

STUDENTS' ATTITUDES TOWARD MARIJUANA LEGALIZATION  
AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

by

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A THESIS

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## ABSTRACT

The legalization of recreational marijuana is a policy change that eight states have recently enacted, providing a tax revenue that greatly benefits the states in which marijuana is legalized. While the state of Alabama has been slow to consider the legalization of recreational marijuana, there have been efforts to enact lesser penalties and legalize the medical use of cannabis. Citizens' attitudes regarding legislation of any kind have been found to have an effect on their relationship with police officers. This current study examines college students' attitudes regarding the legalization of recreational marijuana and their attitudes towards police officers. An online survey was administered to 314 undergraduate students enrolled in an Introduction to Criminal Justice course at The University of Alabama. The results found that 65% of college students supported the legalization of marijuana in Alabama and that the support for legalization was significantly related to students' attitudes towards police officers. Policy implications suggest that non-legalization of marijuana will lead to less support for law enforcement by an important sector of the population.

*Keywords:* marijuana regulation, attitudes toward police officers, legal cynicism, college students

## DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to anyone who listened to me say “I’m giving up” and didn’t let me do it.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

Marijuana regulation is one of the most controversial political issues of the past decade. Marijuana was used medicinally in America until the mid-1900s when the marijuana prohibition began (Bonnie & Whitebread, 1974). Twenty-nine states and Washington DC have since legalized marijuana for medical reasons and eight states legalizing marijuana for recreational use. Conflicting state and federal laws governing marijuana use have presented a challenge to college students who try to abide by both sets of laws (Delkic, 2017). Opinion polls show that college students generally support the legalization of marijuana and its use in college communities (Mostaghim & Hathaway, 2013; Napper, Froidevaux, & LaBrie, 2016; Pearson, Liese, Dvorak, & Marijuana Outcomes Study Team, 2017). The socialization of marijuana on college campuses has led to a change in the attitudes regarding the use of and the legalization of the substance. Marijuana use has also been recognized as a helpful drug in the treatment of medical conditions (Chan, Knoepke, Cole, McKinnon, & Matlock, 2017). As the marijuana laws begin to pass based on majority opinion, it is important to recognize that the college population generally supports the legalization of recreational marijuana (Mostaghim & Hathaway, 2013; Pearson et al., 2017). Empirical research on the relationship between students' opinions on marijuana related legislation and their attitudes toward police officers has not been addressed.

Variables such as age, race, and gender help explain why different students have different views of police officers (Peek, Lowe, & Alston, 1981; Van Damme & Pauwels, 2016; Wilson, 1985). While demographic differences have been found to affect students' attitudes toward

police officers, other variables have an effect on students' attitudes as well. Specifically, a student's interactions with police (Chow, 2012; Tyler & Fagan, 2008) any harassment they may have experienced by police (Jacobsen, 2015), and their prior victimization (Brown & Reed Benedict, 2002) all played a role in determining how students felt about police officers. Students' attitudes regarding law enforcement have the ability to affect the interactions students have with police. Tyler and Fagan (2008) explain that if students' hold positive attitudes toward police officers, they are more willing to cooperate with the officers and follow the law. While students who have positive attitudes toward police officers are more willing to cooperate and follow the law, the reverse is likely to hold as well. Literature in this area focuses on

Few studies have addressed how students feel about police, how those attitudes are formed and whether legislation has an effect on these attitudes. The link between legislation and cooperation with police has been established through the research on legal cynicism (Tyler, 2006; Van Damme & Pauwels, 2016). It would be helpful to use college students as the target sample because they are forming new opinions and gaining new experiences, which may include interactions with police officers for the first time. If legislation in general has an effect on students' attitudes regarding law enforcement, it is important to pinpoint what legislative efforts are most important to help increase positive attitudes toward police officers. This research will contextualize the relationship that exists between college students' opinions regarding the legalization of recreational marijuana and their attitudes toward police officers. If the relationship between college students and the police improves, society will benefit from less conflict between young citizens and authority.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### **History and Definition of Marijuana**

Marijuana is an intoxicative substance that is derived from the Cannabis plant, specifically the *Cannabis sativa* plant (Danovitch, 2012). Danovitch explains that the most common way to produce marijuana is by cultivating the leaves, or buds, from the plant and then drying them to be smoked. In 1965, tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) was identified as the source of the psychoactive effects of marijuana. THC is the chemical component that is responsible for the “high” gained by smoking marijuana. Two specific brain receptors, called cannabinoid receptors, are found within the brain and in the body. These cannabinoid receptors are typically stimulated by anandamide, a naturally occurring hormone in the human body. However, when marijuana is consumed and THC enters the bloodstream, THC stimulates the cannabinoid receptors in place of the anandamide. This stimulation gives the user a feeling of euphoria and causes intoxication (Danovitch, 2012). While there is more to be understood about the drug, Americans have been using cannabis in many forms since the founding of the country.

The United States of America has a long and complicated history with the substance of marijuana. In 1611, when the residents of Jamestown began growing hemp, a cannabis plant grown specifically for its fiber, marijuana was primarily consumed for medicinal purposes (Bonnie & Whitebread, 1974). As stated by the authors, the southwest began to experience significant immigration from Mexico in the early 1900s and with it came heavier uses of marijuana for recreational purposes. The widespread use of marijuana led to the city of El Paso,

a city on the boarder of Texas and Mexico, to become one of the first cities to ban the use of marijuana within city limits. The El Paso city officials began to associate the use of marijuana with prostitutes, pimps, “negroes,” and criminals and decided to take action against it. Prior to this time, marijuana had been legal and regularly bought and sold within America (Bonnie & Whitebread, 1974). By 1933, 33 states had legislation that criminalized the use of marijuana. Rather than do the same, the federal government, specifically the Treasury Department, decided to heavily tax the sale of marijuana so severely that the purchasing of the drug became nearly impossible (Bonnie & Whitebread, 1974).

Marijuana became the drug of choice of the countercultural movements of the 1960s and 1970s. Schwadel and Ellison (2017) noted that the baby boomer generation was at the forefront of these movements especially in relation to drug use. Schwadel and Ellison also explained that support for legalization would come from middle and upper-class members of society, even though the drug was more commonly used among low-income groups. The idea that individuals with more money and a better education (or any education at all) were cultural innovators led to a change in the link between social class and attitudes regarding marijuana use. In the 1980s it seemed as if the vast majority of the country supported the criminalization of marijuana, with less than one quarter of individuals polled supporting the legalization of marijuana (Schwadel & Ellison, 2017). One possible explanation as to the troubled past, specifically in recent times, comes from the observation that society has become more polarized in terms of political party support. Issues such as abortion, health care, sexuality and gay rights, as well as marijuana regulation, have become so heavily aligned with party affiliation that there has been an overwhelming lack of cooperation in terms of research and policy on the substance (Schwadel & Ellison, 2017). While the social support for marijuana grows, the federal government has

established marijuana as one of America's most dangerous drugs. By labeling marijuana as a Schedule 1 substance, the government is saying that there is no recognized use, medical or otherwise, and that there is no legal reason for a citizen to possess it (Boeri & Lamonica, 2017).

The Pacific states (i.e. California, Washington, Oregon, Alaska, and Hawaii) have always had high rates of marijuana use and were some of the first states to legalize marijuana for medicinal and recreational use (Schwadel & Ellison, 2017). This region is known to be the first to address societal and legal issues, such as hate crime initiatives, before any other portion of the country. For this reason, it is likely that they will lead the charge on legalization and set a precedent on how to properly legalize and regulate marijuana as a legal substance (Schwadel & Ellison, 2017; Shively, 2016). Schwadel and Ellison believe that breakthroughs in medical marijuana research and the frail state of the War on Drugs have caused marijuana to quickly become more widespread and visible than ever before. The ready availability of marijuana in nearly every city in America has led to an overall change in the social attitudes toward the drug; that is, marijuana use and possession now carries less of a threat to users, even in areas where the drug is still illegal (Schwadel & Ellison, 2017). Changes in attitudes and social behaviors regarding marijuana have been some of the leading factors in helping states pass legislation to legalize marijuana while the federal government holds strong to its opposition to marijuana use.

### **Prevalence of Marijuana Use**

#### **Factors that Led States to Legalize Marijuana**

As Sam Kamin (2015) stated, "there is simply no precedent in American history for conduct that is prohibited at the federal level while permitted in a large number of states" (p. 429). For this reason, there are many different factors that affect states' decisions to legalize recreational marijuana. While supporters of marijuana legalization typically use financial reasons

(i.e., tax revenue) to argue that legalizing is a good idea, there are many other reasons that may influence a state's decision to make marijuana legal. These factors include saving on the cost of law enforcement, upholding individual liberties, decreases in the black-market sale of marijuana, lowering the burden on local prosecutors and court systems, as well as lessen the disparity in arrests between African Americans and other races of individuals (Shively, 2016). Schluskel (2017) has noted that revenue could be rerouted out of the black market by establishing a proper, legal market and that law enforcement would be able to focus time and resources on violent crime as opposed to the racially disparate drug crimes.

One major factor that may have impacted the first few states' decisions to legalize marijuana was the 2007-2008 financial crisis that left many states needing additional revenue to keep certain state programs afloat. The states that have legalized recreational marijuana have benefitted greatly from the additional tax revenue from the marijuana business. Colorado, Alaska, Maine, and Nevada have all taken the position that marijuana should be legalized in the same way as alcohol since marijuana use is less harmful than alcohol use (Schluskel, 2017). According to Schluskel, the most effective campaigns have been the ones to focus on the white, middle-class individuals who use marijuana. Campaigns that depict a hard-working, white, middle-class marijuana user who *deserves* the right to partake in legalized marijuana use were able to sway the legislative officials who may have found it easier to identify with a white, middle-class American, rather than marginalized groups who are associated with drugs and crime.

