COLLEGE STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF LAW ENFORCEMENT FAIRNESS:

THE INFLUENCE OF GENDER AND POLITICAL BELIEF

BY

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The thesis of Miles Darcey, "College Students Perceptions of Law Enforcement Fairness: The Influence of Gender and Political Belief," approved by his Committee, has been accepted and approved by the Faculty of the School of Behavioral Sciences, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Forensic Psychology.

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my parents, brother, and all of my closest friends, whose continuous support and encouragement have caused me to grow into the man I am today. Their dedication has taught me to set higher standards and expectations of myself, and I hope to make them proud as I journey beyond this educational milestone they have helped me to achieve.

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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

College Students Perceptions of Law Enforcement Fairness:

The Influence of Gender and Political Belief

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The purpose of this study was to examine college students' perceptions of law enforcement fairness and the role that political leaning and gender have on these perceptions. This study specifically wanted to find if there was a main effect for gender on perceptions of law enforcement fairness and if a person's political leaning can predict their perceptions of law enforcement fairness. Results found a main effect for gender on perceptions of law enforcement fairness. Women tended to self report more negative perceptions of police fairness when compared to men in regards to police treatment of different ethnic populations and persons of different socioeconomic status.

Results also found political leaning was a significant predictor of a person's perceptions of law enforcement fairness based on police treatment of different ethnic populations, treatment of persons of differing socioeconomic status, and police respect of privacy. Results found the more conservative a student was, the more positive his perceptions of law enforcement fairness would tend to be. In conclusion, this research found that women and liberal students tend to have more negative perceptions of police when compared to male and conservative students. The implications of this research were discussed.

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Chapter 1

Over the last couple of months, law enforcement departments have faced much criticism due to use of force incidents. These incidents along with various law enforcement practices have resulted in policing agencies losing legitimacy in many communities (Said, 2016; Silver & Pickett, 2015). This distrust can make the job of policing much harder for law enforcement officers. When police lose legitimacy in their community, citizens are less likely to comply with police orders, are less likely to be compliant witnesses, and are more likely to disobey the law, which in turn can lead to more unfortunate use-of-force incidents (Decker, 1985; Tyler, 1990, 2004).

Problem Statement

Various law enforcement departments have made the attempt to fix the distrust between officers and the community through working on the relationships between different ethnic populations and themselves through local events (Chappelle, 2016; Graf, 2016; Staff, 2016). While many law enforcement offices and researchers have studied ethnic population's perceptions of police, not many

researchers have researched the student demographic or the effect of gender or political affiliation on police perception. Research has shown that students and younger adults tend to have more negative perceptions of police compared to older individuals (Prall, 2013). College students are more likely to be involved in protests and vote when compared to past generations (Eagan, et al., 2014). Understanding what student demographics have higher distrust in law enforcement agencies can help law enforcement departments determine which groups to reach out to. Through reaching out, many law enforcement groups can foster a better relationship with current and future communities.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine college students' perceptions of law enforcement fairness and the role that political leaning and gender have on these perceptions.

Research Questions/Objectives

This study asks if a person's political leaning can predict their perceptions of law enforcement fairness. This

study is also attempting to find if there is a main effect for gender on perceptions of law enforcement fairness.

The researchers hypothesize that political leaning will be able to predict a persons' perceptions of law enforcement fairness. The researchers hypothesize positive perceptions of police fairness will increase the more conservative the participant's political identification is.

The researchers also hypothesize that there will be a main effect for gender on perceptions of law enforcement fairness. It is hypothesized that women would perceive less fairness in comparison to their male counterparts.

Delimitaions

This study only looks at the perceptions of one local private university in Southern California, and thus might not be generalizable to all American or Southern California students.

Assumptions

This study assumes the accuracy of previous studies cited within this report.

This study assumes that research participants gave honest and truthful answers to each of the given survey

questions due to the methods made to keep each participant's answers anonymous and confidential.

Definition of Key Terms

Police legitimacy: Citizens confidence and trust in police ability to act procedurally just (Van Craen & Skogan, 2017).

Perception of police: Perceptions are how people organize, interpret, and understand the world (Reid, 1938). Perceptions of police are how one understands and views police based on their own personal interpretations and understandings of police and police actions.

Police use of force: Any incident where a police officer uses a coercive action to make a person do something. Police are granted permission to use a degree of force against citizens as long as that force is not excessive. Force beyond what is required for an officer to obtain compliance from a person is considered excessive (Gallo, 2011).

Chapter 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

Over the last couple of months, police departments
have faced much criticism due to use of force incidents.
The first of the controversial police interactions that
triggered this recent outcry against policing methods was
the Michael Brown incident in Ferguson, Missouri. The
circumstances around the shooting of Michael Brown brought
alleged police excessive use-of-force to the center of
attention in America. Michael Brown was a 17-year-old
African American male who was suspected of robbing a local
convenience store. Surveillance cameras caught him with a
companion stealing cigarillos (Onyemaobim, 2016). In
Officer Darren Wilson's testimony, he stated that he
identified Brown and his companion as the two males who fit
the description of the convenience store robbery suspects.
After Officer Wilson approached the two males, the details
of the incident to follow were not clear. There were a
wide variety of eyewitness reports that had varying
recollections of the event. Some eyewitnesses stated that
there was an altercation in the police vehicle between

