The Influence the Media has on Peoples’ Perceptions of Law Enforcement

Group 1:

Kyler Powelson, Francisco Gill, Brandon Ratcliffe, and Josh Whitehead
Research Question

- How does the media affect the way people perceive law enforcement?

- Depending on the results of our survey we will be able to determine:
  - How police are perceived by the general public
  - Whether or not the media influences this perception
  - What the public generally thinks of law enforcement in general and law enforcement in their community
Literature Review

- Associated Press-Why it matters: Race and Policing
- PeoplePress.org Press Widely Criticized, But Trusted More than Other Information Sources.
- Canadian Journal Of Criminology & Criminal Justice.
- Race, Street Life, and Policing: Implications for Racial Profiling.
- Why Do Media Hate the Police?
- Police body cameras and us: Public perception of the justification of the police use of force in the body camera era.
For our research we conducted a survey that was sent out to a simple random sample of 500 Utah Valley University students sent out by student email addresses.

- Confidence Interval: 95% Level of Confidence
- Response Rate: 57

We first sent out the survey on the 9 July 2018 and received 32 responses. In order to maximize our response, on 14 July 2018 we sent out a reminder email to people who did not respond and received a total of 17 more responses. We sent out an additional reminder email on 19 July and received 8 more responses making the total number of responses 57.
Demographic Information

Response Rate: 11.4% (57 responses out of 500 surveys)

2% of respondents work or have worked in law enforcement

57% of respondents know someone in law enforcement
Race / Ethnicity

- White: 74.00%
- Black or African American
- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Asian
- Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
- Hispanic or Latino
- Other: 6.00%
Age

28.7 years old is the average age of respondents

Ages ranged from 18 to 54
Marital Status

44% Never Married/Single

52% Married

Color Legend:
- Red: Never Married/Single
- Blue: Married
- Green: Divorced
- Orange: Separated
- Yellow: Widowed
Political Affiliation

- Republican: 32.05%
- Democrat: 28.53%
- Independant: 28.53%
- Other: 14.29%
Education Level

- 28% High School
- 46% Associates Degree
- 26% Bachelors Degree

Color codes:
- Red: Less than high school
- Purple: High School
- Blue: Associates Degree
- Green: Bachelors Degree
- Yellow: Masters Degree
- Orange: Doctorate Degree
To what extent is law enforcement effective at proactively preventing crime?
What is your reasoning behind your answer to the prior question regarding the extent law enforcement is effective at preventing crime?
To what extent do you trust your local law enforcement?
What is your reasoning behind your answer to the prior question regarding trust in your local law enforcement?
To what extent do you trust law enforcement in general?
What is your reasoning behind your answer to the prior question regarding trusting law enforcement in general?
Law enforcement officers are generally fair to all people regardless of their race and ethnicity.
What is the reasoning behind your answer to the prior question regarding law enforcement being fair to all people regardless of race or ethnicity?
Does law enforcement use unethical behavior, excessive force, and abuse their power?
What is the reasoning behind your answer to the prior question regarding law enforcement using unethical behavior, excessive force, and abusing their power?
If someone resisted arrest, even a little, most law enforcement officers would become overly assaultive if they thought they could get away with it.
What is the reasoning behind your answer to the prior question regarding law enforcement officers becoming assaultive if they could get away with it?
The majority of law enforcement officers use offensive language in their dealings with citizens to impose authority.
What is the reasoning behind your answer to the prior question regarding law enforcement officers using offensive language with citizens to impose authority?
Do you believe that law enforcement is a career with a bad reputation?
What is the reasoning behind your answer to the prior question regarding law enforcement being a career with a bad reputation?
In the past 12 months, how many times have you had contact with your local law enforcement for any reason?
I am satisfied with my interaction(s) with my local law enforcement?
I receive my news by:

- Social Media: 13.39%
- TV News: 20.47%
- Newspaper or Magazine: 21.26%
- Radio: 30.71%
- Other: 14.17%
How many hours a week do you spend reading, browsing, or watching various media outlets?
The media has turned society against law enforcement. I believe what is reported by the media.

The media influences my perception of law enforcement. The information found in the media is sometimes biased against law enforcement.

The media can't be trusted to provide truthful reporting because they care more about ratings and corporate agenda.
What do you think is the main factor that influences people’s perception of law enforcement in a positive or negative?
Other Observations

- 75.51% of our participants believe that media is the main factor that influences peoples’ perception of law enforcement.
- From the total of our participants 26.53% are republican and 26.53% are democratic.
- The majority (30.71%) of our respondents receive their news by social media and they spend between 1-5 hours per week looking at it.
- 83.34% of participants who are affiliated with the republican party, are strongly satisfied with their interactions with law enforcement, while 66.66% of democrats are satisfied.
Other Observations Continued

- Those who are affiliated with the Republican party (91.67%) almost all of them think that the media is the main factor that influences people's perception of law enforcement and media is responsible and sometime bias against law enforcement, also they are less likely to believe what is reported by the media.
- Those who are affiliated with the Democratic party (53.85%) believe that media is the main factor that influences people's perception of law enforcement and 38.46% believe it's people's interactions and experiences with law enforcement is what influences their views, also they are less likely to believe that the information found in the media is sometimes bias against law enforcement, and at least half of them somewhat believe what is reported by the media.
Conclusions

- Society has more positive influences with law enforcement when they form their opinions from personal experiences rather than media portrayal.
- Society forms their opinions by what is portrayed in the media.
- People tend to form negative perceptions of law enforcement when they get their information from the media.
- There may be a correlation that those who affiliate with the republican party are satisfied with law enforcement interaction, are more likely to support law enforcement, believe that media influence peoples views, and are less likely to believe what is reported by the media, while democratic affiliates are less satisfied with law enforcement interactions, at least somewhat believe what is reported by the media, and at least half of them believe that the media influences peoples perceptions.