### **Current State of Marijuana Laws**

Eight U.S. states currently have legalized recreational marijuana (Colorado, Washington, Oregon, California, Nevada, Alaska, Maine, and Massachusetts) with 33 others legalizing

medical marijuana (Delkic, 2017). In 2012, Colorado successfully passed Amendment 64, legalizing recreational marijuana use, modifying the State Constitution, and requiring the state to develop a “legal, regulatory, and tax framework” for the cultivation and sale of marijuana for recreational purposes (Hudak, 2014). According to Hudak (2014), the implementation of a successful strategy allowed the state to change the culture surrounding marijuana legislature by showing that it can be regulated properly and effectively. The regulations included a tracking system to track individual plants at cultivation sites, required video surveillance at all levels of cultivation and sale, regulations to prevent diversion of product into other states, and finally establishing a revenue system for the self-funding of the Marijuana Enforcement Division to be self-funded (Hudak, 2014).

In 2013, the federal government released the Cole Memo which addressed the issue of how the federal enforcement of marijuana related laws were going to coincide with the state laws. This memo, released under President Barack Obama, included eight statements, each a condition that the state law must meet in order for the federal government to defer to state laws on the issue of marijuana. These conditions included preventing marijuana from being distributed to minors, preventing money from the legal sale of marijuana from going to illegal gangs and cartels, and preventing the diversion of marijuana into states where it is not legal (Kamin, 2015). As long as the state law would address each criterion, it could rely on the federal government to stay out of the way. The Supreme Court, however, made a statement through cases like *Gonzales v. Raich* (2005) and *United States v. Oakland Cannabis Buyers' Collective* (2001), that it would not stand by and allow these state laws to establish legal precedent at the federal level. The Supreme Court was going to continue to criminalize all marijuana related actions, regardless of the state laws (Kamin, 2015).



## **Current Marijuana Laws in Alabama**

The legalization of marijuana for recreational use is something that is typically supported by the more progressive members of society (Swift, 2017). Although Alabama tends to be a very conservative state, there has been some effort to address the usage of marijuana, both recreationally and medically, in recent years. While currently the only law on the books is Leni's Law (2016) which allows the medical use of cannabidiol (an oil derived from cannabis that is found to be effective in treating epilepsy and other disorders), other groups that are pushing for the legalization of marijuana in other forms. Very recently, the Alabama Senate Judiciary Board voted 6-4 to pass a bill that would lessen the consequences of simple possession charges to a violation, which is lower than a misdemeanor charge and is only punishable by a fine, with no possibility of jail time. The bill's success is unlikely as a nearly identical bill was voted out by the House Judiciary Committee in a 7-5 vote just one day earlier (Cason, 2018). Al.com, a popular news site in the state, evaluated how over 10,000 Alabamians feel about marijuana legalization and found that 78% of readers polled support the legalization of marijuana. When AL.com made the poll live on their webpage, the support jumped to 85% of readers (Garrison, 2017).

**Impact of legalization on college campuses.** Federal laws on marijuana use make regulation difficult for college campuses to follow state laws, but still receive funding from the federal government. Regardless of state laws governing the use of marijuana, recreational or medical, any college or university that provides the Free Application For Student Aid (FAFSA) to students cannot allow the use or possession of marijuana on its campus. This policy can be troublesome when students who reside off-campus must travel to campus for class and must abide by a different set of laws. According to The University of Alabama Student Conduct

Handbook (2017), the university has a zero-tolerance policy for all drugs, including marijuana. While general support for recreational marijuana use is growing (McCarthy, 2017), the University's zero-tolerance policy on drugs may come in conflict with students' opinions regarding any policy surrounding the legalization of recreational marijuana.

### **Prevalence of Marijuana**

**Overall prevalence of marijuana use.** The prevalence of marijuana use has increased largely over the last few decades. Using the National Survey on Drug Use and Health (2002-2014) researchers used all adults over the age of 18 which included 492,831 participants and found that in 2002, the rate of use in the past year was at 10.5% and grew to nearly 14% by 2014 (Carliner et al, 2017). Martin et al. (2016), used the National Survey on Drug Use and Health (2002-2013) and found that use by adults in the past month was highest in the 18-25 age range, with the average being 23%. The authors also found that prevalence in use neither increased nor decreased in states that permitted medical marijuana use. Gallup polled Americans on the prevalence of marijuana, yielding a sample of 1,500 adults, and found that 45% admit to trying marijuana at least once, with 18% currently smoking (Swift, 2017). Pew Research Center sampled 1,500 individuals and found that 48% have admitted to trying marijuana, the highest percentage ever recorded by this survey ("Marijuana Use", 2013). While recreational use of marijuana remains illegal for most states, it may be difficult to obtain true numbers on adult use of marijuana, yet recent studies have shown a slight increase over time.

**Prevalence of use among college students.** The actual use of marijuana by college students varies among samples. Napper et al. (2016), used a sample of 506 college students and reported that 51.7% of students sampled reported using marijuana at least once a month, with 22.6% of the sample self-identifying as moderately heavy users. Pearson et al. (2017) sampled

students from 11 different college campuses, found that lifetime prevalence of marijuana use ranged from 42.5% to 63.6% across campuses and an average of 5.8% of the sample using marijuana daily for all campuses. Mostaghim and Hathaway (2013) conducted a study of 130 undergraduates, who were mostly first year students, and found that 60% of the students have reported using marijuana in college. According to a sample of 154 undergraduate students who were self-identified users of marijuana, they were more likely to use on weekends, and major holidays (e.g. St. Patrick's Day, Mardi Gras, and Valentine's Day) than they would on a typical week day (Buckner, Henslee, & Jeffries, 2015). These findings of greater use in times outside of class (i.e., nights, weekends, holidays, etc.) support the notion by Mostaghim and Hathaway (2013) that college gives students the time and access to use marijuana for recreational purposes that may not have been present in high school. The prevalence of marijuana use on college campuses has led to a more socially acceptable reputation for the illicit substance.

### **Attitudes Toward the Legalization of Marijuana**

#### **Public Attitudes toward the Legalization of Marijuana**

The General Social Survey is an annual survey, distributed nationally, that asks a wide range of questions and is used by many researchers in many different fields. Krystosek (2016) took data from the 2006, 2008, and 2010 General Social Survey and combined the samples (N = 3781) to establish a rate of support for the legalization of marijuana. Krystosek found that 41.6% of the sample supported legalization of recreational marijuana. Further, the Gallup Poll has asked questions regarding both medical and recreational marijuana. In 2012, when medical marijuana was the focus of legislative efforts, a Gallup poll was conducted to examine whether Americans felt that the federal government should enforce its laws in states that have legalized marijuana. The poll found that 64% of respondents believed that the federal government should not enforce

federal anti-marijuana laws in states with legalized marijuana (Newport, 2016). McCarthy (2017) reports another Gallup poll, conducted in 2017, and found that the national support for the legalization of recreational marijuana is at an all-time high with 64% supporting the legalization. The Gallup Poll also found that support for legalization by Republicans reached a majority for the first time in history, with 51% of the party members polled supporting legalization. Polls have also been conducted to examine the reasons why Americans are supportive of the legalization of marijuana. A Pew Research poll asked respondents why they believed marijuana should be legalized (“In Debate,” 2015). Americans in support of the legalization of marijuana believe that marijuana had medicinal benefits, marijuana is not as dangerous as other drugs, legalization will lead to better regulation, enforcement of drug laws is expensive and problematic, that the use of marijuana is a personal choice, and that marijuana use is a personal choice reflected in personal liberties.

### **College Students’ Attitudes toward Marijuana**

The substance of marijuana has a troubled history in the United States; however, college students’ attitudes toward the legalization of marijuana tend to be positive. Most students have developed their opinions on marijuana from a combination of parental and peer influence. Even with older generations, marijuana support varies within generations. Some parents tend to view marijuana use as dangerous and leading to risky behaviors while other parents hold more positive views of marijuana use. These positive views stem from their own usage of marijuana and other drugs during the 1960s and 1970s (Robison, 2002). Parents who believe in the “Reefer Madness” propaganda are likely to perceive the use of marijuana as having both short-term and long-term risks and consequences for the younger generation. “Reefer Madness” is a movie that sparked a string of propaganda that scared individuals into demonizing marijuana. For example, a national

fear of marijuana use occurred as a result of the depiction of a young man who became a rapist and a murderer after experimenting with marijuana for the first time (Starks, 2015). Mostaghim and Hathaway (2013) reveal that students perceive their experiences with marijuana use and consequences as being different from the opinions of some members of the older generations who were heavily inundated with the “Reefer Madness” propaganda. The difference in attitudes among generations may help explain why college students have more favorable attitudes about recreational marijuana use than older generations.

College students find their experiences with marijuana to be much less dramatic than the marijuana experiences depicted by older generations. Most students believe that marijuana use is generally not harmful. For instance, White (2015) found that college students averaged a score of 14 on a scale of 10-28 (10 being not harmful at all, 28 being the most harmful) indicating that they did not believe that the recreational use of marijuana had harmful effects on users.

Attending college has made the ability to obtain marijuana easier and provides students with more opportunities to engage in recreational use (Mostaghim & Hathaway, 2013). According to Mostaghim and Hathaway, marijuana is quite easy to obtain on college campuses. These researchers also found that female college students report that obtaining the substance rarely requires an actual purchase and that male users typically share marijuana with women in their social group, suggesting that women are more likely to be protected from the possibility of arrest for purchasing marijuana. Peer and parent expected use by college students is much lower than actual use reported by the same college students (Napper, Hummer, Chithambo, & LaBrie, 2015). Napper and colleagues suggest that the more marijuana use becomes socially and medically acceptable, the divide between younger and older generations’ beliefs about the substance itself will become even greater. Although students’ beliefs are becoming more liberal

in terms of actual use of marijuana, most universities have avoided making changes to their drug-related policies due to the previously mentioned federal restrictions.

