

The Etiology of a New Era: Where Heroes Become Zeros and Victims Become Villains.

by

Traci Jo Harmon

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

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APPROVED BY:



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ABSTRACT

The United States is in a state of turmoil. Unlike any time before this, division in the country is overtaking the Covid-19 Pandemic as the biggest threat to life and liberty. Previous research is contradictory in identifying the etiology of anti-police rhetoric, anti-Christian rhetoric, and victim-blaming. The current research attempts to find out if mainstream and or social media is the etiology of the racial, religious, and victim division in The United States. Attitudes towards law enforcement, Christians, and victims were measured against platforms for current events, hours per day on mainstream and social media, age, gender, and race/ethnicity. Significant results suggest that when participants use friends/family for current events information, they are more likely to have negative attitudes towards Christians. Mainstream media hours revealed no significant results, however social media hours were implicated in increased Anti-Christian rhetoric, and victim blaming. Age was a predictor of victim blaming, and race/ethnicity was a predictor of negative attitudes toward law enforcement and victim blaming.

While a universal etiology was not revealed, overall, the attitudes towards law enforcement, and Christians were negative.

Keywords: anti-police rhetoric, anti-Christian rhetoric, victim-blaming, racism, mainstream media, social media, racial disparity, fake news

Copyright Page (Optional)

Dedication

First and foremost, I want to thank my Savior, Jesus Christ. I am nothing without Him and I owe all my life to Him. He has gotten me out of deep stress and anxiety and brought me to a place of peace and understanding. God and I are a package deal, where I go, He goes with me.

Second, I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my husband Mike. Through pain and sorrow, a cancer diagnosis, and crushed vertebrae, he has stayed by my side and held me up when I was ready to fall. He has been my inspiration and light to keep going when things were dark. He has defined the word forgiveness and his strength and dedication to our family has made me believe that dreams do come true. When I was weak, he was strong, when I was sad, he was happy, when I was mad, he told me to be rational and when I was ready to give up, he kept me going. My unconditional love for him will always and forever be the priority in my life.

Thirdly, my parents. My parents raised me in a Christian home. We all knew what love was simply from watching my parents. My father Gary, though he is now in Heaven, encouraged me no matter what my journey was. He was a kind and very giving person, and he did so many things for others. My father was the true definition of altruistic. My mother Peggy always made sure we had everything we needed, including love. She was proud of us kids no matter what. When I needed a mom, she was a mom and when I needed a friend, she was a friend. I am so thankful for all the support and laughs we have had. I would not be the person I am today without her. She has shown true strength during a storm and has inspired me to be a loving wife and teacher.

My Grandma Gladys is one of the smartest, most caring, and funniest people in my life. She has been a great listener and supporter my whole life. We have been through some tough times, but even through her dialysis, she has never quit supporting me and believing in me. Sometimes there is a special person that you can never explain how much you love them and that is my Grandma.

My Grandpa is in Heaven now but if not for him I wouldn't know Christ the way I do and I wouldn't be the strong woman I have become. I learned some of my best debating skills from battling Grandpa and trying to convince him the Yankees are better than the Indians. I learned to fish, drive, and keep fighting for what I want.

My brother Gary and my sister Kim have always been great examples of success. I am a better student, teacher, and friend because of them.

My mother and father-in-law Jill and Jerry have given me so much love and support. I am so blessed to have another set of parents that have loved and encouraged me when I was ready to give up. My sister-in-law Debbie and brother-in-law Doug have made me feel like I matter and have been there for Mike and me through some very rough times. I can always count on them and knowing that has made this journey so much easier.

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Liberty, Justice, and Bradi have shown me unconditional love and I have cried to them and complained to them. Their innocence and love have helped my journey be more peaceful and loving.

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List of Abbreviations

Attitudes Towards Christian Scale (ATCS)

Attitudes Towards Police Legitimacy Scale (ATPLS)

Rape Vignette (RV)

Anti-Fascist-Antifa

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

This chapter explores previous research regarding attitudes toward law enforcement, victims, and Christians. The chapter highlights what previous literature points to as the cause of anti-police, anti-Christian rhetoric as well as victim-blaming. Utilizing cultivation theory, the research supports the need to identify an etiology for such hatred. The previous research has been void in identifying a definitive cause as represented in the current levels of anti-police, anti-Christian rhetoric, racism, and victim blaming.

Background

Everyday mainstream, social media, and newspapers are inundated with reports of abuse towards minorities at the hands of law enforcement. When the headlines and top stories are not about police abuse of power, the headlines highlight Christian business owners, and ministers as hateful, judgmental, bigots. Finally, when the headlines and news stories are not about law enforcement or Christians, it often is solidifying the rape myth and drives victim blaming.

Following years of racism, racial profiling, abuse by authority, and slavery minorities are often labeled as the race/ethnicity most linked to negative attitudes towards law enforcement. Calvert et al. (2020) measured the impact of hearing about police brutality and racism from friends/family and the media. Young black men ages 14-24 reported feelings of fear when thinking about encounters with law enforcement. While the mainstream and social media platforms report continual stories of police brutality and racial disparity at the hands of law enforcement, even previous research is contradictory and controversial. Edwards et al. (2019) reported black men as having a significant risk of being killed by police and posits death by

police as a leading cause of death. However, after publishing their results, Edwards et al. (2019) said,

I want to be clear: When we talk about the leading causes, police violence trails behind some causes that are killing many, many people," Edwards says. "Relative to all causes of death, it's not that frequent (Edwards, 2019, as cited in US News, 2019, para.6.).

The contradiction comes when the news media and social media present half stories and neglect to report the findings that would unite citizens instead of dividing them.

Cesario et al. (2019) researched the police use of force and found no racial disparities in use of force incidents. Divergently, Edwards et al. (2019) say that black males have a three times more likely chance to have police use of force used against them. Hoekstra et al. (2022) suggest that race matters in police use of force. Their results indicate that in black neighborhoods, white law enforcement officers use police use of force 55 percent more than black officers. However, in white neighborhoods, they use the same use of force. Even in predominately black neighborhoods, black officers increase their amount of force. Though significantly less, black officers also use force in black neighborhoods more than they do in white neighborhoods. These are just a small representation of conflicted research results, yet the mainstream and social media report only those stories that highlight race and anti-police rhetoric.

Another common news story is anti-Christian based. Fox 8 News reported a story regarding Jacob Kersey, a Dallas police officer that was forced to resign because he posted on his personal Facebook page, that "God created marriage" (Brown, 2023, para. 3). Just because Kersey is a Christian, the police force told him he could be fired for his comments. Yet NBA basketball star LeBron James was quoted as threatening a law enforcement officer by saying "You're next", following the officer's heroic action to save the life of a black woman at the

hands of another black woman (Wolfsohn, 2021, para.4). LeBron received no warnings and was not forced to retire. LeBron's comments were threatening, while Kersey's was a statement of his faith. LeBron then tweeted that he didn't know the whole story, yet he never apologized and still called for justice for the girl that was attempting murder. The division in this country is fundamentally resting on the idea that everyone can have a right to their belief system, except for Christians. Currently, in Europe hate crimes against Christians are growing, and fear of this transition to The United States is growing (Brown, 2022).

Historically, black/African Americans have been treated abhorrently. Years of slavery, abuse, rape, and profiling have created a country sensitive to division. The mainstream and social media use the vulnerable minority population to continue the racial divide. If their goal was to report the truth, then there would not be a disparate amount of news stories reporting hate crimes against black/African Americans and ignoring hate crimes against other minorities. Historically, cultivation theory defines this phenomenon.

George Gebner argued that when an individual consumes an extended amount of media exposure, their attitudes towards, and perceptions of the world, and reality align with the media portrayal (Gauthier et al., 2018). In this context, if mainstream media, and more recently social media, continues to report crimes by and against black/African American people, All races are going to become divided. This can be seen in how the mainstream media portrays black defendants in court versus white defendants in court. When you view a black man on tv, during a court hearing, most often he is in a jumpsuit from the jail (The Global Strategic Group and Equal Justice Initiative, 2021). However, when a white defendant is shown in court, they are more often seen in a suit, with a fresh haircut. Thirteen percent of white defendants are shown in a suit,

while only 6% of black defendants are in suits. These news stories are not exclusive to black/African Americans.

There have been countless mainstream and social media stories aimed at perpetuating the rape myth. Thacker (2017) researched the influence of news media on victim blaming. The researcher found multiple news reports and social media reports that focused primarily on the rapists and the impact their sentencing would have on the rest of their lives. News stories often include videos of the rapist's friends and family giving character statements in support of their friend or family. However, there are rarely, if any, character statements about the victim. Once again, using the foundation of cultivation theory, mainstream and social media creating an era of victim-blaming, and perpetuating the rape myth.

From the malignant actions of some law enforcement officers to the continual news stories pushing anti-police, anti-Christian, and victim-blaming rhetoric, the division in The United States is the real pandemic. As the division between a family can ruin that family, division in the country can result in a civil war. Abraham Lincoln said,

A house divided against itself cannot stand. I believe this government cannot endure, permanently half-slave and half-free. I do not expect the Union to be dissolved—I do not expect the house to fall—but I do expect it will cease to be divided. It will become all one thing, or all the other ("House Divided" Speech by Abraham Lincoln, 2015).

Problem Statement

Previous research on the etiology of anti-police, anti-Christian, and victim-blaming rhetoric has resulted in mixed opinions. While research suggests that there is a significant disparity in the use of force against black/African Americans, divergent research suggests there is no racial disparity in the use of force (Cesario et al., 2019; Edwards, 2019). The mainstream

and social media only report one-sided stories. If that wasn't enough to cause division, reports of victim-blaming and stories condemning Christians have deepened the divide. If policymakers and the criminal justice system do not make changes to law enforcement policy, and abuse by mainstream and social media, The United States is looking at its second civil war. Continual reporting of racial, religious and victim divides, is perpetuating racial disparity and encouraging anti-police, anti-Christian, and victim-blaming rhetoric. Through the actions of mainstream and social media, based on cultivation theory, this current research attempts to uncover the etiology of anti-police, anti-Christian, and victim-blaming in The United States.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this research is to lessen the burden on the criminal justice system, minorities, Christians, and victims, by identifying the source of stereotypes, inaccurate information, and assumptions about the dynamics between these groups. One hundred participants, ages 18-65, from a small Midwest community college, were surveyed. Dependent variables included: Attitudes Towards Police Legitimacy Scale (ATPLS), Attitudes Towards Christians (ATC), and a Rape Vignette (RV). The independent variables included: platforms by which participants learn of current events (mainstream media, social media, newspaper, and family/friends.), hours spent on social media, hours spent on television, age, race/ethnicity, and gender.

Significance of the Study

The implications of the study help law enforcement, Christians, the criminal justice system, and policymakers to focus on what areas seem to impact anti-police rhetoric, anti-Christian rhetoric, and victim blaming in The United States. The findings of this study will help expose the implications mainstream and social media have in fostering a dangerous anti-police,

anti-Christian, and anti-victim rhetoric. As history tends to repeat itself, the threat of another civil war looms over The United States. The first civil war in The United States lasted from 1861-1865. An estimated 851,000 soldiers died as a result. Researchers have implicated abolitionists, political division, religion, and those that believed in slave labor as the etiology of the civil war (Latypova et al., 2022). For every group involved in the civil war, there is an unremarkable resemblance growing in The United States today. Division over President Abe Lincoln has been replaced with division over President Donald Trump. The groups that were anti or pro-slavery are now replaced by stories of law enforcement versus minorities, and antifa vs government. Instead of the North and the South arguing over who was to blame for the division and war, Republicans and Democrats are continually arguing and blaming the other party. Latypova et al. (2022) posit that not only was it “short-sighted politicians, but also irresponsible journalists, preachers, southern extremists and fanatical abolitionists of the North in unleashing a bloody war” (p.17). Currently, the mainstream and social media are reporting as irresponsible as pre-civil war journalists. Without identifying the etiology of the division in The United States, a civil war may also be repeated.

Currently, The United States is experiencing a disparate amount of police violence toward black people. However, the violence at the hands of law enforcement is being hailed by the mainstream and social media as a racist cop problem. This has resulted in a lack of trust and feelings of legitimacy toward law enforcement by minorities (Calvert et al., 2020). Other races, including Caucasians, have reported that they have also been the target of police violence, as much as any other race, and research has confirmed this (Cesario et al., 2019).

Another group that mainstream and social media have set their target on is Christians. If a Christian invokes the name of Jesus, they are considered a hateful threat (Brown, 2023). Yet

when actual threats come from an NBA star, there is no outcry and no call for cancellation (Wolfsohn, 202). The mainstream and social media have set their narrative on making black/African Americans feel inferior, Christians feel like criminals, and victims feel like villains.

While previous research should contribute to the decrease and elimination of hate and hate crimes, their results are as divided as the country is. Previous research suggests that racist cops are the problem, while other research suggests there is no racial disparity among law enforcement (Cesario et al., 2019; Edwards, 2019). Christians proclaim their love for others, yet the news media labels Christians as the cause of hate (Brown, 2022). Significant underreporting of rape continues in The United States as the mainstream and social media perpetuate a rape myth that results in victims as villains and villains as victims (Thacker, 2017). This current research is vital to protect The United States from division so wide that it threatens the very existence of “*One Nation Under God*” (Bellamy, 1892, para. 1). It is vital to protect the criminal justice system, along with the thousands of good law enforcement officers in The United States. Social injustice has been a problem since the beginning of time, but never has the fight for equality for all groups been stronger than now. Unfortunately, the fight is no longer about inclusivity, instead, it is about excluding police, Christians, and victims.

Research Question(s)

RQ1: *How does the specific platform used to gain knowledge of current events impact attitudes towards law enforcement, victims, perpetrators, and Christians?*

RQ2: *How does the amount of time spent on mainstream, and social media impact attitudes towards law enforcement, victims, and Christians?*

RQ3: *To what extent do age, race/ethnicity, and gender influence attitudes towards law enforcement, victims, and Christians?*

Definitions

Black-on-Black crime: Crimes committed by Black people against Black people (Latzer, 2019).

1. *Brutality:* “Excessive use of physical violence” (Alang et al., 2017, p. 662).
2. *Cultivation Theory:* “Gerbner's hypothesis that heavy television viewing tends to cultivate attitudes towards the social world that are based on the world represented onscreen” (Oxford Dictionary. Cultivation theory, n.d.).
3. *Hate speech:* “Language that is used to express hatred towards a targeted group or is intended to be derogatory, to humiliate, or to insult the members of the group” (Davidson et al., 2017, para. 1).
4. *Hero:* A person who has demonstrated exceptional courage, achievements, and nobility. A person that is a role model and is held in the highest esteem (Merriam-Webster. Hero, n.d.).
5. *Intimate partner violence:* Emotional, physical, sexual aggression and violence towards an intimate partner (Diez et al., 2017). This also includes stalking.
6. *Insurrection:* “an organized attempt by a group of people to defeat their government or ruler and take control of the country, usually by violence” (“Insurrection” Cambridge English Dictionary, n.d.).
7. *Media:* The “passing [of] information” through social media (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Tumbler, etc.), Television (Fox, CNN, MSN, ABC, NBC, etc.), Newsprint (Washington Post, New York Times, Associated Press, etc.) (Plenkovick, 2019, p.1).

8. *Mainstream media*: Traditional forms of news, current events, politics, and entertainment that includes networks like CNN, FOX, CBS, The New York Times, and Newsmax (Cambridge English Dictionary. Mainstream media, n.d.).
9. *Police use of force*: the amount of force used to obtain compliance from a suspect (The International Association of Chiefs of Police, 2020).
10. *Race*: *The identification of inclusion in a social group. For example, American Indians, Asians, black or African Americans, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islanders, and whites all share a similar skin color, physical and behavioral characteristics. People can also identify with more than one race* (Ghidei et al., 2019).
11. *Racial disparity*: The overrepresentation of black people, or African Americans involved in the criminal justice system (Kim et al., 2018). This includes being a victim and victimization.
12. *Racism*: The stereotyping and negative beliefs and treatment towards minorities (Wilson, 2019).
13. *Rage*: The intense anger, explosive outbursts of hatred, disgust, and verbal and physical assaults toward a person or group of people (Zhang et al., 2019).
14. *Social Media*: “Social media is a computer-based technology that facilitates the sharing of ideas, thoughts, and information through the building of virtual networks and communities” (Dollarhide, 2022, p. 1). This includes Facebook, Twitter, Snap Chat, Instagram, Pinterest, TikTok, YouTube, WhatsApp, and Reddit.
15. *Violence against law enforcement*: Assault or homicide against law enforcement officers and staff (Bedi, 2017).

16. *Visibility bias*: “Visibility bias is the salience of political actors, tonality bias the evaluation of these actors, and agenda bias the extent to which parties address preferred issues in media coverage” (Eberl et al., 2017, p.1125).
17. *Woke*: The ability to see social injustice which includes racism, ageism, and discrimination, to name a few. (Oxford Dictionary. Woke, n.d.)
18. *Zero*: “A worthless or contemptibly undistinguished person” (Merriam-Webster Dictionary, Zero, n.d.).

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction to the Literature Review

The literature review presented in this current research targets several topics and variables involving mainstream and social media coverage of race, religion, law enforcement, victims, perpetrators, obedience to authority, politics, and the impact the coverage has on the criminal justice system. Previous literature has attempted to identify the etiology of racial disparity among law enforcement officers, police brutality, religious inequalities, and the anti-police attitude in The United States, (Alang et al., 2017; Degruet et al., 2016; Diez et al., 2017; Gracia et al., 2017; Johnson et al., 2016; Kim et al., 2018; Latzer, 2019; Lee et al., 2020; Li et al., 2017; Raquel et al., 2020), but the variables of mainstream and social media, anti-Christianity, and victim-blaming are void. There is also a void in previous research exploring the relationship between these variables and their possible universal etiology. The current increasing phenomenon in The United States is anti-police rhetoric, racial disparity in criminal justice, victim-blaming, and anti-Christianity. The news media has reported a disproportionate number of stories vilifying law enforcement officers, victims, and Christians and has also broadcast a disparate amount of racially fueled news stories. The current literature review looks specifically at cultivation theory to predict that mainstream and social media are the etiology of the increased victim-blaming, anti-police rhetoric, and the anti-Christianity movement.

