

2021

## The Effects of Police Officer Ideology on Opinions of Marijuana Legalization, Decriminalization, and Medical Marijuana

Erin Alpandinar

Follow this and additional works at: [https://repository.lsu.edu/honors\\_etd](https://repository.lsu.edu/honors_etd)



Part of the [Food and Drug Law Commons](#), [Law and Philosophy Commons](#), [Law and Psychology Commons](#), and the [Law Enforcement and Corrections Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Alpandinar, Erin, "The Effects of Police Officer Ideology on Opinions of Marijuana Legalization, Decriminalization, and Medical Marijuana" (2021). *Honors Theses*. 78.  
[https://repository.lsu.edu/honors\\_etd/78](https://repository.lsu.edu/honors_etd/78)

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Ogden Honors College at LSU Scholarly Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in Honors Theses by an authorized administrator of LSU Scholarly Repository. For more information, please contact [ir@lsu.edu](mailto:ir@lsu.edu).

The Effects of Police Officer Ideology on Opinions of Marijuana Legalization,  
Decriminalization, and Medical Marijuana

Erin Alpandinar

### **Abstract**

The United States is experiencing a criminal justice crisis, with mass incarceration and increased demands to reform the system. While there are demands for reform in all areas of the criminal justice system, a large number of demands focus on marijuana reform. There are three areas to consider when looking at marijuana reform: legalization, decriminalization, and medical marijuana. This study uses data from a survey of law enforcement to discover the connection between a police officer's political ideology and their opinions on marijuana legalization, decriminalization, and medical marijuana. The study utilizes cross tabulations and gamma tests to analyze the study and relationship between the variables. Results suggest that liberal police officer's are more likely than their conservative counterparts to support marijuana legalization, decriminalization, and medical marijuana. This study hopes to show that dialogue between law enforcement and advocates for drug reform could be very beneficial.

## Introduction

The United States has five percent of the world's population, but almost 25% of the world's incarcerated population. In 1972, there were only 200,000 people incarcerated in the United States but that number has grown to 2.2 million (Criminal Justice Reform 2020). The United States spent eight even billion dollars in 2015 on jails and prisons, compared to the mere seven point four billion spent in 1975. Not only does the United States incarcerate a larger percent of its citizens than any other country in the world, the mass incarceration problem disproportionately affects both the poor and minorities (Alexander 2010; Carson & Sabol, 2012; Criminal Justice Reform 2020; National Research Council, 2014).

However, within criminal justice reform there are many sub-categories meant to greatly reduce mass incarceration, such as marijuana reform. As the ACLU explains the war on marijuana still continues, with marijuana arrests still occurring at higher rates compared to other illegal drugs (Edwards et al., 2020). Further, racial disparities are present in marijuana arrests and these disparities have not seen any improvement since 2010. Importantly, the ACLU finds that following decriminalization and legalization in certain states, marijuana arrests have been found to decrease (Edwards et al., 2020). Though many states have contributed to marijuana reform through instituting policies of decriminalization, legalization, and expungement of low-level marijuana arrests, marijuana reform still warrants attention.

Though much is known about marijuana reform little is known about the attitudes of law enforcement officers towards marijuana reform and why these attitudes exist. Specifically this study looks to address officer perceptions of various solutions to marijuana reform. It seeks to look at attitudes towards policies such as decriminalization and recreational marijuana as well as attitudes towards enforcement of marijuana. Law enforcement attitudes toward marijuana reform

are significant considering officer attitudes have been demonstrated to have the potential to impact how they perform their duties (Paoline, et al., 2000; Torres 2018) and have shown that officers are less likely to aggressively enforce offenses they perceive as less severe (Paoline 2004; Brown 1981). In addition, existing scholarship has been largely descriptive, and limited to gauging officers' attitudes towards drugs and drug use (Jorgensen 2018; Petrocelli, et al., 2014; Moore & Palmiotto 1997; Beck, et al., 1982). Using social identity theory, self-categorization theory, and Goode's notion of cultural conservatism, I argue that law enforcement attitudes towards marijuana are primarily shaped by political views. Specifically, I test whether liberal law enforcement officers are in favor of decriminalization, medical marijuana, and recreational marijuana using a national online survey of law enforcement officers.

