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Media Exposure and Social Response as Predictors of Citizen's Attitudes Toward Police

Tara A. Garrison
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Walden University

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Tara A. Garrison

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Walden University
2018

Abstract

Media Exposure and Social Response as Predictors of Citizen's Attitudes Toward Police

by

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MS, University of Phoenix, 2012

BS, Kaplan University, 2010

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Human Services

Walden University

November 2018

Abstract

Police-involved deaths of African Americans have increased over the past two decades, with continued high-profile media exposure. The problem is that extant research provided only a partial understanding and disparate focus about how media exposure, social responses, social media use, and attitudes towards police were possibly related to citizens witnessing acts of police-initiated actions against African Americans in the United States. The purpose of this quantitative study was to assess the predictive nature of media exposure, social response, and social media use concerning citizens' attitudes towards police. The two theories supporting this study and shaped this hypothetical system are media dependency and the structural strain theory. Data were collected using a characteristic profile survey, Index of Social Networking, Offline and Online Activity Levels Measure, and Attitudes Towards Police Scale with a convenience sample of 132 respondents who were 18 year of age or older who are identified as users of the social media platforms Facebook and LinkedIn. Data were analyzed using Pearson Correlation and forward entry multiple linear regression. The overall model was significant ($p = .002$) and accounted for 12.3% of the variance in the respondent's attitude toward the police, however, media was not significant. This study represented an effort into understanding the sentiments of police and police activity coupled with media-driven and public attitudes towards police-initiated actions. These findings can be used to enhance relationships between communities and the police, especially in the practice of community policing and resolving negative perceptions based on cultural imprints that hinder effective policing.

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to James M. Garrison.

Acknowledgments

After an intensive period, today is the day: writing this note of thanks is the finishing touch on my dissertation. It has been a period of intense learning for me, not only in the research arena, but also on a personal level. Writing this dissertation has had a big impact on me. I would like to gratefully acknowledge those in my life who have been instrumental in my growth as a PhD. First, I would like to praise the Lord for giving me the faith, strength, and perseverance to do this. Second, I would like to thank my husband, Steve. He has been a source for strength, support, and my rock throughout this entire degree program. Next, I'd like to thank my chairperson, Dr. Avon Hart-Johnson for her never-ending wisdom, support, and a guiding light in this journey. I would like to acknowledge my methodologist Dr. Garth Den Heyer and my University Research Reviewer (URR) Dr. Greg Hickman; as both of you pushed me to develop a new level of analysis. My entire committee was instrumental in showing me how to think outside of the box.

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Figure 1: *Frequency Histograms for Scale Scores to Assess Normality* 120

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

High-profile news coverage of police aggression, their use of excessive force against African Americans, and the resulting fatalities has generated public social concerns and controversy (Desmond, Papachristos, & Kirks, 2016). Law enforcement officers are 21 times more likely to kill African American individuals than other ethnic groups (Moore et al., 2016). Freelon, McIllwain, and Clark (2016) indicated that high-profile media cases could influence attitudes of public mistrust towards law enforcement given the sensationalized way these incidents are portrayed in the news. These acts of excessive police force are a complex social problem that has led to the possibility of eroded public trust (Peck, 2015). Moore et al. (2016) posited that mistrust manifests in divergent social norms whereby violent protests, riots, and adverse social responses could ensue. As a result, concerned citizens may revolt by committing actions against the police and engage in acts of civil unrest when they believe formal sources of social control have failed them (Moore et al., 2016). In the context of this study, citizen's use of social media was considered a form of social response and media exposure was considered the way respondents receive information concerning high-profile media cases of police-initiated actions against citizens (Freelon et al., 2016). Social responses are considered citizens' grievances against police-related oppression that can result in forms of activism and protests (Campbell & Nix, 2017; Freelon et al., 2016; Peck, 2015).

According to Betz's (1974) seminal work, an oppressed group who learns of aggression towards members of their group (such as police related aggression), are at a

high-risk for retaliating through rioting or other forms of public outcry as a protest. Putnam (2015) indicated that protesting had become a typical response to police-related deaths. Peck (2015) suggested that activist-led social responses in communities have become institutionalized as protest activities have become part of the repertoire of citizen reactions following police-initiated actions. In this view, participation in social movements is inherently *political* and not necessarily irrational or deviant (Peck 2015; Putnam, 2015). Although not all social responses are retaliatory, citizens' reactions that result in deviance due to cultural oppression experienced or witnessed by specific groups (Martinot, 2014; Moore et al., 2016) can result in harmful consequences for affected citizens and possibly police.

The media appears to play a role in shaping citizen's social responses as well. They tend to leverage their coverage of these potentially volatile situations using sensationalized methods (Jackson, Huq, Bradford, & Tyler, 2013). Hence, they generally emphasize police-initiated actions by focusing on police-involved shooting deaths occurring in African American communities of low-economic standing as if to highlight their disadvantaged status (e.g., employment and poverty status) and adverse attitudes toward police (Jackson et al., 2013). This framing by media towards affected groups can generate questions of how various ethnic backgrounds and social responses of these groups might relate to attitudes towards police officers (Jackson et al., 2013; Maguire et al., 2016). While researchers do not fully understand these reactions, it has been suggested that in communities where poverty is high, and the education system is lacking; public sentiments may have evolved into hostility towards outsiders, especially

when these groups feel disenfranchised (Maguire et al., 2016).

Media coverage of social unrest aligned with police-related incidents has become even more widespread because of the availability of social media platforms (Maguire et al., 2016). This form of mass communication is possible because the Internet can be used to disseminate news of these incidents in real-time and with live video coverage (Harder, Sevenans, & Aelst, 2017). As such, media coverage of police-involved deaths of African Americans continue to be disseminated through traditional sources of media but even more widespread given the availability of social media platforms (Harder et al., 2017; Maguire et al., 2016). The latter form of communication is considered pervasive because the Internet delivers in near real-time coverage (Harder et al., 2017; Maguire et al., 2016).

In this chapter, I previewed the constructs related to the literature about media exposure, or sensationalism as it might relate to citizen's social responses and social media use potentially related to citizens attitudes towards police. In the next section, I provide the background to this problem domain, and I explore the nature and relevance of the study topic. I then discuss the the social problem, the identified gap in research, and the purpose of this study. After stating my research questions and hypothesis, I described the theoretical framework, methodology, and significance of the study. I finished this chapter by summarizing the contents.

Background

Media coverage of police-initiated actions against African Americans have been linked to racial profiling and alleged police brutality (Jackson et al., 2013). Citizens have leveraged various forms of media as an opportunity to highlight these types of incidents

(i.e., cell phone video recordings), connect with more people regarding these issues, and share concerns and frustrations, while also developing diverse relationships (Maguire et al., 2017; Tate, 2017) using these platforms. Forms of electronic media include specific social networking sites (SNS) that serve as portals and contain user-generated media clips called *memes* that are assembled ideas, emotions, and reactions documented in a simple artistic-visual format (Tate, 2017). Memes are considered small graphical callout messages and have been referred to as the carriers of culture and social debates in the modern era (Tate, 2017). With these platforms readily available, internet users can state their frustrations as disenfranchised groups and use memes as an additional means of voicing their concerns (Tate, 2017).

In at least one study, researchers examined media as it relates to ethnicity and to police attitudes, however, they focused solely on the reporter's influence using communications. Specifically, Chermak, McGarrell, and Gruenewald (2006) examined how publicized media cases could create social problems—such as a 1996 police misconduct incident that took place in Indianapolis Police Department. Chermak et al. reported that media exposure about the incident affected the public's opinion on officer's guilt. However, the scope of the research was not specific to citizen's attitudes towards police. Additionally, the researchers did not look at the specificity of acts against African Americans; rather, they examined sensationalized news coverage.

Citizens may use different actions as a response and result from police tactics, taking matters into their own hands by exercising informal social control rather than rely on governance entities such as the police (Martinot, 2014). Along those same lines,

Krieger, Chen, Waterman, Kiang, and Feldman (2015) conveyed that during the past year the United States had experienced major controversies and civil unrest regarding the endemic problem of police-initiated actions experienced by African Americans in the United States. In contrast, DeGue, Fowler, and Calkins (2016) studied violent deaths caused by law enforcement officers between 2009 and 2015. These researchers used a qualitative study to explore the characteristics of recorded deaths based on information gathered from the Center for Disease Control (CDC). They reported that 52% of police-related deaths were White individuals and 32% were African American (DeGue et al., 2016). In their study they indicated that the mental illness of the suspect was a considerable factor in law enforcement officer-related deaths (DeGue et al., 2016). While the information used in this study was not directly related, it was counter to current public opinion, and it does provide insights into situations leading to police-related deaths.

Takagi (2016) also investigated the phenomenon behind the number of African Americans killed by police. The main question in the previously mentioned research entailed determining why African American people are killed at a higher rate than White people. Takagi posited that African American men had been killed by police at a rate ten times higher than White men. Furthermore, Takagi suggested police officers are committing genocide among African American people. This concept has created an open conflict between police and citizenry (McLaren, 2016). However, in contrast, Landers (2015) argued that in a 6-year study, 42% of individuals killed by police were White and 32% were African American. The statistics conveyed by Landers' in his research does not support a conclusion that one race was being singled out by police. These findings

pose a conflict in the literature that on one hand illuminated antipolice attitudes, and on the other, that police-initiated actions towards African Americans in the United States are understood from two divergent perspectives (Jackson et al., 2013; Steinberg, 2016; Todd, 2015).

Antipolice sentiments can extend beyond those affected within the jurisdictions where police killed individuals. For instance, LaVigne, Fontaine, and Dwivedi (2017) evaluated views and attitudes of people from low-income, high-crime communities to learn how those communities perceived police actions. Their study included six cities whereby they found that perceptions of police to be very unflattering about racial bias, community policing, the legitimacy of police, and how they relate to law enforcement. From another research perspective, Jackson et al. (2013) examined public attitudes towards police by investigating various ethnic groups and found a strong correlation with legitimate law enforcement actions, positive perceptions of officers, and negative views focusing on violence as a normative position for retribution. However, police use of force is not always a means of retribution (Martinot, 2014).

Martinot (2014) used a cultural framework to demonstrate how African Americans are a part of an epidemic involving police officer use of force. Martinot's cultural framework described an interpretation of a society's traditions, values, myths, and symbols. Further, Martinot stated that African American people are not born African-American; instead, labeled and characterized as such by White supremacists, society, and cultural practices.

Citizen's reaction or response to police has been researched by scholars using different methods. For example, Culhane, Bowman, and Schweitzer (2016) conducted a quantitative study where participants heard, watched, and read a transcript of an actual police-initiated act of aggression. The first wave of data was collected before the police shooting in Ferguson, Missouri. Culhane et al. (2016) indicated participants were significantly more likely to perceive police-initiated actions were justified if they heard or saw the information rather than those who read the transcript. Following the events in Ferguson, using the same variables, these researchers replicated study and produced inconsistent results. Hence, respondents who viewed video evidence along with transcripts formed positive attitudes towards police (Culhane et al., 2016).

Predictive researchers tend to use studies to capture variations of public perceptions concerning attitudes towards police (Caoa, Stackb, & Sunc, 1998). Other researchers have used demographic or personal characteristics coupled with other variables to better understand the linkage between policing and citizens (Caoa et al., 1998). At least one prior researcher examined demographic variables as well as actions related to public attitudes toward police by surveying college students with diverse ethnic backgrounds, from a small county in New York (Verga, Murillo, Toulon, Morote, & Perry, 2016). This study was limited in scope in that the researchers primarily examined student attitudes toward a local police department rather than to understand media sentiments and attitudes regarding police from a perspective by diverse citizens.

Using another perspective, Verga et al. (2016) focused on three main elements: location (urban and suburban), gender (female and male), and race (Black, Latino, and

White) to examine students' attitudes toward police. Verga et al. determined a significant difference between satisfaction with the police between urban and suburban groups (Verga et al., 2016). Suburban participants were more satisfied with police performance than urban groups. Of note, men were found to be slightly more satisfied with the police than women (Verga et al., 2016). Finally, while White students were found to have significantly higher satisfaction with the police than Black students, there was no difference found between Hispanic students and Black or White students (Verga et al., 2016).

Using a different perspective, Cobbina, Owusu-Bempah, and Bender (2016) examined these characteristics differently. They used race as a variable to understand criminality and established that race was commonly associated with perceptions of crime, (not necessarily criminality). In this same study, the researchers revealed that race had been a predictor of citizen's attitudes toward experiences with the police (Cobbina et al., 2016). These researchers drew from interviews of 81 men and women and explored to what extent protesters from Ferguson, Missouri racially typify ethnic groups' association with crime. They then described how their perceptions about police differ among people who are African American compared to White persons (Cobbina et al., 2016). Cobbina et al. revealed that most respondents did not associate people of color with a crime but believed the police did. In reflection, it is also possible that public sentiments toward police are framed by popular and traditional forms of sensationalized media and social media consumption (Takagi, 2014). These media depictions, whether accurate or not,

may have significant implications regarding attitudes toward police following high-profile incidents (Edwards, 2013).

Finally, Moore et al. (2016) sought to understand in what historical context police relations with African American people exist. African American culture is often viewed as substandard, according to the same authors. As such, the United States is presently witnessing one of the largest public protests and activism movements over police-initiated actions and other matters of race since the civil rights movement (Moore et al., 2014), making this problem both prominent and relevant.

Problem Statement

In the wake of high-profile media cases such as the deaths of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri (Campbell & Nix, 2017) and Freddy Gray in Baltimore, Maryland (Maguire et al., 2016), there remains a possibility of nationwide tension in the onset of future events, given the high news media coverage and sizable public attention. Each of these cases were highly publicized by the media as controversial, thus, increasing the risk of polarization between citizens who differ in opinions of perceived police justified actions (Bowman & Schweitzer, 2016; Clark, 2016). Based on the literature, public reactions appeared to be influenced by high profile media coverage, including the consumption and citizens' use of social media platforms and citizen's retaliatory social responses (Ariel, Farrar, & Sutherland, 2015; Jackson, 2015; Nix & Wolfe, 2015) However, at the outset of this study it was unclear if these factors shaped their attitudes towards police.

Despite continued the high-profile news coverage and related public reactions as a social response of these events, the number of police-involved deaths of African Americans has dramatically increased over the past few years (Campbell & Nix, 2017). Hence, rioting and the civil uprising took place in different urban and rural settings that seemed to exacerbate with the media's sensationalizing these events (Martinot, 2014).

While there may have been additional factors to consider related to citizen's attitudes towards police such as a person's characteristics (Martinot, 2014), in this study, I narrowed my focus to the previously discussed constructs. I have not found a study that collectively analyzes the constructs of social response as a form of social control, and social media as a platform for messaging, and public outcry as it relates to citizens' attitudes toward police in the United States. This void in the literature left a prominent gap in the knowledge base. By examining these factors, and how they possibly relate, it provided me with a clearer understanding and context of the nature of this phenomenon, attitudes towards police. In reflection of the literature presented in this dissertation, it appeared that the problem is that police-initiated actions towards African Americans, including fatalities followed by sensationalized media coverage highlighting these incidents, may contribute to polarization (attitudes) and resultant retaliatory public unrest (citizens' social response) against fellow citizens and the police.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this quantitative study using multiple regression analysis was to first understand if citizen attitudes toward police were related to media exposure, social response, and social media use following incidents of police-initiated actions upon

African Americans in the United States. Second, I wanted to understand what, if any variables in the multiple regression model composed of media exposure, social response, and social media best predicted citizen's attitudes towards police following incidents of police-initiated actions upon African Americans in the United States.

According to Bohrnstedt (2011), there are tangible measures in the social sciences—such as predicting birth, age, marital status—but it is less clear when one considers such concepts as attitudes, values, and beliefs at the individual or organizational level, or societal-level concepts such as social disorganization (Bohrnstedt, 2010). In this study, I used three independent variables (IV) to understand elements that might contribute to citizen's reactions because of police actions as covered by the media. These IVs included media exposure, social response, and social media use. I was also interested in how these variables might co-vary to one another and to understand how, if at all, the relationship exists between or among these factors might predict citizen attitudes towards police as the dependent variable (DV) in this study. The operationalization of these variables is explained in detail in Chapter 3. By examining how these variables might relate between and among each other and by understanding their predictability, I interpreted what role the independent variables convey and garner a deeper understanding of diverse communities and their relationship with police; especially during episodes of police-initiated actions. The variables of interest, combined with my problem statement, helped to shape the following research questions.

Research Question and Hypothesis

To understand this study's research problem, two research questions were posed.

Research Question 1: What are the relationships between or among media exposure, social response, social media use, citizens' and attitudes towards police (after learning of police-initiated actions upon African Americans in the United States)?

H_01 : There is no bivariate relationship between and among media exposure, social response, social media use and citizens' attitudes towards police (after citizens learn of police-initiated actions upon African Americans in the United States)?

H_a1 : A bivariate relationship exists between and among media exposure, social response, and social media use and citizens' attitudes towards police (after citizens learn of police-initiated actions upon African Americans in the United States)?

RQ2: What variables if any, for a model consisting of media exposure, social response, social media use, significantly predict citizen's attitudes towards police (after citizens learn of police-initiated actions upon African Americans in the United States)?

H_02 : $R^2 = 0$: In the population, the proportion of variance of the DV, attitudes towards police, explained by the linear combination of the IVs (social response, social media use) was zero.

H_a2 : $R^2 \neq 0$: In the population, the proportion of variance of the DV, attitudes towards police, by the linear combination of the IVs (media exposure, social response, social media use) was not zero.

Theoretical Framework

The two theories that supported this study's focus and formed the theoretical framework is media dependency (Ball-Rokeach & Defleur, 1976) and structural strain theory (Merton, 1938). Media dependency can be dramatically increased during periods

of social conflict because, according to this theory, people have a strong need for information, support, and advice (Ball-Rokeach & Defleur, 1976). Media dependency theory was considered a concept included for this study because it was used to label when the cognitive part of the brain does not receive enough information; a person may seek more information from media sources (Hirschi, 1969). In the context of this study, media sources are considered television, newspapers, and social media or social network uses such as Facebook and LinkedIn. These media sources are a primary means for individuals to view the world around them and to make determinations of the information received (Carillo, Scornavacca, & Za, 2016). I expound upon each theory below and in Chapter 2.

Media Dependency Theory

The media dependency theory was used to describe how an audience depends upon media information to meet informational needs and ascertain life goals (Carillo et al, 2016). The theory, in part, derives from Gerbner's cultivation studies (Gerbner & Gross, 1976). Gerbner and Gross linked television coverage with a variety of attitudes about crime. They hypothesized that watching television, regardless of the content, distorted viewers' perceptions of social problems and created feelings that the world should be approached as a dangerous place. Gerber and Gross (1976) posited that media could influence persons, thus influencing attitude formation. Accordingly, the dependence of media could influence social stability. For example, this theory holds that when social change and conflict are high, established institutions, beliefs, and practices are challenged. Thus, people make new choices depending on what individuals believe. Such coverage and communication leave an impression of where distinct groups fit into

the larger culture, thus affecting the treatment of others and perceptions about them (Lewis, 2014). Finally, a person's reliance on media increases when instability intensifies (Anderson & Meyer, 2014; Carillo et al., 2016; Lewis, 2014;). This theory was a complement to understanding citizen's social response and how affected individuals might react to high profile media coverage.

