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The Impact of George Floyd's Murder and Participant Race on  
Perceived Coercion in a Black Suspect's Police Interrogation

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**Dissertation****Abstract**

The murder of George Floyd on May 25, 2020 underscored the disadvantages people of color face in the criminal justice system, from police interactions to judicial outcomes. Research suggests that attitudes toward law enforcement are influenced by high profile cases and can influence individuals' behavior. However, few studies have examined how public perceptions of police impact jury decision-making. The present study explored the effect of George Floyd's murder on individuals' opinions of police behavior and whether these perceptions influenced their judgments of coercive police tactics in the interrogation of a Black suspect, while also examining differences by participant race. The results of the mixed methods design suggested that participants who reported their views on policing were influenced by Floyd's death were more likely to rate the detective's interrogation tactics as coercive. There were no significant differences in coercion ratings by participant race, with 81.3% of all participants rating the behavior as coercive. Furthermore, 74.1% of participants reported that Floyd's death influenced their perceptions of police, regardless of race. The qualitative analysis of participants' written responses revealed shared themes across racial groups, such as condemnation of police misconduct and recognition of racial inequalities. There were also notable differences between BIPOC and White participants, including attributions of misconduct, feasibility of change, and expressed emotions. These findings suggest that George Floyd's death has broadly affected public views of police behavior and provide preliminary evidence that high profile incidents of police misconduct shape how mock jurors evaluate police behavior during interrogations.

*Keywords:* George Floyd, race, coercion, police, interrogation, mixed methods

### **The Impact of George Floyd's Murder and Participant Race on Perceived Coercion in a Black Suspect's Police Interrogation**

Racial disparities in the American criminal justice system are longstanding and well documented. Empirical research has consistently revealed the number of disadvantages that Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) face at each decision point of the legal system (Sabol & Johnson, 2022). Available statistics have indicated that Black and Latinx individuals are more likely to be stopped by police, detained and arrested, held in pretrial detainment, and charged with more serious crimes than their White counterparts (Davis et al., 2018; Hinton & Cook, 2021; Klein et al., 2023; Sabol & Johnson, 2022). Data on fatal use of force by police officers tells a similar story. Despite making up only about 13% of the population, a comprehensive report on police violence showed that 28% of the 1,260 individuals killed by police in 2024 were Black (Mapping Police Violence, 2025). These statistics illustrate the systemic racial inequalities in the American criminal justice system, with people of color much more likely to face detrimental outcomes than White people at any stage in the process, from initial police interactions to judicial outcomes (Lloyd, 2020).

The murder of George Floyd on May 25, 2020 serves as a stark example of the extreme consequences of these systemic disparities. Floyd, a 46-year-old unarmed Black man, was murdered by a Minneapolis police officer who knelt on his neck for almost 10 minutes during an arrest for allegedly using a counterfeit bill (Hill et al., 2020). The tragic event, captured on video and viewed by millions worldwide, triggered widespread civil unrest, with an estimated 15 to 26 million people participating in protests throughout the summer of 2020 (Buchanan et al., 2020). This global response amplified political, academic, and media discourse on the dangers of excessive policing and its disproportionate effects on Black Americans (Eichstaedt et al., 2021).

While Floyd's murder garnered unprecedented attention, it was not an isolated incident but rather part of a broader pattern of police brutality and racial profiling (Wu et al., 2023). However, countless other cases of police violence against Black individuals receive little to no national attention, often going unreported, uninvestigated, or unresolved (Judson et al., 2024). Research highlights that systemic underreporting, institutional barriers, and a lack of oversight contribute to the invisibility of many instances of police misconduct, further exacerbating racial disparities in law enforcement (Jefferson et al., 2022).

Research has consistently demonstrated that high-profile incidents of police misconduct significantly influence public perceptions of law enforcement (Kochel, 2019; White et al., 2018). The impact of such events was first examined following the 1991 videotaped beating of Rodney King by Los Angeles police officers. The acquittal of the officers involved led to the 1992 Los Angeles Riots, which prompted Lasley (1994) to conduct a survey that found a substantial decline in public confidence in law enforcement across demographic groups. Subsequent research has reaffirmed that such events contribute to increasingly negative perceptions of the police, with research demonstrating that non-White individuals experience a significantly greater decline in trust compared to their White counterparts (Kaminski & Jefferis, 1998; Weitzer, 2002). Moreover, direct or vicarious exposure to police violence has been shown to negatively impact the physical and mental health, emotional well-being, and overall sense of safety among Black Americans (Sewell et al., 2021). These attitudes are shaped by direct encounters with law enforcement, media exposure, and broader historical knowledge of anti-Black racism in policing (Intravia et al., 2020).

Distinguishing between cognitive and emotional responses to police behavior is essential to understanding public attitudes toward law enforcement. While cognitive assessments focus on

perceptions of police effectiveness, emotional reactions (e.g., fear of police violence) shape overall trust and legitimacy (Lane et al., 2014; Warr, 2000). Studies suggest that emotional responses to police behavior can significantly shape perceptions of law enforcement, often reinforcing distrust and skepticism (Barkworth & Murphy, 2015; Schuck et al., 2008). Given these processes, White (2018) emphasized the importance of qualitative research to examine how high-profile incidents, such as George Floyd's murder, evoke varying emotional and cognitive reactions across different communities. This research is vital to better understand the factors driving the ongoing national crisis of police legitimacy (Weitzer, 2015).

Procedural justice and police legitimacy have emerged as prominent constructs in psychological and policing research in efforts to help understand the recent tensions between law enforcement and the public (White et al., 2018). Procedural justice theory proposes that the degree to which police exercise their authority in a fair and just manner during interactions with citizens can consequently enhance public perceptions of legitimacy of the police (Li et al., 2022). Tyler (2006) refers to police legitimacy as the belief that law enforcement officers' authority is appropriate and that they have the right to enforce rules and exert their power. In the context of police legitimacy, the public will perceive police agencies as more legitimate the more that they believe the particular agency engages in fair, impartial processes when making decisions and engaging with the public, which leads to increased internalization of the norms and values that police represent (Tyler, 1997). Inversely, when police consistently treat individuals in a manner that lacks procedural justice and people perceive unfair treatment, disrespect, or biased decision-making, community members feel less valued, diminished trust, and become less likely to identify with police (Cross et al., 2023). Furthermore, procedural injustices undermine an individual's view of police as a legitimate regulatory institution (Tyler, 2006), which may have

an adverse effect on the public's perception of the police, especially given evidence of a consistent pattern over time (Dowler & Zawiski, 2007).

Procedural justice is frequently undermined in interactions between law enforcement and minoritized communities, as people of color disproportionately experience coercive encounters with police, which diminishes trust in law enforcement (Drakulich et al., 2020). Extensive research has shown that BIPOC individuals generally hold significantly more negative views of the police than their White counterparts, a perspective shaped by both historical and ongoing patterns of discriminatory treatment by law enforcement (Callanan & Rosenberger, 2011; Schuck et al., 2008; Weitzer & Tuch, 2005). Previous studies consistently demonstrate that perceptions of police legitimacy influence individuals' willingness to comply with and cooperate with law enforcement (Jackson et al., 2011; Tyler, 1990; White et al., 2016). For example, Mazerolle et al. (2013) found that individuals with unfavorable perceptions of police legitimacy were more likely to express skepticism, resistance, or even disobedience. Consequently, public perceptions of police behavior can also differentially shape how people of color interact with law enforcement (Graham et al., 2020). In support of this, Cross and her colleagues (2023) found that BIPOC individuals reported more instrumental obligations to obey the police, such as fear of what will happen if non-compliant.

Given that perceptions of police legitimacy impact public attitudes and behavior, researchers have sought to understand how these views might also affect jurors' legal decision-making (Pica et al., 2020). Several studies have found that potential jurors' perceptions of law enforcement significantly impact verdicts in trials involving police misconduct (Reisig et al., 2012; Reynolds et al., 2018). For instance, Ewanation et al. (2022) found that White mock jurors were not only more likely to hold a favorable view of police but were also more inclined to rule

against an officer who used excessive use of force. The authors suggested that perceptions of police legitimacy mediate the relationship between juror race and verdict outcomes. However, the few studies in the extant literature on juror decision-making in cases of police misconduct have almost exclusively focused on police use of force (Ewanation & Maeder, 2023). Given these findings, it is reasonable to expect that jurors' racial identity and perceptions of police behavior also play a role in legal decisions involving other forms of police misconduct, such as coercive interrogation tactics or wrongful investigative practices.

The U.S. Supreme Court has recognized that all custodial interrogations are “inherently coercive” in nature, raising concerns about the infringement of individuals' rights during potentially unconstitutional practices occurring in closed-door settings (Gudjonsson, 2003; *Miranda v. Arizona*, 1966, p. 448). The landmark *Miranda v. Arizona* (1996) decision established that confessions must be made voluntarily, knowingly, and intelligently and emphasized the need to shed light on strategies employed in the interrogation room. This decision sought to safeguard an individual from undue coercion by law enforcement, recognizing that such tactics could lead to false confessions and wrongful convictions. Despite this ruling, research indicates that coercive interrogation strategies remain prevalent in modern policing (Kassin et al., 2025). Etienne and McAdams (2021) argue that common interrogation techniques, such as deception about evidence or misleading suspects about the consequences of confession, erodes the belief that police are honest and trustworthy and, in turn, diminishes perceptions of procedural justice. Given prior research regarding the impact of police legitimacy on jurors' legal decision-making, it is tenable that individuals with unfavorable views of law enforcement may also be more likely to perceive interrogation tactics as coercive.

The racial disparities in wrongful convictions further compound concerns about

interrogation practices. Black defendants are disproportionately represented in wrongful conviction cases, comprising 53% of the 3,651 exonerations documented in the National Registry of Exonerations (2025), despite making up only 13% of the U.S. population. These disparities highlight the need to scrutinize police practices that occur in police stationhouses, just as research has done with street-level policing. Not only are BIPOC suspects more likely to be subjected to interrogations, but they may also face unique vulnerabilities that increase the likelihood of false confessions (Kassin et al., 2025). Najdowski (2011) argues that the non-verbal responses that are typically elicited when experiencing stereotype threat (e.g., fear of confirming negative stereotypes; Steele & Aronson, 1995) such as anxiety, physiological arousal, and attempts to regulate emotional expressions, often mimic cues associated with guilt or deceptive intentions. Additionally, research has demonstrated that race of a defendant plays a small but meaningful effect on jury decision-making (Mitchell et al., 2005). These disparities may stem from deeply rooted stereotypes that associate Blackness with criminality, influencing both law enforcement practices and courtroom outcomes (Smith & Alport, 2007).

