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Citizen Perceptions of Minor Changes to the Police Patrol Uniform

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Citizen Perceptions of Minor Changes to the Police Patrol Uniform

A THESIS

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS IN LEADERSHIP STUDIES

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MAINE

BY

LUCAS J. HALLETT


2017

FINAL APPROVAL FORM

THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MAINE

May 5th, 2017

We hereby recommend that the thesis of Lucas J. Hallett entitled *Citizen Perceptions of Minor Changes to the Police Patrol Uniform* be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Leadership Studies.

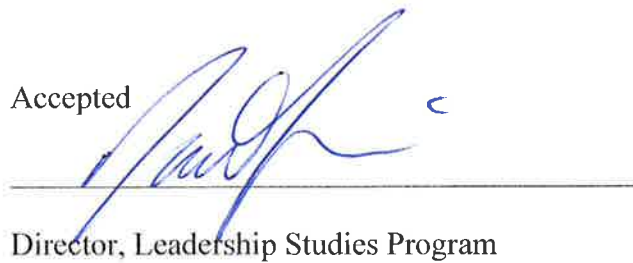


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Abstract

Trust and respect between law enforcement and the public has become a topic of increased controversy in the past few years. The rise of instantly available news, along with audio and video from a variety of modern sources, has brought new attention to every aspect of policing. This project was undertaken to study a ubiquitous portion of daily police life: the patrol uniform. Using an online survey that displayed several photographs of the same police officer in various configurations of the patrol uniform, the 502 total respondents were asked to rate the officer using a 1-5 Likert scale on their impression of him in several categories: nice/mean, warm/cold, gentle/forceful, friendly/unfriendly, passive/aggressive, and honest/corrupt. The survey was offered to 4,972 degree-seeking undergraduate students in southern Maine who registered for Spring 2017 semester classes. Analysis of the data demonstrated that a uniform hat and externally worn protective vest appear to have a negative effect on citizen impressions of the police officer. Conversely, the uniform tie and concealed vest resulted in more positive impressions of the police officer. This study is significant for providing information to police departments and taxpayers to increase fiscal responsibility and/or officer safety considerations above purely aesthetic uniform choices.

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Introduction

As any basically trained American law enforcement officer knows, *officer presence* is the first and least intrusive component of police uses of force. This term is ubiquitous in the United States law enforcement community, and refers to the impact a police officer has on citizens by simply being present around them. The largest and most obviously visible component of a police officer's presence is the clothing he or she wears while performing law enforcement duties.

Police uniforms come in many designs, colors and styles across the country; countless uniform variations exist as each department seeks to stand out from its peers, and have its own unique identity. Do some of these changes have a perceivable effect on a private citizen's opinion of the individual police officer, specifically with regards to how the police officer's personality traits are perceived? Are some uniform components superfluous and unnecessary, removal of which could result in financial savings for taxpayer funded police agencies and simplification of an officer's uniform maintenance routine?

A police uniform is often the source of pride and organizational identity for a department and its officers. The Maine State Police, for example, are historically fiercely protective of their distinctive light blue uniforms and vehicles, and are widely known among other agencies for their insistence on wearing their uniform hats at almost all times. Frequently, county Sheriff's Offices will dress deputies in brown, green, or tan uniforms while municipal and city police departments favor predominately darker blue or black uniforms. Research by Singer and Singer (1985) questioned whether a traditional police style uniform is necessary at all, finding, "the police uniform per se accentuated

the perception of such positive personal attributes as reliability, competence, intelligence, and helpfulness” (p. 160) when compared to a blazer and slacks type uniform.

Respect is also an important consideration when choosing uniform and uniform items. The uniform is a mechanism for conveying the law enforcement officer’s respect for the authority given to them by the community. Also, the uniform can gain respect from citizens who are often strangers to the officer they are interacting with. Joseph and Alex (1972) write, “the uniform serves several functions: it acts as a totem, reveals and conceals statuses, certifies legitimacy, and suppresses individuality” (p. 719). Revealing status and certifying legitimacy are both crucial components of the police uniform, and it is vital that uniform choices reflect the importance the uniform clothing has on the overall police mission.

The present study was designed to examine the question of whether components of a police officer’s uniform influence citizens’ impressions of officers in Maine. Although research has been conducted with regards to the color and style of police uniforms, there is a need for more work to determine if certain items have the effect on the public that Police Chiefs, Sheriffs, and Commissioners desire. In this study, citizen perceptions are defined as the attitudes, thoughts, feelings and opinions that citizens formulate with regards to the police officer they are interacting with.

The goal for this research study is to identify whether minor changes in the police uniform affect citizen impressions of police officers. This information could prove valuable to individual police officers, police labor unions, police supervisors and police administrators, all of whom could benefit from increased knowledge about the way the police uniform is perceived by the public. By increasing overall knowledge about public

perceptions of the police uniform, the research could save money for law enforcement agencies by supporting decisions to eliminate superfluous or unneeded uniform items, thus reducing budgetary requirements and perhaps lessening tax burdens on citizens. In the year 2017 Cumberland County Sheriff's Office (Maine) budget, \$46,000 was budgeted for uniform purchases (Cumberland County, 2017.) to equip approximately 42 full time police officers, at \$1,095 per officer. In the fiscal year 2015-2016 budget for the Falmouth Police Department (Maine), \$17,000 was budgeted for uniforms for 12 full time officers, or \$1,416 per officer (Falmouth, 2016). The Yarmouth Police Department (Maine) budgeted \$18,800 for police uniforms for 13 officers in their year 2016-2017 budget at \$1,446 per officer (Yarmouth, 2017).

Further, if certain uniform items are found to have greater importance for citizen impression formation of the police officer, those items could be emphasized or mandatory wear policies enacted. This benefit could ensure the uniform items officers are wearing are the most effective choices to benefit the mission of law enforcement.

Research Question

Building on the research undertaken by Johnson, Plecas, Anderson and Dolan (2015), who studied minor changes to the police uniform and the effect these changes had on citizen impressions of the police, this research studied a similar topic in Maine using student participants as subjects at the University of Southern Maine. This study featured the addition of a new style of externally worn police body armor that has rapidly gained popularity amongst many police officers and agencies as one of the variable minor uniform changes.

The externally worn protective vest is a relatively new concept for law enforcement, and consists of armor that is more visible and readily apparent to the observer than the concealed style of body armor, which is worn underneath the uniform shirt. The external style of protective vest is sometimes decried both internally in police agencies as well as externally by citizen groups as being overly militaristic and likely to scare ordinary citizens. There is a lack of data on whether or not that concept has merit, which is why it was added to this study. The researcher posed the overall research question: Do minor changes in the police patrol uniform result in a change in citizen impressions of police officers?

Hypothesis

The hypothesis is that there would be no appreciable change in citizen impressions of a police officer when minor changes to the police uniform are made. An appreciable change means either a positive or negative change in average survey item mean scores, based on the variations of uniform depicted in the corresponding questions.

Delimiters to Limit the Scope of Research

The survey sought to collect the following categorical data from respondents:

- age range (by group);
- gender;
- ethnicity;
- highest education level obtained;
- police or military experience;
- whether or not the respondent has a close personal relationship with any police officer,

- whether or not the respondent considers themselves a supporter or non-supporter of the police in general.

Research Assumptions

Certain assumptions directed this study, including the assumption that a sufficient quantity of respondents will be available to conduct meaningful research. This assumption was proven correct, as 502 total respondents took the internet survey. Another assumption was that citizens can and will create or modify an impression of individual law enforcement officers based on visual information. A third assumption was that the research of Johnson et al. (2015), is valid and sufficiently reliable to base portions of this research upon.

Importance of Research

There are significant financial benefits for police agencies, and therefore taxpayers, if superfluous and unnecessary components to the police uniform can be eliminated without loss of perceived professionalism, respect levels from the public, or officer safety. Often uniform items that are considered extra by the officers who wear them are prime candidates for elimination, both from a financial and also comfort standpoint. Police officers sometimes encounter resistance from administrators when proposing elimination of uniform items like hats and ties, with the justification to keep them being the requirement to maintain professionalism and respect from citizens.

Besides financial and convenience gains that may result from a carefully cultivated uniform program, there are potential officer safety benefits that are outside the scope of this research. In a recent Los Angeles Times article discussing a \$300,000 expenditure to change the color of the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department's belt

buckles, Maya Lau (2017) wrote, “Sgt. Mike Ramirez...described a scenario in which one of his former partners, who looked “disheveled” and typically wore a more casual style of uniform than he did, was singled out by a suspect for a fight”. The article goes on to describe current budget shortfalls at the LA County Sheriff’s Department, and other competing budgetary needs that include personnel shortages. Of note are several other statements from police union leaders and citizen groups, decrying the expenditure of hundreds of thousands of dollars for such a seemingly trivial uniform item change, when other areas and programs are being underfunded or eliminated.

It is the justification for hat and tie wear that an officer without one or both is unprofessional or disrespected that this research study sought to examine. Similarly, does the public consider an officer in external, visible body armor to have different personality traits than an officer in concealed body armor? If police administrators or others are going to point to these concepts as justification for their decisions, it is important that actual data and research is conducted. The work completed by Johnson et al. (2015) laid the foundation for proving or disproving these claims, and this study will expand upon their findings within the context of southern Maine.

Literature Review

Amongst a current landscape roiling nationwide with unrest both toward and involving law enforcement, officers need every advantage they can find to best keep peace and administer the law. The following review of available literature covers several major themes. These themes are: the status conferred by the clothing a person wears in terms of respect afforded to the wearer; the effect clothing has on the behavior of both the

wearer and persons interacting with or observing the wearer; and citizen impressions of police officers in various colors and styles of uniform clothing. The literature does not yet present a clear end state for the research.