Structural Strain Theory

The sociologist, Merton (2016) argued that deviant behavior (i.e., people breaking social norms/rules) was produced by how society distributed the means to achieve cultural goals. According to his structural strain theory (or anomie strain theory), deviance was a result of a mismatch between cultural goals and the institutionalized means of reaching those goals (Merton, 2016). Based on this theory, cultural goals refer to legitimate aims of people and their acceptance among peers as equals in society. Merton argued that a mismatch between the cultural goals and the material means a person acquires could lead to deviance (Klimke & Legnaro, 2015; Merton, 2016). What Klimke and Legnaro (2015) meant was that individuals are socialized to aspire to succeed, prosper, and obtain upward social mobility for a family through personal fulfillment. Klimke & Legnaro identified five modes of adaptation to the cultural goals and institutionalized means: conformity, innovation, ritualism, retreatism, and rebellion (Klimke & Legnaro, 2015). The most important theoretical goal related to this study among these constructs was rebellion. Based on Klimke and Legnaro's view, protestors are assumed to want to change something about society. Accordingly, individuals reject and work to replace the existing cultural goals and the institutionalized means of reaching

them. Extending this reasoning, rioters and vandals are examples of rebels. From a structural strain theory perspective, politically motivated riots are more likely to happen when a group has no reliable means to achieve cultural goals (Ball-Rokeach & Defleur, 1976).

Lastly, in communities where poverty was high, and the education system is insufficient, pressure could build and occasionally escalate among residents (Maguire, Nix, & Campbell, 2016). In 1967 Martin Luther King, Jr., said, that “a riot is the language of the unheard” (CBS News, 2013). Structural strain theory also holds that when people cannot address complaints or have the resources to address conditions, they may use destructive means to be heard.

Nature of the Study

This study’s quantitative design comprises a bivariate analysis I conducted followed by a forward entry regression. The data for this study was collected using an online survey tool (Survey Monkey) to obtain information from research respondents (i.e., population). A correlational survey research design was chosen because this study entailed seeking to understand if there was a predictive relationship between two or more variables included in this study. Also, this design served to quantify the dependent variable, attitudes towards police. In this study I used media exposure, social response, and social media use, (independent variables [IV]) as potential predictors of attitudes toward police (dependent variable [DV]). Additionally, by using a multiple regression analysis, I could account for the complexity encountered by using multiple variables, rather than to rely on simple correlational analysis (Fox, 2015).

The statistical analysis for the study was a multiple linear regression. The IVs in this dissertation were media exposure, social response, and social media use. The dependent (also known as the outcome variable [DV]) was attitudes toward police as measured by the Attitudes Toward Police scale (Hurst & James, 2000). A power analysis was conducted with G*Power 3.1 (Faul, Erdfelder, Lang, & Buchner, 2007). A medium effect size ($f^2 = .15$), a power level of .95, and a sample size of 119 was required for three independent variables. The suggested sample size was minimal, and it was projected that more than minimal participation would be achieved (Faul et al., 2007). This allowed for the removal of participants due to outliers and maintain an adequate power (Faul et al., 2007); Laerd Statistics, 2016).

I conducted a multiple regression analysis to understand which independent variables best predicted attitudes towards police (Field, 2013). In addition, I used a forward method of entry to determine the best combination of the variables that predict attitudes towards police (Field, 2013). The fundamental rule of a stepwise forward method of entry was that the variables are entered into the model to determine if the significance changes at each level as they are added (Field, 2013). Further, stepwise could be used when there is a lack of theory. As this study had two underlying theories, it was the best fit because this study was predictive, not explanatory.

The basis of multiple linear regression was to assess whether one continuous dependent variable can be predicted from a set of independent (or predictor) variables (Faul et al., 2007; Laerd Statistics, 2016). Certain regression selection approaches were helpful in testing predictors, thereby increasing the efficiency of analysis (Field, 2013).

For example, Scaglione and Condon (1980) used a multiple regression study to examine attitudes toward police in four neighborhoods in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. A multiple regression analysis was utilized to determine general attitudes towards police.

Additionally, Wu, Lake, and Cao (2015) selected a multiple regression analysis with a hierarchical analysis to estimate the total and indirect effects of race variables on juvenile perceptions. Wu et al. selected this method based on the theoretical basis (social bond theory) in the literature.

Definitions

In this section, I provide definitions for relevant terms and variables associated with this study. I also provide the context-specific operationalization of the study variables and further information of the independent and dependent variables of the study in Chapter 3.

Terms

To the degree possible, the following terms are based on seminal or historical references.

Anti-police sentiment: A thought, attitude, or view based on emotion against law enforcement (Fong, 2002).

Attitudes toward police: These are considered personal attitudes resulting from negative police encounters, even if the experience was indirect through family members or friends (Dunham & Alpert, 1988; Hinds, 2009)

Educational Level: The number of years' participant has completed in academic schooling, and degrees obtained (Crum, Anthony, Bassett, & Folstein, 1993).

Employment Level: The status of which individuals are or are not in a wage-led employment regime: income distribution, or labor discipline (Bowles & Boyer, 1990)

Ethnicity: This is defined as a fact or state of belonging to a social group that has a common cultural tradition (Isajiw, 1974).

Facebook: Facebook is defined as an online social networking website where people can create profiles, share information such as photos and quotes about themselves, memes, and respond or link to the information posted by others (Rouse, 2015).

Formal Responses: Citizen grassroots networks of advocates, activists, or special groups who organize as a formal response to public incidents (Klinger, 1997). This includes mitigated groups such as “Black Lives Matter,” “Hands Up Don’t Shoot,” “I Can’t Breathe,” “No Justice, No Sleep,” formalized demonstrations and protests (NIH, 2016)

Informal social control: This phenomenon describes public reactions including riots, violent outbursts, targeting of police, other delinquent and/or unlawful behaviors by taking measures into their own hands to settle the situation and bring about social order (Silver & Miller, 2004).

LinkedIn: LinkedIn is a social networking site designed specifically for the business community (LinkedIn, 2016). The goal of the site is to allow registered members to establish and document networks of people they know and trust professionally (LinkedIn, 2016).

Mass media: This is a diversified collection of media technologies that reach a large audience via mass communication (Wilke, 2007; 2013)

Offline: Offline refers to activity such as community discussions, interpersonal conversations, or any discussion that takes place outside of the online internet platforms.

Online: Online refers to the discussions and activities taking place on an internet-based-platforms.

Police-Related Deaths (shootings): This term refers to fatalities where an individual(s) was approached by police that resulted in death (NIH, 2016).

Protest: Social movements that aim at producing or resisting change in the perspective environment (Brown & Goldin, 1983; Rucht & Neidhardt, 1999).

Riot: Violent disturbance of the peace by an informal response of a crowd (Rucht & Neidhardt, 1999).

Rural: A characteristic of a country or rustic location rather than a city or township (Lane, 1994).

Social media: This includes forms of electronic communication (such as websites for social networking (i.e., Facebook, LinkedIn) and blogging through which users create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content (such as videos or memes) (Ward, 2016).

Social network sites: An internet platform used as a social structure that promotes human interactions between online participants (this does not include dating websites) (Freeman, 1978).

Urban: This term related to geographic areas distinctly defined as towns, cities, and metro (Breheny, 1992).

Operational Definitions of Variables

The following descriptors explain the operationalization of the variables used in the proposed study. The independent variable media exposure was measured as a nominal measurement where it was presented as “newspaper” = 0 “television” = 1, and “social media” (i.e. Facebook or LinkedIn) = 3. Social response was measured using the Offline and Online Activity Measures (see Appendix E) as an ordinal variable (four Likert-type questions). Social media use was measured using The Index of Social Networking (see Appendix D). The Index of Social Networking consisted of six items rated on frequency scales with various anchors. The data measurements highlighted the number of people who use social media and the frequency of use. The dependent (outcome) variable was attitudes towards police as measured by the Attitudes Toward Police scale (Hurst & Frank, 2000). The variables and scales of measurement are discussed in detail in Chapter 3.

Assumptions

There are multiple assumptions associated with this study. In the current study, I used data collected from a social network platform (Facebook or LinkedIn) in the United States. Due to the expanse and diversity of the recruits available, I assumed the data and sample to be a fair representation of the general population. I also assumed that the participants would voluntarily consent to participate in this study without coercion or pressure from me as the researcher. I also assumed that participants would answer questions truthfully and to the best of their knowledge.

Additionally, this proposed study involved the use of an online formatted surveys.

As with survey research of this type, external validity could be weak because sampling error could not be estimated in a nonrandom sample. Moreover, Wiersman (2015) and Wladis and Samuels (2016) suggested random samples are required for confidence-intervals and other statistics to be valid. Finally, I posited that all necessary statistical assumptions associated with multiple regression analysis (i.e., the normality of residuals, homogeneity of variance, multicollinearity, homogeneity of regression, and no outliers or missing data) would be met (Wladis & Samuels, 2016). I discussed statistical assumptions in detail in Chapter 3, and the results of the assumption tests are reported in Chapter 4.

Limitations

The scope of this study was to determine what, if any at all, predictive nature existed between social response, social media use, and media exposure on attitudes towards police following incidents of police-initiated actions upon African Americans in the United States. This study's research question was designed to answer the related hypothesis with one multiple linear regression model simultaneously. While this method was robust, multiple linear regression could potentially show an intercorrelations between the independent variables and the dependent variable (i.e., correlation or multicollinearity), which challenged the interpretation of multiple linear regression regarding the strength of each predictor's contribution on the outcome variable (Harrell, 2015). Multicollinearity can occur when there are high correlations between two or more predictor variables (Dormann et al., 2013; Cohen & Cohen, 1983). Contradictory to multicollinearity that offered redundant explanations, linearity represents the change in

an independent variable that would produce a corresponding change in the dependent variable (Cohen & Cohen, 1983). Multicollinearity and linearity were addressed in detail in chapter three.

Additionally, another limitation entailed the dependency on a social media platform. Specifically, to participate in this study, participants had to have Facebook or LinkedIn to receive the invitation to participate in this study. Although the convenience sampling approach was the appropriate sampling strategy for this study, it also adversely eliminated the potential participants that did not have internet access to social platforms. Further, a potential weakness of the study involved the use of a self-reporting instrument to measure attitudes. With such instruments, there exists a possibility of inaccuracy and bias of responses (NCBI, 2008). Such inaccurate responses may be due to social standards and an intention not to exhibit a negative viewpoint.

Delimitations and Scope

This study was delimited concerning the sample. Participation in the study was delimited to adults, age 18 years and older, and to those adults who have heard of recent police-initiated actions to African Americans in the United States through media outlets. The study was further delimited in recruitment for this study because the study platform was an electronic survey. Therefore, only those with access online were able to participate.

Significance

Historically, the public viewed police offices as stewards and collaborators who maintained community safety in solidarity with the public (Verga et al., 2016). It was

envisioned that at the least, the knowledge gained from this study would both add to the literature on police-public relations, and potentially provide insights that would contribute to repairing their image to regain or enhance public trust. Finally, it is reasonable to expect that the findings from this study could be disseminated to professionals who are responsible for developing training for media, activism groups, and community members who want to better understand what factors contribute to potentially polarizing attitudes after an incident involving police aggression in a community. Additionally, the understanding from this study could lead to developing culturally relevant training material for community groups who want to respond in effective ways without it resulting in violence.

Social Change Implications

Law enforcement integrity is a significant issue presented daily by media outlets. The media has continued to highlight police deviance in a manner causing public reactions. This study represents an effort into understanding the sentiments of police and police activity coupled with media-driven and public attitudes towards police violence. Policy makers, police practitioners, and academics alike recognize that effective crime prevention and control strategies depend on citizen-police cooperation (Verga, et al, 2015). Understanding public attitudes toward police is a challenging task. Disentangling the complex web of influences shaping those attitudes is necessary for developing effective strategies for improving attitudes toward the police and consequently citizen and police cooperation. The findings of this study can create new knowledge dedicated to the improvement of social conditions between communities and police.

Summary

Highly publicized cases by the media are sometimes deemed as controversial (Bowman & Schweitzer, 2016). Citizen's reactions to these reports may increase the risk of polarization between what is perceived by citizens as police justified actions and adverse public responses (Clark, 2016; Culhane et al., 2016). Researchers purport that media appears to leverage its coverage and influence by focusing on the nexus of police-initiated actions and the African American community's employment status, combined with their attitudes towards police (Cobbina et al., 2016; Jackson et al., 2013; Putnam, 2000). Additionally, Jackson et al. (2013) focused on gender and the levels of use of police force. Understanding the link between employment status and media related reports based on ethnic groups is an important contribution to comprehending the nature of this problem. Yet the literature only provides a partial understanding. The problem is that police-initiated action towards African Americans, including fatalities followed by sensationalized media coverage highlighting these incidents, may contribute to polarization (attitudes) and resultant retaliatory public unrest (citizens' social response) against fellow citizens and the police (Nix et al., 2017). However, we do not know if there is a predictive relationship between the nature of media exposure, social response, characteristic profile variables that help us to better understand risks to public safety for citizens and police. The gap in the literature creates the necessity for continued research regarding police-involved deaths of African Americans that has increased over the past ten years (Correll, Hudson, Guillermo, & Ma, 2014). Further, by understanding the factors relating to social divide, attitudes that may exist between the public and police

officers, and by further understanding the factors related to social responses, may help law enforcement officials to manage their image and work to restore public confidence.

Citizens' attitudes towards police are significantly important to the safety of citizens, and the safety of citizens and officers combined. Research was needed to understand the strength of the relationship of media exposure, social response, social media use and citizen attitudes towards police resulting from police-initiated violent actions upon African Americans in the United States. Such research could be used to enlighten researchers about this problem and potentially identify successful methods that lead to the implementation of more effective training of police officers, and more tolerance by citizens. In this research study, I used a quantitative research design to investigate the predictive nature of media exposure, social response, and social media use on attitudes towards police. The sample population was drawn from recruits from the social networking platforms, Facebook and LinkedIn. This study represented an effort into understanding the sentiments of police and police activity coupled with media-driven and public attitudes towards police-initiated actions.

Chapter 2 contains a discussion and review of the research regarding media exposure, social response, and social media use as predictors of public attitudes toward police. The underlying theoretical framework of media dependency and the structural strain theory will be presented in chapter 2. In the second chapter, I provided an in-depth literature review of the concepts relevant to the problem, purpose, hypothesis, and theoretical framework of the study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

The purpose of this quantitative multiple regression study was to assess the predictive nature of media exposure, social response, and social media use concerning citizens' attitudes towards police following incidents of police-initiated actions upon African Americans in the United States. As indicated in Chapter 1, media exposure, social response, and social media use was the independent (predictor) variables. Also, the term *media exposure* in this dissertation include television media, newspaper, and social media (i.e., Facebook, Instagram). There was a gap in the scientific knowledgebase and a need for examination of media exposure, social response, and social media use that might relate to attitudes towards police (Verga et al., 2016). Therefore, the necessity to measure the use of social media as a primary means of public information was convincing (de Zúñiga, Copeland, & Bimber, 2014.) I designed this study to address the void in the literature and to add to the knowledgebase in this domain.

Existing research provided a partial understanding of the phenomenon relating to media exposure, the social response of citizens, and attitudes towards police possibly resulting from the police-initiated actions against African American people. This chapter describes the latest literature specific to this problem. I did not find literature that collectively examined media exposure, social response, and social media as it relates to attitudes formed by the public against police.

Independent variables as predictors are widely used in segmentation studies because of their prime influence on behavior and their ease of measurement (Mitchell &

Boustani, 2015). Determining what combination of variables best predicts attitudes towards police is important in the social sciences because predictive studies can address questions of risk and probability (Cohen & Cohen, 1983; Mitchell & Boustani, 2015). I expand on this information in Chapter 3.

In this chapter, I introduced the conceptual framework of the media dependency theory (Ball-Rokeach & Defleur, 1976) and the structural strain theory (Merton, 1938) as it related to the predictive nature between age, gender, marital status, ethnicity, employment status, geographic location (urban or rural), educational level, social media use, social response participation, media exposure, and attitudes towards police resulting from police-initiated actions upon vulnerable citizens. To further investigate this subject, I addressed the literature specific to the research question as it related to the independent variables (media exposure, social response, and social media use) and the influence towards attitudes formed by the public against police.

Search Parameters

The literature search strategies included an in-depth search in the Walden University Library research databases. The catalogs used included ProQuest and all EBSCO host databases such as SAGE premier and ProQuest Criminal Justice. Google Scholar was utilized. Search terms included *African Americans, attitudes, attitudes towards police, Baltimore, Maryland riots, Black Lives Matter, community change, demographics and attitudes, education, education and social response, Facebook, Ferguson, Missouri, Freddie Gray, LinkedIn, media, media dependency, media use of Facebook, police initiated actions against Blacks, people of color, social strain theory,*

social strain and gender, social strain and media, police shootings, police-initiated actions, police-related deaths, social advocacy, social media, social media platforms, and social response.

Theoretical Orientation

The two theories that supported this study's focus and formed the theoretical framework is media dependency (Ball-Rokeach & Defleur, 1976) and the structural strain theory (Merton, 1938). Media dependency was dramatically increased during periods of social conflict because, according to this theory, people have a strong need for information, support, and advice (Ball-Rokeach & Defleur, 1976). Media dependency theory was considered a concept because it was used to label how the cognitive part of the brain does not receive enough information; it may seek more information from media sources (Hirschi, 1969).

Media Dependency Theory

The media dependency theory summates that the audience or consumer of media-driven information develops a dependency upon this content to meet one's personal desire for a greater understanding (Carillo, Scornavacca, & Za, 2016). The media dependency theory, in part, is derived from Gerbner and Gross's (1976) cultivation studies. Specifically, Gerbner and Gross linked television viewing with a variety of attitudes about crime and hypothesized that those watching television, regardless of the content, to be impacted by a phenomenon of distorted viewers' perceptions related to social problems (Gerbner & Gross, 1976). As a result, Gerbner and Gross posited that

reactions would entail the viewer's feelings as well as influence a mindset that the world should be approached as a dangerous place.

Other researchers have posited that the dependence of media consumption is influenced by social stability (Anderson & Meyer, 2014; Carillo et al., 2016; Lewis, 2014). For example, when social change and conflict are high, established institutions' beliefs, and practices are challenged. Hence, people, then, are assumed to make new choices sometimes based on polarized beliefs and value-based judgments. Such coverage and social media attention leave an impression of where different groups fit into the larger culture affecting how people are treated, and the perception received (Lewis, 2014). Reliance on media-related information increases in cases of instability (Anderson & Meyer, 2014; Carillo et al., 2016; Lewis, 2014).

Media dependency theory fortifies this study's focus by extending insights on how the cognitive part of a person's brain is affected mostly when information received is not adequate or falls short of expectation (Hirschi, 1969). Hence, people seek more information from media sources to address information deficits (Hirschi, 1969). In the context of this dissertation, media sources are considered traditional forms of media as well as contemporary social media use such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter (Purdue, 2013).

At the outset of this study, it was unclear how, if at all, attitudes towards police are shaped by this cycle of media consumption, cognition, and information seeking behaviors. These media sources are a primary means for individuals to view and even seek to understand the world around them and make sense of the information received

(Pew, 2014). This phenomenon is especially apparent during high-profile police officer-involved shootings that lead to social conflict (Lewis, 2014).