Disparities in Current Mainstream and Social Media Broadcasts & Reports

Law Enforcement: Killed by Police

In 2020, George Floyd, a 46-year-old, black security guard, died tragically when Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin ruthlessly kneeled on Floyd's neck for 9 minutes and

29 seconds. Ultimately convicted, Chauvin's actions led to multiple violent protests and fatalities. Businesses were destroyed by fires and looting occurred around the clock. There was twenty-four-hour news coverage of the murder of George Floyd. The news media decided to focus their stories on the racial discrimination at the hands of law enforcement officers, instead of highlighting a "bad cop" problem. Celebrities offered money to pay for multiple funerals for George Floyd and broke Pandemic restrictions to attend the funeral, while everyone else had to bury their loved ones without funerals. The division increased as footage revealed that Floyd had been committing a crime at the time of his tragic death. While that is no excuse for the abuse Floyd received, the news media, capitalized on the abuse to push their racist cop narrative. The news media reported shock and disgust over the actions of law enforcement against people of color, they neglected to report that the same scenario happened four years earlier.

Tony Timpa, a 32-year-old, white, executive died when Dallas police officer Dustin Dillard kneeled on his back and neck for 14 minutes (Carter et al., 2019). Timpa called the police for help because he was schizophrenic and was off his medication. The Dallas Police sent a 5-member team from their Crisis Intervention Team. The officer's body cam clearly shows them pinning him down with cuffs and zip ties and making fun of him. They said, "It's time for school! Wake up!" and made other juvenile-related remarks (Dallas Police Body Camera Footage, as cited in Carter et al., 2019, video 1). The officers kneeled on Timpa's chest and lungs for 14 minutes before he eventually died. The officers were charged with misdemeanors and the charges were dismissed. One of the officers was promoted and given the responsibility to train other officers. There were no protests, no fires, no riots, and barely any news coverage. As of the date of this research, an appellate court ruled in favor of Timpa, allowing the officers to be sued and not safe under qualified immunity. However, it has not inundated the news like the killing of

George Floyd. The news media has a long history of reporting events that highlight law enforcement's use of force against minorities (Carter et al., 2019; DeAngelis, 2018; Miah, 2001; Richard, 2019; Watson, 2021).

In 2021, Daunte Wright, a black male, was pulled over by law enforcement for a traffic violation. When the officers ran his information, they were told he had a warrant for his arrest (Miah, 2021). When the officers told Wright, he would be arrested for the warrant, he became combative, got away from the officers, and ran towards his vehicle. The officers, fearing he was going to flee or get a weapon made a split-second decision to deploy a Taser to stop Wright. The officer grabbed her gun, as she explains, what she thought was the taser, and killed Wright. While her excuse was unacceptable and she murdered Wright, he was still resisting arrest. Protests and riots ensued, and mainstream and social media coverage was expansive. Numerous stories focusing on abuse and racial disparity among law enforcement were reported by mainstream and social media. Claiming to be part of the Black Lives Matter, protesters began looting, burning businesses, vehicles, police cars, and property. Reports in the media did not report that these crimes were against people of every color and businesses not related to the incident. According to Watson (2021), over 93% of Black Lives Matter Protests were peaceful. Yet the seven percent that were violent were scarcely reported in mainstream media. The media's coverage of racial disparity among law enforcement officers is disproportionate to the media's coverage of the 25 people murdered during the violent protests.

In 2018, Daniel Shaver, a white male, was shot and killed by police officers in his hotel room (DeAngelis, 2018). Shaver worked pest control and was in Arizona on business. He had been seen with an airsoft rifle that is used for exterminating birds. A witness called the police to report seeing the gun and when the police arrived, they ordered Shaver in the hallway and

ordered him to crawl towards them. His shorts were falling as he was crawling, and as he reached down to pull up his pants, Officer Brailsford shot and killed him. There is a video showing Shaver begging for his life. Officer Brailsford was acquitted and was given disability, pension, and three million dollars towards future legal fees. The media coverage was brief and did not gain much attention. There were no protests, peaceful or violent.

In 2014, Michael Brown an 18-year-old, black male, was shot and killed by law enforcement officers in Ferguson, Missouri. Brown was under the influence of drugs and was walking down the street alongside his friend. Brown was shot when he was coming towards the officer in a threatening manner, and the officer feared for his life. All charges were dismissed against the officer. Immediately, the outrage was expressed through riots, protests, and burning buildings. The news media began reporting false reports of Brown being shot in the back and surrendering. Surprisingly, this same thing happened only two years earlier, but there were no outcries, protests, and very little media coverage.

In 2012, Gilbert Collar, a white male, 18 years old, and an Alabama State University student, was shot and killed by a black police officer while unarmed and naked (Richards, 2014). Collar was under the influence of drugs and was sweating when he was knocking on the doors, and windows of the police station. The officer walked away from Collar and when Collar started walking towards him, the officer shot and killed him. There were very few news reports, no rallies, no protests, no burned buildings, or looting. No celebrities offered to pay for multiple funeral services for Collar.

Mainstream media frequently reports a racial divide in the country, often pointing to racist law enforcement officers, eager to use force against people of color (DeAngelis, 2018; Watson, 2021). Preying on the vulnerable minority population, still dealing with issues of past

racial discrimination, the media continues to push the agenda of the racial divide to extremes. Instead of focusing on the overall abuse by law enforcement to all people, they focus their reports on the division between races and forward a message to people of color that they are the target of law enforcement.

Police Use of Force

Edwards et al. (2019) researched the leading cause of death among young black men. Their results have been reported in *The Washington Post*, *US News*, *the LA Times*, and *NBC News*. The results are based on a database developed by journalists that attempt to record every death by law enforcement. Their results suggest that the sixth leading cause of death for young, black men is police killing. These have been the headlines in many journal articles, news media reports, and social media articles. These results, however, are misleading. Included in the police killings are shootings, asphyxia, beating, chemical agent, taser, a gunshot, and medical emergencies. The database of police killings has numerous deaths attributed to police causing the death, however, many of these deaths were medical emergencies that occurred en route to the jail or following drug use and are not caused by law enforcement. For example, in 2019, police responded to a report that a 23-year-old man had beaten his mother. Steven Barrier, the suspect fled on foot and was ultimately caught and arrested. When he arrived at the police precinct he died of cardiac arrest. In a separate incident, media headlines read “Anthony Ray Meely Killed During a Confrontation With Police” (Burghart, 2020, para. 1). The actual events involved Meely resisting arrest and later he died of cardiac arrest. Since the database used in the research by Edwards et al. (2019) includes medical emergencies as police killings, then the reports that police killing is the sixth largest cause of death in young black men is misleading and perpetuates racial disparity in The United States. The news media also misleads the public by only reporting

that “Police violence is a leading cause of death for young [black] men in the United States” (Edwards et al., 2019, p. 16793) and neglects to report the statement made later by the same researchers.

I want to be clear: When we talk about the leading causes, police violence trails behind some causes that are killing many, many people," Edwards says. "Relative to all causes of death, it's not that frequent (Edwards, 2019, as cited in US News, 2019, para.6.).

Statements such as Edwards are rarely reported along with beefed-up results among social and mainstream media.

In 2018, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention listed the leading cause of death among non-Hispanic, black men ages 20-44, which included, in order:

1. Assault (homicide)
2. Accidents (unintentional injuries)
3. Intentional self-harm (suicide)
4. Diseases of heart
5. Malignant neoplasms.
6. Human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) disease
7. Congenital malformations, deformations, and chromosomal abnormalities
8. Diabetes mellitus
9. Chronic lower respiratory diseases
10. Legal intervention (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2021, p.44).

Johnson (2016) reported a list of the leading cause of death in 2015. The top seven causes are medical errors (281,484), suicides (41,149), accidental poisoning (38,851), traffic accidents (35,804), falls (30,208), criminal homicides (16,101), and police shooting deaths (909)

as the leading causes of death in 2015 (Johnson, 2016, p. 3). Ironically, most mainstream media and social media have focused primarily on police shooting deaths and neglected other significant causes of death.

Johnson (2016) suggests that the important thing to learn from statistics is not how many people die by law enforcement, but how many law enforcement are justified in using that lethal force. The police system in The United States has the authority to use lethal force under specific guidelines. If all 909 deaths occurred because of the justified use of lethal force, then that number is not a sign of an epidemic. Of the 990 deaths caused by police shootings, 248 deaths were black males, and 742 of those deaths were white or Hispanic.

The continual mainstream and social media reports suggesting an increased racial divide in The United States prompted Brunner et al. (2015) to evaluate whether law enforcement issues are racial or from another variable. Brunner evaluated the support of police in an area that is predominately people of color. The law enforcement officers are also predominantly people of color. Their results confirm that there is mistrust between law enforcement and civilians, but it is not race that is causing the mistrust. The results were significant that the race of the officer did not increase support for officers, even when the officer was black or brown. The issue is a lack of trust in law enforcement regardless of race.

Countering the research by Brunner et al. (2015) and Johnson (2016), DeGue et. al. (2018) evaluated the deaths cause by police lethal force from 2009 to 2012. Their results indicate significant racial disparities. The researchers reviewed 812 fatalities and found that white victims represented 52% of the deaths and black victims represented 32% of deaths. With a lower number of black people in The United States, these numbers suggest police use lethal force against black people significantly more than white. Hispanic victims showed no disparity from

white victims. Another important result indicates that 14.8% of black victims were unarmed while 9.4% of white and 5.8% of Hispanics were unarmed. Researchers also found that active service military and retired military had a 1.4% higher chance of police lethal force. These numbers are alarming but other research posits that these statistics are a misrepresentation of the whole.

Fryer (2017) researched racial disparities involving law enforcement. The researcher analyzed officer-involved shootings in Houston, the results indicate that there is a 50% increased risk of law enforcement using non-lethal force against black and Hispanic people compared to white (Fryer, 2017). However, Fryer (2017) evaluated 508 police-involved shootings, the results revealed: “on the most extreme uses of force, officer-involved shootings with a Taser or lethal weapon – there are no racial differences in either the raw data or when accounting for controls” (Fryer, 2017, pp. 29-30).

Johnson (2016) evaluated the shooting records of police officers in 2015 and found there were 990 police shooting deaths and 321,418,820 people living in The United States. The results of Johnson’s (2016) research revealed that “0. 00031% of the U.S. population died from police use of force in 2015” (p. 3). Though these statistics are not reported by mainstream and social media, instead stories of law enforcement's use of force against African Americans inundate televisions, newspapers, social media, podcasts, and radio. When asked about the increased reporting of police use of force against black and brown people, Cedric Alexander, President of the National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Executives, and Deputy Chief Operations Officer of Public Safety argued that there is not an increase in police use of force against minorities, there is more coverage in mainstream and social media, where in the past, there was no immediate coverage and footage of events (McLaughlin, 2015). Alexander also argues that

people do not get the opportunity to hear positive reports of law enforcement risking their own lives to save the lives of others which supports the research by Graziano et al. (2018). Alexander (2015) also posits that historically use of force against black and brown people was either not reported or under-reported. However, the same holds for white people on the receiving end of police use of force.

Miller et al. (2017) evaluated the demographics of police killings. One and every 291 stops/arrests resulted in a “hospital-treated injury or death” (p.27). Their research found no statistical difference between black hospital admissions and death from police use of force and white hospital admissions and death from police use of force. Their results also reveal a significantly higher involvement with law enforcement among minorities when compared to whites. The authors argue that these results show that minority individuals are stopped or arrested more frequently than non-Hispanic white people, however, there is no racial difference in the number of people injured or killed by law enforcement.

Cesario et al. (2019) evaluated the reports of general use of force and deadly use of force by law enforcement officers. The cumulative results indicate no racial disparity between law enforcement officers that use deadly force and general use of force. Officers representing all races did not differ in their use of force. The results indicate that there is a bad cop problem and less of a race problem.

Hoekstra et al. (2022) evaluated the impact of gun use of force by black and brown law enforcement officers in areas that are predominantly black and brown in comparison to gun use of force by white officers. The researchers measured minority neighborhoods and neighborhoods that were predominately white. Their results only revealed one side of the use of force controversy. While the researchers suggest that white officers use an increased amount of gun

use force in predominately minority neighborhoods compared to black and brown officers, they neglected to reveal that their results also showed that in predominately white neighborhoods, black and brown law enforcement officers were more likely to use gun use of force than white officers. There is a void in mainstream and social media reporting racial disparity from both white and minority law enforcement officers. One issue that is often a problem among law enforcement officers is racial profiling.

In opposition to media reports, James et al. (2016) evaluated the length of time it takes for a police officer to shoot an unarmed black suspect compared to an unarmed white suspect. The researchers utilized a crime scene simulation with law enforcement participants and found that police officers took a significantly longer time before shooting a black suspect than a white suspect. Divergent to mainstream and social media reports, these results debunk the narrative that law enforcement officers are targeting, and thoughtlessly shooting black suspects. Another narrative herded by mainstream and social media is racial profiling by law enforcement officers.

Racial Profiling: White Law Enforcement Officers

For this current study, racial profiling will be defined using Barlow et al. (2001) definition. Racial profiling is “any situation in which race is used by a police officer or agency to determine the potential criminality of an individual” (p. 334). There is no question that The United States has a long history of racial profiling among law enforcement officers and that problem continues today. Rushin et al. (2021) evaluated the incidence of racial profiling and the correlation with court decisions that have allowed law enforcement the right to do a pretextual stop. They evaluated traffic stops following two separate court decisions in Washington. Following *State v. Ladson*, pretextual traffic stops by law enforcement were ruled illegal and the incidence of racial profiling decreased. However, *State v. Arreola* lifted the ban on pretextual

traffic stops by law enforcement. When the researchers evaluated traffic stops in this area, they found a significant racial disparity in traffic stops between people of color and white people. After *State v. Arreola*, there were far more traffic stops of black individuals than white. These results would indicate that white law enforcement officers are targeting people of color.

Reports of racial profiling by law enforcement have filled news reports in mainstream and social media. While the news media often reports complaints of racial profiling, they are void of reporting the outcomes. For example, in 2021, California's Racial and Identity Profiling Advisory (RIPA) Board, published the results of over 1000 complaints of racial profiling (California Department of Justice, 2021). Over 950 complaints went to deposition. Of those 955 complaints, 75% were ruled to be unfounded, 13% were exonerated, 10% did not have enough evidence and 2% were found to have enough evidence to substantiate the complaint.

The media also portrays law enforcement as racist, violent, arrogant, and abusive. The result is citizens profiling law enforcement because of mainstream and social media highlighting "bad cops" and calling them racist cops.

Supporting the mainstream and social media assumption of racial profiling by law enforcement, Abrahams (2020) evaluated racial profiling in traffic stops. The researcher found that across eight states, 30-40 percent of traffic stops were race-based. Abrahams (2020) argues that it is not just a few bad officers guilty of racial profiling on initial traffic stops, and instead posits that race-based policing is a common practice in The United States.

Racial Profiling: Black/Brown Law Enforcement Officers

In a dated, but ad rem research study, Barlow et al. (2002) found one in ten minority law enforcement officers admit that they use racial profiling in their policing. They also argue that it is a necessary part of the job. The study also reveals a significant number of minority participants

(69%) felt that they had been racially profiled by other officers while being civilians. Even after being on the receiving end of racial profiling, minority officers racially profiled citizens and felt that it was necessary. These results should have brought about policy change but were radically overlooked.

Researchers have pointed to implicit bias as an explanation for this hypocritical stance by minority officers and explain why twenty years later, the argument of racial profiling is still being fought in The United States (Spencer et al., 2016). Spencer et al. (2016) researched the bias or stereotype that minorities are associated with crime and violence and are consequently the victims of racial profiling. The authors argue that this implicit bias explains why both minority and non-minority officers utilize racial profiling in their policing. If officer race is not indicative of racial profiling, then again, the problem is a “bad cop” problem.

Retired Police Chief and National Chairman of the National Association of Black Law Enforcement Officers, Charles Wilson (2020) surveyed officers of color and found that 89% of male officers and 100% of female officers felt an unwritten policy of racial profiling was a part of their training. Chief Wilson said, “been inherently biased against people of color and low income [people], and it was designed to be that way,” he says. “So, the actions of the officers are not surprising” (Mosley et al., 2020, para. 7). Wilson went on to discuss the use of force by law enforcement officers, including the excessive use of force against George Floyd and said, “Putting a knee on somebody's neck for more than nine minutes has no place whatsoever in the law enforcement practition” (Mosley et al. 2020, para. 5). However, when Timpa had a knee on his neck for over 15 minutes, Chief Wilson was silent. Media news reports and social media reports have galvanized a race-divided narrative.

Anti-Police Rhetoric

As social media and mainstream media continue to report one-sided statistics regarding law enforcement's racial discrimination, racial profiling, and disparate use of force, anti-police rhetoric has erupted throughout the country. While it would be misleading to say there have not been far too many incidences involving law enforcement targeting black and brown people (DeGue, 2016), the mainstream and social media has used the struggle of minorities to foster their anti-police agenda. The media has capitalized on the tragic police shooting deaths of minorities but has remained silent on police shooting deaths of white people, heroic efforts to save people of color, and the day-to-day violence by people of all colors. The lack of reporting on all races allows the media to control the narrative of every news cycle. Instead of focusing on a bad law enforcement problem, the focus is on continuing a racial divide in the country.

Steve Pomper, from the National Police Association, reports the reasoning behind social media's exploitation of African Americans and the misleading reports of racist law enforcement officers. Police Chief Scott Schubert, blamed ANTIFA for the violent George Floyd protests, "ANTIFA, they're the ones who are fueling a lot of this." However, here is the CBS' title: "‘Damn Shame’: Pittsburgh Police Chief Says **White Males** Dressed In Anarchist Attire Hijacked George Floyd Protests Downtown" (Schubert, 2020, as cited in Pomper, 2020). The media has reported false police brutality narratives in such a consistent, repetitious manner, that when empirical peer-reviewed journal articles are presented, people do not believe the facts (Pomper, 2020). Pomper argues that the media wants to fuel a fire that was set for no reason.

Last night several police officers across the country were shot and another cop was run over by an insurgent driving a vehicle. One particularly heinous act from Las Vegas reported a terrorist walked up behind the officer and shot him in the head. Anyone who

still thinks this has anything to do with George Floyd's death is irrational (Pomper, 2020, para. 24).

