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## Dr. Charlie Scheer

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Dr. Charlie Scheer assistant professor of Criminal Justice at The University of Southern Mississippi. His research specializations are in the fields of police workforce management, police training, organizational development, and police legitimacy. He has publications on police recruitment and retention strategies, police civil liability, and a national assessment of police training capacities. His research has been published in *Police Quarterly*, *Policing: An International Journal*, *Sheriff & Deputy*, *Justice Research and Policy*, and *Law Enforcement Executive Forum*. He also has publications through the RAND Corporation and the Department of Justice's Office of

Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS). He has provided briefings at academic and professional conferences such as the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) Annual Conference, Police Executive Research Forum (PERF) Conference on Recruitment and Retention, the National Association of Blacks in Criminal Justice conference, and the National Sheriff's Association (NSA) Annual Conference. His research projects include an in-progress study of police personnel retention from a national sample of agencies, a comparison of first-line supervisor leadership training programs, a survey of potential police recruits to gauge interest in patrol careers, and an examination of detective and investigations units in the Gulf Coast region. He also is a sworn sheriff's deputy.

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**Testimony to the Presidential Commission on  
Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice**  
*Special topic: Personnel Recruiting*

**Study Overview**

A fresh perspective on the police recruitment and retention challenge can be gained through the application of marketing and business management principles. In 2017, I engaged in a series of conversations with Chief Leonard Papania of Gulfport (MS) Police Department, an agency that was heavily affected by Hurricane Katrina and had a strong research-practitioner partnership with The University of Southern Mississippi. These conversations centered on the possibility that police agencies are recruited by the *applicant*, and that many agencies have little data regarding the career demands of the applicant pool. Chief Papania and I also considered that applicants may perceive the recruiting and selection processes itself as a potential barrier, or even a “deal breaker”, to police career interest. We decided to pioneer a study of the perspectives of applicants in a way that businesses would conduct “market research” about client or customer desires for a product. Such a project would also clarify myths about generational preferences and Millennials that we felt were inadequate and often not based on data.

Dr. Michael Rossler of Illinois State University and I designed a survey that was disseminated to undergraduate students at five national universities. The survey asked students their perspectives on police careers, the recruitment, selection, and training processes, and potential “fear points” which may act as barriers to police career interest. We provided this 100-item survey to students at Missouri State University, Illinois State University, Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI), University of Massachusetts Lowell, and The University of Southern Mississippi in the spring of 2018.

The technical report which was published following completion of the study is provided along with this testimony. Additionally, peer-reviewed articles are provided which detail statistical analyses of the data with regard to three distinct points of interest: the data pertaining to African-American survey respondents, the data pertaining to women survey respondents, and the creation of models that predict interest in patrol careers. (The third article detailing the predictive models is currently under peer review for the journal *Criminal Justice & Behavior*, and is watermarked as such).

**Study Results: Descriptive Statistics**

The survey sample consists of approximately 800 students and varies across demographic variables. Multiple critical findings are evident. Respondents indicate that they are both

interested and curious about police patrol careers: forty percent show some interest in the career, and are curious about the promotional potential associated with policing professions. They are likewise interested in the service aspects of patrol duties as they represent a “helping profession”. Survey respondents also appear motivated to apply for and obtain patrol positions. The rigorous hiring process, the scrutiny of the selection process (including social media scrutiny), police academy length and intensity, potential for challenging physical training, the changes in lifestyle associated with police work, peer and family disapproval, and perceptions about their own personal histories are not significant barriers to entry. Although these factors would later be analyzed to determine their differential effect on career interest, they are not things that appeared to be “deal breakers” in consideration of police patrol careers.

Respondents expressed doubt that police recruiters and the agencies they represent are in tune with what they expect from police careers and the lifestyle they seek. They believe that having an officer or recruiter mentor them throughout the recruitment process would affect their interest level. This mentor could also provide deeper information about agency benefits and specific lifestyle opportunities, factors that are also related to candidate interest. Survey respondents display curiosity and expectation, although lack of information, about promotional potential and the nature of the career ladder. They admit that their generation may have unrealistic expectations about careers at large, but indicate a lack of specific knowledge about promotional processes and positions beyond patrol. These findings suggest directions for future recruiting efforts which are reiterated with further data analysis.

### **Survey Results: Further Analysis**

Further data analysis suggests many intriguing relationships between variables related to potential barriers, and the degree of candidate interest. First, African-American survey respondents were examined to determine the impact of barriers on recruiting for diversity. Being African-American predicts a higher degree of social disapproval: these respondents are more likely to state that friends, family, and significant others would be opposed to the respondent’s choice of patrol careers. Additionally, being African-American also predicts a lack of respect for the police, using multiple items from the questionnaire. The perception that police racially profile was examined for predictive value. African-American respondents are more likely to believe that police racially profile citizens than other subgroups. However, direct effects of race on career choice were not found. African-American students do view their support structures as less likely to approve of police careers, respect the police less than other subgroups, and more frequently view the police as engaging in what they view as racially biased police practices. A significant indirect effect was found for African-American students having a diminished desire to enter a patrol career because of their perception of these barriers.

Next, survey responses by women were similarly examined to gauge the effect of variables on potential interest in careers. Women perceive potential barriers to police careers differently than

men, and the effect of those perceptions on their career interest is intriguing. A scale was employed to test women's perceptions of barriers using seven survey items. Significant differences in patrol career interest are noted with women who are apprehensive about being exposed to less-lethal weapons in training, those who perceive patrol work as being disruptive to work-life balance, and those with less desire for career advancement. But importantly, there is no significant difference between women and men for these barriers when it comes to career interest. Both male and female respondents' career perceptions are similarly affected when equivalent perceptions of barriers exist. What is important is that women have significantly higher concerns regarding these potential barriers. Results indicated that women's perceptions of policing as being a male-dominated career, and their concerns about the culture associated with such careers, can act as a potential barrier. Again, this finding suggests approaches to recruiting that could be employed to counteract that cultural perception.

A third analysis was conducted to define potential predictors of police career interest among all respondents in the sample. Models were constructed to examine both the "push" and "pull" mechanisms of factors influencing police career interest, including desire for advancement, desire to help, and expectations of lifestyles provided by one's career. Results of these models suggest unique perspectives on the motivations of respondents for entering policing that could form the focus of multiple recruiting approaches. Desire for a more flexible work environment, need for respect among community members and social approval from peers and family, and concerns about physical confrontation all are related to respondent interest in patrol careers. Results suggest that addressing these concerns, while maximizing the "pulling" mechanisms of applicant desire to help as well as clarifying the realities of the police lifestyle, are cornerstone considerations when establishing new recruiting practices.

### **Study Suggestions for Renewed Recruiting Approaches**

Upon initiating this study, we acknowledged the persistence of what has been termed a "crisis" in police recruiting, specifically with regards to recruiting for diversity, and that many recruiting practices were seen as insufficient. In our briefings conducted on these results, we have invited police leaders from diverse agencies to comment on the findings, and envision how these study results may affect their own agencies' recruitment techniques. Recruiting practices are often related to economic fluctuations, budgeting for recruiting, the motivations of the recruiters themselves, and the existing target applicant pool. In light of those disparate contexts, our survey results should intrigue police leaders. What follows is a list of potential "talking points" derived from the project results that are intended to stimulate discussion about new recruiting approaches.

*Respondents are interested in police careers despite multiple potential barriers, but recruiters need to step their game up.* The basic and anecdotal belief that there is a diminished interest in police careers at large is unsupported by our study. But that realization comes with an

admittedly difficult challenge for recruiters themselves. These results indicate that expectations of applicants and their perception of barriers to career interest can be highly individualized, which would seem to require equally as individually-targeted recruiting efforts on the part of recruiters. Despite having largely practical, realistic expectations of the hiring process for police careers, respondents stated frankly that they expect a fulfilling career – and even advancement – without “paying their dues”. Despite our humorous interpretation of that remark as transcending generations, it presents a challenge to the contemporary police recruiter. Are recruiters showing, through realistic, frank, and meaningful mentoring, what the applicant will get in exchange for “paying their dues” should they obtain a position in their department? Do agencies show what “paying one’s dues” entails? In previous eras where large numbers of applicants existed, there may not have been practical need to address these questions in a recruiting context. But as evidenced by study results, sincere effort should be made to disclose the realities of the career, not just the particulars of the selection process.

*Seize opportunities to mentor applicants and provide sincere career preview.* Repeatedly throughout the study results, respondents specifically stated the need for mentoring and left clues that such relationships may intensify their interest by providing deeper career preview. The lifestyle of a police officer, the nature of the career ladder and the roles of promoted persons, opportunities for collateral duties, the specific purpose and climate of the police academy, and how one manages relationships with friends and peers are all substantial topics that could form the basis of a mentoring relationship. With regard to African-American applicants, social disapproval is potentially higher than other subgroups which presents the opportunity for a mentoring approach. With women, discussing barriers to promotion and eliminating the perception of policing as being male-dominated culture hostile to women are paramount objectives. Recruiting in the flavor of a “football coach recruiter” who makes direct and supportive contact with the applicant and their social circle and family, especially with regard to sharing the realities of the police lifestyle and alleviating fear of physical harm, is encouraged.

*Eliminate obstacles to patrol ride-alongs and other preview methods that show a “cool career”.* For many officers, the moment when they first interacted with a police officer in the context of pursuing a career may have been a life-changing experience. Many current officers can remember their first ride-along vividly. Survey respondents show a desire to find out about all aspects of the profession, and the 360-degree opportunities provided by patrol ride-alongs, purposeful internships, and time spent at the agency headquarters serve multiple purposes in the recruiting process. Reach out the applicant’s family and friends who may be wary of the applicant’s career choice and offer preview of the department. Show the police academy as well: respondents stated a willingness to attend the academy, but for some, observing the physical agility tests and practical exercises may enhance their interest. Provide them opportunities to confirm their impressions of the uniqueness and singularity of the career as a venue to make a difference in lives of others.

*Enhance their attraction to a blue-collar profession by talking about benefits other than salary.* Interestingly, respondents showed an attraction to blue-collar employment and the associated benefits of these professions. However, their knowledge and understanding of these benefits and career advantages is limited. Police recruitment materials often display salary numbers to provide a basic impression of the affordability of the applicant's preferred lifestyle, but for many this figure is not put into any relatable context. As many recruiters know, the salary "bottom line" is often more complicated than what is shown on a recruiting flyer. With regards to important milestones like starting a family, purchasing a home, and managing work-life balance, more information could be provided. Addressing these subjects in the context of mentoring relationships can be influential and brand your agency as a place that cares about its employees. Consider that many applicants have not yet experienced routine milestones such as paying rent and bills. Build trust by exploring these new pathways with them, including showing residential areas and being transparent about overtime.

*Consider those persons who are marginally interested.* There exists a risk in creating a "target candidate" based upon these survey results. Doing so creates the potential to discount persons who may be willing to make the personal changes needed to embark on a police career, although some may not yet meet agency policy or criteria for employment. Interest in policing is shaped by multiple factors, including the impact that a recruiter can make. There are innumerable examples of people who made significant changes in lifestyle, attitude, physical fitness, and commitment to self-improvement in order to embrace the challenge of the career. Articulating and demonstrating the rewards of the career can not only establish organizational and personal trust, but show the interested person the benefits of persistence and hard work on career success.

*Portray your agency as a "great place to work".* Absent from these study results is information pertaining to where respondents have considered applying, and why. We all know of many instances where agencies have been able to cross even regional and national barriers to successfully recruit police officers, and the study results provide a road map for branding one's agency as a place where career, lifestyle, and personal goals are realized. Resources and salary are often not the sole reasons why people apply, as evidenced by these survey results and other previous research. Some applicants seek a lasting feeling of satisfaction based on personal or organizational trust. Take stock in what your agency offers, and entrust the right people to communicate these things to those interested in being a part of your community.

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# INTEREST IN POLICE PATROL CAREERS

**An Assessment of Potential Candidates'  
Impressions of the Police Recruitment,  
Selection, and Training Processes**

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## PREFACE

In the spring of 2017, Chief Leonard Papania of the Gulfport (MS) Police Department and I began a conversation regarding the persistence of a crisis in the recruitment of police personnel, addressing the difficulty police agencies of varying size and jurisdictional character were having in generating basic interest in police careers. The well-publicized “cop crunch”, as discussed in previous police literature, was not going away despite the apparent economic recovery from the 2008 recession and its aftermath. Why, we wondered, despite the robust and increasing numbers of entry-level positions in police patrol, was the career of police patrol work such a “hard sell” with the current potential applicant pool? Also, why were some of those very individuals seemingly interested in specialized police work (e.g., detective or investigator, K9 officer, narcotics officer) but averse to patrol officer positions? Were these potential applicants fearful of the selection process (i.e., invasive background investigations and social media oversight)? Were these people deterred from police patrol careers because of the perception that the initial training expectations were too rigorous (i.e., academy physical training and the challenge of attending a lengthy academy)? Another consideration which grew out of this conversation was the potential inability or failure of police agencies to possibly address basic recruit expectations, namely assistance with the application process, realistic job preview, and mentoring. We considered the one-way police application process that had existed for decades, of agencies which recruited by providing application information, and the lack of potential applicants who were interested enough in the career to walk through the proverbial open door. Now that the door was flung wide open, and the applicants were few, what was the source of the continuing challenge? Was it “fear points” on the part of candidates, or the reluctance of police recruiters to embrace the recruiting process which was now reversed, that of candidates recruiting the agency, not the way it had been for generations?

Our interest in resolving this dilemma led to a basic research agenda and project idea. Chief Papania had been a guest lecturer at The University of Southern Mississippi (of which he is an alumnus) for several years, and he proposed a series of roundtable discussions allowing college students (representing a sample of potential candidates) to share their opinions and impressions of police careers, the recruitment, selection, and training processes, and what their potential “fear points” were regarding a patrol career. I began to itemize a list of these possible “fear points” through consultation with not only existing college students but also recent graduates and then-current patrol officers and academy cadets. A survey instrument which focused on numerous potential barriers to police patrol career interest was developed, grouped by venue (the recruitment and selection processes, the training academy) and by group of interest (pressure from family and friends, community and peer expectations, and more global impressions of one’s role within the contemporary police population). I asked Dr. Michael Rossler of Illinois State University to assist me with the project because of his interest in police organizational management. In the fall of 2017 we distributed the survey to five undergraduate institutions in their criminal justice courses, in order to capture not only potential criminal justice majors but also students who may have a passing interest in police careers. In the spring of 2018 we began to analyze the data, which serves as the basis for many of the discussions, conclusions, and suggestions for police recruitment strategy here.

We hope that this report and its findings will illuminate previously-misunderstood features of the police recruitment process, especially in an era when police practitioners are continually challenged to adapt to the existing pool of career applicants in crafting police officers of future generations.

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# RESEARCH SUMMARY

Both criminal justice researchers and practitioners have suspected that generational preferences and the nature of police patrol work have acted as dual forces leading potential police recruits away from police careers, resulting in large numbers of unfilled police positions. This challenge is exacerbated by accelerating retirements and expanding police duties. Police recruitment became an even larger managerial issue after the 2008 recession failed to resolve the most critical factor driving people away from police careers in the first place: police departments saw fewer and fewer qualified applicants, despite the recession bringing more applicants in number. In the wake of the 2008 recession, attention has turned to generational preferences of post-Millennials and the potential incompatibility of their career expectations with the realities of police patrol work (Haggerty, 2009; Morison, 2017; Orrick, 2008; PERF, 2010; Wilson et al., 2010).

Little research has been conducted from the demand, or applicant, side of this critical workforce management issue facing police departments, especially as public demands for accountability and police legitimacy are escalating. This research project addresses

this critical question, and the results inform police leaders as to how better to market and recruit future officers more effectively while balancing community demands and budgetary realities. Additionally, it furthers workforce management theoretical perspectives on the nature and character of human resources dynamics among post-Millennials.

This research project utilizes a survey questionnaire distributed to college students enrolled in criminal justice courses to gauge reaction to prompted statements regarding their perception of the police profession, the application process, contemporary public demands of police officers, and initial police training. Survey results detail “fear points” regarding these expectations. The sample is composed of undergraduate students at the following institutions: The University of Southern Mississippi, Illinois State University, Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis, University of Massachusetts Lowell, and Missouri State University. Participant responses gauge student expectations of a police career, examining their consideration of such a career. This data helps inform practitioner strategies for recruitment of post-Millennial generations.

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We would like to thank the following colleagues for participating in and assisting with the project: Dr. Michael Suttmoeller of Missouri State University, Dr. Eric Grommon of Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis, Dr. Jason Rydberg of University of Massachusetts Lowell. We would also like to thank Sergeant Matt Cobb of Topeka (KS) Police Department and Lieutenant Greg Pashley from the Portland (OR) Police Bureau for their valuable feedback and interest in this project. Above all, we would like to thank the numerous faculty at each university represented in this project as well as their respective administrators for allowing us to complete the project at their site and in their classes.

# CHAPTER ONE

## THE CURRENT STUDY

### STUDY BACKGROUND

During the years prior to the 2008 recession, studies of police workforce management tended to focus on role adjustment (Sun, 2003) and topics related to workforce diversity, usually derived from organizational recruiting strategy (Sanders, 2003; Tartaro & Krimmel, 2003). The concerns of police agencies with respect to personnel recruitment for sworn positions appeared to center upon the challenges of workforce diversification, “best practices”, and models sought to illuminate ways police leadership could attract minority and female applicants (Kaminski, 1993; Meagher & Yentes, 1986; Raganella & White, 2004). Little discussion arose of generational differences in police recruitment until the years just prior to the recession itself, when a strain of police workforce management literature sought to explain the more esoteric features of Generation X and Millennials with respect to perceptions of career longevity and reasons for becoming an officer (Orrick, 2008; Raganella & White, 2004). Anecdotal prediction immediately after the 2008 recession was that the struggling economy, coupled with high numbers of available police positions, would stabilize the need for new officers, despite evidence that employee retention and retirements continued to exacerbate the recruitment challenge in policing (Taylor et al., 2006; Wilson et al., 2010).

As the economic recovery from the 2008 recession began to accelerate, trends in police workforce management that appeared to transcend the recession itself (namely, continued high numbers of retirees and the lack of qualified applicants wrought by changing generational preferences and expectations) persisted in police workforce settings (Derby, 2008; Wilson et al., 2010). Attention in police management turned toward achieving a deeper understanding of these transformative generational preferences, and contemporary research and managerial attention toward the career preferences and expectations of Millennials intensified in policing and other fields (Armacost, 2016; Brown & Vaughn, 2011; Copple, 2017; Kristl et al., 2011; Morison, 2017). Focusing on best practices for recruiting qualified applicants and popularizing police management attention to generational differences, this strain of research and interest searches for a substantive strategy to address contemporary recruitment challenges. But few of these contemporary studies have been derived from actual data on the current applicant pool’s career focus and expectations; one notable research effort (Castaneda & Ridgeway, 2010) examined career attitudes of existing police academy cadets.

This research project seeks to fill a gap in existing focus on police recruitment by examining the attitudes of the potential current applicant pool through the use of a questionnaire disseminated to university criminal justice students. The findings from this questionnaire are certain to stimulate discussion of contemporary recruitment strategies used to attract qualified applicants from this cohort, but may also serve as valuable information to assist police agencies in targeting employee retention trends and in succession planning.

### STUDY APPROACH AND DATA COLLECTION

The intent of this research project was to uncover potential “fear points”, through the use of a Likert-based questionnaire distributed to college students enrolled in criminal justice classes, of potential police patrol applicants who may or may not be considering a police patrol career. The study approach was to visit criminal justice classes at five universities and, once permission was obtained by the university’s Institutional Review Board and administrative staff, visit as many classes as possible in order to distribute (either at the beginning or the end of each class session) a 100-question survey designed to elicit responses to questions regarding their expectations, knowledge of, and feelings regarding various parts of the police patrol candidate recruitment, selection, and training processes.

### SURVEY INSTRUMENT

The survey instrument was a hard-copy document provided to students during the first or last 15 minutes of class. Students self-administered the survey and were instructed to circle the response that most closely represented their feelings, with the exception of degree major and race/ethnicity which were fill-in-the-blank. Perceptions were measured using Likert-type scales ranging from one to five, with a “neither agree nor disagree” option as the middling value. For students present in the 39 course sections sampled, the response rate was 98.8 percent.

### SAMPLE AND RECRUITMENT

Research staff decided to sample criminal justice students at colleges and universities for two reasons. First, the primary point of the study’s original research agenda was to investigate if and why individuals taking criminal justice courses at the college level displayed a disinterest in police patrol careers despite their enrollment in the courses. Second, it was believed that criminal justice students at the college level, while not necessarily interested in police careers, would have some passing familiarity with the rigors of the application, selection, and training processes that went into making police officers. This sampling strategy did not eliminate individuals who were potentially interested in police work from the study population because none of the five universities surveyed restricted criminal justice courses to criminal justice majors, or were necessarily required by the university’s academic curriculum. Therefore, there were a wide variety of students enrolled in the courses surveyed: students of different academic and career interests, students of various ethnic, gender, and age groups, and students whose choice of future career was as-yet undetermined. The universities surveyed (The University of Southern Mississippi, Illinois State University, Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis, Missouri State University, and University of Massachusetts Lowell) were selected for regional and programmatic variance.

# RESPONDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

Respondents to the survey varied across a number of demographic features which are described below in Tables 1-6.

**Table 1.**  
**University Attendance**

University	Respondents	Sample Percent
University of Southern Mississippi	186	24.1%
Illinois State University	102	13.2%
UMass-Lowell	94	12.2%
IUPUI	185	24.0%
Missouri State University	205	26.6%
TOTAL	772	

**Table 2.**  
**Ethnic Demographics of Survey Respondents**

Reported Ethnicity	Respondents	Sample Percent
African- American	114	15.4%
American Indian/Alaskan native	2	0.3%
Asian	12	1.6%
Hispanic/Latino	49	6.6%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	2	0.3%
White	531	71.6%
Self-reported mixed	32	4.3%
TOTAL	742	

**Table 3.**  
**Gender Demographics of Survey Respondents**

Reported Ethnicity	Respondents	Sample Percent
Male	315	43.8%
Female	403	56.1%
Self-report transgender	1	0.1%
TOTAL	719	

**Table 4.**  
**Year in School responses of Survey Respondents**

Year in School	Respondents	Sample Percent
Freshman	136	20.5%
Sophomore	102	15.4%
Junior	205	30.9%
Senior	221	33.3%
TOTAL	664	

**Table 5.**  
**Age Demographics of Survey Respondents**

Reported Age	Respondents	Sample Percent
18-21	524	68.9%
22-25	196	25.8%
26-29	26	3.4%
30 and over	14	1.8%
TOTAL	760	

**Table 6.**  
**College Major Demographics of Survey Respondents**

Reported College Major	Respondents	Sample Percent
Criminal Justice	454	60.3%
Forensic Sciences	38	5.0%
Non-Criminal Justice Social Science Major	71	9.4%
Criminal Justice and another (Double Major)	50	6.6%
Public Safety Management	55	7.3%
Other/Undecided	85	11.3%
TOTAL	753	

# BARRIERS TO PATROL CAREERS

## PERCEIVED BARRIERS TO POLICE PATROL CAREERS

This study assumed and surveyed multiple possible barriers to a potential applicant’s desire to be a police patrol officer. These are categorized in the following sections as questions about the *recruitment and selection* process, the *training and academy* process,

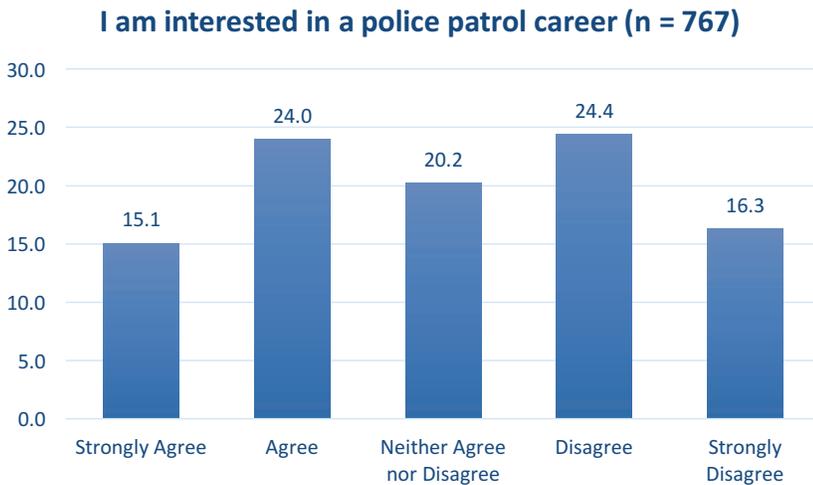
and the *nature of police work itself*. Each of these three categories served as sources of questions which are reflected in the following bar graphs.

### Questions about the recruitment and selection process itself.

The survey questions considered a wide array of potential “fear points” regarding the recruitment and selection process for police careers, including invasive background checks, discussions of prior drug use, aversion to the length of the hiring process, and the scrutiny of one’s social media use. The results below indicate a mixed reaction to the hypothetical fear points. It is apparent from the responses that, while there may be traditional and substantive apprehension to the application process, there also exists a marked confidence and interest in the career despite the challenges of applying. We have

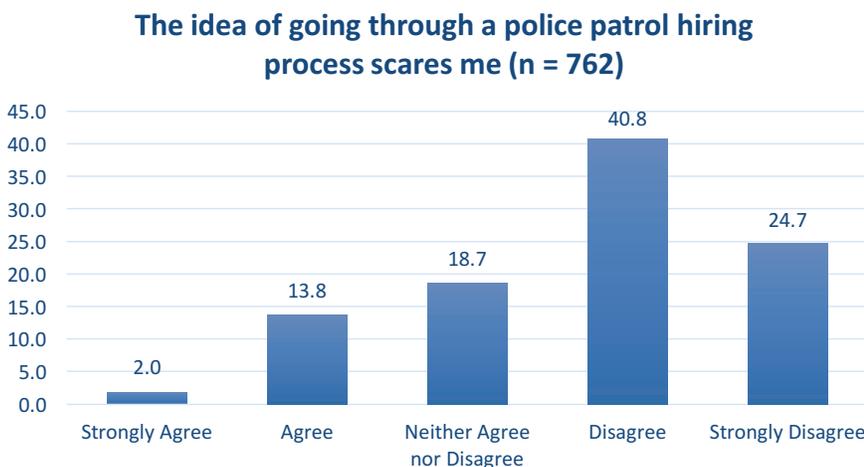
also provided three control variables (two for ethnicity, and one for gender) for questions deemed critical to common perceptions of disparity: criminal history, drug use, and the overall hiring process. As a baseline point of discussion, we asked agreement with the phrase “I am interested in a police patrol career” to gauge basic interest on the part of respondents, resulting in an even distribution. Questions about mentoring, the career ladder, and the respondents’ generational self-perception are also included for context.

Figure 2.1



As shown in Figure 2.1, students displayed substantial variation in level of interest in a police patrol career. About thirty-nine percent indicated interest, while about forty-one percent indicated they would not be interested in a police patrol career. Roughly twenty percent of students neither agreed nor disagreed that they had an interest in a police patrol career.

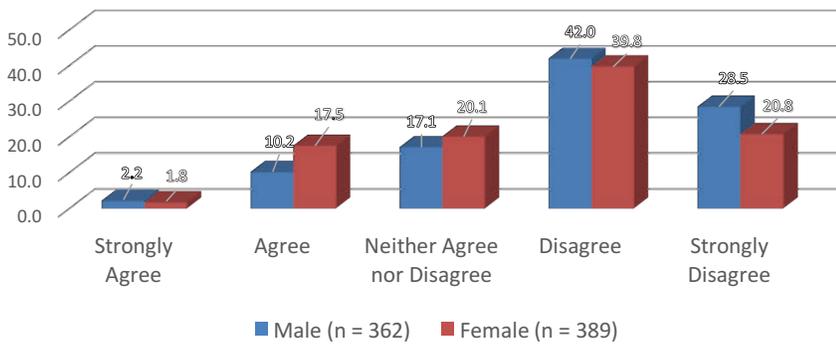
Figure 2.2



Many police administrators are under the impression that potential recruits, especially traditional students of contemporary generations, may be intimidated by the police recruitment process. As shown in Figure 2.2, only about sixteen percent of students indicated that they were scared of the hiring process, while sixty five percent indicated they were not scared of the hiring process.

**Figure 2.3**

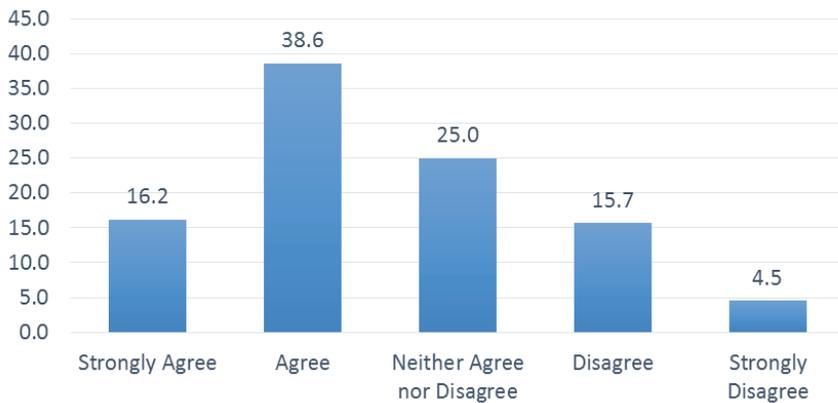
The idea of going through a police patrol hiring process scares me (by gender) (n=762)



Police agencies have speculated that difficulties in attracting female police officers may be partially due to intimidation with the recruitment and selection process. While there was a statistically significant difference between genders in fear of the hiring process, the difference was not especially striking as far as a substantive difference. About twelve percent of male students indicated the hiring process scared them, while about nineteen percent of females indicated they were intimidated (Figure 2.3).

**Figure 2.4**

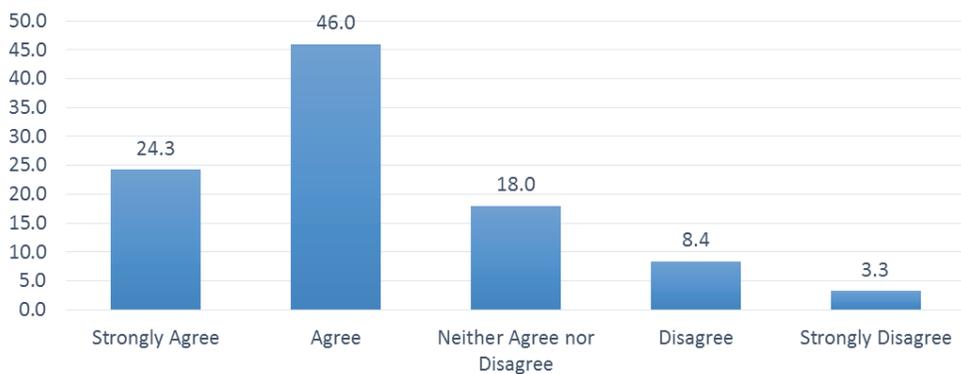
I would only be interested in police patrol as a ladder to some other career (n = 753)



Police agencies and criminal justice professors alike are under the impression that initiation of a police patrol career is viewed as a stepping stone to more specialized work within law enforcement by many students. The current data support this indication, as a majority (54.8%) of students indicated they would only be interested in a patrol career to advance to some other career path (Figure 2.4).

