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The relationship between cynicism and dispositional attributions: Examining individual differences of police officers

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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CYNICISM AND DISPOSITIONAL

ATTRIBUTIONS: EXAMINING INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES

OF POLICE OFFICERS

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University of Nebraska, 1999

Advisor: Wayne Harrison, Ph.D.

Previous research has shown that veteran police officers are more cynical than less experienced police officers. Research has also shown that veterans are more likely than less experienced officers to make dispositional attributions for the actions of suspects in interpersonal disputes. This study examined these two premises and the relationship between cynicism and attributions. Participants included 127 police officers and 70 undergraduate students who completed a cynicism scale and were then asked to read two scenarios depicting interpersonal disputes. Participants answered several questions pertaining to their attributions of responsibility and their perceptions of credibility of the suspect and the victim in each scenario. This study proposed that police officers differing in length of police service would also differ in their attributions of responsibility and perceptions of credibility of suspects and victims in interpersonal disputes. It was also proposed that veteran police officers would score higher in cynicism than less experienced officers. In addition, this study predicted that a relationship existed between cynicism and attributions of responsibility. No relationships or significant differences were found between length of police service and attributions of responsibility. There was some evidence that individuals differing in length of police service differed in

their perceptions of credibility. No significant differences in cynicism were found as a function of length of police service. Although cynicism was not related to length of police service, exploratory analyses indicated that cynicism was inversely related to the total length of service, which included any previous military or police experience. No relationship was present between attributions of responsibility and cynicism as predicted by this study. The results of this study do not replicate previous research regarding police cynicism and attributions. The lack of significant differences in cynicism, attributions of responsibility, and perceptions of credibility indicates that there may be no need for a great deal of concern about changes in these aspects as police officers gain experience.

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Chapter 1

The Relationship Between Cynicism and Dispositional

Attributions: Examining Individual Difference of Police Officers

In their encounters with citizens, police officers are required to make assessments

regarding the circumstances of any given situation as well as about the individuals

involved in each situation. In other words, police officers make attributions, or

inferences, about why an event occurred and predict subsequent action. In general,

attribution theory states that in observing a particular action by another person, perceivers

attribute that action either to something about the person or to something about the

surrounding circumstances (Gilbert, 1995).

Many may wonder how police officers make attributions about suspects and what

cues they use. It is widely supported that police officers are more likely to attribute

stronger criminal dispositions to those suspected of committing more serious offenses

(Black, 1971; LaFave, 1965; Piliavin & Briar, 1964; Siegel, Sullivan, & Greene, 1974).

At this point, Kelley's (1972) augmentation principle aids in the explanation. The police

may reason that because there are strong moral and legal sanctions (which could be

considered inhibiting) against committing serious crimes, anyone who does so must have

a particularly strong criminal disposition (Greenberg & Ruback, 1982).

Seriousness of a crime is usually judged on the basis of the amount of harm

inflicted upon the victim as well as whether or not the crime was premeditated

(Greenberg & Ruback, 1982). In addition, the police also make attributions about a

suspect's actions based on observable personal characteristics such as age, race, and

manner of dress. Prior knowledge of those involved may further contribute to the

officer's attributions regarding the suspect (Smith & Klein, 1984).

The Correspondence Bias

As stated previously, attribution theories describe the ways in which individuals

determine whether another person's behavior was caused by the person's disposition or

by the situation surrounding the person. Sometimes, perceivers tend to attribute an

individual's actions to the disposition of that person even when the individual is

responding to a given situation. This tendency to make dispositional attributions is

known as the correspondence bias (Jones & Davis, 1965).

Gilbert (1995) suggests that there are four primary reasons for this tendency.

First, people like to make dispositional attributions because it gives them a sense of

predictive control. Second, perceivers don't always have reliable or complete

information regarding the situation. Third, perceivers' expectations may distort their

perceptions of another individual's behavior. Finally, dispositional attributions may be

easier to make than situational attributions because people may not have the time or the

mental energy for lengthy contemplation.

In other words, the correspondence bias allows us to think about a large quantity

of past observations. It also allows us to predict what we will see in the future. Several

well-established studies suggest that these factors contribute to the sense of predictive

control we gain from making dispositional attributions (Jones & Davis, 1965; Jones &

Nisbett, 1972; Kelley, 1972). One noted example comes from the research of Tversky

and Kahneman (1974) who have shown that people over-rely on representative

(predictive) information at the cost of background statistical information. However, it should be emphasized that strong dispositional inferences about a person are likely to increase one's sense of control only if it is important to predict that person's behavior.

Individual Differences in the Correspondence Bias Toward Suspects

In line with that reasoning, we would expect people, such as police officers, to be particularly likely to make dispositional attributions when they have a strong need to predict others' behavior, such as in the line of duty.

Previous literature has indeed supported this notion; however, there is also evidence that there seems to be a difference between the attributions made by veteran police officers and those made by less experienced police officers. In 1975, Rozelle and Baxter investigated the cue preferences utilized by police officers in interpreting citizen behavior. The authors interviewed 22 inexperienced officers (one year or less) and 29 experienced officers (five years or more).

The interview consisted of questions regarding person-perception and attributional processes in general situations of citizen encounters. The responses to these questions were classified as being either person-related or situation related. If the responses were classified as being person-related, they were then placed into a subcategory of overt which refers to observable characteristics such as manner of dress and nonverbal behavior, or into the subcategory of covert which refers to unobservable characteristics such as personality traits.

Both groups of officers seemed to focus on person-related characteristics (covert and overt about equally), and neglected situation-related characteristics. However,

additional questioning in regard to explaining covert characteristics indicated that veteran officers tended to focus on more stable types of traits (open-minded, well-educated, and lack of intelligence), while inexperienced officers tended to focus on more situation-specific qualities (fearing arrest and having something to hide). This particular study supports the notion that individuals, including police officers, tend to make dispositional attributions. However, it also suggests that there is a difference between veterans and less experienced officers in regard to the likelihood of making these attributions.

Also in 1975, Prytula, Whiteside, and Davidson investigated police experience and the attribution of personal responsibility. The authors made a proposal based on attribution theory that suggested that veteran officers would be less likely to emphasize environmental factors in criminal causation. Their reasoning centered around the notion that veteran officers have seen criminals and non-criminals as a product of the same environment; thus, they would be more likely to emphasize personal factors in regard to criminal behavior.

The researchers administered 12 scenarios at two outcome intensities (moderately bad and severely bad) to 30 male inexperienced officers (one year or less) and to 30 male veteran officers (two years or more). The results indicated that veteran officers rated others as being more personally responsible for their actions than did less experienced officers. Also, veterans were more harsh in attributing responsibility for careless actions, and less likely to reduce personal responsibility when there were mitigating circumstances. The results of this study seem to be congruent with the pattern mentioned previously.

In 1977, a similar study was conducted; however, Whiteside, Prytula, and Eldridge were investigating differences in attribution of responsibility between male police recruits and their wives. The researchers suggested that a wife of a police officer experiences anxiety over the potential danger to which her husband may be exposed. Therefore, to believe in the random occurrence of negative events would increase her anxiety because it would imply that her husband could not avoid potential harmful events. Thus, it would be more comforting for her to believe that people bring negative events upon themselves. Conversely, the authors also suggested that police recruits would be more likely to hold others less personally responsible because they may tend to emphasize environmental factors.

Sixteen male police recruits and their wives were administered 12 scenarios representing negative outcomes. The participants were asked to decide the level of responsibility of the individual in each scenario. The results of this study indicated that police wives did attribute more personal responsibility to others for their actions. The recruits seemed more likely to consider the role of situational factors in attributing responsibility. This particular investigation supports the notion that less experienced officers may be less likely to make dispositional attributions.

The research involving the correspondence bias and police officers' perceptions regarding the suspect indicates that, in many different situations, veterans and less experienced officers may differ in their perceptions.

Hypothesis 1: Veteran police officers will attribute more personal responsibility to the suspect than will less experienced officers.

When police officers encounter a situation, they are often subjected to the suspect's explanation of how the events transpired. Therefore, they must infer a level of credibility. Following from the previous research regarding the police officer's perception of the suspect's personal responsibility, one would argue that veteran police officers would view a suspect as being less credible in a given situation. In the same way that the veteran officer perceives the suspect's actions of breaking the law as being a result of stable personality traits, then that officer will be less likely to view the suspect as being honest and trustworthy, and hence, less credible. Conversely, less experienced officers are more likely to take situational information into account, and are more likely to consider the possibility that the suspect's actions in the breaking of the law are a result of the circumstances of the situation. Therefore, less experienced officers will not merely discount the suspect's credibility. Although similar logic is implied regarding the attribution of responsibility and the inference of the level of credibility, the present author would not argue that the perceived level of credibility is a result of the attribution of responsibility, but rather an independent inference.

Hypothesis 2: Veteran police officers will perceive suspects as being less credible than will less experienced officers.

Individual Differences in the Correspondence Bias Toward Victims

In many situations, police officers are required to make attributions about the victim as well. When police officers are responding to a particular type of situation such as an interpersonal dispute, there may be instances in which decision-making is more discretionary. Even though the police officer is required to make decisions according to

standard operating procedure, in some circumstances police officers have considerable choice in determining when evidence meets the standard for probable cause (Baumgartner, 1992). Therefore, their attributions of the victim may be very important.

Much of the research involving police officers making attributions regarding the victim relates to specific types of crime including rape and domestic violence. In these instances, police officers may have previous experience, and thus, a framework for a course of action. Some observational field research suggests that officers make decisions based on beliefs about gender roles, battered women, social class, and the sanctity of the family (Black, 1980; Martin, 1976).

However, there are times when officers may be faced with situations that cannot be easily categorized or typified into their specific knowledge about incidents in general. It could be said that the responses to these types of ambiguous and problematic situations reflect a number of normative and practical considerations beyond the lawfulness of behavior. In regard to interpersonal disputes, the police officer's response may be influenced by the relationship between the disputing parties, whether anyone has been injured, the complainant's request for specific police action, and prior knowledge of the individuals involved (Smith & Klein, 1984).

In ambiguous situations, officers must rely more on interpreting testimonial and physical evidence as well as making inferences and attributions about all of the individuals involved. When the police officer has not personally witnessed the event, the officer may be required to infer who is telling the truth. In some instances in which the police respond to a call from a citizen, the complainant is still at the scene. In addition,

the complainant may be the victim and could exercise considerable power over the arrest decision primarily because that individual's testimony could lead to successful prosecution (Baumgartner, 1992).