Ball-Rokeach and Defleur (1976) found media consumption to increase at a high-volume during periods of social conflict, because there is a strong need for information, support, and advice. There also appeared to be a documented linkage between media consumption and reactions to police-related shooting. Ellis and McGovern (2016) examined the relationship between the police and the media through a qualitative study. Their study entailed a new perspective on Australian journalists' point of view from social media and reactions to police-related shootings. Ellis and McGovern reported that increasing media consumption during times of police discourse, the public will gain more confidence in the police. However, the media images of heavily armed police officers in response to protestors in Ferguson, Missouri circulated widely in national and international news coverage (Bonilla & Rosa, 2015).

Further, the news of these events spread quickly across social media during the initial week of protests, over 3.6 million posts appeared on Twitter documenting and reflecting on the emerging details surrounding the 2014 death of Michael Brown (Bonilla & Rosa, 2015). There is limited research on combining media (including social media) and social response to attitudes towards police. The current study adds to this body of knowledge.

Media and Attitudes Toward Police

The literature contains two conflicting views regarding media and public attitudes toward police. For instance, as a rebuttal to McLaughlin (2015) and Goldsmith's (2015)

research reflected that media-related could influence negative behaviors towards law enforcement. Yet, more dated research by Chermak et al. (2006), postulated that media use has no significant effects on general attitudes toward police, police services, and concerns about police harassment. These authors suggested that individuals do tend to conclude about police officer guilt based on their consumption of print media (newspapers) or other forms of news after learning more about a specific case. In the Chermak et al. study, neighborhood crime was an important predictor of attitudes toward the police. In the same study, the researchers found that the influence on attitudes towards race was much more pronounced after media coverage escalated the case.

Along similar lines of research, Edwards' (2007) study substantiated Chermak et al.'s (2006) earlier research and investigated further by controlling selected trait variables, such as gender and race. In this study, the researchers administered a self-report questionnaire to 351 students at a state university. Their survey consisted of demographic and audience trait variables. This survey also contained items measuring the respondents' media use. In other words, they measured the information consumed by respondents. For example, respondents were specifically asked from which format they typically get news (e.g., newspaper, television), how often they watch television, and how real they perceive crime-related television to be. The multivariate analysis showed that demographic and audience trait variables explained more variance than did media-related variables. While the resulting analysis confirms characteristic profile, variables could be associated with a person's attitudes towards police, it does not account for the other

variables of interest for my current study such as media influence, social media use, and social response participation.

Given the growing concerns of escalation in citizens' attitudes towards police, other institutions have developed a growing interest in this problem (Lewis, 2016). For example, the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) (2014) analyzed the media impact on attitudes towards police and how media exposure influences perceptions of the police. The results of the NIJ study reported that recurrent exposure to media reports of police abuse is a strong predictor of public perceptions. Furthermore, Lewis (2016) found that African Americans who live in high-crime areas and regularly hear others talk of police mistrust, are especially likely to believe negative police behaviors are commonplace. This study illuminates how media influence and the combined high crime environment can affect attitudes towards police and ethnicity. However, Lewis' study was limited to expounding the focus specific to variables about social media use and attitudes toward police. Additionally, the study focused on high crime neighborhoods.

Lewis (2016) studied the extent of media coverage of American police-initiated actions with regards to African Americans and American society. Through a qualitative research methodology, this study illustrated the degree to which media coverage of police-initiated actions shaped international community members' perspectives. The six-week research study from January to March 2017, was focused on the Baton Rouge and New Orleans area. Twenty-three respondents contributed through either semi structured interviews or surveys. Respondents were asked about domestic and media coverage of American police-initiated actions, its influence on their perspectives regarding African

Americans and American society, and the impact the Alton Sterling incident had on their perspectives (Lewis, 2016). Through this study, researchers revealed factors such as social group association and construal of media shaped their perspectives more than media coverage alone. While this study is a significant contributor to helping researchers to understand this phenomenon, further evidence is needed to confirm that media-shaped attitudes towards police can promote participative responses in social retort to media coverage of police- initiated actions and confirm external validity.

Media Influence. The media may have tremendous influence when it comes to shaping public opinion through framing the discourse through their lens, otherwise known as media dependency. In general, journalists have struggled with providing a fair and balanced representation of ethnic minorities for decades (Carter, 2017; Lewis, 2016; Scharrer & Ramasubramanian, 2015). Over the past 20 years, there has been a demand for more diversity in journalism and in the newsroom to increase perspectives (Carter, 2017). To create a more nuanced and representative picture, Carter (2017) focused on, the phenomenon related to the Ferguson riots, how journalists covered the event, and what they can do to improve coverage of racial riots (a public outbreak of violence between two different ethnic groups, whether the activities manifest in physical property or toward other people) (Carter, 2017).

Intravia, Wolff, and Piquero (2017) examined both traditional media and the less studied forms of media, such as the Internet and social media. In their study they used a sample of young adults to understand the effect of multiple media types on attitudes towards police. Findings reveal that respondents who read news online are more likely to

have negative attitudes toward police legitimacy (Intravia et al., 2017). Further, Intravia et al. determined the impact of media consumption on attitudes toward police varied. Researchers in this study examined social media and attitudes towards police and is concentrated on young adults instead of encompassing all adults aged 18 years and older and broadening culturist backgrounds. Asmlash, Remmers, and Vang (2017) added insight to Carter's (2017) foundational research by presenting how media concentration on Islamic radicalism has tended to demonize Muslims. While during the last decade, the media has managed to educate and inform people about Islam and the Middle East, it has also blurred the lines of religion and nationality, individuality, and categorically; creating a narrow and repackaged image of Islam and Muslims (Asmlash et al., 2017). Accordingly, it is reasonable to understand how media may play a role in the misrepresentation of ethnic and minority groups. However, it was unclear at the outset of this study whether or not they influenced the public's social response. In the next section, I discuss structural strain theory.

Structural Strain Theory

Structural strain theory is a sociology and criminology concept developed by Merton (1957). This theory holds that society pressures individuals to achieve a socially acceptable status even though they may lack the means (i.e., employment, age, education). Hence, this leads to an individual feeling a sense of personal strain possibly increasing their propensity to commit crimes. According to this theory, these crimes may result from the need to make up for a deficit of resources or a deficit of opportunities (Merton, 1957). This theory helps to explain how it is possible that culturally-motivated

riots erupt due to a group having no reliable means to achieve a cultural goals or position (Ball-Rokeach & Defleur, 1976). In communities like Baltimore where poverty is high, and the education system is insufficient in certain areas, the potential for negative responses can occasionally generate negative social responses towards police; resulting in acts considered deviant (Maguire et al., 2016). In 1967, Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr, said, that "a riot is the language of the unheard" (CBS News, 2013).

Merton (2016) argued that deviance (i.e., people breaking social norms/rules) is shaped by how society distributes the means for minorities to have equal access to resources as other majority individuals. According to the structural strain theory (or anomie strain theory), deviance is a result of a mismatch between cultural goals and the institutionalized means of reaching those goals (Merton, 2016). Merton argued that a mismatch between the cultural goals and the institutionalized means could lead to deviance (Klimke & Legnaro, 2015; Merton, 2016). Deviance then leads to social resistance among community members to satisfy objective needs. Therefore, the structural strain theory appears to be a key underpinning towards understanding the personal motivations of those affected by police-related incidents and public reactions.

Public Reactions to Police-related Shootings. Public knowledge of crime and justice reporting is largely disseminated by media sources (Mesko, Cockcroft, Crawford, & Lemaitre, 2009). Therefore, it is possible the public's perception of victims, criminals, deviants, and law enforcement officials are largely determined by their portrayal in the mass media. This phenomenon of media influence can be understood by McLaughlin (2015) who conveyed that there are not more police shootings, just more news coverage.

McLaughlin (2015) claimed that because news is more prevalent in specific cases, the general public's perception of the rate of police-initiated actions has escalated even though the data shows otherwise. In alignment with McLaughlin's findings, Goldsmith (2015) also posited that current media reporting generates the appearance of an unprecedented wave of police-initiated violence. Goldsmith (2015) used as an example an incident involving a cell phone video of an officer shooting the victim in the back as he ran away. This video went viral (meaning widely shared at unprecedented rates using television and social media as a platform), thereby increasing media consumption. This example supports claims that the negative perception of growing police-initiated actions towards vulnerable citizens could be perpetuated by rapid dissemination of media (Goldsmith, 2015). However, neither McLaughlin nor Goldsmith provided a clear understanding of how individuals of diverse backgrounds, origin, age, and other factors could influence the reactions to this phenomenon of attitudes towards the police.

Social Media

The influence of social media—platforms can reach individuals throughout the nation and across the world in milliseconds (Harris, 2015). Not only is social media a tool for mobilization, but the intense reporting on police brutality via social media also influences print and television coverage, which means that attention to such incidents has multiplied (Harris, 2015). This intense reporting preeminently leads to public reactions that influence attitudes towards police (Harris, 2015). Social media is considered a form of mass media, as it is information transmitted to large numbers of people (Collins English Dictionary, 2005).

The goal of mass media is to influence people's thoughts and behaviors (Buresh & Gordon (2013). This perception held by people received considerable investigation as media changed through the past couple of decades. Dowley (2003) examined earlier studies by Roberts and Doob (1990) and Surette (1998) to determine the depth of public knowledge about crime and justice and perceptions are formed from media.

The mass media can play a key role in the construction of criminality and the criminal justice system. Dowley (2003) reported the public's perception of victims, criminals, deviants, and law enforcement officials is largely determined by their portrayal in the mass media. Additionally, Jackson (2015) explored the extent of media coverage of American police-initiated actions with regards to African Americans in the United States. Jackson used a mixture of quantitative and qualitative approaches to classify preliminary initiators of online opposition and story framing by the media about African Americans.

Opposition to police-initiated violence towards African Americans and the framing of media coverage revealed an emergence (Jackson, 2015) of attitudes towards police and public reactions. Mackey (2017) conducted a six-week research study from January to March 2017, with Baton Rouge and New Orleans the two main locations to explore public reactions to media and police attitudes. Mackey's (2017) study asked about domestic and media coverage of American police-initiated actions, its influence on their perspectives regarding African Americans and American society, and the impact that the Alton Sterling incident had on their perspectives. In this study, the researchers revealed factors such as social identity and interpretation of how media shape their

perspectives more than media coverage alone (Mackey, 2017). The influence of media exposure and perceptions of African Americans does not stand alone - as these perceptions also influence attitudes towards police.

Influence and Attitudes Towards Police

Public reaction, whether experienced or perceived, can affect the overall community attitude towards police. Holmes, Painter, and Smith (2017) extended the Strasburg et al. (2014) study by considering the effects of community context, police organization, and individual characteristics on attitudes about police. They used data for a large sample of citizens residing in 98 small towns in Iowa. Holmes et al. employed multilevel ordered logistic regression techniques to model citizens' rating of police protection and degree of trust in the police. At the community level, social disorder was negatively related with both dependent variables, and social integration was positively related to confidence in the police. Town police departments were viewed more favorably than county sheriff's offices for both police protection and trust. Individual-level perceptions of social integration and community safety were positively related to both outcome variables (Holmes et al., 2017). Respondents' characteristic profiles had relatively few significant effects. While close to my study's design, as this body of work examines contextual, organizational, and individual predictors; all had important effects on attitudes about the police but did not use the total dataset that I propose in my study.

Along similar lines, Perkins (2016) presented the results of a survey evaluating the views of 1,322 residents of York, United Kingdom, regarding their perceptions and attitudes towards crime, their local area, and the police. The aim of this survey was to

understand the main factors affecting public confidence within the city. Perkins evaluated whether differences in the public trust in the police exist across diverse local communities with varying degrees of neighborhood perceptions. The results indicated that fear of crime, public confidence, location, and police interactions are the factors most affecting an individual's views of the police. The role of confidence, fear, interactions play in shaping individual views of the police can vary wildly depending on an individual's perceptions of their local area. These findings demonstrate that theories accentuating community context are essential to understand crime-related perspectives in rural communities. However, both studies illuminate that social disorganization could be a predictor of negative attitudes towards police.

Ethnic Groups and Police-related Shootings

The view that an individual's immediate environment and the rate in which ethnic groups are killed by police can dictate how people respond to police-related shootings is well documented. For example, Takagi (2014) investigated the phenomenon behind black individuals killed by police. The central question in this research was to determine why Black people are killed at a higher rate than White people. In this study, Takagi revealed that police have killed Black men ten times greater than White men. However, Landers (2015) argued in a six-year study that 42% of individuals killed by police were White and 32% were Black. Landers further claimed police are not singling out one race. This study resulted in figures bearing considerably influenced anti-police sentiments (Nix, et al., 2017).

The distortion is represented by a June 2013 Gallup Poll where one in four young black men felt they had been treated unfairly by police within the past 30 days (Newport, 2014). Campbell et al. (2017) and Posick and Hatfield (2017) analyzed fatal police shootings to determine that the number of citizens killed by police has increased since the Ferguson, Missouri shooting. These studies assessed the overall police killings over a 40-year period. The study determined that the longitudinal data did not show an increase in police-related deaths (by percentage). Krieger, Chen, Waterman, Kiang, and Feldman (2015) stated opposition to accuracy in police-reported deaths because many departments have resisted public knowledge. For example, the U.S. Census Bureau recorded only half the amount of police-related deaths in June 2015. Krieger et al., reported 500 actual police-related deaths citing newspapers, social media, and news reports (2015). Formal groups such as Black Lives Matter (BLM) and Mapping Police Violence (MPV), each posit that fatal shootings by police were up six percent in the first six months of 2016 as compared to the same time in 2015 (McLean & Wolfe, 2016). The reporting challenges police legitimacy and creates a widespread protest. Yearly, television ratings and society's need for information changes reporting styles (Stephens, 2015). McLean and Wolfe (2016) consider the rise in potential police-related deaths may stem from increased defiance and willful resistance to officers.

Depolicing the police

It has been suggested that social strain affects citizens' postures and value judgment towards police. Nix and Wolfe (2017) conducted a study to determine if the general strain theory and attitudes towards the police are ultimately leading to a "war on

cops.” In this study, the investigators utilized a survey in the southeastern United States that also incorporated media as a foundation for escalating attitudes toward police. Furthermore, this study included characteristic profile variables on ethnicity and gender alone. The Nix and Wolfe (2017) study posited that the high-profile killings of African Americans across the United States had sparked a volatile resistance to police. Although police felt there was a rise in citizen response, no evidence has been found to support the ideas that are specific to riot and negative responses to police (Nix & Wolfe, 2017). Although this study significantly adds to the existing literature, it did not incorporate media exposure, social response, and social media use on attitudes towards police. Furthermore, the results of Nix and Wolfe were inclusive of the southeastern United States. This study included all 50 states (pending participation), showing that officers who felt strongly about the existence of a war on cops were more likely to believe it is common among officers in today’s world of law enforcement.

Shjarck et al. (2017) explored whether police departments have engaged in depolicing. De-policing refers to withdrawal from active police work in response to unprecedented levels of negative attention to police officers. Their quantitative study was used to examine changes in traffic stops, searches, and arrests from 2014 through 2015 from 118 police departments in Missouri. Shjarck et al. determined a -0.11 decrease or change in stops during the 2014-2015 study. This meant about 67,000 fewer stops in 2015 than in 2014 and determined that departments serving a large African American population have even less reported stops (Shjarck et al., 2017). This study determined that the negative attention on law enforcement do have a significant impact

on proactive police approaches to traffic stops in Missouri. In a similar study by Nix, Wolfe, and Campbell (2017), research was conducted to determine if there was a “de-policing” or “war on cops” where police are the recipients of violent assaults. The purpose of the Nix et al. study was to determine whether command-level police officers believe the war on cops exists and, in turn, if they believe that de-policing is a common coping mechanism among officers (Nix et al., 2017). The correlation between de-policing and perceptions of a war on cops was statistically significant ($p = < .01$).

De-policing is occurring on a broad scale and it is apparent that recent criticism of their profession has adversely affected police officers’ perceptions (Nix et al., 2017). Officers appear to be feeling strain related to national-level challenges to their legitimacy and may believe de-policing is a common response. On the other hand, perceived audience legitimacy at the local level may be a more important factor in shaping officers’ beliefs about de-policing. The Shjarck et al. (2017) and the Nix et al. (2017) studies each examined variables such as education, perception, and years of service. However, neither of the aforementioned studies addressed media exposure, social response, and social media use to determine attitudes towards police.

Social Networking Sites and Social Media Response

In the context of this study, social response is considered public reaction to police-initiated actions or incidents. At the same time, it is unclear if social response directly impacts attitudes towards police. Bowen’s (2015) research investigated the comparison between media coverage of the Rodney King incident 20 years ago to the media coverage following the Ferguson, Missouri incident. The purpose of Bowen’s

study was to understand how media frames racially sensitive news reports and progressively covers specific aspects of sensitive news stories. This study examined factors such as newspaper articles, magazine covers, and broadcast stories. On that premise, this study did not incorporate other demographic variables to explore a personal perspective of attitudes toward police.

The prospect of social response has also grown with social networking sites (SNS) (Laranjo et al., 2015). They are defined as web-based platforms that allow individuals to create their profile and build a network of connections with other users (Laranjo et al., 2015). As of September 2013, 73% of online adults were using a SNS of some kind and 42% were using more than one. Facebook is the most popular platform (with more than 1.19 billion monthly active users), followed by Twitter [500 million users worldwide] (Laranjo et al. 2015). Social media sites have created a unique and safe space for diverse users to coalesce and engage in discourse regarding interactions between citizens and law enforcement (Bora et al., 2013). The relatively low cost of smart phones, emergence of social media and social networking sites has created the opportunity for individuals to capture aggressive injustices that are experienced disproportionately by African Americans in the United States (Correll et al., 2014; Moule et al., 2013). Data from the Pew Research Center indicated that two-thirds (67%) of Americans report that they get at least some of their news on social media.

Furthermore, about three-quarters of non-Whites (74%) consume news on social media sites, up from 64% in 2016 (Pew Research Center, 2017). This growth means that non-Whites are now more likely than Whites to get news while on social media.

Facebook by far still leads every other social media site as a source of news (Pew Research Center, 2017). This is largely due to Facebook's large user base, compared with other platforms, and the fact that most of its users get news on the site (Laranjo et al. 2015). The large user base of social network sites also becomes an important platform for becoming civically engaged (social response) to issues within communities. Warren, Sulaiman, and Jaafar (2014) conducted an online survey of 502 citizens that determined that using social media for civic engagement has a significant positive impact on trust and that this trust led to an increase in trust towards institutions, including police. Interestingly, while group incentives encouraged citizens to engage online for civic matters, it is civic publications through postings on social media that intensify the surge of citizens for civic action to address social issues (Warren, Sulaiman, & Jaafar, 2014). Post-hoc analysis with social response participants examined perceptions of trust toward law enforcement. The overall findings from this study were that law enforcement, in their effort to promote meaningful and trusting citizen engagement, needs to enhance trust among the public by fostering social capital via online civic engagement and closing the public-police disengagement gap (Warren et al., 2014). While there is promising evidence that people are adopting social media for civic engagement, research on citizens' attitudes towards police and social response via social networking sites remains limited (Warren et al., 2014).