**Figure 2.5**

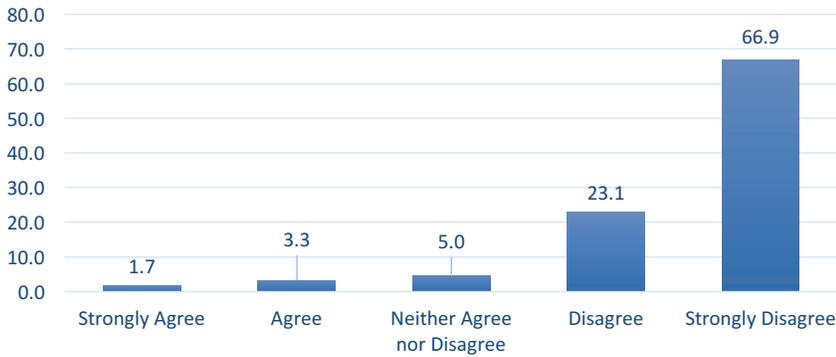
Having a mentor would make a difference in helping me choose a police patrol career (n = 750)



One area that is possibly overlooked by departments seeking to recruit patrol officers is the power of a mentoring relationship. The potential of having a mentor to recruit students into a police patrol career is supported by the survey data. Over seventy percent of responding students agreed or strongly agreed that having a mentor would make a difference in their selection of a career patrol career (Figure 2.5).

**Figure 2.6**

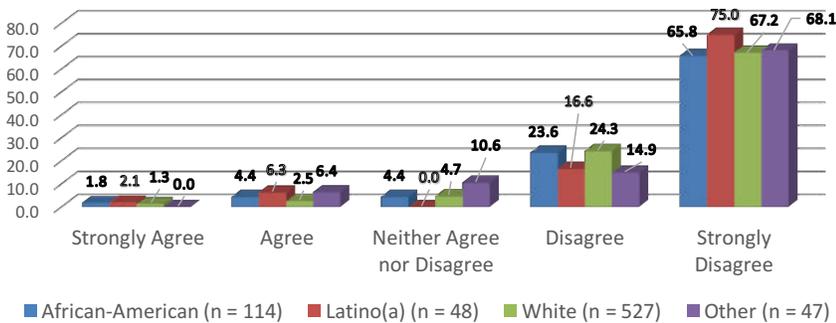
**My personal criminal history would hurt my chances at ever being a patrol officer (n = 764)**



One area that has been indicated as a challenge to recruitment by many police agencies is finding an applicant pool with a background free of a problematic personal criminal history and substance abuse. This has also been used as an anecdotal justification for the lack of success in recruiting patrol officers who are racial and ethnic minorities. As shown in Figure 2.6, ninety percent of the 764 undergraduate students surveyed in criminal justice courses were under the impression that their personal criminal history would not hurt their chances at being a patrol officer. Additionally, no significant differences were displayed between racial/ethnic groupings in terms of background as a barrier to a patrol career (Figures 2.7 and 2.8). Similarly, nearly fourteen percent believed that their drug use may be a disqualifier for patrol work (Figures 2.9 and 2.10) with no significant differences between racial and ethnic groupings.

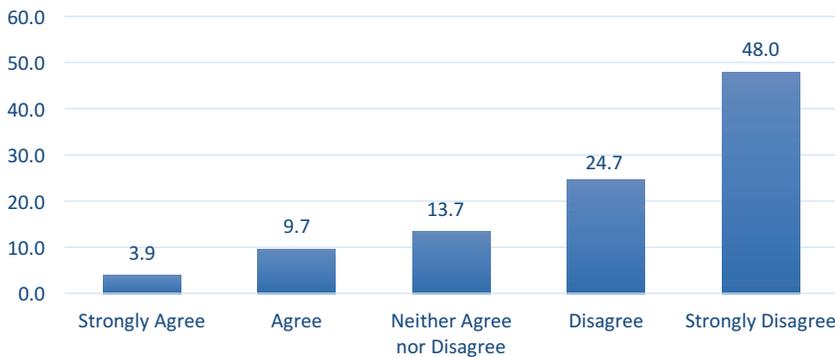
**Figure 2.8**

**My personal criminal history would hurt my chances at ever becoming a patrol officer (by ethnicity) (n=764)**



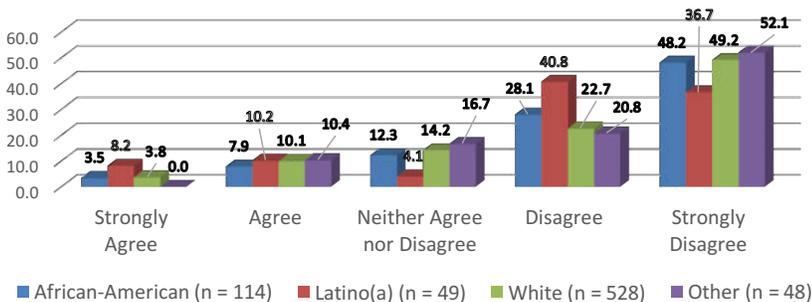
**Figure 2.9**

**My past drug use would hurt my chances at being a patrol officer (n = 766)**



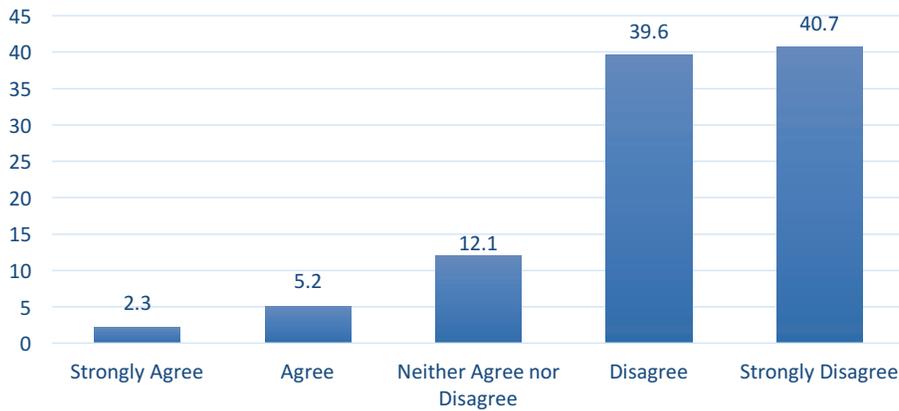
**Figure 2.10**

**My past drug use would hurt my chances at being a patrol officer (by ethnicity) (n=766)**



**Figure 2.11**

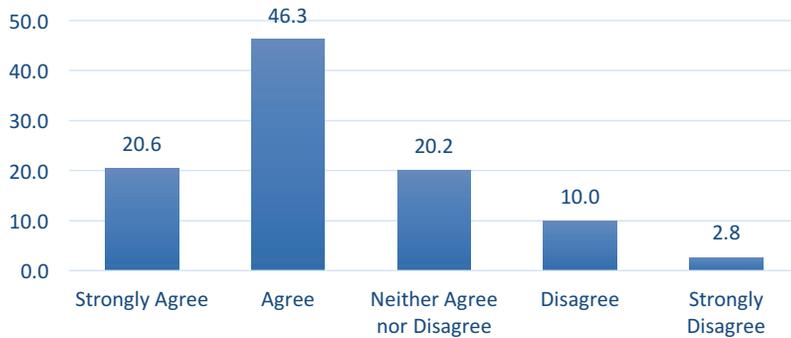
**What I have said on social media in the past would hurt my chances at ever being a patrol officer (n = 767)**



An emerging trend in police recruitment is that police agencies are now able to view social media usage of recruits as a potential disqualifier. Not only do agencies want to screen out recruits who will exhibit problematic behavior as officers, but many of the statements made by these individuals would call into question the discretionary decisions made as officers. Only about eight percent of students indicated that their social media usage may negatively affect their chances of a career in policing (Figures 2.11 and 2.12).

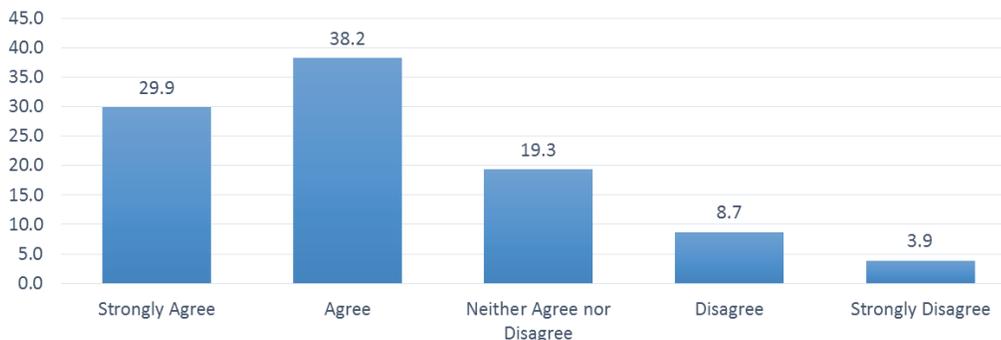
**Figure 2.12**

**Looking at someone's social media activity can give you a good idea of what kind of character they have (n = 751)**



**Figure 2.13**

**People of my generation want an immediately successful career without "paying their dues" at an entry level position (n = 750)**



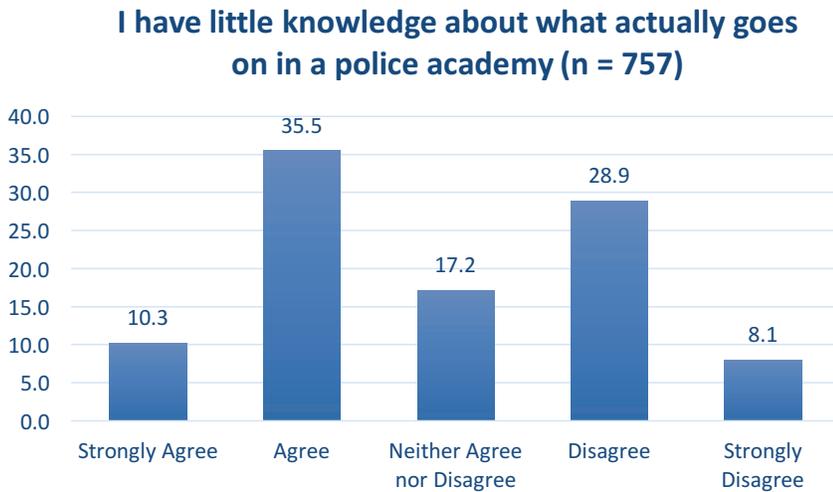
One final question about the recruitment process focused on the potentially unrealistic expectations of students in the Millennial and Post-Millennial generations, who represent the age groupings most likely to enter patrol work for the next five years. As shown, sixty-eight percent of students in criminal justice courses agreed or strongly agreed that members of their generation have unrealistic career expectations (Figure 2.13).

## Questions about the police training academy.

The survey questions considered that the longevity, intensity, and challenge of attending the police training academy was a potential barrier to interest in a police patrol career. The results displayed a marked confidence in respondents that not only does the academy itself not represent a “deal breaker” for considering police careers,

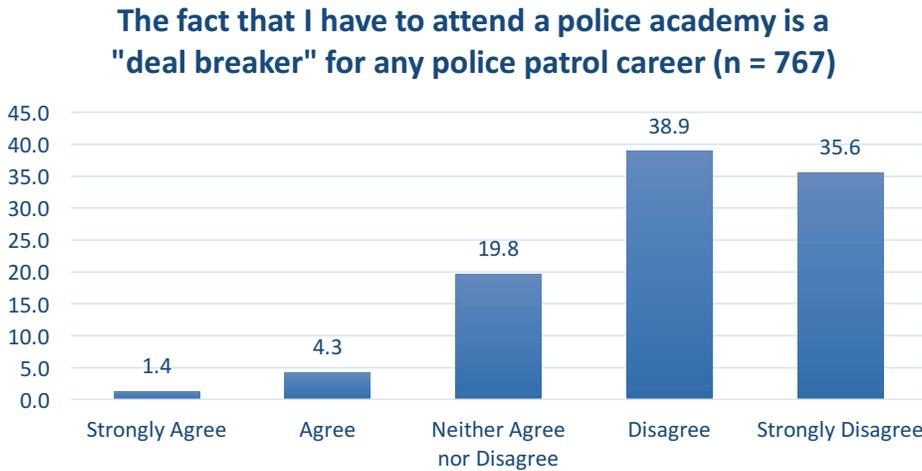
but that confidence in attaining expected physical fitness levels and conquering intimidation of these expectations exists in the respondents. When examining gender differences, the question of physical fitness does display expected dissimilarity.

Figure 2.14



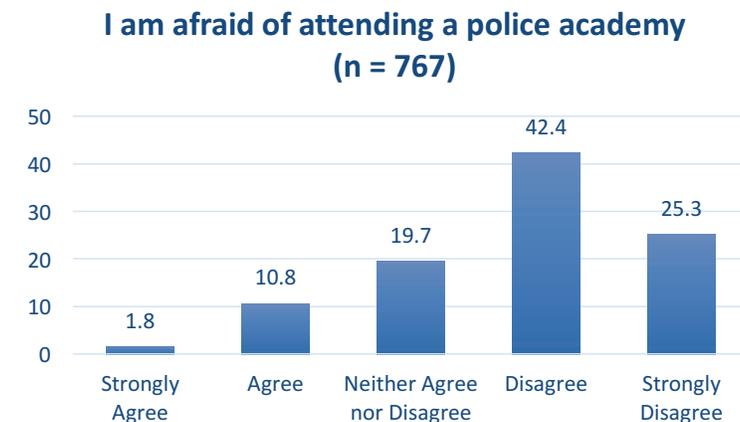
Intriguingly, a strong variation in student responses as to their knowledge about the realities of the police academy reveals that much work can be done to disseminate realistic academy preview to applicants (Figure 2.14).

Figure 2.15



As shown in Figure 2.15, the academy as a whole is not perceived to be a substantial barrier to patrol career interest. Only about six percent of students indicated that attending the academy would be a “deal breaker.”

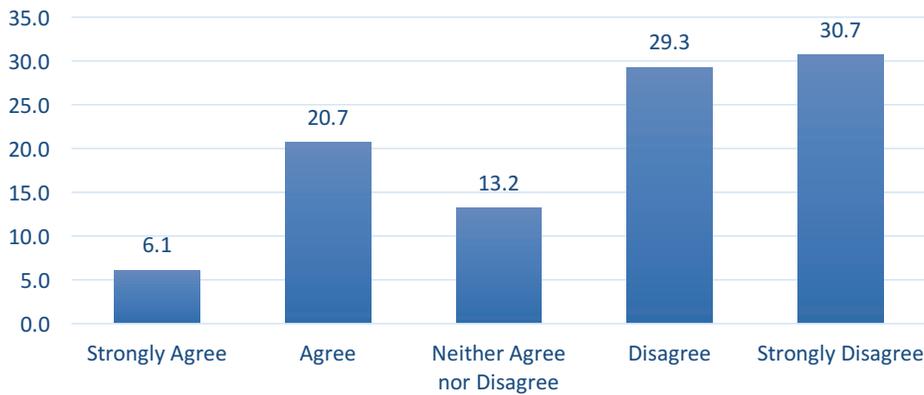
Figure 2.16



While not perceived as an extensive barrier in its entirety, about thirteen percent of students indicated they had some fear about attending a police academy (Figure 2.16).

Figure 2.17

### The physical fitness training required to attend a police academy intimidates me (n = 768)



Physical fitness is perceived as a substantial barrier to entering a patrol career. About thirty percent of respondents reported they would be intimidated by the physical aspects of attending a police academy (Figure 2.17). Significant differences in this regard were displayed between male and female students. About eleven percent of male students indicated that they would be intimidated by the physical training required in the police academy, while about forty-two percent of female students indicated they would be intimidated (Figure 2.18).

Figure 2.18

### The physical fitness training required to attend a police academy intimidates me (by gender) (n=768)

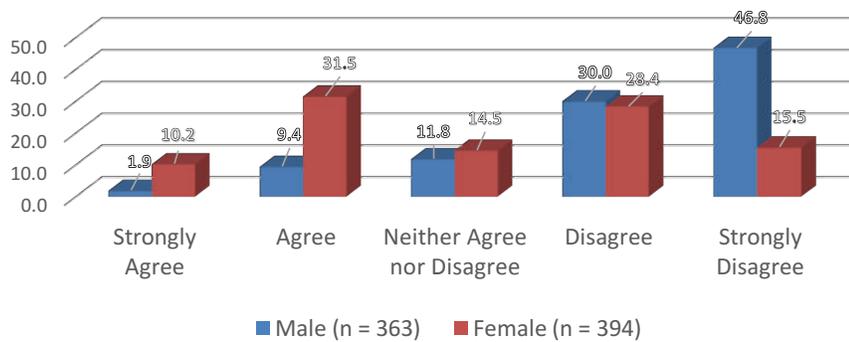
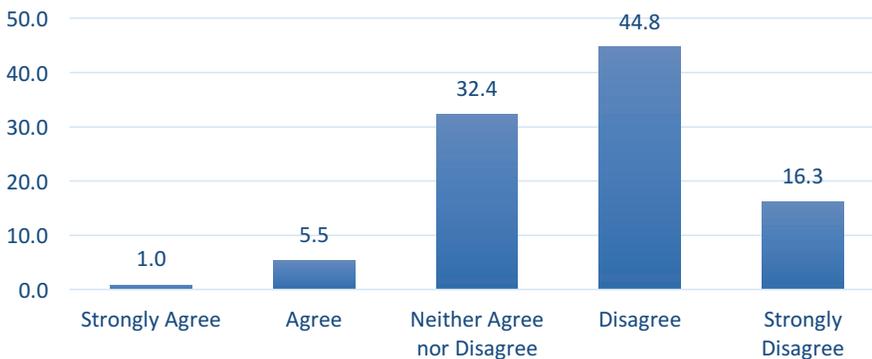


Figure 2.19

### The police academy takes too much time to complete (n = 768)



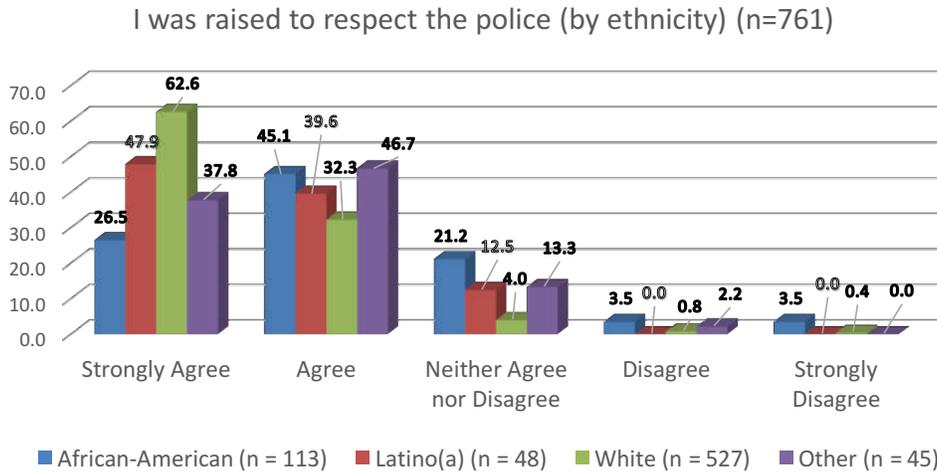
Among the respondents, the time commitment of the academy was not perceived as a barrier. Only six and a half percent of respondents agreed that the police academy takes too long to complete (Figure 2.19).

## Questions about the nature of police work itself.

Intriguing results were indicated when survey respondents were asked about their agreement with survey items regarding their expectations of police patrol careers. These questions probed their knowledge of

the career ladder, social treatment, and societal and peer approval. As noted in our discussion following, the responses to expected promotions raise interesting opportunities for new recruit strategies.

Figure 2.20



Figures 2.20 through 2.24 represent results of questions asked regarding the levels and importance of respect for the police on potential career choice. About thirty eight percent of respondents indicated that the amount of respect that the police receive impacts their desire to enter policing (Figure 2.24).

Figure 2.21

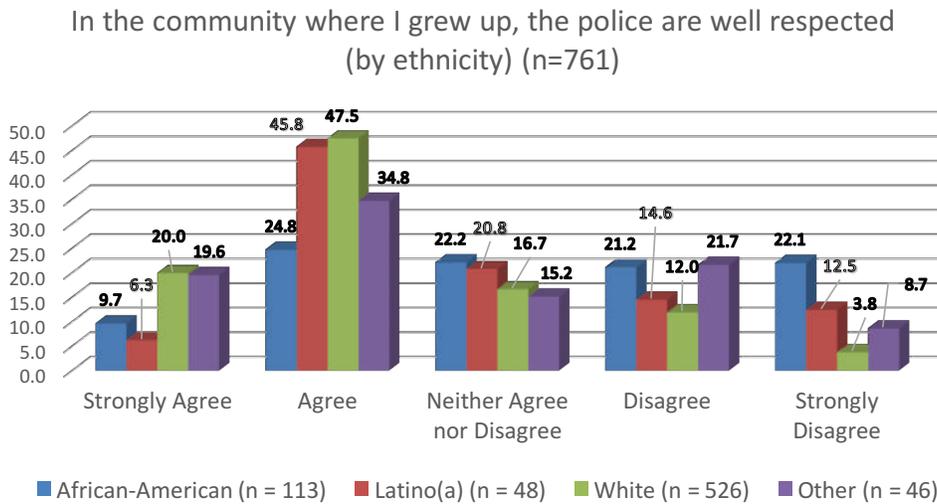
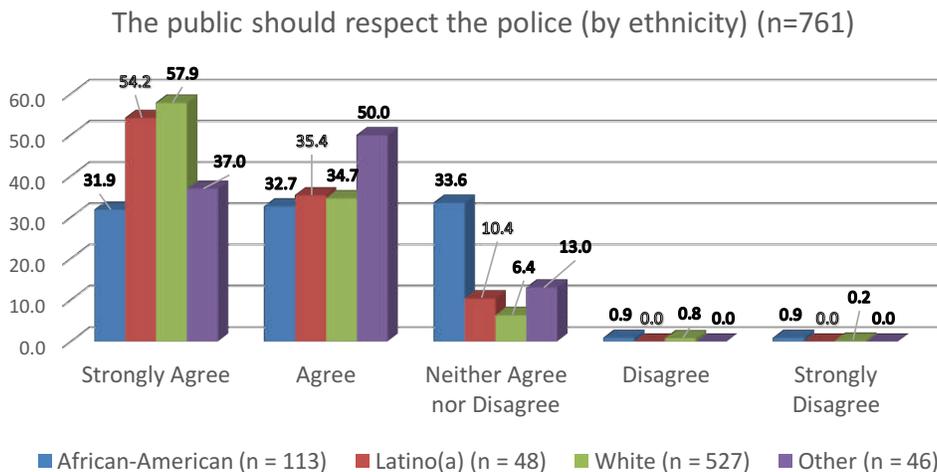
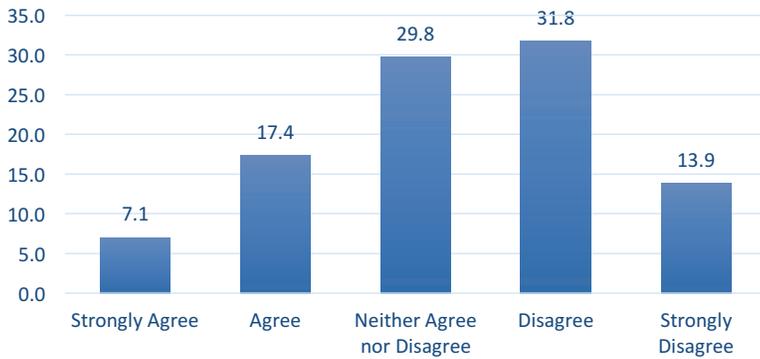


Figure 2.22



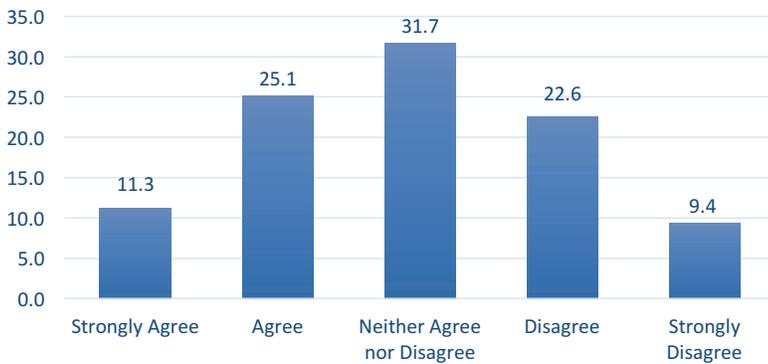
**Figure 2.23**

**It is unfair for the public to criticize what the police do (n = 749)**



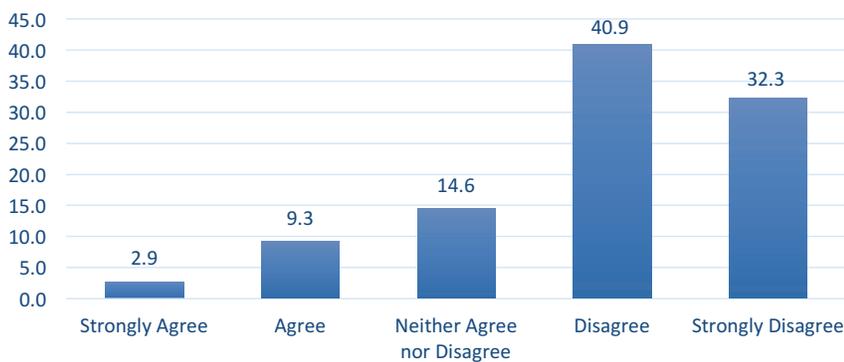
**Figure 2.24**

**The amount of respect the police receive impacts my desire to be a patrol officer (n = 758)**



**Figure 2.25**

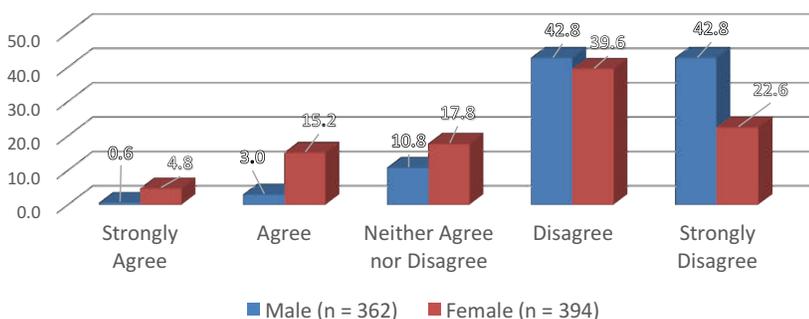
**I am afraid of physical fighting and hand-to-hand combat associated with patrol work (n = 767)**



The physical nature of patrol work is perceived to be a barrier to entering the career by some. About twelve percent of respondents agreed that they would be afraid of the physical fighting aspects of a patrol career (Figure 2.25). While the physical fighting realities of a patrol career were not overwhelmingly shown to be a barrier, substantial gender differences were noted. As shown in Figure 2.26 female students were significantly more likely to agree or agree strongly that they would be afraid of fighting (20.0%) than males (3.6%).

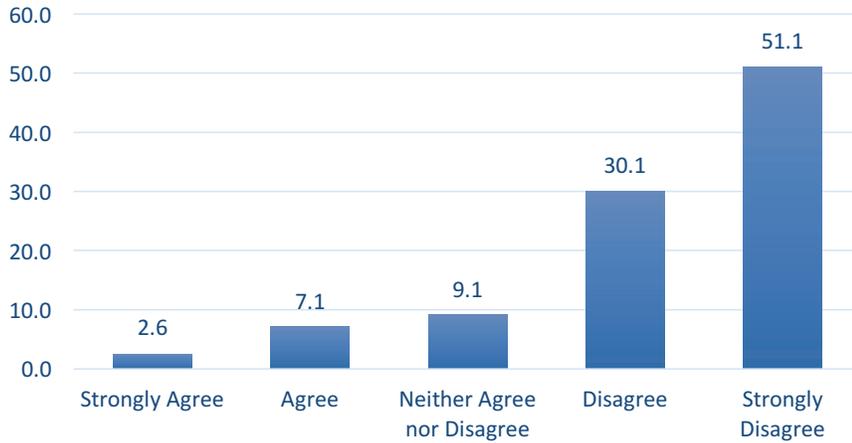
**Figure 2.26**

**I am afraid of physical fighting and hand to hand combat associated with patrol work (by gender) (n=767)**



**Figure 2.27**

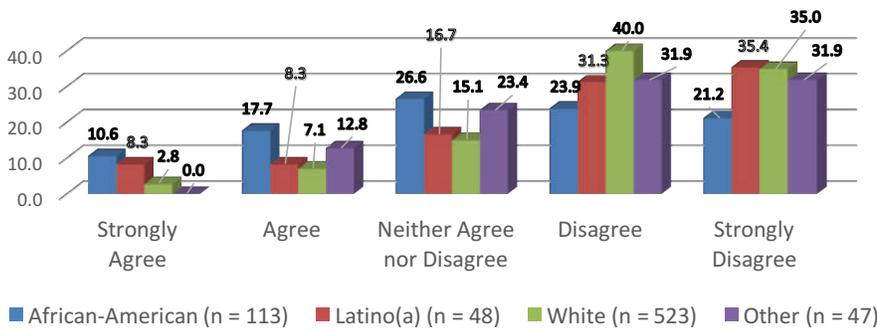
**I am afraid of being around firearms (n = 758)**



Another barrier to entering a patrol career is the support potential recruits receive from their social circle. As shown in Figure 2.27, students of color from all displayed racial and ethnic groupings perceived less approval from their family than did white students.

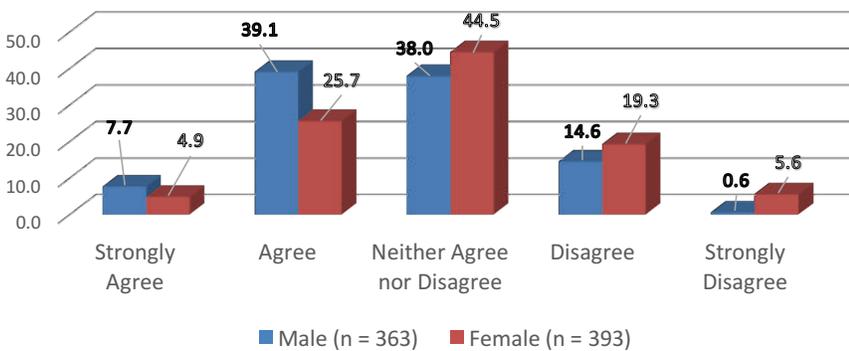
**Figure 2.28**

**My family would not approve of me becoming a patrol officer (by ethnicity) (n=757)**



**Figure 2.29**

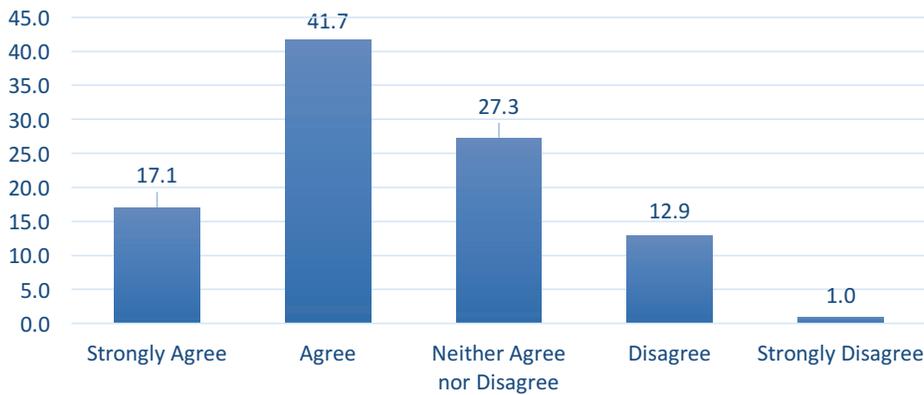
**A police patrol career would provide me a good opportunity to raise a family (by gender) (n=767)**



Another of the potential barriers to entering a police patrol career is that it may contain challenges that make family life difficult. This may be perceived to be especially challenging for female recruits. As shown, twenty-five percent of female students disagreed or disagreed strongly that entering a patrol career inhibited opportunities to raise a family, as compared to fifteen percent of male students (Figure 2.29).