Young adults and their opinions of marijuana are important when considering the potential they have to implement change. Academia is beginning to integrate more college students' opinions into policy efforts as they see the benefit of soliciting fresh and educated opinions on long standing issues in our society (Nix, Wolfe, Rojek & Kaminski, 2015). Students' attitudes regarding the legalization of marijuana recreationally are being seen as influential in the context of marijuana policy. A study of 684 undergraduate students conducted by Farnworth, Longmire, and West (1998) examined students' attitudes toward the punishment of drug use and related crimes. Specifically, Farnworth, et al. assess whether students supported the penalties that were imposed as a result on the war on drugs. Students in a variety of academic backgrounds agreed that there needed to be lesser punitive consequences for drug related offenses. While seniors tended to be less punitive than freshman, the findings were consistent across demographic lines (Farnworth et al., 1998). Young people are not blind to the belief that differences in demographics influence the outcome of encounters with police regarding suspected drug related offenses. Warner, Fischer, Albanes, and Amitay (1998) examined students' attitudes toward the impact of demographic characteristics on outcome of police drug-related stops. Specifically, Warner et al. (1998), a sample of 278 high school students believed that one's race and social class will affect the outcome of an encounter with police regarding marijuana. The students believed that racial minorities and disadvantaged students are more likely to receive a negative outcome (arrest, jail time, etc.) in encounters with police regarding marijuana. Further, these young people believed that cities with more pressing issues than marijuana possession will have higher rates of police-student encounters that result in drug

confiscation instead of arrest. They did, however, still believe that ethnicity and social class would affect the outcome, no matter the location of the encounter (Warner et al., 1998). A study that analyzed 2.2 million traffic stops and arrests found results that support the beliefs of these young adults; that is, minorities are more likely to be stopped by police when the behavior, or possible charge, is marijuana related (Geller & Fagan, 2010). This confirmation of the beliefs that are held by young adults further warrants why their opinions on marijuana related policy should be taken into account when developing laws regarding the recreational use of marijuana.

### **Socialization of Marijuana Use on Campuses**

The rate of marijuana use, both recreationally and illicitly, by college students indicates a more positive attitude regarding marijuana use. Students, when asked about marijuana use in social settings, reported feelings of normalcy among themselves and peers when using marijuana (Mostaghim & Hathaway, 2013). Mostaghim and Hathaway found that most college students believe that recreational marijuana use has been “socialized” and a normal and expected part of social gatherings. Parties that involved heavy consumption of alcohol typically involve a higher exposure to marijuana for college students who may not have been exposed to the drug previously (Nagoshi, Wood, Cote, & Abbit, 1994). Membership in a Greek organization (e.g., a fraternity or sorority) will also lead students to have higher rates of marijuana consumption than students who are non-Greek members of the college community (McCabe et al., 2005). In a college setting, where the parental influence is less direct than peer influence, more students are willing to experiment with marijuana use when their peers around them hold favorable attitudes toward the recreational use of marijuana (Buckner, Crosby, Silgado, Wonderlich, & Schmidt, 2012). White et. al. (2006) found that having fewer friends who used marijuana protected against the increase of use in the transition between high-school and college. The social influences of

college, mixed with the lesser influence of parents, may explain why the socialization of marijuana is becoming so prevalent on campuses. Proximity to peers that hold favorable attitudes towards marijuana use tends to explain the prevalence in use among students.

**College Students and Legalization.** Researchers have begun to poll students to obtain their opinion on the legalization of recreational marijuana. A study by Moreno, Whitehill, Quach, Midamba, & Manskopf (2016) examined college students in Washington (a state who had recently passed a bill to legalize marijuana) and Wisconsin (a state who has no legislation legalizing marijuana in the recreational form). The study asked students in Wisconsin if they would vote for a bill to legalize marijuana and 50.6% agreed that they would vote for such legislation. A different study conducted by Chan et al. (2017), sampled 624 students and found that 64% of them reported support for legalizing marijuana recreationally and 72% supported the reclassification of marijuana from a Schedule I substance by the federal government to allow for more medical uses. Unanimously the study reported the need for further research into the medical effects of marijuana before nationwide legalization of marijuana for medical purposes (Chan et al., 2017). Before large-scale legalization of marijuana for recreational purposes, additional research into the effects of the substance itself is needed and the impact of legalization on our society, economy and other social institutions must be examined. States that have legalized recreational marijuana, such as Colorado and California, should act as pilot sites for other states who are considering the legalization of marijuana for recreational purposes. Shively (2016) suggest that these pilot sites can show how large-scale legalization of recreational marijuana affects the different institutions of a state. While there is limited research on college students' support for the legalization of recreational marijuana, the research that exists on the socialization and support for individual rights held by today's college students warrants further



investigation into how college students' opinions affect society. College students' perspectives on law enforcement, specifically their attitudes toward law enforcement need to be addressed in the context of whether or not these changing beliefs in the world of recreational marijuana may affect the way that these students interact with police officers.

## **Attitudes Toward Law Enforcement**

### **Public Attitudes Toward Law Enforcement**

Nadal, Davidoff, Allicock, Serpe, and Erazo (2017) examined cases that helped to highlight the violent interactions between police and members of the community. Young men like Michael Brown of Ferguson, Tamir Rice of Cleveland, and Alton Sterling of Baton Rouge are examples of how brutal police can be in these acts of injustice. These cases help to highlight the efforts made by academia and media to better understand the relationship between police and members of the community (Nadal et al., 2017). The attitudes toward police that are formed by the public are not only built on individual experiences with police, but with the stories and history that the police have with Americans. Individuals may hear stories of young men of color who have been stopped and searched illegally, beaten by police, or even seen friends or family killed by police. By hearing these stories, either through friends or media, an individual's perception of police officers is going to be greatly impacted (Meares, 2017). These incidents of police brutality, as shown by Nadal and colleagues (2017) lead the public perceptions that are shaped by the media, community organizations, and even political candidate platforms. Meares (2017) believes that incidents of police brutality and recommendations that were developed from the Presidential Task Force on 21<sup>st</sup> Century Policing have impacted the understanding of perceptions of police. Correia, Reisig, and Lovrich (1996) found that 86.2% of their sample of 892 respondents held positive attitudes of police officers. Similarly, a Pew Research Poll found

that 82% of respondents (N=4,904) held positive views of police (Fingerhut, 2017). Of that same sample, 14% of Caucasian respondents held negative views, while 38% of African-American respondents held negative views of police, which supports the suggestions that race may play a role in individuals' attitudes toward police officers. A Gallup Poll that condensed data from 2014-2016 found that 58% of Caucasian respondents had confidence in the police compared to the 29% of African-American respondents (Newport, 2016). Some police-citizen interactions involve drug use and interactions that involve a suspect under the influence of drugs are more likely to result in use-of-force (Alpert, Dunham, & Macdonald, 2004). These findings suggest that while Americans hold favorable views of police, there may be more factors that affect the relationship between citizens and police.

### **College Students' Attitudes Toward Law Enforcement**

Many studies have aimed to determine whether there is a difference between the beliefs students hold about campus police and municipal police. In a study conducted by Shannon Jacobsen (2015), who interviewed 24 students at an East-Coast University, students reported finding campus police to be a nuisance and unnecessary. Further, students who were interviewed regarding the relationship between students and campus police, describe the campus police as "not terribly useful" and infringing on the students' rights to have fun (Jacobsen). The college students in this study believed that they are not the problem; "normal people" or non-college citizens are the problem, and that the campus police are focusing on the wrong population when looking for offenders. Jacobsen reports that campus police officers are commonly believed to abuse their power by over-enforcing behaviors that are common on college campuses, such as intoxication infractions, marijuana possession, or minor altercations that do not end in injury. Students suggested that officers "tone down" their responses to certain situations and that they

focus on safety while still acting reasonably and civilly. Because of these negative views of campus police and the differentiation between them and municipal police (police in the community, not on campus), it is easy to see that college students find campus police less legitimate than municipal police and hold more negative views of them overall (Jacobsen, 2015; Wada, Patten, & Candela, 2010). The role of police on a college campus is to protect students without becoming involved in their lives. Because of this, many students believe that officers are not only in the wrong place but are not engaging in real police work (Jacobsen, 2015). Cordner, Marnenin, and Murphy (1986) found that there is a distinct difference between campus police and municipal police, specifically that campus police should be more understanding of minor infractions that are common place in college environments, which may explain why students have more negative views of law enforcement overall and are less likely to request their assistance.

Legitimacy is a key component in the overall understanding of how people, specifically college students, feel about police officers and their interactions with them (Tyler, 2006). Legitimacy is a combination of trust in a legal authority and the behavior that indicates trust (e.g. following commands during encounters or simply following laws) (Tyler & Fagan, 2008; Van Damme & Pauwels, 2016). A community typically uses a combination of formal and informal social control mechanisms to maintain order in their town or city. (Jiang, Lambert, & Wang, 2007). Lambert et al. (2014) found that attachment to conventional society, specifically having an *effective* form of law enforcement in the area, led to more favorable attitudes of police by college students. These findings suggest that students who hold unfavorable attitudes toward the police, may not support the social norms of the community and may, therefore, violate informal social controls. Tyler and Fagan (2008) suggests that legitimacy, even if simply perceived, will

lead to greater compliance by individuals, especially young adults. Overall, institutions that are perceived to be legitimate will likely have the support of the public (Hough, Jackson, Bradford, Myhill, Quinton, 2010). Legitimacy is important when it comes to how individuals, especially college students, feel about police officers.