Additionally, Correll, Hudson, Guillermo, and Ma (2014) conducted a qualitative study to understand the disdain for police communicated on Twitter by urban, gang-involved youth following the police shooting of one of their fellow gang members. This

study was important to my study in providing an understanding about how age incorporates perceptions of police and how social media is used as a tool for urban youth to express concern for police-initiated actions. However, this study entailed Twitter as a social media base, whereas, my dissertation study was used to investigate social networking sites (SNS) and to quantify demographics to understand attitudes towards police and social response.

Within the last decade, researchers have begun to evaluate how and why social media platforms became a powerful source for documenting and challenging police-initiated actions and the misrepresentation of racial issues (Ferguson, Munoz, Garza, and Galindo, 2014). Specifically, Ferguson examined how social platforms provide outlets for contesting police action. As opposed to someone who might post about Ferguson on Facebook, users on Twitter felt like they were participating in #Ferguson. Tweets, in real-time about the unfolding events, rallied supporters to join various hash tag campaigns and monitored live streams where they could bear witness to the tear gassing and arrests of journalists and protestors (Ferguson et. al, 2014). Engaging in these activities is akin to participating in a protest in the sense that it offers an experience of “real time” engagement, community, and even collective effervescence. Through this form of participation, users can experience the heightened temporality characterizing all social movements.

One example of real-time engagement is the use of the meme on social platforms. A 'meme' is a virally-transmitted cultural symbol or social idea that are captioned photos intended to publicly ridicule human behavior (Gil, 2017). Further, Bayerl and Stovnov

(2016) stated the meme and the process linked to its initiation and rapid sharing on social networks has also been considered in the context of online protests. Carney (2016) added to the Ferguson et al. (2014) study and examined social media response, social media use, age, and gender. Camey (2016) drew on the ways youth of color had an active role in the social response following the deaths of Michael Brown and Eric Garner in 2014. Camey (2016) considered the social response on social media as representing a larger struggle over discourse and race across the United States. Albeit this article was not theoretically predicated as this literature review, a paramount factor emerged. The debate on Twitter revealed various strategies youth of color employed to shape the national discourse about race in the wake of these high-profile tragedies (Camey, 2016). Although the Ferguson study added important social media knowledge to this subject area, it mainly concentrated on social media and the increase of social response. The information revealed by the Ferguson study and Camey's research, collectively demonstrates the need to debate how social media use, and social response or public reaction can result in strain or distress towards various ethnic groups and generate attitudes towards police. Based on the literature covered thus far, these reactions must be properly understood to provide adequate responses and remedies to situations that have proven to be both dangerous and a threat to public safety. Therefore, understanding citizens' reactions becomes an important focus.

Contreras expanded on Bowen's (2015) study in that traditional media, and social outlets may have contributed to moral panic, especially to marginalized communities (Contreras, 2016). During the Ferguson and Baltimore riots, for example, activists had

the technology to record the militarized police practices and share their videos globally on social media. This study researched important aspects concluding that media portrays minorities, specifically African Americans, as the victims of actions perpetrated by police (Contreras, 2016). This study concentrated on media portrayal as a factor and concluded that images of actions and abuse of power create a concern in communities. However, this study did not include media exposure, social response, and social media use into the study, leaving a void in the research. However, the perspectives generated in this study explored solidarity and support for protests at a national and international level. The information gained illuminates the necessity to investigate how geographic location (urban and rural) may or may not influence attitudes towards police.

Attitudes Towards Police and the Community

Community attitudes towards police are a concern given the manner in which individuals view the police in the U.S. today. Specifically, the structural negativity toward the police among some individuals has been starkly evident in the public's reaction to high-profile shooting deaths of African Americans (Wolf, 2016). Braga et al. (2014) revealed that education, race, and income are important characteristics (variables) required to understand citizens' attitudes towards police. However, as later stated in this study, this quantitative multiple regression design was used so that I could determine if attitudes towards police are primarily determined by people learning of experiences with law enforcement officials (and African Americans). De Angelis and Wolf (2016) studied accountability of participants in their study of attitudes towards police. This study used a survey to focus on a specific western U.S. city. De Angelis and Wolf examined

characteristic profile variables such as income, age, gender, ethnicity, and crime to look at the potential relationship between attitudes toward police and demographic information. Race/ethnicity and respondent satisfaction with police was a significant predictor of police satisfaction and consistent with many of the seminal studies on attitudes toward the police (Cao et al., 1996; Hurst & Frank, 2000; Reisig & Parks, 2000). The researchers determined that perception of participant community had an impact on the attitudes toward police. The study adds significantly to the field of knowledge of attitudes towards police and characteristic profile. At the same time, De Angelis and Wolf did not examine other influencing factors such as media exposure, social response participation, or social media use in determining attitudes towards police.

This perception that the police are legitimate might be needed so that the police can enforce authority and civilians would be willing to comply with the law and to cooperate (Hurst & Frank, 2000). Van Damme and Pauwels (2016) conducted a study that looked at the willingness to comply with traffic violations that may influence attitudes toward police. This study consisted of a large-scale survey ($n = 1,659$) that looked at how trust in police varied by ages and how trust in police measure compliance with the law. The results of this test did not yield any specific answers aligned with their hypothesis/research question; however, the researchers did find that the variables *trust in police* and *compliance with the law* to vary among younger individuals than in older individuals (Van Damme & Pauwels, 2016). In other words, younger individuals who had experience with the law most likely had a lower likelihood to cooperate with the police than those who were older and willing to comply with law enforcement. The Van

Damme and Pauwels (2016) study concluded that citizens' perception and attitudes towards police influenced the overall willingness to cooperate.

Given the findings in the literature that members of minority groups hold less favorable views of the police, confidence in the police may also be another important mediator. Lee and Gibbs (2015) surveyed students that attended a university in the northeastern United States. To quantify their contact with the police, attitudes toward the police, and lifestyles, among others were examined (Lee & Gibbs, 2015). The findings of Lee and Gibbs indicated race, along with other predictors, significantly influenced confidence in the police. Race appeared to have a significant effect; that is, minority respondents have lower confidence in the police than White respondents ($p < 0.05$) (Lee & Gibbs, 2015). Additionally, minority students encountered more negative contacts with the police ($p < 0.05$), more negative vicarious experiences ($p < 0.01$), and more exposure to media coverage of police misconduct ($p < 0.01$) (Lee & Gibbs, 2015). This study solidified current literature on attitudes towards police. However, a holistic approach to understand attitudes towards police and community response may potentially benefit from examining media exposure, social response, and social media use.

Lastly, Evans and Williams (2017) extended existing research on attitudes towards police and how those attitudes are influenced by pedestrian stop and frisk in New York City. These results demonstrated that several demographics (characteristic profile) variables, such as ethnicity, gender, education, employment, and age to predict likelihood of being stopped and frisked by police. Specifically, the results yielded that minorities and younger citizens had fewer positive views, and unfavorable perceptions of police

(Evans & Williams, 2017). The minorities and youth were also determined to have less education; were unemployed; lower income; not married; no children; had been previously frisked by police; and vicarious experiences of others with stop-and-frisk (Evans & Williams, 2017). In terms of race, White respondents were more likely than both Black and Latino respondents to report that stop-and-frisk protects them, $p < .001$; that stop-and-frisk reduces drug dealing, $p < .001$; and that stop-and-frisk reduces street violence, $p < .001$; and White respondents were significantly more likely than Black and Latino respondents to support stop-and-frisk $p < .001$ (Evans & Williams, 2017). However, Evans and Williams predominantly focused on stop and frisk procedures whereas this dissertation focuses on media exposure, social response, and attitudes towards police.

Summary

Given the breadth of past-to-present literature, there appeared to be a trend of increasing use of social media as well as a prominent role of mass media in perpetuating the perceptions of social inequality growing among communities in the United States (Hwang & Kim, 2015). Researchers have investigated a range of factors that contributed to attitudes towards police. These factors, often separately examined, included age, ethnicity, education, geography, media influence, social response, and social networking sites (SNS) (e.g., Moule et al., 2013; Correll et al., 2014; Stewart et al., 2014; and Ruback & Singh, 2015). Further, this literature review also covered existing knowledge on attitudes towards police and the community (Braga et al., 2014). The research directs to many common conclusions, such as race and age as a predominant factor in attitudes

towards police (Moule et al., 2013; Correll et al., 2014; Stewart et al., 2014; and Ruback & Singh, 2015).

Existing research provided only a partial understanding of the phenomenon relating to media exposure, the social response of citizens, and attitudes towards police possibly resulting from the police-initiated actions against African American people. Although the studies determined how these variables impacted specified research, there was no literature incorporating wholly the independent characteristic profile variables into one study. Therefore, this study was designed to address the gap in the existing literature that did not examine media exposure, social response and characteristic profile variables concerning attitudes towards police. The results of my study were significant on this topic because it: (a) added and updated to the existing literature on this topic, (b) determined whether there are predictive relationships among all the variables, and (c) determined the significance of variables on the formation of attitudes toward police.

In Chapter 2, I included the literature search strategy, theoretical foundation, introduction to the literature review, influence and attitudes towards police, oppressed society and police-related shootings, demographic variables related to the literature, and attitudes towards police and the community, a summary and conclusions. In Chapter 3, I included the introduction, research design and rationale, methodology, data analysis plan, threats to validity and reliability, informed consent and ethical considerations, and a summary. In Chapter 4, I include the introduction, data collection, results, and a summary. In Chapter 5, I include the introduction, interpretation of findings, limitations of the study, recommendations, implications, and a conclusion to the study.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

The purpose of this quantitative multiple regression study was to determine if there was a relationship between or among the linear combination of the predictors (media exposure, social response, social media use) and attitudes towards police following incidents of police-initiated actions upon African Americans in the United States. The IV in this study were: media exposure, social response, and social media use. The dependent variable in this study was: attitudes towards police (DV). In this chapter, I describe the research design rationale, strategy of inquiry, the role of the researcher, sample population, data collection method, data analysis, and ethical considerations for respondents who participated in this study.

Research Questions

There were two research questions in this study:

Research Question 1: What are the relationships between or among media exposure, social response, social media use, citizens' and attitudes towards police (after learning of police-initiated actions upon African Americans in the United States)?

H_01 : There is no bivariate relationship between and among media exposure, social response, social media use and citizens' attitudes towards police (after citizens learn of police-initiated actions upon African Americans in the United States)?

H_{a1} : A bivariate relationship exists between and among media exposure, social response, and social media use and citizens' attitudes towards police (after citizens learn of police-initiated actions upon African Americans in the United States)?

RQ2: What variables if any, for a model consisting of media exposure, social response, social media use, significantly predict citizen's attitudes towards police (after citizens learn of police-initiated actions upon African Americans in the United States)?

$H_02: R^2 = 0$: In the population, the proportion of variance of the DV, attitudes towards police, explained by the linear combination of the IVs (social response, social media use) was zero.

$H_{a2}: R^2 \neq 0$: In the population, the proportion of variance of the DV, attitudes towards police, by the linear combination of the IVs (media exposure, social response, social media use) was not zero.

Research Design and Rationale

This study's design comprised a quantitative survey; utilizing an online survey tool (Survey Monkey) to obtain information from research respondents (i.e., populations). Further, this purpose of this study was to determine if there was a relationship between or among the linear combination of the predictors (media exposure, social response, social media use) and the dependent variable: attitudes toward police. As quantitative research is fundamentally about collecting numerical data to explain a phenomenon, quantitative research questions are suited to answer research inquiries as they relate to identified variables associated with the phenomenon (Cohen & Cohen, 1983). The following variables explained how the operationalization was used in this dissertation.

Study Variables

The variables used in this study included media exposure, social media use, social response and attitudes towards police as detailed below.

Media exposure (IV). This variable was operationalized as a nominal level of measurement indicating the type of media participants primarily receive news information (television, newspaper, or social network). The data for the variable media exposure will be taken from the Characteristic Profile Survey, question number seven (see Appendix B). Media exposure was divided into three categories: Television = “0”, Newspaper = “1”, and Social Media = “3”.

Social media Use (IV). Social media use was measured by the Index of Social Networking (de Zúñiga, Copeland, & Bimber, 2014) (see Appendix D). This variable was operationalized as an interval level of measurement indicated on a scale of zero to ten to indicate hours per day a person uses social media. The data from this measure determined how much time the participant self-reported on media platforms (Brown, 2016; de Zúñiga et al., 2014; Grimmelikhuijsen & Meijer, 2015; Jernigan & Rushman, 2014; Warren et al., 2014). These platforms included activities such as interacting with news media, through social networking platforms, such as Facebook or Linked In. The Index of Social Networking consists of six items rated on frequency scales with various anchors. The data measurements highlighted the number of people who used social media and the frequency of use. The data was tracked, and rate represented a percentage of the aggregate totals.

Social response (IV). This independent variable accounted for activities as measured by the Offline and Online Activity Level Measures: rated on a five-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (practically every day) and was measured as an ordinal variable. The questions in the Offline and Online Activity Level Measure are

rated on a five-point Likert scale. The Offline and Online Activity Level Measures assessed the level of respondents' offline protest participation and online protest-related activities (Kende, vanZomeren, Uihelyam & Lantos, 2016). The Offline Activity Level questions yielded Cronbach's alphas of .79 and the Online Activity Levels question yielded Cronbach's alphas of .72 (Kende et al., 2016).

Attitudes Towards Police (DV). The dependent (outcome variable) was attitudes toward police as measured by the interval scale variable Attitudes Toward Police Scale (Hurst & Frank, 2000). Items were rated using a five-point Likert scale ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree.” The Attitudes Towards Police scale (see Appendix C) has been used in previous research on the role of police behavior in predicting citizens’ attitudes towards police (Avdija, 2010). The Attitudes Toward Police Scale (ATPs) is an 11-item Likert scale question/items that were constructed to measure dimensions of attitudes towards police (Hurst & Frank, 2000). The reliability analysis of this scale is measured by using the internal consistency of scores, indicating that this scale is highly reliable (Avdija, 2010). It had a Cronbach's Alpha of .936. (Avdija, 2010). Further, this scale was tested on individual questions from peer-review researchers, therefore, using items from the instrument would not affect the validity of the measure (Hurst & Frank, 2000).

Characteristic Profile Survey. This survey served as the total instrument that the study data was gathered from. The Characteristic Profile Survey had four sections. The first section (see Appendix B) was utilized to gain participant information (age, gender, state of residence, ethnicity, urban or rural geographic area, educational status,

and the independent variable, media exposure. The second section, Attitudes Towards Police Scale, contained questions regarding attitudes toward police (DV). The third section contained the questions of social media use (IV). Lastly, the fourth section of the survey contained survey questions on social response (IV). I selected a Likert-type survey design for this research. Fox (2015) indicated that Likert-type survey designs are ideal for exploring the potential relationship between the independent (media exposure, social response, and social media use) and dependent variables (attitudes towards police). Online surveys are less expensive and more efficient in comparison to printed survey-based studies (Samuels, 2016). An online survey was best suited for this study because this mechanism enabled quantified respondent attitudes to determine significance among predictor variables (Cohen & Cohen, 1983; Diesner, 2015; Fox, 2015). The data collected via survey may show prevalence, distribution, and the interrelationships between variables within groups (Rossi, Wright, & Anderson, 2013)

Population

The population for this study was recruited by using the social media platforms known as Facebook and LinkedIn. Specifically, adult users located within the United States who log onto Facebook or LinkedIn at least once a day. Considering all ethical procedures, research with minors, under the age of 18 years old, fell into a protected class of people (NIH, 2015). Therefore, this study preferred the accessible population of users who are 18 year of age and older who frequently used Facebook or LinkedIn as a media platform. Users accessed the link via Facebook or LinkedIn. The link took participants outside of the platform into a secure environment (Survey Monkey) to begin the survey.

The diversity and socio-economic status of Facebook and LinkedIn users represented the general population of social media users that the sample was drawn.

Power Analysis

A power analysis was conducted with G*Power 3.1 (Faul, Erdfelder, Lang, & Buchner, 2007). A medium effect size ($f^2 = .15$), a power level of .95, and a sample size of 119 would be required for ten characteristic profile (Faul et al., 2007). Power increases as the sample size grows. It appeared that determining sample size for an e-survey is not a procedure. Despite a large amount of literature on the topic, seemingly in all cases, there is an element of informed judgment (Hill, 1988; Kalantari, Kalantari, & Maleki, 2011). I was confident the participation in this study would surpass the minimum sample size due to the number of potential participants that use Facebook daily.

Sampling and Sampling Procedures

Convenience sampling is a type of nonprobability sampling method utilizing an available sample selection instead of selecting participants through random sampling (Cohen & Cohen, 2008). Convenience sampling was an appropriate sampling strategy for the current study because this study is accessible to those who have a social media platform (Facebook, LinkedIn, etc.) (Christensen & Johnson, 2012). Utilizing a convenience sampling method was reliant on a participant's availability to utilize the Internet and willingness to participate in the study. The convenience sampling method does not provide the researchers with control over who responds to invitations to participate in the survey; however, it is a viable form of research for the current study because of the sample size through G*Power analysis (Christensen & Johnson,

2012). Mbuba (2010) studied the effect of race and other factors on the attitude of college students toward the police. In the aforementioned study, researchers sought the views of university students toward the police and compared those views across different domains that included race, gender, previous police encounter, and criminal justice major in relation to other majors (Mbuba, 2010). The study utilized a convenience sample, whereby a nonrandom selection of departments was made to ensure that students were drawn from varied academic majors (Mbuba, 2010).

Exclusion Criteria

There were two exclusions to this current study. The first exclusion was an age requirement of participants 18 years of age and older. If participants were under the age of 18 years old, the study directed the participant to the end page thanking them for visiting the platform. The second exclusion of this study was based on a participant's ability to access the survey via social media on the Internet.

Procedures for Recruitment from Social Media

In 2016, the average American adult spent 40-50 minutes a day on Facebook (Bureau of Statistics, 2016). Based on the amount time spent on Facebook by Americans, recruitment from this platform was likely to be successful. To access the survey information and details, potential participants responded by clicking on the request on that link, which automatically took the participant to an Informed Consent Agreement. If the participant agreed, a button indicating, "I agree" was clicked and the individual progressed through the survey questions. Each participant would answer questions and could not move forward unless the question had been answered.

Participants could exit the study at any time with their initially loaded information saved and secure. Participants could come back to the survey, following the same invitation link as previously used to access the survey. Once the survey was finished, the participant could click on “done” to end the survey. The SurveyMonkey platform directed the participant that the survey was complete and thanked the participant for their involvement (SurveyMonkey, 2016).

Finally, to address duplicated survey responses, SurveyMonkey, by default, stored the IP addresses of respondents in survey results (SurveyMonkey, 2016). This was helpful in determining if respondents have completed the survey multiple times. At the end of the survey, SurveyMonkey stores each person’s anonymous data in a password-protected file. There were no follow-ups to this study. If participants requested a copy of the results, participants were directed to contact the researcher.

