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Media Influences and Student Attitudes Toward Law Enforcement Figures Within Northeast
Tennessee

A thesis
presented to
the faculty of the Department of Criminal Justice and Criminology
East Tennessee State University

In partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree
Master of Arts in Criminal Justice and Criminology

by
George T. Ford
May 2013

John Whitehead, Ph.D, Chair
Dennis Hamm, Ph.D
Nicole Prior, Ph.D

Keywords: Media Influence, Attitude toward Police, Police Contact

ABSTRACT

Media Influences and Student Attitudes Toward Law Enforcement Figures Within Northeast

Tennessee

by

George T. Ford

The purpose of this study is to analyze student attitudes toward various law enforcement figures and to obtain a better understanding of public relations, police effectiveness, and media influences in Northeastern Tennessee. This literature review provided a preliminary analysis of related works to advance the accuracy in conducting and examining future studies. The fields that deserve the most analysis are the underlying dimensions associated with public attitudes about police effectiveness, the media's impact on public attitudes toward police, and the individual, external, and contextual variables that influence public attitudes toward police.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT	2
LIST OF TABLES	6
Chapter	
1. INTRODUCTION	8
Hypotheses	9
2. LITERATURE REVIEW	12
Current Concepts	12
Perceptual Dimensions	12
Reporting Perceptions	15
Factors that Influence Perceptions	16
Demographical Variables	16
Race	17
Age and Gender	19
External and Contextual Variables	20
Residency	21
Police Contact	22
Victimization and the Fear of Victimization	23
Fear of Crime	23
Community-Oriented Policing	25
Media Influence	27

Chapter	Page
Summary	35
3. METHODOLOGY	36
Sampling	36
Data Collection Instrument	37
Student Demographic Information	38
Media Presentations of Law Enforcement Figures	40
Student Contact with Law Enforcement Figures	41
Student Attitudes Toward Law Enforcement Figures	42
Procedure	44
4. ANALYSIS	48
Hypotheses	48
Univariate Analysis	48
Bivariate Analyses	53
Cross Tabs-Chi Square	53
Pearson's r	54
Independent Sample t-Test	54
Multivariate Analysis	55
5. RESULTS	56
Univariate Statistics Gender	56
Bivariate Statistics	73
Cross Tabs-Chi Square	73
Correlation	77
Independent Samples t-Test	79
Multivariate Statistics	81

Chapter	Page
Summary	83
6. DISCUSSION	85
Methodology	85
Findings	86
Limitations	89
Implications	91
Future Research	91
REFERENCES	93
APPENDICES	96
Appendix A: Informed Consent Document	96
Appendix B: Questionnaire	97
Appendix C: Debriefing Script	100
VITA	101

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1. Sample Gender Composition	57
2. Sample Race and Age Composition	58
3. Sample Income Averages	59
4. Sample Levels of Education Composition	60
5. Sample Fields of Study Composition	61
6. Sample Residency and Political Orientation Composition	62
7. Sample Type of Contact Composition	63
8. Sample Media Outlet Composition	64
9. Sample Media Consumption Composition	66
10. Sample General Attitude Measures Composition	67
11. Sample Performance Attitude Measures Composition	68
12. Sample Summarized Media Measures Averages	69
13. Sample Summarized Contact Measures Averages	70
14. Sample Summarized Measures Averages	72
15. Sample Demographics & Summarized Contact Measures Composition	74
16. Sample Demographics & Summarized Contact Measures	75
17. Sample Media Variables & Summarized Contact Measures Composition	75
18. Sample Media Variables & Summarized Contact Measures	76
19. Sample Contact & Summarized Contact Measures Composition	75
20. Sample Contact & Summarized Contact Measures	77
21. Pearson Correlation Matrix Results	79

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
22. Independent Samples t-Test Results	80
23. Regression Results	82

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Within recent years, extensive research has been conducted on attitudes towards various law enforcement figures; however, little consideration has been focused on the media's impact on these attitudes. The media has an overwhelming impact on the formulation of social attitudes; this is especially critical in areas where the general public is most often uninvolved with or quite simply lacking contact with law enforcement figures. According to the U.S. Department of Justice, the percentage of U.S. residents (age 16 or older) who had "face-to-face" contact with police has declined from 2002 (21.0%) to 2005 (19.1%) and once again in 2008 (16.9%). Therefore much of society's outlook on law enforcement figures today has become increasingly dependent on a variety of media outlets such as locally and nationally televised news programs, television crime-dramas and documentaries, local and national newspapers, various internet sources, and non-profit radio programs. This issue may become very problematic as media outlets possess the potential to display inaccurate or biased descriptions of various law enforcement figures. Furthermore, this issue may compel individuals to misinterpret the characteristics associated with effective policing.

To effectively examine the impact of inaccurate media displays of law enforcement figures, this study compared student attitudes toward law enforcement figures during episodes of contact with the display of law enforcement figures via media outlets. These attitudes were arranged in two separate subcategories; general and performance attitudes. Once both subcategories were examined they were compared to displays of media outlets that again asked respondents to examine the general and performance measures of law enforcement figures as displayed by various media outlets. Any disparity or covariance in attitudes has been examined

with consideration to the circumstances in which contact with law enforcement figures had been established along with the demographics of each respondent. By understanding the differences in attitudes between a respondent's contact with law enforcement figures and the respondent's perception of law enforcement figures via media displays, the U.S. Criminal Justice System can have a better understanding of the relationship between law enforcement figures and the media. After fully understanding this relationship, criminal justice officials, criminologists, policy makers, the media, and society at large can consolidate to create an accurate image that best reflects law enforcement figures. This movement to create an accurate image can begin by way of literature, community outreach, and congruent displays of law enforcement figures in the mass media.

Hypotheses

The current study tested a variety of hypotheses regarding the impact of media presentations on attitudes toward law enforcement figures. The first hypothesis examined the differences in positive and negative attitudes toward law enforcement figures amongst members of different demographics or racial classes, gender identities, annual income levels, political orientations, and amount of formal education. This was carried out by comparing each respondent's demographic information and positive ratings in both general and performance dimensions. After examining previous literature, it was generally expected that African and Hispanic Americans would report less favorable views of law enforcement figures than their Caucasian counterparts. This was also true in other demographic areas such as reported annual income level and amount of formal education. For example, respondents who are financially stable and are generally well educated record slightly more favorable views of law enforcement figures than respondents who are financially unstable and possess very little to no formal

education. This hypothesis may be problematic as the vast majority of this study's population consisted of undergraduate students who possess very similar financial and academic standings. The second hypothesis examined individual exposure to media presentations and its influence on attitudes toward law enforcement figures. This was carried out by comparing the amount of media consumption and their reported degree of positive general and performance measures one attributes towards a particular law enforcement figure. It was expected that respondents who consumed more than average amounts of media presentations would rate law enforcement figure(s) more positively during their contact with that figure than those who had experienced contact with a law enforcement figure but did not view above average amounts of media presentations. It was also expected that most respondents would report that they view more programs classified as "Crime-Dramas" or "Crime Documentaries" than any other types of programming. More specifically, respondents who consumed a large number of programs classified as either "Crime Dramas" or "Crime Documentaries" would report high general and performance measures towards law enforcement figures. This was expected because many viewers of these programs are typically far more fascinated or place more interest in the field of policing and criminal justice than their counterparts who often view few or no such programs. The third hypothesis examined the differences between media outlets and their influence on attitudes toward law enforcement figures. This was carried out by comparing which media outlets were viewed and their ability to influence general and performance measures toward law enforcement figures. It was expected that those who most often view television "crime-dramas" would rate law enforcement figures more positively than those who most often view national and locally televised news programs. The fourth and final hypothesis examined the effect of each respondent's type of contact with a law enforcement figure on general and performance

measures toward law enforcement figures. This was carried out by comparing whether the respondent was a violator of a traffic infraction, a criminal arrestee, a criminal suspect, a victim, a witness, or as a neutral citizen “other” and their rating of law enforcement figures along general and performance dimensions. It was expected that respondents who had experienced contact as a violator of a traffic infraction, suspect, or criminal arrestee would provide lower ratings along general and performance dimensions than respondents who were a victim, witness, or had reported they were a neutral citizen “other” during their contact with a law enforcement figure. It was also projected that timely response to complaints would be related to positive attitudes toward law enforcement figures.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Current Concepts

A series of researchers have set out to define and examine the underlying dimensions associated with public perception and police effectiveness. An overview of these dimensions must be taken into consideration when determining the fundamental attributes associated with positive public relations and an agency's ability to enforce laws and maintain order. Future research will attempt to apply these dimensions by collecting public perceptions of police and determining how media influences affect these perceptions.

Perceptual Dimensions

Mastrofski, Dejong, and Parks (2001) had categorized the public's perception of policing into three separate dimensions. The first dimension is categorized as "the overall (or general) image of police" and serves to reflect the perceptions, feelings, and evaluations of policing in general. This dimension was most concerned with the public's confidence, satisfaction, trust, and respect toward different police agencies. The general image of policing was somewhat important because it served to provide a summary of the overall favorableness or support that the public holds for the police. However, according to Mastrofski et al. (2001) this dimension is somewhat limited because it provides no indication as to what pleases or displeases the public about policing. In addition to the previous argument, this dimension is also limited due to several factors that indirectly influence the overall image of police agencies. They also reported that factors such as race, age, and socioeconomic statuses can indirectly affect an individual's perception of the overall image of police agencies. However the most significant factor that

indirectly influences the overall image of police agencies was whether a respondent had prior contact with police and what method of contact they experienced. Mastrofski et al. (2001) note that respondents may acquire their impressions through direct experiences (personal contact with police), indirect experiences (accounts described by people with whom they associate – family, friends, coworkers, and acquaintances), or external experiences (images of the police through the mass media – news, entertainment, and educational).

Mastrofski et al. (2001) then identified the overall outcomes of policing as the second dimension of assessing the public's attitudes toward policing. Mastrofski et al. (2001, p. 47) state that;

“Police are expected to achieve a variety of outcomes, some of which have long been characterized as part of the police mission, and others of which have been more recently embraced under the rubric of community policing.”

Therefore, as proposed by Mastrofski et al. (2001) such outcomes of effective policing should include the reduction of crime and disorder while also working to reduce the fear of crime amongst the general public. Rather than simply solving crimes, both of these outcomes can be reached by indirect means such as solving neighborhood problems, improving the quality of life amongst the public, and developing greater community cohesion. All in all, the previous policing strategies share a distinct characteristic, which is an agency's ability to effectively interact with the public to enforce the law and prevent crime from occurring. Therefore future research should emphasize this characteristic when calculating the public's perception of law enforcement agencies and their ability to effectively reduce crime, disorder, and maintain a reasonable level of safety throughout the community.

According to Mastrofski et al. (2001), the third and final dimension is the public's perception of police processes. This is otherwise known as "policing for people" and is often associated with an agency's quality of service when attempting to maintain order and enforce the law. Research on service quality in the private sector has been helpful for delineating some of the dimensions that consumers and clients associate with quality service. Therefore, citizens of a particular area of jurisdiction can provide an insightful testimony of their police agency's quality of service and their ability to maintain order and enforce the law. Mastrofski et al. (2001) identified six characteristics that Americans often associate with quality service in police processes that include attentiveness, reliability, responsiveness, competence, manners, fairness, and integrity.

The previous characteristics can be configured into a series of orderly actions taken by police to effectively maintain order and enforce the law. Citizens or victims first evaluate an agency's ability to respond to a particular issue or crime in a timely fashion. Citizens or victims can then calculate that particular agency's level of reliability by gauging their ability to effectively address their issue. It is then that police competence, or an agency's ability to effectively handle a particular issue in an error-free manner and police attentiveness, or an agency's ability to approach a crime or issue with an adequate level of care or attention are considered. Police attentiveness is especially important when handling victims because it also concerns an agency's ability to bring closure to a victim and to prevent the crime from occurring again in the near future. During this continuous process citizens constantly assess police on their ability to be polite, fair, and moral when maintaining order and enforcing the law.

Reporting Perceptions

Other researchers such as Frank, Smith, and Novak (2005) also discuss the dimensions that determine the public's perception of police. Frank et al. (2005) had set out to determine the public's level of satisfaction with police in their article titled, *Exploring the Attitudes toward Police*, by conducting a household survey of 613 respondents. Frank et al. (2005) had created an interval scale to determine each respondents' level of satisfaction with their local police agency and was organized as follows; very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, somewhat dissatisfied, and very dissatisfied. During the interview process each respondent was asked whether he or she had experienced contact with a local police within the past 6 months. They were then asked to use the previous scale to answer the following question, "In general, how satisfied are you with the police?" This question was immediately followed by an open ended question which was simply; "why are you [their stated level of satisfaction] with the police?" Responses to this question were recorded verbatim and placed into several categories.

Of these categories, whether the police responded in a timely manner to a particular crime or issue appeared to be the most common response to the second question. Frank et al. (2005) had reported that a majority of the respondents had stated that their local agency had responded to their issue in a timely fashion and were therefore "very satisfied" with their local agency. However, the most common reason as to why respondents were "very dissatisfied" with their local police agency involved improper behaviors on behalf of the police. These improper behaviors ranged from harassing the respondent to questioning or stopping the respondent for little to no reason. Another category involved whether the respondent was satisfied with their community's level of safety. A majority of respondents had reported that they were "very satisfied" with the level of safety that their local police agency had maintained within their

community. This was also linked to their police agency's ability to be visibly present during various times of the day.

Factors that Influence Perceptions

Brown and Benedict (2002) address the different variables that give rise to the public's attitudes toward the police. Their article titled *Perceptions of Police* indicated four distinct individual and contextual variables that have consistently been proven to affect the public's attitudes toward the police. According to Brown and Benedict (2002), the individual variables that affect society's attitudes toward police include age, contact with police, race, and socioeconomic status. These individual-level variables are also accompanied by contextual or external variables that include the effects of victimization, the effects of police policies and practices, and the effects of ecological factors such as community environments or community issues.

Demographic Variables

In regards to individual variables and public attitudes toward police, Brown and Benedict (2002) found that race was a significant factor in determining public attitudes toward police. They found that African Americans are most often among the majority of citizens who reported police mistreatment as a severe issue in their community. When compared to other individual-level variables such as the effects of gender, age, income, education, occupational prestige, victimization and residence. Brown and Benedict (2002, p. 28) found that race was "the best predictor for evaluations on police performance". This was driven by the fact that respondents who were often highly critical of the police were members of minority groups or more specifically members of the African American community. Their findings have also been

confirmed through international surveys. For example, Smith (1991) had conducted a British survey that found Afro-Caribbean citizens held a much higher level of hostility toward the police than any other race group. This is also supported by Jefferson and Walker (1993) who surveyed males in Leeds, UK and reported that “blacks held less positive views towards the police than whites”.

