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# Student Perceptions of Police

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Student Perceptions of Police

by

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Dedication

*I dedicate this thesis to my dad. I appreciate all of the sacrifices you made for me over the years.*

*Thank you for everything.*

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Abstract

Police-community relations are a frequently discussed topic in both academe and the media. Many factors are believed to influence individuals' perceptions and views of law enforcement, including demographic variables (race and socioeconomic status), experiences with law enforcement, and media consumption. With an emphasis in the news and on social media regarding police misconduct or police brutality, this research seeks to inquire about college students' perceptions of law enforcement and racial injustice within the criminal justice system. While controlling for key demographic variables, this project specifically examines how individuals' personal experiences with law enforcement and their exposure to news media and social media impact their perceptions and attitudes of police or racial injustice in the criminal justice system. Other variables, such as ideological views, obligation to authority, and delinquent behaviors were also analyzed to provide more specific insight into what factors influence student perceptions. Using ordinal logistic regression, researchers analyzed student perceptions of racial injustice in the criminal justice system and police legitimacy. Findings for this study indicate that variables other than standard demographics, contact with law enforcement, and media consumption had a significant impact on student perceptions of police.

*Keywords:* perceptions of police, police legitimacy, racial injustice

Student Perceptions of Police

For many decades, researchers have studied what factors influence police-community

relations. Research surrounding this topic began in the 1960s in response to riots breaking out in

urban areas (Bayley & Mendelsohn, 1969; Brandl, Frank, Worden, & Bynum, 1994) and the

progression of the civil rights movement (Schafer, Huebner, & Bynum, 2003). Police-

community relations has remained a consistent area of interest within the literature, as the type of

relationship (i.e., positive or negative) between police and the community can greatly affect the

functionality of that community. Positive police-community relations create a more cohesive

community, where citizens have confidence and trust in the police. When citizens have negative

views of law enforcement it can lead to a disjointed community, divided by different goals and

opinions, making it more difficult for police to do their jobs effectively.

By studying what factors affect the public's perception of law enforcement, police can

adapt and work on methods to promote a better relationship with the community. One example

of this is the increase in community-oriented policing efforts across the country since the 1980s

(Dowler & Sparks, 2008). Community policing aims to improve the public's perception of law

enforcement by making law enforcement officials more visible to citizens and creating

environments where citizens have a chance to interact with these officials in a positive capacity;

therefore, improving the relationship.

Public satisfaction with law enforcement has been linked to greater trust in and

compliance or cooperation with law enforcement; thus, making it easier for law enforcement

officers to do their jobs (Hinton & Newborn, 2009; Skogan, 2006). When the public is satisfied

with police, police are seen as a necessary part of society (Lee, Lim, & Lee, 2015). However,

when the public is dissatisfied with police, police are viewed as a disruption to the community and may not receive the cooperation from the citizens.

Throughout various points in history, the legitimacy and need for law enforcement have been questioned. In the last decade, relations between police officers and citizens have been heavily scrutinized, largely due to highly publicized incidents of police misconduct. According to media sources, the tension between citizens and police officers is rising. Citizens are questioning whether police officers are acting with integrity while protecting citizens or if they are abusing their power and purposefully disrupting lives. Police officers are supposed to be both protectors and enforcers. However, individuals tend to group police officers dichotomously, either as protectors or as enforcers, but not both.

One concept that influences the public's perception of police officers is the idea of the "Thin Blue Line." In policing, the "thin blue line" represents the boundary between police officers and citizens (Dicker, 1998). It also represents the notion that police officers will back one another, and even cover for one another, should one of them engage in misconduct (Correll et al., 2007). Citizens may believe that police are only interested in protecting their "brothers in blue", rather than the community as a whole. This idea is reinforced by the concept of the "blue wall of silence" where officers will not testify against one another (Kleinig, 2001).  This may be seen as one way officers are more loyal to each other rather than the people they serve.

Misconduct by police officers is often highly publicized. These incidents of misconduct have an influence on how the public views police officers in general and cause the public to question the police department involved in the incident (Weitzer, 2002). Police misconduct may be minor or major incidents. These instances of misconduct may include bribery, extortion,

administrative violations, abuse of authority, sexual misconduct, and use of excessive force

(Kane, 2002; Lopez, Forde, & Miller, 2017).

Much of the discussion in the media revolves around the use of excessive force. Often

times the incidents of misconduct that are in the media are against members of minority races

(Chermak, McGarrell, & Gruenewald, 2006). In recent years, police-involved fatalities of people

of color such as Eric Garner (Staten Island, N.Y.), Michael Brown (Ferguson, Mo.), Tamir Rice

(Cleveland, Oh.), Freddie Gray (Baltimore, Md.), and Walter Scott (North Charleston, S.C.),

were widely broadcasted on multiple forms of media. These publicized incidents of excessive

force or police brutality have sparked civil unrest, leading to protests and rallies against law

enforcement, calls for police accountability, as well as becoming a platform point for social

movements such as Take a Knee and Black Lives Matter (Krieger, Chen, Waterman, Kiang, &

Feldman, 2015).

According to the Washington Post, it appears as though there has been an influx of fatal

police shootings, especially of minority citizens (Kindy, Lowery, Rich, Tate, & Jenkins, 2016).

As of December 1, 2017, black people represent 26% of people in the U.S. killed by police

officers this year (Mappingpoliceviolence.org, 2017). Police officers have a split-second to make

a decision that has the potential to be fatal (Plant & Peruche, 2005). While it is possible for these

decisions to be influenced by biases and stereotypes that the police officers may have, often

times these decisions are not made lightly though the public may not see that aspect. With

exposure and training, it is possible to change the biases that police officers may hold (Plant &

Peruche, 2005).

Alternatively, media outlets have also reported an increase in the number of law

enforcement deaths while in the line of duty (Santana, 2016). In July 2016, five officers were

killed in Dallas, Texas. Less than 10 days later, three officers were ambushed and killed in Baton

Rouge, Louisiana. Whether it is an officer killed during the commission of a crime or an

ambush/targeted attack, there has been an increased focus in the news, emphasizing the tension

between law enforcement and the community.

Officials in the law enforcement community have reported an increase in anti-police

sentiment over the last few years (Santana, 2016; Maguire, Nix, & Campbell, 2017). Maguire,

Nix, and Campbell (2017) found that there was no recent increase in the number of police

officers killed while on duty; however, the media has depicted a "war on cops." One day the

media may focus on an unarmed, person of color killed by police and the next day on members

of law enforcement being targeted or killed. These topics repeatedly broadcasted in the media

may influence the divide between police and citizens.

Satisfaction with police officers is rooted in various elements that include but are not

limited to race, social economic status, personal and/or vicarious experiences with law

enforcement, and media exposure. Perception of police officers can change as individual

circumstances and experiences change. Whether citizens are satisfied with police behaviors is

unique to each individual.

**Literature Review**

Several factors play a role in the perception of law enforcement officers. Previous

research has highlighted key demographics that influence one's perception of law enforcement,

such as race and socioeconomic status (Weitzer, 2002; Weitzer & Tuch, 2004). Additional

research expanded the focus to include experiences with law enforcement, both personal and

vicarious experiences. More recently, research has focused on how media consumption across

different media platforms, affects the public's perception of law enforcement officers (Intravia,

Wolff, & Piquero, 2017). This current study seeks to explore college students' perceptions of law

enforcement, given their experiences with law enforcement and exposure to media while

controlling for common demographic variables.

**Race**

Though it is 2017, there is still a racial divide in the United States. This divide is not

limited to just the publics' opinion, but it exists within the criminal justice system as evidenced

by the treatment of people of color starting with law enforcement and continuing as they move

through the criminal justice system (Kahn, Goff, Lee, & Motamed, 2016).

Relations between minority communities and police officers are tenuous at best (Weitzer

& Tuch, 2005). The topic of race is taboo, and difficult to discuss, as there are such intense

feelings on the issue (Masden, 2011). People of color are more likely to be exposed to forced or

police-initiated interactions (Walker, Spohn, & DeLone, 2007) and searched by law enforcement

(Gelman, Fagan, & Kiss, 2007). Likely as a result of this exposure, many studies have shown

that people of color are also more likely to be arrested (Hartney & Voung, 2009; Kochel, Wilson,

& Mastrofski, 2011). Bias is also evident when looking at the treatment and sentencing of

minorities (Henderson, Cullen, Cao, Browning, & Kopache, 1997). Minorities often receive

harsher penalties compared to whites, for the same crime (Burch, 2015; Kutateladze, Andiloro,

Johnson, & Spohn, 2014; Mitchell, 2005, Petersilia, 1985; Rehavi & Starr, 2014). However, the

bias is also apparent when looking at police practices. Starting in their youth, people of color

often experience disproportionate contact with law enforcement (Piquero, 2008). This increases

the chance of negative exposure to law enforcement and the perception of racial bias within the

criminal justice system.