Reporting inaccurate incidence of police brutality, allows mainstream media and social media to terrorize the citizens of The United States.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) defines domestic terrorism as “Violent, criminal acts committed by individuals and/or groups to further ideological goals stemming from domestic influences, such as those of a political, religious, social, racial, or environmental nature” (FBI, 2016, para. 3). When acts of terrorism, including, arson, murder, looting, and violence occurs, the mainstream and social media that reports these acts as “mostly peaceful” and “fiery but peaceful,” they are furthering the ideological goals of the terrorists (Jimenez, 2020, CNN; Velshi, 2020, MSNBC). Fear is the great motivator of mainstream and social media. Dr. Serani (2011) explains, “The success of fear-based news relies on presenting dramatic anecdotes in place of scientific evidence, promoting isolated events as trends, depicting categories of people as dangerous and replacing optimism with fatalistic thinking and the reason behind this fear-based storytelling, “capitalistic motive” (Serani, 2011, para. 5).

Pennycook et al. (2018) researched how much exposure to fake news reports is needed to believe fake facts. The researchers focused on Twitter posts and found that even with only one exposure to the fake news, participants are more likely to believe and share the fake news. The researchers also found that even when platforms like Facebook attach a third-party fact check warning, participants still believe the fake news. One impact of the third-party warnings was a decrease in the sharing of fake news stories. However, another trend in social media and mainstream media reporting is victim blaming.

Victim Blaming

Rape

Gravelin (2016) evaluated the news media reports regarding rape and found their subtle victim blaming is significantly influencing viewers and readership. The researcher found that when rape occurred at the hands of strangers, they were reported significantly more than acquaintance rape. Gravelin (2016) argues that this gives the impression that the only true form of rape is stranger rape. The results also indicate that when participants read articles that were filled with high levels of victim blaming, they were able to differentiate between high and low levels of victim blaming. The researcher also concluded that when participants read a high victim-blaming article, they were significantly more likely to blame the victim of another rape case that had nothing to do with the original article that was read. Those participants also expressed their belief in the rape myth.

In February of 2022, a New York City man was accused of the attempted rape of a 21-year-old woman on a subway train. Fox News reported the alleged crime but also added "It wasn't immediately clear if the victim fought off her attacker" (Rosenberg, 2022, para.2). Commentary such as this indicates a fostering of victim-blaming. It does not matter if a victim fights or does not fight, but if the victim does not fight, the public views him or her as "wanting it" Thacker (2017) researched the influence of news media on victim blaming. The researcher found multiple news reports and social media reports that focused primarily on the rapists and the impact their sentencing would have on the rest of their lives. When the victim was mentioned, it was to discuss his or her sexual promiscuity, drunkenness, or the accusations that he or she was lying (Wade, 2013; Thacker, 2017).

Dukes et al. (2017) evaluated the news media portrayal of the perpetrator and victim and if a correlation exists between the participant's attitudes towards shooters and victims, where death was the result. They found a significant influence on perpetrator sympathy and support when the media portrayed the perpetrator as a victim. The participants also had significant sympathy for the shooters when the victim was described as troubled or having a checkered past. The wording of news stories and portrayals of victims and perpetrators directly influence public opinion.

Lee et al. (2020) ran a content analysis of news stories in Canada, highlighting domestic violence cases. The analysis revealed that the format of reporting these crimes was framed as isolated incidents, which resulted in an increased victim-blaming mentality among readers. Readers were also more likely to excuse the perpetrator when these news stories were reported as isolated.

Li et al. (2017) evaluated newspaper and media stories regarding sexual assaults that occur on campuses. A survey of 567 college students revealed that newspaper articles and media stories about campus sexual assault were correlated with an increase in victim blaming. The researchers found that social media was correlated with belief in rape myths that excuse the perpetrator and blame the victim. Rape myths have common assumptions that a rape victim asked for it, lied about it, or somehow otherwise deserved it.

Stubs et al. (2018) evaluated the number of retweets of posts that contained victim-blaming, and the number of retweets of posts that supported victims. The results revealed a significantly higher number of retweets regarding posts that contained victim-blaming compared to retweets of the post supporting victims. Elements of the rape myth make up several tweets on Twitter. Whiting et al. (2019) conducted a content analysis of 400 comments on social media

following a celebrity report of intimate partner violence. The analysis revealed a significant disproportion between angry comments towards the victim in comparison to the perpetrator. There was an increased number of supportive comments to the perpetrator compared to the victim.

The news media has reported narratives that have resulted in anti-police, anti-hero, and anti-victim attitudes. Among those influenced by these media portrayals are law enforcement officers. Long (2018) researched rape victim advocates perception of law enforcement during emergency room exams following a report of rape. The victim advocate reported a positive relationship with law enforcement; however, they reported a significant problem with law enforcement victim blaming. The types of questioning, disbelief in the rape, unwillingness to take a report, and frequent demands for the victim to recount what happened, contributed to these revictimizations.

Gravelin (2018) reported the disproportionate reporting of stranger rapes compared to acquaintance rape by mainstream media, has fostered a victim-blaming attitude. Supporting this research, Long (2018) found the attitudes of law enforcement toward rape victims match the narrative presented by the mainstream news media.

Credible victims (often considered “real rape”) for law enforcement would include cases of stranger rapes, sexual assaults that are accompanied by physical injuries, and/or a weapon used during the assault (Campbell & Johnson, 1997; Maier, 2012; Spohn & Tellis, 2012, as cited in Long, 2018, p.500).

Long (2018) found that how a victim was dressed, their appearance, and their location (dangerous-safe area), significantly impacted their treatment by law enforcement. All these factors are also reported in the news media when reporting on rapes.

As victims of rape have been encouraged to come forward following the crime, there are still numerous unreported rapes by men and women. According to The United States Department of Justice (2017), 230 out of 1,000 rapes are reported to law enforcement, which equates to three out of every four rapes going unreported. The influence of the portrayal of rape victims in the news media is part of the reason for the underreporting of such heinous crimes.

Bullying

Kim et al. (2017) evaluated news media reports to find whether they placed the blame for bullying on the bully or the victim. Their results indicate a significant number of news reports blamed the victim and their families, while a significant amount of news reports blamed the school and teachers. There was a significant conclusion that bullies and their families were rarely blamed for the victimization compared to the victims and their families.

The researchers looked at the possible reasons for an increase in news coverage of bullying starting in 2010 and found:

Research on agenda building has found that the amount of news coverage is not always correlated with the seriousness of a social problem. The rise in school bullying coverage was likely driven by the increase in bullying's public profile rather than by its actual statistics (Shoemaker & Reese, 1991, as cited in Kim et al., 2016, p.741).

With the increased reports of bullying, an increase in fatal school shootings has increased as well.

School Shootings

Dahmen (2018) researched the reporting of mass shootings by news media and found that the news media, in comparison to victim names and photos, displayed photos of the perpetrator 16 times more than victims. The researcher argues the contagion effect, which is a theory that

people will copy what another individual does when they see it reported in the news media.

Dahmen (2018) said,

The Society of Professional Journalists' Code of Ethics encourages news media members to seek truth and report it, the code also emphasizes moral imperatives to "balance the public's need for information against potential harms" and "avoid pandering to lurid curiosity" (p.163).

The public does not need a conveyor belt of perpetrators' photos during every news cycle and hear about their life over and over.

On May 24, 2022, a lone gunman entered an elementary school and shot and killed 19 children and two teachers. The news media has released the gunman's name as well as statements from his mother far more than speaking the names of the victims. This current research will not name the gunman to thwart the contagion effect. The victims of this senseless act include:

Uziah Garcia, 8, Jose Flores, 10, Amerie Jo Garza, 10, Xavier Javier Lopez, 10, Nevaeh Bravo, 10, Alithia Ramirez, 10, Tess Marie Mata, 10, Alexandria Aniya Rubio, 10, Layla Salazar, 10, Makenna Lee Elrod, 10, Jayce Luevanos, 10, Jailah Nicole Silguero, 11, Eliana "Ellie" Garcia, 9, Eliahana Cruz Torres Annabell Guadalupe Rodriguez, 10, Jacklyn "Jackie" Cazares, 10, Maite Yuleana Rodriguez, 10, Rogelio Torres, 10, Miranda Matthis, 11, Eva Mireles, Irma Garcia (Lampen et al., 2022, para. 5).

In 1999, two teenage males entered Columbine High School in Colorado and set a bomb in the cafeteria (Belknap et al., 2022). They waited outside in their vehicles however, when the bomb did not detonate, they went into the school and shot and killed 13 individuals and wounded over 20 more. The gunmen were known to be social outcasts and claimed to be members of a

gothic click. It was reported that the two were bullied throughout their educational journey. The news media has consistently failed to use its power to help prevent bullying and cyberbullying.

Moreno et al. (2019) evaluated the framing of news articles regarding bullying and cyberbullying. Their results indicate that how a story is framed, either preventative or not preventative can impact the audience. During their research, the authors found staggering evidence regarding the impact of news media on the audience. To expose the impact news media has on their audience, researchers have found evidence of copycat behaviors in suicide.

Suicide

Twenge et al. (2018) evaluated suicides from 2010 to 2015 and found that increased time spent on mainstream and social media significantly increased suicide rates. This was especially true for females. The researchers also evaluated variables like socioeconomic, unemployment, and the stock market and found no significant impact on depression reports or suicide. These results were supported by Sedgwick et al. (2019) when they found a correlation between increased social media usage and increased suicide attempts.

Ueda et al. (2017) researched the impact of suicide reports on the popular social media platform, Twitter. The researchers found that when a celebrity suicide was reported on Twitter, as the increased number of Tweets occurred, an increased number of copycat suicides were attempted. This research is important because, in the past 51 years, 86% of school shooters commit suicide (Campus Safety Staff, 2022). Sensationalizing suicide can impact the individuals that commit school shootings by viewing suicide as a way out. School shooters are not the only people committing or attempting suicide.

Mainstream and Social Media Impact on the Criminal Justice System

The above examples demonstrate the significant power the mainstream and social media have on the viewer's attitude towards people of color, law enforcement, rape victims, bullies, and victims of crime. This recently fostered attitude has made it difficult for the criminal justice system in The United States to function effectively. Victim blaming has replaced empathy for victims. Criminals have now become the symbol of courage and hope, while law enforcement is revered as racist, non-effective, abusive, power-hungry, and unworthy of obedience. Rape victims are seen as being at fault for their rape, while rapists are presented as victims. Bullies are portrayed as victims of the school system or the parents' upbringing, while bullying victims are committing suicide at increasing rates. Heroes are now criminals and criminals are now victims.

Obedience to Law Enforcement

One of the scariest noises a driver can hear is that of a police siren behind them. However, in the new era, law enforcement officers must be afraid as they pull someone over. A routine traffic stop follows a relatively routine pattern. Driver runs a stop light, the officer pulls them over, asks for license and registration and proof of insurance, runs information and either warns or gives a ticket. However, in the last five years, multiple dashcam, and cell phone videos have appeared in mainstream and social media depicting a new pattern. This pattern involves all races, genders, and ethnicities. The driver runs a stop light, and an officer pulls them over and asks for their license and registration, the driver refuses to show proof of identity. The driver begins yelling and telling the officer he doesn't have to show them their identification. A quick search on the popular platform YouTube reveals hundreds of videos of this type (YouTube, 2022). Some videos depict officers stopping individuals for no reason, while others are blatant disobedience to authority.

Demir et al. (2020) evaluated the use of body-worn cameras (BWC) on suspects' compliance. Their results found significant compliance, cooperation, and following directives, when the presence of a body camera was known to the citizen. Previous research identifies non-compliance as one of the biggest dangers to police and suspects (Demir et al., 2020; Nix et al., 2019; Perry, 2021).

When citizens are noncompliant during encounters with the police, confrontational situations tend to escalate, officer injuries can result, and police use of force becomes more likely (International Association of Chiefs of Police [IACP], 2004; Mastrofski, Reisig, & McCluskey, 2002, as cited in Demir et al., 2020, p.856).

Demir et al. (2020) go on to argue that when citizens are non-compliant, they decrease the availability of officers to meet the needs of the public through increased paperwork and other responsibilities.

The news media has been producing videos that show a person, complying with officers and still being treated forcefully. These mainstream and social media stories have frequently cut off the first part of the video showing non-compliance and violence towards the officer. These manipulated videos perpetuate the idea that whether you comply or fight, you will still have force used against you, including deadly force.

Perry (2020) evaluated the willingness of the protestors to comply with law enforcement officers. They found that when protestors perceived law enforcement as trustworthy coupled with their belief that the police procedures were fair, directly affected their willingness to comply. The more the protestors trusted law enforcement and their procedures, the more likely they were to comply. When the news media continually shows trimmed videos of police interactions, making it appear that the police did not follow procedure and are not trustworthy,

people are going to think that they cannot trust the police or their procedures. This will increase the likelihood that they will not comply.

A consultant for training and advising police departments on the proper use of force and accountability, Ashley Heiberger (2020) said,

It's not possible to watch a video and decide whether it suggests misconduct without knowing the context, "If you just see an officer applying force to a subject, you have no idea why he's doing that and the totality of circumstances (para. 20).

The news media repeatedly airs videos, often recording long after the incident initially occurred, sending a direct message to the viewer that law enforcement is to blame, the police force is unwarranted, and the police are not to be trusted. When police are not trusted, compliance is lost, and more critical incidents occur. One such incident

Villain to Victim

As discussed earlier, one popular news story in both television and print media was that of the shooting death of Daunte Wright. Framed by the media, this event caused multiple days of protest. The news media claimed that the officer that shot and killed Wright, did so because he was black. The news media often failed to delineate the sequence of events. Wright had been driving with expired license plates. He was pulled over and when his information was run, he had an outstanding warrant for carrying a firearm. When the police tried to arrest him, he struggled with the police and got back in his vehicle to flee. During the struggle the officer yelled "Taser, Taser" but instead of the taser, she fired her weapon and killed Daunte Wright. His death was tragic and unnecessary. The officer had an obligation to do her job correctly and subsequently deserved the charges she received. However, the news media reports of protests

and the continued coverage of a rogue officer neglected to reveal the whole background of Daunte Wright.

Wright did not comply when he was pulled over, he was driving with expired plates and he had a warrant out for his arrest, these three crimes were often void in mainstream and social media stories. Also, unlike the typical attention-grabbing news stories, the media chose to not reveal some significant facts about Daunte Wright. During the funeral of Daunte Wright, outspoken activist, and Reverend Al Sharpton said, “He was a prince, and all of Minneapolis has stopped today to honor the prince of Brooklyn Center” (The New York Times, 2022, p.1). Daunte Wright has been canonized, he has been labeled a victim, a family man, and a symbol of the struggle of black men. A monument was placed in Brooklyn Center honoring Daunte Wright. While protests in support of Wright were broadcast on the news and the news media repeatedly aired pictures of Wright holding his son and being cast as a victim, the victims of Daunte Wright remained silent. According to the alleged victim's statement, Daunte Wright held a gun to an acquaintance of his, demanding money and choking her, reaching under her breast to steal rent money. The victim said, “I had never stared into somebody’s eyes while begging to keep my life, while also having a gun pointed at my head, I have never gasped for air as much as I did when I had his hands wrapped around my neck” (Victim Impact Statement, as cited on Fox News, 2021). Daunte Wright was shot and killed by a police officer deploying her gun instead of a Taser. He died because he was resisting arrest and attempting to flee. Wright’s alleged victim did one wrong thing, she had her rent money in her shirt to pay the landlord. In another lawsuit, the family of Caleb Livingston alleges Daunte Wright shot him in the head at a gas station, leaving him in a vegetative state. A former classmate of Wright, Joshua Hodges, alleges that Wright assaulted him in the face, while his accomplice shot him in the leg, and fled in Hodges's vehicle.

In a violation of probation, Wright also allegedly waved a gun in the middle of an intersection and then threw it and fled. This type of behavior warrants the title of Prince of Brooklyn Center” according to Reverenced Al Sharpton.

Victim to Villain

The New York Times printed an article and quoted actress and doctor Mayim Bialik (2017) as saying that women should know in the current culture that they should not flirt and dress provocatively. Murdoch et al. (2017) evaluated if viewing a story about acquaintance rape, followed by either a victim blaming survey or perpetrator blaming survey influences victim blaming. The researchers highlighted a high-profile rape trial of two Ohio football players, as the news media made a significant stand against the victim, often vilifying her. The football players were found guilty of raping a 16-year-old girl at a party. While they raped her, their friends took videos. During NBC’s *The Today Show*, the perpetrator's family was interviewed and allowed to tell the world what an amazing young man the rapist was, and they repeatedly showed pictures of him as a child. They scarcely mentioned the victim, casting her as a drunken villain. The researchers concluded that when someone views a story regarding rape if it is followed by a survey about perpetrator blaming, they will significantly blame the victim more. The number of news reports focusing on turning villains into victims and victims into villains continues every news cycle. When blame and guilt are consistently placed on the wrong individuals by mainstream and social media, the public may see the criminal justice system as being on the wrong side of the right.

News Media Narratives: Evidence of Being Fake

Fake News: A Bipartisan Phenomenon

Hamaleers (2022) examined political disinformation and misinformation presented by the news media and whether fact checkers were able to provide truth to the public. The researcher presented participants with fake news articles claiming that the increase in immigration has caused an increase in violent crimes. One group reviewed an article that included fake facts and fake experts, the other group reviewed an article that was based on public experience with the problem. The results revealed that when fake facts were presented, participants believed the information more than when the information was presented based on experiences by members of the public.

Greene et al. (2021) presented 1,299 fake news stories to participants regarding the United Kingdom's (UK) withdrawal from the European Union (EU) also called (BREXIT). Following the exposure to these fake news stories, 44% of the participants had false memories of events that never happened. The researchers concluded that social identity theory, which states individuals will side with people from their group and oppose those in other groups, may explain why exposure to fake news results in fake memories (Mallett et al., 2019).

Martel et al. (2020) evaluated emotion as a predictor of belief in fake news stories. Their results revealed that the more an individual relies on emotion, the more likely they are going to believe fake news stories. The researchers also found that when self-reported, high emotional decision-making significantly increases the belief that a fake news story is true. In an era that has so much division and controversy, emotion can be the rationale behind the belief system of an individual. One such division is found in the political parties in The United States.