Although all of the previously mentioned research did seem to find evidence of differences between veterans and less experienced officers regarding attributions of responsibility towards the suspect of a crime, none of the studies attempted to investigate the explanations for these differences empirically. There also seems to be a lack of research concerning police officers making attributions of responsibility regarding the victim of an ambiguous situation and any differences that may exist between veteran and less experienced officers in this type of situation. However, the research involving attributions toward suspects suggests that veteran and less experienced officers may differ in their attributions toward victims as well.

Although veteran police officers will more likely attribute personal responsibility to the suspect in a crime, it doesn't mean that attributions of responsibility aren't made regarding victims of a crime. Often, police officers as well as the general public make inferences about why an incident occurred in the first place. It isn't unheard of for individuals to actually blame the victim or even to hold them responsible for the incident. However, it should be noted that in previous research, there seems to be no direct relationship between the increase and decrease of attributions of responsibility regarding the suspect and the victim (Smith & Klein, 1984). In other words, in many instances, more personal responsibility could be attributed to the victim, more personal responsibility could be attributed to the suspect, or an equal amount of personal

responsibility could be attributed to both parties. In this case, one would argue that veteran police officers make more dispositional attributions than less experienced officers and therefore will perceive the victim as being more personally responsible for an incident than will less experienced officers.

Hypothesis 3: Veteran police officers will attribute more personal responsibility toward the victim than will less experienced officers.

As mentioned previously, police officers must infer who is telling the truth, and must assess a level of credibility for the parties involved. The logic with regard to the credibility of the victim follows the logic with regard to the credibility of the suspect. If the veteran police officers perceive the victim's involvement in the incident as being a result of stable personality traits, one would hypothesize that they will also perceive the victim as being less credible. However, relative to the veteran officers, less experienced officers will be more likely to take situational information into account, and will be less likely to view the victim as being personally responsible for the incident. Therefore, less experienced officers should view the victim as being more credible than will veteran officers.

Hypothesis 4: Veteran officers will perceive victims as being less credible than will less experienced officers.

Cynicism

A possible explanation for the differences between attributions toward the suspect made by less experienced and veteran police officers involves the notion that less experienced officers and veteran officers possess different attitudes or expectations. The

working environment of individuals can have a powerful influence on their attitudes and on their behaviors. The more unique and compelling the nature of the working environment, the more profoundly individuals may be affected. In addition, the amount of time one is exposed to these working conditions could also have an impact on the attitudes and expectations of an individual.

Because of the unique characteristics of their working environment, it could be suggested that police officers tend to look at the world in particular ways. Previous research has indicated that police officers do indeed have distinctive attitudes and values, particularly focusing on cynicism (Chwast, 1970; Toch, 1973; Westley, 1970).

Early research defined cynicism as an attitude distinguished by a "dislike for and distrust of others" (Cook & Medley, 1954, p.418). Others have described cynicism as a type of disillusionment resulting from the failure of specific institutions in contemporary society to meet the high expectations presented by modern day life (Kanter & Mirvis, 1989). Cynicism has been described in various studies as a personality trait, an emotion, a belief, or an attitude and has eluded a universal definition. However, as Andersson (1996) notes, a majority of researchers have defined cynicism as an attitude of contempt, frustration, and distrust toward an object or multiple objects.

The literature on cynicism has been somewhat sparse. Andersson (1996) points out that it has concentrated on three main areas including police cynicism, psychosocial aspects of cynical hostility, and cynicism in social work. The studies in police departments and correctional institutions comprise the largest single body of research pertaining to cynicism in an organizational setting. Niederhoffer (1967) attempted to

specify determinants of police cynicism in his book, <u>Behind the Shield,</u> which sparked a great deal of research on this topic. He identified cynicism as an attitude which is characterized by diffuse feelings of hate, envy, and hostility. He also suggested that this attitude is discernable at all levels and ranks of law enforcement.

In sum, cynicism can be characterized as a basic philosophy about human nature. It can be considered the antithesis of idealism and as a general attitude that one cannot depend on other individuals to be trustworthy and sincere (Andersson, 1996). Cynicism may also be quite specific and directed at one particular entity. Therefore, cynicism can be defined as both a general and specific attitude, characterized by frustration, hopelessness, and disillusionment, as well as contempt toward and distrust of a person, group, ideology, social convention, or institution (Andersson, 1996; Niederhofer, 1967). For the purposes of this study, we will approach cynicism as an attitude of hopelessness, disillusionment, and distrust of human nature in general.

It is relatively easy to discuss the possibility of police officers being cynical. The police role today is often plagued by confusion as to their exact duties. In addition to the intense scrutiny by the media and by the general public regarding their performance, one must consider the constant negative interaction with violent criminals and offenders of the law. With the exposure to these types of interactions and conflicts occurring on a regular basis, police officers may tend to question the goodness and sincerity of people in general. Thus, increased levels of cynicism may develop within the attitudes of police officers.

Because prior knowledge or expectations can exert a particularly strong influence on perceptions of others, we may perceive the causes of behavior as conforming to our expectations at a greater level than they actually do (Gilbert, 1995). Thus, if police officers are cynical and hold distrustful views of others, then their attributions may be influenced by their attitudes. Previous research has indeed indicated that veteran and less experienced officers may differ in levels of cynicism.

Individual Differences in Cynicism

In 1967, Niederhoffer outlined a theory of police cynicism in which cynicism was perceived to be endemic to the police occupation. He constructed a Scale of Police Cynicism which was designed to reveal attitudes regarding important phases of the occupation such as administration, personnel policies, and public relations. He administered the scale to 220 New York City police officers which included 84 patrolmen, 15 detectives, 27 sergeants and lieutenants, and 94 police recruits who served as a comparison group.

Niederhoffer found a curvilinear relationship between cynicism and length of police service with cynicism being the lowest at the recruit stage, reaching its peak during the seven to ten year service period, and then steadily declining until retirement. He explains this pattern in terms of new recruits being naïve, then as they become veterans they become disillusioned with their former ideals, and later, they detach themselves from their sense of hope and become somewhat apathetic. In other words, cynicism tends to peak at the midpoint in a police officer's career.

In 1978, Regoli and Poole conducted a study in which they wanted to specify police cynicism further. The authors pointed out that Niederhoffer's (1967) study was plagued by statistical and methodological problems which may limit the applicability of his findings.

The first problem involved the selection of respondents which was achieved through an availability sample of less than one percent of uniformed personnel from the New York City Police Department. Second, the authors questioned the generalizability of Niederhoffer's findings because he used the largest police department in the country as the sole focus of study. Therefore, Regoli and Poole (1978) examined the assertion made by Niederhoffer (1967) that police cynicism and police experience are curvilinearly related. In addition, they wanted to reexamine this relationship while controlling for department size.

Niederhoffer's (1967) Scale of Police Cynicism was administered to 324 police officers representing nine law enforcement agencies. The police departments ranged in size from 10 to 116 members, and were categorized as being either large departments (70 or more uniformed officers) or small departments (less than 70 uniformed officers).

The results of their study seemed to be congruent with Niederhoffer's assertion regarding police socialization in that as police officers remain in the occupation for a period of years, they perceive the world and the police system more negatively. The researchers suggest that this transformation begins early in the police career, often before one year of service is completed. The cynical attitude then peaks at the seven to ten year career stage, and it gradually decreases thereafter.

The findings of this study also indicated that the police cynicism scores involving the large departments were higher than the scores involving the smaller departments. In addition, the scores from the larger departments correspond more closely with Niederhoffer's hypothesis relating police cynicism to length of police service. Therefore, the authors suggest that department size is an important factor to consider in this particular relationship.

In research involving police cynicism, many relationships have been found between this construct and individual and organizational characteristics. The relationship between length of service and cynicism has been demonstrated in several studies (Lotz & Regoli, 1977; O'Connell, Holzman, & Armandi, 1986; Rafky, 1975).

Hypothesis 5: In a department which is considered large (70 or more uniformed officers), veteran police officers (with 5 to 10 years experience) will be more cynical than less experienced officers (with 2 years or less of experience).

The Relationship Between Cynicism and the Correspondence Bias

If veteran officers are indeed more cynical, then their expectations regarding human nature may influence their attributions. The pattern of results involving veteran officers being more likely to make dispositional attributions and less experienced officers being more likely to take situational factors into account regarding the suspect of a crime indicates that there could be a relationship between levels of cynicism and the likelihood of making dispositional attributions.

In line with this reasoning, it could be suggested that the attributions involving the victims of a crime which are made by less experienced and veteran officers may also be

influenced by levels of cynicism. As mentioned previously, cynical attitudes toward human nature in general may be more prevalent in veteran police officers.

Even though previous research suggests that veteran police officers will be more likely to possess greater levels of cynicism, be more likely to hold suspects as well as victims personally responsible, and be less likely to view suspects or victims as being credible, one must take into account that veteran and less experienced officers may differ in other aspects. For example, levels of cynicism within each group may differ as a function of individual differences such as education level, age, and personal experiences. Therefore, one would argue that if a relationship between the levels of cynicism and the likelihood of making dispositional attributions exists, then individuals, in general, who are more cynical will tend to make more dispositional attributions.

Hypothesis 6: There will be a positive relationship between cynicism scores and attributions of personal responsibility toward the suspect.

Hypothesis 7: There will be a positive relationship between cynicism scores and attributions of personal responsibility toward the victim.

Much of the previously mentioned research in this area doesn't take into account that police officers may be required to make attributions regarding all of the individuals involved. Because previous research did indeed find differences between veteran and less experienced officers in their perceptions of suspects, it is important to replicate this result in the present study in order to gain more insight regarding the possible relationship between levels of cynicism and the likelihood of making dispositional attributions. In addition, previous research has not included examining whether or not there is a

difference between veteran and less experienced officers in their perceptions of victims in ambiguous situations. Therefore, it is important to investigate all possible relationships between the construct of cynicism and the perceptions of the suspect and the victim. Taking all of the previously mentioned arguments and hypotheses into account, I believe that length of service influences levels of cynicism which in turn influence attributions. In other words, cynicism acts as a mediator between length of service and attributions.

Hypothesis 8: Cynicism mediates the relationship between length of service and attributions of personal responsibility of the suspect.

Hypothesis 9: Cynicism mediates the relationship between the length of service and attributions of personal responsibility of the victim.