## **Literature Review**

### *Mass Incarceration*

Criminal justice reform has ranged from policies to increase the presence of the system (such as the War on Drugs) to modern criminal justice reforms aiming to combat issues such as mass incarceration and racial inequalities present in the system. Donnelly (2017) explains that over the past fifty years "...criminal justice has transformed from a 'subject of policy' to an 'object of policy'". Ideas about enhancing the criminal justice system to address crime and disorder continued and grew stronger from the War on Crime through the War on Drugs (Hinton 2016). The War on Drugs effectively increased the size and presence of federal drug control agencies, and pushed through a number of measures that would greatly impact illegal drug enforcement (Hinton 2016; Stern 2017). Mandatory minimum sentences were meant to motivate the government to prosecute high-level drug offenders by mandating specific sentence lengths before the opportunity for release. Three-strikes laws also emerged during this period which

allowed for a life sentence if a defendant accumulated three felonies, despite the specific nature of them (Stern 2017). Other policies enacted during this era include life without parole, increases in plea bargaining, and increase in federal funds to local law enforcement to support their drug enforcement endeavors (Alexander 2010). Importantly for this study the Comprehensive Drug Abuse Prevention and Control Act placed marijuana as a schedule 1 drug with heroin and LSD (Stern 2017).

The impact of this era of criminal justice reform has resulted in what is referred to as mass incarceration. Between 1973 and 2009, the U.S. state and federal prison population grew from 200,000 to 1.5 million inmates (National Research Council, 2014). By 2010 the incarceration rate reached its peak with 2,279,100 adults incarcerated (Glaze & Kaeble, 2014). Importantly, this increase in incarceration has not been the result of increasing crime rates (Alexander, 2010; Beckett & Sasson, 2003; Hawdon & Woods, 2014; National Research Council, 2014). Within this large issue of mass incarceration, there are racial disparities in arrest rates and incarceration. In 2010, the imprisonment rate for Black Americans was 4.6 times higher than that of Whites (National Research Council, 2014). By 2012, approximately 60% of those in American prisons were minorities (Carson & Sabol, 2012). A major contributor to such racial disparities are racial disparities in drug enforcement. Though White's and Blacks have inconsequential differences in rates of drug use (Hawdon 2005), drug-related arrest rates for Blacks have evidenced to be higher than Whites since the War on Drugs (Blumstein & Wallman, 2006; Mitchell & Caudy, 2013; National Research Council, 2014). Beyond this a number of scholars point to policies passed as a result of the War on Drugs, such as mandatory minimums and three strikes laws, as contributors to racial disparities in imprisonment (Chen, 2008; McDonald & Carlson, 1994 Rodriguez, 2003; Sutton, 2013). For example, Blacks received 10%

longer prison sentences than Whites after mandatory minimum sentencing guidelines were imposed (Maxfield & Kramer, 1998; Mustard, 2001).

### *Marijuana Reform*

The War on Drugs significantly contributed to the increase in prisoners incarcerated, specifically prisoners of color, due to marijuana possession, manufacturing, and distribution (Bureau of Justice Statistics 2021). As a result, a portion of the current criminal justice reform has centered specifically on reforming how we deal with marijuana. Historically, many scholars have noted the relationship between race and marijuana legislation and enforcement. Ahren (2020) explains that for the majority of the history of the United States there were no laws or restrictions on marijuana cultivation and use. The United States did not begin to restrict marijuana until 1914, however, early regulation was based on stopping importing and not individual use. This early era of substance regulation was racially motivated and allowed the government to “regulate” certain immigrant and minority groups. (Provine 2007). Ahren (2020, pg. 389) explains:

Legislation specific to marijuana followed a similar pattern: as marijuana became linked with a disfavored social group, criminal sanctions followed. In the 1920s and 30s, marijuana became heavily associated with immigrants from Mexico; politicians portrayed these immigrants as enjoying superhuman powers while under the influence of the drug and linked violent criminality and sexual licentiousness with marijuana

Twenty three years ago, marijuana was made illegal under state and federal law. The War on Drugs expanded the attention given to the enforcement and prosecution of marijuana offenses and subsequently contributed to mass incarceration. King and Mauer (2005) found that since 1990 the War of Drugs shifted its focus to low-level marijuana offenses, where 82% of the

increase in drug arrests from 1990-2002 (450,000) was for marijuana offenses and mostly for possession. Within the same period of study they also find that African Americans made up fourteen percent of marijuana users but thirty percent of those arrested for marijuana related offenses (King and Mauer 2005).