Examples of Fake News

In 2019, Facebook released multiple news stories of Donald Trump being the grandson of a KKK member (Gilbert, 2019). The media story also said his grandfather committed tax evasion and was in a prostitution business as a pimp, all of which were fabricated. In 2022, a social media headline argued that Democrats have never fought against monopolies in The United States until Elon Musk bought Twitter for 44 billion dollars. President Biden was quoted as saying “Children don’t belong to their parents when they are in the classroom,” which was a fake quote. He was making a point that children are not just looked at as other people’s children, teachers feel as though students are their own. Another post accused John Wilkes Booth, the man that murdered Republican President Abraham Lincoln, of being a Democrat. There is no evidence of this claim. Democratic candidate Terry McAuliffe found her name on yard signs and the news and social media making it look like their platform does not support parents deciding curriculum in Virginia. She never had signs made or made this part of her campaign. Vice President Harris was quoted as saying veterans should get a job, as she pushed to pull back on veteran aid. She did not say that, and the quote has been attributed to a website that makes satirical claims. These examples are a minor representation of false news stories and social media stories appearing every day.

Freedom of Speech for Me, not Thee

Supporters of the press often build their support with a foundation of the United States

Constitution’s First Amendment, which states:

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof, or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of

the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances (U.S. Const. amend. I).

While freedom of speech sounds like a simple concept, there are some restrictions to those freedoms. The United States Courts, through landmark Supreme Court cases, have ruled that freedom of speech does not include:

To incite imminent lawless action. *Brandenburg v. Ohio*, 395 U.S. 444 (1969).

To make or distribute obscene materials. *Roth v. United States*, 354 U.S. 476 (1957).

To burn draft cards as an anti-war protest. *United States v. O'Brien*, 391 U.S. 367 (1968).

To permit students to print articles in a school newspaper over the objections of the school administration. *Hazelwood School District v. Kuhlmeier*, 484 U.S. 260 (1988).

Of students to make an obscene speech at a school-sponsored event. *Bethel School District #43 v. Fraser*, 478 U.S. 675 (1986).

Of students to advocate illegal drug use at a school-sponsored event. *Morse v. Frederick*, U.S. (2007) (The United States Courts, 2022, para. 3).

These restrictions on freedom of speech have been violated by mainstream and social media. The press has demonstrated incitement through the disproportionate airing of anti-black rhetoric. By airing continual videos of George Floyd's murder, yet neglecting to air the story of Tony Timpa, murdered in the same way, the news media is inciting violence by inferring that these events only happen to people of color. This can be the trigger that catapults violent protests and continued division.

In 2020, the Covington Catholic High School went to Washington to participate in the "Right to Life" Rally. Many students wore hats that said, Make America Great Again, the slogan associated with former President Donald Trump. Nick Sandmann, a student at Covington

Catholic High School was presented through the popular news source CNN, as “the face of an unruly mob” and accused the students of “engaging in racist conduct” (Coffman, 2020, para. 5-8). These headlines were shared throughout the news and social media platforms. Sandmann ultimately sued CNN and they settled out of court as an investigative team revealed the students had not been involved in starting a confrontation with Native Americans.

The Most Recent Evidence of Mainstream Media Lies

As The United States has been torn between political lines, the country now focuses on false claims of armed insurrection. January 6, 2022, marks the day that rioters overtook the Capital, and many people were injured as well as some deaths, according to mainstream media that is. An insurrection is defined as “an organized attempt by a group of people to defeat their government or ruler and take control of the country, usually by violence” (“Insurrection” Cambridge English Dictionary, n.d.).

When the footage from the capital was released, it was shown that none of the protestors had weapons. The only people with weapons were the capital police. Therefore, the only shooting death was an unarmed, military veteran named Ashli Babbitt. As CBS reported multiple police deaths during the January 6th events, none of it was true (Greenwald, 2021). Mainstream social media posts claim that Trump supporters planned to “capture and assassinate elected officials,” however, The United States Department of Justice was quoted as saying “[authorities have] no direct evidence at this point of kill, capture teams” (Greenwald, 2021, pp.10-11).

As MSNBC, The Washington Post, The New York Times, and CNN reported, capital police officer Brian Sicknick died from a Trump rioter. They claimed the rioter beat the officer with a fire extinguisher. Since the coroner ruled Sicknick died well after the event of January 6th, from a stroke not caused by blunt force trauma, the mainstream media fabricated the story as

well as several Democratic congressional members. Hours after the “insurrection,” the video footage shows Sicknick walking down the halls of the capital completely unharmed. Cabrera, Cooper, Melvin, and Wallace spread this lie causing the country to believe that Republicans and Trump supporters were violent and murderous. Often accused of making fake videos, ABC even admitted,

Analysis of court records, military records, interviews, and available news reports found that at least nineteen of those arrested have associations or possible ties to extremist groups, including the Proud Boys, Oath Keepers, and Three Percenters. Numerous individuals associated with those groups have since been charged with conspiracy (Mallin et al., 2021, para. 18).

These extremist groups do not believe in government. They do not want a president or other governing authority over them. Trump supporters are still being targeted as insurrectionists, even after ABC released this story. The power the mainstream media and social media reporters have is dangerous and spreading untruths, half-truths, and outright fabricated events, incites fear, anger, violence, and a lack of trust in people and authorities.

Theoretical Foundation: Cultivation Theory

In 1969, George Gebner argued that when an individual consumes an extended amount of media exposure, their attitudes towards, and perceptions of the world, and reality align with the media portrayal (Gauthier et al., 2018). This theory was ultimately established as a cultivation theory. In 1976, Gebner et al. published their research on cultivation theory, which focused on television and violence in dramatic programs and news reports and the influence of participants' views of the world. Gebner et al. (1976) conclude:

Fear is a universal emotion and easy to exploit. Symbolic violence may be the cheapest way to cultivate it effectively. Raw violence is, in comparison, risky and costly, resorted to when symbolic means fail. Ritualized displays of any violence (such as in crime and disaster news, as well as in mass-produced drama) may cultivate exaggerated assumptions about the extent of threat and danger in the world and lead to demands for protection (pp.193-194).

When people watch manufactured violence through dramatic shows or social media videos or watch violent-dominated news reports, their perception of the world is impacted by the amount of exposure.

Shrum (2017) evaluated cultivation theory and found the previous research findings to be generalized throughout the years. Shrum separates the sociocultural theory of cultivation into three components. First, media institutions refer to television shows and mainstream media news, social media platforms like Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, WhatsApp, TikTok, and Snapchat. The second component, message production, refers to the content that the media institution chooses to pass along to its viewers. Finally, the cultivation effect is the amount of consumption of the media institution's messages and the belief system each viewer has regarding the world around them. Shrum (2017) postulates that the more consumption of a media institution's message, the greater the influence on the viewers' perception of the world.

Police Outcomes

Gauthier et al. (2018) researched the relationship between exposure to news media reports and perceptions of police outcomes. Their results support previous research by Miller et al. (2008) that concludes negative perceptions of police, their actions, and trust are significantly impacted by media coverage reporting negative police news. The participants also revealed that

when internet news reports negative stories about police, the viewer's perception of police is negative. The authors note that there is only an impact if the viewer feels the internet news source is a trustworthy medium. These results prompted researchers to evaluate if the consumption of negative news about law enforcement impacts the number of people that choose law enforcement as a career.

Graziano et al. (2018) researched the influence of media on police legitimacy. The researchers found a significant increase in participant perception of police legitimacy when the participants consumed local news stories. However, when participants watched national negative news reports about law enforcement, their perception of police legitimacy decreased. The results, again, offer support for cultivation theory but also find news medium (local or national) is another variable that impacts the perception of police legitimacy. Evaluating the recent news broadcasts and reporting, a negative portrayal of law enforcement is disproportionate when compared to positive reports.

Pollock et al. (2022) looked for a correlation between the consumption of television programs and the desire to become law enforcement officers. Their results revealed a significant positive correlation between television drama consumption and the desire to become a police officer. The results revealed that of the dramas portrayed on the major networks, over half of them were about law enforcement and depicted police as heroes. Another significant finding was that more minority participants wanted to go into law enforcement than white participants. These results followed the consumption of fictional dramas; however, the research suggests that the impact of mainstream and social media would also influence law enforcement career choice.

Racism

Adesanya (2017) researched the influence of the news media on minority (black and brown) communities' views of the world and law enforcement. The results revealed a significant negative correlation between news media consumption and trust in police officers. There was also a significant negative correlation between news media consumption and the black community's perspective on the world being a mean place. The results did not reveal a lack of trust in the news media with increased news consumption.

Pollock et al. (2022) found that cultivation theory explains how the increase in television drama consumption impacts the perspective of law enforcement and the desire to choose that vocation. News reports that focus on the racial disparity between law enforcement and people of color also report negative views of other minority groups.

Melhelm et al. (2019) researched the impact of media consumption on college students' views of Arabs. The results revealed a significant correlation between media consumption and negative opinions of Arabs, as Arabs have been portrayed in the media as violent. The results further the theory of cultivation and highlight the etiology of negative stereotypes toward others. The researchers conclude that the etiology behind what people dislike, like, and believe about others is based on the media.

Career Profiling

In 2021, 62 law enforcement officers were killed by gunfire. Of those 62 fatalities, 19 were shot and killed as part of an ambush attack. Sergeant Joshua Caudell, a white correctional officer from Arkansas was shot and killed by Demark Jordan, a black male that was hiding under a trailer (The Officer Down Memorial Page, 2022). Officer Keona Holley, a black law enforcement officer, was fatally shot while sitting in her patrol car by Elliot Knox, 31, and

Travon Shaw, 32, both black males. In 2022, two Chicago police officers were shot as they stood in line to purchase food (Associated Press, 2022). The report indicates that the officers were ambushed by the gunman. The news media does not call these shootings racial profiling because these murders occur regardless of race, instead, this is career profiling. Targeting individuals that are law enforcement or public safety officers and assaulting or murdering them has increased since 2001 according to the Federal Bureau of Investigation Uniform Crime Reporting (2018).

Media Techniques: Cashing in on Cultivation Theory

Framing of Events

Fridkin et. al. (2017) hypothesized that if police use of force events is framed by the media with stories of police brutality, then the results will be negative attitudes towards the police and a belief in police violence towards blacks. Fridkin et. al. (2017) chose to utilize a story that happened against a college professor in 2014. Ersula Ore an African American professor of African American studies was arrested after walking in the middle of the street. The police officer ultimately took the professor to the ground and handcuffed her. The newspapers were inundated with stories of police brutality towards black people following this incident. However, after the dashcam footage was released, a different story unfolded. This footage revealed an African American professor refusing to show her identification, refusing to listen to law enforcement, refusing to stop walking down the middle of a dangerous thoroughway, resisting arrest, assaulting an officer, and damaging a police vehicle (Fridkin et. al., 2017). The researchers randomly selected 223 participants. Each participant was asked to read a short news clip before watching the dashcam video of Ore. There were three articles all framing different sentiments, one article was framed around police brutality (59 participants), one article was framed around race (53 participants), another article was framed around law and order (57

participants), and finally, the control group (54 participants) were only asked to watch the dashcam video without any framing news articles.

The results were statistically significant. When the video was framed with a police brutality news article, support for the professor was significantly higher than support for law enforcement. When the video was framed with a news article about law and order the participants supported the officer. When the video was framed with a racial disparity article, support for the professor was significant. When there was no framing video presented, participants supported the law enforcement officer over the professor. Fridkin et. al. (2017) concludes that when issues of law and order, including resisting arrest, walking down the middle of a dangerous street, and refusing to comply with a request for identification are presented, participants didn't focus on issues of race.

Evidence of Mainstream and Social Media Framing

The Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS) (2021) revealed its top stories during 2020. 39% of the news stories were about the Covid-19 Pandemic, and 21% of news stories were about Black Lives Matter, George Floyd, and racial disparity among law enforcement. Another 21% of news stories were about President Donald Trump, including impeachment and election fraud. The remaining stories focused primarily on hurricanes, celebrity news, and world events. The New York Times reported the most-read news stories were the election, the Covid-19 pandemic, and Black Lives Matter, respectively. According to Twitter one of the most retweeted and discussed tweets in 2020 was regarding a CNN headline that read "*Two Deadly Viruses are Killing Americans: 'COVID-19 and Racism'*" (Lemon, 2020). Harold (2020) reported social awareness as one of the top social media stories and posts in 2020.

After the killing of George Floyd on May 25, countless Black Lives Matter protests began popping up around the country and social media quickly became a key tool for organizers. According to Forbes, on June 7 after the location of a planned protest in New York City was barricaded by police, attendees were quick to take to Instagram Stories to determine where the new location would be (Harold, 2020, sect.6).

The mainstream and social media platforms began framing these news stories according to agendas and not according to facts.

In August 2020, a Cable News Network (CNN) reporter described protests as “fiery but mostly peaceful” (Jimenez, 2020, CNN). While he continued his report, the background shows a building burning to the ground, vehicles burned to their frame, and smoke everywhere. And on the top of the reporter’s head were goggles, around his neck was a respirator. The framing of the story was evident as the Headline reporting peaceful protests read at the bottom of the screen and fire burned in the background. MSNBC reporter Ali Velshi, while standing in front of a burning building and other structures set fire by protestors said, “I want to be clear on how I characterize this. This is mostly a protest. It is not generally speaking, unruly” (Velshi, 2020, MSNBC).

Framing stories can have a dangerous influence on public opinion. Thompson et al. (2019) evaluated the impact of the 24-hour news cycle, portraying violent events like the riots and protests following the murder of George Floyd. The researchers ran a longitudinal study, measuring Post Traumatic Stress Symptoms (PTS) following the viewing of a bombing and viewing the Pulse Nightclub shooting. The results revealed a significant increase in PTS from six months up to three years. However, when a news story is framed with the headline “fiery but mostly peaceful,” while showing a devastating fire set by rioters, then another phenomenon can emerge. Desensitization to violence can occur when an individual views or experiences violent

situations either through news media, social media, or even in their personal life. These people begin to have a decrease in activity in the areas of the brain responsible for reaction (Scharrer, 2008).

Myhand (2019) explores the media framing of police and protestors and found a significant influence on public opinion of social issues and law and order. The kneeling during the National Anthem was evaluated as well and the results indicate that when the media frames kneeling as unpatriotic, disrespectful to the military, and a mockery of the country, the opinions were negative regarding kneeling during the anthem. When the media framed the story as a civil protest and a lifelong fight for equality, public opinion supported kneeling during the National Anthem.

Opening the Door

During a court proceeding, in front of a jury, lawyers are faced with presenting admissible evidence for their case. However, there is a tactic lawyers will use to “open the door” to inadmissible evidence (Unified Court System, 2022). If a lawyer presents information about the trial that would not be normally admissible, such as previous assault or domestic violence charges, they open the door to evidence being admissible. Lawyers do this in front of juries, so they hear the information, even if it’s stricken from the record. The news media utilizes this technique as well. Even if a news media story is false, once people hear the story it will be hard to change their mind.

Creating a Racist News Cycle

The Global Strategic Group and Equal Justice Initiative (2021) released a report identifying racial disparity reported in the news. The statistics, while they support cultivation theory, were distressing. Researchers evaluated 10 news stories, 5 crimes involving white

defendants, and 5 involving black defendants. When reporting crimes involving black defendants, 45% of the cases displayed a mugshot, while only 8% of cases displayed a white defendant. When viewing the reports, 8% of the cases displayed a black defendant in a jumpsuit, while 0 white defendants were in a jumpsuit. When reporting court hearings, 13% of white defendants wore a suit, while only 6% of black defendants wore a suit. White defendants were two times more likely to have family and friends quoted during the report than that black defendants. Finally, the report reveals specific buzzwords are used when describing black defendants that are not used or less frequently used describing white defendants. These words include aggressive, accused, laughing, killing, murder, and arrested to name a few.

Law enforcement officers, like every other citizen, watch news reports and social media to keep current with events. Previous research has found significant support to suggest that mainstream and social media influence the perceptions of the world. If law enforcement officers are watching racially disparate news reports, their perception of the world and people will be influenced. Being presented with news showing a disproportionate number of black defendants, in jumpsuits, with the headline of violent, aggressive, murder, and killing, the result according to cultivation theory, would be fear of black people. The officers guilty of racism could be the result of cultivation theory.

The” Woke” Media and the Birth of “Karen”

The current vocabulary in The United States now includes two frequently used words, “woke” and “Karen”. According to Merriam-Webster Dictionary (n.d.), being woke is a United States slang word that means being “aware of and actively attentive to important facts and issues (especially issues of racial and social justice” (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). The name Karen used to be associated with very talented women, Karen Carpenter (Singer), Karen Bass (Politician), and

Karen Sheard (Singer) to name a few. Today, if someone calls you Karen, they are calling you “an obnoxious, angry, entitled, and often a racist middle-aged white woman who uses her privilege to get her way or police other people’s behaviors” (Kelly, 2021, def.1). A quick Google or Facebook search will produce uncountable evidence of people being called “Karen”. Many of these remarks are towards any woman that disagrees with any issue regarding race, religion, politics or even just standing up for themselves. Facebook is inundated with comments from people calling others “Karen” and these Facebook articles greatly impact society's perceptions.

Dixon et al. (2020) researched the impact of race and gender on feelings toward Black Lives Matter Protests and policing. The authors ran a two-part mixed model study to see if there is a correlation between Facebook comments and views of BLM and policing. The results indicate a significant influence of social media on the opinions of law enforcement and Black Lives Matter in participants that understand racism based on social media.

Klein et al. (2020) researched social media's influence on government trust. The results suggest that when social media use increases, trust in the user’s political party and platform increases. This often causes a great partisan divide. Social media is geared towards news stories and information that the user already supports. This increase in exposure increases the likelihood that the user will remain set in their political preferences.

Divergently, Newton (2018) postulated that there was no media influence on an individual’s opinions on politics, voting, and other agendas. The author utilized archival research in experimental psychology and political science. However, their research has been refuted by researchers such as Della Vigna et al. (2007), who found in areas that broadcast Fox News, a Republican-leaning news source, republican voters participated in voting more, and more Republican registrations were filed.

Pinker (2018) evaluated the negative news that is inundating televisions, computers, and phones in The United States, and found that mainstream and social media sources repeat articles focused on police brutality, racism, inequality, and crime to capitalize on the psychological phenomenon known as the availability heuristic. This phenomenon states that people will assume that issues like police brutality occur more frequently because they can recall stories quickly. If the news continues coverage, like that of George Floyd, then the average person will think this occurs much more frequently or will occur more frequently in the future.

Strothers (2017) explored how the media covers Supreme Court cases and found that when the political and legal impact supports conservative, republican, and right-wing politics, there is little coverage. However, when a liberal agenda will be bolstered, the media coverage is expansive. The Liberal or democratic party is known for pushing anti-police, pro-choice, increased spending, weak borders, and exploiting immigration. When stories feature only partisan agendas, the public can be influenced without knowing the entirety of the issue.