The objectives of this study are to investigate the relationship between cynicism and attributions as well as to address the lack of research involving attributions toward victims in ambiguous situations. Clearly, cynicism is not confined to the police occupation. However, much of the research involving this construct has been within the criminal justice system. The present author is not aware of any research which has investigated the possible relationship between cynicism and attributions in any setting. Therefore, the research involving veteran and less experienced police officers differing in levels of cynicism as well as in the likelihood of making dispositional attributions provides a foundation for further investigation regarding this relationship. The nine hypotheses are listed below to remind the reader of the aims of this study.

Hypotheses

1. Veteran police officers will attribute more personal responsibility to the suspect than will less experienced officers.

2. Veteran police officers will perceive suspects as being less credible than will less experienced officers

3. Veteran police officers will attribute more personal responsibility to the victim than will less experienced officers.

4. Veteran police officers will perceive victims as being less credible than will less experienced officers.

5. In a large police department (70 or more uniformed officers) veteran police officers (5 to 10 years of experience) will be more cynical than less experienced police officers (two years or less of experience).

6. There will be a positive relationship between cynicism scores and attributions of personal responsibility toward the suspect.

7. There will be a positive relationship between cynicism scores and attributions of personal responsibility toward the victim.

8. Cynicism mediates the relationship between length of service and attributions of personal responsibility of the suspect.

9. Cynicism mediates the relationship between length of service and attributions of personal responsibility of the victim.

Chapter 2

Method

Participants

The participants in this study consisted of two groups of individuals. One group included 127 police officers composed of 90 males, 28 females, and 9 individuals who did not specify gender. The other group consisted of 70 undergraduate students, 18 males and 52 females, none of whom had experience with police service.

The police officers were members of the Omaha Police Department and participated on a voluntary basis. The department includes 491 patrol officers (463 men and 28 women) and 138 criminal investigators (113 men and 25 women). A total of 400 questionnaires were randomly distributed, of which 32% were returned.

The undergraduate psychology students were attending a university in the midwest and received course credit or extra credit for their participation.

Materials

Niederhoffer's Police Cynicism Scale is often criticized for being multidimensional in relation to cynicism. Therefore, a cynicism scale adapted for police work (see Appendix A) was developed for use in this study to measure the levels of cynicism of participants in each group. This scale is aimed at measuring cynicism in regard to human nature in general and is composed of 12 items. Items 3, 4, 7, 8, and 11 were taken from the Measures of Life Attitudes: Cynicism Subscale (Kanter & Mirvis, 1989). Items 2, 5, 10, and 12 were taken from Lotz and Regoli (1977, a variation of Niederhoffer's (1967) original scale), while items 1, 6, and 9 were used in the

preliminary psychometric development of a cynicism scale and added by the present author. Participants were asked to rate their level of agreement with each of 12 statements using a 5-point scale. Items 1, 2, 9, 10, and 11 were reverse scored. Higher scores on this scale reflect higher levels of cynicism.

In order to assess attributions of personal responsibility and level of credibility regarding the victim and the suspect, a questionnaire (see Appendix B) including two crime scenarios depicting an incident between two individuals was used. Each scenario was adapted from Wortley's (1990) investigation into the decision to arrest. The scenarios were intended to be ambiguous. The purpose of this ambiguity was to allow the researcher to extract individual differences in attitudes. Because ambiguity facilitates the possibility of multiple interpretations about the events, the researcher can rely on the assumption that the participants' perceptions were influenced by their attitudes.

Following each scenario, a series of eight questions was asked. Each question employed a 5-point response scale. Two questions per target (suspect and victim) regarding personal responsibility were asked. High scores on these questions represent greater personal responsibility. If individuals perceive others' actions as being caused by the type of person that they are and if they perceive the individual behaving similarly in most situations, then the participant is making a dispositional attribution about the target. By making this dispositional attribution, the participant is holding the targets personally responsible for their behavior in the conflict and disregarding any circumstances of the given situation. Two questions per target regarding credibility were asked. High scores on these questions represent greater credibility.

The materials were pilot tested in the interest of item development for each scale. A total of 45 (10 males and 35 females) introductory psychology students participated in the pilot study. The main purposes of the pilot study were to determine the reliability of the cynicism scale and the attributional questionnaire. The participants in the pilot study were given a packet which included the cynicism scale, the attributional questionnaire, a demographics questionnaire (Appendix C), and a consent form (Appendix D). The students were asked to complete the packet of materials and return it to the researcher. These tasks took approximately 10 to 12 minutes per participant.

Reliability analyses were conducted for the attributional measure. For each scenario, two questions were asked per concept. The coefficient alpha for each 2-item scale in Scenario 1 and in Scenario 2 yielded values of sufficient reliability. A reliability analysis was also conducted on the cynicism scale to identify the extent to which the items on that scale were internally consistent. Based on the inter-item correlations and the coefficient alpha, it was determined that the 12-item cynicism scale was psychometrically adequate in terms of reliability. These reliability analyses were conducted in the interest of item development and should not be confused with the reliability analyses involving the participants of this study, which are reported later.

Procedure

Student participants were given a packet that included an informed consent form, the cynicism scale, the attributional measure, and a demographics questionnaire. The participants were asked to complete the cynicism scale. They were then asked to read each scenario and to answer all of the questions.

Police participants were mailed a packet which included an informed consent form (Appendix E), a cover letter from the deputy chief (Appendix F), the cynicism scale, the attributional measure, a demographics questionnaire (Appendix G), and a stamped return envelope. The police officers were asked to complete the questionnaire and to return it to the researcher via the United States Postal Service.

Chapter 3

Results

Attributions of Responsibility and Perceptions of Credibility

Scores from 127 police officers were used in the reliability analyses for the

attributional measure used in this study. Of the total sample of police participants, 117

(85 male, 27 female, and 5 unspecified) indicated their length of police service. These

participants ranged in length of police service with the current department from four

months to 28.2 years with a mean length of police service of 9.9 years. The distribution

for length of police service is shown in Figure 1.

For each scenario, two questions per target (suspect and victim) were asked about

attributions of responsibility and perceptions of credibility. The first scenario involved a

bar fight between two men in which the younger man was considered the suspect and the

older man was considered the victim. The second scenario described a domestic violence

incident in which the husband was considered the suspect and the wife was considered

the victim.

Participants indicated their attributions and perceptions on 5-point rating scales.

On the attribution of responsibility rating scale, a rating of '1' indicated that the

participant viewed the suspect's or victim's actions as being due to the circumstances of

the situation. In other words, the participants made a situational attribution. A rating of

'5' indicated that the participant held the target personally responsible for his or her

actions and made a dispositional attribution. The scale that measured perceptions of

Figure 1. Distribution of length of police service.
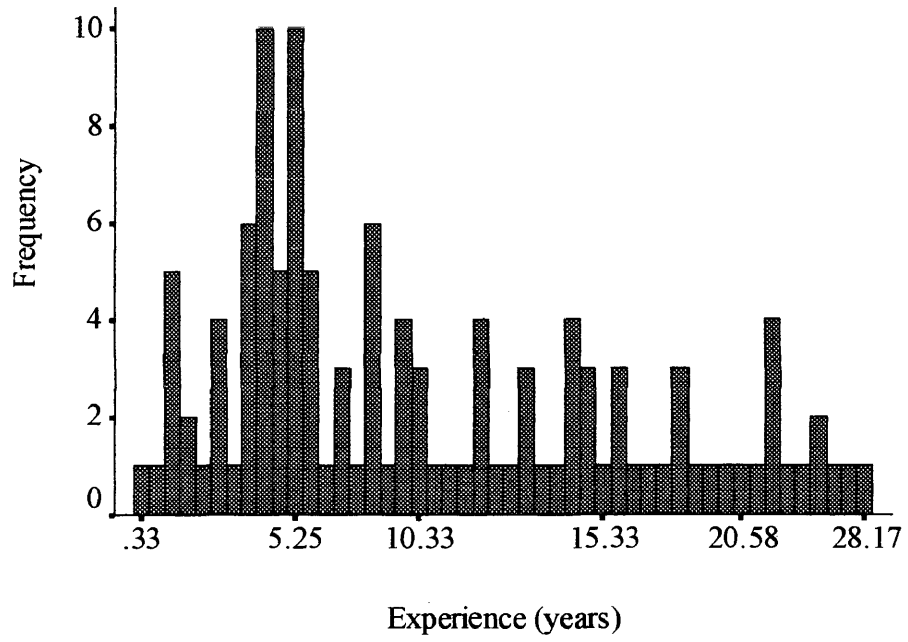
credibility was also a 5-point rating scale. A rating of '1' on this scale indicated that the participant did not perceive the suspect or the victim to be credible, while a rating of '5' indicated that the participant did perceive the target as being credible. For each participant, a composite score was compiled for attribution of responsibility toward the suspect, attribution of responsibility toward the victim, perceptions of credibility of the suspect, and perceptions of credibility of the victim. These scores were the average of the two questions relating to each concept per scenario. These 2-item scale alphas are displayed in Table 1, and indicate sufficient reliability for these scales.

The mean and standard deviation for each variable are displayed in Table 2. These values demonstrate that there was adequate variability in the attributional measures. Thus, on the basis of the coefficient alpha for each scale and the absence of any restriction of range problems, the scales for attributional responsibility and perceptions of credibility were reliable.

In order to test the hypotheses proposed for this study, data were used involving 46 participants (36% of the total sample). These participants included two groups of police officers. One group consisted of 15 officers (12 males and 3 females) who had two years or less of experience. The second group consisted of 31 veterans (18 males, 10 females, and 3 unspecified) who had 5 to 10 years experience. The hypotheses were examined using two-tailed significance tests.

The results for Hypothesis 1 through Hypothesis 4, which refer to the differences between less experienced officers and veterans in attributions of responsibility and perceptions of credibility toward the suspect and the victim, will now be presented.

Table 1

Reliability of the Measures for Attributions of Responsibility and Perceptions of

Credibility

	Cronbach's alpha	
Variable	Scenario 1	Scenario 2
Suspect Responsibility	.80	.86
Suspect Credibility	.83	.85
Victim Responsibility	.79	.69
Victim Credibility	.89	.78

Table 2

Means and Standard Deviations of Attributions of Responsibility and Perceptions of
Credibility

	Scenario 1		Scenario 2	
Variable	M	SD	M	SD
Suspect Responsibility	3.48	.97	4.11	.79
Suspect Credibility	2.59	.58	2.11	.72
Victim Responsibility	3.12	1.00	3.13	1.00
Victim Credibility	3.00	.60	3.40	.68

Scenario 1. Table 3 displays the means and t values for each variable in Scenario 1. Hypothesis 1 and Hypothesis 2 state that veteran police officers will attribute more personal responsibility to the suspect as well as perceive the suspect as being less credible than will less experienced officers. Hypothesis 3 and Hypothesis 4 state that veteran police officers will attribute more personal responsibility to the victim as well as perceive the victim as being less credible than will less experienced officers. In order to investigate these hypotheses, t-tests were conducted. However, none of the t-tests were significant in relation to Scenario 1.