Michael Brown and the officer where others stated that an altercation took place on the sidewalk. Reports stated that Michael Brown initiated the confrontation by physically assaulting officer Wilson, yet contradictory eye witness testimony stated that the officer shot Mr. Brown without provocation (Onyemaobim, 2016). According to the officer's account of the incident, Brown reached for the officer's gun and Wilson fired two shots with one grazing Michael Brown's finger. The officer further testified that he then exited the police vehicle to pursue Brown when he began to flee the scene. Not long after the officer exited the car, Michael Brown stopped, faced the officer and charged him, forcing the officer to shoot (Onyemaobim, 2016). Among the varying eyewitnesses, very few statements were consistent. Evidence after the incident showed that Officer Wilson fired 10 shots at Michael Brown, with six of those shots hitting Michael Brown in various locations, killing him (Onyemaobim, 2016). Since many bystander accounts of the shooting were so inconsistent, there was much speculation about what actually took place. Whether a person believes Brown or Wilson were at fault, this incident sparked the public to question the treatment of minority groups by the police force. This incident

reinvigorated the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement. BLM was a small movement that had started in 2013 after George Zimmerman was acquitted for shooting African American Trayvon Martin, but had grown substantially after the Michael Brown case (Cobb, 2016; Carney, 2016). BLM is a movement that believes that black lives are systematically and intentionally targeted for demise and police officers face little accountability for their actions ("Black Lives Matter: Guiding Principles," n.d.). This group has raised a lot of questions about police legitimacy and fairness.

History of BLM and Movements against Police Misconduct and Brutality

BLM is not the first movement to actively criticize police treatment of minorities and other groups. The Black Panther Party (BPP) was another organization critical of police practices. This group was formed in 1966 in Oakland, California (Nelson, 2016). The original motto of BPP was to "serve the people body and soul". This group responded to many occurrences where they believed that various institutional groups displayed discrimination towards African Americans. BPP had many issues with the deficient social services, redistricting practices by politicians

that took away power from minority neighborhoods, racist healthcare practices, and police treatment of minorities and economically challenged citizens of the time (Nelson, 2016). While not all of the protests and activism BPP engaged in involved police actions, police relations with minority communities were one of the major cornerstones of the original BPP movement. One of the major points in their ten-point platform created in 1966, included point 7 that specifically states "We want an immediate end to police brutality and murder of black people" ("The Black Panther Ten-Point Program," 1968). They were strongly engaged in what was known as "policing the police". This involved the BPP community attempting to keep police accountable through legally armed surveillance and potential resistance to instances of police brutality (Nelson, 2016). After a number of unfortunate incidences that resulted in violent and sometimes fatal exchanges between police officers and members of BPP, the group received increasingly bad publicity in the media. Due to the bad publicity regarding some of the group's interactions with police, BPP substituted its "policing the police" doctrine to focus more on their "serve the people" programs. These programs focused more on helping

impoverished communities through feeding children. The
program also later advocated for better healthcare and
social services for impoverished communities (Nelson,
2016).

Questions about police brutality reemerged into public
light after the Rodney King beating and trial in 1991.
King was driving intoxicated and was pursued by Highway
patrol.   The pursuit reached speeds of 115 mph on the
freeways and 85mph on the streets (Cannon, 2012). After
the chase ended and King was removed from the vehicle, King
resisted arrest and was hit 55 times with police batons
before being taken into custody. George Holliday recorded
the beating on his camcorder and the video footage was
showcased heavily in the media. After the incident, the
officers were acquitted of all charges of police misconduct
in their first trial, which sparked the Los Angeles riots
(Cannon, 2012).   This raised a flood of questions by the
public about the issue of police brutality and fairness.
After this incident, Rodney King became a spokesperson for
these issues. Al Sharpton called him "a symbol of civil
rights [who] represented the anti-police-brutality and
anti-racial-profiling movement of our time" (Cannon, 2012).

King continued to be the backbone and spokesperson for many anti-police brutality movements until his death in 2012.

The most recent revival of the police fairness discussion reemerged through the BLM group. As stated earlier, the Black Lives Matter movement started in response to George Zimmerman's acquittal for the death of Trayvon Martin (Cobb, 2016; Carney, 2016). The phrase "Black Lives Matter" started as a series of Facebook posts by Alicia Garza responding to the George Zimmerman/ Trayvon Martin incident. Her original post on the issue stated the famous phrase, "btw stop saying we are not surprised. That's a damn shame in itself. I continue to be surprised at how little Black lives matter. And I will continue that. Stop giving up on black life" (Cobb, 2016). Alicia Garza had a large social media presence and was known to be an activist through this medium. One of Garza's friends, Patrisse Cullors, thought turning the three word phrase of "Black Lives Matter" into a hashtag would hopefully start activism for cases where they felt black lives were systematically killed. Both Garza and Cullors tried to make a movement out of the phrase (Cobb, 2016). The movement did not gain momentum until the Michael Brown shooting occurred in Ferguson, Missouri. Since then, many

different BLM groups have organized around the country in response to police shootings and suspected cases of police brutality and use of force (Cobb, 2016).