Race

However, there is reason to believe that an inter-item correlation exists between race and contact with police, a contextual variable, as underlying factors when determining negative attitudes toward police. This is confirmed in Dean’s (1980, p. 142) analyses of data obtained from over 1,200 telephone interviews conducted in three metropolitan areas that found race alone does not affect evaluation of police but that, “the combined effects of being African American and having contact with the police lowers respondent evaluations, in case being that they are more often to be chased, questioned, or warned by police”.

In further consideration to Brown and Benedict’s (2002) findings on race, the Gallup Organization’s (2004, p. 13) survey on *Respondents’ Attitudes toward Racial Profiling* was very direct in their inquiry of the public’s perceptions toward police and racial bigotry. This survey first stated that:

“It has been reported that some police officers or security guards stop people of certain racial or ethnic groups because these officials believe that these groups are more likely than others to commit certain types of crimes.”

This statement was then followed with the question: “for each of the following situations, please say if you think this practice, known as ‘racial profiling,’ is widespread, or not?” These

situations included: (1) “when motorists are stopped on roads and highways,” (2) “when passengers are stopped at security checkpoints in airports,” and (3) “when shoppers are questioned attempting to prevent theft in shopping malls or stores.” In response to the first situation, the Gallup Organization (2004) had found that nearly 70% of all African American respondents felt racial profiling was not only existent but widespread. This was significantly higher than the responses of their Caucasian and Hispanic counterparts. The previous report was reflected once again in the third situation that indicated over 65% of African American respondents felt racial profiling was both existent and widespread. This survey also asked respondents to report whether racial profiling was justified in the three presented situations. This question indicated that not only did a majority of the African Americans report that racial profiling existed and was widespread but that the use of racial profiling in these situations was in fact unjustified.

Demographic variables also influenced public attitudes toward various law enforcement agencies and their ability to enforce the law and maintain order. These variables are somewhat more important than the dimensions that society associates with police effectiveness and positive public relationships because they give rise to how society perceives the police rather than what standard we expect the police to perform. Brindenball and Jesilow (2008) attempt to assess the relative influence of individual characteristics, perceptions, and ecological conditions on the public’s attitudes toward police in their article titled *What Matters: The Formation of Attitudes toward the Police*. Brindenball et al. (2008) had identified a series of demographic, ecological, and perceptual variables when calculating whether residents were satisfied or dissatisfied with their local police agency.

The demographic or individual characteristics that Brindenball et al. (2008) had identified were age, sex, ethnicity, education level, occupation, and whether the respondent had been in contact with the police within the past year. Brindenball et al. (2008) found that a majority of their respondents were female (66.7%) and either Caucasian (non-Hispanic), Hispanic, Asian, or African American with an education attainment of a high school diploma or GED. The occupational status of these respondents had ranged from collecting unemployment to being a skilled professional; however, a great majority (44.75%) of these respondents had reported that they were either retired or homemakers. A small percentage of these respondents had also reported that they had been in contact with police within the past year.

Age and Gender

Lai and Shao (2010) then considered a number of demographic, ecological, and police-respondent contact variables when calculating each respondent's answer to the previously mentioned questions. The demographic variables included race-ethnicity, age, gender, and education attainment of the particular respondent. When considering each respondent's age and his or her reported levels of satisfaction, Lai and Shao (2010) found that age was positively associated with general attitudes with the police. However, this was not the case when considering each respondent's age and specific trust in the police that indicated a negative correlation. In other words, as respondents grew older their level of specific trust toward the officers of the HPD had decreased. In addition, gender was also a significant predictor, which suggested that females held higher levels of general attitudes and specific trust in the police than their male counterparts.

After conducting a regression analysis of both the public's general attitudes and specific trust toward the HPD, Lai and Shao (2010) found that African Americans and Hispanics had reported significantly lower levels of general attitudes toward the police than their Caucasian counterparts. These results were also reflected in Lai and Shao's (2010) regression analysis of respondents' specific trust toward the HPD that indicated that African Americans had held significantly lower levels of trust toward the HPD, especially in the unauthorized use of Tasers.

In terms of police-citizen interactions, Lai and Shao (2010) found a negative relationship between victimization and general attitudes and specific trust in officers of the HPD. On the other hand, those who reported high levels of general attitudes toward the police were often satisfied with police work within their respective neighborhood. This indicated that respondents who felt that officers of the HPD were courteous, respectful, and fair also felt the HPD was successful in maintaining order and enforcing the law within the respondents' respective neighborhood.

External and Contextual Variables

Returning to Brown and Benedict (2002), their discussion of external variables suggested that differences in residency also provide differences in community needs and expectations toward the police. This was also coupled with the idea that the combination of cultural factors and socioeconomic statuses within a specific neighborhood can determine perceptions of social disorder, incivility, and informal collective security, which in turn can reflect a neighborhood's attitudes toward police. When addressing geographical differences, they found that residents within rural communities and small towns typically viewed the police more favorably than residents within large urban communities. More specifically, residents of rural communities

viewed the use of police force and authority, and their ability to prevent crime more favorably than urban residents. However, this could be due to the prevalence and proximity of crime within urban communities. Crime is more frequent in urban environments as is the chance that residents may become a suspect, victim, or witness to a crime.

Residency

In regards to ecological variables, Brindenball et al. (2008) asked respondents to report the type of dwelling and neighborhood that they reside in while controlling for the concentrated economic disadvantage and homicide rate of each reported district. Brindenball et al. (2008) found that a majority of the respondents resided in a house or permanent structure within what was reported as a “working neighborhood” or area that consisted mostly of middle class working inhabitants. Brindenball et al. had then applied a concentrated economic disadvantage factor by calculating the number of residents within a given district who had an income under the poverty line, were on government assistance, were receiving unemployment, or headed by a single parent. This was also related to each district’s homicide rate to configure a total consensus of economic disparities within a given district.

The dependent variable was to simply state whether respondents held positive or negative attitudes toward their local police agency and why they held these attitudes. Such responses were organized into two separate categories that were titled, “police related complaints” and “police related praises”. In regards to police related complaints, respondents most often reported that there were “not enough officers within their district” and that “police did not respond in a timely fashion”. The respondents who had been contacted by their local police, either as a victim, perpetrator, or neither, also reported that the police “often displayed negative attitudes”. These

complaints were somewhat countered by the respondents who praised their local police agency, as most reported that their local police agency was “efficient, reliable, and responded to their issue in a timely fashion.”

After conducting a bivariate correlation between independent variables, Brindenball et al. (2008) found a significant correlation between select individual, ecological, and perceptual variables. When discussing individual and perceptual variables, both police related complaints and whether the respondent had been contacted by the police in the past year were suggested a significant relationship ($r=.192, p<.01$). When reviewing ecological and perceptual variables, a significant correlation existed between police related complaints and the concentrated economic disadvantage factor of a given district ($r=.091, p<.01$). A correlational relationship was also found between both police related complaints and the homicide rate ($r=.116, p<.05$) and the type of neighborhood in which the respondent resided ($r=.118, p<.05$).

Police Contact

Brown and Benedict’s (2002, p. 53) discussion of external and contextual variables and their effects on public attitudes toward police primarily address the effects of police contact. They state that positive contact with police improves perceptions while negative contact creates the opposite effect, however they also state that “it is not clear which type of contact has the greatest effect”. They also reported that the strongest influence on general service evaluations is one’s knowledge of police mistreatment amongst members of the public. Koenig (1980), Alemika (1988), and Sing (1998), found that survey respondents who witnessed, experienced, or held knowledge of police brutality, excessive force, or corruption had reported far less favorable evaluations than respondents who were unaware of such cases. This is also true amongst

respondents who had initiated contact with police compared to respondents whose contact was initiated by police.

Victimization and the Fear of Victimization

When discussing contact with police, it is essential to address victimization or the fear of victimization for that matter and its effects on society's attitudes toward police. According to Thurman and Reisig (1996), respondents in one city who had been victimized evaluated the police less positively than those who had not been victimized. They also found that respondents who believed that neighborhood crime rates were high tended to evaluate the police more negatively than respondents who felt that neighborhood crime rates were less than high. This was also true amongst respondents who had reported that they had never been victimized.

Sims, Hooper, and Peterson (2002) provide an interesting approach to the relationship between community-oriented policing and the fear of victimization on the public's attitudes toward the police. Sims et al. (2002) had developed a theoretical model for this relationship that suggests that attitudes toward police can be mediated by one's fear of crime and his or her perceived notions of social disorder within their community. It further suggests that contact with police via community-oriented policing can have a direct effect on the public's fear of crime and perceptions of social disorder.

Fear of Crime

Sims et al. (2002) used survey data collected by the Harrisburg, Pennsylvania Bureau of Police Community Initiative to provide information regarding the public's fear of crime and their perceived notions of social disorder. This independent variable was separated into three distinct indexes that included a physical civilities score, a social incivilities disorder score, and a fear of

crime index score. Sims et al. described physical incivilities as abandoned buildings, excessive noise, graffiti, excessive litter, and the absence of property maintenance by tenants or landlords. Sims et al. (2002, p. 82) measured this variable through a series of Likert-type questions which were arranged in the following responses; (1) “not a problem” which indicated a low level perceived threat, (2) “somewhat of a problem” which indicated a moderate level of perceived threat, and (3) “a big problem” that indicated a high level of perceived threat.

The same process was repeated for questions involving social incivilities which were described as assaults in public, disruption around schools, domestic violence, drug dealing, prostitution, vandalism, and so on. The final index was created to determine fear of crime and asked respondents to rate their level of fear when considering the following crimes: assault, breaking and entering, burglary and vandalism or becoming a victim of a severely violent crime. Respondents were then asked to respond to the previous question by using three separate response categories which were; (1) very worried, (2) somewhat worried, and (3) not worried at all.

The dependent variable was then calculated by determining attitudes toward the police. This information was gathered from the Harrisburg Citizen Survey that asked as a series of questions and provided respondents with a series of Likert-type responses. The three questions involved in this survey were; (1) The HPD are quite open to the opinions of citizens, (2) The HPD respond to citizens’ calls for service in a timely manner, and (3) The HPD are easy to contact. A factor analysis was used to determine the degree to which the three items actually measured the same underlying construct. The factor analysis was successful with the loadings for all items of interest exceeding (0.70).

By using a bivariate correlational analysis, Sims et al. (2002) found that attitudes toward the Harrisburg Police Department's utilization of community-oriented policing was greatly affected by perceived structure damage, social incivilities, and fear of crime. When discussing physical incivilities, citizens who felt physical incivilities were "a big problem" within their community were more likely to hold a more negative view toward police. This may suggest that respondents who reside in communities with high levels of physical incivilities are replete with order maintenance problems, have not developed a rapport with the HPD, or have otherwise failed to receive effective community-oriented policing. This is also true for respondents who reported high levels of fear and victimization, which suggests that the HPD have failed to centralize community concerns and effectively reduced victim centered crimes.

Community-Oriented Policing

Brown and Benedict (2002) also found it paramount to address the effects of community-oriented policing as a means of police contact. According to Brown and Benedict (2002) community-oriented policing involves a police-community partnership that operates to identify, prioritize, and resolve citizen problems. Brown and Benedict (2002) found community-oriented policing to be very useful in addressing community concerns that in turn provided a positive public perception of police. This was supported by Reisig and Giacomazzi's (1998) survey study of citizens under the jurisdiction of the Merriam, Kansas Police Department and their attitudes toward the department's recent emphasis on community-oriented policing. Their finding's indicated that most respondents, even those who viewed the police negatively, supported community policing efforts. These results were replicated in Peak's (1992) survey study of the Reno (Nevada) Police Department's use of community-oriented policing programs and found

that community perceptions were generally positive toward the overall performance, handling of offenders, and feelings of concern projected by the RPD.

On the other hand, other researchers have found that community-oriented policing efforts fail to generate public support. Green and Decker (1989) studied the effects of educational programs involving officers and citizens, known as (COPE) Community-Oriented Police Education that indicated citizens involved in the project became less antagonistic toward the police, but that “citizen support for the police declined dramatically after the COPE program”. This was possibly due to the community’s ambivalence toward becoming a proactive unit in reducing neighborhood crime rates with their local police agency. Most citizens were more favorable toward conventional policing tactics such as criminal investigations that seemed more effective than simply using the public as means to reduce crime. Therefore more respondents felt that police, rather than the community, should bear the majority of the responsibility for crime control.

The effects of demographic, ecological, and police-citizen interactions on public attitudes toward police have also been analyzed by Lai and Zhao (2010). Both researchers used a telephone survey study of 756 respondents within the Houston, Texas area in 2008. Their primary findings suggested that race, ethnicity, gender, age, and victimization were significant predictors of satisfaction with local law enforcement agencies. Lai and Shao (2010) implemented two dimensions, general attitudes and specific trust, to represent the public’s perception of the Houston Police Department. General attitudes were measured based on the respondents’ evaluation of how much they thought that Houston police officers were: courteous, respectful toward citizens, fair and communicated very well and asked to respond using a Likert-type scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree). The second dimension, specific trust, consisted

of three items that were whether the respondent trusts that officers of the HPD would: investigate complaints against its own employees, investigate complaints against its own employees fairly, and hold its officers accountable for the unauthorized use of Tasers. They were also asked to reply using the same Likert-type scale as previously mentioned.

Media Influence

Another area that deserves special consideration when discussing public attitudes toward the police is the influence of the social media. This field of perceptual influence is especially important due to the fact that not every member of the public is provided the opportunity to interact with the police nor have they been forced to interact with the police as a victim or a suspect. Therefore, public knowledge of crime, deviance, victims, justice, and in this case law enforcement is largely derived from the social media. As a means of mass communication, the social media can be used through a variety of outlets such as the newspaper, local televised news, the internet, radio, etc.

According to Surette (1992) a majority of Americans receive much of their impressions and knowledge of the police and law enforcement at large through entertainment television. Most of these television programs feature unrealistic or distorted demonstrations of policing and police work. For example, most television “crime-dramas” illustrate a fierce criminal network that never succeeds and a rigid precinct that never fails to solve crime. This misrepresentation of crime and law enforcement then leads naïve viewers to confuse the events in these programs with reality. This process can be explained by applying the *Reflection Theory* that states cultural products mirror aspects of society and of the social order that gives rise to them (McNeely, 1995, p. 112). Therefore these “crime-dramas”, or any other media program, for that matter, mirror

aspects of law enforcement and in turn affect the constructs of law enforcement. Thus, when addressing attitudes toward police, there is an essential need to separate perception of reality and socialized perception of policing as derived from the media.

Roberts and Doob (1990) also suggest that much of the public's knowledge of crime and justice is largely derived from the media. The researchers set out to determine the effects of media consumption on the fear of crime and public ratings of police effectiveness. To determine these effects, Roberts and Doob (1990) used an annual telephone survey referred to as the National Opinion Survey on Crime and Justice (NOSCJ). The NOSCJ was used to capture information regarding the amount, content, and source of crime news as well as public attitudes toward police, neighborhood problems, delinquency, and the fear of crime. When measuring the fear of crime, Roberts and Doob (1990) asked respondents how often they worried about becoming the victim of a series of violent crimes. Responses were organized from very frequently had a point value of (28) to never that possessed a point value of (7). Higher scores therefore indicated a greater amount of fear about victimization.