The two groups of police officers held similar views of the individuals in Scenario 1. Their ratings indicated that they did not attribute personal responsibility or perceive credibility in terms of extremes. On average, participants gave a rating of about 3.4 in their perceptions of the younger man's (suspect) personal responsibility while they perceived his credibility to be somewhat lower with a rating of about 2.6. The average perception of less experienced officers and veterans was also neutral with a rating of about 3.1 relating to the older man's (victim) personal responsibility as well as a neutral rating (3.0) for his credibility.

Scenario 2. Table 4 displays the means and t values for each variable in Scenario 2. None of the t-tests conducted to investigate Hypothesis 1 through Hypothesis 4 were significant relating to Scenario 2.

The two groups of police officers also held similar views of the individuals involved in Scenario 2. On average, participants in both groups held the suspect (husband) personally responsible in Scenario 2 with mean ratings of about 4.3.

Table 3

Mean Attributions of Responsibility and Perceptions of Credibility in Scenario 1

	Less Experienced Officers		Veteran Officers		
Variable	$\underline{M}$	$\underline{SD}$	$\underline{M}$	$\underline{SD}$	$\underline{t}(44)$
Suspect Responsibility	3.33	1.04	3.54	.91	.71
Suspect Credibility	2.60	.50	2.59	.58	.01
Victim Responsibility	3.23	1.06	2.98	.97	.79
Victim Credibility	2.96	.63	2.95	.53	.08

Note. Veteran Officers (5 to 10 years of service), $\underline{n} = 31$; Less Experienced Officers (two years or less of service), $\underline{n} = 15$.

Table 4

Mean Attributions of Responsibility and Perceptions of Credibility in Scenario 2

Variable	Less Experienced Officers		Veteran Officers		
	$\underline{M}$	$\underline{SD}$	$\underline{M}$	$\underline{SD}$	$\underline{t}(44)$
Suspect Responsibility	4.26	.70	4.38	.61	.59
Suspect Credibility	1.83	.77	2.12	.74	1.25
Victim Responsibility	3.06	.72	3.41	1.00	1.20
Victim Credibility	3.66	.58	3.40	.61	1.38

Note. Veteran Officers (5 to 10 years of service), $\underline{n}$ = 31; Less Experienced Officers (two years or less of service), $\underline{n}$ = 15.

Participants also viewed the suspect in Scenario 2 in terms of low credibility with an average rating of about 2.0. The participants perceived the victim (wife) neutrally in their attributions of responsibility (3.2) and perceptions of credibility (3.5).

Exploratory analyses. Hypotheses 1 through Hypotheses 4 were tested using the two groups of police officers yielding no significant results. Therefore, it was determined that exploratory analyses could be performed to elaborate on the initial analyses by utilizing additional data collected in this study. The purpose of these analyses was to investigate possible relationships or differences that may have been present involving groups other than those specified by the hypotheses.

Based on the data collected from the total sample of police officers who indicated how long they had been serving with the police department ($\underline{N}$ = 117), length of police service was treated as a continuous variable. It was decided that correlations involving data from the total sample of police officers could be used in an effort to detect any relationships based on this variable. Therefore, length of police service was correlated with each of the dependent variables in Hypothesis 1 through Hypothesis 4. Table 5 displays these correlations. No significant results were found.

In addition, Hypotheses 1 through Hypotheses 4 were examined in terms of possible differences between a group of individuals having no police experience (students) and the total sample of police officers. Exploratory $\underline{t}$-tests were conducted in relation to attributions of responsibility and perceptions of credibility of the suspect and the victim.

Table 5

Correlations Between Length of Police Service and Attributions of Responsibility and

Perceptions of Credibility

Variable	Correlations	
	Scenario 1	Scenario 2
Suspect Responsibility	.05	-.08
Suspect Credibility	.01	.07
Victim Responsibility	.07	-.02
Victim Credibility	.08	-.11

$\underline{N}$ = 117.

Table 6 displays the means and the t values of the sample of 127 police officers

and the 70 undergraduate students in relation to attributions and perceptions in Scenario

1. Table 7 displays the means and the t values in relation to attributions and perceptions

in Scenario 2. Although none of the t-tests were significant in relation to Scenario 1,

police officers viewed the suspect as being significantly more credible than students

viewed the suspect in Scenario 2, which is contradictory to Hypothesis 2 regarding the

role of experience. However, the students viewed the victim as being significantly more

credible than did police in Scenario 2, which is consistent with Hypothesis 4.

In summary, none of the t-tests conducted between veteran and less experienced

police officers were significant for Hypothesis 1 through Hypothesis 4. Both groups

made similar attributions and held similar perceptions of the suspect and the victim in

each scenario. However, t-tests conducted for Scenario 2 yielded significant results

between all of the police officers and the undergraduate students in their perceptions of

credibility of the suspect and the victim.

Cynicism

For each participant, a raw score was compiled for cynicism. This score was the

sum of the 12 items that were included in the cynicism scale. Each participant could

score from 1 to 5 on each item. Thus, the possible range for the cynicism scale is 12,

which would indicate low cynicism, to 60, which would indicate high cynicism. Scores

from the sample of 127 police officers ranged from 24 to 60 on the cynicism scale. The item

frequencies and means from the 127 police participants can be found in Appendix H.

Table 6

Mean Attributions of Responsibility and Perceptions of Credibility in Scenario 1

	Students		Police		
Variable	M	SD	M	SD	t(195)
Suspect Responsibility	3.37	.87	3.48	.97	.80
Suspect Credibility	2.63	.59	2.59	.58	.46
Victim Responsibility	3.10	.93	3.12	1.00	.15
Victim Credibility	3.03	.93	3.00	.60	.39

Table 7

Mean Attributions of Responsibility and Perceptions of Credibility in Scenario 2

| | Students | | Police | | |
Variable	M	SD	M	SD	t(195)
Suspect Responsibility	4.16	.83	4.11	.79	.38
Suspect Credibility	1.80	.73	2.11	.72	2.88**
Victim Responsibility	3.30	.97	3.13	1.00	1.12
Victim Credibility	3.65	.70	3.40	.68	2.46*

*p < .05. **p < .01.

A reliability analysis indicated that for the sample of 127 police officers, the cynicism

scale yielded a coefficient alpha of .82. According to Nunnally and Bernstein (1994), a

coefficient alpha of .70 is indicative of a sufficient level of reliability. A reliable measure

contributes relatively less error to the statistical analyses.

Hypothesis 5 stated that veteran police officers would be more cynical than less

experienced police officers. A t-test was conducted between veterans ($\underline{M}$ = 40.90, $\underline{SD}$ =

6.66) and less experienced officers ($\underline{M}$ =38.86, $\underline{SD}$ = 6.23) and was not significant ($\underline{t}$ (44)

= .99, $\underline{ns}$).

Previous research has consistently demonstrated a curvilinear relationship

between length of service and cynicism. It has been suggested that officers with more

than 10 years of experience tended to drop in cynicism. Because the previous $\underline{t}$-test was

not significant, there is evidence that those individuals with 10 years or less of experience

do not differ in cynicism levels and can be grouped together. Therefore an exploratory $\underline{t}$-

test was conducted between the 67 police officers (includes the 15 less experienced

officers, the 30 veteran officers, and the 22 officers who were between the two and five

year period) who had 10 year or less of experience ($\underline{M}$ = 39.63, $\underline{SD}$ = 6.46) and the 50

police officers who had more than 10 years experience ($\underline{M}$ = 37.56, $\underline{SD}$ = 6.60). This $\underline{t}$-

test was not significant, ($\underline{t}$ (115) = 1.70, $\underline{ns}$).

An exploratory correlation was then conducted in order to investigate whether or

not cynicism was related to length of police service involving the sample of 117 police

officers that indicated length of police service. This correlation was not significant ($\underline{r}$ =

-.15, $\underline{ns}$) as shown in Figure 2. There was an interest in whether or not a relationship

Figure 2. The relationship between cynicism and length of police service.
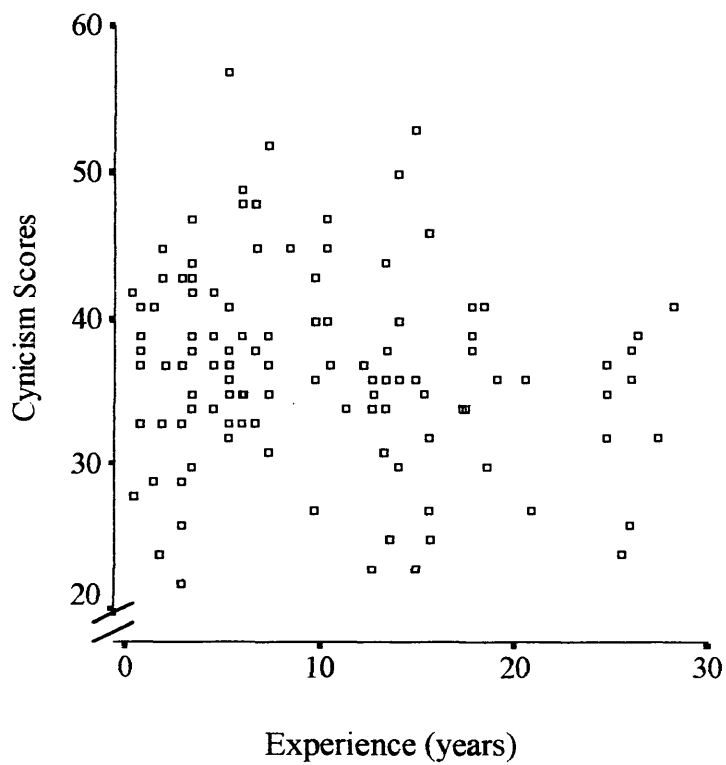
between length of police service and cynicism would be present within each patrol group. Therefore, correlations were used to investigate this possibility. The correlation relating to the sample of patrol officers (n = 90) was not significant, (r = -.06, ns). In addition, the correlation relating to the sample of criminal investigators (n = 33) was not significant, (r = -.22, ns).