By the very nature of the work of law enforcement, police officers are often placed in adversarial or contentious situations with members of the public. Sometimes even amongst calls for service that result in voluntary interactions with the police, citizens can often feel dissatisfaction with the officer's decisions, or the resolution to their complaint. Some level of this unhappiness may result from a citizen perception that the officer is not well trained, knowledgeable, and/or professional.

Previous studies have demonstrated and documented the importance clothing choice can have on forming impressions of other humans. Johnson, Yoo, Kim and Lennon (2008) conclude, "when an individual views someone in creative and pleasing dress, he or she may experience positive affective responses that, in turn, may influence approach behavior"(p. 6). There is an immeasurable amount of stakeholders in this field, ranging from clothing designers and manufacturers to Wall Street bankers, highway construction workers, military personnel and law enforcement officers. In the law enforcement profession specifically, uniform clothing choices may help inform citizen customers of the level of professionalism, and presumably, respect afforded to an officer.

Clothing and Respect

According to Fortenberry, MacLean, Morris, and O'Connell (1978), research by Bickman (1974) found that, "high status individuals, as perceived by their mode of dress, are often treated differently" (p. 139). Law enforcement officers only have a brief window of time to establish rapport and gain the respect of citizens, therefore it is crucial

their mode of dress results in a perception that conveys the weight and importance of their position. Bickman (1974) states, “clothes ... may lead others to assume certain facts about our personal attitudes and values” (p. 50). The position of a law enforcement officer is one of public trust; citizens rightly desire their police officers to have good moral judgment and to be as unbiased as possible. In most cases, if a person calls the police they have a problem that they need help solving, and they want someone capable of resolving their problem to respond. According to Bowman and Hooper (1991), “controlled experiments have repeatedly shown that well-dressed and groomed people are perceived as more intelligent, hardworking, and socially acceptable than those with a more casual appearance” (p. 330). These traits are, of course, desirable of law enforcement officers. Bowman and Hooper (1991) further state, “Uniforms are also reassuring to citizens, particularly when they identify, for example, a physician, airline pilot, game warden or Marine” (p. 330).

Uniform clothing can reassure a citizen that the officer does indeed share their personal attitudes and values. Joseph and Alex (1972) state, “Both their colleagues and the public must be certain that the activities of the policeman on duty, for example, will be consistent with the needs and functions of the of the department instead of the result of personal whim...”(p. 719). This description of the uniform as a sort of guarantee to citizens that the police officer is there to perform the duties of the law enforcement agency, and not a personal agenda, is important. Later, Joseph and Alex (1972) elaborate, “By permitting the use of its uniform, a group certifies an individual as its representative and assumes responsibility for his actions” (p. 723). The uniform can be a reassurance

that the police officer is not present to represent his or herself, but a larger organization that has accountability over the officer.

Clothing and Behavior

A review and analysis conducted by Johnson et al. (2008) looked at 93 existing studies that were conducted between 1955 and 2004 relating to what effect clothing and dress manipulations have on the behavior of other people observing the wearer. This analysis found that a majority of the existing work in the field attempted to measure helping behavior, which is the effect clothing has on the willingness of other people to assist a stranger in some manner. Johnson et al. (2008) stated, “dress is often marketed to individuals as a method to gain benefits in interactions with others in public places” (p. 17). This finding is clearly associated with one of the primary goals of police officer uniforms, which seeks compliance and benefits from someone the officer may have just met for the first time.

Geffner and Gross (1984) researched the effect sex-role behavior has on the obedience to authority. The authors determined that although the genders of the researcher and subject played a part in obedience to instructions, the wear of formal clothing by either the researcher or subject resulted in significant changes to obedience levels. Geffner and Gross (1984) found that obedience was greater when the researcher wore a uniform and the subject did not, and obedience was less when the researcher did not wear a uniform, but the subject wore formal clothing. This work demonstrates the importance a uniform has as a tool to increase compliance and obedience, both of which are desirable in police work.

Police Clothing

Police clothing has been examined in the past, mostly in the context of overall uniform style. Singer and Singer (1985) studied the effect a police uniform has on the formation of impressions between people. The researchers' method also used photographs and surveys to gather data on several scales, including the perceived competency, intelligence, reliability and helpfulness of the officers shown in the photographs. The three photographs they compared were of each officer in uniform, in civilian clothing, and of the officer's face only. Singer and Singer (1985) concluded, "police officers photographed in uniforms were perceived as significantly more competent, more reliable, more intelligent, and more helpful than when they were photographed in either of the other two conditions" (p. 160). This work establishes that the uniform is a crucial feature for police officers to wear.

Another decision with regards to law enforcement uniform choice is choosing the dominant uniform color, or colors. Sometimes this determination was made generations of officers ago and remains solely for historical tradition, with county sheriff's offices selecting shades of brown or green, and municipal police department officers usually choosing blues or black. Research conducted by Johnson (2005) examined differences in police uniform color schemes as they relate to citizen impression formation of police officers. In this study, Johnson (2005) showed citizens four photographs of officers in different colored uniforms, and administered a 5-point Likert scale questionnaire to measure impressions of the officers such as, "good/bad, nice/mean, warm/cold, gentle/forceful, friendly/unfriendly, passive/aggressive, and honest/corrupt" (p. 60). This research served as an important baseline for which later studies were based upon. Johnson (2005) determined that the uniforms consisting of an all-black color theme

received the least favorable impressions while a light blue shirt/navy blue pant scheme received the most favorable impressions. This conclusion confirmed Johnson's (2005) feeling that a black police uniform may be "scary" or "intimidating" to citizens.

A later study by Johnson (2013) adds to and contrasts with the Johnson (2005) study on uniform color, and focuses deeper on whether or not police departments wearing darker colored uniforms are more aggressive than departments wearing lighter colors. Johnson (2013) predicted, "departments utilizing black uniforms would experience more assaults on officers, citizens killed by police, and excessive force complaints" (p. 228). After concluding the study, Johnson (2013) determined, "results of the analyses indicated that black police uniforms were unrelated to police-citizen aggression" (p. 239) in terms of the parameters described in the prediction. Although this study examined numerically collected data instead of the survey collected data of the Johnson (2005) study, the two are related and seem to contradict each other with regards to whether or not black law enforcement uniforms are the best choice for uniform color.

An additional study by Nickels (2005) closely mirrors the Johnson (2005) study while attempting to build upon and correct perceived errors by Johnson (2005). Nickels (2005) modified Johnson's (2005) method by utilizing photographs of officers in full uniform. A full uniform is a uniform with accouterments attached and full utility belt including holstered firearm. Nickels (2005) questioned the conclusions of Johnson (2005) by stating that, "it is unclear how color factors into perception when citizens are confronted with the full attire; a prominently displayed sidearm may tend to distract from such nuance" (p. 80). Nickels (2005) also utilized digital manipulation of the photographs to control variables such as model officer posture, uniform fit, and other subtle

differences in photographs. This is in contrast to Johnson (2005) who utilized wholly different photographs in conducting the study. Nickels (2005) used the same survey scales as Johnson (2005), and concluded, “The preference for darker uniforms generally, and for all-black uniforms over other color combinations in particular, was found to be a consistent pattern” (p. 86).

Having determined the importance of the police uniform and with specific choices therein, Johnson, Plecas, Anderson and Dolan (2015) sought to examine similar metrics as Singer and Singer (1985) while making small changes to the uniform itself. Johnson et al. (2015) produced a study entitled *No Hat or Tie Required: Examining Minor Changes to the Police Uniform* which forms the basis for the present study. Johnson et al. (2015) used telephone surveys to gather data from citizens within 48 hours of a nonemergency police service contact. The data gathered included questions on the personality and demeanor of the officer, as well as his or her professional appearance. The researchers discovered that the presence or absence of a police uniform hat or tie had no noticeable effect on survey responses. The importance of this is magnified when considering the financial savings an agency could realize if unneeded uniform items were eliminated from the budget. Johnson et al. (2015) stated, “the findings suggest that uniform hats and neckties are an issue of agency preference, but do not improve or worsen citizen impressions of officers” (p. 158). This hypothesis is expanded in the present study, to include modern styles of police protective body armor and if possible, a larger sample size.

Research Design

The goal of the present research is to determine whether or not citizen impressions of the police are positively enhanced, negatively reduced, or unchanged given different variations of minor uniform items

Context

This research study was conducted using volunteer participants, with no reward offered or promised. No identifying data was solicited, collected, or retained by the researcher. The anonymity of participants was ensured by following an immediate procedure of removing and deleting any data that could identify a specific participant if such data was received accidentally, and the survey was set up in a manner that did not allow participants to enter such data. There was no personal identification information collected by the survey.

The study evaluated individual citizen's impressions of the police officer whose photograph was featured on the survey website. A goal of 100 participants was set, with a survey closing deadline of two weeks after the email was sent to potential participants. There were 502 survey responses received by the time the survey closed.

Methodology

This study used an Internet survey to gather data from citizens who agreed to participate after receiving an email with the survey link. The email was disseminated to 4,972 degree-seeking undergraduate college students in the Southern Maine area who were currently enrolled in classes. The survey was anonymous, with only the collection of non-identifying demographic data requested such as age, gender, and ethnicity. Categorical questions were also asked about the respondent's education level, whether or not they are a military veteran, and whether or not they consider themselves a supporter

of police in general. The scope of this study is limited to non-emergency, non-adversarial viewing of still digital photographs in a presumably non-stressful environment.