Interactions with law enforcement are more likely to be positive for White individuals than they are for Black individuals (Hurwitz & Peffley, 2005). This holds true for the victim interaction with law enforcement as well as perpetrator interaction with law enforcement. If the victim of a crime is white, there are generally faster police response times, higher probabilities of arrests, and tougher investigative strategies (Hurwitz & Peffley, 2005). Furthermore, if a suspect is Black, it is more likely that the officers will use force, will arrest, and will profile the suspect compared to a white suspect (Hurwitz & Peffley, 2005). The disparities among police behaviors, coupled with the disparities in sentencing and treatment, it is not surprising that distrust for law enforcement is more common among people of color than among Whites (Embrick, 2015; Hurwitz & Peffley, 2005; Tyler, 2005).

Beliefs about the overall criminal justice system can influence how individual citizens perceive law enforcement. Hagan and Albonetti's (1982) research suggests that African-Americans are more likely than Whites are to perceive the criminal justice system as unjust. Hurwitz and Peffley (2005) also find that Whites have more sympathetic views towards the police than Blacks do. Carter (1985) found that Hispanics populations in Texas who had interacted with law enforcement also had unfavorable views of police officers. The unfavorable perception of police officers was attributed to ineffective communication and cultural differences. Hispanics viewed police officers as having a "bad attitude" (Carter, 1985). Overall, have less positive views of law enforcement compared to Whites but a more positive view than Blacks (Callanan & Rosenberger; Peck, 2015; Weitzer 2002).

Lower levels of confidence in law enforcement are reported among people of color (Schuck, Rosenbaum, & Hawkins, 2008; Weitzer, 2000). Additionally, Weitzer and Tuch (2004) found that when compared to their White counterparts, Black and Hispanic citizens believed that

police corruption and misconduct are common. Based on previous research, minority citizens are more likely to view police officers negatively (Weitzer, 2002). Suggested reasons are the perception of the overall criminal justice system being unjust, community expectations not being met, and cultural differences.

The interpretations and perceptions of the racial disparities can have an effect on the relationship and views the public has for law enforcement. If one perceives the criminal justice system as unjust, they will be more likely to be distrustful of law enforcement. Previous surveys appear to be in agreement with the assumption that minority citizens have a higher dissatisfaction with police behaviors and are concerned about an unjust criminal justice system. The previous research supports that notion that race is a predictor of satisfaction and trust for police officers.

**Socioeconomic Status**

One's socioeconomic status can also have an influence on the perception of police officers. Scaglion and Condon (1980) recognized that there were concerns involving police community-relations in urban areas. Individuals who live in more urban areas or in low socioeconomic areas that are prone to police involvement are at greater risk to experience misconduct by police officers, or at least know of others who have experienced misconduct (Brunson & Weitzer, 2009; Schuck et al., 2008).  Many studies have shown that lower income groups, especially minorities, have a less than favorable attitude of police officers than middle-class citizens do. According to Schuck et al. (2008), middle-class status lessened the negative beliefs of police by Black citizens; finding an interaction between race and socioeconomic status.

Individuals who live in the more disadvantaged neighborhoods often have a greater distrust and negative attitude toward police officers (Weitzer, 2002). This may be the result of previous encounters with law enforcement or observations of how law enforcement has treated

family, friends, or neighbors (Apple & O'Brien, 1983; Sampson & Bartusch, 1998; Weitzer, 2002). Socioeconomic status appears to play a role in the public's perception of police officers, though it may be compounded with the race variable.

**Experiences Law Enforcement**

Contact with police can be an influential factor in developing an opinion of law enforcement. Negative interactions with a law enforcement officer can lead to future distrust and can influence one's confidence in police officers (Lee et al., 2015). The negative interactions can be one's own personal experience or the vicarious experiences of others. Knowing about others' negative interactions with law enforcement can influence their perception of police (Bradford, 2011; Schuck et al., 2008; Weitzer & Tuch, 2005). Furthermore, the presence of a positive interaction with law enforcement does not cancel out a distrust or negative perception of police officers (Weitzer & Tuch, 2002). Lee et al. (2015) found that increased social distance or lack of familiarity with the police, in general, decreased one's positive perceptions of law enforcement.

**Media Exposure and Consumption**

Researchers have long studied the media's influence on various topics. Two facets of media have been applied to research regarding the media's influence over public perceptions of law enforcement. One of these facets is media exposure. Media exposure may also play a significant role in perceptions of police officers. When there is an incident of misconduct involving a police officer, it often becomes a highly broadcasted piece among the media. The goal of most media sources is to obtain the top ratings, "if it bleeds, it leads" (Stoop, 2007). When these incidents of misconduct are continually publicized, it causes the public to doubt the department in question and casts a negative shadow over all police officers (Chermark et al.,

2006; Weitzer, 2002). Exposure to negative media portrayal of law enforcement is linked to lower levels of confidence in the police (Schuck & Rosenbaum, 2005).

Media consumption is another variable identified by prior work examining the media's influence on public perceptions. Studies inquiring about media consumption have shown that negative perception of police officers increase as media coverage of police scandals and brutality increase (Lasley, 1994; Weitzer & Tuch, 2005). In recent years, researchers have expanded the topic of media to include not only written or televised news media, but also social media and online news platforms (Intravia et al., 2017; Roche, Pickett, & Gertz, 2016). Little research has been conducted to determine how strong a predictor social media consumption is when it comes to influencing police-community relations (Intravia et al., 2017). This study seeks to expand upon the influence of media consumption, particularly social media, on perceptions of law enforcement and racial injustice.

## Method

### Research Questions

The current study investigates two research questions: 1) How do students perceive law enforcement and racial injustice within the criminal justice system? and 2) What factors influence these perceptions? While expanding upon the findings of prior research, this study seeks to explore what factors are most influential in shaping students perceptions of police legitimacy and procedural justice.

### Sample

Data were collected from a sample of students, both undergraduate and graduate, at a regional southeastern university ($N = 302$) using an online Qualtrics survey. Sixty-three

participants were excluded prior to analyses because of incomplete[1] or duplicate surveys, leaving

239 participants responses for analysis. Participant ages ranged from 18 to 65 years old, with the

most frequent age group 18 to 23. Sixty-one percent of participants were female. The majority of

participants were White, reflective of the overall University population (62.3% White, 15.1%

Black, 12.6% Hispanic, 6.7% Biracial or Multiracial, 2.5% Asian, and 0.4% Native American).

To recruit participants, flyers were posted around campus and distributed to various

cultural-based student organizations. Additionally, with the permission of faculty members in the

Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice, announcements were made in various

undergraduate courses. At the discretion of the professor, extra credit was available to students

for completion of the survey. All participants were at least 18 years old and gave informed

consent prior to participating in the online survey.

**Measures**

The online survey includes questions adapted from previous scales and questions created

by the researcher. Standard demographic questions were also included in the survey

questionnaire (see Appendix A). As part of this exploratory study, the survey questions were

designed to provide insight into the student perceptions of law enforcement and racial injustice.

**Independent variables.**

*Demographic variables.*  A total of 14 demographic questions were collected. Items in

this section included race, socioeconomic status (childhood and current), college major,

employment status, age, gender, household total, and residential type. Items such as race and

socioeconomic status were used because of their status in prior research, as noted previously.

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[1] Incomplete is defined as not responding to any questions other than demographics or completing less than 50 % of
the survey.

College major and employment status were used to control for criminal justice majors and

students employed in the criminal justice field.

   ***Ideological perspective of the criminal justice system.*** Combined from both the

Conservative Criminal Justice Ideology scale and the Liberal Criminal Justice Ideology scale

(Henderson et al., 1997), ten questions were utilized to determine the overall ideological

perspective of the participant, as it relates to the criminal justice system. On a scale of 1

("strongly disagree") to 5 ("strongly agree") participants indicated their agreement for statements

such as: (1) We should hire a lot more police and give them the power to catch criminals, (2)

Punishing criminals more harshly would reduce crime by setting an example and showing others

in society that crime does not pay, and (3) A major reason why we have so much crime is

because our society still has too much poverty, racism, and social injustice. Because items were

combined from separate scales, four of the ten items were reverse coded. Cronbach's alpha was

used to ensure sufficient reliability ($\alpha = .71$).