No pattern of differences in cynicism was detected between any groups of individuals based on length of police service within the police sample. Therefore it was determined that an exploratory t-test should be conducted to investigate differences in cynicism using the full sample of 127 police officers (M = 38.50, SD = 6.53) and the sample of 70 undergraduate students with no police experience (M = 36.82, SD = 5.22). This t-test was not significant (t (195) = 1.84, ns; if one-tailed test, p < .05).

In summary, no significant differences or relationships were present in regard to cynicism and length of police service.

The Relationship Between Cynicism and Attributions of Responsibility

Correlations were computed to assess Hypothesis 6, which involves the relationship between cynicism scores and attributions of personal responsibility toward the suspect, and Hypothesis 7 which states that a positive relationship exists between cynicism scores and attributions of personal responsibility toward the victim. These correlations included the scores of all police officers (N=127) rather than those who were in a defined group (N=46). Table 8 contains each of the correlations for Scenario 1 and Scenario 2. Only one of these correlations was found to be significant. In relation to

Table 8

Correlations Between Cynicism and Attributions of Responsibility

	Cynicism	
Attributions	Scenario 1	Scenario 2
Suspect Responsibility	.10	.19*
Victim Responsibility	-.04	-.01

N = 127.

*p < .05.

Hypothesis 6, cynicism scores were positively related to attributions of personal responsibility toward the suspect in Scenario 2.

Hypothesis 8 and Hypothesis 9 stated that cynicism would mediate the relationship between length of police service and attributions of personal responsibility of the suspect and of the victim. Hypotheses 8 and 9 were based on the expected pattern proposed in Hypotheses 1, 3, and 5 through 7. However, because that set of hypotheses was not supported, Hypothesis 8 and Hypothesis 9 were not testable.

Total Length of Police or Military Service

For each police officer in the total sample who responded to the question that inquired about length of police experience ($\underline{N}$ = 117), a total length of service was determined. The total number of years served was the result of summing the length of service in the current department and any previous experience on a police force or in the military. In this sample, the police officers' range of service including previous police or military service was from four months to 33.2 years with a mean of 12.2 years.

Exploratory correlations were conducted between total length of service and all of the dependent variables. There was a significant and inverse relationship present between total length of service and cynicism scores ($\underline{r}$ = -.22, $\underline{p}$ < .05). Figure 3 displays the relationship between total length of service and cynicism scores which demonstrates a different pattern than in Figure 2, in which length of Omaha Police Department service and cynicism were not related. Table 9 displays the correlations between total length of service and attributions of responsibility and the perceptions of credibility in Scenario 1 and Scenario 2. No significant relationships were found.

Figure 3. The relationship between total length of service and cynicism.

Figure 3. The relationship between total length of service and cynicism.
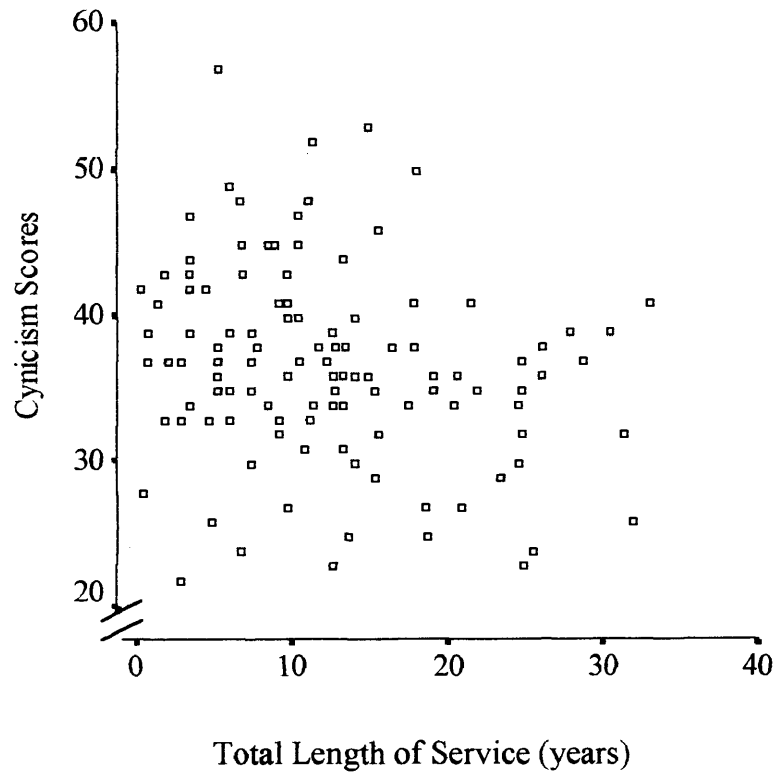
Table 9

Correlations Between Total Length of Service and Attributions of Responsibility and

Perceptions of Credibility

| | Correlations | |
Variable	Scenario 1	Scenario 2
Suspect Responsibility	-.01	-.14
Suspect Credibility	.04	.10
Victim Responsibility	.03	-.01
Victim Credibility	.06	-.11

$\underline{N} = 117$.

Demographic Variables

In order to gain more insight about cynicism, attributions of responsibility and perceptions of credibility, demographic data were obtained for this study. Of the 127 police officers who responded, a total of 90 males and 28 females specified their gender. A total of 116 police officers responded to the question about ethnicity in that there were 98 Caucasian, 9 African-American, 3 Hispanic, 1 Asian, and 5 participants who marked the Other category.

Participants had the option of choosing one of four categories in relation to age, and 119 participants responded. Twenty-nine (24%) were between 20 to 29 years, 49 (41%) were between 30 to 39 years, 35 (30%) were between 40 to 49 years, and 6 (5%) were between 50 to 59 years. Level of education was also inquired about. A total of 123 participants answered this question. Seven (6%) completed high school, 49 (40%) attended college without graduating, 58 (47%) were college graduates, and 9 (7%) had some post-graduate education.

The demographic questionnaire also included a question about the current patrol assignment of the police officer. Of the 123 police officers that responded to this question, 90 were assigned as uniformed patrol officers while 33 were assigned as criminal investigators.

Exploratory analyses. In order to investigate possible differences between the groups in each demographic variable, means were compared on each dependent variable per scenario, which include the attributions of responsibility and the perceptions of credibility as well as cynicism.

Because there were small sample sizes in each of the minority race categories,

they were collapsed and grouped together. A t-test was used to investigate whether

Caucasian individuals and individuals who belonged to a minority group differed in any

of the dependent variables. The means and t values for race categories are displayed in

Table 10. Two of the t-tests were significant. Caucasian police officers viewed the

younger man (suspect) in Scenario 1 as being more credible than did minority officers.

In addition, Caucasian officers attributed more personal responsibility to the older man

(victim) in Scenario 1 than did minority officers.

A one-way ANOVA was used to investigate possible differences between

individuals differing in levels of education in relation to each dependent variable. The

means and F values in relation to attributions and perceptions in Scenario 1 are displayed

in Table 11. The means and F values for Scenario 2 are displayed in Table 12. The

means and the F value for cynicism are also displayed in Table 12. No significant

differences were found between individuals differing in levels of education for the

dependent variables.

A one-way ANOVA was also used to examine any differences between

individuals in different age groups for each dependent variable. The means and F values

for the attributions and perceptions related to Scenario 1 are displayed in Table 13. The

means and the F values related to Scenario 2 are displayed in Table 14. The means and

the F value for cynicism are also displayed in Table 14. No significant age differences

were found involving any of the dependent variables.

Table 10

Mean Attributions of Responsibility, Perceptions of Credibility, and Cynicism by Race

	Race Category				
	Caucasian (n = 98)		Minority Groups (n = 18)		
Variable	M	SD	M	SD	$t(114)$
Scenario 1					
Suspect Responsibility	3.56	.90	3.16	1.21	1.61
Suspect Credibility	2.64	.56	2.30	.68	2.29*
Victim Responsibility	3.22	.97	2.55	1.02	2.68**
Victim Credibility	2.99	.58	2.88	.71	.68
Scenario 2					
Suspect Responsibility	4.15	.76	3.97	.81	.91
Suspect Credibility	2.14	.69	1.91	.75	1.25
Victim Responsibility	3.20	.99	2.80	.87	1.59
Victim Credibility	3.41	.68	3.38	.69	.17
Cynicism	38.72	6.43	38.05	6.12	.41

*p < .05. **p < .01.

Table 11

Mean Attributions of Responsibility and Perceptions of Credibility in Scenario 1 by
Level of Education

| | Level of Education | | | | |
Variable	High School ($n = 7$)	Some College ($n = 49$)	College Graduate ($n = 58$)	Post Graduate ($n = 9$)	$F(3, 119)$
Suspect Responsibility					
M	3.75	3.66	3.50	2.83	2.20
SD	.61	.90	.91	1.11	
Suspect Credibility					
M	2.66	2.60	2.56	2.66	.11
SD	.40	.56	.58	.82	
Victim Responsibility					
M	2.83	3.26	3.10	2.94	.57
SD	1.03	.97	.99	1.18	
Victim Credibility					
M	3.33	2.95	3.04	2.66	1.74
SD	.51	.50	.63	.82	

Table 12

Mean Attributions of Responsibility and Perceptions of Credibility in Scenario 2 and

Cynicism by Level of Education

Variable	Level of Education				
	High School ($n = 7$)	Some College ($n = 49$)	College Graduate ($n = 58$)	Post Graduate ($n = 9$)	$F(3, 119)$
Suspect Responsibility					
M	4.35	4.09	4.17	3.83	.75
SD	.74	.74	.77	.79	
Suspect Credibility					
M	2.21	1.98	2.17	2.38	1.10
SD	1.03	.67	.71	.74	
Victim Responsibility					
M	3.14	3.05	3.24	2.88	.52
SD	1.74	.76	1.04	.96	
Victim Credibility					
M	3.57	3.51	3.34	3.11	1.25
SD	.73	.66	.68	.65	
Cynicism					
M	40.57	38.91	38.29	37.22	.41
SD	5.12	6.31	6.91	6.94	

Table 13

Mean Attributions of Responsibility and Perceptions of Credibility in Scenario 1 by Age

	Age Group				
Variable	20-29 (n = 29)	30-39 (n = 49)	40-49 (n = 35)	50-59 (n = 6)	F(3,115)
Suspect Responsibility					
M	3.58	3.39	3.57	3.75	.45
SD	.83	1.02	.97	1.03	
Suspect Credibility					
M	2.50	2.65	2.60	2.66	.49
SD	.56	.61	.57	.51	
Victim Responsibility					
M	3.08	3.13	3.22	3.50	.33
SD	1.00	.96	1.00	1.18	
Victim Credibility					
M	3.03	2.94	3.04	2.83	.33
SD	.54	.66	.63	.40	

Table 14

Mean Attributions of Responsibility and Perceptions of Credibility in Scenario 2 and

Cynicism by Age

Variable	Age Group				
	20-29 ($n = 29$)	30-39 ($n = 49$)	40-49 ($n = 35$)	50-59 ($n = 6$)	$F(3,115)$
Suspect Responsibility					
M	4.01	4.22	4.17	3.91	.63
SD	.68	.73	.83	1.02	
Suspect Credibility					
M	2.17	2.08	2.11	2.16	.10
SD	.72	.70	.72	.75	
Victim Responsibility					
M	2.91	3.36	3.01	3.33	1.70
SD	.87	.98	.97	1.16	
Victim Credibility					
M	3.32	3.42	3.47	3.33	.26
SD	.71	.65	.73	.60	
Cynicism					
M	38.72	38.67	38.62	36.50	.22
SD	6.79	6.16	6.45	5.08	

Gender differences for each dependent variable were investigated by conducting t-tests. The means and t values for gender are displayed in Table 15. No significant gender differences were found.

