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“Say Her Name”: The Influence of Victim Race, Demeanor, Severity of Force, and Individual Difference Factors on Perceptions of Excessive Force Against A Woman

By

Brooklynn S. Smith

Accepted in Partial Completion
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Science

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Master's Thesis

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Brooklynn S. Smith

April 12, 2022

“Say Her Name”: The Influence of Victim Race, Demeanor, Severity of Force, and Individual Difference Factors on Perceptions of Excessive Force Against A Woman

A Thesis
Presented to
The Faculty of
Western Washington University

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Science

by
Brooklynn S. Smith
May, 2022

Abstract

The Black Lives Matter movement has increased public awareness concerning discriminatory experiences Black people may experience in interactions with police in the United States. Despite this renewed public consciousness, there is a lacuna of empirical research investigating Black women's unique experiences of prejudice and how public perceptions shape them. Research is needed to understand factors that influence perceptions of women who experience discriminatory treatment by police and barriers that may hinder social change. The current study investigated how a woman's racial identity (Black, White), demeanor (i.e., attitude directed towards the officer; respectful, confrontational), and the severity of the force used against her by the police officer (injured, fatal) influence participants' evaluations of blame and perceptions of discrimination for both the woman and officer. It was expected that when the female victim treated the officer respectfully but was fatally wounded, participants would elicit less victim blame, more officer blame, and perceive that the victim experienced more gender discrimination, but only when the woman was also White. However, when the female victim is Black, perceptions of the victim's blameworthiness and racial discrimination will be high, and officer blame and gender discrimination will be lower regardless of her demeanor and the severity of the force used against her. In addition, ethnic identity and authoritarianism were tested as moderators. The participants were 203 individuals across the United States who were recruited using an online crowdsourcing platform, MTurk. Participants read a news story depicting an incident between a woman and a police officer during a routine traffic stop. They then answered questions pertaining to their opinions of the victim and the officer. Utilizing a Multivariate Analysis of Covariance (MANCOVA), the results showed main effects of severity of force and victim race, where participants perceived more excessive police use of force towards the fatally

wounded victim and the Black woman. In order to test whether ethnic identity and authoritarianism moderated the effect of victim race, demeanor, and severity of force on each outcome variable, eight multiple linear regressions were conducted. The results indicate that valuing one's ethnic identity influenced participants' perceptions of gender discrimination for the White victim, such that individuals higher in ethnic identity perceived the respectful White victim as experiencing less gender discrimination when she was killed than when she was injured. Interestingly, valuing one's ethnic identity did not significantly moderate the effect of demeanor and severity of force on participants' perceptions of gender discrimination for the Black victim. Ethnic identity and authoritarianism may generally relate to perceptions of excessive force, with those who scored higher on these measures being more likely to evaluate the victim negatively. This study is one of the first to empirically investigate factors that may contribute to negative perceptions of women who have been subjected to excessive police use of force. These findings could have implications for legal outcomes for women who are victims of intersectional violence and police officers.

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Introduction

Law enforcement officers are often in situations that require them to make split-second decisions to protect their lives and the lives of others. There are numerous instances where it is reasonable and necessary for police officers to use physical force as authorized by law. However, there are times when police officers use force that exceeds what is reasonably considered to be necessary (National Institute of Justice, 2020). This study focuses on incidents of excessive police use of force. Excessive use of force is a social issue because it can result in injury or even death and impact public opinion of the police and the civilians who disproportionately experience excessive force.

Highly publicized police use of force incidents has prompted increased focus and concern about excessive police violence against Black Americans. Specifically, videos and reports of Black individuals being injured or killed by police has sparked national outrage and Black Lives Matter protests about the disproportionate use of excessive, and often lethal, force against Black people and has spurred efforts for police reform. Lethal police violence against Black men, from the 1991 beating of Rodney King to the fatal shooting of Michael Brown in 2014, and the death of George Floyd in 2020, has prompted national discussions about racialized police violence (i.e., racial disparities in police violence that is sustained by systemic discrimination), and has led to increased empirical investigation and calls for change (Crenshaw et al., 2015).

Black women also experience police violence, ranging from profiling to excessive and lethal use of force, yet their experiences receive disproportionately less attention and empirical investigation (Crenshaw et al., 2015; Jacobs, 2017; Money, 2020). Crenshaw et al. (2015) argue that the focus on Black women's stories is essential to elucidate the harsh reality of racialized police violence in the United States. Stories of Black women who have died at the hands of

police reveal that Black women experience abusive policing practices (Ritchie, 2017). For example, in March 2012, 22-year-old Rekia Boyd was shot by a White, off-duty police officer as she was standing in an alley with her back turned while she was hanging out with her friends (Crenshaw et al., 2015). In October 2019, 28-year-old Atatiana Jefferson was fatally shot in front of her 8-year-old nephew as she looked out of her bedroom window by a White police officer in her backyard after her neighbor called police to perform a wellness check (Lopez, 2019). Just five months later, 26-year-old Breonna Taylor was fatally shot in her apartment by White police officers executing a no-knock warrant during a narcotics investigation (Iati et al., 2020). These incidents of police violence against Black women underscore the critical need to examine factors that influence police use of force towards Black women and the problematic perceptions of Black women who experience such violence.

Black women are more likely to be victims of police violence than White women (Fedina et al., 2018). Despite accounting for fewer than 13 percent of all women in the United States, approximately 20% of all women killed by police are Black, and nearly 28% of those Black women were unarmed when killed by police (Iati et al., 2020). After conducting an in-depth review of police-related killings from 2015 to 2017, Johnson et al. (2018) discovered that while 60% of all women killed by police were armed, 57.2 percent of Black women killed by police were unarmed. Black women were the only race-gender category in which the majority of its members were unarmed when they were killed (Johnson et al., 2018).

Black women are more likely than White women to be pulled over in traffic stops (Kajstura, 2019). Black women are also more likely to be arrested and imprisoned than White women, accounting for the majority of women in jails (Kajstura, 2019). According to a study of police tactics in New York City, over half of the women stopped by police in 2013 were Black

(53.4%), while only 13.4% were White. For Black men and women, the rates of racial disparities in stops, frisks, and arrests were similar (Crenshaw et al., 2015). These startling statistics illustrate some of the racial disparities in police violence against women.

According to Crenshaw et al. (2015), the failure to include Black women in the mainstream discourse on police use of force has ramifications for police accountability. Police officers may face little to no repercussions for killing or injuring unarmed Black women (Amuchie, 2016). For example, the officers involved in Breonna Taylor's death faced minor consequences for shooting her. Out of the three officers involved, only one officer was indicted on a charge of "wanton endangerment" for shooting the neighboring apartment walls; however, he was not charged for killing Breonna Taylor (Iati et al., 2020). Similarly, a judge absolved the off-duty officer who shot unarmed Rekia Boyd in the back of the head of all charges (Crenshaw et al., 2015). According to Dewan (2020), few police officers are charged with a felony such as murder or manslaughter when they use fatal force while on duty, and only about a third of those officers are convicted. Even as tens of thousands of Americans protest against excessive use of force and demand reforms, there is still a gap between how the public perceives police violence and how it is dealt with in court. Few convictions and little prison time for police who use excessive force are in part a result of broad legal standards that give police the benefit of the doubt despite misbehavior and bad judgment such as racial profiling Black suspects.

Although police officers are afforded legal liberties to apply force, the apparent discrepancies in the treatment of Black and White women by police raises a central question: What are the characteristics or factors that contribute to Black women's disproportionate vulnerability to police violence? The statistics concerning police use of force against Black

women suggest that being a woman and being Black may make them susceptible to excessive force (Amuchie, 2016).

Multiple Identities: Intersectionality

Black women possess multiple identities: an ethnic identity and a gender identity. Race, gender, and other identity categories may affect an individual's access to opportunity as well as their exposure to oppression and disadvantage (Collins, 2015), and may impact how they are viewed, understood, and treated (Coles & Pasek, 2020). These identities are often perceived immediately and automatically (Ito & Urland, 2003) and can contribute to unique patterns of oppression and privilege (referred to as *intersectionality*; Crenshaw, 1989). For example, a highly educated Black woman may experience class advantage and opportunity, yet may experience race and gender-based discrimination within the workplace (e.g., difficulty being promoted). Similarly, a highly educated White woman may experience advantages based on her class and race but experience gender-based discrimination in the workforce (e.g., her expertise is questioned).

Intersectionality is a lens for understanding the way in which complex forms of inequality (based on an individual's identities) often operate together and exacerbate each other (Collins, 1998). Individuals with intersecting identities may be regarded as non-prototypical group members, according to the intersectionality invisibility paradigm (Purdie-Vaughns & Eibach, 2008). Individuals who exist at the intersection of subordinate identities may be "invisible" because they are not wholly recognized as group members; their attributes and experiences are skewed or ignored to fit them into more prototypical categories (Purdie-Vaughns & Eibach, 2008). Indeed, empirical research has found an association of Whiteness with femininity and Blackness with masculinity in the White American worldview. Participants in one

study who were shown photographs of Black and White men and women and asked to identify the gender of the person shown frequently miscategorized Black women as men, making more errors than any other group (Goff et al., 2004). Due to the compounding experiences of gender-based and race-based discrimination, Black women are disproportionately ignored and mistreated compared to White women and Black men (Eigenberg & Park, 2016). Individuals tend to view discrimination through a single axis (e.g., White women experience gender bias, Black men experience racial bias). Thus, Black women's experiences of discrimination do not fit neatly within the single categories of either "racism" or "sexism" (Crenshaw, 1989).

Black women's experiences of oppression due to their race and gender are also reflected in the public's perceptions of police violence against them. Research suggests that the American public generally assumes that police violence primarily happens to men and that unjust police violence primarily happens to Black men. As a result, cases involving police violence against Black women have not received the same degree of scrutiny or national attention (Lewis & Grzanka, 2016). In order to understand how police violence against Black women differs from police violence against White women or Black men, it is crucial to analyze how race and gender interact to create unique stereotypes of Black women (Kang & Bodenhausen, 2015).

People's position in the social hierarchy and their identities, such as their race and gender, may influence their perceptions of police violence against Black women (Cochran & Warren, 2012). For example, Johnson and Kuhns (2009) suggest that White individuals are more likely to approve of police use of force compared to underrepresented group members, especially when the victim/suspect is a member of a minority group. Additionally, men typically demonstrate more prejudice than women (Dovidio, 2001; Dozo, 2015). Therefore, White men may be more

likely than White women to justify improper use of force by an officer and perceive the victim as more blameworthy because of their privileged position in a male- and White-dominant society.

Stereotypes

Cultural representations and stereotypes of Black women differ from those of White women. Although a Black woman and a White woman share a common social group (gender identity), they may have very different experiences surrounding prejudice and discrimination based on stereotypes (Kaiser & Wilkins, 2010). In the United States, a 'typical' woman may be expected to have feminine features and be interpersonally oriented, attractive, caring, and social (Fiske et al., 2002; Goh et al., 2021). Indeed, some people hold stereotypes of White women as innocent, sensitive, and naïve, allowing White women to embody this idealized expectation of womanhood (Fiske, 2017; Ghavami & Peplau, 2013). By contrast, others may hold stereotypes of Black women as 'angry Black women' who are strong, loud, domineering, and rude, differentiating them from prototypical (White) women. This violation of society's idealized representation of a 'woman' (Davis et al., 2018) can serve to masculinize Black women, which may lead others to perceive them as a greater threat (Thomas et al., 2014).

Additionally, stereotypes of Black women as dominant, angry, and aggressive may normalize racism, sexism, and other forms of injustice (Amuchie, 2016). For example, the manner in which news outlets report a crime can create an exaggerated perception of crime rates and can convey racial bias against Black women and men (Dorfman & Schiraldi, 2001), especially when Black women are portrayed as criminals or as perpetrators of violence (Chiricos & Eschholz, 2002; Duke & Gaither, 2017). Given that the public widely relies on news media as a source of information about crime and crime policy, exaggerated disparities have significant consequences on public perceptions (Warr, 2000). The portrayal of Black women can normalize

police violence against them (Amuchie, 2016), which can adversely impact how Black women are treated by the police and judged by the public (Unok, 2020).

Perceptions of Police Use of Force

Stereotypes and Police Actions. When police officers engage with a threatening individual, police officers may use varying degrees of force as allowed by law (National Institute of Justice, 2016). This force continuum can range from no force to lethal force (Celestin & Kruschke, 2019). For example, low to intermediate use of force includes verbal force (e.g., non-threatening directives to gain compliance), physical force (e.g., holding, grasping), and less-lethal means such as blunt impact (e.g., a baton), chemicals (e.g., pepper spray), or conducted energy devices (e.g., tasers; Kahn et al., 2016). Within a single interaction, a police officer's decision concerning the degree and manner of force to employ is influenced by the context of the interaction (Goff et al., 2016). Officers frequently determine reasonable force in the heat of the moment based on their perception of the situation (Atherley & Hickman, 2014). Given the dynamics of a situation and the need to make rapid judgments, an officer's appraisal of the incident may be influenced by stereotypes and bias (Steen et al., 2005); these factors may lead to greater use of force, including the probability of lethal force against Black women than against White women due, in part, to stereotypes concerning the threat posed by the individual based on their identities (Correll et al., 2011).