Community Mistrust of Police

A possible cause to why police distrust has been a consistent issue over the last couple of decades may revolve around police department tactics practiced in specific communities. Many people critical of these tactics argue that overly aggressive police models and policies create a distrust between the community and police departments. For example, the New York Police Department had been known to follow the broken window model of law enforcement (Said, 2016). The broken window theory states that serious crimes can be prevented through strict enforcement of many smaller crimes, such as drinking in public, vandalism, and petty theft. The theory suggests that because police "crack down" on vandalism and other minor crimes, an atmosphere of cleanliness is created in the city (Wilson & Kelling, 1982). With strict enforcement of these minor crimes, a message is sent to the community that crime is not to be tolerated. According to this theory, the zero tolerance method of enforcement acts as a

deterrent factor that causes a decrease in serious criminal activity (Wilson & Kelling, 1982). The assumption is that when people see smaller crimes being enforced, criminals will think twice before committing a more serious crime. Opponents of this theory of policing argue that the tactics used under the broken window model disproportionately target certain races and groups (Said, 2016). This is due to the policy almost solely being enforced in low-income minority neighborhoods. This tactic can damage the perceptions of the police and decrease the legitimacy of law enforcement in the eyes of certain racial groups and communities where this tactic is more strictly enforced.

　　Another police tactic that has drawn much criticism is the New York Police Department's stop-and-frisk policy. This policy allowed officers to question and frisk any person thought to be a "suspicious individual". What determines a "suspicious individual" can vary heavily depending on the interpretation of the officer. Unfortunately, this policy seemed to target disproportional amounts of minorities. Most of the individuals singled out by this policy were Black or Hispanic persons (Silver & Pickett, 2015). Since this policy targeted African American and other minority communities in much higher

numbers, many critics labeled the policy as prejudiced. When certain races feel like intentional targets for police and are frisked and stopped more than other races, it becomes difficult for these groups to empathize with the police.

Opponents of BLM state that the issue is not completely a race issue, but that police officers can become the "real" victims in many of these cases (Carney, 2016). Many people on this side of the argument state that much of the distrust in police is unwarranted. Supporters of this way of thought admit that police departments have done many questionable things in the past, but a majority of police officers are upstanding citizens. They argue that police as a whole are judged unfairly due to a few bad decisions made by an extremely small minority of officers and many other factors that police have little control over. The media is blamed in this argument for a large part of the recent lack of trust in the police. Reiner, Livingston, and Allen (2002) found that over the last 70 years, newspaper articles on police activity have become increasingly negative. From 1945 to 1964, only 10% of articles published about police officers were about officers abusing power, acting in sexist and racist

manners, and other police instances of misconduct. From 1981 to 1991, the total number of articles about police misconduct was almost doubled as 19% of articles about police showed them in a negative light. The growth in coverage of negative police incidents can have an impact on peoples' opinions. Even though many people might not be convinced that media affects them, studies tend to show otherwise. Eschholz, Blackwell, Gertz, and Chiricos (2002) found that respondent's opinions about the police effectiveness could be positively predicted based on their exposure to police related news media. There have also been many other similar studies that have shown positive relationships between various forms of media and peoples' negative perceptions of police and their actions (Lasley, 1994; Dowler & Zawilski, 2007; Jefferis, Kaminski, Holmes, & Hanley, 1997). With negative police incidents getting increasing media coverage, it is difficult for police officers to get a positive image for themselves with the public.

The Impact of Law Enforcement Agencies Losing Legitimacy with the Public

Research has shown that when police lose legitimacy

with their communities, citizens become less likely to comply to police orders, are less likely to be compliant witnesses, and are more likely to disobey the law (Decker, 1985; Tyler, 1990, 2004). When people are not as prone to respect police and outright refuse orders given by law enforcement, there is a much higher possibility of police use-of-force incidents. These types of incidents can cause negative media and community publicity. As a result, this can produce more disconnect and distrust between police and the community, thus exacerbating the issue. With more use-of-force reactions being used by police due to less compliant contacts, the possibility that police encounters can develop into serious incidents or potential misconduct claims can increase dramatically. These incidents can also lead to more police and civilian related injuries or deaths.

Another study found a negative relationship between satisfaction with police and subsequent police contact (Decker, 1985). Decker (1985) found that more citizen dissatisfaction with police was associated with a decreased likelihood of contacting law enforcement about potential criminal activity in their area. This can cause a drop in the effectiveness of the police in a given neighborhood.

Police are not capable of observing every instance of criminal activity in the area they patrol, thus police officers require the help of the community to respond to criminal activity. If police cannot respond to crime in an area, then the community might be affected negatively. Having a safe living environment is one of the biggest predictors of satisfaction in police (Afon & Badiora, 2016). It becomes more difficult to make an area safe when the community is less likely to report crimes.

   A poor relationship with a neighborhood or group of people can become a horrible perpetuating cycle that can cause harm to both the police and citizens. The less faith and satisfaction a community has for their local police can create more disobedience and non-compliance which makes it harder for police to effectively perform their duties. This in turn can hinder a police department's ability to stop crime, which makes the community opinion of local police plummet. This perpetuating cycle is not healthy for either side of this struggle. An intervention or change is needed before the situation gets worse for any side.