Means were compared for the variable of patrol group which involved uniformed officers and criminal investigators. No significant results were found to be present after conducting t-tests in relation to patrol group. Table 16 displays the means and the t values for patrol group.

Table 15

Mean Attributions of Responsibility, Perceptions of Credibility, and Cynicism Scores by
Gender

| | Gender | | | | |
| | Males (n = 90) | | Females (n = 28) | | |
Variable	M	SD	M	SD	t(116)
Scenario 1					
Suspect Responsibility	3.53	.94	3.53	.91	.02
Suspect Credibility	2.57	.53	2.74	.65	1.31
Victim Responsibility	3.14	1.01	3.31	.79	.79
Victim Credibility	3.03	.61	2.90	.50	1.02
Scenario 2					
Suspect Responsibility	4.10	.74	4.33	.72	1.46
Suspect Credibility	2.15	.69	1.98	.77	1.12
Victim Responsibility	3.10	.98	3.35	.92	1.22
Victim Credibility	3.39	.66	3.51	.70	.84
Cynicism	38.50	6.45	38.82	6.03	.23

Table 16

Mean Attributions of Responsibility, Perceptions of Credibility, and Cynicism Scores by Patrol Group

| | Patrol Group | | | | |
| | Uniformed Patrol ($n = 90$) | | Criminal Investigators ($n = 33$) | | |
Variable	M	SD	M	SD	$t(121)$
Scenario 1					
Suspect Responsibility	3.42	.99	3.77	.75	1.83
Suspect Credibility	2.56	.59	2.60	.49	.33
Victim Responsibility	3.05	1.03	3.36	.90	1.53
Victim Credibility	3.03	.64	2.87	.45	1.31
Scenario 2					
Suspect Responsibility	4.16	.72	4.03	.86	.84
Suspect Credibility	2.15	.72	2.03	.70	.81
Victim Responsibility	3.18	1.04	2.96	.79	1.09
Victim Credibility	3.38	.63	3.42	.75	.30
Cynicism	39.21	6.45	37.21	6.65	1.51

Chapter 4

Discussion

In general, the purpose of this study was to investigate possible differences in cynicism across groups and how those differences would relate to the ways that individuals perceive situations. The primary focus was to examine individual differences in cynicism, attributions of responsibility, and perceptions of credibility based on length of police service. Although research has been conducted on each concept separately, little research exists on the possible relationships between them.

The present study could be viewed as a contribution to the previous research involving police cynicism and attributions. In addition to examining new ideas, the present study investigated established ideas in new ways. The primary advantage of this empirical endeavor involves the broad range of experience within the police sample. Because of this, length of police service was treated as a continuous variable and the statistical analyses were not limited to investigating differences between veteran and less experienced officers per se.

Individual Differences in the Correspondence Bias and Perceptions of Credibility

Hypothesis 1 through Hypothesis 4 refer to the proposal that police officers differing in length of police service also differ in their attributions of responsibility and perceptions of credibility of suspects and victims in interpersonal disputes. The results of this study do not support any of these hypotheses.

Although the research in this area is fairly limited, previous studies (Prytula et al., 1975; Rozelle & Baxter, 1975; Whiteside et al., 1977) did find differences between

veteran police officers and less experienced police officers in making attributions of responsibility. In these earlier studies, veterans had a tendency to make more dispositional attributions than inexperienced officers when considering suspects' personal responsibility for their actions.

The lack of significant differences between groups differing in length of police service in terms of their attributions and perceptions in this study could be due to any of a variety of reasons. One point to consider is the sample itself, in that the earlier studies failed to describe just how inexperienced the new recruits were. One study (Rozelle & Baxter, 1975) did define an inexperienced officer as having no more than 15 months of patrol experience, while others (Prytula et al., 1975; Whiteside et al., 1977) only mentioned that they were new recruits with no police experience. One might suggest that with the less experienced group in this study ranging from four to 24 months of service, perhaps some had already been exposed to a great deal of training and occupational demands. Therefore, there may have been a level of experience that they had already passed that would be related to both groups having similar perceptions about interpersonal disputes. However, this explanation could be ruled out by some of the exploratory analyses.

In comparisons between police officers and undergraduate students, most of the results were not significant. Individuals having no police experience did not significantly differ in their attributions from individuals having a great deal of police experience. In addition, the significant results involving perceptions of credibility only proved to be either contradictory to the hypotheses of this study or inconclusive.

For example, in Scenario 2, students viewed the wife (victim) as being significantly more credible than did police officers. This significant difference follows the logic of this study since the premise is that individuals with less police experience would view suspects and victims as being more credible than would individuals with more police experience. Although this finding partially supports Hypothesis 4, alone it cannot be conclusive.

In addition, police officers viewed the husband (suspect) as being significantly more credible than did students. Therefore, this particular finding is contrary to the prediction of the present study. In other words, Scenario 2 depicts a domestic dispute in which undergraduate students viewed the husband as being more credible and the wife as being less credible than did police officers. Perhaps the differences in the perceptions of these two groups were based on their experiences with such events. Police officers deal with domestic violence on a regular basis in their professional environment, while most students would likely never have had direct experience with such a situation.

Another explanation accounting for the difference between the earlier research in this area and the present study involves the instrument used to measure attributions. Prytula et al., (1975) and Whiteside et al., (1977) used a 41-point scale and 12 scenarios in each of their studies, while the present study used two scenarios and two 5-point questions per scale for each variable. In addition, some participants in this study may have had difficulty with the attributional measure. Appendix I consists of comments made by about 2% (13 participants) of the total sample of police officers. A common theme in these comments involves the participants reporting that they did not have

enough information, and many of these participants then proceeded to mark a neutral answer for each item on the scale. Other participants may have had the same concerns but did not make comments. Therefore, it is not known just how many participants felt as though they were not given enough information to answer the questions.

The scenarios were intended to be ambiguous and to supply a limited amount of information in order to facilitate an extraction of differences in attitudes by providing room for multiple interpretations of the events and the individuals' actions. It is possible that the police officers participating in this study had difficulty with putting themselves in a hypothetical situation to answer questions to the best of their ability. However, it is also possible that better instruction could have been given to clarify the role of the participant.

Finally, as another source of differences between research findings, one should consider the issue of time. All of the previous research that reported individual differences relating to length of police service and attributions of responsibility took place over 20 years ago. A great deal of awareness and education about police behavior has transpired since the 1970's. Perhaps training programs or other institutional aspects have changed within that 20 year time span that have narrowed the gap between less experienced police officers and veterans in their perceptions of others.

Therefore, the results of this study do not replicate earlier findings in this area and may indicate that length of police service is not related to attributions of responsibility and perceptions of credibility of suspects and victims in interpersonal disputes.

Individual Differences in Levels of Cynicism

Hypothesis 5 proposed that veteran police officers would score higher in cynicism than less experienced police officers. However, in this study, that hypothesis was not supported.

Previous research has consistently provided support for the concept of cynicism being related to length of police service (Lotz & Regoli, 1977; Niederhoffer, 1967; Regoli & Poole, 1978). Cynicism had been shown to be low in less experienced officers, peaking for officers between 5 to 10 years of experience, and then declining thereafter. Niederhoffer's study demonstrated this trend within the New York City Police Department while Regoli and Poole's (1978) study contributed by using nine different departments.

One difference between previous research and this study relates to the scale used to measure cynicism. Most of the studies of police cynicism have used some form of Niederhoffer's 20-item scale. This scale is often criticized for being multidimensional because it contains five different aspects of cynicism which include cynicism towards the public, organizational functions, dedication to duty, social solidarity, and training and education (Andersson, 1996). Because of this, a new scale was developed for use in this study to measure cynicism of police officers about human nature in general. As reported, this scale was highly reliable in the sample used in the present research.

Another difference between previous research and the present study involves the issue of time. The research in the area of police cynicism is similar to the research of attributions made by police officers given that it is over 20 years old. Because the

majority of the previous research is older, the concept of changes in training and education of police officers is certainly relevant and applicable in this area as well. In addition to particular aspects within the criminal justice system changing, perhaps certain aspects related to cynical attitudes within society have changed as well, which could explain a lack of significant differences between groups of police officers.

Based on the results of this study, one can suggest that within this particular police department, veterans and less experienced officers did not differ in levels of cynicism about human nature. Therefore, in order to explain the lack of results in this study, one could propose that the differences found between individuals in other departments were a result of independent institutional aspects that are not present in the current department. However, as noted previously, some studies (e.g. Regoli & Poole, 1978) investigated cynicism across several departments.

Another explanation could be given about why no differences were found between the two police groups. Again, one could make the proposal that the less experienced officers in this particular study had already been exposed to particular occupational demands that would narrow the differences in attitudes and perceptions between them. In other words, the less experienced officers already had too much police experience to be distinguished from veteran officers in cynicism. However, exploratory analyses do not support this suggestion.

When comparisons were made between police officers and undergraduate students, no significant differences were found. Thus, there was no evidence in this study

that individuals with as little as no police experience differed from individuals having a variety of years of police experience in terms of cynicism.