Students' perceived legitimacy of police officers includes how students feel about police officers and the laws they enforce (Jackson et al., 2012). Legal cynicism is the understanding that young adults who perceive laws as legitimate are more willing to cooperate with the police who are enforcing them. In contrast, Tyler (2006) and Van Damme and Pauwels (2016) make the point that students who believe that it is acceptable to break the law because they think the behavior itself is acceptable, will not view the police as legitimate. Abuses of power have a large effect on perceived legitimacy. Specifically, if people believe that police regularly abuse their power, they will hold more negative views of the police and not see them as legitimate enforcers of the law (Jacobsen, 2015; Tyler & Fagan, 2008).

College students' attitudes toward police officers include many factors. While one major study found that college students are generally satisfied with police (Griffith, Hueston, Wilson, Moyer, & Hart, 2004), many individuals feel that laws do not align with the morals of the community, and therefore result in conflict between the people and the police. People who agree with the behavior of the police and the laws they enforce will comply with their orders (Tyler, 2006; Tyler & Fagan, 2008). Perceptions of police are affected by judgments students make about police (Tyler & Fagan, 2008) but more specifically how effective they are in enforcing the laws they believe need to be enforced (Skogan, 2006). All these factors affect students' attitudes toward police officers, but their interactions with police may have a greater influence overall.

While the relationships between demographic differences and student attitudes toward police have been established, there are other factors that may affect students' attitudes as well. Specifically, if students have prior experiences with law enforcement, the outcome of these interactions may have an effect on their attitude toward law enforcement. Negative interactions with police, harassment by police officers, and prior victimization all play a role in the development of attitudes toward police by college students.

Wu & Sun's (2010) review of several studies about student-police contact revealed two major findings in how police-student contacts could affect the students' attitudes toward the police. These two factors were the type of contact (i.e. whether the student was a victim or suspect) and the performance of the police once they responded to a call (i.e. whether the police were abusive, aggressive, calm, or understanding). The authors explained how these interactions between students and police can become negative either by false suspicion or disrespect by the officer. The results also indicated that individuals who have consistent, positive contact with police officers will also have positive attitudes regarding the fairness of the officer (Wu & Sun, 2010). These findings are not necessarily groundbreaking, and some might say common sense; however, the results reveal the effect police-student interactions have on students when the encounter is not positive. While the effect prior contact with police has on students' perceptions of law enforcement, has been established (Brown & Reed Benedict, 2002; Tyler & Fagan, 2008; Wu & Sun, 2010), students' negative interactions with police will lead to negative perceptions of law enforcement. Finally, Chow (2012) found that any college students who have negative interactions with the police had a lower overall satisfaction measure.

Student harassment by a police officer can greatly impact their overall assessment of law enforcement. While negative interactions are shown to have an impact on attitudes toward police

officers, actual harassment by police officers may have an even stronger effect. Correia's et al. (1996) research reveals that any unfair treatment by police, whether it be through verbal or physical harassment, may cause an individual to have a lower overall perception of police officers. Similarly, men who have "antagonistic" interactions with police were more likely to have negative perceptions of police officers (Wu & Sun, 2010). Jacobsen (2015) found that abuses of power are also likely to result in more negative reviews of police officers by college students. If a student feels as if they have been harassed, no matter if it was verbal, physical, or otherwise, they are likely to have a negative attitude toward police officers.

Students' victimization histories can have an effect on their attitudes toward law enforcement, especially if the police were directly involved in their victimization. Overall, criminal victimization is significant in its relation to an individual's satisfaction with the police (Chow, 2012). Brown and Reed Benedict (2002) reviewed over 100 studies that studied citizens and found that there was a link between victimization and negative evaluations of the police. Further, individuals who have been recently victimized may have more negative views of police officers than individuals who have been victimized months or possibly years, earlier, Cao, Frank, and Cullen (1996) found that recent victimization experiences had a larger effect on the individual's confidence in police than any other factor, including demographic differences. Wu and Sun (2010) found that crime victims were significantly different in their rating of police effectiveness and that crime victimization was negatively associated with their global satisfaction with police. Overall, it is common for young adults who have been the victims of a crime to have more negative attitudes toward the police (Homant, Kennedy, & Fleming, 1984; Koenig, 1980; Wu, Sun, & Triplett, 2009). Victimization plays a key role in determining a college student's attitudes toward police officers.

## **Demographic Effects on Attitudes Toward Law Enforcement**

Attitudes toward police officers vary by individual and among segments of society. Many variables can affect an individual's attitude toward police officers. Students are no different from the general population considering the fact that their attitudes toward police officers are formed in the same manner as ordinary citizens. Demographic differences among individuals play a key role in students' attitudes toward law enforcement. A student's age, gender, and race can affect how he/she views police officers.

**Age.** The student's age plays an important role in his/her attitude toward law enforcement. In a large-scale study that examined college students' perceptions of police, Wu & Sun (2010) found that age was an important factor in identifying which students had more negative views of police officers. More specifically, the younger the student was, the more likely he/she was to have a negative view of police officers that captured the perception of officers as less trustworthy, unfair in their decision-making, and lacking legitimacy (Wu & Sun, 2010). Several studies had found that age has a stronger effect on overall attitudes toward police than race, gender and socialization (Peek et al., 1981; Wilson, 1985; Wu & Sun, 2010). This finding is supported by Brown & Reed Benedict's study (2002), which also found that younger respondents had more negative views of police. According to Brown & Reed Benedict, "the vast majority of studies which included age as a variable indicated that younger persons view the police less favorably than older persons" and that "young respondents are...more likely to think that the police use too much force" (p.554). One final study that evaluated both student and faculty/staff attitudes toward police officers found that the students responded less favorably towards the police than the faculty and staff because of age differences (Cordner et al., 1986).

Age is an important demographic factor to take into account when measuring college students' attitudes toward police officers.

While age has an influence on an individual's attitude toward police officers, it is important to explain why. In a large study (N = 1,659 students) conducted by Van Damme and Pauwels (2016), the attitudes of students toward police were examined from multiple facets. The focus on young adults, specifically college students, is important because the crime-age curve shows that more "rule-violating behaviors" occur in the age group of 18-24 than any other age group. Further, they found that there has been little research on possible "interfering mechanisms", or other factors, that may explain why young adults have less trust in police officers (Van Damme & Pauwels, 2016). The researchers looked at perceptions of police officers using multiple facets, including *trust in legal authorities*, *felt duty to obey the law*, and *police and civilians share the same values and norms*. Van Damme and Pauwel's goal with these measures was to determine why civilians follow the law and what makes young people more likely to follow the law, specifically based on their feelings about police. Their findings indicated that even when young adults followed the law, it was because they believed that police and legislation were legitimate institutions. When they did not follow the law, it was likely because they viewed the law (both actual legislation and law enforcement) as illegitimate. Students who disagree with and break the law may do so because they are not in moral alignment with the police and/or the legislation (Van Damme & Pauwels, 2016). Students who hold positive views of both the legislation and police officers enforcing the laws are likely to abide by the law.

Another explanation concerning why young people have more negative feelings about police is that this age group holds different mentalities about socially acceptable behavior. Specifically, adults in the 18-24 age range tend to behave in ways that focus on self-gain and are



not concerned with social acceptability. Risky behaviors by adults in this age range are more likely to end in negative or involuntary contact with the police (Gaines, 1994). This finding suggests that young people differ from the rest of the population that may influence negative encounters with police.

**Gender.** The second demographic variable that has an effect on student attitudes toward police officers is gender. Cao et al. (1996) concluded that women held more positive views of police because they tended to have less antagonistic interactions with police than men did. Although women's positive views of police may be attributed to their non-antagonistic interactions with the police, it is important to note that women share certain characteristics that may have led to those positive interactions. Mbuba (2010) explored the effects of demographic variables, specifically gender, on individuals' views of police. The findings indicated not only that men held more negative views of police officers but that there were no differences in the perceptions of police held by males in the community versus the males attending an university (Mbuba, 2010). While gender was not as strong of a predictor variable of attitudes toward police as other demographic variables, gender differences are important factors in explaining college students' attitudes toward police officers.

**Race.** As suggested previously, young adults believe that race impacts the outcomes of interactions with police officers, especially when the suspected charge is marijuana related (Geller & Fagan, 2010). The effect of students' race on their attitudes toward police officers has been supported by scholarly research. For instance, Lim's (2015) research on the impact of race on perceptions of police revealed that African-American students were more likely to have a negative attitude toward police officers than any other race of students. Lim's finding is supported by other scholarly research that posits that students who belong to a minority racial

group are more likely to have negative perceptions of law enforcement (Lewis, Wilks, Geiger, Barthelemy, & Livermore, 2017; Lim, 2015; Mbuba, 2010). When considering specific phrases that are used in measuring perceptions of law enforcement, Mbuba (2010) found that the most common explanatory phrases used by minorities to express their feelings about police include, “police arrest only people they don’t like,” “police break the law all the time,” and “police unfairly target racial minorities.” Racial minorities not only believe that police officers treat them unfairly, they believe officers’ biases affect their ability to enforce the law fairly. Satisfaction with police is highly differentiated when it comes to race. Specifically, white males and females were more likely to have higher satisfaction rates than any other race and gender combination (Hawk-Tourtlot & Bradley-Engen, 2012). Race appears to have a profound effect on individuals’ attitudes toward police officers. Lewis, Wilks, Geiger, Barthelemy, and Livermore (2017), similarly concluded that African-American college students have significantly more negative perceptions of police officers than the white students who were also sampled. Lewis et al. (2017) concluded that there was a “need for student communities of color and police to work together to propose and implement strategies to improve relations, including community policing” (Lewis et al., 2017, p 206).