   ***Trust in news media.*** Adapted from Kohring and Matthews (2007), Trust in News Media

scale, seven questions were selected to gauge participants' belief in the news media. Using a

five-point Likert scale of 1 ("strongly disagree") to 5 ("strongly agree"), participants were asked

to indicate the extent that they agree with statements supporting the news Media. Items in this

scale include: (1) The focus is on important facts, (2) Reporting includes different points of view,

(3) The reports recount the facts truthfully. Reliability for all seven items was high ($\alpha = .85$)

suggesting that all items accurately reported students' trust in news media.

   ***Experience with the criminal justice system.*** Four questions were adapted from the

Henderson and colleagues (1997) Experience with Criminal Justice System measure to

determine the extent of one's contact with the criminal justice system. Participants were

instructed to indicate *yes* or *no* to the following questions: (1) Do you know anyone personally

who was arrested for committing a crime? (2) Have you ever visited someone you know

personally while they were in jail or prison? (3) Have you ever been stopped or watched closely

by a police officer, even when you had done nothing wrong? (4) Do you know someone

personally who was stopped or watched closely by a police officer, even when they had done

nothing wrong?

      ***Obligation to authority***. Adapted from Tyler and Degoey's (1995), Obligation to

Authority scale, four questions were assessed with a five-point Likert response category, ranging

from 1 ("strongly disagree") to 5 ("strongly agree"). These items include: (1) Respect for

government authority is an important value for people to have, (2) People should obey laws even

when they go against what they think is right, (3) Disobeying the law is seldom justified, (4) It is

important for people to learn when to question authority. The initial reliability for this scale was

weak ($\alpha = .40$). Item-factor analysis was conducted and questions (3) and (4) were eliminated

from the scale. After the elimination of the two questions, reliability for the scale was $\alpha = .61$.

      ***Delinquency measure***. Sixteen questions adapted from the Delinquency Measure,

participants used a 7-point Likert scale to indicate the extent to which they agree with a series of

statements (Belmi, Barragan, Neale, & Cohen, 2015). Response categories range from 1

("never") to 7 ("very often"). Examples of items in this section include: (1) Threatened someone

in school with violence, (2) Used illegal drugs, (3) Skipped class because you were high, and (4)

Done something that could have gotten you in trouble with the police. The individual questions

were computed into a single delinquency measure.

      ***Personal experiences with the CJS.*** The final section of the survey is researcher-

developed questions, designed to obtain further insight into the participant's individual

experiences with the criminal justice system. Questions in this section differentiate the individual's personal and vicarious experiences with law enforcement, specifies their consumption of news media, and inquires about their social media use. Contact with law enforcement, direct or indirect, was collected using questions such as, (1) Have you ever been arrested?, (2) Has an immediate family member been arrested?, (3) Has a close friend ever been arrested?, (4) Have you ever reported a crime?, and (5) How many times have you interacted with a member of law enforcement, excluding family and friends? Reported contact could have been positive or negative experiences.

### *Media Usage.*

To gather data on news media consumption, students were asked to report if (a) they watched or read the news regularly, (b) their method of news consumption (e.g., online news sources, TV, newspapers, or social media), and (c) what outlets they used (e.g., CNN, Fox News, MSNBC, AP, BBC, NPR or other). Social media use was also measured. Students were asked to (a) identify what social media platforms they used, (b) if they have seen news stories on social media about police brutality, (c) if they post or comment on those stories, and (d) if they consider themselves to be an "activist" on social media.

### **Dependent variables.**

***Police Legitimacy.*** Using a five-point Likert scale with a response section of 1 ("strongly disagree") to 5 ("strongly agree"), 11 questions have been adapted from the Legitimacy in Policing Questionnaire (Gau, 2015). Examples of these items are: (1) Police are generally honest, (2) Laws protect everyone equally, (3) Powerful people use laws to disadvantage powerless people, (4) Officers make decisions based on facts and the law, not his or her own opinions, and

(5) It would be hard to justify disobeying a police officer. Two items were reverse coded.

Reliability for this scale was high (α = .87).

      ***Perceptions of racial injustice in the criminal justice system.*** Four items have been

adapted from the Perception of Racial Injustice in the Criminal Justice System scale (Henderson

et al., 1997). Each question has three responses based on that specific question. An example of

the question and response options are: If a police officer stops a car that is going 10 miles over

the speed limit, the officer is more likely to give a ticket to (1) A driver who is Black, (2) A

driver who is White, or (3) Treat both the same. Reliability for the scale was good (α = .74).

**Analysis**

      Descriptive statistics were generated including means, percentages, standards deviations,

and minimum/maximum values and are useful for offering an overall snapshot of the sample.

Bivariate correlations, using the Pearson *r*, established which variables were significant in

relation to the two dependent variables (police legitimacy and racial injustice within the criminal

justice system) for the purpose of estimating the multivariate models.  Correlations were then

reviewed to identify which independent variables were significantly associated with the outcome

measures.

      Using the independent variables that were significantly correlated with the outcome

measures at the bivariate level, ordinal logistic regression models determined the extent to which

these factors had any predictive value on college students' perceptions of police legitimacy and

racial injustice within the criminal justice system. Ordinal regression was used due to the nature

of the dependent variables, which were additive scales of ordinal level Likert measures. Ordinal

regression is useful in the modeling of human levels of preference or attitudes, such as the two

dependent variables used in the current analysis. Four models were estimated in total, two for

each of the dependent variables.  Models 1 and 3 regressed the dependent variables on the demographic measures while Models 2 and 4 regressed the DVs on all predictors that were significantly related to the outcomes at the bivariate level. Data were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics 25, a statistical software package.

<div align="center"><b>Results</b></div>

**Descriptive Statistics**

  Table 1 presents the demographic variables analyzed in this study. Approximately 70% of participants were criminal justice majors or minors. Students were asked to indicate (or estimate) their childhood and current socioeconomic status from a range of answers. The most common response for both childhood (29.8%) and current (30.8%) SES was "$75,000 or more." About 6% of students reported having a childhood SES of less than $25,000. Students were asked to report the number of people in their household including themselves ($M = 4.4$, $SD = 1.56$). Most students reported growing up in a suburban environment (62.9%), followed by urban (21.3%) and rural (12.1%) locales.

  The independent variables that measured interactions with and exposure to law enforcement, news media exposure and consumption, social media use, and the adapted scales are presented in Table 2. Participants who indicated they had interacted with law enforcement were asked to estimate the number of interactions they had, excluding interactions with family or friends in law enforcement. Thirty-nine percent of students stated they had interacted with police 1 to 3 times, 21.5% had interacted 3 to 5 times, 16% had interacted more than 5 times, and 23% had interacted with law enforcement more than 10 times. These interactions could have been direct ($M = 2.2$, $SD = 1.56$), indirect ($M = 3.3$, $SD = 1.47$), or any contact ($M = 5.2$, $SD = 2.00$). Six percent of students had only interacted with campus police.

Based upon students who reported watching or reading the news regularly (58%), 97% stated they had seen stories of police brutality in the media while 83% recorded seeing stories of law enforcement being targeted. Students indicated what platforms they used to access news media ($M$ = 1.4, $SD$ = 1.4), with TV being most common (47%), followed by online websites and social media (40%, each), newspapers (13%) and other (3%) (see Table 3). The number of media outlets were also recorded ($M$ = 1.4, $SD$ = 1.61). CNN and Fox News were the most commonly reported outlets, at 34% and 33% respectively. Thirteen percent of students used AP, 18% used BBC, 15% MSNBC, 14% NPR, and 18% indicated other (see Table 3).

Outside of gathering news, 92.1% of participants indicated using social media. The most common social media platforms were Snapchat (78%), Instagram (77%), and Facebook (76%). YouTube (69%) and Twitter (50%) were also frequently reported, while Tumblr and Reddit or Imgur were used by 14 percent and 11 percent, respectively (see Table 3). Overall, 10% of students considered themselves to be an "activist" on social media. Finally, the additive scales presented in Table 2 include trust in news media ($M$ = 2.7, $SD$ = 0.75), obligation to authority ($M$ = 7.3, $SD$ = 1.64), delinquency ($M$ = 1.4, $SD$ = 0.50), ideological perspectives of the criminal justice system ($M$ = 2.8, $SD$ = 0.58), perceptions of racial injustice ($M$ = 2.4, $SD$ = 1.52), and police legitimacy ($M$ = 3.2, $SD$ = 0.70).