The Relationship Between Cynicism and the Correspondence Bias

Hypothesis 6 predicted a relationship between cynicism scores and attributions of responsibility of the suspect, while Hypothesis 7 predicted a relationship between cynicism scores and attributions of responsibility of the victim.

One correlation provided evidence that cynicism is positively and significantly related to attributions of responsibility of the suspect (Scenario 2). As the police officers scored higher on the cynicism scale, they also attributed more personal responsibility to the husband for his actions in Scenario 2. However, the other correlation between cynicism and attributions of responsibility of the suspect (Scenario 1) was not significant. In other words, there was minimal support for Hypothesis 6. The two correlations involving the relationship between cynicism and attributions of responsibility of the victim in relation to Hypothesis 7 were not significant.

These hypotheses have not been posed in previous research. They were based on the research previously mentioned that demonstrated a pattern of veterans being more cynical and being more likely to attribute personal responsibility to suspects than were less experienced officers.

The primary explanation for the lack of results between cynicism and attributions in this study is that they, in fact, are not related. Because there is no previous evidence on which to base the present findings, this explanation is very possible and cannot entirely be ruled out.

To summarize, the results of this study indicate that police officers do not differ from individuals who have no police experience in terms of cynicism. The results of this study also indicate that police officers differ little from others in terms of their attributions or perceptions of individuals involved in interpersonal disputes. Thus, the pattern in previous research that led to the suggestion that a relationship existed between cynicism and attributions is not present in the current study. In addition, direct testing of the hypothesis of a relationship between these two concepts produced minimal support. Thus, there is little evidence that there is a relationship between cynicism and attributions of responsibility.

Total Length of Service

Because it is not known just how previous police or military service may be related to cynicism, attributions of responsibility, or perceptions of credibility, exploratory analyses were performed.

In the present study, the attitude of cynicism was inversely related to the total length of service. In other words, the more experience individuals had serving with the military or the police, the less cynical they were. In addition, this inverse relationship does not replicate previous notions that a curvilinear relationship exists between length of service and the attitude of cynicism. Instead, the results suggest that the attitude of cynicism is highest at the earliest stages of police or military service, and declines thereafter.

Although the relationship between total length of service and cynicism was relatively weak, it raises an interesting question in relation to previous research. It is not

assumed that others have taken previous military or police experience into account before analyzing their data. Therefore, it may not be known just how previous experience or the total amount of experience may have related to cynicism in the past research.

However, no evidence was found to suggest that the total length of service is related to an individual's attributions of responsibility or perceptions of credibility of suspects or victims in interpersonal disputes.

Demographic Variables

The previous research in the areas of police cynicism and attributions of responsibility made by police officers typically used all male samples of predominantly Caucasian patrol officers. Therefore, there was an interest in whether or not relationships were present between ethnicity, gender, age, level of education, and current assignment and the dependent variables, but few were evident.

In this study, Caucasian police officers viewed the younger man in Scenario 1 as being more credible and the older man as being more personally responsible than did minority police officers. Although these results are interesting, they don't provide any conclusive evidence in terms of implications. Scenario 1 involved two males, the use of alcohol by both parties, and it took place in a drinking establishment. Perhaps the differences in the perceptions and attributions of Caucasian and minority officers were influenced by differences in tolerance for this type of behavior based on ethnic culture. However, these results certainly facilitate questions about differences that may exist in attributions and perceptions as a function of race. The current study did not produce any other significant results involving demographic variables.

Limitations

The results of the present study were based on survey research which can be helpful in describing the characteristics of particular populations. However, survey research is often criticized as being somewhat artificial because it is difficult to gain a full sense of social processes in their natural settings through the use of questionnaires (Babbie, 1995).

This particular criticism is very relevant to this study. Police officers were asked to read two hypothetical scenarios in which a limited amount of information was supplied. The scenarios probably did not reflect the typical situation and the amount of detail that they encounter on a daily basis. Thus, their answers about their perceptions of the individuals involved in each scenario did not necessarily reflect their attitudes. This concern is reflected in the comments made by the officers about a lack of information.

In addition, the tendency for individuals in general to make dispositional attributions is well established (Gilbert, 1995). However, very few dispositional attributions were made in this study by any of the groups involved. This issue along with the previously mentioned concerns made by the participants about not having enough information may indicate that changes should be made to the attributional measure, the instructions, or both.

Another limitation involving the survey method relates to the acquisition of the sample itself. The questionnaires were distributed to 400 police officers. One could question whether the 127 (32%) individuals who returned the questionnaire possessed attitudes or other characteristics that differed from those individuals who did not return

the questionnaire. In addition, one must consider the possibility that participants may have responded to the questions in terms of socially desirable answers. All of these issues could contribute to explaining differences between previous research and this study.

Finally, the return rate of the questionnaire was somewhat low. Ideally one would want to have a larger sample, primarily in each of the designated police groups, to measure the concepts presented in this study.

Conclusions

In summary, there was no support from the results of this study relating to the suggestion that individuals differing in length of police service also differ in their attributions of responsibility and their perceptions of credibility. There has not been a great deal of research in this area and the methods used to investigate such proposals may be somewhat unreliable and in need of refinement. Based on the possibility of methodological problems, further research should be done. Perhaps the use of a variety of scenarios including some taken from actual police encounters could be useful. In addition, structured interviews or the use of open-ended questions may provide a better environment for individuals to express their attitudes.

The previous studies of police cynicism were based on findings from a multidimensional scale. It is not known if differences in these other types of cynicism are present today or if these other types of cynicism would be related to attributions.

Thus, because previous research may have not taken previous experience into account or because they used multidimensional scales, no conclusive statements about the total length of police service and other types of cynicism can be made at this time and

these issues should be examined in more detail. Further research is necessary to distinguish the differences in attitudes relating to experience in current departments and to experience as a whole.

Although there are still questions about other issues relating to length of experience and to the various types of cynicism, the results of this study suggest that being cynical about human nature in general should not be of great concern in regard to attributional style. There was no evidence that this attitude is related to the way that individuals perceive others in terms of interpersonal disputes. Therefore, this type of cynicism may be a way of coping with particular demands of the police environment that does not influence particular aspects of police work.

The lack of significant differences in attitudes, attributions of responsibility, and perceptions of credibility can be thought of in a positive way. The results of this study suggest that police officers' perceptions of suspects, victims, and the causes of their behavior in interpersonal disputes are not a function of length of police service, cynicism, or other demographic variables. In addition, the results suggest that the attitude of cynicism does not increase as experience increases. In other words, these findings suggest that as individuals gain more police experience, they do not necessarily view others in a more negative way than they did as inexperienced officers. Thus, there may not be any reason for a great deal of concern about changes in the attitudes or perceptions of police officers as they gain experience.

The focus of the present research was to investigate individual differences based on length of police service. Interactions between police officers and citizens occur under

conditions that could amplify our understanding of more general interactions primarily because there seems to be a greater level of interpersonal involvement due to the possibility of danger and time constraints. In addition, police officers often encounter situations that take place under conditions that are based on limited information.

However, very few of the concepts in this study have been investigated in any population. Perhaps the examination of such issues should not be confined to those of a particular occupation. The ideas and proposals set forth in the present research are relevant to everyone in today's society as interpersonal interactions and cynical attitudes penetrate into so many aspects of life. In addition, because cynicism itself is such a complex attitude, because it can be focused toward so many aspects of life, and because so little is understood about this concept, there are many reasons to continue investigation in this area.

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Appendix A

Cynicism Scale

Please read each statement carefully. Using the following scale, circle a response for each statement that most closely reflects your level of agreement with that item.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

1. Most people are willing to help others without expectation of reward.   SD   D   N   A   SA

2. The media tries to help police departments by giving prominent coverage to stories favorable to police.   SD   D   N   A   SA

3. Although they try to hide it, people are generally selfish.   SD   D   N   A   SA

4. People change their standards according to what they want at that moment.   SD   D   N   A   SA

5. When testifying against a criminal in court, police officers are practically treated like criminals themselves by the public and the media.   SD   D   N   A   SA

6. People are hypocritical.   SD   D   N   A   SA

7. People who trust others are likely to be taken advantage of.   SD   D   N   A   SA

8. People will lie to police officers if they think they can gain from it.   SD   D   N   A   SA

9. People are basically good.   SD   D   N   A   SA

10. The public shows a lot of respect for police.   SD   D   N   A   SA

11. People, in general, are honest.   SD   D   N   A   SA

12. The courts have given offenders so many rights that it is practically impossible to maintain law and order.   SD   D   N   A   SA

Appendix B

Attributional Questionnaire

Please read each scenario and answer all of the questions pertaining to each scenario. Using the scales provided, circle a number for each question that most closely reflects your response to that question.

Scenario 1:

Two men, ages 47 and 34, were involved in a fight in a bar, during which the younger man kicked his opponent repeatedly, causing bodily harm in the rib-cage area. The two men decided to settle their grievances in the yard outside. Here, the older man knocked his assailant to the ground and kicked him. The younger man was admitted to the hospital with a concussion. When questioned by the police, the older man stated that the younger man had started the fight in the bar after he accidentally spilled beer on the younger man. He also stated that he wished to defend himself outside in order to avoid property damage. The younger man stated that the older man intentionally threw his beer on him and lunged toward him after a disagreement about a bad call by the referee in a football game. He stated that he kicked the man in an attempt to defend himself only after the older man lunged at him.

1. Were the actions of the younger man in this incident caused by the type of person he is or were his actions largely a response to the situation?

    1   2   3   4   5

    Circumstances   Type of person
    of the situation

2. Do you think the behavior of the younger man in this incident reflects his personality and would be typical of him in most situations?

1	2	3	4	5

Not at all   Completely

3. How much do you believe the younger man's version of what happened?

1	2	3	4	5

Not at all   Completely

4. How trustworthy do you think the younger man is?

1	2	3	4	5

Not at all   Completely

5. Were the actions of <u>older man</u> in this incident caused by the type of person he is or were his actions largely a response to the situation?

1	2	3	4	5

Circumstances   Type of person
of the situation

6. Do you think the older man's behavior in this incident reflects his personality and would be typical of him in most situations?