Instrumentation and Operationalization of Variables

An extensive search of the literature was completed to determine the necessary instruments to measure attitudes towards police. Four scales were determined to be of importance to this study. The first item was a self-made characteristic profile survey to gather demographic data for age, gender, ethnicity, employment status, geographic location, educational level. The Characteristic Profile Survey also contained the independent variable, media exposure. The second scale, Index of Social Networking (de Zúñiga, Copeland, & Bimber, 2014) was used as an independent variable to determine social media use. Next, social response was measured on the Offline and Online Activity Levels Measurement ((IV) (Williams, 2006). Lastly, the Attitudes toward Police Scale

(Hurst & Frank, 2000) was used as the outcome variable (DV). The total amount of questions used in the survey totaled 30.

Independent Variables

Index of Social Networking (IV). Social media use is the sum of information and entertainment media taken in by an individual or group. I used the data from this measure to determine how much time the participant self-reported on media platforms (Brown, 2016; de Zúñiga et al., 2014; Grimmelikhuisen, & Meijer, 2015; Jernigan & Rushman, 2014; Warren et al.,). The desired age group for this measure was 18 years and older with a population of male and females located in the United States who used social media; These platforms included activities such as interacting with news media, through social networking platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, Snapchat, etc. The Index of Social Networking consisted of six items rated on frequency scales with various anchors. The data measurements highlighted the number of people who used social media and the frequency of use. The data was tracked, and a rate represented a percentage of the aggregated totals. Social media use (IV) was measured as an interval variable (on a scale of zero to ten) and measured alongside the interval dependent variable, attitudes toward police. The dependent (outcome variable) was attitudes toward police as measured by the Attitudes Toward Police scale (Hurst & Frank, 2000).

Offline and Online Activity Levels Measurement (IV). The Offline and Online Activity Levels Measure (Kende et al., 2016) were developed for use in a study that investigated whether the social affirmation use of social media motivates individuals for collective action to achieve social change. The Offline and Online Activity Level

Measures was used to measure offline participation (two items) and online activity levels (two items; i.e., sharing, posting and commenting on the Facebook pages of others). The items were rated on a five-point Likert scale. Offline Activity Levels yielded Cronbach's alphas of .79 (Kende et al., 2016). Online Activity Levels yielded a Cronbach's alpha of .72 (Kende). The format for this instrument comprised of four items. The items were rated on a five-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (practically every day).

Dependent Variable

Attitudes Towards Police Scale (ATPs). Predicting citizen attitudes towards police has also been very successful in other instruments in quantitative studies. The Attitudes Towards Police scale (see Appendix C) has been used in previous research on the role of police behavior in predicting citizens' attitudes towards police (Avdija, 2010). The Attitudes Toward Police Scale (ATPs) were a 12-item Likert scale question/items that was constructed to measure dimensions of attitudes towards police (Hurst & Frank, 2000). The reliability analysis of this scale was measured by using the internal consistency of scores, indicating that this scale is highly reliable (Avdija, 2010). The Reliability analysis, as measured by using the internal consistency of scores, suggested that this scale is highly reliable. It had a Cronbach's Alpha of .936. (Avdija, 2010). Further, this scale was tested on individual questions from peer-review researchers, therefore, using items from the instrument would not affect the validity of the measure (Hurst & Frank, 2000).

Operationalization of Variables

The following descriptors explained the operationalization of the variables used in this study. The variable “media exposure” was measured as a nominal measurement where it was presented as “newspaper” = 0 “television” = 1, and “social media” (i.e. Facebook or LinkedIn = 3. Social media use (IV) was measured as an interval variable (on a scale of zero to 10) and measured alongside the interval dependent variable, Attitudes toward police using the Index of Social Networking scale. The Index of Social Networking consists of six items rated on frequency scales with various anchors. The data measurements highlighted the number of people who used social media and the frequency of use. Social response was measured as an ordinal variable (four Likert-type questions) and measured alongside the interval dependent variable.

Data Analysis Plan

The latest version of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) 21.0 software was used to analyze the data. During and after data collection, results could be viewed at any time during the study in the analysis section of the survey. The summary view of the data, individual responses, charts, use filters, comparisons, and created filters specific to subsets of data (SurveyMonkey, 2016). The data collected from SurveyMonkey was exported to use in SPSS. The exports allow you to see the complete answer set for each respondent. The data retrieved and converted to SPSS consisted of a majority of the variables with the numeric variables, and the value labels would be correctly associated with the numeric values. Also, most of the variables had variable labels. Results could also be filtered by question/answer, completeness, time, and

respondent metadata.

The preliminary analysis of data collected intended to show frequency distributions, descriptive statistics, and bivariate correlations to be sure the data meets assumptions. The strategy for this analysis was to examine the predictive effects of the characteristic variables. The quantitative data was downloaded and converted to SPSS statistical software for analysis. The initial steps involved screening the data for missing responses and the scoring of the, Index of Social Networking, Offline and Online Activity Levels Measurement, and Attitudes Towards Police Scale. Missing responses were replaced using the mean for those participants who did respond to the item.

Descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations, frequencies, and percentages) was used to describe the participants with respect to their characteristic profile information (Wagner, 2016) (see Appendix B). Next, the bivariate relationship was explored to determine whether there was a relationship between or among the three independent (predictor) variables, and if they could predict attitudes towards police. The first step in determining if there is a bivariate relationship among or between the variables was to quantify the degree to which two variables were related (collinearity or multicollinearity). Lastly, a multiple regression was employed to answer the quantitative research questions. The results were presented in tables accompanied by interpretive narratives that provided the means, standard deviations, bivariate correlations, multiple correlations, and beta weights. The .05 level of probability was the basis for rejecting the hypothesis in social sciences (Wagner, 2016). If the relationship between independent variables (IV) and the dependent variable (DV) was not linear, the results of the

regression analysis would under-estimate the true relationship (Wagner, 2016). This under-estimation carried two risks: increased chance of a Type II error for that IV, and in the case of multiple regression, an increased risk of Type I errors (over-estimation) for other IVs that shared variance with that IV (Cohen & Cohen, 1983).

Bivariate Relationship

In this study, I explored whether there was a bivariate relationship between or among the three independent (predictor) variables, and if they could predict attitudes towards police. The first step in determining if there was a bivariate relationship among or between the variables were to quantify the degree to which two variables were related (collinearity or multicollinearity). Multicollinearity occurs when there are high correlations between two or more predictor variables (Cohen & Cohen, 1983; Dormann et al., 2013). In other words, one predictor variable was used to predict the other; creating redundant information and skewing the results in a regression model. Examples of correlated predictor variables (also called multicollinear predictors) are age, years of education, and annual income (Cohen & Cohen, 1983). According to Cohen and Cohen (1983), a straightforward way to detect multicollinearity was to calculate correlation coefficients for all pairs of predictor variables. “If the correlation coefficient, r , is exactly +1 or -1, this is called perfect multi-collinearity-if r is close to or exactly -1 or +1, one of the variables should be removed from the model if at all possible” (Cohen & Cohen, 1983, p.206).

In this study, I explored whether there was a bivariate relationship between or among the three independent (predictor) variables, and if they could predict attitudes

towards police. According to Cohen and Cohen (1983) the variables must be measured on either an interval or ratio scale in multiple regression. However, both variables did not need to be measured on the same scale. If one of the variables is ordinal, then an alternative linear test called Spearman's rank-order correlation was needed (Cohen & Cohen, 1983; Field, 2013).

The Spearman's rank-order correlation is the nonparametric version of the Pearson product-moment correlation. Spearman's correlation coefficient, (ρ , also signified in this study using the syntax r_s) measured the strength and direction of the association between two ranked variables (Cohen & Cohen, 1983; Field, 2013). As indicated in this study, one of the independent variables (media exposure) was an ordinal nominal variable. Therefore, the Spearman's correlation coefficient was the designated measure for the strength of association in this study. The interpretation of Spearman's rank order correlation was determined by the correlation result (Cohen & Cohen, 1988; Field, 2013). To normally describe the strength of the correlation using the following guide for the absolute value of .00 - .19 "very weak," .20 - .39 "weak," .40 - .59 "moderate," .60 - .79 "strong," and .80 - 1.0 "very strong" (Cohen & Cohen, 1983).

Alternatively, Spearman's correlation coefficient was a measure of a monotonic relationship and thus a value did not imply there is no relationship between the variables. A monotonic function is one that either never increases or never decreases as its independent variable increases (Cohen & Cohen, 1983). Monotonic variables increase (or decrease) in the same direction, but not always at the same rate. If an *increase* in the independent variable caused a *decrease* in the dependent variable, this is referred to

as a monotonic inverse relationship (Cohen & Cohen). An inverse relationship is the same thing as a negative correlation. A monotonic direct relationship is where an *increase* in the independent variable caused an *increase* in the dependent variable. In other words, if there was a positive correlation between the data (+1 = a perfect monotonically increasing relationship -1 = a perfect monotonically decreasing relationship. 0 = not monotonic) (Cohen & Cohen).

Multiple Regression

One statistical tool that allowed for the examination of multiple independent variables as they related to a dependent variable is known as multiple regression. This analytic data system, as articulated in the seminal work of Cohen and Cohen (1983), is designed to be a robust and flexible means of understanding simple to complex relationships between variables. By using a multiple regression analysis, I could account for the complexity encountered by using multiple variables, rather than to rely on simple correlational analysis (Fox, 2015). The selection of multiple linear regression in this study enabled the identification of the independent individual (Fox) variable effects (identified above) on attitudes towards police (Montgomery et al., 2015). When selecting the model for the multiple linear regression analysis, another important consideration was the model fit. Adding independent variables to a multiple linear regression model increased the amount of explained variance in the dependent variable (typically expressed as R^2). Therefore, adding too many independent variables without any theoretical justification could result in an over-fit model (Cohen & Cohen, 1988). This substantiated the use of three independent variables (media exposure, social response, and social media

use) in this study. While a logistic regression was proposed to determine whether the IV (media exposure, social response, and social media use) were useful in predicting attitudes toward police; I used a stepwise forward method of entry because this method was the most appropriate when the goal was predictive rather than explanatory, as was this study. Using this method I determined how much each independent variable (media exposure, social response, and social media use) added to the overall variance of the model (known as R² change). The R² change referred to entering predictor variables into the regression analysis one step at a time (Cohen & Cohen, 1983; Halinski & Feldt, 1970; Howard, 2008; Laerd, 2016). Stepwise regression is designed to select from a group of IVs the one IV at each step that made the largest contribution to R² (Cohen & Cohen, 1983; Halinski & Feldt, 1970; Howard, 2008; Laerd, 2016). No additional IVs were entered the equation unless an IV, not already in the equation, contributed to R² which was statistically significant at a specified level (Cohen & Cohen, 1983; Halinski & Feldt, 1970; Howard, 2008; Laerd, 2016). The use of multiple regression in this study was contingent that certain assumptions were met.

Regression is a parametric approach. 'Parametric' means that the researcher meets assumptions about data for the purpose of analysis (Laerd, 2016). Due to its parametric side, regression could be restrictive. There were eight (8) assumptions that must be met for the multiple regression model. The assumptions of a multiple regression allowed this analysis to (a) provide information on the accuracy of predictions; (b) test how well the regression model fits your data; (c) determine the variation in the dependent variable explained by the independent variables; and (d) tested the hypotheses on the

regression equation (Laerd Statistics, 2016). If these assumptions were violated, I had to make corrections and retest these assumptions. If they still did not pass, I had to find an alternative statistical test. Detailed assumptions are outlined below in relation to this study.

Assumption 1: Variable requirement. The first assumption of a multiple regression indicated that the study must have a continuous variable and there must be two or more independent variables (continuous or categorical) (Groves et al., 2009; Leard, 2016; Waltz, Strickland, & Lenz, 2017). If the study design did not meet these two prerequisites, then a multiple regression was not best suited for this study.

Assumption 2: Linear relationship. There needed to be a linear relationship between the two variables. A scatterplot was created using SPSS Statistics to plot the dependent variable against the independent variable and then visually inspect the scatterplot to check for linearity (Laerd, 2016). If a straight line on a graph travels upwards from left to right, it had a positive linear relationship (Laerd, 2016) and it shows a steady rate of increase. If a straight line on a graph travels downwards from left to right, it had a negative linear relationship as it represents a steady rate of decrease (Laerd, 2016). If the relationship displayed in the scatterplot was not linear, either run a nonlinear regression analysis, performed a polynomial regression or transform the data (Groves et al., 2009; Leard, 2016; Waltz et al., 2017).

Assumption 3: Independence of observations. The assumption of independence of observations in a multiple regression is that it stipulates that all participants in a sample are only counted once (Groves et al., 2009; Leard, 2016; Waltz et al., 2017). If a

participant was to appear multiple times in a sample, each time as an independent observation, then the statistics would be artificially skewed in their favor and would not be representative of a true sample of independent participants, independence of observations was checked using the Durbin-Watson statistic (Groves et al., 2009; Laerd, 2016; Waltz et al., 2017). The Durbin Watson statistic is a process used to test for autocorrelation in the residuals from statistical regression analysis (Laerd, 2016). The Durbin-Watson statistic is always between 0 and 4. A value of 2 meant that there is no autocorrelation in the sample (Laerd).

Assumption 4: Linearity. The assumption of linearity in multiple regression is a two-part test. First, establishing if a linear relationship exists between the dependent and independent variable exist (Cohen & Cohen, 1983; Laerd Statistics, 2016). This process could be accomplished by using a scatterplot. Second, a linear relationship must exist between the dependent and each of the independent variables, which was achieved by using a partial regression plot. If the data failed this assumption, adjustments were made to the variables (Cohen & Cohen, 1983; Hazewinkel, 1994/2001; Laerd Statistics, 2016). The Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient (or Pearson correlation coefficient, for short) is a measure of the strength of a linear association between two variables and is denoted by r (Cohen & Cohen, 1983; Laerd Statistics, 2016). The Pearson correlation coefficient, r , took a range of values from +1 to -1. A value of 0 indicated that there was no association between the two variables (Cohen & Cohen). A value greater than 0 indicated a positive association; that is, as the value of one variable increased, so did the value of the other variable (Cohen & Cohen). A value less than 0 indicated a negative

association; that is, as the value of one variable increased, the value of the other variable decreased (Cohen & Cohen, 1983). The variables had to be measured on either an interval or ratio scale. However, both variables did not need to be measured on the same scale. If one of the variables was ordinal, then an alternative linear test called Spearman's rank-order correlation was needed (as described in the previous section).

Assumption 5: Homoscedasticity. The data also needed to show homoscedasticity of residuals (equal error variances). The assumption of homoscedasticity is that the residuals were equal for all values of the predicted dependent variable (i.e., the variances along the line of best fit remain similar as you move along the line) (Draper & Smith, 1998; Fox, 1997). The use of the same plot used to check for linear regression was acceptable. If there is absolutely no heteroscedasticity, there was a completely random, equal distribution of points throughout the range of X axis that resembled a straight line (Cohen & Cohen, 1983; Field, 2013). If a slightly curved line appeared, the inference is homoscedasticity existed. When homoscedasticity of residuals was present, a weighted least squares regression would be more appropriate, as it down-weights those observations with larger disturbances (Cohen & Cohen, 1983; Prabhakaran, 2016).

Assumption 6: Multicollinearity. This situation of multicollinearity can occur when there were two or more independent variables that were highly correlated with each other (Cohen & Cohen, 1983). This could lead to problems with understanding which independent variable contributed to the variance explained in the dependent variable, as well as technical issues in calculating a multiple regression model (Cohen & Cohen,

1983). Hence, there should be minimal significant outliers that were in some way unusual when performing a multiple regression analysis. Further, these points could have a very negative effect on the regression equation that is used to predict the value of the dependent variable based on the independent variables (Groves et al., 2009; Leard, 2016; Waltz et al., 2017).

There are three main problems that address the potential for multicollinearity: risk for interpretation, sampling stability, and computation (Cohen & Cohen, 1983; Harrell, 2015; Montgomery et al., 2015). First, interpretation of multicollinearity can be resolved by removing the variable(s) that potentially create multicollinearity issues. For example, the variable *education* can be removed from the model. Second, sampling stability can be addressed by increasing the sample size of this study. Lastly, computation error is minimized since this study used SPSS as the main computational method of all data (Laerd, 2016).

Assumption 7: Outliers. Abnormal values of a series are considered outliers. They fall out the typical pattern of the trend and seasonal component. Outliers can bias estimates, such as the mean, and affect the sum of squared errors (Field, 2013). One way to account for this was to simply remove outliers or trim the data. A second way to handle outliers was to do a post-hoc trimming of values above a certain parameter (Groves et al., 2009; Leard, 2016; Waltz et al., 2017).

Assumption 8: Residuals. Residuals are normally distributed: the last assumption in a regression is to determine if the residuals are normally distributed. The scatter plot is a good way to check whether the data are homoscedastic (meaning the

residuals are equal across the regression line) (Draper & Smith, 1998; Fox, 1997). The Goldfeld-Quandt test can also be used to test for heteroscedasticity (Laerd, 2016). The test splits the data into two groups and tests to see if the variances of the residuals are similar across the groups (Groves et al., 2009; Leard, 2016; Waltz et al., 2017). If homoscedasticity was present, a nonlinear correction, such as a transformation of the variable addressed this concern (Hazewinkel, 1994/2000).

Weaknesses and Limitations of Multiple Linear Regression

While multiple linear regression was a powerful analytic tool, like other quantitative methods, it had limitations (Cohen & Cohen, 1983). Multicollinearity occurs when there are high correlations between two or more predictor variables (Cohen & Cohen, 1983; Dormann et al., 2013). In other words, one predictor variable could be used to predict the other. This could potentially create redundant information, skewing the results in a regression model. Examples of correlated predictor variables (also called multicollinear predictors) are age, years of education, and annual income. According to Cohen and Cohen (1983), a straightforward way to detect multicollinearity was to calculate correlation coefficients for all pairs of predictor variables.

Threats to Validity

In any quantitative study, an examination of threats to validity is important. Validity pertains to the survey instrument measuring what it was intended to measure (Nachmias & Nachmias, 2008). Validity in this study related to the accuracy of the attitudes towards police (ATPs), Offline and Online Activity Levels Measurement, and the Index of Social Networking. As mentioned, all the aforementioned instruments were

previously field-tested and are valid and considered reliable measures. Although there were many strengths to the use of a survey for this study, there were also weaknesses that needed to be addressed. In relation to this study, one of the threats to validity was while participants were filling out the survey, some may find the questions ambiguous, and I am not present to answer any questions. Trochim and Donnelly (2007) noted that bias issues are also a factor that should be understood with the survey instrument because the participant may answer in a fashion to look good, therefore answering dishonestly. However, it was assumed that participants were honest when answering the questions. Threats to external validity, internal validity, and content validity are discussed below.

External Threats

External validity related to the extent by which a study's results can be generalized to other people who have the same characteristics of the participants in the study (Cohen & Cohen, 1983; Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 2008). Therefore, I was meticulous in creating a sample size that represented the overall population. As with survey research of this type, external validity is weak because sampling error cannot be estimated in a non-random sample. Moreover, random samples are required for confidence-intervals and other statistics to be valid (Wiersman, 2015; Wladis & Samuels, 2016). To control for this weakness, the characteristic profile data of the sample were reported and discussed as descriptive statistics.