Prior research has consistently demonstrated that high-profile cases of police misconduct influence public attitudes and that race plays a key role in shaping these views (Etienne & McAdams, 2021). Although empirical findings indicate that attitudes towards law enforcement officers affect individual's behaviors in situations that involve the police, limited research has explored how public perceptions of police may translate to the court setting and impact jury decision-making. Additionally, there is a significant gap in the literature regarding whether attitudes toward police impact jury decision-making differently by race of the potential juror, and how they manifest in cases involving racial minority suspects (Ewanation et al., 2022). To address these gaps, the present study explored how an individual's race and attitudes towards the

police impact their judgments of coercive police tactics during an interrogation of a Black suspect. Participants listened to an actual real interrogation in which coercive tactics were used on a suspect they were told was Black, resulting in a known false confession. Participants then provided judgements related to their perceptions of those interactions and wrote narrative responses to a prompt related to George Floyd's murder. These data, collected in the aftermath of the events of summer 2020, provide insight into the relationship between perceptions of law enforcement, race, and legal decision-making.

## **Method**

### **Participants**

Data for the present study were collected as part of a broader investigation, which was designed to examine how the suspect's race (White or Black) affected perceptions of an interrogation, and whether those perceptions differed by participant race (Abrams, 2021). Participants were recruited from various platforms using three distinct strategies across three phases in order to achieve greater racial diversity among participants. A total of 247 individuals completed the original study. The initial recruitment phase took place during the fall of 2020 with participants from a university's psychology participant pool. This sample consisted of 133 individuals between the ages of 18 and 24 years old, with approximately 85% identifying their race as White. In an attempt to increase the racial diversity of the sample, students from a more racially diverse private university in a large city were invited to participate in the study, however, this yielded only eight additional participants. Next, a snowball sampling method via a professional networking site was employed, which generated 78 additional participants who self-identified as BIPOC, most of whom were students at three different universities in the south and northeast areas of the U.S. In order to further increase the sample size, participants were recruited for a second time through the university psychology participant pool in fall 2021,



approximately one year after the initial data collection. This resulted in an additional 68 participants (33% self-identified as BIPOC).

In the original study, participants were randomly assigned to listen to an interrogation of a suspect they were told was either White or Black. For the purposes of the current study, only the individuals randomized to the Black suspect condition were included in the analyses. Additionally, participants who failed the quality check were also excluded, which required correct identification of the race of the suspect. The majority of excluded participants were from the university participant pool samples (73.1%). The demographic characteristics of the retained and excluded participants did not statistically differ (see Abrams, 2021). This resulted in a final sample of 139 participants for the current study, which exceeds the recommended number to detect a medium effect size at the .05 level of significance with 80% power when conducting multiple regression, using G\*Power (Faul et al., 2009). Of the 139 participants whose data comprised the current study, the majority identified as White or European American (61.2%) and as women (77.0%) and had a mean age of participants was 20.12 ( $SD = 2.91$ ). See Table 1 for detailed demographic information about the current sample.

### **Stimulus**

Participants read a description of a criminal case in which a suspect was accused of killing his aunt and uncle. The description presented features of the suspect, the alleged charges, and the context surrounding the interrogation. One of the groups read a description in which the suspect was identified as White (see Appendix A, description 1). The suspect was identified as Black in the other group's description (see Appendix A, description 2). Participants then listened to a 4-minute and 28-second audio recording of a real interrogation (see Appendix B). This was a condensed audio clip containing portions of a 7-hour interrogation that was aired as part of a series on a streaming service. The clip involved two White detectives using various common

police interrogation strategies in their questioning of the suspect. The interrogation ultimately resulted in the suspect confessing to the crime; this confession was ultimately deemed to be a false confession at trial. However, participants were not aware that the confession used in the audio recording was later proven to be a false confession due to coercive tactics utilized by the detectives.

In addition to the audio of the interrogation, the recording's transcript was shown simultaneously to mirror the spoken audio to ensure that participants could understand exactly what was being said (see Appendix C). We slightly manipulated the voice of the Black suspect via audio enhancements to be more closely match racial speech stereotypes, as speech stereotypicality can influence bias (Kurinec & Weaver, 2021); a pilot study indicated that the voice manipulation was believable as that of a black man (see Abrams, 2021) for details.

## **Measures**

### ***Demographic Information***

All participants provided basic personal information, including their age, gender, sex, race, ethnicity, income, education level, major area of study, political affiliation, location of residency, and if any immediate or extended family members were employed in law enforcement. They completed these questions after the survey was completed using a demographic form (see Appendix D).

### ***Survey***

Participants completed a 47-item survey presented via Qualtrics survey software (see Appendix E). Items covered four topics: perceptions of the audio recording, perceptions of interrogation methods (i.e., coerciveness of tactics used by police during interrogation), perceptions of the relationship between dispositional risk factors and false confessions, and general questions.

These questions were derived from Mindthoff and colleagues' (2018) survey, which was developed as a method to examine potential jurors' perceptions of interrogations and confessions. We adapted Mindthoff's (2018) definition of coerciveness:

*Something is considered coercive if it tends to remove an individual's perception of their freedom to make a meaningful choice. In other words, the less a suspect feels she/he has choice in how to respond to what is being asked (i.e., confess) the more coercive the method is.*

While many items in this survey remained unchanged from Mindthoff's supplemental materials (Qs 11-15, 19-24, 26, 37), we modified some (Qs 9-10, 16-18, 27, 36) to avoid words that could influence participants' judgements about the interrogation (e.g., manipulated, confronted, criminal). Under the direction of a faculty member, our research team, comprised of two graduate and two undergraduate students, developed additional specific questions related to the audio recording within the survey.

Additionally, we added specific questions related to the death of George Floyd, which occurred very shortly before data collection was about to begin. Participants were asked to indicate their agreement (1= *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*) to the following statement: "*The events of summer 2020, sparked by George Floyd's death, have made me think differently about police behavior.*" Importantly, all data were collected after Floyd's death, but this survey question was constructed prior to any of the four police officers involved in the fatal restraint being found guilty, convicted, and imprisoned for Floyd's murder, and accordingly reflected the legal context in which it was developed. After providing the rating, the participants were then asked to briefly explain their thoughts about police behavior, regardless of whether their opinion had changed. The current study analyzed responses to question 8, which asked the participant to

rate the coerciveness of the police tactics, and questions 43 and 44, which pertain to the impact of George Floyd's death on perceptions of police behavior.

### ***Manipulation Check***

Participants completed four questions (see Appendix E, Qs 36, 38-40) at the end of the survey regarding features of the interrogation, including the suspect's race, name, and the number of detectives involved in and the full length of the interrogation. However, only the response to the suspect's race was used to eliminate participants from analyses, as that was an independent variable (defendant race) in the original study. We removed 32 participants who did not correctly identify the suspect's race from the original sample, leaving the larger study's final sample of 247 participants; of that group, 139 participants had been randomized into the Black suspect condition and their responses comprise the current study.

### **Procedure**

Prior to data collection, the university Institutional Review Board (IRB) reviewed and approved the study (protocol #20-009) in the Expedited category, and it also approved modifications to the study personnel, recruitment methods, and timeline. The participants enrolled in the study through a participant pool operated through the psychology department and that awards research credit for their time in participation. Students recruited from another private university received a link to the study distributed by their instructor; there were no incentives offered to these students. Finally, we used a snowball method to recruit participants via a professional networking platform to increase the racial diversity of the sample (see Appendix F). Additional IRB modifications included approval to use of the original study's anonymous data and the involvement of the undergraduate research assistants who helped review the qualitative data as part of the current study.

Recruitment and the administration of this study were conducted online, and the study

was available through a link to the Qualtrics survey. The participants were first provided with an informed consent document and then read a short paragraph containing instructions for the study (i.e., listening to a recording and completing a survey). These directions included information regarding the audio recording and instructed participants to consider evidence about the defendant as if they were a jury member on this case. It also included a disclaimer regarding the explicit language in the audio and the description of a violent act that might cause discomfort. We emphasized that participants could withdrawal without penalty at any time during the study if they no longer wish to participate.

Randomization was accomplished using a stratified, permuted, block design to ensure that an equal number of participants were assigned into the two levels of the manipulated independent variable of matched ethnicity: a) matched race of participant and suspect b) race of participant and suspect do not match (Hedden, et al., 2006). Participants then listened to the audio recording while the transcript of the interview scrolled on the screen. They were then prompted to complete the 47-question survey that included questions specific to the content of the audio, general questions about interrogation tactics, and manipulation check questions. Participants then completed a brief demographic and general information questionnaire after completing the study. Finally, the participants were provided a debriefing form describing the full purpose of the study; this description included that the audio recording was a real interrogation that was later proven to be a false confession (see Appendix G).

### ***Qualitative Data Analysis***

*Research Team Members.* Qualitative research increasingly emphasizes the importance of explicitly acknowledging and critically evaluating the effect of the researcher's background, identities, assumptions, and desires on the research process (Olmos-Vega et al., 2023, Sabnis &

Wolgemuth, 2023). As the principal investigator of this study, I am mindful that my own positionality—as a White, able-bodied, cisgender woman—and my understanding of institutional racism, law enforcement methodologies, and sociocultural factors may shape the interpretation of participants' responses. Therefore, I integrated specific procedures within the qualitative analysis and sought ongoing consultation from my dissertation advisor and coding team to mitigate researcher subjectivity.

To further minimize personal biases and in recognition of the sociocultural sensitivity of this study, I followed Auerbach and Silverstein's (2003) recommendation to involve individuals who share the cultural backgrounds of the participants. Accordingly, I purposefully recruited three research assistants who self-identify with minority racial backgrounds. The first research assistant identifies as a multiracial woman with one South Asian parent and one White parent, the second identifies as an African American woman with an Islamic background and the third identifies as a woman of mixed race, with one White and one South African parent. While the research assistants were unaware of the racial identities of the participants whose responses they were coding, they regularly engaged in discussions about the responses that included reflections on their personal beliefs and experiences with law enforcement, as well as the historical and current experiences of marginalized communities in America. These discussions provided a critical space for examining issues of privilege, oppression, and the broader sociocultural implications embedded in the responses. While coders' subjectivity cannot be completely eliminated, reflexive practices such as these can shed light on how researchers' positionality influence their inquiry (Creswell, 2003, Glaser & Strauss, 2017).

*Analytic Approach.* Auerbach and Silverstein (2003) described a grounded theory process to qualitatively analyze participants' responses for the emergence of reoccurring themes. The

three research assistants engaged in this process, with the principal investigator teaching the procedure and facilitating coding in the first stages of the process; I took a more active role in the final stages of the analysis. Each researcher engaged in a six-step coding procedure described by Auerbach and Silverstein (2003). In the initial steps, the researcher explicitly states the research concern and selects the relevant text to include in further analysis. In the current study, the research concern was the exploration of racial differences among participants' general attitudes towards police behavior in the responses to an open ended question about the impact of George Floyd's death on their perceptions of police. In this initial phase of the data analysis, the research assistants immersed themselves in the responses to gain familiarity with the depth and breadth of the content.

