



News media consumption and attitudes about police: in search of theoretical orientation and advancement

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ABSTRACT

Examinations of the relationship between attitudes about police and news media have regularly been undertaken since the Rodney King incident in 1991. Although cultivation theory, which argues greater news consumption will result in adoption of views of policing provided in the news, offers an appropriate theoretical framework for media studies of this kind, this body of research has largely lacked theoretical grounding. This study tests underlying premises of cultivation regarding the roles of overall news consumption, consumption of different types of news mediums, and exposure to negative news coverage in determining public perceptions of common policing outcomes. It also tests the mostly neglected area of how audiences perceive news they are consuming by considering how fair they deem the news portrayal of police to be.

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The role news media play in shaping public perceptions of police has been of interest since the Rodney King incident in 1991, an interest that was only renewed following events in Ferguson, Missouri in 2014 and the heavy media scrutiny that followed (See McLaughlin 2015). Solid support exists for a relationship between more negative attitudes about police and exposure to high-profile incidents (e.g., Lasley 1994; Kaminski and Jefferis 1998; Weitzer 2002) and negative news coverage involving police (e.g., Graziano and Gauthier 2017; Weitzer, and Tuch 2004; Wu 2010). Lesser support also exists for increased television news consumption impacting attitudes about police (e.g., Donovan and Klahm 2015; Donovan and Klahm 2017; Eschholz et al. 2002), while very little is known about Internet news consumption despite the fact that Americans are increasingly getting their news online at rates now approaching those of television news consumption (Gottfried and Shearer 2017).

Although theoretical grounding for these studies has largely been absent, some researchers have recognized the natural fit between research in this area and cultivation theory, which argues greater consumption of media increases the likelihood of consumers adopting the worldviews they are exposed to (Gerbner 1972). More of a paradigm than a set of theoretically restrictive premises (Morgan and Shanahan 2010), cultivation is also open to the development of theoretical tenets regarding how consumers interpret the media messages they are exposed to, which ultimately

determine cultivation effects. While studies on the relationship between news media and attitudes about police have looked at audience characteristics, such as personal experience with police and various demographics, examining the specific understanding consumers hold of the news itself has largely been overlooked.

This work has three purposes. First, it reviews the literature on news media and perceptions of police with a special emphasis on its often unarticulated theoretical assumptions, including how cultivation theory might provide this research with much-needed theoretical orientation. Second, it provides further examination of the role of different news mediums, including the Internet, in relation to perceptions of police. Third, it advances this research by not only testing exposure to negative news about police but also how fair news consumers consider that news coverage to be.

Cultivation theory: an overview

As originally conceived by George Gerbner, cultivation theory includes three analytical domains: institutional (decision-making behind production of media messages), message systems (patterns in mass-mediated messages), and cultivation (relationships between institutions, their messages, and beliefs cultivated in media consumers) (Gerbner 1970). Gerbner and associates (e.g., Gerbner 1972; Gerbner and Gross 1976) focused on television as the then most pervasive form of media, conducting message analyses of entertainment programs as they related to violent content. This provided a well-known premise to emerge from cultivation analysis: greater television viewing increases the likelihood consumers will assume the worldviews as supplied on television. To this end, primetime television, with its repeated messages of violence, was seen as a force for cultivating public fear of crime.

In general, cultivation research suggests viewing television does indeed influence the understanding consumers have of the world, although such effects tend to be small (Shanahan and Morgan 1999). While numerous studies appear under the cultivation umbrella, they are not necessarily true to Gerbner's original theoretical conceptions and arguably should not be labeled cultivation (Potter 2014). Morgan and Shanahan (2010), however, argue the large amount of research claiming to be cultivation signifies it achieved paradigm status, having 'gained fairly broad acceptance as a base idea that could be explored in a variety of contexts and situations' (p.349). It has become common to study consumption of media other than television (e.g., the Internet, see Roche, Pickett, and Gertz 2016) or focus on specific television genres rather than all television viewing experience as Gerbner theorized. Indeed, research on news media and its impact on viewers' fear of crime represents one such departure.