The importance of examining students’ attitudes toward the legalization of marijuana in relation to their attitudes toward police officers is linked to several reasons. One reason is that student voices are rarely taken into account in the context of policy writing. Students have the ability and voice to influence policy now more than ever and their ideas and opinions need to be taken into consideration (Bolton, 2016). Furthermore, while many students do not believe that marijuana use is harmful (White, 2015) or that there is a lack of social acceptance and expectation for recreational marijuana use among college students (Mostaghim & Hathaway,

2013), it is important to examine whether college students inherently disagree with a law that currently prohibits the use of marijuana recreationally in the state of Alabama. By understanding legal cynicism, and now knowing that attitudes regarding legislation affect student interactions with police officers (Van Damme & Pauwels, 2016), it is imperative to address how students' opinions regarding the legalization of recreational marijuana affect their attitudes toward police officers. The current literature fails to make a connection between specific legislative policies regarding marijuana and how the changing atmosphere regarding the socialization of marijuana negatively impacts students' relationships with law enforcement officials. The current study aims to address how students' attitudes regarding the legalization of recreational marijuana relate to their attitudes toward police officers while incorporating the variables discussed above (interactions with police, harassment, victimization, race, gender and age).

## CHAPTER THREE

### METHODOLOGY

#### **Research Design**

The current study examines college students' attitudes regarding the legalization of recreational marijuana and their attitudes toward police officers. The student researcher administered an online survey to college students who were enrolled in an introductory level criminal justice course at The University of Alabama. The study examines whether college students' opinions of the legalization of recreational marijuana affect their overall attitudes toward police officers in the city of Tuscaloosa. One hypothesis was developed to test the relationship between students' support for legalization and their attitudes toward police officers. The hypothesis will be presented after the discussion of the major variables in the study.

#### **Setting of the Study**

The University of Alabama is a public university that is located in Tuscaloosa, Alabama. The university has a population of 38,563 students in undergraduate, graduate and professional programs (University of Alabama Quickfacts, 2017). The University of Alabama student population is mostly white (76%) and female (55%). African American and Hispanic student represent 11% and 3% of the population. About 52% of the students came from out of state (*Forbes*, 2017). The University has a zero-tolerance policy regarding drug use of any kind, including marijuana. The University of Alabama Student Conduct Handbook suggests that any student who is caught using, possessing, trafficking, or producing marijuana (or any other illicit drug) is subject to expulsion from school (University of Alabama Student Conduct Handbook,

2017). The University requires incoming freshman to participate in Alcohol EDU, a program that informs new students about the negative consequences of using alcohol and drug use. While the program does include information about drug use, there is no specific education on marijuana as a substance separate from its illicit status in the state of Alabama (University of Alabama Alcohol EDU, 2018).

Alabama historically has conservative attitudes regarding the legalization of marijuana, both for recreational and medical purposes (Garrison, 2017). Prior to leaving political office in 2016, Gov. Robert Bentley signed an act that allows for the medical use of cannabidiol, an oil made from cannabis that can be administered as a drug in certain medical cases (Leni's Law, 2016). Beyond this limited use of cannabis, the legalization of medical marijuana and recreational marijuana is rarely discussed in the Alabama legislature. Recent bills introduced to the Alabama State Legislature have attempted to decriminalize marijuana, however the efforts have seen immediate backlash. The outcome of the proposed legislation has not yet been seen (Cason, 2018). For this study, the questions regarding the legalization of marijuana focused specifically in the state of Alabama.

### **Population and Sample**

The sample consists of 406 undergraduate students at The University of Alabama in the Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice, specifically those enrolled in an introductory Criminal Justice course in Fall 2017. The introductory class was selected because of its accessibility and convenience. The students were invited to complete an online survey between September 11<sup>th</sup> to the 25<sup>th</sup> of 2017. All 406 students had access to the online survey. A total of 314 online surveys were collected, yielding a response rate of 77%. Demographic information is recorded in Table 1.

## Concepts and Variables

### Independent Variable

The independent variable in this study is college students' attitudes toward the legalization of recreational marijuana in the state of Alabama. Recreational marijuana is defined as the use of marijuana in any form for the purpose of entertainment or recreation, independent of any medical diagnosis or prescription by a physician. Recreational marijuana use is typically regulated in a similar to alcohol. In states where recreational marijuana is legalized, individuals must be 21 to purchase marijuana and may only use it in a private residence. The independent variable is a dichotomized variable, measured on a nominal scale, with categories reflecting the student's support or lack of support for the legalization of recreational marijuana in the State of Alabama. The question presented to students was, "Do you support the legalization of recreational marijuana use in the state of Alabama?" These responses are recorded in the results section.

### Dependent Variable

The dependent variable is the college students' attitudes toward police officers. Attitudes were measured on a five-point Likert scale indicating the degree to which participants agreed or disagreed with multiple statements regarding police officers. The full survey appears in **Appendix A**. The most appropriate scale measure to use is a Likert scale because it allows students to properly categorize the extent to which they agree or disagree with the statements (e.g. Chow, 2012; James & Lee, 2015). The student researcher adapted five statements from a previously established scale, Perceptions of Police Officers (POPS) (Nadal & Davidson, 2015). Only five statements were adapted due to the expansiveness of the original scale and the lack of permission attained at the time of the survey's development. The POPS scale is a 12-point scale

that measures different aspects of perception levels, including legitimacy, trustworthiness, honesty, among others. For this study, in addition to the five statements from the POPS, five other statements were created to embody the necessary aspects of attitudes while maintaining a ten-point scale. The ten-point scale was used to keep an even number to simplify the analysis process. The responses to each statement in the scale were combined to create an overall attitude score. A higher overall score represented a more negative view of police officers in the state of Alabama.

### **Additional Variables**

Prior research (Ferdik, Wolfe, Blasco, 2014; Mbuba, 2010; Skogan, 2006) has found that there are multiple factors that affect students' attitudes toward police officers. For this reason, these variables were included in the analysis of the primary variables. The first variable is the students' prior interactions with police officers, which have been found to affect students' attitudes toward police officers, specifically when classified as a negative interaction (Chow, 2012; Wu & Sun, 2010). Harassment by police officers has also been found to affect student attitudes towards police officers and was included as an additional variable. The final variable that was included in the analysis was the students' prior victimization. These three variables helped to control the effects that the independent variable of support for recreational marijuana legalization may have on the dependent variable of student attitudes toward police officers. Demographic variables, such as age, gender, and race have been found to affect student attitudes as well (Cao et al., 1996; Cordner et al., 1986; Lewis et al., 2017; Lim, 2015; Van Damme & Pauwels, 2016). For this reason, the regression model will include these variables, as well as demographic variables, to help explain the relationship between the two main variables.

## **Hypotheses**

The current state of research on attitudes toward police officers focuses on their behaviors and has started to look at the effect of legislation on attitudes toward police officers, but has not included marijuana regulation. This study was designed to address how marijuana related legislation may influence the relationship between police officers and college students. The hypothesis examines the relationship between college students' support for the legalization of marijuana and their attitudes toward police officers.

H<sub>1</sub>: College students who support the legalization of recreational marijuana are more likely to have negative attitudes toward police officers than college students who do not support the legalization of recreational marijuana.

## **Instrument**

The data was collected using an online survey that was administered through the online program, Qualtrics. Qualtrics is software, developed in 2002, that is free to The University of Alabama students. The software allows users to create surveys for various uses, including independent research. An online survey was chosen because of its speed and ease of use. Online surveys are typically the quickest way to collect and analyze data, and they are cost-effective. There is no cost to use the survey software and the data was exported directly to SPSS for cleaning and analysis. The survey was made available to 406 students enrolled in CJ 100- Introduction to Criminal Justice at the University of Alabama in Fall 2017. The survey link was provided to the participants through an email sent out by the professor.

The survey for this study was administered through four sections: (1) students' attitudes toward police officers; (2) students' support for the legalization of recreational marijuana use; (3) students' experiences of interacting with police, police harassment, and victimization; and (4) a



demographics section. The first section consisted of 10 questions asking students whether they agree or disagree with statements that about attitudes towards police officers. These 10 questions were combined to create an attitude score, which was then tested against support for legalization. A higher overall score indicated that the student had a more negative attitude toward police officers. These statements were measured on a 5-point, Likert scale, with responses ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The second section was shorter and consisted of questions about support for legalization and exposure to marijuana. Questions in this section included, “Do you support the legalization of marijuana for the recreational use in the state of Alabama?” and “Do you know anyone who uses marijuana recreationally?” The third section was used to measure the additional variables and included the questions, “Have you had any prior contact with police? If so, was the interaction positive or negative?”, “Do you believe that in those instances of contact with police that you were harassed by the police?” and finally, “Have you ever been the victim of a crime?” All questions asked for further explanation to provide context to the situation or to include any other information that they believed to be important. The final section asked questions regarding demographic information about the students to better describe the population. To test the validity of the instrument, a pretest was given to undergraduate students in various majors. The pretest helped to establish where further clarification of statements was needed. Three students (one enrolled in the school of business, one enrolled at a local community college, and one undergraduate criminal justice student) took the survey as a pretest. All pretests took about 6-7 minutes to complete. As a result of the pre-tests minor changes were made to the wording of some of the questions that were not analyzed as variables. The questions overall reflected surveys that have been successful in measuring attitudes previously (Chow, 2012; James & Lee, 2015; Nadal & Davidson, 2015).