Throughout the study, the research assistants remained blinded to the study's primary intent, which was to examine possible differences in responses by participant race. They were provided with two sets of participant responses, but they did not know the why or how the sets of responses were created. They were also initially blind to each other's initial coding, as each step was conducted independently of other team members. After they had completed a step in the coding, the team met with the principal investigator at the same time to discuss their impressions and note any coding discrepancies until the group came to a unanimous decision about how to best sort the content.

In the third step, each research assistant independently and systematically produced initial codes from all responses using a strategy described by Braun and Clark (2021), in which a "code" is a word or a short phrase that identifies a feature of the raw data that can be meaningfully assessed and appears relevant to the research concern. For example, the first sentence of a participant's response stated, "Recent police behavior that society has seen is

disgusting and inhumane, but not all police officers are like that.” The research team identified two initial codes within this excerpt: ‘disgusting and inhumane behaviors’ and ‘not all officers are bad.’ Thus, multiple initial codes could be derived from one participant’s response. The initial codes were subsequently compiled into one master list, which was then organized into two groups based on participant race: BIPOC and White. As previously stated, the research assistants were blinded to the purpose of the groups and were informed only that these were “Group A” and “Group B.”

The coding team then completed the fourth step by systematically reviewing the responses to identify repeating ideas, which are defined by Auerbach and Silverstein (2003) as concepts expressed by two or more participants. These recurring ideas were subsequently presented and discussed in a collaborative process with an emphasis on transparency, communication, and coherence, in keeping with the Auerbach and Silverstein’s method. In the fifth step, the research assistants independently examined the repeating ideas within each group to identify emerging themes, which were implicit ideas or topics that reflected the commonalities among the repeating ideas (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003). During the final phase, a theoretical narrative was created to connect the participants’ experiences to the overall theoretical framework of the study and address similarities and differences in general attitudes towards police behavior (Braun & Clarke, 2022). The primary investigator took a more active role in collaborating with the research assistants during this phase. The method included direct quotes or examples of key points to support the data interpretation and allow for a deeper understanding of the data.

## **Results**

### **Quantitative Analyses**

An overarching goal of the current study was to investigate whether participants’ race and perceptions of police behavior after the murder of George Floyd impact a participant’s



ratings of the degree of coercion in a police interrogation that resulted in a Black suspect's confession. To examine this, I compared BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color,  $n = 85$ ) and White ( $n = 54$ ) participants' (1) ratings of the detectives' coercion in a Black suspect's interrogation and (2) the ratings of the impact of George Floyd's murder on participants' perceptions of police behavior generally. We also examined how the race of participants and the impact of George Floyd's death on perceptions of police behavior were related to participants' ratings of the coerciveness of an interrogation involving a Black suspect. We indicator coded the participant race variable as 0 = BIPOC that included participants who identified as having a minority racial identity, and 1 = White as participants who identified their race/ethnicity as only "White/European American."

**Degree of Coercion.** I conducted an independent samples  $t$ -test to examine the participants' ratings of the coerciveness of the Black suspect's interrogation by participant race (BIPOC versus White). Specifically, the participants rated, "Do you think the detectives' tactics were coercive?" on a 1-5 Likert scale, from 1 indicating "Not at all Coercive" to 5 indicating "Clearly Coercive." The means, standard deviations, and independent samples  $t$ -test results are presented in Table 2. The coercion ratings of the Black suspect's interrogation did not differ by participant race,  $t(137) = 1.02, p = .31$ .

Although the ratings did not differ by participant race, it is notable that the mean ratings of the degree of coercion, (4.20 and 4.02 for BIPOC and White participants, respectively), indicated a "mostly coercive" rating of the detective's tactics. To further understand the participants' ratings of coercion, I examined the descriptive data to evaluate the percentage of participants who rated the detectives in the interrogation as engaging in coercive techniques.

For the sample as a whole, the majority (81.3%;  $n = 113$ ) of participants rated the

detectives' tactics as 4 (mostly coercive; 36%,  $n = 50$ ) or 5 (clearly coercive, 45.3%,  $n = 63$ ); only one participant (who was White) rated the interrogation as "not at all coercive" (.7%), with the other categories as "somewhat coercive" (12.2%,  $n = 17$ ) and "unable to determine" (5.8%,  $n = 8$ ). These findings suggest participants felt that the detectives approached the interrogation in a manner that would potentially influence the suspect's statements.

**Impact of George Floyd's Murder.** I conducted an independent samples  $t$ -test to examine the participants' ratings of the impact that George Floyd's murder had on their perceptions of police behavior by participant race (BIPOC versus White). Specifically, the participants rated the statement, "The events of summer 2020, sparked by George Floyd's death, have made me think differently about police behavior," on a 1-5 Likert scale, with 1 indicating "Strongly Disagree" and 5 indicating "Strongly Agree." The means, standard deviations, and independent samples  $t$ -test results are presented in Table 2. Participants' ratings of the impact of George Floyd's murder on their perceptions of police behavior did not differ by participant race,  $t(137) = 1.46, p = .15$ .

To further understand our participants' ratings, I examined the descriptive data to evaluate the percentage of participants who rated the impact of George Floyd's murder on their perceptions of police behavior. Although the ratings did not differ by participant race, the mean rating of the impact of George Floyd's murder on their perceptions of police behavior were 4.07 and 3.74 for BIPOC and White participants, respectively; these means are closest to the "somewhat agree" rating. We also examined the distribution of the ratings across the 5-point range. The majority (74.1%;  $n = 103$ ) of participants rated the impact on their perceptions of police behavior as a 4 (28.1%,  $n = 13$ ; somewhat agree) or 5 (46%,  $n = 64$ ; strongly agree) in the sample as a whole; the remainder of the ratings were: 1 (9.4%;  $n = 13$ ; strongly disagree), 2

(7.2%;  $n = 10$ ; somewhat disagree), and 3 (9.4%,  $n = 13$ ; neither agree nor disagree).

**Relatedness of Ratings.** I first conducted correlations to examine how the race of participants and the impact of George Floyd's death on perceptions of police behavior were related to participants' ratings of the coerciveness of an interrogation involving a Black suspect. The means, standard deviations, and correlation coefficients are presented in Table 3. There was a significant correlation between ratings of the impact of George Floyd's murder and coercion ratings,  $r = .24, p < .01$ . However, participant race was not significantly correlated with coercion ratings,  $r = -.09, p = .16$ , nor was there a significant correlation between participant race and the ratings of the impact of George Floyd's murder on their views of police behavior in the interrogation,  $r = -.12, p = .07$ .

I conducted a multiple regression analysis to further examine the relationships among these variables, with rating of interrogation coercion serving as the criterion variable and participant race (coded as 1 and 2) and ratings of the impact of George Floyd's murder on perceptions of police behavior serving as the predictor variables. The results are presented in Table 4. The predictor variables had a collective significant effect on the ratings of coercion,  $R^2 = .06$ , adjusted  $R^2 = .05$ ,  $F(2,136) = 4.56, p = 0.1$ . For each individual predictor, the race of participants did not significantly predict the coercion rating,  $\beta = -.12, SE = 0.18, p = .50$ , whereas the reported impact of George Floyd's murder was a significant predictor,  $\beta = .18, SE = 0.66, p < .01$ .

### Qualitative Analyses

A qualitative analysis of participants' written responses was utilized to extend the quantitative findings, facilitating a more comprehensive understanding of racial differences among participants' general attitudes towards police behavior in the aftermath of George Floyd's homicide and the events of summer 2020. I examined participants' responses to an open-ended

question, “Whether or not your opinion has changed, explain your thoughts about police behavior,” to gather additional information about participants’ attitudes towards police behavior and to better understand the sociocultural climate in which this study took place. The primary objective was to describe the similarities and differences between the two groups (BIPOC and White) of participants related to their perceptions of police behavior. We also explored both the explicit and subtle emotional language used, and the emotional intensity conveyed in participant’s viewpoints separately for White and BIPOC participants.

Of the 139 participants that completed the survey, 117 individuals (84.2%) provided a response to the question utilized in the qualitative analysis. After separating the responses by self-identified race of the participant, the final qualitative sample consisted of 45 (38.5%) BIPOC participants and 72 (61.5%) White participants. The responses ranged from four to 100 words ( $M = 38.33$ ,  $SD = 22.20$ ).

For the group of BIPOC participants, the coding team identified a total of 123 initial codes from the relevant text, and 23 repeating ideas that were expressed across participants’ responses. For the White participants, the coding team identified 253 initial codes, which were supported by 37 repeating ideas. Seven supporting themes emerged from the responses from BIPOC participants, and nine supporting themes were identified for the White participants using grounded theory analysis. The repeating ideas and themes for each group are presented in Tables 5 and 6. Tables 7 and 8 include selected text passages from participants’ open-ended responses that shaped the formation of each repeating idea (underlined text) and theme (bold text).

**Comparative Analysis.** A thematic analysis of participant responses revealed several recurring ideas shared among both BIPOC and White individuals. The most prominent themes included a condemnation of police misconduct, recognition of racial inequalities, and a call for

change in systemic problems. Participants across both groups recognized George Floyd's murder as a pivotal moment that reinforced awareness of police brutality and racial injustice, with many noting an increased saliency of racism and discrimination following the event, while others cited a long-standing concern. Despite these shared concerns, many participants qualified their opinions by recognizing the duality of having both positive and negative experiences with law enforcement officers.

There also were differences that emerged between BIPOC and White participants. Many BIPOC individuals reported that Floyd's murder did not alter their perceptions of policing, rather, the events of summer 2020 reinforced their pre-existing awareness of police brutality. Among the BIPOC participants who described an impact, the responses noted that the accessibility of live video footage influenced broader societal awareness, suggesting that their longstanding perspectives became more widely shared by society. Conversely, White participants who reported an increased awareness often referenced their personal reactions and realizations (e.g., that the event was "eye opening"), without reference to broader influence.

Additionally, White participants were more likely to justify police misconduct, such as citing job-related challenges, beliefs that such behaviors are uncommon, and referencing the identity of a police officer being the protectors of society. BIPOC participants were more likely to express hostility (e.g., using profanities), integrate their personal experiences and racial identity into their responses, and focus on the pervasive harm that is systemically reinforced across all police. While all participants recognized systemic issues, White participants expressed the need for changes to police behavior and training, whereas BIPOC participants were more likely to view the system as beyond repair, with many expressing hopelessness, citing a deep-rooted history of oppression, and advocating for abolition and reallocating resources. This

contrast suggests that White participants assume that the system can and should be changed, while BIPOC participants believe the system is too far gone to change.