Analyzing the context of incidents involving use of force directed toward Black women is critical to understanding how intersectional stereotypes lead to police violence (Nadal et al., 2017). For example, incidents of police violence against Black women, such as the death of Margaret Mitchell and the maiming of Jonie Pratt, illustrate how stereotypes color Black women's experiences with police. On May 21, 1999, Margaret Mitchell was shot dead by a Los

Angeles Police Department police officer on the streets where she lived (Lait & Glover, 2000). Residents described Margaret Mitchell as sweet and harmless. Based on eyewitness accounts, officers stopped Margaret Mitchell as she pushed a shopping cart down the street. When an eyewitness sought to intervene, Margaret Mitchell reportedly ran away from the officers, who shot her in the back. The officers later claimed that Margaret Mitchell—who weighed 102 pounds at five foot one—lunged at them with a screwdriver, causing them to fear for their lives (Lait & Glover, 2000). The officers' narrative is in stark contrast to eyewitness accounts, which provides support for the view that the police officers perceived Margaret Mitchell as a criminal and dangerous due to stereotypes, and fits within the broader pattern of police officers using stereotypes to interpret Black women's behavior.

In many cases like Margaret Mitchell's, Black women killed by police were alleged to be armed or dangerous. However, witness accounts often dispute officers' versions, and suggest that less lethal force could have been employed (Ritchie, 2017). Importantly, police officer fears are often perceived to be reasonable even when Black women have done nothing wrong (Fiske et al., 1987; Goff et al., 2008).

On April 4, 2006, an officer approached Jonie Pratt while she was parked in her driveway (Fox News, 2006). When the officer approached her, he drew his gun and demanded that Jonie Pratt get out of her car. When she questioned why the officer approached her, the officer pulled Jonie Pratt out of her car, verbally assaulted her, pepper-sprayed her, pulled her hair, and punched her in the face. The officer claimed that he stopped Jonie Pratt because she ran two stop signs. As a result of the officers' unwarranted aggression, Jonie Pratt sustained a black eye, a swollen forehead, and a fractured left wrist (Fox News, 2006). The officers' actions against Jonie Pratt reflect the broader pattern of Black women being profiled and abused because a police

officer perceived a Black woman as a threat. The officer did not face any consequences for brutally beating Jonie Pratt due to insufficient evidence. His use of excessive force against her highlights how stereotypes can promote discriminatory violence against Black women. Cases such as Margaret Mitchell and Jonie Pratt provide evidence for how stereotypes arise from, and are reinforced by, discrimination that then serves to justify police violence towards Black women in the eyes of the general public (Crenshaw et al., 2015; Dovidio et al., 2010).

Stereotypes and Public Perceptions of Police Violence. Stereotypical characterizations of Black women may serve as a rationale for blaming Black female victims of police violence. Specifically, stereotypes that Black women are strong and masculine may lead others to perceive a Black woman as less victimized than White female victims (Dovidio et al., 2010), which may have significant legal implications due to the public's involvement in important decisions such as determining whether to indict and/or convict offending officer(s) or compensate the victim (Johnson, Sattler, Ginther, Smith, Otton, & Dierckx, under review). Indeed, studies investigating the criminal justice system and sentencing show that White jurors tend to support harsher punishments for crimes involving Black individuals compared to crimes involving White individuals (Sommers, 2006). Johnson et al. (under review) investigated whether a woman's race influenced White participants' perceptions of an incident of police use of force. They found that when participants scored high on a measure of prejudice and valued (i.e., reported feeling sympathy for) the officer involved, participants perceived an unarmed Black woman as more blameworthy for the lethal force used against her and perceived the police officer as less culpable for her death compared to a White woman in the same situation. Stereotypical perceptions of Black women prompt questions about what other factors (beyond victim race)

may influence public opinions as well as legal proceedings for the offending police officer(s) (Dukes & Gaither, 2017).

Factors that Influence Victim Blame. A woman's demeanor in an interaction with a police officer may influence whether the public blames her for the excessive force used against her (Money, 2020). Specifically, a Black woman's confrontational attitude towards an officer may be perceived as disrespectful compared to a White woman with a similar demeanor (Johnson et al., under review). When Margaret Mitchell did not stop running in response to the officers' directive, the officers shot her (Lait & Glover, 2000). When Jonie Pratt questioned why an officer approached her, the officer became physically aggressive (Amuchie, 2016). In both cases, Margaret Mitchell and Jonie Pratt's perceived non-compliance with the officer(s) appears to have been interpreted utilizing stereotypes, thereby justifying the force used against them (Crenshaw et al., 2015). When performed by a Black woman, behaviors such as resisting arrest or verbal/physical aggression may be perceived to be more violent and, therefore, more deserving of a forceful response by a police officer than if the woman were White (Money, 2020; Greenwald et al., 2003).

When a victim's behavior(s) is perceived to validate negative stereotypes, individuals are more likely to judge the victim as being more at fault for her death or injuries than when the victim does not adhere to stereotypes of Black women (Dukes & Gaither, 2017). While the victim's behavior may influence perceptions of the victim, the level of force used by the officers involved in the incident may have a powerful effect on shaping how incidences of police violence are viewed and how blame is applied.

Prior research on excessive use of force has primarily focused on instances where deadly force is used against marginalized groups (Ucok, 2020). In the same vein, social psychological

research has primarily focused on how stereotypical views of Black Americans influence perceptions of the use of deadly excessive force against them (Cochran & Warren, 2012; Kahn & McMahon, 2015). These results suggest that White participants are more likely to justify lethal force against an unarmed Black woman compared to an unarmed White woman (Johnson et al., under review). Nevertheless, simply focusing on deadly police violence against Black women limits the ability to describe how negative intersectional stereotypes affect perceptions of non-fatal police violence. Routine, non-lethal force used against Black women in police interactions may have severe consequences for public opinion by reinforcing and normalizing stereotypes of Black women as criminal, aggressive, and violent, thereby justifying the disparate treatment of Black women by police (Nadal et al., 2017).

Individual Differences and Stereotypes

Stereotype-based judgments are not inevitable, and individual differences in attitudes and personality predict the likelihood that individuals will engage in stereotyping and whether they will protest unjust police violence (Stewart & Tran, 2018). There is clear evidence of variability in the extent that the American public has favorable and supportive attitudes toward police officers (Johnson & Lecci, 2020; Mbuba, 2010; Miller & Davis, 2008). In other words, there is variability in the degree to which people support the use of violence by the police and whether such violence is appropriate (Jacobs, 2017). Therefore, it is essential to examine prejudicial beliefs and traits and how they might predict individuals' reactions to an incident of police violence against a White or Black woman. Ethnic identity and authoritarianism are a few factors that may predict variability in support for police violence against a Black woman.

Ethnic Identity. The degree of identification among dominant group members may significantly predict perceptions of unjustified police violence against a woman. Specifically, a

large body of social psychological research has found that those who value their ethnic identity are more likely to favor groups to which they belong over groups in which they do not belong.

This phenomenon is known as ingroup bias (Dovidio & Gaertner, 1986; Perdue et al., 1990). Ingroup bias manifests itself in a variety of ways, including recalling more negative than positive outgroup behaviors (Corenblum, 2003), evaluating a behavior more positively when performed by an ingroup member than when performed by an outgroup member (Schruijer et al., 1994), providing greater rewards to ingroup members (Tajfel & Turner, 1986), and attributing negative behaviors performed by an outgroup member to internal, dispositional factors while attributing negative behaviors performed by an ingroup member to external factors (Sherman & Kim, 2005). According to a previous study, White Americans who identify strongly with their ethnicity are more likely to be prejudiced against minorities; for example, they are more likely to dismiss the necessity for multicultural initiatives that celebrate diversity (Morrison & Chung, 2011).

Research has been relatively mixed on whether underrepresented groups show outgroup bias (i.e., favoring Whites). Blodorn and colleagues (2016) discovered that ethnic identity was positively related to perceived racism for Black Americans but negatively related for White Americans, implying that high-identified White Americans are more likely to react negatively to the Black female victim than low-identified White Americans. In contrast, high-identified Black Americans may be more likely to react positively to the Black female victim. Minority groups, on the other hand, have been found to have ingroup prejudice or a preference for other ethnic groups. Indeed, studies show that members of minority groups internalize stereotypes and cultural messages about their group that associate "White" with "good" and "Black" with "evil," leading them to implicitly favor Whites. As a result, members of high-identified

underrepresented groups may judge the Black victim poorly if she appears to confirm negative stereotypes about Blacks (e.g., being disrespectful and aggressive with the officer).

Authoritarianism. Authoritarianism, according to Boehm (1968), is linked with right-wing philosophy, acceptance of acts constituted by authority (even if illegal), and a tendency to exhibit prejudice against members of ethnic minority groups, as well as a more punitive response in general. Thus, authoritarianism can lead to inflexibility and oppression within a legal context (Henderson, 1991). A meta-analysis by Narby and colleagues (1993) revealed that individual differences in authoritarianism predicted juror perceptions and were linked to verdict choice in criminal trials. In other words, scoring higher on a measure of authoritarianism predicted harsher sentences for minorities.

Specifically, Packer (1968) found that individuals who strongly endorse authoritarian values regard the control and reduction of criminal behavior as the fundamental purpose of the criminal justice system. Authoritarians tend to believe that efficiency in the criminal justice system must be preserved at all costs (Packer, 1968). As a result, they have a higher level of trust in law enforcement and other criminal justice actors to carry out their responsibilities of apprehending and prosecuting offenders while acquitting the innocent. These people consider the presumption of innocence and the burden of proof as unnecessary roadblocks, and they support institutionalized authority's control over the accused's rights (Boehm, 1968).

On the other hand, individuals lower on authoritarianism may doubt the criminal justice system's ability to adequately carry out its tasks in apprehending and prosecuting criminals (Packer, 1968). They tend to prioritize the accused's rights, are concerned about innocent people being unfairly convicted, and emphasize the necessity of procedural safeguards in upholding the integrity of the process, even if it means releasing people who are guilty (Boehm, 1968).

Therefore, individuals who score high on a measure of authoritarianism may be more likely to hold negative attitudes toward a Black female victim, especially when she is perceived to be violating society's morals and standards, which is relevant given stereotypes portraying Black women as deviant and aggressive (Money, 2020). Furthermore, individuals high in authoritarianism are more likely to rely on authority to make decisions and thereby be more likely to endorse police use of force, especially against a Black woman, which can be consequential given judiciary power these individuals may have in determining who loses their freedom, property, and potentially their life (Cutler, 2008).

The Present Study

This study addresses a lacuna in the literature by analyzing perceptions of police use of force against a Black and a White woman, and adds to a budding body of work that focuses on Black women as targets of biased policing (e.g., Brown-Ianuzzi et al., 2021; Johnson et al., under review; Money, 2020). This study responds to reports that women, particularly women of color, are left out of discussions about police brutality and are underrepresented in the media (Crenshaw et al., 2015; Ritchie, 2017). Furthermore, this study used an intersectionality framework to examine how a woman's social identity(s) and contextual factors regarding a police-civilian interaction (i.e., attitude toward the officer; the severity of force used against her) influence how the public perceives the female victim and the officer involved. Understanding why women are underrepresented in discussions on discriminatory policing begins with examining the factors that may cause disparities in perceptions of police use of force. Police officers may not be held accountable and policies are unlikely to change without public demands for justice for Black women. Thus, victim race, the victim's attitude directed at the officer, the degree of violence exerted by the police officer against the victim, and individual difference

factors may affect how an incident of police violence against a woman is viewed and how blame is applied to the victim and the officer by the public.

The current study utilizes a 2 (Victim Race: Black, White) x 2 (Demeanor: Respectful, Disrespectful) x 2 (Severity of Force: Injured, Fatal) experimental design to examine how victim race and contextual factors influence differential outcomes in police use of force against a woman. Specifically, perceptions of victim blame, officer blame, perceived racial discrimination, and perceived gender discrimination are examined. Ethnic identity and authoritarianism were tested as moderators of these results.

Hypotheses

There are two main hypotheses, focusing on the effect of race, demeanor, and severity of force on perceptions of police use of force against a woman:

Hypothesis 1 (HYP 1): There will be significant interactions between race, demeanor, and severity of force on perceptions of excessive police use of force when controlling for participants' ethnic identity and authoritarianism. Main effects of race, demeanor, and severity of force are hypothesized, where participants would blame the victim less, blame the officer more, and perceive more gender discrimination when the woman is White, respectful, and killed compared to when she is Black, disrespectful, and injured (with the exception of racial discrimination, where participants should perceive more racial discrimination when the female victim is Black compared to White). These effects are hypothesized to be qualified by a significant three-way interaction between race, demeanor, and severity of force. Specifically, it is expected that when the female victim is White, demeanor and force will affect participant's perceptions of blame and discrimination, such that when the respectful White victim is killed during the interaction, she will incur less blame, participants will perceive more gender

discrimination, and blame the officer more than when the White woman is disrespectful and injured. However, when the female victim is Black, demeanor and severity of force will have a weaker effect, such that perceptions of the victim's blameworthiness and racial discrimination will be high, and officer blame and gender discrimination will be lower regardless of her demeanor and the severity of force used against her.