As a result of the impact of the War on Drugs on marijuana enforcement and prosecution criminal justice reform has specifically sought to change how the U.S. deals with marijuana. Advocates of changes to marijuana legislation explain that the enforcement of marijuana laws is expensive, has not decreased the drug's popularity, that such laws distract from the enforcement of more significant crimes, and studies find negative or null effects of marijuana use and crime (Bennett et al., 2008; Adda et al., 2014; Braakmann & Jones 2014; Drug Policy Alliance 2021 Fergusson & Horwood 1997; Green et al., 2010; Markowitz 2005; Norstrom & Rossow 2014; Pacula & Kilmer 2003). Among the dominant changes to deal with marijuana are three forms of regulation--decriminalized use, medical use, and recreational use. First, many states have implemented reforms to decrease punishments for low-level marijuana use or what is also called decriminalization. Decriminalization allows for marijuana possession to continue to remain illegal but minimizes the severity of punishment for possession. Thirty-one states have passed laws to decriminalize possession of marijuana (Marijuana Policy Project 2021). There have been both pros and cons discussed regarding decriminalization. It is hypothesized that tax-payers would save money from decriminalization (Caulkins and Kilmer 2016) and that decriminalization would allow the criminal justice system to divert its efforts to more serious crimes and public safety concerns (Marijuana Policy Project 2021). This latter theory is yet to be determined and it may be the case that rates of misdemeanor arrests, of which marijuana possession is included, remain unchanged even after decriminalization (Kozlowski 2019).



Beyond decriminalization thirty-three states have moved to allow for medical marijuana (Garcia and Hanson 2020). Medical marijuana allows for individuals to use marijuana with a doctor's recommendation. Here, this proposal seeks to account for the fact that marijuana use can be used to treat a number of ailments including pain, and post-traumatic stress disorder (Greer, 2014; Wilsey et al., 2016). However, despite these benefits, there are costs associated with the medicalization of marijuana. For example, in states where marijuana is legalized for medical purposes, children under twelve have higher exposure to marijuana (Wang et al., 2013; Cao et al., 2016; Onders et al., 2015). Importantly, despite fears that medical marijuana dispensaries will increase violent and property crime, this is largely unsupported by studies (Gavrilova et al., 2018; Huber et al., 2016; Morris et al., 2014; Maier et al., 2017; Shepard & Blackley 2016).

The final proposal is the recreational legalization of marijuana. A minority of states have legalized the recreation use of marijuana, and looking at the level of support behind the legalization of marijuana (Brenan 2020), it is expected for other states to follow. Colorado and Washington were the first states to legalize recreational marijuana in 2012 and now fifteen states have legalized the recreational use of marijuana for adults twenty-one and over (Marijuana Policy Project 2021). Like other proposals, research has explored the costs and benefits of recreational marijuana. For example, there will be less individuals brought into the criminal justice system due to the war on drugs (Marijuana Policy Project 2021), crime may decrease (Dragone, et al., 2019) and more crimes can become cleared (Makin et al., 2018).

#### *Social Identity, Self-Categorization, and Attitudes Toward Marijuana Among Law Enforcement*

A key factor shaping changes to marijuana legislation are attitudes toward marijuana. One factor that impacts an individual's support for marijuana legalization is age. There is a so-called "silent generation," (born between 1925 and 1945) that are seen to be the most opposed to

marijuana legalization. However, over the past 15 years, support for marijuana legalization has grown for individuals among all birth cohorts. The silent generation has continued to be opposed to marijuana legalization, but general replacement has been playing a role in limiting their voice (Caulkins, et al., 2012). Generally speaking, older individuals believe marijuana is more dangerous and are unsure about legalization (Ellis et al., 2019), and younger individuals are more likely to support legalization (Denham 2019).

Also, there appears to be a difference in support for legalization based on gender. Elder and Green explain that, “men’s greater propensity relative to women to use marijuana is a major driver behind the gender gap,” (Elder and Green 2018). The gender gap regarding support for Marijuana legalization is expected to get smaller as marijuana becomes more normalized and its stigma continues to decrease (Elder and Green 2018). Looking towards race, White and blacks show greater support than minorities other than African Americans (Denham 2019). Also, past marijuana use was found to be one of the strongest factors in determining opinion of marijuana legalization (Cruz et al., 2016).

