

# Willingness to Speak in the Context of Police Use of Force

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WILLINGNESS TO SPEAK IN THE CONTEXT OF POLICE USE OF FORCE

by

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## ABSTRACT

### WILLINGNESS TO SPEAK IN THE CONTEXT OF POLICE USE OF FORCE

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Marquette University, 2018

Police use of force has become a common phrase in the current United States society, especially in the context of law enforcement encounters with Black men. However, even with extensive media coverage of protests and incidents between police and Blacks, not much is known about peoples' willingness to speak out about the topic. Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann's spiral of silence theory, which states that peoples' perceptions of others and media exposure is largely responsible for determining an individual's willingness to speak, is uniquely positioned to examine this topic. This study utilized a Qualtrics panel of 905 participants and a questionnaire to examine the willingness of participants to speak with others about police use of force.

ANOVA results showed that previous negative interactions with police officers, age, race, income, gender, taking a civics class, income, political affiliation and working for a newspaper all affect willingness to speak. Additional regression analyses showed that communication apprehension (CA) and diversity exposure both were large, influencing factors when it comes to willingness to speak. Several other variables were also found to be significant, although not to the same extent. Results supported Noelle-Neumann's theory that perceptions play a role in willingness to speak; however, media exposure was less influential than expected. Implications, recommendations and future research angles are discussed.

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Rachel Italiano

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## PERSONAL DISCLAIMER

It is my belief that the best research comes when the researcher is invested in it. This inevitably means that the researcher has feelings and opinions about said topic, which can lead to an implicit bias. While some see this bias as detrimental to the research process, I believe that this in fact makes the researcher stronger, with the caveat that the researcher must be honest and up-front about her experiences with the topic. As such, I'd like to spend a moment talking about why I chose this topic.

My mother is a 911 dispatcher and as a result I've grown up around police officers. I've seen the effects a career in law enforcement has on a person, my own mom included. I also believe that most officers, not just the ones I know, are good men and women who want to do right by the people they have sworn to serve and protect. Unfortunately, it is the few bad apples who always seem to make the news, which only serves to inflame tensions, especially regarding race. These tensions make life more dangerous not only for law enforcement, but also for the community. I am drawn to the topic of this thesis because I'd like to see these tensions ease, and eventually dissipate. While the complete dissipation of these tensions might seem like a fool's errand (no one is perfect, after all), I'd still like to try to help solve this issue. No dream is ever too small.

I believe that it is necessary to learn as much as one can about a problem before attempting to resolve it. This requires one to shift one's perspective. Instead of listening to respond, one must first listen to understand. This means that the community needs to listen to the police, and the police need to listen to the community. I chose to start this

listening process through a survey. Other people may choose to do it another way; the important thing is that an effort is being made.

Now, this all leads back to implicit bias. I won't lie and say I don't have a bias, however unintentional it may be. However, I've worked hard to make sure this thesis accurately represents the data I've collected. I've also done my best to present reasonable recommendations at the end. My thesis committee as well as others who have helped me edit this have held me accountable. I hope that this project can serve as a window into the minds of police officers and citizens and provide valuable information to help ease the racial tensions in the United States.

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Black and blue. Although that phrase typically refers to a nasty bruise, the two colors mentioned symbolize a whole lot more. Black refers to race. Blue refers to law enforcement. Currently, racial tensions between these two groups are receiving extensive media coverage. The contentious, racial divisions that have reached a boiling point are no stranger to U.S. society. Like a wound, they have festered and grown for years.

While there are many contributing factors to the racial tension, perhaps the most publicized factor has been the string of shooting deaths of Black men by members of law enforcement. Police use of force, both lethal and non-lethal, has become part of the daily news cycle and national conversation. However, although it has become an almost normalized part of the news cycle, police use of force, and the racial divides underpinning it, lead to combative arguments and an unwillingness to engage in productive dialogue. This study attempts to address that willingness, or unwillingness to speak about police use of force and to determine what factors contribute to willingness to speak (or not speak) in order to develop a better understanding of how to generate constructive dialogue that could help heal these societal rifts.



## **Background of the Study**

The racial tensions that are so easily seen now have undergirded the U.S. for years, perhaps even decades. However, it seems that they have only received widespread media attention in the last few years, and it is unclear why this is so. German researcher Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann provides an explanation for this through her spiral of silence theory. According to Noelle-Neumann, people remain silent because they perceive their opinions to be in the minority. Conversely, people who believe their opinions are held by a majority of the public are more likely to be willing to speak. Therefore, the minority devolves into a spiral of silence; no one speaks out and thus the status quo remains the same. As a side note, it is important that the issue in question have a moral element (Noelle-Neumann, 1974). This is what we see with the racial tensions in the U.S. The minority are those who believe racial inequality is still a problem in the U.S. The majority are those who perhaps believe that everyone is equal, or at the least believe that the status quo, whatever that may be, is acceptable (Noelle-Neumann, 1974). In 2012, however, the death of teenager Trayvon Martin, a Black male, changed that. Notably, he was shot and killed by a member of the local neighborhood watch rather than a law enforcement official (CNN Library, 2018). Even so, his death served as the spark to a fire that was just waiting to happen. Media attention since then has focused on numerous incidents between Black males and law enforcement officers who are usually White males.

In addition to extensive media coverage, several social movements have focused on the racial inequality within the U.S. Although these movements are rooted in perceived unfair treatment, there is also a larger ethical dilemma at play: whose life

matters? Is it the Black male who was shot and killed because a police officer perceived a threat? Is it the police officer who believed that unless he acted, he would go home in a body bag?

The Black Lives Matter movement (#BlackLivesMatter, BLM), Blue Lives Matter movement and the All Lives Matter movements each have different answers to this question. While the All Lives Matter movement has perhaps been less prominent, the other two are very active and visible. As their name suggests, “#BlackLivesMatter (BLM) is an online forum intended to build connections between Black people and our allies to fight anti-Black racism, to spark dialogue among Black people, and to facilitate the types of connections necessary to encourage social action and engagement” ([www.blacklivesmatter.com](http://www.blacklivesmatter.com)). It is worth noting that while this definition specifically refers to the website and organization created by Patrisse Cullors, Opal Tometi, and Alicia Garza, the BLM exists outside of the digital sphere. Blue Lives Matter has become a rallying cry for police officers and other law enforcement workers, especially after several high-profile ambushes and attacks of officers. This is less of a centralized organization and more of a general social cause for various people and groups to rally around. Although it is primarily a media organization founded by and for those in law enforcement ([www.themaven.net](http://www.themaven.net)), like Black Lives Matter it has also grown beyond the internet.

Despite extensive media coverage and political debate surrounding racial tensions and inequalities, not much seems to be getting resolved. the issue continues to remain hotly contested. . As previously noted, people appear to be unwilling participate in the dialogue needed to talk about this issue and start healing these jagged divides.

However, before starting this process, it is also necessary to understand how and why people feel a certain way to fully understand all the factors at play. That is the central purpose of this study.

### **Recent Encounters between Black Men & Law Enforcement**

Recent encounters between Black men and law enforcement officers have received extensive media attention. While most of these encounters involve deadly use of force, other cases have occurred using a lesser extent of force as well. A timeline of these encounters is established next in this chapter. This list is not all-inclusive; rather, it highlights several major incidents that received extensive media attention.

While police use of force was not involved in the encounter, the death of Trayvon Martin set off an unprecedented chain of events and pushed underlying racial tensions to the forefront of U.S. society (CNN Library, 2018).

One of the first major incidents after Martin's death was the death of Dontre Hamilton in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, involving Milwaukee police officer Christopher Manney. The two individuals struggled as the officer attempted to pat Hamilton down (Madhani, 2014).

Another incident occurred a few months later in July involving Eric Garner, a Black male, and an officer of the New York Police Department. Garner was placed in a chokehold and eventually died, even though he alerted officers that he could not breathe (Goodman, 2015; Quah & Davis, 2015). In August of that same year yet another incident took place in Ferguson, Missouri. Michael Brown Junior was shot and killed by a Ferguson police officer, whom a grand jury later declined to charge. Brown's death

and the grand jury decision led to violent rioting and protesting (United States Department of Justice, 2017; Quah & Davis, 2015).

Shortly after the Ferguson incident in November 2014, a twelve-year-old Black male, Tamir Rice, was shot and killed by police officers in Cleveland, Ohio. Officers believed his toy gun to be real (Quah & Davis, 2015). Encounters like these continued into 2015. On March 6, 2015, Tony Robinson was shot and killed in Madison, Wisconsin, after claims of disrupting traffic and then assaulting the responding officer (Shoichet & Mullen, 2015). Freddie Gray of Baltimore, Maryland, died a week after his arrest from a spinal cord injury sustained during his arrest and transport in a police van (Rector, 2016; Quah & Davis, 2015; United States Department of Justice, 2017).

In 2016, Sylville Smith was shot and killed by a Black officer of the Milwaukee Police Department in Wisconsin. This encounter was further complicated by charges the officer faced that were unrelated to the incident (Luthern, Rutledge & Gabler, 2016; Diedrich & Luthern, 2016). Even more recently, 17-year-old Antwon Rose II was shot and killed by police in East Pittsburg, Pennsylvania (Moton, Claiborne, Ghebremedhin & Hutchinson, 2018).

The above timeline are just a few prominent examples of encounters between law enforcement workers and Black males. There have been many more during this period, many of which may not have generated as much media attention as those listed above.

## **Research Goals**

Given how volatile the relationship between minorities (Black minorities in particular) and law enforcement is in the U.S. right now, the goal of this study is to examine participants' willingness to speak during conversations about police use of force. It is grounded in Noelle-Neumann's spiral of silence theory and seeks to discover the different elements, both perceived and demographic, that may influence an individual's willingness to engage in conversation with different types of people about police use of force. The two main groups are friend and stranger; however, they are then stratified by gender (male and female) as well as race (Black and White).

Although police use of force and race have both received extensive media attention, and each has been the subject of thorough research, there appears to be a lack of research on people's willingness to communicate about these two topics. Therefore, this study aims to address the gap in literature and generate knowledge that not only extends the field but will also prove useful in effectively addressing the racial tensions and easing the relationship between police officers and the communities they serve, especially the minority communities.

## **Overview**

First, a literature review that contains relevant literature and background information is offered. Next, a summary of the research questions and methodology is discussed, followed by the results. The discussion section then details how the results fit in with the larger societal picture. Finally, the conclusion summarizes the findings, notes important implications and outlines ideas for future research.

## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Police use of force has become a controversial and highly politicized issue within the last few years in the United States. This makes it ideal for examining Noelle-Neumann's spiral of silence theory in the context of a relevant, timely topic. Understanding a research problem in-depth requires a thorough examination of past research related to the topic in question. Thus, this literature review includes information about media coverage of Blacks and law enforcement officers, current crime statistics and the spiral of silence theory, which is the theoretical foundation of this study. Since 'use of force' is central to this study, an explanation of that concept is provided first. After that, public opinion around related issues is discussed before segueing into the section focusing on spiral of silence theory. In this discussion, information about media coverage and public perceptions of race and police are also included.

### **Defining Police Use of Force**

The National Institute of Justice (NIJ) (2009) discusses how police 'use of force' operates on a continuum. According to NIJ (2009), "Officers are instructed to respond with a level of force appropriate to the situation at hand, acknowledging that the officer may move from one part of the continuum to another in a matter of seconds." A typical continuum can begin with an officer's presence, which in and of itself could act as a deterrent, or it could move further to verbalization and then progress through multiple levels of options gradually increasing in lethality. The final option is the use of deadly force.

Although use of force operates on a continuum, this distinction is not visible in the media coverage on the issue. In media reporting, it appears to be a label specifically applied oftentimes

to incidents where police officers kill unarmed Black men. Other labels applied to these incidents, which are particularly evident in media coverage and social media, include “police brutality” and “police violence.” In general, the use of force terminology is used when police officers are assumed to have crossed over a line. As Graziano, Schuck & Martin (2017) noted, more importance is typically attached to incidents involving physical force (p. 64). Although studies have been conducted about police use of force, these do not shed much light on the definitions. This lack of clarity about use of force creates ambiguity and a disconnect between the perceptions average citizens have compared to members of law enforcement regarding what constitutes police use of force. This study will address this disconnect by gauging the participants’ perception of police use of force.

While the concept of use of force might be muddy in the media coverage on the topic, police organizations have defined policies for their officers to follow. For example, the City of Madison, Wisconsin, Police Department defines deadly force as “the intentional use of a firearm or other instrument, the use of which would result in a high probability of death” (City of Madison Police Department, 2017, p. 1). Officers use these policies to guide their actions. The Pew Research Center found that most officers surveyed think their individual department policies on use of force are “appropriate and helpful” (2017). A majority of the officers (84%) believe that all officers should be mandated to step in if another officer is going to use unnecessary force. However, in terms of determining when force is necessary, Black officers and department administrators are significantly more likely to worry that officers will act too quickly. Additionally, Pew Research Center (2017) found that officers in larger departments are more likely to say that “officers are more reluctant to use force to control a suspect even when it is appropriate.”

Carter & Corra (2016) also found that attitudes toward police use of force were affected by beliefs about race, although they did not specifically survey police officers. Specifically, they found that “individuals who hold higher levels of racial resentment are more likely to support greater use of force by the police” (p. 503). Overall, police use of force as a concept is subject to various interpretations, and attitudes towards the concept can be influenced by a variety of factors.

### **Current Crime Statistics**

Because many encounters between law enforcement and Black citizens occurs in the context of crime, an overview of crime statistics is necessary to set the stage. These encounters are usually attributed to racial profiling by law enforcement. However, *The New York Times* reported on a study done by the National Bureau of Economic Research with slightly different findings. While it did confirm that Black men and women are treated differently by officers, there was no racial bias found when it came to lethal force (police shootings) (Bui & Cox, 2016). Davenport, Soule & Armstrong II (2011) found that police are more likely to be present at Black protests than White protests and are also more likely to act at Black events. Interestingly, they also noted that these findings varied over time, perhaps because Blacks “may have turned to protest because they did not have equal access to institutional political channels” (p. 169). They further suggest that the issues may have continued to be unaddressed, eventually leading to the protestors stopping their protests. Davenport et. al. also makes one other point: there were many years where events held by Blacks were no more likely to be policed than those held by Whites. Overall, these findings imply a spiral of silence effect. Because Blacks perceived themselves to be in the minority, they eventually stopped trying to draw attention to the issues. This is the essence of a spiral of silence.



One of the concerns about incidents like the ones listed above is retaliatory violence as a response or reaction. Bejan, Hickman, Parkin & Pozo (2018) explain retaliatory violence as “whether the taking of life by law enforcement is associated with retaliatory lethal violence against law enforcement and whether the reverse may also be true, that lethal violence against law enforcement is associated with increased killings by police” (p. 2). Bejan et. al. examined whether evidence supports a retaliatory relationship between law enforcement and the public. They also explored the role of social media in these potential relationships. They found strong evidence of a violent, retaliatory relationship between citizens and law enforcement. They also found that “social media coverage of the Black Lives Matter movement increases the risk of fatal victimization to both law enforcement officers and minorities” (p. 1). According to their results:

Unexpected shocks to the number of law enforcement officers killed are associated with more minorities killed and fewer whites killed on the same day. In addition, our models found that unexpected increases in citizen deaths increased the number of law enforcement officers killed if the citizens were white non-Hispanics and decreased the number of law enforcement officers killed if the citizens were minorities. These relationships held regardless of how much social media attention was focused on the Black Lives Matter movement. (p. 19)

They also found that *death primed officers* (officers who are aware of the homicides of other officers) might be less ready to use lethal force when necessary when they perceive the person to be in their ingroup. Finally, their results also documented that social media often incites the situation by giving greater visibility to such incidents:

The results measuring the relationship between social media and shootings of citizens were not as robust as an unexpected shock to the number of tweets referencing Black

Lives Matter, which was associated with an immediate increase in the number of minorities killed by law enforcement but had no relationship with the number of white non-Hispanics killed. (p. 20)

The encounters outlined above speak to a larger, underlying issue regarding race in the United States. Issues people previously did not talk about are now part of the national dialogue. This research study examines what factors could contribute to people's willingness to speak out about race and police 'use of force' in conversation through the lens of spiral of silence theory.

To summarize the above section, police use of force operates on a continuum that can start with the presence of an officer and ends at the use of lethal force. While this distinction is made clear in police departmental policies for law enforcement personnel, it is often not made clear in media reports to the general public. Attitudes towards police use of force are affected by race. The next section examines public opinion and the spiral of silence theory.

### **Public Opinion**

Before diving into the spiral of silence theory, a brief overview of the idea of public opinion is necessary since spiral of silence theory is rooted in public opinion. Public opinion is tricky to quantify and explain; most people usually associate it with political elections. Additionally, individual researchers tend to have their own nuanced definitions for the term. For example, Crandall & Ayres (2002) define public opinion as "opinions that one can express in public without fear of isolating oneself" (p. 27). Lang & Lang (2012) use two criteria to determine what qualifies as public opinion: "They have to be opinions and they must be public" (p. 380). Noelle-Neumann (1989) provides two very similar definitions in some of her work: "public opinion consists of opinions and modes of behavior in value-laden areas which can be publicly expressed or demonstrated with the expectation that they will meet with approval or that

there is no danger of thereby isolating oneself” (p. 8) and “opinions on controversial issues that one can express in public without isolating oneself (Noelle-Neumann, 1993, p. 63). She also makes an important note: “public opinion is limited by time and place” (Noelle-Neumann & Petersen, 2004, p. 350). This also applies to the spiral of silence theory. It only applies at a specific time, and it may not be universal; in fact, it can be very targeted. That is, the contentious issues U.S. society is facing right now are not the issues the previous generation faced. As chapter five will note, this means that the topics the public sphere focuses on now are not the same as they were in the past. Additionally, willingness to speak itself can be issue-specific; someone may be very vocal on one issue but then silent on another. The later explanation of the spiral of silence theory will elaborate on more on this.

Splichal (1999) extends public opinion and highlights that the formation and expression of public opinion tends to lead to individual and group consensus on controversial issues. This usually then becomes what is referred to as the majority opinion. He also notes an important element: “universal definitions of the public and public opinion cannot be attained” (p. 52). While no universal definition can be determined, public opinion still exists.

Rusciano argues that world public opinion not only exists, but also reflects the spiral of silence process in that nations also fear isolation, just like individuals (p. 180). As he notes, “world opinion derives its power in part because of its moral imperatives; nations and leaders do not wish to offend generally accepted values of other nations and leaders” (p. 182). While recent events may suggest that this claim may not be fully supported, at least in the United States, the key takeaway is that the spiral of silence can operate on a much larger scale than one may first assume.

Perhaps the lack of a universal definition is what makes public opinion a dynamic rather than a static process. It can develop and change, usually in response to a change in the environment. Noelle-Neumann (1989) highlights this and notes that these developments occur “when conditions which previously were considered normal begin to be seen as flagrant ills” (p. 8-9). Based on this statement, public opinion can extend beyond the political arena; the key element, at least according to Noelle-Neumann, is extensive media coverage given to a controversial, morally-laden issue (Noelle-Neumann, 1991). Her spiral of silence theory falls under this umbrella of public opinion research. The following overview of the Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann’s original spiral of silence work provides more information about the effects and influence of the media.