The Impact of Relationship Building Between Police and Communities

One of the ways police departments can hope to bridge the gap between themselves and the communities is to understand what groups feel the most distrust in police and try to reach out to them. This is important even in cities where the communities generally find cops to be dependable and competent, like in Boston. Stoutland (2001) interviewed 50 residents of Boston and found that despite the higher perception of police, there were still concerns about how much respect citizens expected to receive from officers. He also found people were worried about whether the police understood their concerns and whether police believed these concerns were important. This matter could possibly be solved or lessened through more police meetings and communication within communities. There have been recent occasions where this technique has shown some success in restoring the relationship between police and communities after major police shooting incidents. In Phoenix Arizona, the police met with the local Black Live Matter organization and other community leaders in hopes to bridge the divide between the two groups (Graf, 2016). This event was called "Move Phoenix Forward" and took place

at a church in downtown Phoenix. At this event, the people

of the neighborhood wrote concerns onto comment cards,

which were read aloud by the local Reverend. Police

department officials and community leaders then answered

these questions written by the community. In this meeting,

the community was able to personally voice their concerns

and suggestions while the police were able to give the

audience facts about how the department is changing to meet

these concerns and get in touch with the community. There

were many persons within the community who also discussed

what actions the neighborhood should take to help officers

perform their jobs easier and more efficiently (Graf,

2016). Another example of a productive meeting between BLM

and police was at the "First Steps Community Cookout" in

Wichita, Kansas. This cookout started when the police

chief met with BLM leaders in Wichita. The BLM group was

planning a protest that weekend, but after meeting with

police chief Gordon Ramsey, both parties decided that a

barbeque would be a better option. The event followed two

Baton Rouge shooting incidents (Chappelle, 2016; Staff,

2016). One of the shootings involved the death of Alton

Sterling, an African American male, who was shot by police.

In the second shooting, six police officers were killed

(Chappelle, 2016). After these recent incidents, both parties were extremely troubled and decided a peaceful meeting between the two would be much more productive. Similar to the "Move Phoenix Forward" meeting, there was a question and answer portion of the event where police answered questions from the community (Chappelle, 2016; Staff, 2016). Most people involved seemed to have a very positive experience at the event with one mother stating, "It was a bonding moment where the police saw them as children and my [sons] got to see them as people! It was a great first step Chief Gordon Ramsey and Wichita PD!" (Chappelle, 2016). These examples show a much more productive way for police and groups like BLM to encounter each other.   At protest rallies, BLM and police can potentially be on opposite sides and view each other as antagonists. These protests have the potential to get out of control, which leads to unfortunate situations. These situations can create a further divide between police officers and the community. Another issue with these rallies for police departments is the amount of resources needed to monitor these protests. This takes away resources from other areas where the police might need them. More positive events like Move Phoenix Forward or the First

Steps Community Cookout can quell distrust from both parties and have the potential to bring about real change. This is a benefit to the community as their problems will be heard, and can benefit the police in that they might be able to avoid stressful protest situations.

Perceptions of Law Enforcement Among College Aged Persons

These types of police community interactions should not only be limited to meeting with protest groups like BLM. Police should attempt to reach out to other groups that might have potential issues. One group of people that police should pay more attention to is college students. Students will one day be the people who run the country, create policies, vote on policies, contribute to the workforce, and will eventually teach their children what they have learned. While mending the problems with the current communities is especially important, looking at the future generation and addressing their concerns can hopefully create a safer and better future for both groups. College students may be dismissed since many are not yet fully situated in the community and few have yet to establish a full time career. A report titled "The American Freshman: National Norms Fall 2015", questioned

over 140,000 students from 199 universities (Eagan, et al.,

2014). This report found that many students have a desire

to influence and make change in politics. Around thirty

percent of black students, twenty seven percent of Latino

students, and twenty percent of white students thought that

having an influence on politics was very important to them.

Around sixty percent of freshmen also stated that they were

"very likely" to vote in state elections (Eagan, et al.,

2014). College students plan to be a significant factor

when it comes to decision-making in this country. Current

college students will have an impact on their community and

the policies that are voted in. These policies can

directly affect the police force. If police want to mend

their relationships between their departments and American

communities as a whole, they will have to make sure their

relationships with students are healthy. By being

transparent and answering student questions, they can hear

the concerns of the future generation and have an honest

discussion about the problems they are affected by. This

will secure a positive foundation early on to help make the

future of policing easier.

Another reason police should have more positive

interactions and meetings with college students is because

college students tend to be very engaged in activism, change, and protests. Current college students are much more likely to protest today than ever. Around ten percent of college students stated that they were very likely to participate in protests during their college years (Eagan, et al., 2014). This number is higher than the 1960's, which were historically a time that was famous for protest. Due to recent incidents and police involved shootings, sixteen percent of black students stated they were likely to protest (Eagan, et al., 2014). These numbers show that college students do take issue with these recent police shootings and are willing to show their discontent through protest. Positive police engagements or meetings with these students can open up dialog. Both sides have the opportunity to state their opinions in a peaceful manner and to quell potential tensions of future protests. Protests are a great way for students to practice free speech, but there is the potential that protests can get out of control. This can unfortunately end with students and police on opposite sides and can antagonize the relationship between the two groups.

Younger adults also tend to have less favorable opinions about police when compared to older age groups.

In a Gallop poll conducted in 2013, 1,033 adults were
randomly sampled across the United States of America. The
researchers looked at how age can affect a person's opinion
of the honesty and ethical standards of certain professions
(Prall, 2013). When asked to rank the ethical standards
and honesty about police officers on a five-point Likert
scale (very high, high, average, low, very low), the poll
found that only forty-eight percent of people between the
ages of eighteen and thirty-four raked police officers as
having "high" to "very high" honesty and ethical standards.
In comparison, fifty-nine percent of those polled between
the ages of thirty-five and fifty-four ranked police
officers to have "high" to "very high" ethical standards
and honesty. The ten percent difference reveals that
younger people have more negative opinions of the ethics
and honesty of police officers when compared to the older
generation. This is not a new discovery, as studies from
ten years ago and prior have shown similar results (Dukes &
Hughes, 2004; Reisig & Correia, 1997).

