

Date: March 1, 2017

To: Doctor Jessica McCarthy, ENGL 2880 professor

From: Madison C. Webb, ENGL 2880 student

Subject: Research Proposal of Local Attitudes on Police Brutality and Use of Force

Purpose

The objective of this research survey is to evaluate Jasper, TN individuals from 20-30 years old about their personal opinions toward police brutality and use of force from law enforcement. Research will commence on March 6th and end on March 20th.

Summary

Proposed is a research using a survey method to conduct a theory on local attitudes of Jasper, TN citizens regarding local attitudes toward the use of force and police brutality. The participants will answer a brief survey of 10 questions using only yes or no answers. Prior to completing the survey, the participant will be asked to read through and accept the terms. The purpose of this study is to conduct a trend of individuals' thoughts toward local law enforcement officers and how the demeanor of officers effects personal opinions with or without personal experiences of force. The information gathered from the completed surveys will be analyzed to draw conclusions that can be published for educational statistics.

Introduction

Currently, police brutality and the use of force in certain circumstances have become mainstream media stories due to personal opinions and emotions related to these stories. With the rise of media attention, law enforcement officers are under higher scrutiny more now than ever. Thus, bringing more studies and research into when an officer should use force and how much force should be used. All officers are instructed to use force in certain situations like making arrests, restraining an individual, controlling a disorderly, or when they feel fear for their own life. However, at what point is the force used to consider unjustifiable? This level can vary from individual which is the purpose of this proposed research, to find a trend of local opinions on when force has exceeded justifiable.

A study was performed based on six jurisdictions of the 7,512 adult arrests in custody. The use of force among all these inmates while being detained by officers was the focus point of the research while they wanted to compare any injuries that came from encounters. 80% of the participants stated the use of force involved weaponless tactics with grabbing being the majority tactic used. Only 2.1% arrests involved weaponry use by law enforcement officers with pepper spray the most common at 1.2% and firearms being 0.2% of all arrests. Injuries can occur with the use of force which is involved in most arrests, however majority of the time, we do not see serious injuries. 48% of inmates were injured with a bruise or abrasion, a very large percentage of only a minor incident injury (NCJRS, 1999). Another research about injury resulted from officers was conducted by BJS in 2006 and found that depending on the agency, 17-64% injuries occurred to citizens and 10-20% of injury to the law enforcement officers. Like the previous

study, minor bruises and abrasions were commonly found among the group claiming excessive use of force (BJS, 2006). A length of time has passed between the two studies, however they both claim similar results.

Police administrations are knowledgeable on the fact force will be used in most arrests or situations and find the statistics very predictable. Among the officers' training, they are taught the amount of force to be used should always be the least amount necessary to accomplish the goals of the call. However, fatal shootings, severe beatings with fists or batons that lead to hospitalization or causing unconsciousness or death from choke holds are not typical situations found under the use of force (NCJRS, 1999). Although, the majority of media focuses on the situations above as police brutality even though they are scarce in occurrence.

“Citizens perceive the police as a friend and enemy, much like police perceptions of the citizenry (van Maanen, 1978; Wiley and Hudik, 1974). Opinions and emotions blur the ideals and duties of police officers as they have evolved their reputation from protectors to being above the law in some individual's eyes. Police are often taught to never let their emotions or judgments cloud the reality of the situation which can lead to believing every citizen has criminal tendencies. This treatment toward the public plus the media attention can alter citizens' views on police officers. The shift from protectors to being feared could have resulted from becoming more militarized departments and secretive. Militarization has become a hot topic to discuss since images of officers carrying assault rifles and uniform of masks and helmets emerged, bringing many Americans are thinking a war has come home to their community (ACLU, 2014)). “War Comes Home” defines a trend where American policing has become militarized due to the billions of dollars being flooded into their programs. This evolution of policing is unnecessary and dangerous for all communities. The rapport built between officers and citizens has vanished due to the fear officers put inside every citizen from destroying property and eliminating their liberties.

Evolution of community policing to militarization policing in addition to media influences has caused a great deal of citizens to complain about the amount of force police officers have used in certain situations. BJS found that in state and local agencies with one hundred or more sworn officers, they saw 26,000 citizen complaints during the year 2002 (BJS, June 2006). Although, only 8% of the complaints were sustainable with sufficient evidence to support the claim. The characteristics of the agencies are directly proportionate to the complaint volume with the size and type of agency and policing procedures. The conclusion to the statistics gathered was 1 incident per 200 sworn in officers occurred in 2002. Citizen complaints throughout the years have been found as inappropriate with insufficient evidence to move further in the procedures of handling complaints.

Frank Newport conducted an online survey from 2011 to 2014 on “Blacks and Whites Attitudes on Police” which we are not considering race for this research proposal, his statistics give us insight to national data on attitudes. Newport conducted with certain aspects to measure such as confidence of police, honesty and ethics of officers, and perceptions of treatment over the three year period. Majority of adults across America found a great deal or quite a lot of confidence in the police coming in at 56%. Only 14% of Americans found little to no confidence

in police officers. However, comparing confidence in the criminal justice system, we notice a huge gap with the majority coming in at 40% having some confidence in the justice system and only 27% having a lot of confidence. The next aspect measured was the honesty and ethics found in police officers. Nationally, 56% of Americans found officers to be very high on their honesty and ethics ratings with only 11% at very low ratings on honesty and ethics. Perceptions of treatment by officers by age range and gender were measured next from the survey conducted. From the statistics, females and males from all age ranges said they were not treated less than fairly from age 18-55 ranging from 74-84% of the participants. The highest group was males with 24% saying they were treated less than fairly ranging from 18-34 years old. Summarizing the findings, we can conclude the majority feels as if they are treated fairly and have no issue with the style of policing they have encountered (Newport, 2014).

To identify Jasper's public's opinions towards officer's use of force and brutality is the basis for this research. Hypothetically, the goal is to compare opinions against experiences with officers prior to the study. Numerous articles have been written describing personal experiences with officers and media coverage has increased tremendously throughout the years on certain police incidents that force and brutality may have occurred. Although, a concrete study of experiences and opinions has not been published to compare the numbers.

Proposed Program/Plan of Work (research methods)

The study will be administered in a survey format sent via email to a random selection of individuals ranging in age from 20-30. Individuals under 20 or above 30 are not selected to participate in the research process. Fellow classmates of the primary researcher will be informed of the study as well as instructed to pass along to other individuals to get a random selection from all ages, ethnicities, and education levels. The approximate number of individuals may vary considering how many complete the survey. Administration of the survey will involve a primary email stating the purpose of the research and informed consent. The informed consent form will be the primary email as well as located on the first page of the electronic survey. After reading the informed consent form, the participant will decide whether or not to continue; if they choose to continue on in the research process, they will begin a series of questions regarding their opinions and experience with police brutality and force. The individuals will tell their age at the time of the survey with no further personal information required. After, they will answer 10 questions that should take 5-10 minutes to complete by answer "yes" or "no". The results from the survey will allow the primary researcher to conclude local opinions on police brutality.

Qualifications/Personnel

I, Madison Webb, am a student of the Department of Criminal Justice at the University of Tennessee Chattanooga. I am conducting a research study to develop a trend in personal opinions of local individuals from 20-30 years old on the subject of police brutality and force.

Budget and Schedule

The research does not require financial funding since all surveys will be conducted via the internet through email. The research proposal is estimated to take roughly 2 weeks to complete for completion of surveys and concluding the findings.

References

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