### **The Spiral of Silence Theory**

#### **Theory origins.**

The spiral of silence theory was originally developed by Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann, a German researcher who studied political elections. She is also credited as establishing the fields of empirical survey communication research and survey research in Germany (Petersen, 2012). During her time at the Allensbach survey research institution, where she studied public opinion, she noticed that while the polls did not change, the environment did. The polls advertised the Social Democrats as being in the lead of the election, even though expectations of people shifted to believe that the Christian Democrats would win. However, the polls did not notice this shift (Noelle-Neumann, 1991). In fact, Noelle-Neumann found little evidence that a change in voting intentions existed (Noelle-Neumann, 1989). She (1991) hypothesized that “if there was a difference in the public show of voting intentions between the two camps, this difference was bound to result in overestimating the more publicly visible camp and underestimating the less

visible one” (p. 258). One would then assume that visibility was based on media coverage. This idea led to the concept of the spiral of silence.

According to the spiral of silence theory, individuals attempt to gauge the opinion climate around them and determine how well it matches up with their own beliefs. If they perceive that most people share their opinion, they are more likely to speak up. However, if they believe they are in the minority, they are more likely to remain silent. These tendencies, primarily based on perceptions of the media, can create a spiral effect and result in the establishment of one prevailing opinion (Noelle-Neumann, 1974).

There are five assumptions that the spiral of silence theory is built upon. They are as follows:

- 1) Society threatens deviant individuals with isolation.
- 2) Individuals experience fear of isolation continuously.
- 3) This fear of isolation causes individuals to try to assess the climate of opinion at all times.
- 4) The results of this estimate affect behavior in public, especially the open expression or concealment of opinions.
- 5) This assumption connects the above four. Taken together, they [the above four assumptions] are considered responsible for the formation, defense and alteration of public opinion. (Noelle-Neumann, 1991, p. 260)

While these assumptions are the main components of the theory, there is one other requirement.

The issue in question (i.e. who to vote for) must have a moral element associated with it. As Noelle-Neumann (1989) described, “public opinion always has an irrational, morally loaded

component. It is from the moral dimension that public opinion derives its strength and its threat of isolation” (p. 8).

### **The hardcore group.**

Noelle-Neumann’s original theory noted that there was almost always a group of people who shared their opinions regardless of if they were in the majority or minority. This group of people is known as the hardcore. Other researchers have also found evidence of this group. Baldassare & Katz (1996) found that study participants who were more interested in politics held extreme political views and those who paid more attention to election information were more willing to speak with a newspaper reporter (p. 152). This finding could also be associated with the hardcore concept. Additionally, the research “suggests that the fear of appearing ignorant in public by not having more definite opinions to express, or having nothing to say because of a lack of information about the issues, can cause people to remain silent” (p. 154).

### **Train test.**

To study her theory, Noelle-Neumann designed a survey question which is known as the train test. The original question “dealt with the issue of raising children and occurred in the context of an interview with housewives” (Noelle-Neumann, 1993, p. 16). First, participants were asked a question to determine their opinions on using spanking as a punishment. Then, they were asked: “Suppose you are faced with a five-hour train ride, and there is a woman sitting in your apartment who thinks...” (p. 17-18). At this point, women were given a situation that was the opposite of what their response for the previous question was. Regardless of the situation, the question then closed by saying “would you like to talk with this woman so as to get to know her point of view better, or wouldn’t you think that worth your while?” (p. 18).

The goal of these questions was to determine “whether the various camps differed in their readiness to stand up for their views and convictions” (p. 18). In studies that came later, this concept was typically referred to as willingness to speak/tendency to remain silent, which will be discussed later in this thesis. Additionally, the train test has the flexibility to be administered instead as a plane test, boat test or a bus test, enabling it to be adjusted to different cultures.

In summary, the spiral of silence theory is part of public opinion research. It proposes that people who believe their opinions are shared by the majority are more likely to speak out, while people who think they are in the minority are less likely to speak out. However, there is always a hardcore group that will speak regardless of if they are in the majority or the minority. The original design for testing this theory was the train test, which asks participants how likely they are to converse with a person of differing beliefs than them about a topic. The train test can be adapted to fit different scenarios. For the purposes of the current study, the train test has been modified into a plane test using the topic of police use of force as the conversation topic. The next section details factors that can contribute to an individual’s willingness to speak out and tendency to remain silent.

#### **Factors that contribute to willingness to speak.**

The spiral of silence theory rests on an individual’s perception of the opinion climate, usually referred to as the *quasi-statistical sense* (Noelle-Neumann, 1974). When an individual uses his or her *quasi-statistical sense*, he or she is constantly scanning the environment that surrounds them and evaluating the opinions of others. Perceptions of their environment determine if the individual will speak out or remain silent based on the public opinion they perceive (Noelle-Neumann, 1974). Scheufele & Moy (2000) say that, “perceptions of public

opinion matter not only because individuals attend to their social environment, but also because these perceptions potentially influence individual behavior and attitudes” (p.6).

### *The media.*

Noelle-Neumann posited that perceptions of the media, which mostly presented a consonant message, play a role in determining an individual’s perception of the opinion climate (Matthes & Hayes, 2014, p. 55). She “never found a spiral of silence that goes against the tenor of the media, for willingness to speak out depends in part upon sensing that there is support and legitimation from the media” (Noelle-Neumann, 1991, p. 276). Although Noelle-Neumann’s original theory emphasized that the media was the major factor, a later study noted that age, income, residence and sex also played a role in an individual’s willingness to talk about a controversial topic in a public locale (Noelle-Neumann, 1974). Interestingly, Baldassare & Katz (1996) found that media exposure was unrelated to opinion expression. Lee et. al. (2004) also found media exposure to be unassociated with outspokenness. An updated meta-analysis also noted that the media no longer present a universal message (Glynn & Huges, 2014, p. 70).

### *Police in the media.*

MaGuire, Sandage & Weatherby (1999) found differences between big city and small-town reporting of police. Thus, one might conclude that consuming solely local news will give an individual very different perceptions than someone who consumes only national news; in other words, two different stories may exist. While not specific to police, trust in news also varies between the local and national level.

Gronke & Cook (2007) and Moy & Pfau (2007) suggest that local news is trusted more than national news and the institution of news itself. Gronke & Cook (2007) note that:



Much of this may reflect a split not only between their preference for the known quantity of the news over the distant and poorly understood institution known as ‘the press,’ but also between their approval of the information they receive and their disapproval of the practices and procedures that they see journalists pursuing (p. 276).

*Police officers’ perceptions of media.*

The perceptions of police officers themselves are also an important element to consider. According to the Pew Research Center, about 81% of officers who participated in a survey believe that the media treat police unfairly (Gramlich & Parker, 2017).

Race is a dividing factor among the ranks as well. For example, White officers are more likely to believe that the media are unfair towards police than Black officers, especially those who in the 18-44 age range. Administrators also appear to have different perceptions than officers (Gramlich & Parker, 2017). While 69% of Black officers believe that demonstrations and protests after fatal encounters were motivated somewhat by a desire to hold police accountable, only 27% of White officers felt the same way. Finally, although 92% of White officers believe that the necessary changes to assure equal rights for Blacks have already been made, only 29% of Black officers feel the same way. (Morin et. al., 2017).

Nix and Pickett (2017) found evidence that officers believe in what they call the Ferguson effect. More than 80% of officers who participated in the study believed that negative media coverage regarding police results in an increase in crime. Additionally, officers who believe media coverage is hostile towards police are more likely to believe that citizens are disrespectful, among other things, towards police.

*Police & social media.*

Social media is making a difference as well. More and more police departments are becoming active on social media and using social networking sites (i.e. Facebook and Twitter) to communicate with the public (Lieberman, Koetzle & Sakiyama, 2013). Social media enables police departments to bypass the traditional media gatekeepers and therefore affect perceptions an individual might hold about the police. However, how the departments choose to use social media and what they post can vary greatly. (Lieberman, Koetzle & Sakiyama, 2013; Procter, Crump, Karstedt, Voss & Cantijoch (2013); Dai, He, Tian, Giraldi & Gu, 2017).

According to Procter et. al. (2013), “some agencies tended to be more law enforcement oriented, while others were more community oriented” (p. 792) and that content “tended to broadcast information rather than seek any kind of interaction” (p. 432). They also noted that police departments do not interact much with citizens or even post that often on social media. While the Proctor et. al. (2013) study took place in England, its findings are like U.S. studies.

A content analysis of 23 of the largest police departments in the U.S. identified using the Uniform Crime Report data from 2009 (Lieberman, Koetzle & Sakiyama (2013) found important differences between high frequency posters and low frequency posters on Facebook. High frequency posters tended to post crime-related messages, which were also the most common type of posts. However, police departments categorized as low frequency posters used more public-relations messaging. In fact, low frequency departments had a higher likelihood of posting public relations communications than the high frequency departments (p. 452). The crime related messages often act as a police blotter. However, the authors came across an interesting finding: Although crime-related posts generated little responsiveness from the public, posts about an officer injury or direct communication to a specific group or individual (i.e. answering a

question, etc.) generated a much higher response from the public (p. 456). A later study done by Dai et. al. (2017) generated similar results and noted that “citizens are not likely to engage with police departments who solely post crime-related information” (p. 793).

To start addressing the interaction/responsiveness problem, Procter et. al. (2013) recommend that departments use more hashtags, which enable users to easily view information about the topic, especially if they are searching for the hashtag specifically. Dai et. al.’s (2017) recommendation is that departments just starting on social media begin with both Facebook and Twitter to reach the most number of people and that they aim to post one to two messages daily, keeping these short in length.

As Lieberman, Koetzle & Sakiyam (2013) note, social media has the potential to greatly develop and improve police-community relations. However, Procter et. al. (2013) observe that, “the police (and emergency services and government agencies generally) face difficult problems in making effective use of social media services such as Twitter during crisis situations, although it would be unwise to generalize about the performance of police as a whole: the picture varies from police force to police force” (p. 433). While not the focus of the current study, future research should examine whether frequent viewers of social media posted by police departments have different perceptions of police than those who do not frequently view such social media.

#### *Race in the media.*

Race in the media is another topic that is central to this study. The media often misrepresents race in its reporting (Dixon & Williams, 2015). This is problematic because, as Bjornstrom, Kaufman, Peterson & Slater (2010) state, “media representations of crime shape public opinion in important ways” (p. 269). Media can powerfully influence the shaping of public opinion, including determining (to some extent) where to place blame and recommended

punishment (Dukes & Gaither, 2017). If something is being misrepresented, public opinion may be skewed toward an inaccurate conclusion. Therefore, consumers of media should pay attention to the media they consume, because, as highlighted by Klahm IV, Papp & Rubino:

“understanding the way media outlets portray these incidents is important for our understanding of how news stories might shape public perception regarding police and their use of force, particularly deadly force” (p. 211). One way in which researchers have sought to understand this is by comparing news portrayal with reality.

Dixon, Azocar & Casas’ (2003) study found that network news focused largely on Whites, and that both Blacks and Whites were more likely to be depicted as perpetrators as opposed to victims. However, they also found that the news portrayals accurately represent the societal racial composition of perpetrators. A later study by Dixon & Williams in 2015 also found that Whites were accurately represented on cable and network news. The study also reported that Blacks were underrepresented as both victims and violent perpetrators on cable and network news, while Latinos and Muslims were overrepresented; the former as legal and undocumented immigrants, and the latter as terrorist suspects (p. 34). An even more recent study found that depictions of Blacks have greatly improved, and that “Blacks are accurately portrayed across all roles including as perpetrators, victims, and officers” (Dixon, 2017, p. 785). Additionally, Latinos are still underrepresented as officers and victims, while Whites are overrepresented as homicide victims and officers.

While the previous studies seem to build on one another, Bjornstrom et. al. offer contradicting findings. They observe “a relative overreporting of blacks compared to whites” and an “underreporting of Hispanic perpetrators relative to whites” (p. 287). It is possible that the variations in findings are due to the specific focus of the study and differences in methodology. It

is also worth noting that even coverage about non-criminal matters tends to be biased. According to Entman (1990), coverage relating to Black politicians and activists tends to be framed as special interest politics, while White politics equates with public interest politics.

Representations of race go beyond numbers; in fact, the way race is framed can affect people's perceptions of race and racial issues. For instance, Willis & Painter's (2016) textual analysis of newspaper coverage of Trayvon Martin, who was shot and killed by a member of the local neighborhood watch, found that "national media perpetuated racial stereotypes, thus heightening the issue of race and making the case more emotional (i.e. race) than factual (i.e. Stand Your Ground)" (p. 190). Additionally, Messer & Bell (2010) found that although Black survivors of the Tulsa riots in 1991 believed the events to be an injustice, leaders and most of the White community chose to frame it instead as an uprising among people who were already having problems. Thus, the media's framing not only tells the audience what to think about, but also how to think about it (Postman, 2006). This is especially a dilemma because no news organization will present stories the same way; each value something different, and as such may use a different frame. This differential framing, then, could cause individuals exposed to one type of frame to have very different opinions and perceptions than those exposed to a different frame. For example, Oh & Hudson (2017) found differences in mainstream media framing vis-a-vis reader discourse about the 1992 LA riots. Framing can also change as a response to events. Take the Diallo incident of 1999 when New York City police officers shot and killed African immigrant Amadou Diallo when they mistook his wallet to be a gun. The officers were later acquitted. Hirschfield & Simon (2010) noted that framing surrounding fatal police shootings changed after that incident. Stories were more likely to locate the topic within the larger cultural framework than before that incident.

To review this section, research has shown that the media misrepresent race, although accuracy has improved over the years. Some research has shown that media portrayals of crime can shape public opinion, which in turn could influence peoples' perceptions of events/crime and their surrounding opinion climate. However, while Noelle-Neumann's originally theorized that the media play the largest role in determining peoples' perceptions, additional research found the media to have little to no effect on perceptions. Other research showed that there are many other factors that can play a role in influencing an individual's perceptions and thus their willingness to speak.

***An individual's perceptions.***

The perceptions held by an individual shape his or her *quasi-statistical sense*. However, perceptions of the media are not the only perceptions that matter. Perceptions of police, which can be affected by multiple demographic factors, could also affect the *quasi-statistical sense*. Because this study deals with race and police, those are discussed in greater detail in the next few paragraphs.

Perceptions of the police are often shaped by race (Marquette University Law School 2017; Graziano, Schuck & Martin, 2010; Dowler & Zawiliski, 2007; Carter & Corra, 2016; Chermak, McGarrell & Gruenewald, 2006; Callanan & Rosenberger, 2011). A Marquette University Law School poll (2017), which polled 800 people registered to vote in Wisconsin via landline or cell phone, found that 43% of all respondents believe "police in general are too willing to use deadly force." However, 70% of Blacks surveyed said "police are too willing to use deadly force," while only 34% of Whites "see police as too willing to use deadly force." Hispanic respondents fell in the middle, with 59% of Hispanic respondents saying force is used too willingly by the police.

Finally, an even greater divide was found in categorizing the fatal shootings of Blacks both in Wisconsin and across the United States. While 75% of Blacks say these incidents are part of a larger pattern, only 38% of Whites see things that way. However, an earlier study done by Graziano, Schuck & Martin (2010) found that majority of respondents “supported the belief that it [racial profiling] was a byproduct of police strategy and best understood as a broader social issue” (p. 71). The findings of Chermak, McGarrell & Gruenewald (2006) also suggest a similar pattern:

Whites, who consumed media coverage of the trial, seem to have directed their concern to the officers involved in the case—the officers are bad apples but their concern did not extend to other officers. Conversely, Blacks who consumed the case were somewhat more likely to generalize the coverage and think that the officers’ behavior was representative of other officers. (p. 273-274)

These opinions of the public contrast greatly with those of police officers. According to the Pew Research Center, “two-thirds [of officers] characterize the fatal encounters that prompted the demonstrations as isolated incidents and not signs of problems between police and the Black community” (Morin, Parker, Stepler & Mercer, 2017).

Chermak, McGarrell & Gruenewald (2006) also noted that “racial differences in the evaluation of the police increased following the high-profile media trial of police misconduct...it intensified concerns and negative perceptions among Blacks” (p. 273). Carter & Corra (2016) furthered this more recently and that beliefs about race affect attitudes about police use of force, especially when it comes to racial resentment. Additionally, they found that the effects of racial resentment have remained strong since the 1980s (p. 507).

The findings of Dowler & Zawilski (2007) are similar: “race and experience within [the] criminal justice system were significant predictors of attitudes toward police misconduct” (p. 198). In fact, they note that “including race was an important element in the examination of media effects.” On a similar note, Lee, Lim & Lee (2015) show that minority students not only have more negative interactions with police, but that they also have lower confidence in the police.

Although all the above studies highlight race as an important factor in perception development, Holt (2013) documents that race does not significantly predict perceptions. The author goes on to suggest that this could be because “priming criminality may go beyond race; fear of criminals is a human fear” (p. 119).

Demographic factors other than race also play a role in perceptions of police. For example, Dowler & Zawilski (2007) show significant relationships between being charged/arrested, education level, gender and race (p. 199). Chermak, McGarrell & Gruenewald (2006) highlight that interpretation of media coverage and reactions to said coverage are dependent on other factors such as existing perceptions of police officers and/or prior experience with the police. Callanan & Rosenberger (2011) also observe that first-hand experience with crime is more important than the media when it comes to people’s perceptions and opinions about police. In addition to these demographic factors, other factors also influence an individual’s willingness to speak or tendency to remain silent.

***Other factors.***

*Communication apprehension.*

Crandall & Ayres (2002) found that an individual’s level of communication apprehension (CA) and the relationship between people (friend or stranger) played a role in the public



expression of a controversial opinion. Specifically, participants who scored a high CA “were less willing to express an opinion than were low CAs” (p. 35). Additionally, participants were more willing to express themselves when they were talking with friends. They concluded that the tendency to remain silent if one is perceived to be in the minority “is exacerbated when a person experiences high communication apprehension” (p. 36). Lee, Detenber, Willnat, Aday & Graf (2004) also found that communication apprehension affects public outspokenness.

*Civic engagement & political socialization.*

Civic engagement, political socialization and willingness to speak are all interrelated. Political socialization starts at an early age. Children form their core beliefs by learning from their friends, parents, siblings and involvement with social organizations (Jennings, Stoker & Bowers, 2009; Denmark, Mattes & Niemi, 2016; Jacewicz, 2017). These core beliefs then determine their civic engagement. While forms of civic engagement vary, some of the most familiar are related to political participation. People can vote and/or support their candidate, which can be in as simple of a form as wearing political buttons or placing bumper stickers on their car (Scheufele & Moy, 2000)

Research has illustrated the link between civic engagement and willingness to speak. For example, Dalis, Hmielowski, Kushin & Yamamoto (2012) found that civic engagement “had a direct effect on people’s willingness to express opinions” (p. 337), although the study was performed in Guam and not the United States.

The findings of Niemi & Klingler (2012) suggest that individual roles and responsibilities have the potential to greatly develop within adolescence and early adulthood, specifically during ages 18 to 24. Because this age period often involves higher education, it is important to look at the impact of schools on civic engagement. Many young people spend a lot of time in institutions

of higher education, thus giving these institutions the opportunity to influence their development. Snyder (2014) highlights this: “Educational is powerful, and schools play a vital role, not only in the teaching of reading, writing and arithmetic, but also in shaping the youth of today to be the citizens of tomorrow” (p. 71). Additionally, the goal of the educational system, at least in the United States, is to “seek the truth and not to inculcate its students” (Sarabyn, 2008, p. 85). Students do this by debating and discussing ideas. This search for truth is also accomplished through the exposure of students to diverse ways of thinking and different ideas than they are used to. This educational model promotes civic discourse, which is “the ability to have a conversation, not a one-sided soliloquy but an engagement of two or more people in the exchange of ideas, information, opinions and/or positions (Herbst, 2014). This type of discourse is also commonly referred to as the marketplace of ideas (Hopkins, 1996). However, an important aside to this is that public institutions and private institutions are not held to the same standards when it comes to the marketplace of ideas. Public institutions are required to follow the First Amendment, which prevents the government from interfering with the free speech of citizens. However, private institutions are not held to the First Amendment, as they are not government entities (Sarabyn, 2010). Thus, the marketplace of ideas may present itself differently in a public school as compared to a private school.