Internal Threats

The threats to validity were self-selection, individuals' motivation to complete the survey, and multiple entries. Self-selection meant the researcher had not controlled the

selection and completion of the survey (Wladis & Samuels, 2016). Further, the researcher did not offer incentives to participants, so many may not have completed the survey in its entirety. Lastly, participants may have attempted to complete more than one survey. The use of Survey Monkey eliminated the more than one survey per participants IP address from the study (Survey Monkey, 2015). Further, there were no threats to internal validity such as selection, history, and selection-maturation in this study.

Construct Validity

Construct validity is obtained when the instruments are related to the study's theoretical concept (Frankfort-Nachmias, & Nachmias). In this study, construct validity pertained to testing the strength of the effect of the independent variables (IV) and measuring attitudes towards police (DV). The measures used in this study were logical and accurately measured attitudes towards police.

Ethical Considerations and Informed Consent

To address ethical considerations aspect of this dissertation effectively, several ethical considerations were discussed. An application to Walden University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) was submitted to ensure this study complied with all of Walden University's procedures. The informed consent process was communicated to the participants followed by relevant ethical guidelines to protect participant interests. Lastly, to ensure that I would be a competent researcher, I completed The National Institute of Health (NIH) Office of Extramural Research on protecting human research participants on January 20, 2016. This study addresses issues emphasized by using humans in research. All safeguards were taken to prevent harm according to Institutional

Review Board (IRB) and NIH guidelines.

The potential risk of ethical violations in this study includes privacy breaches and misinterpretation of data. The risks above were mitigated by ensuring all controls to prevent these issues were addressed. Those who are considered part of the “protected groups” clause is not typically excluded. This survey did not ask mental disability, pregnancy status, or if they are economically disadvantaged. It was the rationale of the researcher that those who are mentally disabled, pregnant, and economically challenged are subject to viewing, reading, or hearing about police-initiated actions. Therefore, the protected groups would only be asked generalized questions and no identifying information would be collected. Further, this study was not available to those who were currently incarcerated. The survey used in this study only used characteristic profile data and no identifying variables of participants. Further, any questions that arose from the data analysis was brought to the dissertation committee chairman for clarification.

Informed Consent

The first step in the survey is an acknowledgment of the informed consent process. This ensured the participants were fully informed, as required by the Walden IRB consent form. The IRB consent form provides an overview of the study’s potential benefits, as well as any foreseeable risks. There was no compensation offered in exchange for participation in my study, and this was indicated on the informed consent acknowledgment form. All necessary measures were taken to protect the privacy of data collected. As mentioned earlier, all survey information was anonymous. Results of the study would be maintained for no less than five years. Following the five-year criterion,

the data (protected and stored on a USB drive) would be destroyed.

Risks

The questions asked in the survey might have caused minimal psychological stress greater than what one would experience in daily life (e.g., materials or topics that could be considered sensitive or offensive) however, protections were put in place. Specifically, to protect participants from this, there was a notice at the beginning of the survey that the questions of this study may be considered offensive or may be considered sensitive to some subjects. At this point, the participant could have exited the study. Further, if at any time during the survey, the participant may exit the survey at any point. Next, some participants might be considered emotionally disabled or economically disadvantaged.

According to the National Institute of Health (NIH; 2011), federal regulations consider vulnerable populations as: children, prisoners, pregnant women, mentally disabled persons, and economically or educationally disadvantaged persons. Studies seeking to enroll vulnerable subjects must provide additional safeguards to protect the rights and welfare of these subjects. As participants must be sheltered from research that might be insensitive, intrusive, and potentially distressing (NIH, 2011). People diagnosed with a life-limiting condition may be vulnerable and involving such people in research samples may be fraught with difficulties. For this study, none of the survey questions would violate federal protective persons. Participants in this study might be emotionally or economically disabled; however, I would not know they are. It is believed there was minimal risk involved, including the risk of inconvenience (for example, time spent

completing the survey). Lastly, all data will be maintained on a jump drive (external memory) in a locked safe for a period of no less than five years. Following the minimal data management, the data would be destroyed by erasing the file.

Summary

This study's research question was designed to answer the related hypothesis with one multiple linear regression model simultaneously. The research question used in this study are: what is the predictive nature of media exposure, social response, and characteristic profile variables among attitudes towards police? While this method is robust, multiple linear regression can show an intercorrelations between predictor variables (i.e., correlation or multicollinearity), which challenged the interpretation of multiple linear regression weighting regarding the strength of each predictor's contribution on the outcome variable (Harrell, 2015). In Chapter 4, I present the research findings and answer the alternative and null hypothesis.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of this quantitative study was to explore if citizens' attitudes towards police was related to media exposure, social response and social media use following incidents of police-initiated actions upon African Americans in the United States, and to determine whether media exposure, social response, and social media use predicted citizens' attitudes toward the police following incidents of police-initiated actions upon African Americans in the United States. Data for this study was gathered from the Characteristic Profile Survey (see Appendix B). There were 132 respondents that identified as users of the social media platforms Facebook and LinkedIn.

To understand the study as mentioned above's research problem, two research questions were posed.

Research Question 1: What are the relationships between or among media exposure, social response, social media use, citizens' and attitudes towards police (after learning of police-initiated actions upon African Americans in the United States)?

H_01 : There is no bivariate relationship between and among media exposure, social response, social media use and citizens' attitudes towards police (after citizens learn of police-initiated actions upon African Americans in the United States)?

H_{a1} : A bivariate relationship exists between and among media exposure, social response, and social media use and citizens' attitudes towards police (after citizens learn of police-initiated actions upon African Americans in the United States)?

RQ2: What variables if any, for a model consisting of media exposure, social

response, social media use, significantly predict citizen's attitudes towards police (after citizens learn of police-initiated actions upon African Americans in the United States)?

$H_02: R^2 = 0$: In the population, the proportion of variance of the DV, attitudes towards police, explained by the linear combination of the IVs (social response, social media use) was zero.

$H_a2: R^2 \neq 0$: In the population, the proportion of variance of the DV, attitudes towards police, by the linear combination of the IVs (media exposure, social response, social media use) was not zero.

In Chapter 4, I present the data collected and answer the alternative and null hypothesis as depicted in the following tables. Table 1 has the frequency counts for selected variables in the study. Table 2 has the descriptive statistics for the offline and online activity levels measures. Table 3 has the psychometric characteristics for the five aggregated scale scores. Table 4 has the Pearson and Spearman correlations for social media and social response scales with attitude toward police to answer Research Question One. Table 5 has Pearson and Spearman correlations for the demographic variables and offline and online activity levels measures with attitude toward police as additional findings. Table 6 has the results of the multiple regression model that predicted attitude toward police to answer Research Question Two. As additional findings, Table 6 has the results of the stepwise regression model that predicted attitude toward police based on 18 candidate variables.

Data Collection

This study received approval from the Walden University Institutional Review Board on June 8, 2018. The IRB approval number for this study is #06-08-18-0360658. This study's design comprises of a bivariate analysis followed by a forward entry regression. The data for this study was obtained using an online survey tool (Survey Monkey) to obtain information from research respondents (i.e., population). A correlational survey research design was chosen because this proposed study entails understanding if there is a predictive relationship between two or more variables included in this study. Also, this design served to quantify the dependent variable, attitudes towards police. This study used media exposure, social response, and social media use, (IV) as potential predictors of attitudes toward police (DV). Additionally, by using a multiple regression analysis, I could account for the complexity encountered by using multiple variables, rather than to rely on simple correlational analysis (Fox, 2015). Further, the purpose of this study was to determine if there was a relationship between or among the linear combination of the predictors (media exposure, social response, social media use) and the dependent variable: attitudes toward police. A total of 137 people began the Characteristic Profile Survey. Respondents who had zero missing answers ($n = 121$), one missing answer ($n = 5$), or two missing answers ($n = 6$) were retained. Missing answers were imputed with either the grand mean for continuous variables or the grand mode for categorical variables. This left the final sample at $N = 132$. Pronounced nonnormal distributions were noted for several key variables (see Figure 1). With that, Pearson correlations were supplemented with Spearman correlations for statistical

verification purposes (see Tables 4 and 5). Similar relationships were noted using the two types of correlations.

Additional assumption testing was performed for the regression model.

Autocorrelation was not an issue based on the Durbin-Watson test. The Durbin Watson test resulted in 2.403. According to Laerd Statistics (2015) a Durbin-Watson result of 2.403 means there is just a light autocorrelation in the sample. The Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) measured how much the variance of the estimated regression coefficients are inflated as compared to when the predictor variables are not linearly related (Laerd Statistics, 2015). The VIF is also used to explain how much amount of multicollinearity exists in a regression analysis (Cohen & Cohen, 1983). Values of the VIF that exceed ten are often regarded as indicating multicollinearity (Cohen & Cohen, 1983).

Multicollinearity was not evident based on tolerance and VIF statistics in this study. All residuals from the regression model were between \pm three standard deviations. An inspection of the three residual plots (histogram, normal P-P plot, and the scatterplot of the standardized residuals against the standardized predicted values) revealed all to acceptably meet the statistical assumptions of normality, linearity, and homoscedasticity according to (Cohen & Cohen, 1983; Figure 2). Taken together, the statistical assumptions for this dataset were adequately met.

Description of the Sample

Table 1 has the frequency counts for selected and the demographic variables. As this table conveys, most respondents had heard of police-related violence towards African American citizens (81.1%). There were 97 females (73.5%) and 35 male (26.5%)

participants for this study. The most frequent levels of education reported were a graduate degree (58.3%), followed by some college (no degree) (17.4%) and bachelor's degree (14.4%). A sizable majority lived in a suburban/urban setting (69.7%) with the balance of living in rural areas (30.3%). The most common racial/ethnic backgrounds were White/Caucasian (59.1%), followed by Black/African-American (31.8%) and Asian/Pacific Islander (6.1%). Most respondents reported getting their news primarily through social media (53.0%) or television (42.4%).

Table 1
Frequency Counts for Selected Variables

Variable	Category	<i>n</i>	%
Have heard of police-related violence to African Americans citizens			
	Yes	107	81.1
	No	25	18.9
Gender			
	Female	97	73.5
	Male	35	26.5
Highest level of school completed or highest degree received			
	High school degree or equivalent (e.g., GED)	8	6.1
	Some college but no degree	23	17.4
	Associate degree	5	3.8
	Bachelor degree	19	14.4
	Graduate degree	77	58.3
Geographic location			
	Suburban/Urban	92	69.7
	Rural	40	30.3
Race/ethnicity			
	Multiple ethnicity / Other	4	3.0
	Asian/Pacific Islander	8	6.1
	Black or African American	42	31.8
	White/Caucasian	78	59.1
Primary news source			
	Television	56	42.4
	Newspaper	6	4.5
	Social Media (i.e. Facebook, LinkedIn)	70	53.0

Note. *N* = 132.

Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics for the offline and online activity levels measures. The highest mean score was for the question: “How often did you read or like

the Facebook or other online sites (following incidents of police-related violence)?” ($M = 31.83$, $SD = 29.13$), and the lowest mean score was for the question: “How often did you attend (protests, rallies, or gatherings following incidents of police-related violence)?” ($M = 6.40$, $SD = 13.85$). It should be noted that there were wide differences in participation as seen in the large standard deviations and the ranges of the scores.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics for Offline and Online Activity Levels Measures

Item	M	SD	Low	High
How often did you attend (protests, rallies, gatherings, etc. following incidents of police-related violence)?	6.40	13.85	0.00	68.00
How often did you participate in the discussions (following incidents of police-related violence)?	24.53	25.84	0.00	100.00
How often did you read or like the Facebook or other online sites (following incidents of police-related violence)?	31.83	29.13	0.00	100.00
How often did you comment or post something on the Facebook, LinkedIn, or other online sites (following incidents of police-related violence)?	19.48	25.04	0.00	100.00

Note. $N = 132$.

Table 3 has the psychometric characteristics for the five summated scale scores. The Cronbach α reliability coefficients for the scales ranged from $\alpha = .33$ to $\alpha = .90$ with a median $\alpha = .77$. Although the social response-offline scale did have a lower reliability coefficient ($\alpha = .33$) than the other scales, this is not uncommon when scales consist of

only two items. This suggested that most of the scales had adequate levels of internal reliability (Cohen & Cohen, 1988).

Table 3

Psychometric Characteristics for Aggregated Scale Scores

Score	Number of Items	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Low	High	α
Attitude Toward Police ^a	11	3.41	0.68	1.00	5.00	.90
Social Media Use ^a	5	3.24	0.88	1.00	5.00	.79
*Social Response-Offline ^b	2	15.47	16.05	0.00	55.50	.33
*Social Response-Online ^b	2	25.65	24.14	0.00	100.00	.73
Social Response-Total ^b	4	20.56	18.58	0.00	75.25	.77

Note. N = 132.

a Scale based on five-point Likert scale: 1 = I Strongly Disagree to 5 = I Strongly Agree.

b Scale based on aggregated self-reported frequency of behaviors. *Social Media Response – Offline refers to activity such as community discussions, interpersonal conversations, or any discussion that takes place outside of the online internet platforms. Social Media Response – Online is discussions and activities taking place on an internet-based platform.

Results

There are two research questions in this proposed study: RQ1: What are the relationships between or among media exposure, social response, social media use, citizens' and attitudes towards police (after learning of police-initiated actions upon African Americans in the United States)?

Research Question 1: What are the relationships between or among media exposure, social response, social media use, citizens' and attitudes towards police (after learning of police-initiated actions upon African Americans in the United States)?

H_01 : There is no bivariate relationship between and among media exposure, social response, social media use and citizens' attitudes towards police (after citizens learn of police-initiated actions upon African Americans in the United States)?

H_a1 : A bivariate relationship exists between and among media exposure, social response, and social media use and citizens' attitudes towards police (after citizens learn of police-initiated actions upon African Americans in the United States)?

RQ2: What variables if any, for a model consisting of media exposure, social response, social media use, significantly predict citizen's attitudes towards police (after citizens learn of police-initiated actions upon African Americans in the United States)?

H_02 : $R^2 = 0$: In the population, the proportion of variance of the DV, attitudes towards police, explained by the linear combination of the IVs (social response, social media use) was zero.

H_a2 : $R^2 \neq 0$: In the population, the proportion of variance of the DV, attitudes towards police, by the linear combination of the IVs (media exposure, social response, social media use) was not zero.

To answer research question one and the related null hypothesis, Table 4 presents the Pearson and Spearman correlations for social media and social response scales with attitude toward police. Spearman correlations were included for additional statistical verification due to the non-normal distributions in many of the variables. Attitude toward

police had three significant Pearson correlations with the five social media and social response scales. Also, the three significant Spearman correlations among the five social media and social response scale with largely similar results. Specifically, the three significant Pearson correlations were for positive attitudes toward police associated with less social response-offline ($r_s(4) = 4.47, p < .001$), less social response-online ($r_s(4) = 4.47, p = .002$), and less social response-total ($r_s(4) = 4.47, p < .001$). The three significant Spearman correlations were for positive attitudes toward police associated with less social response-offline ($r_s(4) = 4.47, p < .001$), less social response-online ($r_s(4) = 4.47, p = .001$), and less social response-total ($r_s(4) = 4.47, p < .001$). This combination of findings provided support to reject the null hypothesis for research question one.

Table 4

Pearson and Spearman Correlations for Social Media and Social Response Scales with Attitude Toward Police Scale

Variable	Pearson Correlation Attitude Toward Police	Spearman Correlation Attitude Toward Police
Social Media	-.13	-.12
Social Response-Offline	-.32 **	-.28 ****
Social Response-Online	-.27 *	-.29 ****
Social Response-Total	-.31 ****	-.30 ****
Social Media Use	-.02	-.03

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .005$. **** $p < .001$.

**Social Media Response – Offline refers to activity such as community discussions, interpersonal conversations, or any discussion that takes place outside of the online internet

platforms. Social Media Response – Online is discussions and activities taking place on an internet-based-platforms.

Note. $N = 132$.

Note. Table 4 answers Research Question One.

As additional correlational findings, Table 5 presents the Pearson and Spearman correlations for 13 demographic and activity level variables with the attitude toward police measure. Attitude toward police had eight significant Pearson correlations with the 13 demographic variables and offline and online activity levels measures, and eight significant Spearman correlations with the 13 demographic variables and offline and online activity levels measures. Specifically, the eight significant Pearson correlations were for positive attitudes toward police associated with being female ($r = -.22$, $N = 97$, $p = .01$), living in rural locations ($r = .18$, $N = 40$, $p = .04$), ethnicity of White ($r = .43$, $N = 78$, $p < .001$), ethnicity of African American ($r = -.40$, $N = 42$, $p < .001$), less frequently attending protests/rallies/gatherings following incidents of police-related violence ($r = -.27$, $N = 132$, $p = .002$), less frequently participating in discussions following incidents of police-related violence ($r = -.25$, $p = .004$), less frequently reading or liking Facebook or other online sites following incidents of police-related violence ($r = -.23$, $p = .008$), and less frequently commenting or posting something on Facebook, LinkedIn, or other online sites following incidents of police-related violence ($r = -.25$, $p = .005$).

The comparable Spearman correlations had similar results. Specifically, the eight significant Spearman correlations were for positive attitudes toward police associated with being female ($r = -.19$, $N = 97$, $p = .03$), living in rural locations ($r = .19$, $N = 40$, $p = .03$), ethnicity of White ($r = .45$, $N = 78$, $p < .001$), ethnicity of African American ($r = -.42$, $N = 42$, $p < .001$), less frequently attending protests/rallies/gatherings following

incidents of police-related violence ($rs = -.22, p = .01$), less frequently participating in discussions following incidents of police-related violence ($rs = -.27, p = .002$), less frequently reading or liking Facebook or other online sites following incidents of police-related violence ($rs = -.24, p = .005$), and less frequently commenting or posting something on Facebook, LinkedIn, or other online sites following incidents of police-related violence ($rs = -.25, p = .005$).

Table 5

Pearson and Spearman Correlations for Demographic Variables and Offline and Online Activity Levels Measures with Attitude Toward Police Scale

Variable	Pearson Correlation Attitude Toward Police	Spearman Correlation Attitude Toward Police
Have heard of police-related violence to African American citizens ^a	.11	.11
Gender ^b	-.22 **	-.19 *
Highest level of school completed, or highest degree received	-.17	-.13
Geographic location ^c	.18 *	.19 *
	***	**
Caucasian ^a	.43 *	.45 **
	***	**
African-American ^a	-.40 *	-.42 **
Traditional Media ^a	.13	.12
TV ^a	.12	.10
On a typical day, how much time do you spend on online social networking sites?	-.10	-.11
How often did you attend (protests, rallies, gatherings, etc. following incidents of police-related violence)?	-.27 ***	-.22 **
How often did you participate in the discussions (following incidents of police-related violence)?	-.25 ***	-.27 *
How often did you read or like the Facebook or other online sites (following incidents of police-related violence)?	-.23 **	-.24 *
How often did you comment or post something on the Facebook, LinkedIn or other online sites (following incidents of police-related violence)?	-.25 ***	-.25 *

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .005$. **** $p < .001$.

^a Coding: 0 = *No* 1 = *Yes*.

^b Gender: 1 = *Female* 2 = *Male*.

To answer Research Question 2 and the related null hypothesis, Table 6 is presented as the relevant model. The overall model was significant ($p = .002$) and accounted for 12.3% of the variance in the respondent's attitude toward the police. Inspection of the table revealed that attitudes towards the police were more favorable among those with lower social response-offline scale scores ($\beta = -.25, p = .04$). This provided support to reject the null hypothesis for Research Question 2.

