Mahurin Honors College Capstone Experience/Thesis Projects

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The Development and Validation of the General Attitudes toward Police (GAP) Questionnaire

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THE DEVELOPMENT AND VALIDATION OF THE

GENERAL ATTITUDES TOWARD POLICE (GAP)

QUESTIONNAIRE

A Capstone Experience/Thesis Project Presented in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree Bachelor of Arts

with Mahurin Honors College Graduate Distinction

at Western Kentucky University

By

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ABSTRACT

Previous studies have examined the relationships between various demographic characteristics (e.g., race/ethnicity, prior arrest experience, residential living area, political affiliation) and various measures of attitudes toward police (e.g., trustworthiness, legitimacy; Brown & Benedict, 2002; Hindelang, 1974; Rizer & Trautman, 2018; Schuck et al., 2008). However, a measure of overall general attitudes toward police has not been established. The main goal of the present research was to fill this gap in the literature by creating and validating a brief questionnaire that effectively captures respondents' general attitudes toward police. In Study 1, a brief 14-item questionnaire that captured general attitudes toward police was created, the General Attitudes Toward Police (GAP) Questionnaire. Study 2 tested the predictive validity of the 14-item questionnaire by analyzing the relationship between participants' scores on the questionnaire and their judgments of police officer use of force while also controlling for various demographic variables that have been established in the literature as strong predictors of attitudes toward police (race/ethnicity, prior arrest experience, residential living area, political affiliation). It is my hope that the GAP questionnaire will be useful regarding future research on attitudes toward police as well useful for measuring the general public's attitudes toward police before and after police policy changes.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Introduction

The overall opinion of the public regarding police within the United States has been a major point of interest among scholars within the fields of psychology, law, and criminology. In recent years, the public's general awareness of police has likely increased due to the rising number of police brutality cases showcased in mainstream news media and the substantial increase in exposure to police brutality cases on several forms of social media. As a result, I believe it is important to understand the general public's attitudes toward police, as well as how they evaluate police behavior. The goal of the present research was to investigate these questions. In Study 1, a questionnaire designed to measure the public's general attitudes toward police was created, called the General Attitudes toward Police (GAP) Questionnaire. The goal of Study 2 was to provide a test of the validity for the GAP Questionnaire. In order to establish a test of validity, the relationship between scores on the GAP Questionnaire and judgments of police officer use of force, while controlling for various demographic variables, was examined.

Study 1

In order to examine attitudes toward police, it is first necessary to determine how to measure attitudes toward police. Previous researchers have attempted to measure the public's general attitudes toward police in many ways (Cavanagh & Cauffman, 2015; Nadal & Davidoff, 2015; Reynolds et al., 2018). However, a standard measure of individuals' overall *general attitudes toward police* has not been established in the literature.

Previous studies' measures of general attitudes toward police vary greatly. For instance, Reynolds et al. (2018) developed an instrument to examine perceptions of police legitimacy specifically (e.g., "Police officers desire justice. Agree or disagree."). Cavanagh and Cauffman (2015) measured people's perceptions of police by asking participants their attitudes about police fairness and equity (e.g., "The police treated me the same way they treat most people my age. Agree or disagree."). Researchers tend to treat such measures as 'measures of attitudes toward police.' Measures such as these have been helpful in answering questions regarding the public's perceptions of police effectiveness (e.g., legitimacy, fairness, equity, etc.); however, such measures fail to appeal to the more comprehensive question of what the public's general attitudes toward police might be. That is, while there is a great deal of research on individuals' perceptions of the police effectiveness (legitimacy, fairness, etc.), there has been no attempt to establish a more general measure regarding whether people tend to have more positive or negative attitudes toward police.

There is indirect evidence in the literature supporting a general attitudes toward police latent variable. For instance, Nadal and Davidoff (2015) asked participants various questions regarding their perceptions of police and police bias. The researchers created a 12-item Perceptions of Police Scale (POPS) and found that their questions loaded onto two factors: a perceptions of police bias factor as well as a general attitudes toward police factor. To my knowledge, this is the only study that has found evidence for a measure of general attitudes toward police. Thus, the purpose of Study 1 was to establish a measure of general attitudes toward police—and create a questionnaire in which items loaded onto a single factor capturing general attitudes toward police (i.e., negative to positive

attitudes toward police). In Study 1, participants were asked various questions regarding their attitudes toward police officers. An item-analysis of participants' responses was performed in order to construct a brief questionnaire capturing people's general attitudes toward police.

Methods

Participants

The participants (N=550) in the study were a U.S. national sample obtained through Amazon's Mechanical-Turk (40.7% female, M_{age} = 37.64). Participants were paid $0.50 for completing the study. An Honors Development Grant awarded by the Mahurin Honors College at Western Kentucky University funded the project. The study was programmed using Qualtrics survey software and was approved by the university's Institutional Review Board.

Materials

Questionnaire. Participants were asked to answer 60 questions designed to measure people's attitudes toward police. All questions were agree/disagree statements, and participants indicated whether they agreed or disagreed with each statement. See Appendix A. The questions were randomly presented to participants. Additionally, there were manipulation checks inserted in the questionnaire: some questions were repeated so that participants' attention to the questionnaire could be assessed.

Demographic information questionnaire. Participants were asked to provide information about their race/ethnicity, prior arrest experience, residential living area, political affiliation, and other demographic information. See Appendix D.

Procedure

First, participants provided informed consent. Next, participants completed the questionnaire regarding their attitudes toward police officers. After participants completed the questionnaire, they completed the demographic questionnaire. Upon completion of the study, participants were debriefed, thanked for their time, and compensated $0.50.