Figure 2.30

### Police patrol work requires serious personal lifestyle changes (n = 768)



About sixty percent of students indicated they agreed or strongly agreed that patrol work would require a serious lifestyle change (Figure 2.30). So, while they perceive unrealistic career expectations amongst their peers, a majority of students understand that a patrol career would change their personal habits. Additionally, only twenty-six percent of students agreed that a patrol career would give them the salary to live the type of lifestyle that they would want (Figure 2.31).

Figure 2.31

### Police patrol salaries allow me to live the kind of lifestyle I want (n = 768)

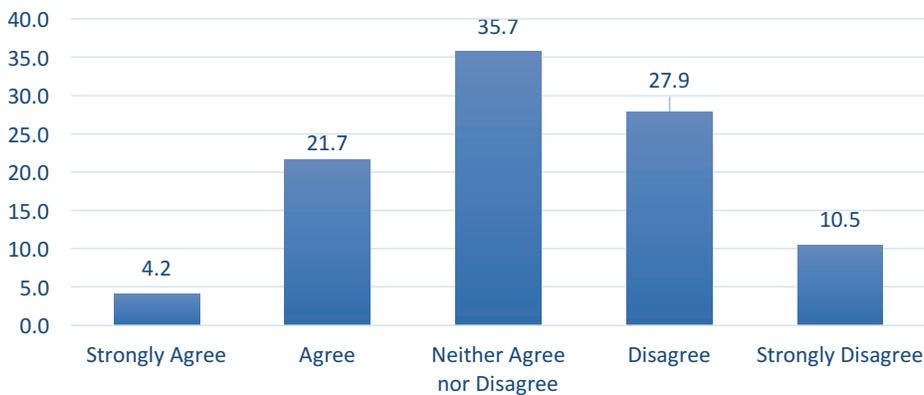
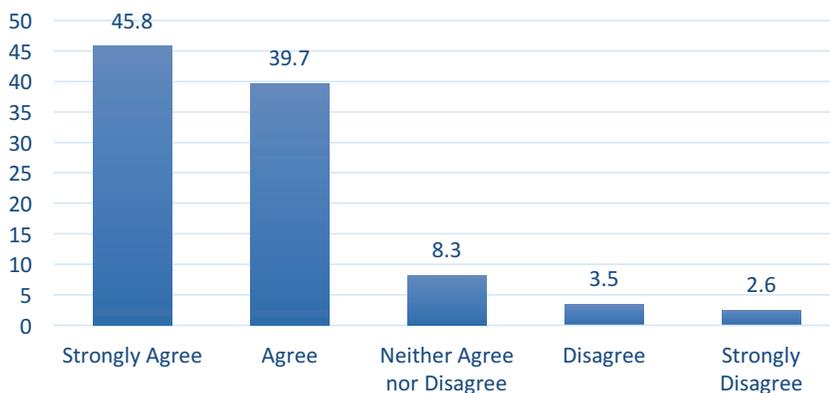


Figure 2.32

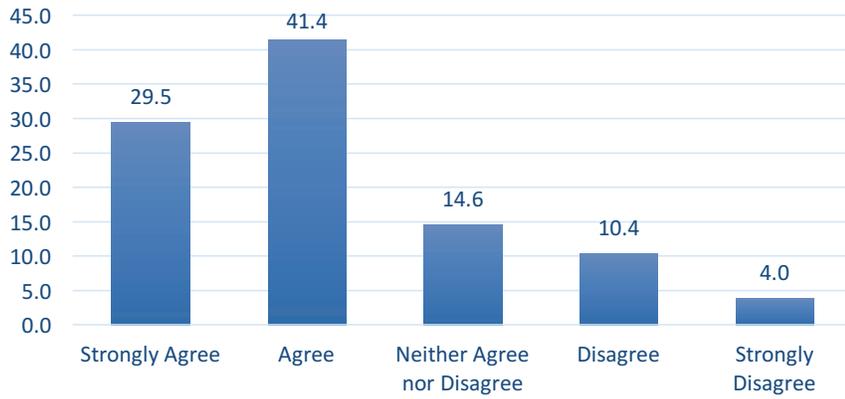
### I would enjoy being a detective or investigator (n = 768)



Along with the agreement that patrol work largely represents a stepping stone, a vast majority of students (85.5%) agreed that they would enjoy a career as a detective or investigator (Figure 2.32). Additionally, about seventy-one percent indicated they would enjoy narcotics investigation (Figure 2.33), but only about thirty-nine percent agreed they would enjoy a career in a police supervisor role (Figure 2.34). However, only about forty-four percent of students indicated that they understood what a police supervisor does (Figure 2.35).

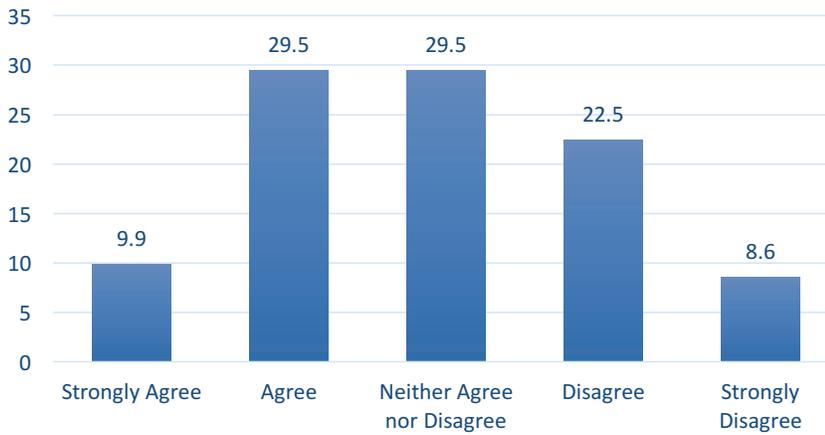
**Figure 2.33**

**I would enjoy working narcotics investigations as a specialized role (n = 766)**



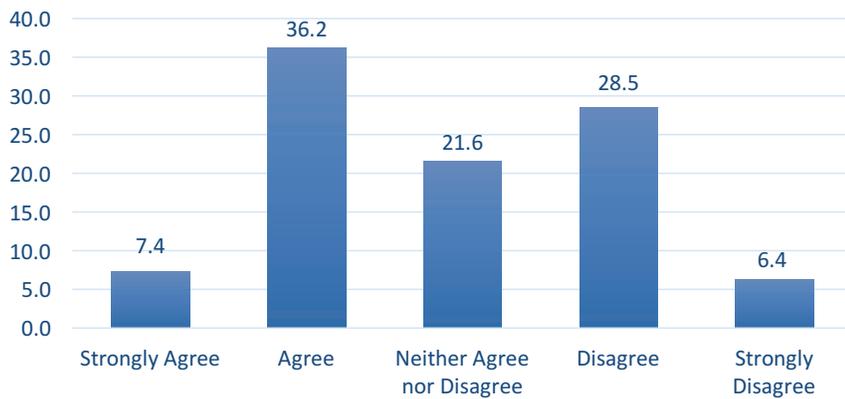
**Figure 2.34**

**I would like being a police supervisor (n = 769)**



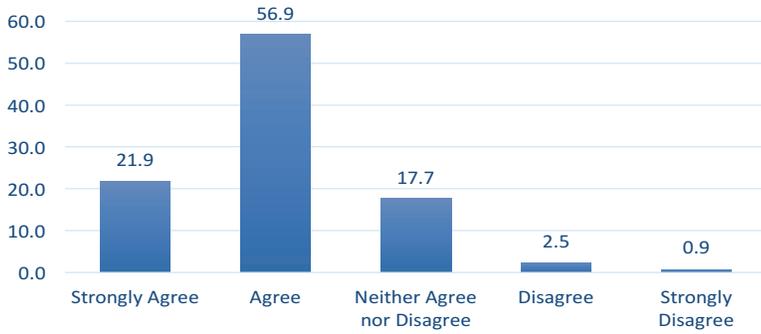
**Figure 2.35**

**I'm not sure what a police sergeant actually does (n = 769)**



**Figure 2.36**

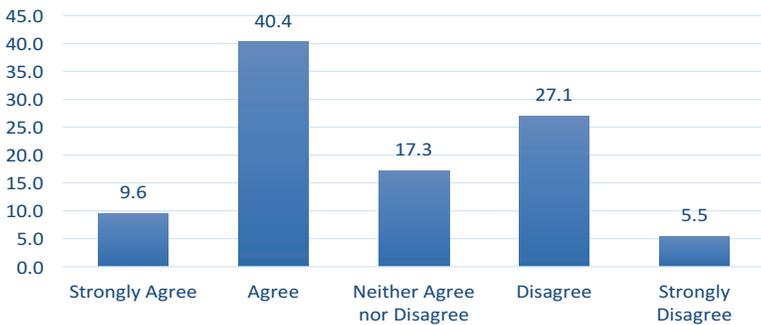
**A police patrol position is a stepping stone to a federal law enforcement career (n = 750)**



Results of questions examining the anecdotal belief that patrol candidates are fixed on future, more prestigious careers at the federal level, as well as their realistic understanding of the rigors and goals of the promotions process within a department, are shown in Figures 2.36 and 2.37.

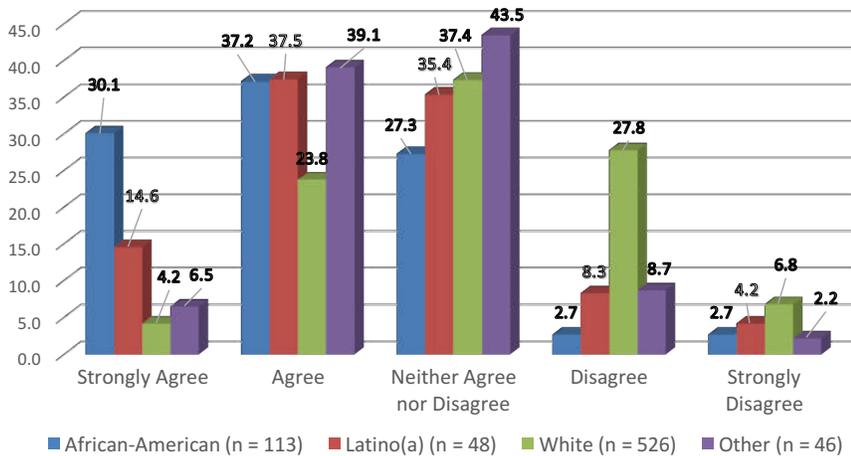
**Figure 2.37**

**I do not fully understand the promotional process for police patrol careers (n = 757)**



**Figure 2.38**

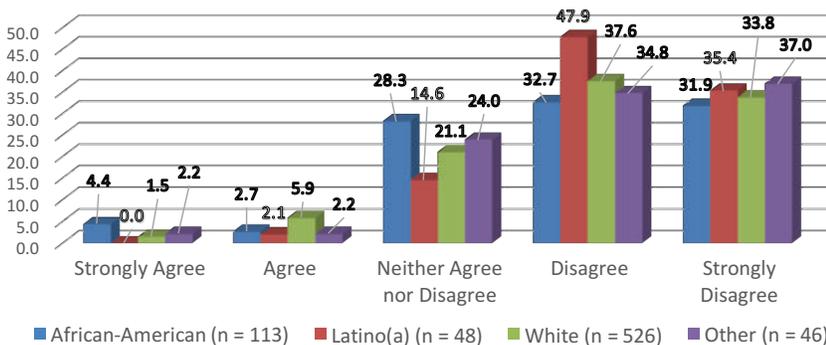
**Police officers racially profile people (by ethnicity) (n=761)**



Results of questions exploring the contemporary issue of police shootings of individuals shown by media, specifically with respect to the interpretation of those events as portraying police as having a racist agenda, are shown in Figures 2.38 through 2.40.

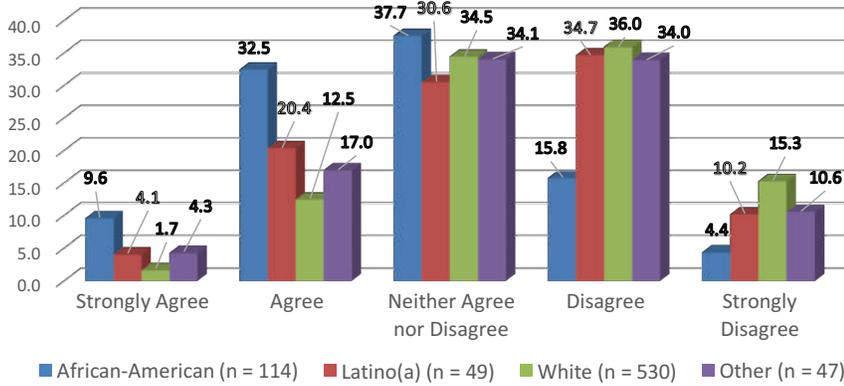
**Figure 2.39**

**I would never be a police patrol officer because I don't want to be labeled as a racist (by ethnicity) (n=760)**



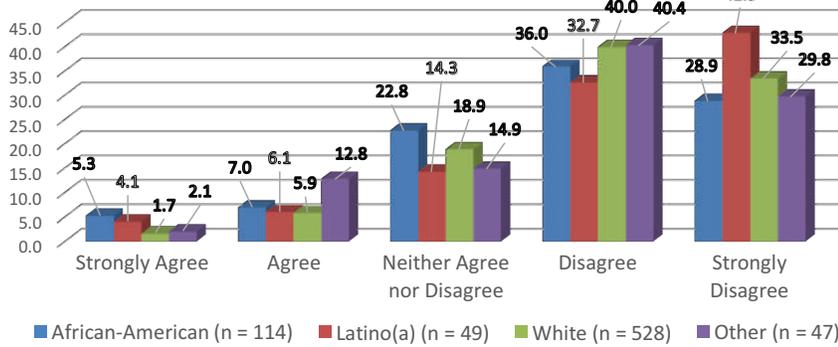
**Figure 2.40**

On-the-job shootings involving patrol officers occur frequently  
(by ethnicity) (n=769)



**Figure 2.41**

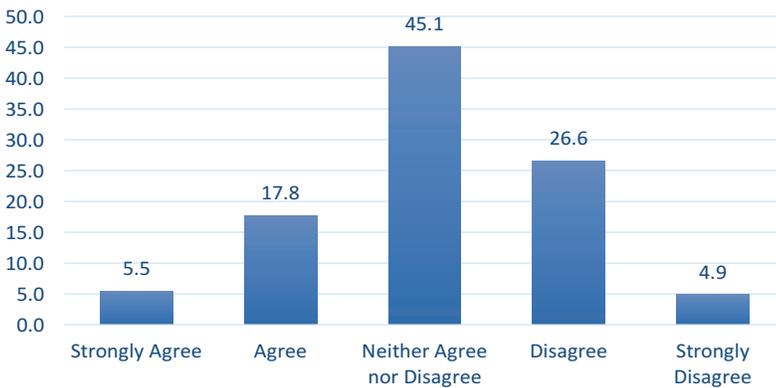
I dislike the idea of wearing a police uniform  
(by ethnicity) (n=767)



The visible experience of wearing a police uniform which identifies one as a police officer was explored in a question regarding one’s self-identification. There were some notable differences in the response of students by ethnicity as to their impressions of wearing a police uniform (Figure 2.41).

**Figure 2.42**

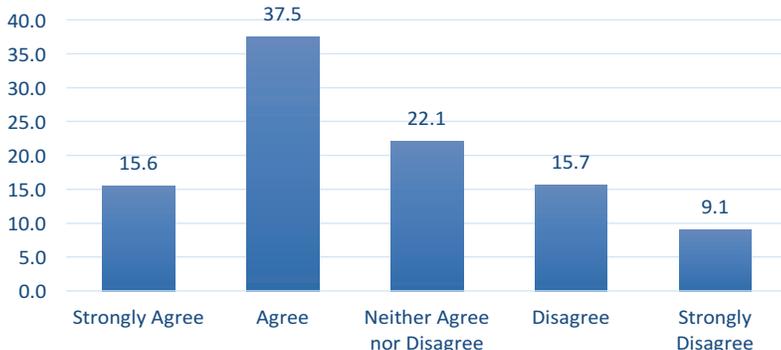
Police patrol work is too stressful (n = 758)



Evidence as to whether or not students perceived the work of a police patrol officer as “too stressful” shows some variation on behalf of respondents (Figure 2.42).

**Figure 2.43**

I could arrest someone for marijuana possession  
in good conscience (n = 758)



Figures 2.43 and 2.44 display respondents’ conscientious attitudes toward arresting individuals for possession of drugs. While the impressions of arrests for marijuana display obvious reconsideration, their willingness to arrest individuals for cocaine possession remains strong.

Figure 2.44

**I could arrest someone for cocaine possession in good conscience (n = 756)**

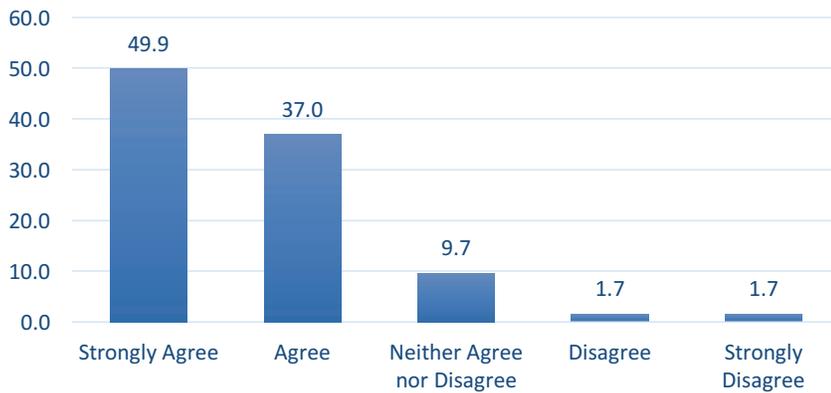
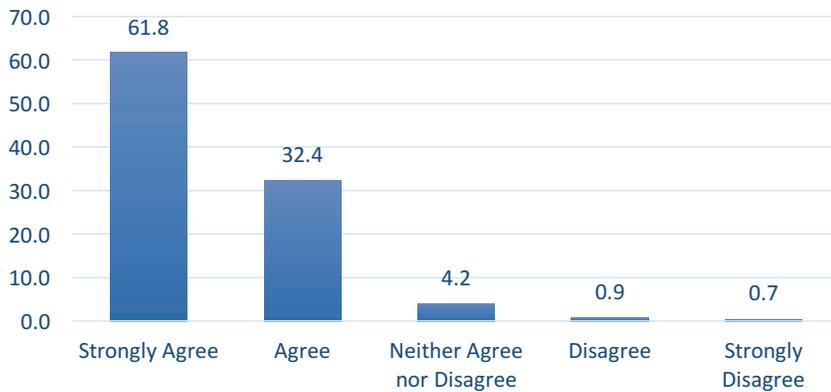


Figure 2.45

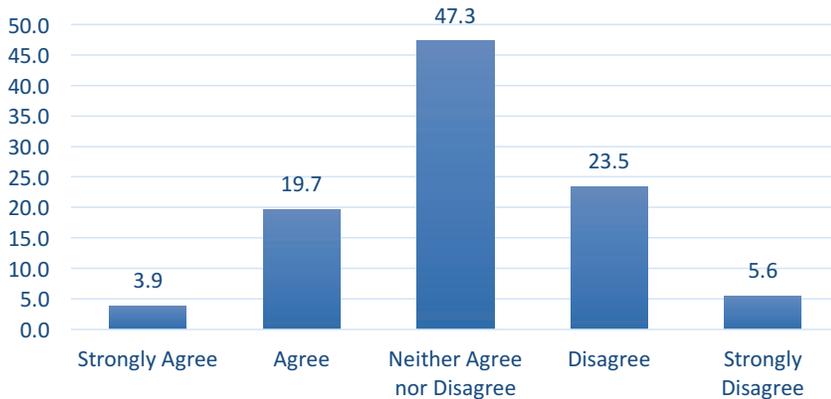
**I would want to help child victims involved in criminal situations (n = 756)**



Respondents indicated strongly that they would be committed to assisting child victims as police patrol officers (Figure 2.45).

Figure 2.46

**Police departments understand what my generation expects from a career (n = 748)**



In Figure 2.46, variation in agreement that police departments anticipate current applicants' career expectations is shown.

## CHAPTER THREE

# DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

From five universities' criminal justice programs, this study sought to discover "fear points" from a variety of questions regarding perceptions of the recruitment, selection, and training processes for police patrol careers, and also if respondents agreed with common perceptions of policing itself as they considered career planning. We feel that no single fear point was demonstrated as being more substantively significant than another as a stand-alone response to the dilemma of police recruitment from the potential applicant pool represented in the survey. However, a number of intriguing and tangible lessons can be gleaned from the data, including some that have potential importance for police organizations seeking to expand recruiting efforts. We elaborate on five potential lessons in this chapter, and discuss each from the basis of what they may say about future recruitment strategy.

### ***Respondents suggest the need for mentors during the career preparation process.***

Mentoring in police work is institutional (for instance, in the form of field training, and in select agencies with well-defined succession planning and leadership training programs). Such mentoring within a department is often time and organization intensive. It requires insight, dynamic leadership, and buy-in at multiple organizational levels to successfully initiate, sustain, and evaluate mentoring programs. Many police agencies struggle to sustain even the simplest of these (i.e., internship programs), despite their popularity and seeming rewards for both recruitment and public outreach. Yet the data in these results can be considered in tandem to form novel approaches and strategies that go beyond traditional recruitment strategies in police work. For instance, the disparity among ethnicities when answering the question about family barriers to police work suggests that mentoring of applicants of color could take the form of greater, more immersive involvement in what is apparently the applicant's difficult life choice. Recasting the police recruiter as more of a "football coach"-type of recruiter (one who visits the families of a potential recruit), or as one who exercises one-on-one with recruits, or who socializes as a mentor with the recruit across multiple personal and professional contexts) may unlock potential possibilities of conversation, assurance, and strengthened relationships that display a side of the agency that was previously unforeseen. The respondents simultaneously agree with the idea of having a mentor (Figure 2.5) and show (at least in African-American contexts) a reluctance to confide in the family about one's career plans (Figure 2.28). This creates an opportunity for the agency in question to establish a deeper relationship beyond making available basic information about the selection and testing process, often the traditional extent of police recruiter behavior.

### ***Respondents appear under-informed about the realities of the police career ladder.***

While simultaneously showing some interest in police supervisory and leadership roles (a cumulative percentage of thirty-nine percent either strongly agree or agree, Figure 2.34), and also admitting lack of knowledge about the activities inherent in those same roles

(a cumulative percentage of forty-four percent, Figure 2.35), it is obvious that while the respondents are interested and curious about career advancement in police work, their information about those positions is lacking (also Figure 2.37). This suggests that there is little revealed to many potential interested applicants about what specifically the process for advancement, and the content of the roles beyond patrol, might actually be. Time should be taken by recruiters not only to engage in realistic job preview of patrol positions (through ride-along experiences, mentoring, internships, and the like) but also to expose potential applicants to what exactly sergeants, lieutenants, and captains in the department do, and how they arrived at those roles. Interestingly, respondents are freely admitting (by sixty-eight percent agreeing or strongly agreeing, Figure 2.13) that their generation has little patience with the entry-level position route of career advancement. This may be interpreted in conjunction with the question about the career ladder itself (fifty-five percent agreeing or strongly agreeing that patrol is an acceptable entry-level position should a future promotional opportunity await, Figure 2.4). What is evident is that the potential recruit's knowledge of what exactly lies beyond that entry level position is ambiguous. Strategies that target the potential recruit's impressions of the agency's career opportunities by sharing the importance, content, and relative prestige of these positions can potentially act as retention strategies as well.

### ***Respondents feel confident about their criminal history, drug, and social media use.***

The responses to questions about personal background (Figures 2.6, 2.9, and 2.11) can be interpreted two ways: did the candidate believe as though their personal past behavior was acceptable for police hire regardless of the potential infractions within, or are they fully aware of agencies' expectations and limitations regarding these background items and confirm that their behavior was within those boundaries? The second interpretation does not disclose much information about the first, but it can be assumed that the respondents had an opportunity to reflect upon what they knew to be their criminal, drug, and social media history, and answered as to whether they felt these behaviors "hurt their chance" at being hired. In an era of gradually relaxing attitudes toward marijuana use, and an expectation of social media transparency often regardless of the statement made, this concept can be problematic. Agencies could do well to communicate these expectations at the earliest stage of the recruit process, even prior to an individual expressing interest, and possibly to younger groups of people that visit or have contact with the agency. Many departments with established "Explorer" and high-school (and earlier) programs make clear the level of acceptability of these possible infractions; making this information a central part of recruitment can solidify recruit expectations early on.

### ***Respondents appear confident about the police academy.***

Police agencies which likewise provide preview of the academy experience could do well to communicate realistic expectations of

what takes place on a day-to-day basis within. Various ways of doing so include timely video clips of academy experiences beyond physical training (the respondents being college students, it is possible that their familiarity with classroom-based education is more acute than other potential applicant cohorts), and internship experiences that allow individuals time to immerse in the academy environment. Many older police officers can recall an era when such experiences were often held (even deliberately) as invisible as possible to preserve mystique and intimidate cadets, but changing generational preferences allow for more transparency to capitalize of evident recruit and applicant interest.

### ***Respondents may benefit from one-on-one communication of the process.***

Since the 2000's, widespread attention has been paid to the connectedness of Generation X and Millennial cohorts of job seekers, and the way in which their use of social media and computer technology to seek and retain information and communication has transformed the workplace. Similarly, social media has enhanced the police recruitment process, providing an almost global platform for police agencies to advertise and disseminate information pertaining to positions and application expectations. But when it comes to the police recruitment and selection process, specifically in light of many of the survey responses in this project, police agencies should continue to pursue non-digital means of identifying, mentoring, and building relationships with applicants. Specifically, respondents' statements about mentoring, physical preparation and training, gaining knowledge of advanced career opportunities and collateral duties, and ethnic differences in responses to questions about the influence of family opinions on the career decision open the doors to more traditional (and time-intensive) methods of recruiting. The use of social networking and cellular communication should not be the extent of a police agency's overall recruitment effort, despite their advantages. Future research efforts to investigate the extent to which police agencies' recruitment philosophies and strategies have been either transformed by or limited to social media and online-based efforts should be conducted to make more conclusive statements about the limitations of these options.

# CHAPTER FOUR

## FROM THE CHIEF'S DESK

Leonard Papania, Chief of Police, Gulfport Police Department

History shows that in policing, especially in recent years, while many characteristics never change, new challenges are always present. For instance, the integrity of police officers has been under question as the public demands body cameras. Citizen contacts with law enforcement are now being scrutinized to levels that diminish the impact of police presence. Another challenge in law enforcement that has been influenced by the aforementioned contemporary changes in policing is recruitment and retention. In this study, we conclude with two overall questions. First, what changes in the occupation must be noted and adjustments to recruitment and retention be made? Second, what must remain constant in policing, and should not be changed?

The data collected in this study allow us to better understand the perspectives of the potential labor pool from which we recruit. It provides perspective of what an applicant can expect in the initial part of the career where an individual transitions from citizen/applicant to police officer. Also, some of the data provide an overall perspective as to what potential applicants perceive about policing overall. Prior to examining this data, it is important to understand what we (the employer) seek in our applicant. By understanding both the viewpoint of potential applicant and employer, we have the greatest opportunity of improving our approach to recruitment and retention while maintaining the integrity and competency in policing.

In my assessment of the data, I arranged responses into four categories I have titled *First Tier*, *Growth*, *Balance* and *Job*. *First Tier* is the initial phase of a law enforcement career. It includes the time period that encompasses recruitment, the application process, background investigation, and initial training. Generally, the duration of this time period will be one's first year as a police officer. For most agencies, the first year will follow an applicant's growth into a trained practitioner who operates independently. The second category, *Growth*, refers to those opportunities that arise for career growth after the *First Tier*. This includes promotions, special assignments, collateral duties, and so forth. The third category of *Balance* focuses on what the individual must consider in regards to his or her personal life, and those specific requirements of policing that will impact and possibly change their personal life. Lastly, the *Job* category specifies the perceived and anticipated challenges of the profession of law enforcement. These challenges are ones that are present throughout a law enforcement career. Because of the numerous contemporary challenges that exist in recruiting for diversity, I also examined specific data that present implications for recruiting members of minority communities, especially African-Americans.

### THE FIRST TIER

There were several statements that solicit specific consideration about the potential applicant's preparation for a patrol career. When considering the position of patrol officer, it was revealed that generally the respondents are not averse to considering the idea of a patrol career (Figure 2.1). However, as we will see in the responses particular to *Growth*, respondents look past patrol duties towards

long-term service in other law enforcement capacities. I believe that the entry-level position of the uniformed officer, which accounts for most of the jobs in law enforcement, continues to be tarnished by the combination of negative media and either misunderstood or malicious police actions.

There were three statements in which the respondents had the opportunity to measure their perceptions of use of force (Figures 2.25, 2.27, and 2.40). Their responses gave indication that physical engagement was not a barrier to career interest. While the potential to use force was not a substantive concern, there was a statement that the respondent weighed in on arresting someone for marijuana (Figure 2.43). It was readily apparent that the contemporary movement toward legalization of marijuana has influence upon these college age respondents. Over half the respondents indicated that they were bothered with the notion of arresting an individual for marijuana possession. Less than twenty five percent indicated they would not have an issue. This view point may have a relationship to number of applicants that will report historic use of marijuana during the background phase.

Several statements offer insight into the perception of the police academy. Respondents tend to understand the need for the academy, but also they express a lack of full knowledge of what occurs in the academy (especially in Figure 2.14). Overall, it seems that the academy does not present a major obstacle for these respondents as they consider a law enforcement career.

Respondents were presented with opportunities to give insight into their background and character being analyzed for consideration of police employment. Respondents recognized the importance of integrity. Even prior to this report, it has been safe to assume the younger potential labor market for policing is heavily involved in the use of social media. Much of social media is concerned with self-expression and revelation. Past generations did not engage in public forums that allowed for so much personal exposure. In my personal experience, that was perpetually one of the training objectives: as a police officer you were expected to be constantly observed. Being of a prior generation, having an in-depth background investigation performed was a subject of concern. However, it is apparent that the respondents in this study (mostly college-age students) did not have an aversion to being examined in a background investigation, nor do they have an indifference to their social media being reviewed (Figures 2.11 and 2.12). Moreover, they indicated that a review of a person's social media gives a "good idea of what character they have." I believe this to be a strong indicator that today's potential applicants have much less apprehension to the invasiveness of body cameras, dash cameras, and so forth. The data revealed that less than ten percent of respondents had any such concern (Figure 2.11). Of the statements in this grouping, one gave indication of potential solutions for new police officers. Just over seventy percent of respondents indicated that a mentor would be beneficial to them (Figure 2.5).

