circumstances where your life or your family's life is put at risk. But I think my issue with the law itself, I think it's interpreted way too broadly. I think when you're dealing with the loss of life, there has to be a look at the totality of the situation to determine whether those extenuating circumstances that effect, you know, whatever situation that occurred. Because again, there are situations where I believe that utilizing force, although maybe an option in situations, is not always the only option. So, I believe that the law is interpreted very broadly, and I think it needs to be. It needs to be addressed from the standpoint there are situations where, although you can use it as just, you shouldn't say it's a situation where you and every individual has to make a decision, a split-second decision. (Participant 1, Zoom communication, February 12, 2022)

Participant 4 stated:

I have some issues with the law in the sense of when it was first developed and brought in the history of it was after we had several hurricanes in Florida. And citizens were trying to protect the homes and so forth because the law enforcement officials and so forth were busy trying to handle the hurricane situations, so they tried to apply. That is sort of the genesis behind the law to make it. And then they made it very broad. (Participant 4, Zoom communication, February 12, 2022)

Participant 4 also noted:

You know, we escalated all the way to a firearm quickly because we have it available, but no one thinks through this process. I know it has to be split second, but why do you have
to? Because do you have an argument over a parking space? You know, that's what I sort of saying. The law was designed to protect you and your family in your home and that type of situation. But we made such a broad area of it. It becomes hard to say governance. And now we're seeing where the laws bled over to people, get in arguments, and getting shot because they felt threatened. How do they feel threatened with, you know, what is the category? When do you say you’re threatened? And so, I think the law really needs to be, as we said, before, relooked at and adjusted it to specifics because if we just leave it open, it could be in court cases. We're going to have accidental shootings. I'll use that term because people lost the ability to think through the process, went for the emotion and pulled trigger. And now they've killed somebody or injured, and they've got to live the rest of their lives. And for someone who was in the military, that’s something you know you never forget. So, we've got a law now saying, ‘Well, go ahead and start shooting and then we'll figure it out later.’ We need to think beforehand before we go into that. But it goes into a bigger question that society, why are we doing this? But that's, you know, why do we have to feel the need to carry weapons? You know, that's why we have law enforcement so forth, but I'm not trying to get into that argument right now. I understand that you have a right to protect yourself, and I agree you do. But we don't. We need to think through it because people are just once again reacting on emotion. And not thinking the process through and seeing what does, so I think the law needs to have some sort of guidelines a little more definitive of when and when you cannot do it. (Participant 4, Zoom communication, February 12, 2022)
**Interview Question 2.** As a group, based on your personal experiences and what you know about the intended and unintended outcomes of the law, has each of you become more of a proponent or opponent of Florida's Stand Your Ground Law? (FG2)

When question two was presented to the focus group, three of the eight participants provided a response on whether they were a proponent or opponent of Florida’s Stand Your Ground Law. Participant 3 agreed with the Stand Your Ground Law. He believed that everything came down to the question of how the law is actually interpreted and how the law is understood and applied (Participant 3, Zoom communication, February 12, 2022). Participant 6 expressed:

But as I have, you know, changed as a person, moved to Florida, and now have a family and I'm a father. My opinion has, or my thoughts on the law have changed or evolved over time. So, where I was more a little bit, you know, kind of the sense of being this law has to be stricter, more technical, more laws around it. I've kind of, my opinion has changed over time and evolved where I'm more of, have a more conservative viewpoint on the Stand Your Ground Law. (Participant 6, Zoom communication, February 12, 2022)

From Participant 2’s viewpoint, she believed that Florida’s Stand Your Ground Law is very vague, and she also believed that it was important to notice that the law was created intentionally to be vague. She continued to say,

We can put in all those technicalities. But when will they stop? Like, when is it OK to be like, OK, can you do this at the gas station if you're under threat? Or can you do that in your home if you're under threat? These decisions are made in split seconds. And I also want to further add that stand your ground is only used for deadly force. Like, yes, there's been some outcomes that involved deadly force. However, there's also people that have
been able to stand their ground and people have walked alive from those circumstances. So, I just feel like it's important to notate that as well. (Participant 2, Zoom communication, February 12, 2022)

**Interview Question 3.** Does the Florida Stand Your Ground Law produce an environment for citizens to take the law into their own hands or lay the ground for vigilantism? (FG3)

When Participant 1 was presented this question, he explained that the Stand Your Ground Law could possibly produce an environment of people taking the law into their own hands. He stated,

So, you know, I think as it stands, yes, it creates a situation. I don't I mean, I don't know about, you know, from a vigilante standpoint, but definitely, it creates a situation where people, we can take the law into our own hands. You know, in certain situations, when we feel we were wrong and we feel we was threatened because again, threat is subjective. (Participant 1, Zoom communication, February 12, 2022)

Participant 8 noted that she believed that stereotyping is instilled in some people. So, when the Stand Your Ground Law came into effect, the law developed an archetype that had risen to say, “this is our opportunity.” She did not want to abandon the vigilantism component of it because we have seen “a lot of that.” Furthermore, she went on to say,

There was no longer discourse. It was I have a gun and I've got the law standing behind me that says if you make one step towards me, I can defend myself. So, I really don't want to abandon that. I think that this law really did embolden a lot of people to come out of the shadows and come out from behind the curtain to say, with this law and whatever weapon I have, I can do whatever I need to do to protect myself. And I think it sort of kind of flipped itself on its head now that folks are more or less the Clint Eastwood of
their communities. Not everybody, but I do believe that it really did spark something in folks who have those sinister intents on being the tough guy who wasn't maybe that before. (Participant 7, Zoom communication, February 12, 2022)

Participant 1 added more to the discussion by indicating that one of the issues that concerned him was that society has become more hostile. We have laws that we alter and those we do not alter. So, we kind of pick and choose sometimes what rules we want to follow. And when you take that type of sentiment and you add that to a situation where you know, we're a gun-wielding society, we just are, and then the fact that we have a law that, you know, that is pretty gray, in my opinion. I think it creates a powder keg, kind of for the future where you have angry people with weapons and a law that says you can defend yourself. You know; however, you want to define that. (Participant 7, Zoom communication, February 12, 2022)

Participant 2 added to the conversation by stating the issue of race. She did not think that anyone would have known the well-known, justifiable homicide cases had it not been for the black man or a black individual dying. She believed that in both circumstances, if the script was flipped, she believed that cases involving black person would not be raised at all. Additionally, she stated:

But I'm willing to bet that there's other like situations just like those that nobody knows about and had nothing to do with race at all whatsoever. And I'm willing to bet that had the roles been reversed on both of those situations, had it been the black man armed who pursued and killed somebody that we would never have heard of it, and it wouldn't be important as it is right now. (Participant 2, Zoom communication, February 12, 2022)

Participant 1 responded to Participant 2 response to race by stating,
I mean, I like to think differently in that. Yes, I think being that were black men involved in these incidents, you know, that probably helped bring them to the forefront because our media does take every opportunity to put controversy out there, which is what we like as people. But I believe even in that, you know, we had the law been more defined, it wouldn't have been a story at all, regardless of who it was. And I think that's the underlying issue with it. (Participant 1, Zoom communication, February 12, 2022)

Participant 2 also responded on an earlier statement from Participant 4 regarding the Stand Your Ground Law being created due to hurricanes. She asked the question,

But why did we stick by it; this is just me thinking out loud? Could it be because of the crime change? Could it be because we don't have the capacity and police force in order to address crimes quickly enough, swiftly enough in order to avoid people from being in imminent danger? I would just wonder if that's the reason. Maybe it was because of the crime rise that we needed something to be able to protect ourselves in the event things happen so quickly in the event cops will make it in two minutes flat, you know? So, I'm just curious to know if maybe that's why we stood behind it. (Participant 2, Zoom communication, February 12, 2022)

Participant’s 4 response was, “If we did, that's a sad case, because that actually opens up vigilantism. There's no rule of law now. And I go directly to you being judge, jury and executioner” (Participant 2, Zoom communication, February 12, 2022).