1	2	3	4	5

Not at all   Completely

7. How much do you believe the older man's version of what happened?

1	2	3	4	5

Not at all   Completely

8. How trustworthy do you think the older man is?

1	2	3	4	5

Not at all   Completely

Scenario 2:

A 20-year old woman reports to police that after a verbal argument with her 21-year old

husband, she left home with their young daughter and went to the bus stop with the

intention of going to her parents' house to get away from her husband. Her husband

followed her to the bus stop, was extremely abusive, hit her in the face, and pushed her to

the ground, but after making several threats, left. The husband is questioned and states

that they did have an argument and she left home. He admits that he was in a bad mood

and followed her to the bus stop, but emphatically denies that he hit her. A few days after

reporting the incident, the wife calls the police station to say that she and her husband are

back together, that she no longer wishes her husband to be prosecuted, and that she will

not testify against him.

1. Were the actions of the husband in this incident caused by the type of person he is or
   were his actions largely a response to the situation?

1	2	3	4	5
Circumstances of the situation				Type of person

2. Do you think the behavior of the husband in this incident reflects his personality and
   would be typical of him in most situations?

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all				Completely

3. How much do you believe the husband's version of what happened?

    1   2   3   4   5

Not at all   Completely

4. How trustworthy do you think the husband is?

    1   2   3   4   5
Not at all   Completely

5. Were the actions of <u>the wife</u> in this incident caused by the type of person she is or were her actions largely a response to the situation?

    1   2   3   4   5

Circumstances   Type of person
of the situation

6. Do you think the wife's behavior in this incident reflects her personality and would be typical of her in most situations?

    1   2   3   4   5

Not at all   Completely

7. How much do you believe the wife's version of what happened?

    1   2   3   4   5

Not at all   Completely

8. How trustworthy do you think the wife is?

    1   2   3   4   5

Not at all   Completely

Appendix C

<u>Student Demographic Questionnaire</u>

Please answer the following questions. This information will not be used to identify you. It will be used to describe the research sample.

<u>GENDER</u>   Please circle one: M   F

<u>AGE</u>   Please circle one: 20-29   30-39   40-49   50-59   60+

<u>RACE</u>   Please circle one: Caucasian   African-American   Hispanic   Asian   Other_____

Please briefly describe any previous military service or police experience_____

_____

_____

What is the highest level of education you have completed?   (Circle One)

High School   Some College   College Graduate   Post Graduate

Thank you for your participation!

Appendix D

<u>Student Consent Form</u>

ADULT CONSENT FORM
IRB # 192-99 EX

PERCEPTIONS OF INTERPERSONAL DISPUTES

You are invited to participate in this research study. The following information is provided in order to help you make an informed decision whether or not to participate. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to ask. You are eligible to participate because you are a student at the University of Nebraska at Omaha.

The purpose of this study is to examine perceptions of interpersonal disputes.

Participation in this study will require approximately 10 to 12 minutes. In this experiment, you will be asked to complete a short attitude questionnaire. You will then be asked to read three scenarios depicting interpersonal disputes. Following each scenario, you will be asked to answer several questions about your perceptions of the individuals involved.

There are no known risks or discomfort to you as a participant. There are no direct benefits to you either. However, results from this research may help to provide insight about how particular attitudes and experiences may influence perceptions of disputants.

You will receive research credit for participating in this study. If you choose not to participate, your instructor can identify other ways for you to earn the same amount of credit.

The information obtained will only be used together with information from other participants. No information will be linked directly to you. Your identity will be kept strictly confidential.

Your rights as a research participant have been explained to you. If you have any additional questions concerning your rights as a research participant, you may contact the University of Nebraska Institutional Review Board (IRB), (402) 559-6463.

You are free to decide not to participate at any time without adversely affecting your relationship with the investigators or the University of Nebraska. Your decision will not result in any loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

DOCUMENTATION OF INFORMED CONSENT

YOU ARE VOLUNTARILY MAKING A DECISION WHETHER OR NOT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS RESEARCH STUDY. YOUR SIGNATURE CERTIFIES THAT YOU HAVE DECIDED TO PARTICIPATE HAVING READ AND UNDERSTOOD THE INFORMATION PRESENTED. YOU WILL BE GIVEN A COPY OF THIS CONSENT FORM TO KEEP.

_____   _____

SIGNATURE OF SUBJECT   DATE

IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATORS

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR
    Jennifer Weimer, B.A.

SECONDARY INVESTIGATOR
    Wayne Harrison, Ph.D.

Appendix E

Police Consent Form

ADULT CONSENT FORM
IRB # 192-99EX

PERCEPTIONS OF INTERPERSONAL DISPUTES

Dear Omaha Police Officer,

My name is Jennifer Weimer and I am a graduate student in the social psychology program at the University of Nebraska at Omaha. I am currently working on my master's thesis which concerns police officers' attitudes and perceptions of interpersonal disputes.

You are invited to participate in this study because you are a police officer working for the Omaha Police Department. The following information is provided in order to help you make an informed decision whether or not to participate.

Participation in this study will take only about 10 to 12 minutes. First, you are asked to complete a short attitude questionnaire. You are then asked to read two scenarios depicting an interpersonal dispute. Following each scenario, you are asked to answer several questions about your perceptions of the individuals involved.

There are no known risks or discomfort associated with participating in this study. There are no direct benefits to you as a participant either. However, results from this research may provide insight about how particular attitudes and experiences may influence perceptions of police officers.

The information obtained will only be used together with information from other participants. No information will be directly linked to you.

Your rights as a research participant have been explained to you. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to call me at 597-4133. If you have any additional questions concerning your rights as a research participant, you may contact the University of Nebraska Institutional Review Board (IRB), at 559-6463.

I appreciate you considering participating in my research project. You are free to decide not to participate without adversely affecting your relationship with the investigators or the University of Nebraska. Your decision will not result in any loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

YOU ARE VOLUNTARILY MAKING A DECISION WHETHER OR NOT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS RESEARCH STUDY. YOU MAY KEEP THIS CONSENT FORM.

IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATORS

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR
     Jennifer Weimer, B.A.

SECONDARY INVESTIGATOR
     Wayne Harrison, Ph.D.

Appendix F

Deputy Chief's Cover Letter

You are invited to participate in a study being conducted by UNO graduate
student Jennifer Weimer. The purpose of the study is to investigate the perceptions that
individuals have about the causes of interpersonal disputes, as little research exists on the
relationship between them.

The attached survey should take less than ten minutes to complete. A return
envelope is provided for your convenience.

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this study.

Deputy Chief Barb Hauptman

Appendix G

Police Demographic Questionnaire

Please answer the following questions.

1. What is your date of appointment to the Omaha Police Department?

Month_____/Year_____

2. CURRENT ASSIGNMENT   Please circle one: UPB   CIB

The next three questions are optional. It is important, however, to characterize the research sample. This information will not be used to identify you.

3. GENDER Please circle one: M   F

4. AGE Please circle one: 20-29   30-39   40-49   50-59   60+

5. RACE Please circle one:

   Caucasian   African-American   Hispanic   Asian   Other_____

6. Please briefly describe any military or police experience prior to joining the Omaha Police Department.

_____

_____

_____

7. What is the highest level of education you have completed?   (circle one)

   High School   Some College   College Graduate   Post Graduate

Please enclose the completed questionnaire in the provided envelope and drop in the U.S. Mail.   THANK YOU!   Your participation is greatly appreciated!

Appendix H

Means and Frequencies of Cynicism Scale Item Ratings

Item	M	SD	Rating				
			1	2	3	4	5
1	3.51	.91	2	23	18	76	8
2	1.83	.87	51	54	12	9	1
3	3.33	1.02	1	36	23	54	13
4	3.33	.98	1	35	21	61	9
5	3.02	1.06	3	52	20	43	9
6	3.50	.83	0	17	39	61	10
7	3.11	.97	1	45	24	52	5
8	4.14	.83	0	8	12	61	46
9	3.71	.75	2	8	24	84	9
10	2.75	.94	9	48	37	32	1
11	3.46	.77	1	17	33	74	2
12	3.31	1.13	3	35	31	35	23

Note. Means and frequencies are reported prior to reverse scoring.

Appendix I

<u>Comments of Police Participants</u>

1.   A good police officer would complete a record check on those involved for safety

reasons, possible warrants, & history of arrest(s). Knowing a person's previous

record, & talking to unbiased or credible witnesses will usually assist an officer

w/ determining if a person is trustworthy, or if this is normal behavior. Previous

history or contacts w/ individuals often assist us w/ knowing what type of person

we are dealing with. The 1st scenario is unrealistic of a good officers approach,

& a good officer should never drop their guard. We can't afford to believe

someone is trustworthy, the court should do that.

2.   Not enough info. to adequately answer
      There is no way to make these type of assessments off just this paragraph.

3.   More needs to be known about these two parties before one can answer these

      questions accurately.

4.   There is not enough information in the scenarios. Was there bruising? The

      woman's and man's emotional state at the time of the interview, etc.

      An officer cannot make the judgments called for with limited information, such as

      that provided in these two scenarios.

5.   The information is somewhat limited.

6. It is difficult to assess personalities of people from a single, isolated incident. Much of what we were asked to assess would normally be better crystalized by witness statements and/or physical injuries.

7. Too vague. Would do more investigation (Scenario 1)

    Does she have any marks?   (Scenario 2)

8. Unknown--would have to see their faces & talk to witnesses (Scenario 1).

    Need to see both parties--interview both, check for witnesses (Scenario 2).

    Would have to see her face and his too.

9. My answers here are strictly adherent to your scenario. (Other) factors I would need to consider are; the alcohol consumption of both these individuals, witness information, the response of non-verbal communication, the eyes & actions & attitudes of each person involved. (Scenario 1)

    Same problem with this scenario. You (I) would not be able to tell how trustworthy either person is due to reading a scenario. Other factors here include the need for counseling. This 21 year old male needs to find ways to vent his anger without hitting. The 20 year old female needs to realize she cannot run from her problems. I am not saying she needs to stay to get abused. (Scenario 2)

    If all our incidents were this black & white, or job would be easier. You are a

attempting research in the area of interpersonal disputes. [16 questions & 12 attitude responses]. You're gauging how police officers react to people depending on their biases. When you work in an area where people distrust the police (from their own bias) valid or unvalid, you become less trusting of the people you serve & protect. it seems 80% of the population has little dealing with the police. The remaining 20% →75% has some dealing with police and 25% (or 5% of population) cause 80 to 90% of the work for police FBI Lawyers, etc. etc.

10. Just to let you know--we would gather more information to make conclusions!

11. It is difficult to respond to these questions without personally speaking to the parties involved. Many factors are left out of the scenarios--witnesses, physical evidence, parties' body language, etc.

12. Does the wife have injuries--need more for these questions.

13. (Scenario 2--responding to questions about victim credibility) Would be based on evidence.