Hypothesis 2a (HYP 2a): After controlling for authoritarianism, ethnic identity should moderate the interaction between victim race, severity of force, and demeanor. Specifically, at lower levels of ethnic identity, the three-way interaction is not predicted to be significant, such that individuals lower in ethnic identity would perceive less victim blame, more officer blame, more gender discrimination, and more racial discrimination (no effect on racial discrimination is hypothesized for the White victim) regardless of victim race, severity of force, and demeanor. However, at higher levels of ethnic identity, the three-way interaction should be significant. More specifically, for the White victim, those high in ethnic identity should perceive less victim blame, more officer blame, and more gender discrimination when the victim is respectful and killed (compared to disrespectful and injured). Whereas, when the victim is Black, individuals who score higher on ethnic identity should judge her more harshly (more victim blame, less officer blame, less perceived racial and gender discrimination), especially when she was disrespectful and injured.

Hypothesis 2b (HYP 2b): After controlling for ethnic identity, the interactions between race, demeanor, and severity of force will be strengthened by participant's authoritarianism, such that individuals who score higher (compared to lower) in authoritarianism should perceive more victim blame, less officer blame, and perceive less gender discrimination when the victim is Black, and especially when she is disrespectful and injured. More specifically, at lower levels of

authoritarianism, the three-way is not predicted to be significant, such that individuals lower in authoritarianism would perceive less victim blame, more officer blame, more gender discrimination, and more racial discrimination (no effect on racial discrimination is hypothesized for the White victim) regardless of victim race, severity of force, and demeanor. At higher levels of authoritarianism, the three-way interaction should be significant. For the White victim, those high in authoritarianism should perceive more victim blame, less officer blame, and less gender discrimination when the victim is disrespectful and injured (compared to respectful and killed). Whereas, when the victim is Black, individuals who score higher on authoritarianism should judge her more harshly (more victim blame, less officer blame, less perceived racial and gender discrimination), especially when she was disrespectful and killed.

Method

Sample: Power Analysis

A priori power analyses were conducted with G*Power to estimate the sample size to detect an effect. To test HYP 1, a prospective analysis for ordinary least square multivariate analysis of covariance (MANOVA): Special effects and interactions producing a small-to-moderate effect ($f^2 = .13$) with a power level at .80 recommended a total sample size of 45¹ (G*Power; Faul et al., 2007). To test HYP 2a and 2b, a prospective analysis for OLS multiple linear regression: Fixed model, R^2 increase producing a small-to-moderate effect ($f^2 = .08$) with a power level of .80 recommended a total sample size of 155.

Participants

The initial sample included 276 individuals across the United States who were recruited using Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk). MTurk is a crowdsourcing platform where people

¹ Notably, the degrees of freedom denominator was 148. The degrees of freedom for the interaction term in a MANOVA is inflated compared to the estimated sample size because each participant is counted on multiple measures.

(workers) agree to be study participants in exchange for payment. In comparison to college students, MTurk participants often produce a more demographically diverse sample (Buhrmester et al., 2011). Although according to the Pew Research Center, U.S. MTurk participants tend to be more educated but have lower household incomes than the general population (Hitlin, 2016).

To participate in the study, individuals had to be 18 years of age or older, have a MTurk reputation score of .90 or higher (which helps to ensure quality data), and reside in the United States. Numerous additional measures ensured quality data. First, participants had to correctly respond to a number of attention checks (e.g., “If you are reading this item, respond with not at all”). Second, participants who completed the study in an amount of time suggesting they were not adequately reading the questions (i.e., less than 450 seconds, $N = 69$) were excluded from the analyses. The 450-second cutoff was calculated using a general formula that estimated the minimum time it would take to finish the study based on the number of questions and length of the survey. According to CloudResearch, MTurk workers tend to spend an average of 5.53 to 8.3 seconds on each question in longer studies (2020). Thus, participants should have taken about 376 to 565 seconds to complete the current study. In addition, responses that were extreme and inconsistent with their other answers, suggesting they were not carefully reading items ($N = 4$; e.g., reporting being pulled over 140 times in 12 months but only 4 times in their lifetime) were not included in the analyses. In total, 73 participants were removed from the final sample.

The final sample included 203 individuals. This sample size satisfies the power analyses indicating the sample size needed to detect small-to-medium effect sizes for each test. The majority of the participants identified as male (56.2%), followed by female (42.4%), transgender (1%), and declined to state (.05%). Most were White (76.8%), with 9.4% of participants identifying as Black, 7.9% as Asian, 4.4% as Multiracial, 1% as Latino/a/Hispanic, 1% as Native

American/Indigenous, and one participant indicated “Other” and specified their ethnic identity as Latino and White. Participants ranged in age from 22 to 74 ($M = 39.79$; $SD = 11.47$). Most participants reported their highest level of education as a Bachelor’s degree (48.8%), followed by some college (21.2%), with 13.3% indicating an advanced/postgraduate degree, 16.3% indicating a high school diploma, and 0.5% indicating less than a high school diploma. Participants’ political ideology was left-leaning (44.8%), right-leaning political views (38.4%), neutral or neither liberal or conservative (15.8%), and 1% declined to answer. About three-quarters (72.4%) lived in an urban area and about one-quarter (27.6%) lived in a rural area.

Materials

The materials were presented in the following order (see Appendix for study materials).

Demographics. Demographic questions asked for information about age, gender identity, ethnic identity, education level, political ideology, and location.

Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (Phinney, 1992). The 12-item Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure assessed the degree to which participants identified with their ethnic group. Reliability was excellent, $\alpha = .90$. Participants indicated their levels of agreement with each item on a 4-point Likert response scale (1 = *Strongly Disagree*, 4 = *Strongly Agree*), with higher scores relating to stronger commitment to one's ethnic group. Subscales include Ethnic Identity ($\alpha = .83$; “I have spent time trying to find out more about my ethnic group, such as its history, traditions, and customs”) and Affirmation, belonging, and commitment ($\alpha = .89$; “I feel a strong attachment towards my own ethnic group”).

Authoritarianism (Kravitz et al., 1993). To measure authoritarianism, the 23-item revised Legal Attitudes Questionnaire assessed the extent to which participants agreed with authoritarian attitudes within a legal context ($\alpha = .80$). Participants indicated their levels of

agreement on a 5-point Likert response scale (1 = *Strongly Disagree*, 5 = *Strongly Agree*), with higher scores indicating a greater endorsement of authoritarian attitudes. Subscales include authoritarian ($\alpha = .86$; “The law coddles criminals to the detriment of society”), anti-authoritarian ($\alpha = .75$; “Wiretapping by anyone or for any reason should be completely illegal”) and egalitarian ($\alpha = .68$; “All too often, minority group members do not get fair trials”). Both anti-authoritarian and egalitarian items were reverse-coded.

Police interaction news story. Participants were randomly assigned to read a fictitious news story, which was used to manipulate the race of a female victim, demeanor of the female victim, and the severity of force used by the police officer against the victim (see Appendix for the news story).

Participants were informed that the story involved a legal matter, and that they would make judgments about the situation and those who were involved. The story involved a White male police officer who pulled over either a Black or White woman who was driving late at night. The story revealed that video recorded by the officer’s bodycam showed he first asked the woman why she “changed lanes erratically” and if she “had been drinking.” She responded by saying, “I have done nothing wrong! Are you targeting and harassing me because of who I am?” or saying, “Sir, I didn’t realize I changed lanes so quickly.” Then the police officer asked for her license and registration. She either replied, “Why should I have to give you my driver’s license? Don’t you have something better to do?” or “Yes, officer. Here is my driver’s license” while handing her license and registration to the officer. The police officer then directed her to get out of the car. As she began to slowly get out of the car, she moved her right hand towards her purse, which was in the front seat. The officer immediately yelled “Stop and put your hands up!” but Samantha Anderson continued reaching for her purse. The officer then either opened fire with

his gun, fatally killing her or grabbed her arm, forcibly pulling her from the car and handcuffed her. A search of her car showed that she did not have a weapon in her purse. A lawsuit was filed against the police department and is seeking to have the officer charged in court and fired. In his statement the officer said that what happened to her “was devastating” but she “brought this upon herself” by her actions. The police department released a statement that the officer’s actions were in the line of duty and that he felt “severely threatened” by the woman’s actions. After reading the scenario, participants completed measures assessing victim blame, officer blame, gender discrimination, and racial discrimination.

Perceived Victim Blame. Six items assessed the extent to which participants were certain that “Samantha Anderson is responsible for the events that occurred during the traffic stop” and to what extent do participants feel like “Samantha Anderson was a threat to the officer’s safety.” Reliability was excellent, $a = .90$. Participants indicated their levels of agreement on a 5-point Likert response scale (1 = *Not at All*, 5 = *Very Much*), with higher scores indicating greater perceptions of the victim’s blameworthiness. The items were summed and averaged to create a perceived victim blame score.

Perceived Officer Blame. Six items assessed the extent to which participants were certain that “Officer Billy Warner should be held responsible for the incident” and to what extent do they feel like “Officer Billy Warner should be fired from the Police Department.” Reliability was excellent, $a = .94$. Participants indicated their levels of agreement on a 5-point Likert response scale (1 = *Not at All*, 5 = *Very Much*), with higher scores indicating greater perceptions of the officer’s blameworthiness. Officer blame was computed by averaging responses.

Perceived Racial Discrimination. One item assessed the extent to which participants were certain that “Samantha was treated differently because of her race.” Participants indicated

their levels of agreement on a 5-point Likert response scale (1 = *Strongly Disagree*, 5 = *Strongly Agree*), with higher scores indicating greater perceived racial bias directed towards the female victim.

Perceived Gender Discrimination. One item assessed the extent to which participants were certain that “Samantha was treated differently because of her gender.” Participants indicated their levels of agreement on a 5-point Likert response scale (1 = *Strongly Disagree*, 5 = *Strongly Agree*), with higher scores indicating greater perceived gender bias directed towards the female victim.

Procedure

This project was approved by the Western Washington University Institutional Review Board. Informed consent information was presented and all responses were confidential. If consent was given, participants completed demographic items, followed by ethnic identity and authoritarianism questionnaires, the experimental manipulation, and measures asking about perceptions of the incident (see Appendix). All data was collected within three days in October 2021. To reduce the likelihood that the experimental manipulation would influence participants' scores on the identity and attitude measures, both the ethnic identity and authoritarianism measures were completed prior to the experimental manipulation (cf. Johnson & Lecci, 2020).

The study took approximately 20 minutes to complete. Participants were debriefed, and informed that the fictional story was based on actual events. They received \$4.00 as compensation for their participation (in addition to a \$1.60 MTurk charge per participant).

Design and Data Analytic Plan

This study utilized a 2 x 2 x 2 between-subjects experimental design to test how the victim's racial identity, demeanor, and the severity of force influences outcomes related to

excessive police use of force against a woman. More specifically, victim blame (i.e., when the victim is held responsible for the force used against her), officer blame (i.e., when the police officer is held responsible for using excessive force), perceived racial discrimination (i.e., perceiving unjust and unfair treatment as a result of the victim's race), and perceived gender discrimination (i.e., perceiving unjust and unfair treatment as a result of the victim's gender) were assessed.

To test HYP 1, a factorial multivariate analysis of covariance (MANCOVA) was conducted to determine the effects of victim race, demeanor, and severity of force (and their interactions) on perceptions of excessive police use of force after controlling for authoritarianism and participants' ethnic identity. A MANCOVA was an optimal approach due to its combination of multiple related dependent variables into a single value that maximizes differences across groups (Bray & Maxwell, 1985). Additionally, a MANCOVA allows the ability to control the overall alpha level (at .05) and evaluate the mean differences on all of the dependent variables (victim blame, officer blame, racial discrimination, and gender discrimination) simultaneously while controlling for the intercorrelations among them (Huberty & Morris, 1989). Covariates are added so that it can reduce error terms and so that the analysis eliminates the covariates' effect on the relationship between the independent grouping variable and the dependent variables (Smith, 1958).

To test HYP 2a and HYP 2b, eight hierarchical regressions were conducted to test whether participants' ethnic identity and authoritarianism (separately) would moderate the influence of victim race, demeanor, and severity of force. Hierarchical regression was selected because of its ability to test moderation with multiple predictors, indicate significant changes in R^2 , and ensure that any three-way interactions were not qualified by two-way interactions or

main effects. Most importantly, these tests maintain ethnic identity and authoritarianism as continuous variables. Both covariates were centered at the sample means (Aiken & West, 1991). The categorical independent variables were dummy coded. Authoritarianism was controlled in all tests regarding ethnic identity and vice versa.

Additionally, previous research has found that participant characteristics such as ethnicity and gender can influence how people react to excessive police use of force (Tyler, 2005). Furthermore, research has revealed demographic differences in attitudes towards police (Ekins, 2016), valuing one's ethnic identity (Goff et al., 2008), and authoritarianism (Boehm, 1968). Thus, although participant demographics and attitudes towards police were not the main focus of this study, they were considered in supplementary analyses.