## **Data Collection**

The data for this study was collected using an online survey administered to an introductory level criminal justice class at The University of Alabama. The study was approved by the University of Alabama Institutional Review Board (IRB). Voluntary participation was met through using a statement on the cover page, as well as the email invitation, stating that by participating, students accept the voluntary nature of the survey. Confidentiality is always a concern when collecting data on human subjects, but the Qualtrics program allowed for complete anonymity in the collection of the responses. Qualtrics does collect the IP address of the computer used to complete the survey, but that feature was turned off to maintain confidentiality. The level of anonymity made it impossible for the researcher to link any data back to a respondent. The survey was administered through a link to the survey in an email sent out by the professor of the course.

Permission was requested from the instructor of the CJ 100 introductory level class to survey his students. The researcher and the professor met to discuss the necessary steps in disbursing the survey, as well as to review the survey itself. The instructor agreed to disburse the survey to one of his sections, which contained 406 students. The Institutional Review Board (IRB) then reviewed the study and made minor changes to the proposal to maintain a data collection process that abided by the standards of the IRB. The front page of the survey acted as the cover letter. This cover letter included information about the study, what the goals of the study are, and that the study was approved by the University of Alabama IRB. Students were reminded that their participation was completely voluntary and that their name or student ID would not be stored by the survey. Once the students began the survey, they were prompted to go to the second page to ensure they understood that they were completing the online survey

voluntarily and that they could stop at any time. By continuing to the second page of the survey, participants accepted the voluntary condition of the survey. A consent waiver was filed and accepted by the IRB to allow for this unique consent collection process. The survey was live for fourteen days. At the conclusion of the two weeks, a thank-you email was sent to all the students in the course regardless of whether they completed the online survey. The email thanked them for participation and included a brief paragraph reiterating the goals of the survey and the goals of the research. Information regarding IRB contact, department contact, as well as personal contact for the researcher was included in the thank-you email. Once the responses were recorded, Qualtrics stored the responses until the survey was completed and closed. Qualtrics featured a progress bar to allow the student to know how much of the survey they had completed. While Qualtrics does not report the timing of each individual response, the program estimated that the survey took nearly 6 minutes to complete. Students were allowed to save the survey and complete it later; however, any responses that were uncompleted at the end of the two weeks were not included. The data was exported to SPSS for cleaning and analysis.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### RESULTS

#### **Demographics**

The introduction to criminal justice class used to provide the sample for this study. The demographic characteristics of the sample are similar to the University as a whole. A little over half of the sample was female (52.6%) and 81.6% of them were white/Caucasian, followed by 6.6% black/African-American, 4.3% Hispanic/Latino, 3.3% Asian/Pacific Islander, 1.0% Native American/American Indian and 3.3% other (of which the most common response was mixed race). The respondents' age ranged from 17 to 43, with an average age of 18 years (54.1%). The students were asked what their academic major was, which was then condensed to represent the students' college. The three top responses were Arts & Sciences (30.3%), Culverhouse College of Commerce (27.3%), and Engineering (23.2%). Finally, the students were asked what state they resided in prior to coming to the University of Alabama. These responses were then condensed into regions and reported. The South represented the majority with 74.3% of the sample, followed by the Midwest with 12.7%, then the Northeast with 7.3% and finally, the West with 4.7%. There was one "other" response, which the researcher assumed to represent an international student. Table 1 presents the demographics of the sample.

#### **Bivariate Tests**

The relationship between students' attitudes toward marijuana legalization and their attitudes toward police officers was measured at the bivariate level. The relationship was tested using an independent samples t-test and is reported in Table 2. The results indicate that there is a

Table 1. *Demographics of the Sample*

<u>Variable</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
<u>Gender</u>		
Male	140	46.1
Female	160	52.6
Other	4	1.3
Total	304	100
<u>Race</u>		
White/Caucasian	248	81.6
Black/ African-American	20	6.6
Hispanic/ Latino	13	4.3
Native American/ American Indian	3	1
Asian/ Pacific Islander	10	3.3
Other	10	3.3
Total	304	100
<u>Age</u>		
17-20	253	83.5
21-24	47	15.5
25+	3	0.1
Total	303	100
<u>College</u>		
Arts & Sciences	90	30.3
Communication and Information Sciences	24	8.1
Culverhouse College of Commerce	81	27.3
College of Education	3	1
Engineering	69	23.2
Human & Environmental Sciences	11	3.7
Undecided	19	6.4
Total	297	100
<u>Region</u>		
South	223	74.3
West	14	4.7
Midwest	40	13.3
Northeast	22	7.3
Other	1	0.3
Total	300	100

statistically significant relationship between students' support for the legalization of recreational marijuana and their attitudes toward police officers ( $t = -4.433, p = .000$ ). Students who support the legalization of recreational marijuana are more likely to have more negative attitudes toward police officers than students who do not support the legalization of marijuana.

Table 2. *T-Test: Support for Legalization and Attitudinal Score*

<u>Legalization</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>Standard Deviation</u>	<u>t</u>	<u>Sig.</u>
Yes	196	23.87	5.76	-4.433	.000
No	106	20.81	5.66		

The student researcher performed bivariate analyses to test the relationship between demographic variables (age, gender, and race), interactions with police, harassment by the police, victimization, and students' attitudes toward police officers. The dependent variable in all of these tests is the overall attitudinal scores of the students. The dependent variable will change between the variables previously listed. The first group of variables tested was the demographic variables of age, gender, and race. A basic correlation was used to determine the relationship between the students' age and attitudes toward police officers. The results are shown in Table 3. The results indicate that there is a weak, positive relationship between the students' age and their attitudes toward police officers; however, the results were not significant ( $r(297) = .060, p = .305$ ). The sample included one outlier in the variable of age, while most fell into a typical student age range; one student was 43 years old. The scatter plot of the correlation is included to show that this outlier did not affect the overall significance of the relationship. The wide range of results throughout the age range suggests that the outlier would not have moved the relationship out of a significant range.

Table 3: Correlation Results of Age and Attitude Score

Age	N	M	SD	R	Sig.
17	4	20.25	3.50	0.060	0.305
18	162	22.02	5.27		
19	62	22.68	6.20		
20	21	27.76	6.55		
21	34	23.50	6.01		
22	10	22.40	7.82		
23	2	27.00	4.24		
24	1	-	-		
25	1	-	-		
28	1	-	-		
43	1	-	-		

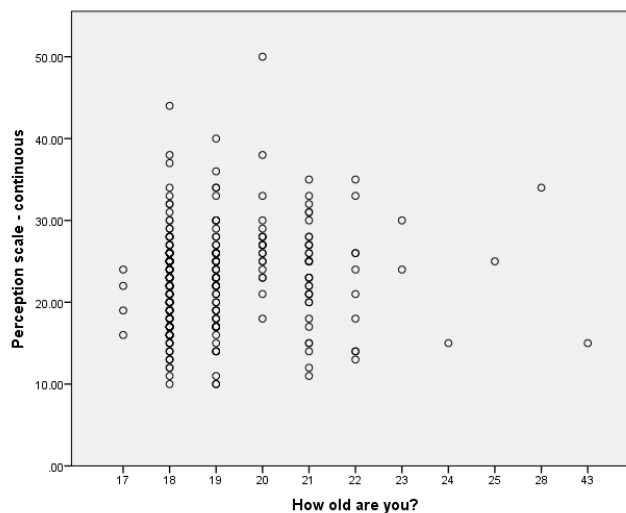


Figure 1. Scatterplot of Age and Attitudinal Score

The second demographic variable tested was the respondents' gender. The relationship between gender and attitudes toward police officers was analyzed using ANOVA (see Table 4). An ANOVA was chosen because the survey included three categories for gender (male, female, other) for inclusiveness. The relationship between students' gender and their attitudes toward police officers was not significant ( $F = .813, p = .444$ ).

The third demographic variable tested was race in relation to attitudes toward police officers. The results for this test are reported in Table 5. The results indicate that there is a

significant relationship between the students' race and their attitudes toward police officers ( $F = 5.608, p = .000$ ). After finding a significant result, a post-hoc Tukey HSD multiple comparisons test was run to determine which pairs of means were significantly different from each other. The Tukey HSD multiple comparisons test found that there is a significant difference in the attitudinal scores of black and white students ( $p = .000$ ). These findings indicated that African-American students had more negative scores on the overall attitude toward police officers than any other race of students.

Table 4. *F-test: Gender and Attitudinal Score*

Gender	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	F	Sig.
Male	138	22.30	5.97	.813	.444
Female	158	23.16	5.82		
Other	4	23.50	7.68		

Table 5. *F-test: Race and Attitudinal Score*

Race	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	F	Sig.
White	244	22.33	5.42	5.608	.000
Black	20	28.95	8.19		
Hispanic	13	23.38	7.42		
Native American	3	18.00	5.20		
Asian	10	21.30	3.40		
Other	10	23.20	5.59		

Further bivariate tests were performed on the additional variables that were suggested by the literature review to be effective in determining students' attitudes. These three additional variables were criminal victimization, prior interactions with police, and harassment by police. It was hypothesized that criminal victimization, prior police interactions, and police harassment would influence students' attitudes toward police officers. The first variable of victimization was tested using an independent samples t-test. The results for this test are reported in Table 6. No



statistical significant relationship existed between students' victimization and their attitudes toward police officers ( $t = 1.050, p = .294$ ).

Table 6. *T-Test: Victimization and Attitudinal Score*

Victimization	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	t	Sig.
Yes	60	23.48	5.55	1.050	.294
No	240	22.59	5.99		

Using an independent samples t-test, the second contextual variable tested was the quality of students' prior interactions with police officers (See Table 7). The results indicate that there is a significant relationship between the qualities of students' prior contact with police ( $t = -6.777, p = .000$ ). Students who had negative interactions with police were more likely to have negative attitudes toward police officers than students who had positive or no interactions with police.