Fine (2020) explores the racial disparity in America, highlighting the healthcare field. The author used buzzwords like “police violence epidemic” and “criminalization of Black Lives Matter”. Published articles such as these, push the media agenda that police use of force against minorities is an epidemic and takes attention away from topics that need discussion, research, and change, like increased acts of domestic violence and victim-blaming.

Victim-Blaming by Law Enforcement

Law enforcement officers are not exempt from media techniques. Long (2018) researched complaints by victim advocates and found a major problem with victim blaming by law enforcement officers. Comments were made about the victim’s appearance, clothing style, makeup, and hair by law enforcement, insinuating that had the victim not appeared the way she

did she would not have been raped. Advocates report law enforcement officers telling victims that being in a specific location, they were asking to be raped. The advocates report this is when officers demonstrate disbelief in victims.

Raquel et al. (2020) delineate healthcare workers' and criminal justice professionals' views of domestic violence victims. The authors focused their discussion on the interdisciplinary approach to domestic violence against women. Criminal justice and healthcare workers were interviewed to look for common themes and correlations between professionals' social norms, rules, and regulations and their attitudes toward female domestic violence victims. Their results reveal a significant influence of social norms and personal characteristics on victim support and victim blaming. Social norms come from the environment, family, friends, social and mainstream media. The verbiage and visual material used in news reports influence the amount of victim-blaming.

Schwark et al. (2019) argue that the news media directly influences the incidence of victim blaming. The researchers added the variable of photographs and researched how much influence news media had on victim blaming. When participants viewed victims as either victims or survivors.

Religion

The latest target of liberal media is religion. The following topics have brought about controversy and division in The United States. The topics include abortion, LGBTQ+ rights, eliminating the rights of the religious, public schools forcing Christmas out of the school year, teachers forcing to call children names that change daily, and hypocrisy in politics. The news media had numerous reports regarding negative reactions to biological men and women using the restroom of the opposite sex, including in public schools (Columbia Broadcasting System, Inc.,

2022; Grinberg et al., 2017; Li, 2022). There were no media stories highlighting the success of all-inclusive restrooms in several Universities.

The media has reported multiple stories of business owners refusing to serve the LGBTQ+ community. Puritanical Christians are staunchly against the LGBTQ+ lifestyles as they are considered a sin in the Holy Bible. When a local baker refused to bake a cake for a gay couple, the story was reported on every news cycle for weeks (*Masterpiece Cakeshop v. Colorado Civil Rights Commission*, 2018). Since this news story, other events have been broadcast on the news, vilifying Christians, and victimizing those that have lifestyles different than Christians. There are few, if any news stories highlighting the vast number of Christians that love everyone regardless of race, gender, sexual orientation, and religion.

Every year students look forward to their Christmas program. However, public schools have now been pressured to call these programs or concerts, Winter Programs. The concept of Santa Claus is still used in songs and plays put on by schools, however, the mention of Christ or Christmas is void. The very reason for the Christmas holiday has been replaced with Santa, elves, reindeer, and winter festivities. This is another example of how the media helps push the removal of the rights of Christians to live their lives according to their beliefs, yet Christians must accept and promote the lifestyles and beliefs of others.

Establishment Clause

A major argument in support of the attack on Christianity is built around the Establishment Clause.

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof, or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of

the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances. (U.S. Const., Amend. I)

The concept behind the Establishment Clause is to provide a separation of church and state. However, following the attack on The United States on September 11, 2001, former President George W. Bush said,

Tonight, I ask for your prayers for all those who grieve, for the children whose worlds have been shattered, and for all whose sense of safety and security has been threatened. And I pray they will be comforted by a power greater than any of us spoken through the ages in Psalm 23: “Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for You are with me (President George W. Bush, 2001, as cited in National Archives, 2008, p. 57).

The news media, politicians, and other civil rights advocates discuss the importance of the separation of church and state, yet the very second something serious or life-threatening happens, they request prayer. Wagoner (2021) researched the impact Christian views had on the separation of church and state. Their results reveal that the fundamentalist Christians were against the separation of church and state, however, other Christian participants were positive about a more integrative relationship. Either result still highlights the hypocritical stance that the liberal media and politicians have towards Christianity. In a country that identifies as 70% Christian (PPRI, 2022), it appears that the mainstream and social media platforms, along with the liberal politicians, are the majority pushing for the separation of church and state.

Stand, Sit, Kneel, Fight

Another story that has been frequently aired is that of professional and amateur athletes kneeling during the National Anthem, refusing to come out of the locker room till the anthem is

done playing, and turning their back on the National anthem during the Olympics, all to bring awareness to social injustices. The controversy has been at the heart of many mainstream and social media stories and has brought great division in The United States. On one side, athletes say this is the only way to bring awareness to racial injustice and the other side claims this is disrespectful to the country and to the military that risks their lives so these athletes can play sports. Mueller (2021) researched the support of Americans towards athletes that kneel during the National Anthem and for the flag. The researcher evaluated the participants for evidence of support for kneeling and found a significant number of participants did not agree with kneeling for the anthem or the flag. While the news media reported multiple sports games where players kneeled, there has been an overall lack of support for this demonstration among most Americans.

Mainstream and Social Media: Purpose Behind Their Actions

Research conducted by Stromback et al. (2020) found that the purpose of the news media was to inform, entertain, and provide companionship and social identity to the public. The researchers also found that for the news media to fulfill their purpose, the public must trust them. Currently, trust in news media and social media varies from person to person, and while Democrats trust the media significantly more than Republicans, bi-partisan trust in the media has been decreasing (Brenan, 2021). Mainstream and social media have been the target of “fake news” claims by politicians and gained even more attention during the Trump administration. There are several reasons for the mainstream and social media to broadcast fake narratives including money, power, and division.

Money

According to Hallinan (2021), “There were 100 corporations controlling media outlets in the U.S. As of September 2020, six corporations control 90 percent of media outlets in the U.S.:

AT&T, CBS, Comcast, Disney, News Corp, and Viacom” (Hallinan, 2021, as cited in Ismi, 2021, para.2). The goal of these corporations is to make money. By controlling the news media, these corporations control the country, and the result is more money in the bank.

People read what those [six] corporations want them to read, and corporations like lower taxes, fewer financial and environmental regulations, in short, whatever makes them the most money. Since profits are the bottom line, staff are cut back, papers are merged, and stories are dumbed down to not upset anyone. So fewer papers, fewer reporters, tighter budgets (which means no investigative reporting), and a less informed population.

Because democracy only works when people are informed enough to make choices, democracy is diminished (Hallinan, 2021, as cited in Ismi, 2021, para.3).

Corporations have hidden their support for pro-gun, anti-abortion, and have been using the news media to throw their “visible” support for Black Lives Matter, while secretly giving money to politicians that are anti-BLM, anti-abortion, and anti-LGBTQ+. Whatever agenda these controlling corporations have, they can utilize the media to obtain it. Some of the press have a deep relationship with politicians and lobbyists. When the politicians get what they want, so do the press.

Power

As early as first grade, students are taught that The United States is known for being a democracy, which is governed by the people. However, when six main corporations control the news media, they control what people hear, think, and do. That is no longer a democracy and now has become an Oligarchy. These corporations have a deep ally in becoming an oligarchy and that is politicians. The news media thrives on drama, controversy, and control. Politicians

thrive on drama, controversy, and control. The media and politicians work hand in hand to promote their platform. Hidgon (2019) argued,

[The news media] reduce everything to a narrow frame of Republicans versus Democrats. The audience tunes into MSNBC or CNN or reads *The Washington Post* or *The New York Times* to boo Republicans and cheer Democrats. And users of Fox News Channel, *Forbes*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and Breitbart do the same to cheer Republicans and boo Democrats....The emphasis on what divides us distracts from the neoliberal ideology of empire that binds parties and the elite class that fund, support, and run them (Hidgon, 2019, as cited in Ismi, 2021, para .6).

The oligarchy and the politicians use the news media as an outlet to promote skewed reports, fake news, and division among the citizens. They utilize the news media because of the power it has over what people think.

Division vs. Unity

The news and social media present news stories that appear to be Republican versus Democrat, white versus black, women versus men, straight versus gay, Christians versus LGBTQ+, rich versus poor, black versus black, and law enforcement versus people of color. This division distracts citizens from true news that is affecting them. The news media pushes a partisan government by distracting voters with fake news stories. For issues like racism and other social injustice, while there has always been evidence of these types of discriminations, the press thrives on reminding people of color that they are different, less than others, and not worthy of appearing on news stories in suits and ties. They remind young children that their lineage is different from whites and that their education and opportunity are less than whites. The media tells people of color that they are always in trouble, always in jail, always the target of law

enforcement, always given fewer opportunities, always different, and always slighted in society. The news media does not report about people, they report about skin color, gender, and sexuality. There is very little coverage of intelligence, accomplishments, heroic acts, hard work, and success stories of people of color. There is very little coverage of law enforcement and people of color working together for the good of the community. Instead, story after story reminds people of color about the horrific past. The focus of the news media should be to report unification stories. The news media would rather focus on stories that cause division and anger. This makes ratings go up and fills their pockets. The reporting of racist events is not new to mainstream media.

Hoecker (2021) researched the recent apologies given by news sources for their racist reporting in the past and found:

The racism at news organizations represents a violation of these ethical principles on a number of levels. By under- and misrepresenting African Americans in coverage, journalists fail to accurately report on the communities that they cover. By perpetuating stereotypes, this kind of news coverage inflicts harm on already marginalized communities (Hoecker, 2021, p. 92).

Breazu et al. (2021) evaluated the Romanian news media, and as in The United States, the media used continued representations of minorities that resulted in them appearing in a negative light. The dangerous factor is that these reports are done in such a discrete manner that people are often unaware of the racist undertones of a news story.

The news media wants to keep people in the situation they are in because it always promises the next news cycle.

In terms of social media, what some people are finding out, social media platforms that allow for expressions of racism, sexism, genderism, and ageism, are costing them their jobs. Robards et al. (2022) researched the effect Facebook has on individuals' jobs. They found a significant number of people have lost their jobs due to racist comments or news stories. As an example of a step in the right direction, business owners and human resource offices are looking to Facebook updates before hiring and often continue to monitor these platforms for evidence of racism. As people continue to lose jobs over disparate remarks, the more the social media network will stop contributing to this very serious problem.

Heroes to Zeros: Victims to Villains

Harrell et al. (2020) surveyed 65.5 million Americans that had contact with law enforcement. Only two percent reported the threat or use of force. However, in mainstream and social media, reports of police brutality against minorities are one of the top stories, top tweets, and top newspaper articles.

O'Rourke et al. (2021) delineate the concept of defunding the police. The author postulates that defunding the police is saying much more than people realize. Defunding the police suggests that racial disparity and use of force against minorities is a requirement and part of the training, instead of blaming the bad person. Defunding the police says all police are racist. This does not accurately reflect most law enforcement officers and ignores the real problem which is a bad cop problem. The press focuses primarily on police brutality an epidemic. The press takes heroes (law enforcement officers) and turns them into villains.

The press also pushes an agenda that influences children so that when they are of voting age, they will vote for liberal leaders. Torres et al. (2017) asked third to fifth-graders to create a world of heroes and villains. The influence of media on children was viewed through the

portrayal of Donald Trump as a villain. The children had followed media rhetoric to determine that Trump was a villain that hates Mexicans and is racist and homophobic. The media has taken the office of The President of The United States from a position of respect and power to a position of villainous acts and disrespect of the position. The president used to be considered the most powerful position in The United States. The press has worked hard to strip the position of president to a disrespected, underappreciated job. Once the heroes were villainized, the media set its sights on citizens.

Halstead (2020) explored the Covid-19 pandemic and mask mandates and closings of funeral homes. While people were dying every day from Covid-19 and other causes, families had to say goodbye to loved ones without ever seeing them in the hospital or at a funeral. Bodies were taken from hospital beds to the casket, and many people were not embalmed. The depression and stress from not being able to be with their loved ones have impacted the mental health of many Americans. Dawood et al. (2022) evaluated the impact of Covid-19 on the mental health of individuals. Their results show that when participants were not able to perform their funeral rituals, physiological symptoms of stress, anxiety, and increased grief were often the result. During this same time, the news media reported continual coverage of George Floyd who was given three funerals, attended by Hollywood stars, congressmen and women, ministers, family, and friends, and the mainstream media. Floyd's funeral resembled that of a hero and a positive, productive member of society. There were no restrictions on funerals like there were for every other death that occurred at this time. Instead, a man that had a gun pressed against a pregnant victim's belly was a repeat drug user and a thief was given three funerals and news coverage of a hero, while everyone else couldn't even be with their loved ones as they died.

Daunte Wright's funeral labeled him the "Prince of Brooklyn Center." The victims of Wright were robbed, assaulted, shot in the head, shot in the leg, and choked.

The current research focuses on discovering the etiology of anti-police, anti-Christian, and victim-blaming. Variables of age, race/ethnicity, and gender are included to account for those factors. Previous research suggests that Black/African American participants have heightened fear and feelings of fight or flight when encountering a white officer (Lloyd et al., 2022). Foster et al. (2022) evaluated juveniles' attitudes toward police. When having an interaction with police, juveniles demonstrated significant disrespect for law enforcement. Finally, gender, an under-evaluated variable, has previously shown female participants to be more positive in their attitudes regarding law enforcement (Taylor et al., 2001).

The news media pushed a continued ideology that says law enforcement officers hate people of color and those individuals that are injured or murdered are automatically heroes that fell prey to the racist cop. The news media pushes an agenda that blames the victim of rape, bullying, and domestic violence. Law enforcement officers and other first responders are often influenced by the rape myth perpetuated in the media. Most mainstream and social media continually report stories of police brutality, social injustice, anti-Christianity, anti-police rhetoric, victim-blaming, and division to control the laws, politicians, citizens, and ultimately wealth, and freedom. Through the framing of events, reporting fragmented data, pushing racism, victim-blaming, opening the door, and cultivation theory, the media in The United States has birthed an era where villains are victims and heroes are zeroes.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

The purpose of this study was to decrease the burden on the criminal justice system by identifying whether the recent increase in anti-police rhetoric, racism, victim-blaming, disobedience to authority, canonizing criminals, and villainizing victims is a result of the malignant actions of the mainstream and social media.

Design

A correlational research design was used to look for a relationship between variables. If a relationship is found, the researcher can predict values from one or more of the variables and predict the value of the other variable (McBride, 2020). This variable is called the predictor variable. Developed from the work of Sir Francis Galton and Karl Pearson, correlational studies measure the linear strength of association between variables (Jarse et al., 2021). An ANOVA was also used because the research has multiple sample means. When associating two or more variables factorial designs are recommended (Jarse et al., 2021).

Research Questions

Main Question: How does the specific platform used to gain knowledge of current events impact attitudes towards law enforcement, victims, perpetrators, and Christians?

Sub-Question 1: How does the amount of time spent on mainstream, and social media impact attitudes towards law enforcement, victims, and Christians?

Sub-Question 2: To what extent do age, race/ethnicity, and gender influence attitudes toward law enforcement, victims, and Christians?

Hypothesis(es)

RQ1: *How does the specific platform used to gain knowledge of current events*

impact attitudes towards law enforcement, victims, perpetrators, and Christians?

- H₀1: There is no statistically significant difference in the platform a person uses for current events and the attitudes towards law enforcement, victims, perpetrators, and Christians.
- H_a1: There is a statistically significant difference in the platform a person uses for current events and the attitudes towards law enforcement, victims, perpetrators, and Christians?

RQ2: *How does the amount of time spent on mainstream, and social media*

impact attitudes towards law enforcement, victims, and Christians?

- H₀2: There is no significant impact on attitudes towards law enforcement, victims, and Christians and time spent on mainstream and social media.
- H_a2: There is a significant impact on attitudes towards law enforcement, victims, and Christians and time spent on mainstream and social media.

RQ3: *To what extent do age, race/ethnicity, and gender influence attitudes*

towards law enforcement, victims, and Christians?

- H₀2: There is no statistically significant difference between age, race/ethnicity, and gender on attitudes towards law enforcement, victims, and Christians.
- H_a2: There are statistically significant differences between age, race/ethnicity, and gender on attitudes towards law enforcement, victims, and Christians.

Participants and Setting

The setting of this research, a small midwestern community college, was chosen because of the proximity to the researcher, the access to multiple students across several disciplines, and the multiple demographics of this location. Additionally, the location of this college is in an area of great division over sensitive topics like race, law enforcement, victim-blaming, and obedience to authority.

This community college has slightly over 10,000 students from several diverse backgrounds and ages. In 2016, 72% were part-time students, and 28% were full-time students. Of those students, 73% were white, 11% were Hispanic, 9% were black, 1% were Asian and 4% were mixed races.

For this study, the number of participants sampled was 108 which according to Brysbeart (2019), exceeds the 100 participants needed for $p < .05$ and a $d = .4$ effect size. The sample came from students from various disciplines within the community college. The participant demographics include (see Table 1 Descriptive Statistics), 41 males, 62 females, 3 transgender, and 2 nonbinaries. There were 3 Asian-Pacific Islanders, 4 Black or African American, 7 Hispanic or Latino, 4 Native American or Alaskan Native, 72 White or Caucasian, and 18 Multi or Biracial participants. The ages of participants ranged from 18 – 42. Forty students were age 18, 22 were age 19, 12 were age 20, and there were 7 each of age 21 and 22. There were 3 participants ages 23, 26, and 36, and there were 2 participants ages 25 and 34. The remainder of the participants were ages, 28, 32, and 52.

Instrumentation

For data collection, three different scales were used to measure attitudes toward law enforcement, victims, and Christians. *The Attitudes Towards Police Legitimacy Scale (ATPLS)* developed by Reynolds et al. (2018), measures the amount of trust the participants have in law enforcement and the amount of confidence the participant has in the actions of law enforcement. This instrument was used in multiple studies (Taylor et al., 2020; Vermeer et al., 2020). The instrument contained 32 questions and used a 6-point Likert scale that had ranges of Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree. Responses were as follows: “Strongly Agree = 6, Agree = 5, Somewhat Agree = 4, Somewhat Disagree = 3, Disagree = 2, and Strongly Disagree = 1.” The

combined total score for the ATPLS is from 32-192. A score of 32 is the lowest score possible and indicates a high level of distrust and lack of legitimacy toward law enforcement. A score of 192 is the highest score and indicates the highest level of trust and feelings of legitimacy towards law enforcement. A total score of 113 -192 indicates participants view law enforcement as legitimate, while a mean score of 32-112 indicates participants view law enforcement as illegitimate. The ATPLS yielded very high reliability for the 34 questions, with a Cronbach's alpha of .985. Permission was granted to use the ATPLS (see Appendix A 1).

