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Hero or Villain? Portrayals of Police Officers in the News Media

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Abstract

In the wake of recent events were reports of black men being killed by police officers. Policing and perceptions of the police have in some cases became national stories. Further, the deaths of Michael Brown and later Freddie Gray, just to name a few have led to an examination of police community relationships and how people view the police, particularly racial and ethnic minorities. Public views of the police in large part come from the media. A content analysis of The Philadelphia Inquirer, TIME Magazine and 60 Minutes episodes were conducted to explore the types of portrayals of police officers and policing in general. Focusing on the front page stories of the Philadelphia Inquirer, cover stories in TIME Magazine and segments on the television show 60 Minutes topics, beginning January 1st, 2015 and until December 31st 2016 findings suggested that stories that portrayed police in a particularly negative light or efforts to highlight good deeds by police officers did not dominate the news cycle. Further, nationally (TIME Magazine and 60 Minutes) police were seldom the focus, although when mentioned, negative stories outpace positive ones. Similar themes were found in locally within the Inquirer.

Introduction

In light of some of the controversial incidents that have taken place (e.g. Ferguson, MO and Baltimore, MD), there has been more scrutiny on the police and in some cases a powerful resistance toward police. Individual's perceptions of the police are developed from a variety of sources. The public often form their opinions of criminals and law enforcement based on media depictions. As a result of this, the media plays a key role in determining how these groups are perceived (Dowler & Zawilski, 2007). Since the death of Michael Brown, the media has had a microscope on law enforcement. In this light, the current work examined the media's narrative of police conduct soon after August 2014 murder of Michael Brown in Ferguson, MO.

Before examining the narratives put forth by newspapers, the role and importance of the media in influencing public perceptions of the police will be reviewed. For the purpose of this review, three forms of media will be analyzed: national television, national magazine and local newspaper articles will be reviewed. Specifically, through extensive research of scholarly articles on the aforementioned topic, conflicting evidence and perspectives arose. Of these perspectives, some hold that the media influences police perspectives positively while some argue the contrary. Some researchers acknowledge that media influences police perspectives, but claim factors like race, prior experiences with police, and involvement in the criminal justice system matter more (Dowler, 2003). This is to say past experiences shape how they perceive controversial instances in the media. Each perspective offers a different understanding of the ways by which the media molds the perception of police.

Literature Review

The media as a whole is commonplace in most individual's everyday lives. Alerts from news apps on phones, daily news on the television and newspapers among many other forms inform our society on events currently happening within our country. The media covers a variety of events across the country including those as insignificant as a celebrity break up to things as crucial as being informed on terror attacks and everything in-between. The notion of media having influence over perceptions of our society is evident more than ever currently. President Donald Trump has waged war upon the mass media, claiming that many stations report fake and impartial news in attempts to damage his perceived image.

Often we hear people claim that news stations are liberal or conservative. This is to say that news stations speak about news stories in a way which parallels with a Democratic or Republican philosophy. Each station portrays events in the media through the lens of their views and ideologies which align with their political "side" often referred to as leftist and rightist. Many forms of media are guilty of presenting information which is biased in favor of their ideologies. As a result of such, individuals are receptive to information which may have an underlying suggestive message. Ideally the media should present its viewers and readers with unbiased, objective facts. Such is not the case, rather media sometimes presents fallacious assumptions for individuals to form their opinions with (Barak, 1994). Individuals who only watch or read news that aligns with their own views aren't exposed to or understand opposing perspectives. Disconnects between groups of individuals are formed as a result of this one-sided way of receiving information.

The role of the media in our country is instrumental in formulating police perceptions as 57% of Americans watch the television to get the news (Mitchell, et. al., 2015). One study that suggested that police perception was generally positive (Dowler, 2003). Using a telephone survey of 1,005 adults at random, Dowler (2003) asked a series of questions to determine the attitude of people toward different aspects of the criminal justice system. For the purpose of this literature review, the focus will be on media influence. Using the results of the survey, Dowler was able to conclude that individuals average rank for police effectiveness on a scale from 7-28 was 15. He explains that generally, the public sees police in a positive light. Marsh (1991) suggests that the news media claims that police solve more crimes than they actually do, giving them a better image. Marsh and Dowler would agree that the media positively influences police perception.

Another way that the media influences perceptions in a positive way is in the form of crime control. As a way to maintain social control and order, key players of the criminal justice system attempt to bolster their image among society (Schlesinger and Tumbler, 1994). The desired result of this is to gain an improved sense of trust and overall satisfaction with police conduct. News topics which highlight the success of law enforcement help viewers to perceive them in a more positive light. This not only helps law abiding citizens to perceive the police and law enforcement as effective, but can help criminals who are viewing such media to perceive police as effective as well. As a result, criminals may think twice about committing crimes for fear of arrest.

Mutz (1989) interestingly highlighted a theory that explains how the media has influenced a dialogue of police misconduct to become relevant. The Spiral of Silence theory

holds that individuals are less likely to speak their minds when the majority opposes their position. In contrast, individuals are more likely to express themselves when in alignment with the majority feeling. With greater amounts of police actions being highlighted on front pages of newspapers and running on the 6'oclock news daily, more and more people begin to speak up and express themselves and their feelings toward police. Prior to these controversial events, television and newspapers were much less dense with police based stories- negative reports specifically. As these issues come into the spotlight on a national level more and more people join the cause.