Roberts and Doob (1990) then addressed the public's attitude toward police effectiveness, appropriateness, and use of force. When seeking public attitudes toward police effectiveness, the researchers constructed a three-question inquiry that addressed respondents' confidence in their local police's ability to protect citizens and property as well as solve and prevent crime. Each question was accompanied by a four category response which ranged from a great deal confidence, some confidence, little confidence, and no confidence at all. When measuring public attitudes toward police appropriateness, respondents were asked to assess their local police in the following traits: promptness, friendliness, and fairness. This question was accompanied by a five category response which ranged from very high, high, average, low, to very low. The final

question sought to determine public attitudes about the use of excessive force by police within their community. When answering the severity of this issue within respondents' communities, category responses ranged from a serious problem, somewhat of problem, a minor problem, to not a problem at all.

The third set of variables involved media crime information and consisted of three categories that were the amount, content, and source of their crime news. Respondents' amount of consumed crime information was recorded by asking how many hours of television they watched per week and how much of this time involved crime information. The amount of crime information that respondents consumed was then separated into either television crime shows or other. The final category involved the primary source of respondents' media consumption; this category included such media outlets as television, newspaper, radio, and even friends or neighbors.

After conducting a correlation analysis, Roberts and Doob (1990) found that viewing crime shows was significantly related to the fear of crime and perceived police effectiveness. Furthermore, they found that regular viewers of crime shows were most likely to fear crime and hold negative attitudes toward police effectiveness. However, after conducting a bivariate correlation analysis, they found that newspaper consumption was a primary source of crime news and the amount of crime television viewing was not significantly related to the fear of crime or perceived police effectiveness.

All media outlets possess the potential to provide positive or negative reflections of policing. For example, local news may provide a positive description of policing by discussing the actions of a heroic officer. Conversely, local news may provide a negative description of

policing by describing a single instance of police misconduct. Whether this information is accurate or inaccurate is otherwise meaningless because members of the public will develop a “socialized” perception of law enforcement based on their culture’s reflection of policing. In support of this topic, Chermak, McGarrell, and Gruenewald (2006) conducted a series of phone surveys to examine public attitudes toward police before and after public trials of police misconduct. Their findings suggested that media consumption of police misconduct as presented during trials of police misconduct had no significant effects on the general attitudes of police, police services, or concerns about police harassment. However they did find a relationship between respondents’ amount of exposure to a particular case of misconduct through media outlets and the likelihood that respondents felt the officer or officers involved were guilty. For example, the more respondents had been exposed to a particular case through various media outlets, the more likely they thought the officer or officers accused of police misconduct were in fact guilty.

Chermak et al. (2006) developed these findings by testing the effects of three media related variables on the public’s attitudes toward police. The first media related variable involved the frequency with which a particular respondent reads the local newspaper. They had found that the mean average of this variable was approximately 3 days a week. The second variable attempted to measure respondents’ specific exposure to a particular trial by asking two questions: (1) How many newspaper stories do you remember reading about the particular trial and (2) How many television stories did you remember seeing about the particular trial? Respondents were then asked to gauge each of these answers in intervals from 1 to 5, 6 to 20, 11-25, or more than 26 articles. The third media related variable asked respondents to discuss their general familiarity with these trials of police misconduct. This question was created for respondents who were

exposed to these trials of police misconduct through media outlets other than the local newspaper. After analyzing their survey data, Chermak et al. (2006) found, as noted before, that increases in media exposure would increase the likelihood that the officer or officers involved were publically perceived as guilty.

Kaminski and Jefferis (1998) also set out to identify the underlying problems involved in media exposure of police practices and the public perception's toward police. Their study *The Effect of a Televised Arrest on Public Perception of Police* explored the effects of a critical incident on various measures of support for the police. The critical event discussed in this study involves a highly publicized and violent arrest of an African American youth. Kaminski et al. had hypothesized that public levels of diffuse or general support would remain stable regardless of the introduction of the televised arrest. They then pulled data obtained from the Greater Cincinnati Survey (GCS), a semiannual survey conducted on adult residents within the Hamilton County area of Cincinnati. The GCS asked a random sample of respondents to rate the Cincinnati police on levels of courtesy, protection, response time, amount of force in apprehending suspects, and departmental performance in resolving neighborhood problems. Thirteen weeks had elapsed until the introduction of the arrest and the administration of the GCS. As a control measure, Kaminski et al. (1998) evaluated a series of media outlets during the administration of the GCS to determine whether they possessed information likely to affect public attitudes toward the Cincinnati Police Department. Their findings had somewhat replicated a pattern of public support for the CPD as exhibited during the early 1990s. During this era, diffuse support for the CPD had sharply decreased due possibly to the media coverage of the Rodney King incident in March 1991. Therefore the media exposure of the violent arrest of the African American youth had created a decrease in diffuse support for the CPD.

However, when discussing media influence on perceptions toward police and the Rodney King incident, there are two possible explanations that effectively describes the decrease in support for the CPD. The first explanation is that the decrease in diffuse support for the CPD is due to the CPD's reflection of the officers displayed in the media coverage of the Rodney King Incident. The second explanation is a bit more complex and involves the application of the *Reflection Theory*. In this case the cultural product or the negative perception of law enforcement figures mirrors the actions of those involved in Rodney King incident. Therefore citizens in Cincinnati could have confused the cultural product of the Rodney King incident with law enforcement figures.

When discussing media presentations of crime, Dowler (2003) found that the relationship between media presentations and crime is dependent on both the message and audience of the particular presentation. Dowler (2003) suggests that the presentation of large amounts of local crime can engender increased levels of fear among the members who reside in that particular area. However the presentation of large amounts of non-local crime allows viewers to feel safer in comparison to those who reside elsewhere. Comparatively speaking, the amount of crime displayed in media presentations can in fact determine the level of safeness in some viewers when compared to viewers who receive more or less media presentations of crime.

In terms of audience effects, Dowler (2003) also explains that the fear of victimization will depend on who is viewing a particular media presentation of crime. He suggests that those who reside in high crime areas and watch a large amount of television are more likely to be afraid of crime. This fear can also be affected by whether the viewer was once a direct victim of crime, had witnessed a crime, or had possessed characteristics that made him or her vulnerable to crime.

While examining the National Opinion on Crime and Justice, Dowler (2003) found that local media attention to crime was significantly related to the fear of sexual assault, being mugged, or being assaulted at home. Furthermore, Chiricos (1997) found that the frequency of watching television news and listening to the news on the radio is significantly related to crime rates. Chiricos also found that television news consumption was significantly related to fear only for females between the ages of 30 to 44. Males on the other hand begin to develop an increased level of aggression toward those who break the law and low levels of aggression toward those who swear to protect the law. This may explain the impact of media attention to crime and gender differences in developing attitudes toward the police.

In support of Chirico's (1997) research, Gerbner (1980) found that individuals, who consume large amounts of television, more than four hours a day, are more likely to feel threatened by the thought of crime and victimization. Gerbner (1980) explains that television often portrays crime as a frequent event that may lead viewers to believe crime is more prevalent than statistics actually indicate. He also states that viewers find crime portrayed on television as significantly more violent, random, and dangerous than crime in the "real-world". This distorted reflection of reality then leads viewers to internalize these images and develop a "mean world view" that is often characterized by mistrust, cynicism, alienation, and fear. Unfortunately this world view is often transferred toward law enforcement figures, who are often the most public representatives of the Criminal Justice System.

When discussing media portrayal of police and its influences on public attitudes toward police, researchers have found somewhat conflicting views. After reviewing television portrayals of police, Reiner (1985) found that police are often over dramatized and romanticized by television "crime dramas", while local and national media news portray police as heroic and

professional crime fighters. He states that television “crime dramas” typically involve crimes that are always solved and criminal suspects who are always apprehended. Likewise, local and national media news typically exaggerate the proportion of offenses that result in successful arrests and often project an image that police are more effective than statistics actually display. Ericson, Baranek, and Chan (1987) suggest that this image is a product of the benefit centered relationship between the police and the media. This relationship is interdependent because the media needs the police to provide a quick and reliable source of crime information while police need the media to create a positive public image. The favorable view that the media provides also works in accordance with public relation efforts that police attempt to cast. This image is obviously one that illustrates effective and efficient community crime solving. According to Reiner (1985), it is this image that reinforces traditional approaches to law and order and entails such police practices as increased police presence, harsh penalties, and increased police authority.

On the other hand, some researchers argue that the news media often portray police in a negative light. Surette (1998) suggests that different media outlets portray the police in opposing fashions. For example, documentary crime dramas and news tabloids portray the police as crime fighting heroes, whereas print and broadcast news characterize the police as both ineffective and incompetent. This is supported by Graber’s (1980) claim that the general public tends to evaluate the police more favorably than other divisions of the Criminal Justice System. On the other hand, the media tends to focus on negative criticism to undermine the effectiveness of law enforcement figures.

Summary

After examining recent literature, it is imperative to outline several variables and appropriate procedures for analyzing media influences and student attitudes toward law enforcement figures. First and foremost, as recent research has indicated, it is imperative to place emphasis on various media outlets that display law enforcement figures. This should include both news programs (written or televised) and televised crime entertainment. However, given the recent growth in various technological fields, these media programs should also include internet or “E-type” news feeds. Today’s general public especially students, typically embrace internet outlets to provide expedient but thorough news feeds on both national and international matters. This attention to detail must also be focused on individual, external, and ecological variables. Recent findings suggest that these variables possess a great influence on developing and modifying attitudes toward law enforcement figures. Furthermore demographic information appears to possess the greatest influence within these variables and will be dually noted in the progression of this study. This will also include such external variables as contact with law enforcement figures. Previous literature has stated that this external variable is of primary importance when reporting attitudes toward law enforcement figures and will not be disregarded in this study’s analyses. With consideration to this study’s population, it is projected that little to no differences will be reported in the previously mentioned variables. It is also projected, given the geographical location of ETSU, that these variables will have an interdependent relationship with each respondent’s reported external information. Therefore it is assumed that a majority of respondents will report similar types of law enforcement figures and contact.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Sampling

The population sample featured in this study included both undergraduate and graduate students enrolled at East Tennessee State University (ETSU). East Tennessee State University is a public university located in Johnson City, Tennessee and was comprised of approximately 14,536 undergraduate and graduate students (A/Y 2012). In order to obtain a purely random sample of ETSU undergraduate and graduate students, systematic sampling was employed after identifying a series of undergraduate and graduate student emails as provided by the Department of Institutional Research at ETSU. Each student was then chosen at random; which helped in incorporating students across various ages, sexes, races, levels of education, political orientation, and fields of study. Once selected, students were contacted via email and informed that they have been randomly chosen to participate in an online study. This notification included an electronic consent form requesting their participation in an online questionnaire study concerning student attitudes towards law enforcement figures. To maintain a high level naiveté the full extent of this study was not immediately disclosed until the debriefing period of the online questionnaire. However, the electronic consent form included information regarding the estimated duration of the study, debriefing timeframe, data collection period, analysis, and publication of reported findings. Upon receipt of the informed consent document, each student was asked “would you like to participate in this study?” They were then able to select “yes, I would like to voluntarily participate in this study” or “no, I would not like to participate in this study.” Students who responded “yes, I would like to voluntarily participate in this study” were directed to complete

the online questionnaire; however, students who responded “no, I would not like to participate in this study” were subsequently instructed to exit the online questionnaire.

Data Collection Instrument

This study used an online self-administered questionnaire that was divided into three distinct segments; student demographic information, student attitudes toward law enforcement figures, and media influences concerning law enforcement figures. This study consisted of three sets of variables; each student’s demographic information, his or her type of contact with law enforcement figures, and the media’s presentation of law enforcement figures. These variables were analyzed in comparison to the dependent variable; student attitudes toward law enforcement figures. The first independent variable was student demographic information and was collected by using several questions that examined each respondent’s age, gender, race, income, parental income, primary residency, political orientation, and education level and also requested that they list their respective major(s) and minor(s). The second independent variable in this study was each respondent’s perception of media representations involving law enforcement figures and whether these presentations are similar or dissimilar to their general and performance measures during contact with that particular law enforcement figure. The third independent variable analyzed the most recent type of contact each respondent has had with a law enforcement figure or figures. This information was collected after determining whether the respondent was a violator of a traffic infraction, a criminal suspect, a criminal arrestee, a victim, a witness, or had established contact as a neutral citizen or “other”. Once again, each respondent was asked to report his or her most recent type of contact with a law enforcement figure or figures to provide an up-to-date measure of this law enforcement figure(s) along general and performance dimensions.

The dependent variable in this study was student attitudes toward the law enforcement figure they had contacted. This information was collected after requesting that respondents first identify the type of contact which they had experienced (if any), the respective law enforcement figure they had contact with, and to assess that figure along general and performance dimensions. These attitude dimensions included both respondents' general and performance dimension measures towards the particular law enforcement figure that he or she had experienced contact. This provided an overall measure of respondents' summarized measures toward the respective law enforcement figure which they had some form of contact.

Student Demographic Information

Respondents were asked several demographic questions concerning their; age, gender, race, annual income, parental income, primary residence, political orientation, and education level that also requested that they list their respective major(s) and minor(s). When reporting age, respondents were asked to simply input their age (in years) during the completion of the online questionnaire. As for gender, respondents were asked to report what category best describes their gender and the categories included both male and female. This approach was replicated when reporting race which asked respondents to choose a category that best describes themselves. These categories included: Caucasian (non-Hispanic/white), African-American (non-Hispanic/black), Hispanic, Asian, or "Other" which allowed respondents to state a race that best describes his or her ethnicity. When reporting income each respondent was asked to state both, their personal and parents' annual earnings and/or cash assistance. These responses were open-ended to allow each respondent to provide an accurate total and were subsequently be averaged to calculate the mean annual income within the population sample. When reporting primary residency each respondent was asked to report the respective county, state-province, and nation

that he or she resided before they attended ETSU. This response prevented respondents from simply reporting their campus residency, which was confined to areas surrounding Johnson City, Tennessee. It was also assumed that each respondent would report his or her parent's primary residence because a majority of college students had resided with their parents before attending college. This, as with reporting parental annual income, provided information for further research on the relationship between parenting and attitudes toward law enforcement figures. This attention to detail was further emphasized when asking respondents to report his or her education level which requested that respondents report their respective major(s) and minor(s) within either their undergraduate or graduate education. This provided room for comparison amongst various academic fields as well as serve as a measurement to identify any attitudes or biases among students of conflicting fields of study. The final categorical variable asked each respondent to report their political orientation. This question instructed each respondent to choose the political party that they most favor. Responses included such political orientations as Conservative, Republican (GOP), Democratic, Liberal, Independent, and "none of the above" for respondents who possess neither republican, democratic, liberal, or independent political orientations. This question is of vital concern considering the relationship between political parties and various media outlets. Previous research has indicated the mutually exclusivity of media outlets and their information feed which are typically centered on a distinct political agenda. As stated before, this study assessed the relationship of these demographic variables to attitudes toward law enforcement figures.