     One of the reasons that students do not have positive
perceptions of police when compared to other age groups is
due to the fact that student tend to have a higher quantity
of negative police interactions. Younger people are much

more likely to be involved in or be the target of crime

(Skogan, 2006). With much more consistent negative police

interaction, there is a higher likelihood for younger

people to harbor negative perceptions of officers. Young

adults show a much higher amount of risk taking behavior

then that of older adults. This is mostly explained by the

lack of development in young adult brains when compared to

that of adults. This lack of prefrontal cortex development

means that young adults lack some of the cognitive control

that adults have developed. This causes young adults to

exhibit much more impulsive behavior (Schwartz, 2007). Due

to this, young adults tend to engage in activities without

thinking of potential consequences. Unfortunately, some of

these poor choices tend to have poor outcomes. For

example, speeding and reckless driving is much more

prevalent among teens and young adults and is one of the

reasons that traffic accidents are one of the leading

causes of death for this population (Kostermans, et al.,

2014). Since speeding, reckless driving, and other

impulsive actions can many times be illegal, teens who

practice these impulsive behaviors tend to confront

officers more often than other groups. People who receive

more traffic tickets have more negative opinions of state

police when compared to people who obtain fewer tickets (Correia, Reisig, & Lovrich, 1996). No one enjoys getting traffic tickets, as these encounters are considered to be costly and negative. Teens and young adults in college are also more prone to excessive drinking and the use illegal narcotics due to the media promoting wild parties and reckless acts as intriguing. These acts act as a form of symbolic capital to get recognition from peers (Järvinen, & Gundelach, 2007). When police respond to wild house parties, the disturbing the peace accusations can be viewed by young adults as a negative invasion of their way of life. According to Wesley Skogan's research (2006), having a bad experience with a police officer causes around four to fourteen times the effect on a person that a positive experience will have. All these negative experiences out weigh the limited positive interactions that police might have with young adults. As a result, police need to understand, meet with, and discuss college students' problems in a safe and open environment. Positive interactions with college students by police can gain favorable recognition with that group. This can ease tensions between the two groups and give students positive

experiences with law enforcement to counter negative experiences.

Perceptions of Law Enforcement: Gender Differences

    While there has been a lot of research on different races' perceptions of police, there is limited research regarding gender and how it can affect a person's perceptions of law enforcement. There have been numerous studies that show women employed in the police force endure much harassment, discrimination, and disrespect in the workplace (Brown & Grovel, 1998; Hassel & Brandl, 2009; Rabe-Hemp, 2008; Seklecki, & Paynich, 2007). One of the reasons why women face harassment is possibly due to the large percentage of men in most police departments. Police departments could become "all-boys clubs" that socially enforce masculine social traits in the office. Many women have a hard time thriving in this type of environment unless they have more masculine social traits themselves (Rabe-Hemp, 2008). Due to the heavy percentage of males in police departments and the harassment that many female officers face, it might seem like women harbor less favorable attitudes about police fairness then their male counterparts. The limited amount of research on women and

their perceptions of police states otherwise. In Richard

Dukes and Robert Hughes research (2004), they found that

women, along with whites and older citizens, tended to have

more positive attitudes towards police. In another study,

when inquiring about police traffic stops, women were more

likely than men to believe their traffic stop was

legitimate (Lundman & Kaufman, 2003). This positive

attitude towards police and their legitimacy could

potentially stem from various factors. One potential

factor is that men commit crimes in disproportionately

higher numbers compared to women (Skogan, 2006). This

means that women have less overall negative encounters with

police that could alter their view of law enforcement in a

negative way. Male police officers are also less likely to

stop female drivers due to the fear of accusations of

wrongdoing (Rubinstein, 1973, p. 265). It is also possible

that police officers tend to treat females in a more

favorable manor due to certain gender roles and stereotypes

(Lundman & Kaufman, 2003). Results amongst one study in

the Hispanic community showed an interesting difference

when compared to the previous studies. The study found that

women were much less likely to report personal instances of

racial profiling by police officers, but were more likely

to believe profiling based on race is widespread when compared to males (Reitzel, Rice, & Piquero, 2004). While women might perceive less experiences of racial profiling themselves, this study shows that women do show a more widespread belief that profiling exists. Women also tend to disapprove of police use of force incidents more strongly than men do (Thompson & Lee, 2004). While women might have more positive interactions with police and a more overall positive attitude when compared to men, they still show more belief of racial profiling and less acceptance of police use-of-force incidents. With negative police encounters becoming a hot topic in recent news, there is a possibility that women's opinions of police fairness might be lesser then that of men despite some of the earlier studies showing otherwise positive overall perceptions of police. Unfortunately there are many conflicting understandings about women's opinion of police, making it harder to predict. It is important to understand women's opinions on the matter because they make up such a large portion of the population.