**Emotional Saliency.** In order to examine the emotional language and intensity conveyed in participants' written responses, the research team independently reviewed each response and identified between one to four emotion words to describe the participant's open-ended statements. The emotion words were then categorized into seven broad emotion themes: happy, sad, angry, fear, disgust, surprised, and shame. The research team also rated the emotional intensity of each response on a 1-5 Likert scale, from 1 "Not at all Intense" to 5 "Very Intense."

Anger was the most common emotional response for both BIPOC (45.2%) and White (37.1%) participants. For the participants in the BIPOC group, other common emotional responses were disgust (19.0%), sadness (16.7%), and surprise (9.5%). The White participants commonly expressed the emotions of fear (17.1%), sadness (15.7%), and disgust (12.9%). Shame was an emotion identified within four (5.7%) White participants' responses, while there were no BIPOC participants who expressed shame. Although the responses from both groups had similar emotional intensities (mean ratings of 2.93 and 2.84 for BIPOC and White participants, respectively), the BIPOC participants had more responses rated as 5 or "Very Intense" (9.5% vs. 1.4%), whereas White participants had more responses rated as 1 or "Not at all Intense" (10.0% vs 7.1%). See Table 8 for detailed information about the frequency of emotion words and intensity.

As we were reviewing the themes, the research coders observed that many of the participants included opposing and sometimes contradicting viewpoints regarding police behavior within one response. Therefore, we indicator coded participant viewpoints as "yes" indicating the response had opposing viewpoints (e.g., "there are many good cops but also bad

ones”), or “no” indicating the response did not contain multiple viewpoints. The White (30.0%) participants were more likely to express opposing viewpoints than BIPOC participants (19.0%).

### **Discussion**

The gruesome murder of George Floyd, captured on video and witnessed by millions worldwide, sparked global outrage and renewed discussions about racial disparities in police-citizen interactions (Buchanan et al., 2020). Prior research has demonstrated that high-profile cases of police misconduct influence public attitudes and that race plays a key role in shaping these views (Etienne & McAdams, 2021). However, less is known about how perceptions of police behavior translate to the courtroom, especially within the context of jury-decision making in cases involving racial minority suspects (Ewanation et al., 2022). Thus, to fill the gap in the literature, we used a mixed methods design to investigate whether participants reported that the murder of George Floyd influenced their perceptions of police behavior and what role, if any, participant race had on their ratings of the degree of coercion in a police interrogation of a Black suspect. We hypothesized that participants’ ratings of the impact of George Floyd’s murder on their views of police behavior would be significantly related to their ratings of coercion in the interrogation of a Black suspect. We also hypothesized that BIPOC participants would produce different ratings in these areas than their White counterparts.

As predicted, participants who reported that George Floyd’s murder had influenced their perceptions of police were significantly more likely to rate the detective’s interrogation tactics as coercive. Specifically, approximately 6% of the variance in coercion ratings was accounted for by participants’ views on how Floyd’s murder shaped their broader perceptions of law enforcement practices. These findings provide preliminary evidence that real-world events, such as Floyd’s murder, shape how mock jurors evaluate police behavior during interrogations.

Contrary to expectations, there were no significant differences between BIPOC and White participants in their ratings of coercion demonstrated by the detectives in the Black suspect's interrogation. Notably, the failure to find differences in ratings occurred in the context of highly skewed responses in the coercion ratings. The majority of participants (81.3%) rated the police behavior as coercive, irrespective of their racial background. This finding is not surprising, as the interrogation in the present study involved highly coercive techniques, such as repeated accusations, threats of consequences for non-compliance, and repeated questioning that lasted over seven hours (Kassin et al., 2010). Furthermore, this interrogation was ultimately found to have resulted in a false confession by the suspect. Our results suggest that coercive police behavior is likely to be condemned by participants across racial backgrounds, as participants collectively recognized that the detectives' approach to the interrogation had the potential to contribute to the wrongful conviction of the Black suspect.

Unexpectedly, no significant differences emerged between BIPOC and White participants in their ratings of the impact that George Floyd's murder had on their perceptions of police behavior. Although White participants reported slightly higher impact ratings on average, a substantial majority (74.1%) of the total sample indicated that their perceptions of law enforcement had been affected by Floyd's murder, regardless of race. These findings suggest that a majority of participants reported that the events of summer 2020, sparked by George Floyd's death, have led them to think differently about police behavior, at least at the time of data collection.

The significant impact of George Floyd's murder on participants' perceptions of police is consistent with prior research, demonstrating that highly publicized incidents of police misconduct can significantly influence public perceptions of law enforcement across race, gender, or age groups (Cross & Fine, 2021; Intravia et al., 2020). Emerging evidence suggests



that George Floyd's murder and the subsequent public discourse on police brutality altered how both White and BIPOC Americans perceive and interact with law enforcement (Reny & Newman, 2021). These findings underscore the need for law enforcement agencies and policymakers to acknowledge the effects of such high-profile incidents on public trust. For example, O'Brien et al. (2022) found that when police departments responded to incidents of police brutality by apologizing and acknowledging their role in community mistrust, it led to increased public cooperation. While responding to past harms and policy initiatives are critical, many advocates emphasize the need for police departments to hold officers publicly accountable for their actions (Kassin et al., 2025).

The absence of significant differences between BIPOC and White participants' ratings of perceptions of police following George Floyd's murder or the detectives' coercion during the interrogation contrasts prior research emphasizing the role of racial identity in shaping perceptions of law enforcement, particularly during interactions that involve excessive force or coercive tactics (Peck, 2015). While previous studies have demonstrated a general decline in public opinion following high profile incidents of police misconduct, researchers have found that attitudes among non-White individuals tend to decline more significantly and rebound more slowly in response to police brutality than their White counterparts (Kaminski & Jefferis, 1998; Fridkin et al., 2017; Weitzer, 2002). One possible explanation for the lack of racial differences in this study may be the highly publicized nature of George Floyd's murder, which may have prompted a collective shift in how individuals from various racial backgrounds perceive law enforcement, regardless of differences in pre-existing concerns about police behavior. It is also plausible that racial differences in perceptions may emerge in more nuanced contexts, such as specific drives of perceptions or other variables not captured in the current study.

The results of this study suggest that high-profile incidents of police misconduct, such as George Floyd's murder, shape not only general attitudes toward policing but also how potential jurors evaluate specific law enforcement tactics. Specifically, participants who indicated that George Floyd's murder had influenced their views on police behavior were more likely to rate the detective's interrogation tactics as coercive. These findings align with existing literature demonstrating that broader social and political climates, including publicized cases of police use of force, shape jurors' perceptions and decision-making processes (Sommers & Marotta, 2014; Weitzer, 2002). While previous studies have established that general attitudes toward law enforcement influence evaluations of police conduct in excessive use-of-force cases (Ewanation et al., 2024), our study extends this research by demonstrating that perceptions of police following a widely publicized incident of misconduct can directly affect jurors' assessments of coercive interrogation tactics. Given these findings, attorneys may benefit from incorporating questions about prospective jurors' attitudes toward police and their reactions to major social events during voir dire, particularly in cases involving coercive tactics and Black defendants.

The overall results of our quantitative analyses support the Director's Cut Model of jury decision-making (Devine, 2012), which posits that jurors' pre-existing attitudes and beliefs significantly influence their decisions and perceptions of evidence. It is possible that that George Floyd's murder led participants to perceive police as more likely to act aggressively or coercively toward minority suspects, which likely influenced their perceptions of the coercion used by detectives during the interrogation of the Black suspect in this study. According to Cross et al. (2023), individuals who perceived George Floyd's murder as unjust were more likely to question the legitimacy of police authority and experience a stronger sense of coercion in their interactions with law enforcement, rather than voluntary obedience. However, due to the lack of

specificity in how the questions were posed, we were unable to determine the exact mechanisms behind participants' ratings of changes in perceptions of police behavior following George Floyd's murder. To address this, we employed a qualitative comparative approach to analyze participants' free responses regarding their perceptions of police behavior. While both BIPOC and White participants expressed disapproval of police behavior, systemic racism in police practices, and a lack of consequences for abuses of power, notable differences emerged between the two groups.

Many BIPOC participants noted that their long-standing exposure to discriminatory treatment by police reduced the impact of George Floyd's murder. This finding is supported by research demonstrating that marginalized groups often become desensitized to police violence, as they have been socialized to view incidents of police mistreatment as part of a broader pattern of systemic discrimination within law enforcement practices (Williams & Clarke, 2019). In contrast, White participants who reported an increased awareness of police brutality often described personal reactions and realizations (e.g., the event was "eye-opening"), aligning with studies that show a similar shift can be triggered by high-profile events that force White individuals to confront racial disparities (Glover, 2020). Some White participants argued that their views on police behavior had not been significantly altered, as they saw the incident as an outlier involving a small number of officers. BIPOC participants, on the other hand, were the only group to specifically address the impact of watching the video of George Floyd's murder, with many emphasizing that it was a shock to those who had never seen such brutality captured on film. This speaks to research on the role of media in exposing the public to police violence, where visual depictions of violence can act as powerful catalysts for social change by shedding light on injustices that often go unnoticed (Kitch, 2002).

We found that BIPOC and White participants differed in their attributions of police misconduct. White participants were more likely to express opposing viewpoints within a single response (30.0%; e.g., “there are many good cops but also bad ones”) than BIPOC participants (19.0%), often qualifying police misconduct with external attributions. Specifically, they identified factors such as the stressful nature of police work, barriers to effective policing, political influences, and emotional reactivity as contributing to misconduct. Additionally, several White participants expressed the belief that racialized violence by police can lead to a misrepresentation of law enforcement when overgeneralized from a few “bad apples.” In keeping with our findings, Haider-Markel and Joslyn (2017) theorize that individuals who identify as Black are more likely to attribute police brutality to a “bad barrel” problem, suggesting internal or systemic factors (e.g., racism) as relevant attributions, whereas White individuals tended to view police brutality to a “bad apple” problem and make excusatory attributions, such as a belief that factors outside the control of police officers and agencies were causing police misconduct. One of the BIPOC participants in our study captured this sentiment, stating, “One bad apple is enough to sour the bunch.”

Given the differential attributions for police misconduct, it follows that BIPOC and White participants held distinct views and perspectives on proposed solutions and the feasibility of change. White participants largely expressed the need for reform through targeted policy interventions and social activism, reflecting a belief in the potential for improvement within existing systems (Goff et al., 2016). This stands in contrast to BIPOC participants’ tendency to view the system as beyond repair, often expressing a sense of hopelessness, citing a deep-rooted history of oppression, and advocating for abolition and the reallocation of resources. This is consistent with the findings of Pickett et al. (2022), who argued that Black Americans are more

likely to support calls to defund or even disband the police compared to White Americans because of their heightened fear of the police, which is primarily shaped by their lived experiences and cultural understanding of American policing.