The crux of the argument that suggests media does in fact influence the perceptions of police hinges upon the Social Constructionist Theory. This approach holds that problems in an objective sense are often not as big of a problem as perceived (Lawrence, 2000). It would be impossible for us to view every controversial issue in our country first person. We often rely on the media to fill in the blanks. As more and more prevalent social issues show up in media, this creates a larger perception that these issues are social problems conceptually, although not necessarily objectively. Weitzer and Tuch (2004) found a correlation between exposures of police misconduct in the media and how often individuals think police misconduct occurs. Similarly, increased exposure to police misconduct in the media showed a direct relationship with individuals feeling as though police act with bias against minorities. In conjunction with the Social Constructionist theory, Weitzer and Tuch's findings support the notion that media can influence public perceptions. These data lends support to the notion that news station broadcasts as mass media negatively influence public perception of police were prevalent. Using the Law and Media Survey, a random telephone survey of 1,011 adults, Dowler and

Zawilski (2007) found that people compared to other types of media network news influenced perceptions most. Results also showed that those who viewed network news shows are much more likely to believe that police misconduct is a common occurrence. This finding is contrary to Dowler's telephone survey results of 2003. Weitzer and Tuch (2004) acknowledges that a single instance of police brutality displayed by the media can largely influence public perception of police. Further, exposure to such media broadcasts on a consistent basis is likely to result in a substantial effect on citizen's perception of police.

Influential narratives in newspapers also play a role in the way media shapes the public perception of police. One researcher suggests that newspapers can often help to shape the perception of police in a positive way. He claims that often times newspapers will claim that a greater amount of crimes have been solved than they have solved in reality (Klahm et al., 2016) As a result, citizens feel as though the police are doing their job and are appeased by their performance. Mutz (1989) agrees that the media can help police perception in some cases. He discusses the "Third Person Effect" that claims that individuals are influenced by media much less when reports are about their own group in comparison to when media reports are about others; influences are greater. Newspapers can also mold the perception of police by highlighting areas of higher crime in relation to their own, making citizens feel they are safer than others (Liska & Baccaglini, 1990).

Gurevitch and Levy (1985) claim that the media is a means by which establishments, groups of people and various belief systems battle for social reality. With this understanding, we can expect that newspaper articles can also impact the perception of police in a negative way. Surette (2007) claims that both print and broadcast forms of media have characterized the

police as "ineffective and incompetent". Such strong claims against law enforcement may influence the way people view the police. These articles in the newspaper are very influential on perceptions when considering the claims of Gorelick (1989) and other researchers who claim that the most popular articles that are read in the newspapers those of crimes. With this in mind, both Surrete and Gorelick's findings are instrumental in understanding how the media can help society form their perceptions of police.

An interesting dynamic to study that was left unmentioned by many researchers was the race of an individual and their experience, or lack thereof, with the criminal justice system. Dowler (2003) also acknowledges that media plays a role in shaping perceptions like many other researchers but goes further to suggest that age, race, and background also help shape these views. These backgrounds and experiences are a lens through which individuals view incidents in the media. This is to say an African American who has been arrested and victimized by a police officer may see the same incident on the news as a white male with no prior record and perceive it as misconduct. In contrast the white male may see nothing wrong with what he has viewed because he perceives the police as doing their job to apprehend a criminal. This idea parallels with that of Brown and Benedict (2002) who highlights the media's influence on police perceptions and also acknowledges that experiences assist in shaping the way individuals perceive the media.

Alternate views that also acknowledge medias influence are present in the findings of Heath and Gilbert (1996) who claim that the message, or that the way that media delivers content to the public determines how it is perceived. Similarly, they found that the characteristics of the audience that is viewing this media play a role in determining how it is

perceived. Heath and Gilberts findings lend support to the findings of Brown and Benedict (2002) and Dowler (2003). The four researchers agree that factors other than just exposure to the media plays a role in the way media is perceived.

Many researchers have studied the effects that the mass media, specifically network news broadcasts and newspaper articles, have on shaping the perceptions that citizens have about police. Conflicting arguments surrounding the effect of media on public perception are prevalent. While most researchers agree that media does have an impact on public perceptions of the police, some argue that these perceptions matter less in creating the perceptions individuals have. Rather these researchers would conclude that prior experiences and backgrounds are a lens, biased in some ways, through which they perceive the media.

Michael Brown shooting in Ferguson, Mo.

One of the most controversial and prominent narratives in American history is that of differential treatment of African Americans by police (Rushing, 2013). On August 9th 2014, Darren Wilson took the life of unarmed Michael Brown which sparked an outrage from the African American community. Brown was engaged by Officer Wilson after Brown reportedly robbed a convenience store. The events that took place between the initial confrontation and the eventual shooting are widely debated. Some people claim that Officer Wilson was justified in his decision to shoot as the police claim Brown was reaching for Wilson's firearm. Others claim to have seen Brown with his hands up in the air as to surrender himself when the shots

were fired (Brown, 2014). Ultimately, the U.S. Justice Department cleared Officer Darren Wilson in the Killing of Michael Brown, but a debate raged on.

This incident gave way to the "Hands Up, Don't Shoot" movement, and later, Black Lives Matter. The media framed this event within the Racist System "frame" which claims that law enforcement as a whole are racist agents of oppression. Activists and outraged citizens took to the press and news channels as tensions between law enforcement and the African American community deepened. Fueled by articles and news segments which preached anti-oppression rhetoric, influenced citizens began to speak out causing an explosion of controversy in our society and in the media.