The final variable tested, using an independent samples t-test, was police harassment of students (See Table 8). The results indicate that there is a significant difference in the attitudinal scores of students who have been harassed by police officers and those who have not ( $t = 4.517, p = .000$ ). Students who have been harassed by a police officer are more likely to have negative attitudes toward police officers than students who have not been harassed by police officers.

Table 7. *T-Test: Interactions and Attitudinal Score*

Type of Interaction	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	t	Sig.
Positive	123	21.66	5.03	-6.777	.000
Negative	37	28.70	7.01		

Table 8. *T-Test: Harassment and Attitudinal Score*

Harassment	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	t	Sig.
Yes	19	29.05	7.69	4.517	.000
No	141	22.51	5.66		

## Results of Linear Regression

In order to examine the relationship between a student's support for the legalization of marijuana and his/her attitude toward police officers, linear regression models were run to see how these previously tested variables interact on a larger scale. Due to the required normal distribution, a log form of the attitudinal score was created to better normalize the data. In model one, results show that the students' support for legalization is still significantly related to their attitudes toward police officers ( $t = 4.451, p = .000$ ). This model represented 6.4% of the variance in attitudinal scores among college students ( $R^2 = .064$ ). A second model included the students' support for legalization of marijuana and the demographic variables of age, gender, and race. In this model, legalization was the only variable to have a significant relationship with attitudinal scores ( $t = 4.537, p = .000$ ). This model explained 7.3% of the variance in students' attitudinal scores ( $R^2 = .073$ ). The third model was the most inclusive model; it included six variables (three additional variables and three demographic variables) which were students' prior victimization, negative interactions with police, harassment by police, as well as student's age, gender, and race. Negative interactions ( $t = 4.471, p = .000$ ) and support for legalization ( $t = 2.463, p = .015$ ) both had significant effects on the students' attitudes toward police officers. This model explained 28.1% of the variance in the students' attitudes toward police officers ( $R^2 = .257$ ).

The fourth model incorporates the students' prior victimization and the students' support for legalization of recreational marijuana. In this model, only the support for legalization was significant ( $t = -4.543, p = .000$ ). This model only accounted for 6.9% of the variance in students' attitudes toward police officers ( $R^2 = .069$ ). The fifth model evaluates the differences in students' attitudes toward police officers while considering their support for legalization and

their prior interactions with police officers, specifically negative interactions. Both support for legalization ( $t = 2.635, p = .009$ ) and negative interactions with police ( $t = 5.843, p = .000$ ) had significant relationships with the attitudinal scores. This model accounted for 22.6% of the overall variance in attitudinal scores ( $R^2 = .226$ ). The final, sixth, model incorporates the students' support for legalization and whether they have been harassed by police. Both harassment ( $t = -3.741, p = .000$ ) and support for legalization ( $t = -2.705, p = .008$ ) were significant. These two variables were able to explain 13.4% of the variance in students' attitudes toward police.

Table 9. *Regression Results: Variable Effects on Students' Attitudinal Score*

Variables	Models					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
Legalization	.141(.031)***	.143(.031)***	.102(.042)*	.142(.031)***	.108(.041)**	.117(.043)**
Victimization			.025(.042)	-.054(.037)		
Interactions			.234(.052)***		.266(.045)***	
Harassment			.101(.068)			.234(.063)***
Age		.005(.008)	-.006(.008)			
Gender		.051(.029)	.057(.036)			
Race		.002(.013)	-.016(.015)			
$R^2$	.064	.073	.257	.069	.226	.134
$F$	20.617	5.759	7.450	11.056	22.877	12.191

*Note.* The dependent variable for all models was students' attitude toward police officers  
 \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$

## CHAPTER FIVE

### DISCUSSION

This study examined the relationship between college students' attitudes regarding the legalization of marijuana and attitudes toward police officers. The results of the study reveal that college students who support the legalization of marijuana have negative attitudes toward police officers. In all regression models, the relationship between the students' support for legalization and their attitudes toward police officers was significant. This finding indicates that the students' opinions regarding the regulation of marijuana has an impact on their attitude toward police. Previous literature has assessed legal cynicism and the effect that existing legislation can have on relationships and interactions between citizens and police (Tyler, 2006; Van Damme & Pauwels, 2016). The current study supports these findings by establishing that students' support for the legalization of marijuana has enough of a factor on their attitudes toward police officers that passing new laws may be able to change the relationship between the two groups. If students do not believe that marijuana should be banned, then the police who are enforcing that law are going to be seen as encroaching on their personal freedom. Police officers who are questioning students who may use marijuana themselves, regardless of the legality of the substance, may be seen as antagonistic or simply mean for enforcing a law that students do not believe should be in place. If the student believes that the use of marijuana is harmless, the enforcing of the law might seem unnecessary, leading to a negative attitude toward police by the student.

While the relationship between students' support for the legalization of recreational marijuana and their attitudes toward police is of particular importance to the literature regarding

legal cynicism and perceptions of law enforcement, the findings regarding the additional variables (i.e. race, gender, age, prior interactions with police officers, victimization, and harassment by law enforcement) show that students' attitudes toward police officers are not solely based on a singular variable (i.e. the students' attitude regarding the legalization of marijuana). The current study shows that a student's race relates directly to his or her attitude toward police officers. Specifically, African-American students have on average more negative attitudes toward police officers than any other race of students. These results support the research that has found racial differences affect attitudes toward police officers (Lewis et al., 2017; Lim, 2015; Mbuba, 2010) but more importantly further the finding that the specifically, African-American individuals will have more negative views of law enforcement than other races (Hawk-Tourtelot & Bradley-Engen, 2012). While the findings indicated that African Americans had the most negative attitudes toward police officers, it is important to note that Native American students and Asian students both reported a more positive view of the police than Caucasian students. While the findings do support that African American students have more negative views of police officers than white students, not all minorities have more negative views of police officers than white students as some literature has suggested (Hawk-Tourtelot & Bradley-Engen, 2012). One possible explanation as to why African Americans have the worst attitudes toward police officers is that they are the racial minority that is most often attacked by police. That is, most victims of highly publicized, police brutality have been young, African-American males. This could explain why other racial minorities do not have as negative attitudes toward police officers as African Americans.

The current study suggests that negative interactions with police have an effect on students' overall attitudes toward police officers. Previous literature suggests not only that

interactions played a role (Brown & Reed Benedict, 2002; Tyler & Fagan, 2008; Wu & Sun, 2010), but that negative interactions led to more negative views of law enforcement (Chow, 2012). It is important to understand the impact that interactions with police officers have on attitudes toward law enforcement as a whole. Having a negative interaction with a police officer can be a traumatic incident and one that a student is not going to quickly forget. A negative interaction could cause the student to believe that the officer was enforcing the law improperly, the officer was acting inappropriately or illegally, or the officer was simply not helpful when they are expected to be. Any of these types of interactions could leave the student believing that all police are bad and explain why students with negative interactions with police have more negative attitudes regarding law enforcement.

Harassment by police officers has long been studied to measure its effect on police/citizen interactions (Correia et al., 1996; Jacobsen, 2015; Wu & Sun, 2010), yet the relationship has rarely been tested on college students. The current study finds that college students are equally as affected by harassment of police officers in their overall opinions of law enforcement. The findings suggest that college students who experience harassment by law enforcement have more negative views of police officers. The body of literature on perceptions of police can benefit from examining college students as they embody a unique population of citizens. Students' harassment was the strongest variable, second only to support for legalization, in relation to the students' attitudes toward police officers. It is easy to believe that anyone who is harassed by a person in uniform is going to think less of that uniform. A student who is harassed by police officers may believe that all police officers are hostile and may fear future harassment by police. This possible fear may explain why students' who have been harassed have more negative attitudes toward police.

While previous literature supports the belief that victimization does affect an individual's attitude toward police officers (Homant et al., 1984; Koenig, 1980; Wu et al., 2009), the current findings were inconclusive. The relationship between a student's victimization and their attitude toward police was not significant. The current findings may differ from the literature due to the lack of police involvement in victimization. That is, the survey did not specify the difference between victimization that resulted in contact with police and victimization that was not reported to official authorities (i.e., the police). In the absence of contact with the police, students' prior victimization does not necessarily make them think about police in a positive or negative manner.

The basic relationship between students' opinions of marijuana legalization and their attitudes toward police officers has never been empirically studied. The current study suggests that students who support the legalization of marijuana have more negative views of police officers than students who do not support the legalization of marijuana for recreational use. This finding is new to the literature on attitudes toward police and suggests that specific legislation does, in fact, play a role in how students feel about police officers. The literature on legal cynicism has grown to include the effect of legislation on views of law enforcement (Tyler, 2006; Van Damme & Pauwels, 2016). The current study suggests that students' who support legalization of marijuana do in fact hold more negative views of law enforcement. These results provide a specific case to support the building body of research on student attitudes toward police.

The current study incorporates several variables that have been suggested by previous literature to have an impact on college students' attitudes toward police officers. The relationship between students' opinion regarding the legalization of recreational marijuana and their attitudes

toward police officers is a relationship that has yet to be empirically studied. The relationship suggests that it is important to integrate attitudes regarding specific legislation when testing the relationship between police officers and the people they protect. The establishment of this relationship suggests that in order to improve the relationship between college students and police officers, policy efforts may need to shift focus onto legislation that the college population supports.



## CHAPTER SIX

### CONCLUSIONS

#### **Limitations**

Although the findings of this study will add to the current body of literature on student attitudes toward police, there are a few limitations that must be addressed. To begin, the population was identified based on convenience; the participants were students at the University of Alabama who were asked to participate in the study by their professor. The findings cannot be generalized to The University of Alabama student population or other Universities because the sample was not a random sample. Secondly, the scale used to measure attitudes was created by the researcher, while incorporating measures from other established scales. A validated measure of attitudes should be used. A validated measure was not used in this survey because the POPS survey, the only applicable measure, required permission from the creator of the POPS survey to use in the study. Permission came too late in the IRB process to include the entire survey, but statements in the current study were allowed. The survey should include more information and more variables to expand the study as a whole; however, this was unfeasible for the current study.