We also found differences in how White and BIPOC participants discussed the concept of identity. White participants expressed views consistent with the narrative that law enforcement personnel are obligated to “protect and serve,” as evidenced by one participant citing the longstanding motto of police departments (Wendel et al., 2022). They also expressed disappointment that recent instances of police misconduct did not align with their expectations, while simultaneously asserting that police power should not be limited, as some White participants expressed a belief that police have the authority to combat any alleged criminal behavior. These findings align with procedural justice theory, which suggests that when police treat individuals fairly and impartially, they communicate to the public that citizens are valued, which fosters trust and legitimacy and increases the likelihood that community members will identify with law enforcement (Fagan & Tyler, 2005; Bradford, 2012). Although White participants did not explicitly acknowledge their racial identity, their responses conveyed an implicit identification with police officers, reflecting an expectation that police should serve and protect the public and align with societal expectations of fairness and safety.

Conversely, BIPOC participants integrated their personal testimony into their responses and acknowledged how the identity of a Black American informs perceptions of systemic issues. BIPOC participants likely draw from multiple sources of information about anti-Black discrimination in policing, including historical knowledge and personal or vicarious experiences, to inform their views of law enforcement (Martin & Higginbotham, 2024). As procedural justice theory would predict, individuals who have experienced or identified with victims of racialized

police violence are less likely to view police as representatives of their communities. Many BIPOC participants in our study viewed the purpose of the police as inherently hostile, echoing findings from similar studies that characterize the role of police as “to victimize and control Black communities” (Wendel et al., 2022).

Emotional responses to George Floyd’s murder likely shaped participants’ attitudes in distinct ways, particularly given the profound emotional impact of the event that extended beyond intellectual limitations. Anger emerged as the most prevalent emotional response for both BIPOC and White participants, with disgust and sadness also common across both groups. Eichstaedt et al. (2021) documented a broad increase in feelings of anger and sadness among Americans during the weeks following Floyd’s death, indicating a widespread emotional response to the event. BIPOC participants’ expression of surprise supports Bryan-Davis’s (2017) argument that while individuals from marginalized racial groups experience police violence as an expected event, high-profile incidents like Floyd’s murder can nevertheless trigger strong emotional reactions. This finding is further explained by Martin and Higginbotham (2024), who observed that, while there were no racial differences in surprise at Floyd’s murder itself, Black Americans were surprised by the support of White Americans in protesting and advocating for justice; in fact, the data indicated that they were more surprised by White Americans’ behavior than they were by Floyd’s murder itself. In contrast, White participants were more likely to express fear, characterized by a concern for the unregulated behaviors of police. White participants’ responses also indicated shame, as they appeared to defensively use compensatory mechanisms to justify or minimize police misconduct (Haider-Markel & Joslyn, 2017). Notably, shame was not emotion not observed in BIPOC participants’ responses. These differences underscore how emotional responses to Floyd’s murder influenced participants’ perspectives on

policing and racial injustice.

**Limitations.** There are several factors to consider when interpreting the findings of the present study. First, the survey questions regarding George Floyd's murder were not taken from validated instruments and may have introduced ambiguity. For example, the question "The events of summer 2020, sparked by George Floyd's death, have made me think differently about police behavior" does not specify the direction or nature of changes in perception. Therefore, it is possible that perceptions changed but were not captured by the current measures and responses. Future research should develop more precise measures to capture the complexity of these attitudinal shifts. Additionally, given the study's correlational design, causal conclusions should be made with caution.

Despite efforts to recruit a diverse sample, the majority of participants identified as White cisgender women with some college education, a middle-class background, and Democratic political affiliation, with a mean of approximately 20 years of age. The generalizability of the findings may be broadened by incorporating participants from a wider range of geographic, socioeconomic, and political backgrounds to better reflect the diversity of perspectives on policing.

It is also worth noting the potential for cohort effects, as this study's data collection spanned from fall 2020 through fall 2021. The participants were recruited in different waves that may have been influenced by evolving sociopolitical factors, such as media coverage, protests, and legislative changes. The heightened national attention to police misconduct following George Floyd's murder may have shaped responses in the data collected during the months immediately following that summer; however, it is unclear the extent to which participants' perceptions evolved over time. Fridkin and colleagues (2017) explained previous research

indicating that, following highly publicized incidents of police misconduct and brutality, White attitudes tend to rebound more quickly than non-White individuals (Fridkin et al., 2017).

Therefore, future studies with more controlled or longitudinal designs could help clarify how attitudes shift in response to changing social and political contexts.

Finally, while the qualitative methodology facilitated a deeper exploration of individual perspectives, it also posed challenges for comparative analysis. The open-ended responses varied in length and thematic focus, making direct comparisons across participants more difficult. Additionally, the qualitative sample was quite large in comparison to similar research questions, which may have increased the breadth of attitudes captured in the present study.

**Future Research.** As we were examining our data, there were various questions that we attempted to answer but would benefit from future research. While there were no differences in the quantitative analyses, the qualitative comparative analysis found differences in emotional reactions and cognitive evaluations toward police behavior by participant race. However, future research can expand on these impressions by posing questions that separate emotions and thoughts, as well as asking participants to self-identify emotions, their intensity, and their influence on perceptions of police legitimacy and coercion. This approach would clarify how emotions shape attitudes and whether this influence is bidirectional.

We also found that George Floyd's murder influenced participants' perceptions of police coercion in interrogations. Future research could further explore this by examining how exposure to high-profile incidents of police violence affects views on interrogation tactics and broader policing practices. Given the likelihood of future incidents of police brutality, continued research in this area is essential for understanding public attitudes and their evolution over time.

Additionally, applying theories surrounding police legitimacy could provide insight into



how perceptions of coercion relate to views on police authority. The present study found that White participants were more likely to describe police as protectors of society, while no BIPOC participants mentioned police as fulfilling a public service role. Future studies could assess how procedural justice theory (i.e., perceptions of police fairness and neutrality) shapes individuals' internalization of policing norms and values across different racial and socioeconomic backgrounds. Additionally, it would be beneficial to utilize a validated questionnaire, such as the Attitudes Towards Police Legitimacy Scale (Reynolds et al., 2018).

In light of our finding that both BIPOC (19.0%) and White (30.0%) participants expressed seemingly opposing viewpoints in their qualitative responses, in that they acknowledged both positive and negative aspects of police behavior within a single response (e.g., "there are many good cops but also bad ones"), we recommend that future research explore whether individuals hold dialectical or extreme perspectives on police behavior and how these perspectives shape broader attitudes toward law enforcement. Understanding whether individuals balance conflicting views or adopt rigid stances could inform discussions on public trust, reform, and policy development.

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**Table 1***Sociodemographic Characteristics of Participants*

Characteristic	<i>N</i>	%
Recruitment source		
Sample 1 <sup>a</sup>	68	48.9%
Snowball <sup>b</sup>	39	28.1%
Sample 2 <sup>a</sup>	32	23.0%
Race		
White/European American	85	61.2%
Black/African American	31	22.3%
Hispanic American or Latino/a	10	7.2%
Multiracial	8	5.8%
Asian	3	2.2%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	1	0.7%
Middle Eastern	1	0.7%
Gender identity		
Female	101	77.0%
Male	33	23.7%
Gender non-conforming	3	2.2%
Non-binary	1	0.7%
Transgender female to male	1	0.7%
Current level of education		
High school	3	2.2%
Some college	126	90.6%
Bachelor's degree	8	5.8%
Master's degree	2	1.4%
Political affiliation		
Democrat	67	48.2%
Republican	18	12.9%
Independent	32	23.0%

Characteristic	<i>N</i>	%
Other	3	2.2%
Prefer not to respond	19	13.7%
Income class		
Very low	2	1.4%
Low	16	11.5%
Middle	60	43.2%
Upper middle	51	36.7%
Upper	10	7.2%
Family in law enforcement		
Yes	39	28.1%
No	100	71.9%

*Note.*  $N = 139$ . Participants ( $n = 136$ ) were on average 20.12 years old ( $SD = 2.91$ ).

<sup>a</sup> 1 sample was collected during the fall of 2020. Sample 2 was collected during the fall of 2021.

<sup>b</sup> Due to the small number of participants recruited from the private university, their demographic information was collapsed into the Snowball Sample column.

**Table 2**

*Results of Independent Samples t-test Comparing Coercion and George Floyd Ratings by Race of Participant*

Variable	BIPOC		White		<i>t</i> (137)	<i>p</i>	Cohen's <i>d</i>
	<i>n</i> = 54		<i>n</i> = 85				
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>			
Coercion	4.02	1.12	4.20	.96	1.02	.312	0.17
GF Impact	3.74	1.52	4.07	1.13	1.46	.146	0.25

*Note.* GF Impact= rating of the impact of George Floyd's murder on perceptions of police; possible range from 1-5, with higher ratings indicating greater coerciveness or difference in perceptions after George Floyd's murder.

**Table 3***Descriptive Statistics and Correlations for Study Variables*

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3
1. Coercion	4.13	1.03	—		
2. Participant race <sup>a</sup>	1.39	.49	-.09	—	
3. GF Impact <sup>b</sup>	3.94	1.30	.24*	-.12	—

*Note.*  $N = 139$ .

<sup>a</sup> Participant race is coded as BIPOC = 1, White = 0.

<sup>b</sup> GF Impact= rating of the impact of George Floyd's murder on perceptions of police; possible range from 1-5, with higher ratings indicating greater change in perceptions after George Floyd's murder.

\* $p < .05$ .

**Table 4***Multiple Regression Coefficients for Predicting Ratings of Coerciveness*

Predictor Variable	<i>B</i>	95% CI	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Constant	3.56	[2.79, 4.32]	.39	9.17	<.001**
Participant race <sup>a</sup>	-.12	[-.47, .23]	.18	-.68	.497
GF Impact <sup>b</sup>	.19	[.06, .32]	.07	2.83	.005**

*Note.* *N* = 139. CI = confidence interval for *B*.

<sup>a</sup> Participant race is coded as BIPOC = 1, White = 0.

<sup>b</sup> GF Impact= rating of the impact of George Floyd's murder on perceptions of police; possible range from 1-5, with higher ratings indicating greater change in perceptions after George Floyd's murder.