Citizens who agreed to respond answered a series of questions about a pictured officer, requiring answers using a five-point Likert scale. The questions were related to the officer's appearance and the citizen's perceptions of that appearance, and what conclusions about the officer that participants drew from viewing the photographs. Participants were asked to rate the officer on several personality traits, based on appearance: nice or mean, warm or cold, gentle or forceful, friendly or unfriendly, passive or aggressive, and honest or corrupt. For each question, the highest positive personality trait rating possible was a (5), and the lowest negative trait rating possible was (1). The personality traits measured were the same traits Johnson (2005) surveyed in previous research on police uniform color.

The photographs had the officer's face and identifying information blurred to be unrecognizable, as well as departmental identifying information similarly concealed. The instrument also featured yes-or-no questions to determine if the respondent had prior law enforcement experience or had a close personal relationship with any law enforcement officer. The same officer was used in several uniform variations, in front of the same background to control as many variables as possible.

Quantitative data analysis was conducted with the use of IBM SPSS software as well as Microsoft Excel software. The researcher undertook an examination and analysis of the difference in mean Likert scale response scores between different uniform item combinations to determine if certain uniform items scored higher than others.

Using Microsoft Excel software, the researcher conducted analysis to determine if mean survey participant responses to the questions concerning officer's personality differed based on the variables of age range, ethnicity, education level and gender.

Sub-Problems

Several sub problems existed in this study, including whether respondents answered the survey questions honestly. Another sub-problem was whether or not respondents had a predisposition toward or against the police in general, which may have affected overall results. An attempt was made to measure respondent attitude toward the police by including the survey questions about whether or not the respondent had a close personal relationship with any law enforcement officer, and another question asking if the respondent is mostly a supporter or non-supporter of the police in general. Variables that were uncontrolled included the participant's history of interactions with law enforcement. Citizens who had an adversarial interaction with a police officer possibly responded differently than citizens who have had positive and agreeable interactions, both of which are outside the scope of this study.

Contribution

As described above, the mission of this research project was to determine what effect, if any, making minor changes to the police patrol uniform had on citizen impressions of the police officer. Although there was existing research of similar topics in the field, there was a lack of research using the survey style methodology combined with a variable that included the modern style external armor vest.

Results

The purpose of this study was to determine if minor changes to a police officer's patrol uniform results in a change in citizen's perceptions of that officer, based solely on appearance.

Description of the Sample

The data collected was first visually inspected using pie chart graphs generated by Google using the host-software Google Forms. In reviewing the visual presentation of the data, several observations were made. A majority of participants identified themselves as being in the 18-25 year old age range, with 58.7% ($N = 294$). The 26-33 year old group contained 16.6% of participants ($N = 83$), and the 34-41 year old group contained 12.6% of respondents ($N = 63$). The 42-49 year old group and 50 years old and older group combined for 12.2% of participants ($N = 61$). One participant was not comfortable answering the question.

Participants were asked to identify their gender, with options consisting of: male, female, neither or prefer not to answer, and other. The majority of participants were female with 70.2% ($N = 351$), followed by males with 28.6% ($N = 143$). The choices of neither or prefer not to answer, and other, were selected by 0.6% of participants ($N = 3$) and two participants did not chose a response to the question.

White or Caucasians made up the large majority of participants with 90.2% ($N = 451$). The next largest group were participants identifying themselves as Black, making up 3% of respondents ($N = 15$). Participants identifying themselves as Asian, Hispanic, Other or Not Comfortable Answering made up 6.8% total ($N = 34$).

Participants with Some College or an Associate's Degree accounted for 66.2% of the total ($N = 331$). Participants with a Bachelor's Degree and High School Diploma

made up similar totals, measuring 15.6% ($N = 78$) and 15.2% ($N = 76$), respectively.

Participants with a Graduate Degree or higher made up 2.8% of the total sample ($N = 14$).

An overwhelming majority of participants reported never having worked as a law enforcement officer, with ($N = 484$, 96.6%). Twelve participants answered that they did have police experience (2.4%). Participants who were not comfortable answering the question made up 1% of the sample ($N = 5$).

A majority of participants (91.2%) reported never having served in the United States military, either active duty or reserve ($N = 456$). There were 42 participants who reported they had served in the military (8/4%) and two participants (0.4%) were not comfortable answering.

Participants consisting of 59.1% ($N = 296$) of the total sample responded that they did not have a close personal relationship with any law enforcement officers. Participants who answered that they did have such a relationship made up 39.9% of the sample ($N = 200$). Five participants (1%) of the total sample were not comfortable answering the question.

The final categorical and demographic question asked participants if they considered themselves mostly a supporter, or mostly a non-supporter of the police in general, or neither. The participants who responded that they generally support the police accounted for 72.1% of the sample ($N = 360$). There were 94 participants who responded that they were neutral on their feelings of the police (18.8%). Participants that answered they generally do not support the police made up 4% ($N = 20$) of the sample. Four participants (1.2%) answered they are anti-police, four participants were not comfortable answering (1.2%), and 15 answered "other". Despite this being a quantitative study, the

researcher determined it was relevant to examine what participants wrote when answering “other”. One person wrote they are, “highly supportive of police”, and another wrote, “black lives matter”. Five participants wrote that they support the idea of law enforcement/police, but not all police officers. Several participants wrote that they support the police but with unnamed caveats, and one participant wrote, “this is a complicated question to answer”. Table 1 provides a visual breakdown of the sample demography and categorical question responses.

Table 1

Demographical and Categorical Participant Responses

Characteristics	<i>n</i>	%
Age	502	100
18-25	294	58.7
26-33	83	16.6
34-41	63	12.6
42-49	27	5.4
50 or older	34	6.7
Not Comfortable Answering	1	0.0
Gender	500	99.6
Male	143	28.6
Female	351	70.2
Neither/Prefer Not to Answer	3	0.6
Other	3	0.6
Race/Ethnicity	500	99.6
Black	15	3.0
Asian	10	2.0
White/Caucasian	451	90.2
Hispanic	6	1.2
Not Comfortable Answering	6	1.2
Other	12	2.4
Highest Education Level	500	99.6
H.S. / G.E.D.	76	15.2
Some College/Associate	331	66.2
Bachelor	78	15.6
Graduate or Higher	14	2.8
Not Comfortable Answering	1	0.2
Law Enforcement Experience	501	99.8

No	484	96.6
Yes	12	2.4
Not Comfortable Answering	5	1.0
Experience in US Military	500	99.6
No	456	91.2
Yes	14	8.4
Not Comfortable Answering	2	0.4
Close Relationship with Officer	501	99.8
No	296	59.1
Yes	200	39.9
Not Comfortable Answering	5	1.0
Supporter/Non-Supporter of Police	499	99.4
Generally Supportive	360	72.1
Generally Non-Supportive	20	4.0
Neither / Neutral	94	18.8
Anti-Police	6	1.2
Not Comfortable Answering	4	0.8
Other	15	3.1

Analysis

Quantitative data analysis was conducted with the use of an Analysis of Variance test (ANOVA), performed using IBM SPSS software. The data was first analyzed to determine if any statistical significance existed based on the survey responses for each uniform combination. Each personality trait was measured at a P-value of .000 except for the honest/corrupt question which measured $P = .001$, meaning all of the results are highly statistically significant. Nominal data such as education level is reported as percentages of total responses and raw numbers (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013).

Table 2 provides a visual presentation of the mean scores by uniform item present, and the percentage of the complete data set mean score of 3.1809 that each represents. The data set mean score was calculated from all responses to survey questions concerning the officer's personality traits.

Table 2

Mean Survey Scores by Uniform Item

Uniform Item	Mean Survey Score	% change from Data Set Mean Score
External Vest	2.8977	-8.9
Concealed Vest	3.3226	4.5
Hat	3.1063	-2.3
Tie	3.3268	4.6

Consistent across all the personality trait categories, the officer wearing an exposed (external) protective vest with no hat, and an exposed protective vest with a hat were both rated the lowest by respondents in all categories. The officer wearing an external vest and hat had the lowest overall mean score of any uniform combination sampled, with a mean score of 2.8351. The officer wearing a concealed vest, a hat and tie and concealed vest, and a concealed vest with a tie and no hat were the highest rated uniform combinations across all personality trait categories.

The data set mean for the survey questions pertaining to personality traits was 3.1809. The personality trait question about whether the officer was perceived as passive or aggressive received the lowest mean score of any of the personality traits at 2.9434. The highest rated personality trait was whether the officer was perceived as honest or corrupt, with a mean of 3.4486. Table 3 displays the mean scores for each trait.

Table 3

Mean Survey Scores by Personality Trait

Uniform Item	Mean Survey Score
Nice / Mean	3.4248
Warm / Cold	3.1072
Gentle / Forceful	3.0115
Friendly / Unfriendly	3.1498
Honest / Corrupt	3.4486

Mean personality trait question scores for the demographic age, ethnicity, and gender groups were calculated using Microsoft Excel. Respondents who did not answer the age, ethnicity, or gender question were not included in the mean score calculations for this portion of the analysis. Respondents who chose an answer that was not “male” or “female” for the gender question were grouped together in the category of “other” for calculation purposes. Similarly, participants who answered “other” or typed an ethnicity into the response field were grouped together as “other” for purposes of calculation purposes. The researcher also calculated mean personality trait scores for each group that answered the question “Do you personally consider yourself mostly a supporter or mostly a non-supporter of the police in general, or neither?”. Respondents who answered “other” or “not comfortable answering” were not included in the calculations for this question.

The age, gender, ethnicity or supportive/non-supportive of police group that had the highest overall mean survey response scores was respondents identifying themselves as 42-49 years old ($N = 27$). The mean survey response score from this group across all uniform and personality trait variations was 3.4148.