Results and Discussion

Two statistical procedures were used to develop the final questionnaire designed to measure people's general attitudes toward police. The first statistical procedure was a squared multiple correlation. Next, item response analysis was utilized to examine characteristics of each item separately. The goal was to produce a 10-15 item questionnaire that had an item test function with good psychometric characteristics (e.g., a test function that was approximately normally distributed, the average general attitude toward police was roughly at the peak of the distribution, and that the items represented a range of attitudes – from negative to positive). Below are the specific steps that were taken to create with the final questionnaire:

First, I performed a squared multiple correlation with all 60 questions. That is, to ensure that all items were related to attitudes toward police to an adequate extent, I correlated each item with the composite of all other items.

Second, I used item response analysis to examine the psychometric characteristics of each of the remaining 28 items. In particular, I wanted to make sure that there was a relationship between how people responded to that item and the general understanding of how attitudes should vary according to that question; such that someone with a negative

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attitude toward police would have a lower score, and likewise, someone with a positive

attitude toward police would have a higher score; see Figure 1. I tried to choose a set of

items that were sensitive to a range of attitudes toward police, and when combined with

other items created a distribution that was approximately normally distributed (a test item

functioning distribution).
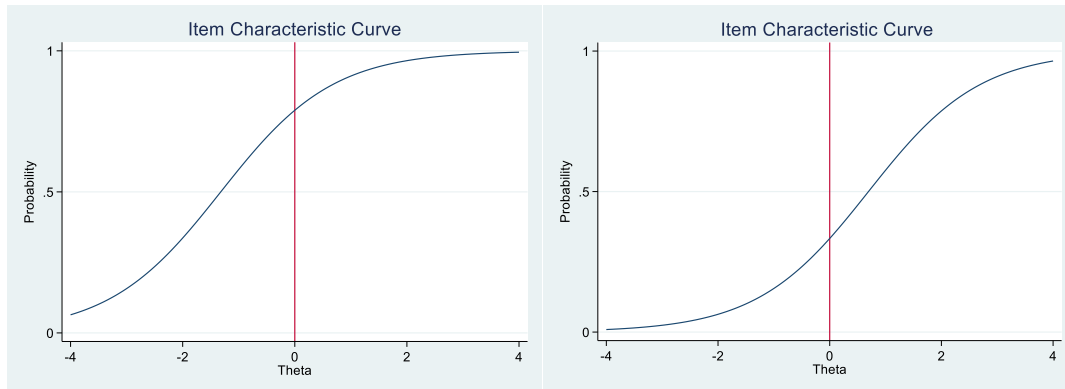
Figure 1. Examples of differential item functioning for two different items. The figure on
the left shows an item that has good differential item functioning for people who have
negative attitudes toward police and poor differential item functioning for people who
have positive attitudes toward police. The figure on the right shows an item that has poor
differential item functioning for people who have negative attitudes toward police and
good differential item functioning for people who have positive attitudes toward police.

Last, out of the 28 items, I wanted to choose 10 to 15 items that produced a test

characteristic function that was approximately normally distributed and centered on the

average attitude toward police. See Figure 2 for a comparison of the combination of items

that I used to create the final questionnaire with a test characteristic function that was

approximately normally distributed.
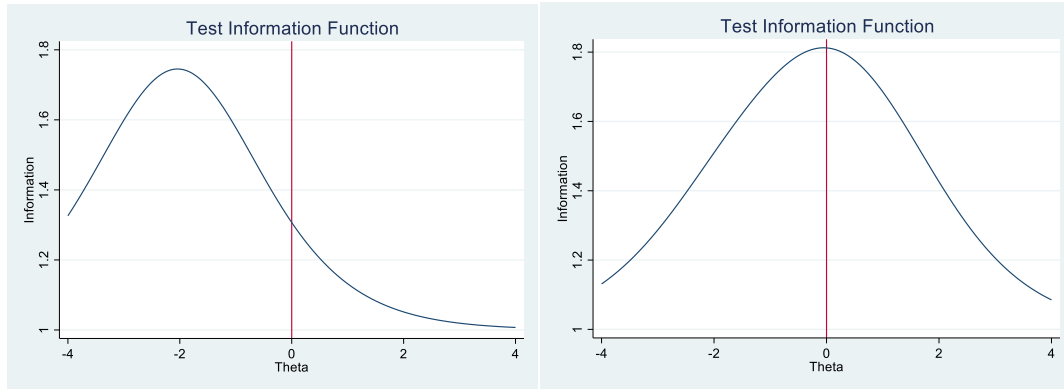
Figure 2. Examples of test information functions for 2 different sets of questions. The figure on the left shows a distribution that is skewed such that the total test score would only differentially function to distinguish among people who have negative attitudes toward police (and not positive attitudes toward police). The figure on the right shows a distribution that is centered and shows a total test score distribution that distinguishes among people across negative and positive attitudes toward police.

The result of Study 1 was a brief 14-item questionnaire that measured individuals' general attitudes toward police. I believe that I created a questionnaire in which the total scores on the test reflect differences in people's general attitudes toward police, and that the test has adequate psychometric properties: the General Attitudes toward Police (GAP) Questionnaire, see Appendix B. The GAP Questionnaire was created such that participants' scores could range between 0-14 with lower scores indicating more negative attitudes toward police and higher scores indicating more positive attitudes toward police. The Cronbach's alpha for the GAP Questionnaire was 0.92.