\*\**p* < 0.1



**Table 5***List of Themes by Race of Participant*

BIPOC <i>n</i> = 45	White <i>n</i> = 72
1. Fear and criticism of police behavior	1. Distrust and disapproval of police behavior
2. Racial identity and injustice awareness	2. Racial inequalities and discrimination in policing
3. Police brutality, racial bias, and systemic misconduct	3. Abuse of authority by police
4. Systemic problems	4. Systemic issues
5. Reimagining police systems and training	5. Reforming police behavior and systemic practices
6. Balancing good intentions and misconduct	6. Majority of police are good, while acknowledging imperfections
7. Influence of media and video	7. Influence of media and society
	8. Activism and call for justice
	9. Challenges of policing

*Note.* *N* = 117

**Table 6***List of Themes and Repeating Ideas by Race of Participant*

BIPOC <i>n</i> = 45	White <i>n</i> = 72
<b>Fear and criticism of police behavior</b>	<b>Distrust and disapproval of police behavior</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <u>Fearful of police</u></li> <li>2. <u>Grievances and hostility towards police</u></li> <li>3. <u>Condemning of inappropriate behaviors</u></li> <li>4. <u>Superiority and abuse of power</u></li> <li>5. <u>Focus on prevalence and harm of bad officers</u></li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <u>Fear and distrust of police</u></li> <li>2. <u>Condemning police behavior</u></li> <li>3. <u>Disagree with police tactics</u></li> <li>4. <u>Behavior misaligned with public service roles and expectations</u></li> </ol>
<b>Racial identity and injustice awareness</b>	<b>Racial inequalities and discrimination in policing</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>6. <u>Reflecting on identity as a Black American</u></li> <li>7. <u>Increased awareness of racial issues after George Floyd and black lives matter</u></li> <li>8. <u>Longstanding awareness of racial discrimination highlighted by George Floyd event</u></li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5. <u>Racial profiling</u></li> <li>6. <u>Need for racism training</u></li> <li>7. <u>Mistreatment and injustices against People of Color</u></li> <li>8. <u>Recognizing racism and discrimination</u></li> <li>9. <u>Recognition of police biases</u></li> <li>10. <u>George Floyd as evidence for previous awareness of police brutality</u></li> <li>11. <u>Increased awareness of police brutality after George Floyd</u></li> </ol>
<b>Police brutality, racial bias, and systemic misconduct</b>	<b>Abuse of authority by police</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>9. <u>Violence and harsh brutality</u></li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>12. <u>Aggressive</u></li> <li>13. <u>Abuse of power</u></li> </ol>

BIPOC <i>n</i> = 45	White <i>n</i> = 72
10. <u>Racist behaviors and prejudices towards People of Color</u>	14. <u>Superiority complex</u>
11. <u>Biased police behavior</u>	15. <u>Systemic protection of police behaviors</u>
<b>Systemic problems</b>	<b>Systemic issues</b>
12. <u>Historic and systemic racism</u>	17. <u>Systemic racism</u>
13. <u>Problems within the system</u>	18. <u>Systemic flaws</u>
14. <u>Systemic protections and lack of consequences</u>	
<b>Reimagining police systems and training</b>	<b>Reforming police behavior and systemic practices</b>
15. <u>Abolish and defund the police</u>	19. <u>Call for change in police behavior</u>
16. <u>Ability to change system is hopeless</u>	20. <u>Call for change in police training</u>
17. <u>Need for improved training and assessment</u>	21. <u>General call for change</u>
18. <u>General call for change</u>	22. <u>Call for change in police brutality</u>
19. <u>Need for change in police behavior</u>	23. <u>Repair and transform the police system</u>
	24. <u>Increased limitations and restrictions on behavior</u>
<b>Balancing good intentions and misconduct</b>	<b>Majority of police are good, while acknowledging imperfections</b>
20. <u>Acknowledge both good and bad officers</u>	25. <u>Respect and acknowledge good police</u>
21. <u>Offering police sympathy and the benefit of the doubt</u>	26. <u>Overgeneralizations and misconceptions from a few bad officers</u>
	27. <u>Against limiting police power</u>
	28. <u>Protectors of society</u>
	29. <u>Recognition that police officers are "not all bad"</u>
<b>Influence of media and video</b>	<b>Influence of media and society</b>
22. <u>Media and societal focus on negative police incidents</u>	30. <u>Influence of media's focus on negative police incidents</u>

BIPOC <i>n</i> = 45	White <i>n</i> = 72
23. <u>Impact of watching video of George Floyd's murder</u>	31. <u>Culture and societal influence</u>
	32. <u>Political and legal influence</u>
	<b>Activism and call for justice</b>
	33. <u>Call for justice after George Floyd's death</u>
	34. <u>Motivated for activism against police misconduct</u>
	<b>Challenges of policing</b>
	35. <u>Reactive or mood-dependent behavior</u>
	36. <u>Recognizing realistic barriers to effective policing</u>
	37. <u>Recognize stressors and difficulties in policing</u>

*Note.* Themes denoted in bold text (BIPOC= 7, White= 9). Repeating ideas displayed in underlined text (BIPOC= 23, White= 37). Repeating ideas denoted in italic font indicates differences between BIPOC and White groups.

**Table 7***Example Quotes of Themes Derived from Repeating Ideas for BIPOC Participants*

Theme (in bold) and Repeating Idea	Example Quote
<b>1. Fear and criticism of police behavior</b>	
<u>Fearful of police</u>	“My thoughts about police behavior is more towards being scared than having anger towards a cop. I fear that a situation could arise and I be put in danger over a misunderstood situation as well as serve time in prison for something I did not do.”
<u>Grievances and hostility towards police</u>	“Abolish the Police. They are killers, liars, and oppressors. They exist to capture not help.”
<u>Condemning inappropriate behaviors</u>	“Unacceptable. Police behave in an inhumane manner.”
<u>Superiority and abuse of power</u>	“I believe that many police officers do believe that they are indeed above the law.”
<u>Focus on prevalence and harm of bad officers</u>	“One bad apple is enough to sour the bunch.”
<b>2. Racial identity and injustice awareness</b>	
<u>Reflecting on identity as a Black American</u>	“Being an African American in America, I know that police tend to think of me differently than my white peers.” “I’m black, it’s always been a problem for my community; I’ve always been afraid.”
<u>Increased awareness of racial issues after George Floyd and Black Lives Matter</u>	“I believe that George Floyd's death simply reminded the public that racism is still so prevalent in our world today; especially in the context of police brutality.”

Theme (in bold) and Repeating Idea	Example Quote
<u>Longstanding awareness of racial discrimination highlighted by George Floyd event</u>	“My thoughts on police behavior remains the same. They treat Blacks unfairly and more harshly than whites.”
<b>3. Police brutality, racial bias, and systemic misconduct</b>	
<u>Violence and harsh brutality</u>	“Police behavior has one commonality, which is excessive use of force and violence that has costs peoples lives.”
<u>Racist behaviors and prejudices towards People of Color</u>	“They treat Blacks unfairly and more harshly than whites.”
<u>Biased police behavior</u>	“I believe that individuals most likely act on their biases regardless if they are aware of them or not under pressure.”
<b>4. Systemic problems</b>	
<u>Historic and systemic racism</u>	“I have known the police are a corrupt white supremacist system... exists to enforce this government’s laws, and their origins in the US were slave patrols in the South and strike breakers in the North.”
<u>Problems within the system</u>	“An entire system has failed the communities its meant to protect and instead covered up the crimes committed.”
<u>Systemic protections and lack of consequences</u>	“I think some police officers... feel they are protected by the racist system America has in place so they feel they can get away with certain things.”

Theme (in bold) and Repeating Idea	Example Quote
<b>5. Reimagining police systems and training</b>	
<u>Abolish and redirect funds</u>	“Police departments should be defunded because I believe they cause more harm than good in a community. Government funding should be directed to departments and initiatives focused on keeping people out of prison.”
<u>Ability to change system is hopeless</u>	“I am reaching a point at which I’m not sure how reformable the situation is.” “I believe that you cannot truly change what is in someone's heart.”
<u>Need for improved training and assessment</u>	“I believe there needs to be more training for police officers so they are made aware of their biases and how to correctly respond to specific events.”
<u>General call for change</u>	“There needs to be a change within society!”
<u>Need for change in police behavior</u>	“I think police behavior needs to be called out, evaluated, and reformed.”
<b>6. Balancing good intentions and misconduct</b>	
<u>Acknowledge both good and bad officers</u>	“I think there a lot of good cops but there also some bad cops just like there are good and bad people in any job.”
<u>Offering police sympathy and the benefit of the doubt</u>	“I do feel for those who wholeheartedly care about citizens' safety and genuinely think they are serving their community.”
<b>7. Influence of media and video</b>	
<u>Media and societal focus on negative police incidents</u>	“Society tends to focus on the negative and the bad cops.”

Theme (in bold) and Repeating Idea	Example Quote
<u><i>Impact of watching video of George Floyd's murder</i></u>	"I believe it's a shock to other people because now they're seeing it for themselves as they're being captured on film."



**Table 8***Example Quotes of Themes Derived from Repeating Ideas for White Participants*

Theme (in bold) and Repeating Idea	Example Quote
<b>1. Distrust and disapproval of police behavior</b>	
<u>Fear and distrust of police</u>	“Sadly, there are terribly racist police officers that take matters beyond the limits which in a way makes me fear police.”
<u>Condemning police behavior</u>	“Recent police behavior that society has seen is disgusting and inhumane.”
<u>Disagree with police tactics</u>	“The interrogation methods in this video were an example of the coercive methods police use on a daily basis with subjects, and I think it's extremely wrong.”
<u><i>Behavior misaligned with public service roles and expectations</i></u>	“Police are not proper public servants that serve the best interest of the general public. To look to an example of what one is simply look to firefighters.”
<b>2. Racial inequalities and discrimination in policing</b>	
<u>Racial profiling</u>	“I would LIKE to equate police behavior to that of EMTs and other trained emergency professionals, but those jobs do not concern racial profiling techniques and focus mainly on saving lives rather than protecting.”
<u>Need for racism training</u>	“There needs to be a universal training that officers go through that include racial injustice and how the system can do better and to treat everyone equally.”

Theme (in bold) and Repeating Idea	Example Quote
<u>Mistreatment and injustices against People of Color</u>	“I believe that police frequently use brutal force that is driven by their racist preconceptions.”
<u>Recognizing racism and discrimination</u>	“It has lead me to believe that many cops are racist and treat men and women of color unfairly compared to white men and women.”
<u>Recognition of police biases</u>	“There is an extreme prejudice towards black males when it comes to criminal behavior...shouldn't ever be allowed, but especially in a career that require split second decisions. The split second decision should not come from a stereotype, prejudice, or racial bias.”
<u>George Floyd as evidence for previous awareness of police brutality</u>	“If one was to have their eyes opened by the death of Floyd, they are late to the party, even if they're white”
<u>Increased awareness of police brutality after George Floyd</u>	“I did not realize how bad police behavior is until George Floyd's death and the current Black Lives Matter movement.”
<b>3. Abuse of authority by police</b>	
<u>Aggressive</u>	“Police are aggressive, power-hungry beings who victimize minorities and use anything as an excuse to be violent.”
<u>Abuse of power</u>	“I believe that the police have power and often times they use that power negatively and harmfully.”
<u>Superiority complex</u>	“A lot of officers believe that since they have a badge they are invincible and can do what they want.”