A consistent finding within this literature is that political ideology has an influence on attitudes toward marijuana. Overall, the legalization of medical marijuana is determined more by the ideology of the public and views toward government (Cruz et al., 2016; Kim 2019). Specifically, individuals characterizing themselves as liberal, left of center, or centrist tend to express greater support for legalization than those who consider themselves conservative (Caulkins, et al., 2012; Ellis et al., 2019). These results largely speak to the political socialization of people. Researchers have argued that partisan identification, which largely reflects people’s political ideology, is a form of social identity, especially in moments of political polarization (Abramowitz and Saunders, 2008; Greene, et al., 2002; Levendusky, 2009). According to Social

Identity Theory (e.g., Tajfel, 1982; Huddy, 2001), individuals categorize themselves and others who share a similar characteristic as members of a (in-)group and those who do not share that characteristic as members of another (out-)group. Within your respective group, members are socialized into the beliefs that align with the group as favorable and the beliefs of the (out-)group as unfavorable. On a theoretical level, self-categorization (Turner, et al., 1987) extends the social identity model by suggesting that individuals define themselves on three levels. At the superordinate, or interspecies, level, humans observe themselves as distinct from other living beings, and at the intermediate level, individuals define themselves based on the social (or political) groups to which they belong. At the subordinate level, individuals define themselves according to unique personal attributes. Importantly, the self-categorization model recognizes that identity expression tends to vary based on circumstance. For example, at certain points in time, individuals may regard political party identification as relatively insignificant, but at other times (e.g., times of intense partisanship) party affiliation may be a key indicator of social identity (see, for discussion, Bolstad & Dinas, 2017; Groenendyk, 2018; Iyengar & Krupenkin, 2018; Twenge et al., 2016).

The self-categorization model offers insight into potential differences between political ideology and party affiliation as attitudinal determinants. At the subordinate level, Carney, Jost, Gosling, and Potter (2008) observed that liberalism and conservatism, as ideologies, may be rooted in basic personality dispositions, or “stable individual differences in psychological needs, motives, and orientations toward the world” (p. 807). Graham, Haidt, and Nosek (2009) found that liberals and conservatives tend to rely on different sets of moral foundations, and Jost, Federico, and Napier (2009) discussed associations between ideologies and cognitions. At the intermediate level, individuals may define themselves, to some extent, based on the political

party with which they are affiliated. As indicated, research (Iyengar & Westwood, 2014) has suggested that increases in affective polarization have led opposing groups to view each other in an increasingly hostile manner.

### The Current Study

While much research has focused on attitudes toward marijuana, little attention has been given to the views of law enforcement on this matter. Some have suggested that the reason for a lack of inquiry into police officer attitudes towards marijuana is the police occupational subculture (Petrocelli, et al., 2014), which supports secrecy and be suspicious of non-police outsiders (Petrocelli & Smith 2000). Existing scholarship has been largely descriptive, and limited to gauging officers' attitudes towards drugs and drug use (Jorgensen 2018; Petrocelli, et al., 2014; Moore & Palmiotto 1997; Beck, et al., 1982). In one of the earliest studies Beck et al., (1982) find that most officers already perceived lax enforcement of marijuana laws. The most recent study finds that officers who self-identified as being more liberal were associated with possessing reduced punitive attitudes (Jorgensen 2018). Regardless, officer attitudes have been demonstrated to have the potential to impact how they perform their duties (Paoline et al., 2000; Brown 1981; Torres 2018; Torres, et al., 2018). That is, police officers may employ their powers of discretion to selectively enforce- or not enforce- laws that they perceive as being of insignificant severity (Paoline 2004; Brown 1981). Along with social identity and self-categorization principles it is expected that political socialization plays a role in law enforcement attitudes toward marijuana. Thus the more liberal a law enforcement officer is the more supportive they are of loosened marijuana enforcement and the more they favor approaches that allow for more tolerant uses of marijuana. This interpretation specifically aligns Goode's (1998:

20) interpretation of cultural conservatives who embody a set of conservatives that are in favor of the get tough usage of the criminal justice system:

Cultural conservatives are not particularly interested in calculating costs and benefits to minimize the harms that the current drug policy might inflict, nor do they consider the impact of alternate drug policies, since that would open the door to thinking about some forms of legalization. What counts is crushing the monster of drug abuse.

Specifically this study seeks to test the following hypotheses.

H1: Liberal law enforcement officers are more likely to support recreational use of marijuana.

H2: Liberal law enforcement officers are more likely to support medical marijuana.

H3: Liberal law enforcement officers are more likely to support decriminalization.