**Interview Question 4.** Should law enforcement officers be given more authority to determine whether or not an individual used self-defense in justifiable incidents? (FG4)

From Participant 3’s standpoint, he did not think that more authority really mattered because a justifiable homicide case would eventually go to court.
What I understand about law enforcement. I mean, he (meaning law enforcement officer) may not send you to jail, but there will be court proceedings, later on, to find out how that was justified. Am I misspoken there? Is that wrong or is that not right? I mean, it's usually investigators. (Participant 3, Zoom communication, February 12, 2022)

Participant 7 responded to his question by stating that if she understood him correctly law enforcement will conduct an initial investigation and decide on whether they will arrest an individual or not, which could take law enforcement weeks to make a decision. They don't have to arrest someone on the spot. But even after law enforcement makes a decision, they can say, we're not arresting this guy. This was our determination. It was self-defense. It still can get picked up by the State Attorney's Office, and so the State Attorney's Office can still choose to prosecute it, even if law enforcement chose not to. So, I don't know that law enforcement, I feel like they have plenty of opportunity to do their own investigation, and I don't know that they need more. I just feel like either way, there's a kind of checks and balances in two different entities. (Participant 7, Zoom communication, February 12, 2022)

Participant 2’s response was as follows:

But I do ultimately think that one side or the other will ultimately use the police officer as a witness to the case should somebody get charged and it should go to trial, etcetera. So, while they do conduct their own investigation, should the state prosecute or want to pursue charges, then the cop will just serve as a witness and show his findings. And then obviously, at the end of the day, it comes down to the jury. (Participant 2, Zoom communication, February 12, 2022)

Participant 3 stated,
I think because of the way the law is written you know; he comes back out as self-defense. But after the investigation went through, we talked about before you can arrest them. It's just, I would say it's just sort of a gate. You have to go through this law. It's not an immediate arrest. You have to investigate it, verify is it really self-defense was the immediate danger and all that stuff before versus just outright arrest. So, I don't know if that's an issue or not, because if it is verified that it was not a self-defense, whenever there's questions it's going to court. (Participant 3, Zoom communication, February 12, 2022)

Participant 1 stated,

I don't think we need to give the officers more responsibility. I think the officers have enough responsibility as is trying to determine what they're going to do on a day to day, and this is another one of those areas within the law. I think that should be readily identified. There should be a standard put in as to how we're going to deal with these situations where we're going to arrest everybody, or we're not going to arrest anybody and investigate and then we'll determine arrest later. I think it needs to be a standard across the board. So, we're not putting officers in a position to where they have to make those on-the-spot decisions. (Participant 1, Zoom communication, February 12, 2022)

**Interview Question 5.** Do you believe Federal, and Florida State legislative leaders are motivated to clarify the intent and wording of the Florida Stand Your Ground Law? (FG5)

Participant 3 noted that he did not believe that Florida State legislative leaders were motivated to do anything unless the public or their constituents wanted them to do so. “You know, it's one of those things that will get them voted out of office. I feel like they're not going to be motivated at all to make a change or do anything about it personally. It's my opinion”
Participant 8 also was of the belief that constituents were responsible for motivating the legislative leaders. She said,

I do believe that there are a few arbiters of decency and decorum existing among the Florida… and I'll stick with Florida legislative leaders. However, the importance of public safety, just as the previous gentleman mentioned, the importance of public safety is going to be on the back burner. If the public, if their constituents aren't sounding the alarm to say, do something, do something now and we expect you to do something. So, the importance of preserving and building communities that that may be at the top of their list. But unless we as constituents make it an important and upfront in-your-face issue, it won't happen and they're not really responding to the disenfranchisement. Well, I shouldn't say that. Maybe they are responding to the disenfranchisement of voting and all of that, but we can't, as constituents, allow any of these important issues to not be up front and personal for them. (Participant 8, Zoom communication, February 12, 2022)

Participant 5 stated that he believed as a previous speaker stated the legislators mirror the wishes of their constituents and if their constituents are applying pressure to the legislators, he believed that legislators did not feel that they needed to change anything. He continued to say,

I think the law's been modified a few times. I think one change a few years ago was to allow expungement of it. And this goes to your last question. I couldn't find the section of the law before it finished, so I apologize for skipping around. But I believe that there is a change that allows law enforcement to expunge the arrest if they believe that the arrest was made, that the defendant acted in lawful self-defense. So that means after writing the law, they said, well, it's not broad and vague enough, let's make it even broader and vaguer, or so we don't even know that it happened according to one or two police
officers. Subjective view. Now their view may be correct. But again, there's a lack of transparency there and a lack of openness that does create questions as to whether this law is being applied. And I'm not even using race just in terms of someone being friends or knowing someone or someone interpreting a situation at a certain time because of where they are in their life or how they see it. So, I don't see the Legislature being open to making the law more specific. (Participant 8, Zoom communication, February 12, 2022)

Participant 1 stated that there have been issues since the creation of the law, but he believed that as far as the legislators’ motivation is concerned, there are other issues that heavily effect the law. Issues such as gun laws. People believe they have the right to protect themselves. Furthermore, he was of the opinion that this right was heavily aligned to the Stand Your Ground Law. He also expressed that the constituents of the legislator played a vital role in the decision-making process.

I believe that anything that you know, that may be perceived to be a negative toward gun laws, is typically a touchy subject because again, you got probably 50 percent of the people on one side and 50 on the other. So, it's a heavily contested issue. So, I think that whatever changes that get made to the stand your ground rule will be, you know, heavily scrutinized just because of the implications of just gun laws in general. People, me included. You know, I like my weapons, you know? But I, believe in using them responsibly, and I understand that subjective as well. But I think the motivation, for our elected officials is just really, truly based on the outrage at the time. And then, with the will of the people that's holding them in office at the time, feel it's important. (Participant 1, Zoom communication, February 12, 2022)
Participant 2 added to the discussion by stating that the jury has the final say if a person is tried in a justifiable homicide case.

But I do ultimately think that one side or the other will ultimately use the police officer as a witness to the case should somebody get charged and it should go to trial, etcetera. So, while they do conduct their own investigation, should the state prosecute or want to pursue charges, then the cop will just serve as a witness and show his findings. And then obviously, at the end of the day, it comes down to the jury. (Participant 1, Zoom communication, February 12, 2022)

**Interview Question 6.** As a collective group, what recommendations can you provide to Florida State legislators to reduce or eliminate the unintended consequences of the Stand Your Ground Law? (FG6)

What was discovered from the participants responses from questions six was that one of the eight participants which was Participants 7, believed there was no significant issue with concealed weapon permits.

Well, as far as defining you said an unintended consequence was an increase in concealed carry, so that would sound to me like it's lawful. I don't necessarily see a problem that that's a negative if more people are lawfully trying to get concealed carry permits. I don't necessarily see that as negative. (Participant 7, Zoom communication, February 12, 2022)

What was revealed based on input from the other participants was that changes to the Florida Stand Your Ground Law could potentially give criminals an advantage, that legislators are out of touch with the average Florida citizen, and how changes could hurt minorities.

Participant 3 pointed out:
I think that when you have those situations where it's the law-abiding citizen against a law-abiding citizen and you have an incident that occurs, I mean, that's always unfortunate. But I mean, me personally, I look on the other side, it's like, What about the criminal? The criminal doesn't really care about your Stand Your Ground Law. They have a firearm and they're going to operate how they operate. So, any modifications or changes to the Stand Your Ground Law is going to impact their flexibility and their capabilities, I should say, to do what they do. So, I mean. With that being said, I totally agree, you know, there has to be some mechanism where the where the law-abiding citizen can protect themselves. (Participant 3, Zoom communication, February 12, 2022)

Participant 6 believed that the legislators in Tallahassee were slow to move on issues concerning guns. When it was his turn to provide a response, he stated that his issue with federal of Florida legislators was that,

Sometimes these folks or these politicians, I'll say that are making these decisions on gun safety and gun laws or anything, you know, revolving around the Second Amendment or Stand Your Ground Laws, they are kind of like unplugged from reality sometimes. So, these folks sometimes have very strong opinions regarding, you know, stand your ground. But you know, this person, this lawmaker, will never be in a situation where they have to stand their ground because they have a whole plethora of security, and they walk with security, and they live in very safe neighborhoods and gated communities. So that's why I sometimes have conflicts with politicians, with strong opinions, sometimes regarding stand your ground or anything related to the Second Amendment. Sometimes you know these people live kind of in an unreal, they don't live in reality. (Participant 6, Zoom communication, February 12, 2022)
In his response, Participant 6 also added the issue of race. In his view, he believed that more minorities and people of color should obtain concealed weapons permits legally because there were not enough people that possessed permits in those extremely violent communities. Additionally, he noted:

I am of the opinion that more people of color and more minorities, these are the type of people that should be going out and getting concealed weapons permits legally like there's not enough in these very violent communities. And I'm of the opinion that these are the people that need it the most, not the person living behind the gate gated community. The person or the people that need defense against their personal safety are the folks living in these very violent communities where the criminals are running around and they're clearly unlawful and they are not worried about any type of legislator with the Florida law is or isn't or the federal law. So is the unintended when you bring up unintended consequences, you think that. People of minorities are definitely affected by laws, so in the sense that they are not able to get what concealed weapons permit or so I just ask the question how does that affect them directly or what is the unintended consequence to specifically minorities? (Participant 6, Zoom communication, February 12, 2022)

Participant 4 responded to Participant’s 6 statement by stating,

To keep in mind, weapons permits, concealed weapons. You have to buy them. You know, you have to go through training, so forth, they're not going to sort of hand given out. And that may be a reason why some people of color or minorities so forth may not be able to afford a weapon. (Participant 4, Zoom communication, February 12, 2022)

