The Perception of Police Officers AMONG UVU STUDENTS
Group #7

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Law Enforcement has become more than just a profession. It has also become a highly contentious subject, even political.

In our study we wanted to find out what Utah Valley University Students opinions of police officers are.

Are they supported or hated?
The Media’s Influence

The public impression of police use of force, as brutality, in modern day policing continues to be a sensitive issue for law enforcement agencies across the nation. Police agencies across the United States deal with accusations of misuse of force on a daily basis. Justified or not, images of police utilizing force continue to strike a nerve in the American public.

However, police use of force incidents are often misconstrued by the community due to the media frenzy utilizing misrepresentation of facts and propaganda techniques. These techniques undermine the authority of the police and diminish the trust that the community has in its police force.

We were curious to know that in our conservative state, county, and school if college educated individuals have the same perception of police officers as what is portrayed in the media. And maybe get a little insight on their opinion.
LITERATURE REVIEW

- It’s important to research other studies and the data that they collected.
- Studying others research can help us understand the population that we want to study.
- Incidents involving police have been drawing the attention from both researchers and the public, in recent decades. In our study we surveyed Utah Valley University students to find out their perception of police officers. So, other similar research from other states can be informative to compare with our survey results.

In this study, their goal was to expand on an article called, “Citizen attitudes toward the Police” in addition to 100 articles on perceptions of and attitudes toward the police. The researchers review of literature found that only four variables have a consistent affect on attitudes toward police. These variables are age, contact with police, neighborhood, and race. They did acknowledge that there are other variables that are not understood yet.

They found that people viewed the police more negatively in 1995 than in previous years. This is thought to be because of the high-profile cases that year and the criticism of how they were handled. They also found that demographics can be an influence on a person’s perception of police.
This studies research examined the relationship between race and ethnicity and perceptions of police use of force among college students. When doing this study they were seeking to answer the following question: “Do suspect race and ethnicity affect college students perceptions of police use of force?” Students were randomly selected to a group to answer a questionnaire. The results of this study show that race and ethnicity do not predict perceptions of police use of force among college students. And, as expected, they found that White Males were significantly more likely to perceive police use of force as justified.


RESEARCH DESIGN

We chose to gather our research with a Survey Research Design.

Our Sample Selection is randomly selected through UVU Institutional Research and Information Department.
Survey Format

The survey is compiled of 19 questions, which include multiple choice and ranking questions. All the questions are aimed at assessing if UVU students have a positive or negative perspective of police officers.
Out of 500 Emails being randomly sent out our survey received 64 respondents to the survey.
The chart represents the distribution of race/ethnicity preferences. The categories shown are:

- Prefer Not To Answer
- Other
- Asian
- African American
- Polynesian
- Hispanic
- Caucasian

The bar for Caucasian is the longest, indicating the highest preference. The other categories have much shorter bars, suggesting lower preferences.
What Is Your View Of Police Officers?

- Very Positive
- Mostly Positive
- Neutral
- Negative
- Strongly Negative

Police Officers...

- Make The Laws
- Enforce The Laws
- Both Make And Enforce Laws
Answer The Following:

1. Do you feel that most police officers are sufficiently trained?
2. Do you think the media influences the way you view the police?
3. Do you believe the media displays an accurate picture of police?
What is your overall view of police officers?

- They are making a difference.
- They are doing a good job.
- They are doing a poor job.
- They are corrupt and violent.

Have you ever come in contact with a police officer?

- Yes
- No
What do you perceive is the most negative aspect of policing? (Rank 1-5, 1 being the most negative)

1. Police officers are corrupt.
2. Police officers are racist.
3. Police officers are too aggressive.
4. Police officers are bias.
5. Police officers lack proper training.
What do you believe is the most positive aspect of policing? (Rank 1-4, 1 being the most positive)

1. Police officers keep society safe.
2. Police officers are kind and helpful.
3. Police officers are professional and unbiased.
4. I have family members/friends who are police officers.
What influences your perception of officers the most? (Rank 1-5, 1 being the most influential)

1. News
2. Family
3. Friends
4. Entertainment
   (TV, Music, Video-Games)
5. Social Media
How frequently do you come in contact with a police officer?

- Daily
- Weekly
- Monthly
- Yearly
- No Interactions
- Other

What were the interactions you had with police officers?

- Conversational
- Traffic Stop
- Arrested
- Reporting a crime
- Victim of a crime
Has you ever been arrested/detained?

Detained/Arrested

No

Has being arrested or other interactions changed your perception of officers?

Yes

No
Has your perception of officers changed as you have had interactions with them?

Has your perception become more negative or positive toward officers?

- **Yes**
  - More Positive
  - More Negative

- **No**
  - More Positive
  - More Negative
Our conclusion is that, based on those that responded to our survey, the majority have a positive view of officers and are in support of the local law enforcement.

Most UVU students have a positive perspective of law enforcement and how officers currently conduct themselves.