Henson & Denker (2009) studied the spiral of silence theory in relation to perceptions of silencing in the classroom. Their results suggest “that when students believe there are differences between the views they hold and the views they believe their instructors hold, there is a greater likelihood of perceiving silencing behaviors” (p. 213) on the part of the instructor. Two specific perceptions, ideological difference and political party affiliation, were found to predict these

perceptions. These silencing perceptions could potentially have a dampening impact on the marketplace of ideas.

As Niemi & Klingler (2012) so aptly stated, “one would like to suppose that university students, in particular, become more interested in and tolerant of different cultures, persons and experiences” (p. 41). However, their results did not support this conclusion, and they found that acceptance of diversity did not change with age, even when comparing students to nonstudents. Hatemi & Verhulst (2015) also found similar evidence. Their results found that “higher levels of Openness to Experience in young adults do not meaningfully predict the endorsement of liberal political attitudes” (p. 13). Additionally, Green, Aronow, Bergan, Greene, Paris & Weinberger (2011) used a randomized field experiment to determine if knowledge of constitutional principles increased support for civil liberties. Results did not support that knowledge increased support for civil liberties, which, as they note, is a finding that “challenges the longstanding hypothesis that exposure to civil liberties norms per se increases tolerance” (p. 465).

Niemi & Klingler (2012) also found that political participation showed little change during the 18-24 age period. This is further evidenced by Hatemi & Verhulst (2015), who found that while political preferences can change over time, they are relatively stable. Although it appears that political participation and preferences do not change much over time, Klobstad’s (2015) panel study findings supported the idea that the college campus plays a role in establishing an individual’s baseline political participation. Results showed a positive relationship between political discussion and political participation: students who were exposed to political discussion had a higher rate of political participation for many years, thus creating a long-term relationship. Additionally, they also noted a trend that “suggests that the influence of discussion decayed once the discussant left college” (p. 304). They hypothesize that this could

occur because organizations that encourage political participation are lacking once a student leaves the school—he or she no longer has easy access to such organizations. Lee et al. (2015) also found something similar. Their study indicates that “those who are equipped with the essential resources, talking about politics with others—indeed, arguing about politics—can actually enhance one’s level of engagement in the democratic process” (p. 587).

Billings & Terkla (2014) found that “the relationship between the campus culture and civic engagement is mediated through students’ civic values and beliefs. As a result, the perception of a supportive campus culture for civic engagement influences the civic values and beliefs of its students” (p. 50). However, they also found that this relationship is only partially responsible when it came to predicting levels of civic activity. Other attributes like community connectedness, leadership ability and self-efficacy can play a role as well. On the other hand, Hatemi & Verhulst (2015) found that personality traits, which could include leadership ability, develop independently of political attitudes. In other words, there was no evidence that a relationship exists between changes in personality and political attitudes over time.

#### *Fear of isolation.*

Fear of isolation too plays a major role in determining an individual’s willingness to speak. As mentioned earlier, individuals use their *quasi-statistical sense* to gauge their surrounding opinion climate. Based on their perceptions of the opinion climate, an individual may feel that his or her opinion could cause isolation if it does not match the majority public opinion as they perceive it to be. Lin & Salwen (1996) found “qualified support for fear of ostracism, public opinion and media climate along with some demographic characteristics on respondent willingness to engage in public expression” (p. 134). These demographic factors included educational level and age, though ethnic origin was not in this list.

*Race.*

The role of race extends beyond perceptions of police. Jeffres, Neuendorf & Atkin (1999) found that race plays a role in willingness to speak by experimenting with the race of the interviewer in diverse public settings. Participants were approached by the interviewer regarding the O.J. Simpson verdict and having their opinion published. They found clear differences, albeit not statistically significant, between Blacks, Asians and Whites about O.J. Simpson's innocence. The race of the person conducting the interview also made a difference. Whites were more likely to tell a Black interviewer that Simpson was guilty compared to a White interviewer. Blacks were more likely to give interviewers of the same race an opinion that lined up more "with what the national polls told them was the normative opinion of the Black community" (p. 124). The authors also note that this fits with the spiral of silence theory's fear of sanctions (like social isolation).

*Perceived disagreement.*

In her deliberation research, Wojcieszak (2011) found results that showed that "perceived disagreement slightly decreased communicative participation" (p. 219). Results from Lee, Oshita & Oh's (2014) study also supported this conclusion. "The more people fear being isolated if they express their opinion in a situation where their opinions are incongruent with others', the more they are unwilling to express their opinions in public" (p. 196). Hayes (2007) also found additional support for this. Participants were more likely to use opinion expression avoidance strategies, specifically walking away and trying to change the subject, in a hostile opinion climate (p. 796). Thus, they were less willing to express their opinion.

While perceived disagreement can decrease participation, perceived agreement can have the opposite effect. Hayes, Shanahan & Glynn (2001) found that "participants expressed a

greater preference to discuss a particular topic more when they believed that public opinion was more consistent with their own opinion on that topic” (p. 54). This is also consistent with the findings of Dalisay, Hmielowski, Kushin & Yamamoto (2012), although their study participants were from Guam and not the United States. The willingness to express opinions (also known as speaking out) was directly affected by perceived support for the opinion. Interestingly, they also found that perceptions of support were affected by neighborliness and trust (p. 338). This illustrates the importance of reference groups. Oshagan (1996) found support that reference group influence was very important. In fact, he found no support for the spiral of silence theory itself. However, reference groups have been overlooked in more recent research. Neuwirth, Frederick & Mayo (2007) note that “few studies incorporate aspects of a person’s immediate social environment and majority opinion” (p. 465).

*Other mitigating factors.*

Shamir (1997) found that other factors such as policy discontent and the need for value expression can override the fear of social conformity (i.e. fear of isolation). Additionally, Slater (2012) believes a modernized version of the spiral of silence theory would account for “the degree to which religious, political or lifestyle subcultures perceive that their values and concerns are reflected in mainstream media content or political and social discourse” (p. 297). These perceptions, then, may influence openness/closure, feeling of personal alienation/connection (social isolation) and the level of an individual’s willingness to engage in political-related processes.

To summarize this section, there are multiple factors that can influence both peoples’ perceptions of their opinion climate as well as their willingness to speak/tendency to remain silent. Race, other demographic factors, level of communication apprehension, civic engagement

and political socialization, fear of isolation and perceived agreement/disagreement can all play a role.

Another factor that can influence willingness to speak out is culture. Perry & Gonzenbach (2000) found that perceived opinion could predict speaking out, which they believed occurred because of a cultural bias affect. The ability of the spiral of silence theory to be applied to other cultures is also a theoretical challenge. The upcoming section discussed this and other challenges the theory faces.

### **Theoretical Challenges.**

Like all theories, the spiral of silence is not without flaws. Perhaps one of the largest issues with the theory is the problem of operationalizing willingness to speak. For example, Baldassare & Katz (1996) define “speaking out in public as willingness to be interviewed by a newspaper or television reporter and have one’s name and views published or broadcast in a news story” (p. 149). On the other hand, bumper stickers and political buttons have also been highlighted as ways a person can speak out (Scheufele & Moy, 2000). This variation in measurement makes it difficult for researchers to standardize and measure an individual’s willingness to speak.

Matthes, Morrison & Schemer (2010) found results that challenge the idea that the theory only works on morally laden issues. According to them, “it can be speculated that value-laden issues are those issues that polarize opinions, that is, those that lead to rather certain attitudes” (p. 794). Additionally, the presence of a hardcore group suggests that attitude strength can contribute to the breaking of a spiral of silence (Baldassare & Katz, 1996). Splichal (1999) also notes that Noelle-Neumann does not include the influence of reference groups, which, as Oshagan (1996) noted earlier, can have a major influence.

Another major flaw of the theory concerns the lack of research regarding the timing of spirals. It is hard to tell when a spiral started, when it is currently happening and when it has ended. According to Bodor (2012), “if the test is conducted at the ‘wrong’ time—before or after the spiral--...the test might fail to detect a spiral of silence” (p. 274). Matthes (2015) extends this line of thought. He notes that “there can be no spiral of silence when there is no variation in the initial levels of opinion climate perceptions and opinion expression” (p. 170). In addition to that, study design may be unable to test the process over time” (Matthes & Hayes, 2014, p. 60). Overall, if one does not realize that a change has occurred, one might miss the time to study the spiraling process.

The scarcity of studies examining timing of spirals makes it hard to determine when and how a spiral dissipates. Scheufele and Moy (2000) note that this is another factor that needs to be considered when explaining the theory. They note that an individual attempts to gauge not only the current opinion climate but also how the climate will develop in the future. Matthes, Morrison & Schemer (2010) believe that the “conviction that one possesses the truth” could end a spiral (p. 793). They also found that without the moderating variable of attitude certainty, no support for a spiral would have existed in the studies they ran.

Researchers hold differing opinions regarding the accuracy of an individual’s *quasi-statistical sense*. Petersen (2012) states that Noelle-Neumann:

assumed that it [the quasi-statistical sense] is an emotional reason reaction that people are generally not consciously aware of—and for this reason, it is not possible to test the theory by presenting test subjects with hypothetical situations, but rather only when they are actually in a situation where they are subject to social pressure” (p. 266-267).



Self-report and hypothetical situations may not capture reality (Matthes & Hayes, 2014, p. 58). That is why conducting experimental studies rather than survey studies could provide more accurate results. However, an experimental design can be challenging to implement (Petersen, 2012).

Likewise, Sohn & Geidner (2016) note that while their study “assumed all agents could accurately perceive the proportions of supportive and opposition opinions within their networks” (p. 41), that may not always be true. However, results from Lin & Salwen’s (1996) study appear to show that:

Respondents were quite capable of identifying the perceived tone of media coverage on the issue. They became more willing to discuss this issue in public with the understanding that perceived media coverage on this issue was generally positive or ‘supportive’ in nature” (p. 140)

Lin & Salwen (1996) lay the blame for the distorted estimates at the feet of vote preference. In other words, an individual’s partiality for a candidate could change their perceptions of public opinion. This highlights a unique consequence. If an individual holds a distorted view of public opinion, it is likely that their willingness to speak out would change in accordance with what an individual thinks is happening, regardless of the accuracy of his or her perceptions. Additionally, it is difficult to measure fear of isolation. Matthes & Hayes (2014) note that “spiral of silence scholarship lacks a standardized, reliable and valid measure of FSI [fear of social isolation]” (p. 56).

The spiral of silence theory is also challenged by the diversity of cultures that exist throughout the world. Fung & Scheufele (2014) examined three cross-cultural studies of the spiral of silence that took place over the last decade. They found that the studies overall suggest

that “the spiral of silence effect is likely to be bounded by cultural norms” (p. 136), although more extensive research is needed to confirm this concept. Additionally, conflict resolution, norms and socially shared meanings vary from culture to culture, and individualistic versus collectivist cultures may be very different from one another (Scheufele & Moy, 2000). As Rosenthal & Detenber (2014) state:

The spiral of silence is apt to manifest in collectivistic, traditional societies that actively limit public dissent of dominant ideological tenets: when the nail that stands up gets pounded down, the nail prefers not to stand up. (p. 190)

To some extent, individualistic cultures are used to dissent, while collectivist cultures try to minimize it.

Shamir (1997) also comes to a similar conclusion and notes that “results may be country or issue specific” and that “it is quite possible that there are cultural differences on speaking up” (p. 609; Willnat et. al., 2002). The findings of Lee et. al. (2004), who ran a cross-cultural test of the theory in Singapore and the United States, suggest that the spiral of silence is not universally applicable. Additionally, fear of isolation differs across cultures. As Rosenthal and Detenber (2014) note, “although researchers have identified differences in fear of isolation, they have not considered how these differences affect willingness to speak out” (p. 197).

However, Matthes et. al. (2012) argues that there are universal personality traits that can be used to measure the spiral of silence theory. These personality traits are found in all cultures. Results showed positive correlation in eight of the nine countries sampled, which, according to the authors, “hints to the almost universal nature of basic spiral of silence processes” (p. 301). Although most research points to cross-cultural differences in spiral processes, it is possible that there are some universal elements present across all cultures.

The final flaw to note, and one that has been discussed throughout this literature review, is the influence of the media. While Noelle-Neumann placed much emphasis on the effects of media on people's perceptions, other factors have been shown to play a role, perhaps even a much greater one than that held by the media.

In summary, while the spiral of silence theory does much to explain peoples' willingness to speak/tendency to remain silent, it is not without its challenges. It is difficult operationalize willingness to speak as well as to determine what can be considered a morally-laden issue. There is a lack of research surrounding when and how a spiral occurs along with the general timing of a spiral. The accuracy of an individual's *quasi-statistical sense* has also been called into question. Finally, the spiral of silence is difficult to apply to different cultures.

The previous literature review outlines the foundation of this thesis, including police use of force and the spiral of silence theory. Police use of force operates on a continuum that is usually outlined in individual police departments' policies. However, these policies are not usually clearly noted in media coverage. The spiral of silence theory is part of the larger body of research regarding public opinion. According to the theory, people are more likely to speak out when they perceive themselves to be majority. The reverse is also true. People who believe they are in the minority are more likely to remain silent. Although the original theory by Noelle-Neumann credited the media as the driving factor behind the determination of peoples' opinion, other research has shown that race, other demographic factors, communication apprehension, civic engagement, fear of isolation and perceived disagreement/agreement to all influence peoples' perceptions and thus their willingness to speak. While the theory is not without its flaws, researchers keep coming back to it when they are seeking an explanation for peoples' willingness to share their opinions and/or tendency to keep them to quiet.

Based on the literature, the following research questions are proposed and answered using a combination of regression analyses and one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) tests:

**RQ1a:** What attitudes do people hold regarding the seriousness of police use of force as a problem?

**RQ1b:** What factors influence people's attitudes towards police use of force as a serious problem?

**RQ2:** What factors affect an individual's willingness to speak out about police use of force?

- A) Does the type of conversation partner (stranger or friend) make a difference?
- B) Does the gender and race of the conversation partner make a difference?
- C) Does an individual's perceptions of public opinion about police use of force make a difference?
- D) Does an individual's own opinion about police use of force being a serious problem in the U.S. make a difference?
- E) Does an individual's level of CA make a difference?
- F) How do the following demographic factors of the participant make a difference?

Age, Gender, Race, Political Affiliation

Based on the previous literature review and research questions, a questionnaire was designed and administered to a Qualtrics panel of 905 participants. The following chapter provides more details regarding the questionnaire design and methodology of this study.

## CHAPTER 3: METHOD

### **Research Design**

#### **Questionnaire.**

This study uses a predominantly Likert-scale and multiple-choice questionnaire administered to participants using Qualtrics software. It consists of several blocks: informed consent, PRCA-24, police train test, police demographics and media perceptions of police, learning different perspectives, media exposure, schooling demographics, demographics (not including schooling) and a debriefing statement. All other questions included on the questionnaire are based on the previous literature and created by the researcher for this study. Although a few open-ended questions exist in the questionnaire, those have not been included in this analysis for this project and will be used for a separate study.

The PRCA-24 is a measure created by James McCroskey to determine an individual's level of communication apprehension (McCroskey, 1982). This test measures communication apprehension in group discussion, interpersonal conversations, meetings and public speaking arenas. These four scores are also combined to form an overall communication apprehension score. Questions in this section include: "I dislike participating in group discussions; I am afraid to express myself at meetings." (McCroskey, 1982) To prevent survey fatigue, the PRCA-24 has been broken up into three different sections consisting of eight questions from measures in each section. These sections are located at different points within the survey.

McCroskey (1982) provided the norms for the PRCA-24. The mean for the total score for the original scale was 65.6 and it had a standard deviation of 15.3. In this study, the mean total score is 64.7 and the standard deviation is 20.8. A high PRCA-24 score is greater than 80 and a low score is less than 51. Scores for this study ranged from 24 to 120. McCroskey's norms for the group score are a mean of 15.4 and a standard deviation of 4.8. A high score is greater than 20 and a low score is less than 13. In this thesis, the mean group score is 15.8 and the standard deviation is 5.9. McCroskey's norms for the meeting score are a mean of 16.4 and a standard deviation of 4.2. The mean meeting score in this thesis is 15.87 with a standard deviation of 5.8. A high score is greater than 20 and a low score is less than 13. McCroskey's norms for the interpersonal (dyad) are a mean score of 14.2 and a standard deviation of 3.9. In this thesis, the mean interpersonal score is 15.2 with a standard deviation of 5.3. A high score is greater than 18 and a low score is less than 11. McCroskey's norms for the public score are a mean of 19.3 and a standard deviation of 5.1. In this thesis, the mean public score is 17.8 and the standard deviation is 6.1. A high score is greater than 24 and a low score is less than 14. Scores for the meeting, interpersonal and public range from six to 30. The calculated Cronbach's Alpha for the PRCA-24 in this study is 0.955 which is considered highly reliable as per academic standards (George & Mallery, 2003).

The police train test administered in this study is a modified version of Noelle-Neumann's original train test. Instead of a train, participants are asked to imagine themselves to be on a long plane ride. First, they are asked how comfortable they are talking about police use of force in a day-to-day conversation. Then, they are asked how

comfortable they are talking about the topic with someone who holds an opposing viewpoint. Once this baseline is established, the modified train test begins. They are then asked about their willingness to participate in conversations with the person sitting next to them (their conversation partner). Variations of the conversation are presented to the participant. First, participants are asked how likely they were to participate in a conversation initiated by a stranger about police use of force. The stranger's gender and race vary as follows: Black male, Black female, White male and White female. After that, participants are asked how likely they are to continue participating in the conversation if they realize the conversation partner either agrees or disagrees with them. The train test is then repeated with a close friend serving as the conversation partner.

The police demographics and media perceptions of police questions are designed to measure participants' perceptions about police, police use of force and media coverage of police and police use of force. This section includes questions such as the following: In general, do you believe the claims the media reports about police use of force are underreported, overreported or given about the right amount of attention? Other questions use Likert-scale responses. For example, participants are asked to choose if they strongly disagreed, somewhat disagreed, neither agree nor disagree, somewhat agree or strongly agree with a statement like the following: The media portrays police use of force positively. Likert-scales are also used to gauge the participants' perceptions of their opinion climate, including the media, majority of the United States and friends and family. For instance, one question is phrased as follows: The media views the police use of force the same way I do. These Likert-scales are later

collapsed to create a combined perceptions variable which includes participants' perceptions of their opinion climate encapsulating all three i.e. media opinion, majority of the United States' opinion and opinion of friends and family about police use of force- this combined perceptions variable reflects the majority opinion about the issue which is integral to spiral of silence theory (it measures the participants perceptions about whether the majority of U.S./friends and family/ the media view police use of force the same way as they do). The section wraps up by asking if the participant has ever had a negative experience with a police officer.

The next section consists of two questions (one in matrix format) and attempts to determine an individual's exposure to different perspectives in their home, school and online environment. For example, one matrix question is phrased as follows: My school environment was filled with a variety of ideas and perspectives. The other question is multiple choice and asks participants how diverse the group of people with whom they most frequently interact with is. Participants could choose from a Likert-scale ranging from not diverse to highly diverse. They also could choose "I don't know" or "prefer not to answer."