Study 2

The purpose of Study 2 was to provide a test of validity for the GAP Questionnaire established in Study 1. To validate the GAP Questionnaire, an experiment designed to examine how participants' scores on the GAP Questionnaire related to their judgments about police behavior was conducted in Study 2. Additionally, the ways in

which certain demographic variables might also influence the relationship between the GAP Questionnaire and judgments of police behavior were examined in Study 2. In order to obtain a measure of participants' judgments of police behavior, participants in the study were shown a police officer and civilian confrontation video and asked whether they believed the officer used excessive force against the civilian. The video is described in more detail in the Methods section. Observing a relationship between the GAP Questionnaire and judgments of police behavior, such as an officer's use of excessive force, would show support for the GAP Questionnaire's predictive validity.

Relationship between General Attitudes toward Police and Judgments of Police Use of Force

In order to validate the GAP Questionnaire, the relationship between general attitudes toward police and judgments of police use of force was examined. In other words, I wanted to examine how individuals' general attitudes might be related to, or predict, how they judge police behavior; specifically, police use of force. As it currently stands, the nature of this relationship remains to be established in the literature. It is intuitive to think that attitudes toward police might predict judgments of police behavior. For instance, one might expect that people who demonstrate more positive general attitudes toward police would then judge police behavior as being fair or just compared to people who demonstrate more negative attitudes. In the context of Study 2, that would mean participants in the study with more positive general attitudes toward police would be less likely to judge the ambiguous officer-civilian confrontation video as an instance of excessive force compared to participants with negative general attitudes toward police. Likewise, participants with more negative general attitudes toward police would be more

likely to judge the video as being an example of police use of excessive force compared to participants with positive general attitudes toward police.

Research suggests that people's judgments of police behavior are likely motivated by their overall attitudes toward police (Lee et al., 2019; Nadal & Davidoff, 2015; Reynolds et al., 2018). However, as previously discussed, the existing research on the general public's views of police has not developed an adequate measure of attitudes toward police and, in turn, have never used a measure of attitudes toward police to predict behaviors or decisions regarding police conduct. This study directly addressed this gap in the literature and attempted to provide a test of the validity of the general attitudes toward police measure obtained in Study 1. I predicted that there would be a relationship between participants' general attitudes toward police and their judgments of police use of force. Specifically, I expected that participants who had more negative attitudes toward police would be more likely to judge the police officer as using excessive force compared to participants who had more positive attitudes toward police. I argue that this relationship would provide a test of predictive validity for the GAP Questionnaire.

Demographic Variables

In addition to validating the GAP Questionnaire by examining whether scores of the questionnaire would predict judgments of police use of force, it is also important to consider the research that has examined various demographic variables as predictors of perceptions of police. Decades of research on perceptions of police, and other *indirect* measures of attitudes toward police (e.g., trustworthiness), focused heavily on how specific demographic factors predict such perceptions of police (Lee et al., 2019; Nadal

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& Davidoff, 2015; Reynolds et al., 2018). The classic review paper by researchers Brown and Benedict (2002) reported various relationships between demographic factors (e.g., race/ethnicity, age) and opinions of police effectiveness (e.g., legitimacy, trustworthiness). More importantly, researchers like Brown and Benedict who have observed strong relationships between various demographic variables and their measures of attitudes toward police suggest that some demographic variables (e.g., race/ethnicity) and measures of attitudes (e.g., trustworthiness) are so highly correlated that the variables are essentially unable to be separated from each other when predicting individuals' evaluations of police behavior (e.g., judgments of police use of force). In Study 2, I examined four demographic variables that researchers suggest are strongly correlated with measures of attitudes toward police: race/ethnicity, prior arrest experience, residential living area, and political affiliation. Because researchers argue that these demographic variables are strongly related to measures of attitudes toward police, these demographic variables were used as control variables in the current study. Specifically, the relationship between participants' scores on the GAP Questionnaire and their judgments of police use of force was examined while controlling for race/ethnicity, prior arrest experience, residential living area, and political affiliation. Below, I discuss each demographic variable and its expected relationship to general attitudes and judgments of police use of force.

Race/Ethnicity. The majority of research that has been conducted on race/ethnicity and attitudes toward police has concluded that members of racial and ethnic minority groups view the police less favorably than people without racial/ethnic minority status. Specifically, the literature review by Brown and Benedict (2002) noted

that most studies have investigated the relationship between race and attitudes toward police, with their results widely conferring that Black individuals have attitudes toward police that are more negative than White individuals. The bulk of existing research conducted specifically focusing on this demographic variable has examined the attitudes of Black people in particular, citing disproportionate rates of both experience with police brutality (Brunson, 2007), and experience with being suspected and stopped by police (Hurst et al., 2000). Previous research on race/ethnicity and attitudes toward police suggest that Hispanic individuals report more negative attitudes toward police when compared to White individuals (Lai & Zhao, 2010) and that their attitudes tend to fall between those of Black individuals and White individuals (Schuck et al., 2008). Correia (2010) examined additional factors with regard to the Hispanic community such as immigrant status in the context of attitudes toward police. Results showed that Hispanic immigrants harbored more positive attitudes toward law enforcement when compared to their Hispanic nonimmigrant counterparts. One explanation may be that immigrants tend to compare the police in the United States to the police in their home countries when forming their opinions of police in general (Menjivar & Bejarano, 2004). Consistent with previous research on racial/ethnic minorities and attitudes toward police (e.g., Lai & Zhao, 2010; Schuck et al., 2008), I expected that race/ethnicity would have an effect on judgments of police use of force in the current study.