The murder of Michael Brown and later, others like the Alton Sterling case came into focus as the media began to give stories like this, and therefore the police more facetime. The media appears to have been changed by the events that took place on August 9th, 2014. Elliot McLaughlin, a reporter for CNN said "The headlines make it feel as if the country is experiencing an unprecedented wave of police violence, but experts say that isn't the case. We're just seeing more mainstream media coverage." The increased interest and focus on controversial police interactions, especially ones that resulted in a civilian death has potentially thrust the police and the profession of policing on news and part of the national discussion.

The perception of police officers in America have drastically been altered over the past half-decade. Some continue to support the *Thin Blue Line* while others oppose. A poll from Gallup found that the confidence in police is at a twenty-two year low. (In U.S., Confidence in Police Lowest in 22 years, 2015.) From 2015 to 2016, respect for police increased by 12

percentage points and more than 70 percent claim they respect their local police. (Americans

Respect for Police Surges, 2016) Living in a generation of technology where the latest news is

just a click away, individuals have access to information unlike previous generations. With news

that is impacting our society so readily available, individuals in society are free to gather

information and formulate their own opinion in any way they please.

Rationale for Current Research

Past work has linked the media's role in shaping public opinion and specifically views of

the police. Further, anecdotal evidence suggests that since the death of Michael Brown the

media has intensified its focus on reporting stories about the police. Some suggest the overall

coverage and treatment of the police by the media and others has been hostile (Mac Donald,

2016) but to date it isn't clear how the media is portraying the police. Therefore, the current

work sought to fill this gap and systematically examine portrayals of the police in the media

subsequent to the events in Ferguson, MO and the rise of the Black Lives Matter. It is

hypothesized that increased scrutiny on police because of high profile incidents has resulted in

preponderance of critical stories about the police

Analytic Method and Data

A content analysis of The Philadelphia Inquirer, 60 Minutes Epsiodes, and TIME

Magazine front cover stories was conducted in an attempt to better understand responses

events currently taking place in our nation, specifically, the research question at hand. A

content analysis is a way for researchers to study and interpret a text to make inferences about

the material. These inferences can be used to determine the presence of concepts, and draw meaning from the frequency a concept does or does not appear (Busch et. al., 1994). By pre-determining key concepts to be measured called coding, researchers can focus on information which relates only to relevant categories while excluding irrelevant information. The frequency in which these categories appear are to be measured during the examination of the three aforementioned media platforms. From these patterns, content analysis helps to draw connections between itself and other concepts. Correlations and causal relationships can be better examined to understand in what ways and to what degree the media has an influence on the perception of police. From this data, informed and valid inferences can be made about the examined articles intent, agenda, and effect. By better understanding the existence of these in newspaper articles, national magazines and television shows, informed and factual inferences on the impact the media has are able to be made.

The samples that were examined came from *The Philadelphia Inquirer* (Local text media), as well as *60 Minutes* (National visual media) and *Time Magazine* (National text media). These were specifically chosen so that different mediums of media were examined as well as to be able to compare local and national coverage. They were also chosen because we can then examine both daily news and weekly news. *The Philadelphia Inquirer* is a reputable, local, daily issued newspaper in Philadelphia which has been around since 1829. *60 Minutes* is the longest running and most watched newsmagazine which is nationally broadcasted and covers relevant issues surrounding America. Finally, TIME Magazine is one which was founded in 1923 and has been delivering its readers quality information involving world news, American news and many other topics.

It was not feasible to review every newspaper for every day, therefore for the content analysis of the *Philadelphia Inquirer* a sample was selected. To ensure a representative sample, 100 dates at random, without replaced were generated using a random date generator to examine a two-year span of newspaper coverage ranging from January 1st, 2015 – December 31st 2016. As *60 Minutes* and *Time* Magazine are not a daily form of news, every episode and publishing respectively were examined during that same range.

Next, four groupings were created to categorize the message that was presented in the media: Positive mention, negative mention, general mention and no mention at all. Mentions that are positive are those which portray police in a generally good light, highlight good deeds and praise police. Those mentions which are negative portray police poorly, highlight negative incidents, or scrutinize police. General mentions are instances when police are simply brought up in the conversation but not specifically negative or positive. An example of such scenario would be a story which covered a non-violent protest and acknowledged that the police were present. It does not make any suggestion that the officers were acting with any type of merit, yet did not make claims of the police causing any disturbances. These categories are key in answering the research question of whether the news media have police at the forefront of their stories, and if so, in what ways. The 100 dates were then used to reference articles, showings, and publishing's of each source, labeling each one under the four possible codes. These data that this research examined yields both qualitative and quantitative data. The quantitative data lies in the frequency, or lack thereof, that police stories enter the media. The qualitative data looks to examine the common themes and messages that are presented in various forms of media (see appendix for dates and coding scheme)

Results

The data derived from the 100 *Philadelphia Inquirer* cover pages, 60 Minutes Episodes

and Time Magazine front page coverage ranging from January 1st, 2015 to December 31st, 2016

yield both interesting and unexpected results. The Philadelphia Inquirer obtained from frequent

police based stores in a great majority of the examined articles. Specifically, there were 16

instances found in the Inquirer where police were mentioned in rather derogatory or

dissatisfactory light. Of the sixteen instances found, four were written about the police

excessive use of force; specifically shooting civilians. Stories which praised police or gave them

a good image were found 9 times. From these data, assuming that all factors remain the same,

we can project that in a two-year span there would be approximately one-hundred sixteen

articles which mention police negatively; roughly every three days. Using the same data, we

may conclude that there would be about sixty-five articles which highlight commendable

behavior which is about every five days. These articles typically spoke of good deeds by police

and spoke to the effectiveness of law enforcement via crime control statistics. Though

mentioned slightly more in a negative light than in a positive light, there is no real significant

disproportionality in the types of messages about police are presented to the public.