## THE IMPACT OF CAREER GROWTH POTENTIAL

This data offered an interesting cluster of statements for respondents to reveal their views and concerns about growth as a law enforcement officer. Many administrators and personnel involved in the recruitment and hiring of police officers are already aware of this topic. As I have stated, contemporary issues have caused much of society to look with greater scrutiny at the uniformed patrol officer. It is arguable that this group of respondent's revelations about growth in a career is influenced by this, in that it appears there is much consideration as to what lies beyond patrol work. Patrol work almost has the appearance of the "necessary evil" in developing a law enforcement career. Half the respondents expressed a lack of full understanding of the promotional process (Figure 2.37). That aside, it is clear what draws them to law enforcement is the perception of career opportunities beyond patrol. Eighty-five percent expressed interest in investigations (Figure 2.32). Just over seventy percent indicated they would enjoy being a narcotics detective (Figure 2.33). Less than forty percent indicated a desire to be a supervisor (Figure 2.34). Perhaps supervisory roles are less popular of a career path because that would keep them in a uniformed position. What was notable in regards to the Growth responses were impressions of the statement, "a police patrol position is a stepping stone to a federal law enforcement career." Seventy eight percent of all respondents indicated either agreement or strong agreement to this (Figure 2.36). I believe several things can be interpreted from this. First, and most concerning, is that most of the "top shelf" police candidates plan career tracks that mean early exits from local police agencies. Second, there remains a stigma with local uniform patrol positions. I believe, again this reveals that uniformed policing is still the "necessary evil."

## THE IMPACT OF CAREER-LIFE BALANCE

As stated earlier, the category of Balance focuses on what the individual must consider in regards to personal life and those specific requirements of policing that will impact, if not require changes, in one's personal life (Figure 2.30). Respondents gave some indication that they have a general understanding of the impact of patrol careers on their personal life. There seems to be a slightly greater concern about their individual or personal time in comparison to time spent with family (Figure 2.29). One could speculate that that since respondents were college students, they would currently be single, and perhaps at a point in life where they are loosening ties with family. An additional consideration here is that since the respondents are in college and some may also be employed, they are adjusted to certain pressures associated with time management. The results also showed that generally there is not a high expectation of pay that would provide for a lifestyle the respondent wants (Figure 2.31). This is probably reflective of their understanding of the realities of contemporary police salaries. Interestingly, the variance in pay scales among the states represented in this study is notable (five different states are represented). However, the offset of differential cost of living among the sample may be responsible for the overall like results. Also notable is the overwhelming response to the statement, "police patrol work requires serious personal lifestyle changes" (Figure 2.30). Almost fifty-nine percent of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed to this. This response is much stronger than what was indicated in regards to personal/family time and finances. So if time and money are not viewed as substantively significant, what remains in the potential lifestyle changes that would be a factor in career

choice? Our respondent base is college students. As such, many of them are already at some point in the transformation from youth to adulthood. Because of this, the respondents most likely already have considerations of what will change in their lives upon graduation and entering life as an adult. That, combined with the contemporary issues in the media of law enforcement, is possibly why the respondents are able to have such a strong perspective when contemplating patrol work as an adult. I do not believe the thought of patrol work alone causes them to consider it as requiring a great lifestyle change. This is evidenced by the responses to the statement, "Police patrol work is too stressful" (Figure 2.42). Only twenty-three percent either agreed or strongly agreed to this.

Beyond the scope of this study, but built upon the observations I have seen within the context of police recruitment and retention, most new police officers have a more vested concern as to their off-duty time than with past generations. It is much in line with the adage, "what can the company do for me?" as opposed to, "what can I do for the company?" While for many seasoned law enforcement administrators this can be a concerning position, it must be evaluated and contended with as opposed to being disregarded.

## THE IMPACT OF JOB PREFERENCES

The cluster of questions that allows respondents to assess the police career is truly interesting. It appears that overall respondents have a realistic understanding of the rigors of a law enforcement career. While they see it as an important and honorable profession, they are not blinded by the glow of the badge in that they understand there are vulnerabilities in the profession for undesirable officers, or incidents to occur. While not displaying a full understanding of the police profession, the respondents showed a credible understanding, if not consideration of significant segments of the duties of a police officer. Force and firearms were shown to be understood and accepted (Figure 2.25 and 2.27). Throughout the history of policing we have heard applicants and new recruits indicate that they have a desire to join the ranks so they could "help people." This remains much the character of those who are considering policing. Ninety-four percent of all respondents either agreed or strongly agreed when responding to, "I would want to help child victims involved in criminal situations." This was one of the strongest responses in the study (Figure 2.45).

The respondents, who were college students, are likely very much influenced by media stories of police behavior. While there could be a discussion as to whether or not this generation of people is more influenced than others, it is factual to say they certainly have more media by which to be influenced. For instance, our current society has a much more accepting view of marijuana. Use and legalization can be found daily in news, social media and entertainment. Just over half of the respondents indicated that they would have difficulty arresting someone for possession marijuana; this compared to eighty-seven percent would have no problem arresting someone for possession of cocaine (Figures 2.43 and 2.44). Less than twenty-five percent of respondents believed that it is unfair for the public to criticize what police do (Figure 2.23). This appears to indicate their understanding of the common belief that "police live in a fishbowl."

One intent of this study was to gain a better understanding of the potential labor pool available in the college community so that better practices of finding and recruiting police applicants could

be implemented. There were two statements that give insight into the fundamental issues of police recruitment. The statement, “police departments understand what my generation expects from a career” received agreement from only twenty-four percent of respondents (Figure 2.46). “People of my generation want an immediately successful career without “paying their dues” at any entry level position” generated an agreement of sixty-eight percent (Figure 2.13). In some ways this can be viewed as an admission from the respondents as to what is being faced in policing today. Many new police officers and potential police officers seek employment in policing with a reasonable understanding of what the job will be and what demands are placed upon them. However, it can be argued that the world in which these young people are living provides an environment of immediacy for things that satiate their desires. As such, it is not a “disconnect” from the demands of policing that they may have; instead, it may be the difficulty they find when they realize the necessary “time in grade” that exists to develop and gain experience in policing so that they can advance in an organization. This may be yet another contemporary dilemma in police recruitment, and more importantly, in personnel retention. Police leadership must contemplate this finding. Should we continue to sift through diminishing levels of applicants to find those that fit our model, or do we evaluate our model and adjust it to address the demands of those who are entering law enforcement?

The answer to this dilemma is probably found with some level of “meeting in the middle”. Many organizations (because of policy, civil service rules, or collective bargaining) have regimented avenues of advancement that rely on a specified “time in grade”, normally the historic mainstream in police organizations. Seniority, regimentation, and other benchmarks have long been embraced. An organization that is willing to ask “why do we do it this way”, and considers other methods, will have the greatest opportunity to develop into a modern police workplace that facilitates opportunities that will satisfy the demands of the contemporary police applicant pool.

## THE IMPACT OF ETHNICITY

The relationship between law enforcement and African-American communities has a contentious past and remains at the forefront presently. While the media continues to create a disproportionately negative view of policing as it relates to African-American communities, the issues are also tethered to a real history that does not reflect well based on the modern principles of policing. Generally, there are three ways to develop an opinion regarding law enforcement. The first is based upon information provided by a trusted network which usually includes family and friends. This styled influence also allows for influence from occurrences that may be from a prior generation in addition to more current experiences. The second is that which is formed by media, social media and entertainment. Both aforementioned sources only carry as much influence as does the particular person or source relaying such. The third influence is that which is experienced firsthand. Firsthand experience is usually the most powerful, and in some instances it can change a perception that may have been formed in response to one or both of the other influences. It is an absolute necessity for law enforcement to understand both the nature of this relationship, its origins, and the potential opportunities to negotiate all three sources of influence to improve the overall relationship. While there are many areas that policing must strive to improve, this particular issue would bring one of the greatest gains.

The data collected in this study were sorted to provide for a comparative look among African-American and Caucasian respondents. It is important that while responses may vary due to life experiences unique to ethnicity, not all responses should be evaluated as only influenced by ethnicity. A young person contemplating a career in a field that has real inherent dangers will be influenced about such decision based upon many things. For instance, family members (especially parents) will tend to discourage certain career choices because of the dangers. Additionally, the financial realities of police salaries will have an influence on all candidates. While many factors can influence the responses, those which can be clearly identified as associated with ethnicity should be evaluated.

The influence of family on career choice is evident. Approval from the family of an individual becoming a police officer was less likely among the African-American respondents who agreed that this would be an issue at twenty-eight percent, while among Caucasians there were only ten percent who agreed (Figure 2.28). Both responses were relatively low in overall opposition from family. However, the variation in responses between those ethnic groups does indicate that family disapproval may be critical for African-American students’ career choices.

Respect and policing also were addressed by respondents. When asked about whether the public should respect the police, about sixty-five percent of African-Americans agreed and almost ninety-three percent of Caucasians agreed (Figure 2.22). While there is a differential among the ethnicities, it is evident that both agree. More specifically, when asked about how they were raised pertaining to respecting the police, which speaks directly to the influences of family, about seventy-two percent of African-Americans indicated that they agreed in being raised this way and ninety-five percent of Caucasians agreed (Figure 2.20). Both races showed strong agreement. While each group expressed that they believed in the importance of respecting law enforcement (Figure 2.22), a much lesser group viewed respect of law enforcement as an influence as to whether or not they would enter law enforcement (thirty-nine percent of African-Americans saw this as important and thirty-five percent of Caucasians viewed it the same). These responses are indicative that while both groups were raised to respect law enforcement, it appears as though their life experiences were different. When asked about the community where they grew up and the level of respect police received, thirty-five percent of African-Americans indicated that respect for police existed. Only forty-nine percent of Caucasians believed the same (Figure 2.21).

Four statements allowed for respondents to address the image of policing and police actions. African-Americans and Caucasians responded almost alike when responding to whether or not they would be a patrol officer because they don’t want to be labeled a racist (Figure 2.39). Seven percent of African-Americans agreed with this concern and almost eight percent of Caucasians agreed with this. Image again was contemplated when the respondents considered wearing a police uniform (Figure 2.41). Twelve percent of African-Americans disliked the idea of wearing a uniform compared to over seven percent of Caucasians that did. The influence of media was evident when respondents commented whether they believed “on-the-job shootings involving police patrol officers occur frequently” (Figure 2.40). Forty-two percent of African-Americans agreed, and

only fourteen percent of Caucasians agreed. The difference in opinion was even more evident in the responses to the statement, “police officers racially profile people” (Figure 2.38): sixty-seven percent of African-American respondents believed this, while only about twenty-eight percent of Caucasians believed it.

In many ways the views on the existence of racial profiling in policing becomes the crux of the problem in recruiting African-Americans. This study shows they were raised and believe that police should be respected. However, their life experiences and the influences upon them have led to perceived systemic issues regarding the police profession. Accepting these findings, it must be considered that recruiting African-Americans into policing is a huge “ask” of potential applicants. If applicants believe the profession as a whole is negative toward the ethnicity they belong to, then something must give in order to bring them into law enforcement. Again, this is clear evidence that law enforcement must understand the realities of the relationship between African-American communities and law enforcement. The findings of this study also show that while there is a race issue, there is also great evidence to show that the opportunities to overcome this and bring greater diversity into policing are very achievable.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

New generations bring new challenges. More importantly, new generations bring change that has and continues to allow for improvements in policing. This study confirmed that many aspects of policing, from the selection process to the work itself, are not fully understood by individuals who may be considering it as a career. However, it is also evident that there are still those potential applicants who are of great character and who desire to be police officers. Police organizations must work to evolve in how we seek the greatest resource – our human resources. Part of this evolution is remodeling the processes of policing while keeping the mission statement intact. The labor pool, as demonstrated through this study, is seeking fulfilling careers with opportunities. They desire a quicker pace in career tracks. While it may not be realistic to completely fulfill this want, it must be examined. The desire for faster pace must also be contemplated as an influence on the problems with police retention which makes this a priority concern. Police organizations must, as they always have been required, to ask why they function the way they do, and seek to improve. Finally, the evidence shows that race and ethnicity challenges remain; but a positive interpretation of this study is that resolution of many fundamental problems is closer than ever before.

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## **Policing: An International Journal**

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# Patrol career interest and perceptions of barriers among African-American criminal justice students

African-American  
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## Abstract

**Purpose** – The purpose of this paper is to evaluate whether black and African-American criminal justice students perceive barriers to a police patrol career differently than white students, and whether the perceptions of these barriers impact desire to enter a police patrol career.

**Design/methodology/approach** – The current inquiry uses a self-administered survey of over 630 undergraduate students in criminal justice classes across five public universities.

**Findings** – Findings suggest that African-American students differ significantly from white students in perceived social disapproval of patrol careers, respect for police and perceptions of whether the police engage in racial profiling. These perceptions display a significant indirect relationship indicating lower patrol career interest for black and African-American students compared to all other races.

**Research limitations/implications** – Research limitations of the current inquiry include the lack of a nationally representative sample, the use of four-year university students as a sample to represent the potential police patrol applicant pool, and the use of a survey instrument to gauge respondent beliefs about patrol careers as opposed to actions they would take in pursuit of a police career.

**Practical implications** – Findings from the current inquiry indicate that departments may need to focus more on improving global perceptions of the police and discussing the nature of the career with recruit social support structures. Police recruiters should focus on techniques such as addressing social isolation experienced by the police rather than on decreasing standards for background checks or simply increasing awareness of police careers.

**Originality/value** – The current inquiry is one of the first to explore perceptions of barriers to entering a patrol career among CJ students. It is also among the first to examine the impact these perceptions have on patrol career interest. The findings may also help criminal justice instructors more fully discuss these barriers with students of color.

**Keywords** Careers, Barriers, Police, Patrol, Recruitment, Race

**Paper type** Research paper

The exigency of discussion surrounding the relationship police share with communities of color in the USA has reached a level not seen since perhaps the Civil Rights Movement. Numerous high-profile incidents and the civic response to these events have been shared on various media platforms, placing tension between the police and the public on the wider national consciousness. As part of this discussion, President Barack Obama commissioned the Task Force on 21st Century Policing in an attempt to build partnerships, increase public trust in the police, and reduce crime. Among the task force's many recommendations for improving police legitimacy was to establish a concerted effort to recruit and retain officers



who better reflect the communities they serve (Gupta and Yang, 2016; Ramsey and Robinson, 2015). Similarly, the UK's Police Education Qualification Framework (PEQF) highlights that in addition to improving police education and training, workforce diversity is globally viewed as a pathway to a more professional and legitimate police institution.

Police legitimacy and a diverse police force are often seen as complimentary interests, where diversity improves legitimacy and legitimacy improves success in recruiting for diversity. Two important concepts that define police legitimacy are shared-values and lawfulness. The message becomes clear that laws must come from a shared value system, and be enforced in a manner that is acceptable to those being policed (Tankebe, 2013). Police agencies that are racially representative of the communities they police may help to reduce racial bias or the perceptions of racial bias (Fridell and Scott, 2005), and thereby increase police legitimacy in those communities. Clearly, to increase the representativeness of their agency as a pathway to legitimacy, departments must have success recruiting officers of color.

Recruiting officers of color is certainly not a new challenge to police leadership, and previous research has identified many barriers to the successful hiring and retention of nonwhite officers including a lack of trust and respect for the police, direct or vicarious experiences with negative police practices, a lack of awareness of opportunities and selection criteria that disproportionately screen out applicants from underrepresented communities (Gupta and Yang, 2016; Kringen and Kringen, 2014; Matthies *et al.*, 2012; Perrott, 1999). Despite the identification of these barriers, and an ostensible desire among departments and communities alike to recruit more police officers of color, the representation of black and African-American officers has only increased from 9 to 12 percent since 1985 (Reaves, 2015). Coupled with this lack of recruiting success, little research has directly examined the impact of these potential barriers on interest in police careers. Fewer still are studies examining this relationship among people who express a specific interest in criminal justice occupations.

Drawing upon a sample of over 630 undergraduate students in criminal justice courses across five US universities, the current inquiry compares the perception of commonly identified barriers to recruiting officers of color (i.e. social approval of a police career, respect for the police, awareness of police career opportunities, personal background issues and perception of operational practices) between students of color and white students. Subsequently, the current inquiry explores what impact these perceptions have on black and African-American criminal justice students' interest in pursuing a police patrol career. Suggestions for future research and policy implications are also offered.

### Literature review

Since the emergence of the first post-industrial police agencies, policing has largely been a career field dominated by white males (Martin, 1980). Improvements in the representation of female and ethnic minority officers have increased over the past three decades (Reaves, 2015), but recruitment, selection, hiring and retention of nonwhite officers still remains a challenge for many departments (Orrick, 2008; Wilson *et al.*, 2010). This is especially true for black and African-American officers, who remain significantly underrepresented in sworn police positions (Reaves, 2015).

The rationale for improving diversity through recruitment is appealing, and has historical roots in the post-civil rights struggle to establish equity among civil service occupations in the USA. One potential benefit of a more representative police department is that it may help to ease tensions between communities of color and the police (Clairmont, 1991; Leighton, 1991; Skolnick and Bayley, 1986). Additionally, some researchers hypothesize increased diversity among police officers may reduce misconduct by reducing the likelihood of white male officers mistreating female and nonwhite citizens in the presence of fellow officers who are female or

ethnic minorities (Skolnick and Fyfe, 1993). Other research indicates that increased representation may result in fairer outcomes for persons of color in police-citizen interactions, and ultimately produce more sensitive and empathetic officers (Home Office, 1999). Skolnick and Fyfe (1993, p. 241) argue that a diverse police force is less susceptible to “groupthink,” where officers of a singular gender and race reinforce their definitions of proper behavior during down time at work and socializing after hours. The then unified authority imposes the definitions of proper behavior onto a diverse citizenry, resulting in tension and resentment (Skolnick and Fyfe, 1993; see also Tankebe, 2013).

The potential benefits of increasing minority representation in police departments also extend to longer-term organizational changes. Increasing representation of African-Americans in police departments has been linked to an increase in police legitimacy (Ranganella and White, 2004; Scrivner, 2006), and to overcoming institutionalized racism that persists in many departments (Waters *et al.*, 2007). Others argue that increasing African-American representation may make the implementation of community policing strategies more successful (Viverette, 2005). Black and Latino officers have also shown more favorable attitudes toward community policing generally (Gau and Paoline, 2017; Paoline *et al.*, 2015). At the management level, a more ethnically diverse police workforce may foster managerial strategies and policies which respond to both changing external (such as service delivery) and internal (such as increased training for professionalization) needs (NPCC/APCC, 2017), as anticipated in the PEQF standards supported by the College of Policing in the UK. Further diversifying the field for promotions and advancement may additionally serve police needs in reflecting a more pluralistic society and community at large (Tong, 2017). These potential benefits have substantially increased the pressures placed upon police departments to increase minority representation (McGreevy, 2006; Ranganella and White, 2004; Spielman, 2016), with some proponents of increasing minority representation going so far as to include requirements in federal consent decrees (McGrady, 2007).

Despite the pressures placed on police organizations, minority hiring still lags and the growth appears to be slowest among African-Americans (Reaves, 2015). The difficulties in hiring persons of color to police departments are often traced back to the early portions of the process, namely the recruitment, screening and initial training phases. This phenomenon can often be divided into two challenges: whether departments are experiencing difficulty in pulling-in recruits, or are screening out recruits of color. As an example of screening out recruits, recently the Chicago Police Department (CPD) developed an applicant pool that was approximately 71 percent minority (a contemporarily positive example of pulling in nonwhite recruits). Unfortunately, CPD has been hiring white recruits at a higher pace due to the tendency for their hiring process to screen out persons of color (Farr, 2018). The policy dynamic of selecting in applicants vs screening out, historically a source of contention in the police candidate selection process as it pertained to recruitment of females, appears to have a similar impact when considering applicants of color (Scrivner, 2006; Wilson *et al.*, 2010).

### *Barriers to minority recruitment*

Previous research has identified some common barriers that can be identified as issues related to ineffectively attracting recruits of color. Many nonwhite recruits choose to stay away from the occupation because they view police departments and officers as racist, or have had previous negative contacts with the police. A great deal of previous research has identified the tensions that exist between communities of color and the police (Brunson, 2007; Chevigny, 1969; Skolnick, 1966), and research has consistently shown that blacks express less favorable views toward the police than whites (Decker, 1985; Smith *et al.*, 1991; Weitzer and Tuch, 1999).

According to Waters *et al.* (2007), the way police are portrayed in the news and entertainment media, the expectation of race-related harassment in the workplace, and previous experiences interacting with the police were mentioned by nearly half of all ethnic minorities interviewed in a UK study exploring barriers to minority recruitment. Similarly, Perrott (1999, p. 344) surveyed Canadian applicants at a minority-focused recruitment drive, and “prejudice at the police-community level” and “societal racism” were the most commonly selected top obstacles to joining a police force. Conversely, Kaminski (1993) found that while black high school students were more likely to believe that the police treat minorities unfairly, the perception of unfair treatment was not a predictor of whether the students would accept a hypothetical job offer to become a police officer. When it came to neighborhood perceptions, black students who perceived the level of community respect for police officers was low, were significantly less likely to accept a hypothetical job offer.

Racist and discriminatory behaviors among those who would be their coworkers have also been identified as a barrier to recruiting minority officers (Holdaway, 1991). The police culture and subculture has frequently been identified as a place where racial epithets and jokes have routinely been part of “water cooler” discussion (Chan, 1996; Holdaway, 1983; Wilson *et al.*, 1984), or in discussions while on duty related to incidents of excessive force (Christopher Commission, 1991). More recent findings continue to support the contention that many ethnic minorities avoid policing careers because they will face discrimination from their coworkers (Waters *et al.*, 2007).

A closely related barrier is that potential recruits may have family and friends opposed to the idea of them pursuing a policing career, or find traditional police work counterintuitive to their identity (Perrott, 1999; Waters *et al.*, 2007). Waters *et al.* (2007) documented numerous instances of individuals who indicated their family and friends had expressed open hostility to them pursuing a police career. One respondent even indicated that they used to express an interest in a police career as a joke in order to get a rise out of their mother (Waters *et al.*, 2007). Others took a more serious tone, indicating that a police career could result in social isolation, and that while ethnic minority groups needed additional representation in police departments, they feared a perception that they would be discriminating against their own ethnic group (Waters *et al.*, 2007). Similarly, Perrott (1999) found that disapproval from within the ethnic community was toward the middle of listed obstacles to joining a department. In his survey of public high school seniors in Albany, NY, Kaminski (1993) found that if black students thought their parents would disagree with them becoming a police officer, they were over four and a half times as likely to decline a hypothetical job offer than those who thought their parents would agree. White students were just under three times as likely to decline, but the differences in the coefficients between white and black students were not significant, indicating parental support was not specific to one race or another (Kaminski, 1993).

Additionally, persons of color are also believed to lack awareness of the breadth of police career opportunities, and the mentorship structure with regard to entering a career in policing. This is potentially due to the existing lack of diversity in policing. Some have suggested that police departments have not placed enough emphasis in recruiting from the proper demographic areas, resulting in minority communities that are unaware of the careers available (Matthies *et al.*, 2012). While this may be part of the equation, Perrott (1999) found that many recruits mentioned that there was a lack of police role models available to people of color. Research directly examining the hiring of minorities by police departments indicates that recruitment efforts targeting minorities increase the number of minority hires (Jordan *et al.*, 2009). This offers considerable support to the argument that awareness of opportunities could be a barrier to hiring of officers of color.

Other barriers are better conceptualized as those that screen recruits of color out. For example, previous research has identified that nonwhite recruits may struggle with criminal

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history or credit score issues related to poverty and marginalization (Matthies *et al.*, 2012). Law enforcement agencies typically conduct extremely thorough background checks (98 percent use criminal records checks and 97 percent conduct a thorough background investigation), with any police contact being potentially problematic for entry into the field (Matthies *et al.*, 2012; Walker and Katz, 2012). In their examination of a major metropolitan police department in the Southwest, Kringen and Kringen (2014) found that the background check phase of the application process represented a significant barrier to the hiring of black officers, with both the criminal and financial aspects of the background check representing significant barriers.

### Current inquiry

Despite the obvious challenges in recruiting persons of color for police patrol careers, and then successfully ushering them through the selection process to the offer of a position, little research has systematically explored whether the nonwhite potential applicant pool perceives these challenges differently than do their white counterparts. Studies that have explored these attitudes in a meaningful way are over 25 years old, and are therefore more proximate in time to the era of the Rodney King beating than the contemporary challenges following the killings of Eric Garner and Michael Brown.

Drawing upon a survey of students in criminal justice classes in universities in the USA, the current inquiry examines whether student race impacts perceptions of the pulling in and screening out barriers to entry into a police career. For barriers defined as issues related to pulling in recruits, the current inquiry asks students whether social support persons (i.e. parents, friends, significant other) would support them entering a police patrol career, whether they believed the police are worthy of respect, whether they had awareness of police career opportunities and whether they thought the police engaged in racial profiling. Students were also asked questions related to the screening out process in a police patrol career. Students reported the degree to which they thought a criminal background and personal history check would hurt their police career chances.

Building upon these initial models, perceived barriers that displayed a significant relationship to students who identify as African-American were explored to determine whether they influence desire to enter a police patrol career. Thus, the current inquiry will evaluate whether differences in perceived barriers may enhance or diminish the desire of African-American students in four-year institutions to enter a police patrol career.

### Methodology

The data for the current research are drawn from the investigating potential candidates' interest in police patrol careers study, a comprehensive survey examination of undergraduate student's perceptions of police and patrol officer careers from recruitment to career advancement. Data were collected from a survey of students enrolled in criminal justice courses across five public universities in the USA, which included The University of Southern Mississippi (USM) (School of Criminal Justice); Illinois State University (ISU) (Department of Criminal Justice Sciences); University of Massachusetts-Lowell (School of Criminology and Justice Studies); Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis (School of Public and Environmental Affairs); and Missouri State University (MSU) (Department of Criminal Justice and Criminology).

The academic units selected displayed variation in geographic locations (i.e. South, Midwest and Northeast), average university size (14,500–30,000), and major offerings (e.g. SPEA offers many managerial and public safety majors). Each academic unit also had a substantive proportion of students who would actually express interest in a police patrol career[1]. These similarities likely increase the internal validity of our sampling process, but limit external

validity to other areas (e.g. two-year community colleges, private universities, students not taking criminal justice courses).

The comparative character of the five universities reveals some similarities and differences in terms of student diversity, university size, and program offerings. The most diverse was The USM, which was over 30 percent African-American and about 3 percent Latino (Table I). The least diverse was MSU, which was about 4 percent African-American and 3 percent Latino. ISU and the University of Massachusetts-Lowell (UMass-Lowell) had the highest percentage of Latino students, at 9.4 percent (Table I)[2]. USM was the smallest school studied, with about 15,000 students, and Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis was the largest at over 30,000 students (Table I).

*Survey design and administration*

Project staff determined that the most cost-effective way to administer the survey was to spend one to two days on each campus and administer to as many courses as possible. A contact person in each academic unit engaged with other professors in that department to determine if they were willing to allow research staff into their classroom to administer the survey. After pre-testing the survey among a group of students attending summer classes at USM (who were not included in the sample), the survey was distributed to undergraduate students in class during the Fall Semester of 2017 or Spring of 2018. This typically occurred during the first 15 min of the class, or the last 15 min of class. A total of 39 of 102 (38.2 percent) seated class sections were visited, including a variety of courses ranging from Freshman introductory courses to Senior seminar or capstone classes. Unfortunately, it cannot be determined which students were enrolled in multiple or no sections. For these 39 total class sessions across five sites, no professors contacted for classroom survey distribution refused researcher access to their classrooms. Students who were in attendance were instructed not to take the survey again if they had taken it in a previous course session. The 105-item survey was self-administered and completed on paper. The data were then coded into SPSS by project staff. For students present in the classes, the response rate was 98.8 percent.

The contemporary career aspirations of individuals taking criminal justice courses at the college level has been of increasing interest to both police practitioners and criminal justice academic leadership in an era of declining interest in police careers (Orrick, 2008; Wilson *et al.*, 2010). Of equal interest to scholars of career pathways and workforce management, as well as to police leaders and organizations such as the College of Policing in the UK who desire to market police careers to persons with higher academic credentials, is the level of knowledge of the career ladder shown by persons who may be interested in more specialized police roles such as investigator or supervisor. The current inquiry assessed the orientation of the college student potential applicant cohort toward entry-level police positions in order to make potential statements about the landscape of challenges faced by both police organizations and programs such as the PEQF in further professionalizing policing. By focusing survey questions on student interest in careers at the entry-level position of patrol, the current inquiry was able to ascertain the desire of potential applicants to embark upon the rigorous selection,

**Table I.**  
University  
demographics

University	Students	African-American (%)	Latino (%)	Male (%)	Graduate school
Southern Miss	14,554	30.2	3.1	37	PhD
Illinois State	21,039	7.7	9.4	45	Master's
UMass-Lowell	17,849	5.9	9.4	62	PhD
IUPUI	30,105	9.8	6.1	44	Master's
Missouri State	26,000	4.3	3.4	42	Master's

training and career ladder processes that may lead to future employment in positions that are of anecdotal interest to the potential applicant (e.g. detective, narcotics officer and supervisor).

*Dependent variables*

The dependent variables for the current analysis consist of student perceptions of barriers to entry into a police patrol career, and patrol career interest. We examine patrol career interest as function of race, perceived barriers and a host of relevant control variables. About 40 percent of students in criminal justice classes across the five study sites indicated that they would agree or strongly agree that they had an interest in a police patrol career.

*Perceived barriers*

The survey questions for the current inquiry were designed to measure particular perceptions of barriers specific to those identified in the previous literature. Research staff developed between 3 and 5 question groupings that could be combined into scales representing the underlying latent variables (see Table II). The scales are coded such that a higher score would represent a greater perception of the issue as a limitation to entering a patrol career. To examine the degree to which social approval ( $\alpha = 0.795$ ) of entering a policing career represents a barrier to African-American students entering the police profession, three survey questions were used measured on a Likert type scale (1 = Strongly Agree, 2 = Agree, 3 = Neither Agree nor Disagree, 4 = Disagree, 5 = Strongly Disagree), “My family would not approve of me becoming a police patrol officer” (reverse coded), “My friends would not approve of me becoming a police patrol officer” (reverse coded), “My spouse or significant other would not approve of me becoming a police patrol officer” (reverse coded)[3].

An additional barrier identified that may impact desire to enter a career in policing was the level of respect ( $\alpha = 0.786$ ) individuals had for the police. To examine this latent variable, four questions were used, “I was raised to respect the police”; “Police work is a noble profession”; “The public should respect the police”; “Police work is an honest profession.” While students were not asked directly about interactions with the police, research indicates that perceptions of the police can be tied to personal and vicarious experiences, as well as generalized neighborhood influences (Brunson, 2007; Kirk and Papachristos, 2011).

Furthermore, awareness of police career opportunities ( $\alpha = 0.604$ ) has been identified as a barrier for students of color for entry into the profession. To examine this phenomenon, the following three questions were combined into a scale: “I want to know more about police patrol careers, but I have never been able to ask anyone about it” (reverse coded); “Having a mentor would make a difference in helping me choose a police patrol career” (reverse coded); “I have never had an opportunity to figure out what a police patrol career is really like” (reverse coded).