Results

Preliminary Analyses

Scales were constructed with item responses averaged to represent overall scores for each participant. Outliers, accuracy, and missing data were then assessed. No multivariate outliers were marked through the use of Mahalanobis Distances. Box plots and scatterplots revealed as many as nine univariate outliers, but they did not significantly alter any statistical results and were thus retained. No missing data was present. Next, descriptive statistics and bivariate correlations among the study variables were computed to test for multicollinearity and to assess the relationship between variables (see Table 1). Two tests examined multicollinearity. No Pearson's correlations were greater than $r = .90$ which suggests that multicollinearity is not an issue for the multivariate analysis of variance (Belinda & Peat, 2014; Bray & Maxwell, 1985). In addition, to further examine any potential multicollinearity for the multiple linear regression

models, variance inflation factors² (VIF) were measured on each dependent variable. The obtained VIF values were > 1 ; therefore, it can be concluded that multicollinearity is not an issue in this data (Hair et al., 2014). Next, a p-plot of regression standardized residuals tested for non-linearity. The points were relatively clustered around the horizontal line, meeting the assumption of multivariate linearity (Buchanan, 2015). By plotting the residuals against fitted values, the results showed that the trend is mostly centered around zero and with the exception of a few values. Since the variance around zero was scattered uniformly and randomly, it was determined that the heteroskedasticity assumption was satisfied. To test univariate normality, skew and kurtosis were assessed. Both skew and kurtosis were between ± 2 , which was considered acceptable (West et al., 1995).

Pearson's correlations were conducted to assess the relationships and patterns between dependent variables and covariates. Table 1 shows that for authoritarianism, higher scores were positively associated with victim blame, and negatively correlated with officer blame, perceived racial discrimination, and perceived gender discrimination. Thus, individuals who endorsed more authoritarianism were more likely to perceive the victim as more blameworthy, the officer as less culpable, and perceive that the victim experienced less discrimination. Higher valuing of one's ethnic identity was also positively associated with victim blame, perceived racial discrimination, and perceived gender discrimination, but was not significantly correlated with officer blame. Interestingly, individuals who highly valued their ethnic identity were more likely to perceive the victim as more blameworthy, but were also more likely to perceive that the victim experienced more discrimination. Ethnic identity and authoritarianism were positively correlated,

² In an ordinary least square (OLS) regression analysis, the variance inflation factor (VIF) is used to detect the severity of multicollinearity. Small VIF values suggest poor correlation among variables, under ideal conditions $VIF < 3$. However, if VIF is > 1 and < 10 , it is acceptable.

such that individuals who endorsed more authoritarianism were also more likely to highly value their ethnic identity. Indeed, negative evaluations of the victim (i.e., victim blame) were associated with less officer blame, and less perceived racial discrimination, and less perceived gender discrimination. Whereas negative evaluations of the officer were associated with more perceived racial discrimination and gender discrimination. These results suggest that individual differences in ethnic identity and authoritarianism play a significant role in participants' perceptions of a police-civilian interaction. Evaluations of the victim, the officer, and whether the officer acted discriminatorily are all relevant to participants' perceptions of excessive force.

Table 1

Correlations Between Study Variables

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Ethnic Identity	2.80	0.64	–					
2. Authoritarianism	2.63	0.54	.22**	–				
3. Victim Blame	2.74	1.11	.25***	.50***	–			
4. Officer Blame	3.13	1.19	-.01	-.43***	-.76***	–		
5. Racial Discrimination	2.65	1.47	.15*	-.19**	-.26***	.54***	–	
6. Gender Discrimination	2.43	1.34	.26***	-.15*	-.18*	.48***	.64***	–

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

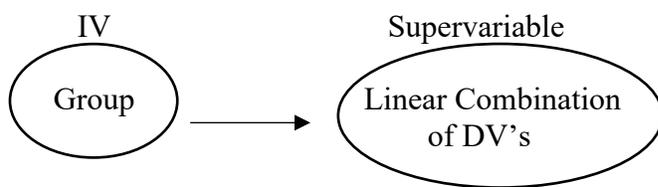
Hypothesis Testing

HYP 1. To test HYP 1, a between-subjects factorial MANCOVA was conducted on the linear combination of the four dependent variables: victim blame, officer blame, racial discrimination, and gender discrimination, after controlling for authoritarianism and ethnic identity scores (see Figure 1). If there are significant mean differences on the supervariable (referred to as perceptions of excessive police use of force), the effects will be assessed on each

dependent variable independently (an ANCOVA). A preliminary evaluation of the data showed that the assumptions (i.e., normality, linearity, multicollinearity) for MANCOVA were met. Additionally, the *Box's M* (88.24) was not significant, $p (.151) > \alpha (.001)$, indicating that there are no significant differences between covariance matrices (i.e., multivariate homogeneity of variance; Nichols, 1993). Multiple Levene's tests (one for each dependent variable) confirmed equal variance across independent variable groups. Therefore, the assumptions for homogeneity are not violated, and Wilk's Lambda is an appropriate test to use.

Figure 1

Multivariate Analysis of Covariance Supervariable Diagram



Note. A MANCOVA generates a new DV (variable, supervariable, linear combination of DV's) and then runs an ANCOVA on the supervariable (Y^*). For each of the main effects and interaction effects, a different linear combination of the DV's is constructed separately in a factorial design (more than one IV).

Multivariate Effects. Main effects for victim race, demeanor, and severity of force were predicted to be qualified by a significant interaction on perceptions of excessive police use of force, where the respectful White woman who was killed was predicted to elicit greater perceptions of excessive police use of force. The three-way interaction³ was not statistically significant ($p > .05$). However, Wilks' criterion showed that perceptions of excessive use of force (i.e., the combined dependent variables or supervariable) were statistically significant by levels

³ Some two- and three-way interactions were significant at the univariate level, but because the effects were not captured by the supervariable, these effects are not discussed.

of severity of force and victim race after controlling for authoritarianism and participants' ethnic identity, which partially supports HYP 1 (see Table 2). Notably, the main effect for demeanor did not reach statistical significance. These multivariate results indicate that participants did not differ in their perceptions of excessive police use of force (the supervariable) regardless of the combination of the female victim's race, demeanor, and severity of the force used against her. In line with HYP 1, there were significant main effects of severity of force and victim race; therefore, these effects will be explored at the univariate level.

Table 2

Multivariate Effects

Variable(s)	Wilks' Lambda	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	Partial η^2
Legal Attitudes	.746	16.21	<.001	.254
Ethnic Identity	.838	9.21	<.001	.162
Force	.896	5.50	<.001	.104
Race	.750	15.87	<.001	.250
Demeanor	.986	0.68	.61	.014
Force * Race	.967	1.64	.17	.033
Force * Demeanor	.963	1.81	.13	.037
Race * Demeanor	.984	0.79	.53	.016
Force * Demeanor * Race	.967	1.64	.17	.033

Univariate Effects. Univariate analysis of variance tests were performed to investigate the impact of the severity of force and victim race on each dependent variable separately (refer to Table 3).

Victim Blame. It was hypothesized that participants would perceive the victim as less blameworthy when the victim was White (compared to Black) and was fatally wounded (compared to injured). There was a significant main effect for severity of force, where blaming the female victim was greater in the injured ($M = 2.95$, $SE = .091$) compared to the fatal ($M =$

2.54, $SE = .092$) condition, lending support to HYP 1. The main effect of victim race on victim blame did not reach significance ($p > .05$), such that participants' perceptions of blame did not differ whether the victim was White or Black.

Officer Blame. The main effect of severity of force on officer blame was significant, indicating that participants blamed the officer more when the female victim was fatally shot ($M = 3.45$, $SE = .103$) compared to when she was injured ($M = 2.80$, $SE = .103$). The finding supports HYP 1, which predicted that participants would perceive the officer as more blameworthy when the victim was killed during the altercation. The hypothesized main effect of race on officer blame was not statistically significant ($p > .05$). That is, participants' judgment of the officer did not differ based on whether the victim was White or Black.

Racial Discrimination. The main effect of severity of force on perceptions of racial discrimination was not significant ($p > .05$). The main effect of race on racial discrimination was statistically significant, such that participants perceived more racial discrimination when the female victim was Black ($M = 3.31$, $SE = .132$) compared to White ($M = 2.06$, $SE = .126$). The hypothesized main effect of victim race on perceived racial discrimination was supported.

Gender Discrimination. Greater perceptions of gender discrimination was predicted towards the White woman (compared to the Black woman) and the fatally wounded (compared to injured) woman. Results showed that the main effect of severity of force on perceived gender discrimination was not statistically significant ($p > .05$). There was a marginally significant main effect of victim race on gender discrimination. Similar to racial discrimination, participants perceived more gender discrimination when the woman was Black ($M = 2.62$, $SE = .122$) compared to when she was White ($M = 2.28$, $SE = 1.97$), which is contrary to HYP 1.

Table 3*Univariate Effects of Victim Race and Severity of Force on Dependent Variables*

Variable	Condition	Mean	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	Partial η^2
Victim Blame	Black	2.72	0.13	.717	.00
	White	2.77			
	Injured	2.95	10.30	.002	.05
	Killed	2.54			
Officer Blame	Black	3.19	0.84	.361	.00
	White	3.06			
	Injured	2.80	20.00	<.001	.09
	Killed	3.45			
Racial Discrimination	Black	3.31	46.54	<.001	.19
	White	2.06			
	Injured	2.54	2.47	.118	.01
	Killed	2.83			
Gender Discrimination	Black	2.62	3.70	.056	.02
	White	2.28			
	Injured	2.37	0.79	.375	.00
	Killed	2.53			

HYP 2a. To test ethnic identity as a moderator of the relationship between victim race, demeanor, and severity of force, authoritarianism was entered into the first step of the model as the control variable. Next, the victim race (R), demeanor (D), severity of force (F), and centered ethnic identity (EI) were entered into the second step. In the third step, the two-way interactions between the conditions (i.e., RxF, RxD, FxD), as well as the conditions and centered ethnic identity (i.e., RxEI, FxEI, DxEI), were entered. Then, the three-way interactions were entered into the model. The interaction between the victim race condition, the demeanor condition, and the force condition (i.e., RxDxF) and ethnic identity (i.e., RxFxEI, RxDxEI, FxDxEI) were entered into the fourth step. Finally, the interaction between victim race, demeanor, severity of force, moderated by ethnic identity (RxDxFxEI) was entered in the fifth step. Victim blame,

officer blame, racial discrimination, and gender discrimination were then entered into separate regressions as the dependent variables. If the three-way moderated interaction term in the fifth step was significant, three-way interactions and the simple slopes were tested. Because significant interactions do not indicate specific patterns of results, PROCESS macro model was used to probe the interactions and simple effects (Hayes, 2018).

The following regression equation was tested for each of the four outcome variables, where Y = victim blame, officer blame, racial discrimination, or gender discrimination. Covariates are coded as ethnic identity (EI) and authoritarianism (LA).

$$Y = b_0 + b_1X_{1,R} + b_2X_{2,D} + b_3X_{3,F} + b_4X_{4,EI} + b_5X_{5,LA} + b_6X_{6,RF} + b_7X_{7,RD} + b_8X_{8,FD} + b_9X_{9,REI} + b_{10}X_{10,DEI} + b_{11}X_{11,FEI} + b_{12}X_{12,RDF} + b_{13}X_{13,RDEI} + b_{14}X_{14,FDEI} + b_{15}X_{15,RFEI} + b_{16}X_{16,RDFEI} + e$$

Where:

$$\begin{aligned} X_{6,RF} &= X_{1,R} + X_{3,F}; \\ X_{7,RD} &= X_{1,R} + X_{2,D}; \\ X_{8,FD} &= X_{3,F} + X_{2,D}; \\ X_{9,REI} &= X_{1,R} + X_{4,EI}; \\ X_{10,DEI} &= X_{2,D} + X_{4,EI}; \\ X_{11,FEI} &= X_{3,F} + X_{4,EI}; \\ X_{12,RDF} &= X_{1,R} + X_{2,D} + X_{3,F}; \\ X_{13,RDEI} &= X_{1,R} + X_{2,D} + X_{4,EI}; \\ X_{14,FDEI} &= X_{3,F} + X_{2,D} + X_{4,EI}; \\ X_{15,RFEI} &= X_{1,R} + X_{3,F} + X_{4,EI}; \\ X_{16,RDFEI} &= X_{1,R} + X_{2,D} + X_{3,F} + X_{4,EI} \end{aligned}$$

A significant three-way interaction between victim race, demeanor, severity of force, moderated by ethnic identity was predicted for all dependent variables. The results of the hierarchical regressions are discussed separately for each dependent variable.