Surprisingly, the overwhelming majority of dates sixty-three contained no cover stories about

police at all.

Similar themes were found in examining 60 Minutes episodes. Of one-hundred

examined episodes, ninety-three were found to have no relevance to police coverage. One

interesting finding as a result of the 60 Minutes content analysis is that during a two-year span,

the show didn't have one episode which could be categorized negatively. Just once did it cover

police in a positive light. Only two episodes were determined to mention police generally.

Based on the data derived, it is evident that 60 Minutes neglects to cover police related stories

on a regular basis. Specifically, ninety-three episodes had no mention of police found. 60

Minutes frequents many other topics rather than those surrounding the effectiveness or

ineffectiveness of policing.

TIME Magazines eighty-one police irrelevant publications during the same time period

parallel with 60 Minutes trends in coverage. Only four times total were mentions of police

made on TIME front cover stories; three of which were negative. Each of the three negative

portrayals of police examined issues surrounding disproportionate use of excessive (deadly)

force on African Americans like Black Lives Matter and the Baltimore Riots as a result of the

death of Freddie Gray. No general mentions were made within these samples but one positive

article titled "What it's Like to be a Cop in America" examined the difficulties police face in

carrying out their duties in light of these recent controversial evens (see chart 1 for full results).

Chart 1

Content Analysis Findings
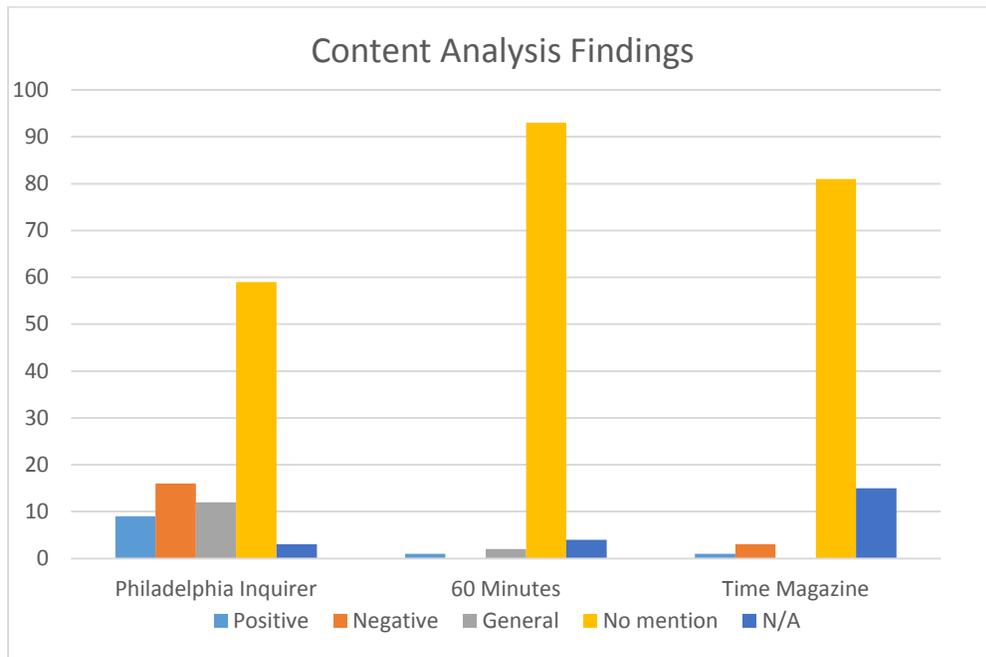
Discussion

Through careful synthesis of the data gathered, inferences were made based on the trends that become evident. There are some researchers whose perspectives align with the results of these data while other conclusions conflict with these findings. Some contend that police are mentioned generally positively while others disagree. Prior researchers, members of law enforcement and others claim that the media poorly effects their public perception. What could cause such varying perspectives to be reached?

Generally, these data gathered lends support to suggest that police related stories do not dominate the news cycle. This is interesting as most of the research surrounding the topic contend that media does play a role in police perceptions in some way, whether it be good or bad. Unvisited was the idea that media does not engage in presenting its viewers with

influential police related content. Interesting patterns emerged from the research which supports The Spiral of Silence Theory. Mutz (1989) explains that individuals are much more likely to speak out when their opinion aligns with the majority. A common trend that arose was that police coverage was much more likely to be found during or immediately following controversial events involving law enforcement. The news coverage begins because of an event which results in an increased awareness about the situation. As the stories becomes more popular, news mediums give more attention to them. After interests in the situation begin to decrease, media coverage begins to decline as well.