Theme (in bold) and Repeating Idea	Example Quote
<u>Systemic protection of police behaviors</u>	“I think that there are far too many cops that are getting away with horrible things and no one is stopping them so they think it is okay and keep doing it.”
<u>Police brutality awareness</u>	“Police brutality is such an epidemic in our country[...] I think that this summer has been eye-opening to many about how harsh police behavior/practices can be.”
<b>4. Systemic issues</b>	
<u>Systemic racism</u>	“I hope that major changes can be made in legislation and addressing the present systemic racism that plagues this industry. I think it is absolutely unacceptable that police officers can and will kill Black people in the way that they have for years.”
<u>Systemic flaws</u>	“There are too many innocent people in jail- mass incarceration is real and private prisons are messed up. The laws protecting police for wrongfully shooting, raping, and arresting POC and people in general are not okay.”
<b>5. Reforming police behavior and systemic practices</b>	
<u>Call for change in police behavior</u>	“Police behavior should be monitored and supported with suspect behavior training. Police behavior should have more strict boundaries.”
<u>Call for change in police training</u>	“I believe that police should have to go through much more training and not have as much power.”

Theme (in bold) and Repeating Idea	Example Quote
<u>General call for change</u>	“Some things need to change.”
<u>Call for change in police brutality</u>	“Police brutality needs to stop. Their behavior is not okay.”
<u>Repair and transform the police system</u>	“I believe that the police system is in need of serious repair and transformation.”
Increased limitations and restrictions on behavior	“Police need greater oversight. The ability of a single organization to run rampant with little to no ability to curb bad behaviors is incredibly worrying.”
<b>6. Majority of police are good, while acknowledging imperfections</b>	
<u>Respect and acknowledge good police</u>	I do believe that police are here for good reasons and strive to do what is right but I also believe that some behavior gets too aggressive at times... But overall, I want to believe that police act and behave by doing the right thing.”
<u>Overgeneralizations and misconceptions from a few bad officers</u>	“My opinions/views of police haven't changed since the events sparked by the death of George Floyd... because I view the incident as something that is not common and is attributed to a minuscule minority of police officers.”
<u>Against limiting police power</u>	“I believe that Police have the right to act upon ANYONE who is committing a crime [...] limiting their power is going to make harder to authorize larger crimes.”
<u>Protectors of society</u>	“I was raised that cops are what and who protect us.”

Theme (in bold) and Repeating Idea	Example Quote
<u>Recognition that police officers are "not all bad"</u>	"I think there are good and bad people in this world just like how I believe there are good and bad police in the world."
<b>7. Influence of media and society</b>	
<u>Influence of media's focus on negative police incidents</u>	"I think as a country we have too much of a negative view toward cops because we often only see the bad acts they commit through the news"
<u>Culture and societal influence</u>	"Police are part of [an] institution over a century old cultivated to adapt bondage and discrimination that has adapted to different forms as cultural and social morals have evolved."
<u>Political and legal influence</u>	"Police behavior has definitely declined and I believe it is because of how political this country is and how politically divided we are."
<b>8. Activism and call for justice</b>	
<u>Call for justice after George Floyd's death</u>	"I think the man who killed George Floyd should be punished because he is a terrible person and represents police officers in a terrible way."
<u>Motivated for activism against police misconduct</u>	"The death of George Floyd and many others has made me even more upset and even more active in my voice against brutality and behavior of police."
<b>9. Challenges of policing</b>	
<u>Reactive or mood-dependent behavior</u>	"Their moods could even affect how they treat someone who they are arresting or could result in unnecessary aggressive behaviors."

Theme (in bold) and Repeating Idea	Example Quote
<u><i>Recognizing realistic barriers to effective policing</i></u>	“There [needs] to be a strong push to employ cops who have minimal biases. I know this is extremely hard to carry out in practice though.”
<u><i>Recognize stressors and difficulties in policing</i></u>	“I believe police are often put in difficult situations in which they are not thinking properly/ may not be trained well enough to handle stressful situations...Police are under a lot of stress all of the time, and a lot of times they have to act quickly.”

**Table 9***Emotion Words, Emotional Intensity, and Viewpoints by Participant Race*

Variable	BIPOC		White	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Emotion				
Happy	1	2.4%	5	7.1%
Sad	7	16.7%	11	15.7%
Angry	19	45.2%	26	37.1%
Fear	3	7.1%	12	17.1%
Disgust	8	19.0%	9	12.9%
Surprised	4	9.5%	3	4.3%
Shame	0	0.0%	4	5.7%
Intensity				
1	3	7.1%	7	10.0%
2	13	31.0%	16	22.9%
3	14	33.3%	29	41.4%
4	8	19.0%	17	24.3%
5	4	9.5%	1	1.4%
Opposing Views <sup>a</sup>				
Yes	8	19.0%	21	30.0%
No	34	81.0%	48	70.0%

*Note.*  $n = 42$  for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) participants.  $n = 70$  for White participants. Intensity ratings ranged from 1-5, with higher ratings indicating greater emotional intensity in the response. The average rating was  $M = 2.93$  for BIPOC participants and  $M = 2.84$  for White participants. <sup>a</sup> Yes = evidence of opposing viewpoints within one response (e.g., “there

are many good cops but also bad ones”). No = no evidence of opposing viewpoints within one response.



## **Appendix A**

### **Study Descriptions**

#### **Description 1**

Imagine that you are a juror. In that role, a court asks you to consider evidence that is presented to you to make judgments about a defendant's guilt. In a moment, you will listen to an audio recording from a real case, in which two detectives are questioning a suspect. Although the clip you will listen to is four and half minutes long, it was compiled from a single interrogation session that lasted for a period of 7 hours. The suspect is a 25-year-old White male named Matt, who is being questioned about the murder of his aunt and uncle. While listening to the audio recording, a transcript of the recording will appear on your screen, to ensure you can understand what is being said. Following the recording, you will be asked several questions about the case, including making a determination about whether or not Matt committed the crime he is accused of. You will also be asked to answer general questions about the strategies the detective used during questioning.

*\*Note: Explicit language and description of events that some may find disturbing is present in this recording. Please exit the study now, or at any time during the study, if you no longer wish to participate.*

#### **Description 2**

Imagine that you are a juror. In that role, a court asks you to consider evidence that is presented to you to make judgments about a defendant's guilt. In a moment, you will listen to an audio recording from a real case, in which two detectives are questioning a suspect. Although the clip you will listen to is four and a half minutes long, it was compiled from a single interrogation session that lasted for a period of 7 hours. The suspect is a 25-year-old Black male named Matt,

who is being questioned about the murder of his aunt and uncle. While listening to the audio recording, a transcript of the recording will appear on your screen, to ensure you can understand what is being said. Following the recording, you will be asked several questions about the case, including making a determination about whether or not Matt committed the crime he is accused of. You will also be asked to answer general questions about the strategies the detective used during questioning.

*\*Note: Explicit language and description of events that some may find disturbing is present in this recording. Please exit the study now, or at any time during the study, if you no longer wish to participate.*

## **Appendix B**

### **Links to Audio Recording**

The content of the audio recordings contains proprietary material. To obtain access to the recordings please contact the dissertation chair, Dr. Hart, at [hartk@xavier.edu](mailto:hartk@xavier.edu).

## **Appendix C**

### **Transcript of Audio Recording**

The content of the audio recordings contains proprietary material. To obtain access to the recordings please contact the dissertation chair, Dr. Hart, at [hartk@xavier.edu](mailto:hartk@xavier.edu).

**Appendix D****Demographic Form and General Information Questionnaire**

1. Age
  - a. Write in: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Assigned sex at birth:
  - a. Male
  - b. Female
  - c. Prefer not to respond
3. Current gender identity:
  - a. Male
  - b. Female
  - c. Transgender male to female
  - d. Transgender female to male
  - e. Gender non-conforming
  - f. Write in: \_\_\_\_\_
  - g. Prefer not to respond
4. What is your race/ethnicity?
  - a. American Indian
  - b. Asian
  - c. Black/African American
  - d. Hispanic American or Latino/a
  - e. Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
  - f. White/European American

- g. Multiracial: \_\_\_\_\_
  - h. Write in: \_\_\_\_\_
  - i. Prefer not to respond
5. Current Year in College
- a. 1<sup>st</sup> year
  - b. 2<sup>nd</sup> year
  - c. 3<sup>rd</sup> year
  - d. 4<sup>th</sup> year
  - e. Graduate School
6. Major Area of Study
- a. Write in: \_\_\_\_\_
7. Do you have any immediate or extended family members who are employed in law enforcement?
- a. Yes
    - i. If yes, in what area? \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. No
8. Do you want to work in criminal justice/law enforcement?
- a. Yes
  - b. No
  - c. If yes, in what capacity?
9. What political affiliation best describes you?
- a. Democratic
  - b. Republican

- c. Independent
  - d. Other: \_\_\_\_\_
  - e. Prefer not to respond
10. How would you describe the income level of your family of origin?
- a. Very low
  - b. Low
  - c. Middle
  - d. Upper-Middle
  - e. Upper

**Snowball Sample Demographic Form and General Information Questionnaire**

1. Age
- a. Write in: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Assigned sex at birth:
- a. Male
  - b. Female
  - c. Prefer not to respond
3. Current gender identity:
- a. Male
  - b. Female
  - c. Transgender male to female
  - d. Transgender female to male
  - e. Gender non-conforming
  - f. Write in: \_\_\_\_\_

- g. Prefer not to respond
4. Highest Level of Education
- a. HS
  - b. GED
  - c. Some College
  - d. Associate's Degree
  - e. Bachelor's Degree
  - f. Master's Degree
  - g. Doctorate Degree
  - h. Other: \_\_\_\_\_
5. Major Area of Study
- a. Write in: \_\_\_\_\_
6. What is your race/ethnicity?
- a. American Indian
  - b. Asian
  - c. Black/African American
  - d. Hispanic American or Latino/a
  - e. Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
  - f. White/European American
  - g. Multiracial: \_\_\_\_\_
  - h. Write in: \_\_\_\_\_
  - i. Prefer not to respond



## Appendix E

### Survey

#### Section I:

**Considering the questioning you heard in the audio recording, rate the following items:**

1. The way the detectives are talking with the suspect is standard procedure.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree

2. The detectives would treat me this way if I were brought into questioning.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree

3. The detectives would treat *anyone* this way if they were brought into questioning.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree

4. Do you think the suspect's confession was voluntary (i.e., without any detective prompting)?

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all Voluntary	Not likely Voluntary	Neither Voluntary nor Involuntary	Probably Voluntary	Completely Voluntary

5. How confident are you that the suspect committed the crime he confessed to?

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all Confident	Somewhat Confident	Neither Confident nor Unconfident	Mostly Confident	Very Confident

6.

a. Imagine you are a juror listening to this recording. What would your verdict be?