Finally, Participant 3 completed the final response of the seventh question:
I mean, I don't know enough about the study itself. But again, if you have an increased concealed carry permits and then you have an increase in people acting on the law, I would have to know like, OK, so where is this happening? You know what neighborhoods to what groups of people. What's the outcome? Is there a decrease in certain type of criminal activity in that area? I mean, I just don't know enough to actually like, say, like, Hey, yeah, this is a bad thing. I mean, anybody, I guess in my mind, can put together like a case study and come out with statistics. But it's like, OK, but from what angle or what's your thought process in doing it? And those are questions that I would have about the study itself. (Participant 3, Zoom communication, February 12, 2022)

**Interview Question 7.** What would each of you consider to be an equitable and fair Florida Stand Your Ground Law? (FG7)

Participant 6 pointed out that he would be agreeance with listening to new concepts the law, but also wanted to know the ramifications behind the change. He stated:

So as far as making it more equitable. My thought would be like, how do we do that? And then what would be the consequences of making the change? And that even comes to the thought of how do we make it better because there's some wild ideas out there that I definitely disagree with. But then there's also some possibly reasonable ones. So, I'm always open-minded but very cautious when making changes to or how do we make it more equitable? I would need to hear the thought or the idea or the change and then kind of way out the consequences of it. (Participant 6, Zoom communication, February 12, 2022)
Participant 4 replied this question by providing a recommendation that spoke to the vagueness of the Stand Your Ground Law. He expressed:

I have a suggestion if I would like to add a provision or modify the law to ask who is the initial aggressor? It's in several cases. There have been situations where someone started a fight or an argument or they took an argument and escalated to physical action when the other person responded with physical action, then they shot them or stabbed them or used a heavy object to kill them. And I don't think they were directly thinking about the law, but I think they had the general impression, well, you know, this might be OK to do now, you know, because they have a general idea that the law might excuse that, or they might have a way out. So, I think, well, if you're the initial aggressor, we'd have to take a stronger look at it rather than if you're reactive, you're not the person whose house is being broken into, you're the person that started the conflict. (Participant 4, Zoom communication, February 12, 2022)

When Participant 8 responded to the question, she agreed with Participant 4 in reference to the person who started a hostile action. She noted:

The initial aggressor not being able to use the stand your ground and also the decision to allow unlicensed open carry. Oh wow. We are really setting ourselves up for trouble. And I think the state of Tennessee, my home state, has opted in on that immunity provisions. Let's look at those again, and I agree with the first gentleman who spoke. I'm open to a whole lot of things that could be presented, but there are some things that are glaring that we certainly need to consider. And again, immunity provisions under Stand Your Ground Law. I don't like those who were together when it comes to stand your ground. (Participant 8, Zoom communication, February 12, 2022)
Participant’s 1 viewpoint aligned with Participant 4 and Participant 8; he also believed that if an individual initiated an aggressive action, the action did not warrant the defense of the Florida Stand Your Ground Law.

I don't think if you are aggressive that you should use this as a defense. Also, I believe that we need, like I said earlier, we need to put something in the law that determines when an officer, how our officers handle this situation. So that way it's clear. So, we know when this happens, this is what's happening. So again, it happens to everybody. So that takes the racial connotation away from it at that point, because this how the law is written and this is what happens, whatever that may be. I think we just need to go down line by line and ask the question, is this clear? If a reasonable citizen, any normal citizen can't look at portions of the law and understand what it means, then we can't expect and I think, you know, if you look at just reading through it, a lot of areas, everything is so subjective. (Participant 1, Zoom communication, February 12, 2022)

Participant 3 was of the mindset that he did not see a positive outlook for Florida’s Stand Your Ground Law. He noted:

I mean, crime is always going to be there. People are always going to get into altercations and everything. I don't think that the stand your ground is not going to erase any altercations or how people react. I mean, people have guns, people act irrational. There's always that question of, hey, was this person reasonable in their in their reaction?

( Participant 3, Zoom communication, February 12, 2022)

Participant 2 reiterated her previous statement that the law unclear and that one action does not fit all cases. She stated:
I think just to add to that, I think this goes back to when I said I think the law is made vague and is overbroad, probably on purpose because I feel these cases are just like how the speaker just said on a case-by-case basis, meaning like there is nothing that you can write that will fit every situation. And so that's why we have to have 12 jurors to determine, and we have an investigation to kind of home in on the details of the case to determine if it was reasonably done. But, repeating what I said earlier. I don't think there's a solution that will solve and that will fit every situation that there is. (Participant 2, Zoom communication, February 12, 2022)

Lastly, Participant 3 believed there should be more public education on Florida’s Stand Your Ground Law and additionally the implications of the law (Participant 3, Zoom communication, February 12, 2022).

**Summary of Findings**

The participants in this study addressed the research question: What are some viable solutions to modifying the current Florida Stand Your Ground Law which can eliminate the unintended consequences that have been produced by the implementation of the law? Both the individual interview and focus group participants in this study provided their insights on Florida’s Stand Your Ground Law.

Based on statements during the individual interviews, the purpose of the law was to use self-defense and eliminate the duty to retreat. Additionally, the Florida Stand Your Ground Law extended the Castle Doctrine which gives the homeowner the right to use deadly force in defending their home.

Through further observations, some participants believed that Florida’s Stand Your Ground Law was unnecessary. There were more participants who believed that the Florida
legislative leaders should revise, modify, or repeal the current Stand Your Ground Law. One of the primary reasons was the most significant eyewitness in a justifiable homicide was dead and could not disprove the actions that led to the homicide. Those that did not accept the idea of revising, modifying, or repealing the law felt that there were more vital problems for legislators to resolve and, secondly, there was not a viable way to improve the law.

The participants did not know the rationale and the motivation of Florida State legislative leaders in passing the Stand Your Ground Law in 2005. Their assumptions were that the legislators wanted to clearly explain that Florida citizens have a right to defend themselves and to possibly enact legislation that describes that right. There were views that pointed out that there were no intentional, nefarious reasons for the enactment of the law. Also, the law could have possibly been created in good confidence, but there was a mistaken belief that the law was a necessity. Furthermore, the Florida Stand Your Ground Law was enacted for political reasons, to help citizens in order to receive additional votes.

The research illustrated that the Florida State legislative leaders may have taken the correct action because there is a definitive law that explains what happens when a justifiable homicide incident occurs and is not recorded by a camera. Counter to this viewpoint was the perspective that the correct action was not taken because the law was not thoroughly thought through. Yet, other perspectives that disagreed that the right action was taken, noted that the Florida legislative leaders went well beyond what was needed for the establishment of the law and Florida’s Stand Your Ground Law would not allow criminals to be prosecuted.

What was discovered when the individual interview participants were asked if they believed the current Florida state legislative leaders have a thorough understanding of Florida's Stand Your Ground Law, the participants believed that State legislative leaders lacked a full
understanding of the Florida Stand Your Ground Law because they lacked real-life experiences to engender that level of understanding.

Secondly, the law is very complex for those who continually practice the law on a daily basis, which the legislators do not practice. Moreover, Florida legislators lack a clear understanding of the law, because their time is, generally, otherwise spent on several issues and bills that must be addressed and their personal agendas that they are pushing.

Based on the opinions of a small number of participants, the State of Florida is safer because there is no significant difference from the Castle Doctrine. In addition, an individual can defend themselves using deadly force despite the Stand Your Ground Law. For those who believe the law makes Florida less safe, a primary reason was that the law produces a stalemate in the criminal justice system, but the law also promotes people to use deadly force when there is no need. Most importantly, the Florida Stand Your Ground Law could encourage law enforcement to misinterpret the individual standing their ground as a possible active shooter.

The potential short-term and long-term effects of maintaining Florida’s Stand Your Ground Law, as the law currently stands, is that the state will continue to utilize it in court as a self-defense tool. Additionally, there will be more shootings; individuals will use the excuse that “I was justified.” There will be less de-escalation of conflict, less individuals resolving issues peaceably, the promotion of violent conflicts, more deaths by firearms, community division, and people being encouraged to use violence. A potential long-term effect is that people who are gun owners and lawbreakers exploit inadequacies in the law.

The legislative leaders of Florida must have leaders with certain leadership traits to analyze the law and potentially improve and refine the law. For an elected official to be successful, this study found that those individuals have knowledge of what is right and wrong,
and the qualities integrity, responsibility, good listening skills, transparency, reliability, and commitment.

There were several recommendations that the participants provided for the Florida legislators which could possibly assist in reducing the unintended consequences of the disparity of African American incarceration rates when the Stand Your Ground Law is applied, the increase in justifiable homicides and the exponential increase in concealed carry permits. The first recommendation was conducting training law enforcement officers concerning race and exposing those officers to an assortment of cultures. Other recommendations were conducting open and candid conservations about the law, giving the judges more leeway in making judgments, having a minimum mandatory sentence, despite what an individual has done, developing five subcommittees to reinforce family, faith, industry, and education, and attempting to lessen the government influence and repealing the Stand Your Ground Law which also involves undoing the changes from 2017.

One belief was that Florida’s Stand Your Ground Law helped by spelling out guidelines which relieved law enforcement of making independent judgements. Another similar perspective was that the Stand Your Ground Law has no effect on law enforcement to the point the law restricts the decision of the jury and judiciary. There was an opinion that an increase in justifiable homicides was not necessarily a negative issue. There was more of a concern with an increase in the total number of homicides.