The overemphasis by news media on reporting about crime, particularly violent crime, underpins the misplaced emphasis the public places upon crime as a serious problem when the actuality of crime rates does not support such an emphasis (Lowry, Nio, and Leitner 2003). Indeed, greater consumption of television news, particularly local news, has been found to be related to greater fear of and concerns about crime, although newspaper and Internet news consumption often is not (Callanan 2011; Chiricos, Eschholz, and Marc 1997; Chiricos, Padgett, and Gertz 2000; Kohm et al. 2012; Roche, Pickett, and Gertz 2016; Romer, Jamieson, and Aday 2003; Weitzer and Kubrin 2004). Media emphasis on violent crime and the fear of crime it invokes lends itself to second order effects, with greater television news consumption related to greater support for more punitive crime policies (Gilliam and Iyengar 2000; Goidel, Freeman, and Procopio 2006; Lance, Shah, and Kwak 2004; Roche, Pickett, and Gertz 2016; Rosenberger and Callanan 2011).

Newspaper consumption has at times been found to increase fear of crime, typically where news emphasizes violent (Jaehnig, Weaver, and Fico 1981) or local crime, which has special salience for consumers (Liska and Baccaglioni 1990; Williams and Dickinson 1993). The latter speaks to an early criticism of cultivation: assuming audiences passively receive media messages. One area of necessary theoretical expansion concerned examining differences across audience characteristics in determining cultivation effects, with demographics considered to impact attitudes about crime

now routinely considered. For example, competing hypotheses were developed regarding viewer experience, arguing effects are greater for either those who personally experience what is viewed (e.g., crime victimization) (Gerbner et al. 1980) or those who have not (Weaver and Wakshlag 1986).

Examinations of how audience characteristics might moderate the influence of news media on fear of crime, however, have yet to consider how consumers actually conceptualize the news they are exposed to, not simply the exposure itself, as cultivation research on entertainment television has. Most notably, studies in this area have considered how realistic viewers deem portrayals in determining cultivation effects such as aggression in children (Busselle and Greenberg, 2000). To truly understand cultivation effects is to also understand the judgments audiences make in interpreting the media messages they receive.

Negative media coverage and attitudes about police

Within a cultivation framework, examination of news coverage of police and its impact on news consumers rests upon a simple hypothesis: greater exposure to negative news coverage of police will result in more negative attitudes toward police. It should be noted Gerbner focused primarily on entertainment television where portrayals of police were considerably more positive than their news portrayals. Indeed, he felt the increased fear of crime television excited in viewers would only make them more amenable to 'established authority, and to legitimize its use of force' (Gerbner and Gross 1976, p.194). Yet the premise supplied above not only remains more true to cultivation's central thesis that viewers assume the dominant worldview they are exposed to by the media but has been consistently supported by a growing body of research.

Clearly *how* the news media construct police actions is important to understanding public perceptions of those actions (Graziano, Schuck, and Martin 2010; Lawrence 2000; Miller and Davis 2008), but research has largely shied away from examining construction of messages about police and public understanding of them concurrently. Content analyses of media messages (e.g., Archbold et al. 2013; Hirschfield and Simon 2010) are typically conducted independent of examinations of the impact of exposure to news about police; regardless of focus, however, the messages from news media mattering most for researchers are negative, highlighting police misconduct. While this emphasis conceptually falls in line with research on the impact of contact with police, where negative contacts ultimately have greater resonance than positive ones (Skogan 2012), the rationale for this focus has seldom been elucidated by researchers.

In fact, providing a theoretical basis for the expected impact of exposure to negative media, even one as simple as cultivation theory supplies, is largely absent in this area of research. Not surprisingly, interest in the potential role of news media to shape public perceptions of police stirred following the Rodney King incident in 1991. Research focused on controversial high-profile incidents of use of force, such as King's, with a non-theoretical if common sense goal of testing whether exposure to such incidents impacted attitudes. Support was relatively unequivocal, and perceptions of the prevalence of police misconduct became more negative after exposure (Jefferis et al. 1997; Kaminski and Jefferis 1998; Lasley 1994; Sigelman et al. 1997; Tuch and Weitzer 1997; Weitzer 2002).