**Correlations**

Using bivariate correlations for preliminary analysis, the independent measures with significance to one or both of the dependent measures are presented in Tables 4a and 4b. Overall, eighteen independent measures showed a significant relationship to the primary dependent variable, police legitimacy; while eleven measures showed a significant relationship to the second dependent variable, perceptions of racial injustice.

**Police Legitimacy.** In regards to demographic variables, race showed the strongest relationship to perceptions of police legitimacy. Consistent with prior research, Black participants had a negative correlation to police legitimacy ($r$ = -0.34, $p \leq$ .001) compared to their White counterparts ($r$ = 0.28, $p \leq$ .001). Both childhood socioeconomic status ($r$ = 0.24, $p \leq$ .001) and current socioeconomic status ($r$ = 0.14, $p \leq$ .05) had a positive, weak correlation with police legitimacy. Gender (being male) also had a positive, weak correlation with police legitimacy ($r$ = 0.21, $p \leq$ .001). Lastly, being a criminal justice major or minor was positively correlated with police legitimacy ($r$ = 0.14, $p \leq$ .05).

While direct contact alone did not have a relationship to perceptions of police legitimacy, indirect contact had a weak but slightly stronger correlation ($r$ = -0.21, $p \leq$ .001) when compared to any contact (direct or indirect) with law enforcement ($r$ = -0.16, $p \leq$ .01). In general, exposure to news stories about police brutality or law enforcement being targeted did not have a relationship to police legitimacy. However, individuals' reactions to seeing those stories were correlated with police legitimacy. Those who were more likely to support law enforcement or doubt claims of police brutality had a positive correlation with police legitimacy ($r$ = 0.38, $p \leq$ .001). Conversely, those who consider themselves to be outspoken against incidents of police brutality ($r$ = -0.24, $p \leq$ .001) or a "social media activist" ($r$ = -0.15, $p \leq$ .05) had a negative correlation with police legitimacy.

Among the adapted subscales, trust in the news media ($r$ = 0.18, $p \leq$ .05), a higher sense of obligation to authority ($r$ = 0.50, $p \leq$ .001), and conservative ideology ($r$ = 0.53, $p \leq$ .001) are positively correlated with police legitimacy. Higher rates of delinquency had a weak, negative relationship with police legitimacy ($r$ = -0.13, $p \leq$ .05). The strongest correlation for police

legitimacy was the secondary dependent variable, perceptions of racial injustice ($r$ = -0.58, $p \leq$ .001).

**Perceptions of Racial Injustice.** Race, gender, and childhood socioeconomic status are the demographic variables with significant correlations. Being Black was positively correlated with perceiving racial injustice within the criminal justice system ($r$ = 0.26, $p \leq$ .001) while being White ($r$ = -0.24, $p \leq$ .001) was negatively correlated. Additionally, being male ($r$ = -0.26, $p \leq$ .001) and having a higher childhood SES ($r$ = -0.19, $p \leq$ .01) were also negatively correlated with perceptions of racial injustice.

Those who have had direct contact with law enforcement ($r$ = -0.14, $p \leq$ .05) and more interactions overall ($r$ = -0.15, $p \leq$ .05) have a weak, negative correlation to perceptions of racial injustice. Furthermore, those who are more outspoken against crimes targeting law enforcement are less likely to perceive racial injustice ($r$ = -0.14, $p \leq$ .05). Finally, obligation to authority ($r$ = -0.28, $p \leq$ .001) and conservative views of the criminal justice system ($r$ = -0.45, $p \leq$ .001) were negatively associated with perceptions of racial injustice.

**Ordinal Regression**

Model 1 regressed the police legitimacy scale on the demographic variables gender, White race, Black race, childhood SES, current SES, criminal justice majors, criminal justice major or minor, direct contact, indirect contact and any contact (see Table 5). Results from the ordinal regression analysis indicated only three of the demographic variables were significantly related to police legitimacy. Specifically, gender was significantly related with perceptions of police legitimacy with males being more likely to report positive attitudes towards law enforcement ($\beta$ = .80, p $\leq$ .01). Race was also significantly related to the dependent variable with Black respondents significantly less likely to report perceptions of the legitimacy of police ($\beta$ = -

1.08, p ≤ .01). Finally, childhood SES also significantly impacted the odds of favorable

perceptions of police legitimacy, with those reporting higher SES more likely to score higher on

the police legitimacy scale (β = .15, p ≤ .05). The Nagelkerke $R^2$ was somewhat low at .244,

indicating that the model was able to account for approximately 24% of the variance in the

outcome measure.

In addition to the demographic variables in Model 1, Model 2 also regressed the number

of interactions with police, reactions to stories of police brutality and police as targeted victims,

being outspoken about crimes committed by police or those targeting police, being a social

media activist, one's obligation to authority, trust in news media, delinquency, ideological views

of the criminal justice system, and perceptions of racial injustice (see Table 5). Ten variables

were significantly related to perceptions of police legitimacy. The significance of gender carried

over to Model 2, where males were more likely to have higher perceptions of police legitimacy

(β = .69, p ≤ .05). Those with a higher current SES were also more likely to perceive the police

as legitimate (β = .12, p ≤ .05). As the number of interactions with police increased, perceptions

of police legitimacy decreased (β = -0.28, p ≤ .05). Reactions to stories of police brutality in the

news also had a significant relationship to perceptions of police legitimacy, with those who

reported doubting or blaming the alleged victim during instances of police brutality having more

favorable perceptions of police legitimacy (β = .61, p ≤ .01). Additionally, when individuals

were more likely to be angry at the alleged perpetrator during instances where police were

targeted victims, they were also more likely to have higher perceptions of police legitimacy (β =

.42, p ≤ .05).

Furthermore, all adapted scales were significantly related to perceptions of police

legitimacy in Model 2. Those with a higher obligation to authority were significantly more likely

to have positive views of police legitimacy ($\beta$ = .47, p $\leq$ .001). Trust in news media was significantly associated with perceptions of police, with people who reported greater trust in the news media also having favorable views of police legitimacy ($\beta$ = .92, p $\leq$ .001). Individuals scoring higher on the ideological views of the criminal justice system scale, indicating more conservative views, also scored higher on the scale for perceptions of police legitimacy ($\beta$ = 1.07, p $\leq$ .001). Lower scores of perceptions of police legitimacy were significantly associated with higher rates of delinquency ($\beta$ = -1.11, p $\leq$ .001) and higher perceptions of racial injustice ($\beta$ = -0.70, p $\leq$ .001). Approximately 69% of the variance for the outcome measure was accounted for within Model 2, as indicated by the Nagelkerke $R^2$.

Presented in Table 6, Model 3 was regressed against the same demographic variables in Model 1, showing four significant relationships between demographics and perceptions of racial injustice within the criminal justice system. Gender had a significant relationship to perceptions of racial injustice, where males were less likely to perceive racial injustice in the criminal justice system ($\beta$ = -0.64, p $\leq$ .01). Additionally, individuals indicating higher SES during childhood were also less likely to perceive racial injustice within the criminal justice system ($\beta$ = -0.16, p $\leq$ .01), as are students majoring in criminal justice ($\beta$ = -.80, p $\leq$ .05). Lastly, there was a significant relationship between direct contact and perceptions of racial injustice. Those reporting more direct contact with law enforcement were less likely to perceive racial injustice within the criminal justice system. The Nagelkerke $R^2$ was low for this model, only accounting for 19% of the variance for the perceptions of racial injustice measure.

In the final model, Model 4, demographic and independent variables were included in the regression. Three variables showed a significant association with the outcome measure, perceptions of racial injustice. Unexpectedly, those with higher obligation to authority were

significantly more likely to perceive racial injustice within the criminal justice system ($\beta$ = .32, p

$\leq$ .01). Alternatively, individuals who reported more conservative ideological views of the

criminal justice system were less likely to perceive racial injustice ($\beta$ = -1.09, p $\leq$ .01). Finally,

students with higher perceptions of police legitimacy were significantly less likely to perceive

racial injustice within the criminal justice system ($\beta$ = -1.97, p $\leq$ .001). Approximately 53% of

the variance of the outcome measure can be accounted for in this model ($R^2$ = .531).

## Discussion

Prior research has noted relationships between race, socioeconomic status, exposure to

media, and contact with law enforcement. This study sought to explore these relationships and

the influence of social media on students' perceptions of police legitimacy and racial injustice. In

order to build on prior research, other variables, such as obligation to authority, ideological

perspectives of the criminal justice system, and delinquency were also included to assess if they

had any predictive factors of perceptions of police.