Opposite views noted that the law hindered law enforcement from making arrest due to concerns about following the guidelines of the Stand Your Ground Law. That concern, in turn makes law enforcement hesitant to make an arrest until more information can be collected. Additional viewpoints were that the law put an addition burden on the judicial system.
example of how the Florida Stand Your Ground Law hinders law enforcement, and the judicial system is the Michael Drejka case where Sheriff Valtteri did not make an immediate arrest.

The individual interviews produced different perspectives on whether the Florida Stand Your Ground Law was equitable for all races. Those who believed that the law was equitable for everyone thought that, if a person attacks another person with deadly force, deadly force can be returned. Additionally, there was a belief that the law was written to apply equally to everyone. From an opposite vantage point, there was an opinion that that the law was not equitable for African Americans because this group of people were disproportionately impacted by Florida’s Stand Your Ground Law.

According to the individual interview participants, Florida State legislators can address the unintended increase of conceal weapon carry permits by increasing the cost of permits, implementing screening methods so that weapons are not obtained when someone is angry, and restricting the number of people that can obtain a permit. Also, discussion was creating training requirements, focusing on additional legal comprehension, and faster background investigations. An opposing viewpoint was that concealed weapon licenses was not related to the Stand Your Ground Law.

Focus Group

Individuals within the group had much to say about Florida’s controversial Stand Your Ground Law. People within the group believed that the law was interpreted too broadly. There were circumstances where a person could retreat from a possible assailant. It came down to someone making a quick decision in a stressful situation. Because of the Stand Your Ground Law, people are persuaded to possess and carry firearms. Individuals have the right to protect themselves as well as their property. The law should be reevaluated and aligned to specific
situations. There will continue to be issues with the law because individuals lack understanding of what they can and cannot do. The law looks at danger from the viewpoint of the person that lived.

Based on the focus group discussion, there appeared to be a split between those that were in favor of the Stand Your Ground Law and those who opposed the law. Those who were in favor believed that the law was only used when deadly force was involved. For those that were opposed, a member of the group believed the law was vague, and it was important to understand that the vagueness of the law was intentional.

The focus group was presented with the question, does the Florida Stand Your Ground Law produce an environment for citizens to take the law into their own hands or lay the ground for vigilantism? The thoughts were that we as a nation have become a hostile, gun-wielding society. The Florida Stand Your Ground Law has created an explosive situation where there are angry people that possess weapons, and the law gives those individuals the right to defend themselves.

There was the opinion that law enforcement officers should not be given more responsibility because they had other priorities. Additionally, there must be a set standard when arresting people who are involved in justifiable homicides. Law enforcement officers are forced to make rapid decisions. Despite the investigation of self-defense incidents, the ultimate decision comes down to the courts.

When discussing the subject of Federal and Florida State legislative leaders’ motivation to make the Florida Stand Your Ground Law more comprehensible, some members believed that the leaders lacked motivation and initiative. The legislative leaders only took action when their
constituents applied pressure. In conclusion, the research illustrated that there were practical solutions to modifying the current Florida Stand Your Ground Law.
CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This research aimed to obtain participants' viewpoints regarding the three unintended consequences of Florida’s Stand Your Ground Law as a means to induce the state’s legislative leaders to consider amending the Florida self-defense Statute which would eliminate the unexpected results of the law. An additional purpose of this study was to provide facts that would allow legislative leaders to present a constructive proposal to modify the Stand Your Ground Law. This action would ensure that the law is clear and concise for Florida law enforcement officers to make the appropriate judgments when justifiable homicides occur.

Participants from the individual interviews and focus group for this study reside or once resided in the state of Florida. The individual interview participants consisted of present and past Florida State Representatives, past and present law enforcement officers, a defense attorney, and a civil rights attorney. There was a technical issue with Participant's three data which did not allow his data to be saved. The researcher reached out to this participant to answer the research questions again through email.

The focus group included eight Florida state citizens. Only one individual in the focus group also participated in an interview. The lack of original participants in the focus group was due to individual interview participants declining offers to participate.

This chapter presents what was discovered, the significant findings, what the researcher could have done differently, recommendations for the Florida State legislators, recommendations for future research and the conclusion. The purpose and framework for the research, an explanation of Florida's Stand Your Ground Law, and the three effects that the law has produced, are: 1) the disparity of African American incarceration rates when the law is applied, 2) the increase in justifiable homicides, and 3) the exponential increase in concealed carry permits.
This study is significant because the data and ideas that were collected could potentially supply legislators with a clearer understanding of revising the Stand Your Ground Law. Secondly, what makes this study significant is that it was intended to bring additional clarity and equity to a law consisting of ambiguous elements. Lastly, the study was intended to provide recommendations to Florida State legislators to assist law enforcement officers in making decisions to arrest or not arrest individuals when the Florida Stand Your Ground Law is used as a defense.

Chapter Two investigated the literature, which previously researched the topics of justifiable homicides in the State of Florida, justifiable homicides in the United States, laws that govern self-defense, the Stand Your Ground Law, and leadership’s possible role in reexamining and reevaluating the unintended consequences of the law’s enactment.

The methodology and proposal of this study was outlined and presented in Chapter Three, which provided specifics on the process for collecting data from legislators, law enforcement officers, Florida attorneys, and Florida citizens. That process allowed the participants to provide their viewpoints on the Florida Stand Your Ground Law and their recommendations.

The data were analyzed and presented in Chapter Four. Because of the enormity of a topic such as this, there were 15 themes from the individual interviews that were selected and analyzed independently. Those themes were a precursor to establishing recommendations to Florida State legislators. The data collection for this study, data analysis, and ideas concerning how to improve or modify Florida's Stand Your Ground Law, what leadership characteristics are needed for political leadership to be successful, and recommendations were analyzed to determine how the data are associated to the research question, which is: What are some viable
solutions to modifying the current Florida Stand Your Ground Law which can eliminate the unintended consequences that have been produced by the implementation of the law? A focus group session was conducted utilizing an additional seven themes to further explain participants’ responses to a separate set of interview questions.

Chapter Five covers a discussion and summary of the findings in Chapter Four, a discussion of the conclusion in connection to the literature, limitations of the research, and recommendations for future research.

**Discussion**

**What Was Discovered**

For this study there was a collective total of 22 themes utilized for analyzing the data from the individual interviews as well as the focus group session. The themes were as follows:

1. Purpose
2. Necessity
3. Improve or modify
4. Reason and motivations
5. Right action to take
6. Understanding of the law
7. Safe or less safe
8. Short term and long term
9. Requirements for political leadership success
10. Recommendations
11. Helps or hinderers
12. Mitigation or elimination
13. Equity

14. Concealed weapons carry

15. Right to keep and bear arms

16. Thoughts on the controversy

17. Proponent or opponent

18. Vigilantism

19. Authority

20. Motivated to clarify,

21. Recommendations

22. Equity

The interview and focus group questions were analyzed and grouped into categories which were in alignment with the order in which the questions were asked. There were varying opinions on Florida’s Stand Your Ground Law; however, a majority of people interviewed disagreed with aspects of the law.

**Significant Findings**

The most significant finding of this study was the causes and effects of Florida’s Stand Your Ground Law. The enactment of the law produced an unintended increase in concealed weapon carry permits which a majority of participants believed should be addressed. The Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (2019) reported that the implementation of Florida’s Stand Your Ground Law was associated with a total of 439,218 concealed permits requested by and granted to Floridians. The 2nd Amendment of the United States Constitution gives every citizen the right to bear arms within the limits of the law. In essence, the 2nd Amendment is a large obstacle to overcome when there is a discussion about reducing or even
stopping the increase in concealed weapons permits. Without a modification to the 2nd Amendment of the United States Constitution, there cannot be a decrease, or a stoppage of concealed weapons permits because this would infringe on Florida citizens’ constitutional right of possessing a firearm.

The second significant finding from this study was the deep divide that was found among the individual interviews and focus group conversations. There were those who held conservative viewpoints as opposed to individuals that had analyzed the topic of this study with a liberal lens. From the conservative perspective, participants saw no great issue with the Florida Stand Your Ground Law. Those with conservative leanings believed that there was no need to modify the law. They believed that the 2005 creation of Florida's Stand Your Ground Law was the right action to take, that the law was not a priority because there were important issues to be studied and dealt with, and if more homicides were identified as justified this could mean there is an equitable system.

From the liberal vantage point, people believed that the law should be repealed or modified and that the Florida Stand Your Ground Law lacked equitability for African Americans. Those participants also believe that the State of Florida is less safe because of the Stand Your Ground Law.

What the Researcher Would Have Done Differently

In the extensive and complex dissertation process, this researcher would have approached the interviewing step differently. The first action that could have been taken was to reach out to more state representatives, as well as U.S. Congress members and Senators to take part in the study because a greater number of representatives would have highlighted the issues of the law even more. This researcher was of the mindset that people would voluntarily want to be part of
this study because of the subject matter. Unfortunately, the opposite was true. Due to COVID-19, government officials’ busy schedules, and despite the study being confidential and anonymous, government officials were uncertain that the topic was something that they desired to be involved in. The task of collecting participants became arduous.