Victim Blame. Contrary to expectations, the Race x Demeanor x Force interaction moderated by ethnic identity on victim blame was not significant, $B = -0.07$, $SE = .82$, $t(186) = -0.80$, $p = .94$, adjusted $R^2 = .31$. Similarly, no other three- or two-way interactions were

statistically significant ($p > .05$). However, there was a significant main effect of ethnic identity, $B = 0.27$, $SE = .10$, $t(201) = 2.55$, $p = .01$. Overall, these findings do not support the hypothesis that ethnic identity would moderate the effect of race, demeanor, and severity of force on participants' judgment of the victim. These results suggest that participants' greater connection to their ethnic identity leads to greater perceptions of the female victim's blameworthiness.

Officer Blame. For officer blame, the three-way interaction was not significantly moderated by ethnic identity, $B = 1.05$, $SE = .90$, $t(186) = 1.16$, $p = .25$, adjusted $R^2 = .28$. No other three- or two-way interactions were statistically significant ($p > .05$). Additionally, the main effect of ethnic identity was not statistically significant, indicating that ethnic identity does not influence participants' perceptions of officer blame.

Racial Discrimination. For racial discrimination, the hierarchical regression revealed that the four-way interaction was not statistically significant, $B = 2.19$, $SE = 1.14$, $t(186) = 1.92$, $p = .057$, adjusted $R^2 = .25$. Indeed, no other interactions were statistically significant ($p > .05$). Importantly, the main effect of participants ethnic identity ($B = 0.45$, $SE = .15$, $t(201) = 3.11$, $p = .002$) on perceived racial discrimination was statistically significant, indicating that as ethnic identity increases so does participants' perceptions of racial discrimination.

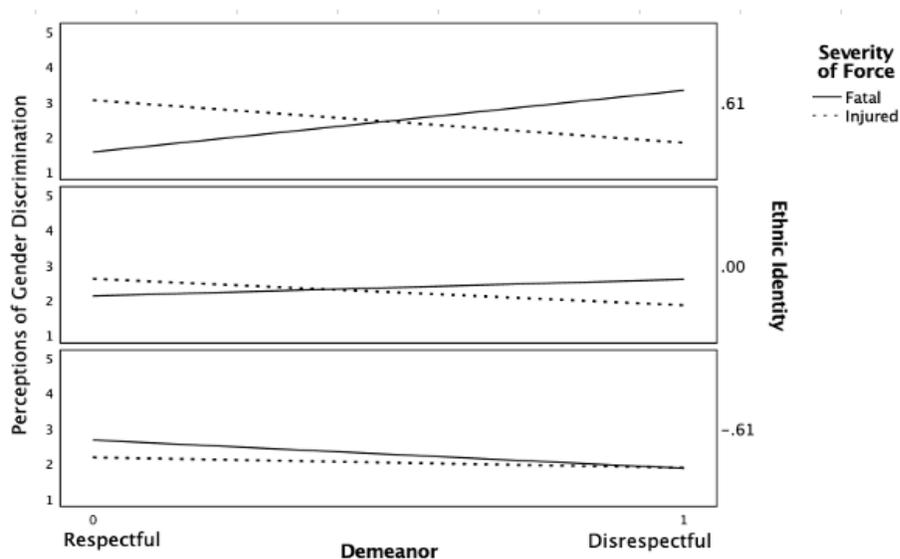
Gender Discrimination. The hypothesis that there would be a three-way interaction between victim race, demeanor, and severity of force moderated by ethnic identity was supported, $B = 3.11$, $SE = 1.09$, $t(186) = 2.87$, $p = .005$, adjusted $R^2 = .17$. The interaction was probed using PROCESS macro model 3 (Hayes, 2018) to examine the interactions between severity of force, demeanor, and ethnic identity within each victim race condition.

For the White victim, the three-way interaction was statistically significant, $B = -2.85$, R^2 change = .11, $F(1, 98) = 14.37$, $p < .001$. (See Figure 2). Results indicated that the two-way

interaction Severity of Force x Demeanor was significant at high levels, $B = -2.96$, $F(1, 98) = 21.19$, $p < .001$, but not low levels of ethnic identity, $B = 0.51$, $F(1, 98) = .63$, $p = .43$. Simple slopes were subsequently examined to evaluate the interaction at high levels of ethnic identity. The results indicated that participants perceived significantly more gender discrimination when the respectful White victim was injured ($M = 3.04$) compared to killed ($M = 1.57$), $B = 1.47$, $t(98) = -3.16$, $p = .002$. When the White victim was disrespectful towards the officer, participants perceived significantly less gender discrimination when the White victim was injured ($M = 1.82$) compared to killed ($M = 3.32$), $B = -1.49$, $t(98) = -3.35$, $p = .001$.

Figure 2

The Interaction Between Force, Demeanor, and Ethnic Identity on Perceptions of Gender Discrimination for the White Victim



Note. On the z-axis, $-.6 =$ one standard deviation below the mean of ethnic identity, $0 =$ the mean of ethnic identity, and $.6 =$ one standard deviation above the mean of ethnic identity.

For the Black victim, the three-way interaction was not statistically significant, $B = .43$, R^2 change = $.002$, $F(1, 89) = .29$, $p = .60$, suggesting that ethnic identity did not influence the interaction between severity of force and demeanor (see Figure 3).

In order to fully parse out these findings, these three-way interactions were also assessed another way by looking at the severity of force and demeanor interaction within levels of ethnic identity for the White victim. Simple slopes indicated that when the White victim was respectful and killed, ethnic identity predicted perceived gender discrimination, such that those lower in ethnic identity perceived more gender discrimination ($M = 2.66$) than those who are higher in ethnic identity ($M = 1.57$). However, when the White victim is disrespectful and killed, those low in ethnic identity ($M = 1.86$) perceived less gender discrimination than those high in ethnic identity ($M = 3.32$).

Taken as a whole, for the White victim, severity of force and demeanor predicted perceptions of gender discrimination at high levels of ethnic identity. Contrary to the hypothesized effect, individuals high in ethnic identity perceived significantly *less* gender discrimination when the White victim was respectful and fatally wounded (compared to injured) by the officer. When the White victim was disrespectful, however, individuals high in ethnic identity perceived significantly *more* gender discrimination when the White victim was fatally wounded (compared to injured) by the officer.

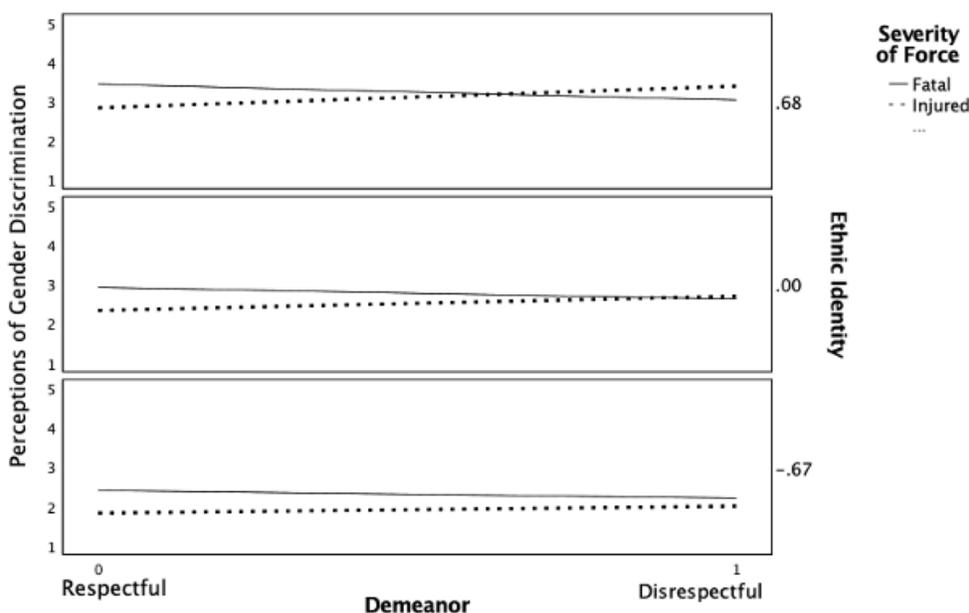
The three-way interaction did not reach statistical significance for the Black victim, which does not support the hypothesis (see Figure 3). However, an investigation of the means suggests that, at lower levels of ethnic identity, participants perceived more gender discrimination when the respectful Black woman was killed ($M = 2.40$) compared to injured ($M = 1.83$). In conjunction, when the Black woman was disrespectful, participants lower in ethnic identity perceived more gender discrimination when the victim was killed ($M = 2.21$) rather than injured ($M = 2.01$). At higher levels of ethnic identity, participants perceived more gender discrimination when the respectful Black woman was killed ($M = 2.92$) compared to injured (M

= 2.33). When the Black woman was disrespectful, participants higher in ethnic identity perceived more gender discrimination when the victim was injured ($M = 3.39$) rather than killed ($M = 3.03$).

To summarize, contrary to expectations, (1) those who scored higher on ethnic identity perceived more gender discrimination than those lower in ethnic identity, and (2) those higher in ethnic identity perceived more gender discrimination when the Black victim was disrespectful (compared to respectful) and injured (instead of fatally wounded).

Figure 3

The Interaction Between Force, Demeanor, and Ethnic Identity on Perceptions of Gender discrimination for the Black Victim



Note. On the z-axis, $-.67$ = one standard deviation below the mean of ethnic identity, 0 = the mean of ethnic identity, and $.68$ = one standard deviation above the mean of ethnic identity.

HYP 2b. To test authoritarianism as a moderator of the relationship between victim race, demeanor, and severity of force, the analytic strategy for testing ethnic identity as a moderator (described above) was followed, with authoritarianism substituted for ethnic identity.

Victim Blame. Contrary to expectations, the Race x Demeanor x Force interaction moderated by authoritarianism on victim blame was not significant, $B = 0.38$, $SE = 1.16$, $t(186) = 0.33$, $p = .74$, adjusted $R^2 = .30$. No other three- or two-way interactions were significant ($p > .05$). However, there was a significant main effect of authoritarianism, $B = 0.95$, $SE = .12$, $t(201) = 7.63$, $p < .001$, where greater authoritarianism predicts greater victim blame. Overall, these findings do not support HYP 2b that authoritarianism would moderate the effect of race, demeanor, and severity of force on participants' judgment of the victim.

Officer Blame. For officer blame, the hypothesized moderating effect of authoritarianism on the three-way interaction was not significant, $B = -0.05$, $SE = 1.30$, $t(186) = -0.40$, $p = .97$, adjusted $R^2 = .29$. No other three- or two-way interactions were significant at the $p < .05$ level. Notably, the main effect of authoritarianism on officer blame was statistically significant, $B = -0.97$, $SE = .14$, $t(201) = -7.03$, $p < .001$. Overall, these findings do not support the hypothesis and suggests that authoritarianism predicts less officer blame in general, but not in regard to victim race, demeanor, and severity of force.

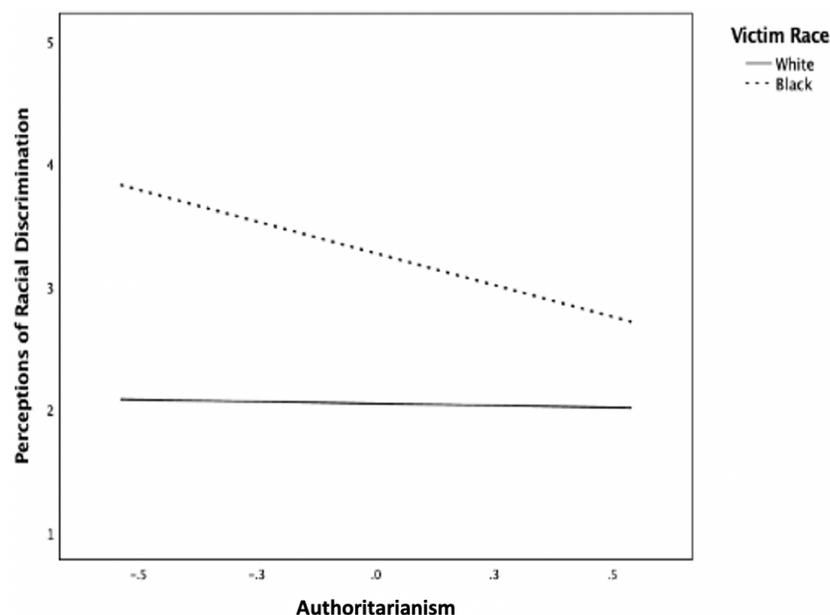
Racial Discrimination. For racial discrimination, the hierarchical regression revealed that the moderated three-way interaction was not statistically significant, $B = 1.89$, $SE = 1.57$, $t(186) = 1.21$, $p = .23$, adjusted $R^2 = .27$. However, a two-way interaction between authoritarianism and victim race, $B = -1.01$, $SE = .36$, $t(197) = -2.80$, $p = .006$, was statistically significant.