**Current Study**

Given that race is noted in prior work as one of the most influential factors regarding

public perceptions of police, this study expected to confirm that race is a strong predictor of

perceptions of police legitimacy. While race variables for White and Black groups were

statistically significant at the bivariate levels and in Model 1, their significance decreased in the

full regression models. As other factors were added, race became less predictive of police

legitimacy and did not play a significant role in perceptions of racial injustice. Other variables

may be more influential than race when it comes to predicting perceptions of police legitimacy.

Additionally, other marginalized races, Hispanic/Latino, Asian, Multiracial, and Native

American, showed no significant relationships to the outcome variables, even at the bivariate

level. This may be due to the small number of participants in the sample who identified as these races.

The significance of SES as a predictor varied throughout the results. Childhood SES was significant at the bivariate levels for both perceptions of police legitimacy and perceptions of racial injustice, as well as regression models 1 and 3. Similar to race, as more variables were added to the models, the significance of SES diminished. Overall, childhood SES appeared to be a stronger predictor of perceptions of racial injustice for this sample when compared to current SES, which was only significant at the bivariate level and full model (Model 2) for police legitimacy. Those with lower incomes during childhood perceived more racial injustice within the criminal justice system and were less likely to have favorable views of police legitimacy. As expected, favorable views of police legitimacy increased among students with a higher current SES, consistent with prior research (Weitzer, 2002).

Unexpectedly, one demographic variable significantly related to police legitimacy and perceptions of racial injustice was gender. Prior research often reports mixed findings when it comes to positive views of police legitimacy and gender, providing no clear conclusions of the impact of gender on police legitimacy (Bradford, Jackson, & Stanko, 2009; Lee et al., 2015; Stewart, Baumer, Brunson, & Simons, 2009). However, the current study showed females were significantly less likely to perceive the police as legitimate. Additionally, gender was also a significant predictor in perceptions of racial injustice (Model 3), with males less likely to perceive racial injustices.

Contact with law enforcement was not as much of a predictor as originally anticipated. Prior research (Lee et al., 2015) showed that contact played a significant role in perceptions of police legitimacy. While direct and indirect contact did not have any significant findings in the

regression models for police legitimacy, the number of interactions with police were found to be

significant, showing a negative relationship; as the number of interactions increased, views of

police legitimacy decreased. This may be due to the nature of these interactions (i.e., having

more interactions that are negative). However, direct contact with police did show significance in

Model 3 with perceptions of racial injustice. Individuals who had more direct contact with law

enforcement were less likely to perceive the criminal justice system as being racially unjust. This

may be because the type of contact was a positive experience for the respondent.

Contrary to prior research, the mere exposure to news media, in general, did not have

statistical significance as predictors for perceptions of police legitimacy and racial injustice.

However, how individuals interpret and react to seeing stories of police brutality influenced their

perceptions of police legitimacy. Students who were less likely to believe the news stories about

police brutality saw police as more legitimate. Alternatively, participants who reported more

trust in the media were more likely to perceive the police as legitimate. Additionally, adding

social media as a possible media-related predictor did not have as much of an impact as

hypothesized. Despite 92% of the sample using social media and 40% of individuals getting their

news from social media, there were no significant findings for general social media use and

perceptions of police legitimacy or perceptions of racial injustice. However, at the bivariate

level, those who identify as social media activists are less likely to perceive police legitimacy

positively. This significance disappeared within the regression model as other variables were

considered (Model 2), indicating that being an activist on social media may not be as influential

on perceptions of police when compared to other variables included.

Finally, delinquency as a predictor of police legitimacy remained significant throughout

levels of analyses, showing a negative association between delinquency and perceptions of

police legitimacy. Obligation to authority and ideological perspectives were significant at every level of analysis. These results indicate that ideology and a need for authority have more significance in predicting perceptions of police legitimacy and racial injustice than do demographic variables.

**Limitations, Future Directions, and Conclusions**

As common with self-reported data, this current study has some limitations. Despite having anonymity, participants may not report accurate information and provide socially desirable responses, especially in regards to the delinquency questions or controversial topics (i.e., racial and socioeconomic disparities). This survey was distributed in a largely conservative region, at a predominately white institution with mostly middle- to upper-class students. Thus, this sample may not be reflective of the overall population and ultimately unable to capture perceptions of individuals in communities where police-citizen contact is more prevalent and/or tenuous. Extending the survey to citizens in a variety of diverse communities could provide a more encompassing view of the publics' perceptions of police legitimacy. Furthermore, it would be worthwhile to explore how police officers perceive police-community relations in the same communities to determine if there is a cyclical effect of distrust within these communities.

Moreover, the survey instrument itself needs to be strengthened. In the future, the questionnaire should provide a space to distinguish between positive and negative experiences with law enforcement. As is, the contact measurements could include both positive and negative encounters with police, depending on the participants' experiences.

Future research should further examine the relationship between ideology and other variables that influence perceptions of police legitimacy. For example, investigating how ideology interacts with news media consumption to influence perceptions of police legitimacy or

racial injustice may provide a fruitful area for inquiry. Identifying additional factors that

influence perceptions of police could inform future policy and practices for law enforcement,

aimed at easing tense relations between the community and police.

Public satisfaction and trust of police officers are necessary for a cohesive society. It

creates an environment where police can better perform their job duties and citizens feel safe. By

continuing to explore this topic, researchers can identify ways to combat negative interactions

and perceptions of disparate treatment to increase positive relationships between law

enforcement and the communities they serve.

Appendix A

Survey Instrument

**Demographics**

*Please answer the following demographic questions.*

Please select your status at the University of North Florida.
        Undergraduate Student
        Master's Student
        Doctoral Student

If you are a student, what is your major(s) and minor?
        _____

What is your age?     _____

What is your gender?
        Female
        Male
        Other: _____
        Prefer not to disclose

What is your race?
        Asian
        Black or African-American
        Hispanic or Latino(a)
        White
        Biracial or Multiracial
        Other:

Place of Birth: City, State, Country
        Postal Code (if applicable)

Which type of residential environment did you grow up in?
        Rural
        Suburban
        Urban
        Other (Please explain):

What is your current zip code? _____

How many people were in your household during the majority of your adolescence?
        _____ adults              _____ children

What was the socioeconomic status of your family during your adolescence? (Please estimate if necessary)

      Less than $12,000
      $12,000 to $24,999
      $25,000 to $34,999
      $35,000 to $44,999
      $45,000 to $54,999
      $55,000 to $64,999
      $65,000 to $74,999
      $75,000 or more
      Not Sure

What is your current economic status? (If you are a dependent, please use your family's socioeconomic status)

      Less than $12,000
      $12,000 to $24,999
      $25,000 to $34,999
      $35,000 to $44,999
      $45,000 to $54,999
      $55,000 to $64,999
      $65,000 to $74,999
      $75,000 or more
      Not Sure

Are you currently employed? What is your job?

      Yes, I have one job. _____
      Yes, I have multiple jobs. _____   _____
      No

What is your highest level of completed education?

      High School
      GED
      Associate's Degree
      Bachelor's Degree
      Master's Degree
      Doctorate Degree
      Other: _____

What is your relationship status?

      Single
      Married
      Divorced
      Widowed

**Ideological Perspective of Criminal Justice System**

Scale:
1 = Strongly Disagree
2 = Disagree
3 = Neutral
4 = Agree
5 = Strongly Agree

*Please rate the following questions on the scale provided below.*

We should hire a lot more police and give them the power to catch criminals.

The best way to reduce crime is to reestablish the traditional values that made our country great: hard work, religion, respect for authority, and firm discipline in both home and school.

A major reason why we have so much crime is because our society still has too much poverty, racism, and social injustice.*

Unless we do something about the root causes of crime such as poverty and social injustice, the crime rate will remain high.*

Even if prisons cannot deter or rehabilitate criminals, long prison sentences are needed so that we can keep habitual and dangerous offenders off of our streets.

Criminals these days have too many legal rights.

Many people are driven to crime by the frustration they feel when they fail repeatedly at school or cannot get a job, no matter how hard they try.*

Punishing criminals more harshly would reduce crime by setting an example and showing others in society that crime does not pay.

A major reason why we have so many crimes these days is because young people are just not taught to respect authority.

The best way to reduce crime is to expand social programs that will give disadvantaged people better education, job training, and equal employment opportunities.*


*indicates reverse code needed

Adapted from Henderson et al., 1997

**Perception of Racial Injustice in the Criminal Justice System**

*Please select your answer for the following questions.*

While on patrol, police officers are more likely to stop and question:
1. A Black person in a predominately White neighborhood.
2. A White person in a predominately Black neighborhood.
3. Blacks and Whites treated the same.