Secondly, the researcher could have reached out to politicians in the states that also currently have a Stand Your Ground Law. That action could have potentially added a first-hand account of how other states that have adopted the Stand Your Ground Law operate.

**Recommendations for the Florida State Legislators**

**Mitigating the Disparity of African American Incarceration Rates when the Law is Applied.** In the State of Florida, an individual’s sentence is influenced by several factors, such as prior history, severity of the crime, culpability, and the sentencing judge (Hornsby Law Firm, 2022). These factors do not equate to equal sentencing where African Americans are concerned. As previously illustrated in Chapter One, a disproportionate number of people of color are arrested, sentenced, and incarcerated in comparison to White people suspected of the same offenses (“About – Justice Policy Institute,” 2020). The U.S. Census Bureau (Quick Facts, 2019) estimated that African Americans made up 13.4% of the overall population in the nation, but the (Federal Bureau of Prisons, Statistics: Inmate Race, 2022) reported that 38.4% of the individuals in this country’s prisons are African American. Reform to the criminal and juvenile justice systems must include a concerted effort to decrease the disparate impact on communities of color (“About - Justice Policy Institute-Racial disparities, 2020). A recommendation to Florida legislators to mitigate the unintended consequences of the disparity of African American incarceration rates would be to provide judges more freedom to utilize their discretion when sentencing individual self-defense cases. Judges must also balance the scale of justice by
collectively comparing the sentencing of White defendants and African Americans in cases where the Florida Statute 776.013, Justifiable Use of Force is used as an alibi to kill another person.

Another recommendation is to provide judges throughout the state with a Florida racial sentencing database that is managed by the Florida State Attorney. That database would consist of the sentencing, race, and scenario of each self-defense case across the state of Florida. This action would also help mitigate the disparity of African American incarceration rates and allow individuals to be sentenced the same amount of time for the same crime.

**Mitigating the Increase in Justifiable Homicides.** Another recommendation to the Florida State legislators to mitigate the increase in justifiable homicide is add a provision in the Florida Stand Your Ground Law that would specifically point out or indicate who the aggressor was in a justifiable homicide incident. That provision could potentially play a vital role in court cases where witnesses were present. Another possible provision is to add a stipulation about de-escalation. This component of the law would ask the question, Did the aggressor take an action to deescalate the situation prior to pulling the trigger, resulting in a homicide?

**Mitigating the Exponential Increase in Concealed Carry Permits.** This unintended consequence of the Florida Stand Your Ground Law would possibly be the most problematic to mitigate due to the 2nd Amendment of the U.S. Constitution. The recommendation to alleviate the exponential increase in concealed carry permits would be to make the process of obtaining a conceal carry permit more challenging. For example, a requirement for a more thorough background investigation to analyze an individual’s history of mental issues could be added to the approval steps. The Florida Statute 790.06, Weapons and Firearms states that a person is authorized to obtain a conceal carry permit if the individual:
(j) Has not been committed to a mental institution under chapter 394, or similar laws of any other state. An applicant who has been granted relief from firearms disabilities pursuant to s. 790.065(2)(a)4.d. or pursuant to the law of the state in which the commitment occurred is deemed not to have been committed in a mental institution under this paragraph. Florida Statute 394.4787 states that a mental institution provides “Acute mental health services means mental health services provided through inpatient hospitalization.

Florida Statute 790.065 contains no provision that calls for individuals who have had violent mental episodes as recorded by local and state law enforcement officers but were not committed to a mental facility, to be reported to the Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE).

Another recommended method of mitigating the exponential increase of concealed carry permits is to task the Commissioner of Agriculture and Consumer Services to conduct public service announcements through television and social media. The purpose would be to raise public awareness, fully explain the Florida Statute, and push the importance of de-escalation instead of elevating a confrontation that could become lethal.

The last recommendation to Florida State legislators to reduce the exponential increase of concealed carry permits is to eliminate Florida’s gun show loopholes. Currently, prohibited purchasers are regularly stopped by Florida state authorities from making illegal firearm purchases. However, Florida has not terminated the unlicensed sale loophole, which means that individuals who are not authorized to own guns are able to exploit an expanding market for unlicensed sales and become armed illegally. To close this loophole, Florida legislators, for the sake of their constituents, must create a strong and enforceable law that will disallow prohibited
purchasers of guns from skipping a background check and mandating that each gun seller is licensed. Additionally, that law would prohibit those who are unlicensed sellers from participating in the numerous guns shows throughout the State of Florida.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

The original aim of this study was to identify the issues concerning the Florida Stand Your Ground Law. However, one area that can be investigated even further is the sentencing of Floridian African Americans versus White Floridians in cases where the Florida Stand Your Ground Law was used as a defense. An additional analysis of research such as that could potentially illustrate whether the issue of racial equity has improved or become worse over time. That possible research would examine and assess a timeline from 2005, when the Florida Stand Your Ground Law was initially enacted, up until the present day. A plan of action for the researchers who conduct that type of study would be to collaborate with the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) and/or the Marshall Project. The SPLC is an organization that provokes significant change for racial justice in the South and beyond which also works hand in hand with communities to advance the human rights of all people, dismantle white supremacy, and strengthen intersectional movements (About Us, 2022). The nonpartisan and nonprofit online news organization, the Marshall Project, fills the void of declining traditional print journalism. The Marshall Project has provided extensive, investigative reporting of America’s criminal justice system (About Us 2022). Additionally, that recommended study could benefit judges in utilizing their discretion when making judgements in justifiable homicide cases by observing previous sentencing of White and African American defendants who use Florida’s Stand Your Ground Law as a defense.
The research of how Florida’s State legislative leaders govern the state can be advanced even further by conducting a thorough phenomenological study of the conservative Florida and liberal legislative leaders to illustrate each group's fundamental viewpoints on not only the Florida Stand Your Ground Law but other important issues within the state. The suggested method of collecting the data for that recommended study would call for the researcher to moderate a focus group utilizing the cloud based teleconferencing application, Zoom. A study such as that would allow conservative and liberal Florida legislators to virtually sit down and share their different perspectives, potentially reach a common ground, and become a model for future leaders of Florida. Since the state of Florida is not the only state that carries the Stand Your Ground Law as a state statute, I would recommend that future researchers conduct a phenomenological study that could possibly provide an explanation of how other states have adopted the Stand Your Ground Law, the positive aspects of the law as well as the negative consequences, if any. This study would entail individually interviewing state legislative leaders, law enforcement officers and state attorneys utilizing the teleconferencing application, Zoom.

Another probable area of research is to examine the Florida conservative legislative leaders reasoning for maintaining the Florida Stand Your Ground Law and the liberal legislative leaders’ rationale for modifying or repealing the law. Since the Florida Statute has been in place, there has been a considerable amount of debate on the law, primarily from a party affiliation standpoint. Meanwhile the law continues to be ambiguous and left open to interpretation. Potential research of that nature could point out the differences in viewpoints and help lead to a bipartisan approach which would be feasible for both parties. Despite the arduous tasks of obtaining present and past Florida State legislative leaders, former Florida law enforcement
officers, and Florida attorneys, which was a primary limitation of this study, those essential participants were eventually obtained through continual phone calls and emails.

The next area of recommended research is to examine, through a mixed method study, the causes of confrontations that lead to justifiable homicides in the State of Florida. The data from a study of that nature should examine specific areas such as a well-defined explanation of the incident, age, race, economic status, education, family dynamics, arrest records, city of residence, employment, marital status, and time. That type of study would provide a clearly defined illustration of why justifiable homicides occur, what led to the confrontations, who are the parties involved, where do the incidents occur the most, and provide recommendations for law enforcement officers throughout the State of Florida to centralize where possible incidents could occur and take a more proactive approach of mitigating future incidents.

Participant 3 provided a thought-provoking response to Interview Question Nine, when he was asked, What do you believe are the three leadership requirements for an elected official to be successful? He stated that, “Political success was not associated with leadership” (Participant 3, via email communication, October 30, 2021). That statement coincides with the Florida legislator’s creation of the 2005 Florida Stand Your Ground Law. Even though a majority of the legislators voted to allow Florida citizens to protect themselves against lethal attack, the law seems to be unsuccessful over the last 16 years based on the unintended consequences of an increase of justifiable homicides, the disparity of African American incarceration rates when the Stand Your Ground Law is applied and the increase in concealed weapons carry permits. Due to those facts, a recommendation for future research would be to compare previous legislative leaders, those who created and passed the Stand Your Ground Law to the present-day legislative leaders. The rationale for a study of that type is to identify factors that could possibly lead to
positive change and to provide future politicians a foundation for what works and what does not work.