Existing research on race/ethnicity and judgments of police use of force is limited. Given the nature of the relationship between this demographic variable and general attitudes toward police, one may expect that racial/ethnic minority respondents might be more likely to judge the police officer in the video as using excessive force compared to

non-minority respondents. Early research suggests this to be true for Latino populations (Cheurprakobkit & Bartsch, 1999; Skogan, 2005) and Black populations (Levin & Thomas, 1997). The results of those studies showed that Spanish-speaking Hispanic individuals are more likely to believe that police use excessive force when compared to White individuals (Cheurprakobkit & Bartsch, 1999) and that Black individuals are more likely to judge police as using excessive force when compared to White individuals (Levin & Thomas, 1997). Levin and Thomas (1997) sought to examine how the race of two police officers in a Black civilian/officer confrontation video would affect respondents' judgment of whether or not the officers in the video used excessive force against the Black civilian. They found that no matter the race of the officers in the videos (one Black officer/one White officer, two Black officers, or two White officers) shown to participants, Black respondents consistently judged the videos as demonstrations of excessive force at higher rates than the White respondents (Levin & Thomas, 1997). Additionally, the Cato Institute reported that 73% of Black Americans and 54% of Hispanic Americans believe police are "too quick to resort to deadly force" while the same is true only for 35% of White Americans (Ekins, 2016). Considering the established nature of the relationship between general attitudes and race/ethnicity (e.g., Cheurprakobkit & Bartsch, 1999; Levin & Thomas, 1997) in addition to the indirect evidence suggesting a relationship between race/ethnicity and evaluations of police behavior (e.g., Ekins, 2016), I predicted a similar relationship would be present with regard to judgments of police use of force in the current study. I expected that ethnic/racial minority participants would be more likely to judge the police officer as using excessive force compared to non-minority participants.

Prior arrest experience. A literature review by Alberton and Gorey (2018) found that contact with police (i.e., personal experience with police) was a strong predictor of a person's attitudes toward police in general. In other words, whether or not people have interacted with police at all is of importance with regard to attitudes. Additional research has addressed the differences in attitudes toward police between people who have had positive experiences with police and those who have had negative experiences with police. This research overwhelmingly shows that people who report having negative interactions with the police have more negative views of police compared to people who reporting having positive interactions with the police (e.g., Correia et al., 1996; Schuck et al., 2008; Walker et al., 1972; Worrall, 1999). Additionally, many differences in attitudes toward police have been established based on the nature of contact with police. For instance, positive and negative interactions have been defined as voluntary interactions (e.g., calling the police) and involuntary interactions (e.g., being arrested), respectively. Based on the results of these studies, it appears that negative experiences with police seem to correlate with negative attitudes (Correia et al., 1996; Schuck et al., 2008; Walker et al., 1972; Worrall, 1999). Given the negative, involuntary nature of an arrest, one may expect the existence of a similar relationship between arrest history and attitudes. That is to say, based on the previous research, it seems that individuals who have been arrested in the past likely report less favorable attitudes toward police officers when compared to individuals who have no prior arrest history (e.g., Smith & Hawkins, 1973). Based on this general attitudes toward police research, one might expect a similar correlation to exist concerning prior arrest history and judgments of police use of force. In the current study, I expected that participants in the study with prior arrest experience

would be more likely to judge the officer's actions in the video as use of excessive force than those participants without previous prior arrest experience.

Residential living area. Overall, the research regarding the relationship between residential living area and attitudes toward police suggests that people living in disadvantaged neighborhoods tend to demonstrate more negative attitudes toward police compared to people living in more advantaged neighborhoods (Reisig & Giacomazzi, 1998; Schuck et al., 2008; Skogan, 2006; Weitzer & Tuch, 2005). Additional research has also investigated neighborhood stability and its relationship to attitudes toward police. This research has similarly found that low rates of neighborhood stability or "social cohesion" among neighbors is related to negative attitudes toward legal authority compared to neighborhoods with high rates of neighborhood stability (Sampson et al., 1997). A related study found that neighborhood stability is more specifically related to trust in the authority of police (Lee et al., 2019). In an examination of three different neighborhoods, Weitzer (2000) offers insight into possible explanations for this relationship. For one, most disadvantaged neighborhoods are primarily comprised of racial/ethnic minorities. As discussed previously, race/ethnicity is one of the most heavily investigated demographic variables in relation to attitudes toward police because it appears to be a strong predictor of attitudes toward police. As a result, perhaps the racial and ethnic makeup of these neighborhoods are at play rather than the characteristics of the neighborhoods themselves. Furthermore, aggressive policing strategies are more widely used in such neighborhoods which may also lend a hand in shaping attitudes (Weitzer, 2000). Similarly, members of disadvantaged communities are highly likely to experience contact with the police, whether it be direct or indirect, due to extensive

crime-control strategies that are implemented by police in these neighborhoods (Weitzer, 2000). The current study sought to add to this research question by measuring residential living area, not as 'disadvantaged' or 'advantaged' neighborhoods, but splitting the concept of residential living area into the categories of urban, suburban, and rural residential living areas. Consistent with trends demonstrated in both the Federal Bureau of Investigation's Uniform Crime Reporting Program and the National Crime Victimization Survey, one can expect that urban areas with more residents generally experience higher crime and victimization rates than suburban and rural areas (National Criminal Justice Reference Service, 2017). These higher rates of crime and victimization may play a role in the formation of attitudes toward police, considering the co-occurring increase in likelihood of personal or vicarious experience with police, and that aggressive crime-control strategies employed by police are primarily enforced within urban residential living areas (Weitzer, 2000). In other words, individuals in urban residential living areas are more likely than those living in suburban or rural residential living areas to experience contact with the police in general, given higher crime rates and aggressive policing strategies. Therefore, one may expect urban residents to be more likely to have a negative experience with a police officer, lending them to develop more negative general attitudes toward the police. In the current study, I expected residential living area to have an effect on judgments of police use of force.