Media Presentations of Law Enforcement Figures

The questionnaire also probed the amount of media consumption and type of media outlet that respondents most often viewed. Each respondent was asked "how often do you view media

presentations that display police or law enforcement figure(s)?" Answers ranged from less than 1 hour, 1-3 hours, 4-6 hours, 7-8 hours, 9-10 hours, to more than 10 hours a week. This question was followed by asking respondents to identify what type of media outlet they most often viewed. These responses were very broad and incorporated media outlets found in local and national news programs, television crimes dramas and documentaries, local and national newspapers, various internet sources, or any other media outlet that best describes what respondents most frequently viewed. The focus was on how these media outlets present law enforcement figures and if these presentations are similar or dissimilar to the respondent's contact with a law enforcement figure(s). To accomplish this task, respondents were asked to assess the media display of law enforcement figure(s) on the same dimensions that were noted in the general measure sections of the online questionnaire. Therefore, when measuring media presentations and general attitudes toward law enforcement figures, respondents were asked, "does the media outlet mentioned above display police-law enforcement figure(s) as:" and to rate this media outlet in accordance to the same general dimensions and Likert-type scale used in the general dimension measure of law enforcement figure(s) during contact. This approach was replicated when measuring media presentation and performance attitudes of law enforcement figure(s). Respondents were asked, "does the media outlet mentioned above display police-law enforcement figure(s) as effective at:" and to rate this media outlet in accordance to the same performance dimensions and Likert-type scale used in the performance dimension measure of law enforcement figure(s) during contact.

Student Contact with Law Enforcement Figures

The third and final independent variable consisted of each respondent's most recent type of contact with a law enforcement figure(s). As previously stated, respondents were asked to

report their most recent type of contact to gather a current understanding of their general and performance attitudes toward a law enforcement figure(s). Respondents reported whether they were a violator of a traffic infraction, a criminal suspect, a criminal arrestee, a victim, a witness, or had established contact as a neutral citizen or “other”. Respondents who reported that they had violated a traffic infraction included both moving and non-moving violations. Moving violations included; speeding or driving below the minimum speed, running a stop sign or red light, driving without a seat belt, and drunk driving (DUI and DWI), whereas non-moving violations included; parking in a handicapped zone or other illegal parking, driving with an invalid vehicle registration or without vehicle insurance, having expired or missing license plates, and leaving a vehicle unattended and running. It is important to note that these traffic infractions are far less severe in penalty than criminal offenses. Therefore, respondents who reported that they were once a criminal arrestee had violated either a felony or misdemeanor crime as according to the specific statutes or codes of the respective state, city, or municipal area they were arrested. Such misdemeanor offenses included but were not limited to; littering, public intoxication, petty theft-shoplifting under \$500, misdemeanor drug possession, possession of drug paraphernalia, etc... whereas felony offenses included but were not limited to; assault and battery, criminal trespassing, criminal drug use-possession, and any other crime(s) deemed more severe than a petty or misdemeanor offense. On the other hand, respondents who reported that they were once a criminal suspect had only been accused of one or more of the previously mentioned misdemeanor-felony offenses. However, these criminal suspects must not have been convicted of a misdemeanor-felony offense in a court of law. Respondents who reported that they were a victim were individuals who were once harmed and/or injured as a result of a criminal action. These respondents also included individuals whose property had either been damaged or stolen

as a result of a criminal action. Respondents who reported that they were once a witness included individuals who had reported or provided testimonial evidence of a criminal action. Respondents who reported “other” implied that they had experienced contact with a law enforcement figure under none of the previously mentioned circumstances. This type of contact involved such situations as exchanging greetings, participating in a professional forum, sharing an informal discussion, participating in a neighborhood meeting, or simply receiving assistance. Each respondent’s most recent type of contact was subsequently compared to their general and performance attitudes toward the particular law enforcement figure they had contacted.

Student Attitudes Toward Law Enforcement Figures

Another aspect of this study was the effect of contact with a law enforcement figure on respondents’ general and performance measures toward that particular law enforcement figure(s). This analysis examined what type of contact respondents had experienced, the respective figure(s) which they had contact with, and their general and performance attitudes toward that particular law enforcement figure(s). When measuring the type of contact respondents had experienced, respondents chose from five separate categories to determine their respective type of contact with a particular law enforcement figure. Once again, these categories ranged from the violation of a traffic violation, a criminal suspect, a criminal arrestee, a victim, a witness, or as a neutral citizen “other” that implied the respondent had received contact under none of the previously mentioned circumstances. In the event that respondents had never experienced contact with a law enforcement figure, they were asked to “skip” to the third section of the questionnaire. This ensured that each respondent provided data concerning media presentations and law enforcement figure(s) regardless if they had ever experienced contact with a law enforcement figure. For those who had experienced contact with a particular figure they

were also asked to identify that particular figure by choosing between various local, state, federal figure(s), or simply “other” law enforcement units. If respondents had experienced contact with a figure that was not listed they provided the respective name and area of the figure with which they had experienced contact. At this point, respondents rated the figure(s) with whom they had contact with along general and performance dimensions. The first dimension concerned general dimension measures toward law enforcement figures and covered a series of attributes related to positive social relations. These attributes examined how courteous, respectful, fair, trustworthy, honest, and impartial the law enforcement figure(s) appeared during their interaction with the respondent. Thus respondents were asked “during contact with this law enforcement figure, he/she was” and rated these attributes while using a Likert-type scale which rated whether a respondent agrees or disagrees that this figure effectively displayed the previously mentioned attributes. This Likert-type scale ranged from 1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=neutral, 4=agree, and 5=strongly agree. This scale was also used when measuring the second dimension which asked respondents to provide a performance measure of the law enforcement figure(s) with whom they had experienced contact. This question asked respondents “I believe this law enforcement figure was effective at:” and included the figure’s ability to reduce crime, victimization, and the fear of victimization. This assessment also included the figure’s effectiveness at interacting with the community, solving community problems, maintaining order, protecting the public, and responding to community problems in a timely manner.

Procedure

As previously noted, this study used an online survey method of data collection. Respondents were granted access to the survey via invitation from the online e-mail system as provided by East Tennessee State University. Following receipt of the acceptance e-mail

respondents were directed to the informed consent article of the survey where they were provided detail information concerning the extent and time frame of the online survey followed by a voluntary compliance question that states; “would you like to voluntarily participate in this online survey.” Respondents were instructed to select either “yes, I would like to voluntarily participate in this online survey” or “no, I would not like to participate in this online survey.” If respondents elected “no, I would not like to participate in this online survey” they were instructed to close their current online browser. Once participants closed their online browser their data were discarded from the data collection bank and their e-mail address (contact information) was removed from the sampling roster. If respondents elected to participate in the online survey, they were able to complete the survey and were directed to the next article titled; “Student Demographic Information.” This section of the survey instructed respondents to complete the secondary variable data discussed in the student demographic instrument. Therefore they were asked to report their age, gender, race, income, parental income, primary residence, academic field of study, and political orientation. Following the completion of these questions, respondents were directed to the second section of this survey titled; “Attitudes toward Law Enforcement Figure.” This section of the survey instructed respondents to complete the primary variable data discussed in the type of contact they had experienced instrument. Respondents then reported whether they were a “violinator of a traffic infraction, criminal suspect, criminal arrestee, victim, witness, or other” to determine what type of contact they had experienced. If respondents reported that that they have never experienced contact with a law enforcement figure under the previously stated circumstances they were instructed to immediately continue to the third section of the survey titled; “media presentation of law enforcement figure(s).” Respondents who reported that they experienced contact with a law enforcement figure as a “violinator of a traffic

infraction, criminal suspect, criminal arrestee, victim, witness, or other” were then instructed to report what type of law enforcement figure had established contact with them. Answers for this question ranged from local, state, federal to other types of law enforcement figures. Following participants’ report of the type of law enforcement figure they had experienced contact, they were then instructed to report their perception of this law enforcement figure under general and performance dimensions. When reporting perceptions along general dimensions, respondents were instructed to report the degree to which they perceived this law enforcement figure was courteous, respectful, fair, trustworthy, honest, impartial, and racially, socially, and economically prejudiced while using a Likert-type scale that ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). This scale of perception was also used when reporting performance dimensions that instructed participants to report the degree to which this law enforcement figure was effective at reducing crime, reducing victimization, reducing the fear of victimization, interacting with the community, solving community-oriented problems, maintaining order, protecting the public, and responding in a timely manner. Following the completion of the type of contact respondents had experienced they were then instructed to continue to the third section of the survey titled; “media presentation of law enforcement figure(s).” During the third section, respondents were instructed to complete the secondary variable data discussed in the type and consumption of media outlets instrument. Respondents were then asked what type of media program that they most often consumed which ranged from locally and nationally televised news programs, television crime-dramas and documentaries, local and national newspapers, separate internet sources, or other. Respondents were instructed to select the media outlet to which they most often consume on a separate basis such as “locally televised news program” but ranged from various types of media presenters such as “CNN, FOX, MSNBC, etc...” These various media presenters range in display

and presentation of information involving law enforcement figures based on various economic, political, and religious factors, and will be discussed during the results and discussion portion of this article. Once respondents identified what type of media outlet they most often consume they were instructed to report the ordinal amount to which they view that type of media outlet. Responses in amount of media consumption range from less than 1 hour, 1-3 hours, 4-6 hours, 7-8 hours, and 9-10 hours. Once respondents report the amount of media they consume, they were then asked to rate the display of law enforcement figures as projected by the media outlet they most consume. Their perceived display of law enforcement figures in media outlets involved both general and performance dimensions. Therefore when rating law enforcement figures as displayed in media outlets, respondents were asked “the above mentioned media outlet display law enforcement figures as;” and were instructed to rate this media display of law enforcement figure(s) along general dimensions (courteous, respectful, fair, trustworthy, honest, impartial, and racially, socially, and economically prejudiced). Respondents were instructed to report their perceptions while using a Likert-type scale that ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). This scale was used again when rating media displays of law enforcement figure(s) along performance dimensions that asked respondents; “I believe this law enforcement figure(s) was effective at” and were instructed to rate this media display of law enforcement figure(s) along performance dimensions (reducing crime, reducing victimization, reducing the fear of victimization, interacting with the community, solving community-oriented problems, maintaining order, protecting the public, and responding in a timely manner). Following the third section, respondents were instructed to continue to the debriefing section that stated the research objectives of the online survey. Once respondents had fully read the debriefing section they were asked whether they wanted to voluntarily submit their completed survey. If respondents elected

“yes, I would like to voluntarily submit my data” their completed survey was stored in the online data bank. However if respondents elected “no, I would not like to submit my data” they were immediately asked to close their online browser and their survey data were removed from the online data bank and their e-mail address (contact information) was removed from the sampling roster.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS

Hypotheses

As previously noted this study involved four hypotheses that sought to affirm the relationship between demographic information, media influences, type of contact with law enforcement figure(s), and student attitudes toward law enforcement figures.

Hypothesis 1: Respondent demographic data will have a significant effect on attitudes toward law enforcement figures.

Hypothesis 2: The amount of respondent media consumption will have a significant effect on attitudes toward law enforcement figures.

Hypothesis 3: The type of media outlet that respondents most often consume will have a significant effect on attitudes toward law enforcement figures.

Hypothesis 4: The type of contact respondents have with law enforcement figures will have a significant effect on attitudes toward law enforcement figures.

Univariate Analysis

A series of univariate analyses were conducted to compute an overall composition of the population sample and to subcategorize independent variables within the population sample for further analyses. The first independent variable was demographic information and was measured along methods of central tendency to derive an overall composition and to subcategorize respondents along areas of race, age, level of education, and political orientation. In regards to

demographic subcategories, race was arranged into two subcategories that were classified as *white* (Caucasian/non-Hispanic) or *nonwhite* (other than Caucasian/non-Hispanic). Age was categorized into three separate subcategories; 18-24, 25-34, and 35 or older. Levels of education were categorized into three subcategories; *freshman or sophomore*, *junior or senior*, and *graduate* levels of education. Political orientation was categorized into four separate subcategories; *Liberal or Democrat*, *Conservative or Republican (GOP)*, *Independent*, and *Other or No political activity*. Frequencies and descriptive statistics were also collected on each respondent's residency, field of study, reported annual income, and combined parental income for further analyses.

The results of the demographic analyses were also compared to the demographic composition of the entire ETSU student population to derive a sense of generalization. If demographic compositions are similar between the population sample and the ETSU student population one can infer that the results of this study can be generalized across larger student populations. Several other variables were also analyzed to provide both a thorough composition of the population sample and to again further subcategorize respondents along areas of media consumption, type of media outlets, attitudes toward law enforcement figures during both media displays and contact, and types of contact with law enforcement figures.

The second independent variable in this analysis was the most recent type of contact the respondent had experienced. Respondents' most recent type of contact ranged from whether they were a violator of a traffic infraction, criminal suspect, arrestee, victim, witness, socially bystander, or simple classified under "other" circumstances during contact with a law enforcement figure. Few respondents reported that they had "no" contact with a law enforcement figure and for the purposes of this study, they were removed from the data analysis. Respondents

who reported that they had never experienced contact with a law enforcement figure would consequently dilute attitude measures reported by the population sample thus making the analysis less accurate. To compare the type of contact respondents had experienced with the dependent variable, all types of contact were reduced into two subcategories. These subcategories were centered on the criminality of the respondent. Therefore respondents who reported that they were either a violator of a traffic infraction, a suspect, or arrestee were classified as *positive in criminality*. On the other hand, respondents who reported that they were a victim, witness, or “other” were classified as *negative in criminality*.

The third independent variable in this analysis included the media program that the respondent most often consumed. This variable consisted of eight responses that included nationally and locally televised news programs, national and local newspapers, crime documentaries and crime dramas, and internet or other sources. For the purposes of this study, these subcategories were reduced into three subcategories. Two of the subcategories were arranged on whether the outlet was classified as a *locally* or *nationally and internationally distributed news feed*. Therefore the first subcategory consisted of local newspapers and locally televised news programs and was classified as *locally distributed news feed*. The second subcategory consisted of national newspapers, nationally televised news programs, and external internet news feeds and was classified as *nationally and internationally distributed news feed*. The third subcategory consisted of crime dramas and crime documentaries and was classified as *televised sitcom-profile*. Respondents who reported that they most often consume “other” types of media outlets were removed from the data analyses. As with student attitude measures toward law enforcement figures, these respondents would also dilute media attitude measures reported by the population sample thus making the analysis less accurate. Respondent’s reported amount

of media consumption was also measured and arranged into two subcategories. Respondents reported one of the six categorical amounts of media consumption which were identified as less than 1 hour, 1 to 3 hours, 4 to 6 hours, 7 to 8 hours, 9 to 10 hours, or more than 10 hours. After calculating the average amount of media consumption amongst the population sample these subcategories were classified as either *less media consumption* (less than 1 hour and 1-3 hours) or *more media consumption* (4-6 hours to more than 10 hours).