If a police officer stops a car that is going 10 miles over the speed limit, the officer is more likely to give a ticket to:
1. A driver who is Black.
2. A driver who is White.
3. Treat both the same.

If a person is in court for stealing from a department store, who is more likely to receive a jail sentence for this offense:
1. A person who is Black.
2. A person who is White.
3. Both treated the same.

Who would a jury be more likely to give the death penalty to:
1. A Black person convicted of murdering a White person.
2. A White person convicted of murdering a Black person.
3. Both treated the same.

Adapted from Henderson et al., 1997

**Trust in News Media**

Scale:
1 = Strongly Disagree
2 = Disagree
3 = Neutral
4 = Agree
5 = Strongly Agree

*Please indicate the extent to which you agree with each statement in regards to the news media.*

The essential points are included.

The focus is on important facts.

Reporting includes different points of view.

The information in a report would be verifiable if examined.

The reported information is true.

Criticism is expressed in an adequate manner.

The reports recount the facts truthfully.

Adapted from Kohring & Matthes, 2007

**Obligation to Authority**

Scale:
1 = Strongly Disagree
2 = Disagree
3 = Neutral
4 = Agree
5 = Strongly Agree

*Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements.*

Respect for government authority is an important value for people to have.

People should obey laws even when they go against what they think is right.

It is important for people to learn when to question authority

Disobeying the law is seldom justified.

Adapted from Tyler and Deogey, 1995

**Perceptions of Legitimacy in Policing**

Scale:
1 = Strongly Disagree
2 = Disagree
3 = Neutral
4 = Agree
5 = Strongly Agree

*Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements.*

Police protect people's basic rights.

Police are generally honest.

Most officers do their jobs well.

Police can be trusted to do what's right for my neighborhood.

Laws protect everyone equally.

People with money and power can get away with anything.*

Officers treat all people with respect.

Powerful people use laws to disadvantage powerless people.*

Officers make decisions based on facts and the law, not his or her own opinions.

When a police officer issues a formal order, you should do what they say even if you disagree with it.

It would be hard to justify disobeying a police officer.

*indicates reverse code needed

Adapted from Gau, 2015

**Delinquency Measure**

Scale:
(1) Never   to   (7) very often

*Please indicate the extent to which the following statements apply.*

Drank alcohol excessively or beyond your limit

Smoked marijuana

Used illegal drugs (other than marijuana)

Abused prescription pills

Used over-the-counter drugs to get high (e.g., cough syrup)

Drove recklessly

Missed classes because you were drunk or hungover

Skipped classes because you were high

Threatened a professor or authority figure

Made racist remarks to hurt someone else

Done something that could have gotten you in trouble with the police

Ruined or damaged other people's properties or possessions on purpose

Stolen something or tried to steal something worth more than US $50.00

Hit or pushed someone else

Threatened someone with violence

Carried a weapon, such as a knife, gun, Taser, or club illegally

Adapted from Belmi et al., 2015

**Experience with Criminal Justice System**

*Please indicate your answer for the following questions with a "yes" or "no."*

        Do you know anyone personally who was arrested for committing a crime?

        Have you ever visited someone you know personally while they were in jail or prison?

        Have you even been stopped or watched closely by a police officer, even when you had done nothing wrong?

        Do you know someone personally who was stopped or watched closely by a police officer, even when they had done nothing wrong?

Adapted from Henderson et al., 1997

**Personal Experiences**:

*Please answer the following questions to the best of your ability.*

Do you have any close family members or friends in law enforcement?

Have you ever interacted with law enforcement? (Excluding family members and/or friends)
  How often have you interacted with a law enforcement officer?
    1-3 times
    3-5 times
    more than 5 times
    more than 10 times

  Were your interactions with law enforcement campus police?
    No
    Yes

Have you ever been arrested?
  No
  Yes
        How many times? For what crimes?


Has an immediate family member ever been arrested?
  No
  Yes

Has a close friend ever been arrested?
  No
  Yes

Have you ever reported a crime?
  Yes
  No

Would you be willing to call the police for help if you were the victim of a crime?
  Yes
  No

Do you watch or read the news regularly?
  Yes
  No


What is your source of news?

TV
Newspaper
Social Media
Online News Websites
Other: _____

If you watch or read the news, what news company are you most likely to get your news from?
AP
CNN
Fox News
MSNBC
BBC
NPR
Other

Have you seen stories in the news that depict police brutality or police corruption?
Yes
No

What was your reaction to these stories?
Indifferent
Anger for the alleged victim
Anger for the police officer
Disbelief or doubt of the validity
Other:

Have you seen stories in the news about police officers being ambushed or purposely targeted because they were law enforcement?
Yes
No

What was your reaction to these stories?
Indifferent
Anger for the alleged perpetrator
Anger for the police officer
Disbelief or doubt of the validity
Other:

Do you use social media?
No
Yes

Do you follow stories or events of police brutality or corruption?
No

Yes

Do you post or comment to others' posts about when you hear or see stories regarding alleged police brutality and corruption?
No
Yes

Do you consider yourself to be an "activist" on social media?
No
Yes

Are you outspoken when it comes to crimes committed by police?
No
Yes

Are you outspoken when it comes to crimes targeting law enforcement?
No
Yes

Are you willing to be interviewed about your experiences and perceptions with law enforcement in a one-on-one format?
No – End Survey
Yes – Clicks through to sign up

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Tables

Table 1: Descriptives (Demographics)

| Variable | N | % / Mean (SD) | Min | Max |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Gender (1 = male) | 235 | 38.3% | 0 | 1 |
| Age | 239 | 21.9 (5.62) | 18 | 65 |
| Race | 239 | | | |
|     Asian | | 2.5% | 0 | 1 |
|     Black / African-American | | 15.1% | 0 | 1 |
|     Hispanic / Latino(a) | | 12.6% | 0 | 1 |
|     Native American | | 0.4% | 0 | 1 |
|     White | | 62.3% | 0 | 1 |
|     Multiracial | | 6.7% | 0 | 1 |
| Residential Type (during childhood) | 240 | | | |
|     Urban | | 21.3% | 0 | 1 |
|     Suburban | | 62.9% | 0 | 1 |
|     Rural | | 12.1% | 0 | 1 |
| Criminal Justice Major or Minor | 239 | | | |
|     Major | | 57.7% | 0 | 1 |
|     Minor | | 12.5% | 0 | 1 |
| Employed | 238 | 64.7% | 0 | 1 |
|     Criminal Justice Employed | | 2.1% | 0 | 1 |
|     Military | | 1.6% | 0 | 1 |
| Household Size | 239 | 4.4 (1.56) | 2 | 10 |
| Childhood SES | 238 | | | |
|     Less than $12,000 | | 3.4% | | |
|     $12,000 to $24,999 | | 2.5% | | |
|     $25,000 to $34,999 | | 7.6% | | |
|     $35,000 to $44,999 | | 7.6% | | |
|     $45,000 to $54,999 | | 8.8% | | |
|     $55,000 to $64,999 | | 11.8% | | |
|     $65,000 to $74,999 | | 13.0% | | |
|     $75,000 or more | | 29.8% | | |
|     Not Sure | | 15.5% | | |
| Current SES | 237 | | | |
|     Less than $12,000 | | 9.7% | | |
|     $12,000 to $24,999 | | 8.0% | | |
|     $25,000 to $34,999 | | 9.7% | | |
|     $35,000 to $44,999 | | 6.8% | | |
|     $45,000 to $54,999 | | 6.8% | | |
|     $55,000 to $64,999 | | 7.6% | | |
|     $65,000 to $74,999 | | 7.2% | | |
|     $75,000 or more | | 30.8% | | |
|     Not Sure | | 13.5% | | |