Also, still another recommendation for probable research is to conduct a quantitative study of Florida State Representatives and State Senators that can be derived from Participant’s 3 statement that “Political success was not associated with leadership”. The data for that study would be collected utilizing a survey. The scope of the survey would analyze legislators’ opinions on what is considered political success and if there a direct correlation between political success and leadership. How would the leaders of a state’s citizens define and differentiate between being a leader and being a politician?

Lastly, a viable and useful topic for future researchers is to conduct a study on how the three unintended consequences from the Florida’s Stand Your Ground Law should be prioritized. This proposed research could analyze what is the order of importance to eventually resolve or mitigate each issue. Despite the fact each unintended consequence is problematic based on research, this study would also address Florida legislators’ perspectives on what is the most significant issue and what plan of action can legislators take to solve or mitigate the three issues. A mixed-method study is the suggested approach to take because the study could provide stronger evidence and additional confidence in the findings. The recommended gathering of data would be through individual interviews with Florida legislators and statistics from the Florida Department of Law Enforcement and the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services.

**Conclusion**

The results of this study illustrated the perceptions and ideas of participants from the individual interviews, as well as the focus group. Each participant had the opportunity to answer
the research questions with frankness and candor. There was also a belief among a majority of
the participants that their contributions could yield probable solutions to modifying, or even
repealing, the Florida Stand Your Ground Law which would assist law enforcement officers in
making arrests, aid Florida judges in bringing racial equity to the sentencing process and,
additionally, making the law less ambiguous, clearer, and more concise for the purpose of
interpretation.

Upon the completion of the individual interview process and the focus group, varying
opinions on the Florida Stand Your Ground Law were revealed. Those opinions ranged from
maintaining the self-defense law as currently written, modifying the law, up to removing the law
completely from the Florida Statutes (2019 Florida Statues, 2019). What this researcher found to
be most striking was that there was an agreement among all individual interview participants
that the Florida Stand Your Ground Law was not a necessity. The belief was that citizens had the
right to protect themselves in their homes, as well as outside of the home. However, a majority of
the individuals believed that, if the law were to remain, modifications should be made. A
minority of participants believed the law did not need a change.

One member of the focus group best summarized the need for leadership and also the
voice of Florida citizens to bring a resolution to a difficult problem. She placed the responsibility
of the self-defense law in the hands of the Florida lawmakers, as well as their constituents. The
focus group member expressed that, if the legislators’ constituents are not voicing their concerns
about the Florida Stand Your Ground Law and demanding their legislators take action, then
nothing will ever happen. That finding was a clear indication that the issue of the unintended
consequences of Florida’s Stand Your Ground Law rest in the hands of the state legislators in
Tallahassee, Florida. Without those political leaders’ determination and bipartisanship, the
haphazard killing of Florida citizens by the hands of other Floridians will continue to be a significant problem for the present time and in the future.

A recommendation to remedy that issue is to start a state conversation which calls for state legislators to conduct town hall meetings with their constituents to discuss Florida’s Stand Your Ground Law and how to improve the law and mitigate the three unintended consequences of the law. The primary objective of taking actions such as those described is to involve all Florida citizens in the discussion concerning the issues surrounding Florida’s Stand Your Ground Law and in essence, educating all Floridians about the self-defense law.

The goal of this study was to examine the three unintended consequences of Florida’s Stand Your Ground Law as a means to persuade the state’s legislative leaders to consider amending the law so that the unexpected outcomes could potentially be eliminated. This study allowed leaders within the State of Florida, law enforcement officers, attorneys, and the average Florida citizens to provide recommendations for Florida State legislators. A major issue discovered while conducting this study was acquiring participants to take part in such a controversial issue. Despite the arduous tasks of obtaining present and past Florida State legislative leaders, former Florida law enforcement officers, and Florida attorneys, which was a primary limitation of this study, those essential participants were still obtained through continual phone calls and emails. Eventually seven participants that met the criteria for the methodology and design of this study volunteered. Those individual interviewees along with the eight members of the focus group provided practical solutions to modifying the current Florida Stand Your Ground Law.

The sole intent of this study was to investigate the three unintended consequences of Florida’s Stand Your Ground Law that were created by the 2005 Florida legislators. This study
also offers additional knowledge that also provides a clearer path for future research on this controversial topic. Hopefully, legislative leaders will put aside their political differences and arrive at a partisan decision to mitigate the ambiguity of the law and make Florida a safer place to live. Finally, as an African American, a Floridian and most of all as a human being, I believe that we must take the necessary proactive steps to eliminate senseless shootings and killings of Florida citizens by the hand hands other Florida citizens.
REFERENCES


About. (2020). About 45,000 Americans are paralyzed from gunshot wounds. Everytown Research & Policy. https://everytownresearch.org/about/


https://commons.law.famu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1159&context=faculty-research


https://www.academia.edu/download/48198072/RESEARCH_METHODS.pdf

https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2705913


https://www.justicepolicy.org/research/category/36


https://doi.org/10.15537/smj.2016.10.15620


Latham, J. (2019, November 1). *Bias and validity threats to qualitative research*.

https://www.drjohnlatham.com/bias-validity-threats-qualitative-research/


https://www.themarshallproject.org/2017/08/14/killings-of-black-men-by-whites-are-far-
more-likely-to-be-ruled-justifiable?ref=hp-1-111&utm_content=bufferf81b6&utm_medium=social&utm_source=twitter.com&utm_campaign=buffer#.7yJEP6Su7


https://scholarship.law.upenn.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=9678&context=penn_law_review


https://www.shrm.org/hr-today/news/hr-magazine/fall2019/pages/how-leaders-can-make-better-decisions.aspx


https://doi.org/10.1007/s10488-013-0528-y


http://digitalcommons.law.seattleu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2362&amp;context=sulr


https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794114550439


https://www.leg.state.fl.us/statutes/index.cfm?App_mode=Display_Statute&URL=0700-0799/0776/0776ContentsIndex.html&StatuteYear=2019&Title=%2D%3E2019%2D%3EChapter%20776


The Florida Senate. (2020). *Calendar for 5/1/2020 - The Florida Senate.*

https://www.flsenate.gov/About/HowAnIdeaBecomesALaw


WISQARS Data Visualization. (2020, March 7). https://wisqars-viz.cdc.gov:8006/explore-data/explore/selected-years?ex=eyJpbnRlbnRzIjpbIjMiXSwibmFtZSI6ImlkX2FtcGxhY2UuanBnIiwicG9zdC1jaWRoaW5nIjoiYmluXyIsInNlcnZlcm5hbWUiOiJDb250Ym94X25ld3MifQ==


APPENDICES
Appendix A

Interview Protocol Guide
Appendix A

Interview Protocol Guide

This study is an investigation of the unintended consequences of Florida’s Stand Your Ground Law and leadership’s role in both implementing the law and revising it.

1. I appreciate the time that you have taken to participate in the interview part of my study, which is investigating of the unintended consequences of Florida’s Stand Your Ground Law and leadership’s role in both implementing the law and revising it. The objective of this research is to obtain opinions, ideas, lived experiences and the recommendations of the participants of the individual interviews as well as the focus group.

2. You were provided a consent form requesting your approval to participate in our discussion. The consent form also specifies:
   a. Throughout this individual interview you can be assured that your well-being is of the upmost importance. Confidentially and anonymity are your right, which means that, in the interview only the researcher and you will have knowledge of your participation and the information you provide will be presented in the study using a number.
   b. Only the researcher will have access to records that will be stored in a secured area.
   c. You will have an opportunity to review the transcript of our interview session.
   d. You can request a copy of this study when completed.
   e. Participation for this study is voluntary.
   f. You can withdraw from the interview at any time.
   g. The risks associated with this study are low to none.

3. You have received a copy of the questions that will asked during interview to assist you in understanding the substance of what the interview is about and to better prepare yourself for the range of questions.

4. Before the interview begins, what questions do you want to ask or what concerns do you want to address?
   a. If you have any questions during the interview, please feel free to ask them at any time.
Appendix B

Individual Interview Questions
Appendix B

Individual Interview Questions

Research Question

What are some viable solutions to modifying the current Florida Stand Your Ground Law which can eliminate the unintended consequences that have been produced by the implementation of the law?

Individual Interview Questions of Participants

The State of Florida’s Stand Your Ground Law is defined as: A person is justified in using or threatening to use force, except deadly force, against another when and to the extent that the person reasonably believes that such conduct is necessary to defend himself or herself or another against the other’s imminent use of unlawful force.

1. What do you believe the purpose of Florida’s Stand Your Ground Law is?

2. Do you believe that Florida’s Stand Your Ground Law is a necessary law to ensure the self-defense of Florida citizens?

   Why?

   Why not?

3. Do you believe Florida legislative leaders should improve or modify the Florida Stand Your Ground Law?

   Why?

   Why not?

4. What do you believe were the Florida State legislative leaders’ reasons and motivation for passing the Stand Your Ground Law in 2005?

5. Had the Florida state legislative leaders taken the right action by passing the law?
Why?

Why not?

6. Do you believe the current Florida state legislative leaders have a thorough understanding of Florida’s Stand Your Ground Law?