Stories which mention police in a negative light, although not significantly, outnumber those which exemplify police for commendable behavior. Articles that give a negative image to police often were typically covering some facet of police brutality. Articles highlighting positive conduct were generally in the form of crime statistics and spoke to police effectiveness. These findings are interesting to consider in conjunction with the perspective that other researchers and members of law enforcement and others hold about media coverage. There are some like Heather McDonald who contend there is a "War on Police" within our society. President Donald Trump himself waged war upon the mass media, frequently citing its involvement with the increased displeasure and disrespect for police in our society. Jeff Roorda, Police Union Spokesman and former member of The House of Representatives, suggests that the media unfairly targets or portrays law enforcement. Out of a possible three-hundred samples, one-hundred dates for each of the three media forms, only nineteen dates yielded stories which negatively exemplified police. Based on the examination of articles, specifically with the Inquirer, four out of the sixteen found negative police related stories directly covered the killing

of a citizen by law enforcement. TIME Magazine covered four negative policing stories, three of which were directly covering the killings of citizens by law enforcement. Two important inferences can be made here to help us better understand the research questions. Not only do the results show that the media doesn't frequently cover police related stories in general, but it also shows that when they do, they tend to focus on mostly severe issues. Instances involving minor misconduct and such are generally unfound.

Samples which positively influence the perception of police were found but less than expected. Just nine articles were found in the Philadelphia Inquirer and, only one 60 Minutes episode were found to have a positive police message. Although this number seems low, articles of positive connotation were found relatively proportionate to those of negative connotation in the Inquirer. As previous research indicated, samples were likely to include the effectiveness of police through decreased crime related articles.

Proportionate to each other category of mention, general mentions of police were evident in the content analysis. General mentions of police were made just fourteen times across all three forms of media that was examined. As we see from examinations of articles, general police mentions like other types of mentions do not really dominate the news cycle. Articles mentioning police generally were determined to have neither a positive or negative expression, rather the tone was even and police often weren't the main focus of the article.

In a comparison between a local, daily form of print media and weekly, national visual and print forms of news, there are a few interesting considerations in play. The Philadelphia Inquirer publishes its paper daily while TIME Magazine only publishes new issues on Mondays

and 60 Minutes episodes release on Sundays. The data shows that the Philadelphia Inquirer was the most likely of the three forms of media to mention police in any way. One obvious reason for this is because it publishes seven times more often than do the other two media forms. The Inquirer has more opportunities to place these stores in the front of their paper. TIME and 60 Minutes must pick topics wisely as they only release once per week. Another consideration for understanding this disparity could be in examining the political "association" if you will. Many perceive The Philadelphia Inquirer to be a left leaning, or liberal minded news source. TIME Magazine on the other hand can be described as generally centrist. With the data gathered and political interests better understood, one could infer that the increase in police coverage and messages about them could be in part because of political perspectives. One final consideration for the disparity is the size of the area in which these media forms cover. The Philadelphia Inquirer covers news mostly within the Tri State region while TIME and 60 Minutes are a national news coverage. National, periodical media covers a much broader spectrum of news. Local news, specifically the Inquirer, focuses on events mostly happening within the city of Philadelphia so it's choices for coverage topics are much narrower. These findings best parallel the Social Constructionist Theory. This theory claims that problems in an objective sense are often not as big of a problem as they may be perceived (Lawrence, 2000). For each of us to be able to witness these events first hand would be both physically and logistically impossible. The media is a prominent source that many people use to educate themselves on current events. As more and more prevalent social issues show up in media, this creates a larger perception that these issues are social problems conceptually, although not necessarily objectively.

An important thing to keep in mind when examining the impact that the media may have is not the intent of any given article, rather, does the message put forth in that article bare any responsibility for the formulation of an opinion. This is to say, it is not whether the media is *trying* to change ones opinion on something, what is important is if any presented message *actually* assists in developing a perspective of police. The Philadelphia Inquirer could have published ninety articles out of one-hundred with negative police presentations. That fact holds no relevance unless it influences someone.

Limitations

A general limitation is conducting the content analysis arises from the objectivity in coding each of the articles. One individual may read the same articles that another did, yet their categorizations may differ. This is because each individual may perceive a different message from the article. This limitation is highlighted Dowler, (2003) who acknowledges that media plays a role in shaping perceptions but goes further to suggest that age, race, and background also help shape these views. Things such as race, culture and previous experiences are a lens through which we can interpret things differently.

Another limitation to the study is the examination of social media platforms. Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat and Twitter are loaded into a vast majority of American's home screens. Many people spend a majority of the time on their phones using these apps. Often times these are a major source of news for people. Unfortunately, there is beyond the scope of the current research to accurately determine a sample to be able to examine it for the presence of police based material.. Social media platforms also prove challenging because anyone can post

anything. Opinions are commonly formed and posted on a variety of these platforms with no evidence or support to back these claims. They can be accurate, but also can be uninformed and biased.

A limitation that arose with TIME Magazine was the lack of variety. As we only examined front cover stories, only one topic could be considered for this per issue. TIME is forced to choose its front cover stories carefully and frequently left police based stories off of the cover. This is not to say that police related articles are not available within the pages of TIME. Expansion of the aforementioned research could have yielded a better understanding of the coverage that national news gives to law enforcement topics.