Because the spiral of silence theory relies heavily on media exposure, participants' media exposure is evaluated in-depth. Social media, news media and entertainment media are tested. First, participants are asked if they use social media and, if yes, a Likert-scale statement follows to determine if they talk about controversial topics while on social media. Then, participants are asked where they receive their news from. Options include social media, TV, radio, newspapers, online news and other. They are then asked to give more detail, such as specific stations (ABC, FOX, etc.) and



newspapers (Huffington Post, InfoWars, New York Times, other international/national/local news sources, etc.), Participants are also asked to approximate how often they are exposed to news in a typical week and how much attention they pay to news from specific news media (radio, newspapers, etc.). Additionally, because some research has shown crime entertainment shows to affect perceptions of police, exposure to that type of programming are also measured. These programs include crime reality shows, police procedurals and crime dramas. Finally, participants were also asked what type of source they considered credible regarding police use of force.

The next section collects demographic information specifically regarding the type of high school and college the participant attended. Types include public, private and certificate programs. Additionally, this section also asks if the schools are religiously affiliated. Participants are also asked if they have ever taken a civics class, as the literature on civic engagement notes that it could make a difference. Questions that capture information about whether participants have worked for a newspaper (student newspaper or other) as well the government are asked in this section as well. Examples of questions from this section are as follows: What type of college did you attend?; and Have you ever taken a civics class? Civics can include a class about government, constitutional rights and/or civilian rights and responsibilities.

Finally, the questionnaire ends with basic demographic information such as age, income, political affiliation, work status and race. Participants are also asked if they had ever worked in law enforcement or served in the military. For example, the political

affiliation question states the following: To what extent do you consider yourself a Democrat or Independent or Republican?

### **Population.**

The questionnaire was administered to a Qualtrics panel of 1,864 participants. The cleaned-up data file yields a representative sample of 905 responses. This questionnaire was administered to the panel during the month of April 2018. Table One provides a breakdown of participants by state. Forty-nine out of 50 states are represented, with South Dakota being the only state with no participants. Additionally, three participants identify as from the District of Columbia (DC) and one participant is from a location outside of the United States. Because the location questions were open-ended responses, the researcher has coded them into the appropriate category. One participant's location is unclear.

Table 1: Qualtrics panel sample details.

<b>State</b>	<b># of participants</b>
Alabama	16
Alaska	1
Arizona	17
Arkansas	14

California	58
Colorado	19
Connecticut	9
Delaware	2
Florida	73
Georgia	29

Hawaii		3
Idaho		5
Illinois		37
Indiana		26
Iowa		7
Kansas		10
Kentucky		21
Louisiana		7
Maine		8
Maryland		12
Massachusetts		10
Michigan		24
Minnesota		15
Mississippi		8
Missouri		24
Montana		3
Nebraska		5
Nevada		4
New Hampshire		7
New Jersey		18
New Mexico		6

New York		47
North Carolina		28
North Dakota		1
Ohio		56
Oklahoma		12
Oregon		10
Pennsylvania		63
Rhode Island		6
South Carolina		17
Tennessee		24
Texas		56
Utah		8
Vermont		4
Virginia		19
Washington		20
West Virginia		11
Wisconsin		17
Wyoming		2
Unclear/unknown		1
DC		3
Not in US		1

The overall sample skews white, with 84.3% identifying as White. Table 2 contains the complete race breakdown.

Table Two: Race Breakdown of Participants

<b>Race</b>	<b>Percent (%)</b>	<b># of Participants</b>
White	84.3	763
Black	7.7	70
American Indian/Alaska Native	1.3	12
Asian	2.3	21
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	0.4	4
Other	2.9	26
Prefer not to answer	1.0	9

The sample is roughly 50-50 in terms of gender. About fifty percent of participants identify as female and 49.1% identify as male. The remaining participants (less than 1%) prefer not to identify their gender. Roughly half of the sample, 51.6%, identify as being age 54 or under. Fifty-seven-point nine percent of the sample state they have either attended some college, had a two-year degree or had a four-year degree. Forty-nine-point six percent of the sample state they had taken a civics class, while 43.2% say they had not. Seven-point two percent do not remember if they had ever taken a civics class. Six percent of the sample say they had worked in law enforcement, 15.4% of the sample say they had served in the U.S. military and 9.1% of

the sample say they had worked for a newspaper. Participants are asked to identify the political party with which they most identify. Thirty-eight-point eight percent identify as Democrat, 27.5% as Independent and 33.6% as Republican. Six percent of participants identify as having worked in law enforcement. More details of findings regarding demographics are provided at the beginning of the next chapter

### **Procedures.**

Qualtrics software was used to create, design and distribute the survey. All participants took the questionnaire via their personal, internet-enabled devices. These were most likely either desktop computers, laptop computers or smartphones. Participants were able to complete the questionnaire at their convenience. The Qualtrics panel received \$5 as compensation for completing the questionnaire, which was paid out by the company. Although Qualtrics kept track of participants for compensation purposes, the data given to the researcher was anonymized. Participant confidentiality was essential to this research process, especially given the nature of the study.

Before beginning the questionnaire, participants read an informed consent. Clicking the arrow to continue signaled agreement and that they understood. After completing the questionnaire, participants read the debriefing statement. They were provided with the contact information for the researcher and her advisor in case of any concerns or questions. As of this time, no one has contacted the researcher.

The IBM SPSS Statistics program has been used to analyze survey results. Frequencies, ANOVAs and regression tests were run on various elements of the data. The results of the open-ended questions were not included in this study but will be revisited at a later time. The exception to this was the open-ended question asking

participants their location. The researcher re-coded these answers to determine if location influenced willingness to speak and perceptions. Location was not found to have an effect.

## CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

This chapter lists the results for the RQs proposed in this study. First, a brief overview of frequency breakdowns is provided, as they provide further background and context for the answers to the research questions. Then, one-way between groups analysis of variance (ANOVAs) are run here to answer RQ1 (What attitudes do people hold regarding the seriousness of police use of force as a problem?) and multiple regression models are run to answer RQ2 (What factors affect an individual's willingness to speak out about police use of force?). Frequencies are reported first.

### **Frequencies**

Participants are asked to about their personal attitudes towards police use of force in the United States and 53.3% of participants agree that police use of force is a serious problem, while only 26.5% disagree. However, 20% of participants neither agree nor disagree. Participants are also split on whether media claims about police use of force are over-reported, under-reported or given about the right amount of media attention. Thirty-seven and a half percent believe the claims are over-reported, 29.1% believe they are under-reported and 33.5% believe they are given about the right amount of media attention.

Participants are also asked about their perceptions of police use of force. Only 21% agree that the media shares the same views as them, although the results may be skewed as 35.1% of participants neither agree nor disagree with the question. Almost 44% (43.9%) disagree with that question. Most participants, 55.2%, disagree that the media portrays police use of force positively, with 17.6% agreeing and 27.2% neither

agreeing nor disagreeing. However, 32.5% of participants agree that the majority of the U.S. views police use of force the same way they do, with 22.1% disagreeing and 45.4% neither agreeing nor disagreeing. Roughly half of the participants, 52.6%, believe that their friends and family view police use of force the same way they do. Only 10.5% disagree, but 36.9% neither agree nor disagree.

Twenty-five percent of the overall sample say they experienced a negative interaction with a police officer. A race breakdown provides more detail. Although only 24.2% of Whites say they have had a negative experience, 32.9% of Blacks say they have experienced a negative interaction. Interestingly, 50% of American Indians/Alaska natives and 50% of Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islanders say they have experienced a negative interaction.

In addition to perceptions of groups, participants are asked to choose whether local, national or neither media accurately/fairly depicts police officers more. Forty-point eight percent of participants believe that neither portrays police officers more. About 28% of participants chose local media and 30.9% chose national. Frequencies are also run after breaking the sample down into selected categories, including political affiliation, working in law enforcement and working at a newspaper.

#### **Law enforcement subset demographics.**

Six percent of the sample (54 participants) identify as having worked in law enforcement. This subset skews White at 74.1%. This is followed by Blacks at 16.7%, American Indian/Alaska natives at 1.9%, Asians at 1.9% and other at 5.6%. There are no Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islanders in the law enforcement subset.



Within the subset, 35.2% identify as female, 63.3% as male and 1.9% prefer not to answer. About forty-four percent of law enforcement workers surveyed are age 54 or under and 70.4% say they have completed some college, a two-year degree or a four-year degree, while 46.3% say they have taken a civics class. About forty-one percent of the subset also say they had served in the U.S. military. About forty-one percent also identify their political affiliation as Democrat, with 37% Republican and 22.2% as Independent.

Interestingly, 50% of law enforcement workers agree that police use of force is a serious problem in the U.S, and 46.3% of workers say they have experienced a negative interaction with a police officer. However, 50% of the subset also agree that the media over-reports claims of police use force. Only 27.8% agree that the media shares the same views as them, and 61.1% disagree that the media portrays police use of force positively. Additionally, law enforcement officers split on the type of news program that accurately portrays police more. About twenty-six percent (25.9%) chose local news, 35.2% chose national news and 38.9% chose neither. Finally, 37.1% agree that the majority of the U.S. shares their views. On the other hand, 66.6% of law enforcement workers agree that their family and friends share the same views as them.

#### **Newspaper subset demographics.**

Nine percent (82 participants) identify as having worked for a newspaper. Most newspaper workers are White, resulting in a total of 80.5%. Roughly ten percent (9.8%) are Black, 1.2% are American Indian/Alaska native, 2.4% are Asian and 6.1% identify as “other.” Interestingly, 20.7% of those who have worked for a newspaper also say they have worked in law enforcement, and 15.8% have served in the U.S. military.

About 43% percent identify as female and 57% identify as male. About 54% were age 54 or under and 53.5% of newspaper workers said they had either completed some college, a two-year degree or a four-year degree, and 67.1% said they had taken a civics class. Newspaper workers also skewed Democrat at 52.4%. About 25% identified as Independent and 22% as Republican.

About 66% of newspaper workers agree that police use of force is a serious problem. Additionally, 34.1% say they have had a negative interaction or experience with a police officer. Only 31.7% believe that the media over-reports claims of police use of force; in fact, 41.5% believe the topic is given the right amount of attention. 40% also agree that the media shares the same views as them. About 48% disagree that media portray police use of force positively. Interestingly, even media workers themselves are split on which type of news program portrays police more accurately. Thirty-point five percent chose local news, 36.6% chose national news and 32.9% chose neither. However, 39.1% agree that most of the U.S. views the topic the same way they do, although 63.4% agree that their family and friends share the same views as them.

#### **Political affiliation subset demographics.**

As will be described later, ANOVAs found that political affiliation plays a large role in willingness to speak and perceptions of police use of force. Out of the entire sample, 38.8% of participants identify as Democrats, 27.5% as Independents and 33.6% as Republicans. Seventy-six-point one of Democrats identify as White, 13.9% as Black, 2% as American Indian/Alaska natives, 2.6% as Asian, 0.9% as Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, 4% as other. 0.6% prefer not to answer. Gender is not quite an even split; 51.4% are female, 47.7% male and 0.9% prefer not to answer. The majority of

Independents, 84.7%, identified as White, followed by 5.6% as Black, 1.2% as American Indian/Alaska native, 3.2% as Asian, 4% as other and 1.2% prefer not to answer. A little under half of Independents, 48.2%, are female, 51% male and 0.8% prefer not to answer. The majority of Republicans, 93.4%, identify as White, 2.3% as Black, 0.7% as American Indian/Alaska native, 1.3% as Asian, followed by 0.3% as Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, 0.7% as other and 1.3% prefer not to answer. Fifty-percent of Republicans are female, 49% are male and 1% prefer not to answer.

Republicans are the largest political affiliation to identify as having either some college, a two-year degree or a four-year degree. Sixty-one-point two percent of Republicans, 59.3% of Democrats and 51.4% of Independents fall under that category. Republicans are also the largest political affiliation to identify as having taken a civics class, with 56.5% of Republicans identifying as having taken one. Democrats are the second largest group at 49.4%. Independents are the smallest, with only 41.4% identifying as having taken a civics class.

Six-point-three percent of Democrats, 4.8% of Independents and 6.6% of Republicans state that they have worked in law enforcement. Interestingly, a larger gap exists between Democrats and Republicans regarding military service. 11.6% of Democrats state they have served in the U.S. military, while almost double that amount, 20.4%, of Republicans state that. Fourteen and a half percent of Independents also have served in the military.

Personal attitudes towards police vary greatly depending on political affiliation. While 69% of Democrats and 52.2% of Independents believe police use of force in the United States is a serious problem, only 26.5% of Republicans feel the same way.

Additionally, only 20.7% of Democrats believe the media over-reports claims about police use of force, while 57.9% of Republicans believe in the over-reporting. The Independents fall somewhat in the middle, with 36.1% believing police use of force to be over-reported by the media. However, the parties do seem to be somewhat in agreement that the media do not portray police use of force positively. Forty-seven-point one percent of Democrats, 49.9% of Independents and 69.1% of Republicans all disagree with the following statement: The media portrays police use of force positively. On the other hand, the percentages also illustrate the vast difference between the beliefs of Democrats and those of Republicans.

Perceptions of media portrayal of police use of force also varies by political affiliation, although in general all affiliations do not appear to agree with the media. While 31.2% of Democrats say that the media views police use of force the same way they do, only 13.6% of Independents and 15.1% of Republicans agree with that statement. Perceptions of the U.S. public opinion also vary, although these variances are much closer to one another. Thirty-one-point nine percent of Democrats, 26.5% of Independents and 38.1% of Republicans agree that the majority of the U.S. views police use of force the same way as them. Fifty-two-point three percent of Democrats, 43.4% of Independents and 60.5% of Republicans agree that their friends and family view police use of force the same way as they do. The following portion of this section highlights the key findings of the frequencies.

The following paragraphs summarize the above frequency findings. Overall, the sample skews White. Roughly half of the participants in the study (905) believe police use of force is a serious problem in the United States. Close to 50% of

participants believe that the media disagrees with their views, while roughly half disagree that the media portrays police use of force positively. However, half of participants do believe that their friends and family view police use of force the same way they do. The majority of participants also believe that neither local nor national media accurately depicts police.

Six percent of the sample (54 participants) identified as having worked in law enforcement. This subset also skews White. Fifty percent of law enforcement workers believe police use of force is as serious problem, and 61% disagree that the media portray police use of force positively. This is about 11% greater than the overall sample. Almost 67% also believe that their friends and family view police use of force the same way they do, which is about 17% higher than the overall sample.

Nine percent of the sample (82 participants) identified as having worked for a newspaper. This subset skews White as well. This subset is also higher when it comes to believing police use of force is a serious problem at 66%. This is roughly 16% higher than the overall sample and the law enforcement subset. This subset also shows that even the news media itself is split on which type of news program (local or national) portrays police more accurately.

The last subset is political affiliation. Democrats made up 38.8% of the overall sample, with Republicans at 33.6% and Independents at 27.%. While the majority of Democrats and Independents believe police use of force is a serious problem, only 26.5% of Republicans believe that to be true. In the next section, ANOVAs are run to examine these differences in opinion in more detail.

## ANOVAs

### **Negative experience.**

An ANOVA is conducted to explore negative experiences and interaction with police officers on perceptions of police use of force. Specifically, the question examined if participants believe police use of force is a serious problem in the U.S. Participants are divided into groups according to their response to the following question: Have you ever had a negative experience or interaction with a police officer? Participants could respond with yes, no or prefer not to answer. There is a statistically significant difference at the  $p < .05$  level for the negative experience variable:  $F(2, 902) = 13.140$ ,  $p = 0.00$ . Despite reaching statistical significance, the actual difference in mean scores between the groups is small. The effect size, calculated using eta squared, is 0.02. Post-hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicate that the mean score for those who have had a negative experience ( $M = 3.79$ ,  $SD = 1.282$ ) is significantly different than those who have not had a negative experience ( $M = 3.29$ ,  $SD = 1.271$ ). Those who preferred not to answer ( $M = 3.40$ ,  $SD = 1.170$ ) do not differ significantly from either of the previous groups. Those who identified as having a negative experience with a police officer responded more strongly than those who did not, which provides evidence that those with a negative experience are more likely to believe that police use of force is a serious problem in the U.S.

### **Age.**

ANOVAs are run to determine if age has an impact on perceptions of and attitudes towards police use of force. While no statistically significant results are found

regarding responses to use of force perceptions of majority of the U.S. and perceptions of friends and family, age is found to have an impact on several other related perceptions and attitudes.

One ANOVA examines the impact of age on the following question: The media portrays police use of force positively. There is a statistically significant difference at the  $p < .05$  level between age groups:  $F(7, 897) = 8.415, p = .05$ . The effect size, determined using eta squared, came to .06, which is a medium-sized effect. Post-hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicate that the mean score for the 18-24 age group ( $M = 2.68, SD = 1.177$ ) is significantly different than the 65-74 age group ( $M = 2.10, SD = 1.073$ ). Additionally, the 25-34 age group ( $M = 3.00, SD = 1.299$ ) is significantly different than the 35-44 age group ( $M = 2.45, SD = 1.124$ ), the 45-54 age group ( $M = 2.38, SD = 1.180$ ), the 55-64 ( $M = 2.30, SD = 1.069$ ) age group, the 65-74 ( $M = 2.10, SD = 1.073$ ) age group and the 75-84 age group ( $M = 2.03, SD = 1.028$ ). The 25-34 age group clearly responds more strongly to the ‘media portrays police use of force positively’ statement than those who are older, and the 18-24 age group responds more strongly to it than the 65-74 group implying that young people are more likely to agree that the media portrays police use of force positively than those participants who are older.

Another ANOVA looks at the relationship between age and participants’ response to the following statement: Police use of force is a serious problem in the United States. There is a statistically significant difference at the  $p < .05$  level between age groups:  $F(7, 897) = 3.937, p = .019$ . However, despite reaching statistical significance, the actual difference in mean scores between the age groups is quite small.

The effect size, calculated using eta squared, is .01. Post-hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicate that the mean scores for the 18-24 age group ( $M = 3.79$ ,  $SD = 1.155$ ) are significantly different than the mean scores for the 65-74 age group ( $M = 3.14$ ,  $SD = 1.348$ ). No other age groups are found to be significantly different. The 18-24 age group had a higher mean score than the 65-74 age group, meaning that younger participants are more likely to agree that police use of force is a serious problem in the U.S. than the older age group.

The final ANOVA that documents a statistically significant difference is in response to the following statement: The media views police use of force the same way I do. There is a statistically significant difference at the  $p < .05$  level between age groups:  $F(7, 897) = 3.217$ ,  $p = .02$ . Despite reaching statistical significance, the actual mean scores between groups are also small. The effect size, calculated using eta squared, is .02. Post-hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicate that the mean scores for the 25-34 age group ( $M = 2.94$ ,  $SD = 1.237$ ) differ significantly from the mean scores of the 65-74 age group ( $M = 2.40$ ,  $SD = 1.146$ ). The younger age group responded more strongly than the older age group, meaning that the younger group believes the media matches up with their own beliefs about police use of force.

The three previous ANOVAs suggest that age plays a role in perceptions of police use of force. There appears to be a generational age gap; millennials and Gen Z have very different perceptions than those of older generations, which includes their parents. Chapter five of this project will discuss this finding and its implications in depth.



### **Race.**

Race plays a role in perceptions of and attitudes towards police use of force, although it is smaller than anticipated. The following ANOVAs provide more detail.