An additional barrier that has been identified for potential recruits of color is criminal and personal background checks. To examine whether background and personal history ( $\alpha = 0.675$ ) would impact their entry into a police patrol career, the following five questions

Scale	Range	Mean	SD	$\alpha$
Social approval	3–15	6.71	2.73	0.795
Respect	4–20	7.16	2.65	0.786
Awareness	3–15	9.65	2.54	0.604
Background	5–25	9.26	3.27	0.675
Racial Profiling	0–1	0.37	0.48	–

**Table II.**  
Descriptive  
statistics for perceived  
barrier measures

were employed: “My past drug use would hurt my chances at being a patrol officer” (reverse coded); “My personal criminal history would hurt my chances at ever being a patrol officer” (reverse coded); “I am afraid what my references will say about me during my background investigation for a patrol position” (reverse coded); “I would be worried about taking a polygraph examination” (reverse coded); “What I have said on social media in the past would hurt my chances at ever being a patrol officer” (reverse coded). Finally, to measure the barrier indicating whether negative police practices would influence a police career, students were asked the extent to which they agreed with the statement, “Police officers racially profile people.” This was coded as a “1” if the student agreed or strongly agreed that the police engage in racial profiling, and a “0” if the student strongly disagreed, disagreed, or did not agree or disagree. This measure is also related to police legitimacy (see Tankebe, 2013). For further information about the scales created to represent student attitudes about barriers to police patrol careers, please see Table II.

*Independent variables*

Of primary interest in the current inquiry is the influence of being African-American on perceptions of barriers to entering a police patrol career. Students were asked to write their ethnicity in a blank presented on the survey document. From these entries, project staff coded seven separate designations consistent with the race categories used by the US Census Bureau. The resulting categories produced three variables of interest: black/African American, Latino/Hispanic and other race (Table III). White/Caucasian alone served as the reference category. As shown in Table III, 15 percent of students identified as black or African-American, 7 percent identified as Latino and 7 percent identified as a race other than white, African-American, or Latino.

Variables	Coding	Mean	SD
<i>Dependent</i>			
Patrol	1 = Interested in a patrol career 0 = All others	0.391	0.488
<i>Independent</i>			
Black	1 = Student black or African-American 0 = All others	0.154	0.361
Latino	1 = Student Latino or Hispanic 0 = All others	0.066	0.249
Other race	1 = Not African-American, Latino/Hispanic, or White alone 0 = African-American, Latino/Hispanic, or White alone	0.065	0.246
Age	1 = 18-21; 2 = 22-25; 3 = 26-29; 4 = 30 or over	1.382	0.645
Male	1 = Male; 0 = All other	0.480	0.500
Military	1 = Military experience; 0 = No military experience	0.086	0.280
CJ major	1 = Criminal justice or Public safety major; 0 = All other	0.742	0.438
Freshman	1 = Freshman, 0 = All others	0.204	0.403
Sophomore	1 = Sophomore, 0 = All others	0.154	0.361
Junior	1 = Junior, 0 = All others	0.309	0.463
ISU	1 = Illinois State University; 0 = All others	0.132	0.339
UMass	1 = UMass-Lowell; 0 = All others	0.123	0.327
IUPUI	1 = Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis 0 = All others	0.240	0.427
MSU	1 = Missouri State University 0 = All others	0.266	0.442

**Table III.**  
Descriptive statistics  
for career interest and  
independent variables

**Note:** n = 772

We also included age, gender, military experience, degree major, year in school and university as control variables. Policing is largely a male dominated field (Martin, 1980), and thus it is necessary to control for differences in patrol career interest amongst genders. Similarly, it is reasonable that students who are older or more advanced in school may show differences in their knowledge of patrol careers, as well as attitudes toward issues such as racial profiling. It was also important to control for the participant's degree major. Paoline *et al.* (2015) found that only 50 percent of the officers involved in their study had majored in criminal justice, while the other 50 percent had majored in a variety of other fields. Similarly, Roberg (1978) found that approximately 50 percent of the college educated officers in his study had majored in criminal justice, with the other approximately 50 percent majoring in a variety of other fields. Because of the substantial number of those that enter police work that do not major in criminal justice, it was important to control for the type of college major. Further, students who are CJ majors have also been shown to have differing occupational attitudes from their counterparts once entering a patrol career (Paoline *et al.*, 2015).

Finally, military experience was used as a control variable. In addition to military experience being a commonly included independent variable in empirical examinations of the police (Gau *et al.*, 2013), military experience is a fairly common characteristic of those interested in police work. The number of recruits or officers that have a military background varies between departments, but Weichselbaum and Schwartzapfel (2017) reported that approximately 19 percent of all police officers nationwide had prior military experience, while Decker and Huckabee (1999) found that approximately 31 percent of successful applicants for the Indianapolis Police Department had prior military experience. Individuals with military experience also represent another group that has been specifically targeted for recruitment into police patrol careers, with some departments even offering application and employment incentives (BJA, 2011).

As shown in Table III, the sample was 48 percent male, about 9 percent of students had some military experience and 74 percent of students were criminal justice, criminology, or public safety majors. Students who double majored, with at least one of those majors being criminal justice, were coded as CJ majors. Additionally, four dummy variables were included for the university site, with USM serving as the reference category.

## Findings and analyses

### *Perceptions of barriers*

To evaluate the relationship between race and the perception of barriers to patrol career scales, four Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression models were estimated. OLS regression is typically used for continuous variables, such as attitude scales with large ranges[4]. To examine the relationship between race and perceptions of racial profiling by the police, logistic regression was employed, as this measure was based upon a single survey question, and is coded as a dichotomous outcome variable.

As shown in Table IV, whether a student was African-American was a significant predictor of perceived social approval of entry into a patrol career ( $\beta = 0.193$ ,  $p \leq 0.001$ ). African-American students perceived significantly lower levels of approval for entry into a police patrol career from their parents, friends and significant others than did white students. While Latino students and students of other races also held a positive coefficient, neither of these effects was statistically significant, indicating that their perceptions of approval did not significantly differ from white students. In terms of the other independent variables, students with military experience ( $\beta = -0.162$ ,  $p \leq 0.001$ ) and criminal justice majors ( $\beta = -0.114$ ,  $p \leq 0.001$ ) indicated that their social support structures would express greater approval of a patrol career.

Being African-American was also a significant predictor of the level of respect for the police. As shown, African-American students viewed the police with greater disrespect than their white counterparts that ( $\beta = 0.358$ ,  $p \leq 0.000$ ). Essentially, the respect (or lack of)

**Table IV.**  
OLS regression  
models for perception  
of barrier scales

Variables	Social approval ( <i>n</i> = 627)		Respect ( <i>n</i> = 633)		Awareness ( <i>n</i> = 634)		Background ( <i>n</i> = 636)	
	$\beta$	SE	$\beta$	SE	$\beta$	SE	$\beta$	SE
Black	0.193***	0.321	0.358***	0.291	0.044	0.308	0.025	0.386
Latino	-0.008	0.431	0.046	0.390	0.121**	0.413	0.044	0.521
Other race	0.015	0.429	0.095*	0.393	0.105**	0.412	0.012	0.519
Age	0.049	0.215	-0.025	0.192	0.020	0.204	0.034	0.256
Male	-0.050	0.217	-0.088*	0.195	-0.011	0.207	0.031	0.260
Military	-0.162***	0.390	-0.058	0.348	-0.042	0.369	-0.109**	0.461
CJ major	-0.114**	0.255	-0.150***	0.230	0.066	0.244	0.018	0.308
Freshman	0.021	0.350	-0.064	0.315	0.143**	0.334	-0.014	0.420
Sophomore	0.049	0.355	0.013	0.318	0.157***	0.338	0.039	0.425
Junior	-0.007	0.280	-0.048	0.250	0.149**	0.265	-0.048	0.333
ISU	0.025	0.371	0.163***	0.315	-0.052	0.354	0.018	0.444
UMass	-0.078	0.398	0.136***	0.328	-0.066	0.379	0.037	0.478
IUPUI	-0.003	0.319	0.178***	0.268	-0.115*	0.306	0.026	0.385
MSU	-0.007	0.301	0.143***	0.257	-0.088	0.288	0.014	0.363
	$R^2 = 0.096; F = 4.630$		$R^2 = 0.166; F = 8.793$		$R^2 = 0.072; F = 3.423$		$R^2 = 0.022; F = 0.978$	
	$p = 0.000$		$p = 0.000$		$p = 0.000$		$p = 0.474$	

Notes: \* $p \leq 0.05$ ; \*\* $p \leq 0.01$ ; \*\*\* $p \leq 0.001$

African-American students have for the police represents a greater barrier (and thus a positive slope) than it does for white students. Students of a race other than black or Latino also rated respect as a greater barrier to police patrol careers ( $\beta = 0.095, p \leq 0.05$ ). Additionally, CJ majors had greater respect for the police than other majors while other predictors were held constant, and students at ISU, UMass-Lowell, IUPUI and MSU all held lower levels of respect for the police than students at USM.

Contrary to conventional wisdom, African-American criminal justice students did not significantly differ from white students in the perception that access to knowledge about police careers was a barrier to their entry into a patrol position. Latino students ( $\beta = 0.121, p \leq 0.01$ ) and students of other races ( $\beta = 0.105, p \leq 0.01$ ) displayed a significant difference, and indicated that a lack of access to mentoring about patrol positions may represent a barrier to entry into policing. Freshmen, Sophomores and Juniors all indicated they had less awareness of police careers than Seniors, and students at IUPUI had a lower score on the perception of access as a barrier than students at USM.

In terms of the model for whether personal background issues would prevent entry into a police patrol career, the entire model was not statistically significant. This is important, as race is shown to not statistically differ in terms of perceptions of background issues as a barrier for students at four-year institutions.

We also estimated a logistic regression model for perceptions of racial profiling. As shown in Table V, African-American students were significantly more likely than white students to agree that the police engage in racial profiling (OR = 8.964,  $p \leq 0.001$ ). Latino students (OR = 2.977,  $p \leq 0.01$ ) and students of a race other than African-American or Latino (OR = 2.498,  $p \leq 0.05$ ) were also statistically significantly more likely than white students to believe that the police engage in racial profiling. Three of the site control variables were also significant, with students at ISU (OR = 3.353,  $p \leq 0.001$ ), UMass (OR = 2.316,  $p \leq 0.01$ ) and MSU (OR = 2.574,  $p \leq 0.001$ ) all indicating that they were more likely than students at USM to believe that the police engage in racial profiling.

*Desire to enter patrol*

The next step was to determine the degree to which race and perceptions of barriers to a patrol career influence the desire to enter into patrol. As shown in Table VI, four models

**Table V.**  
Logistic regression  
for perceptions of  
racial profiling

Variables	<i>b</i>	SE	OR
Black	2.193***	0.296	8.964
Latino	1.091**	0.346	2.977
Other race	0.915*	0.346	2.498
Age	-0.067	0.183	0.935
Male	-0.182	0.186	0.834
Military	-0.227	0.345	0.797
CJ major	-0.439*	0.220	0.645
Freshman	-0.431	0.301	0.650
Sophomore	-0.509	0.310	0.601
Junior	-0.150	0.239	0.531
ISU	1.210***	0.333	3.353
UMass	0.840**	0.355	2.316
IUPUI	0.345	0.299	1.412
MSU	0.946***	0.279	2.574

$$\chi^2 = 90.049, p \leq 0.001; \text{Pseudo } R^2 = 0.181$$

**Notes:**  $n = 635$ . \* $p \leq 0.05$ ; \*\* $p \leq 0.01$ ; \*\*\* $p \leq 0.001$

Variables	Race only ( $n = 631$ )	Social approval ( $n = 632$ )	Respect ( $n = 631$ )	Racial profiling ( $n = 632$ )
	OR	OR	OR	OR
<i>Attitudes</i>				
Approval	-	0.817***	-	-
Respect	-	-	0.785***	-
Profiling	-	-	-	0.395***
<i>Race</i>				
Black	0.885	1.243	1.718	1.425
Latino	1.500	1.555	1.685	1.931
Other race	0.820	0.771	1.048	0.974
Age	0.869	0.977	0.860	0.854
Male	2.816***	2.758***	2.603***	2.712***
Military	2.453**	1.976*	2.313*	2.515**
CJ major	3.835***	3.638***	3.365***	3.577***
Freshman	1.028	1.127	0.965	0.923
Sophomore	0.569	0.635	0.558	0.508*
Junior	0.906	0.901	0.828	0.841
ISU	1.027	1.174	1.427	1.361
UMass	1.039	0.935	1.232	1.153
IUPUI	1.053	1.101	1.271	1.117
MSU	1.089	1.181	1.269	1.279
	$\chi^2 = 103.136$	$\chi^2 = 131.980$	$\chi^2 = 134.587$	$\chi^2 = 121.646$
	$p \leq 0.001$	$p \leq 0.001$	$p \leq 0.001$	$p \leq 0.001$
	Pseudo $R^2 = 0.204$	Pseudo $R^2 = 0.259$	Pseudo $R^2 = 0.261$	Pseudo $R^2 = 0.238$

**Table VI.**  
Logistic regression  
models for perception  
of barrier scales and  
patrol career interest

**Notes:** \* $p \leq 0.05$ ; \*\* $p \leq 0.01$ ; \*\*\* $p \leq 0.001$

were estimated, the first omitting perceived barriers, with each subsequent model including a barrier perception that was significantly related to whether a student identified as African-American (e.g. social approval, respect, racial profiling). As shown in the race only model, African-American students did not significantly differ from white students in their patrol career interest. Male students (OR = 2.816,  $p \leq 0.001$ ), students with military experience (OR = 2.453,  $p \leq 0.01$ ) and criminal justice majors (OR = 3.835,  $p \leq 0.001$ ) were all significantly more likely to express interest in a patrol career.

Next, the perceptions of barriers where African-American was a significant predictor were included. As perceptions of social approval (OR = 0.817,  $p \leq 0.001$ ), respect (OR = 0.785,  $p \leq 0.001$ ) and racial profiling (OR = 0.395,  $p \leq 0.001$ ) as barriers increased, the likelihood a student would express an interest in entering a patrol career decreased. Whether a student identified as African-American or white remained a non-significant predictor of patrol career interest.

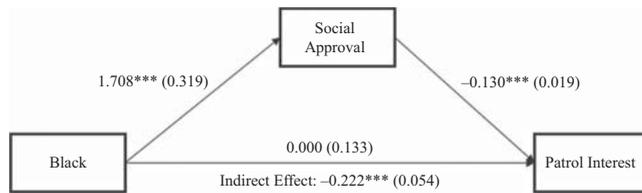
*Indirect effects*

From the previous analyses, we have established that whether a student is African-American is a significant predictor of perceptions of social approval of a career in police patrol, respect for the police and perceptions of whether the police engage in racial profiling. Contrary to previous research and conventional wisdom, identifying as African-American did not display a significant (direct) relationship to interest in a police patrol career, but each of the aforementioned barriers displayed a negative relationship with patrol career interest. Due to the nature of these relationships, we explored whether a student identifying as African-American would display an indirect effect on interest in a patrol career through perceived barriers[5].

To examine whether significant indirect effects were present, indirect effects models were estimated using Mplus 7[6]. As shown in Figure 1, whether a student was African-American (compared to all other races) was associated with a significant increase in the perception that social approval would be a barrier to a patrol career ( $b = 1.708$ , SE = 0.319). Additionally, higher scores on the social approval barrier index were associated with a significantly lower interest in a patrol career ( $b = -0.130$ , SE = 0.019). While the direct effect was still not statistically significant ( $b = 0.000$ , SE = 0.133), the indirect effect between whether a student was African-American and patrol career interest via perceptions of social approval of entering a patrol career was significant ( $b = -0.222$ , SE = 0.054).

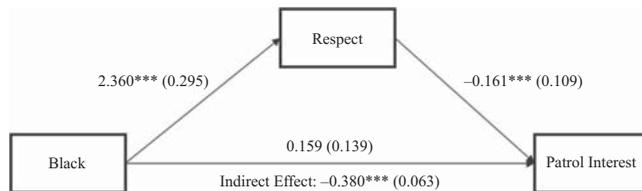
Similar effects were found for perceptions of respect for the police (Figure 2). African-Americans viewed the police with lower levels of respect, and thus being African-American increased the perception of respect as a barrier ( $b = 2.360$ , SE = 0.295). The lack of respect for police was again associated with a diminished interest in a patrol career ( $b = -0.161$ , SE = 0.109). Similarly, the direct effect was not significant, but a significant indirect effect was found, again indicating African-American students having a diminished desire to enter a patrol career due to diminished respect for the police ( $b = -0.380$ , SE = 0.063).

**Figure 1.**  
Indirect effects of race and perceptions of social approval on patrol career interest



Notes: \* $p \leq 0.05$ ; \*\* $p \leq 0.01$ ; \*\*\* $p \leq 0.001$

**Figure 2.**  
Indirect effects of race and perceptions of respect for police on patrol career interest



Notes: \* $p \leq 0.05$ ; \*\* $p \leq 0.01$ ; \*\*\* $p \leq 0.001$

Finally, the influence of whether the police are perceived to engage in racial profiling was examined as a predictor of entry into a police patrol career. Figure 3 displays that black and African-American students were significantly more likely to believe that the police engage in racial profiling. An increased perception that the police engage in racial profiling is significantly associated with a decreased interest in a patrol career. Again, while there is no significant direct effect between a student identifying as black or African-American and patrol career interest, a significant indirect effect is found, indicating that a student identifying as black or African-American is associated with decreased interest in a patrol career ( $b = -0.252$ ,  $SE = 0.067$ ).

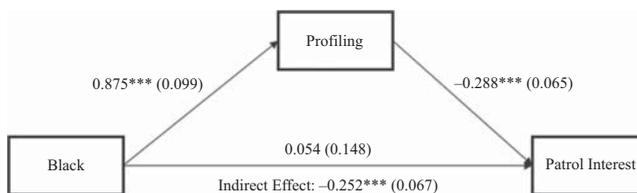
**Discussion**

The current inquiry examined whether African-American undergraduate students in criminal justice courses have differing perceptions of issues that have commonly and contemporarily been viewed as barriers to entry into a police patrol careers than white students. Additionally, we added to the current literature by directly measuring the effect that these beliefs have on interest in a patrol career. Consistent with much of the previous research, our results showed that African-American students viewed their social support system as less approving of them entering policing, had lower levels of respect for the police, and were more likely to agree that the police engage in racial profiling than were white students. Notably, African-American students did not display any significant differences from white students in their perceived access to information about patrol career opportunities and mentoring, or the impact that their background (e.g. criminal history, drug use, social media profile) would have on their ability to enter policing as a career choice.

Some other enlightening findings were that Latino and Hispanic students, and students who were not white, African-American, or Latino were more likely than white students to indicate they were missing some opportunities to learn more about patrol careers (e.g. opportunities to ask questions, learn about patrol and mentoring). Students of other races also displayed lower levels of respect for the police than did white students. Latino students, and students who identified as a race other than African-American or Latino, were more likely to agree that the police engage in racial profiling than were white students.

Some other findings outside of the direct research question were also notable. While other relevant control variables were held constant, students who were CJ majors and those with military experience had a greater belief that their social support structures would approve of them entering policing as a career choice, and CJ majors had greater respect for the police than did other majors.

In terms of whether students expressed an interest in a police patrol career, no significant direct effects were found for any of the three variables examining students of color. This is somewhat surprising given the stagnation of African-American representation in American police departments (Reaves, 2015), and previous findings displaying a direct effect in research examining high school students (Kaminski, 1993). These results may be impacted to a certain extent given that the sample is limited to



Notes: \* $p \leq 0.05$ ; \*\* $p \leq 0.01$ ; \*\*\* $p \leq 0.001$

**Figure 3.** Indirect effects of race and perceptions of racial profiling on patrol career interest

students enrolled in criminal justice courses, and that students in these courses could possibly have more interest in police careers. However, since not all students who enroll in criminal justice courses in college are necessarily majors in the field, interested in police careers, or even sharing the same reasons for studying criminal justice (some students may be enrolled in their criminal justice courses as a requirement of their chosen field of study), this remains an intriguing finding.

The current inquiry was able to build upon previous research examining perceptions of barriers to a policing career and police career interest. Like previous research (Kaminski, 1993), we found that parental agreement or approval (and in the case of the current inquiry friend and significant other approval) could significantly influence patrol career interest among African-American students. Additionally, by examining the indirect effects of barriers on patrol career interest among college students in criminal justice courses, we also found that respect for the police and perception of negative police practices (i.e. racial profiling) also produced diminished interest in police work. Our findings indicated that while no direct effects for race were evident, African-American students view their support structures as less approving of a policing career than white students, respect the police less, and more frequently view the police as engaging in negative practices. A significant indirect effect is found for African-American students having a diminished desire to enter a patrol career because of their perception of these three common barriers to entering the profession.

#### *Support for legitimacy predictors*

Our initial framing of this argument focused on the effects of pulling-in vs screening out, a discussion of which emerged decades ago with regard to the impact of these selection procedures on gender-related differences in police career interests. Applying this perspective to potential impacts on racial disparities in the police career applicant pool, the results are somewhat unclear. Social approval, respect for the police, and racial profiling would be pulling-in issues, and indeed there is some indication that police departments may struggle to attract black and African-American applicants because of these issues. Opposing this assumption, African-American students indicate that they have no significantly different perceptions about the ability to learn about patrol work and access mentoring compared to white students. On the screening out issue, African-American students display no significant differences in terms of their perceptions about what their background issues may play in entering a patrol career.

What explanation may fit these findings more accurately is the comparison between predictors that reflect perceived legitimacy of the police, and those that focus on awareness or background. The current inquiry shows that whether a student identified as African-American or white was significantly related to how they view the police, and their perceptions of potential social isolation (i.e. social approval of the career choice, respect for the police, negative police practices), while barriers viewed as more practical (i.e. awareness of the career and background problems) were not significantly related to whether a student was African-American.

One caveat to these explanations is for students of color who do not identify as black or African-American. Latino students and students of other races both indicated they had less access to knowledge about patrol careers (i.e. opportunity to ask questions about patrol careers, find out what patrol careers are really like and having a mentor) than did white students, and thus recruitment efforts targeting Latino students should reflect this trend. The evident influence of perceptions of social approval, respect and police practices over practical issues for African-Americans could be a partial explanation for why representation of Latino officers and other officers of color (despite a self-reported diminished awareness of opportunity) has improved at a faster rate than for African-Americans.

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*Limitations of current research*

While this research does make a contribution to the current literature, it is not without limitation. One obvious limitation is that the data are not drawn from a nationally representative sample. It would be preferable for future research to have students randomly selected from all criminal justice programs in the USA, or at least a multi-stage cluster sample of criminal justice programs. The coordination of a project such as this would be optimal, but was not realistic given the challenges at hand, and we are extremely appreciative of our site contacts at each of the five study sites for the access and assistance we received.

A second limitation is that while we were able to achieve a diverse body of students with varying levels of interest in patrol, the students at four-year institutions are not reflective of the entire applicant pool for patrol positions. It is possible that students at four-year universities reflect the most qualified and informed applicant pool, and that a more encompassing sample would yield different results on perceptions of awareness and background barriers. Four-year university students are inundated with opportunities to talk to criminal justice practitioners, and likely have fewer background limitations than the population as a whole. Therefore, we recommend further research on these topics with a broader contingent that more accurately reflects the entire applicant pool for patrol positions.

A final identified limitation is that this is an examination of beliefs rather than action. The current inquiry cannot definitively say that students who express an interest in patrol work will enter the police profession, or those that indicate no desire or are unsure will not end up as police officers. Future research should examine whether the attitudes and beliefs about barriers to patrol work in college (or earlier) actually influence entry into patrol careers rather than intentions or interest.

*Policy implications*

While the current inquiry is a single study, and far from definitive, we do recognize some suggestions for policy, or at the very least some suggestions for the direction of pilot programs for recruitment of police officers of color. To attract African-American recruits, police departments should focus on improving perceptions of the police in black and African-American communities. However, the police may not be able to do this by themselves. Similar to community policing, the police should engage community members and forge community partnerships with various community groups, nonprofits or service organizations (COPS, 2014), and religious organizations (Fridell and Scott, 2005). These groups may prove to be invaluable in helping the police not only increase their legitimacy in the community, but also possibly help the police identify potential recruits. This is not an easy task, especially in communities where perceptions of the police are very negative, but departments must devote whatever resources are necessary for this task (Fridell and Scott, 2005).

Furthermore, police departments should not abandon recruitment strategies that attempt to place the police in a more positive light, but should find ways to do so even more effectively. Given the consistency of the influence that social support has displayed in choosing to enter a career in policing, departments should focus on ways to get the parents and significant others of potential recruits onboard, or at least to provide information about the career from a perspective of someone who has faced the challenges a potential recruit's family finds troublesome. As previously stated, and because black and African-American students indicate that they may have access to mentoring, this activity could be entrusted to individuals who may act as mentors to potential recruits to go beyond the typical role of assisting applicants with navigation of the selection process to actually providing a realistic job preview in a broad fashion to the applicant's family, friends and significant other.

Specifically, the relationship between predictors related to community-police relations and career interest, and the lack of relationship between basic practical recruitment approaches and career interest among African-American students, have implications for police recruitment strategies in communities of color, especially in contexts where police legitimacy is potentially reduced. Police departments seeking to attract applicants from diverse backgrounds should consider recruitment strategies that accentuate the content of traditional recruitment approaches (i.e. the specific realistic job preview a mentor may provide in attracting a candidate, such as home visits or speaking to a candidate's family and significant other) as opposed to simply having a mentor available (i.e. placing African-American and black police officers as the visible face of an agency's recruitment practice). Respondents in the sample may even be perceiving the availability of a mentor as a "token" individual in the recruitment effort who, while present, is possibly missing an opportunity to address concerns of social support groups and family who may be skeptical of police careers.

At least from our research, lowering background check standards and increasing generalized knowledge about patrol careers will be a less effective strategy if departments seek to increase African-American representation among patrol officers. In our sample, the data show that police agencies are likely missing out on qualified African-American recruits due predominately to their perceptions of the police, and the perceptions of their social circles.

Conversely, Latino students and students identifying as a race other than African-American were significantly more likely than white students to indicate that they needed more information about patrol work, or needed some form of mentoring. Therefore, in communities of color that are not predominately African-American, increasing access and outreach may in fact be the best route. Effective use of this strategy may explain why representation of other ethnic minority groups in policing has increased, while African-American representation has not.

Finally, these policy implications also illuminate current efforts (in the UK, through the PEQF and elsewhere) to increase the recruitment and development of a more professional, diverse workforce (NPCC/APCC, 2017). This renewed focus somewhat legitimizes the current study's approach of examining college students potentially contemplating careers in criminal justice fields, especially policing, since it provides empirical evidence of the professional orientation of the potential applicant cohort of interest. The PEQF framework, embedded in the larger Policing Vision 2025, intends to increase entry-level qualifications for potential police personnel to align the profession with more rigorous fields and professions which require advanced educational qualifications (Peach and Clare, 2017). These efforts, which include curriculum revisions, increased entry-level qualifications for police and enhanced professional training for professional development, should be augmented by a vigorous focus on attracting candidates who already envision themselves as potential criminal justice professionals but may view policing as a career in which risks outweigh potential professional rewards. Data from this study suggest that institutions continue to fine-tune police recruitment efforts by providing sincere and meaningful mentoring relationships, particularly with applicants of color, in order to supplement traditional informational methods designed to attract applicants.

## Notes

1. The authors believed that an examination of all university students would produce too small of a proportion who may actually have an interest in policing, and thus an availability sample (see Weaver *et al.*, 2018) of criminal justice and akin academic units was used.
2. As one anonymous reviewer noted, a nationally representative sample would be preferable to an availability sample of five universities. While we agree, we also note that convenience (and in this case, availability) sampling is commonly used in exploratory studies, and additionally with the examination of undergraduate criminal justice students (Craig and Piquero, 2016; Lambert *et al.*, 2014;

Mallicoat and Brown, 2008; Tontodonato, 2006; Weaver *et al.*, 2018). It should also be noted that the racial/ethnic and gender distribution of our sample conforms closely to previous research utilizing both criminal justice majors and college students in general (Lambert *et al.*, 2014; Krimmel and Tartaro, 1999; Mallicoat and Brown, 2008; Tontodonato, 2006).

3. Overall “Neither Agree nor Disagree” was selected by 17.5 percent of respondents for the family prompt, 18.3 percent for the friends prompt, and 29.7 percent for the spouse or significant other prompt, indicating that not having a spouse or significant other may have marginally impacted the overall score of about 10 percent of the sample. The scale had an  $\alpha$  value of 0.795 when combined with the other two prompts, which indicates a high degree of reliability with the other two items that do not suffer from the potential measurement validity problem of respondents not being in a relationship.
4. Collinearity diagnostics were completed for all regression models. The highest Variance Inflation Factor value was 1.824, indicating that collinearity was likely not a concern (Chatterjee and Price, 1991).
5. The earliest mediation models, known as the causal steps approach, indicated that a significant direct effect must be present before a mediating effect is estimated. More contemporary approaches, such as outlined in Hayes (2009), indicate that indirect effects can be estimated even if a significant direct effect is not present.
6. In these models, career interest and racial profiling are represented as reverse coded ordinal variables.

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# Influence of Gender on Perceptions of Barriers to a Police Patrol Career

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## Abstract

Policing as an institution has been under immense pressure to increase the representation of women as police patrol officers. As the representation of women in policing has plateaued, increasing research has focused on barriers to women entering patrol work but has not examined the salience of these barriers with respect to males or reliably determined which barriers are most influential to desire to enter a police patrol career prior to employment. Drawing upon survey responses from more than 640 students enrolled in criminal justice courses across five universities (i.e., University of Southern Mississippi, Illinois State University, University of Massachusetts-Lowell, Indiana University-Purdue University Indiana, and Missouri State University), the current inquiry examines the degree to which female and male students differ in their perceptions of barriers to entering a patrol career frequently listed in the literature. The findings indicate that female students view many of these obstacles differently than male students and that these perceptions influence interest in patrol careers.

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In 1978, Catherine Milton (1978), a respected police scholar, predicted that “within a few decades 50 percent of all police officers will be women” (p. 185). She was not alone in her prediction. Many scholars predicted that the numeric representation of women in policing would continue to increase (Martin, 1980; Pike, 1985). When examining the historical progression of female representation in policing, the reason for Milton’s prediction becomes apparent—the percent of women in the sworn police ranks almost tripled from 1971 to 1980 and then doubled again by 2000 (Uniform Crime Reporting, 1972, 1981, 1991, 2001, 2010; Hickman & Reaves, 2006; Reaves, 2010; Reaves & Goldberg, 1999; Reaves & Hickman, 2004). Forty years after Milton’s prediction, however, instead of showing a continued climb, the progress that women were making in policing has stalled.

The possible explanations for the stalled growth of women in policing primarily focus on barriers to police recruitment and retention. Much of this research has pointed to disparate recruitment and hiring processes, such as physical fitness tests, academy and field training experiences, and discriminatory or outdated hiring practices (Chappell & Lanza-Kaduce, 2010; Corder & Corder, 2011; Kringen, 2014; Prokos & Padavic, 2002; Reaves, 2015; Schuck, 2014), along with rescinding or expiring consent decrees and other affirmative action initiatives that were more common in the 1970–1990s (Martin, 1991; Sass & Troyer, 1999; Sklansky, 2006). Alternatively, another explanation is that women may simply not be interested in police employment (Yim, 2009) or have been socialized to perceive themselves as less qualified for male-dominated careers (Lawless & Fox, 2005; Yim, 2009). Prior research indicates that socialization experiences orient women toward careers in which they can pursue “communal” or helping goals and avoid conflict (Raganella & White, 2004; Schneider et al., 2016). The perception of policing as male-dominated and lacking in female role models are also likely influences on female interest in police employment (Austin & Hummer, 1999; Campbell & Wolbrecht, 2006; National Center for Women and Policing, 2002).