## **Methods**

### *Data Collection*

The following study is based on secondary survey data. Specifically the data comes from PoliceOne.com's "Policing in an Era of Legal Marijuana" survey.<sup>1</sup> This survey was conducted between March 20 and March 17, 2020. Respondents had to have been sworn law enforcement members of PoliceOne, not retired, and not in federal law enforcement. A total of 3,620 respondents completed the survey. Following the survey an additional five respondents were dropped because they did not meet the criteria based on information provided in write-in responses. Results presented below are based on a final total of 3,615 respondents. Importantly, the convenience sample is not representative of the overall law enforcement population.

Respondents were mostly male (91%), White (85%), from agencies with 0-99 sworn personnel (54%), and from municipal or city law enforcement agencies (56%). Based on comparison with

---

<sup>1</sup> Access to the survey was granted by researchers overseeing this study.

the Law Enforcement Management and Administration Survey (2016) respondents are largely in line with the trends across these categories but the sample greatly over represents Whites.

### *Measures*

There are four variables present in this study, all of which are ordinal. They are the following: *support for decriminalization*, *support for medical marijuana*, *support for recreational marijuana*, and *political affiliation*. The first variable is defined as an officer's level of support for the decriminalization of marijuana. The survey captured support for decriminalization through a single item requesting the officers indicate their level of support based on the following question: "Decriminalization is a policy that keeps drug possession unlawful, but requires no or reduces criminal sanctions (such as a \$25 dollar fine). Based on this definition do you think marijuana should be decriminalized in your state?" (Yes = 4, Maybe = 3, No = 2). *Support for medical marijuana* is defined as an officer's level of support for medical marijuana. The survey captured support for medical marijuana through a single item requesting the officers indicate their level of support based on the following question: "Medical marijuana legalization involves changing the law to allow people to legally access marijuana by allowing doctors to recommend its use based on patient need. Based on this definition do you think it should be legal to medical marijuana in your state?" (Yes = 4, Maybe = 3, No = 2). Next, *support for recreational marijuana* is defined as an officer's support for recreational marijuana. The survey captured support for recreational marijuana through a single item requesting the officers indicate their level of support based on the following question: "Recreational marijuana legalization involves changing the law to allow people to legally access marijuana through policies that allow selling marijuana in the same way that alcohol is sold (regulated distribution). Based on this definition do you think it should be legal to have recreational marijuana in your

state?” (Yes = 4, Maybe = 3, No = 2). Lastly, *political affiliation* is defined as an officer’s political beliefs. This variable was captured through a single item requesting the officers indicate their level of support based on the following question: “How would you describe your political views on most issues?”. This variable was recoded into a 3-point ordinal scale (Very Liberal or Somewhat Liberal = 3, Moderate = 2, Somewhat Conservative or Very Conservative = 1).

### *Analysis*

In order to determine whether there is a relationship between being liberal and supporting decriminalization, medical marijuana, and recreational marijuana, I present a series of cross tabulations and gamma tests. Results are analyzed with reference to the gamma statistic which provides measures of association for ordinal variables.

### **Results**

Table 1 presents the summary statistics for the variables under investigation. The mean average of political affiliation is 1.32 and the median suggests that the majority of respondents are conservative. Support for recreational marijuana has a mean of 2.74. The median showcases that the majority of officer’s surveyed do not support recreational marijuana. The mean for medical marijuana is 3.26. Here, the median showcases that the majority of officer’s surveyed tend to be conflicted on medical marijuana, not giving a “yes” answer but also not giving a “no” answer. Lastly, the mean value for support for decriminalization is 2.79 and the median showcases that the majority of officer’s surveyed do not support decriminalizing marijuana.

*Table 1. Summary statistics*

	N	Mean	Median	Std. Dev.	min	max
Political Affiliation	3594.00	1.32	1.00	0.54	1.00	3.00
Support for Recreational Marijuana	3599.00	2.74	2.00	0.90	2.00	4.00
Support for Medical Marijuana	3596.00	3.26	4.00	0.84	2.00	4.00
Support for Decriminalization	3607.00	2.79	2.00	0.89	2.00	4.00

Table 2 showcases that only 25.30% of conservatives said they supported recreational marijuana, whereas 63.57% of liberals said they did. The gamma statistic from this cross tabulation is 0.3871. This suggests the strength and direction of the relationship of the hypothesis that liberals are more likely to support recreational marijuana is moderately strong. Thus there is support for the hypothesis one.