Table 6

Prediction of Attitude Toward Police Based on Selected Variables. Standard Regression

Variable	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	β	<i>p</i>
Intercept	3.43	0.22		.001
Social Media Exposure ^a	-0.16	0.12	-.12	.19
Social Response-Offline Scale	-0.01	0.00	-.25	.04
Social Response-Online Scale	0.00	0.00	-.12	.32
Social Media Use Scale	0.10	0.07	.12	.20

Full Model: $F(4, 127) = 4.47, p = .002. R^2 = .123. \text{ Durbin-Watson} = 2.40.$

^{an} Exposure: 0 = *No* 1 = *Yes*.

Note. $N = 132.$

Note. This table answers Research Question Two.

Additional Findings

As an additional analysis, Table 7 has the results of the stepwise regression model that predicted attitude toward police based on the 18 candidate variables from Tables 4 and 5. The final two-variable model was significant ($p = .001$) and accounted for 21.8% of the variance in the dependent variable, attitude toward police. Specifically, positive attitudes toward police were related to an ethnicity of White ($\beta = .36, p = .001$) and less social response-offline ($\beta = -.20, p = .02$). It should be noted that this model accounted for 21.8% of the variance while the Research Question Two model accounted for 12.3%.

Table 7
Prediction of Attitude Toward Police Based on Caucasian and Social Response-Offline. Stepwise Regression

Variable	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	β	<i>p</i>
Intercept	3.24	0.11		.001
Caucasian ^a	0.50	0.11	.36	.001
Social Response-Offline Scale	-0.01	0.00	-.20	.02

Final Model: $F(2, 129) = 17.94, p = .001. R^2 = .218. \text{ Durbin-Watson} = 2.37.$

Candidate variables = 18.

^a Coding: 0 = No 1 = Yes.

Note. $N = 132.$

Summary

In summary, this study used survey responses from 132 social media users to explore if citizens' attitudes towards police was related to media exposure, social response, and social media use following incidents of police-initiated actions upon African Americans in the United States, and also to determine whether media exposure,

social response, and social media use predicted citizens' attitudes toward police following incidents of police-initiated actions upon African Americans in the United States.

Hypothesis One (media exposure, social response, and social media use associated with attitudes toward police) was supported (Table 4). Hypothesis 2 (media exposure, social response, and social media use predicting attitudes toward police) was also supported (Table 6).

The media has continued to highlight police deviance in a manner causing public responses. This study represented an effort into understanding the sentiments of police and police activity coupled with media-driven and public attitudes towards police violence. The results of this study for Research Questions One determined that I would reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative: a bivariate relationship exists between or among media exposure, social response, and social media use and citizens' attitudes towards police. Lastly, based on the results of this study for Research Question 2 I determined that I would fail to reject the null hypothesis that in the population, the proportion of variance of the DV, attitudes towards police, explained by the linear combination of the IVs (media exposure, social response, and social media use) is zero. Only one of the IV (social response) was considered predictive of attitudes towards police in the model. In Chapter 5, these findings were compared to the literature, conclusions, and implications were drawn, a series of recommendations was suggested, social change implications were addressed, and the conclusion were explained. The social change perspective is essential for implementing new policies to bring together communities across the United States and understand attitudes towards police.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, Implications, and Recommendations

Introduction

High-profile news coverage centered on police aggression and their alleged acts of excessive force leading to fatalities of African Americans has generated social concerns and controversy among members of the public (Desmond, Papachristos, & Kirks, 2016). Freelon, McIllwain, and Clark (2016) indicated that high-profile media cases could influence attitudes of public mistrust towards law enforcement given the sensationalized way these incidents are portrayed in the news. These acts of excessive police force are a complex social problem that can lead to the possibility of eroded public trust (Peck, 2015). The purpose of this quantitative study using multiple regression analysis were to first understand if citizen's attitudes towards police was related to media exposure, social response, and social media use following incidents of police-initiated actions upon African Americans in the United States. Second, I wanted to understand what, if any variables in the multiple regression model composed of media exposure, social response, and social media best-predicted citizen's attitudes towards police following incidents of police-initiated actions upon African Americans in the United States.

Key findings from the analysis of data collected from 132 participants conveyed that (a) attitudes toward police had three significant Pearson correlations with the five social response scales; (b) a bivariate relationship exists between and among media exposure, social response, and social media use and citizens' attitudes towards police (after citizens learn of police-initiated actions upon African Americans in the United

States); (c) it was determined that media exposure and social media use did not significantly predict attitudes toward police (after citizens learn of police-initiated actions upon African Americans in the United States).

Interpretation of the Findings

The findings from this study are discussed in this section. I present descriptive statistics and results of the Pearson product moment correlation and stepwise regression used to describe and interpret the results of the statistical tests. I then examined the relationship among the independent variables (media exposure, social response, and social media use). I also examine the theoretical implications of the media dependency theory and the social strain theory as it relates to this study.

Research Questions

There are two research questions in this proposed study:

Research Question 1: What are the relationships between or among media exposure, social response, social media use, citizens' and attitudes towards police (after learning of police-initiated actions upon African Americans in the United States)?

H_01 : There is no bivariate relationship between and among media exposure, social response, social media use and citizens' attitudes towards police (after citizens learn of police-initiated actions upon African Americans in the United States)?

H_{a1} : A bivariate relationship exists between and among media exposure, social response, and social media use and citizens' attitudes towards police (after citizens learn of police-initiated actions upon African Americans in the United States)?

RQ2: What variables if any, for a model consisting of media exposure, social

response, social media use, significantly predict citizen's attitudes towards police (after citizens learn of police-initiated actions upon African Americans in the United States)?

$H_02: R^2 = 0$: In the population, the proportion of variance of the DV, attitudes towards police, explained by the linear combination of the IVs (social response, social media use) was zero.

$H_a2: R^2 \neq 0$: In the population, the proportion of variance of the DV, attitudes towards police, by the linear combination of the IVs (media exposure, social response, social media use) was not zero.

Research Question 1. In this study, the variables attitude toward police and social response (citizen's reactions) had a significant relationship. This result may mean that overall, participants' personal reactions after learning of police violence via media reports towards African Americans, in some manner shaped their attitudes toward police. These findings are consistent with Haas, Keijer, and Bruinsma (2013), who found that public attitudes were not only shaped by police behavior, but also indicated that these incidents provided citizens with a perceived justification to carryout vigilantism behaviors. Research question one for this study asked: What are the relationships between or among media exposure, social response, social media use, and attitudes towards police (after learning of police-initiated actions upon African Americans in the United States)? Attitudes towards police had three significant Pearson correlations with the five social media and social response scales. However, attitudes toward police and media exposure was not statistically significant. While my study did not examine how and to what degree citizen's actions were carried out beyond social media activities, my

findings do concur that people tend to respond with some form of social response when these events occur.

Online Versus Offline Responses

In this study, participant responses were examined as having either an online social media related actions or activities or that which took place within interpersonal contexts, community settings, or otherwise offline engagement. Hence, the variable, social media use, had two central components: Online and offline participation. It is important to note that Social Response was significant for offline response and not online response. Offline response significance is likely to advocate that participants are most likely to respond to injustices or experiences by African Americans rather than responding online. Therefore, I rejected the null hypothesis stating there is no bivariate relationship between or among media exposure, social response, social media use and citizens' attitudes towards police and accepted the alternative hypothesis.

Citizen Attitudes Towards Police and Media Exposure

The variables representing citizen attitudes towards police and media exposure were not statistically significant. This likely means that participants did not feel having exposure to media whether newspaper, television, or social media, influenced attitudes towards police. This finding aligns with Chermak, McGarrell, & Gruenewald (2006), who also concluded in their study that media use has no significant effects on general attitudes toward police. This finding contrasts with McLaughlin (2015) and Goldsmith's (2015) research which suggested that media-related coverage could influence negative behaviors towards law enforcement after learning of specific events.

Additionally, the findings from this study indicated that participant social media use did not show a strong relationship in shaping respondent attitudes towards police. Lewis (2016) posited that social media is a means for immediate dissemination of information using communication channels to mass disseminate information when people learn of police violence within certain neighborhood vicinities. It is unclear why my study's findings do not show a strong correlation between this form of media use and participant attitudes. Based on my findings and corroborated by Lewis' (2016) report, it is likely that rather than the media influencing attitudes, perhaps the social media was used merely to share their personal feelings, emotions, and responses like (Bonilla & Rosa, 2015) who found that hashtags for Ferguson, MO were considered a notification for supporters to join in solidarity. While a dated study, it is worth noting that Bonner (2009) explained the role of social media as a form of accountability, where using this public forum/media, holds police officers accountable for their actions. Additionally, Jacobs and Schillemans (2016) and Weitzer (2015) studies provided insight that media can stimulate individuals to reflect on their behavior, trigger formal accountability by reporting on the behavior of police, and amplify formal accountability as they respond in forums such as Facebook, LinkedIn, or Twitter.

Research Question 2. Not only does media coverage convey a public forum of solidarity, but it is also potentially a foundation of how attitudes could be measured, how attitudes are shaped during life, how they are changed by other people, and finally, how attitudes, in turn, affect our thoughts and behavior (Vogel & Wanke, 2016). The literature presents two conflicting views regarding media and public attitudes towards the police.

For instance, as a rebuttal to McLaughlin (2015) and Goldsmith's (2015) research reflected that media-related could influence negative behaviors towards law enforcement. More dated research by Chermak, McGarrell, & Gruenewald (2006), postulated that media use has no significant effects on general attitudes toward police, police services, and concerns about police harassment. These authors suggested that individuals do tend to conclude police officer guilt based on their consumption of print media (newspapers) or other forms of news after learning more about a specific case. In my study, research question two hypothesized that in the population, the proportion of variance of the DV, attitudes towards police, explained by the linear combination of the IVs (social response, social media use) is zero. Based on the results of this study, I determined that media exposure and social media use are not predictive of citizens attitudes towards police. Therefore, I postulate that attitudes towards police are not inherently influenced by media exposure.

Media Exposure

Scholars have long noted the importance of the media in shaping citizens' attitudes about crime and justice (Donovan & Klahm, 2015; Goldsmith, 2015; & McLaughlin, 2015). Most studies have focused on the impact of news and particularly local TV news (Donovan & Klahm, 2015). In this study, I explored which, if any, of the independent variables, would predict attitudes towards police. The first variable entered equation was media exposure. Although previously studied by McLaughlin (2015) and Goldsmith's (2015), the research reflected that media-related influence could create negative behaviors in citizens that result in possible negative interaction with law

enforcement. However, the results of my study show that media exposure (television, newspaper, and social media use) were not a significant predictor of attitudes of police. It is possible that given that most of the participants received their news or media source from social media rather than print, television, or radio. Perhaps social media is the primary source of conveying recent news events related to police actions towards African Americans, that other phenomena were at play. For example, the increasing social networking site (SNS) interactivity could potentially silence out of fear of offending others or of being exposed to ridicule Gearhart & Zhang, 2015. Gearhart and Zhang (2015) results revealed that encountering agreeable content predicts speaking out while encountering disagreeable postings stifles opinion expression, supporting the spiral of the silence theory in the SNS environment. However, certain uses of SNSs and psychological factors demonstrate a liberating effect on opinion expression. This appears to demonstrate a potential "dark side" of social media which could be represented ideally on social media as a means that is because people want to appear favorable, they actively choose not to post (Gearhart & Zhang, 2015). There is a high degree of consensus on the balance of values: a majority decides the middle standpoints. Steen-Johnsen and Enjolras (2016) determined that many individuals would limit their expressions when presented with the risk of offending or hurting others, a process that is termed "self-limitation." Theoretically from this viewpoint, individuals still depend upon the media to provide them with communication of the world around them.

This study was theoretically aligned with Gerbner and Gross' media dependency theory. Gerbner and Gross linked television viewing with a variety of attitudes about

crime and hypothesized that those watching television, regardless of the content, to be impacted by a phenomenon of distorted viewers' perceptions related to social problems (Gerbner & Gross, 1976). Intravia, Wolff, and Piquero (2017) examined both traditional media and the less studied forms of media, such as the Internet and social media. Their study used a sample of young adults to understand the effect of multiple media types on attitudes towards police. Findings revealed that respondents who read news online were more likely to develop perceptions based on media influence (Intravia, Wolff, & Piquero, 2017). Other researchers have posited that the dependence of media consumption is influenced by social stability (Anderson & Meyer, 2014; Carillo et al., 2016; Lewis, 2014). For example, when social change and conflict are high, established institutions' beliefs, and practices are challenged. People, then, make new choices sometimes based on polarized beliefs and value-based judgments. Reliance on media-related information increases in cases of instability (Anderson & Meyer, 2014; Carillo et al., 2016; Lewis, 2014). It is important to know this study was performed while there was no active sensationalized coverage of police-initiated violence against African Americans in the United States. The results of this study report that media exposure (television, newspaper, and social media use) were not a significant predictor of attitudes towards police.

Social Response

The influx of social response comes directly on the heels of sensationalized reports following police-initiated violence against African Americans in the United States, the prospect of social response has also grown with social networking sites (SNS) (Jackson, 2015). Social response is the term coined for actions by citizens of the United

States in response to police-initiated violence against African Americans. Further, it takes the shape of online discussions, demonstrations, walks, marches, and advocacy groups. The social response following police-initiated violence against African Americans (Lewis, 2014) has created a public engagement in discourse regarding interactions between citizens and law enforcement (Bora et al., 2013). The large user base of social network sites also becomes an important platform for becoming civically engaged (social response) to issues within communities. Warren et al. (2014) conducted an online survey of 502 citizens that determined that using social media for civic engagement has a significant positive impact on trust and that this trust led to an increase in trust towards police.

Interestingly, Warren et al. (2014) determined that citizens were eager to engage online for civic matters, it is civic publications through postings on social media that intensify the surge of citizens for civic action to address social issues (Warren et al., 2014). However, my study found offline response was more frequent than online social response. Perhaps this is due to an underlying phenomenon of online silence; whereas certain groups are more likely to withhold their own opinion, out of fear of offending others or of being exposed to ridicule.

In my study, social response (online and offline) were used as an independent variable to explore whether an online social response or offline social response or both, were significant. Based on the results I determined that three significant Pearson correlations were that positive attitudes toward police associated with less social response-offline less social response-online, and less social response-total. This

combination of findings provided support that social response, specifically offline, was a significant predictor of attitudes towards police. While through my study, I investigated the predictive nature of media exposure, social response, and social media use, I did not find a totality of significance of the three variables together. However, it was determined that offline social response held a significance. Tewksbury (2018) presented results of a study whereas participants in the 2014 Ferguson protest were studied about the response. Tewksbury added that the intersection of the movement's online, social and mobile media uses became its offline community-building and mobilization. For Ferguson protesters, it was participatory, online media—social and mobile media, in particular—that greatly strengthened the offline practices of solidarity, community, and togetherness through the act of sharing (Tewksbury, 2018). Although the Tewksbury study provided insights into the relationship between online and offline behavior, my study results, individuals are most likely to act more offline than talking about it online and doing nothing at all. Other studies may wish to illuminate this phenomenon. The findings of this study determined that just because police-related violence is discussed (online or offline), there is no clear correlation that social media platforms provide an outlet for contesting police-initiated violence against African Americans in the United States.

Social Media Use

The goal of media is to influence people's thoughts and behaviors (Buresh & Gordon (2013). Not only is social media a tool for mobilization, but the intense reporting on police brutality via social media also influences print and television coverage, which means that attention to such incidents has multiplied (Harris, 2015). Mackey (2017)

conducted a six-week research study from January to March 2017, with Baton Rouge and New Orleans the two main locations to explore public reactions to media and police attitudes. Mackey's study asked about domestic and media coverage of American police-initiated actions, its influence on their perspectives regarding African Americans and American society, and the impact that the Alton Sterling incident had on their perspectives. Through this study, the researchers revealed factors such as social identity and interpretation of how media shape their perspectives more than media coverage alone (Mackey, 2017). Bowen's (2015) investigated the comparison between media coverage of the Rodney King incident 20 years ago to the media coverage following the Ferguson, Missouri incident. The purpose of Bowen's study was to understand how media frames racially sensitive news reports and progressively covers specific aspects of sensitive news stories. My study examined factors such as newspaper articles, magazine covers, and broadcast stories.

On that premise, this study did not incorporate other demographic variables to explore a personal perspective of attitudes toward police. Further, the discussion of "fake news" is a present-day phenomenon following the 2016 Presidential Election. Allcott and Gentzkow (2017) determined that: social media was important with 14 percent of Americans calling social media their "most important" source. The importance of social media as an important source of information could be likely because people are much more likely to believe stories that favored their viewpoints. At the same time, there is evidence that individuals are becoming increasingly reliant on others in their online social networks for news recommendations, and that their knowledge, opinions, and behaviors

are affected by the information stream and social dynamics within these sites. Taken together, these two phenomena suggest that individuals who are highly active with news and political information in social media have the potential to be influential in shaping the attitudes towards police.

However, in my study, social media use was used as an independent variable to determine the number of time participants spent on social media, which could potentially influence their attitude towards police. The question asked participants to measure how much time was spent on social media on a typical day (0-10 hours). The survey results showed that participants spent an average of 3.34 hours a day on social media platforms (Facebook or Twitter). The growing prominence of the Internet and social media in society has coincided smaller segments of the population who actively engage with social response via social media use (Prior, 2007). As such, it was determined that social media use not have a significant effect on predicting citizens attitudes toward police.

Attitudes Towards Police

Lastly, this study asked participants to rate questions related to attitudes toward police (see Appendix C). The scale items were rated using a five-point Likert scale ranging from “strongly disagree = 0” to “strongly agree = 5”. The first four questions of the attitudes towards police scale determined if individual perceptions of police (do you trust the police, I am satisfied with the police, police do a good job, and I like the police). The mean score for the first four questions was 3.76. This means participants’ attitudes towards police are not directly negative. The remaining questions in the attitude toward police scale asked participants to rank specific tasks that police officers perform. The

mean for these questions was positive at 3.23. This means that it is likely that participants do not hold negative attitudes towards police

Goldsmith (2015) and McLaughlin (2015) studies considered how attitudes towards police are akin to media presentation of police-related violence. Both studies above indicated that media could influence negative attitudes towards police. Further Harris (2015) determined that the intense reporting lead to public reactions that influence attitudes towards police. Contreras (2016) added to Harris' study considering that traditional media and social outlets may also contribute to attitudes towards police. Chermak et al., (2006) sought to determine how media effects attitudes towards police. The findings in the aforementioned study determined news consumption have no significant effects on general attitudes toward police, police services, and concerns about police harassment. Although Chermak et al., study concurred with results of this study, the participants were obtained via telephone interviews. The data from this study was collected using a social media platform (Facebook and LinkedIn). Chermak et al. also found that the amount of exposure to news stories of police-related violence was not significant.