Recent research suggests that the increased representation of women in policing impacts police organizations positively (Barnes et al., 2018; Schuck, 2018). For example, Barnes et al. (2018) found that citizens believed that increasing women’s participation in policing would reduce police corruption due to the perception of women as outsiders to policing and more cautious than male officers. In addition, Schuck (2018) reported that the

outcomes for sexual assault survivors improved with increased female representation in policing. These results, combined with considerable previous research that suggests that female representation is associated with reduced police use of force and excessive use of force incidents as well as positive responses to crime victims, suggest that the continued recruitment and retention of women police officers is important to the future of American policing (Pew Research Center, 2017; Rabe-Hemp & Schuck, 2007; Schuck, 2014, 2018; Schuck & Rabe-Hemp, 2007).

Drawing on a survey of more than 640 undergraduate students enrolled in criminal justice courses across five universities, the current inquiry seeks to disentangle these explanations of the perceived barriers of women to police patrol careers, linking the perceptions of the barriers to their interest in entering patrol careers. Studying potential female officers and their perceptions of these barriers is a critical step toward understanding the challenges to recruiting and ultimately retaining female police officers. The current inquiry offers a review of the current literature, followed by a description of the methods used. Subsequently, several multivariate models are offered. Finally, a discussion of the results is offered, along with policy implications and suggestions for future research.

## Literature Review

From the outset, policing has been a male-dominated profession (Martin, 1980; Rabe-Hemp, 2018). Women struggled to make inroads to the profession until the 1972 Civil Rights Act made it illegal to use sex as a method to exclude women from entering a career as a police patrol officer (Martin, 1980). Following the passage of the civil rights act, the representation of women in police careers steadily increased, from 4.2% in 1972, to 8.8% in 1986, to 12.2% in 2013 (Reaves, 2015). Despite the increased representation over time, the percent of women in policing has remained steady at around 12% for the past two decades, prompting the question of why the representation of women in policing has stalled.

Primarily, the underrepresentation of women in policing has been attributed to the barriers that women face when entering police careers (Birzer & Craig, 1996; Bissett et al., 2012; Cordner & Cordner, 2011; Gaines et al., 1993; Lonsway, 2003; Prokos & Padavic, 2002; Schuck, 2014). Much of this research focuses on the physical fitness test for applicants, which has been shown to disproportionately deter female hopefuls and have a negative impact on the hiring of female officers (Birzer & Craig, 1996; Bissett et al., 2012; Cambareri & Kuhns, 2018; Gaines et al., 1993; Hernandez, 1981; Lonsway, 2003; Schuck, 2014; Shelley et al., 2011). Various reasons have been put forward as to why physical agility tests deter females from attempting to join police departments, such as being socialized to believe that they are weaker and that they are not

physically capable of passing the various physical tests (Cordner & Cordner, 2011; Schuck, 2014; Todak, 2017).

In addition, the police academy experience is often considered a barrier to women (Cambareri & Kuhns, 2018; Kringen, 2014; Prokos & Padavic, 2002; Schuck, 2014; Silvestri, 2017). Although academies may differ in various places, generally police academies consist of a paramilitary-style structure in which recruits endure physical training, classroom curriculum, and intense socialization to prepare for entering the policing career. This includes learning reliance on fellow officers, formal authority structures, and solidarity (Chappell & Lanza-Kaduce, 2010). Feminist scholars have argued that practices that reify the hypermasculine culture inherent in the academy experience such as hand-to-hand combat and using less-lethal weapons such as tasers and pepper spray on recruits are for the purpose of keeping women out of policing (Prokos & Padavic, 2002).

Subsequently, the underrepresentation of women in policing has also been associated with barriers women face once they have entered the career. Historically, being a police officer was strictly a male career, and thus, when women entered policing, policies on situations that are relevant to women and family life, such as maternity leave and part-time work, were not available. Shiftwork, lack of supportive policies in departments, departments' unwillingness to compromise with pregnant officers, and unusual hours that encompass having a career in policing create a barrier for women who are caregivers and in the workforce (Cambareri & Kuhns, 2018; Cordner & Cordner, 2011; Martin, 1990; Rabe-Hemp & Humiston-Sears, 2015; Shelley et al., 2011). In addition, young women who express an interest in policing have indicated that female mentorship and seeing female officers succeed in police careers was instrumental in helping them overcome the barriers they have been socialized to accept (Todak, 2017).

Furthermore, as policing is seen as a masculine career, female officers must work harder to be accepted within the career and often report the feeling of giving up a sense of femininity. Those who are considered "too feminine" to be an officer are often ridiculed and not taken seriously among their peers (Rabe-Hemp, 2009; Silvestri, 2017). As a result, women have experienced sexual harassment, sexism, blocked opportunities for advancement, and discrimination at work, confirming a lack of social approval for women within policing (Haarr, 1997; Martin, 1980; Rabe-Hemp, 2018). Some young women have also perceived that the public and even their families have expressed doubt in their ability to engage in police work (Todak, 2017). While these barriers are important to understanding the experiences of women police, it is not clear to what extent these issues influence interest in police employment rather than retention of current officers (Coffey et al., 1992; Gau et al., 2013; Schulz, 2004).

The limitations of previous studies point to an important gap in the literature. While there is a substantial body of literature concerning the motivations for

current police recruits or officers joining (Gibbs, 2019; Lord & Friday, 2003; Raganella & White, 2004; White et al., 2010), the majority of the research in this area has relied on the experiences of current police officers to explain the underrepresentation of women police (Cordner & Cordner, 2011; Schuck, 2014), which only provides one piece of the puzzle. There is much less research on how women perceive police employment and how that influences their interest in policing as a career. A notable exception, Yim's (2009) aptly named article, "Girls, Why Do You Want to Become Police Officers," summarized some of the challenges in determining the interest of potential female police recruits. We know that women are socialized to perceive themselves as less qualified for male-dominated careers (Lawless & Fox, 2005; Yim, 2009) and more oriented toward careers where they can help others (Raganella & White, 2004; Schneider et al., 2016). Yim (2009) suggested this as a likely explanation for why female respondents generally rate women as less competent to do police work than men. These same results have been reported with male respondents. Austin and Hummer (1994) compared male criminal justice majors' attitudes toward female police officers. They reported that the male students were the least supportive of female's physical skills and strength to do police work, just as they were a decade prior in a preceding study (Golden, 1981; Johns, 1979).

Important to this understanding is the public image of the police as a male-dominated occupation, which may discourage women from seeking police employment, due to not fitting the "standard" image of that employee. The notion that police work involves violence and tough crime-fighting leads to citizens and officers equating police work with hypermasculinity. Although some departments have attempted to rebrand the image of policing to emphasize communication skills and community policing which may welcome women who may be apprehensive of applying to such positions, this revitalization is not consistent with the public perception of the police (Lord & Friday, 2003).

These challenges, coupled with declining representation of women as recruits, have led to a general perception that women may just not be that interested in policing. Cordner and Cordner (2011) reported that the majority of both southern Pennsylvania male police chiefs and female police officers agreed that few women applied for police positions. However, in his exploration of the gendered messages in police recruitment, Aiello (2018) rejected this notion and instead offered a solution to departments interested in recruiting women. His findings indicated that interest in policing was related to the messages communicated in recruitment materials. This suggests that a relationship between interest in police employment, gender, and the perceptions of barriers may matter to potential police recruits. Building on this recent research, this article extends the conversation on the perceived barriers of women to police patrol careers, linking the perceptions of the barriers to their interest in entering patrol careers.

## Current Inquiry

Based upon the identification of barriers in prior research, the current inquiry explores whether female criminal justice students significantly differ in their perceptions of barriers from students of other genders. In addition, the current research then examines whether perceptions of those significant barriers influence interest in a police patrol career. Finally, among perceptions that are significantly related to patrol career interest, interaction effects are examined to determine whether these influences have a differential effect on female students in criminal justice courses compared with students of other genders. These research objectives can be summarized by the following 10 hypotheses:

H1: Female students have less respect for the police than students of other genders.

H2: Female students have greater apprehension about the police academy and physical aspects of police work.

H3: Female students have greater opposition to being exposed to tasers or pepper spray as part of the preemployment process.

H4: Female students perceive patrol work as more disruptive to their lifestyle ambitions.

H5: Female students perceive less access to mentors and opportunities to learn about patrol work.

H6: Female students perceive greater social disapproval for their entry into patrol work.

H7: Female students feel greater apprehension about competing for patrol positions.

H8: Female students express less interest in a police patrol career.

H9: The diminished interest of female students in patrol work is explained by differential perceptions about the nature of patrol work.

H10: The effects of these perceptions have a greater influence on female students' patrol career interest than students of other genders.

## Methods

The current research draws upon responses from the *Investigating Potential Candidates' Interest in Police Patrol Careers* study. This study involved the examination of student perceptions of a host of police-related issues including patrol career interest, respect for the police, academy experiences, physical requirements of police careers, the career ladder, and competition for patrol positions. Research staff spent 1 to 2 days on five different public university campuses. The five academic units examined include The University of Southern Mississippi School of Criminal Justice, Illinois State University Department of Criminal Justice Sciences, University of Massachusetts-Lowell School of

Criminology and Justice Studies, Indiana University-Purdue University Indiana School of Public and Environmental Affairs, and Missouri State University Department of Criminal Justice and Criminology. The 105-question instrument was distributed and self-administered by students in 39 sections of criminal justice courses. Paper surveys took approximately 15 minutes to complete, and students who took the survey in a previous course section were instructed not to take the survey again. This strategy of survey administration yielded a 98.8% response rate for students in attendance.<sup>1</sup>

### *Dependent Variables*

The dependent variables for these analyses include seven scales derived from Likert-type questions and one measure using a single Likert question that represent common barriers to women entering police patrol careers. Subsequent analyses focused on the influence that barriers significantly related to gender have on patrol career interest. Thus, we first examined the influence of gender on perceptions of barriers to entering a police career. We then conducted analyses that examined the influence that perceptions of the barriers significantly related to gender have on patrol career interest.

*Barriers to Women Entering Patrol Careers.* Survey items included in the current examination were used as indicators of barriers to women entering police patrol careers, which may diminish the interest or willingness of females to pursue a police patrol career. Scales used to measure these perceptions assessed student agreement with between two and six indicator statements<sup>2</sup> on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly agree*, 2 = *agree*, 3 = *neither agree nor disagree*, 4 = *disagree*, and 5 = *strongly disagree*).

For each scale, higher values represent greater concern or apprehension (and therefore, higher values would theoretically serve as a barrier). For the additive indices, some alpha scores fell shy of the generally accepted heuristic minimum of .70. Cortina (1993) and Schmitt (1996) note that alpha is sensitive to the number of items within a scale, and so scales with a limited number of items can display low alphas even if the indices are reliable (see also, Taber, 2018). To further support reliability, and subsequent measurement validity of the indices, all items were examined together via confirmatory factor analysis using Mplus 8. The results indicated that these scales were statistically appropriate for use in the analyses. Convergent validity was generally supported, as most factor loadings were greater than 0.5.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, the highest between-factor correlation was .547, providing support for discriminant validity. Suitable model fit was also shown via comparative fit index (.908), root mean square error of approximation (.055), and standardized root mean square residual (.067).

Female students may hold general attitudes about the police that differ from male students, including higher or lower levels of respect for police institutions

(Correia et al., 1996; Schafer et al., 2003). Previous research has indicated that a general level of respect for the police may be linked to patrol career interest (Rossler et al., 2019). To measure overall respect for the police, a four-item scale labeled “lack of respect” ( $\alpha = .786$ ) was used to assess agreement with the following statements: *I was raised to respect the police*; *Police work is a noble profession*; *The public should respect the police*; and *Police work is an honest profession*. As previously mentioned, higher values of this scale represent less respect for the police.

Women may also be deterred from entering police careers due to concerns about physical aspects of the job, preemployment training, or the academy environment itself. To assess these perceptions, a five-item scale labeled “physicality/academy apprehension” ( $\alpha = .844$ ) was created from the following statements: *With proper training, I could use physical force to arrest someone*; *I am afraid of the fighting and hand-to-hand combat associated with patrol (reverse coded)*; *I am afraid of police academy physical and defensive tactics and fighting training (reverse coded)*; *I am afraid of attending a police academy (reverse coded)*; *I do not like the idea of being a part of a military-style environment (reverse coded)*; and *I'm confident I can overcome the physical challenge of attending the police academy*. Higher values of this scale represent greater apprehension about the academy environment and physicality associated with patrol work by the general public.

Our factor analyses also indicated another potential deterrent to a patrol career related to physical experiences that reify hypermasculine culture in the preemployment stage of policing, namely exposure to less-lethal weapons technologies (Prokos & Padavic, 2002). To assess these perceptions, we created a two-item scale labeled “less-lethal apprehension” ( $\alpha = .872$ ) from the following statements: *The fact that I have to be tased as part of academy training makes me not interested in a patrol career (reverse coded)*; and *The fact that I have to be pepper sprayed as part of academy training makes me not interested in a patrol career (reverse coded)*.

Research has also indicated that women may avoid policing careers because the shiftwork and stress are not conducive to family life and the societal expectations placed on women with respect to pregnancy and childcare. To measure perception of these pressures as a barrier to entering policing, a three-item scale labeled “Work–life balance apprehension” ( $\alpha = .637$ ) was created using agreement with the following statements: *A police patrol career would provide me a good opportunity to raise a family*, *Patrol schedules would not allow me to spend time with my family (reverse coded)*, *Patrol work is too stressful (reverse coded)*, and *I would be overworked in a police patrol career (reverse coded)*.

An additional concern is that potential female recruits may not have strong mentoring relationships with police patrol officers due to the historical exclusion of women from patrol positions and the lack of a critical mass of women currently in police positions who could serve as career mentors. This lack of a

mentoring relationship may also translate to less awareness (or a perceived lack of awareness) of police career opportunities. To measure this barrier, a three-item scale labeled “Lack of mentoring” ( $\alpha = .629$ ) was created from the following Likert questions: *Having a mentor would make a difference in helping me choose a police patrol career (reverse coded)*; *I want to know more about police patrol careers, but I have never been able to ask anyone about it (reverse coded)*; and *I have never had an opportunity to figure out what a police patrol career is really like (reverse coded)*. For this measure, higher values indicate less mentoring and opportunities to learn about patrol work.

Research has also indicated that females may experience greater social opposition to pursuing a police patrol career than do males. To address this concern, we developed a scale we term *social disapproval* ( $\alpha = .804$ ), which is measured based on agreement with three statements: *My family would not approve of me becoming a police patrol officer (reverse coded)*, *My friends would not approve of me becoming a police patrol officer (reverse coded)*, and *My spouse or significant other would not approve of me becoming a police patrol officer (reverse coded)*.<sup>4</sup> For this scale, higher values indicate less social approval for entering a police patrol career.

An additional barrier that has been identified as keeping women from pursuing police careers is that they perceive their upward mobility to be limited in a male-dominated occupation such as policing. Female students may avoid the occupation completely because they view opportunities for advancement as being blocked. To assess the attraction to upper-level positions in police agencies, we created a scale labeled “blocked advancement” ( $\alpha = .562$ ) from agreement with three statements: *I would enjoy being a detective or investigator*; *I would like being a police supervisor*; and *I would enjoy working narcotics investigations as a specialized role*. For this scale, higher values indicate a diminished perception of opportunities for advancement and specialized assignments. Similarly, comfort in competing for a patrol position was assessed using agreement with the statement: *I feel insecure about competing for a police patrol position*.

**Patrol Career Interest.** Also serving as a dependent variable in our second set of analyses is whether the students expressed an interest in a police patrol career. The emphasis on examining patrol specifically, rather than law enforcement or policing generally, targets the inquiry at the entry-level position that leads to other positions within the organization. In this way, we assess the interest in this area that is more traditionally linked to the rigorous and potentially arduous training and selection process, rather than confounding the position with where potential candidates see themselves in the more distant future (e.g., detective, sergeant, federal law enforcement), which distinguishes it from previous research that has looked at current police officer’s perceptions or interest in policing, more generally (Cambareri & Kuhns, 2018; Kringen, 2014; Yu, 2015).

To measure potential candidates' patrol career interest, we assessed on the same Likert scale agreement with the following statement: *I am interested in a police patrol career*. Those who agreed or strongly agreed were coded as a "1," while all others were coded as a "0."

### **Independent Variables**

Of primary interest in the current inquiry is the variation by sex in perceptions of barriers to entering a police patrol career that frequently serve as explanation in theory and literature for the stark differences in the number of male and female police officers. As such, our first independent variable is sex. This was assessed by having students select the option that best represented their sex, *Male*, *Female*, or *Other*, with an option to fill in a blank. Respondents who selected *Female* were coded as "1," while all others were coded as "0."<sup>5</sup> As shown in Table 1, the sample of 642 students for the current inquiry was approximately 53% female.

In addition, in the analyses focused on patrol career interest, the barrier scales of lack of respect, physicality/academy apprehension, less-lethal apprehension, work-life balance apprehension, and blocked advancement serve as independent variables. We also examine the insecurity of competing for a patrol position as an independent variable.

Several other demographic variables have been shown to influence both perceptions of barriers to entering a police career and patrol career interest (Rossler et al., 2019). As such, we include a series of control variables for race (i.e., Black, Latino, Other race), with White students serving as the reference category. In terms of race, 14% were Black or African-American, 7% were Latino, and 7% were a race other than White, African-American, or Latino (see Table 1).

We also control for age groupings (1 = 18–21, 2 = 22–25, 3 = 26–29, 4 = 30 or older), military experience (1 = *military experience*, 0 = *all others*), degree major (1 = *criminal justice/criminology major*, 0 = *all others*), and a series of dummy variables for class (i.e., Freshman, Sophomore, Junior) with Senior serving as the reference category due to their more temporally proximate job search timing and an ability to show how an interest in a patrol career changes over time. As shown in Table 1, most students were between the ages of 18 and 21 years of age (70%), and the vast majority were criminal justice majors (74%). About 30% of the sample were Juniors, 15% were Sophomores, and 20% were Freshmen. We also included four control variables for our study sites (i.e., Illinois State University, University of Massachusetts-Lowell, Indiana University-Purdue University Indiana, and Missouri State University), with the University of Southern Mississippi serving as the reference category.

**Table 1.** Descriptive Statistics (N = 642).

Variable	Alpha	Range	M	SD
<i>Dependent variables</i>				
Patrol career interest	–	0–1	0.39	0.49
Lack of respect	.786	4–20	7.04	2.50
Physicality/academy	.844	6–28	12.40	4.54
Less-lethal	.872	2–10	4.78	2.23
Work–life balance	.637	4–19	11.18	2.46
Lack of mentoring	.629	3–15	9.64	2.55
Social approval	.804	3–15	6.63	2.69
Blocked advancement	.562	3–15	6.85	2.25
Competition	–	1–5	2.43	1.06
<i>Independent variables</i>				
Female	–	0–1	0.53	0.50
Race				
Black	–	0–1	0.14	0.34
Latino	–	0–1	0.07	0.25
Other race	–	0–1	0.07	0.25
Age	–	1–4	1.35	0.59
18–21 years	–	–	70.1%	–
22–25 years	–	–	25.5%	–
26–29 years	–	–	3.4%	–
30 years or older	–	–	1.0%	–
Military	–	0–1	0.09	0.28
CJ major	–	0–1	0.74	0.44
Class				
Freshman	–	0–1	0.20	0.40
Sophomore	–	0–1	0.15	0.36
Junior	–	0–1	0.31	0.46
Site				
Illinois State	–	0–1	0.14	0.34
UMass-Lowell	–	0–1	0.12	0.32
IUPUI	–	0–1	0.23	0.42
Missouri State	–	0–1	0.29	0.45

Note. CJ = criminal justice; IUPUI = Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis; UMass-Lowell = University of Massachusetts Lowell.

## Findings

This section begins with seven ordinary least squares and one ordered logit models. Next, to assess barrier influence on patrol career interest, two logistic regression models are used to quantify the differences between female and other students, as well as determine the degree to which this relationship is influenced by the perceptions of barriers that are significantly related to sex. Finally, to test

for interactions between sex and barrier perceptions on patrol career interest, three logistic regression models are estimated.

### *Modeling Perceptions of Barriers*

First, we assessed whether female students differ in their perceptions of barriers to police patrol careers. To do so, seven ordinary least squares and one ordered logit model are estimated. As shown in Table 2, sex is significantly related to perceptions of several barriers to entering a patrol career. In terms of the barriers displaying a significant relationship, female students had less respect for the police ( $b = .417, SE = .192$ ), held more negative views of the physical aspects of police work and the academy ( $b = 2.984, SE = .323$ ), were more apprehensive about exposure to less-lethal weapons ( $b = 1.309, SE = .164$ ), viewed the impacts of police work on their family life and stress as more problematic ( $b = .632, SE = .199$ ), and held less interest in upward mobility or specialized roles ( $b = .484, SE = .174$ ). No significant differences were displayed for sex and awareness of patrol career opportunities or between sex and disapproval of entering a police patrol career. As shown in Table 3, using an ordered logit approach, female students were also more insecure about competing for a police patrol position than were men ( $B = .602, SE = .155$ ).

In terms of race, African-American students held less respect for the police ( $b = 2.668, SE = .287$ ), were more apprehensive about having to experience less-lethal weapons ( $b = .654, SE = .244$ ), and felt greater disapproval for entering a police patrol career ( $b = 1.501, SE = .321$ ) than did White students. Those with military experience were less concerned about the physical aspects of police work and the academy experience ( $b = -3.583, SE = .574$ ), experiencing tasers or pepper spray ( $b = -1.203, SE = .291$ ), the approval of their social circles about entering a patrol career ( $b = -1.568, SE = .390$ ), and were less concerned over competing for positions ( $B = -1.029, SE = .282$ ). Criminal justice majors had significantly lower scores for every barrier on average than did students of other majors, except for lack of mentoring. No significant differences were found for age. Freshman, sophomores, and juniors all indicated they had less knowledge and mentoring regarding police patrol careers than did seniors.

### *Patrol Career Interest*

To assess interest in a police patrol career, two logistic regression models are presented. The first model examines the influence of sex excluding the barrier perception scales, and the second examines the influence of sex net of barrier perceptions and relevant controls. Coupled with previous analyses, these models examine whether there are any differences in interest in a police patrol career between female and male students in criminal justice courses, and if so, whether

**Table 2.** Ordinary Least Squares Regression of Gender and Perceptions of Barriers to Patrol Careers.

Variable	Lack of respect b (SE)	Physicality/ academy b (SE)	Less-lethal b (SE)	Work-life balance b (SE)	Lack of mentor b (SE)	Social disapproval b (SE)	Blocked advance b (SE)
Female	0.417* (.192)	2.894 *** (.323)	1.309*** (.164)	0.632** (.199)	0.056 (.207)	0.269 (.217)	0.484** (.174)
Race							
Black	2.668*** (.287)	-0.161 (.482)	0.654** (.244)	0.355 (.297)	0.327 (.308)	1.501 *** (.321)	-0.288 (.258)
Latino	0.477 (.384)	-0.763 (.638)	-0.370 (.328)	-0.056 (.394)	1.257** (.413)	-0.082 (.431)	-0.296 (.343)
Other race	1.005** (.386)	0.549 (.637)	-0.315 (.327)	0.609 (.393)	1.086** (.412)	0.160 (.429)	-0.027 (.346)
Age	-0.127 (.189)	-0.193 (.316)	0.123 (.161)	0.048 (.195)	0.086 (.204)	0.221 (.215)	0.033 (.170)
Military	-0.509 (.342)	-3.538*** (.574)	-1.203*** (.291)	-0.690 (.352)	-0.377 (.369)	-1.568*** (.390)	-0.498 (.309)
CJ major	-0.803*** (.227)	-2.267*** (.382)	-0.934*** (.194)	-0.898*** (.235)	0.380 (.244)	-0.694** (.255)	-1.545*** (.206)
Class							
Freshman	-0.340 (.301)	0.725 (.520)	0.565* (.265)	-0.526 (.320)	0.913** (.334)	0.141 (.350)	0.036 (.279)
Sophomore	0.145 (.314)	0.323 (.527)	0.140 (.270)	-0.041 (.326)	1.111*** (.338)	0.364 (.355)	0.020 (.286)
Junior	-0.224 (.247)	-0.122 (.413)	-0.094 (.210)	-0.180 (.255)	0.822** (.365)	-0.043 (.280)	-0.053 (.222)
Site							
Illinois State	1.228*** (.329)	0.576 (.552)	-0.190 (.280)	0.270 (.339)	-0.390 (.354)	0.200 (.371)	0.130 (.295)
UJMass-Lowell	0.836* (.353)	0.755 (.591)	0.068 (.302)	-0.063 (.366)	-0.531 (.379)	-0.658 (.398)	0.656* (.318)
IUPUI	0.930*** (.284)	0.562 (.478)	-0.020 (.242)	0.203 (.295)	-0.695* (.306)	-0.019 (.319)	0.946*** (.257)
Missouri State	0.622* (.267)	0.242 (.449)	-0.194 (.229)	0.403 (.279)	-0.497 (.288)	-0.007 (.301)	0.335 (.242)
R <sup>2</sup> = .168		R <sup>2</sup> = .284	R <sup>2</sup> = .229	R <sup>2</sup> = .071	R <sup>2</sup> = .072	R <sup>2</sup> = .096	R <sup>2</sup> = .158
F = 8.945	F = 17.597	F = 13.253	F = 3.407	F = 3.423	F = 4.630	F = 8.379	F = 8.379
p = .000	p = .000	p = .000	p = .000	p = .000	p = .000	p = .000	p = .000

Note. CJ = criminal justice; IUPUI = Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis; UJMass-Lowell = University of Massachusetts Lowell.

\*p .05. \*\*p .01. \*\*\*p .001.

**Table 3.** Ordered Logit of Insecurity Over Competing for a Police Patrol Position.

Variable	B	SE	p
Female	0.602***	.155	.000
Race			
Black	0.007	.227	.975
Latino	-0.093	.304	.761
Other race	-0.095	.304	.753
Age	-0.072	.151	.633
Military	-1.029***	.282	.000
CJ major	-0.447*	.180	.013
Class			
Freshman	0.213	.246	.388
Sophomore	0.480	.249	.054
Junior	0.116	.197	.556
Site			
Illinois State	0.289	.263	.272
UMass-Lowell	0.331	.280	.237
IUPUI	0.638**	.227	.005
Missouri State	0.182	.213	.392
		$\chi^2 = 1289.936$	
		p .001	
		Pseudo $R^2 = .106$	

Note. CJ = criminal justice; IUPUI = Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis; UMass-Lowell = University of Massachusetts Lowell.

\*p .05. \*\*p .01. \*\*\*p .001.

this effect is influenced by perceptions of barriers to entering policing commonly portrayed as explanations for gender disparities in police departments.

As shown in Table 4, female students are indeed less likely to express an interest in a police patrol career. In fact, female students are about .356 times as likely to express an interest in a police patrol career as are students who did not identify as female. In this base model, students with a military background ( $OR = 2.449$ ,  $SE = .325$ ) and criminal justice majors ( $OR = 3.815$ ,  $SE = .248$ ) are more likely to express an interest in a police patrol career.

In the perceptions model, the influence of sex is still significant after controlling for differences in the perceptions that females and males have about barriers to a police career. Following the inclusion of variables measuring the perceptions of common barriers, females were shown to be about .564 times as likely to express an interest in a police patrol career as were other students.<sup>6</sup> Three of the six barriers that were significantly related to sex are also significantly related to patrol career interest. As shown, those who feel greater apprehension about being exposed to less-lethal weapons as part of the hiring process ( $OR = .814$ ,

$SE = .069$ ), those who feel patrol work is disruptive to work–life balance and stressful ( $OR = .830$ ,  $SE = .048$ ), and those with less desire to advance or specialize in their career ( $OR = .694$ ,  $SE = .061$ ) all display diminished interest in a police patrol career. No significant relationship was found for insecurity about competing for a patrol position and interest in a patrol career.

A couple of other noteworthy findings appeared. First, the effects for military experience displayed in the first (base) model were fully accounted for by the perceptions of barriers. It appears that the decreased interest in a patrol career among those without military experience may be explained by their apprehension over barriers to which military personnel and veterans would have greater exposure (e.g., experiencing the effects of less-lethal weapons, work–life balance, and stress). Like the effects for sex, the increased interest for criminal justice majors was still significant after controlling for perceptions of barriers as well ( $OR = 1.835$ ,  $SE = .287$ ).

### *Interaction Effects*

To this point, the current inquiry has shown that female students have less interest in a police patrol career. Based on the findings thus far, these differences are potentially linked to differences in perceptions of barriers between female and male students. While this is useful, we also sought to examine whether these barriers had a more significant impact on female students than male students. To test for potential interactions, we included a variable representing the product of each significant barrier scale with sex, along with the barrier scale<sup>7</sup> and sex, as has been recommended in previous research (Cohen et al., 2003).

As shown in Table 5, no potential barriers displayed a significant interaction effect with sex. Upon further analyses plotting average marginal effects, we saw that there were really limited differences between male and female students in terms of the effects that each barrier had. The results of these tests for interactions indicate that among our sample, female students who share equal perceptions of each barrier as students who do not identify as female are equally likely to be deterred (or not) from a police patrol career. That is, fear of having to be tasered or pepper sprayed, work–life balance and job stress, and concern over advancement have an equivalent effect for male and female students when they have equivalent perceptions of the barriers. The difference being that female students, on average, have significantly higher concerns regarding these potential barriers.<sup>8</sup>

## **Discussion**

This examination supports previous research that female students are indeed less likely to express an interest in a police patrol career, as well as more insecurity in competing for entry-level patrol positions (Cambareri & Kuhns, 2018; Kringen,

**Table 4.** Logistic Regression of Patrol Career Interest.

Variable	Base model			Perception model		
	B	SE	OR	B	SE	OR
Female	-1.033	.183	0.356***	-0.573	.221	0.564**
<i>Perception scales</i>						
Respect					.053	0.916
Fighting/academy					.042	0.923
Less-lethal					.069	0.814**
Work-life balance					.048	0.830***
Blocked advancement					.061	0.694***
Competition					.119	1.181
<i>Race</i>						
Black	-0.123	.280	0.884	0.234	.346	1.264
Latino	0.405	.356	1.499	0.256	.419	1.291
Other race	-0.199	.379	0.820	-0.166	.466	0.847
Age	-0.139	.183	0.870	-0.072	.207	0.931
Military	0.896	.325	2.449***	0.220	.376	1.246
Cj major	1.339	.248	3.815***	0.607	.287	1.835*
<i>Class</i>						
Freshman	0.024	.302	1.024	0.135	.357	1.144
Sophomore	-0.567	.308	0.567	-0.731	.359	0.481*
Junior	-0.100	.232	0.904	-0.276	.266	0.759
<i>Site</i>						
Illinois State	0.027	.308	1.027	0.280	.362	1.323
UMass-Lowell	0.039	.342	1.040	0.364	.408	1.439
IUPUI	0.051	.276	1.052	0.580	.326	1.787
Missouri State	0.088	.265	1.092	0.291	.303	1.337
		$\chi^2 = 103.006$			$\chi^2 = 241.449$	
		p .001			p .001	
		Pseudo R <sup>2</sup> = .203			Pseudo R <sup>2</sup> = .438	

Note. Cj = criminal justice; IUPUI = Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis; UMass-Lowell = University of Massachusetts Lowell.

\*p .05. \*\*p .01. \*\*\*p .001.