The interaction was probed using PROCESS macro model 1 (Weaver & Dubois, 2012). Simple slopes indicated that both individuals who were low ($B = 1.75$, $SE = 0.26$, $t(199) = 6.77$, $p < .001$) and high ($B = 0.70$, $SE = 0.26$, $t(199) = 2.68$, $p < .008$) in authoritarianism perceived more racial discrimination for the Black victim ($M = 3.83$; $M = 2.71$) compared to the White woman ($M = 2.08$; $M = 2.01$) respectively (see Figure 4). Accessed another way, this finding

lends partial support to HYP 2b because individuals higher in authoritarianism perceived less racial discrimination for the Black victim ($M = 2.71$) than individuals low in authoritarianism ($M = 3.27$), $B = -1.03$, $t(199) = -3.96$, $p < .001$, whereas, for the White victim, there was no difference in perceptions of racial discrimination between individual's authoritarianism. Importantly, the main effect of authoritarianism on perceived racial discrimination was statistically significant, $B = -0.59$, $SE = .17$, $t(201) = -3.40$, $p < .001$, indicating that participants perceived more racial discrimination when they were lower in authoritarian attitudes.

Figure 4

The Interaction Between Victim Race and Authoritarianism on Perceived Racial Discrimination



Note. On the x-axis, -0.5 = one standard deviation below the mean of authoritarianism, 0 = the mean of authoritarianism, and 0.5 = one standard deviation above the mean of authoritarianism

Gender Discrimination. For gender discrimination, hierarchical regression revealed that the three-way interaction moderated by authoritarianism was not statistically significant, $B = 0.60$, $SE = 1.60$, $t(186) = 0.37$, $p = .71$, adjusted $R^2 = .07$. Additionally, no other three- or two-way interactions were statistically significant ($p > .05$). Importantly, the main effect of

authoritarianism on perceived gender discrimination was statistically significant, $B = -0.51$, $SE = .17$, $t(201) = -3.04$, $p = .003$ such that participants' perceived more gender discrimination when they scored lower on authoritarianism.

Supplementary Analyses

Independent sample t-tests were conducted to assess significant mean differences in ethnic identity, authoritarianism, and attitudes towards police between both men and women, as well as between White and racially underrepresented participants.

Results indicated that women ($M = 2.77$, $SD = 0.49$) were significantly higher than men ($M = 2.53$, $SD = 0.56$) in authoritarianism, $t(198) = 3.15$, $p < .001^4$, $d = 0.45$. According to Kavitz et al.'s (1993), findings have consistently shown that women tend to score higher on the revised legal attitude questionnaire; however there is currently no explanation for this gender difference.

There were no significant differences between women ($M = 2.81$, $SD = 0.58$) and men ($M = 2.79$, $SD = 0.68$) in their connection to their ethnic identity, $t(198) = 0.22$, $p = .41$, $d = 0.03$, which is consistent with previous findings (Herrington et al., 2016).

For gender differences in attitudes about police, men ($M = 3.58$, $SD = 1.28$) were significantly more likely than women ($M = 3.16$, $SD = 1.35$) to believe that Blacks are commonly pulled over without good cause, $t(198) = -2.23$, $p = .013$, $d = -0.32$. Moreover, results indicated that women ($M = 3.22$, $SD = 1.49$) were significantly more likely to believe that police officers are being unfairly scrutinized because of only a handful of officers ("one bad apple") compared to men ($M = 2.68$, $SD = 1.34$), $t(198) = 2.67$, $p < .01$, $d = 0.38$, which is inconsistent with prior findings that men tend to harbor more prejudicial views such as racism (Ekehammar

⁴ A one-sided p-value was utilized for all t-tests. All significant results were also significant at the two-sided p-value.

& Sidanius, 1982) and are typically more supportive of police use of force than women (Dozo, 2015).

Additionally, White participants ($M = 2.63$, $SD = 0.56$) were not significantly different from racially underrepresented participants ($M = 2.61$, $SD = 0.48$) in authoritarianism, $t(201) = 0.17$, $p = .43$, $d = 0.03$. This finding is inconsistent with research on ethnic differences on the revised legal attitudes questionnaire which have found that Whites tend to score higher than underrepresented group members (Kravitz et al., 1993; Ross & Morera, 2016). Notably, unequal sample sizes between White ($n = 156$) and underrepresented ($n = 47$) participants may decrease statistical power, contributing to the nonsignificant result.

For ethnic identity, results indicated White participants ($M = 2.73$, $SD = 0.65$) were significantly lower in ethnic identity than racially underrepresented participants ($M = 3.02$, $SD = 0.56$), $t(201) = -2.82$, $p = .003$, $d = -0.47$. This finding is consistent with research theory, which indicates that members of higher status groups tend to think less about their group membership than members of lower level social groups seeing as membership in high status groups is seen as the benchmark against which other social groups' identities must be measured (see Spencer & Markstrom-Adams, 1990; Tatum, 1997). As a result, members of minority ethnic groups place more value on their group identification since they are compelled to negotiate their identity's 'otherness' as they diverge from the norm (Turner & Brown, 2007).

Results showed that racially underrepresented participants ($M = 3.74$, $SD = 1.13$) were significantly more likely than White participants ($M = 3.29$, $SD = 1.35$) to believe that Blacks are commonly pulled over without good cause, $t(201) = -2.08$, $p = .02$, $d = -0.35$. Furthermore, results indicated White participants ($M = 2.99$, $SD = 1.46$) were significantly more likely to believe that police officers are being unfairly scrutinized because of only a handful of officers

(“one bad apple”) compared to racially underrepresented participants ($M = 2.66$, $SD = 1.31$), $t(201) = 1.68$, $p < .05$, $d = 0.28$, which is consistent with past research (Rice & Piquero, 2005; Sigelman et al., 1997).

Discussion

The Influence of IV Factors on Perceptions of Excessive Force

This study examined the relationship between victim race, demeanor, and severity of force on public perceptions of excessive police use of force. It was expected that participants would blame the victim less, blame the officer more, and perceive more gender discrimination when the woman was White, respectful, and killed compared to when she was Black, disrespectful, and injured. It was also expected that participants would perceive greater racial discrimination for the Black victim compared to the White victim. HYP 1 was partially supported.

As predicted, the fatally wounded women did receive more protective responses than women who were injured. More specifically, participants indicated less victim blame and greater officer blame when the victim was killed compared to injured; however, the main effect of severity of force on perceived racial discrimination and perceived gender discrimination was not statistically significant.

This result suggests that participants generally recognized that excessive force that leads to a woman's death is more consequential than excessive force that leads to injury. Given the violent nature of excessive police use of force, less victim blame (and more officer blame) responses in the current study may have been one way for participants to support the women whom they viewed as more harmed by the force used against them.

This main effect is in line with previous research on lay evaluations of police use of force, which shows that the public tends to scrutinize lethal force by police more than non-lethal force (Friedersdorf, 2015). Celestin and Kruschke (2019) observed that vignettes of police officers using lethal force were perceived as more severe (i.e., less appropriate, less acceptable, and more punitive) than vignettes of non-lethal physical force. Further, because physical force that results in injury is more common than lethal force, the public is more likely to criticize the police officer for excessive lethal force rather than excessive force that leads to injury (Lindström et al., 2018). Indeed, studies have found that when socially unfavorable behavior (e.g., violence) is seen as prevalent, evaluations of that behavior are less harsh (McGraw, 1985; Trafimow et al., 2001; Welch et al., 2005). As a result, it is highly probable that the victim was assigned more blame, and the police officer was viewed less harshly because non-lethal force is seen as a normal, even routine action during police-civilian interactions.

Contrary to the hypothesized main effect, the level of excessive force used against a woman did not play a role in participants' perceptions of racial and gender discrimination. Interestingly, no study to the author's knowledge has directly investigated how differing levels of force influence public perceptions of discrimination. In spite of this, previous research has found that the type of contact with police (i.e., traffic stops, arrests) and experiences (e.g., harassment or compassion) that people have with police does have an impact on whether or not people consider an officer's conduct as discriminatory (Reisig & Parks, 2000, 2003; Weitzer & Tuch, 1999, 2002).

An explanation for this study's contrasting finding is that recent police incidents may have influenced the results. Studies and polls have shown that public opinion is influenced by major events (Tuch & Weitzer, 1997). For example, public perceptions of police were adversely

affected by Rodney King's beating in 1991 (Lasley, 1994). Tuch and Weitzer (1997) found that a majority of Los Angeles residents viewed racism as commonplace among police officers after the highly publicized incident of police brutality. Further, Trayvon Martin's death in 2012 inspired protests against excessive police violence against Black people (Thebault, 2022). Therefore, participants may have been cognizant that the level of force was excessive in both the injured and the fatal conditions, especially considering that the data was collected following the deaths of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor, just to name a few.

Another possible explanation is that other factors (e.g., victim and perpetrator race and gender) may be more influential to perceptions of discrimination. Indeed, the fact that perceptions of discrimination were consistent across non-lethal and fatal levels of excessive force may suggest that participants perceived that any physical force used by the officer against the woman was unjustified. This explanation is supported by research on benevolent sexism. Specifically, women have been perceived as warm, weak, and less competent and should therefore be protected and pitied (Cuddy et al., 2008). Given that both non-fatal and fatal levels of force used physical violence, respondents in both conditions may have perceived similar levels of discrimination because the officer was seen as violating prescribed positive stereotypes of women when he failed to protect the woman by harming her.

The main effect of victim race on participants' perceptions of racial discrimination was statistically significant. As predicted, participants perceived more racial discrimination when the female victim was Black compared to White. This finding indicates that the victim's (and the officer's) racial identity was highly salient to participants when reading the news story and influenced their perceptions of racial discrimination.

Previous research endorses this theory, indicating that a victim's (and perpetrator's) race has an impact on participants' perceptions of prejudice. Individuals are generally aware of the relative status of various groups within society (e.g., Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). Black people, for example, are more likely to face racial prejudice from White people (Axt et al., 2014). When making decisions about whether an action is discriminatory, people may consider whether the perpetrator and victim belong to the same group. Furthermore, people are likely to be aware of ingroup bias and outgroup derogation dynamics, and they expect others to prefer their ingroup and reject outgroups. As defined by Inman and Baron (1996), the outgroup conflict effect is the anticipation that prejudice and discrimination will come from the victim's outgroup rather than the victim's ingroup. Therefore, in this study, when the victim was Black, participants may have been able to discern racial outgroup conflict (i.e., Black victim vs. White officer). Thus, participants accurately perceived, interpreted, and reacted to victim race, establishing validity for the victim race manipulation.

The tendency to expect outgroup conflict may also provide support for the marginal main effect of victim race on perceptions of gender discrimination. Specifically, participants perceived more gender discrimination when the woman was Black compared to when she was White. Given the #SayHerName campaign's claims that Black women's experiences of discrimination are typically taken less seriously because they are deemed non-prototypical members of their particular identity groups, this conclusion was initially surprising (Crenshaw et al., 2015; Purdie-Vaughns & Eibach, 2008).

However, there is some evidence to support the main effect of victim race on gender discrimination, such that people are more likely to make a judgment of gender discrimination when the perpetrator and victim are from different groups as compared with when they are from

the same group. In the White victim condition, the victim and the perpetrator share the same racial ingroup and may be considered part of a high-status group, thereby decreasing the participant's perceptions of gender discrimination for the White victim.

Contrary to expectations, the main effect of race on victim blame and officer blame was not statistically significant, indicating that participants' perceptions of blame did not differ by the race of the victim. This finding contradicts past studies that found victim race (and thus racial stereotypes) impacts victim blame and perpetrator culpability. For example, studies have shown that stereotypes of Black women's hypersexuality led to rape victim blaming, such that the victim was judged as more culpable and the perpetrator as less blameworthy when a White man raped a Black woman (George & Martinex, 2002). Indeed, this finding also contrasts with previous research on men and police use of force, which have demonstrated that when the victim was a Black man compared to a White man, there was a higher perception of culpability (Goff et al., 2014; Johnson & Kuhns, 2009; Smith & Holmes, 2014).

However, recent research on police use of force against Black women suggests that some participants may suppress their prejudice against a Black female victim while displaying anti-White bias (Johnson et al., under review; Money, 2020). These findings differ from those with Black male victims and lend support for the notion that Black women's experiences with discrimination may be distinct from those of Black men (Crenshaw, 1989; Goff & Kahn, 2013). One possible explanation may involve differing stereotypes for each group and may be based, in part, on factors associated with intersectionality. (Goff et al., 2008).

The three-way interaction between victim race, demeanor, and severity of force on perceptions of excessive force was not significant. The lack of an interaction based on victim race, demeanor, and severity of force on perceptions of excessive force is surprising given

research on intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989). One potential explanation for these findings is that the study was conducted in the aftermath of social movements #BlackLivesMatter and #SayHerName. According to the Pew Research Center, the hashtag #BlackLivesMatter has surged in popularity from roughly 30 times per day in mid-2013 to an average of 3.7 million times per day following the death of George Floyd in May 2020 (Anderson et al., 2021). As a result, widespread condemnation of excessive force against Black women and men may have heightened participants' awareness of racially discriminatory policing practices, which could explain the study's findings.