The fourth independent variable in this analysis was attitudes toward media displays of law enforcement figures. Each respondent rated media displays of law enforcement figures along general and performance dimensions using a Likert-type scale, 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). These ratings were averaged along general and performance dimensions using various measures of central tendency. To calculate overall general attitudes toward media displays of law enforcement figures, all ratings were added and then divided by the number of general dimensions. This was also conducted to calculate overall performance attitudes toward media displays of law enforcement figures. Overall general and performance attitudes toward media displays of law enforcement figures were then averaged and arranged into four subcategories. The first subcategory consisted of respondent ratings that were less than the average overall general measure and were classified as a *negative general media attitude*. The second subcategory consisted of respondent ratings that were higher than the average overall general measure and were classified as a *positive general media attitude*. The third subcategory consisted of respondent ratings that were less than the average overall performance measure and were classified as a *negative performance media attitude*. The fourth subcategory consisted of respondent ratings that were higher than the average overall performance measure and were classified as a *positive performance media attitude*.

This process was repeated to calculate attitude measures and separate overall general and performance attitudes toward law enforcement figures during contact into four subcategories. The first subcategory consisted of respondents who reported a lower than average overall general measure toward law enforcement figures during contact and were classified as *negative general contact attitude*. The second subcategory consisted of respondents who reported a higher than average overall general measure toward law enforcement figures during contact and were classified as *positive general contact attitude*. The third subcategory consisted of respondents who reported a lower than average overall performance measure toward law enforcement figures during contact and were classified as *negative performance contact attitude*. The fourth subcategory consisted of respondents who reported a higher than average overall performance measure toward law enforcement figures during contact and were classified as *positive performance contact attitude*.

To reach a more conclusive analysis, overall general and performance measures toward law enforcement figures during media displays and contact were also averaged to determine each respondent's *summarized media* and *contact measure*. Much like computing overall general and performance attitudes toward law enforcement figures during media displays and contact, measures of central tendency was used to determine the average of respondents' general and performance measures. After computing the average general and performance measures amongst respondents they were categorized into four subcategories. The first set of subcategories concerned ratings toward media displays of law enforcement figures. Of this set, respondents were arranged into two subcategories that were classified as either *negative summarized media measure* or *positive summarized media measure*. The second set of subcategories concerned ratings toward law enforcement figures during contact. Of this set, respondents were arranged

into two subcategories that were classified as either *negative summarized contact measure* or *positive summarized contact measure*. Respondents' summarized measures toward law enforcement figures during media displays and contact will be compared to determine disparities. These attitudes will also be compared to various independent variables by using multivariate or regression analysis to determine the relationship between summarized media and contact measures and descriptive subcategories.

Bivariate Analysis

A series of statistical and correlational analyses were used to determine what variables possessed a significant relationship. Analyses included a *Crosstabs/Chi Square*, a *Pearson's r*, and an *Independent Samples t-Test*. More specifically, these will examine the relationship between categorical, interval-ratio, and dichotomous independent variables and each respondent's summarized contact measures and attitudes toward law enforcement figures. For example, by comparing independent variables such as demographic subcategories, the respondent's type of contact, media outlet and media consumption with attitudes toward law enforcement figures, one can infer the strength of the relationship for further analyses.

Cross Tabs-Chi Square

To determine covariance between demographic subcategories and summarized contact measure subcategories, respondents' race, age, levels of education, and political orientation were compared to determine their relationship with attitudes toward law enforcement figures during contact. Other demographic information such as respondents' reported annual income and combined parental income were also compared during these analyses. To determine covariance between media variables and the dependent variable, subcategories within the media variables

were compared to respondents' summarized measures toward law enforcement figures during contact. In regards to media outlets, these analyses determined the relationship between *local* and *national-international news feeds* and *televised sitcoms-profiles* and the dependent variable. These analyses also compared respondents within *less* or *more media consumption* subcategories to determine their relationship with summarized contact measure subcategories. To determine covariance between each respondent's type of contact with law enforcement figures and the dependent variable, each respondent's criminality (*positive* or *negative in criminality*) was compared to their summarized contact measure subcategories.

Pearson's r

To determine covariance between interval-ratio variables respondents' reported age, income, parental income, and overall media ratings were compared to their summarized contact measure toward law enforcement figures during contact. This analysis was also used to compare overall general and performance measures toward law enforcement figures during both media displays and contact. This will determine the disparity between interval-ratio ratings toward law enforcement figures during both media displays and contact.

Independent Samples t-Test

To determine covariance between dichotomous variables and interval-ratio variables, subcategories within respondents' gender, race, media consumption, type of contact and overall general and performance media subcategories were compared to respondents' summarized contact measure toward law enforcement figures during contact. These categorical variables included: whether a respondent was male or female, white or nonwhite, consumed less or more media, were positive or negative in criminality, and held negative or positive overall general and

performance media attitudes. These were then compared to respondents' summarized contact measure toward law enforcement figures during contact to determine differences in means across subcategories.

Multivariate Analysis

After determining the relationship between variables, each independent variable was simultaneously compared to the dependent variable. These analyses determined which independent variables possessed the greatest influence on the dependent variable in accordance with the hypotheses. The first regression model examined the relationship between several demographic subcategories and summarized measures toward law enforcement figures during contact. The second regression model examined the relationship between media outlet and consumption subcategories and summarized measures toward law enforcement figures during contact. The final regression model examined the relationship between respondents' type of contact and summarized measures toward law enforcement figures during contact.

CHAPTER 5

RESULTS

Several analytical analyses were used to determine the relationship between various independent variables and dependent variables. First, univariate statistics were computed to describe the overall composition of the population sample. These statistics primarily served to subcategorize the overall composition of the population sample for further analysis. It should also be noted that these statistics are merely descriptive in nature and cannot be used to determine the relationship between variables. Second, bivariate statistics were computed to determine whether a relationship exist amongst several variables. This was conducted by using cross tabulations between categorical variables, a Chi Square test of independence between nominal variables, and an Independent Samples t-Test between dichotomous variables. Again, it should be noted that bivariate analyses cannot determine the causality between variables. Lastly, a series of multivariate or regression analyses were computed to exam each hypothesis and determine which variables concurrently possessed the greatest relative influence on the dependent variable.

Univariate Statistics

After conducting a series of central tendency measures the descriptive statistics computed the overall demographic composition of the population sample. These statistics are descriptive in nature and cannot be used to determine the relationship between variables. However these frequencies were calculated to determine the demographic composition of the population sample that will be compared to the ETSU undergraduate and graduate student populations to determine whether results can be generalized to larger student populations. There were 207 undergraduate

and graduate students in this study's population sample (n=207). Of these 207 student respondents 40.6% of respondents had identified themselves as male while 59.4% of respondents identified themselves as female (see Table 1).

Table 1

Frequencies: Sample Gender Composition

Variable	Frequency	Percent
Gender		
Male	84	40.6%
Female	123	59.4%
Total	207	100%

When discussing the racial composition of the population sample, 91% of respondents (189) had identified themselves as Caucasian while 8.69% of respondents (18) had report that they were of a minority race or “nonwhite” which include such responses as; “African American”, “Hispanic”, “Asian”, or simply “Other” (see Table 2). When discussing age, 58.93% of respondents (122) had reported that they were between the ages of 18 to 24 while 24.15% of respondents (50) had reported that they were between the ages of 25 to 34. Respondents who reported that they were 35 years of age or older constitute for 16.9% (35) of the population sample (see Table 2).

Table 2

Frequencies: Sample Race and Age Composition

	Variable	Frequency	Percent
Race	White	189	91.3%
	Nonwhite	18	8.69%
	African American	8	3.86%
	Hispanic	2	.96%
	Asian	2	.96%
	Other	6	2.89%
	Total	207	100%
Age	18-24	122	58.93%
	25-34	50	24.15%
	34-66	35	16.9%
	Total	207	100%

Respondent's annual income was also calculated using various methods of central tendency. This included their reported amount of annual earnings and/or cash assistance as well as the annual income of their parents. This calculation indicates that the average amount of reported annual income in the population sample was \$18,525 ($M=18,525$, $SD=18,441$). The minimum amount of reported annual income was \$600 while the maximum amount of reported annual income was \$120,000. In regards to combined parental income, the average reported amount of combined parental income amongst respondents within the population sample was \$71,710 ($M=71,710$, $SD=48,079$). The minimum reported amount of combined parental income was \$1,000 while the maximum reported amount of combined parental income was \$250,000 (see Table 3).

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics: Sample Income Averages

Variable	Min.	Max.	Mean	SD	Mode	Median
Reported Respondent Income <i>n</i> = 182	\$600	\$120,000	\$18,525	\$18,441	\$10,000	\$12,000
Reported Parental Income <i>n</i> = 152	\$1,000	\$250,000	\$71,710	\$48,079	\$100,000	\$62,500

In regards to education levels within the population sample, a majority of the respondents were in their junior to senior levels of education and constitute for 54.1% (112) of the population sample. Respondents who reported that they were in their freshman to sophomore levels of education constitute for 25.6% (53) of the population sample while respondents who reported that they were within their first to fourth year of graduate school constitute for 20.29% (42) of the population sample (see Table 4). Data was also collected on each respondent’s field of study. Reported fields of study ranged from STEM or Science, Technology, Engineering, or Mathematical fields to Undeclared. For the purposes of this study, such fields as Sociology, Social Psychology, and Social Work were categorized as “Social Art”. Respondents who reported that they were graduate students were also included in the field of study distribution and categorized based on their respective graduate discipline (see Table 5).

Table 4.

Frequencies: Sample Levels of Education Composition

Variable	Frequency	Percent
Education Level		
Freshman	26	12.6%
Sophomore	27	13%
Freshman/Sophomore	53	25.6%
Junior	52	25.1%
Senior	60	29%
Junior/Senior	112	54.1%
Graduate	42	20.29
Total	207	100%

Residency was also calculated which indicated that a vast majority of the population sample, roughly 85% (175) of the population sample, resided in the state of Tennessee prior to their acceptance to ETSU. A minority of students reported that they resided in Virginia, which made up 2.9% (6) of the population sample, North Carolina, which made up 4.3% (9) of the population sample or other states which made up for 8.2% (17) of the population sample (see Table 6). In regards to political orientation, a considerably majority of respondents (94) which constitute for 45.41% of the population sample reported that they were members of the Liberal or Democratic Parties. The second most popular political party was that of the Conservative or Republican (GOP) parties which constitute for 32.36% (67) of the population sample. Few respondents reported that they were either a member of the Independent Party (20) or held other political views ranging from other third parties to no political activity (26) (see Table 6).

Table 5

Frequencies: Sample Fields of Study Composition

Variable	Frequency	Percent
Field of Study		
STEM	46	22.2%
Social Art	39	18.8%
Business	19	9.2%
Psychology	19	9.2%
Education	18	8.7%
Criminal Justice	13	6.3%
Communication	12	5.8%
Languages	9	4.3%
History	7	3.4%
Political Science	6	2.9%
Art	6	2.9%
Sports Management	5	2.4%
Geography	3	1.4%
Philosophy	3	1.4%
Undeclared	2	1.0%
Total	207	100%

Table 6

Frequencies: Sample Residency and Political Orientation Composition

Variable	Frequency	Percent
Residency		
Tennessee	175	84.5%
Virginia	6	2.9%
North Carolina	9	4.3%
Other	17	8.2%
Total	207	100%
Political Orientation		
Liberal	48	23.2%
Democrat	46	22.2%
Liberal/Democrat	94	45.41%
Conservative	34	16.4%
Republican (GOP)	33	15.9%
Conservative/Republican	67	32.36%
Independent	20	9.7%
Other/No Political Activity	26	12.6%
Total	207	100%

To better understand the overall composition of the population sample, descriptive statistics were also computed to determine the distribution of independent variables other than demographic information. When discussing the overall disposition of the population sample or the type of contact which respondents most recently experienced with law enforcement figures, an overwhelming majority of respondents, 67.1% (139) had experienced contact while violating a traffic infraction. When discussing each respondent's most recent contact with law enforcement figures; 11.6% (24) reported that they were a victim, 4.8% (10) reported that they

were a witness, and 4.3% (9) reported that they were an arrestee, 1.9% (4) reported that they were a criminal suspect. Other categories of contact include contact with a law enforcement figure as a social bystander. For the purposes of this study, these respondents were classified as “other” (see Table 7).

Table 7

Frequencies: Sample Type of Contact Composition

Variable	Frequency	Percent
Type of Contact		
Traffic Infraction	139	67.1%
Arrestee	9	4.3%
Suspect	4	1.9%
Positive Criminality	152	73.43%
Victim	24	11.6%
Witness	10	4.8%
Other	10	3.9%
Negative Criminality	44	21.25%
None*	11	5.3%
Total	207	100%

**removed from analysis*

Respondents who reported “other” type of contact constitute 3.9% (10) of the population sample while respondents who reported “no” contact with a law enforcement figure constitute 5.3% (11) of the population sample. As previously noted, respondents who reported “no” contact with a law enforcement figure were removed from the data analysis. For the purposes of this study, when determining the relationship between the type of contact with law enforcement figures and attitudes toward law enforcement figures, respondents who reported they were violators of a traffic infraction, suspects, or arrestees were categorized as *positive in criminality* (152) while respondents who reported that they were victims, witnesses, or other were categorized as *negative in criminality* (44).

In regards to the most frequently reported media outlet that featured a media display of law enforcement figures, respondents most often reported that they consumed locally televised news programs. These respondents constitute 27.5% (57) of the population sample while respondents who reported that they most often consume nationally televised news programs constitute 17.9% (37) of the population sample. Respondents who most often consume local newspaper feeds constitute 10.1% (21) of the population sample while 3.4% (7) most often consumed national newspaper feeds. Respondents who most often consume television crime dramas constitute 18.4% (38) of the population sample while 4.3% (9) most often consume television crime documentaries. Respondents who most often consume internet news feeds constitute 16.4% (34) of the population sample while 1.9% (4) reported that they most often consume media sources other than the previously mentioned media outlets (see Table 8).

Table 8

Frequencies: Sample Media Outlet Composition

Variable	Frequency	Percent
Media Outlets		
Nationally Televised NP	37	17.9%
National Newspaper	7	3.4%
Internet News Feed	34	16.4%
Nat./Int. News Feed	78	37.68%
Locally Televised NP	57	27.5%
Local Newspaper	21	10.1%
Local News Feed	78	37.68%
Televised Crime Drama	38	18.4%
Televised Crime Doc.	9	4.3%
TV Sitcom-profile	47	22.07%
Other*	4	1.9%
Total	207	100%

**removed from analysis*

For the purposes of this study, these media outlets were categorized into three subcategories and were centered on the geographical extent of the particular news feed. The first

subcategory consisted of respondents who reported national newspapers, televised news programs, and external internet news feeds, which constitute 37.68% (78) of the population sample, and were classified as consuming *national-international news feeds*. The second subcategory consisted of respondents who reported local newspapers and televised news programs, which constitute 37.68% (78) of the population sample, were classified as consuming *local news feeds*. The third subcategory consisted of respondents who reported televised crime dramas or documentaries, which constitute for 22.07% (47) of the population sample, were classified as consuming *television sitcoms-profiles*. Responses that reported “other” media outlets were removed from the data analysis due to the little accuracy that this possible subcategory can render.