An ANOVA is conducted to explore the impact of race on the combined perceptions variable (which includes the participants' perceptions about whether the majority of U.S./friends and family/ the media view police use of force the same way as they do). There is a statistically significant difference at the  $p = .05$  level between the different racial groups:  $F(6, 898) = 3.808, p = .001$ . However, the actual difference in mean scores between groups is quite small. The effect size, calculated using eta squared, is .0248. Post-hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicate that there is a significant difference between Native Hawaiians/Pacific Islanders ( $M = 4.4167, SD = .78764$ ) and the following groups: Whites ( $M = 3.0887, SD = .75883$ ), Blacks ( $M = 3.1143, SD = .93919$ ), American Indians/Alaska natives ( $M = 2.6667, SD = 1.14592$ ) and those who identify their race as "other" ( $M = 2.9744, SD = .88906$ ). Additionally, the mean scores of American Indians/Alaska natives are also significantly different than those of Asians ( $M = 3.5397, SD = .71861$ ). These results suggest that Native Hawaiians/Pacific Islanders perceive their opinion environment differently than the other racial groups. Additionally, American Indians hold very different perceptions of their opinion climate than Asians.

The impact of race on whether the media portrays police use of force positively is also examined through an ANOVA. Participants are divided into groups based on their race. There is a statistically significant difference at the  $p < .05$  level between different racial groups:  $F(6, 898) = 6.205, p = .000$ . Despite reaching statistical

significant, the actual mean scores between the groups are quite small. The effect size, calculated using eta squared, is .039. Post-hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicate that the mean scores for Whites ( $M = 2.33$ ,  $SD = 1.1450$ ) are significantly different than the mean scores of Asians ( $M = 3.29$ ,  $SD = .902$ ) and Native Hawaiians/Pacific Islanders ( $M = 4.50$ ,  $SD = 1$ ). Additionally, the mean scores for Blacks ( $M = 2.70$ ,  $SD = 1.208$ ) are significantly different from those of Native Hawaiians/Pacific Islanders. Asians and Native Hawaiians/Pacific Islanders responded more strongly than Whites to this statement, meaning that Asians were more likely to agree that the media portrays police use of force positively when compared to Whites. Additionally, Native Hawaiians/Pacific Islanders also responded more strongly to this statement when compared to Blacks, meaning that they were more likely than Blacks to agree that the media portrays police use of force positively. Taken together, these findings imply that both Blacks and Whites are less likely to believe that the media portrays police use of force positively.

Another ANOVA examines the impact of race on whether participants believe police use of force is a serious problem in the United States. There is a statistically significant difference at the  $p < .05$  level between Blacks and Whites:  $F(6, 898) = 4.759$ ,  $p = .000$ . The effect size, calculated using eta squared, is small at .030. Post-hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD show that the mean scores for Whites ( $M = 3.33$ ,  $SD = 1.283$ ) are significantly different than those of Blacks ( $M = 3.96$ ,  $SD = 1.173$ ). These results suggest that Blacks are more likely than Whites to believe police use of force is a serious problem in the U.S.

An additional ANOVA is run to explore the relationship between race and whether participants believe their friends and family view police use of force the same way they do. There is a statistically significant difference at the  $p < .05$  level between the different races:  $F(6, 898) = 2.202, p = .041$ . However, despite reaching statistical significance, the actual mean scores between groups are small. The effect size, calculated using eta squared, is .014. Post-hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD indicate that the mean scores for American Indians/Alaska natives ( $M = 2.83, SD = 1.267$ ) are significantly different than the mean scores of Native Hawaiians/Pacific Islanders ( $M = 4.75, SD = .250$ ). Native Hawaiians/Pacific Islanders responded more strongly to this statement, meaning that they were more likely to agree that their friends and family's views of police use of force matched up with theirs.

A final ANOVA examines the impact of race on participants' perceptions of whether the media view police use of force the same way they do. There is a statistically significant difference at the  $p < .05$  level between the racial groups:  $F(6, 898) = 5.137, p = .000$ . However, the actual difference between mean scores is rather small. The effect size, calculated using eta squared, is .0331. Post-hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicate that the mean scores for Whites ( $M = 2.87, SD = 1.145$ ) are significantly different than the scores for Asians ( $M = 3.67, SD = .966$ ) and Native Hawaiians/Pacific Islanders ( $M = 4.50, SD = 1.000$ ). Additionally, the mean scores for Blacks ( $M = 2.76, SD = 1.290$ ) are significantly different than the scores for Asians. The mean scores for Asians are also significantly different than the scores for those who identify as "other" ( $M = 2.50, SD = 1.241$ ). Finally, the scores for Native Hawaiians/Pacific Islanders are significantly different than those of the "other" category

as well. These results mean several different things. Firstly, American Indians/Alaska natives, Asians and Native Hawaiians/Pacific Islanders responded more strongly to this statement, which suggests that they are more likely than Whites to agree that the media views police use of force the same way they do. Additionally, Asians responded more strongly than Blacks and thus were more likely to agree that their views matched up with the views of the media than Blacks. Interestingly, those in the “other” group were more likely than Native Hawaiians/Pacific Islanders and Asians to also agree that the media views police use of force the same way they do.

These findings illustrate that race plays a role in perceptions of and attitudes towards police use of force. However, these findings also suggest that the tension between law enforcement and the Black community may be overshadowing the issues other minorities face with law enforcement. However, the racial makeup of the sample might be affecting the results, as it skewed White. This issue is discussed further in Chapter Five.

### **Gender.**

Gender is found to be somewhat statistically significant. An ANOVA is run to explore the impact of gender on the following question: The media portrays police use of force positively. Male, female and prefer not to answer make up the three response groups. There is a statistically significant difference at the  $p < .05$  level between males and females:  $F(2, 902) = 7.285, p = .001$ . However, despite reaching statistical significance, the actual difference in mean scores between groups is quite small. The effect size, calculated using eta squared, is 0.01584. Post-hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD illustrate that the mean score for females ( $M = 2.31, SD = 1.100$ ) is

significantly different than males ( $M = 2.50, SD = 1.220$ ). Males responded more strongly to this statement than females, meaning that males were more likely to agree that the media portrays police use of force positively than females.

Another ANOVA, which uses the same response groups, examines the impact of gender on perceptions of whether the media shares the participants' views. There is a statistically significant difference at the  $p < .05$  level between males and females:  $F = (2, 902) = 3.679, p = .026$ . However, like the previous ANOVA, the effect size is very small. Calculated using eta squared, the result is .008. Post-hoc *comparisons* however do not reveal any significant difference between groups for this result.

#### **Civics class.**

ANOVAs are conducted on several variables to determine if taking a civics class significantly affects a participant's perceptions about police use of force. While the ANOVAs find some significant differences, the effect sizes were small.

The first ANOVA with a significant result shows that taking a civics class impacts the participant's answer to the following statement: The media portrays police use of force positively. There is a statistically significant difference at the  $p < .05$  level between those who have taken a civics class and those who have not:  $F = (2, 902) = 16.351, p = .00$ . As previously noted, however, the effect size calculated using eta square is small: .034. Post-hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD highlight that the mean score for those who have taken a class ( $M = 2.20, SD = 1.157$ ) are significantly different than those who have not taken a civics class ( $M = 2.59, SD = 1.129$ ). This finding suggests that those who had not taken a civics class responded more strongly to

the statement than those who had taken a civics class. Those who had not taken a civics class are more likely to agree that the media portrays police use of force positively.

The second ANOVA documents a significant impact of civics class on a participant's response to the following statement: My friends and family view police use of force the same way I do. There is a statistically significant difference at the  $p < .05$  level between those who have taken a class and those who have not:  $F(2, 902) = 4.436, p = .012$ . The effect size, calculated using eta squared is .0097. Post-hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD indicate that the mean score for those who have taken a civics class ( $M = 3.67, SD = 1.005$ ) differs significantly from those who did not have taken a civics class ( $M = 3.48, SD = .958$ ). Those who had taken a civics class responded more strongly than those who had not, meaning that taking a civics class makes people more likely to agree that their friends and family view police use of force the same way they do. This also supports the idea that people surround themselves with those who think the same way they do.

The final ANOVA with statistically significant results studies the impact of a civics class on participants' response to the following statement: The media views police use of force the same way I do. There is a statistically significant difference at the  $p < .05$  level between the two groups:  $F(2, 902) = 10.986, p = .0237$ . The effect size is calculated using eta squared and is .0238. Post-hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD indicate that the mean score for those who have taken a civics class ( $M = 2.44, SD = 1.182$ ) is significantly lower than those who have not taken a civics class ( $M = 2.79, SD = 1.120$ ). This finding suggests that those who had not taken a civics class respond more strongly to this statement than those who had taken a civics class. Those who had not

taken a civics class are more likely to agree that the media portrays police use of force the same way they do.

Taken together, these findings suggest that taking a civics class makes a difference in how people perceive their surroundings. It is possible that taking a civics class makes people more aware of the nuances of media coverage and what may be influencing the reporting. Because of this knowledge, they may have more tempered opinions and consider the larger context more than those who have not taken a civics class.

### **Law enforcement/newspaper careers & perceptions.**

Several ANOVAs examine the impact of working in law enforcement or at a newspaper on the combined perceptions variable. The variable is computed using three survey statements that participants are asked to respond to: 1) The media views police use of force the same way I do, 2) The majority of the U.S. views police use of force the same way I do and 3) My friends and family view police use of force the same way I do.

An ANOVA is run to explore the relationship between working at a newspaper and perceptions of police use of force. There is a statistically significant difference at the  $p < .05$  level between those who have worked for a newspaper and those who have not worked for a newspaper:  $F(2, 902) = 9.120, p = .000$ . However, despite reaching statistical significance, the difference between mean scores is quite small. The effect size, calculated using eta squared, is only 0.019. Post-hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicate that the mean score for those who have worked in a newspaper ( $M = 3.4266, SD = .88622$ ) is significantly higher than the mean scores of those who had not

worked at a newspaper ( $M = 3.0567$ ,  $SD = .76468$ ). Those who identified as having worked for a newspaper are more likely to agree that their opinion climate is full of people who agree with them than those who do not work for a newspaper.

Interestingly, an ANOVA does not find significant differences between the perceptions of those who have worked in law enforcement and those who have not. Taken together, it appears that these results support the idea that being involved in the production of media influences perceptions, while simply paying attention to the media does not.

### **Income.**

An ANOVA is conducted to explore the impact of income on the combined perceptions variable. There is a statistically significant difference at the  $p < .05$  level between income groups:  $F(12, 892) = 1.886$ ,  $p = .033$ . However, despite reaching statistical significance, the actual difference between mean scores is quite small. The effect size, calculated using eta squared, is 0.0247. Post-hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicate that there is a significant difference between the mean score of those who make more than \$150,000 ( $M = 3.5495$ ,  $SD = .96933$ ) and those who fall into the following income groups: \$30,000-39,999 ( $M = 3.0522$ ,  $SD = .74874$ ); \$40,000-49,999 ( $M = 3.000$ ,  $SD = .68622$ ); and \$50,000-59,999 ( $M = 3.000$ ,  $SD = .72604$ ). Those who made more than \$150,000 responded more strongly to the combined perceptions variable than the other groups, implying that they were more likely to believe that the surrounding opinion climate matched up with their beliefs. These results imply that there is a large disparity in perceptions of opinion climate between the middle class and the extremely wealthy.



### **Political affiliation.**

The ANOVAs detailed here find significant results for political affiliation. Participants are divided into three groups based on political affiliation: Democrat, Independent and Republican.

Political affiliation is found to be statistically significant on perceptions at the  $p < .05$  level between the party affiliations:  $F(2, 902) = 7.649, p = .001$ . However, despite reaching statistical significance, the actual difference between mean scores is rather small. The effect size, calculated using eta squared, is .016. Post-hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicate that a significant difference exists between the mean scores of Democrats ( $M = 3.2150, SD = .83577$ ) and Independents ( $M = 2.9665, SD = .04826$ ). Democrats also differ significantly from Republicans ( $M = 3.0658, SD = .74268$ ). Interestingly, the scores between Independents and Republicans are not significantly different. This supports the idea that Democrats perceive their opinion climate differently than Republicans and Democrats. Interestingly, however, Republicans and Independents do not appear to be different from each other in their perceptions regarding their opinion climates.

An ANOVA is run to explore the relationship between political affiliation and the participant's response to a statement stating that the media portray police use of force positively. There is a statistically significant difference at the  $p < .05$  level between the three groups:  $F(2, 902) = 15.141, p = .00$ . However, the effect size, calculated using eta squared, is rather small: .032. Post-hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicate that the mean score for Democrats ( $M = 2.63, SD = 1.134$ ) is significantly different than the mean score for Republicans ( $M = 2.14, SD = 1.141$ ). The

mean score for Independents ( $M = 2.43$ ,  $SD = 1.190$ ) also differs significantly from Republicans. Democrats are responding more strongly to this statement than Republicans, meaning that they are more likely to agree that the media portrays use of force positively. Additionally, Independents are also more likely to agree with this statement than Republicans. Together, these findings suggest that Republicans are much more likely to disagree that the media portrays police use of force positively than the other two political affiliations.

Another ANOVA examines the relationship between political affiliation and participants' response to the following statement: Police use of force is a serious problem in the United States. There is a statistically significant difference at the  $p < .05$  level between the three groups:  $F(2, 902) = 47.573$ ,  $p = .00$ . The actual difference in mean scores is also large; the effect size, calculated using eta squared, came to .09. Post-hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicate that the mean score for Democrats ( $M = 3.86$ ,  $SD = 1.124$ ) is significantly different than both the scores for Independents ( $M = 3.40$ ,  $SD = 1.273$ ) and Republicans ( $M = 2.93$ ,  $SD = 1.287$ ). Additionally, there is a significant difference in scores between Independents and Republicans. Democrats responded more strongly to this statement than Independents or Republicans, meaning they were more likely to agree that police use of force is a serious problem in the U.S. However, Independents were also more likely than Republicans to agree that police use of force is a serious problem. Overall, Republicans are less likely to believe police use of force is a serious problem than the other two political affiliations.

The next ANOVA explores the impact of political affiliation on responses to the following statement: My friends and family view police use of force the same way I do. There is a statistically significant difference at the  $p < .05$  level between the three political affiliation:  $F(2, 902) = 8.415, p = .00$ . However, the effect size, calculated using eta squared, is small at .018. Post-hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicate that the mean score for Democrats ( $M = 3.54, SD = 1.006$ ) is significantly different than those of Republicans ( $M = 3.75, SD = .935$ ). Additionally, the mean score for Independents ( $M = 3.41, SD = 1.004$ ) is significantly different than that of Republicans. Republicans responded more strongly to this statement as compared to Democrats and Independents, meaning that Republicans are more likely to believe their friends and family view police use of force the same way they do. This suggests that Republicans are more likely to surround themselves with people who think the same way they do.

An additional ANOVA explores the relationship between political affiliation and participants' perceptions of the media; specifically, the statement participants are asked to respond to is: The media views police use of force the same way I do. There is a statistically significant difference at the  $p < .05$  level between the three groups:  $F(2, 902) = 51.329, p = .00$ . The effect is medium sized. Calculated using eta squared, it is .082. Pos-hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicate the mean score for Democrats ( $M = 3.02, SD = 1.119$ ) differs significantly from that of Independents ( $M = 2.49, SD = 1.048$ ). Additionally, Democrats also differ significantly from Republicans ( $M = 2.25, SD = 1.182$ ). Finally, Independents are also significantly different than those of Republicans. Democrats responded to this statement more strongly as compared to

Republicans and Independents, meaning that Democrats are more likely to agree that the media views police use of force the same way they do. However, Independents also respond more strongly to this statement when compared to Republicans, meaning that Independents are also more likely to believe the media matches their views than Republicans. Taken together, these findings suggest that perceptions of media portrayal of police use of force differ based on political affiliation. Democrats and Independents tend to hold the same views as the media, while Republicans do not. This somewhat supports the idea that the media holds a liberal bias.

One ANOVA is borderline and documents a slight difference in scores between Republicans ( $M = 3.20$ ,  $SD = 1.022$ ) and Independents ( $M = 3.00$ ,  $SD = 1.002$ ) regarding the following statement: The majority of the U.S. views police use of force the same way I do. However, the effect size is non-existent at 0.00 when calculated using eta squared. Republicans respond more strongly to this statement than Independents, meaning that they are more likely to agree that the majority of the U.S. views police use of force the same way they do. However, because the effect size is so small, these results overall do not mean much.

Overall, these results show that political affiliation is influential when it comes to peoples' perceptions of their opinion climate. It also suggests that Republicans hold different beliefs and perceptions than Democrats and, at times, Independents. While not necessarily a surprising finding, it is one of importance. It suggests that Republicans are more likely to surround themselves with people who think the same way as them. It also suggests that Republicans believe police use of force is overblown as a problem.

**Location.**

An ANOVA is conducted to explore the impact of location of the participant and their perceptions of the media's portrayal of police use of force. No statistical significance is found between the regions of the U.S.: Northeast, Midwest, South and West. While a significant difference is detected between the four regions and those who identified as coming from an "other" location, only two participants fall into that category. Thus, the small sample size may account for the significant difference. Overall, it appears that location does not make a difference in determining the perceptions people hold.

To summarize the ANOVA findings, there are multiple factors that increase the likelihood of an individual believing police use of force is a serious problem in the U.S. People who have had a negative experience with a police officer, those who are younger and those who are Black are all more likely to agree. Younger people are also more likely to say that their views match up with the media's; interestingly, however, both Blacks and Whites are less likely to say that the media portrays police use of force positively when compared to other racial groups, although the sample makeup may account for this difference.

Taking a civics class and income can affect one's perceptions of the opinion climate. Additionally, political affiliation is found to be influential in perceptions. The ANOVA results confirm what is first observed in the frequencies. Republicans are more likely to disagree that the media portrays police use of force positively and are also less likely to say that police use of force is a serious problem when compared to Democrats

and Independents. These results are expanded upon in the next section, which details the regression results.

### Regressions

Multiple linear regression analysis is used to assess the ability of CA, diversity, media exposure, type of college, level of education, working in law enforcement, gender, age, race, political affiliation, the combined perceptions variable and participants' response to the statement saying police use of force is a serious problem to predict participants' willingness to speak. The willingness to speak scenario has been created using the modified train (plane) test and has several variations. The two main variations are friend and stranger. The gender and race of the friend and stranger are then varied. The following table provides the model number of the regression, the variable name and a description of the conversation partner the partner was asked to imagine themselves in conversation with.

Table 3: Regression Models

Model #	Variable	Description of Conversation Partner
1	TT_friend	Close friend
2	TT.friend.male	Male close friend
3	TT.friend.female	Female close friend
4	Black.TT.friend	Black close friend
5	White.TT.friend	White close friend
6	TT_stranger	Stranger
7	TT.stranger.male	Male stranger
8	TT.stranger.female	Female stranger
9	Black.TT.stranger	Black stranger
10	White.TT.stranger	White stranger

A combination of regression and ANOVAs are used to answer RQ2 which asks: What factors, if any, affect an individual's willingness to speak out about police use of force? First, all the regression results are discussed here and then the ANOVA results are discussed.

### **Friend train test.**

Preliminary analyses are first conducted to ensure no violation of the assumptions of normality, linearity, multicollinearity and homoscedasticity for all the regression models run.