One final limitation of this study was the inability to understand the impact or the actual influence that a form of media has on someone. It is one thing to be able to understand the frequency or the types of messages that a form of media presents its viewers, it is another to understand the actual impact, if any at all, these prints or broadcasts have on the public. One thing that I would like to explore in a further study are the different media forms that actually play a role in the opinions they form. By understanding which forms of media are most impactful in formulating opinions in society we can further expand on the research question and truly understand the role that the media plays in shaping the perceptions of police.

Implications and Conclusions

As previously stated, there is a somewhat general belief among law enforcement that the mass media unfairly criticizes and portrays them. Further, police may feel a sense of displeasure coming from the general public, whether it be reality or perceived. As a result of this, a disconnect is formed between law enforcement and the public. Results from this study could be viewed by law enforcement to truly understand how they are both presented by the media and perceived by the public in an effort to repair citizen relations. This study can help police to see that they are not, in this case, unfairly represented or targeted. As previously mentioned, positive and negative mentions of police were relatively similar. The study shows that the media does not extensively cover police based topics on its front-page samples. We also know through surveys that police are generally liked by the public (Dowler, 2003). Confidence in the police took a hit following the death of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri but has since bounced back. This has important implications for law enforcement because it shows them that the public is generally appreciative of them and support them. With this understanding, improved relations with the public, a decreased "us against them" mentality, and higher morale leading to greater job performance could result.

The results of the study show that police based stories do not dominate the news cycle of The Philadelphia Inquirer front page, 60 Minutes Episodes and TIME Magazine front cover stories. An examination of the three media sources as well as empirical studies on the topic yield important information for answering the research question and further, lay the foundation for future research. A literature review on the impact resulted in varying theories and perspective on the influence media has on perceptions of police while the results of the

content analysis illustrated a different conclusion. The evidence found by many other researchers conclude that the media does influence people's perception of police one way or another. One may argue though based on the results of the content analysis that the media does not present stories or articles which have the potential to influence the perception of police often enough to make any impact.

As trends in the data show, police coverage in the media spikes following controversial events and soon dies out. We can infer from this that the media doesn't appear to be looking for reasons to put police on the front page. Although this is true, it is evident that they will not shy away from doing so when an incident worth publishing on the front page occurs. At sixteen mentions of police in a one-hundred date sample, this projects to about 50 front page articles of negative police coverage over a one year span. The media is a platform by which so many of us are informed of a variety events in our society. But in what ways are we informed about police? We can conclude that the media most commonly excludes police related stories except during or immediately following a controversial event. In those instances where police are mentioned, there is no significant difference in the frequency positive, negative or general mentions are made. No bias is apparent that would suggest intentional slander of the police.

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Appendix

Philadelphia Inquirer

	Philadelphia Inquirer (Page A1)	Corruption – Negative	Praised – Positive	General – Neutral	No Mention
2					
3	Tuesday, December 22, 2015				x
4	Wednesday, March 2, 2016			x	x
5	Sunday, January 11, 2015				x
6	Monday, May 9, 2016				x
7	Saturday, November 5, 2016				x
8	Thursday, December 24, 2015				x
9	Monday, February 23, 2015				x
10	Saturday, August 20, 2016	x			x
11	Friday, March 20, 2015	x		x	x
12	Friday, July 10, 2015	x			x
13	Sunday, August 7, 2016	x			x
14	Wednesday, April 29, 2015	x			x
15	Thursday, March 12, 2015				x
16	Thursday, October 20, 2016				x
17	Tuesday, September 22, 2015	N/A			
18	Wednesday, November 18, 2015				x
19	Tuesday, February 10, 2015				x
20	Sunday, December 13, 2015				x
21	Friday, September 18, 2015				x
22	Monday, May 16, 2016				x
23	Sunday, August 2, 2015	x			x
24	Wednesday, October 19, 2016				x
25	Tuesday, August 30, 2016		x		x
26	Wednesday, April 13, 2016	x	x		x
27	Sunday, September 27, 2015				x
28	Thursday, November 5, 2015		x		x
29	Saturday, October 17, 2015				x
30	Tuesday, August 23, 2016	Officer murder case			x
31	Tuesday, March 15, 2016	N/A			
32	Tuesday, May 12, 2015				x
33	Monday, September 5, 2016		x		x
34	Thursday, August 6, 2015	x		x	x
35	Sunday, January 3, 2016	x			x
36	Saturday, August 15, 2015				x
37	Thursday, May 26, 2016				x
38	Thursday, May 21, 2015			x	x
39	Wednesday, March 25, 2015				x
40	Thursday, March 12, 2015				x
41	Thursday, December 29, 2016				x
42	Sunday, March 20, 2016				x
43	Saturday, May 23, 2015				x
44	Tuesday, May 3, 2016				x
45	Thursday, July 14, 2016		X		
46	Monday, March 2, 2015				x
47	Saturday, May 30, 2015				x
48	Wednesday, January 6, 2016				x
49	Saturday, April 9, 2016				x
50	Sunday, July 19, 2015	x		x	x
51	Friday, August 21, 2015	x			x
52	Monday, November 14, 2016			x	x
53	Tuesday, December 20, 2016				x
54	Wednesday, January 7, 2015				x
55	Thursday, September 29, 2016				x