The suppression of prejudice may also explain, in part, the findings. Research has found that while explicitly articulated prejudice has decreased considerably in recent decades, implicit forms of bias still widely exists (Dovidio & Gaertner, 1986; Glaser & Knowles, 2008). Social norms could be one reason why blatant forms of bias have declined. Sherif (1953) claims that openly expressing bias is linked to social approval. Respondents may have been particularly driven to look non-prejudiced, yet perhaps retaining biased ideas due to heightened global awareness of Black women's experiences of discrimination (Plant & Devine, 1998). Individuals are driven to suppress bias because of their personal ideals and values, as well as social norms (Crandall & Eshleman, 2003; Crandall et al., 2002). Individuals may require justification to express their prejudiced attitudes openly; for example, stereotypes, belief in a just world, and authoritarian attitudes are all mechanisms that might justify prejudice (Crandall et al., 2002; McFarland, 2010; Money, 2020; Wenzel et al., 2017). Accordingly, demeanor (the victim's (non)stereotypical attitudes towards the officer) was manipulated to see if participants took the opportunity to utilize stereotypes to justify the excessive force used against the women.

However, (non)stereotypical attitudes may not have been sufficient to justify the expression of prejudice towards the victim (e.g., by victim blaming, less officer blame).

Another reason for the insignificant three-way interaction could be that the police interaction was evaluated using different standards determined by racial and gender stereotypes. A Black woman's attitude and behavior may have been judged based on prejudices about Black women (e.g., that they are loud and violent; Collins, 2000), whereas a White woman's attitudes and behavior may have been based on stereotypes about White femininity.

Being disrespectful to an officer may have been stereotype-consistent for a Black woman, whereas being disrespectful to an officer may have been stereotype-inconsistent for a White woman. Because victim culpability, officer blame, and perceived discrimination are all subjective responses, the White woman may have been evaluated harsher for acting in a stereotype-inconsistent manner than a Black woman who behaved in a stereotype-conforming way. Similarly, the victim's demeanor (i.e., disrespectful, pulling away from the officer) could be interpreted as defensive rather than offensive, especially considering the fact that the study took place during the #BlackLivesMatter social movement. Additional research is needed to examine these issues.

The Moderating Effect of Ethnic Identity

Individual differences in ethnic identity were hypothesized to moderate the effect of victim race, demeanor, and severity of force on perceptions of excessive police use of force. Specifically, "prototypical" (i.e., respectful and White) women were expected to be perceived as less blameworthy, experience more gender discrimination, and blame the officer more when police used fatal force by those higher in ethnic identity. On the other hand, more negative outcomes were predicted for disrespectful Black women (compared to respectful Black women)

who were killed (compared to injured) by those who are higher in ethnic identity. This hypothesis was partially supported.

The moderation of ethnic identity and authoritarianism on the three-way interaction (i.e., HYP 2a and 2b) received partial support. There were no significant three-way interactions between these individual difference variables and the conditions of victim race, demeanor, and severity of force on victim blame, officer blame, and perceived racial discrimination.

There was a significant moderating effect of ethnic identity on the three-way interaction of victim race x demeanor x severity of force on perceived gender discrimination. When the victim was White, HYP 2a was partially supported, such that at lower levels of ethnic identity, the three-way interaction was not significant. This finding indicates that participants' perceptions of gender discrimination were not influenced by the victim's demeanor or the severity of force used against her at lower levels of ethnic identity. This finding is consistent with previous research that showed ethnic identity is positively linked to racism and anti-Black bias (Constantine, 2002; Johnson & Lecci, 2020). As a result, those who are low in ethnic identification are less likely to support unfavorable stereotypes about Black people (Andreychik & Gill, 2009) and are less likely to feel the criminal justice system is just and fair (Stokes-Guinan, 2010).

However, the hypothesis was not supported at higher levels of ethnic identity. Specifically, when the White victim's demeanor was disrespectful, participants perceived significantly more gender discrimination when the White victim was killed rather than injured, which does align with the researcher's expectations. This finding is corroborated by prior research by Andreychik and Gill (2009), who found that the degree to which White people identify with their ethnic group is associated with their external or internal attributions of

outgroup members. They argue that Whites who have a strong sense of belonging, attachment, and social value as a result of being White (i.e., high identifiers) want to believe that the current system is fair and are driven by a desire to endorse external attributions when the victim is White (e.g., the White woman was being rude to the officer because she was scared) rather than internal attributions (e.g., it was the White woman's fault that she was injured or killed).

However, in the respectful condition, participants perceived significantly *less* gender discrimination when the White victim was killed rather than injured. This finding goes against the expectation that White women would be perceived more favorably when they were respectful and killed during the police interaction at higher levels of ethnic identity. According to the literature, highly valuing one's ethnic identity is linked to ingroup bias; therefore, a White woman should have blamed the White victim less and the officer more when individuals strongly identified as White (Tajfel, 1970).

Counter to expectations, the three-way interaction was not significant for the Black victim, indicating that ethnic identity did not influence the interaction between severity of force and demeanor when the victim was Black. In order to investigate these unexpected findings, the three-way interactions were assessed another way by looking at the interactions between victim race, demeanor, and ethnic identity within each severity of force condition. Simple slopes indicated that when the victim was respectful towards the officer, participants higher in ethnic identity perceived more gender discrimination when the victim was Black compared to White. However, when the victim was disrespectful towards the officer, participants higher in ethnic identity did not significantly differ in their perceptions of gender discrimination between the Black and the White victim. This result contrasts with prior research on ethnic identity, which

suggests that support for the mistreatment of Black women and more structural racism in general, is driven by a motivation to protect White's positive self-identity.

Although ethnic identity did not significantly moderate the three-way interaction on victim race, officer blame, and racial discrimination, there were significant main effects of ethnic identity where greater ethnic identity predicted greater victim blame, greater perceived racial discrimination, and greater gender discrimination. These findings suggest that ethnic identity may be relevant for responses towards women in policing contexts in general, but may not provide a robust explanation for how contextual factors and victim race influence perceptions of police use of force.

One explanation for the contrary findings is that underrepresented participants that were high on ethnic identity showed an ingroup preference for the Black victim. Specifically, some studies have shown that underrepresented group members can show ingroup bias or a preference for their own ethnic group (Stokes-Guinan, 2010). Heightened dangers experienced by underrepresented group members may cause these groups to be more affiliated with their ingroups and thus more prone to favoring more protective outcomes for an ingroup member (i.e., the Black victim) compared to the White victim who experiences excessive force (Jensen et al., 1982)

Further, the just-world hypothesis is a phenomenon that could explain these findings. According to the just-world argument, individuals prefer to believe that they live in a fair world. This theory asserts that an individual's moral standing influences the outcomes based on their actions, with those who act in an "appropriate" manner being rewarded and those who act in a "bad" manner being punished (Wenzel et al., 2017). This assumption becomes troublesome when individuals acquire evidence that contradicts their view of a just world (e.g., the respectful White

woman killed by the officer). Individuals may alleviate their dissonance by justifying the victim's suffering by downplaying their victimization or portraying them in a negative light. Indeed, ethnic identification has been linked to a positive belief in a just society in studies (Wang & Zheng, 2020). Individuals who scored higher on ethnic identity in the current study may be driven to rationalize the respectable White woman's murder by claiming that gender discrimination played no part in her death (compared to when she was injured).

The Moderating Effect of Authoritarianism

Individual differences in authoritarianism were hypothesized to moderate the relationship between victim race, demeanor, and severity of force. It was predicted that outcomes would be relatively more negative towards the Black woman for participants higher in authoritarianism compared to those low in authoritarianism, even in the respectful and fatal conditions. Specifically, at lower levels of authoritarianism, the three-way interaction should not reach significance. Participants higher in authoritarianism should report more victim blame, and less officer blame, racial and gender discrimination towards the Black woman, especially in the disrespectful and fatal conditions. HYP 2b was not supported.

Specifically, authoritarianism did not significantly moderate the three-way interaction on victim race, officer blame, perceived racial discrimination, and perceived gender discrimination. Despite these null findings, authoritarianism did significantly moderate the effect of victim race on perceptions of racial discrimination. Individuals higher in authoritarianism perceived less racial discrimination than individuals who were lower in authoritarianism which lent partial support to the hypothesized effect that individuals higher in authoritarianism would perceive less racial discrimination for the Black victim. Additionally, significant main effects of authoritarianism were found, such that greater authoritarianism predicted greater victim blame,

less officer blame, less perceived racial discrimination, and less perceived gender discrimination. These findings suggest that authoritarianism may be relevant for responses towards women in policing contexts in general, but may not provide a robust explanation for how contextual factors and victim race influence perceptions of police use of force.

Overall, given the well-established links between authoritarian attitudes and right-wing philosophy, the expression of stereotyped beliefs toward underrepresented outgroups (Cutler, 2008), support for conventional norms and authority (e.g., police officers; Kravitz et al., 1993), and approval of harsh sanctions against deviants (Packer, 1968), the general lack of moderation of the three-way interaction by authoritarianism was surprising. These findings contrast with prior work that has found that differences in authoritarianism influence perceptions of blame and discrimination, with individuals with stronger authoritarianism more likely to blame someone suspected of a crime and perceive an authority's actions as appropriate and fair (Narby et al., 1993).

An explanation for these findings may be that individuals high in authoritarianism perceived the woman in all conditions as a criminal (i.e., the woman was pulled over) and a threat to the police officer (i.e., he could lose his job or be sued by the victim's family) and thus judged her harshly regardless of her race, her demeanor, and the force used against her. It is also possible that other individual difference measures of authoritarian beliefs may have been more influential than those assessing authoritarianism via legal attitudes, resulting in nonsignificant interactions between race, demeanor, severity of force, and authoritarianism on victim blame, officer blame, perceived racial discrimination, and perceived gender discrimination.

Overall, these findings may relate to the argument above that the existing social environment and awareness of discriminatory policing practices influenced participants'

responses. Participants who scored higher on ethnic identity and authoritarianism may have felt compelled to overcompensate to conceal their bias (DeVault & Miller, 2019). Thus, in order to appear unbiased, these individuals may respond favorably to non-prototypical women (i.e., Black, disrespectful) in order to compensate for their stereotypical beliefs (Sommers, 2006) and to conceal their biases by acting egalitarian (Plant & Devine, 1998).

Limitations and Future Directions

There are several limitations. A priori power analyses indicated that a sample size of approximately 200 was adequate to detect small-to-medium effect sizes (e.g., .13 for the multivariate test, or .08 for hierarchical regression). Some observed effect sizes in the study were small to moderate (partial η^2 ranged from .00 to .25, adjusted R^2 ranged from .07 to .30), although observed power for nonsignificant effects was quite low (see Sun et al., 2011). Thus, power may be an issue limiting the analyses.

Next, it is possible that social desirability may have influenced responses. Participants completed the legal attitudes questionnaire (Kravitz et al., 1993) and the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (Phinney, 1992) prior to being presented with the police incident. If participants had prejudicial attitudes, it is possible that they may have attempted to suppress them in order to appear non-prejudiced to the researcher or to themselves (Dovidio & Gaerthner, 2004). It is also possible that these participants were low in prejudicial attitudes. Measures of implicit prejudice, such as the Implicit Association Test (IAT; Rudman et al., 1999) or the social desirability bias (Crowne & Marlowe, 1960), may be useful in examining the degree to which individuals possess prejudiced attitudes or engage in social desirability.

Participants may have believed their responses were identifiable due to the fact that each were assigned a unique identification number in order to receive payment and limit multiple

submissions to the same study (Casey et al., 2017). Although participant identifiers were deleted after participants received payment, the perception that one is identifiable may influence participants to misrepresent themselves in a way that they think is consistent with researcher or societal expectations, thereby obscuring the results.

The demographic characteristics of MTurk workers are less diverse than the general population (Buhrmester et al., 2011) but more diverse and representative than college samples in general (Kees et al., 2017). Less representation of non-White respondents may introduce some degree of bias and limit generalizability of the findings.

Attention checks were included throughout the survey to help determine whether participants were reading the content thoroughly, and only those who passed the attention checks were included in the data analyses. Because participants completed the survey at a time and place of their choosing, the conditions in which they completed the measures and possible distractions in the environment are unknown. To help address these issues, this study required participants to have an MTurk reputation score of .90 or greater, which has previously been shown to increase the data quality of MTurk samples (Chmielewski & Kucker, 2019).

Future research could analyze perceptions of excessive police violence among members of other groups, as the majority of participants in this study identified as White. Given the disadvantages that racial and ethnic minorities may face in the criminal justice system and documented treatment received during encounters with police, it is reasonable to expect that members of other groups may react differently to an excessive use of force incident than individuals in the present sample.

Future research examining police officer perceptions of problematic police incidents and factors that contribute to biased behavior is warranted. In addition, research could evaluate use of

force incident reports from police departments concerning interactions with women and members of various groups. Examining the perspectives of police officers may allow researchers to identify important factors that may give rise to excessive force. The resulting information might inform police training and procedures.

While the intersectional framework used in this study allowed an exploration of select variables, future research might explore more identities. Specifically, looking at other intersecting identities such as sexual identity, gender expression, and class would contribute to psychological literature by expanding on how intersectional stereotypes may affect the ways in which police officers interact with persons with multiple marginalized identities. This approach could address gaps in the literature on perceptions of police use of force which fail to represent women of color with multiple identities (e.g., poor, old, young, transgender, lesbian).