The Rape Vignette Survey (RVS) developed by Sjoberg et al. (2022) adapted from Stromwall et al. (2014), to measure victim blaming. Previous research has included this scale multiple times (Coble, 2022; Perenc et al., 2022). The instrument had 10 questions and used a scale of 0-100% to indicate whether the victim or the perpetrator was at fault. A score closest to 0% indicates that the victim is not at fault, and scores closer to 100% indicate the victim is at fault. Four questions indicated victim blame and four questions indicated perpetrator blame. A final question asked participants whether the vignette should be considered rape. The RVS had a high reliability for the victim blame questions with (Cronbach's $\alpha = .80$) and a high reliability for the perpetrator blame questions with (Cronbach's $\alpha = .76$). Permission was granted to use the RVS (see Appendix 2 12



Sjöberg, Mattias (Postgraduate Researcher)

July 27, 2022 at 6:27 AM

RE: [External] Permission to use the rape vignetter.

To: Harmon, Traci Jo

Hi Traci,

Thanks very much for your email and sorry for my slow reply. That sounds like an interesting study.

I have attached the vignettes as well as the victim and perpetrator items which were used in the research. Since we borrowed the rape blame items from Strömwall et al. (2014), and large parts of the vignette, it would be necessary to site that paper as well. I have provided a reference to it below.

They are currently in Swedish (as we carried out the research in Sweden), but let me know if you would like me to translate them into English for you.

Best
Matt

Strömwall, L. A., Landström, S., Alfredsson, H. (2014). Perpetrator characteristics and blame attributions in a stranger rape situation. *The European Journal of Psychology Applied to Legal Context*, 6, 63-67. doi:[10.1016/j.ejpal.2014.06.002](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ejpal.2014.06.002)

From: Harmon, Traci Jo <tharmon27@liberty.edu>

Sent: 22 July 2022 16:18

To: Sjöberg, Mattias (Postgraduate Researcher) <m.sjoberg@lancaster.ac.uk>

Subject: [External] Permission to use the rape vignetter.

This email originated outside the University. Check before clicking links or attachments.

Hello,

My name is Traci Harmon, and I am a graduate student at Liberty University. I am writing to ask permission to use your vignette from your research "Two Sides of the Same Coin: The Relationship Between Modern Racism and Rape Blaming Attitudes among Swedish Students and Community Members. I am conducting my research on the mainstream and social media influence on anti-police rhetoric, victim blaming and racism. I felt your vignette would fit

).

The Attitudes Towards Christian Survey (ATCS), like the *Attitude Towards Religion Survey (ATRS)* used by Wang et al. (2018) measures the two components of attitude; position, and interest to look for attitudes towards Christians. The instrument included ten questions and used a 6-point Likert scale that had ranges of Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree. Responses were as follows: "Strongly Agree = 6, Agree = 5, Somewhat Agree= 4, Somewhat Disagree= 3,

Disagree = 2, and Strongly Disagree = 1.” The combined total score for the ATPLS is from 10-60. Questions 1,3,4,9 and 10 measure the position a participant position toward religion, and questions 2, 5, 6, 7, and 8 measure the interest a participant has in Christianity. For both measures, a score between 10 and 29 indicates a lack of interest and a negative position toward Christianity. A score between 30 and 60 indicates interest in Christianity and a positive position toward Christianity. This scale has been used in previous research (Leiner, 2020; McPhail, 2022; Zhao, 2021). According to Wang et al. (2018),

The internal consistency reliability for the ATRS subscale scores was all adequate. The ATRS-Interest scores had Cronbach alpha of .85 in Sample 1 and .81 in Sample 2. The split-half reliability for ATRS-Interest scores was .81 in Sample 1 and .83 in Sample 2. The ATRS-Position scores had Cronbach alpha of .84 in Sample 1 and .75 in Sample 2. The split-half reliability for ATRS-Position scores was .80 in Sample 1 and .74 in Sample 2 (p. 10).

Permission was granted to use the ATCS (see Appendix A 3

[External] Re: Permission to use scale - Inbox • Liberty University

🗑 Delete
📁 Archive
📁 Move
🚩 Flag
📧 Mark Unread
⋮

[External] Re: Permission to use scale 😊 ↶ ↷

KW

○ Kenneth Wang <ktwang@fuller.edu>

To: Harmon, Traci Jo; **Cc:** Zhong Yao (Nickel) Xie

Thursday, August 11, 2022 at 12:50 PM

ATRS.pdf
83.8 KB

Wang, Xie, Johnson,...
320.1 KB

Download All • Preview All

Hi Traci,

Glad that you are interested in the ATRS. You definitely have my permission to use this measure. Attached are the scale items and the article describing how the ATRS was developed.

Wishing you the best with your study.

Kenneth

On Wed, Aug 10, 2022 at 1:36 PM Harmon, Traci Jo <tharmon27@liberty.edu> wrote:

Hi Dr. Wang,

*I am a criminal justice Doctoral candidate at Liberty University in Virginia. I was seeking permission to use your **Attitudes Towards Religion Scale**. My research is looking at the mainstream and social media as the etiology of anti-Christian, anti-police, and victim*

).

A demographic survey was used to identify age, gender, race, the platform for news and events, and hours spent on each platform (see Appendix A 4

Which of the following be

Race/ Ethnicity:

- Asian or Pacific Island
- Black or African Ameri
- Hispanic or Latino
- Native American or Al
- White or Caucasian
- Multiracial or Biracial
- A race/ethnicity not lis

Gender:

Male

Female

Transgender

Other_____

**How many hours
per day are you
interacting with
social media?**

- 1-4
- 5-8
- 9-12
- 12-15

**How many hours
per day do you
watch
television?**

- 1-4
- 5-8
- 9-12

Age: _____

Procedures

Before beginning the current research, the researcher obtained Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval from the college that would be the site of the research as well as Liberty University (see *Appendix A 5*)

Date: 1-11-2023

IRB #: IRB-FY21-22-1166

Title: The topic is: The Etiology of a New Era: Where Heroes Become Zeros and Victims Become Villains.

Creation Date: 6-2-2022

End Date:

Status: **Approved**

Principal Investigator: Traci Harmon

Review Board: Research Ethics Office

Sponsor:

Study History

Submission Type	Initial	Review Type	Exempt	Decision	Exempt
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Key Study Contacts

Member	Traci Harmon	Role	Principal Investigator	Contact	tharmon27@liberty.edu
Member	Traci Harmon	Role	Primary Contact	Contact	tharmon27@liberty.edu
Member	Carolyn Dennis	Role	Co-Principal Investigator	Contact	cbdennis@liberty.edu

and *Appendix A 6*). Once permissions had been granted, an email was sent to the professors in

the Social Sciences, Criminal Justice, and Biochemistry departments, inviting professors to either have students provide a link to the survey or have the researcher come to the classes and conduct the research in person. All professors willing to allow their students to participate, requested the researcher present in class. Schedules were created and the researcher spent two weeks visiting the classes and conducting the research. Each participant was given an informed consent form (see *Appendix A 8*), and surveys, and was told to return the surveys, when complete, to a folder located at the front of the classroom.

Data Analysis

The first research question is, How does the specific platform used to gain knowledge of current events impact attitudes towards law enforcement, victims, perpetrators, and Christians? The null hypothesis states there is no statistically significant difference in the platform a person uses for current events and the attitudes towards law enforcement, victims, perpetrators, and Christians. A frequency table was created to indicate the chosen platform that each participant learns their current event information from. In criminal justice, a chi-square test is often used to show if there is no relationship between two categorical variables (Maxfield, 02/2017). IBM SPSS Statistics, Version 28 was used to enter the data and a table was created to reveal if the platform of current events correlates with attitudes towards law enforcement and Christians. For the variable of victim blaming, a one-way between-subjects ANOVA was conducted to compare the effect of using different platforms for current events and attitudes toward victims. The instrument used in measuring victim blaming yielded several different percentages, so the researcher chose to use an ANOVA

The second research question states, How does the amount of time spent on mainstream, and social media impact attitudes towards law enforcement, victims, and Christians? The null

hypothesis is, There is no significant impact on attitudes towards law enforcement, victims, and Christians and time spent on mainstream and social media. A frequency table was created to display the number of hours on social media per day and the number of hours on mainstream media per day. An ANOVA was also used because the research has multiple sample means. When associating two or more variables, factorial designs are recommended (Jarse et al., 2021). IBM SPSS Statistics, Version 28 was used to enter the data and a table was created to reveal if the hours spent on mainstream and social media correlates with attitudes towards law enforcement, Christians, and victims. When there was statistical significance, a post hoc test was used to determine which groups were significant. The ANOVA reveals if there is a difference between groups, but that information was limited, and a Tukey's post hoc test was used.

The third research question states, *To what extent do age, race/ethnicity, and gender influence attitudes towards law enforcement, victims, and Christians? The null hypothesis states, There is no statistically significant difference between age, race/ethnicity, and gender on attitudes toward law enforcement, victims, and Christians.* An ANOVA was used to compare the means of each group. A simple linear regression was used to analyze the ANOVA's significant result between age and attitude toward victims. IBM SPSS Statistics, Version 28 was used to enter the data, and a table was created along with figures to show significant results.

To look for significance an Alpha value of .05 was used. When significance was found in the assumption tests, a partial eta squared was used for effect size. The values are $\eta^2 = 0.01$ small effect, $\eta^2 = 0.06$ medium effect, and $\eta^2 = 0.14$ large effect.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

The purpose of this study was to decrease the burden on the criminal justice system by identifying whether the recent increase in anti-police rhetoric, victim-blaming, and anti-Christian rhetoric is a result of the malignant actions of the mainstream and social media.

RQ1: *How does the specific platform used to gain knowledge of current events impact attitudes towards law enforcement, victims, perpetrators, and Christians?*

- H₀1: Participants that use mainstream and social media as their platform for information on current events, will be more likely to have negative attitudes towards law enforcement, Victims, and Christians.
- H_a1: Participants that use mainstream and social media as their platform for information on current events, will be no more likely to have negative attitudes towards law enforcement, Victims, and Christians than newspaper, and friends and family.

RQ2: *How does the amount of time spent on mainstream, and social media impact attitudes towards law enforcement, victims, and Christians?*

- H₀2: There is no significant impact on attitudes towards law enforcement, victims, and Christians and time spent on mainstream and social media.
- H₀2: There is a significant impact on attitudes towards law enforcement, victims, and Christians and time spent on mainstream and social media.

RQ3: *To what extent do age, race/ethnicity, and gender influence attitudes towards law enforcement, victims, and Christians?*

- H₀2: There is no statistically significant difference between age, race/ethnicity, and gender on attitudes towards law enforcement, victims, and Christians.
- H_a2: There are statistically significant differences between age, race/ethnicity, and gender on attitudes towards law enforcement, victims, and Christians.

Descriptive Statistics

The demographics survey included data identifying race/ethnicity, age, gender, and hours spent on mainstream and social media, as well as platforms for current events (see Table 1).

Table 1 Descriptive Statistics

<i>Descriptive Statistics</i>			
	N	M	SD
RACE/ETHNICITY			
White/ Caucasian	72		
Black/African American	4		
Hispanic/Latino	7		
Asian/Pacific Islander	3		
Native American/Alaskan Native	4		
Multi/B-Racial	18	4.78	1.10
GENDER			
Male	41		
Female	62		
Transgender	3		
Nonbinary	2	1.69	.62
AGE RANGE			
18-22	91		
23-28	10		
29-33	1		
34-38	5		
39-43	0		
44-48	0		
49-53	1	21.00	5.00
SOCIAL MEDIA HOURS			
1-4	50		
5-8	44		
9-12	11		
13-16	3	1.70	.77
TV HOURS			
1-4	89		
5-8	17		
9-12	1		
13-16	1	1.2	.49
CURRENT EVENTS PLATFORM			
Mainstream Media	44		
Newspaper	7		
Social Media	97		
Friends/Family	80		

Table 2 includes descriptive data about the platform a participant chooses for their current events information, including mean (M) and standard deviation (SD).

Table 2 Participant Preferred Platform*Participant Preferred Platform*

	Selected	Not Selected	Total
Mainstream Media	44	64	108 (M = .40, SD = .49)
Social Media	95	11	108 (M=.94, SD-.42)
Newspaper	7	101	108 (M=.06, SD-.28)
Friends and/ or Family	80	28	108 (M=.74, SD-.44)

Note. Data indicating which platform (mainstream media, social media, newspaper, friends/and or family) participants receive their current events information.

The previous descriptive statistics show data for the independent variables of age, race/ethnicity, gender, hours spent on mainstream and social media, and platform for current events. Table 3 displays the descriptive data for the dependent variables of ATPLS, ATC, and RV.

Table 3 ATPLS, ATC, RV*ATPLS, ATC, RV*

	Pos. Attitude	Negative Attitude	M	SD
Attitude Towards Law Enforcement (ATPLS)	44	63	3.26	19.21
Attitude Towards Christians (ATC)	32	76	.29	.45
Victim Blaming (RV)	72	36	.33	.46

Results

The first hypothesis states that those participants that use mainstream and social media as their choice for current event information will have a higher negative attitude towards law enforcement, Victims, and Christians, compared to newspapers, and family and friends, (H_01 : There is no statistically significant difference in the platform a person uses for current events and the attitudes towards law enforcement, victims, perpetrators, and Christians).

Platform For Current Events

A chi-square test of independence was performed to examine the relation between the platform for current events and the attitude towards and feelings of legitimacy towards law enforcement. The relation between these variables was not significant, $X^2(3, N = 107) = 1.530, p = .211$.

To look for a relationship between the platform of current events and attitudes towards Christians, A chi-square test was performed and significance was found between participants that used family/friends to learn about current events and attitudes towards Christians, $X^2(1, N = 108) = 6.49, p = .01$ (see Table 4). Reaching statistical significance, the effect size was medium ($\phi_c = .25, p = .01$). There was no significance between mainstream media, social media, and newspapers as a participant's platform and attitudes towards Christians.

Table 4 Chi-Square Platform and ATC

Chi-Square Tests Platform*ATC

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	6.486 ^a	1	.011		
Continuity Correction ^b	5.320	1	.021		
Likelihood Ratio	7.419	1	.006		
Fisher's Exact Test				.015	.008
Linear-by-Linear Association	6.426	1	.011		
N of Valid Cases	108				

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 8.30.

b. Computed only for a 2x2 table

A one-way between-subjects ANOVA was conducted to compare the effect of using different platforms for current events and attitudes toward victims. There was no significant effect on attitudes towards victims from platforms of current events (see Table 5).

Table 5 ANOVA Platform and Victim Blaming

ANOVA Platform *Victim Blaming

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Mainstream Media	Between Groups	.074	1	.074	.302	.584
	Within Groups	26.000	106	.245		
	Total	26.074	107			
Newspaper	Between Groups	.019	1	.019	.301	.585
	Within Groups	6.528	106	.062		
	Total	6.546	107			
Social Media	Between Groups	.019	1	.019	.199	.656
	Within Groups	9.861	106	.093		
	Total	9.880	107			
Family or Friends	Between Groups	.005	1	.005	.024	.878
	Within Groups	20.736	106	.196		
	Total	20.741	107			

Hours on Mainstream /Social Media

The second hypothesis states that there is no significant impact on attitudes towards law enforcement, Christians, victim blaming, and time spent on mainstream and social media. Television media hours and attitudes toward law enforcement, victims, and Christians were analyzed using an ANOVA (see Table 6). The data suggests there is no significant relationship between hours spent on television media and attitudes towards law enforcement, Christians, and victims, and as a result, the null hypothesis was accepted.

Table 6 ANOVA TV Hours and ATPLS, ATC, RV

ANOVA TV Hours*ATPLS*ATC*RV

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
ATPLS	Between Groups	1891.777	3	630.592	1.744	.163
	Within Groups	37600.964	104	361.548		
	Total	39492.741	107			
ATC TOTALSP	Between Groups	.423	3	.141	.664	.576
	Within Groups	22.095	104	.212		
	Total	22.519	107			
TBSA	Between Groups	.583	3	.194	.863	.463
	Within Groups	23.417	104	.225		
	Total	24.000	107			

Social media hours and attitudes toward law enforcement, Christians, and victims were analyzed. An analysis of variance (ANOVA) on these scores yielded significance between hours on social media and attitudes towards Christians, [F (3, 107) = 3.33, $p < .02$] and victims [F 3,(107) = 2.75, $p=.04$] (see Table 7). A post hoc Tukey test (see Table 8) suggests a significant relationship between participants that spent 5-8 hours on social media and increased negative attitudes towards Christians (F 3, 107) = [1.670], $p = 0.04$), compared to those who spent less time on social media. Reaching statistical significance, the effect size was large ($\eta^2=.088$). suggests those that who are on social media between 1-4 hours per day are more likely to blame victims (see Figure 1). Reaching statistical significance, the effect size was large ($\eta^2=.073$). There were no other significant findings between social media hours and attitudes toward law enforcement and victims.