The lowest mean score from the same four categorical groups was from respondents identifying themselves as “anti-police” ($N = 6$) who had a mean survey response score across all uniform and personality trait variations of 1.7535. Table 4 displays the group overall mean scores in descending order.

Table 4

Mean Survey Scores for Age, Gender, Ethnicity and Level of Police Support in Descending Order

Characteristics	<i>n</i>	Mean Survey Score
42-49	27	3.4148
Generally Supportive of Police	360	3.3309
26-33	83	3.2613
White/Caucasian	451	3.2165
18-25	294	3.2020
Female	351	3.2004
Male	143	3.1618
34-41	63	3.0034
50+	34	2.9418
Ethnicity – Other	12	2.9252
Neither Supportive or Non-Supportive of Police	94	2.8901
Asian	10	2.8870
Hispanic	6	2.8194
Black	15	2.7380
Generally Non-Supportive of Police	20	2.5184
Gender - Other	3	2.4440
Anti-Police	6	1.7535

The highest overall group mean score across uniform variations and personality traits came from the 42-49 age group ($N = 27$) and was 3.6415, scored on the questions picturing the officer wearing a concealed protective vest with tie, and no hat. The second highest overall mean score came from the same age group, scoring the officer wearing a concealed vest with no hat and no tie at a mean of 3.5625.

The lowest overall group mean score across uniform variations and personality traits came from the “I am anti-police” group ($N = 6$) who scored the officer in external protective vest with no hat a mean score of 1.3958. The second lowest overall mean score also came from the “I am anti-police” group, who scored the officer in a hat and external protective vest a mean of 1.4375.

Discussion

After examination and analysis of the survey results, the study hypothesis was rejected. In the sample population of respondents, there is clear evidence that the

externally worn body armor and/or hat resulted in a lower mean score in general. This result was true across all personality traits and uniform combinations surveyed, and across all demographic or categorical sub-groups of participants. In each personality category, the median possible response of three (3.0) on the five point Likert scale received the most responses overall but a clear change in amount of higher and lower scores were received between the external and concealed armor categories, therefore affecting the various mean scores to be higher or lower. This confirmed the literature by Bickman (1974) that stated clothing would cause the formation of impressions about the values and traits of the wearer.

Also confirmed was work by Bowman and Hooper (1991), describing how well dressed persons are more likely to be better perceived than those in casual dress. The uniform tie receiving the highest mean survey scores was perhaps an indicator of this concept, with uniform combinations including the tie rated 4.5% higher than the mean of the data set of all uniform combinations.

The most important comparison observed in the present study was the contrast between it and the research of Johnson et al. (2015) in which the police uniform hat and tie appeared to have no impact on the formation of citizen impressions of the police officer. This is in conflict with the present study in which both the hat and tie appear to have caused a change in mean survey scores. Of note is the fact that this study borrowed the same personality trait combinations that were used by Johnson et al. (2015), with the two studies differing in methodology between a telephone survey after live officer interactions, and the present study utilizing an internet based photographic survey. The

participants in Johnson et al. (2015) were called on the phone by researchers, while respondents to this study volunteered after receiving an emailed link to the survey.

A potential cause of why the external vest received lower, less desirable personality trait scores is its similarity in appearance to the body armor worn by military forces throughout the world, with exposed pouches mounted on the chest and torso area. This may have elicited negative reactions in the survey participants, who then rated the external vest uniform variations in a more negative way.

The concealed armor vest with and without a tie both received the highest mean overall scores. This could be for a variety of reasons, including that participants did not realize the officer was wearing body armor at all. Body armor, by its nature, is designed to protect the officer from attack. This is not a topic most people in general are intimately familiar with, and it may be uncomfortable for them to think about. Therefore participants may have rated the officer higher without visible body armor because they unconsciously or consciously assumed he was “safer”, or less likely to take part in a situation where he may be assaulted or killed.

The sample ($N = 502$) approximately reflected the enrollment demographic data for the last period available, the fall semester of 2016. Of 7,855 students enrolled in fall 2016, 57.5% were female and 42.5% were male (USM, 2016.). The sample for this study included 70.2% females and 28.6% males. In fall 2016, 72% of the enrolled population self-described themselves as “white”, along with 4.2% black and 2.3% Hispanic students (USM, 2016.). The present study sample is described as 90.2% white, 3% black, and 1.2% Hispanic. Finally, the average age of a student in the potential participant

population was 24.4 years old in fall 2016 (USM, 2016.) compared to 58.7% of the sample selecting the age range of 18-25 years old.

Age

The groups of 18-25 year olds ($N = 294$) and 26-33 year olds ($N = 83$) had similar answers to the survey questions overall. The largest variation in mean scores between these two groups was in their mean responses to the officer in external protective vest with no hat, across all personality trait questions. The groups differed 0.1179 in their mean responses regarding this uniform configuration, with 26-33 year olds rating the officer a mean score of 3.0958 and 18-25 year olds rating the officer a mean score of 2.9780. The closest these two groups came to rating a uniform combination identically was on the personality questions regarding the officer wearing a tie and concealed armor vest with no hat; the difference in mean scores between the groups on this uniform was .0288 points.

Mean survey response scores did not appear to follow a linear ascending or descending progression along with age. Participants reporting their age as 50 years old or older rated the officer the lowest across all uniform configurations and personality traits, with 34-41 year olds giving the next lowest ratings. The dispersion of mean scores between the groups giving the highest and lowest ratings was .473 points.

Gender

Persons who selected the survey answer of “other” or entered their gender in the input field ($N = 3$) rated their impressions of the officer lower overall with a mean score of 2.4440. However, the small sample size is not sufficient to draw a conclusion from especially in contrast with the mean survey scores of persons responding “male” ($N =$

143) and “female” ($N = 351$). The male group rated the officer on average .0386 points lower in all categories than the female group. Males gave their highest scores to the officer wearing a tie, concealed vest and no hat with a mean score of 3.3893. Males gave their lowest scores to the officer wearing the hat and external armor vest, with a mean score of 2.8215. Females gave their highest mean score to the officer in a tie, concealed vest, and no hat with a mean score of 3.4365, which was almost identical to their mean score females gave the officer in concealed vest only, of 3.4322.

The dispersion between the gender giving the highest mean ratings (female) and lowest mean ratings (other) was .7563 points.

Ethnicity

Survey respondents overwhelmingly answered white/Caucasian when asked to choose their race and ethnicity. This is likely due to the demographic makeup of the population the survey was sent to ($N = 4972$). The small sample sizes of all race/ethnicity groups other than “white/Caucasian” reduce their comparison value in this study, but are reported below. The white/Caucasian group rated the officer the highest overall across all uniform combinations compared to the other ethnicity groups, with a mean score of 3.2165. The second highest mean score of all uniform combinations and personality traits came from participants that selected “other” or entered in an unlisted race/ethnicity ($N = 12$), with a mean score of 2.9252. Participants selecting “Asian” ($N = 10$) gave third highest mean ratings of 2.887, followed by “Hispanic” ($N = 6$) mean ratings of 2.8194 and “black” ($N = 12$) with the lowest ratings mean of 2.7380. The difference in means between ratings given by “white/Caucasian” respondents and “black” respondents was 0.4785 points. As stated above, the sample sizes of participants selecting race/ethnicities

other than “white/Caucasian” were so small the researcher does not draw conclusions from this data without further testing and analysis.

Conclusion

Further research is needed to fully understand why participants gave overall mean lower scores to the officer wearing an external armor vest or hat. Qualitative research may shed light on what caused these results, along with a larger and/or more diverse sample size. Several strengths and weaknesses of this study were identified when contemplating in what ways future research could build upon the present study.

A weakness of this study is a lack of technical statistical data analysis at a high level. More thorough and advanced data analysis is needed using the existing survey responses to determine what other conclusions are possible from the data set, or to eliminate any false conclusions.

A strength of this study was the sample size. The researcher was prepared to collect and analyze responses from approximately 100 respondents, and eventually received over five times that many. This response level provided a better measurement of the questions surveyed, and increased confidence in the results received.

Future directions for research could expand upon the current study in several meaningful ways. More thorough and complex data analysis is needed using the existing survey responses to determine if other, or stronger conclusions are possible from the data set. Future researchers may also incorporate more variables such as uniform color, gender, or race/ethnicity of an officer into the study to determine if any of those factors change citizen impressions of the police officer. Manipulation of other uniform items

such as badge size, collar brass, duty belt items, visibility of the duty handgun, and others may reveal valuable information about the importance of wearing or not wearing those items while conducting the duties of a law enforcement officer.

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Appendix A
USM IRB Approval Letter



NOTICE OF EVALUATION-EXEMPT

DATE: January 28, 2017

TO: Lucas Hallett, Leadership Studies , Elizabeth Fisher Turesky, Leadership Studies

FROM: Casey Webster, Human Protections Administrator, USM IRB

PROTOCOL TITLE: Citizen Perception of Minor Changes to the Police Uniform

FUNDING SOURCE: NONE

PROTOCOL NUMBER: 17-01-886

Approval Date: January 28, 2017 Expiration Date: December 31, 2017

The Office of Research Integrity and Outreach (ORIO) has evaluated the project named above. This study has been granted an exemption from USM IRB review per Title 45 CFR Part 46. This designation is based on the assumption that the materials that you submitted to the IRB contain a complete and accurate description of all the ways in which human subjects are involved in your research.