2014; Yu, 2015). However, while considerable research has established that women perceive barriers to entering a police career, this study extends our knowledge by demonstrating that women perceive the barriers differently than men. Specifically, female students reported less respect for the institution of policing, less confidence in their physical abilities and the academy experience, more concern over exposure to less-lethal weapons, a greater issue with work–life balance and stress in policing, a diminished sense of career mobility, and greater apprehension over competing for a patrol position than male students. This holds true even in a setting where women have self-selected into courses studying criminal justice. These findings suggest that despite the modest gains in female representation in policing, female students continue to perceive significant barriers to police employment. These barriers in turn may impact their interest in entering policing. By examining the impact of sex on the barriers to entering policing as well as interest in a patrol career, we sought to disentangle these relationships. We found that the barriers women perceived in police employment diminished the observed differences between female and male students in patrol career interest but did not explain away the effect of sex. In other words, there is even more to whether a student identifies as female and the impact it has on patrol career interest than just these barriers.

One explanation is that women are generally not interested in doing the work associated with a police career. However, research suggests that both men and women list helping people as the most common motivator to becoming a police officer (Raganella & White, 2004). Instead, Kringen (2014) has argued that women who are interested in policing must overcome tension between their self-image as a woman and the image of policing as being exclusively male. In other words, gendered expectations for behaviors are important in shaping the career preferences for women. In this examination, we were unable to assess the role that perceptions of police culture and belonging have on interest in a patrol career, preemployment, but we know from previous work that policing has historically been a male-dominated institution with processes and structures that are inherently gendered (Acker, 2006). The “all boys club” culture of policing is apparent in the police academy experience (Kringen, 2014; Prokos & Padavic, 2002; Rabe-Hemp, 2018) and continues as women enter police agencies where they are often treated as outsiders and tokens (Acker, 2006). The findings that female students felt less confident about physical fighting and more apprehensive about the academy experience and less interest in upward mobility and more concerned about the impacts on family life may be related to concerns about their ability to “fit” into policing, which may also play a role in female student’s interest in a police career. However, female students did not differ in their perception of social approval or mentoring as barriers to police employment. This may be due to the increased representation of women in police recruitment materials and social media outlets (Kringen, 2014). Another explanation for these results is that female students had familial support, which

**Table 5.** Interaction Effects for Gender and Perceptions of Barriers on Patrol Career Interest.

Variable	Nonlethal		Work–life balance		Career	
	OR	SE	OR	SE	OR	SE
Female	0.534**	.205	0.395***	.193		
Less-lethal	0.666***	.080				
Female Less-Lethal	1.103	.105				
Female						
Work–Life Balance			0.714***	.065		
Female Work–Life			1.046	.056		
Balance						
Female					0.339***	.207
Blocked advancement					0.705***	.069
Female Career					0.847	.105
	$\chi^2 = 152.597$		$\chi^2 = 165.413$		$\chi^2 = 181.472$	
	<i>p</i> .001 Pseudo		<i>p</i> .001 Pseudo		<i>p</i> .001 Pseudo	
	$R^2 = .290$		$R^2 = .312$		$R^2 = .338$	

\*\*p .01 \*\*\*p .001.

helped the social approval and mentoring support perception. Another limitation of this study is that we did not ask students if they had a family member in law enforcement, which is commonly reported as a support for recruits interested in police careers (Rabe-Hemp, 2018).

Another explanation, supported by the finding that upward mobility was more concerning for female rather than male students, is that women have a reaction formation to blocked opportunities for upward mobility in policing. Coined by Sigmund Freud, a reaction formation is a psychological defense mechanism in which people think or behave in the opposite way they really want to because of blocked opportunities. In other words, our findings suggest that female students who sense climbing the ladder and breaking the “brass ceiling” in policing is unlikely simply reject the desire to become a patrol officer, which is often seen as a stepping stone to specialized roles or supervisory responsibilities in police agencies. Research has consistently found that female officers perceive upward mobility blocked in policing. Archbold and Schulz (2008) found that some female officers held a perception that women were promoted for their gender, as tokens, to project an image of inclusivity and progression. Not surprisingly, Archbold et al. (2010) found that female patrol officers were less likely to seek promotion than male officers. Similarly, Gau et al. (2013) reported that women were less likely to seek promotion and were more likely to believe that they would retire at their current patrol rank. It is interesting that potential female police officers perceive the same challenges that women working in police agencies report.

One further addition that the current inquiry offers to the current body of literature on women and perceptions of barriers preemployment is that no significant differences were found in examination of interactions between sex and exposure to less-lethal force devices, work–life balance, and perceptions that workplace advancement will be blocked. Thus, men who express concerns over being exposed to tasers or pepper spray, work–life balance, and a lack of advancement opportunities will also exhibit a diminished interest in a police career. Conversely, female students who show little concern over being subject to less-lethal weapons, work–life balance, and feel confident in opportunities for advancement should exhibit greater interest in a police patrol career. This indicates that sex does not moderate the relationship between perceptions and career aspirations. Future research should examine methods by which to reduce the barriers experienced by women, in order to increase the potential applicant pool for police recruitment.

One additional intriguing finding from the current inquiry is that criminal justice majors express more interest in entering police patrol compared with other majors. Criminal justice courses provide opportunities for immersive exercises (such as internships in criminal justice agencies) that may mitigate the perception of barriers and target many of the specific barriers such as pessimism toward career promotion and the unappealing nature of police work. Therefore, police agencies should continue and further develop participatory opportunities that go beyond nominal recruiting efforts. Some examples include partnering with criminal justice departments and schools for recruitment in university settings. Universities provide a unique forum where the specific topic of women in police work could be addressed as a contemporary issue, with curricula designed to support student inquiry into the nature of barriers to police careers among women. The finding that barriers are influential in whether women intend to choose a police career suggests that deeper relationships between police agencies and university criminal justice departments may be used to transform the understanding women have about policing.

### *Limitations*

While this inquiry does contribute to the current literature on barriers to women entering police patrol, it is certainly not without limitations. First, the current inquiry was not able to use probability sampling of universities with criminal justice departments, given the time and energy required of site contacts. We were also unable to assess interest in other institutions that offer criminal justice curricula, such as community colleges. Second, the sample used was composed of students who had self-selected into criminal justice courses. This limits the generalizability of our findings, as our theoretical argument is that female students are socialized away from male-dominated fields such as policing and as such may have self-selected away from criminal justice curricula prior to

entering college. Third, in order to examine undergraduates' perceptions of the police hiring process, many of our indicator questions focused on more general issues of policing without highly concrete examples. Finally, many of our indicator questions assessed the fear associated with the police preemployment process. Male students may respond to the word fear differently than other terms, such as "apprehensive" or "concerned," and future research should experimentally examine whether these responses are reflective of actual levels of worry about specific tasks or are a reaction to the vernacular.

### *Policy Implications*

Studying potential female officers and their perceptions of these barriers is an important step toward understanding the challenges to recruiting and ultimately retaining female police officers. Our results suggest that female students continue to perceive significant barriers to police work and that these barriers influence their interest in policing as a career. As agencies attempt to recruit more diverse recruitment classes, especially in response to a perceived "cop crunch," several policy implications are apparent (Taylor et al., 2006).

As a result of these findings, it is apparent that if police agencies would like to recruit more women into policing, addressing the perceptions of barriers women experience regarding a police career is crucially important. There are several ways in which these barriers and the perceptions of these barriers could be addressed. First, departments must continue to increase the clarity of the selection and physical standards for female recruits. Physical fitness tests that overemphasize upper body strength disadvantage women, and agencies that use these tests are less likely to attract women (Birzer & Craig, 1996; Bissett et al., 2012; Cambareri & Kuhns, 2018; Gaines et al., 1993; Lonsway, 2003; Schuck, 2014; Shelley et al., 2011). Discriminatory physical fitness tests are also being challenged in the courts and by the U.S. Department of Justice (Levy, 2014).

Second, academy practices that set the stage for police employment should be examined. Steps should be explored to prevent tokenism in the academy. One suggestion is to bring in a critical mass of female recruits. Based on the results of Aiello (2018), that when the physical expectations were explicitly stated on recruitment materials, physicality was not a significant barrier for women interested in a policing career. Future research should replicate these findings to see if explicitly stating academy experiences such as taser and pepper spraying recruits (or explicitly stating recruits will not be exposed to taser and Oleoresin Capsicum spray) and hand combat and physical fighting expectations will reduce their likelihood of being a barrier to potential female recruits. Defining the reality of patrol work in which violence is rare, to counter the popular culture assumptions about policing, may also clarify the career expectations for recruits.

Third, as a new generation of family focused police recruits enter policing, many departments have already addressed the need for more family-friendly policies and practices. For example, the Santa Fe Department of Transportation became the first state-sponsored childcare center in the United States. At the federal level, the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center in Georgia; The National Security Agency Police in Fort Meade, Maryland; and several of the U.S. Customs and Border Protection offices have on-site day care. Combined with the 2012 announcement of the International Association of Chiefs of Police revised model policy regarding pregnancy and maternity in American police agencies, agencies are being encouraged to make every reasonable effort to “accommodate the needs of pregnant employees to allow them to remain gainfully employed during their pregnancies.” These changes will ensure that future generation of potential officers sees fewer barriers to police and family life.

Fourth, agencies must make upward mobility possible for female officers and then highlight these opportunities to recruits. Our results support that potential recruits are aware of the barriers for women in progressing through the ranks, which has been consistent in the past several decades. While we often think of upward mobility as a retention issue, this research suggests it may be a recruitment issue for potential female recruits, as well.

Finally, strategies to recruit women and minorities into policing need invigoration considering the current study’s findings. Contemporarily, critique and restructuring of police recruitment practices is occurring globally with regard to a persistent inability of police departments to attract qualified women applicants (Orrick, 2008; Wilson et al., 2010). It is not enough that women officers be visibly included in recruitment efforts in order to provide a public face to potential recruits; frank and open discussions with women officers to address issues such as work–life balance, the rigors of the police academy, the true nature of promotional opportunities and career advancement, and other potential barriers should be frequent. Also, these discussions need not take place in formal recruitment settings such as career fairs. Internships, ride-along opportunities, and one-to-one mentorships provide an alternative recruiting environment that allows for more intimate exploration of the nature of women’s police experiences. As recruitment of women currently constitutes a special concern for the police manager, criminal justice researchers should focus on studying the efficacy of recruiting approaches and the development of promising practices that can guide police agencies toward further success in workforce diversification.

In conclusion, the results suggest that not only are female students less interested in a patrol career and feel less confidence in competing for positions, but they are more likely than male students to anticipate barriers to a successful career in policing. Our findings suggest that the perceptions of these barriers influence female and male students similarly but that female students are more likely to see opportunities as blocked. As police agencies are increasingly tasked

with making their departments more representative of the communities they police and filling police rosters in a “cop crunch,” we see that the interest in policing as a career for women is largely being blocked by the barriers that they perceive for female police officers. These barriers and the perceptions of these barriers by potential recruits must be addressed to ensure future generations of women police.

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### Notes

1. For a more comprehensive accounting of the survey design and administration, consult Rossler et al. (2019).
2. Fear of competing for a police patrol career was measured using a single indicator.
3. Factor loadings for *Patrol schedules would not allow me to spend time with my family (reverse coded)* on “work–life balance” was .448, *Having a mentor would make a difference in helping me choose a police patrol career (reverse coded)* on “lack of mentoring” was .414, and *I would enjoy being a detective or investigator* on “blocked advancement” was .384.
4. Overall, the “neither agree nor disagree” was selected by 17.5% of respondents for the family prompt, 18.3% for the friends prompt, and 29.7% for the spouse or significant other prompt, indicating that not having a spouse or significant other may have marginally impacted the overall score of about 10% of the sample. The scale had an alpha value of .804 when combined with the other two prompts, which indicates a high degree of reliability with the other two items that do not suffer from the potential measurement validity problem identified.
5. While students were asked to self-report their gender, the response categories listed reflected biological sex categories (i.e., male, female). As such, the detailing of findings and discussion refers to sex rather than gender. In our measure, the “all others” category includes less than 1% of the sample who identified as a gender/sex other than male or female. While including students who reported as male with students who identified as neither male or female is not the optimal modeling strategy in terms of theory, coding the measure in this fashion did not result in any substantive changes to the results.

6. Multinomial regression models were also estimated, allowing for examination of the effect of sex on neutral versus strongly/agree to being interested in a patrol career and strongly/disagree versus strongly/agree to being interested in a police patrol career. In the base model, female students were less likely to strongly/agree with interest in a police patrol career than hold neutral attitudes when compared with students who did not report as female, but the results were not statistically significant. Female students were significantly less likely to strongly/agree rather than strongly/disagree to interest in a police patrol career when compared with students of another sex. When perceptions of barriers were included, no significant differences were found for student sex, but the effects for female were nearly identical for neutral versus strongly/agree ( $B = -.496$ ,  $SE = .278$ ) and strongly/disagree versus strongly/agree ( $B = -.488$ ,  $SE = .253$ ).
7. Each of the scales was mean centered. Coefficients as presented in Table 5 include all control variables presented in the Table 4 base model. All models were also run including perception controls listed in the Table 4 perception model, but no substantive changes to the statistical significance of the coefficients presented in Table 5 were detected.
8. The authors would like to thank the anonymous reviewer for highlighting the interpretation of these interaction effects.

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**IDENTIFYING PREDICTORS OF POLICE PATROL CAREER INTEREST AMONG  
UNIVERSITY CRIMINAL JUSTICE STUDENTS**

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## **Abstract**

Both criminal justice practitioners and researchers continually struggle to confront the contemporary challenge of police personnel recruitment. The persistence of this issue continues a debate about how best to recruit qualified applicants and develop a more diverse police workforce. Drawing on a sample of criminal justice students across five public universities, this study examines factors that may affect potential candidate interest in entry-level patrol positions. Findings indicate that students are equally split in their interest in entering policing. Interest in pursuing a career in policing is shaped by students' perceived expectation of the lifestyle the position will provide, respect for the profession, approval from their social network, and desire to help. Fear of anticipated physical confrontation also contributed to students' views on pursuing a police patrol career. These results suggest approaches to managing police recruitment in a turbulent recruiting environment that is continually straining police resources.

## **Introduction**

The police workforce recruitment challenge has intensified since the global economy began to recover from the 2008 recession. Police agencies have been fatigued by the recruiting challenge amidst rapid fluctuations in the business cycle, workforce expectation transitions, and unforeseen changes in public opinion of their legitimacy. Since 2002, when some were asking "who wants this job?" (Domash, 2002, p. 32), police departments were overwhelmed with applicants during the peak of the 2008 recession, only to find that the economic downturn was a mirage as they now struggle to fill their ranks in an era of record low unemployment and

changing public opinion about policing (Domash, 2002; SAPOA, 2018). Evidenced by comments from Renee Hall, the Chief of Police of Dallas, Texas, who lamented that “Millennials... want all days off and to be the chief in six months” (Ernst, 2017, n.p.), police leaders are reaching a point of unforeseen frustration and desperation as they search for sure-fire solutions amid turbulent times. One agency lamented, “our applicant pool has become an applicant puddle” (Cobb, 2018, n.p.) in the face of plummeting applications for open police patrol positions. More evidence of frustration can be seen from the current disagreement as to who is responsible for resolving the current recruit shortage, as some have implicated police leadership and police culture itself for the dilemma (DuPont, 2017). The debate has consumed police management for nearly two decades, with few evidence-based solutions to navigate a path forward (PERF, 2018).

This study provides evidence about a plausible police applicant cohort and its beliefs, impressions, and aspirations about being a patrol officer, the entry-level position that candidates traditionally accept when undertaking a police career. A multisite survey of over 700 public university students in the United States captures nine factors that may draw potential recruits toward policing or serve as challenging hurdles for eligible candidates to overcome. The study advances the field in multiple ways. First, it provides a contemporary update to research examining motivations for becoming a police officer. Second, it extends knowledge on police recruitment by clarifying the range of forces which may act as either attractants or barriers to consideration for police careers using a national sample. Third, it tests and contextualizes existing opinion about contemporary recruiting efforts by providing perspective on the trajectory of prior recruitment research and its promise. For example, despite the existence of previous literature providing recruiting “best practices”, the law enforcement community has been

increasingly frustrated with the innumerable and often contradictory elements of these approaches. The current study broadens the scope of police recruitment literature by differentiating between attitudes and approaches seen as programmatic (i.e., police use of social media in recruitment efforts) and those that speak to broader needs of the candidates themselves (i.e., marketing the lifestyle provided by a police career).

### **Literature Review**

The challenges of obtaining qualified applicants for police patrol positions follows a cyclical trend which has mirrored fluctuations in the economic cycle. In times of economic distress, many American workers seek security in the lifestyle provided by a stable government career path. Conversely, in periods of economic prosperity, many patrol officer positions go unfilled, as private sector growth creates opportunity elsewhere (Wilson et al., 2010). There has been a growing concern among police managers and scholars alike that the interests of American workers in generational cohorts most proximate to entry level police work (e.g., Millennials and post-Millennials) have become incompatible with the drawn out, invasive hiring practices of police agencies, and potentially even police work itself (Taylor et al., 2006; Wilson et al., 2010). Some of the most noteworthy considerations identified by police administrators and scholars to effective recruitment into police patrol positions are a desire to help others, fear of physicality in the academy and work environment, incongruent lifestyle expectations, a diminishing respect for the police and social approval of joining the force, a lack of knowledge about what police do, and privacy concerns related to invasive background investigations, including the use of polygraph and similar examinations.

#### **Desire to Help**

Attempts to understand what potential applicants want and expect from a police career have been driven, in part, by cyclical and specific police manager needs rather than a systematic examination of the longer-term trends and establishing the most influential attractive aspects of policing along with the barriers to entering patrol work. One of the best supported explanations across decades of research for why people are drawn to police careers is the desire to help others.

Most studies examining why people choose to enter police careers have focused largely on the perspectives of early career officers. In some of the earliest research on the topic, Lester (1983) reported that service, including a desire to help people in the community, was among the top-rated reasons listed by police recruits at a state police training academy. Similarly, Raganella and White (2004) examined the perspectives of recruits to the New York City Police Department (NYPD) and reported that the opportunity to help people in the community was the highest ranked reason listed for becoming a police officer. In a follow-up to their examination of NYPD officers from the 2001 recruit class, White and colleagues (2010) examined motivations for becoming a police officer among the same population of recruits at a more advanced point in their careers. Upon this subsequent examination, officers had become somewhat more practical in their motivations, listing opportunities to help people in the community fifth, behind lifestyle considerations such as job security, benefits, early retirement, and opportunities for career advancement.

### **Lifestyle Considerations**

The lifestyle afforded to police officers has long been viewed as a major point of consideration when entering the career, and a reason that early career police officers provide for entering themselves or more advanced officers give for encouraging others to seek employment in policing. In his seminal work on police career orientations, Reiss (1967) found that the main

reasons police officers provided for why they would encourage their sons to seek employment as a police officer were the salary and job security. This early work provides a fundamentally different picture of why people enter policing compared to personal values such as a desire to give back to the community or *esprit de corps* with fellow officers.

Other research has supported this contention, with Westley (1970) indicating that a large proportion of officers in the 1950s viewed job security as their primary motivation. The extrinsic economic benefits of police careers were also listed as important to most officers in research by Harris (1973). Lester (1983) found academy recruits listed the level of pay and job security as top-level draws to policing.

While many of these studies are from a previous economic climate, the appeal of a steady career, good benefits, and generous pay for a “blue collar” job has continued into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In their first examination of early career NYPD recruits, Raganella and White (2004) reported that job security, job benefits, opportunities for career advancement, and early retirement were among the most important considerations, behind only the opportunity to help people in the community. In follow-up research, White and colleagues (2010) indicated that economic considerations were more important to officers later in their careers. These findings are contradictory to the proposition that the lifestyle afforded by a police career has become incongruent with the expectations of Millennials and post-Millennials (Ernst, 2017). Given that these samples included officers or applicants, little can be said about whether the police lifestyle is generally attractive or repulsive. Furthermore, research in this area has not included pre-employment Millennial or post-Millennial age groups, which are often pointed to as espousing a holistically different approach to employment.

More contemporary research has shown that younger and emerging workers desire greater workplace flexibility and work-life balance, especially relative to that typically afforded by policing (Chung & van der Lippe, 2018; Scrivner, 2008). To date, little research has examined the degree to which this is influencing interest in police careers, but it should be noted that fewer than half of young people indicate that a police agency would be a desirable, or even acceptable, place to work (Sackett & Mavor, 2003). Furthermore, while pay is commonly listed as an appealing aspect of police careers, it also appears as a reason provided for not entering a police career (Cheurprakobkit & Bartsch, 1999; Wilson et al., 2010). In response, many police departments are increasing their compensation in the hopes of luring more people to policing, as well as making sure they attract candidates in a competitive market (Leszcynski, 2018).

### **Respect for the Profession and Approval of the Career**

Respect for the institution of policing and social support for pursuing a police career have also been listed as contemporary challenges for the recruitment of more, and more diverse, police officers. Given the many high-profile police use of force incidents, particularly involving citizens of color, scholars have noted that support for the police may be waning (James et al., 2016). This attenuated support for the police as an institution has been linked to concerns about policing careers among potential police recruits. In her study of university students who applied for police positions post-graduation, Todak (2017) found that students expressed concerns about the social climate surrounding policing and anticipated that the current legitimacy crisis would result in increased hostilities from citizens. Unfortunately, this inquiry was not able to assess the perspectives of university students who elected not to pursue police positions.

Kaminski (1993) found that the level of respect for the police could influence the likelihood of high school students indicating they would accept a hypothetical job offer.

Students who did not believe that most people in their neighborhood respected the police were less likely to accept the hypothetical position. When the support for seeking a career in policing was more proximate in their social network, the effects were even more salient. Respondents who felt that their parents would disagree with the decision to become a police officer were substantially less likely to accept the hypothetical job offer than those who anticipated parental support (Kaminski, 1993). In more contemporary research, Lord and Friday (2003) found that parental encouragement for a police career was significantly different between students and applicants for police positions.

The lack of support by one's social network has been identified as particularly problematic among recruits of color. Waters and colleagues (2007) note that people of color frequently report that their families express open hostility to the idea of them becoming a police officer, and list this as an obstacle to seeking a career in policing. Perrot (1999) also identified disapproval from social support structures as an obstacle to entering a police career, although social disapproval was not a primary obstacle listed by potential recruits.

### **Fear of Physical Confrontation and the Academy Environment**

In addition to a lack of external support for the career path, the need to implement authority may serve as a deterrent to many who see patrol work as otherwise appealing. The capacity to use coercive force is a necessary aspect of policing (Bittner, 1970), yet many police officers morally struggle with using coercion in situations even where it is warranted (Muir, 1977). Todak (2017) identified the application of lethal force as a serious consideration among police applicants, though research has yet to definitively establish the degree to which using

force discourages patrol career interest. Similarly, candidates and those working in patrol struggle morally and ethically with the application of the criminal law. Police work inherently involves acting for someone, which also means taking coercive against someone else (Bittner, 1970). The challenging ambiguities in the application of the criminal law have been listed previously in research as an obstacle to entering police work, although rarely have these issues been systematically addressed (Waters et al., 2007).

Policing, and patrol work specifically, has also been characterized as a career path involving a significant amount of “dirty work”. The lore of police culture embraces the grotesque aspects of this career path, partially in an attempt to push away those who do not fit within the traditionally defined police culture. Van Maanen (1973, p. 221) has identified the police as claiming to be different from mainstream society, in that patrol work is the “only profession where ya gotta wash your hands before you take a piss”. In many instances, officers utilize “war stories” as a device to winnow out candidates who do not fit the machismo of traditional policing culture, and the sight of police in action brings to mind their work as something society in general “has no stomach for” (Bittner, 1970, p. 7).

Closely related to the conceptualization of the “dirty work” in policing, potential applicants who are otherwise interested in careers within the criminal justice system are deterred by the physical aspects of policing. Both physical fitness requirements, as well as the necessity of learning the skills of fighting and defensive tactics have been listed as substantial barriers to recruiting more police officers (Aiello, 2018; Cordner & Cordner, 2011; Lonsway, 2003; Schuck, 2014). The potential for harm and injury that is inherent in patrol work may also deter applicants. Research has highlighted the potential for physical combat, lethal force, or

generalized danger as an influential consideration in whether to apply for a position as a police officer (Lord and Friday, 2003).

Beyond the aspects of policing involving physical coercion, those otherwise interested in police patrol careers may find the academy experience to be an obstacle, both due to the physical fitness requirements, as well as the paramilitary environment, where recruits will ostensibly be subjected to demeaning treatment by trainers. The changing preferences of early career age Americans away from a willingness to join a militarized organization has been offered as an explanation for decreased interest in joining the armed forces (Bowyer, 2007), and this logic has been extended to increased difficulty in finding qualified police applicants (Wilson et al., 2010).

In support of this belief, Westley (1970) identified the police academy specifically as an experience which may attrite incompetent recruits from the process of becoming police officers, as well as a method to instill police culture in prospective officers. This academy process has been identified as a potential barrier to entering police patrol careers for many otherwise interested recruits (Haarr, 2005; Orrick, 2008; Prokos & Padavic, 2002), particularly those who do not display physical prowess (Kappeler et al., 1998). Current research also points toward the physical evaluation practices and hypermasculine culture of the academy as a process that may be particularly deleterious to the recruitment of female officers, contributing to a decades long inability to increase female representation in policing (Cambareri & Kuhns, 2018; Kringen, 2014; Prokos & Padavic, 2002; Schuck, 2014; Silvestri, 2017).

### **Knowledge of Careers**

While not traditionally listed as a barrier or attractive aspect of patrol careers, improving the access to information about police careers has frequently been listed as a method by which to improve police recruitment. In her research examining police position applicants, Todak (2017)

notes that applicants were typically well informed about what a police career would entail, which may provide some evidence that citizens who know little about the career would express little interest.

When offering recruitment strategies that police departments should consider, Wilson and colleagues (2010) focus heavily on the need for outreach to increase familiarity with police patrol careers as the optimal strategy for increasing the pool of qualified applicants. Techniques such as effective digital communication, use of community liaisons, open-door policies at the police department, job fairs, and youth programming are all listed as useful ways to generate qualified applicant pools (Wilson et al., 2010). These contentions have been empirically supported to some extent, as research by Jordan et al. (2009) indicates that dedicating funds to recruitment improves the access to more diverse applicant pools. However, contemporary research has not highlighted a link between knowledge about policing and interest in patrol careers at an individual level.

### **Social Media and Polygraph Utility**

In response to emerging societal pressures to screen out potentially problematic recruits pre-employment, police agencies have increasingly implemented investigations of social media accounts in addition to the long standing practice of subjecting applicants to polygraph examinations (Kim et al., 2017; Orrick, 2008). In general, university students tend to be fairly accepting of employers searching through social media profiles (Leott, 2019; Peluchette & Karl, 2009), although students of color express more opposition on average (Rossler & Scheer, 2020). While acceptance of this practice is fairly widespread, there is little research that has examined whether young people would actively avoid careers where this screening practice is commonplace. Polygraph examinations have a longer pedigree, but are less common in fields

outside of policing. While polygraphs have been noted as a mechanism to exclude candidates who do not ascribe to middle class norms and values (Kappeler et al., 1998), little research has explored whether perceptions of this practice influence interest in police patrol careers.

### **Current Inquiry**

To date, there is limited research systematically examining the influence of forces which may either attract persons to, or serve as barriers to, a police patrol career among a target-rich applicant pool, such as criminal justice undergraduate students. The current study used survey responses from over 700 undergraduate students across five public universities to examine the influence of variables hypothesized to shape patrol career interest from academic and professional literatures.

### **Methodology**

Data are drawn from a multisite survey of students enrolled in criminal justice courses at public universities. The survey utilized ninety-nine individual items that seek to capture information about police career indications and impressions in addition to six questions addressing demographic information. Students in five public universities with undergraduate criminal justice or criminology programs were surveyed. Survey sites included The University of Southern Mississippi (USM) School of Criminal Justice; Illinois State University (ISU) Department of Criminal Justice Sciences; University of Massachusetts-Lowell (UMass-Lowell) School of Criminology and Justice Studies; Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI) School of Public and Environmental Affairs; and Missouri State University (MSU) Department of Criminal Justice and Criminology.

### **Survey sample and administration**

The survey instrument was pre-tested in the summer of 2017 at The University of Southern Mississippi in six seated criminal justice courses in which enrollment was open to students of multiple majors. Following pre-testing, the survey was self-administered on paper in seated classes to undergraduate students during the Fall 2017 and Spring 2018 semesters at the five sites.

Project staff conducted one to two-day site visits at each location to administer surveys. Prior to site visits, project staff worked with a faculty member at each location who identified days and times when the maximum number of courses were being delivered, coordinated with other faculty members in their respective units, and requested permission from course instructors to schedule and administer the survey. Project staff attended courses where instructors approved of the data collection over the one to two-day visit. At times, multiple simultaneous seated courses necessitated that project staff contact the faculty or instructor in either the first or the last fifteen minutes of class to maximize efficiency and number of participants. None of the instructors who previously approved of the survey administration refused entry during site visits. For students in attendance in each course, the survey response rate was 98.8 percent.

## **Measures**

The dependent variable, *interest in a patrol career*, captures respondents' agreeableness to pursuing a police patrol career. This single-item measure asked respondents to indicate the extent to which they agreed with the statement "I am interested in a police patrol career." The item was measured on a 5-point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=neither agree nor disagree, 4=agree, 5=strongly agree). While a single item measure of a dependent variable is

not ideal, single-item measures are appropriate when concepts are easy to understand or digest (Hair et al., 2009).

As described in Table 1, a set of nine independent variables were used to explore factors that may shape perceptions and serve as barriers to entering policing. Principal components analysis (PCA) with varimax rotation identified latent combinations of weighted and observed survey items correlated to one another. These combinations capture the variance that exists in the survey data collection and serve as underlying factors. Thirty-six survey items were used in the PCA. Survey items were also measured on a 5-point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree; 5=strongly agree). Nine principal components with eigenvalues greater than one and at least 50% of cumulative proportion of variance explained emerged from the analysis and were retained as independent variables (see Table 1). This latter condition follows Merenda's (1997) criteria for extracting components. Scree test plots were also used to identify the slate of components used in this study. Table 1 also provides a summary of PCA results and the survey items used.

The desire of the candidate to engage in a helping role has been hypothesized to affect patrol career interest, even predating the community policing era (Harris, 1973; Reiss, 1967). *Desire to help* ( $\bar{x} = 3.78$ ;  $\alpha = .51$ ) taps into respondents' motivations to assist the public in times of crisis. Higher scores on this measure signal more willingness to help others. An additional potentially influential predictor of interest in a patrol career is the impact it may have on the applicant's lifestyle (Foley et al., 2008; Lord & Friday, 2003; Orrick, 2008; Stone & Tuffin, 2000). Our measure of *lifestyle expectations* ( $\bar{x} = 3.03$ ;  $\alpha = .67$ ) captures the perceived lifestyle benefits a police career would provide respondents. Higher scores represent greater anticipated benefit.

A sense of occupational prestige, as well as social approval from one's peer group has been linked to interest in police work from the earliest studies of police career pathways through modern investigations of pursuing the career in the midst of a legitimacy crisis (Bordua & Reiss, 1966; Slater & Reiser, 1988; Todak, 2017). *Social approval* ( $\bar{x} = 3.71$ ;  $\alpha = .80$ ) captures the extent to which respondents perceive their social network to encourage the choice to pursue a police career. Higher scores represent greater support from one's social network. *Respect for police profession* ( $\bar{x} = 4.21$ ;  $\alpha = .79$ ) relates to respondents' views on how much respect the profession deserves. Higher scores imply that a respondent possesses greater respect for the profession than their peers.