Table 7 ANOVA Social Media and ATPLS, ATC, RV

ANOVA Social Media Hours*ATPLS*ATC*RV

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
RV	Between Groups	1.586	3	.529	2.748	.047
	Within Groups	20.011	104	.192		
	Total	21.597	107			
ATC	Between Groups	1.973	3	.658	3.329	.022
	Within Groups	20.545	104	.198		
	Total	22.519	107			
ATPLS	Between Groups	403.695	3	134.565	.358	.783
	Within Groups	39089.046	104	375.856		
	Total	39492.741	107			

Table 8 ATC Total (Tukeys)

Multiple Comparisons

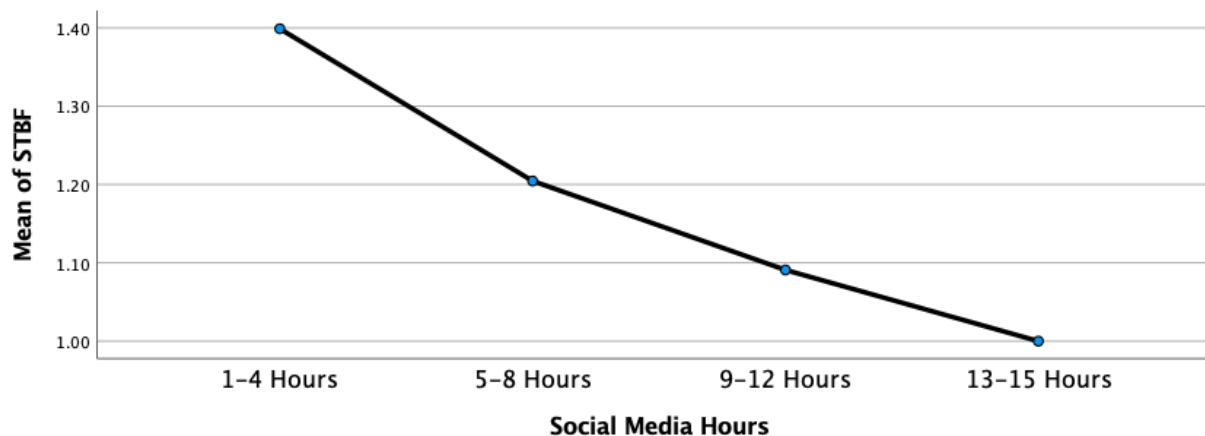
Dependent Variable: ATC TOTALSP
Tukey HSD

(I) Social Media Hours	(J) Social Media Hours	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
1-4 Hours	5-8 Hours	.25455*	.09187	.033	.0147	.4944
	9-12 Hours	-.01818	.14802	.999	-.4047	.3683
	13-15 Hours	-.20000	.26420	.873	-.8898	.4898
5-8 Hours	1-4 Hours	-.25455*	.09187	.033	-.4944	-.0147
	9-12 Hours	-.27273	.14983	.270	-.6639	.1185
	13-15 Hours	-.45455	.26522	.322	-1.1470	.2380
9-12 Hours	1-4 Hours	.01818	.14802	.999	-.3683	.4047
	5-8 Hours	.27273	.14983	.270	-.1185	.6639
	13-15 Hours	-.18182	.28950	.923	-.9377	.5741
13-15 Hours	1-4 Hours	.20000	.26420	.873	-.4898	.8898
	5-8 Hours	.45455	.26522	.322	-.2380	1.1470
	9-12 Hours	.18182	.28950	.923	-.5741	.9377

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

*Plot Social Media Hours*RV*

Figure 1 Social Media Hours and RV



Age, Race/Ethnicity, Gender

The final hypothesis states there are statistically significant differences between age, race/ethnicity, and gender on attitudes towards law enforcement, victims, and Christians,

Age

A regression was used to test if age, race, and gender significantly predicted participants' attitudes toward law enforcement, Christians, and victims. The ANOVA yielded significance, $F(4, 107) = 2.57, p < .02$ (see Table 9 ANOVA ATPLS, ATC, RV and Age).

Table 9 ANOVA ATPLS, ATC, RV and Age

ANOVA Age*ATPLS*ATC*RV

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
ATPLS	Between Groups	69.682	4	17.421	.046	.996
	Within Groups	39423.058	103	382.748		
	Total	39492.741	107			
TBSA	Between Groups	2.568	4	.642	3.086	.019
	Within Groups	21.432	103	.208		
	Total	24.000	107			
ATC TOTALSP	Between Groups	.660	4	.165	.778	.542
	Within Groups	21.858	103	.212		
	Total	22.519	107			

The simple linear regression analysis indicated that the older the participant's age, the more likely they are to blame victims in a rape scenario, $R^2 = .22, F(1, 107) = 5.47, \beta = .22, p = .02, 95\% \text{ CI } [.02, .22]$ (see Table 10). The hypothesis that age is significantly correlated with attitudes (victims) is accepted and the null is rejected. There were no other significant results correlating age and attitude towards law enforcement and Christians.

Table 10 Age and RV

Coefficients Age*RV^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
1	(Constant)	.180	.079		2.260	.026	.022	.337
	Age	.118	.050	.222	2.339	.021	.018	.218

a. Dependent Variable: TBSA

Race/Ethnicity

Race/Ethnicity and attitudes towards Christians did not yield any significant results. However, an ANOVA suggests significance between race/ethnicity and attitudes towards police [$F(5, 107) = 2.62, p = .03, \eta^2 = .14$], and victim blaming [$F(5, 107) = 3.1, p = .01, \eta^2 = .13$] (see

Table 11). Both significant results had a large effect size. Mean scores suggest that Black/African American, Hispanic/Latino, and Multi/Biracial are more likely to distrust law enforcement than the other races (see Figure 2). Figure 3 suggests Native American/Alaskan Native and Asian/Pacific Islander victim blame more than any other race/ethnicities.

Table 11 ANOVA and Race/Ethnicity, ATPLS, ATC, ATC, RV

*ANOVA Race/Ethnicity*ATPLS*ATC*RV*

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	η^2
ATPS	Between Groups	2.837	5	.567	2.621	.028	
	Within Groups	22.079	102	.216			
	Total	24.917	107				.114
ATC TOTALSP	Between Groups	1.040	5	.208	.988	.429	
	Within Groups	21.478	102	.211			
	Total	22.519	107				.046
RV	Between Groups	2.798	5	.560	3.100	.012	
	Within Groups	18.415	102	.181			
	Total	21.213	107				.132

Figure 2 Race/ Ethnicity and ATPLS

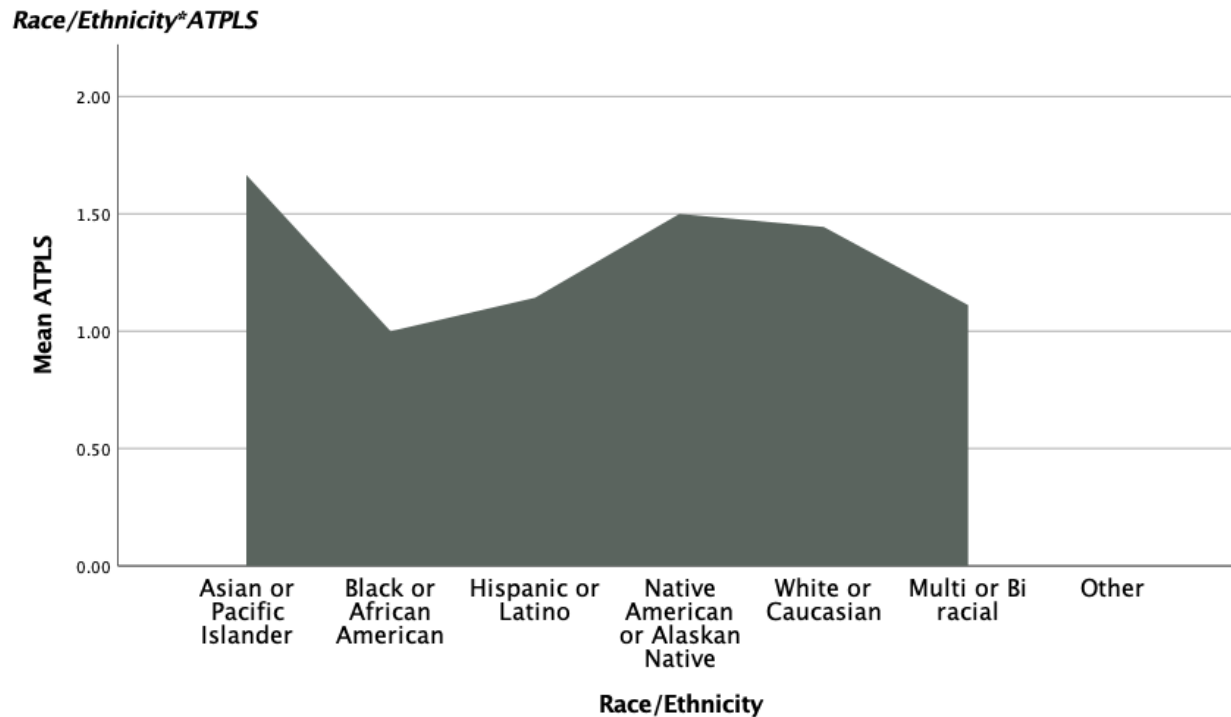
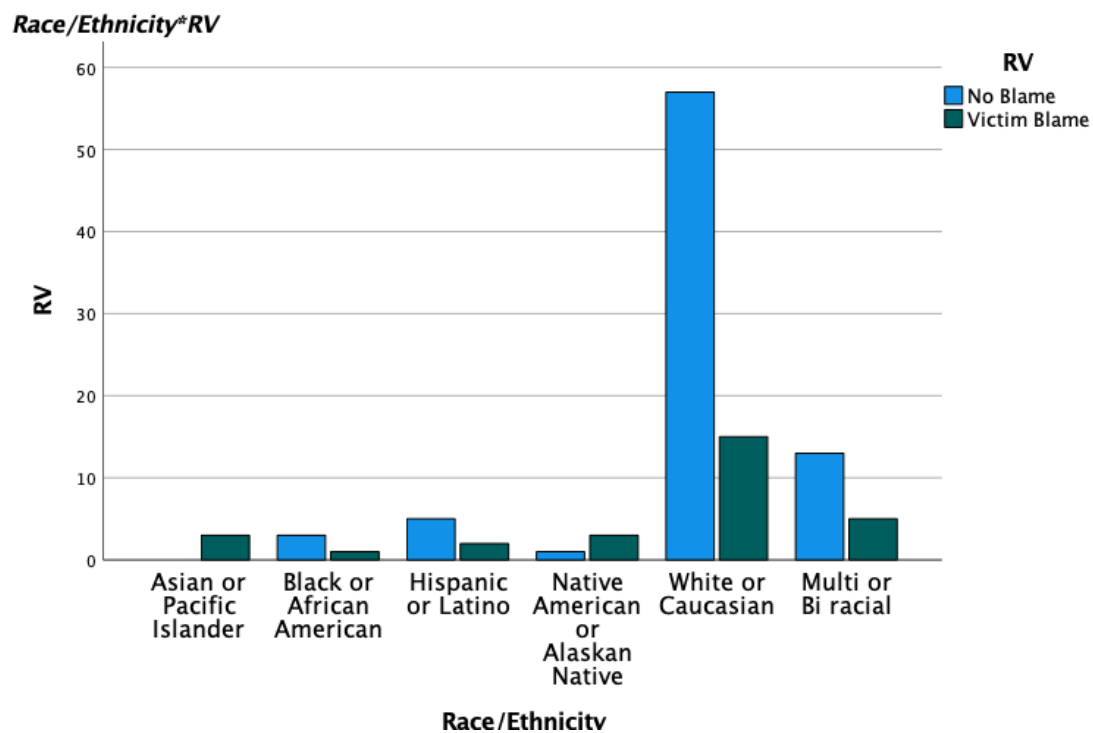


Figure 3 Race/Ethnicity and RV



Gender

An ANOVA suggests that there is no statistical difference between genders and attitudes towards law enforcement [F (3, 107) = .58, p =.63], Christians [F (3, 107) = 1.10, p =.37], and victims [F (3, 107) = .82 p =.49] (see Table 12). The null hypothesis is accepted.

Table 12 ANOVA Gender and ATPLS, ATC, RV

*ANOVA Gender*ATPLS*ATC*RV*

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
RV	Between Groups	.488	3	.163	.816	.488
	Within Groups	20.725	104	.199		
	Total	21.213	107			
ATPL S	Between Groups	648.517	3	216.172	.579	.630
	Within Groups	38844.224	104	373.502		
	Total	39492.741	107			
ATC	Between Groups	.668	3	.223	1.059	.370
	Within Groups	21.851	104	.210		
	Total	22.519	107			

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS

Overview

In a country suffering from a pandemic, massive loss of life, continual incidence of police brutality, anti-Christian, and anti-police rhetoric, coupled with copious amounts of victim blaming, discovering the etiology of these phenomena is essential in protecting the country from another civil war. As the results of this current research are discussed, it is essential to highlight more participants had a negative attitude towards law enforcement, and Christians, while victims were blamed less than perpetrators in an incident of rape.

Discussion

The United States is riddled with division between law enforcement, blaming victims, and religion. Previous research often points to the racism of police officers to explain this division. However, previous data also suggests the mistrust of law enforcement is generalized among all races (Brunson et al., 2015). A recent phenomenon has been the increase in negative mainstream and social media narratives, frequently aimed at law enforcement (Schulz, 2019). To identify if mainstream and social media are the etiology of anti-police rhetoric the current research examined variables that are either void in research, or variables that have had conflicting outcomes.

The first research question, in this current study, asks, *How does the specific platform used to gain knowledge of current events impact attitudes towards law enforcement, victims, perpetrators, and Christians?* The data suggest that there is no difference between the platform a participant uses to learn about current events and their attitudes towards law enforcement, and victims. However, the data suggest that learning about current events from friends and family is related to negative attitudes toward Christians. This partially contradicts previous research that

posits that mainstream media influences a person's outlook on the world around them (Gauthier et al., 2018; Graziano et al., 2018; Miller et al., 2008).

The theoretical framework for this current study is focused on cultivation theory. Previous research has identified a significant relationship between spending time on mainstream media and having attitudes based on those narratives (Gauthier et al., 2018; Graziano et al., 2018; Pollock et al., 2022; Shrum, 2017). The current research contradicts those results, except those from Shrum (2018), which states that it is a combination of the platform of current events, content disseminated, and the amount of time spent on the platform.

The second research question investigates the under-evaluated variable of hours spent on mainstream and social media, *To what extent do the hours spent on mainstream and social media increase victim blaming in The United States?* The data suggested a significant negative relationship between the number of hours spent on social media and a participant's attitude towards Christians. Participants that spent 1-4 hours per day on social media were also more likely to victim blame than any other time range. It is important to note that the number of participants that were on social media for 1-4 hours was significantly larger than those who spend more time on social media. Previous research indicates an increased number of social media posts on Twitter that blame victims, which supports the results of the current research (Stubbs et al., 2018). Whiting et al. (2019) found a significant number of victims blaming tweets, following a celebrity posting that she had been involved in a rape event. Previous research focuses primarily on mainstream media narratives, however much of social media contains retweets and reposts from these mainstream media outlets. Researchers found that when a rape is reported in the media it focuses on the rapists and how the impact their sentencing would have on the rest of their lives (Wade, 2013; Thacker, 2017). When the victim was

mentioned, it was to discuss his or her sexual promiscuity, drunkenness, or the accusations that he or she was lying. The current research measured attitudes towards victims using questions that were worded in a format in which the blame was associated with the victim, and questions worded in a format in which blame was associated with the perpetrator's name. The limited research linking hours spent on social media and attitudes towards Christians and victims, synthesized with cultivation theory, the current research supports this combined assumption. While the data suggests that social media exposure is related to increased victim blaming, the same did not hold for anti-police attitudes.

The final research question asks, To what extent do age, race/ethnicity, and gender influence attitudes towards law enforcement, victims, and Christians? The data suggest that age has a statistically significant relationship with victim blaming. Participants ages 19-23 and 42-46, were more likely to blame the victim than any other age ranges. Age was not a significant factor in attitudes toward law enforcement and Christians. These results contradict previous research that posits the younger the participant, the less respect for law enforcement (Foster et al., 2022).

Race/Ethnicity was measured, and data suggests participants that identified as Black/African American, Hispanic/Latino, and Multi/Bi-Racial are more likely to distrust police and have negative feelings of legitimacy about law enforcement than any other race/ethnicity. This supports previous research that African American/Black participants have a more negative attitude toward law enforcement compared to other races/ethnicities (Lloyd et al., 2020).

Race/Ethnicity was a significant factor in victim blaming. Native American/Alaskan Native and Asian/Pacific Islander victims were blamed more than any other race/ethnicity.

The gender of participants was measured, and the data suggests there is no significant relationship between gender and attitudes toward law enforcement, Christians, and victims. This

contradicts previous research suggesting females have a more positive attitude toward law enforcement (Taylor et al., 2021).

Implications

The implications of the study help law enforcement, Christians, the criminal justice system, and policymakers to focus on what areas seem to impact anti-police rhetoric, anti-Christian rhetoric, and victim blaming in The United States. As the number of false or incomplete news stories that run every news cycle increases, the results of this current research, while not finding significance between the platform of current events and attitudes towards law enforcement, the overall attitude towards law enforcement was reported as negative. The overall attitude towards Christians was also negative. Most participants blamed the perpetrator more than the victim, however, any blame towards the victim should be considered significant.

Limitations

This current research used a population made of higher education students. Using a student-only sample, the results may not be generalizable across the whole population, as some members of the population have not completed higher education. Another sampling error could be found in the race/ethnicity variable. White/Caucasian participants were overly represented and may be better suited for stratified sampling. Limitations should be discussed in terms of threats to both internal and external validity.

Recommendations for Future Research

The current research can be interpreted as a step closer to uncovering the etiology of division in The United States. The results should be viewed with the following recommendations in mind. First, the underrepresented race and ethnicities may have influenced the results. Future

research utilizing a stratified sample of equal races and ethnicities would provide a more accurate result.

Second, adding variables to future research, including the variables of political party, socio-economic status, and religious affiliation, could help account for their influence on the division in the country. Third, future research could examine those variables with a theoretical foundation of social identity theory to better understand how people see themselves.

Understanding how people view themselves may give a glimpse into how they see law enforcement, Christians, and victims.

Fourthly, the instrumentation used in this current research included a rape vignette. The survey asked for percentages of victim blaming. Analyzing the data was a significant challenge and an instrument identifying victim blaming that utilizes either a Likert scale or similar, would be easier for the participant to understand and the researcher to analyze the results. Also using a qualitative study that includes interviews with law enforcement, minorities, victims, and those opposed to law enforcement, and Christians could yield insight into why there are feelings of anti-police, anti-Christian, and victim blaming, and their etiology.

Finally, research that includes both Republican and Democrat majority areas is an important recommendation, as the current research was conducted in a county that is majority Democrat.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A 1**Narina Luz Nunez**

March 6, 2022 at 12:52 PM

[External] RE: Permission to use survey

[Details](#)

To: Harmon, Traci Jo, Cc: Karlee Rae Provenza



[EXTERNAL EMAIL: Do not click any links or open attachments unless you know the sender and trust the content.]

Traci,

Feel free to use it. Also, my graduate student did some work on creating a short scale that looked very good. I'm ccying her here if you want more information.

Narina

From: Harmon, Traci Jo [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, March 6, 2022 9:47 AM
To: Narina Luz Nunez [REDACTED]
Subject: Permission to use survey

◆ This message was sent from a non-UWYO address. Please exercise caution when clicking links or opening attachments from external sources.