These initial findings serve as the rationale for expected effects Lance, Shah, and Kwak (2004), Weitzer and Tuch (2005a, 2005b) offered: if a single publicized incident of police misconduct impacts attitudes about police, repeated exposure to media reports of various incidents of misconduct will exert even greater effects. Here began what typified subsequent research examining the impact of negative news exposure: testing awareness of more generalized negative coverage of police (e.g., frequency of hearing about police misconduct in the news), with media just one of multiple factors examined for possible influence on perceptions of police, particularly when the focus of the study was race-ethnicity or personal experience with police. With few exceptions, later studies offer no theory and simply point to previous findings of negative coverage begetting negative attitudes about police as rationale for hypothesized effects (Chermak,

McGarrell, and Gruenewald 2006; Donovan and Klahm 2015; Donovan and Klahm 2017; Dowler 2002; Graziano and Gauthier 2017; Miller and Davis 2008). Those with theoretical orientation draw primarily on cultivation theory (Callanan and Rosenberger 2011; Dowler 2003; Dowler and Zawilski 2007; Eschholz et al. 2002; Graziano and Gauthier *forthcoming*), although Callanan and Rosenberger do not revisit their theoretical framework or its implications in their discussion of findings and both Dowler articles, while clearly referencing cultivation theory, never refer to it by that name.

Regardless of its lack of theoretical orientation, within this body of work, support for the premise of cultivation theory that greater exposure to negative news coverage of police will lead to more negative assessments of the police has been established on two primary police outcomes. Greater awareness of negative media on police has been found to increase perceptions of the prevalence of police misconduct, including racial discrimination (Graziano and Gauthier 2017; Miller and Davis 2008; Raj, Oliver, Jason Sole, and Prew 2017; Weitzer and Tuch 2004; Weitzer and Tuch 2005b; Wu, Smith, and Sun 2013), while negatively impacting assessments of police legitimacy, specifically the dimension of trust and confidence in police (self-identifying citation omitted; Sun et al. 2013; Sun, Susan Jou, and Chang 2014; Sun et al. 2016). Notably, it is on the outcome of police effectiveness that findings have diverged. Wu and colleagues have found exposure to negative media to impact perceptions of effectiveness (Wu 2010; Wu, Sun, and Smith 2011; Wu, Triplett, and Sun 2012); Miller and Davis (2008), however, failed to find a similar relationship and posited perceptions of misconduct might be more susceptible than those of effectiveness because of the tendency of news media to focus on the former.

As with the work on cultivation theory regarding fear of crime, research in this area has largely failed to consider how audiences conceptualize the news about the police that they consume. The exception is the work of Sun and colleagues (Sun et al. 2013; Sun, Susan Jou, and Chang 2014; Sun et al. 2016), who not only tested exposure to negative media about police but also if respondents believed the news to be *authentic* and found them to be equally strong predictors of lack of trust in police. Still, they do not discuss the finding as to its value for our understanding of media effects on attitudes about police. With the extent of existing support for a relationship between negative news coverage and attitudes about police, exploring consumer understanding of that coverage warrants further consideration.

Extent and modes of news consumption

Other research concerns the impact of greater news consumption and different modes of news consumption on attitudes about police. Some of these studies offer no theory and seemingly rely on prior findings for hypothesis development (Chermak, McGarrell, and Gruenewald 2006; Donovan and Klahm 2015; Donovan and Klahm 2017; Dowler 2002; Graziano and Gauthier 2017; Miller and Davis 2008). However, attempts to provide theoretical grounding are more apparent here and draw primarily on cultivation theory (Callanan and Rosenberger 2011; Dowler 2003; Dowler and Zawilski 2007; Eschholz et al. 2002; self-identifying citation omitted; Roche, Pickett, and Gertz 2016), yet the treatment of the theory is inconsistent and often not well articulated in terms of linking theoretical premises to specific hypotheses or findings.

For cultivation theory, greater consumption of media is related to a greater likelihood of consumers adopting the worldview depicted by the media. As with the study of fear of crime, researchers have similarly looked beyond television to other news mediums. Greater news media consumption in general (self-identifying citation omitted; Miller and Davis 2008; Wu 2014) and greater newspaper consumption (Callanan and Rosenberger 2011; Chermak, McGarrell, and Gruenewald 2006; Dowler 2002; Dowler 2003) have not been found to be related to perceptions of police. Callanan and Rosenberger (2011) hypothesize the failure to find a relationship between newspapers and attitudes is due to the mix of both positive and negative coverage of police found there.