1	2	3	4	5
Definitely Not Guilty	Unlikely to be Guilty	Equally likely to be Guilty and Not Guilty	Likely to be Guilty	Definitely Guilty

b. As a juror, after listening to this recording, you would have to make a decision. What would your verdict?

1	2
Not Guilty	Guilty

*Some strategies that detectives use when questioning people have been called coercive. Something is considered coercive if it tends to remove an individual's perception of their freedom to make a meaningful choice. In other words, the less a suspect feels she/he has choice in how to respond to what is being asked (i.e., confess) the more coercive the method is.*

7. Was the suspect's confession coerced?

1	2	3	4	5
Definitely Not Coerced	Unlikely to be Coerced	Equally likely to be Coerced or not Coerced	Likely to be Coerced	Definitely Coerced

8. Do you think the detectives' tactics were coercive?

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all Coercive	Somewhat Coercive	Unable to Determine	Mostly Coercive	Clearly Coercive

## Section II:

Read each description below and please rate the extent to which you think the following tactics are coercive. For questions 9-15, the following response scale was utilized:

1. Not at all Coercive
2. A little Coercive
3. Neither Coercive nor Not Coercive
4. Somewhat Coercive
5. Extremely Coercive

*Reminder: Something is considered coercive if it tends to remove an individual's perception of their freedom to make a meaningful choice. In other words, the less a suspect feels she/he has choice in how to respond to what is being asked (i.e., confess) the more coercive the method is.*

9. Presenting the suspect with false evidence of guilt (e.g., providing false information regarding forensic evidence, eyewitness evidence, surveillance footage, and negative polygraph results).
10. Presenting the suspect with true evidence of guilt (e.g., providing accurate information regarding forensic evidence, eyewitness evidence, surveillance footage, and negative polygraph results).
11. Bluffs about evidence (i.e., pretending to have evidence, but not explicitly stating that this evidence confirms the suspect's guilt – e.g., “we found DNA at the crime scene that we are going to test” or “there is surveillance footage we haven't been able to watch yet”).
12. Rejecting the suspect's denials (e.g., repeated accusations, cutting off denials of guilt, telling suspects his/her alibi is false).
13. Promises of leniency (e.g., suggesting/implying suspect will receive a lenient charge and/or sentence for confession, or explicitly promising suspect will receive a lenient charge and/or sentence for confession).
14. Threat and use of physical harm (e.g., explicitly threatening to beat or assault the suspect, implying the suspect will be beaten or assaulted, or actually beating or assaulting the suspect).
15. Building rapport with the suspect (e.g., being nice/friendly to the suspect, finding commonalities with the suspect, treating the suspect with respect).

### **Section III:**

**Please rate to what extent each factor would contribute to a person confessing to a crime he or she DID NOT commit. For questions 16-24, the following response scale was utilized:**

- 1. No Contribution**
- 2. A Small Contribution**
- 3. Some Contribution**
- 4. A Moderate Contribution**
- 5. A Very Large Contribution**

16. Having a serious mental illness (e.g., schizophrenia).
17. Having a less serious mental illness (e.g., anxiety).

18. Having a below average IQ.
19. Being under 18 years old.
20. Being under the influence of alcohol.
21. Being under the influence of marijuana.
22. Being under the influence of illegal drugs (e.g., cocaine, heroin, ecstasy).
23. Being under the influence of powerful prescription drugs (e.g., pain medication, sleeping pills).
24. Being sleep deprived.

#### **Section IV:**

**For question 25, the following scale was utilized:**

- 1. No**
- 2. Some of it**
- 3. All of it**

25. Have you watched any of the following productions?

1. *Making a Murderer (Netflix)*
2. *When They See Us (Netflix)*
3. *Confession Tapes (Netflix)*

**For questions 26-36, the following response scale was utilized, with participants asked to rate their agreement with the following statements:**

- 1. Strongly Disagree**
- 2. Somewhat Disagree**
- 3. Neither Agree nor Disagree**
- 4. Somewhat Agree**
- 5. Strongly Agree**

26. If someone confessed to a crime, they are probably guilty.
27. Suspects might confess to a crime they did not commit.
28. Detectives should use coercive techniques to obtain a confession.
29. Coercive techniques are an effective way to obtain a true confession.

- 30. A white suspect is more likely to falsely confess compared to a black suspect.
- 31. A black suspect is more likely to falsely confess compared to a white suspect.
- 32. A black detective is more likely to use coercive techniques with a white suspect to obtain a confession.
- 33. A black detective is more likely to use coercive techniques with a black suspect to obtain a confession.
- 34. A white detective is more likely to use coercive techniques with a white suspect to obtain a confession.
- 35. A white detective is more likely to use coercive techniques with a black suspect to obtain a confession.
- 36. I might confess to a crime I know I did not commit if I was pressured by a detective.
- 37. In your opinion, what percentage of all innocent people who are arrested and interrogated falsely confess? (Participants were instructed to rate the percentage of people falsely confessing on a scale from 0% to 100%.)

**Thinking back to the audio recording:**

- 38. In the description you read, what was suspect's race described as? (Write Response)
- 39. What was the name of the suspect in the audio recording?
  - a. I don't know
  - b. John
  - c. Matt
  - d. I never heard a name
- 40. How many detectives questioned the suspect in the audio recording?
  - a. 1
  - b. 2
  - c. 3
- 41. How long was the questioning?
  - a. 2 hours
  - b. 5 hours
  - c. 7 hours

42.

a. You listened to an audio interrogation earlier, do you think it was real interrogation?

- 1) Yes – I believe it was an actual case
- 2) No – I believe it was made up

b. If no, what didn't seem real? Briefly describe below: (Write Response)

43. The events of summer 2020, sparked by George Floyd's death, have made me think differently about police behavior.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree

44. Whether or not your opinion has changed, explain your thoughts about police behavior. Briefly describe below: (Write Response)

45. Have you ever had an official encounter with the police, such as being pulled over for a traffic violation (e.g., speeding)?

- a. Yes
- b. No

46. If yes, how safe did you feel?

1	2	3	4	5
Not safe	A Little Safe	Neutral	Somewhat Safe	Completely Safe

47. In this experiment, half of you heard an audio recording, where the voice was manipulated to be consistent with the race presented in the study description. Before this question, did you have any suspicion regarding either the voice or the race described.

1	2	3
Not at all Suspicious	A Little Suspicious	Very Suspicious

## Appendix F

### Recruitment Form

In this study you will listen to a brief audio recording (under 5 minutes) of police detectives questioning a suspect. After you listen to the questioning, you will answer questions about the strategies the detectives used, and you will give your opinion about those strategies and the suspect's participation in the crime. **Note: this audio recording includes some harsh language and a description of a disturbing event.** You will also provide basic information about yourself (e.g., age, race, gender, major in school).

This study will take approximately 30 minutes. If you are interested, click below.

## Appendix G

### Debriefing Form

Thank you for your participation in this study. Please keep the purpose of this study confidential and do not disclose any information about this study to other potential participants.

The audio recording you listened to was a real interrogation that involved a known false confession. The purpose of this study was to investigate if the perception and judgments of a false confession differed by the participant's and suspect's race.

Your responses to the questionnaires are, and will remain, anonymous.

If you have questions or concerns about this study, or if you wish to inquire about the results, you may contact the principal investigator, Marissa Abrams, at [blinded], or her dissertation chair, Dr. Kathleen Hart, at [hartk@xavier.edu](mailto:hartk@xavier.edu).

**Please keep the purpose of this study confidential and do not disclose any information about this study to other potential participants. We are still in the process of collecting data and the details we've provided here could alter our findings.**



### Summary

*Title:* The Impact of George Floyd's Murder and Participant Race on Perceived Coercion in a Black Suspect's Police Interrogation

*Problem:* The murder of George Floyd, captured on video and widely disseminated, intensified public scrutiny of law enforcement and highlighted systemic inequities faced by communities of color in police-citizen interactions (Buchanan et al., 2020). Research has consistently shown that racial minorities experience disproportionate police contact, eroding trust in law enforcement (Drakulich et al., 2020). These disparities persist throughout each decision point of the criminal justice system, spanning from arrest to sentencing (Sabol & Johnson, 2022). Furthermore, racial biases influence perceptions of defendants in legal settings, with studies indicating that jurors' decisions are affected by a defendant's race (Mitchell et al., 2005). Given these systemic issues, it is critical to explore how perceptions of law enforcement behavior, particularly in the context of custodial interrogations, may influence legal decision-making. This study examines whether perceptions of police behavior following George Floyd's death and participants' racial identity impact their assessments of interrogation coercion.

*Method:* Participants were recruited via a participant pool, a private university, and a snowball method. The study utilized a sample of 139 participants, categorized into two racial groups: BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color;  $n = 85$ ) and White ( $n = 54$ ). They then listened to a four minute, 28-second audio recording of an actual interrogation that resulted in a false confession and were told that the suspect was Black. After completing the 47-item survey about their impressions of features of the interrogation, they completed a brief demographic and general information questionnaire. Finally, participants were debriefed with a form disclosing that the audio recording was a real interrogation that involved a known false confession. We used

a mixed methods design to investigate whether participants reported that the murder of George Floyd influenced their perceptions of police behavior and what role, if any, participant race had on their ratings of the degree of coercion in a police interrogation of a Black suspect.

*Findings:* A multiple regression analysis revealed that the reported impact of George Floyd's murder significantly predicted ratings of coercion,  $\beta = .18$ ,  $SE = 0.66$ , accounting for approximately 6% of the variance in coercion ratings. There were no significant differences between BIPOC and White participants' ratings of the impact of George Floyd's murder on their perceptions of police behavior,  $t(137) = 1.46$ ,  $p = .15$ , or the coercion ratings of the Black suspect's interrogation,  $t(137) = 1.02$ ,  $p = .31$ . Notably, this occurred in the context of highly skewed responses, such that the majority of participants rated the detectives' tactics as coercive (81.3%) and that George Floyd's murder impacted their perceptions of police (74.1%). A qualitative comparative analysis of participants' free responses revealed shared concerns regarding systemic racism in police practices, a lack of consequences for abuses of power, and expressed condemnation of recent police behavior. However, there were notable differences in BIPOC versus White participants' explanations about the mechanisms impacting their perceptions of police behavior after George Floyd's murder, attributions of police misconduct, feasibility of systemic change, expressions of identity, and the emotional language utilized in the free responses.

*Implications:* The significant findings suggest that potential jurors' evaluations of police behavior are shaped by real-world instances of police brutality. Future studies should continue to investigate how exposure to high-profile police violence incidents affects views on interrogation tactics and broader policing practices. Distinguishing emotions from thoughts is essential to understanding evolving public attitudes. Future research should examine their potential

bidirectional influence and utilize validated measures to examine attitudes of police legitimacy.