This exemption is given with the following terms:

1. You will conduct the project according to the plans and protocol you submitted;
2. No further contact with the ORIO is necessary unless you make changes to your project or adverse events or injuries to subjects occur;
3. If you propose to make any changes to the project, you must submit the changes to the ORIO for review; you will not initiate any changes until they have been reviewed and approved by the ORIO;
4. If any adverse events or injuries to subjects occur, you will report these immediately to the ORIO;
5. As applicable, you will comply with the University of Maine Information Security Policy and Standards and/or the Muskie School of Public Service Securing Protected Information Policies and Procedures and any other applicable USM policies or procedures; and

6. You will close the project upon completion (or discontinuation).

The University appreciates your efforts to conduct research in compliance with the federal regulations that have been established to ensure the protection of human subjects in research.

Sincerely,

Casey Webster

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Casey Webster". The signature is written in a cursive style with some loops and a horizontal line at the end.

Appendix B
USM Registrar Permission Email

From: Rachel Tracy rachel.tracy@maine.edu

Subject: Re: Master's in Leadership Studies program help

Date: January 26, 2017 at 8:44 AM **To:** Lucas Hallett lucas.j.hallett@gmail.com

Cc: lucas.hallett@maine.edu, David Ciampa david.ciampa@maine.edu

Hi Lucas,

Yes, upon your IRB approval, I can run a query to pull the UMS email addresses of all undergraduates enrolled for the Spring 2017 term which would be about 5500 students.

Email address is directory information and can be released to third parties, withholding information of those students who have placed a FERPA block on their record. So you can have the list of emails to e-mail your request yourself. If you did this, names would have to be pasted into the blind copy line to prevent recipients from accessing the entire list.

Alternatively, I am also happy to send an email message to that same population on your behalf using the messaging center in MaineStreet. You would have to send me the final email you want sent. The benefit of this is that students would receive an email as well as a message in their message center.

I hope this gives you the information you need to move forward.

Sincerely,

Rachel S. Tracy Associate Registrar for Records, Reporting, and Data Systems

University of Southern Maine Registration and Scheduling Services

107A Bailey Hall Gorham, ME 04038

207-780-5285

Appendix C
Solicitation Email to Potential Participants

Greetings! My name is Luke Hallett and I am a student in my final semester of the Master's of Leadership Studies program here at USM.

As part of my Capstone project, I am conducting research that will eventually form my graduate thesis paper. This is where I need the help of my fellow USM students and community, and I would appreciate less than 15 minutes of your busy day to help out!

Below is a link to a Google Forms-based, anonymous survey. At the link, there are a few questions about your basic demographic information, and then you are asked to report your opinion of the person in the photograph, based on what the first impression of that person you had is. That's it! The survey should take no more than 10-15 minutes, and probably less than that, to take.

Even better, all the questions are optional so if you see something you aren't comfortable with or don't want to answer, you can just skip it. Also, the survey is completely anonymous. Your name, email address, or any personal information will not be asked for, and it isn't wanted for this project!

I would really appreciate your help, and the opinions and responses you provide will go a long way toward helping me complete this project (on time!).

Please note that clicking the link constitutes your consent to participate in the survey, but you may exit the survey at any time afterward if you decide not to participate, with absolutely no penalty or punishment of any kind. Unfortunately, there are also no direct benefits personally or academically to you for participating, except for knowing you helped a fellow student and contributed to academic research at USM.

Thank you for your time and consideration! Below is the link to the survey, should you choose to participate.

<https://goo.gl/forms/xX0JU6BaDCMnkJcj2>

Appendix D
Survey Instrument
Citizen Perceptions of Police Officers

This survey should take no more than 10-15 minutes of your time. Please don't forget to click Submit at the end to record your responses, thank you!

The researcher would like to reiterate that all questions are optional, and absolutely no information that can identify you is desired or sought. This is an ANONYMOUS survey. By arriving at this survey and answering questions, you are giving consent to participate, and for the data collected to be used in an academic project at USM. Please do not include your name, email address, or any information that could be used to identify you! If you do leave identifying information, that data will be destroyed immediately when it is detected.

Welcome to the survey! Please answer each question based upon your individual observations made of the police officer pictured with the applicable questions. Thank you!

Please choose your age range:

18-25

26-33

34-41

42-49

50 years old and older

Not comfortable answering

Please choose your gender:

Female

Male

Neither / Prefer not to answer

Other:

Please choose your race/ethnicity:

Black

Asian

White / Caucasian

Hispanic

Not comfortable answering

Other:

Please choose the highest level of education you have obtained:

- High School Diploma / GED
- Some College / Associate's Degree
- Bachelor's Degree
- Graduate Degree or above
- Not Comfortable Answering

Do you personally have experience working as a law enforcement officer?

- Yes
- No
- Not comfortable answering

Do you personally have experience in the US military, active duty or reserve?

- Yes
- No
- Not comfortable answering

Do you personally have a close personal relationship (friend, family, etc.) with any law enforcement officers?

- Yes
- No
- Not comfortable answering

Do you personally consider yourself mostly a supporter or mostly a non-supporter of the police in general, or neither?

- I generally support the police.
- I generally do not support the police.
- I am neither supportive or non-supportive of the police.
- I am anti-police.
- Not comfortable answering
- Other:

Nice/Mean

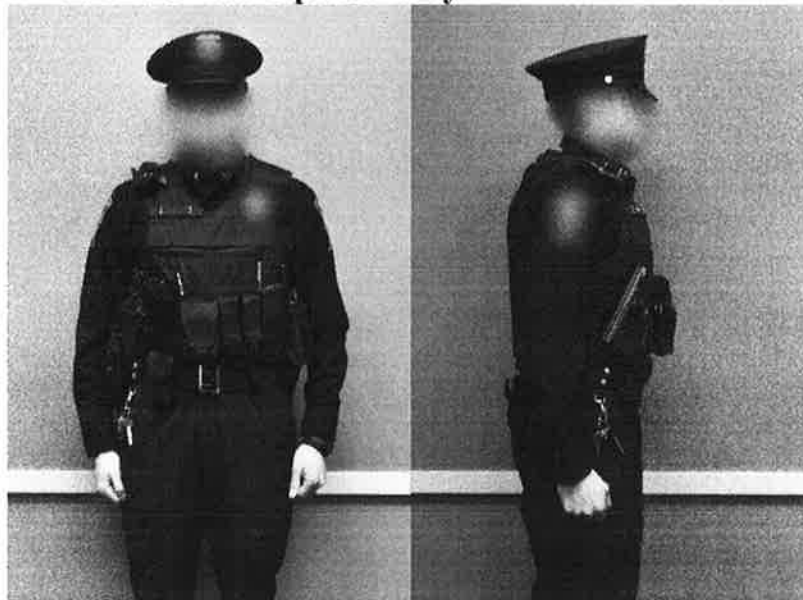
In this section, you are asked to evaluate the officer depicted and whether his personality is "nice" or "mean" based only on the photo you are shown.

Is this officer's personality "nice" or "mean"?



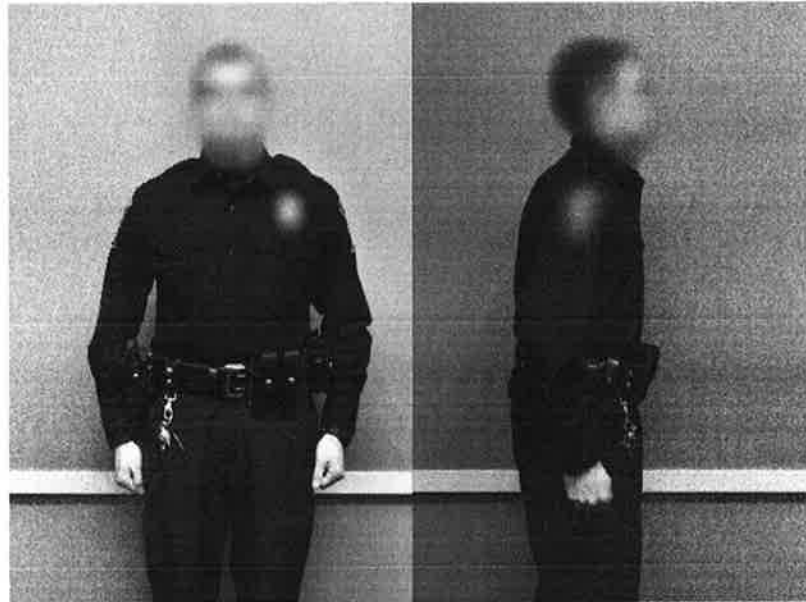
Mean 1 2 3 4 5 Nice

Is this officer's personality "nice" or "mean"?



Mean 1 2 3 4 5 Nice

Is this officer's personality "nice" or "mean"?



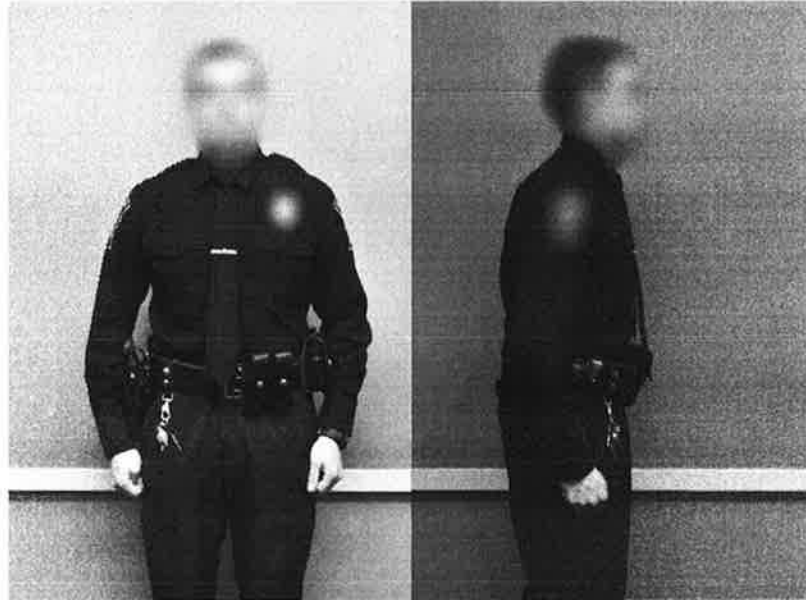
Mean 1 2 3 4 5 Nice

Is this officer's personality "nice" or "mean"?