When discussing the most frequent amount of media consumption amongst respondents, a majority of respondents which constitute approximately 30% (62) of the population sample viewed between 1-3 hours of media displays featuring law enforcement figures. In other amounts of media consumption featuring law enforcement figures; approximately 28% (58) viewed between 4-6 hours, 15.9% (33) viewed less than 1 hour, 14% (29) viewed between 7-8 hours, 6.3% (13) viewed between 9-10 hours and 5.8% (12) viewed more than 10 hours (see Table 8.B.). The average amount of media consumption within the population sample ranges from 2.8 to 3.3 hours of media displays featuring law enforcement figures. Therefore respondents who consume 3 or less hours of media displays featuring law enforcement figures were categorized as *less media consumption* while respondents who consume 4 or more hours of media displays featuring law enforcement figures were categorized as *more media consumption* (see Table 9).

Table 9
Frequencies: Sample Media Consumption Composition

Variable	Frequency	Percent
Amount of Media Consumption		
Less than 1 Hour	33	15.9%
1-3 Hours	62	30%
Less Media Cons.	95	45.98%
4-6 Hours	58	28%
7-8 Hours	29	14%
9-10 Hours	13	6.3%
More than 10 Hours	12	5.8%
More Media Cons.	112	54.1%
Total	207	100%

When discussing ratings toward media displays featuring law enforcement figures along general and performance dimension subcategories, respondent ratings were averaged using their Likert-type responses. When determining the overall general dimension measures toward media displays of law enforcement figures respondents were asked “the media outlet mentioned above displays police-law enforcement figure(s) as:” across all nine general dimension (see Table 10). When determining the overall performance measure toward media displays of law enforcement figures respondents were asked “the media outlet mentioned above displays police-law enforcement figure(s) as effective at:” across all eight performance dimension (see Table 11).

Table 10

Frequencies: Sample General Attitude Measures Composition

Variable	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
General Dimensions					
Courtesy	12	24	68	75	27
Respect	12	35	55	75	30
Fair	16	29	61	68	33
Trust	15	34	48	64	46
Honest	15	34	52	67	39
Impartial	28	39	62	54	24
Racial Prejudiced	50	39	46	47	25
Social Prejudiced	46	43	51	46	21
Economic Prejudiced	45	44	45	52	21
Total	207	207	207	207	207
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

Using measures of central tendency, all Likert-type responses were averaged within general and performance dimensions when reporting ratings toward media displays of law enforcement figures. Therefore the maximum measure of overall general measure toward media displays featuring law enforcement figures was 45 while the minimum measure of overall general measure toward media displays featuring law enforcement figures was nine. For each respondent, these ratings were summed and subsequently divided by the amount of general dimensions to compute an overall general measure toward media displays featuring law enforcement figures. Within the population the average overall general measure toward media displays featuring law enforcement figures was 26.59 ($M=26.59$, $SD=7.56$). For the purposes of this study, respondents who reported an average overall general measure toward media displays

featuring law enforcement figures of 26.22 and lower, which constitute 49.5% (100) of the population sample, were categorized as reporting an overall *negative general media attitude* toward media displays featuring law enforcement figures. Respondents who reported an average overall general measure toward media displays featuring law enforcement figures of 26.33 and higher, which constitute 51% (103) of the population sample, were categorized as reporting an overall *positive general media attitude* toward media displays featuring law enforcement figures (see Table 12).

Table 11

Frequencies: Sample Performance Attitude Measures Composition

Variable	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Performance Dimensions					
Reduce Crime	10	21	60	65	51
Reduce Victimization	12	22	61	72	40
Red. Fear of Vic.	17	21	68	57	44
Interact w/ Comm.	13	18	58	65	53
Solve Comm. Prob.	12	26	49	77	43
Maintain Order	12	19	52	74	50
Protect Public	14	19	55	66	53
Respond Timely	10	25	48	75	48
Total	207	207	207	207	207
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

This process was repeated to calculate the average overall performance measure across performance dimensions. However this dimension consists of eight subcategories, therefore the maximum measure of overall performance measure toward media displays featuring law enforcement figures was 40 while the minimum measure of overall performance measure toward media displays featuring law enforcement figures was eight. Within the population sample the average overall performance measure toward media displays featuring law enforcement figures

was 25.34 ($M=25.34$, $SD=6.72$). For the purposes of this study, respondents who reported an average overall performance measure average of 26.38 and lower, which constitute 48% (97) of the population sample, were categorized as reporting an overall *negative performance media attitude* toward media displays featuring law enforcement figures. Respondents who reported an average overall performance measure of 26.5 and higher, which constitute 52% (105) of the population sample, were categorized as reporting an overall *positive performance media attitude* toward media displays featuring law enforcement figures (see Table 9).

Table 12

Descriptive Statistics: Sample Summarized Media Measures Averages

Variable	Min.	Max.	Mean	SD	Mode	Median
Summarized Measures/Media Displays						
Overall General Measure	8.11	40.56	26.59	7.56	24.33	26.33
Overall Performance Measure	7.13	35.63	25.34	6.72	21.38	26.50

After computing overall general and performance attitudes toward media displays of law enforcement figures the same methods of central tendency were used when computing overall general and performance attitudes toward law enforcement figures during contact. Within the population sample the average overall general measure toward law enforcement figures during contact was 29.27 ($M=29.27$, $SD=7.89$). For the purposes of this study, respondents who reported an overall general measure toward law enforcement during contact of 30.22 and lower, which constitute 48.5% (98) of the population sample, were categorized as reporting an overall *negative general contact attitude* toward law enforcement figures during contact. Respondents who reported an average overall general measure toward law enforcement during contact of 30.33 and higher, which constitute 50% (101) of the population sample, were categorized as reporting an

overall *positive general contact attitude* toward law enforcement figures during contact (see Table 13).

This process was repeated to calculate the average across performance dimensions. Within the population sample the average overall performance measure toward law enforcement figures during contact was 22.41 ($M=22.41, SD=6.43$). For the purposes of this study, respondents who reported an average overall performance measure of 23.25 and lower, which constitute 49.5% (101) of the population sample, were categorized as reporting an overall *negative performance contact attitude* toward law enforcement figures during contact. Respondents who reported an average overall performance measure toward law enforcement figures during contact of 23.38 and higher, which constitute 50% (101) of the population sample, were categorized as reporting an overall *positive performance contact attitude* toward law enforcement figures during contact (see Table 13).

Table 13

Descriptive Statistics: Sample Summarized Contact Measures Averages

Variable	Min.	Max.	Mean	SD	Mode	Median
Summarized Measures/Contact with Law						
Overall General Measure	8.33	40.56	29.27	7.89	40.56	30.38
Overall Performance Measure	7.13	35.63	22.41	6.43	27.63	23.37

Using methods of central tendency, each respondent was classified into four subcategories concerning their summarized measures toward law enforcement figures during both media displays and contact. The first set of subcategories concerned summarized measures toward media display of law enforcement figures. Within the population the minimum summarized media measure was 11.67 while the maximum summarized media measure was 58.37 therefore, the average summarized media measure toward media displays featuring law

enforcement figures was 39.26 ($M=39.26$, $SD=10.14$). For the purposes of this study, respondents who reported an average summarized media measure of 39.58 and lower, which constitute 49.5% (101) of the population sample, were categorized as reporting a *negative summarized media measure* toward media displays featuring law enforcement figures. Respondents who reported an average summarized media measure of 40.02 and higher, which constitute 50% (101) of the population sample, were categorized as reporting a *positive summarized media measure* toward media displays featuring law enforcement figures (see Table 14).

This process was repeated to arrange respondents into the second set of subcategories which concerned summarized measures toward law enforcement figures during contact. Within the population sample the minimum summarized contact measure was 15.02 while the maximum summarized contact measure was 58.37 therefore, the average summarized contact measure toward law enforcement figures during contact was 40.48 ($M=40.48$, $SD=9.46$). For the purposes of this study, respondents who reported an average summarized contact measure of 41.43 and lower, which constitute 49.5% (101) of the population sample, were categorized as reporting a *negative summarized contact measure* toward law enforcement figures during contact. Respondents who reported an average summarized contact measure of 41.51 and higher, which constitute 50% (101) of the population sample, were categorized as reporting a *positive summarized contact measure* toward law enforcement figures during contact (see Table 14).

Table 14

Descriptive Statistics: Sample Summarized Measures Averages

Variable	Min.	Max.	Mean	SD	Mode	Median
Summarized Measure/Media Displays						
Summarized Media Measure	11.67	58.37	39.52	10.14	35.02	40.08
Summarized Measure/Contact with Law						
Summarized Contact Measure	15.02	58.37	40.48	9.46	49.24	41.51

The composite demographic statistics of respondents in this study are similar to those reported in the *ETSU Fact Book for Statistical Profiles* published by the Office of Planning and Research for academic year 2012. The Office of Planning and Research indicated that roughly 84.85% of the ETSU student population had identified themselves as Caucasian or “White” while the minority or “Nonwhite” students had made up 15.15% of the ETSU student population. This is also true in regards to gender identification which indicated that students who identify themselves as female had made up 58.41% of the student population while respondents who identified themselves as male had made up 41.59% of the student population. The Office of Planning and Research also reported that the median age group of undergraduate and graduate students is from 18-24 years of age which constitute for roughly 67.46% of the student population. They also indicate that students from 25-34 years of age constitute for 16.88% of the student population and students who are 35 years of age or older constitute for 13.41% of the student population. The current study’s population sample is also reflective of the ETSU student population in regards to educational levels. The Office of Planning and Researching indicated that 44.88% (6,525) of ETSU students are in their junior and senior levels of education. This is also true for students in their freshman to junior levels of education, which constitute for 36.48% (5,303), and students in their first to fourth year of graduate school, which constitute for 15.61%

(2,269) of the student population. In regards to residency, the Office of Planning and Research indicated that 83% of the ETSU student population resided in Tennessee, 5% resided in Virginia, 4% resided in North Carolina, and 8% resided in other states.

When comparing other demographic information such as political orientation, the population sample reflected in this study slightly differs from the data collected following the 2012 presidential election. According to the 2012 *National Election Pool* roughly 46% of voters were affiliated with the Liberal or Democratic Parties which was reflective the current study's political composition which was 54.5% of the population sample. However when discussing Conservative and Republican (GOP) political orientation, the population sample was understated in comparison to the 2012 *National Election Pool* which constitute 51% of national voters while the population sample only constitute 32.3%.

Bivariate Statistics

Cross Tabs-Chi Square

After interval-ratio variables were categorized, Cross Tabs and Chi Square analyses were conducted to determine whether variables were independent of one another and/or independent of the subcategories within the dependent variable (*positive or negative contact attitude*). The first Cross Tabs analysis examined the relationship between categorical variables such age, race, gender, level of education, and political orientation subcategories and the subcategories of dependent variable (see Table 15).

This was subsequently followed by a Chi Square analysis to determine whether categorical variables were independent of one another (see Table 16). There were no significant relationships between demographic subcategories and whether respondents held a negative or

positive contact attitude toward law enforcement figures at the $p \leq .05$ level. However it should be noted that within nearly all demographic subcategories, with the exception of race and political orientation, respondents were evenly distributed along negative and positive contact attitudes toward law enforcement figures (see Table 15).

Table 15

Cross Tabs: Sample Demographics & Summarized Contact Measures Composition

Variable	Negative	Percent	Positive	Percent
Age				
18-24	65	56%	51	44%
25-34	21	42%	29	58%
35-66	13	38.2%	21	61.8%
Gender				
Male	39	47.5%	43	52.5%
Female	60	50.8%	58	49.2%
Race				
White	93	51.1%	89	48.9%
Nonwhite	6	33.3%	12	66.7%
Level of Education				
Fr-So	29	58%	21	42%
Ju-Sn	50	45.8%	59	54.2%
Grad.	20	48.7%	21	51.3
Political Orientation				
Liberal/Democrat	51	57.4%	43	42.6%
Conservative/Republican	30	46.8%	34	53.2%
Independent	7	33.3%	14	66.7%
Other/None	8	47.1%	9	52.9%

Table 16

Chi Square: Sample Demographics & Summarized Contact Measures

Variable	X ²	df	Sig.
Contact Attitude*Age	4.83	2	.089
Contact Attitude*Gender	2.09	1	.648
Contact Attitude*Race	2.07	1	.150
Contact Attitude* Level of Education	2.03	2	.363
Contact Attitude*Political Orientation	3.29	3	.349

The second Cross Tabs analysis examined the relationship between media outlet and consumption subcategories and the subcategories of the dependent variable (see Table 17). Respondents in media consumption and outlet subcategories were evenly distributed which provides a more accurate analysis between media variables and attitudes toward law enforcement figures. A Chi Square analysis was subsequently conducted between media consumption and outlet subcategories and subcategories of the dependent variable. However, much to the same effect of demographic subcategories, no significance was found between media consumption and outlet subcategories and negative or positive contact attitudes toward law enforcement figures (see Table 18).

Table 17
Cross Tabs: Sample Media Variables & Summarized Contact Measures Composition

Variable	Negative	Percent	Positive	Percent
Media Outlet				
Local News Feed	39	50.6%	38	49.4%
Nat./Int. News Feed	37	49.3%	38	50.7%
TV Sitcom-profile	21	47.7%	23	52.3%
Media Consumption				
Less Consumption	45	49.4%	46	50.6%
More Consumption	54	49.5%	55	50.5%

Table 18
Chi Square: Sample Media Variables & Summarized Contact Measures

Variable	X ²	df	Sig.
Contact Attitude*Media Outlet	.097	3	.992
Contact Attitude*Media Consumption	.000	2	.990

The final Cross Tabs analysis examined the relationship between type of contact subcategories and the subcategories of the dependent variable (see Table 19). After reviewing

this analysis, it is easy to notice the disparity between negative contact attitudes and respondents who were categorized as either negative or positive in criminality. As indicated, a large majority of respondents who were classified as negative in criminality generally reported a positive contact attitude. However given the uneven distribution amongst the different types of contact subcategories it is difficult to determine the accuracy of this analysis. Subsequently, a Chi Square was computed to draw further accuracy in determining the independence between type of contact subcategories and subcategories of the dependent variable (see Table 20). The Chi Square analysis between contact subcategories and dependent variable subcategories render no significance at the $p \leq .05$ level.