Table 2: Descriptives (Independent Variables)

| Variables | N | % / Mean (SD) | Min | Max |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Direct Contact | 233 | 2.2 (1.16) | 0 | 5 |
| Indirect Contact | 233 | 3.3 (1.47) | 0 | 6 |
| Any Contact | 232 | 5.2 (2.00) | 1 | 10 |
| Number of Interactions | 200 | 2.2(1.20) | 1 | 4 |
|    1 to 3 times | | 39.5% | | |
|    3 to 5 times | | 21.5% | | |
|    More than 5 times | | 16.0% | | |
|    More than 10 times | | 23.0% | | |
| Interactions only with campus police | 199 | 6.0% | 0 | 1 |
| Willing to call for help | 234 | 98.0% | 0 | 1 |
| Read or Watch News Regularly | 236 | 58.0% | 0 | 1 |
| Seen stories that depict police brutality or corruption | 234 | 97.0% | 0 | 1 |
|    Reaction to these stories | 235 | 1.9 (0.87) | 1 | 4 |
|    Outspoken against police brutality or corruption | 218 | 29.0% | 0 | 1 |
| Seen stories that depict police being targeted | 235 | 83.0% | 0 | 1 |
|    Reaction to these stories | 230 | 3.4 (0.92) | 1 | 4 |
|    Outspoken against crimes targeting police/law enforcement | 220 | 33.0% | 0 | 1 |
| # of News Platforms (online, newspaper, TV, social media) | 239 | 1.4 (1.40) | 0 | 5 |
| # of Media Outlets (AP, CNN, Fox News, NBC, BBC, NPR) | 239 | 1.4 (1.61) | 0 | 7 |
| Use social media | 235 | 92.1% | 0 | 1 |
| # of Social Media Platforms (combined totals) | 239 | 3.8 (1.63) | 0 | 7 |
| Do you consider yourself an activist on social media? | 220 | 10.0% | 0 | 1 |
| Trust in News Media Scale | 236 | 2.7 (0.75) | 1 | 5 |
| Obligation to Authority Scale | 239 | 7.3 (1.64) | 2 | 10 |
| Delinquency Scale | 239 | 1.4 (0.50) | 1 | 4.31 |
| Ideological Views of Criminal Justice System Scale | 233 | 2.8 (0.58) | 1.20 | 4.30 |
| Perceptions of Racial Injustice Scale | 238 | 2.4 (1.52) | -2 | 4 |
| Police Legitimacy Scale | 233 | 3.2 (0.70) | 1.09 | 5.0 |

Table 3: *Descriptives (Media and Social Media)*

| Variables | N | % |
|---|---|---|
| News Platforms | 239 | |
|     TV | | 47% |
|     Online Websites | | 40% |
|     Newspapers | | 13% |
|     Social Media | | 40% |
|     Other | | 3% |
| Media Outlets (AP, CNN, Fox News, NBC, BBC, NPR) | 239 | |
|     AP | | 13% |
|     BBC | | 18% |
|     CNN | | 34% |
|     Fox News | | 33% |
|     MSNBC | | 15% |
|     NPR | | 14% |
|     Other | | 18% |
| Social Media Platforms | 239 | |
|     Facebook | | 76% |
|     Instagram | | 77% |
|     Snapchat | | 78% |
|     Twitter | | 50% |
|     Tumblr | | 14% |
|     Reddit/Imgur | | 11% |
|     YouTube | | 69% |
|     Other | | 2% |

Table 4a: *Correlations;* variables with significant relationships to DVs [a, b]

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Gender | 1.00 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 2. White | 0.10 | 1.00 | | | | | | | | | | |
| 3. Black | -0.08 | -0.54*** | 1.00 | | | | | | | | | |
| 4. Child SES | 0.10 | 0.19** | -0.16** | 1.00 | | | | | | | | |
| 5. Current SES | 0.06 | 0.08 | -0.06 | 0.47*** | 1.00 | | | | | | | |
| 6. CJ Major | 0.08 | 0.00 | 0.01 | -0.05 | -0.01 | 1.00 | | | | | | |
| 7. CJ Major or Minor | 0.04 | -0.01 | -0.06 | -0.08 | -0.02 | 0.74*** | 1.00 | | | | | |
| 8. Direct Contact | 0.17** | 0.03 | 0.02 | -0.02 | -0.10 | 0.02 | 0.08 | 1.00 | | | | |
| 9. Indirect Contact | -0.01 | -0.19** | 0.21** | -0.19** | -0.21*** | 0.05 | 0.07 | 0.28*** | 1.00 | | | |
| 10. Any Contact | 0.09 | -0.11 | 0.18** | -0.16** | -0.24*** | 0.06 | 0.09 | 0.65*** | 0.89*** | 1.00 | | |
| 11. # of Interactions | 0.14 | 0.19** | 0.04 | -0.02 | -0.02 | 0.10 | 0.12 | 0.35*** | 0.16* | 0.29*** | 1.00 | |
| 12. Reaction to PB stories | 0.07 | 0.21** | -0.21*** | 0.03 | -0.06 | 0.09 | 0.10 | 0.09 | -0.21** | -0.14* | 0.14* | 1.00 |
| 13. Reaction to LE targeted | 0.20 | 0.20** | -0.15* | 0.11 | 0.06 | 0.05 | 0.02 | 0.02 | -0.15* | -0.10 | 0.18** | 0.10 |
| 14. Outspoken – PB | -0.07 | -0.18** | 0.16* | -0.12 | -0.12 | -0.05 | -0.11 | 0.07 | 0.26*** | 0.26*** | -0.06 | -0.20** |
| 15. Outspoken – Target LE | -0.01 | 0.00 | -0.10 | -0.09 | -0.10 | 0.09 | 0.03 | 0.15* | 0.06 | 0.12 | 0.04 | 0.11 |
| 16. Social Media Activist | -0.04 | -0.12 | 0.03 | -0.03 | -0.01 | -0.03 | -0.12 | 0.09 | 0.08 | 0.08 | -0.13 | -0.06 |
| 17. Obligation to Authority | 0.06 | 0.18** | -0.20** | 0.08 | 0.14* | 0.08 | 0.07 | 0.01 | -0.02 | -0.03 | 0.01 | 0.16* |
| 18. Trust in News Media | 0.16** | -0.11 | 0.00 | 0.03 | 0.16** | -0.10 | -0.17** | -0.05 | -0.06 | -0.10 | -0.01 | -0.16** |
| 19. Delinquency | 0.03 | 0.15* | -0.09 | -0.03 | -0.11 | -0.05 | 0.04 | 0.30*** | 0.32*** | 0.37*** | 0.18** | 0.07 |
| 20. Ideology (CJ system) | 0.06 | 0.22*** | -0.17** | 0.08 | -0.02 | 0.09 | 0.05 | -0.07 | -0.23*** | -0.20** | 0.10 | 0.32*** |
| 21. Racial Injustice [a] | -0.26*** | -0.24*** | 0.26*** | -0.19** | -0.03 | -0.12 | -0.09 | -0.14* | 0.09 | 0.02 | -0.15* | -0.33*** |
| 22. Police Legitimacy [b] | 0.21*** | 0.28*** | -0.34*** | 0.24*** | 0.14* | 0.14* | 0.14* | 0.02 | -0.21*** | -0.16** | 0.06 | 0.38*** |

Notes: *p ≤ .05; **p ≤ .01; ***p ≤ .001

Table 4b: *Correlations;* variables with significant relationships to DVs [a, b]

| | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1.  Gender | | | | | | | | | | |
| 2.  White | | | | | | | | | | |
| 3.  Black | | | | | | | | | | |
| 4.  Child SES | | | | | | | | | | |
| 5.  Current SES | | | | | | | | | | |
| 6.  CJ Major | | | | | | | | | | |
| 7.  CJ Major or Minor | | | | | | | | | | |
| 8.  Direct Contact | | | | | | | | | | |
| 9.  Indirect Contact | | | | | | | | | | |
| 10. Any Contact | | | | | | | | | | |
| 11. # of Interactions | | | | | | | | | | |
| 12. Reaction to PB stories | | | | | | | | | | |
| 13. Reaction to LE targeted | 1.00 | | | | | | | | | |
| 14. Outspoken – PB | 0.05 | 1.00 | | | | | | | | |
| 15. Outspoken – Target LE | 0.16* | 0.64*** | 1.00 | | | | | | | |
| 16. Social Media Activist | -0.10 | 0.39*** | 0.28*** | 1.00 | | | | | | |
| 17. Obligation to Authority | 0.22*** | -0.04 | 0.13* | -0.12 | 1.00 | | | | | |
| 18. Trust in News Media | -0.09 | -0.13 | -0.15* | -0.09 | 0.08 | 1.00 | | | | |
| 19. Delinquency | -0.01 | 0.08 | 0.04 | 0.09 | -0.06 | -0.12 | 1.00 | | | |
| 20. Ideology (CJ system) | 0.20** | -0.18** | 0.08 | -0.13* | 0.39*** | -0.02 | -0.18** | 1.00 | | |
| 21. Racial Injustice [a] | -0.16** | 0.05 | -0.14* | 0.05 | -0.28*** | -0.05 | -0.01 | -0.45*** | 1.00 | |
| 22. Police Legitimacy [b] | 0.29*** | -0.24*** | 0.07 | -0.15* | 0.50*** | 0.14* | -0.13* | 0.53*** | -0.58*** | 1.00 |