Both Callanan and Rosenberger (2011) and Eschholz et al. (2002) hold to the premise greater consumption of television news will see more positive attitudes about police given their positive portrayals and their findings support this premise in relation to confidence in police; Eschholz et al. (2002), however, note a lack of negative news coverage on police at the time of the study. The reverse has also been found, with greater television news consumption linked to less confidence in police (Donovan and Klahm 2015; Donovan and Klahm 2017) and beliefs of greater police misconduct (Dowler and Zawilski 2007). Wu (2014) failed to find Internet use in general to be related to trust in police but did not look specifically at the role of Internet news consumption, for which findings have been mixed. Roche, Pickett, and Gertz (2016) failed to find a relationship between Internet news consumption and attitudes about expanding police powers, but television news consumption was only marginally ($p < .10$) related to these attitudes. On the other hand, those most relying on Internet news have been found to exhibit less trust in police than those relying on television news, potentially due to the access to unfiltered news about police the Internet offers, as well as exposure to negative comments on sites (self-identifying citation omitted).

The Internet stands as an increasingly important source for news, one that is beginning to rival the importance of television (Gottfried and Shearer 2017), yet findings on television and Internet news consumption are clearly limited and mixed. What consumers actually think about the policing news they consume also remains largely unexplored. There is not only a need for further examination of the relationship between attitudes about police and how individuals perceive the news they consume but also a need to further examine how the news mediums they rely on differ in their influence.

Hypotheses

Cultivation theory has a central premise that media cultivates the internalization of its worldviews in media consumers (Gerbner 1970), and therefore a key hypothesis is greater media consumption increases the likelihood of consumers adopting the worldviews media provides. Cultivation effects can expect to vary by audience characteristics, such as media message interpretation, as well as by news medium and extent of news consumed (Grabe and Drew 2007). The following hypotheses test for effects as they pertain to news media and attitudes about police, drawing on prior findings while employing cultivation's theoretical framework.

Regarding mode of news consumed, newspaper consumption has consistently lacked impact on attitudes, while television news has shown an inconsistent impact. Internet news, however, has been little examined. (Self-identifying citation omitted)'s rationale for why consumption of Internet news would produce more negative perceptions of police than television news aligns neatly with cultivation theory: the Internet provides a more unfiltered news experience and, including comments on sites, the potential for greater exposure to more negative news on police. Research suggests traditional news mediums (e.g., television and newspapers) regularly employ social media, such as Twitter (Engesser and Humprecht 2015), but tend to do so to promote traditional news reporting (Russell 2017). The presence of negative user feedback to online news reports, however, has been shown to negatively impact perceptions of those reports (Lee and Tandoc 2017).

To this end, *we expect those whose primary source of news is the Internet to hold more negative perceptions of police than those who use newspapers or television as a primary news source (Hypothesis 1).*

Seemingly contradicting cultivation's main tenet, rates of general news consumption have not been found to be related to attitudes about police in prior research, yet this is a small body of work requiring further verification. Callanan and Rosenberger (2011) assert failure of newspaper consumption to impact attitudes can be attributed to the mix of positive and negative coverage newspapers contain, which, while speculative, aligns with what might drive a lack of findings on general consumption rates. Cultivation theory operates on the premise that viewers adopt a dominant

worldview media supplies. If no single worldview is provided – or in the case of overall news consumption, the mix of positive and negative views of police provided through multiple news mediums renders that view neutral – *we expect the frequency of general news consumption is not related to perceptions of police (Hypothesis 2).*

A focus on negative news coverage of police, however, obviously concerns examining a very specific worldview of police being supplied by news media, one in which police regularly engage in excessive use of force and other acts of misconduct. Of no concern here is how much news media is being consumed, but rather awareness of negative news about police as the focus of consumption; in alignment with cultivation theory as to the increased likelihood of adopting the worldview with greater consumption, *we expect those with greater awareness of negative coverage of police are more likely to hold more negative perceptions of police (Hypothesis 3).*