Conclusion

The current study was prompted by a call for more women of color to be included in conversations about police violence (Crenshaw et al., 2015; Ritchie, 2017). Social psychological research has highlighted racial disparities at all levels of the criminal justice system (e.g., Eberhardt et al., 2006; Hester & Gray, 2018; Ridgeway, 2006), which has mostly excluded women (see Brown-Ianuzzi et al., 2021; Johnson et al., under review; Money, 2020; Thiem et al., 2019 for a few exceptions). Furthermore, race is largely ignored in gender prejudice research (Goff & Kahn, 2013). This study aimed to understand how Black and White women who have been harmed by a police officers' use of excessive force during an interaction are perceived in terms of culpability and discrimination.

Overall, this study found that after reading about a use of force incident, participants are more protective of Black and fatally wounded women (compared to White and injured women),

with no interactions detected between victim race, demeanor, or severity of force. Highly valuing one's ethnic identity influenced participants' perceptions of gender discrimination for the White victim, such that those with a higher ethnic identity perceived that the respectful White victim faced less gender discrimination when she was killed than when she was injured. Unexpectedly, the effect of demeanor and severity of force on participants' judgments of gender discrimination for the Black victim was not significantly moderated by valuing one's ethnic identity. Further, ethnic identity and authoritarianism may be related to perceptions of excessive force in general, with individuals who scored higher on these measures being more willing to judge the victim negatively, although additional research is needed to confirm these findings. This research could lay the groundwork for future research into how women are discriminated against in policing.

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Appendix Study Materials

Consent Form

Thank you for considering to participate in the Police Interactions Study conducted by Brooklynn Smith and Dr. David Sattler at Western Washington University.

This consent form provides information to help you decide if you would like to participate in the study.

The purpose of this project is to increase understanding about how people perceive interactions between a female civilian and a police officer, including characteristics of both individuals (e.g., physical appearance, race, gender) and their behaviors during the interaction. First, participants will complete surveys that ask about attitudes about society and ethnic diversity. Second, participants will then read a situation involving a police officer and a female civilian and answer questions about their impressions of the individuals and the situation.

This study includes checks to make sure participants are answering the questions honestly and completely. If you read the instructions and complete the tasks honestly, your HIT will be approved. If you fail the checks, your HIT will be rejected. Please carefully read the instructions and questions. Thank you!

It will take about 20 minutes to complete the surveys. We would be pleased to provide additional explanation of the project at your request.

Participation is voluntary. You may withdraw at any time if you so choose or skip any question. By completing the survey, some persons may be reminded about events they may have experienced. By participating in the project, you will be helping to increase our understanding about police perceptions.

Your responses are confidential. Your MTurk identification is used only to compensate you for your participation. We will remove any identifying information from the data file, and there will be no way to identify your responses with your name. The data file will be stored in a secure office. We will take precautions to protect this information but we cannot guarantee that security is absolute; the chances of you or your responses being identified are low due to protections in place. Your information will not be used by us for future studies.

You must be at least 18 years of age to participate.

Upon completion of the entire survey, you will receive US \$4.00 for compensation, which will be credited to your MTurk account.

If you would like a copy of the results of the project, please contact Brooklynn Smith at smithb69@wwu.edu. If you have any additional questions or concerns about the research project, please contact Dr. Sattler at 360-650-3525 or at david.sattler@wwu.edu. For questions regarding your rights as a participant, please contact the WWU Office of Research and Sponsored Programs at compliance@wwu.edu or (360) 650-2146.

If you agree with these terms and consent to participate in the study, check the box.

Please print a copy of this consent form for your records.

IMPORTANT REMINDER: There will be reliability questions in this survey, such as "For this item, check strongly agree." You must enter the reliability questions accurately in order to get compensated for your work.

Survey:

Please enter your MTurk ID: _____

How would you describe your gender identity?

Man

Woman

Non-binary

transgender

If your gender identity is not listed, please specify: _____

How old are you? _____

With which racial/ethnic group(s) do you identify? Check all that apply:

Asian/East Asian/South Asian

Black/African American

Hawaiian/Pacific Islander

Latinx/a/o/Hispanic

Native American/Indigenous/Alaska native

White/Caucasian

If your race/ethnicity isn't listed, please specify: _____

How would you describe your political orientation? (1-7 slider; *Very left-leaning* to *Very right-leaning*)

What is your highest level of education?

Completed primary/elementary school

Some secondary school

Completed secondary school

Some college/University

Completed college/University

University postgraduate/advanced

What is your marital status?

Single, never married

Married/Domestic partnership

Divorced/Separated

Other

Do you live a rural or urban area?

_____ Urban

_____ Rural

How many times have you been approached or stopped by the police?

_____ Type in number of times

How many times have you been approached or stopped by the police within the last 12 months?

_____ Type in number of times

On the last occasion you were approached by the police, how do you think you were treated?

Would you say you were treated:

Very well

Reasonably well

Neither well nor badly

Somewhat badly

Very badly

As far as you are aware, how often have the following people that you know been approached or stopped by the police within the last year?

Members of your immediate family (never, rarely, sometimes, often, very often)

Other family relatives (never, rarely, sometimes, often, very often)

Friends or Neighbors (never, rarely, sometimes, often, very often)

Other acquaintances (never, rarely, sometimes, often, very often)

Are you currently or have you been a law enforcement officer (e.g., sheriff, state trooper, police)?

Yes

No

Do you have any family members or friends in law enforcement officer (e.g., sheriff, state troopers, police)?

Yes

No

For each item, indicate how much you agree with the statements on a scale from 1 = *Strongly Disagree* to 4 = *Strongly Agree*.

1. I have spent time trying to find out more about my racial/ethnic group, such as its history, traditions, and customs.
2. I am active in organizations or social groups that include mostly members of my own racial/ethnic group.
3. I have a clear sense of my racial/ethnic background and what it means for me.
4. I think a lot about how my life will be affected by my racial/ethnic group membership.
5. I am happy that I am a member of the group(s) I belong to.
6. I have a strong sense of belonging to my own racial/ethnic group.
7. I understand pretty well what my racial/ethnic group membership means to me.
8. To learn more about my racial/ethnic background, I have often talked to other people about my ethnic group.

9. I have a lot of pride in my racial/ethnic group and its accomplishments.
10. I participate in cultural practices of my own group(s), such as special food, music, or customs.
11. I feel a strong attachment towards my own racial/ethnic group.
12. I feel good about my cultural or racial/ethnic background.

How much do you agree with each item? 1 = *Strongly Disagree* to 5 = *Strongly Agree*

1. Unfair treatment of underprivileged groups and classes is the chief cause of crime.
2. No one should be convicted of a crime on the basis of circumstantial evidence, no matter how strong such evidence is.
3. Wiretapping by anyone or for any reason should be completely illegal.
4. Because of the oppression and persecution minority group members suffer, they deserve leniency and special treatment in the courts.
5. A society with true freedom and equality for all would have very little crime.
6. When there is a "hung" jury in a criminal case, the defendant should always be freed and the indictment dismissed.
7. Too many obviously guilty persons escape punishment because of legal technicalities.
8. Evidence illegally obtained should be admissible in court if such evidence is the only way of obtaining a conviction.
9. Any person who resists arrest commits a crime.
10. Defendants in a criminal case should be required to take the witness stand.
11. Accused persons should be required to take lie-detector tests.
12. Police should be allowed to arrest and question suspicious looking persons to determine whether they have been up to something illegal.
13. The law coddles criminals to the detriment of society.
14. Upstanding citizens have nothing to fear from the police.
15. Search warrants should clearly specify the person or things to be seized.
16. There is no need in a criminal case for the accused to prove his innocence beyond a reasonable doubt.
17. When determining a person's guilt or innocence, the existence of a prior arrest record should not be considered.
18. All too often, minority group members do not get fair trials.
19. Citizens need to be protected against excess police power as well as against criminals.
20. It is better for society that several guilty men be freed than one innocent one wrongfully imprisoned.
21. It is moral and ethical for a lawyer to represent a defendant in a criminal case even when he believes his client is guilty.
22. The freedom of society is endangered as much by zealous law enforcement as by the acts of individual criminals.
23. In the long run, liberty is more important than order.

Legal Matter: In legal matters, people often differ in their opinions about the situation. Our opinions may differ depending on the amount of information we have about the situation or own experiences. This section presents a story about a legal matter and then asks for your opinions

about it. The story you will read is about an incident with a police officer. Please read it carefully and pay close attention to the details because you will be asked to make several judgments regarding the case and the individuals involved in the case.

Story from Newspaper: Police Officer Shooting Female Driver

Late Friday night, White police officer Billy Warner [fatally injured, injured] Samantha Anderson, a 26-year old [Black, White] woman during a traffic stop.

Video from the police bodycam showed Officer Billy Warner asking Samantha Anderson why she had “changed lanes erratically” and if she “had been drinking.” Samantha Anderson replied, saying [“I have done nothing wrong! Are you targeting and harassing me because of who I am?”]; “Sir, I didn’t realize I changed lanes so quickly.”] The officer asked for her license and registration. Samantha Anderson replied, [“Why should I have to give you my driver’s license? Don’t you have something better to do?”]; “Yes, officer. Here is my driver’s license.”] and then gave the license and registration to the officer.

After looking at the license and registration, Billy Warner directed Samantha Anderson to “Get out of the car.” As Samantha Anderson began to slowly get out of the car, she moved her right hand towards her purse, which was in the front seat. Billy Warner immediately yelled “Stop and put your hands up!” but Samantha Anderson continued reaching for her purse. Billy Warner [opened fire with his gun and shot and killed Samantha Anderson; grabbed her arm and forcefully pulled Samantha Anderson from the car and handcuffed her.]

A search of the car showed that no weapons were in Samantha Anderson’s purse. A lawsuit was filed against the police department and is seeking to have Officer Billy Warner charged in court and fired. Billy Warner stated that what happened to Samantha Anderson “was devastating” but she “brought this upon herself” by her actions. The police department released a statement that Officer Billy Warner’s actions were in the line of duty and that he felt “severely threatened” by Samantha Anderson’s actions.

The following questions ask about your impressions of the legal matter you just read. Read each item carefully and then answer the questions.

How much do you agree with each statement? (1 = *Not at All*, 5 = *Very Much*)

1. Samantha Anderson is responsible for the events that occurred during the traffic stop.
2. If Samantha Anderson would have behaved differently, it would have changed the outcome of the incident.
3. Samantha Anderson was a threat to the officer Billy Warner’s safety.
4. Samantha got what she deserved.
5. The lawsuit is just an excuse to exploit officer Billy Warner for the money.
6. Samantha is NOT to blame for the incident.

How much do you agree with each statement? (1 = *Not at All*, 5 = *Very Much*)

1. Officer Billy Warner should be held responsible for the incident.
2. Officer Billy Warner’s use of force during the incident was justified.
3. Officer Billy Warner should be fired from the Police Department.

4. Officer Billy Warner felt threatened by Samantha.
5. Officer Billy Warner should be arrested and charged for what he did to Samantha.
6. Officer Billy Warner is to blame for the incident.

How much do you agree with each statement? (1 = *Strongly Disagree*, 5 = *Strongly Agree*)

1. Samantha was treated differently because of her race
2. Samantha was treated differently because of her gender
3. Samantha was mistreated by Officer Billy Warner
4. Officer Billy Warner did NOT discriminate against Samantha

How much do you support the Black Lives Matter movement?

Slider scale (00 – 100)

Do you think police officers are being unfairly scrutinized because of only a handful of officers (“one bad apple”)?

Slider scale (00 – 100)

Do you think Blacks are commonly pulled over without good cause?

Slider scale (00 – 100)

Debriefing Form

The present study was designed to understand perceptions of a police officer’s use of force toward a female civilian. Many studies have found that perceptions of incidents involving police use of force widely vary based on the characteristics and behaviors of the victim and the police officer involved.

In this study, you were asked to provide your opinions on a police matter. All participants answered demographic and personal attitude questions. Participants were given different versions of a scenario detailing an interaction between a police officer and a woman during a traffic stop. In the scenario, race and demeanor of the woman, and level of force used by the officer during the interaction varied. Participants then answered questions based on the version of the scenario they were given. This study examined if perceptions of the police officer and the woman varied based on their characteristics as described in the scenario and on participants’ attitudes regarding authoritarianism and empathy. The study may provide some information about factors that influence decisions, which may help increase understanding about public opinion concerning publicized incidents of police use-of-force.

If you are interested in learning more about factors that influence perceptions of police use-of force, please refer to Dukes, K., & Gaither, S. E. (2017). Black racial stereotypes and victim blaming: Implications for media coverage and criminal proceedings in cases of police violence against racial and ethnic minorities. *Journal of Social Issues*, 73, 789- 807.

Thank you for participating in this study.

If you have any questions or concerns about this study, you may send an email to Brooklynn Smith at smithb69@wwu.edu For questions regarding research participation rights, please call the Research & Sponsored Programs office at 360-650-2146 or email compliance@wwu.edu.