In the first multiple regression model for this study, the variables- communication apprehension, diversity exposure, media exposure, type of college, highest level of education, 'have you ever worked in law enforcement,' age, gender, race, political affiliation, one's own perceptions about police use of force being a serious problem and the combined perceptions about police use- are used to predict participants' willingness to speak with a friend on a plane. The total variance explained by the model as a whole is 21.8%,  $F(12, 892) = 20.733, p < .001$ . In this model, communication apprehension has a significant negative relationship with willingness to speak with a friend ( $B = -.251, p < 0.001$ ), diversity exposure ( $B = .237, p < 0.001$ ) and media exposure both have a positive relationship with it ( $B = .071, P < 0.05$ ), gender has a negative relationship with willingness to speak with a friend ( $B = -.067, P < 0.05$ ) implying women are more willing to speak with friends about this than men, perceptions about police use of force being a serious problem ( $B = .078, P < 0.05$ ) and combined perceptions about police use of force

( $B=.074$ ,  $P<0.05$ ) both have a positive association with willingness to speak with a friend.

Table 4: Regression Model 1

*OLS regression results with TT\_friend (as DV)*

Predictor	Standardized Beta coefficient	SE
CA	-.251***	(.370)
Diversity	.237***	(.001)
Media Exposure	.071*	(.033)
Highest Level of Education	.003	(.020)
Working in Law Enforcement	-.011	(.114)
Age	-.023	(.017)
Gender	-.067*	(.053)
Race	-.044	(.024)
Political Affiliation	-.017	(.015)
Police Use of Force is a Serious Problem	.078*	(.023)
Combined Perceptions	.074*	(.037)
Constant	—	(.370)
F (degrees of freedom)	20.733*** (12, 892)	
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.208	
N	905	

Note- Entries are standardized regression coefficients and standard errors. \*  $p<.05$ ; \*\*  $p<.01$ , \*\*\*  $p<.001$

In the second model, the same analysis as above is re-run but this time the dependent variable is changed to willingness to speak with a male friend (to incorporate



the gender component). The total variance explained by the model as a whole is 18.4%,  $F(12, 892) = 16.758, p < .001$ . In this model, communication apprehension again has a significant negative relationship with willingness to speak with a male friend ( $B = -.231, p < 0.001$ ), diversity exposure ( $B = .219, p < 0.001$ ) has a positive relationship with it but, unlike in model 1, media exposure's relationship is not significant. Gender still has a negative relationship with willingness to speak with a male friend ( $B = -.061, P = 0.05$ ) implying females are more willing to speak with male friends about this than men. Also, perceptions about police use of force being a serious problem ( $B = .077, P < 0.05$ ) has a positive association with willingness to speak with a male friend while combined perceptions about police use of force still has a positive sign but narrowly misses significance ( $B = .064, P = 0.054$ ).

Table 5: Regression Model 2

*OLS regression results with TT.friend.male (as DV)*

Predictor	Standardized Beta coefficient	SE
CA	-.231***	(.002)
Diversity	.219***	(.042)
Media Exposure	.056	(.038)
Highest Level of Education	-.009	(.023)
Working in Law Enforcement	-.020	(.130)
Age	.001	(.019)
Gender	-.061*	(.060)
Race	-.054	(.027)
Political Affiliation	-.021	(.017)
Police Use of Force is a Serious Problem	.077*	(.026)
Combined Perceptions	.064	(.042)
Constant	—	(.419)
F (degrees of freedom)	16.758*** (12, 892)	
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.173	
N	905	

Note- Entries are standardized regression coefficients and standard errors. \*p<.05;

\*\*p<.01, \*\*\*p<.001

In model 3, the same variables used as predictors in models 1 and 2 are again used to predict participants' willingness to speak this time with a female friend on a plane. The total variance explained by the model as a whole is 19.5%,  $F(12, 892) = 18.040$ ,  $p < .001$ . In this model, communication apprehension again has a significant negative relationship with willingness to speak with a female friend ( $B = -.212$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), diversity exposure ( $B = .234$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) has a positive relationship with it and

media exposure's relationship is not significant. Gender still has a negative relationship with willingness to speak with a female friend ( $B = -.104$ ,  $P < 0.01$ ) implying females are more willing to speak with female friends about this than males. Also, perceptions about police use of force being a serious problem ( $B = .098$ ,  $P < 0.01$ ) has a positive association with willingness to speak with a female friend while combined perceptions about police use of force still has a positive sign but narrowly misses significance ( $B = .065$ ,  $P = 0.052$ ).

Table 6: Regression Model 3

*OLS regression results with TT.friend.female (as DV)*

Predictor	Standardized Beta coefficient	SE
CA	-.212***	(.002)
Diversity	.234***	(.042)
Media Exposure	.055	(.038)
Highest Level of Education	-.004	(.023)
Working in Law Enforcement	-.012	(.131)
Age	-.005	(.019)
Gender	-.104**	(.061)
Race	-.051	(.027)
Political Affiliation	-.026	(.018)
Police Use of Force is a Serious Problem	.098**	(.027)
Combined Perceptions	.065	(.042)
Constant	—	(.422)
F (degrees of freedom)	18.040*** (12, 892)	
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.184	
N	905	

Note- Entries are standardized regression coefficients and standard errors. \* p<.05;

\*\* p<.01, \*\*\* p<.001

In model 4, where the variables- communication apprehension, diversity exposure, media exposure, type of college, highest level of education, ‘have you ever worked in law enforcement,’ age, gender, race, political affiliation, one’s own perceptions about police use of force being a serious problem and the combined perceptions about police use- are used to predict participants’ willingness to speak with a Black friend on a plane. The total variance explained by the model as a whole is

18.8%,  $F(12, 892) = 17.260$ ,  $p < .001$ ). In this model, communication apprehension has a significant negative relationship with willingness to speak with a Black friend ( $B = -.224$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) while diversity exposure ( $B = .213$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) has a positive relationship with it, gender has a negative relationship with willingness to speak with a Black friend ( $B = -.088$ ,  $P < 0.01$ ) implying females are more willing to speak with Black friends about this than males and perceptions about police use of force being a serious problem ( $B = .111$ ,  $P < 0.05$ ) has a positive association with it. However, combined perceptions about police use of force does not have a significant relationship with willingness to speak with a Black friend.

Table 7: Regression Model 4

*OLS regression results with Black\_TT\_friend (as DV)*

Predictor	Standardized Beta coefficient	SE
CA	-.224***	(.002)
Diversity	.213***	(.045)
Media Exposure	.048	(.040)
Highest Level of Education	-.001	(.024)
Working in Law Enforcement	-.006	(.138)
Age	-.027	(.020)
Gender	-.088**	(.064)
Race	-.037	(.028)
Political Affiliation	-.047	(.019)
Police Use of Force is a Serious Problem	.111*	(.028)
Combined Perceptions	.057	(.045)
Constant	—	(.445)
F (degrees of freedom)	17.260*** (12, 892)	
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.178	
N	905	

Note- Entries are standardized regression coefficients and standard errors. \*p<.05;

\*\*p<.01, \*\*\*p<.001

In model 5, the above predictor variables are again used to predict participants' willingness to speak with a White friend on a plane. The total variance explained by the model as a whole is 16.5%,  $F(12, 892) = 17.260$ ,  $p < .001$ . In this model, communication apprehension has a significant negative relationship with willingness to speak with a White friend ( $B = -.207$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) while diversity exposure ( $B = .229$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) has a positive relationship with it and gender still has a negative relationship

with willingness to speak with a White friend ( $B=-.074$ ,  $P<0.05$ ) implying females are more willing to speak with White friends about this than males. Unlike previous models, perceptions about police use of force being a serious problem ( $B=.111$ ,  $P<0.05$ ) does not have a significant association with it, although combined perceptions about police use of force does have a positive significant relationship with willingness to speak with a White friend ( $B=.070$ ,  $P<0.05$ ) implying the more one feels their own opinion on the issue matches with the combined perceptions about it in their environment the more likely they are to speak out in the presence of a White friend. Also, race for the first time in these models has a negative significant relationship with the willingness to speak with a White friend ( $B=-.066$ ,  $P<0.05$ ) implying that Whites are more likely to speak about it with White friends than minorities are.

Table 8: Regression Model 5

*OLS regression results with White.TT.friend (as DV)*

Predictor	Standardized Beta coefficient	SE
CA	-.207***	(.002)
Diversity	.229***	(.042)
Media Exposure	.060	(.038)
Highest Level of Education	-.011	(.023)
Working in Law Enforcement	-.001	(.130)
Age	.026	(.019)
Gender	-.074*	(.060)
Race	-.066*	(.027)
Political Affiliation	.002	(.018)
Police Use of Force is a Serious Problem	.058	(.026)
Combined Perceptions	.070*	(.042)
Constant	—	(.421)
F (degrees of freedom)	17.260*** (12, 892)	
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.165	
N	905	

Note- Entries are standardized regression coefficients and standard errors. \*p<.05;

\*\*p<.01, \*\*\*p<.001

### **Stranger train test.**

The above set of models are then again re-run in model 6, using the same variables as predictors but the dependent variable instead is willingness to speak with a stranger. Preliminary analyses are conducted again to ensure no violation of the assumptions of normality, linearity, multicollinearity and homoscedasticity happen. After entry of the variables, the total variance explained by the model as a whole is



28.4%,  $F(12, 892) = 30.911, p < .001$ . In this model, communication apprehension again has a significant negative relationship with willingness to speak with a stranger ( $B = -.337, p < 0.001$ ) while diversity exposure ( $B = .257, p < 0.001$ ) has a positive relationship with it, age has a negative relationship with willingness to speak with a stranger ( $B = -.078, P < 0.01$ ) implying older people are less willing to speak with strangers about this than younger people, one's own perceptions about police use of force being a serious problem is not significant any more as a predictor but combined perceptions of others about police use of force does have a positive significant relationship with willingness to speak with a stranger ( $B = .101, P < 0.01$ ).

Table 9: Regression Model 6

*OLS regression results with TT\_stranger (as DV)*

Predictor	Standardized Beta coefficient	SE
CA	-.337***	(.001)
Diversity	.257***	(.038)
Media Exposure	.057	(.034)
Highest Level of Education	-.058	(.020)
Working in Law Enforcement	-.028	(.116)
Age	-.078**	(.017)
Gender	-.002	(.054)
Race	-.013	(.024)
Political Affiliation	-.007	(.016)
Police Use of Force is a Serious Problem	.055	(.024)
Combined Perceptions	.101**	(.038)
Constant	—	(.445)
F (degrees of freedom)	30.911*** (12, 892)	
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.284	
N	905	

Note- Entries are standardized regression coefficients and standard errors. \*p<.05;

\*\*p<.01, \*\*\*p<.001

The same variables are then used in model 7 to predict participants' willingness to speak with a male stranger on a plane. After entry of the variables, the total variance explained by the model as a whole is 26.1%,  $F = 24.453$ ,  $p < .01$ . In this model, communication apprehension again has a significant negative relationship with willingness to speak with a male stranger ( $B = -.344$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) while diversity exposure ( $B = .234$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) has a positive relationship with it and age again has a negative

relationship with willingness to speak with a male stranger ( $B=-.060$ ,  $P<0.05$ ), implying older people are less willing to speak with male strangers about this than younger people. However, one's own perceptions about police use of force being a serious problem is not significant any more as a predictor but combined perceptions of others about police use of force still does have a positive significant relationship with willingness to speak with a male stranger ( $B=.091$ ,  $P<0.01$ ). Another predictor that is significant for the first time in all these models and has a negative relationship with willingness to speak with male strangers is highest level of education ( $B=-.075$ ,  $p<0.05$ ).

Table 10: Regression Model 7

*OLS regression results with TT\_stranger.male (as DV)*

Predictor	Standardized Beta coefficient	SE
CA	-.344***	(.001)
Diversity	.234***	(.038)
Media Exposure	.043	(.034)
Highest Level of Education	-.075*	(.020)
Working in Law Enforcement	-.032	(.116)
Age	-.060*	(.017)
Gender	-.018	(.054)
Race	-.025	(.024)
Political Affiliation	-.015	(.016)
Police Use of Force is a Serious Problem	.049	(.024)
Combined Perceptions	.091**	(.038)
Constant	—	(.445)
F (degrees of freedom)	24.453** (12, 892)	
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.261	
N	905	

Note- Entries are standardized regression coefficients and standard errors. \*p<.05;

\*\*p<.01, \*\*\*p<.001

In model 8, the above relationships between the same predictors are again run this time with willingness to speak with female strangers being used as the dependent variable. In this model, 24.7% of the variance in the dependent variable is explained by the predictors,  $F = 24.338$ ,  $p < .01$ . In this model, communication apprehension again has a significant negative relationship with willingness to speak with a female stranger ( $B = -.298$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) while diversity exposure ( $B = .241$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) has a positive

relationship with it, age again has a negative relationship with willingness to speak with a female stranger ( $B=-.064$ ,  $P<0.05$ ) implying older people are less willing to speak with female strangers about this than younger people, one's own perceptions about police use of force being a serious problem is a positive significant predictor ( $B=.090$ ,  $P<0.01$ ) as is the combined perceptions of others about police use of force variable ( $B=.081$ ,  $P<0.05$ ).

Table 11: Regression Model 8

*OLS regression results with TT\_stranger.female (as DV)*

Predictor	Standardized Beta coefficient	SE
CA	-.298***	(.002)
Diversity	.241***	(.044)
Media Exposure	.040	(.039)
Highest Level of Education	-.056	(.024)
Working in Law Enforcement	-.009	(.135)
Age	-.064*	(.020)
Gender	-.053	(.063)
Race	-.012	(.028)
Political Affiliation	-.022	(.018)
Police Use of Force is a Serious Problem	.090**	(.028)
Combined Perceptions	.081*	(.044)
Constant	—	(.437)
F (degrees of freedom)	24.338** (12, 892)	
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.237	
N	905	

Note- Entries are standardized regression coefficients and standard errors.

\*p<.05; \*\*p<.01, \*\*\*p<.001

In model 9, the above same variables are now used to predict participants' willingness to speak with a Black stranger on a plane. After entry of the variables, the total variance explained by the model as a whole is 25.2%,  $F(12, 892) = 25.018$ ,  $p < .001$ . In this model, communication apprehension again has a significant negative relationship with willingness to speak with a Black stranger ( $B = -.311$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) while

diversity exposure ( $B=.221$ ,  $p<0.001$ ) has a positive relationship with it and age again has a negative relationship with willingness to speak with a Black stranger ( $B=-.095$ ,  $P<0.01$ ), implying older people are less willing to speak with female strangers about this than younger people. Like previous models, one's own perceptions about police use of force being a serious problem is a positive significant predictor ( $B=.105$ ,  $P<0.01$ ) as is the combined perceptions of others about police use of force variable ( $B=.080$ ,  $P<0.05$ ).

Table 12: Regression Model 9

*OLS regression results with Black\_TT\_stranger (as DV)*

Predictor	Standardized Beta coefficient	SE
CA	-.311***	(.002)
Diversity	.221***	(.047)
Media Exposure	.026	(.042)
Highest Level of Education	-.056	(.026)
Working in Law Enforcement	-.018	(.146)
Age	-.095**	(.021)
Gender	-.018	(.068)
Race	.012	(.030)
Political Affiliation	-.053	(.020)
Police Use of Force is a Serious Problem	.105**	(.030)
Combined Perceptions	.080*	(.047)
Constant	—	(.470)
F (degrees of freedom)	25.018** (12, 892)	
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.242	
N	905	

Note- Entries are standardized regression coefficients and standard errors. \*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$

In model 10, the same variables are now used to predict participants' willingness to speak with a Caucasian stranger on a plane. After entry of the variables, the total variance explained by the model as a whole is 24.2%,  $F(12, 892) = 23.985, p < .05$ . In this model, communication apprehension again has a significant negative relationship with willingness to speak with a Caucasian stranger ( $B = -.311, p < 0.001$ ) while diversity exposure ( $B = .240, p < 0.001$ ) has a positive relationship with it and highest level of



education has a negative relationship with willingness to speak with a Caucasian stranger ( $B=-.072$ ,  $P<0.01$ ) implying more educated people are less willing to speak with Caucasian strangers about this than less educated people. Unlike other models, one's own perceptions about police use of force being a serious problem is not a significant predictor in this model, but the combined perceptions of others about police use of force variable has a significant positive relationship with willingness to speak with a Caucasian stranger ( $B=.087$ ,  $P<0.05$ ).

Table 13: Regression Model 10

*OLS regression results with White\_TT\_stranger (as DV)*

Predictor	Standardized Beta coefficient	SE
CA	-.311***	(.002)
Diversity	.240***	(.044)
Media Exposure	.056	(.039)
Highest Level of Education	-.072**	(.024)
Working in Law Enforcement	-.023	(.135)
Age	-.022	(.020)
Gender	-.015	(.063)
Race	.050	(.028)
Political Affiliation	.019	(.018)
Police Use of Force is a Serious Problem	.026	(.027)
Combined Perceptions	.087*	(.044)
Constant	—	(.437)
F (degrees of freedom)	23.985*** (12, 892)	
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.234	
N	905	

Note- Entries are standardized regression coefficients and standard errors. \*p<.05;

\*\*p<.01, \*\*\*p<.001

Although the ANOVAs showed that race, age, previous negative experience with a police officer and political affiliation are influential in determining attitudes towards police use of force, the regressions show that none of those factors are very influential in determining willingness to speak. Rather, an individual's level of communication apprehension is usually the largest factor and is closely followed by

diversity exposure in influencing willingness to speak. While race does become influential in some of the later regressions, it is still a minor predictor when compared to communication apprehension and diversity exposure- race only becomes a significant predictor during the talking to a White friend train test (with Whites more likely to speak out when speaking with White friends vis-à-vis non-Whites). Perceptions of police use of force however is a strong positive predictor in determining willingness to speak in multiple contexts as is the combined perceptions variable. Gender too plays a role in determining police use of force in the case of the friend train test (with being female increasing the willingness to speak in multiple contexts) while age plays a role in determining willingness to speak in the stranger train tests (with being older reducing the willingness to speak in multiple contexts). The level of education also has a negative effect on willingness to speak with strangers but only for the train tests involving speaking with males and the speaking with White males. The next chapter discusses these results and their implications of these results.

## CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION, RECOMMENDATIONS & IMPLICATIONS

The results reported in the previous chapter show that there are many factors at play which determine police use of force perceptions and multiple variables impacting a person's willingness to speak about police use of force.

### **Regression Discussion**

Although the ANOVAs illustrated that these factors make a difference in one's perceptions about police use of force, the regressions show that they are not necessarily the most influential factors in determining willingness to speak. Rather, an individual's level of communication apprehension and diversity exposure play major roles. These findings further expand the body of knowledge surrounding willingness to speak and spiral of silence in many different ways. In particular, the findings regarding communication apprehension and diversity exposure are perhaps most valuable.

Firstly, Noelle-Neumann and other researchers vastly underestimated the impact of communication apprehension on an individual's willingness to speak out. In fact, according to the coefficients in the regressions, it is either the largest or second largest factor in accounting for the variance in the dependent variable. The more apprehensive an individual is, the less likely he or she is to speak out, regardless of other factors. This matches up with the 2002 results of Crandall & Ayres, who found that people who scored high on communication apprehension were much less willing to express their opinions in public than those who scored low on the PRCA created by Levine and McCroskey in 1990. This greatly extends the current literature and also makes the argument for more research. Whenever a survey project regarding the spiral of silence is

done, the PRCA-24 should also be included in order to accurately gauge an individual's baseline level of communication apprehension and its implications.

Diversity exposure also greatly influences willingness to speak. This suggests that people who have been exposed to different ways of thinking are more likely to speak out about police use of force. Diversity exposure appears to enable people to engage with people of other opinions more easily than those who have not had as much exposure. This also expands the literature surrounding the spiral of silence and suggests that future researchers need to consider diversity exposure when looking at an individual's willingness to speak.