Hello, my name is Traci Harmon, and I am a graduate student at Liberty University. I am currently working on my dissertation for the PhD in criminal justice program. I am doing some research on attitudes towards law enforcement and wanted to request permission to utilize your Attitudes Towards Police Legitimacy Scale


In my research. This survey fits every check I have for my research, and I would be honored if you would allow me to use it.

Thank you,
Traci Harmon

Appendix 2 12

Sjöberg, Mattias (Postgraduate Researcher)

July 27, 2022 at 6:27 AM

RE: [External] Permission to use the rape vignetter. 

To: Harmon, Traci Jo

Hi Traci,



Thanks very much for your email and sorry for my slow reply. That sounds like an interesting study.

I have attached the vignettes as well as the victim and perpetrator items which were used in the research. Since we borrowed the rape blame items from Strömwall et al. (2014), and large parts of the vignette, it would be necessary to site that paper as well. I have provided a reference to it below.

They are currently in Swedish (as we carried out the research in Sweden), but let me know if you would like me to translate them into English for you.

Best
Matt

Strömwall, L. A., Landström, S., Alfredsson, H. (2014). Perpetrator characteristics and blame attributions in a stranger rape situation. *The European Journal of Psychology Applied to Legal Context*, 6, 63-67. doi:[10.1016/j.ejpal.2014.06.002](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ejpal.2014.06.002)

From: Harmon, Traci Jo 
Sent: 22 July 2022 16:18
To: Sjöberg, Mattias (Postgraduate Researcher) 
Subject: [External] Permission to use the rape vignetter.

This email originated outside the University. Check before clicking links or attachments.

Hello,

My name is Traci Harmon, and I am a graduate student at Liberty University. I am writing to ask permission to use your vignette from your research "Two Sides of the Same Coin: The Relationship Between Modern Racism and Rape Blaming Attitudes among Swedish Students and Community Members. I am conducting my research on the mainstream and social media influence on anti-police rhetoric, victim blaming and racism. I felt your vignette would fit

Appendix A 3

[External] Re: Permission to use scale - Inbox • Liberty University

🗑 Delete 📁 Archive 📁 Move 🚩 Flag 📧 Mark Unread ⋮

[External] Re: Permission to use scale 😊 ↶ ↷ ↸

Kenneth Wang [Redacted] Thursday, August 11, 2022 at 12:50 PM

To: Harmon, Traci Jo; **Cc:** Zhong Yao (Nickel) Xie

ATRS.pdf
83.8 KB

Wang, Xie, Johnson,...
320.1 KB

[Download All](#) • [Preview All](#)

Hi Traci,

Glad that you are interested in the ATRS. You definitely have my permission to use this measure. Attached are the scale items and the article describing how the ATRS was developed.

Wishing you the best with your study.

Kenneth

On Wed, Aug 10, 2022 at 1:36 PM Harmon, Traci Jo [Redacted] wrote:

Hi Dr. Wang,

*I am a criminal justice Doctoral candidate at Liberty University in Virginia. I was seeking permission to use your **Attitudes Towards Religion Scale**. My research is looking at the mainstream and social media as the etiology of anti-Christian, anti-police and victim*

Appendix A 4

Which of the following be

Race/ Ethnicity:

- Asian or Pacific Island
- Black or African Ameri
- Hispanic or Latino
- Native American or Al
- White or Caucasian
- Multiracial or Biracial
- A race/ethnicity not lis

Age: _____

Gender:

Male

Female

Transgender

Other_____

**How many hours
per day are you
interacting with
social media?**

- 1-4
- 5-8
- 9-12
- 12-15

**How many hours
per day do you
watch
television?**

- 1-4
- 5-8
- 9-12

Appendix A 5

Date: 1-11-2023

IRB #: IRB-FY21-22-1166

Title: The topic is: The Etiology of a New Era: Where Heroes Become Zeros and Victims Become Villains.

Creation Date: 6-2-2022

End Date:

Status: **Approved**

Principal Investigator: Traci Harmon

Review Board: Research Ethics Office

Sponsor:

Study History

Submission Type	Initial	Review Type	Exempt	Decision	Exempt
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Key Study Contacts

Member	Traci Harmon	Role	Principal Investigator	Contact	[REDACTED]
Member	Traci Harmon	Role	Primary Contact	Contact	[REDACTED]
Member	Carolyn Dennis	Role	Co-Principal Investigator	Contact	[REDACTED]

Appendix A 6

August 26, 2022

Dear Traci:

Thank you for submitting your application to the Lorain County Community College Institution Review Board (LCCC IRB). The LCCC IRB has approved your request to conduct research. Your proposal titled "**The Etiology of a New Era: Where Heroes Become Zeros and Victims Become Villains.**" was found to be exempt under code 45CFR 46.101(b), 45 CFR 46.101 (b) (2) and CFR 46.101 (b) (3). It has been assigned the internal IRB number **2039** for internal IRB tracking purposes.

We wish you the best as your study moves forward. Please contact us should you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,



Denise M. Douglas, Ph.D.
IRB Coordinator



cc: Dr. Carolyn Dennis-Chair, Liberty University
Dr. Vincent Granito, IRB Chair, Professor of Psychology

Appendix A 8**Consent**

Title of the Project: “The Etiology of a New Era: Where Heroes Become Zeros and Victims Become Villains”

Principal Investigator: Traci Harmon, Liberty University, Helms School of Government, Doctoral Program

Invitation to be Part of a Research Study
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You are invited to participate in a research study. To participate, you must be a student, between the ages of 18 and 65. Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this research.

What is the study about and why is it being done?
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The purpose of my research is to decrease social injustice in America.

What will happen if you take part in this study?

If you agree to be in this study, I will ask you to do the following things:

1. Carefully and thoroughly fill out a demographic survey. (5 minutes)
2. Carefully and thoroughly complete 3 surveys (30 minutes)

How could you or others benefit from this study?

Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study.

Benefits to society include decreased division in the United States.

What risks might you experience from being in this study?
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The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

How will personal information be protected?
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The records of this study will be kept private. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher and chair will have access to the records.

- Participant responses will be anonymous.
- The completed surveys will be entered into a password-locked computer and may be used in future presentations. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted. The original surveys will be shredded and destroyed immediately following the data entry.

Does the researcher have any conflicts of interest?
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The researcher serves as a psychology professor at Lorain County Community College. To limit potential or perceived conflicts the study will be anonymous, so the researcher will not know who participated. This disclosure is made so that you can decide if this relationship will affect your willingness to participate in this study. No action will be taken against an individual based on his or her decision to participate or not participate in this study.

Is study participation voluntary?

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University or Lorain County Community College. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time prior to submitting the survey without affecting those relationships.

What should you do if you decide to withdraw from the study?

If you choose to withdraw from the study, simply exit the survey and close your Internet browser. Your responses will not be recorded and included in the study.

Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?

The researcher conducting this study is Traci Harmon. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact her at [REDACTED]. You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, Dr. Carolyn Dennis at [REDACTED].

Whom do you contact if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, [REDACTED] [REDACTED] or email at [REDACTED].

Disclaimer: The Institutional Review Board (IRB) is tasked with ensuring that human subjects research will be conducted in an ethical manner as defined and required by federal regulations. The topics covered and viewpoints expressed or alluded to by student and faculty researchers are those of the researchers and do not necessarily reflect the official policies or positions of Liberty University.

Your Consent

Before agreeing to be part of the research, please be sure that you understand what the study is about. You will be given a copy of this document for your records if participating in person. If you are participating online, you will be given the opportunity to print this page for your records. If you have any questions about the study later, you can contact the researcher using the information provided above.

Table 1

<i>Descriptive Statistics</i>			
	N	M	SD
RACE/ETHNICITY			
White/ Caucasian	72		
Black/African American	4		
Hispanic/Latino	7		
Asian/Pacific Islander	3		
Native American/Alaskan Native	4		
Multi/B-Racial	18	4.78	1.10
GENDER			
Male	41		
Female	62		
Transgender	3		
Nonbinary	2	1.69	.62
AGE RANGE			
18-22	91		
23-28	10		
29-33	1		
34-38	5		
39-43	0		
44-48	0		
49-53	1	21.00	5.00
SOCIAL MEDIA HOURS			
1-4	50		
5-8	44		
9-12	11		
13-16	3	1.70	.77
TV HOURS			
1-4	89		
5-8	17		
9-12	1		
13-16	1	1.2	.49
CURRENT EVENTS PLATFORM			
Mainstream Media	44		
Newspaper	7		
Social Media	97		
Friends/Family	80		

Table 13 Participants Preferred Platform
Participant Preferred Platform

	Selected	Not Selected	Total
Mainstream Media	44	64	108 (M = .40, SD = .49)
Social Media	95	11	108 (M=.94, SD-.42)
Newspaper	7	101	108 (M=.06, SD-.28)
Friends and/ or Family	80	28	108 (M=.74, SD-.44)

Note. Data indicating which platform (mainstream media, social media, newspaper, friends/and or family) participants receive their current events information.

Table 14
ATPLS, ATC, RV

	Pos. Attitude	Negative Attitude	M	SD
Attitude Towards Law Enforcement (ATPLS)				
	44	63	3.26	19.21
Attitude Towards Christians (ATC)				
	32	76	.29	.45
Victim Blaming (RV)				
	72	36	.33	.46

Table 4

Chi-Square Tests Platform*ATC

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	6.486 ^a	1	.011		
Continuity Correction ^b	5.320	1	.021		
Likelihood Ratio	7.419	1	.006		
Fisher's Exact Test				.015	.008
Linear-by-Linear Association	6.426	1	.011		
N of Valid Cases	108				

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 8.30.

b. Computed only for a 2x2 table

Table 5

ANOVA TV Hours*ATPLS*ATC*RV

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
ATPLS	Between Groups	1891.777	3	630.592	1.744	.163
	Within Groups	37600.964	104	361.548		
	Total	39492.741	107			
ATC TOTALSP	Between Groups	.423	3	.141	.664	.576
	Within Groups	22.095	104	.212		
	Total	22.519	107			
TBSA	Between Groups	.583	3	.194	.863	.463
	Within Groups	23.417	104	.225		
	Total	24.000	107			

Table 6

ANOVA Platform *Victim Blaming

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Mainstream Media	Between Groups	.074	1	.074	.302	.584
	Within Groups	26.000	106	.245		
	Total	26.074	107			
Newspaper	Between Groups	.019	1	.019	.301	.585
	Within Groups	6.528	106	.062		
	Total	6.546	107			
Social Media	Between Groups	.019	1	.019	.199	.656
	Within Groups	9.861	106	.093		
	Total	9.880	107			
Family or Friends	Between Groups	.005	1	.005	.024	.878
	Within Groups	20.736	106	.196		
	Total	20.741	107			

Table 15

ANOVA Social Media Hours*ATPLS*ATC*RV

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
RV	Between Groups	1.586	3	.529	2.748	.047
	Within Groups	20.011	104	.192		
	Total	21.597	107			
ATC	Between Groups	1.973	3	.658	3.329	.022
	Within Groups	20.545	104	.198		
	Total	22.519	107			
ATPL S	Between Groups	403.695	3	134.565	.358	.783
	Within Groups	39089.046	104	375.856		
	Total	39492.741	107			

Table 8

Multiple Comparisons

Dependent Variable: ATC TOTALSP

Tukey HSD

(I) Social Media Hours	(J) Social Media Hours	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
1-4 Hours	5-8 Hours	.25455*	.09187	.033	.0147	.4944
	9-12 Hours	-.01818	.14802	.999	-.4047	.3683
	13-15 Hours	-.20000	.26420	.873	-.8898	.4898
5-8 Hours	1-4 Hours	-.25455*	.09187	.033	-.4944	-.0147
	9-12 Hours	-.27273	.14983	.270	-.6639	.1185
	13-15 Hours	-.45455	.26522	.322	-1.1470	.2380
9-12 Hours	1-4 Hours	.01818	.14802	.999	-.3683	.4047
	5-8 Hours	.27273	.14983	.270	-.1185	.6639
	13-15 Hours	-.18182	.28950	.923	-.9377	.5741
13-15 Hours	1-4 Hours	.20000	.26420	.873	-.4898	.8898
	5-8 Hours	.45455	.26522	.322	-.2380	1.1470
	9-12 Hours	.18182	.28950	.923	-.5741	.9377

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Table 9

ANOVA Age*ATPLS*ATC*RV

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
ATPLS	Between Groups	69.682	4	17.421	.046	.996
	Within Groups	39423.058	103	382.748		
	Total	39492.741	107			
TBSA	Between Groups	2.568	4	.642	3.086	.019
	Within Groups	21.432	103	.208		
	Total	24.000	107			
ATC TOTALSP	Between Groups	.660	4	.165	.778	.542
	Within Groups	21.858	103	.212		
	Total	22.519	107			

Table 10

Coefficients Age*RV^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
1	(Constant)	.180	.079		2.260	.026	.022	.337
	Age	.118	.050	.222	2.339	.021	.018	.218

a. Dependent Variable: TBSA

Table 11
ANOVA Race/Ethnicity*ATPLS*ATC*RV

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	η^2
ATPS	Between Groups	2.837	5	.567	2.621	.028	
	Within Groups	22.079	102	.216			
	Total	24.917	107				.114
ATC TOTALSP	Between Groups	1.040	5	.208	.988	.429	
	Within Groups	21.478	102	.211			
	Total	22.519	107				.046
RV	Between Groups	2.798	5	.560	3.100	.012	
	Within Groups	18.415	102	.181			
	Total	21.213	107				.132

Table 12

ANOVA Gender*ATPLS*ATC*RV

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
RV	Between Groups	.488	3	.163	.816	.488
	Within Groups	20.725	104	.199		
	Total	21.213	107			
ATPL S	Between Groups	648.517	3	216.172	.579	.630
	Within Groups	38844.224	104	373.502		
	Total	39492.741	107			
ATC	Between Groups	.668	3	.223	1.059	.370
	Within Groups	21.851	104	.210		
	Total	22.519	107			

Figures

Figure 1

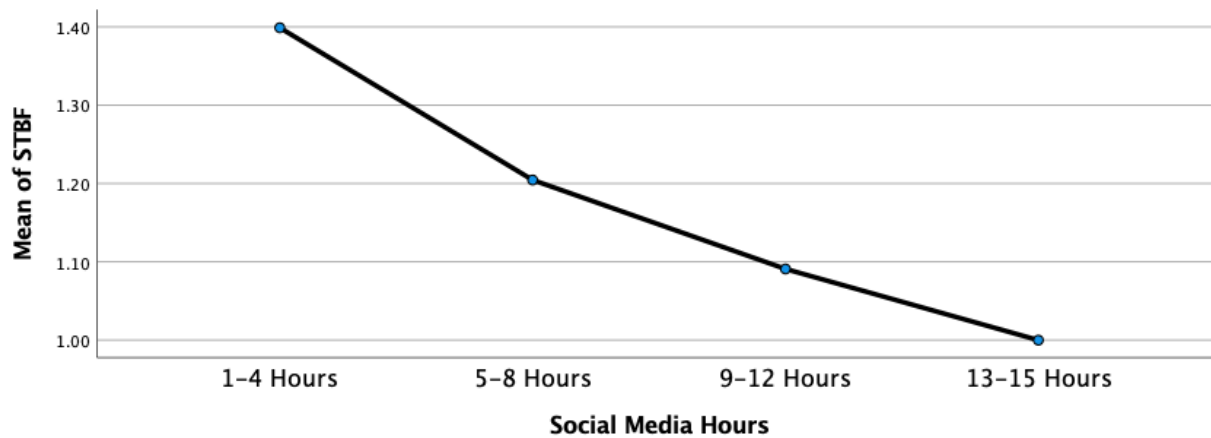


Figure 2

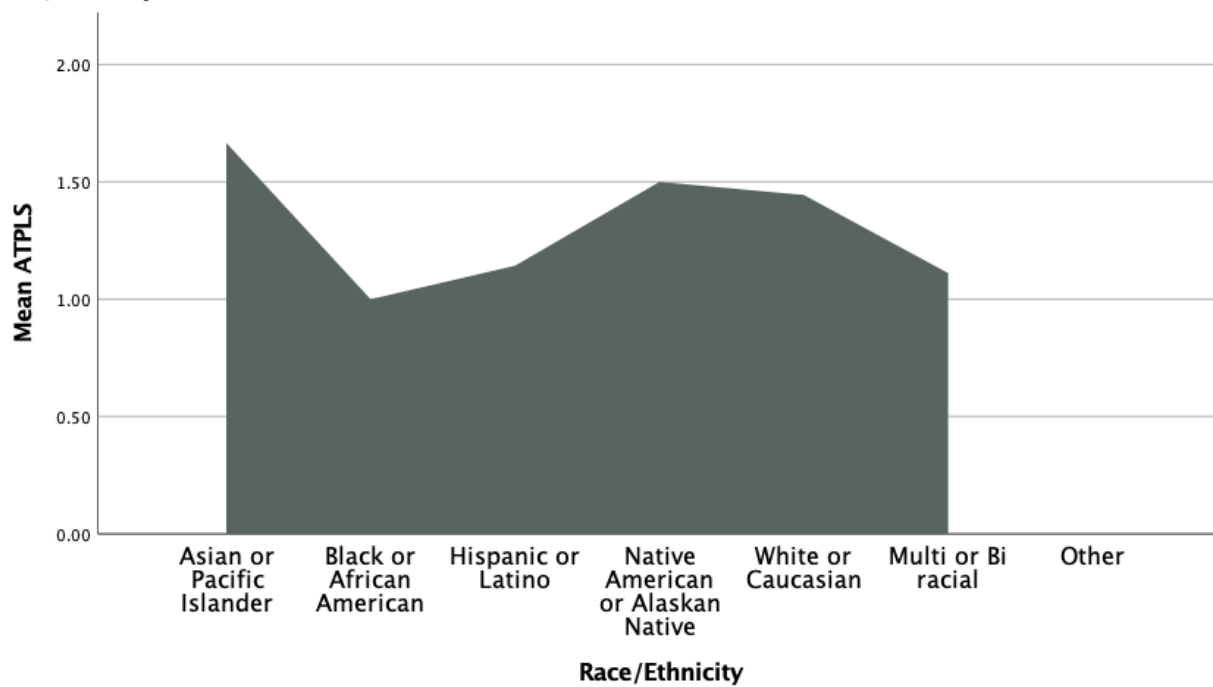
Race/Ethnicity*ATPLS

Figure 3

