

University of Alabama in Huntsville

LOUIS

RCEU Project Proposals

Faculty Scholarship

1-1-2020

A Pilot Study of Religious and Political Sources of Moral Attitudes Towards Police and Protest

Robert Thompson

University of Alabama in Huntsville

Follow this and additional works at: <https://louis.uah.edu/rceu-proposals>

Recommended Citation

Thompson, Robert, "A Pilot Study of Religious and Political Sources of Moral Attitudes Towards Police and Protest" (2020). *RCEU Project Proposals*. 69.

<https://louis.uah.edu/rceu-proposals/69>

This Proposal is brought to you for free and open access by the Faculty Scholarship at LOUIS. It has been accepted for inclusion in RCEU Project Proposals by an authorized administrator of LOUIS.

**Black or Blue:
A Pilot Study of Religious and Political Sources
of Moral Attitudes Towards Police and Protest**

Dr. Robert Thomson, Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology

CTC 203C, 256-824-2297, rat0019@uah.edu

RCEU2020-SOC-RT-01

Project Description

A number of highly publicized police-minority violence events have recently thrust social inequalities into the national spotlight, including the deaths of Eric Garner, Michael Brown, Tamir Rice, Walter Scott, Freddie Gray, and others. Social movements such as Black Lives Matter and Blue Lives Matter have emerged in direct response to such incidents, and others. Current research has not yet caught up, however, to the ways in which religion and politics frame responses to these incidents. The current study aims to understand how racially different conservative Christians filter these stories through the lens of their religious beliefs.

Specifically, I—along with a colleague at Rice University—am presently conducting hour-long interviews with 24 individuals who regularly attend one of three Baptist churches in Houston, Texas, including one predominantly black church, one predominantly white church, and one racially diverse church. Interviews include questions about police (i.e., confidence, trust, perceived misconduct, equal treatment) and social movements (e.g., Black Lives Matter, All Lives Matter, Blue Lives Matter, Antifa, alt-right and white nationalist groups), as well as participation in social movements. Our goal is to produce a research article and provide initial findings to inform a larger scale survey study on the topic. To date, 5 interviews have been completed, and we are in the process of scheduling the remaining interviews.

Student Duties, Contributions, and Outcomes

The primary tasks for the student include at least one of the following: 1) transcribing interviews from the raw audio to written form; 2) coding responses to categorize them into major themes that emerge during the interviews; and 3) surveying relevant literature on the topic and drafting annotated bibliographies. Tangible contributions therefore include interview transcriptions, coded interview responses, and annotated bibliographies. If so inclined, the student would be welcome to present findings at a regional conference. Specific outcomes include developing skills for qualitative research methods, including transcription and coding interview data.

Student Selection Criteria

All students are welcome to apply, though strong preference is given to students who have taken either Qualitative Methods or Research Methods through the Department of Sociology, as well

as at least one of the following courses offered through the Department of Sociology:
Introduction to Sociology, Introduction to Criminology, Deviance & Social Control, Social Stratification, Race & Ethnicity, and Religion & Crime. Preference will also be given to Juniors and Seniors.

Faculty/Research Staff Mentorship

The student will work directly with Dr. Thomson for all project-related tasks. Dr. Thomson will plan to meet with the student at least once weekly, more often as necessary.