In addition to underestimating the impact of communication apprehension and diversity exposure, Noelle-Neumann's original theory clearly overestimated the impact of media exposure. While it was occasionally a significant predictor in the train tests, it was low-ranking. This contradicts Noelle-Neumann's original theory, which posited media exposure as the largest element in a spiral. However, it does line up with research by Baldassare & Katz (1996) and Glynn & Huges (2014) who note that media does not play the largest role in determining willingness to speak. Conversely, Dowler & Zawilski (2007) found media consumption to be a significant predictor. They found that heavy consumers of media "were more likely to believe police misconduct was a frequent event" (p. 193). Although the two previous regression findings point out flaws in Noelle-Neumann's theory, the current project also found extensive support for part of the theory. An individual's perceptions of their opinion climate (*quasi-statistical sense*) (i.e. the opinions of the people and media surrounding them) influence their willingness to speak or tendency to remain silent. In most of the regression models, the combined

perceptions variable (which is reflective of how much the participant feels his/her opinion matches with surrounding opinion climate) is positively significant in predicting willingness to speak. This indicates that people who are comfortable in their opinion climate are more likely to speak. However, it also signifies that people are more willing to speak when they are surrounded by people who think the same way they do. These findings line up with the findings from the Oshagan (1996) study, which found that reference groups, specifically one's closest friends, were the more important influence than societal majority opinions when it came to willingness to speak.

There are some interesting differences in the train test regressions which are particularly worth noting. In the stranger train tests across race, CA, diversity exposure, highest level of education and the combined perceptions variables are all significant in determining willingness to speak for those speaking with a Caucasian stranger. However, when talking to an African American stranger, level of education does not make a difference. Age and the response to the 'police use of force is a serious problem' question does make a difference as well. Those who are more likely to agree that police use of force is a serious problem are more likely to speak out against it. The simplest explanation for these differences is that because incidents involving police use of force usually involve African Americans, it is easier to talk to an African American because they are the party seemingly most affected by the issue. Why the education level impacts one's willingness to speak to Caucasians, though, is harder to justify. Perhaps level of education acts as a confidence boost when speaking with Caucasians who are perceived to be opposed to the Black Lives Matter movement/issue.

Interestingly, the factors that are significant in the stranger train tests that are separated by race are different from those that influence results of the friend train test separated by race. CA and diversity again are major predictors, and the police use of force question is also significant only in the African American friend train test. However, gender is significant in the friend train test separated by race for both Caucasian and African American conversation partners with women being more willing to speak out compared to men in all the contexts. This could be because women are more likely to speak when with friends, which could be attributed to the idea that females do more emotional support and relationship-building than males.

The fact that the combined perceptions variable and the race of the participant is only significant in the friend train test where the conversation partner is varied by race is interesting, to say the least. This could mean that people utilize their *quasi-statistical sense* more when they are talking to a Caucasian friend than an African American friend. Furthermore, this could imply that self-censorship exists more when talking to a Caucasian friend. If this is true, that could provide an explanation as to why a spiral surrounding police use of force related to African American men exists.

While race of the participant is not significant in the stranger train tests separated by race, it is somewhat significant in the Caucasian friend train test. However, in the gender-separated tests, race of the participant is not significant at all. This is unexpected, especially considering the topic in question. Race of a person has little to no effect on that person's willingness to speak. Because of this finding, in theory it should be easier to facilitate dialogue between people of different races about police use of force; however, this is clearly not the case. Rather than dialogue, there is protest.

While protest is speaking out, it does not solve the problem. No one is sitting down, discussing the problem and attempting to come to resolutions.

In the friend train test where the conversation partner varied by gender, the same factors are significant for both the female train test and the male train test: CA, diversity, gender, responses to the 'police use of force is a serious problem' question, and the combined perceptions variable. However, it is worth noting that in both tests, the combined perceptions variable is barely significant. It appears that when an individual is talking to a friend, perceptions matter less. People usually know how their friends stand on an issue, so perceptions may weigh less in this configuration; they do not need to use their *quasi-statistical sense* when they already know something as fact.

The stranger train test where the gender of the conversation partner varied differs from the friend train test. Communication apprehension, diversity exposure, age and combined perceptions are all significant; however, the female test shows that the answer to the police use of force is a serious problem question is also significant, while the male test does not find that to be significant. However, the male test shows that the level of education is significant. These findings are unexpected. For one, a person has no way of telling a person's highest level of education just by looking at a person, although assumptions may be made. These assumptions are a form of perceptions, which then gives the combined perceptions variable even more support. It is intriguing that attitudes towards police use of force matters more when the conversation partner is a female rather than a male. More research needs to be done to examine why this might be the case.



In the friend train test regression, the following variables are significant: CA, diversity exposure, media exposure, gender, police use of force is a serious problem and the combined perceptions variable. It appears that the participant's affiliation (or lack of) with the conversation partner somewhat affects the factors that influence willingness to speak. Future research should examine this dynamic more.

Although communication apprehension, diversity exposure and the other factors listed above were significant predictors of willingness to speak, they were not significant in regard to perceptions held and attitudes towards police use of force. The following section discusses the ANOVA results and their implications.

### **ANOVA Discussion**

The ANOVAs highlight the impact of several factors on perceptions about police use of force. Although these factors are not surprising by any means, they are worth noting. People are more likely to believe that police use of force is a serious problem if they have had a past negative experience with a police officer, if they fall into the millennial and Gen Z age groups, if they are Black, or if their political affiliation is Democrat or Independent. These results further the spiral of silence theory and show that media exposure is less influential than Noelle-Neumann suggested in her original theory. Additionally, they highlight the difference in perceptions of Whites and Blacks, which could be contributing to the overall Black Lives Matter vs. Blue/All Lives Matter movements.

Additionally, there were significant differences between Native Hawaiians and several other groups, which was unexpected. It is possible that this racial group may be overlooked and/or overshadowed by events between law enforcement and African

Americans. However, as noted below in the limitations, the racial makeup of the sample may have partially skewed these results.

One of the most impactful findings of this study is the differences in opinion that exist between age groups, specially the younger generation (Millennials and Gen Z) and the older generation (generally over age 65). In addition to the actual opinion differences, the different generations also score differently when it comes to willingness to speak. The age variable has a negative relationship with willingness to speak with strangers across all contexts except when speaking with Caucasians. Overall, the older people get, the less willing they are to speak about police use of force with strangers. This could be occurring for several reasons. When the older generations were growing up, extensive and intense news coverage regarding police use of force and incidents between law enforcement and African Americans did not exist. Thus, the older generation might not pay as much attention to these issues because they were not primary issues facing the United States when they were young. Additionally, the advent of social media could also account for some of this change. Today, people are almost instantly aware when an incident occurs because they are notified either via social media and/or phone notifications. However, older generations did not grow up with social media and smartphones, and so are less likely to use them to get their news. Thus, they do not get the information as quickly, and certainly not to the same extent that people with smartphones and/or social media do. Although this study included questions about social media use, those results were not analyzed for this specific project. Future research would do well to look back and incorporate those results to see if they match up with this idea.

The second key finding within the ANOVA results was that taking a civics class appears to make a difference in how people perceive their opinion climate. Participants in the study who had taken a civics class were more likely to agree that their friends and family viewed police use of force the same way they do. This also provides some evidence that people silo themselves; that is, they surround themselves with people who feel and think the same way they do. This silo-ing may be at least partially responsible for the stark divide in society today. Because people are not being exposed to viewpoints they disagree with, they are unable to have even a simple conversation without it becoming polarized. They are not used to being with people who disagree with them. This somewhat lines up with the findings of Moussaïd, Kämmer, Analytis & Neth (2013), who found that a major attractor of opinions was the presence of a majority of people who shared the same or similar opinions.

It is also interesting that those who take a civics class are less likely to agree that the media's coverage of police use of force matches up with one's own beliefs. There is no clear-cut reason why this may be. However, as noted earlier, it is possible that people who have taken a civics class are more sensitive to the notion of media fairness and bias, and thus are more likely to notice when biased coverage that they do not agree with is happening. It could also suggest that civics education helps people form their own opinions apart from the influence of the media; in other words, civics education could be shaping one's opinions. These findings regarding civics education also expand the field, as no previous study about spirals of silence have uncovered this before. This also strengthens the argument for more civics education in school, as it could lead to a better-informed populace.

One surprising finding of this study is that significant differences between perceptions of law enforcement workers and those outside of law enforcement do not exist in this study. In other words, being in law enforcement does not affect your perceptions of the media and police use of force. However, working at a newspaper has some effect, although small. This provides some support for the idea that the media shapes public opinion rather than reflect it, as Noelle-Neumann discussed when she outlined her theory.

While not necessarily a resounding finding, several frequencies either indirectly contradicted or matched up with previous research. These findings are discussed in the next section.

### **Frequency Discussion**

Gronke & Cook (2007) and Moy & Pfau (2007) suggest that local news is trusted more than national news and the institution of news itself. However, the results of the frequencies show that the most participants believe that neither option portrays police more accurately than the other (40.8%). Local and national news are each chosen by about 30% of the participants. This could simply be a product of time; 20 years have passed since those previous studies, and the news media has changed since then.

However, the previous research is not an exact match to that of the current research, as the question asked is different. It is possible that a more generic question (i.e. which type do you trust more?) would yield a different response. It is also possible that rephrasing the current study's question to the following could yield different results: When it comes to reporting on law enforcement, do you trust local news, national news or neither more? If this study is run again, that question should be changed.

Several findings specific to the law enforcement subset match up with the findings of the Behind the Badge report done by the Pew Research Center published in January of 2017. Their study found that 81% of officers say that the media treat police unfairly in their coverage. Similarly, 61% of participants in the current study disagreed that the media portray police use of force positively, and 59.3% of the subset disagree that the media shares the same view of police use of force as police officers do. Both of these results highlight the tension between the media and the police. Additionally, Pew Research Center also found that seven-in-ten officers believe that the people who live in their patrol areas share the same values as them. Although it is hard to make a direct comparison to the current study, 66.6% of the law enforcement subset of the current study agreed that their friends and family view police use of force the same as them. If the police officers were to become friends with those in their patrol area, these two statistics would support one another. Finally, Pew Research Center found that only 32% of Black police officers believe police relations with Blacks to be excellent or good, while six-in-ten of White and Hispanic officers believed it to be excellent or good. While not an exact comparison, police relations could be compared to whether officers believe police use of force to be a serious problem in the U.S. The current study found that 66.6% of Black officers agree that police use of force is a serious problem in the U.S., while only 50% of White officers believe that to be true.

### **Limitations & Future Research**

While this study provides a good starting point for looking at willingness to speak about police use of force, there are several limitations to this study that need to be recognized. One major flaw is that the sample. While it is large and from across the

United States, there is still not a lot of variance in the sample, which is predominantly Caucasian. This could account for race having less of an effect than expected. It could also explain while significant findings were found between minority groups other than Blacks when compared to Whites.

While not necessarily a limitation, future iterations of this survey should ask participants if they are over 18 at the time of the informed consent, rather than waiting until the demographics section. Anyone under 18 should be eliminated from the survey from the beginning, rather than the researcher doing the elimination at the end.

Some of the questions need revision before future studies. First, although participants were asked if they were in either the military or law enforcement, they were not asked if any family or close friends were part of those groups. This should be included in future studies because, as the results and discussion above detail, people surround themselves by those with whom they are similar. It is likely that if a family member or close friend is a law enforcement officer, the participant would have similar views to them. Another question asked participants what type of source they considered credible regarding news about police use of force. This was a multiple-choice question where participants could choose all that apply. Future studies should change the format of this question to rank in order of source credibility. Finally, although the researcher did her best to present a clean survey, several typos still were present in the survey version sent to participants. These should be corrected before future studies.

Additionally, while this study measured media exposure, it did not measure exposure to media about any events occurring between Blacks and law enforcement workers during the time the survey was live other than the general media exposure

inquiries. Future research should specifically ask how many news stories about police officers and/or African Americans an individual has been exposed to in the last week, night, month, etc. Future research should look for an interaction effect between exposure to social media of police departments and willingness to speak. Additionally, this study used a random sample to examine willingness to speak about police use of force. It may be prudent to specifically study police officers' willingness to speak about this and related topics, although obtaining a sufficient sample may be more difficult due to specificity of the required sample.

Other future research should examine how and what specific measures could be used to improve dialogue surrounding police use of force. Examining willingness to speak in the context of civilian review boards, community policing and sensitivity training could also prove prudent (Weitzer, 2002). It may also be worthwhile to examine willingness to speak within specific subgroups such as law enforcement officers/police departments, Black Lives Matter activists, etc.

### **Recommendations**

The results of this study illustrate the great divide that exists in American society right now. Although people are speaking out via protest, not much progress is being made towards resolving the issues. People need to be willing to not only speak out, but also be to listen. When people feel they are not being heard, wrongs cannot be righted, and problems cannot be solved. Speaking out is a necessary element of being heard; however, the other side must be willing to listen. This is where the idea of Listening Circles was born.

Sophia Bustamante (2017) implemented Listening Cafes after the Brexit vote in the United Kingdom. Simply put, the Circles bring together four people. More than four people become a café. One person talks while the others listen, and each person receives a chance to speak. There is also a moment of silence between each speaker. The goal of these Circles is to connect people and help them understand each other's views and what has influenced and helped form those views. Two important elements with Listening Circles are that they occur face-to-face and the pause between speakers. Physically being in the same room as the other person(s) helps create the connection and appropriate environment that is essential to the process. Pausing between speakers enables participants to transition into the next speaker and also to gather their thoughts (The Circle Way, 2017). Additionally, these Circles:

Are not about trying to persuade people to change their views. Rather, we are invited into a conversational experience which cultivates a heightened ability to listen well to others' views, and to share our own views, safely, respectfully, thereby growing in deeper understanding of self and others. (Bustamante, 2017).

While truly listening to people is an excellent starting point, listening alone cannot solve the issues society faces. However, there are programs and organizations that aim to do that and have proven results, such as Safe & Sound and community policing.

Safe & Sound is an organization that focuses on improving neighborhood safety through a combination of community organizing, law enforcement partnerships and youth development. The organization strives to increase and improve collective efficacy, which is "the strength of the social fabric of the neighborhood" (Safe & Sound, 2017, p. 1); it is social cohesion and control executed in an informal manner. It



became evident that “resident-centric collaboration is key to building neighborhood safety” (p. 1). Six out of eight neighborhoods showed improvement after the organization entered them. According to the 2017 annual report, the most effective types of interventions are block clubs and resident meetings/events, both of which are relaxed social gatherings that encourage casual conversation. A total of 27,599 residents participated in 1,538 meetings in 2017. Additionally, 1,371 neighborhood nuisances were resolved through Safe & Sound (Safe & Sound, 2017). It is clear that Safe & Sound’s unique structure enables the community and law enforcement to come together and collaborate.

Like Safe & Sound, community policing initiatives involve community partnerships and problem solving, along with organizational transformation, to “proactively address the immediate conditions that rise to public safety issues such as crime, social disorder and fear of crime” (COPS, p. 2). Also like Safe & Sound, community policing aims to address the smaller issues that exist in communities before it becomes necessary for a formal response by law enforcement. The types of relationships built through both types of programs build relationships between law enforcement and their communities, which in turn improves public trust. Overall, they lead to more constructive dialogue and have the potential to help better the relationship between law enforcement and minority communities especially, which right now are fraught with tension.

The techniques used by Safe & Sound and community policing initiatives are not the only way to encourage dialogue on tense issues. In 2017, the Greater Milwaukee Foundation (GMF) piloted its On the Table initiative, which brought together small groups over meals to create “a unique opportunity for civil conversation among people

interested in building new relationships, generating ideas and igniting action for the benefit of the community and its future” (GMF, 2017). In other words, the initiative gathered “diverse groups throughout the city and region to talk about ways to improve the community” (Baker, 2017). Thousands of people participated in face-to-face conversation in Milwaukee, Waukesha, Washington and Ozaukee counties in Wisconsin. At 81% of the tables, race/equity emerged as a topic (GMF, 2017), highlighting that not only does the U.S. need these conversations, but that its citizens want these conversations, too.

These community conversations are effective on a smaller scale, too. The Medical College of Wisconsin Cancer Center commenced its community conversation series, which aims to foster discussion and educate participants on health disparities that exist within the area served by the Center. These disparities primarily affect minorities. Although no formal records were kept, many comments on the post-event comment form not only noted that these community conversations should keep happening, but also contained topics for future conversations. Again, the community wants to have these conversations (personal communication, June 28, 2018).

Another space where discussions like these can occur is school. Educational institutions are uniquely placed to combat this from happening and evidence of their influence on students does exist. Billings & Terkla (2014) found “a positive relationship between students’ civic values and beliefs and their civic activity levels” (p. 49). Additionally, Klofstad (2015) found a positive relationship between political discussion and political participation, meaning that more exposure to political discussion in college increased the likelihood of political participation beyond college, part of which includes

speaking out and sharing opinions. Schools can not only train students on public speaking, which would help students become more comfortable with it, but also help them become more comfortable articulating and sharing their opinions with people who hold different viewpoints. Additionally, research has shown that attitudes and habits develop at an early age (Jennings, Stoker & Bowers, 2009; Jacewicz, 2009); therefore, starting these conversations in school ingrains civil conversation techniques into students.

Educational institutions can also teach and model to students that here in the United States, their right to share their opinion is protected. Free speech is the foundation of the United States. Schools, both public and private, should be modeling this and encouraging their students to share their thoughts and opinions, and not just through a public speaking class. Encouraging classroom discussion instead of lectures, especially in high school and beyond, is another way educational institutions can help students become more comfortable sharing their opinions in a productive manner. Because this study also showed that civics classes can impact perceptions, institutions should perhaps consider improving and broadening that curriculum. Before doing this, however, more research is needed in order to determine what specific parts of civic education should be emphasized, more research needs to be conducted. While these conversations are needed to create change, it is important to note that this is a slow process; “worthwhile efforts take time” (The Circle Way, 2017). Relationships are not built over night, so police departments and the community need to be willing to start small and work up towards bigger interventions. Perhaps an easy place to start having these conversations, and a variation on Bustamante’s Listening Circles, is for law enforcement to host

Coffee with a Cop. This event is just like it sounds. Cops show up at a coffeehouse and community members can stop in and talk with them about anything, from just saying hi to in-depth dialogue about an issue.

Overall, programs based on listening and then solving problems have proven to positively improve society and should be implemented by police departments and communities to help improve police-community relations.

### **Conclusion**

The beginning of this thesis compares the current racial tension in the U.S. to a nasty, horrible bruise. However, bruises can be healed. It could take a while, and it might be ugly and painful, but a bruise does go away. The racial tensions and high emotions in the U.S. are no different. Like Graziano, Schuck & Martin (2010) stated, “Attitudes about race and racism are likely to reflect underlying beliefs about society and how individuals behave; as such, these beliefs are highly resistant to change” (p. 71). No one likes being challenged about their underlying beliefs and what is, in essence, their morals and values. The tension we see now is a by-product of the challenging of those beliefs. Sometimes, however, challenge and change are necessary.

The United States of America is at a crossroads right now. To overcome these challenges and racial inequities, people must be willing to not only speak up about what is wrong, but also be willing to come to the table to brainstorm and implement solutions. While it certainly will not be an easy, quick process, ultimately doing this will strengthen the very foundations of the U.S.: democracy and a belief that all people are equal.