Table 19
Cross Tabs: Sample Contact & Summarized Contact Measures Composition

Variable	Negative	Percent	Positive	Percent
Positive in Criminality	81	53.7%	70	46.3%
Traffic Infraction	71	51.4%	67	48.6%
Arrestee	5	55.5%	4	44.5%
Suspect	2	50%	2	50%
Negative in Criminality	15	34.8%	28	65.2%
Victim	7	28%	18	72%
Witness	7	70%	3	30%
Other	6	54.5%	5	44.5%

Table 20
Chi Square: Sample Contact Summarized Contact Measures

Variable	X^2	df	Sig.
Contact Attitude* Criminality	4.92	2	.086

Correlation

Pearson's r correlational coefficients were generated across interval-ratio independent and dependent variables. These correlations are only appropriate to determine a relationship between interval-ratio variables. A correlation value of -1 would represent a negative linear relationship, +1 would represent a positive linear relationship, and 0 would represent that no relationship is existent. This analysis examined the relationships between age, reported respondent and parental income, and each respondent's summarized and overall general and performance measures toward law enforcement figures during both media displays and contact. These analyses also examined the relationship between overall general and performance measures and summarized measures during both media displays and contact. Within demographic variables, age and reported respondent and parental income were analyzed with overall general and performance measures toward law enforcement figures during both media displays and contact. With regards to overall general and performance measures toward media displays of law enforcement figures, a significant relationship was found between reported respondent income and overall and performance measures at the level $p \leq .05$ level ($r = -.152$; $p \leq .05$). However this negative linear relationship is far too weak to draw a conclusive understanding between respondent income and performance measures toward media displays featuring law enforcement figures. No significance was found between age and reported parental income and overall general and performance measures toward law enforcement figures during both media displays and contact at the $p \leq .05$ level (see Table 21).

This analysis also examined the relationship between summarized measures that combined overall general and performance measures toward law enforcement figures during both media displays and contact to provide a more inclusive analysis. A significant relationship

was found between overall general and performance attitudes toward media displays of law enforcement figures at the $p \leq .01$ level. This illustrates the level of covariance between overall general and performance measures toward media displays featuring law enforcement figures. This can be supported by the relationship between summarized media measures and overall general and performance measures toward media displays featuring law enforcement figures.

A significant relationship was also found between overall general and performance measures toward law enforcement figures during contact at the $p \leq .01$ level. Much like the relationship between overall general and performance measures toward media displays of law enforcement figures, this relationship illustrates the covariance between overall general and performance measures toward law enforcement figures during contact. Once more, this can be supported by the relationship between summarized contact measure and overall general and performance measures toward law enforcement figures during contact.

Table 21

Pearson Correlation Matrix Results

	Age	R. Income	P. Income	Gen. Media Measures	Perf. Media Measures	Gen. Contact Measures	Perf. Contact Measures	Summarized Media Measure	Summarized Contact Measure
Age	1	.029	.055	.027	.112	-.008	.082	.057	.021
R. Income	.029	1	.066	-.188	-1.52*	.016	-.025	-.139	.004
P. Income	.055	.066	1	-.069	.051	-.059	-.019	-.068	-.056
Gen. Media Measures	.027	-.188	-.069	1	.679**	.081	.099	.970**	.101
Perf. Media Measures	.112	-.152*	.051	.679**	1	.05	.099	.837**	.075
Gen. Contact Measures	-.008	.016	-.059	.081	.05	1	.332**	.077	.947**
Perf. Contact Measures	.082	-.025	-.019	.099	.099	.332**	1	.106	.617**
Summarized Media Measure	.057	-.139	-.068	.970**	.837**	.077	.106	1	.100
Summarized Contact Measure	.021	.004	-.056	.101	.075	.947**	.617**	.100	1

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Independent Samples t-Test

An Independent Samples t-Test was used given the dichotomous arrangement of variables within this study. This analysis compared respondents within summarized and overall general and performance measures of law enforcement figures during both media displays and contact. Therefore the dichotomous variables which were analyzed in comparison to summarized and overall general and performance measures were gender, race, media consumption, type of contact, and media attitude subcategories. This analysis determined whether respondents in various subcategories possess significantly different means across summarized and overall

general and performance measures of law enforcement figures during media displays and contact (see Table 22).

Table 22

Independent Samples t-Test Results

Variable	Mean	<i>t</i>	Df	Sig.
Gender		.481	200	.631
Male	40.87			
Female	40.22			
Race		-1.78	200	.077
White	40.12			
Nonwhite	44.25			
Media Consumption		.013	200	.989
Less Consumption	40.49			
More Consumption	40.48			
Type of Contact		-2.57*	200	.011
Positive in Criminality	39.49			
Negative in Criminality	43.48			
General Media Subcategories		-2.29*	200	.023
Positive Gen. Media Attitude	38.99			
Negative Gen. Media Attitude	42.03			
Performance Media Subcategories		-.898	200	.370
Positive Perf. Media Attitude	39.87			
Negative Perf. Media Attitude	41.07			

After reviewing the Independent Samples t-Test, one should notice the significant differences in summarized contact measure between respondents who were categorized as either positive or negative in criminality at the $p \leq .05$ level. Therefore respondents who were subcategorized as positive in criminality reported a significantly different summarized contact measure than respondents who were subcategorized as negative in criminality; $t(200) = -2.57$, $p = .011$). This was also true for respondents who were subcategorized as reporting a negative general media attitude ($M = 38.99$, $SD = 9.28$) and respondents who were subcategorized as reporting a positive general media attitude ($M = 42.03$, $SD = 9.49$); $t(200) = -2.29$, $p = .023$).

Multivariate Statistics

Lastly, a Linear Regression model was used to determine the variable relationships in concurrence with the dependent variable. Each independent variable was accompanied by a beta score to determine relationships between several other independent variables. The Regression analysis examined the concurrent relationship between both subcategory and interval-ratio variables. Therefore, the various categorical independent variables included age, gender, race, level of education, types of contact, media outlets, media consumption, and overall general and positive media attitudes. These subcategories were also compared to interval-ratio variables such as respondents' reported income and parental income. The dependent variable was of an interval-ratio level of measurement and consisted of respondents' summarized measures toward law enforcement figures during contact. However it should also be noted that this analysis' population sample was considerably limited because each respondent must have reported information within the previously stated variables.

Table 23

Regression Results

	Summarized Contact Measure	Age Categories	Gender	Race	Level of Education	Respondent Income	Parental Income	Criminality	Media Outlet	Media Consumption	Summarized Media Measure
Summarized Contact Measure	1	.143	.020	.208**	.114	-.036	-.036	.145*	.079	.027	.146*
Age Categories	.143	1	-.106	.047	.500**	.515**	-.034	.102	.066	-.116	-.128
Gender	.020	-.106	1	-.048	-.033	-.115	.071	-.003	.116	-.146*	.021
Race	.208**	.047	-.048	1	.065	.063	.050	.290**	.035	-.028	-.056
Level of Education	.114	.500**	-.033	.065	1	.366**	.079	.062	.064	-.107	-.070
Respondent Income	-.036	.515**	-.115	.063	.366**	1	.066	.182*	.059	-.089	-.145*
Parental Income	-.036	-.034	.071	.050	.079	.066	1	-.061	.002	.029	-.145*
Criminality	.145*	.102	-.003	.290**	.062	.182*	-.061	1	.023	.028	.131
Media Outlet	.079	.066	.116	.035	.064	.059	.002	.023	1	-.093	.056
Media Consumption	.027	-.116	-.146*	-.028	-.107	-.089	.029	.028	-.093	1	-.028
Summarized Media Measure	.146*	-.128	.021	-.056	-.070	-.145*	-.145*	.131	.056	-.028	1

* significant at the 0.05 level

**significant at the 0.01 level

The multivariate analysis shows marginal, if any, support for the hypotheses regarded in this study. However, one should notice the significance stated in the bivariate analysis referring to race and summarized contact measure toward law enforcement figures during contact (see Table 23). According to the bivariate statistics, respondent race and summarized contact measure possessed a significant relationship $b=.208$, $t(119)=1.82$, $p=.034$. Though this relationship is significant it is far too weak to accurately predict the direction of the relationship. This is also the case between the criminality of the respondent (*positive or negative in criminality*) and their summarized contact measure. The linear regression model suggests that both variables are

significantly related $b=.145$, $t(119)=.753$, $p=.049$ but render a very weak relationship. This relationship is nearly identical to that of each respondent's summarized media measure (*positive* or *negative media attitude*) and summarized contact measure $b=.146$, $t(119)=1.68$, $p=.049$. In regards to the relationships between independent variables and the dependent variable, no significance was found for any other independent variable at the $p \leq .05$ level ($R^2=.123$ $F(10,119)= 1.67$, $p .097$).

Summary

The various methods of analysis used in this study indicated a variety of relationships amongst variables. In principle terms, two of the hypotheses in this study can be supported by the data analysis while two cannot. In regards to the relationships between demographic information and the dependent variable, the multivariate analysis suggests a significant relationship between one's race and attitudes toward law enforcement figures $b=.208$, $t(119)=1.82$, $p=.034$ (see Table 23). As provided by previous literature, these findings do in fact affirm the relationship between race and attitudes toward law enforcement figures. However this study's results indicate that minority or "nonwhite" respondents typically reported more positive attitudes toward law enforcement figures than their Caucasian or "white" counterparts. This is perhaps due to several reasons but first and foremost it should be noted that the minority or "nonwhite" population sample within this study were in fact students. This may explain the disparity in recent findings due primarily to each "nonwhite" respondent's level of education and income. Recent research had typically possessed minority populations that reported lower than average levels of education and income. This is also true in consideration to external and ecological factors, "nonwhite" respondents in this study reported similar external and ecological standings as their "white" counterparts. Therefore it is assumed that "nonwhite" student respondents are less influenced by

their reported individual, external, and ecological information than previous research had suggested. These findings also suggest a relationship between the type of contact one experiences and his or her attitudes toward law enforcement figures $b=.145$, $t(119) = .753$, $p=.049$ (see Table 23). This study can affirm previous findings that suggested individuals who were either a violator of a simple traffic infraction, a criminal arrestee, or a criminal suspect typically possess more negative attitudes toward law enforcement figures than individuals who were either a victim, witness, or social bystander. Therefore, based on the criminality of an individual, or one's criminal history, one can determine whether they may possess a negative or positive attitude toward law enforcement figures. On the other hand, the data also suggest that no significant relationships exist between either the media outlet that one most often consumes or the amount of media they consume and their attitudes toward law enforcement figures. However one can infer, given the significant relationship between summarized media and contact measures, that the media does affect attitudes toward law enforcement figures. It should also be noted that these findings were centered on student attitudes and are therefore limited in areas of generalization.

CHAPTER 6

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to explore the extent to which media influences impact student attitudes toward law enforcement figures. In regards to previous research, professionals have identified a series of individual, external, and ecological variables that give rise to attitudes toward law enforcement figures. This is most notable in the recent findings of Lai and Zhao (2010), Frank et al. (2005), Brown and Benedict (2002), Mastrofski et al. (2001), and various other researchers. However little information has been provided on student attitudes toward law enforcement figures and even less information on the development of such attitudes in consideration to media influences. The findings outlined in this study provide little affirmation to previous research in areas concerning race, contact with police, media consumption, and attitudes toward law enforcement figures. As these findings suggest, the previously stated variables are especially critical within student populations and their development of attitudes toward law enforcement figures.

Methodology

When assessing public attitudes of law enforcement figures, the variables examined in this study were of grave importance. The research pioneers mentioned in this study's literature review were very accurate in determining the variables to which the public assess and evaluate law enforcement figures. These variables such as those outlined across general (e.g. courtesy, fairness, impartiality, respect, etc...) and performance (e.g. reducing crime and victimization, solving community problems, timely responses, etc...) dimensions are templates for measure that can be applied to fields that assess consumer satisfaction, public safety, and community

service. This is also transferrable to the variables that influence and develop public attitudes toward law enforcement figures. One's internal (demographic), external (contact with police and media consumption), and ecological (community environments and community organization) are fundamental in developing an aggregation of attitudes toward law enforcement figures. As witnessed in this study, these variables were clearly present in respondents' development and report of their attitudes toward law enforcement figures. Therefore, the variables examined in previous research on respondents in the general public were present in this study's population sample which consisted of post-secondary level students.

Findings

As identified by previous research, various internal, external, and ecological variables play a considerable role in the development of attitudes toward law enforcement figures. This study was able to affirm these findings in areas concerning race (internal) and contact with police and media consumption (external). In regards to race (internal), Brown and Benedict (2002) had outlined a series of internal variables, most notably race, to be a decisive factor in developing attitudes toward law enforcement figures. They also stated that race possessed an interdependent relationship with external and contextual variables. This study was limited in determining the relationship between race and external variables which is not to say that this relationship does not exist within a student population. Various factors in student populations curb the examination of this relationship and how it impacts attitudes toward law enforcement figures. First and foremost, factors such as financial instability and community impoverishment have little to no effect to secondary level students who most often possess a heightened sense of financial stability than do their nonstudent counterparts. Community impoverishment is also merely nonexistent amongst post-secondary students. Most student populations typically come from

communities and geographical areas that are not plagued by severe conditions of poverty.

Furthermore, in regards to Dean's (1980) findings that minorities are more often than their Caucasian counterparts to be confronted by law enforcement figures in situations concerning criminality and therefore tend to develop negative attitudes to law enforcement figures in whole cannot be supported by this study. Although this study's population sample is disproportionate in regards to race, minority respondents typically reported more positive attitudes toward law enforcement figures than their Caucasian counterparts.

Lai and Shao (2010) found that African Americans and Hispanics had reported significantly less favorable attitudes toward law enforcement figures than their Caucasian counterparts. As previously noted, this study's findings contradict this occurrence within the student population. Respondents who had classified themselves as "nonwhite" had reported significantly higher general contact measures than their Caucasian counterparts. Furthermore, nearly 67% of nonwhite respondents held a positive summarized contact measure while 23% of nonwhite respondents held negative summarized contact measure.

In variables concerning levels of education (internal), this study was unable to provide an accurate examination of education and attitudes toward law enforcement figures as provided by Brindenball and Jesilow (2008). These researchers found that those who held negative attitudes toward law enforcement figures were often respondents who possessed little to no formal education. These findings are merely impossible to determine in this study because all participants did in fact possess some degree of formal education. However the findings reported in this study can be used as a baseline for comparison to members of the general public who possess very little to no formal education. This could in fact support previous research that

indicated differences in attitudes toward law enforcement figures with consideration to levels of education.

When discussing other internal variables such as age, this study did consist of a population sample with an average age of 22 years old which was reflective of both the ETSU student population and the general public. Therefore this study's findings on age and attitudes toward law enforcement figures can be generalized to members of the general population. This is also the case in regards to political orientation. Upon examination of the political composition of the general public a majority of the populace are in the Liberal and Democratic areas of political orientation. This study found that an overwhelming proportion of the population sample reported that they were members of one of these areas of political orientation.

When discussing external variables a large portion of the population sample resided in rural or suburban areas. Geographical and structural compositions can be indicative of attitudes toward law enforcement figures as well as the type of law enforcement figures to which individuals most frequently experience contact. As suggested by Brown and Benedict (2002), rural respondents typically report more positive attitudes toward law enforcement figures. These researchers stated that this was due to rural respondents' distance from urban areas, which are often regarded as having more incidents involving crime and policing than rural areas. Unfortunately, this cannot be contested amongst respondents in this population sample due to the fact that an overwhelming majority resided in rural areas or away from areas that experience more accounts of crime and policing. In all, the findings in this study can and should be compared to universities of similar size that are located in urban areas.