The scope of research conducted with respect to residential living area and judgments of police use of force is extremely limited. There does not appear to be any research that discusses how residents in certain residential living areas might view police use of force. While research on general attitudes and residential living area has suggested

residents in disadvantaged neighborhoods view police more negatively (e.g., Reisig & Giacomazzi, 1998; Schuck et al., 2008; Skogan, 2006; Weitzer & Tuch, 2005), there is no clear consensus, since other studies have found the opposite to be true (e.g., Sims et al., 2002). Given the finding that members of communities residing in urban residential living areas are more likely to have negative interactions with police (Weitzer, 2000), one might expect the same to be true with regard to personal or vicarious experience with police use of force. That is, perhaps residents of disadvantaged neighborhoods, primarily within urban areas, who according to research have more negative interactions with police (e.g., Reisig & Giacomazzi, 1998; Schuck et al., 2008; Skogan, 2006; Weitzer & Tuch, 2005), would be more likely to view police as using excessive force than residents of more affluent neighborhoods, primarily within more suburban areas. Still, the lack of consensus must be considered when forming expectations for outcomes. I expected that respondents from urban residential living areas would be more likely to view the police officer as using excessive force when compared to respondents from suburban and rural residential living areas.

      Political affiliation. There is evidence in the literature that suggests a possible relationship between political affiliation and perceptions of police. The research that has been conducted on the matter has investigated ideology such as identifying as liberal or conservative and views of police. Of those that have examined the question of liberalism versus conservatism, results suggest that people identifying themselves as conservative hold the police in higher esteem than those identifying themselves as liberal (Huang & Vaughn, 1996; Zamble & Annesley, 1987). A survey report from the Cato Institute in 2016 concluded that identifying as conservative is a much greater predictor of positive

attitudes toward police than identifying as liberal according to a variety of statistical analyses (Ekins, 2016). It has also been found that higher conservatism is related to higher confidence in police, perhaps a component of overall general attitudes (Stack & Cao, 1998). Early research that has investigated party affiliation specifically has yielded similar results – finding that members of the Republican Party view police more positively than members of the Democratic Party (Hindelang, 1974). In addition, the Cato Institute found that 81% of the Republican respondents in their survey held a favorable view of police, while only 59% of respondents who were Democrats held a favorable view of police (Ekins, 2016). Another public opinion survey by the Pew Research Center upheld this assertion, reporting that 86% of Republicans rated police officers "warmly" on a 0-100 "feeling thermometer" while only 57% of Democrats rated police officers in this way (Fingerhut, 2017). One possible theoretical explanation for such results is that conservative ideology is more aligned with respect for authority in general compared to liberal ideology, and that this notion may extend to systems of authority within our society like the criminal justice system – and more specifically – the police (Talt, 2020). Another explanation may be found in the established historical tendency for Republican candidates for public office to run on the premise of "law and order," being "tough on crime," and holding the police in high esteem (Rizer & Trautman, 2018).

There is no empirical research on political affiliation and how it may be related to how an individual judges police officer use of force. One public opinion survey reported that 80% of Republicans believe police only use lethal force when necessary, while 63% of Democrats think police are too quick to utilize lethal force (Ekins, 2016). Although the video shown to participants in the current study did not involve lethal force, it may be

theorized that this trend extends to the issue of excessive force in general. Silver and Pickett (2015) concluded that individuals self-identifying as "slightly conservative" were significantly more opposed to police officer use of excessive force than individuals self-identifying as "extremely conservative" in their research on levels of conservatism and police use of force. While overall empirical research on political affiliation and attitudes toward police is limited to a few notable studies (e.g., Stack & Cao, 1998; Huang & Vaughn, 1996; Zamble & Annesley, 1987), it seems as though one could expect Republicans to be more likely to view police more positively in general, given their results. Therefore, I expected that participants in the study who affiliated as Democrats would be more likely to judge the police officer as using excessive force than participants who affiliated as Republicans.

To summarize, the goal of Study 2 was to validate the GAP Questionnaire by examining whether scores on the GAP Questionnaire predicted participants' judgments of police use of force while controlling for various demographic factors.

Methods

Design

The study was a single factor design. The presentation of the General Attitudes toward Police (GAP) Questionnaire was counterbalanced: some participants completed the GAP Questionnaire before viewing the police officer-civilian confrontation video, while some participants completed the GAP Questionnaire after viewing the video.

Participants

The participants (N=380) in the study were a U.S. national sample obtained through Amazon's Mechanical-Turk (40.8% female, M_{age} = 37.08). As in Study 1,

participants in Study 2 were paid $0.50 for completing the study. The study was

programmed using Qualtrics survey software. The study was approved by the university's

Institutional Review Board.

Materials

 GAP Questionnaire. Participants completed the 14-item GAP Questionnaire

regarding their attitudes toward police. All questions were agree/disagree statements, and

participants rated whether they agreed with each statement. See Appendix B.

 Video. The video used in the study was created by Baker and Bacharach (2017).

The 30s video showed a male police officer pulling over a male civilian for a routine

traffic violation. The video shows the officer getting out of a police car. At the same time,

the civilian gets out of his car and approaches the police officer. Finally, the police

officer grabs the civilian by the arm, aggressively pushes him on the hood of the police

car, cuffs him, and guides him to the back seat of the police car. The video had no audio.