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
52	Monday, November 14, 2016					x	x
53	Tuesday, December 20, 2016						x
54	Wednesday, January 7, 2015						x
55	Thursday, September 29, 2016						x
56	Wednesday, May 4, 2016			x police killing			x
57	Tuesday, April 21, 2015						x
58	Saturday, July 9, 2016			x police killing			x
59	Tuesday, March 3, 2015			x reform to hold cops accountable			x
60	Saturday, June 13, 2015						x
61	Sunday, October 11, 2015						x
62	Tuesday, October 6, 2015						x
63	Friday, November 4, 2016						x
64	Tuesday, March 29, 2016						x
65	Saturday, April 9, 2016						x
66	Wednesday, September 14, 2016						x
67	Tuesday, July 26, 2016			x police shooting			x
68	Friday, February 26, 2016					x	x
69	Saturday, November 7, 2015						x
70	Friday, February 27, 2015						x
71	Monday, August 10, 2015				x		x
72	Saturday, June 27, 2015						x
73	Saturday, January 9, 2016						x
74	Monday, April 25, 2016					xx	x
75	Tuesday, June 16, 2015					x	x
76	Sunday, April 17, 2016						x
77	Wednesday, April 1, 2015						x
78	Thursday, May 7, 2015				x crime decrease		x
79	Monday, June 6, 2016						x
80	Saturday, December 31, 2016						x
81	Monday, November 28, 2016					x	x
82	Friday, January 22, 2016					x	x
83	Thursday, February 11, 2016						x
84	Saturday, June 13, 2015						x
85	Saturday, November 19, 2016						x
86	Monday, December 5, 2016						x
87	Sunday, September 4, 2016					x	x
88	Saturday, August 27, 2016						x
89	Wednesday, August 3, 2016						x
90	Thursday, December 17, 2015						x
91	Thursday, May 5, 2016						x
92	Thursday, April 9, 2015						x
93	Friday, September 18, 2015						x
94	Thursday, May 12, 2016			x			x
95	Sunday, June 26, 2016						x
96	Monday, August 17, 2015						x
97	Saturday, August 8, 2015						x
98	Friday, January 15, 2016						x
99	Thursday, March 10, 2016						x
100	Wednesday, October 21, 2015						x
101	Monday, March 9, 2015			N/A			
102	Thursday, November 12, 2015				x		x
103							
104	http://random-date-generator.com/homepage/results						
105							

Time Magazine

	9	10	11	12	13	14	
	TIME Magazine Front Cover		Corruption – Negative	Praised – Positive	General – Neutral	No Mention	··
	Monday, January 5, 2015		N/A				
	Monday, January 12, 2015		N/A				
	Monday, January 19, 2015					x	
	Monday, January 26, 2015					x	
	Monday, February 2, 2015					x	
	Monday, February 9, 2015					x	
	Monday, February 16, 2015					x	
	Monday, February 23, 2015					x	
	Monday, March 2, 2015		N/A				
	Monday, March 9, 2015					x	
	Monday, March 16, 2015					x	
	Monday, March 23, 2015					x	
	Monday, March 30, 2015					x	
	Monday, April 6, 2015					x	
	Monday, April 13, 2015					x	
	Monday, April 20, 2015		Black Lives Matter				
	Monday, April 27, 2015					x	
	Monday, May 4, 2015		N/A				
	Monday, May 11, 2015		Baltimore Riots				
	Monday, May 18, 2015					x	
	Monday, May 25, 2015					x	
	Monday, June 1, 2015					x	
	Monday, June 8, 2015					x	
	Monday, June 15, 2015					x	
	Monday, June 22, 2015					x	
	Monday, June 29, 2015					x	
	Monday, July 6, 2015					x	
	Monday, July 13, 2015		N/A				
	Monday, July 20, 2015					x	
	Monday, July 27, 2015					x	
	Monday, August 3, 2015					x	
	Monday, August 10, 2015		N/A				
	Monday, August 17, 2015					x	
	Monday, August 24, 2015			Whats it like to be a cop in America			
	Monday, August 31, 2015					x	
	Monday, September 7, 2015					x	
	Monday, September 14, 2015		N/A				
	Monday, September 21, 2015					x	
	Monday, September 28, 2015					x	
	Monday, October 5, 2015					x	
	Monday, October 12, 2015					x	
	Monday, October 19, 2015					x	
	Monday, October 26, 2015					x	
	Monday, November 2, 2015					x	
	Monday, November 9, 2015					x	
	Monday, November 16, 2015					x	
	Monday, November 23, 2015					x	
	Monday, November 30, 2015					x	
	Monday, December 7, 2015		N/A				
	Monday, December 14, 2015					x	
	Monday, December 21, 2015					x	
	Monday, December 28, 2015					x	