Perceptions of Law Enforcement and Political Affiliation

Political party affiliation is a possible factor for a person's opinion of police fairness and one not often studied when discussing perceptions of police. A 20-year study conducted by the Pew Research Center showed that people with different political opinions rarely share views or engage in discussions with each other in our current society. In the same study, people also showed a deeper distain for persons of opposing political parties. This disdain for persons of opposing political parties is higher currently than it ever has been before in America (Slon, 2016). Strong division of opinions between political affiliations could potentially correlate directly with people's opinions of police fairness. Due to the increased animosity for other political parties and the higher likelihood for people to associate with their own party, there is a good possibility that a person's political affiliation might predict his or her views on various other issues. Despite the intense divide between political parties, most everyone's trust in political institutions, regardless of political affiliation, has gradually gone down since the 1960's (Hibbing & Theiss-Morse, 1995). Every demographic, without exception, whether they be

majority, minority, men, women, Conservative, or Democrat, have all continuously been losing confidence in government institutions (Zinsmeister, 1995). Lack of trust in government institutions is not necessarily a new phenomenon, and trust in government has been in the decline for a long period of time (Hibbing & Theiss-Morse, 1995). Though every group might be losing trust in government institutions, certain groups have more trust in government at different points in time. One example being that Americans tend to be more trusting of government institutions when the President shares the same political party that they do. So when Ronald Regan was president, people who politically identified with the Republican Party were more trusting of the government than people who identified as Democrats (Alford, 1998). Using that logic, it might seem that Republicans would currently have more favorable opinions of police fairness, since Donald Trump is the current president. This logic is not fully supported through research though. In a Gallup poll that randomly sampled 1,031 adults across the United States of America in 2013, the researchers examined how party differences can affect a person's opinion of the honesty and ethical standards that people have for certain

professions (Prall, 2013). The survey found a vast difference in how Republicans and Democrats view police officers' ethics and honesty. The poll found that only forty four percent of Democrats rated officers to have "high" to "very high" honesty and ethical standards. This is in contrast to the sixty eight percent of Republicans who rated officers as having "high" to "very high" honesty and ethical values (Prall, 2013). This survey took place in 2013 during Barak Obama's presidency.

People who are politically conservative also may have more positive perceptions of police due to the fact that they tend to be more accepting of police use-of-force situations when compared to liberals or moderates (Silver & Pickett, 2015). There are many factors that may affect this acceptance of use-of-force incidents. One factor among Republican candidates that might help understand the reasons for higher opinions of police is religion. There are a much higher percentage of Christians within the Republican Party than there are in the Democratic Party. Religion is a larger factor in candidate selection for Republicans when compared to Democrats. Research shows that how much a candidate practices the Christian religion has a significant positive effect on Republican voter preference

(Bradberry, 2016). This is important to understanding Republicans' perceptions of police, because when compared to other groups, religious fundamentalism tends to show a much higher acceptance for police use-of-force incidents and scenarios (Arthur, 1993, Applegate, et al., 2000). This could be attributed to Fundamentalist Christians supporting more retributive ideas for how punishment should be delivered (Applegate, et al., 2000). Retributive punishment is the idea that a person reaps what they sow. Due to this, people that believe in ideas of Retributive punishment do not find police use of physical force to be much of an issue. This could lead some Fundamentalist Republicans to have more acceptance for police using force because according to retributive ideas, the person being arrested should not have been breaking the law and thus deserves punishment for doing so.

 Gun ownership and second amendment rights are also enforced and defended by many Republican candidates. People who heavily defend gun ownership possibly do this because they want the ability to defend themselves from criminals. According to some of these groups, certain situations might require forceful protection from people who intend to harm them (Kleck, Gertz, & Bratton, 2009).

Due to this line of thought they might also find it necessary for police to defend themselves and others using aggressive and forceful defensive techniques. People who more heavily support gun ownership might be more accepting of police use-of-force situations due to these ideas.

Contrary to conservative Republicans, another political demographic known as conflicted conservatives show generally less acceptance of police use of force incidents (Silver & Pickett, 2015). Conflicted conservatives are self-identifying conservatives that tend to favor more liberal spending policies. This group showed acceptance to police use-of- force incidences similar to that of liberals or moderates (Silver & Pickett, 2015).

Not all conservatives completely support police use of force incidents, but there are still more conservative groups overall that accept these actions when compared to politically moderate or Liberal persons (Silver & Pickett, 2015). Conservatives probably have not lost as much faith in police departments when compared to other groups and are more likely to have positive perceptions about the fairness of police when compared to liberal persons.

Chapter 3

METHOD

Participants

Participants were obtained through a sample of convenience consisting of undergraduate students from a local private university in Southern California. A total of 270 undergraduate students were surveyed. Participants ranged in age from 18 to 42 years of age (M= 22, SD = 3.79). A total of 25% (n=68) were males and 75% (n=202) females. Participant ethnicity was as follows: A total of 43% (n=115) were White/Caucasian, 12% (n=32) Black/African American, 36% (n=96) Hispanic/Latino, 7% (n=20) Asian/Pacific Islander, and 2% (n=6) American Native/Alaskan Native. Participant year of schooling was as follows: A total of 5% (n=13) were a Freshmen/1st year, 13% (n=36) Sophomore/2nd year, 47% (n=126) Junior/3rd year, 31% (n=83) Senior/4th year, and 4% (n=11) 5th year or above.

Design

A quantitative survey research design methodology was utilized for this study.

Instrument

A brief survey questionnaire (Appendix A) was developed to examine students' perceptions of law enforcement fairness. The concept of police fairness included (a) police respect of privacy, (b) perceptions of police treatment of ethnic groups, and (c) perceptions of police treatment of socioeconomic statuses. All three items were measured using a 6-point Likert scale. The survey also included a total of four demographic items, including age, ethnicity, year of schooling, and political alignment.