The rough and unpredictably violent side of law enforcement careers, as well as the requirement to attend the police academy, may serve as a potential barrier among interested persons (Haarr, 2005; Jurkanin et al., 2001; Martin, 1980). *Fear of physical confrontation* ( $\bar{x} = 2.32$ ;  $\alpha = .79$ ) relates to concerns or reservations about the physical hazards of policing. Higher scores indicate that a respondent possesses more fear, concerns, or reservations than their peers. The measure *police academy apprehension* ( $\bar{x} = 3.76$ ;  $\alpha = .82$ ) captures the fears, concerns, or reservations about the police academy and its activities. Higher scores indicate more concerns about police academy demands.

Other issues that may potentially influence interest in policing are knowledge about the career, attitudes toward investigations of social media accounts, and perceived legitimacy of polygraph tests. *Knowledge of police careers* ( $\bar{x} = 2.33$ ;  $\alpha = .77$ ) addresses the level of understanding respondents have about police career options. Higher scores indicate that a respondent possesses a greater perceived understanding of police careers. The measure *social media investigations* ( $\bar{x} = 3.71$ ;  $\alpha = .76$ ) captures perceptions of whether the review of social

media accounts is an appropriate background investigation tool. Higher scores represent more agreeableness to this form of investigation. *Polygraph utility* ( $\bar{x} = 3.37$ ;  $\alpha = .76$ ) taps into attitudes and beliefs about polygraph examinations as a screening mechanism for prospective candidates. Higher scores signal more confidence in the usefulness of polygraph examinations. For a full description of indicators included in each factor with corresponding factor loadings, please see Table 1.

To account for pre-existing differences between respondents, several control variables were collected. To address the influence of gender, respondent gender was classified as male or female (female = 0, male = 1). As shown in Table 2, about 48 percent of respondents reported as male. Respondent age was measured as a series of four categories: 18-21, 22-25, 26-29, and 30 and older, with about 70 percent of respondents indicating they were between 18 and 21 years of age. Race/ethnicity was captured through the use of five categories: White, Black or African American, Hispanic/Latino, Two or More Race/Ethnicities, and Other. The majority (72%) of respondents identified as White, followed by Black or African American (15%), Hispanic/Latino (7%), two or more races (4%), and other (2%). Grade represents respondents' class standing (i.e., freshman through senior). Respondent major field of study was classified into six categories: Criminal Justice (60%), Criminal Justice Double Major with another discipline (5%), Forensic Science (6%), Social Sciences (22%), and Other (7%). Military background is a dichotomous indicator differentiating respondents with self-reported military experience from those who did not have military experience. About 8 percent of respondents reported previous or current military experience. Additionally, a series of five binary variables were used to represent each university.

### **Analytic strategy**

A series of multinomial logistic regression models are estimated to examine factors that contribute to the pursuit of a patrol officer career net of control variables. To advance these analyses, the dependent variable was collapsed to three categories (agree, neither agree nor disagree, and disagree). Ordinal regression models were estimated but violated the assumption of parallel lines when the dependent variable was left in its original 5-point scale [-2LL chi-square (27, 722[772])=45.67,  $p < 0.01$ ] or collapsed into a 3-point scale [-2LL chi-square (9, 722[772])=22.24,  $p < 0.01$ ]. Logistic regression models were not appropriate for this study as data on one of the three dependent variable categories is ignored.

Control variables were transformed into dummy variables and entered into regression equations. Categories accumulating the largest count of responses became the reference category (i.e., age 18-21, race/ethnicity as White, Senior grade, Criminal Justice major, and MSU). Regression models are presented as stepwise progressions, moving forward from partially conditional estimates to a fully conditional model including all independent and control variables.

## Results

Respondents' desire to help, lifestyle expectations, respect for police profession, sense of social approval, fear of physical confrontation, and knowledge of police careers were associated with polar views on a patrol career. As evidenced in Table 3, when respondents' fear of physical confrontation increased, they were more likely to disagree rather than agree that they were interested in a patrol career (OR = 1.70; SE = .16). Those with more desire to help (OR = .70; SE = .13), knowledge about the profession (OR = .64; SE = .15), and respect for policing (OR = .64, SE = .19) were more likely to agree rather than disagree to patrol career interest.

Respondents who expect greater lifestyle benefits from this line of work are also more agreeable to taking on a patrol career (OR = .33; SE = .21).

Knowledge about policing, its promotional potential, and the lifestyle considerations the profession can support also differentiated agreeable from neutral responses to career attainment. The effect for knowledge (OR = .65; SE = .17) and lifestyle considerations (OR = .37; SE = .23) were comparable to their influence on disagree v. agree. Respondents with greater support from their social networks (OR = .69; SE = .14) were more likely to agree to the idea of a patrol career than express neutral views. Finally, apprehension about the police academy, views on polygraph utility and fairness, and opinions about the use of social media investigations in hiring selection had no relationship to respondent career interest.

Respondent sex, age, grade, major, and military experience also differentiated views on pursuing a patrol career. As shown in Table 3, male respondents were significantly more likely to agree that they were interested in a police patrol career than were female respondents (OR = .46; SE = .18). Respondents who were 30 years or older (OR = 5.17; SE = .84) were more likely to reject the notion of a patrol career in relation to traditional college age students who were much more agreeable to the idea. Similarly, sophomore respondents (OR = 2.78, SE = .35) are more likely than seniors to hold neutral views about a patrol career.

All of the respondents' majors were much more likely to disagree to the choice of patrol career in relation to criminal justice majors. Forensic Science and Other majors were more likely to hold neutral views about this type of career. Respondents with military experience were more agreeable to a patrol career than peers who did not possess experience. This reiterates some prior research on the subject of the suitability of military veterans for patrol careers in police

agencies (Hickman, 2006). In the analysis, there were no relationships between university setting and race/ethnicity on agreeableness to pursuing a patrol career.

Most of the associations observed in the partial models (Model 1 and 2) were found in the full model (Model 3). There were four exceptions. First, respondents' knowledge of police careers no longer differentiates views that accept or reject interest in a patrol career once accounting for relevant control variables. Second, gender is no longer a significant predictor of patrol career interest across either differentiated model. Third, criminal justice majors are no more or less likely than other majors to hold neutral or agreeable views on a patrol career once the independent variables are entered into the multinomial logistic regression equation. Finally, military experience is no longer able to differentiate between response options in the full conditional model.

### **Discussion**

This research examined a range of hypothesized factors thought to inhibit or facilitate entry into a police career among a multisite sample of students enrolled in undergraduate criminal justice courses. The results indicate that students were nearly split in their views on entering the police profession. Interest in pursuing a career in policing was shaped by students' perceptions, fears, and social networks. These results inform the modification or enhancement of current personnel recruiting strategies. This section explores these opportunities in detail by considering the factors that appear to be pulling candidates toward or pushing candidates away from patrol careers, and the utility (and risk) of using analysis results to form a prototypical "target candidate".

#### **The pull mechanisms of patrol interest**

Among numerous previous research studies, the desire to help is often listed as one of the most appealing aspects of policing (Lester, 1983; Raganella & White, 2004). In this way, a

sense of mission to help one's community may be characterized as a career feature that "pulls" candidates toward career consideration. Our findings support this belief, as we found that as the respondent's desire to help increased, they were more likely to agree rather than disagree that they were interested in a police patrol career. This is a useful finding in that it provides evidence of desire to help as a predictor while other relevant controls are included. From a recruitment perspective, this may be less useful, as the desire to help is less malleable, and there is a conceptually larger gulf between disagreement and agreement with patrol career interest.

An additional predictor of patrol career interest that is frequently listed as the most important consideration is lifestyle expectations (Reiss, 1967; White et al., 2010). Findings in the current inquiry indicated that those who viewed the lifestyle provided by policing as desirable were more likely to agree that they were interested in a police patrol career rather than disagree or have a neutral perception. The desire to have a secure occupation with good pay and benefits, available with a more "blue collar" job, appears to still be an appealing aspect of police work for the Millennial and post-Millennial generations. Thus, police recruiters should consider or continue to feature benefits in their recruitment materials.

### **The push mechanisms of patrol interest**

Emerging research has found that the rigid employment expectations associated with police work may be contradictory to the flexibility and work-life arrangements sought by the Millennial and post-Millennial generations (Cheurprakobkit & Bartsch, 1999; Sackett & Mavor, 2003; Wilson et al., 2010). Similarly, respect for the profession of policing is a more contemporary concern (James et al., 2016), and many researchers and practitioners alike are concerned that diminishing respect for the police may be partially responsible for reduced applications to police positions (Todak, 2017). Our findings are consistent with the hypotheses

that desire for workplace flexibility, and waning respect for the police, are influential in deciding whether to pursue a policing career.

A concern closely related to respect for police is the social approval of a policing career. Previous research has indicated that those who perceived that their parents disagree with them becoming a police officer were less likely to accept a hypothetical offer of police employment (Kaminski, 1993), and that recruits of color frequently experience hostility from their social support structures (Perrot, 1999; Waters et al., 2007). The findings in the current inquiry support the findings in previous research that those who experience less social approval tend to be less interested in a police patrol career. However, one's perception about the approval of their social network was only able to differentiate between respondents holding neutral and agreeable views. That is, participants in this study who possess less social approval are most likely to hold neutral views of a police patrol career, rather than disagreeable views. This finding indicates that social approval may be one of the more malleable factors for potential recruits. If police recruiters could influence family, peer group, significant others, or a combination of these groups, officers may be able to nudge an otherwise ambivalent pool of potential patrol officer recruits.

Fear of physical confrontation is also a potential issue that may push otherwise interested candidates away from police patrol careers. Policing is often characterized by dirty work and danger (Van Maanen, 1973), and the portrayal of this danger may be an instrumental consideration in whether to enter a police career (Lord & Friday, 2003). The current inquiry finds support for this argument, as respondents who reported greater fear of physical confrontation were more likely to disagree rather than agree that they were interested in a police patrol career. This concern may be less malleable and downplaying the requisite physical

confrontation inherent in policing may not be as effective as promoting the pay and benefits of a patrol career, or meeting with a candidate's nuclear social group in an attempt to garner support.

### **The benefit and risk of creating a “target candidate” based on these results**

There is great attractiveness, and risk, to creating a “target candidate” from these results. What needs to be emphasized is that predictive factors appear to be complex and synergistic. That is, departments may focus on a “prototypical strong recruit”, motivated by a sense of mission, who desires to help their community, is less fearful of physical confrontation, and who respects law enforcement meets criteria which are not exclusively “interested” in becoming a police officer.

While looking for a model candidate is cognitively appealing, there is risk inherent in such tendencies, and simply proceeding in this fashion is to ignore the overarching lesson of these results. It should be noted that people may express an interest in patrol careers, but they (and other respondents) may still need the same amount of active recruiting. For instance, the disposition towards focusing on previous military experience as an attribute is elusive, as military experience becomes an obsolete attribute after accounting for relevant control variables such as fear of physical confrontation, lifestyle considerations, social approval for the career, and perceptions of policing. Similarly, the results show no effect of race or ethnicity on career inclination, contrary to anecdotal belief that contemporary police recruiting is a harder endeavor to ethnic minorities. The results state that *higher* levels of interest in careers nest among specific persons, but that should not exclude other candidates for whom greater effort needs to be made, especially when the factors are potentially reinforcing in such a complex manner.

Another risk of using these results to create a “target candidate” is that the survey cohort itself reflects a spectrum of candidate attractiveness to patrol careers that may reflect unforeseen

distinctions, such as the differently-established notions about careers between older survey respondents and younger, traditional-age college students. This distinction could potentially reflect the notion that cohorts of younger college students, less progressed through their respective programs, have not yet assessed their potential career options as have senior students (or even older, non-traditional students) who are more mature. Therefore, consideration of an “ideal age group” for targeting recruiting should proceed with caution. Additionally, there may be temptation to focus attention on a “target candidate” with respect to majoring in criminal justice. This finding may indicate that criminal justice majors have a pre-disposed outlook on police patrol careers than other majors, including forensic science, which requires advanced science coursework and can lead to more laboratory-based careers. Literature assessing differential occupational orientation among majors and non-majors within criminal justice courses has shown mixed results (Lambert, 2007; Rossler & Scheer, 2020; Tontodonato, 2007), therefore caution should be exercised when assuming interaction between patrol career expectations and specific declared college major.

### **Implications for research and policy**

The survey results present implications for future research investigation. First, while the results indicate a possible synergy of factors which may sway candidate interest in patrol careers, the possibility that specific “triggers” exist is not yet explored. Future research could focus on the potential that incidents, past experiences, or even historical events may “spike” interest, or aversion, to the career. Second, the synergy of factors is, in itself, less useful for both researchers and practitioners than an ordered or disentangled array of factors which may be considered more or less attractors than others. A future study could undertake the task of

differentiating or ranking such factors on a scale which may present opportunities for theoretical exploration.

Most importantly for future research, three specific factors that did not appear to impact career preference were against the contemporary anecdotal beliefs of police practitioners. The possibility that college students are wary of attending a police academy following obtaining a four-year degree, the potential applicant fear of invasive selection techniques (such as polygraph & social media scrutiny), and the perception of significant racial and ethnic differences were all unfounded in the current study. Each of these items could be studied in more specific detail to determine if there are intervening factors which made each less influential than popular belief. For instance, in an age where best practices for “recruiting for diversity” are being sought, more detailed research uncovering the specific nature of what differences exist between these groups could clarify theoretical understandings which have eluded police managers for decades (Castaneda & Ridgeway, 2010). Further, developing a scale or ranking of these factors could greatly illuminate the nature of the career’s appeal or lack thereof among diverse groups.

Similarly, policy approaches to enhance and readdress recruitment and selection processes are suggested by the study results. Specific actionable steps include strengthening recruitment approaches to focus on the selling of specific lifestyle and work-life balance benefits, refocusing recruitment of college sophomores and above in order to capture impending graduates, and continuing to educate those who display less career familiarity (namely, college freshmen and forensic science students, who may have less realistic career orientation when it comes to policing). It is also important for practitioners to consider that what had been commonly viewed as “deal breakers” by the potential applicant cohort (namely, fear of the police academy, fear of invasive selection processes such as social media investigations) may actually

not exist as strongly as first envisioned. On the contrary, these experiences are expected by future applicants, and may actually present opportunities to generate or strengthen feelings of organizational commitment, so long as the agency is transparent as to the purpose and specific utility of these steps (such as, rebranding a rigorous police academy as beneficial investment in individual safety).

There also exist implications for long-term recruitment and career development among cohorts of future applicants. The results of the study implicate that agencies should be actively invested in branding their agencies, as well as providing knowledge about specific details pertaining to the lifestyle associated with police careers, to cohorts of future applicants. Likewise, frank discussion about the “realities” of police work may alleviate candidate misconceptions about physical confrontation. Finally, agencies could well emphasize the helping aspects and “social services” opportunities inherent in patrol careers. Survey results strongly suggest that the preferred methods by which agencies can undertake these and other specific points of education and recruiting are the creation of first-hand experiences and one-on-one mentoring, forged through job shadowing, realistic job preview strategies such as internships, and other creative methods of open-door partnering with colleges and universities where individuals who comprise the target applicant cohort may reside.

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UNDER REVIEW

**Table 1: Exploratory Factor Analysis of Survey Items**

Factor	Loading	Exp. Var.	Eigen	$\alpha$
<b>Desire to Help</b>		67%	1.35	0.51
I do not want to deal directly who are injured or physically hurt [R]	0.82			
I would have difficulty dealing with abused children as a patrol officer [R]	0.82			
<b>Lifestyle Expectations</b>		51%	2.42	0.67
Police patrol work schedules would allow me plenty of free time	0.58			
Police patrol schedules would not allow me to spend time with my family [R]	0.58			
Police patrol salaries allow me to live the kind of lifestyle I want	0.59			
I would be overworked in a patrol career [R]	0.54			
A police patrol career would provide me with a good opportunity to raise a family	0.63			
Police patrol work requires serious personal lifestyle changes [R]	0.56			
Police patrol work is too stressful [R]	0.52			
<b>Respect Profession</b>		62%	2.48	0.79
I was raised to respect the police	0.75			
Police work is a noble profession	0.83			
The public should respect the police	0.83			
Police work is an honest profession	0.74			
<b>Social Approval</b>		71%	2.13	0.80
My family would not approve of me becoming a patrol officer [R]	0.87			
My friends would not approve of me becoming a patrol officer [R]	0.87			
My spouse or significant other would not approve of me becoming a patrol officer [R]	0.79			
<b>Fear of Physical Confrontation</b>		71%	2.13	0.79
I am afraid of physical fighting and hand-to-hand combat associated with patrol work	0.73			
The fact that I have to be tased as part of academy training makes me not interested in a patrol career	0.90			
The fact that I have to be pepper sprayed as part of academy training makes me not interested in a patrol career	0.89			
<b>Academy Apprehension</b>		59%	2.95	0.82
I am afraid of attending a police academy	0.76			
Being yelled at by academy instructors makes me not interested in a patrol career	0.82			
I am afraid of police academy firearm training	0.76			
I am afraid of being compared to other police academy attendees based on our firearms familiarity	0.70			
I do not like the idea of being a part of a military-style environment	0.80			
<b>Knowledge of Careers</b>		59%	2.38	0.77
I do not fully understand the promotional process for police patrol careers [R]	0.80			
I do not fully understand police patrol work scheduling [R]	0.81			
I'm not sure what a police sergeant does [R]	0.79			
I have never had an opportunity to figure out what a police patrol career is really like [R]	0.69			
<b>Social Media Investigations</b>		58%	2.33	0.76
It is appropriate for police departments to look at a candidate's social media use as part of the background check process	0.76			
Looking at someone's social media activity can give you a good idea of what kind of character they have	0.73			
What someone says on social media has no impact on whether or not that person would make a good police officer [R]	0.74			
I don't think anybody should look at my social media activity as part of any job application process [R]	0.81			
<b>Polygraph Utility</b>		59%	2.35	0.76
I am confident in the fairness of a polygraph examination	0.79			
Polygraph examinations are unethical [R]	0.74			
If you have nothing to hide, then you shouldn't be bothered by taking a polygraph examination	0.71			
Polygraph examinations are unreliable [R]	0.74			

**Table 2: Descriptive Statistics**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Mean (SD) [Range] / N (%)</b>
<i>Interested in police patrol career</i>	
Strongly Agree (5)	116 (15%)
Agree	184 (24%)
Neither Agree or Disagree	155 (20%)
Disagree	187 (25%)
Strongly Disagree (1)	125 (16%)
<i>Predictive Factors</i>	
Desire to Help	3.78 (0.96) [1-5]
Lifestyle Expectations	3.03 (0.54) [1-5]
Respect Profession	4.21 (0.66) [1-5]
Social Approval	3.71 (0.75) [1-5]
Fear Physical Confrontation	2.32 (0.96) [1-5]
Academy Apprehension	3.76 (0.91) [1-5]
Knowledge of Careers	2.33 (0.69) [1-5]
Social Media Investigations	3.71 (0.75) [1-5]
Polygraph Utility	3.37 (0.77) [1-5]
<i>Sex</i>	
Female	395 (52%)
Male	365 (48%)
<i>Age</i>	
18-21	524 (69%)
22-25	196 (26%)
26-29	26 (3%)
30+	14 (2%)
<i>Ethnicity</i>	
Black/African American	114 (15%)
Hispanic/Latino	49 (7%)
Two or more Races/Ethnicities	32 (4%)
White	531 (72%)
Other	16 (2%)
<i>Grade</i>	
Freshman	136 (21%)
Sophomore	102 (15%)
Junior	205 (31%)
Senior	221 (33%)
<i>Major</i>	
Criminal Justice	454 (60%)
Double Major (including CJ)	40 (5%)
Forensic Science	48 (6%)
Social Science (not including CJ)	162 (22%)
Other	51 (7%)
Military Experience	65 (8%)
<i>University</i>	
USM	186 (24%)
ISU	102 (13%)
UML	94 (12%)
IUPUI	185 (24%)
MSU	205 (27%)

**Table 3: Stepwise Conditional Multinomial Logistic Regression Models**

	Model 1				Model 2				Model 3			
	Disagree v. Agree		Neutral v. Agree		Disagree v. Agree		Neutral v. Agree		Disagree v. Agree		Neutral v. Agree	
	B (SE)	EXP(B)	B (SE)	EXP(B)	B (SE)	EXP(B)	B (SE)	EXP(B)	B (SE)	EXP(B)	B (SE)	EXP(B)
<b>Desire to Help</b>					-0.36 (0.13)	0.70**	-0.09 (0.15)	0.92	-0.36 (0.15)	0.70**	-0.15 (0.16)	0.86
<b>Lifestyle Expectations Respect Profession</b>					-1.10 (0.21)	0.33***	-0.99 (0.23)	0.37***	-1.09 (0.22)	0.34***	-1.09 (0.24)	0.34***
<b>Social Approval</b>					-0.13 (0.13)	0.87	-0.37 (0.14)	0.69**	-0.14 (0.14)	0.87	-0.37 (0.15)	0.69**
<b>Fear Physical Confrontation</b>					0.53 (0.16)	1.70***	0.21 (0.19)	1.30	0.53 (0.18)	1.70**	0.19 (0.20)	1.21
<b>Academy Apprehension</b>					0.25 (0.22)	1.29	0.37 (0.24)	1.44	0.08 (0.24)	1.09	0.23 (0.26)	1.26
<b>Knowledge of Careers</b>					-0.37 (0.15)	0.64*	-0.43 (0.17)	0.65*	-0.20 (0.17)	0.82	-0.37 (0.18)	0.70
<b>Social Media Investigations</b>					0.10 (0.14)	1.11	-0.05 (0.15)	0.95	0.04 (0.15)	1.04	-0.13 (0.16)	0.88
<b>Polygraph Utility</b>					0.05 (0.14)	1.05	0.17 (0.15)	1.19	0.04 (0.15)	1.04	0.24 (0.17)	1.27
<b>Male</b>	-0.77 (0.18)	0.46***	-0.63 (0.20)	0.54***					-0.33 (0.17)	0.72	-0.29 (0.18)	0.75
<b>Age</b>												
<b>22-25</b>	0.11 (0.23)	1.12	0.52 (0.27)	1.68					-0.22 (0.27)	0.80	0.21 (0.30)	1.23
<b>26-29</b>	0.58 (0.50)	1.79	0.21 (0.71)	1.24					0.24 (0.62)	1.27	0.09 (0.78)	1.09
<b>30+</b>	1.64 (0.84)	5.17*	1.51 (0.98)	4.54					1.62 (0.88)	5.05	1.13 (0.99)	3.10
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>												
<b>Black</b>	0.30 (0.27)	1.36	0.22 (0.32)	1.24					-0.41 (0.34)	0.66	-0.26 (0.38)	0.77
<b>Hispanic/Latino</b>	-0.57 (0.37)	0.56	-0.28 (0.40)	0.77					-0.70 (0.44)	0.49	-0.35 (0.44)	0.70

<b>Two or More</b>	0.41 (0.43)	1.50	-0.34 (0.62)	0.71		0.31 (0.55)	1.36	-0.38 (0.69)	0.68
<b>Other</b>	-1.30 (0.81)	0.27	-0.02 (0.65)	0.98		-0.78 (0.89)	0.46	-0.08 (0.80)	0.93
<b>Grade</b>									
<b>Freshman</b>	-0.13 (0.30)	0.88	0.18 (0.35)	1.19		-0.45 (0.35)	0.64	-0.03 (0.39)	0.97
<b>Sophomore</b>	0.51 (0.31)	1.67	1.02 (0.35)	2.78**		0.50 (0.36)	1.65	1.07 (0.39)	2.93**
<b>Junior</b>	0.17 (0.23)	1.19	0.36 (0.27)	1.44		0.13 (0.26)	1.18	0.31 (0.30)	1.36
<b>Major</b>									
<b>CJ Double Major</b>	1.37 (0.44)	3.95**	0.41 (0.57)	1.51		1.39 (0.48)	3.85**	0.55 (0.60)	1.73
<b>Forensic Science</b>	1.42 (0.48)	4.13**	1.35 (0.56)	3.87*		1.40 (0.56)	4.04**	1.33 (0.61)	3.79*
<b>Social Sciences</b>	0.64 (0.24)	1.91**	0.09 (0.30)	1.09		0.39 (0.29)	1.48	-0.10 (0.34)	0.90
<b>Other Major</b>	2.57 (0.56)	13.04***	1.97 (0.61)	7.17***		2.17 (0.61)	8.74**	1.61 (0.65)	5.00**
<b>Military Background</b>	-0.88 (0.35)	0.41**	-1.04 (0.45)	0.35*		-0.36 (0.41)	0.70	-0.46 (0.48)	0.63
<b>University</b>									
<b>USM</b>	0.05 (0.29)	1.05	-0.03 (0.35)	0.97		0.20 (0.34)	1.23	0.06 (0.38)	1.07
<b>ISU</b>	-0.28 (0.33)	0.75	0.34 (0.35)	1.41		-0.18 (0.37)	0.84	0.50 (0.38)	1.07
<b>UML</b>	0.24 (0.33)	1.27	0.40 (0.37)	1.20		0.42 (0.39)	1.52	0.69 (0.41)	1.99
<b>IUPUI</b>	-0.05 (0.26)	0.95	-0.16 (0.32)	0.85		0.01 (0.31)	1.01	-0.07 (0.36)	0.93
<b>Nagelkerke R<sup>2</sup></b>	0.19			0.30		0.37			
<b>-2LL</b>	936.77			1309.63		1223.22			
<b>Chi-Square</b>	135.80***			219.83***		283.30***			
<b>N (df)</b>	754 (40)			722 (18)		711 (58)			

\*p<0.05, \*\*p<0.01, \*\*\*p<0.001

## Chief Will Johnson

Arlington, TX Police Department



Will Johnson has twenty-five years of law enforcement experience and was promoted to police chief in March 2013. He currently serves on the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) Executive Board as Vice President and is the Past Chair of the IACP Human and Civil Rights Committee. Will also serves on the Executive Board for the Major Cities Chiefs Association, which represents the largest 78 cities in the United States and Canada. Will is an Executive Fellow for the Police Executive Research Forum (PERF) and was the recipient of the PERF 2013 Gary P. Hayes Leadership Award and the 2016 Ethical Leadership Award from the Institute for Law Enforcement Administration. Will holds a master's degree from Texas Christian University and a bachelor's degree from Texas Tech University. He is a graduate of the FBI National Academy 245th Session, where he served as president, a graduate of the 35th session of the Senior Management Institute for Police, the 40th FBI National Executive Institute, and the Texas Law Enforcement Management Institute's 45th Leadership Command College.

## Deputy Chief Valerie Cunningham

Indianapolis Metropolitan Police Department



Valerie Cunningham has over 28 years of experience in law enforcement, she has served in every rank from patrol officer to Interim Chief of Police and now serves as Deputy Chief of Police of the Administration Division of the Indianapolis Metropolitan Police Department (IMPD). The Administration Division is responsible for the IMPD Training Academy, Recruiting Unit, Behavioral Health Unit, Office of Professional Development and Wellness, Technical Projects, and the Community Engagement Office.

Her management experience includes internal affairs investigator, narcotics unit supervisor, executive officer and serving as a Lieutenant in the

Homeland Security Division, traffic branch, and special events planning.

Chief Cunningham holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in exercise physiology/movement and sports science from Purdue University. She is a graduate of the 240<sup>th</sup> session of the FBI National Academy and the 48<sup>th</sup> session of the Senior Management Institute for Police.

Chief Cunningham is an active member of the National Association of Women Law Enforcement Executives (NAWLEE) and currently serves as the immediate past President. She represents the association at the national level on a variety of topics affecting women in law enforcement. She currently serves as the liaison for NAWLEE as a partner agency on the Collaborative Reform Initiative Technical Assistance Center (CRI-TAC) program, which in partnership with the Department of Justice's Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) provides customized technical assistance to police agencies throughout the United States.

Chief Cunningham's current projects include serving on committees at the national level pertaining to officer safety and wellness and law enforcement suicide prevention. She was a selected representative on the Officer Safety and Wellness Group, a collaborative working group formed by the COPS office in partnership with Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA). To address the critical issue of law enforcement suicides, in 2019 the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) and the BJA sponsored a National Consortium on Preventing Law Enforcement Suicides. Chief Cunningham is an active member of the Consortium.

## Chief Mike Yankowski

Lansing, MI Police Department



Mike Yankowski graduated from Ferris State University as a student athlete (Football) in 1994, where he earned his Bachelor's Degree in Criminal Justice. Upon graduation, he was hired with the Lansing Police Department (LPD) where he quickly promoted through the ranks of Police Officer, Canine Handler, Field Training Officer, Sergeant, Lieutenant, and Chief of Police. During his tenure with the LPD, he led the Canine Unit, Road Patrol, and Internal Affairs Unit. As a Captain, Yankowski was tasked with consolidating the North and South Precincts into one operation and was proudly named the 2010/2011 City of Lansing Employee of the Year.

In April of 2013, Yankowski was elevated to his greatest role as Chief of Police for the LPD. As the Chief of Police, Yankowski was instrumental in developing and executing the implementation of the Data Driven Approach to Crime and Traffic Safety (DDACTS), Gang Resistance Education and Training (G.R.E.A.T.), Capitol Area Violent Crime Initiative (VCI), Crisis Intervention Teams (CIT), Body Worn Camera Program at the Lansing Police Department.

He spearheaded the efforts to establish an Advocates and Leaders for Police and Community Trust (ALPACT) program in Metro Lansing where he currently serves as the Co-Chair.

Yankowski secured collaboration with the Michigan State Police Secure Cities Partnership, Angel Program, and Department of Justice National Public Safety Partnership for the LPD.

He received the 2017 Ferris State Criminal Justice Distinguished Alumni Award.

Yankowski is a graduate of the Michigan State University School of Staff and Command, where he was unanimously voted Class President of the Fourth Class.

Yankowski is a member of the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP), Police Research Executive Forum (PERF), Michigan Association for Chiefs of Police (MACP) and Police Assisted Addiction Recovery Initiative (PAARI).

In 2016, Yankowski was appointed to the Michigan Citizen-Community Emergency Response Coordination Council (MCCERCC) by Governor Rick Snyder.

In 2017, Yankowski was appointed as a member of the Michigan Commission on Law Enforcement Standards (MCOLES) Recruiting Task Force.

In 2018, Yankowski was appointed to the Council of Law Enforcement and Reinvention (CLEAR) by Governor Rick Snyder.

Yankowski has served as a board member of the following:

- Greater Lansing Old Newsboys Organization
- Y.M.C.A. Lansing Chapter
- H.O.P.E. Scholarship
- Lansing Promise Scholarship
- Partners in Crisis
- Lansing Safety Council
- Ferris State Criminal Justice Advisory Board
- Mid-Michigan Police Academy Advisory Board
- Michigan State University Criminal Justice Professional Development
- WA-IAM Inc. RISE Recovery Community
- Lansing Catholic Diocese Task Force on Race in Catholic Schools

Chief Yankowski modeled his career around five key areas: 1) Building Police and Community Trust, 2) Recruiting and Hiring a Diverse Department, 3) Reducing Violent Crime, 4) Increasing Training and Officer Wellness, and 5) Strengthening Policy and Accountability.

In August of 2019, Chief Yankowski retired after a 25-year career with the LPD, spending the last six as the Chief of Police.

In October of 2019, Yankowski began his chapter two career with the Michigan State University where he humbly accepted the role of Institutional Ethics and Compliance Assistant Director.