Notes: *p ≤ .05; **p ≤ .01; ***p ≤ .001

Table 5: Ordinal Logistic Regression

| Independent Variables | Model 1 Police Legitimacy (Demographics) | | | Model 2 Police Legitimacy (Full Model) | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | β | SE | Wald | β | SE | Wald |
| Gender | .80** | .26 | 9.768 | .69* | .31 | 4.883 |
| White (race) | 0.40 | .30 | 1.740 | -0.04 | .38 | 0.013 |
| Black (race) | -1.08** | .41 | 6.936 | -0.47 | .50 | 0.893 |
| Childhood SES | 0.15* | .06 | 5.378 | 0.12 | .07 | 2.847 |
| Current SES | -0.01 | .05 | 0.060 | 0.12* | .06 | 3.776 |
| CJ Major | 0.33 | .35 | 0.890 | -0.07 | .41 | 0.034 |
| CJ Major or Minor | 0.39 | .39 | 0.993 | 0.57 | .45 | 1.604 |
| Direct Contact | 0.17 | .25 | 0.431 | -0.23 | .31 | 0.536 |
| Indirect Contact | -0.01 | .34 | 0.000 | 0.04 | .44 | 0.010 |
| Any Contact | -0.23 | .33 | 0.510 | 0.03 | .42 | 0.007 |
| Number of Interactions | | | | -0.28* | .13 | 4.353 |
| Reaction to police brutality in news | | | | 0.61** | .20 | 9.574 |
| Reaction to police targeted in news | | | | 0.42* | .18 | 5.747 |
| Outspoken about crimes committed by police | | | | -0.44 | .48 | 0.845 |
| Outspoken about crimes targeting police | | | | 0.23 | .42 | 0.306 |
| Social Media Activist | | | | -0.05 | .49 | 0.010 |
| Obligation to Authority | | | | 0.47*** | .11 | 20.387 |
| Trust in News Media | | | | 0.92*** | .22 | 18.105 |
| Delinquency | | | | -1.11*** | .35 | 10.416 |
| Ideological views of CJ system | | | | 1.07*** | .32 | 11.104 |
| Perceptions of racial injustice | | | | -0.70*** | .12 | 32.324 |
| Nagelkerke ($R^2$) | | .244 | | | .692 | |

Notes: *$p \le .05$; **$p \le .01$; ***$p \le .001$

Table 6: Ordinal Logistic Regression

| Independent Variables | Model 3 Perceptions of Racial Injustice (Demographics) | | | Model 4 Perceptions of Racial Injustice (Full Model) | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | β | SE | Wald | β | SE | Wald |
| Gender | -0.64** | .26 | 6.069 | -0.42 | 0.34 | 1.483 |
| White (race) | -0.50 | .31 | 2.552 | -0.65 | 0.42 | 2.389 |
| Black (race) | 0.75 | .44 | 2.935 | 0.45 | 0.59 | 0.591 |
| Childhood SES | -0.16** | .06 | 6.385 | -0.15 | 0.08 | 3.295 |
| Current SES | 0.09 | .05 | 2.917 | 0.09 | 0.07 | 1.938 |
| CJ Major | -0.80* | .37 | 4.716 | -0.51 | 0.45 | 1.327 |
| CJ Major or Minor | 0.21 | .40 | 0.275 | 0.15 | 0.50 | 0.093 |
| Direct Contact | -0.58* | .26 | 4.863 | -0.59 | 0.34 | 3.047 |
| Indirect Contact | -0.54 | .35 | 2.373 | -0.65 | 0.48 | 1.840 |
| Any Contact | 0.61 | .34 | 3.226 | 0.58 | 0.46 | 1.577 |
| Number of Interactions | | | | -0.21 | 0.14 | 2.158 |
| Reaction to police brutality in news | | | | -0.24 | 0.21 | 1.238 |
| Reaction to police targeted in news | | | | 0.23 | 0.19 | 1.412 |
| Outspoken about crimes committed by police | | | | -0.74 | 0.52 | 2.001 |
| Outspoken about crimes targeting police | | | | -0.20 | 0.47 | 0.189 |
| Social Media Activist | | | | 0.62 | 0.57 | 1.196 |
| Obligation to Authority | | | | 0.32** | 0.12 | 7.257 |
| Trust in News Media | | | | 0.18 | 0.23 | 0.587 |
| Delinquency | | | | -0.42 | 0.38 | 1.261 |
| Ideological views of CJ system | | | | -1.09** | 0.37 | 8.848 |
| Perceptions of police legitimacy | | | | -1.97*** | 0.37 | 28.421 |
| Nagelkerke ($R^2$) | | .190 | | | .531 | |

Notes: *$p \le .05$; **$p \le .01$; ***$p \le .001$

Vita
# Taylor L. Claxton

## EDUCATION

Exp. 2018   *University of North Florida*, Jacksonville, FL
M.S. in Criminal Justice

2015   *University of North Florida,* Jacksonville, FL
B.A. Criminal Justice
B.A. Psychology

## RESEARCH INTERESTS

Police-Community Relations; Commercial Sexual Exploitation and Human Trafficking; Criminal Justice Reform; Disparities/Inequalities and Crime

## PUBLICATIONS

Miller, J. Mitchell, Holly Ventura Miller, and Taylor L. Claxton. (2018). Theorizing novel and emerging drug use: A motivational typology. *Deviant Behavior.*

## CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

**Claxton, T. L**., & Miller, H. V. (2018, February). *"Protect and serve" or "Disrupt and harm" Perceptions of Police Officers among College Students*. Poster presented at the 2018 Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences Annual Meeting, New Orleans, LA

**Claxton, T. L**., Miller, H. V., & Miller, J. M. (2018, February). *Theorizing novel emerging psychoactive drug use: A motivational typology.* Paper presented at the 2018 Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences Annual Meeting, New Orleans, LA.

## PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

2017 – Present   Managing Editor, *American Journal of Criminal Justice*
University of North Florida

2017 – Present   Graduate Assistant, *Department of Criminology & Criminal Justice*
University of North Florida

2014 – Present   Victim Advocate, *Women's Center*
University of North Florida

## RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

2017-2018   **Research Assistant, Victims of Commercial Sexual Exploitation in Florida: An Exploratory Pilot Study**
Holly Ventura Miller, Ph.D.
Completed state agency Institutional Review Board protocol; Prepared web-based survey

2017-2018     **Research Assistant, Canine-Inmate Rehabilitation Program**
              Jennifer K. Wesely, Ph.D.
              Collected data during focus groups; transcribed recordings from focus groups.

2014-2016     **Research Assistant, The TIE Laboratory, Preschooler's Nutritional Knowledge**
              Jody S. Nicholson, Ph.D.
              Assisted with data collection, data entry, and data cleaning; coded and analyzed data.

## TEACHING EXPERIENCE

**Graduate Teaching Assistant**

**CJE 3232 Drugs & Crime                    Spring 2017, Fall 2017, Spring 2018, Summer 2018**
Managed online platform for course; provided accommodations for student exams; responded to student inquiries

**CCJ 3014 Criminological Theory                                         Fall 2017**
Proctored and graded class exams; administered make-up exams; input grades

**CCJ 3700 Research Methods in Criminal Justice                          Fall 2017**
Proctored and graded class exams; administered make-up exams; input

**CCJ 4939 Pre-Internship in Criminal Justice                         Spring 2017**
Graded assignments; provided constructive feedback for students; assisted and facilitated student mock interviews

**CCJ 4940 Internship in Criminal Justice                             Spring 2017**
Graded assignments; provided constructive feedback for students; responded to student inquiries

**Undergraduate Teaching Assistant**

**SOP 3214C Experimental Social Psychology                            Spring 2015**
Developed and presented lectures on APA format; Graded research papers and quizzes

## PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS

Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences
American Society of Criminology
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Alpha Phi Sigma, The National Criminal Justice Honor Society
Psi Chi, International Honor Society in Psychology

## HONORS & AWARDS

Summa Cum Laude, College of Arts & Sciences, University of North Florida, 2015
Affirmative Action Scholarship Mini-Grant Travel Award, Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences, 2018
Student Government Travel Grant, University of North Florida, 2017
The Rawand Hiriezi Memorial Scholarship, University of North Florida, 2015