8	9	10	11	12	13	14
	Monday, January 4, 2016		N/A			
	Monday, January 11, 2016		N/A			
	Monday, January 18, 2016					x
	Monday, January 25, 2016					x
	Monday, February 1, 2016					x
	Monday, February 8, 2016					x
	Monday, February 15, 2016					x
	Monday, February 22, 2016					x
	Monday, February 29, 2016		N/A			
	Monday, March 7, 2016					x
	Monday, March 14, 2016					x
	Monday, March 21, 2016					x
	Monday, March 28, 2016					x
	Monday, April 4, 2016					x
	Monday, April 11, 2016					x
	Monday, April 18, 2016					x
	Monday, April 25, 2016					x
	Monday, May 2, 2016					x
	Monday, May 9, 2016		N/A			
	Monday, May 16, 2016					x
	Monday, May 23, 2016					x
	Monday, May 30, 2016					x
	Monday, June 6, 2016					x
	Monday, June 13, 2016					x
	Monday, June 20, 2016					x
	Monday, June 27, 2016					x
	Monday, July 4, 2016					x
	Monday, July 11, 2016					x
	Monday, July 18, 2016		N/A			
	Monday, July 25, 2016					x
	Monday, August 1, 2016					x
	Monday, August 8, 2016					x
	Monday, August 15, 2016					x
	Monday, August 22, 2016					x
	Monday, August 29, 2016					x
	Monday, September 5, 2016					x
	Monday, September 12, 2016					x
	Monday, September 19, 2016		N/A			
	Monday, September 26, 2016					x
	Monday, October 3, 2016		Colin Kaepernic			
	Monday, October 10, 2016					x
	Monday, October 17, 2016					x
	Monday, October 24, 2016					x
	Monday, October 31, 2016					x
	Monday, November 7, 2016					x
	Monday, November 14, 2016					x
	Monday, November 21, 2016					x
	Monday, November 28, 2016					x
	Monday, December 5, 2016		N/A			
	Monday, December 12, 2016					x
	Monday, December 19, 2016					x
	Monday, December 26, 2016					x

60 Minutes

16	17	18	19	20	21
60 Minutes Topics		Corruption – Negative	Praised – Positive	General – Neutra	No Mention
Sunday, January 4, 2015					x
Sunday, January 11, 2015					x
Sunday, January 18, 2015		N/A			
Sunday, January 25, 2015					x
Sunday, February 1, 2015					x
Sunday, February 8, 2015					x
Sunday, February 15, 2015					x
Sunday, February 22, 2015					x
Sunday, March 1, 2015					x
Sunday, March 8, 2015					x
Sunday, March 15, 2015					x
Sunday, March 22, 2015					x
Sunday, March 29, 2015					x
Sunday, April 5, 2015					x
Sunday, April 12, 2015					x
Sunday, April 19, 2015					x
Sunday, April 26, 2015					x
Sunday, May 3, 2015					x
Sunday, May 10, 2015					x
Sunday, May 17, 2015					x
Sunday, May 24, 2015					x
Sunday, May 31, 2015					x
Sunday, June 7, 2015					x
Sunday, June 14, 2015					x
Sunday, June 21, 2015					x
Sunday, June 28, 2015					x
Sunday, July 5, 2015					x
Sunday, July 12, 2015					x
Sunday, July 19, 2015					x
Sunday, July 26, 2015					x
Sunday, August 2, 2015					x
Sunday, August 9, 2015					x
Sunday, August 16, 2015					x
Sunday, August 23, 2015					x
Sunday, August 30, 2015					x
Sunday, September 6, 2015					x
Sunday, September 13, 2015					x
Sunday, September 20, 2015					x
Sunday, September 27, 2015					x
Sunday, October 4, 2015					x
Sunday, October 11, 2015					x
Sunday, October 18, 2015					x
Sunday, October 25, 2015					x
Sunday, November 1, 2015					x
Sunday, November 8, 2015					x
Sunday, November 15, 2015					x
Sunday, November 22, 2015			Looks at Police officer training		
Sunday, November 29, 2015					x
Sunday, December 6, 2015				x	x
Sunday, December 13, 2015				x	
Sunday, December 20, 2015					x
Sunday, December 27, 2015					x

Sunday, January 3, 2016				x
Sunday, January 10, 2016				x
Sunday, January 17, 2016				x
Sunday, January 24, 2016				xx
Sunday, January 31, 2016				x
Sunday, February 7, 2016	N/A			
Sunday, February 14, 2016				x
Sunday, February 21, 2016				x
Sunday, February 28, 2016				xx
Sunday, March 6, 2016				x
Sunday, March 13, 2016				x
Sunday, March 20, 2016				x
Sunday, March 27, 2016	N/A			
Sunday, April 3, 2016				x
Sunday, April 10, 2016				x
Sunday, April 17, 2016				x
Sunday, April 24, 2016				x
Sunday, May 1, 2016				x
Sunday, May 8, 2016				x
Sunday, May 15, 2016				x
Sunday, May 22, 2016				xx
Sunday, May 29, 2016				x
Sunday, June 5, 2016				x
Sunday, June 12, 2016				x
Sunday, June 19, 2016				x
Sunday, June 26, 2016				x
Sunday, July 3, 2016				x
Sunday, July 10, 2016				x
Sunday, July 17, 2016				x
Sunday, July 24, 2016				x
Sunday, July 31, 2016				x
Sunday, August 7, 2016				x
Sunday, August 14, 2016	N/A			
Sunday, August 21, 2016				x
Sunday, August 28, 2016				x
Sunday, September 4, 2016				x
Sunday, September 11, 2016				x
Sunday, September 18, 2016				x
Sunday, September 25, 2016				x
Sunday, October 2, 2016				x
Sunday, October 9, 2016				x
Sunday, October 16, 2016				x
Sunday, October 23, 2016				x
Sunday, October 30, 2016				x
Sunday, November 6, 2016				x
Sunday, November 13, 2016				x
Sunday, November 20, 2016				x
Sunday, November 27, 2016				x
Sunday, December 4, 2016				x
Sunday, December 11, 2016				x
Sunday, December 18, 2016				x
Sunday, December 25, 2016				x