How consumers actually perceive the news about police has not been studied with any theoretical basis, examining the extent to which respondents believed the news coverage about police to be fair is exploratory. Clearly, there was an increase in negative news coverage at the time of our study (McLaughlin 2015), with a media-provided worldview of police unjustly using force against unarmed black males. Exposure to such news does not touch on whether consumers believe it to accurately represent reality; drawing from cultivation theory research on entertainment media, the more realistic viewers perceive what is being seen in the media the greater likelihood their attitudes will be impacted (Busselle and Greenberg, 2000). Therefore, *we expect those who perceive the media coverage of police to be fair are more likely to hold negative perceptions of the police (Hypothesis 4).*

While other research has found a relationship between awareness of negative news coverage and perceptions of police, as noted above they have not taken into account how people feel about that coverage. It is possible that the awareness of negative news coverage may matter more for some people. Therefore, *we expect that awareness of negative news coverage will have a greater impact on perceptions of police for those who feel the media coverage is fair (Hypothesis 5).*

Methods

Data for this study were collected by way of a telephone survey conducted in a mid-size city near Los Angeles between July and October 2015. In 2010, this diverse city had a population of approximately 130,000 with a racial-ethnic makeup of 10.5% African American, 14.5% Asian, 35% Hispanic, and 40% White and a median age of 37. The median family income was approximately \$70,000 with 86% having a high school diploma and 49% having a bachelor's degree or higher (U. S. Census Bureau 2010). The survey instrument asked residents about their personal media consumption as well as their perceptions of and experiences with law enforcement. After being pilot tested, the instrument was administered using computer-assisted telephone interviewing (CATI) software.

The population of interest was all city residents 18 years or older. Quota samples were used so that meaningful comparisons between racial and ethnic groups were possible. Quotas of 300 were set for each of the four major racial-ethnic groups: African American, Asian, Hispanic, and White. To obtain these sample sizes, sampling frames for both landline and cellular random-digit dialing were used within zip codes contained in the city limits. Studies that rely solely on landlines suffer from non-coverage bias and produce samples less representative of their population (Keeter et al. 2007). These dual sample frames, however, also have limitations in that they add another source of error, take longer to complete, and are more expensive (Keeter et al. 2007; McGeeney 2016). Further, African Americans and Asians are underrepresented in this city, and so extra samples were drawn to backfill the quotas for these groups. Random sampling was conducted from lists targeting households and individuals in areas known to have large proportions of African Americans and lists targeting surnames known or presumed to be Asian. In this sense, the sample does not faithfully represent the race-ethnicity of the population and therefore is a limitation to generalizability.

However, the quota method was appropriate because the original study's objective was to compare causal effects across racial and ethnic groups rather than measure population parameters. Because our goal is to test theoretical constructs of cultivation theory, this sampling method is appropriate for the current study as well. The final sample size was 1,197 residents, which included 300 African Americans, 300 Caucasians, 300 Hispanics, and 297 Asians.

Independent variables

Media variables

Five independent variables (including one interaction variable) were used to examine the relationship between media and several measures of police perceptions. Drawing on the work of Weitzer and Kubrin (2004), the first variable comes from a survey item that asks 'what would you say is the most important source of news for you?' with response categories of 'local TV,' 'national TV,' 'newspaper' or 'Internet.' Dummy variables were used in the models with 'Internet' used as the omitted category. Recent findings indicate that those who use Internet as their primary source of news have more negative attitudes about police than those who use more traditional sources (self-identifying citation omitted). Based on these findings, the effect of Internet as most important media source is compared to more traditional sources.

The second variable is frequency of media consumption (see Weitzer and Kubrin 2004). Survey items asked respondents how often they get their news from the following sources: national TV, local TV, newspaper, and Internet. Response categories included 'never,' 'several times a month,' 'once or twice a week,' 'most days,' and 'every day.' Responses to these items were added to create an index with higher numbers indicating more media usage.