Additional Findings

Gender, Ethnicity, Geographic Location, and Education

Jackson et al., (2013) examined attitudes towards police actions by investigating various ethnic groups and found a strong correlation with legitimate police actions, positive perceptions of police, and negative views focusing on violence as a normative position for retribution. Using another perspective, Verga's et al. (2016) study

concentrated on three main elements: location (urban and suburban), gender (female and male), and race (Black, Latino, and White) to examine students' attitudes towards police. Males were found to be slightly more satisfied with the police than females (Verga et al., 2016). While White students were found to have significantly higher satisfied with the police than Black students, there was no difference found between Hispanic students and Black or White students (Verga et al., 2016).

On the other hand, Cobbina et al. (2016) research examined these characteristics differently. They used race as a variable to understand criminality and established that race is commonly associated with perceptions of crime, not necessarily criminality. In at least one other study, researchers revealed that race had been a predictor of citizen's attitudes toward experiences with the police (Cobbina et al., 2016). These researchers drew from interviews of 81 men and women and explored to what extent protesters from Ferguson, Missouri racially typify crime and their perceptions of how the police view and treat people who are African American compared to White (Cobbina et al.). The results from this study revealed that most respondents did not associate people of color with a crime but believed the police did. Race/ethnicity and respondent satisfaction with police was a significant predictor of police satisfaction and consistent with many of the seminal studies on attitudes toward the police (Cao et al., 1996; Hurst & Frank, 2000; Reisig & Parks, 2000). The results of this study are aligned with multiple previous studies on the same subject.

There was a limitation, however, in the literature that captures gender and attitudes towards police holistically. Gender is often used as part of characteristic

variables to gather more information on participants viewpoints. In this study, gender was also used in the same manner. Taylor, Tuner, Esbensen, and Winifree (2001) explored the attitudes of juveniles toward police and if these attitudes vary by gender. Taylor et al. study did determine there were significant differences by gender. For example, some argue that police officers and other law enforcement officials have historically treated female offenders more leniently than their male counterparts (Smith & Visher, 1980). Other influential studies also determined that females rate the police higher than males (Anderson, 1976; Nagel & Weitzman, 1971). In my study, I found several important correlations based on the aforementioned studies. Gender was found to be significantly correlated and had no contributing factor towards attitudes toward police. However, the results yielded females having more positive attitudes towards police than males. This was a weak correlation, but important nonetheless.

Lastly, increased sensationalized media coverage of violence towards African Americans in the United States is likely to affect individuals differently in opposing geographic locations (Kääriäinen, 2007). For example, Moreto, Brunson, and Brage (2016) found that rural areas trust the police and viewed attitudes towards police as positive in relation to both police protection and trust. This study determined that geographic location (rural versus urban/suburban) were significant; this meant that those located in rural areas had better opinions about the police in general as compared to urban and suburban areas. Holmes, Painter, and Smith (2017) conducted a study of 98 small towns in Iowa. The results of the study suggested that urban areas were viewed more favorably than rural departments. It is likely that the results of Holmes, Painter, and

Smith (2017) study highlighted attitudes towards police in areas where violence towards African American by police has been limited.

Kezar, Chambers, and Burkhardt (2015) concluded that perceptions of educated individuals typically support and assist in the emergence of social movements. Huffman (1974) determined that education contribute to an enhanced ability to acquire, process, and efficiently understand information from multiple lenses. This study had 58.3% of participants who had a Graduate degree or above. It cannot be determined conclusively if education has a part in predicting attitudes towards police. However, with most participants holding a Graduate degree or higher, this study articulated that there were positive attitudes towards police held by graduate level and beyond participants.

Limitations of the Study

There are possible limitations from internal threats to validity. Omitted variable bias is a potential threat to internal validity in this study (Gast & Ledford 2014). The study population was limited to social media platform participants. Therefore, generalizability may be shifted to those who use online social platforms.

Recommendations

This study determined that attitudes towards police were not significantly predicted by all the independent variables. However, as the study progressed, important recommendation became apparent for future studies. One recommendation is for this study to be broadened to include those with less than a graduate degree, no degree at all, and no high school diploma. Potentially, these factors could influence attitudes towards

police. Future research into this should include using the same study in a non-online element to potentially include participants who are considered the working class.

Additionally, this study was conducted during a “slow” news cycle where events of police-involved violence were not central to media access. Potentially, a study should be conducted during heightened times of media coverage to determine if attitudes towards police changes with media news cycles. Other researchers have posited that the dependence of media consumption is influenced by social stability (Anderson & Meyer, 2014; Carillo et al., 2016; Lewis, 2014). For example, when social change and conflict are high, established institutions’ beliefs, and practices are challenged. Lastly, future studies could incorporate age as a factor in social media use and attitudes towards police. The results of the data analysis showed that media exposure, social response, and social media use were not significance predictors of attitudes towards police. However, the offline social response was found to be a single significant factor. Theoretically, the structural strain has been argued that a disparity between the cultural goals and the institutionalized means could lead to deviance (Klimke & Legnaro, 2015; Merton, 2016). Deviance then leads to social resistance among community members to satisfy objective needs.

Data collections lasted approximately seven days from June 6 – June 12, 2018. Increased generalizability should be attempted in future studies related to the length of time survey was available. The survey was shared to Facebook publicly, and to the Facebook group pages such as PhinishE/FinishEdD, South Carolina N.A.A.C.P., Black Lives Matter of Greater Atlanta, Southern Heritage News and Views, FCB NAACP,

#houstonalllivesmatters, Black Lives Matter Lynchburg, VA, All Lives Matter, and Walden University PD/EdE/DBA.

Implications for Social Change

Historically, the public viewed police offices as stewards and collaborators who maintained community safety in solidarity with the public (Verga et al., 2016). It is envisioned that at the least, the knowledge gained from this study would both add to the literature on police-public relations, and potentially provide insights that would contribute to repairing their image to regain or enhance public trust. Decker (1981) points out that police organizations need public support, and positive attitudes toward the police are especially important in urban societies where the police are primarily reactive and depend on the public to initiate police activity. The success of the police in carrying out their duties depends heavily on the cooperation of the public, and the absence of cooperation and support makes it difficult if not impossible for the police to perform effectively (Rosenbaum et al. 2015). Finally, it is reasonable to expect that the findings from this study could be disseminated to professionals who are responsible for developing training for media, activism groups, and community members who want to better understand what factors contribute to potentially polarizing attitudes. Additionally, the understanding could lead to developing culturally relevant training material for community groups who want to respond in effective ways without it resulting in violence.

Conclusion

Law enforcement integrity is a significant issue presented daily by media outlets. The media has continued to highlight police deviance in a manner causing public

responses. This study represented an effort into understanding the sentiments of the public's attitudes towards police and their activity coupled with media-driven focus towards police violence against African Americans. Policy makers, police practitioners, and academics alike recognize that effective crime prevention and control strategies depend on citizen-police cooperation (Verga et al., 2015). Understanding public attitudes toward police is a challenging task.

Disentangling the complex web of influences shaping those attitudes is needed for developing effective strategies for improving attitudes toward the police and consequently citizen and police cooperation. The findings of this study could potentially create new knowledge dedicated to the improvement of social conditions between communities and police. Highly publicized cases by the media are deemed as controversial (Bowman & Schweitzer, 2016). The increased risk of polarization between what is perceived as police justified actions and adverse public responses is important (Clark, 2016; Culhane et al., 2016). Further, by understanding the factors relating to social divide, attitudes that may exist between public and police officers, and by further understanding the factors related to social responses, may help law enforcement officials to manage their image and work to restore public confidence.

In this study, I found that media does not drive citizens' attitudes towards police. Seminal studies determined that media and media dependency are the significant predictors of attitudes towards police. Although, in this study I did not determine the same outcomes as previous studies, it is important to know my study was done during a neutral news coverage period. Further, 98% of the participants had heard of violent

actions against African Americans in the United States and were able to indicate recent cases of such violence. Secondly, social response offline was another significant finding in this study. Social response offline means that individuals are more likely to participate in offline responses as seen in North Carolina, Maryland, New York, Missouri, and Illinois. Citizen's attitudes towards police are significantly important to the safety of citizens, and the safety of citizens and officers combined (Goldsmith, 2015; McLaughlin, 2015). Therefore, this study provided more insight to the fact that individuals are likely to get personally involved in social response versus voicing opinions via media or social media platforms. This study represented an effort into understanding the sentiments of police and police activity coupled with media-driven and public attitudes towards police-initiated actions.

Appendix A: Operationalization of Variables

Variables of Interest and Scales of Measurement

Hypothesis	Independent Variable/Scale of Measurement	Coding	Dependent Variable / Scale of Measurement
H0 ₁ : There is no bivariate relationship between or among media exposure, and citizens' attitudes towards police.	Media Exposure/Nominal	"newspaper" = 0 "television" = 1, and "social media" = 3.	Attitudes Toward Police/Interval
H0 ₂ : There is no bivariate relationship between or among social response and citizen's attitudes towards police.	Offline and Online Activity Measurement/Interval	1 (never) to 5 (practically every day)	Attitudes Toward Police/Interval
H0 ₃ : There is no significant relationship between social media use and attitudes toward police.	Index of Social Networking/Interval	Scale of 0-10	Attitudes Toward Police/Interval

Appendix B: Characteristic Profile

Qualifying Questions:

1. Are you at least 18 years of age or older? Yes/no

If participant answers “yes” to both aforementioned questions, the following questions are asked:

2. Please enter the four-digit year you were born
_____ - (four-digit year)

3. Please select your gender:

- Male
- Female

4. Please specify your ethnicity:

- White
- Black or African American
- Native American or American Indian
- Latino
- Asian
- Other

5. What is your geographic area?

- Rural
- Urban

6. Education: What is the highest degree or level of school you have completed? *If currently enrolled, highest degree received.*

- Some high school, no diploma
- High school graduate, diploma or the equivalent (for example: GED)
- Associate degree
- Bachelor degree
- Master degree
- Doctorate degree

7. Please indicate the primary source for receiving news?

___ Television ___ News Paper ___ Social Media (i.e. Facebook, LinkedIn)

Appendix C: Attitudes Toward Police Scale (ATPs)

- (1) In general, I trust the police.
- (2) In general, I am satisfied with the police in my neighborhood
- (3) In general, police officers do a good job.
- (4) In general, I like the police.

Specific attitude

- (5) The police would help you if your car is broken down and you need help.
- (6) The police do a good job of stopping people from selling drugs.
- (7) The police do a good job of stopping people from using drugs.
- (8) The police do a good job in keeping my neighborhood quiet at night.
- (9) The police do a good job of stopping crime.
- (11) If the police see someone who is sick and needs help, they would do their best to help them.
- (12) The police do a good job in stopping people from hanging around on street corners and causing trouble.

Note. Items are rated using a five-point Likert scale ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree

Appendix D: Index of Social Networking

Items

*Do you use social networking sites, such as Facebook or LinkedIn? Yes No

On a typical day, how much time do you spend on online social networking sites?

How much do you use the Internet for social networking?

To what extent does your use of SNSs help you to:

Stay in touch with family and friends

Meet people who share my interests

Stay informed about my local community

Get news about current events through family and friends

*Note. Those answering affirmatively were then given a battery of six questions assessing the extent of use on a 10-point scale.

Appendix E: Offline and Online Activity Levels Measures

The **offline** level measures are used to measure participation in the physical (two items)

1. How often did you attend (protests, rallies, gatherings, etc. following incidents of police-related violence)?
2. How often did you participate in the discussions (following incidents of police-related violence)?

The **online level measure** activity levels (two items; i.e., sharing, posting and commenting on the Facebook pages online).

3. How often did you read or like the Facebook or other online sites (following incidents of police-related violence)?
4. How often did you comment or post something on the Facebook, LinkedIn or other online sites (following incidents of police-related violence)?

*The four items are rated on a five-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (never) to 5

(practically every day).

Appendix F: Number of Incidences Mentioned

Incident Name	# of Occurrences
Michael Brown, St. Louis, MO	20
Freddy Gray Baltimore, MD	8
Eric Garner	1
Trayvon Martin	7
Naked Man Richmond, VA	2
Media reports	9
Videos	1
General incidents of police against African Americans	22
California Riots of the 1970's	1
Philandro Castille	8
Police and unwarranted shootings	8
Sandra Brown	6
Rodney King	2
Alton Sterling	1

List of Figures

Figure 1: Frequency Histograms for Scale Scores to Assess Normality

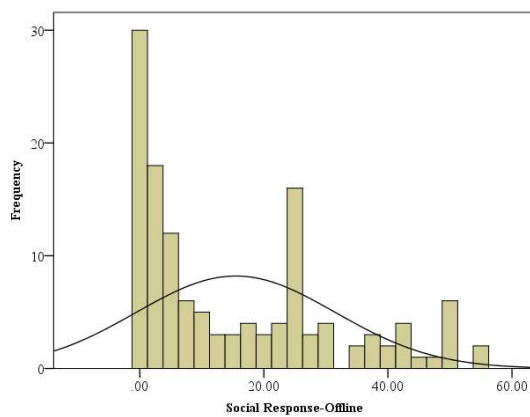
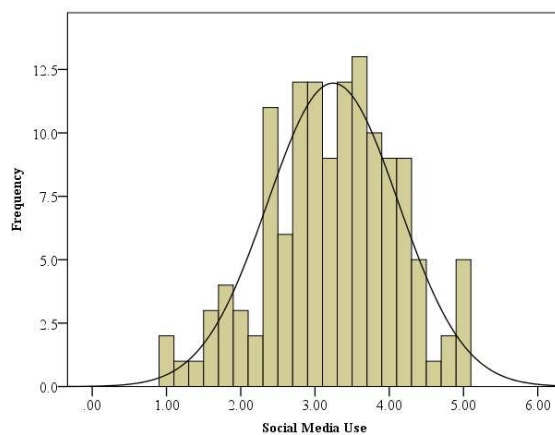
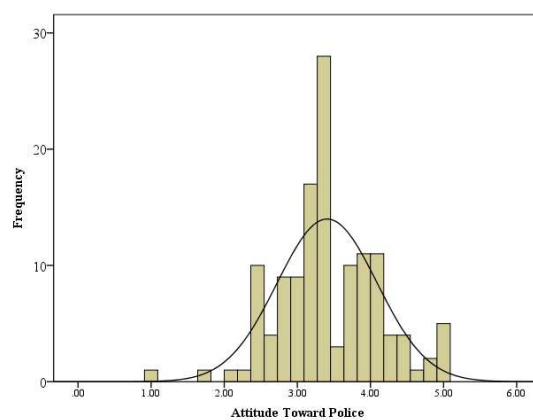


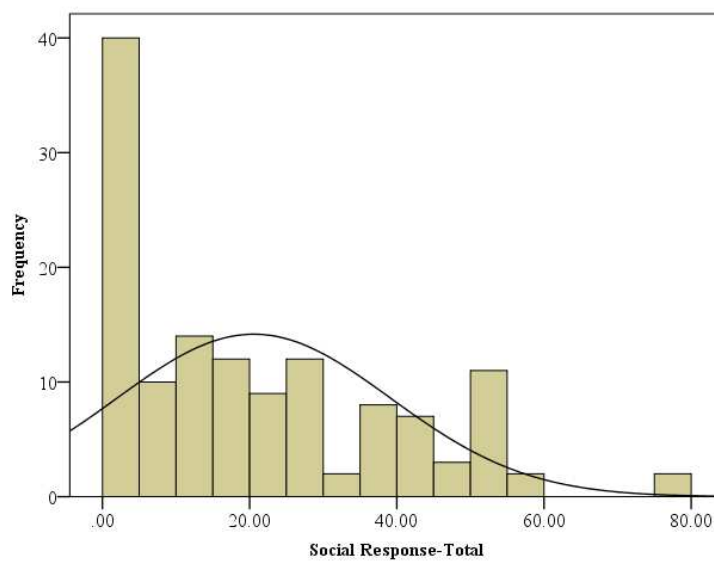
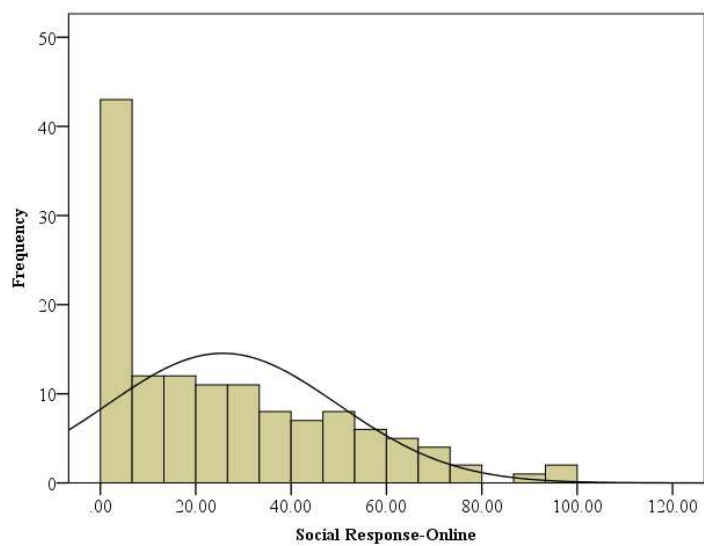
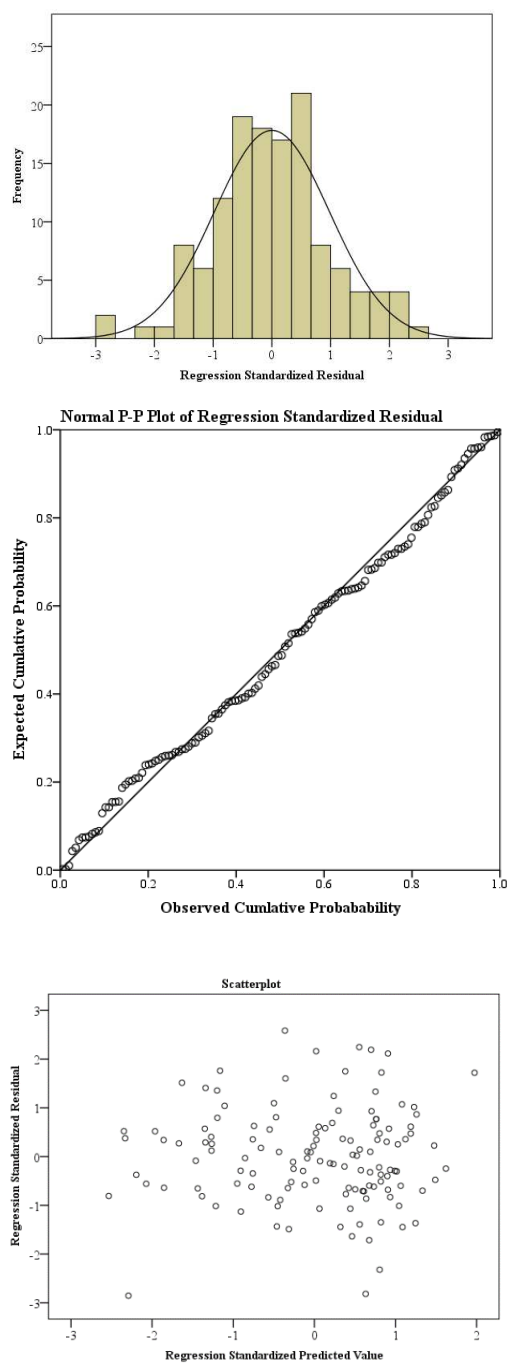
Figure 1 *Continued*Figure 1 *Continued*

Figure 2: Regression Diagnostic Graphs

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