*Table 2. Crosstabulation: Political Affiliation and Support for Recreational Marijuana*

Support for Recreational Marijuana	Political Affiliation			
	Conservative	Moderate	Liberal	Total
No	1618	391	31	2040
%	63.38	43.49	24.03	56.97
Maybe	289	134	16	439
%	11.32	14.91	12.40	12.26
Yes	646	374	82	1102
%	25.30	41.60	63.57	30.77
Total	2553	899	129	3581
	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00
Gamma	.3871			

Table 3 shows that 45.49% of conservatives said they supported medical marijuana, whereas 81.40% of liberals said they did. This showcases that conservative officers are more likely to support medical marijuana than recreational marijuana. However, liberal officers still show more support for medical marijuana as a whole. The gamma statistic from this cross tabulation is 0.3670. This shows that there is a moderately strong relationship between a liberal political affiliation and support for medical marijuana. Thus, findings show support for hypothesis two.



*Table 3. Crosstabulation: Political Affiliation and Support for Medical Marijuana*

Support for Medical Marijuana	Political Affiliation			
	Conservative	Moderate	Liberal	Total
No	763	148	12	923
	29.90	16.48	9.30	25.79
Maybe	628	176	12	816
	24.61	19.60	9.30	22.80
Yes	1161	574	105	1840
	45.49	63.92	81.40	51.41
Total	2552	898	129	3579
	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00
Gamma	.3670			

In Table 4, 25.96% of conservatives support decriminalizing marijuana whereas 63.57% of liberals support decriminalization. The gamma statistic from this cross tabulation is 0.3569. This shows that there is a moderately strong relationship between being a liberal police officer and support for decriminalizing marijuana. Overall, this suggests support for hypothesis three.

*Table 4. Crosstabulation: Political Affiliation and Support for Decriminalization of Marijuana*

Support for Decriminalization	Political Affiliation			
	Conservative	Moderate	Liberal	Total
No	1472	355	31	1858
	57.54	39.36	24.03	51.77
Maybe	422	169	16	607
	16.50	18.74	12.40	16.91
Yes	664	378	82	1124
	25.96	41.91	63.57	31.32
Total	2558	902	129	3589
	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00
Gamma	.3569			

## Discussion and Conclusion

Through this analysis of the PoliceOne's Policing in an Era of Legal Marijuana survey, it was hypothesized that liberal law enforcement officers would be more supportive of various marijuana legislation proposals. Results suggest that the political affiliation of police officers are correlated to their opinions on the decriminalization of marijuana, medical marijuana, and

recreational marijuana. Specifically the study shows that officers who are more liberal are more likely to support decriminalization of marijuana, medical marijuana, and recreational marijuana, whereas their conservative counterparts are less likely to support decriminalization of marijuana, medical marijuana, and recreational marijuana.

While others scholars have considered police officers' perceptions of marijuana, this paper is one of few to deal directly with officers' perceptions of legalization, and is the only known paper to link these perceptions to enforcement attitudes. This study showed that liberal law enforcement officers are more supportive of decriminalizing marijuana, medical marijuana, and recreational marijuana. This aligns with previous findings from Caulkins et al. (2012) who find that political ideology has an influence on attitudes toward marijuana and Jorgensen (2018) who finds that liberal officers possessed reduced punitive attitudes towards drugs. These results are especially significant as the sample of the survey was a law enforcement sample where one would likely expect that law enforcement officers to be more homogenous in their views towards marijuana policies. Given the evidence we can expect a subset of police officers to be susceptible to progressive drug legislation. However, there still remains a large number of conservative police officers who actively do not support decriminalization, medical marijuana, and recreational marijuana, despite the general public's view that marijuana should be legalized (Brenan 2020).

Police officers play a large role in marijuana law enforcement, and it is important to consider what opinions they hold on various marijuana policies (such as decriminalization, medical marijuana, and recreational marijuana) and what aspects of their personal beliefs influence this opinion considering officer attitudes have been demonstrated to have the potential to impact how they perform their duties (Paoline et al., 2000; Brown 1981; Torres 2018; Torres,

et al., 2018). As this study has shown, political affiliation directly impacts police officer's opinions on marijuana laws. The evidence suggests that it may be beneficial for drug reform advocates to be open and willing to reach out to law enforcement to support drug reform. For instance, reform advocates could reach out to non-profits, such as the Law Enforcement Action Partnership (LEAP) whose mission is to unite and mobilize the voice of law enforcement in support of drug policy and criminal justice reforms (LEAP 2021). Creating communication between drug reform advocates and law enforcement through any means is both necessary and extremely beneficial in helping to combat the issues surrounding marijuana reform.