Next, an additive index was created using two variables measuring awareness of negative depictions of police by news media ($\alpha = .76$). The first variable, taken from Weitzer and Tuch (2004), measures how often respondents 'hear or read about incidents of police misconduct (such as police use of force, verbal abuse, corruption, and so on) that occur somewhere in the nation.' Because of the increased media scrutiny of police-minority encounters over the past few years, a second question was asked to distinctly measure how often respondents 'hear or read about negative police encounters with minorities (such as shootings, excessive force or discrimination) that occur somewhere in the nation.' Both variables had response categories of 'never,' 'rarely,' 'sometimes,' and 'often,' with higher numbers indicating more frequent exposure to negative coverage of policing.

To measure how individuals regard the news they were exposed to, respondents were asked how fair they thought police are portrayed in the media. The response categories were 'very fair,' 'somewhat fair,' 'somewhat unfair,' and 'not very fair,' with higher numbers indicating greater perceived fairness. The fairness of coverage variable was then split into two categories: those who thought the coverage was fair (including those who responded 'very fair' and 'somewhat fair') and those who thought the coverage was unfair (including those who responded 'somewhat unfair' and 'not very fair').

Finally, because it is possible that the effects of awareness of negative news coverage on perceptions of police will depend on whether respondents think the coverage is fair, an interaction term between the awareness of negative news coverage variable and the fairness variable was created. To create the interaction variable, the media awareness variable was centered (see Cohen et al. 2003) and then multiplied by the dichotomous fairness variable.

Demographic variables

To control for the effects of demographic variables, several variables were entered into these models. First, gender was included as a dummy variable with Male as the excluded category. Respondents were also asked to specify their age, and so a ratio-level variable for age was included. Education was measured with an ordinal variable asking for the highest grade or year

of school completed, with higher numbers indicating more education. Dummy variables were used in the regression analyses for respondents who self-identified as African American, Asian, and Hispanic, with 'White' as the omitted category. Finally, whether respondents were born in the United States or not was included.

Dependent variables

To examine the effects of media on the previously examined policing outcomes, four dependent variables are used: misconduct, trust, discrimination, and effectiveness.

Misconduct

The survey contained four questions regarding perceptions of police misconduct in the local police department (see Davis, Henderson, and Cheryachukin 2004). Respondents were asked if the following issues were currently a 'major problem,' 'minor problem,' or 'not a problem': the local police stopping people in cars or on the street without good reason; police engaging in racial profiling; police using offensive language; and, police using excessive force. An index was created with these items with lower numbers representing perceptions of a more serious misconduct problem ($\alpha = .89$).

Trust

The second dependent variable measures trust in police. Using three variables that tap into this construct (see Gau 2011; Reisig, Bratton, and Gertz 2007), an additive index was created consisting of the following items: 'you have confidence the police can do their job well,' 'you trust the leaders of police to make decisions that are in the public's best interest,' and 'people's basic rights are well protected by the police' ($\alpha = .88$). The response categories were 'strongly agree,' 'agree,' 'disagree,' and 'strongly disagree,' with higher scores indicating stronger trust in police.

Discrimination

Perception of discrimination by police was measured using two survey questions: 'police officers are more likely to treat whites better than minorities,' and 'police officers are more likely to treat wealthy people better than the less well-off' (Dowler and Zawilski 2007). Response categories for these two questions were 'strongly agree,' 'agree,' 'disagree,' and 'strongly disagree,' with higher scores indicating greater perceived discrimination by police. These questions were used to create an additive index ($\alpha = .89$).

Effectiveness

The final dependent variable is an additive index measuring perceptions of police effectiveness ($\alpha = .92$). This index is made up of seven questions (Davis 2000), including: 'the police in your neighborhood do a good job preventing crime'; 'police in your neighborhood promptly respond to non-emergency calls for assistance'; 'police in your neighborhood promptly respond to emergency calls for assistance'; 'police in your neighborhood are helpful to people who have been victims of crime'; 'overall, the police are effective in dealing with the problems that really concern people in your neighborhood'; 'overall, the police in your neighborhood are doing a good job dealing with residents in a fair and courteous manner'; and, 'the police in your neighborhood are doing a good job working together with residents to solve local problems.' Response categories for each of these questions were 'strongly agree,' 'agree,' 'disagree,' and 'strongly disagree,' with higher scores indicating greater perceived effectiveness of police.