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## APPENDIX

## Examining Opinion-Sharing Habits in a Modern Context

## Start of Block: Informed Consent

Q1.1 You have been asked to participate in a research study. You must be age 18 or older to participate. The purpose of this study is to examine an individual's willingness to share their opinions on a controversial topic. In this study, police use of force will be examined in a communication context. The study involves taking a survey and will take about fifteen (15) minutes to complete. You will be asked to answer questions about police use of force, your media habits and demographic information. In this context, police use of force is a continuum that starts with the threat of force, moves through physical and less lethal-force and ends with lethal force, as stated by the National Institute of Justice.

Your name and other identifying information, including IP address, will not be collected. Your responses will be anonymous. The risks associated with this project are minimal and there are no direct benefits to you. Collection of data and survey responses using the internet involves the same risks that a person would encounter in everyday use of the internet, such as hacking or information unintentionally being seen by others. Your participation is completely voluntary and you may withdraw from the study at any time. You can skip any questions you do not wish to answer. Your decision to participate will not impact your relationship with Marquette University or the researcher. Data may be used for future research. If you have any questions about this study, you can contact Rachel Italiano at [rachel.italiano@marquette.edu](mailto:rachel.italiano@marquette.edu) or Sumana Chattopadhyay at [sumana.chattopadhyay@marquette.edu](mailto:sumana.chattopadhyay@marquette.edu). If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant, you can contact Marquette University's Office of Research Compliance at (414) 288-7570. Thank you for your participation.

## Page Break

## End of Block: Informed Consent

## Start of Block: PRCA-24 (1-2)

Measures communication apprehension. This questions that make up this scale are spaced out throughout the survey to prevent survey fatigue.

Q2.1 Choose the answer that best fits you.

Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Undecided (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)
I dislike participating in group discussions. (1)				
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Generally, I am comfortable while participating in group discussions. (2)				
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am tense and nervous when participating in group discussions. (3)				
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I like to get involved in group discussions. (4)				
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Page Break

Q2.2 Choose the answer that best fits you.

Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Undecided (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)
Engaging in a group discussion with new people makes me tense and nervous. (1)				
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am calm and relaxed when participating in group discussions. (2)				
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Generally, I am nervous when I have to participate in a meeting. (3)				
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Usually, I am calm and relaxed while participating in a meeting. (4)				
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Page Break

End of Block: PRCA-24 (1-2)

Start of Block: Police Train Test

This section is a modified train test (originally designed by Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann when she posited the spiral of silence theory) and measures an individual's willingness to speak out or tendency to remain silent when confronted with conversations about police use of force.

Q3.1 I am comfortable talking about police use of force in day-to-day conversation.

- Extremely uncomfortable (1)
- Somewhat uncomfortable (2)

- Neither comfortable nor uncomfortable (3)
- Somewhat comfortable (4)
- Extremely comfortable (5)

Q3.2 How comfortable would you be comfortable talking about your views on police use of force with someone of an opposing viewpoint?

- Extremely uncomfortable (1)
- Somewhat uncomfortable (2)
- Neither comfortable nor uncomfortable (3)
- Somewhat comfortable (4)
- Extremely comfortable (5)

Page Break

Q3.3 Imagine that you're on a long plane ride with a stranger. The stranger begins talking to you about police use of force. How likely are you to participate in conversation with the stranger if they are:

	Extremely Unlikely (1)	Unlikely (2)	Undecided (3)	Likely (4)	Extremely Likely (5)
An African-American (Black) Female (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
A Caucasian (White) female (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
An African-American (Black) male (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
A Caucasian (White) male (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Page Break

Q3.4 During the course of your conversation with the stranger on the plane, you realize that the person disagrees with your opinions about police use of force. How likely are you to continue participating in the conversation?

- Extremely unlikely (1)
- Somewhat unlikely (2)
- Neither likely nor unlikely (3)

- o Somewhat likely (4)
- o Extremely likely (5)

Page Break

Q3.5 During the course of your conversation with the stranger on the plane, you realize that the person agrees with your opinions about police use of force. How likely are you to continue participating in the conversation?

- o Extremely unlikely (1)
- o Somewhat unlikely (2)
- o Neither likely nor unlikely (3)
- o Somewhat likely (4)
- o Extremely likely (5)

Page Break

Q3.6 Now imagine that you're on a long plane ride with a close friend. Your friend begins talking to you about police use of force. How likely are you to participate in conversation with the friend if they are:

	Extremely Unlikely (1)	Unlikely (2)	Undecided (3)	Likely (4)	Extremely Likely (5)
An African-American (Black) Female (1)	o		o		o
	o				o
A Caucasian (White) female (2)	o		o		o
	o				o
An African-American (Black) male (3)	o		o		o
	o				o
A Caucasian (White) male (4)	o		o		o
	o				o

Page Break

Q3.7 During the course of your conversation with your friend on the plane, you realize that they disagree with your opinions about police use of force. How likely are you to continue participating in the conversation?

- o Extremely unlikely (1)

- Somewhat unlikely (2)
- Neither likely nor unlikely (3)
- Somewhat likely (4)
- Extremely likely (5)

Page Break

Q3.8 During the course of your conversation with your friend on the plane, you realize that the person agrees with your opinions about police use of force. How likely are you to continue participating in the conversation?

- Extremely unlikely (1)
- Somewhat unlikely (2)
- Neither likely nor unlikely (3)
- Somewhat likely (4)
- Extremely likely (5)

Page Break

End of Block: Police Train Test

Start of Block: PRCA-24 (3-4)

Q4.1 Choose the answer that best fits you.

Strongly Disagree (1) Disagree (2) Undecided (3) Agree (4) Strongly Agree (5)

I am very calm and relaxed when I am called upon to express an opinion at a meeting.

(1)

I am afraid to express myself at meetings. (2)

Communicating at meetings usually makes me uncomfortable. (3)

I am very relaxed when answering questions at a meeting. (4)

Q4.2 Choose the answer that best fits you.

Strongly Disagree (1) Disagree (2) Undecided (3) Agree (4) Strongly Agree (5)

- While participating in a conversation with a new acquaintance, I feel very nervous. (1)
- I have no fear of speaking up in conversations. (2)
- Ordinarily, I am very tense and nervous in conversations. (3)
- Ordinarily, I am very calm and relaxed in conversations. (4)

End of Block: PRCA-24 (3-4)

Start of Block: Police Demographics & Media Perceptions of Police

This section is designed to first determine what meanings people infer from the term “police use of force.” It also seeks to determine the participant’s views on police use of force in the United States. It also measures the participant’s perceptions of the media coverage regarding police use of force. It also asks if the individual has had any interaction with police before taking this survey, as that could potentially affect their beliefs and influences about police, and thus affect their answers to questions on this survey.

Q5.1 What is the first thing that comes to mind when you hear the phrase "police use of force?"

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Page Break

Q5.2 Please choose the answer that best corresponds to your beliefs.

- |     |                       |                       |                            |
|-----|-----------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|
|     | Strongly Disagree (1) | Somewhat Disagree (2) | Neither agree nor disagree |
| (3) | Somewhat Agree (4)    | Strongly Agree (5)    |                            |
- Police use of force is a serious problem in the U.S. (1)
- 
- A bias that favors police officers exists in the U.S. (2)
- 
- The government should pass more laws that more strictly regulate police use of force. (3)

Page Break

Q5.3 In general, do you believe the claims the media reports about police use of force are:

- over-reported (1)
- under-reported (2)
- given about the right amount of media attention (3)

Page Break

Q5.4 Please read the following statements carefully and choose the answer that best fits you.

- |  | Strongly disagree (1) | Somewhat disagree (2) | Neither agree nor disagree |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|
| (3) Somewhat agree (4) Strongly agree (5)              |                       |                       |                            |
| The media portrays police use of force positively. (1) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>      |
| The media portrays police use of force neutrally. (2)  | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>      |
| The media portrays police use of force negatively. (3) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>      |

Page Break

Q5.5 Please read the following statements carefully and choose the answer that best fits you.

- |  | Strongly disagree (1) | Somewhat disagree (2) | Neither agree nor disagree |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|
| (3) Somewhat agree (4) Strongly agree (5)  |                       |                       |                            |
| The media views the police use of force the same way I do. (1)                     | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>      |
| The majority of the United States views police use of force the same way I do. (2) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>      |
| My friends and family view police use of force the same way I do. (3)              | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>      |

Page Break

Q5.6 Which media accurately/fairly depicts police officers more?

- Local (1)
- National (2)
- Neither (3)

Page Break

Q5.7 Have you ever had a negative experience or interaction with a police officer?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)
- Prefer not to answer (3)

End of Block: Police Demographics & Media Perceptions of Police

Start of Block: PRCA-24 (5-6)

Q6.1 Choose the answer that best fits you.

- |  | Strongly Disagree (1) | Disagree (2)          | Undecided (3)         | Agree (4)             | Strongly Agree (5)    |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| While conversing with a new acquaintance, I feel very relaxed. (1)                 | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I'm afraid to speak up in conversations. (2)                                       | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I have no fear of giving a speech. (3)   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Certain parts of my body feel very tense and rigid while I am giving a speech. (4) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

Q6.2 Choose the answer that best fits you.

- |  | Strongly Disagree (1) | Disagree (2)          | Undecided (3)         | Agree (4)             | Strongly Agree (5)    |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| I feel very relaxed while giving a speech. (1) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |



- My thoughts become confused and jumbled when I am giving a speech. (2)
- 
- I face the prospect of giving a speech with confidence. (3)
- 
- While giving a speech, I get so nervous I forget facts I really know. (4)
- 

End of Block: PRCA-24 (5-6)

#### Start of Block: Learning Different Perspectives

This section measures an individual's exposure to different perspectives with the school and home environments. It also measures their willingness to pay attention to something with which they disagree. Finally, it also looks to see if the participant has ever participated in any community event designed to increase dialogue between people with different viewpoints, as that could affect their beliefs and thus their answers to this survey.

Q7.1 Choose the answer that best fits your environment.

- Strongly disagree (1)   Somewhat disagree (2)   Neither agree nor disagree (3)   Somewhat agree (4)   Strongly agree (5)
- My home environment included a variety of ideas and perspectives. (1)
- 
- My school environment was filled with a variety of ideas and perspectives. (2)
- 
- My online environment is filled with a variety of ideas and perspectives. (3)
- 

Page Break

Q7.2 How diverse is the group of people with whom you most frequently interact?

- Not diverse (1)
- Not very diverse (2)
- Somewhat diverse (3)
- Highly diverse (4)
- I don't know (5)
- Prefer not to answer (6)

Page Break

## End of Block: Learning Different Perspectives

### Start of Block: Media Exposure

This section measures an individual's media exposure, including amount and type. It is included because Noelle-Neumann's theory relies on an individual's media exposure as a determining factor in their willingness to speak out or tendency to remain silent. An additional variable is an individual's viewing of police procedural/drama television shows. Dowler and Zawiliski (2017) found that individuals who frequently watch these television shows believed that police give preferential treatment to the wealthy. Although this exact variable is not the focus of the current study, this study is predicated on the idea that media consumption affects the creation and ending of spirals, and so the entertainment variable needs to be tested.

Q8.1 Do you use social media?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Display This Question:

If Do you use social media? = Yes

Q8.2 I talk about controversial topics on social media.

- Strongly disagree (1)
- Somewhat disagree (2)
- Neither agree nor disagree (3)
- Somewhat agree (4)
- Strongly agree (5)

Display This Question:

If Do you use social media? = Yes

Q8.3 I avoid talking about controversial topics on social media.

- Strongly disagree (1)
- Somewhat disagree (2)
- Neither agree nor disagree (3)
- Somewhat agree (4)
- Strongly agree (5)

Page Break

Q8.4 Where do you get your news from? Choose all that apply.

- Social media (1)
- TV (2)
- Radio (4)
- Newspapers (5)
- Online news (3)
- Other (Please specify) (6)

Display This Question:

If Where do you get your news from? Choose all that apply. = TV

Q8.5 Check all the news stations you get your news from.

- ABC (1)
  - CBS (2)
  - CNN (3)
  - FOX NEWS (4)
  - MSNBC (5)
  - NBC (6)
  - Other (please specify or place at end) (7)
- 

Display This Question:

If Where do you get your news from? Choose all that apply. = Newspapers

Q8.6 What news sources do you get your news from? Choose all that apply.

- Breitbart (9)
- Huffington Post (2)
- Infowars (10)
- LA Times (7)
- Politico (8)
- Slate (11)
- Washington Post (6)
- The New York Times (1)
- Other national news sources (3)
- Other local news sources (4)
- Other international news sources (5)

Page Break

Q8.7 In a typical week, how often do you do the following?

	Daily (1)	4-6 times a week (2)	2-3 times a week (3)	Once a week (4)	Never (5)
listening to news on the radio (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
reading news in a print (hard copy) newspaper (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
reading news online (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
watching television news (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
reading news from social media (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Page Break

Q8.8 Please indicate just how much you pay attention to news you receive from the following:

	None at all (1)	A little (2)	A moderate amount (3)	A lot (4)	A great deal (5)
listening to news on the radio (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
reading news in a print (hard copy) newspaper (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
reading news online (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
watching television news (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
reading news from social media (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Page Break

Q8.9

About how often do you watch the following types of programs?

Crime dramas and police procedurals refer to shows such as Blue Bloods, Chicago P.D., Hawaii Five-0, Law and Order.

Crime reality shows refer to shows such as COPS, Police Women of Memphis and Highway Patrol.

Superhero shows refer to shows such as Agents of Shield, Arrow, Gotham, Legends of Tomorrow and The Flash.

	Daily (1)	4-6 times a week (2)	2-3 times a week (3)	Once a week (4)	Never (5)
Crime dramas/police procedurals (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Crime reality shows (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Page Break

Q8.10 Generally speaking, which of the following do you find to be credible sources of information about police use of force? Choose all that apply.

- Bystanders who saw the incident (1)
  - Citizen/witness videos (2)
  - Family members of those involved in the incidents (3)
  - Statements/press releases by police (4)
  - Statements/press releases by government officials (5)
  - Other (please specify) (6)
- 

Page Break

End of Block: Media Exposure

Start of Block: Schooling Demographics

This section covers demographic information regarding schooling, including involvement in student media and government. It is separated out from the main demographic section because it involves a series of questions involving schooling rather than just one or two questions.

Q9.1 Have you ever worked for a newspaper? (This includes a student newspaper.)

- Yes (1)
- No (2)
- I don't remember (3)

Page Break

Q9.2 Have you ever worked for the government?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)
- I don't remember (3)

Page Break

Q9.3 Have you ever taken a civics class? Civics can include a class about government, constitutional rights and/or civilian rights and responsibilities.

- Yes (1)
- No (2)
- I don't remember (3)

Display This Question:

If Have you ever taken a civics class? Civics can include a class about government, constitutional r... = Yes

Q9.4 When did you take the class? Choose all that apply.

- Elementary school (1)
- High school (2)
- College (3)
- Graduate school (4)
- Other (please specify) (5)

- 
- I don't remember (6)

Page Break

Q9.5 What type of high school did you attend?

- Public (1)
- Private (2)
- Other (please specify) (3)

- 
- I don't remember (5)
  - Did not attend high school (4)

Display This Question:

If What type of high school did you attend? = Private

Q9.6 Was your private high school religiously affiliated?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)
- I don't remember (3)

Page Break

Q9.7 What is your highest level of education?

- Less than high school (1)
- High school graduate (2)
- Some college (3)
- 2 year degree (4)
- 4 year degree (5)
- Master's degree (6)
- Professional degree (7)
- Doctorate (8)

Q9.8 What type of college did you attend?

- Public (1)
- Private (2)
- Technical (3)
- Certificate Program (4)
- Other (please specify) (5)

- 
- None (6)
  - I don't remember (7)

Display This Question:

If What type of college did you attend? = Private

Q9.9 Was your private college religiously affiliated?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)
- I don't know (3)

Page Break

End of Block: Schooling Demographics

Start of Block: Demographics

This section covers common demographic factors that could play a role in influencing an individual's beliefs and perspectives.

Q10.1 How old are you?

- Under 18 (1)
- 18 - 24 (2)
- 25 - 34 (3)
- 35 - 44 (4)
- 45 - 54 (5)
- 55 - 64 (6)
- 65 - 74 (7)
- 75 - 84 (8)
- 85 or older (9)
- Prefer not to answer (10)

Page Break

Q10.2 To which gender do you most identify?

- Female (1)
- Male (2)
- Prefer not to answer (3)

Page Break



Q10.3 What is your race?

- White (1)
- Black or African American (2)
- American Indian or Alaska Native (3)
- Asian (4)
- Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander (5)
- Other (please specify) (6)

- 
- Prefer not to answer (7)

Page Break

Q10.4 What is your religious affiliation?

- Lutheran (1)
- Catholic (2)
- Mormon (3)
- Jewish (4)
- Jehovah's Witness (5)
- Muslim (6)
- Agnostic (7)
- Atheist (8)
- Non-denominational (9)
- Unaffiliated (10)
- Other (please specify) (11)

- 
- Prefer not to answer (12)

Page Break

Q10.5 What state do you live in?

Page Break

Q10.6 Have you ever worked in law enforcement?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Q10.7 Have you ever served in the U.S. military?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Page Break

Q10.8 What is your career field?

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Page Break

Q10.9 What is your work status? Choose all that apply.

- Employed full time (1)
- Employed part time (2)
- Unemployed looking for work (3)
- Unemployed not looking for work (4)
- Retired (5)
- Student (6)
- Disabled (7)

Page Break

Q10.10 What is your average yearly household income?

- Less than \$10,000 (1)
- \$10,000 - \$19,999 (2)
- \$20,000 - \$29,999 (3)
- \$30,000 - \$39,999 (4)
- \$40,000 - \$49,999 (5)
- \$50,000 - \$59,999 (6)
- \$60,000 - \$69,999 (7)
- \$70,000 - \$79,999 (8)
- \$80,000 - \$89,999 (9)
- \$90,000 - \$99,999 (10)
- \$100,000 - \$149,999 (11)

- o More than \$150,000 (12)
- o Do not wish to specify (13)

Page Break

Q10.11 To what extent do you consider yourself a Democrat or Independent or Republican?

- o Strong Democrat (1)
- o Democrat (2)
- o Lean Democrat (3)
- o Independent (4)
- o Lean Republican (5)
- o Republican (6)
- o Strong Republican (7)

Page Break

Q10.12 Please share any additional thoughts you have about the topics discussed in this survey.

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End of Block: Demographics

Start of Block: Debriefing

Q11.1 Debriefing Statement The purpose of this study was to examine police use of force in relation to German researcher Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann's spiral of silence theory. The need for further research regarding perceptions of police and police use of force is evident; it's already part of the national discourse and events are commonly seen news stories. According to the theory, an individual's willingness to speak out and/or tendency to remain silent when conversing about controversial topics is influenced greatly by an individual's perceptions. The major factor in determining these perceptions is the media. A spiral of silence is formed when people don't speak out because they perceive themselves to be in the minority. This study was concerned with the development of spirals around police use of force and what factors other than the

media might play a role in their development. Factors tested include race, age, job, exposure to civics/First Amendment education and participation in student media and/or government. This study also attempted to determine when, if at all, the spiral occurred and what triggered its demise.

**Measurement** Most questions were measured using a Likert-scale. Several also were multiple choice. A few questions were open-ended and short answer.

**Research Questions** The researcher was interested in answering the following questions:

How do people describe police use of force?

When did police use of force become part of the national discourse?

How do people's perceptions of police use of force affect their willingness to speak out about the topic?

What factors, if any, affect an individual's willingness to share their opinions of police use of force?

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Thank you for participating!

End of Block: Debriefing