Why?

Why not?

7. Do you believe that the State of Florida is safer with the Stand Your Ground Law or is the state less safe?

Why?

Why not?

8. What could be the possible short-term and long-term effects of maintaining the Stand Your Ground Law as it is currently written?

9. What do you believe are the three leadership requirements for an elected official to be successful?

10. What recommendations would you make to Florida legislators to reduce the unintended consequences of: (1) the disparity of African American incarceration rates when the law is applied, (2) the increase in justifiable homicides, and (3) the exponential increase in concealed carry permits.

11. Do you believe that the Stand Your Ground Law helps or hinders Florida’s law enforcement officers from making arrest and the judicial system from making sound judicial decisions?

12. Can the current unintended consequences of the law be mitigated or eliminated and if so how and if not, why?
13. In your judgment, is Florida’s Stand Your Ground Law equitable for all races?
   
   If yes, described how the law is equitable for all races.
   
   If no, described how the law in inequitable for all races.

14. Within the State of Florida, firearms are the primary contributing factor of deaths in a majority of justifiable homicide incidents. How can legislators address the unintended increase of conceal weapon carry permits?

15. What is your opinion of the 2nd Amendment, the right of people to keep and bear arms?

16. Are there other negative ramifications of the Stand Your Ground Law that were not yet mentioned in this discussion? What are they?
   
   Are you willing to participate in a focus group session, with other participants, in order to continue the discussion on recommendations for Florida’s legislative leaders to reduce the number of justifiable homicides and to modify the current Stand Your Ground Law? What questions or concerns do you have that I can address as we end this interview?
Appendix C

Focus Group Introduction and Discussion Questions
Appendix C

Focus Group Introduction and Discussion Questions

Purpose of the study: Thank you for participating in this study! Your information and time are valuable and highly appreciated. On the consent form you were informed that the purpose of the study is to investigate the unintended consequences of Florida’s Stand Your Ground Law and leadership’s role in both implementing the law and revising it. This study is intended to help Florida State legislators to make the Stand Your Ground Law more concise and clearer, so law enforcement, as well as the citizens of Florida, are more able to interpret the intent of the law. Please be aware that the confidentiality and anonymity is no longer in the control of the researcher. I would ask everyone who is a participant of this focus group to honor and to be mindful of the other members of this focus group’s confidentiality and anonymity. Before the focus group discussion begins, what questions do you want to ask or what concerns about this group session do you want to address?

Research Question

What are some viable solutions to modifying the current Florida Stand Your Ground Law which can eliminate the unintended consequences that have been produced by the implementation of the law?

Focus Group Interview Questions

1. What are your thoughts on the controversy regarding Florida’s Stand Your Ground Law?

2. As a group, based on your personal experiences and what you know about the intended and unintended outcomes of the law, has each of you become more of a proponent or opponent of Florida’s Stand Your Ground Law?

Why?
Why not?

3. Does the Florida Stand Your Ground Law produce an environment for citizens to take the law into their own hands or lay the ground for vigilantism?
   Why?
   Why not?

4. Should law enforcement officers be given more authority to determine whether or not an individual used self-defense in justifiable incidents?
   Why?
   Why not?

5. Do you believe Federal, and Florida State legislative leaders are motivated to clarify the intent and wording of the Florida Stand Your Ground Law?
   Why?
   Why not?

6. As a collective group, what recommendations can you provide to Florida State legislators to a reduce or eliminate the unintended consequences of the Stand Your Ground Law?

7. What would each of you consider to be an equitable and fair Florida Stand Your Ground Law?
   What questions or concerns do you have that I can address before we begin a short debriefing of the focus group session?
Appendix D

Letter of Informed Consent for Individual Interviewees
Appendix D

Letter of Informed Consent for Individual Interviewees

My name is Anthony Keel, and I am a Doctoral student at National Louis University. I am asking you to participate in this study, An Investigation of the Unintended Consequences of Florida’s Stand Your Ground Law and Leadership’s Role in Both Implementing the Law and Revising It. The purpose of this study is to investigate the unintended consequences of Florida’s Stand Your Ground Law and leadership’s role in both implementing the law and revising it. This study will assist Florida State legislatures in making the Stand Your Ground Law less ambiguous so there is a better understanding of the law by law enforcement, as well as the citizens of Florida. Lastly, the data collected, such as the opinions, ideas, and knowledge of the phenomenon from this interview, will be utilized to present recommendations to Florida legislative leaders to modify the Stand Your Ground Law, as a means to minimize unintended consequences that arose after the law’s passage. This form outlines the purpose of the study and provides a description of your involvement and rights as a participant.

By signing below, you are providing consent to participate in a research project conducted by Anthony Keel, Doctoral student, at National Louis University, Tampa. Participation in this study will include:

• Interviews will last up to 60 minutes and include semi-structured questions which will be based on open ended questions.
• A single individual interview session will be scheduled at your convenience.
• Interviews will be recorded, and participants may view and have final approval on the content of interview transcripts.
• All interviews will be followed by a short (5-10 minute) debriefing session.
• Digital data will be stored on a password protected non-cloud hard drive. Written data will be kept in a locked safe and stored for 3 years. Access to the safe can only be gained by the researcher.

Your participation is voluntary and can be discontinued at any time without penalty or bias. Participants’ identities will in no way be revealed. All data will be reported anonymously and bear no identifiers that could connect data to individual participants. Your confidentiality will be ensured by securing all data on a password protected external hard drive in a secure safe in the researcher’s office. Only Anthony Keel will have knowledge of who participated in the study and have access to all data.

There are no anticipated risks or benefits, no greater than that encountered in daily life. Further, the information gained from this study could be useful to National Louis University and other Universities looking to refine research in Florida’s justifiable homicides, as well as the Stand Your Ground Law.

Upon request you may receive summary results from this study and copies of any publications that may occur. Please email the researcher, xxxxx@xx.xx.edu, to request results from this study.

In the event that you have questions or require additional information, please contact the researcher at (xxx) xxx-xxxx.

If you have any concerns or questions before or during participation that have not been addressed by the researcher, you may contact my research advisor, Dr. Marguerite Chabau; email: xxxxxxxx@nl.edu; phone: 1-xxx-xxx-xxxx or the co-chairs of NLU’s Institutional Research Board: Dr. Shaunti Knauth; email: xxxxxxx@nl.edu; phone: (xxx) xxx-xxxx; or Dr. Christopher
Rector; email: xxxxxx@nl.edu; phone: (xxx) xxx-xxxx. Co-chairs are located at National Louis University, 122 South Michigan Avenue, Chicago, IL.

Thank you for your consideration.

Consent: I understand that by signing below, I am agreeing to participate in the study (An Investigation of the Most Effective Leadership Strategies to Reduce the Number of Justifiable Homicides in the State of Florida. My participation will consist of the activities below:

Study interview

_________________________________  ________________________________
Participant’s Signature    Date
Appendix E

Letter of Informed Consent for Focus Group Participants
APPENDIX E

Letter of Informed Consent for Focus Group Participants

My name is Anthony Keel, and I am a Doctoral student at National Louis University. I am asking you to participate in this study, An Investigation of the Unintended Consequences of Florida’s Stand Your Ground Law and Leadership’s Role in Both Implementing the Law and Revising It. The purpose of this study is to investigate the unintended consequences of Florida’s Stand Your Ground Law and leadership’s role in both implementing the law and revising it. This study will assist Florida State legislatures in making the Stand Your Ground Law less ambiguous so there is a better understanding of the law by law enforcement, as well as the citizens of Florida. Lastly, the data collected, such as the opinions, ideas, and knowledge of the phenomenon from this interview, will be utilized to present recommendations to Florida legislative leaders to modify the Stand Your Ground Law, as a means to minimize unintended consequences that arose after the law’s passage. This form outlines the purpose of the study and provides a description of your involvement and rights as a participant.

By signing below, you are providing consent to participate in a research project conducted by Anthony Keel, Doctoral student, at National Louis University, Tampa.

Participation in this study will include:

- A focus group discussion will last up to 60 minutes and include semi-structured questions which will be based on open ended questions.
- The focus group discussion will be recorded, and participants may view and have final approval on the content of interview transcripts.
- The focus group discussion will be followed by a short (5-10 minute) debriefing session.
- Digital data will be stored on a password protected non-cloud hard drive. Written data will be kept in a locked safe and stored for 3 years. Access to the safe can only be gained by the researcher.

Your participation is voluntary and can be discontinued at any time without penalty or bias. Participants’ identities will in no way be revealed. In this study, anonymity will be set and maintained by assigning each participant a number, such as P1, P2, and so forth, and reporting each individual’s findings using only that identification. All data will be reported anonymously and bear no identifiers that could connect data to individual participants.

Your confidentiality will be ensured by securing all data on a password protected external hard drive in a secure safe in the researcher’s office. Only this researcher will have knowledge of who participated in the study and have access to all data.