Procedures

Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval was obtained before conducting any data collection for this study. A recruitment script was provided to potential participants during the last 5 minutes of their class periods. Those students who wanted to participate in the study stayed after class had ended. All participants signed a consent form and received a Bill of Rights form. Participants were then provided with a survey. The survey took approximately 5 minutes to complete. After completion of surveys, participants received a list of community resources. The course instructors offered course credit to students for

participating in the survey. The students who did not
participate in this study had the option of completing a
different but equal activity provided by the instructor.
The consent forms were kept separately from the completed
surveys and no identifiable information could be connected
to the survey questions. All data collected was stored in a
secure location.

Data Analyses

The statistical program IBM SPSS was used to analyze
the data collected. All data was screened for univariate,
bivariate, and multivariate outliers. A total of three
Linear Regression analyses and a one-way multivariate
analysis of variance (MANOVA) were used to analyze the
data. A Linear Regression analysis was used to predict
student's perceptions of police officers' respect of
privacy based on political affiliation. A second Linear
Regression analysis was used to predict student's
perceptions of police officers' treatment of ethnic groups
based on political affiliation. A third Linear Regression
analysis was used to predict student's perceptions of
police officers' treatment of people due to socioeconomic
status based on political affiliation. A one-way MANOVA was

used to examine gender differences in perceptions of police

fairness in regards to police respect of privacy, treatment

of ethnic groups, and treatment of people based on

socioeconomic status.

Chapter 4

RESULTS

Table 1 (see Appendix B) shows the means and standard deviations for police respect of privacy, treatment of ethnic groups, and treatment of people based on socioeconomic status, by gender.

A one-way multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted to examine gender differences on perceptions of police fairness in the following three areas (a) police respect of privacy, (b) treatment of ethnic groups, and (c) treatment of people based on socioeconomic status. It was hypothesized that there would be significant gender differences in perceptions of police fairness across the three variables. Specifically, it was hypothesized that women would report lower perceptions of police fairness across all three variables in comparison to male counterparts.

The one-way MANOVA results showed a statistically significant difference in perceptions of police fairness based on the participant's gender (Wilk's Λ = 0.96, F [3,266] = 3.74, p = .01, η^2 = .04). Univariate between-subjects ANOVA tests were conducted as follow up tests.

Results revealed a main effect for gender on the perceptions of police treatment of ethnic groups (F [1,269] = 10.83, p = .001, η^2 = .04). As hypothesized, women tended to perceive less fairness in police treatment of ethnic groups (M = 2.77, SD = 1.25) in comparison to male counterparts (M = 3.37, SD = 1.445).

Results also revealed a main effect on the perceptions of police treatment of socioeconomic status (F [1,269] = 6.97, p = .01, η^2 = .03). As hypothesized, women perceived less fairness in police treatment of socioeconomic classes (M = 2.74, SD = 1.215) when compared to males (M = 3.21, SD = 1.356).

No main effect between groups was found for the perceptions of police respect of privacy.

A simple linear regression was used to examine the extent to which political affiliation predicted perceptions of police respect of privacy. A significant regression equation was found (F [1,261] = 39.497, p < .000), with a R^2 of .13. Participants' perceived fairness is equal to 2.084 + .385 (political affiliation) with their respect of privacy when political affiliation is measured using the six point Likert scale. A person's perceptions of police respect of privacy increased .385 for each whole number

increase on the Likert scale based on political affiliation.

A second simple linear regression was conducted to examine the extent to which political affiliation predicted perceptions of fairness of police treatment of ethnic groups. A significant regression equation was found (F (1,261) = 58.52, p < .000), with a R^2 of .18. Participants' perceived fairness is equal to 1.003 + .487 (political affiliation) with their treatment of ethnic groups when political affiliation is measured using the six point Likert scale. A person's perceptions of police treatment of ethnic groups increased .487 for each whole number increase on the Likert scale based on political affiliation.

A third simple linear regression was conducted to examine the extent to which political affiliation predicted perceptions of the fairness of police treatment of people of differing socioeconomic status. A significant regression equation was found (F (1,261) = 53.89, p < .000), with a R^2 of .17. Participants' perceived fairness is equal to 1.093 + .450 (political affiliation) with their treatment of socioeconomic groups when political affiliation is measured using the six point Likert scale. A person's perceptions of police treatment of people of differing socioeconomic

status increased .450 for each whole number increase on the

Likert scale based on political affiliation.

Chapter 5

Discussion

The primary purpose of this study was to examine
college students' perceptions of law enforcement fairness
and the role that gender and political leaning have on
these perceptions. Earlier research suggested that females
tend to have more positive personal interactions with
police, though they also tend to believe that police
profiling based on race is more widespread (Lundman &
Kaufman, 2003; Reitzel, Rice, & Piquero, 2004). Research
also suggests that conservatives show higher perceptions of
police honesty and ethics and are more accepting of use-of-
force incidents when compared to liberals (Prall, 2013,
Silver & Pickett, 2015).

Conclusions

The results revealed significant differences in
perceptions of police fairness based on the participant's
gender. Women tended to perceive less fairness in police
treatment of ethnic groups and treatment of persons based
on socioeconomic status. These results support previous
research that women find racial profiling more widespread

when compared to men (Reitzel, Rice, & Piquero, 2004). This current research also found that women have more widespread thoughts about how police perceive people based on socioeconomic status as well.

There was no significant difference between men and women based on perceptions of police respect of privacy. This could be due to women overall having less negative personal interactions with police (Skogan, 2006). This coupled with the fact that women tend to have higher belief of police legitimacy in their personal traffic stops when compared to men, could have caused the difference between genders to be less significant in regards to perceptions of police respect of privacy (Lundman & Kaufman, 2003).