See Figure 3 for screenshots of the video.

Figure 3. Screenshots of the officer-civilian confrontation video. The officer approaches the civilian, grabs him by the arm, pushes him on the hood of the police car, cuffs him, and leads him to the back seat of the police car.

Excessive force questionnaire. Judgments of the police officer's use of excessive force were measured by asking participants, "Do you believe that the police officer in the video used excessive force against the man?" Participants could either answer "yes" or "no". See Appendix C.

Demographic information questionnaire. Participants were asked to provide demographic information. See Appendix D.

Procedure

First, participants provided informed consent. Participants were randomly assigned to complete the GAP Questionnaire either before viewing the confrontation video or after. Participants assigned to complete the GAP first, completed the questionnaire. Before participants viewed the video, they were told, "You are going to watch a video showing a confrontation between a civilian and a police officer." Next, participants watched the confrontation video. After viewing the video, all participants

completed the excessive force questionnaire. Next, participants assigned to complete the GAP after viewing the video, completed the questionnaire. Last, all participants completed the demographic questionnaire. At the conclusion of the study, participants were debriefed, thanked for their time, and compensated for their participation.

Results

To examine the relationship between participants' scores on the GAP Questionnaire and their judgments of police use of force, a hierarchical logistic regression was performed. In Step 1 of the model, race/ethnicity, prior arrest experience, residential living area, and political affiliation were entered as predictors of judgments of police use of force. In Step 2, the GAP Questionnaire variable was added to the model.

Step 1: The first model was significant, Wald (7, $N = 380$) = 30.908, $p < .001$. The odds of judging that the police officer used excessive force was 2.109 times more likely if the participant had a prior arrest experience ($B = .746$, $SE = .276$, $p = .007$, 95% CI for OR [1.229, 3.621]). The odds of judging that the police officer used excessive force was 2.555 and 2.104 times more likely if the participants lived in an urban residential area compared to if participants lived in suburban and rural residential areas, respectively (Bs= .925, .749, $SEs = .234$, .343, $ps < .000$, .029, 95% CIs for ORs [1.619, 4.032], [1.078, 4.105]. There were no effects of race/ethnicity or political affiliation, ps ranged .115 - .773.

Step 2: In the second model, when the GAP Questionnaire was added, the overall model was significant, Wald (8, $N = 380$) = 38.871, $p < .001$. As in Step 1, the effects of prior arrest history and residential living area were significant. The odds of judging that the police officer used excessive force was 2.105 times more likely if the participant had

a prior arrest experience (B = .744, SE = .273, p = .006, 95% CI for OR [1.232, 3.595]).

The odds of judging that the police officer used excessive force was 2.511 and 2.264

times more likely if the participants lived in an urban residential area compared to if

participants lived in suburban and rural residential areas, respectively (Bs= .921, .817,

SEs = .235, .348, ps < .000, .019, 95% CIs for ORs [1.584, 3.980], [1.146, 4.474]. There

were no effects of race/ethnicity or political affiliation, ps ranged .258 - .658. Most

importantly, scores on the GAP Questionnaire reliably predicted judgments of police use

of excessive force such that the odds (OR = 1.068) of someone judging the police officer

as using excessive force were higher for participants with lower scores (or more negative

attitudes) on the GAP Questionnaire (B = .066, SE = .024, p = .006, 95% CI for OR

[1.019, 1.119]). In summary, the results show evidence for the validity of the GAP

Questionnaire: the GAP Questionnaire predicted judgments of police officer use of

excessive force.

General Discussion

The goal of this research was to develop and validate a scale designed to measure

the general public's attitudes toward police, ranging from positive to negative attitudes.

In Study 1, I developed items regarding attitudes toward police and explored their factor

structure. The results yielded a 14-item questionnaire which seems to measure a single

factor: general attitudes toward police, which was named the GAP Questionnaire.

Showing predictive validity for the GAP Questionnaire in Study 2, I found that the GAP

Questionnaire predicted judgments of police officer use of force after participants

watched a brief police officer-civilian confrontation video. Additionally, I would like to

emphasize that the GAP Questionnaire predicted judgments even while controlling for

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additional predictor demographic variables of race/ethnicity, prior arrest experience, residential living area, and political affiliation – factors in which researchers have argued are themselves highly predicative of attitudes toward police (e.g., Alberton & Gorey, 2018; Brown & Benedict, 2002; Hindelang, 1974; Lai & Zhao, 2010; Schuck et al., 2008; Skogan, 2006; Weitzer & Tuch, 2005). I argue that this is at least moderate evidence of the validity of the GAP Questionnaire.

Demographic Variables as Predictors of Judgments of Police Behavior

As previously discussed, there has been a great deal of research regarding the relationship between various demographic factors and attitudes toward police and judgments of police behavior (e.g., Alberton & Gorey, 2018; Brown & Benedict, 2002; Hindelang, 1974; Lai & Zhao, 2010; Schuck et al., 2008; Skogan, 2006; Weitzer & Tuch, 2005). Not only have researchers found strong relationships among certain demographic factors and attitudes toward police, but many researchers also argue that certain demographic variables are difficult to distinguish from measures of attitudes towards police (Brown & Benedict, 2002). The demographic variables examined in the current study, race/ethnicity, prior arrest experience, residential living area, and political affiliation, were all factors that have been found to strongly relate to attitudes and, in some studies, judgments of police behavior (e.g., Alberton & Gorey, 2018; Cheurprakobkit & Bartsch, 1999; Hindelang, 1974; Lai & Zhao, 2010; Schuck et al., 2008; Skogan, 2006; Weitzer & Tuch, 2005).