The following study is not without limitations and results should be interpreted with caution. The study under represents non-White officers based on comparison with Law Enforcement Management and Administrative Statistics (LEMAS) Survey (Department of Justice, 2013). Variation among departments is likely (see Kearns, 2017) and the results should be used a guide to frame and construct studies evaluating attitudes toward drug policies at local levels. Nonetheless, the study recruited nationally across the spectrum of non-federal police agencies and evidence suggests that such an approach is recommended to reduce sample bias and increase generalizability (Blair, et al., 2013; Nix, et al., 2017; Shadish, et al., 2002).

## References

- Abramowitz, A. I., & Saunders, K. L. (2008). Is Polarization a Myth? *The Journal of Politics*, 70(2), 542–555.
- Ahrens, D. (2020). Retroactive Legality: Marijuana Convictions and Restorative Justice in an Era of Criminal Justice Reform. *The Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology*, 110(3), 379–440.
- Austin, J. (2005). Rethinking the Consequences of Decriminalizing Marijuana. *Prisonpolicy.org*. The JFA Institute. Retrieved from [https://www.prisonpolicy.org/scans/jfa/marijuana\\_report.pdf](https://www.prisonpolicy.org/scans/jfa/marijuana_report.pdf)
- Blair, E. A., Czaja, R., & Blair, J. (2013). Designing surveys: a guide to decisions and procedures. *Amazon*. SAGE. Retrieved March 23, 2021, from <https://www.amazon.com/Designing-Surveys-Guide-Decisions-Procedures/dp/1412997348>
- Brenan, M. (2021, January 14). Support for Legal Marijuana Inches Up to New High of 68%. *Gallup.com*. Gallup. Retrieved March 23, 2021, from <https://news.gallup.com/poll/323582/support-legal-marijuana-inches-new-high.aspx>
- Brown, A., Calice, M., Dederich, B., Johnson, J., Maul, B., & McBride, B. (2018, December). Medical Marijuana in Wisconsin: A Cost-Benefit Analysis. *lafollette.wisc.edu*. Retrieved from <https://lafollette.wisc.edu/images/publications/cba/2018-CBA-MARIJUANA.pdf>
- Carney, D. R., Jost, J. T., Gosling, S. D., & Potter, J. (2008). The Secret Lives of Liberals and Conservatives: Personality Profiles, Interaction Styles, and the Things They Leave Behind. *Political Psychology*, 29(6), 807–840.

- Caulkins, J. P., Farber, C. C., & Vesely, J. V. (2012). Marijuana Legalization: Certainty, Impossibility, Both, or Neither? *Journal of Drug Policy Analysis*, Article 1, 5(1).
- Criminal Justice Reform. (2020, March 16). *Equal Justice Initiative*. Equal Justice Initiative 2020. Retrieved from <https://eji.org/criminal-justice-reform/>
- Cruz, J. M., Queirolo, R., & Boidi, M. F. (2016). Determinants of Public Support for Marijuana Legalization in Uruguay, the United States, and El Salvador. *Journal of Drug Issues*, 46(4), 308–325.
- Daniller, A. (2020, May 30). Two-thirds of Americans support marijuana legalization. *Pew Research Center*. Pew Research Center. Retrieved January 17, 2021, from <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/11/14/americans-support-marijuana-legalization/>
- Decriminalization. (2019). *MPP*. Marijuana Policy Project 1995-2020. Retrieved from <https://www.mpp.org/issues/decriminalization/>
- Denham, B. e. (2019). Attitudes toward legalization of marijuana in the United States, 1986-2016: Changes in determinants of public opinion. *International Journal of Drug Policy*.
- Donnelly, E. A. (2016). The Politics of Racial Disparity Reform: Racial Inequality and Criminal Justice Policymaking in the States. *American Journal of Criminal Justice*, 42(1), 1–27.
- Economic and Social Costs of Legalized Marijuana. (2018, November 8). *Centennial Institute*. Retrieved from <http://cdn-centennial.pressidium.com/centennial/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Economic-and-Social-Costs-of-Legalized-Marijuana-v1.3.pdf>