When discussing media consumption (external) and attitudes toward law enforcement figures, Surette (1992) stated a majority of the public receives much of their impressions from entertainment television. This widely accepted and was dually noted in this study however, this study found no significant relationship between the types of media program one most often consumes and their attitudes toward law enforcement figures. It was hypothesized that respondents who reported positive attitudes towards law enforcement figures would also report that they most often consume media displays of law enforcement figures through various crime dramas and documentaries. This was not the case and refutes evidence of this phenomenon within a student population. This can also be applied to the previous findings set forth by McNeely (1995) who suggested that society often “mirrors” media presentations when developing their attitudes toward law enforcement figures. The contradiction at hand could actually support the reasoning that students are perhaps less “feeble minded” and choose to be more proactive in developing their attitudes toward law enforcement figures. This can be justified after realizing that a majority of respondents in this study consumed news outlets more often than crime dramas and documentaries. This may indicate that students are more inclined to separate their attitudes toward law enforcement figures from media presentations or the manner to which these media outlets present law enforcement figures.

Limitations

The variables analyzed in this study were very similar to those found in previous research. However, the methods used to collect data was slightly different. First and foremost, this study used an online questionnaire whereas previous research typically used open ended interviews and surveys or questionnaires. By using interviews rather than surveys or questionnaires, researchers can be more selective in examining the data that provides the most

significance in developing attitudes toward law enforcement figures. This was nonexistent in this study and was yet another contributor to the narrow scope of these findings. Secondly, this study used a Likert-type scale that consisted of five possible responses ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree”. Such responses included attitudes of neutrality in general and performance dimensions and can be problematic when arranging dichotomous populations. This was problematic because neutral attitudes typically dilute attitude measures and can compromise the accuracy of attitude analysis. Furthermore, respondents who report neutral attitudes typically possess little to no understanding of the dimension’s presence during their reported type of contact and are therefore subjected to report a neutral attitude. Thirdly, questions concerning respondent and parental income, political orientation, and types of contact barred a collection of respondents from multivariate analyses. Respondents who failed to report relevant data in these fields made it considerably difficult to determine the relationship between such variables and their attitudes toward law enforcement figures that again narrowed the scope of this study’s findings. Lastly and perhaps most critically, this study’s population sample only consisted of post-secondary level students. Therefore it is difficult to determine the relationship between variables with a strong degree of certainty and transparency to the general public. It should also be noted that the findings of this study are limited to student populations that are geographically, structurally, and quantifiably similar to East Tennessee State University. Future research should consider the relationships between these variables within this unique area of society to provide an aggregate understanding of public attitudes toward law enforcement figures.

Implications

Exposure to this study did not establish a significant relationship between media outlets and student attitudes toward law enforcement figures. There may be several possible explanations for these findings. Perhaps students simply disregard media displays featuring law enforcement figures or simply regard such media outlets as entertainment with little to no application in the development of their attitudes toward law enforcement figures. Furthermore, this study was successful in examining the differences in viewing media outlets by a student population rather than by the general public. Also, to better understand the effects of police contact on attitudes toward law enforcement figures a more thorough analysis should examine separate forms of contact. This study, which classified respondents based on their criminality during contact, did not examine the effects of a particular criminal or otherwise deviant action on the development of attitudes toward law enforcement figures. For example, to have a better understanding in attitudes toward law enforcement figures following offenses such as traffic infractions, one can examine the differences in attitudes between respondents who were cited for speeding or illegal parking. Both situations are somewhat similar in penalty and severity but provide different circumstances and therefore may produce a different measure of law enforcement figures along general and performance dimensions. This can also be said when determining differences in attitudes between violent and non-violent offenders.

Future Research

Following the analyses of this study it was determined that the impact of media influences on student attitudes toward law enforcement figures was much lower than generally expected. Therefore future research should encompass student related sectors of society to

increase generalizations across both the general public and student populations. Future research should also involve more complex areas of media outlets, presentations, and influences. This study attempted to determine differences amongst local and national-international news feeds and television sitcoms-profiles. By examining differences in media displays featuring law enforcement figures as provided by various news programs, research can determine more specific relationships. This can also incorporate, as was the attempt in this study, examining the convergence between internal differences such as political attitudes and media influences as variables that shape attitudes toward law enforcement figures.

This approach can also broaden areas of research concerning variables that are unique to law enforcement structures such as militarization and their relationship to media influences and attitudes toward law enforcement figures. Furthermore these examinations can include media influences and attitudes held by law enforcement figures toward the general public. With a thorough understanding of internal matters concerning law enforcement figures further research can develop a more holistic understanding of the development of attitudes toward law enforcement figures.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: Informed Consent Document

Media Influences and Student Attitudes Toward Law Enforcement Figures Within Northeast Tennessee

IRB #: C1112.15sw-ETSU

Dear Respondent,

You are about to take part in an online research study that will examine student attitudes toward various law enforcement figures. This research will be collected in the format of a questionnaire via email and will take roughly 15 minutes to complete. During this online questionnaire you may be asked questions regarding your contact with state, local, or federal law enforcement figures. You must be at least 18 years of age and you may be asked to describe, in slight detail, your contact with these various law enforcement figures. This may bring about embarrassing, shameful, or unpleasant feelings. However, your participation is completely voluntary therefore at any point, if you so choose, you may waive your right to participate without penalty or loss of benefits. If you happen to waive your right to participate while completing the questionnaire your data will be removed from the online databank and you may close your browser. It is your right to remain anonymous during and after this online research study. Therefore your identity, personal information, or self-reported deviant/criminal history will NOT, under any circumstance, be disclosed to the general public. However your data may in fact be publicized to advance recent findings involving public perception and law enforcement figures. If at any point during the online questionnaire you find yourself confused or misinformed please feel free to respond to the sender of this questionnaire with any questions you may have. Your participation in this online research study is greatly appreciated as your data may be used to provide reason to explain student attitudes toward law enforcement figures. It is my intent that you also benefit from this research, therefore each of you will receive an expedient debriefing via email which will explain the full scope and results of this study. If you have any questions regarding this research study, please feel free to contact me via email at fordgt@goldmail.etsu.edu. If at any time you are unaware of your rights as a research subject, please feel free to contact the chairperson of the Institutional Review Board at ETSU at (423) 439-6054. If you have any questions or concerns about the research and would want to contact someone independent of the research team please feel free to contact the IRB Coordinator at (423) 439-6055 or (423) 439-6002.

Sincerely,

George T. Ford

East Tennessee State University

Tel: (423) 439-5346

Fax: (423) 439-4660

APPENDIX B: Questionnaire

Student Demographic Information

IRB #: C1112.15sw-ETSU

Age (during questionnaire) _____
Sex <input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female
Race <input type="checkbox"/> African-American (non-Hispanic/black) <input type="checkbox"/> Caucasian (non-Hispanic/white) <input type="checkbox"/> Hispanic <input type="checkbox"/> Asian <input type="checkbox"/> Other (describe) _____
Income (total annual earnings/cash assistance) \$ _____
Parental Income (total annual earnings/cash assistance) \$ _____
Primary Residence (before you attended ETSU) County _____ State/Province _____ Country _____
Education Level/Field (current education completion and field of study) Undergraduate Education <input type="checkbox"/> Freshman <input type="checkbox"/> Sophomore <input type="checkbox"/> Junior <input type="checkbox"/> Senior <input type="checkbox"/> Complete Major(s) _____ Minor(s) _____ Graduate Education <input type="checkbox"/> First Year <input type="checkbox"/> Second Year <input type="checkbox"/> Third Year <input type="checkbox"/> Fourth Year M.A./M.S.(s) _____ Ph.D.(s) _____
Political Orientation (please choose one of the following political parties/groups) <input type="checkbox"/> Conservative <input type="checkbox"/> Republican (GOP) <input type="checkbox"/> Democrat <input type="checkbox"/> Liberal <input type="checkbox"/> Independent <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____

Attitudes toward Law Enforcement Figure(s)

IRB #: C1112.15sw-ETSU

Contact with Law Enforcement Figure(s) (if any)

Have you ever had contact with a law enforcement figure (police, deputy, sheriff, detective, etc...) whether as a violator of a traffic infraction, criminal suspect, criminal arrestee, victim, witness, or "other"? If yes, check the most recent type of contact.

- None (skip to section 3)
- Violation of a Traffic Infraction
- Criminal Suspect
- Criminal Arrestee (misdemeanor or felony)
- Victim
- Witness
- Other (describe) _____

Type of Law Enforcement Figure(s)

If you have ever had contact with a law enforcement figure, please identify what type of law enforcement figure contacted you. Check the most recent type of law enforcement figure.

- Local Police Officer (e.g. Sheriff's Department, local, city, or metropolitan Police)
- State Trooper/Highway Patrol (e.g. Tennessee, Virginia, North Carolina Highway Patrol, etc...)
- Federal Law Enforcement Officer/Agent (e.g. DEA, FBI, ATF, etc...)
- Other (describe) _____

Common/General Dimensions

1 Strongly Agree	2 Agree	3 Neutral	4 Disagree	5 Strongly Disagree
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"During contact with this law enforcement figure(s), he/she was;" Please check one of the five following values below each general dimension. Values range from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree).

Courteous	1	2	3	4	5
Respectful	1	2	3	4	5
Fair	1	2	3	4	5
Trustworthy	1	2	3	4	5
Honest	1	2	3	4	5
Impartial	1	2	3	4	5
Racially Prejudiced	1	2	3	4	5
Socially Prejudiced	1	2	3	4	5
Economically Prejudiced	1	2	3	4	5

Performance Measure Dimensions

1 Strongly Agree	2 Agree	3 Neutral	4 Disagree	5 Strongly Disagree
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"I believe this law enforcement figure(s) was effective at;" Please check one of the five following values below each performance dimension. Values range from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree).

Reducing Crime	1	2	3	4	5
Reducing Victimization	1	2	3	4	5
Reducing the Fear of Victimization	1	2	3	4	5
Interacting with the Community	1	2	3	4	5
Solving Community Problems	1	2	3	4	5
Maintaining Order	1	2	3	4	5
Protecting the Public	1	2	3	4	5
Responding in a Timely Manner	1	2	3	4	5

Media Presentations of Law Enforcement Figure(s)

IRB #: C1112.15sw-ETSU

Type of Media Outlet

Of the following social media outlets, which do you most often observe/consume?

- Locally Televised News Programs (e.g. “9-o’clock news” or evening news)
- Nationally Televised News Programs (e.g. CNN, FOX, MSNBC, etc...)
- Television Crime-Dramas (e.g. NCSI, CSI, Law & Order, etc...)
- Television Crime Documentaries (e.g. COPs, Frontline, 60 Minutes, etc...)
- Local Newspaper (e.g. Johnson City Press, East Tennessean, The Town Gazette, etc...)
- National Newspaper (e.g. New York Times, The Washington Post, Wall Street Journal, etc...)
- Internet Sources (e.g. The Daily Beast, The Early Bird, Al Jazeera, etc...)
- Other (describe) _____

Amount of Media Consumption

Of the media outlet you most often observe, how many hours a week do you view this media outlet?

- Less than 1 Hour
- 1-3 Hours
- 4-6 Hours
- 7-8 Hours
- 9-10 Hours
- More than 10 Hours

Media Presentation and General Attitudes Law Enforcement Figure(s)

1 Strongly Agree	2 Agree	3 Neutral	4 Disagree	5 Strongly Disagree
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“The media outlet mentioned above displays police/law enforcement figure(s) as:” Please check one of the five following values below each general dimension. Values range from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree).

Courteous	1	2	3	4	5
Respectful	1	2	3	4	5
Fair	1	2	3	4	5
Trustworthy	1	2	3	4	5
Honest	1	2	3	4	5
Impartial	1	2	3	4	5
Racially Prejudiced	1	2	3	4	5
Socially Prejudiced	1	2	3	4	5
Economically Prejudiced	1	2	3	4	5

Media Presentation and Performance Measure of Law Enforcement Figure(s)

1 Strongly Agree	2 Agree	3 Neutral	4 Disagree	5 Strongly Disagree
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“The media outlet mentioned above displays police/law enforcement figure(s) as effective at:” Please check one of the five following values below each performance dimension. Values range from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree).

Reducing Crime	1	2	3	4	5
Reducing Victimization	1	2	3	4	5
Reducing the Fear of Victimization	1	2	3	4	5
Interacting with the Community	1	2	3	4	5
Solving Community –Oriented Problems	1	2	3	4	5
Maintaining Order	1	2	3	4	5
Protecting the Public	1	2	3	4	5
Responding in a Timely Manner	1	2	3	4	5

APPENDIX C: Debriefing Script

IRB #: C1112.15sw-ETSU

East Tennessee State University

Media Influences and Student Attitudes Toward Law Enforcement Figures Within Northeast Tennessee

Thank you for your participation in this online research study. Before discussing the details of the study I would first like to explain this research study's use of deception. The use of deception in nearly all studies is to purposely mislead or misinform participants/respondents about the true nature of the experiment. This is necessary because humans are often sensitive to how they appear to others (and to themselves) and this self-consciousness might interfere with or distort how they actually behave outside of a research context. Therefore to prevent participants/respondents from exacerbating their accounts with various law enforcement figures, the focus of this online questionnaire was to determine their media consumption, mode of media outlet, and whether this media outlet affected the participant's actual contact with various law enforcement figures.

At this time I would like to discuss the intent, purpose, and objective of this online research study. As the title may suggest the intent of this study was to explore and provide more explanation as to how the media and one's contact, or lack thereof, with various law enforcement figures affect their attitudes towards state, local, and metropolitan police officers. The purpose of this online research study was to confirm or reject previous findings and provide a foothold for future studies. Therefore your data will continue to provide relevant information for future researchers who wish to expand this ever-growing field of criminology. The objectivity of this study was to determine whether various media outlets, as discussed in the survey, strongly influence participants who have established various forms of contact with various law enforcement figures.

I hope this has been a fulfilling experience, if you have any questions please feel free to contact me by email: fordgt@goldmail.etsu.edu or by phone: (423) 439-5346.

Thank you again for your participation.

VITA
GEORGE T. FORD

Personal Data: Date of Birth: May 16, 1988

 Place of Birth: Tampa, Florida

 Marital Status: Single

Education: Public Schools, Tampa, Florida

 B.A. Psychology, University of Charleston, Charleston, West
 Virginia 2011

 M.A. Criminal Justice & Criminology, East Tennessee State
 University, Johnson City, Tennessee 2013

Professional Experience: Graduate Assistant, East Tennessee State University,
 College of Arts and Sciences, 2011-2013

Publications: Ford, George T. (2011, April 20) Quantitative Information Recall:
 Varying Presentation Types. *The Eagle*, p. A4

Honors and Awards: Distinguished Military Graduate.

 Outstanding Graduate Student, East Tennessee State University.