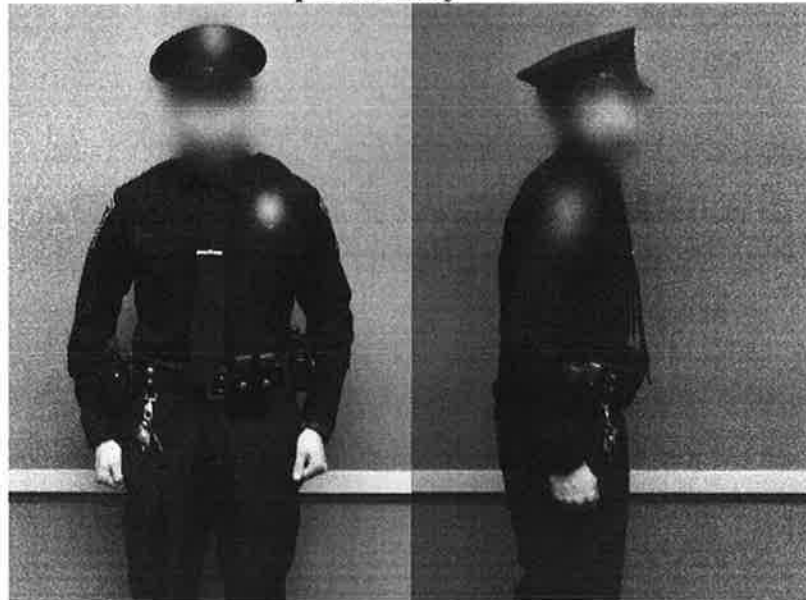
Mean 1 2 3 4 5 Nice

Is this officer's personality "nice" or "mean"?



Mean 1 2 3 4 5 Nice

Is this officer's personality "nice" or "mean"?



Mean 1 2 3 4 5 Nice

Warm/Cold

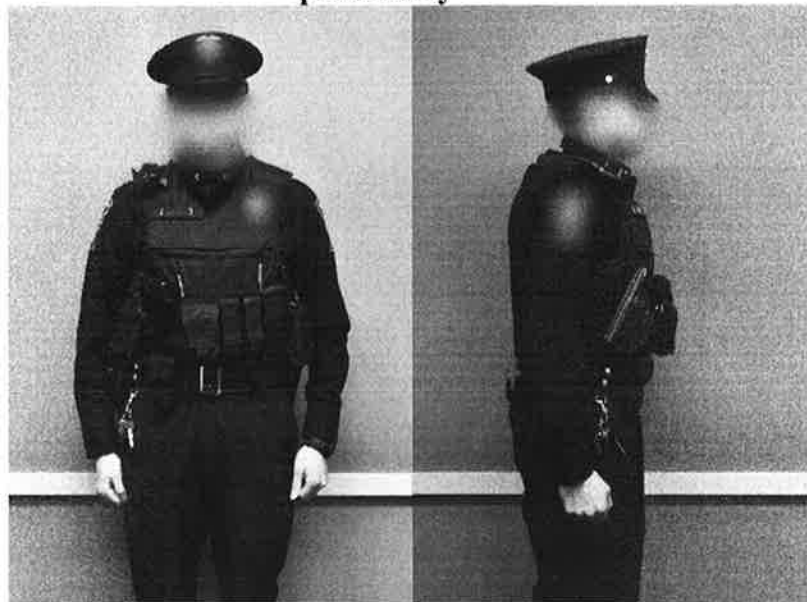
In this section, you are asked to evaluate the officer depicted and whether his personality is "warm" or "cold" based only on the photo you are shown.

Is this officer's personality "warm" or "cold"?



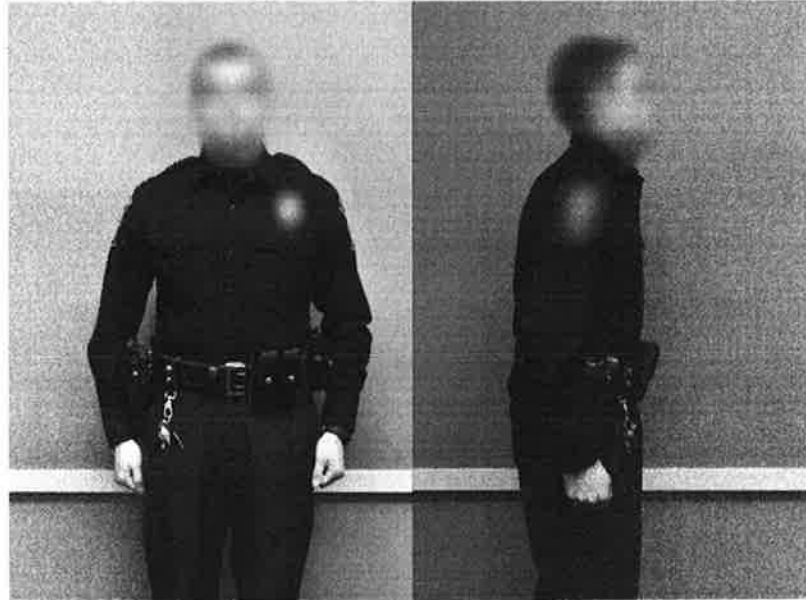
Cold 1 2 3 4 5 Warm

Is this officer's personality "warm" or "cold"?



Cold 1 2 3 4 5 Warm

Is this officer's personality "warm" or "cold"?



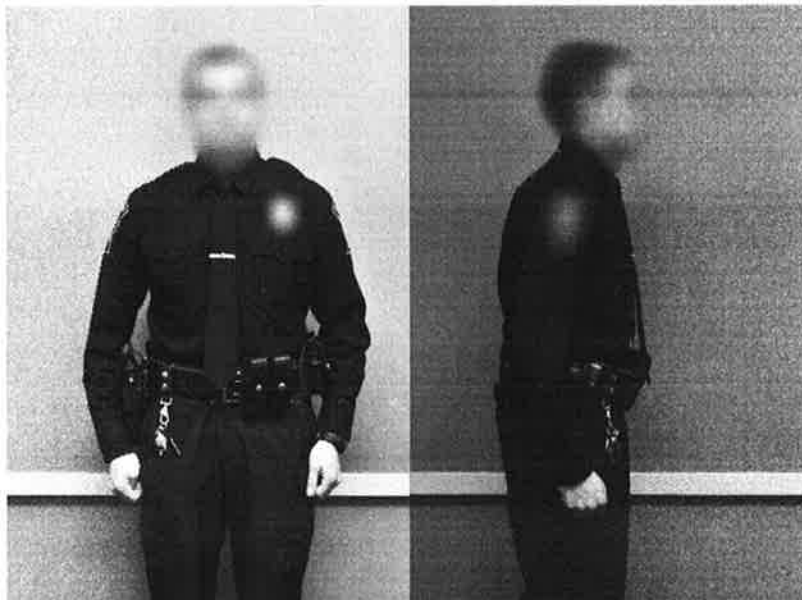
Cold 1 2 3 4 5 Warm

Is this officer's personality "warm" or "cold"?



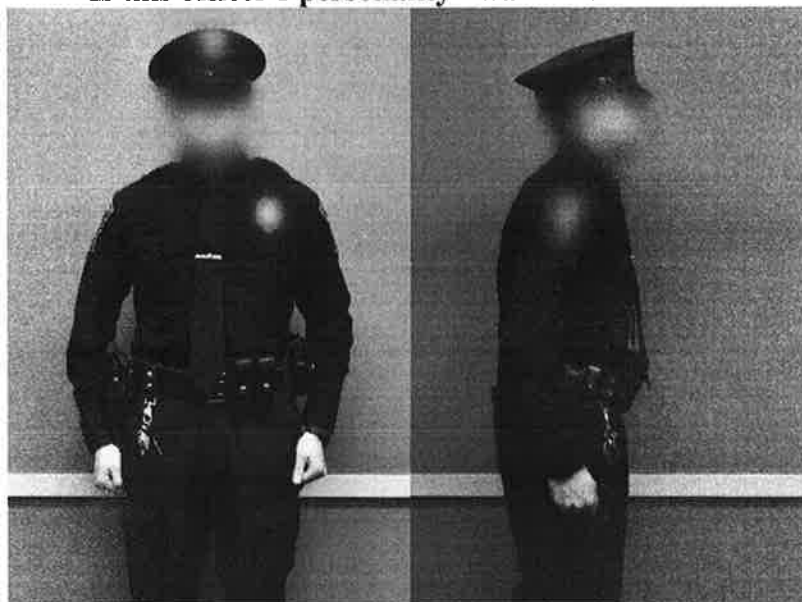
Cold 1 2 3 4 5 Warm

Is this officer's personality "warm" or "cold"?



Cold 1 2 3 4 5 Warm

Is this officer's personality "warm" or "cold"?



Cold 1 2 3 4 5 Warm

Gentle/Forceful

In this section, you are asked to evaluate the officer depicted and whether his personality is "gentle" or "forceful" based only on the photo you are shown.

Is this officer's personality "gentle" or "forceful"?