The survey could be further improved using a more refined measure of victimization. The current survey failed to differentiate between victimization that resulted in contact with police and victimization that went unreported to authorities. This distinction could help to improve the findings relating students' prior victimization and their attitudes toward police officers. The survey did ask students to explain certain answers on the survey, yet the responses were not

helpful in explaining the reasons certain respondents felt certain things about police officers. The survey asked students to provide explanations about why they support marijuana or why they believed their interactions with police were negative, but failed to ask why they scored certain statements about police on the attitudinal scale. The survey should be revised to ask questions specifically why students feel the way they do about police officers (i.e. why they do not trust them, why they feel they are focused on petty laws, why they believe officers target minorities, etc.)

### **Policy Implications**

The findings of this study have added to the literature by establishing that student opinions regarding the legalization of marijuana relate to their attitudes toward police officers. This relationship between a students' opinion on the law and their feelings toward police creates a strain on the relationship between the officers and the students. If policies were to reflect the students' support of the legalization of marijuana by legalizing marijuana without restrictions, it is possible that the relationship between college students and police may improve. While it is important to have laws that reflect the community's wishes, it is more important to have a community that trusts their law enforcement officers and feels safe when around them. If the relationship between officers and college students can be improved by creating legislation that aligns with the opinions of the students, it is important for the government to take their wishes into consideration.

With national numbers gaining support every year and the current study yielding a 65% support rate for legalization, it makes sense to legalize, or at the very least decriminalize, marijuana for recreational use in the state of Alabama. This would help to align state law with the opinions of the population and work to better the relationship between police officers and the

college population. The relationship would be less tense because the risk of arrest for possession would be nonexistent. Findings in states like Colorado, where recreational marijuana has been legalized for some time now, indicate that the law enforcement systems benefit from the lowered burden of having to investigate marijuana related crimes (Hudak, 2014). Policies legalizing recreational marijuana may want to include legislation that allow prior marijuana related convictions to seal their records. These policies allow for the population, especially college students, to move past mistakes that they have made and further their education and their careers. If college students begin to feel as if they can trust police officers and that police are spending time enforcing laws they agree with, the relationship between the two parties may improve over time.

### **Conclusion**

The current study set out to determine if there is a relationship between college students' opinions regarding the legalization of recreational marijuana and their attitudes toward police officers. Building on the literature, the findings indicated that many factors impact college students' attitudes toward police officers. In all models, the relationship between the students' support for legalization and their attitudinal score was significant. The relationship that exists between the variables of legalization and attitudinal scores indicate that legislative policies do in fact play some part in how students feel about police officers. These results suggest that if policy were to reflect the wishes of the college students, the relationship may be improved between the students and police officers. Future research should use a random sample of students at multiple universities, both in areas where recreational marijuana use is currently legal and illegal. This would help to better understand the relationships on a larger scale. Variables to be added in the future could be actual marijuana use by the student, familial opinions on marijuana use (does the

family generally support the legalization of recreational marijuana?), familial opinions on law enforcement (does the family raise kids to respect police or to fear them?), variables addressing the student's exposure to marijuana use by peer and/or personal use, as well as the students' perceptions of police in the media. These variables could help get a more complete understanding of the culture surrounding marijuana use in college as well as better understand where their attitudes regarding law enforcement come from.

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## APPENDIX A

### SURVEY

#### Cover Letter/ Front Page of Survey

Dear Participant,

My name is Taylor Fisher and I am a graduate student at the University of Alabama in the Criminal Justice Department. The following survey will provide data for my thesis project. I am researching the opinions of students pertaining to the legalization of marijuana and perceptions of police officers. This study will hopefully provide insight into the different factors that affect college students' perceptions of police officers and how those factors can be addressed to improve the relationship between police officers and the community. You were selected as a voluntary participant because you are a student enrolled in CJ 100- Introduction to Criminal Justice at the University of Alabama at the undergraduate level.

The following study is completely voluntary. You can stop completing the survey at any time and for any reason. If you come across an answer that you do not wish to answer you can choose to omit it, and move forward. Any answers you provide for this study will be kept confidential. Your name will not appear anywhere on the survey. For this reason, please refrain from reporting any identifying information in any of your responses.

The survey will stay live for two weeks following the initial email. Please complete the survey in a timely manner to guarantee that your response will be recorded. Once you complete the survey I will compile the data and include it in my report. If you would like a copy of the results, please contact me at the email provided below.

Your participation in this survey is greatly appreciated. If you have any further questions, please feel free to contact me at any time.

Thanks for all your help,

Taylor Fisher  
440-539-5711  
[tsfisher@crimson.ua.edu](mailto:tsfisher@crimson.ua.edu)

Dr. Ida Johnson  
Thesis Committee Chairperson  
205-348-8090  
[ijohnson@ua.edu](mailto:ijohnson@ua.edu)

Tanta Myles  
 Research Compliance Officer  
 205-348-5746  
 cmyles@fa.ua.edu

Instrument/Survey

Page 2 of Survey- Perceptions

Below are some statements regarding attitudes towards police officers. Please read each one carefully and indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with each statement:

	Strongly Disagree	Agree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. Police officers are usually fair					
2. Police are prompt in their response to calls					
3. The police are more likely to use force against minority people					
4. Police officers are courteous					
5. Police officers spend more time going after petty criminals than they do focusing on serious crimes					
6. Police officers protect me					
7. The police are good people					
8. The police are helpful					

9. The police are trustworthy					
10. Police officers care about the UA community.					

Page 3 of Survey- Marijuana

6. Do you believe that police officers have the proper training to handle an individual who may be acting under the influence of a drug?

Yes

No

7. Would you feel more trusting of a police officer if they, instead of taking you to jail for possession of a controlled substance (any illicit drug, such as marijuana, cocaine, heroin, etc.), took you to a hospital?

Yes

No

8. Would you feel more trusting of a police officer if they, instead of taking you to jail for possession of a controlled substance (any illicit drug, such as marijuana, cocaine, heroin, etc.), referred you to a substance abuse program?

Yes

No

9. Do you support the legalization of recreational marijuana use in the state of Alabama?

Yes

No

10. Other than recreational marijuana, are there any forms of marijuana that should be considered legal? Please refrain from including any identifying information in your response.

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10. Do you know someone who has used marijuana?

Yes

No

Page 4 of Survey- Prior Contact/Harassment/Victimization

11. In the past five years, have you had any contact with the police? If yes, what was the nature of the interaction? Please refrain from including any identifying information in your response.

Yes

No

Please Explain \_\_\_\_\_

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12. Would you classify the interaction(s) you have had with the police as positive or negative?

Please refrain from including any identifying information in your response.

Positive

Negative

Please Explain \_\_\_\_\_

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13. In any of these interactions, do you feel as if you were harassed by the police officer(s) that were involved in the incident? Please refrain from including any identifying information in your response.

Yes

No

Please Explain \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

14. Have you ever been the victim of a crime?

Yes

No

15. As the victim, did you contact the police for assistance? If yes, please describe the encounter in the space provided. If you have been the victim of multiple crimes, please focus on the most serious incident. Please refrain from including any identifying information in your response.

Yes

No

Please Explain \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

16. Please describe the most memorable encounter you have experienced with law enforcement. Please refrain from including any identifying information in your response.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



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Page 5 of Survey- Demographics

17. What gender do you identify as?

Male

Female

Other

18. What race/ethnicity do you identify as?

White / Caucasian

Hispanic / Latino

Black / African American

Native American or American Indian

Asian / Pacific Islander

Other

19. How old are you?

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20. What is your academic major?

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21. What is your standing in school?

First Year (Freshman)

Second Year (Sophomore)

Third Year (Junior)

Fourth Year (Senior)

Fifth Year or further

Unknown

22. What state did you live in prior to coming to the University of Alabama?

---

23. Are any of your close family members a police officer (Check all that apply)

Parent/Step-Parent

Sibling

Aunt/Uncle

Grandparent

Cousin

Other \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX B

### UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA IRB LETTER

THE UNIVERSITY OF  
**ALABAMA** | Office of the Vice President for  
Research & Economic Development  
Office for Research Compliance

August 15, 2017

Taylor Fisher  
Dept. of Criminal Justice  
College of Arts & Sciences  
Box 870320

Re: IRB#: 17-OR-263 "Student Perceptions of Marijuana Legalization and Law Enforcement"

Dear Ms. Fisher:

The University of Alabama Institutional Review Board has granted approval for your proposed research.

Your application has been given expedited approval according to 45 CFR part 46. You have also been granted the requested waiver of written documentation of informed consent. Approval has been given under expedited review category 7 as outlined below:

(7) Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies

Your application will expire on August 8, 2018. If your research will continue beyond this date, complete the relevant portions of the IRB Renewal Application. If you wish to modify the application, complete the Modification of an Approved Protocol Form. Changes in this study cannot be initiated without IRB approval, except when necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to participants. When the study closes, complete the appropriate portions of the IRB Request for Study Closure Form.

Please use reproductions of the IRB approved stamped research invitation to provide to your participants.

Should you need to submit any further correspondence regarding this proposal, please include the above application number.

Good luck with your research.

Sincerely,

Carpantato T. Myles, MSM, CIM, CIP  
Director & Research Compliance Officer

358 Rose Administration Building | Box 870127 | Tuscaloosa, AL 35487-0127  
205-348-8461 | Fax 205-348-7189 | Toll Free 1-877-820-3066