Analysis

Descriptive statistics were conducted on select independent and control variables. Ordinary least squares regression analysis was also conducted to estimate the effects of media on the following perceptions about police: police misconduct, trust, discrimination, and effectiveness.

All regression assumptions have been met with the exception of homoscedasticity. The Breusch-Pagan Test indicated the presence of heteroscedasticity in three of the regression models: Misconduct, Trust, and Discrimination. Using the technique demonstrated by Hayes and Cai (2007), new OLS regression models were run with heteroscedasticity-consistent standard error estimators. While there were minor differences in the adjusted standard errors, the results otherwise did not change. For purposes of parsimony, therefore, the original coefficients and standard errors are presented in the tables.

Results

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of select independent and control variables.

	<i>f</i>	%
Gender		
Male	538	44.9
Female	657	54.9
Race		
Asian	297	24.8
African American	300	25.1
Hispanic	300	25.1
White	300	25.1
Highest level of education		
Elementary school/Less than high school	54	4.5
High school graduate/GED	166	13.9
Vocational/Technical degree	25	2.1
Some college	235	19.6
College degree	386	32.2
Graduate/Professional school	308	25.7
Age		$\bar{x} = 51.16$ $sd = 17.92$
Born in the US		
Yes	795	67.1
No	389	32.9
Media variables		
Most important source: Local TV	284	26.4
Most important source: National TV	274	25.5
Most important source: Newspaper	91	8.5
Most important source: internet	426	39.6
Fairness of media coverage of police very fair and somewhat fair	699	63.4
Not very fair and somewhat unfair	403	36.5

Table 2. Regression models predicting perceptions of police with media variables.

	Misconduct (N = 608)		Trust (N = 878)		Discrimination (N = 823)		Effective (N = 497)	
	b (SE)	Beta	b (SE)	Beta	b (SE)	Beta	b (SE)	Beta
Media								
Most important source: Local TV ^a	-.458 (.278)	-.074	.527** (.193)	.104	-.547** (.134)	-.155	.556 (.462)	.065
Most important source: National TV ^a	-.377 (.263)	-.060	.117 (.182)	.023	-.074 (.125)	-.021	-.018 (.449)	-.002
Most important source: Newspaper	-.401 (.423)	-.038	.038 (.274)	.005	.243 (.188)	.044	.385 (.768)	.024
Media consumption	.030 (.027)	.044	-.022 (.019)	-.038	.013 (.013)	.033	.045 (.047)	.044
Media awareness ^c	.018 (.138)	.008	-.134 (.101)	-.068	.097 (.075)	.070	.069 (.244)	.022
Fairness of coverage	.755** (.111)	.206	-.582** (.145)	-.127	.571** (.100)	.179	-.818* (.357)	-.102
Aware x fairness	.356* (.175)	.123	-.358** (.127)	-.144	.280** (.092)	.166	-.518 (.295)	-.134
Control variables								
Gender	.226 (.201)	.042	-.001 (.139)	.001	.229* (.096)	.075	.411 (.345)	.053
Age	-.014* (.006)	-.093	.011* (.004)	.089	-.002 (.003)	-.019	.025* (.011)	.121
Education	-.121 (.079)	-.072	-.087 (.055)	-.061	.064 (.038)	.065	.006 (.136)	.002
African American ^b	2.110** (.309)	.353	-1.289** (.205)	-.258	.898** (.141)	.262	-1.654** (.515)	-.191
Hispanic ^b	.487 (.343)	.083	-.240 (.232)	-.047	.267 (.158)	.076	-.544 (.579)	-.064
Asian ^b	.127 (.335)	.020	-.014 (.217)	-.003	.030 (.151)	.008	-.385 (.581)	-.041
Born in U.S.?	-.255 (.252)	-.044	.198 (.177)	.041	-.192 (.122)	-.058	-.610 (.462)	-.073
R ²	.197		.172		.230		.071	
F	10.419**		12.845**		17.272**		2653**	

^aInternet is the omitted category. ^bWhite is the omitted category. ^cThis variable was centered in order to create the interaction variable. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$.