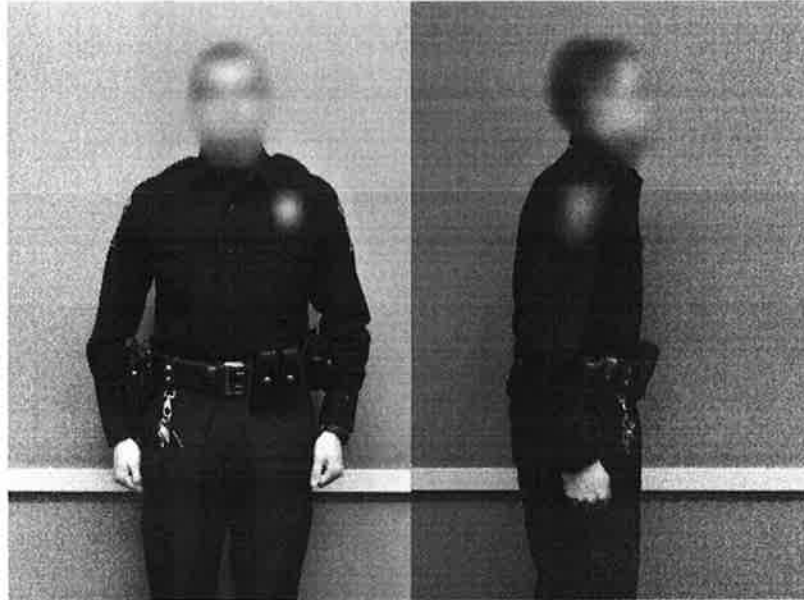
Forceful 1 2 3 4 5 Gentle

Is this officer's personality "gentle" or "forceful"?



Forceful 1 2 3 4 5 Gentle

Is this officer's personality "gentle" or "forceful"?



Forceful 1 2 3 4 5 Gentle

Is this officer's personality "gentle" or "forceful"?



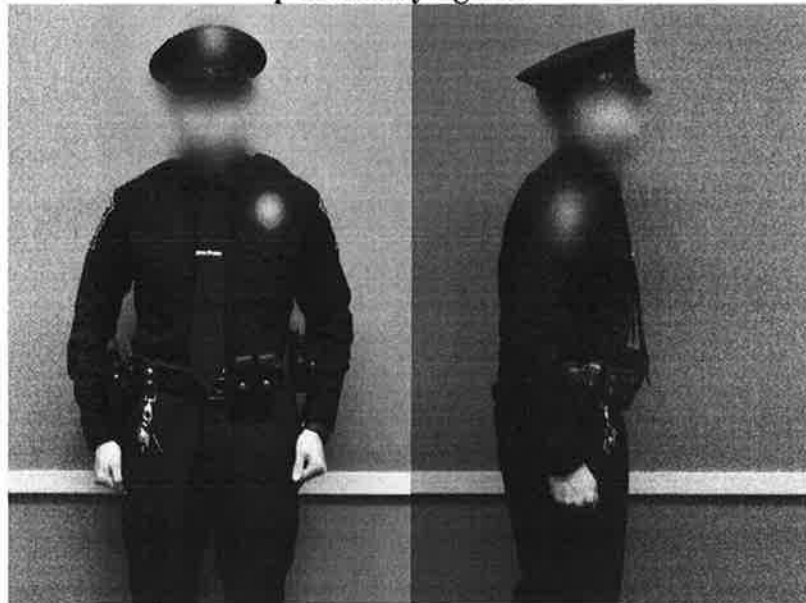
Forceful 1 2 3 4 5 Gentle

Is this officer's personality "gentle" or "forceful"?



Forceful 1 2 3 4 5 Gentle

Is this officer's personality "gentle" or "forceful"?



Forceful 1 2 3 4 5 Gentle

Friendly/Unfriendly

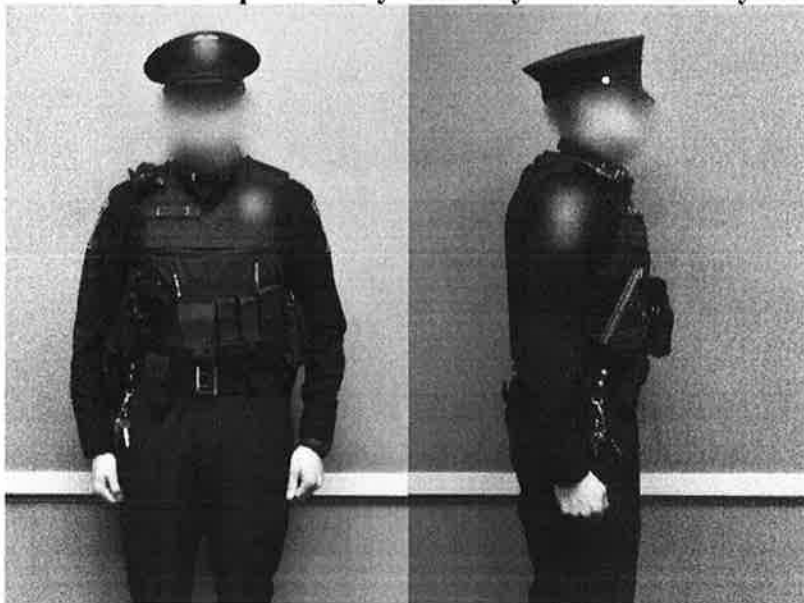
In this section, you are asked to evaluate the officer depicted and whether his personality is "friendly" or "unfriendly" based only on the photo you are shown.

Is this officer's personality "friendly" or "unfriendly"?



Unfriendly 1 2 3 4 5 Friendly

Is this officer's personality "friendly" or "unfriendly"?



Unfriendly 1 2 3 4 5 Friendly

Is this officer's personality "friendly" or "unfriendly"?



Unfriendly 1 2 3 4 5 Friendly

Is this officer's personality "friendly" or "unfriendly"?



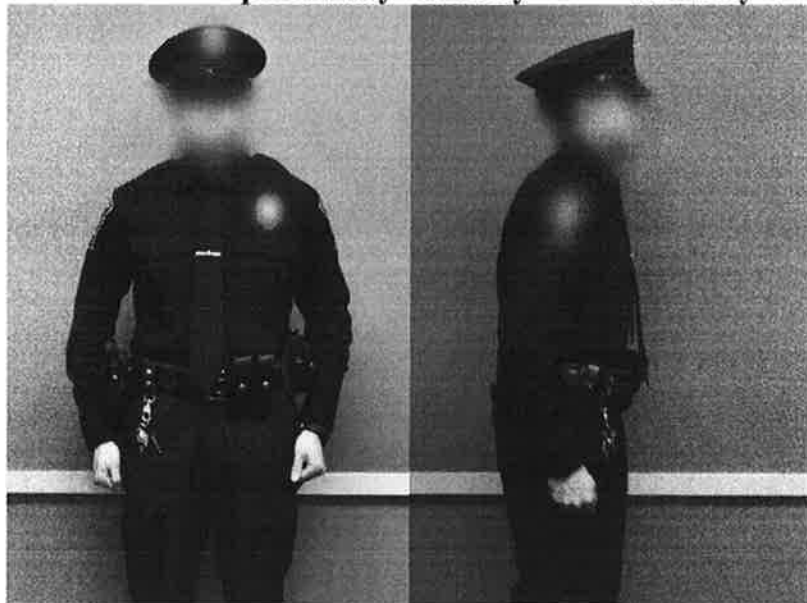
Unfriendly 1 2 3 4 5 Friendly

Is this officer's personality "friendly" or "unfriendly"?



Unfriendly 1 2 3 4 5 Friendly

Is this officer's personality "friendly" or "unfriendly"?



Unfriendly 1 2 3 4 5 Friendly

Passive/Aggressive

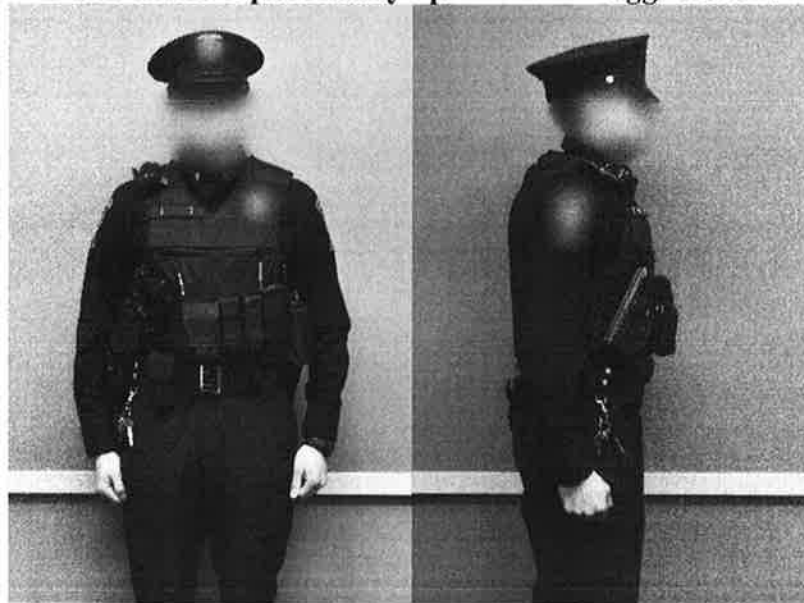
In this section, you are asked to evaluate the officer depicted and whether his personality is "passive" or "aggressive" based only on the photo you are shown.

Is this officer's personality "passive" or "aggressive"?



Aggressive 1 2 3 4 5 Passive

Is this officer's personality "passive" or "aggressive"?



Aggressive 1 2 3 4 5 Passive

Is this officer's personality "passive" or "aggressive"?