Interestingly, results of the current study did not yield a statistically significant relationship between race/ethnicity and judgments of police use of force. This finding is not consistent with what was expected nor the limited literature on judgments of police

use of force and race/ethnicity (e.g., Cheurprakobkit & Bartsch, 1999; Levin & Thomas, 1997).

Prior arrest experience was also examined in the current study. Results regarding the relationship between prior arrest experience and judgments of police use of force showed that respondents who had prior arrest experience were more likely to judge excessive force compared to respondents without prior arrest experience. This is consistent with what I expected.

With regard to residential living area, it was found that respondents who were residents of urban areas were more likely to judge the police officer as using excessive force compared to respondents who were residents of suburban and rural areas. I originally expected that this would be the case based on the review of the literature, which suggests that members of disadvantaged communities are more likely to have negative experiences with police (e.g., Reisig & Giacomazzi, 1998; Schuck et al., 2008; Skogan, 2006; Weitzer & Tuch, 2005). Large urban areas (i.e., cities) typically employ large police forces to meet the demands of the city. Perhaps people living in cities evaluate behavior of police differently than members of suburban and rural areas due to the media portrayal of their police forces. Typically, the behavior of police that is portrayed in broadcast news is negative and police are depicted as incompetent (Surette, 1998). In more recent years especially, urban police behavior captured and portrayed by the media has been perceived as racist in the context of the Black Lives Matter movement. Given that widely recognized law enforcement-facilitated murders of Black individuals (e.g., Eric Garner, Samuel DuBose, Michael Brown, Tamir Rice, Breonna Taylor, George Floyd) have occurred in urban areas and were heavily broadcast, it is

possible that there is a connection between these instances and urban residents'
evaluations of the behaviors of police like use of excessive force.

The final demographic variable investigated was political affiliation. The current
study's results found that respondents identifying as Republicans and Democrats were
equally as likely to judge the officer's actions in the video as excessive force. This
finding is inconsistent with the initial prediction that Republicans would be less likely to
judge the officer's actions as excessive force, which was informed by public opinion
research (e.g., Ekins, 2016; Fingerhut, 2017).

Because the above demographic variables show strong relationships in the
literature, I chose to include those specific factors as control variables when examining
the relationship between the GAP Questionnaire and judgments of police use of force.
That is, one might argue that because certain demographic variables are so strongly
related to attitudes toward police, then the demographic variables in the current study
could explain any relationship between the GAP Questionnaire and judgments of police
use of force. But, by controlling for these variables in Study 2, I was able to adjust for
that possibility: I controlled for those demographic variables and was still able to find that
the GAP Questionnaire predicted judgments of police use of force. Additionally, it is
surprising that results showed a relationship between the GAP Questionnaire and
judgments of police officer use of force while also revealing relationships among prior
arrest experience and residential living area. I argue that this shows support for the use of
the GAP Questionnaire as a tool used to predict judgments of police behavior.

Implications and Future Research

The results of the current study revealed a relationship between general attitudes toward police and judgments of police use of force. Specifically, results showed that participants who had positive general attitudes toward police were less likely to judge the police officer as using excessive force. Similarly, participants who had negative general attitudes toward police were more likely to judge the officer as using excessive force. This finding is what was initially expected and serves as an important addition to the literature, considering there is no other research that has examined this relationship.

Because the current literature lacks a scale researchers and police organizations alike can use to consistently measure general attitudes toward police, I believe the current study has both important theoretical and applied implications. First, future researchers can utilize the GAP Questionnaire in their studies as a valid measure to capture attitudes toward police that range from negative to positive. Second, the GAP Questionnaire can be used to predict additional behaviors including prosocial behaviors such as cooperation and compliance with the police. Third, having a valid measure of general attitudes toward police can aid police in determining whether their policy changes and behaviors impact the general public's attitudes toward the police.

Conclusion

In conclusion, a brief questionnaire aimed at capturing and measuring general attitudes toward police was developed (Study 1) and validated (Study 2). As discussed previously, other measures related to general attitudes have failed to measure people's general attitudes toward police. In the current study, I created a questionnaire that could serve as a consistent measure of general attitudes toward police and could potentially be

used as a tool to measure general attitudes toward police in future research. It is my hope

that the GAP Questionnaire will be used in future research designed to assess the public's

general attitudes toward police.

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Appendix A

General Attitudes toward Police Questions [Study 1]

Please answer the following questions to the best of your ability. These questions will ask you about your general attitudes toward police officers. Note, your information will not be given to outside entities. It is for internal research purposes only.

Please indicate whether you 'agree' or 'disagree' with each statement.

1. I like police officers.
2. I respect police officers.
3. The think the police do a good job protecting my neighborhood.
4. I feel safe around police officers.
5. I think the majority of police officers are prejudiced against other races/ethnicities.
6. I think the majority of police officers use an excessive amount of force when making a citizen arrest.
7. I believe that the majority of injury and/or deaths that occur during police officer-civilian confrontations are mostly the fault of the officer.
8. I believe that the majority of police officers like to misuse their authority by using an unnecessary or excessive amount of force against citizens.
9. I believe that the majority of police officers like to misuse their authority.
10. I think police treat people fairly most of the time.
11. I think police officers are the most important officials in the legal system.
12. I believe police have an important role in society.
13. I think police receive too much negative publicity these days.
14. I think police are underappreciated.
15. I believe that the majority of police officers treat people fairly.
16. I believe the majority of police abuse their power.
17. I believe police keep me safe.
18. I think the police discriminate based on race.
19. I think the police do a good job serving my community.
20. I would feel comfortable calling the police if necessary.
21. I think my morals align with those of the police.
22. I believe most police officers are nice people.
23. I think that police officers enjoy exercising their authority over others.
24. I think police are good role models.
25. I think people become police officers to serve others.
26. I think people become police officers to protect others.
27. I believe that the police value the safety of all citizens in the communities they serve.
28. I think the majority of police officers enforce laws fairly.