There are no anticipated risks or benefits greater than that encountered in daily life. Further, the information gained from this study could be useful to National Louis University and other Universities looking to refine research in Florida’s justifiable homicides, as well as the Stand Your Ground Law.

Upon request you may receive summary results from this study and copies of any publications that may occur. Please email the researcher, xxxxx@xx.nl.edu, to request results from this study.

In the event that you have questions or require additional information, please contact the researcher at (xxx) xxx-xxxx.

If you have any concerns or questions before or during participation that have not been addressed by the researcher, you may contact my research advisor, Dr. Marguerite Chabau; email: xxxxx@nl.edu; phone: 1-xxx-xxxx-xxxx or the co-chairs of NLU’s Institutional Research
Board: Dr. Shaunti Knauth; email: xxxxxxxxxxx@nl.edu; phone: (xxx) xxx-xxxx; or Dr. Christopher Rector; email: xxxxxx@nl.edu; phone: (xxx) xxx-xxx. Co-chairs are located at National Louis University, 122 South Michigan Avenue, Chicago, IL.

Thank you for your consideration.

Consent: I understand that by signing below, I am agreeing to participate in the study (An Investigation of the Unintended Consequences of Florida’s Stand Your Ground Law and Leadership’s Role in Both Implementing the Law and Revising It. My participation will consist of the activities below:

Study interview

__________________________________  ______________________________________
Participant’s Signature               Date
Appendix F

Recruitment Email
Appendix F

Recruitment Email

Recruitment Email Subject: Anthony J. Keel is seeking participants for a research study.

Hello:

   My name is Anthony Keel, and I am a doctoral student from National Louis University. I am writing to you to extend an invitation to participate in my study titled: An Investigation of the Unintended Consequences of Florida’s Stand Your Ground Law and Leadership’s Role in Both Implementing the Law and Revising it. I obtained your contact information from: (this information will be filled in for each individual contacted).

   If you decide to participate in this study, you will take part in an interview and, also, be invited to be part of a follow up focus group discussion, to describe your lived experiences of the Stand Your Ground Law, as well as with justifiable homicide, if applicable. The interview will occur through the Zoom application. You will be asked a series of open-end questions. Your responses will be used to collect data to assist in constructing a study that points out the many facets of justifiable homicide. Participation will be both strictly confidential and anonymous. All recordings and files will be safeguarded to maintain confidentiality and anonymity.

   Your participation in this study is totally voluntary. You can choose to participate or not. If you would like to participate or have any questions about the study, please contact me by phone at: (xxx) xxx-xxxx or email at: xxxx@xx.nlu.edu

   Sincerely,

   Anthony J. Keel
Appendix G

Debriefing for Interview Participants
Appendix G

Debriefing for Interview Participants

This debriefing was conducted immediately following each interview.

Thank you for participating in this study. Your information and time are highly valued in achieving the overall purpose of this research, which is to assist Florida State legislatures in making the Stand Your Ground Law less ambiguous so there is a better understanding of the law by law enforcement, as well as the citizens of Florida. Additionally, the study’s purpose is to illustrate the transformational leaders who possess the qualities to highlight the problems with the Stand Your Ground Law and to stand up for those individuals who lack the wherewithal of speaking on their own behalf.

Confidentiality and anonymity have and will be maintained throughout the entire study process. Interview participants will remain anonymous through the use of numbers to represent their responses when the findings are reported. Participants’ confidentiality will be managed due to the fact that all personal information and the data collected will be securely maintained in both written and digital formats. Digital data will be stored on a password protected hard drive. Written data will be kept in a locked safe accessible to only the researcher.

Final Study Document: If you would like to receive a copy of the final report of this study when it is completed, please feel free to contact the researcher at: (xxx) xxx-xxxx or email: xxxx@xx.nlu.edu

What questions and/or concerns do you have that I can address as we end this interview?
Appendix H

Debriefing for Focus Group Participants
Appendix H

Debriefing for Focus Group Participants

This debriefing will be conducted immediately following the focus group session as a means to strengthen the assurances of anonymity and confidentiality as a way to safeguard participants and to also put them at ease with their participation.

Thank you for participating in this study. Your information and time are highly valued in achieving the purpose of this research to assist Florida State legislatures in making the Stand Your Ground Law less ambiguous so there is a better understanding of the law-by-law enforcement, as well as the citizens of Florida.

Confidentiality and anonymity have and will be maintained throughout the entire study process. Each of you is asked to keep the identification of the other focus group participants anonymous. Additionally, this researcher will keep focus group participants anonymous through the use of numbers to represent their responses when the findings are reported. Each of you is asked to keep the participation of others confidential. Additionally, this research will manage the focus groups participants’ due to the fact that all personal information and the data collected will be securely maintained in both written and digital formats. Digital data will be stored on a password protected hard drive. Written data will be kept in a locked safe accessible to only the researcher.

Final Study Document: If you would like to receive a copy of the final report of this study when it is completed, please feel free to contact the researcher at: (xxx) xxx-xxxx or email: xxxx@xx.nlu.edu

What questions and/or concerns do you have that I can address as we end this interview?
Appendix I

Transcript Review Email
Appendix I

Transcript Review Email

Dear xxx:

Thank you for taking part in this study which investigates the unintended consequences of Florida’s Stand Your Ground Law and Leadership’s Role in both Implementing the Law and Revising it. Attached is the transcript of your interview which was held on xxx date, via Zoom. Please review and advise me if there are any minor changes you recommend to be made to your comments. You will have seven (7) days from receipt of this email to provide me with those revisions. If you have no requested revisions, please respond back to this email with “I (insert name) confirm this recording transcript to be satisfactory for submission.” A non-response within seven (7) days will be taken as a confirmation of satisfaction with the original transcript. If you have any questions, please contact me at (xxx) xxx-xxxx or email: xxxx@xx.nlu.edu
Appendix J

CITI Completion Report
Appendix J

CITI Completion Report

COLLABORATIVE INSTITUTIONAL TRAINING INITIATIVE (CITI PROGRAM)
COMPLETION REPORT - PART 1 OF 1
COURSEWORK REQUIREMENTS*

* NOTE: Scores on this Requirements Report reflect quiz competencies at the time all requirements for the course were met. See list below for details. See separate Transcript Report for browsed quiz scores, including those on optional (supplemental) course elements.

- Name: 
- Institution Affiliation: 
- Institution Email: 
- Institution Unit: 
- Phone: 
- Curriculum Group: 
- Course Learner Group: 
- Stage: 
- Record ID: 
- Completion Date: 
- Expiration Date: 
- Minimum Passing: 
- Reported Score:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>REQUIRED AND ELECTIVE MODULES ONLY</th>
<th>DATE COMPLETED</th>
<th>SCORE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For this Report to be valid, the learner identified above must have had a valid affiliation with the CITI Program subscribing institution identified above or have been a paid independent learner.

Verified at: [Redacted]

Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI Program)
Email: support@citiprogram.org
Phone: 888-520-8329
Web: https://www.citiprogram.org
COLLABORATIVE INSTITUTIONAL TRAINING INITIATIVE (CITI PROGRAM)

COMPLETION REPORT - PART 1 OF 1

COURSEWORK TRANSCRIPT**

** NOTE: Scores on the Transcript Report reflect the most current quiz completions, including quizzes on optional (supplemental) elements of the course. See list below for details. See separate Requirements Report for the reported scores at the time all requirements for the course were met.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name:</th>
<th>ANTHONY ADELL, RN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Institution:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institution Email:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institution Unit:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phone:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum Group:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Course Learner Group:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Record ID:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Report Date:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current Score:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>REQUIRED, ELECTIVE, AND SUPPLEMENTAL MODULES</th>
<th>MOST RECENT</th>
<th>SCORE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For this Report to be valid, the learner identified above must have had a valid affiliation with the CITI Program subscribing Institution identified above or have been a paid independent learner.

Verify at: [link]

Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI Program)

Email: support@citinprogram.org
Phone: 866-829-5939
Web: https://www.citinprogram.org
Appendix K

IRB Approval Letter
Appendix K

IRB Approval Letter

February 12, 2022

Anthony J. Keel

Dear Anthony J. Keel:

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) has received your application for amendment of your research study “AN INVESTIGATION OF THE MOST EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP STRATEGIES AND PRACTICES TO REDUCE THE NUMBER OF JUSTIFIABLE HOMICIDES IN THE STATE OF FLORIDA”. The amendment is approved.

IRB: ER09991
Amendment approved 9-Feb-2022

Please note that the approval for your study is for one year, from 30-Aug-2021 to 30-Aug-2022. As you carry out your research, you must report any adverse events or reactions to the IRB.

At the end of your approved year, please inform the IRB in writing of the status of the study (i.e., complete, continuing). During this time, if your study changes in ways that impact human participants differently or more significantly than indicated in the current application, please submit a Change of Research Study form to the IRB, which may be found on NLU’s IRB website.

Please also ensure that your Human Subjects Research (HSR) certification stays active throughout any amendments to your research period.

All good wishes for the successful completion of your research.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Shaunet Knauth, Ph.D.
Chair, IRB