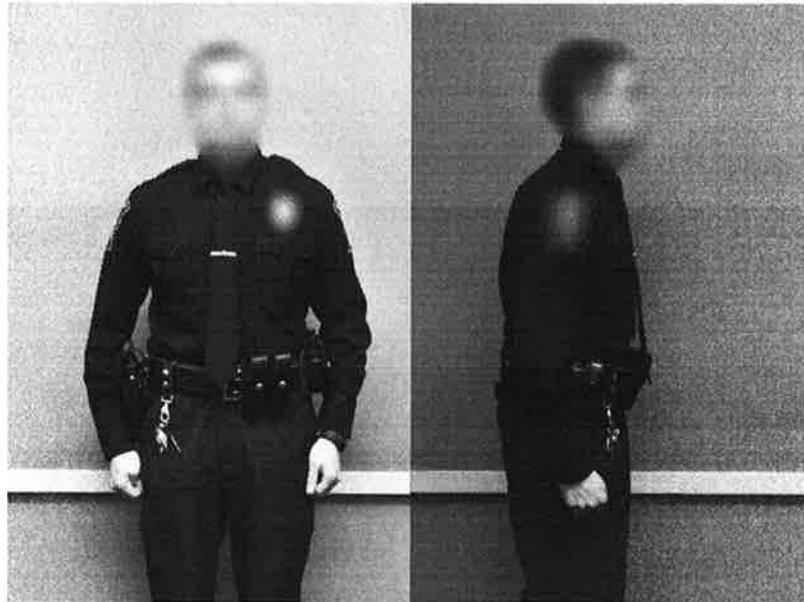
Aggressive 1 2 3 4 5 Passive

Is this officer's personality "passive" or "aggressive"?



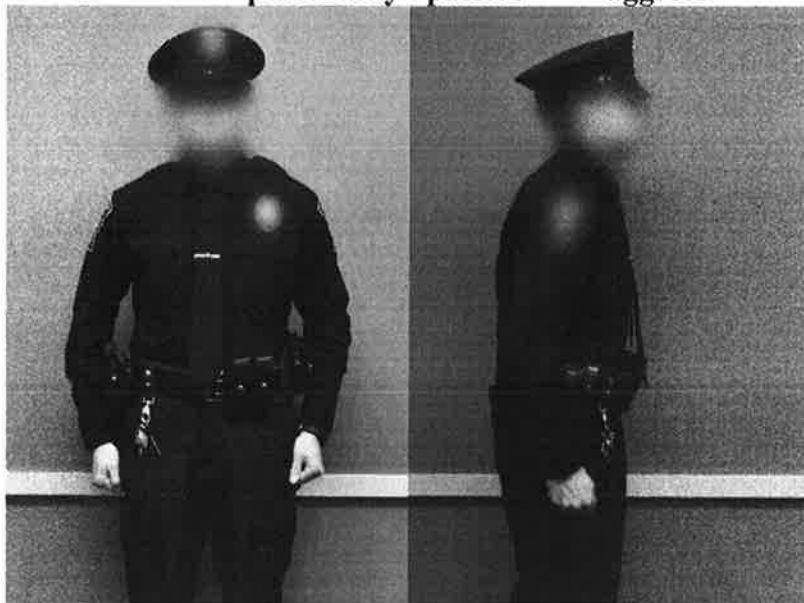
Aggressive 1 2 3 4 5 Passive

Is this officer's personality "passive" or "aggressive"?



Aggressive 1 2 3 4 5 Passive

Is this officer's personality "passive" or "aggressive"?

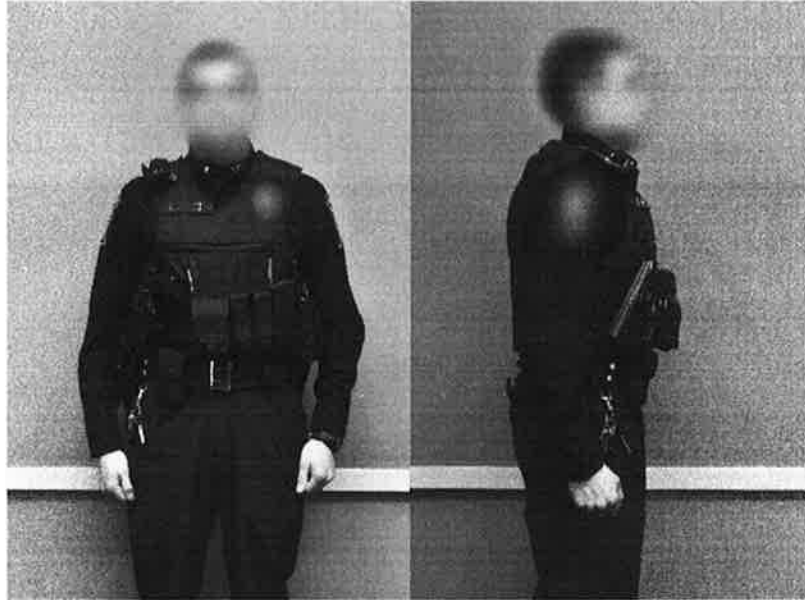


Aggressive 1 2 3 4 5 Passive

Honest/Corrupt

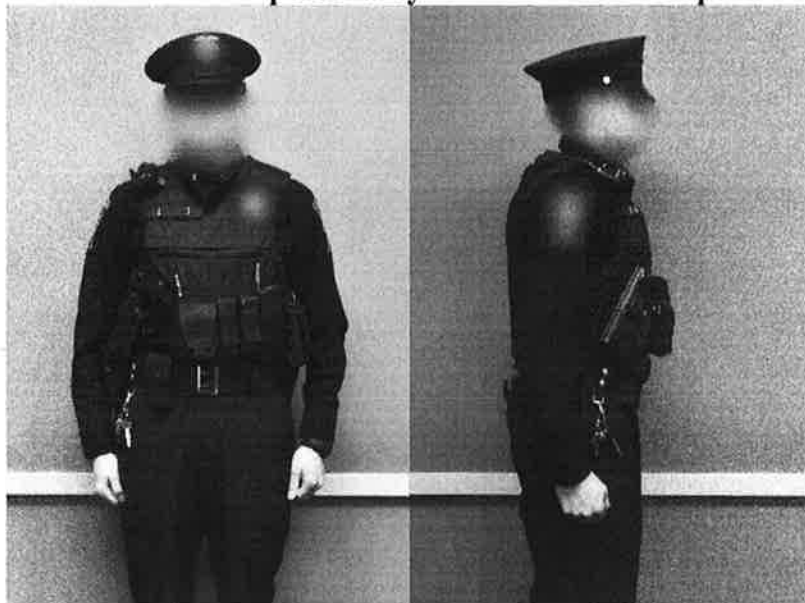
In this section, you are asked to evaluate the officer depicted and whether his personality is "honest" or "corrupt" based only on the photo you are shown.

Is this officer's personality "honest" or "corrupt"?



Corrupt 1 2 3 4 5 Honest

Is this officer's personality "honest" or "corrupt"?



Corrupt 1 2 3 4 5 Honest

Is this officer's personality "honest" or "corrupt"?



Corrupt 1 2 3 4 5 Honest

Is this officer's personality "honest" or "corrupt"?



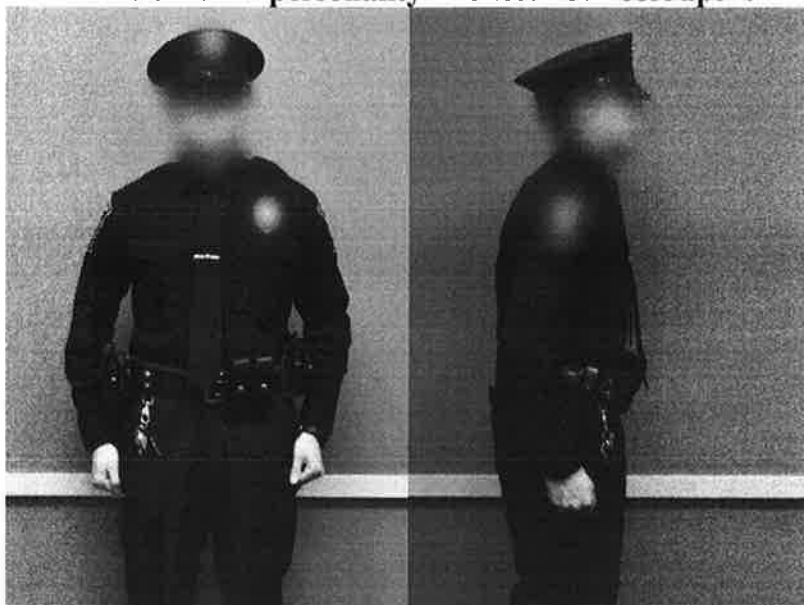
Corrupt 1 2 3 4 5 Honest

Is this officer's personality "honest" or "corrupt"?



Corrupt 1 2 3 4 5 Honest

Is this officer's personality "honest" or "corrupt"?



Corrupt 1 2 3 4 5 Honest

All done! Please click Submit below!

Thank you for participating! Please feel free to share the survey link with others you might know who would want to participate. You may close this browser window at any time, thanks again for your help and have a great day!

Biography of the Author

Lucas J. Hallett is a graduate student in the Master of Leadership Studies program at the University of Southern Maine. Lucas's undergraduate experience was also at USM, where he earned a B.S. in Applied Technical Leadership. Lucas is a seven year law enforcement officer, with four years in the Marine Corps prior to that. Lucas also holds Associate degrees in Criminal Justice from the Southern Maine Community College and in General Studies from the American Military University. Lucas grew up in Falmouth, Maine and currently residents in Gray, Maine with his wife and their two dogs and cat.