29. I trust the police.
30. I think police officers are adequately trained.
31. I think police officers should receive more training.
32. I think police officers are not held accountable if they break the law.
33. I think police should wear body cameras to record interactions with civilians.
34. I think police target people based on how they look.
35. I value the work that police do.
36. I think that police need to do better at their job.
37. I feel angry when I see police.
38. I feel happy when I see police.
39. I think police care about justice.
40. When I hear about police officer and civilian confrontations, I tend to assume that the police officer is to blame for the confrontation.
41. I believe police officers racially profile civilians.
42. I believe police officers serve an important role in communities.
43. I feel nervous when I am around police.
44. I think police officers use excessive force.
45. I think police cover up the inappropriate behavior of other police.
46. I believe police officers are held accountable for their actions.
47. I think police deserve higher pay.
48. I think police treat everyone equally.
49. I think police are inefficient.
50. I believe the police's authority should be respected by everyone.
    I feel nervous when I am around police. (check #43)
51. I think that when police break the law, they are treated the same as civilians who break the law.
52. I think police receive special treatment.
53. I think the majority of police officers treat people equally.
54. I believe that police officers should be held to a higher standard than civilians.
55. I think police often use force when it is unnecessary.
56. I believe police officers do a good job at creating positive relationships with civilians.
57. I think police officers are reasonable people.
58. I believe police officers should undergo a more thorough screening process during the hiring process.
59. I feel safe when I see police in my community.
60. I think police officers are moral people.

Appendix B

General Attitudes toward Police (GAP) Questionnaire [Study 2]

Please answer the following questions to the best of your ability. These questions will ask you about your general attitudes toward police officers. Note, your information will not be given to outside entities. It is for internal research purposes only.

1. I like police officers.
2. I feel safe around police officers.
3. I believe that the majority of police officers like to misuse their authority.
4. I believe that the majority of police officers treat people fairly.
5. I believe that the majority of police officers abuse their power.
6. I believe most police officers are nice people.
7. I think police are good role models.
8. I think the majority of police officers enforce laws fairly.
9. I trust the police
10. I think police care about justice.
11. I think the majority of police officers treat people equally.
12. I think police officers are reasonable people.
13. I feel safe when I see police in my community.
14. I think police officers are moral people.

Appendix C

Police Officers and Excessive Force Questionnaire

These questions are in regard to the video that you saw at the beginning of the study. Please answer the questions to the best of your ability.

Please note, your information will not be given to outside entities. It is for internal use only.

1. Did the video that was previously shown play properly so that were you able to watch the entire video?
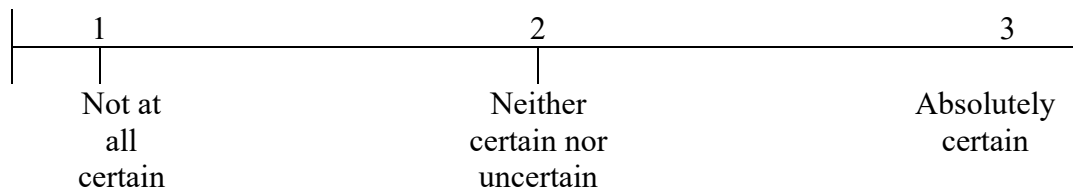
   Yes
   No

2. Do you believe that the police officer in the video used excessive force against the man?

   Yes
   No

3. On a scale of 1 to 3 (1=*Not at all certain*, 3=*Absolutely certain*), how certain are you in your answer to question #1?

1	2	3
Not at all certain	Neither certain nor uncertain	Absolutely certain

4. Do you have any comments about the video that you just saw? If so, feel free to comment in the textbox below.

   [text box here]

Appendix D

Demographic Information Questionnaire

Please answer the following demographic questions to the best of your ability. Note, your information will not be given to outside entities. It is for internal use only.

1. What is your age?
   Younger than 18-older than 90

2. What is your sex?
   Male
   Female

3. What is your current marital status?
   Single
   Married
   Separated
   Divorced
   Widowed

4. How do you describe yourself? (Please check the one option that best describes you.)
   Black or African American
   Hispanic or Latina
   Non-Hispanic White
   Other

5. What state do you live in?
   Alabama – Wyoming

6. What is the highest level of education you completed?
   Elementary school only
   Some high school, but did not finish
   Completed high school
   Some college, but did not finish
   Two-year college degree / A.A. / A.S.
   Four-year college degree / B.A. / B.S.
   Some graduate work
   Completed Master's or professional degree
   Advanced graduate work or Ph.D.

7. What is your employment status?

Employed full-time
Employed part-time
Unemployed
Student
Homemaker
Retired

8. What is your annual income?
   Less than $5,000 – More than $100,000

9. What is your political affiliation?
   Republican
   Democrat

10. What type of area do you live in?
    Urban area (in a city)
    Suburban area (outskirts of a city)
    Rural area (outside of a city)

11. Have you ever been arrested?
    Yes
    No