The results also revealed that political affiliation was a strong predictor for perceptions of police fairness in regards to police treatment of ethnic groups, police treatment for people of differing socioeconomic status, and police respect of privacy. In all three tests, it was revealed that the higher the participant self-reported themselves as conservative, the higher their positive perceptions were for each of the three facets about perceptions of police fairness. These results fall in line with previous research and understandings of political

affiliations. This research is similar to the findings of the Gallop poll, where republicans were found to have higher perceptions of police honesty and ethical standards when compared to democrats (Prall, 2013). These findings could be due to the fact that conservatives are more accepting of use of force incidents (Silver & Pickett, 2015). The effects of recent media depicting police use-of-force incidents could be affecting politically conservative individuals much less when compared to people who identify more politically liberal. More research is needed on the subject.

Recommendations for Law Enforcement Agencies

College students are more likely to engage in activism and protests now more than ever due to their many concerns (Eagan, et al., 2014). Police departments should look into addressing the issues college students have with law enforcement, making sure to address the specific concerns about police fairness that women and liberal students might have. Holding events similar to the Move Phoenix Forward or First Steps Community Cookout with college students could give both sides a voice to address issues in a positive manner. This research will hopefully give law

enforcement agencies an understanding of which groups have more perceived issues with police fairness.

Limitations

This study was limited to one local private university in Southern California and thus might not be generalizable to all Southern California or American college institutions.

This study used a sample of convenience, which could potentially have over-represented or under-represented certain groups of people.

This study was only specifically looking at the effects of political affiliation and gender. This study did not look at effects of ethnicity on police perceptions or how ethnicity might have affected the results.

Future Research

Repeating this study in other private or non-private Universities can increase the generalizability of this research amongst college students located in Southern California or America as a whole. Also finding if there is a significant predictability between political affiliations of specific ethnicities in regards to perceptions of police

fairness can give researchers a more specific understanding about college students' perceptions of police.

It can also benefit researchers to replicate this study at different times as Police and Sherriff Departments make changes or host events to counter negative perceptions from the community. Repeating the same study after law enforcement departments alter their practices or perform events can help gage how effective those specific changes or actions are at increasing positive perceptions amongst specific groups. Not only is it important for law enforcement agencies to know what groups have more concerns with their departments, but it is also important that the measures taken by departments in order to increase positive perceptions are proven to be successful.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

POLICE FAIRNESS QUESTIONNAIRE

Survey:

Demographics

1. Age:_____

2. What is your gender?
( ) Male
( ) Female

3. Ethnicity
( ) White/Caucasian
( ) Black/African American
( ) Hispanic/Latino
( ) Asian/Pacific Islander
( ) American Indian/ Alaskan Native

4. What year of college is this for you?
( ) Freshmen/1st year
( ) Sophomore/2nd year
( ) Junior/3rd year
( ) Senior/4th year
( ) 5th year or above

5. Where do you consider yourself to align politically?

Very Liberal	Liberal	Somewhat Liberal	Somewhat conservative	Conservative	Very Conservative
( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

6. Police treat all ethnic groups equally.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6

7. Police treat people of all social economic classes equally.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6

8. Police respect people's rights to privacy while performing their duties.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6

APPENDIX B

TABLE 1

Table 1

Means and Standard Deviations for Gender

Variable	Males			Females		
	n	Mean	SD	n	Mean	SD
Police respect of privacy	68	3.81	1.296	202	3.52	1.21
Police treatment of ethnic groups	68	3.37	1.445	202	2.77	1.25
Police treatment of socioeconomic status	68	3.21	1.356	202	2.74	1.22

APPENDIX C

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Consent Form

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by graduate student Miles Darcey under the supervision of Dr. Ana Gamez for the California Baptist University's Forensic Psychology Department. I hope to understand undergraduate college students' perceptions of law enforcement fairness.

If you decide to participate, you will have to complete a survey that should take less than 5 minutes of your time.

Students will receive an amount of course credit or extra credit for their participation in the survey based on the teacher's discretion. A sign-in sheet will be provided for those who participate in order for the professor to assign credit. Any students who choose not to participate in the survey will have the option of completing a different assignment that is equitable to completing the survey for the same amount of course credit or extra credit.

You will not be asked to identify any personal details such as your name or address on the survey. Subject identities will be kept confidential by utilizing numbered surveys instead of names. Your name will never be used in this study. The consent forms will be kept separately from the survey data so no identifying information will be connected to any of the data on the surveys.

Your participation is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your relationship with *California Baptist University*. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw your consent and discontinue participation at any time without penalty.

If you have any questions about the study, please feel free to contact the graduate student, Miles Darcey by emailing him at mdarcey25@gmail.com. You could also contact Associate Professor of Psychology *Ana Gamez at agamez@calbaptist.edu.* If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, please contact the IRB (IRB@calbaptist.edu). You will be offered a copy of this form to keep.

If you are negatively affected by the survey in any way, contact the California Baptist University Counseling Center (951-689-1120). Other counseling resources in the Riverside area will be provided to participants as well. It is expected that there are no risks beyond the inconvenience you will receive due to the amount of time it takes to complete this survey. It will not cost you anything to participate.

Your signature indicates that you have read and understand the information provided above, that you willingly agree to participate, that you may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty, that you will receive a copy of this form, and that you are not waiving any legal rights or future claims.

Signature

Date