- Edwards, E., Greytak, E., Madubuonwu, B., Sanchez, T., Beiers, S., Resing, C., Fernandez, P., et al. (2020). A Tale of Two Countries: Racially Targeted Arrests in the Era of Marijuana Reform. *ACLU*. 2020 American Civil Liberties Union. Retrieved from [https://www.aclu.org/sites/default/files/field\\_document/tale\\_of\\_two\\_countries\\_racially\\_targeted\\_arrests\\_in\\_the\\_era\\_of\\_marijuana\\_reform\\_revised\\_7.1.20\\_0.pdf](https://www.aclu.org/sites/default/files/field_document/tale_of_two_countries_racially_targeted_arrests_in_the_era_of_marijuana_reform_revised_7.1.20_0.pdf)
- Elder, L., & Greene, S. (2018). Gender and the Politics of Marijuana.
- Ellis, J. D., Resko, S. M., Szechy, K., Smith, R., & Early, T. J. (2019). Characteristics Associated with Attitudes toward Marijuana Legalization in Michigan. *Journal of Psychoactive Drugs*, 51(4), 335–342.
- Enforcement. (n.d.). *Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS)*. Retrieved March 23, 2021, from <https://www.bjs.gov/content/dcf/enforce.cfm#salespos>
- Flamm, M. W. (2005). *Law and order: street crime, civil unrest, and the crisis of liberalism in the 1960s*. Columbia University Press.
- Garcia , A., & Hanson, K. (2020, November 10). *State Medical Marijuana Laws*. Retrieved from <https://www.ncsl.org/research/health/state-medical-marijuana-laws.aspx>
- Gimpel, J. (2003). Partisan Hearts and Minds: Political Parties and the Social Identities of Voters. By Donald Green, Bradley Palmquist, and Eric Schickler. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002. 272p. \$35.00. *Perspectives on Politics*, 1(03), 606–607.
- Goode, E. (1998). Strange Bedfellows: Ideology, Politics, and Drug Legalization.
- Graham, J., Haidt, J., & Nosek, B. A. (2009). Liberals and conservatives rely on different sets of moral foundations. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 96(5), 1029–1046.

Graham, R. (2014, October 8). Is Marijuana Good for Public Health? *Daily JSTOR*. 2020 ITHAKA. Retrieved from <https://daily.jstor.org/marijuana-and-public-health/>

King, R. S., & Mauer, M. (2006, February 9). The war on marijuana: The transformation of the war on drugs in the 1990s.

Law enforcement management and administrative statistics (LEMAS): 2016 sample survey of law enforcement agencies. (2016). *Department of Justice*. Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR). Retrieved from <http://doi.org/10.3886/ICPSR36164.v2>.

Levendusky, M. (2009). The Partisan Sort.

Marijuana Legalization. (n.d.). *MPP*. Retrieved March 23, 2021, from <https://www.mpp.org/issues/legalization/>

Mission & Vision. (2020, February 12). *Law Enforcement Action Partnership*. Retrieved January 17, 2021, from <https://lawenforcementactionpartnership.org/about-us/mission-and-vision/>

Nix, J., Pickett, J. T., Baek, H., & Alpert, G. P. (2017). Police research, officer surveys, and response rates. *Policing and Society*, 29(5), 530–550.

Nowotny, K., Bailey, Z., Omori, M., & Brinkley-Rubinstein, L. (2020). COVID-19 Exposes Need for Progressive Criminal Justice Reform. *American Journal of Public Health*, 110(7), 967–968.

Platt, T., & Takagi, P. (1981). LAW AND ORDER IN THE 1980'S. *Crime and Social Justice*.

Project, M. P. (n.d.). Decriminalization. *MPP*. Retrieved March 23, 2021, from <https://www.mpp.org/issues/decriminalization/>

Roberts, D. E. (2004). The Social and Moral Cost of Mass Incarceration in African American Communities. *Stanford Law Review*, 56(5).

Shadish, W. R., Cook, T. D., & Campbell, D. T. (2002). Experimental and quasi-experimental designs for generalized causal inference. Boston, MA: Houghton-Mifflin

Stern, J. D. (n.d.). The War on Drugs and Jim Crow's the Most Wanted: A Social and Historical Look at Mass Incarceration. *Ramapo Journal of Law and Society*. Retrieved from <https://www.ramapo.edu/law-journal/files/2017/06/The-War-on-Drugs-and-Jim-Crow%E2%80%99s-the-Most-Wanted.pdf>

Tajfel H. and Turner J.C., The social identity theory of intergroup behavior, In S. Worchel and W. Austin (eds) *Psychology of Intergroup Relations*, 1986 Chicago; Nelson-Hall, 7-24.

Turner, J. C., Hogg, M. A., Oakes, P. J., Reicher, S. D., & Wetherell, M. (1987). *Rediscovering the social group: A self-categorization theory*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Williams, A., Scott, A. A., & Kruzan, S. (2018, March 28). Dirty Water. Ear Hustle.