

Social Anxiety in the Presence of Police Officers

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Background

- ❑ Police are trained to look for non-verbal cues in witnesses and suspects as indicators of lying
 - ❑ Lack of eye contact, fidgeting, hand gestures, sweating, standing far away
- ❑ Research shows nonverbals are not reliable indicators of lying
- ❑ There is **much variation in the use of nonverbals** based on emotional reaction, race, and social anxiety

Research Questions

1. Is there an association between fear of negative evaluation (FNE), race, and feelings of safety in the presence of police officers?
2. Does race and FNE affect feelings of safety in the presence of police officers?
3. Does the race of the officer affect feelings of safety for participants?

Hypotheses

- ❑ **Race and FNE will significantly predict feelings of safety in the presence of police officers**
- ❑ For **African American** participants, the **more FNE** one endorses, the **less safe one feels** in the presence of police officers
- ❑ For **Caucasian** participants, the **more FNE** one endorses, the **more safe one feels** in the presence of police officers.
- ❑ For **African American** participants, the **race of the police officer will influence feelings of safety**
 - ❑ Feel safer with a same-race officer
- ❑ For **Caucasian** participants, the **race of the police officer will not influence feelings of safety**

Variables

Independent Variables:

- ❑ Participant race
- ❑ FNE

Dependent Variables:

- ❑ Feelings of safety around police officers in general
- ❑ Feelings of safety around same-race police officers
- ❑ Feelings of safety around other-race police officers

Covariate:

- ❑ Total PANAS Negative affect score

Method

Participants

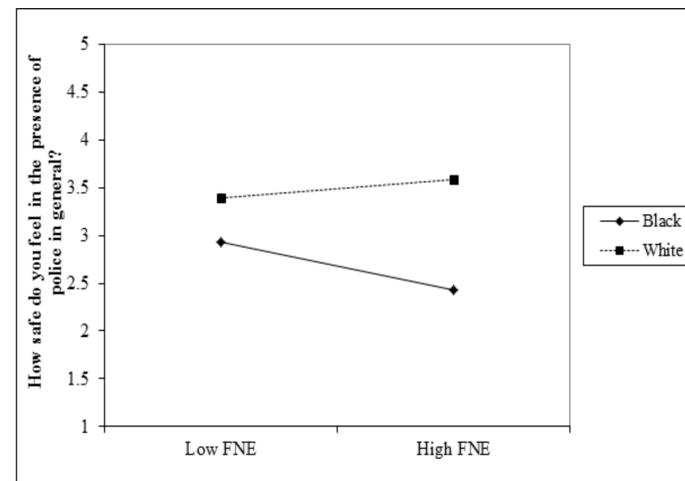
- ❑ 224 undergraduate college students aged 18 to 48 years
 - ❑ 76.8% female; 21% male; 2.2% transgender/other
 - ❑ Black/African American (50%); White/European American (50%)
- ❑ Undergraduate research pool

Procedures

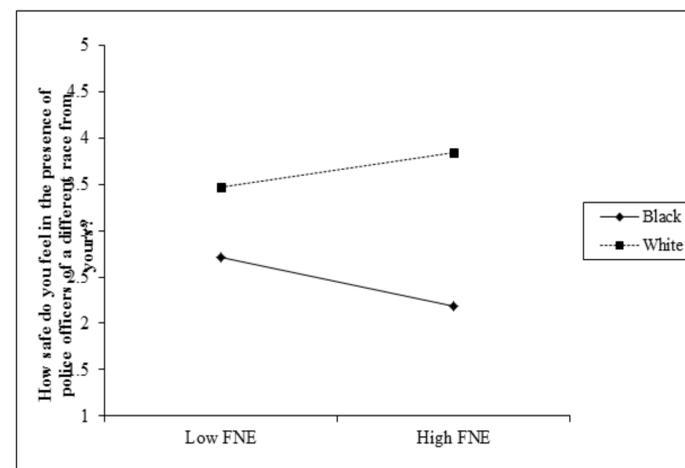
- ❑ Survey study of healthy relationships among college students
 - ❑ Demographic data
 - ❑ Fear of Negative Evaluation--Brief Version (FNE-B)
 - ❑ Anxiety about Violence Questionnaire
 - ❑ Positive and Negative Affect Scale (PANAS)

Results

How safe do you feel in the presence of police officers in general?



How safe do you feel in the presence of police officers of a different race from yours?



Results

- ❑ If one is Black, the more FNE one endorses, the less safe one feels in the presence of other-race police and police in general
- ❑ If White, high FNE participants feel significantly SAFER in the presence of other-race police officers than do low FNE white participants
- ❑ In the presence of same-race police officers, White participants feel safer than Black participants regardless of FNE

Discussion

- **Police are trained** in kinesic methods, which emphasize **nonverbal cues as indicators of deception**
 - Problematic because research shows that nonverbal behaviors are not reliable indicators of lying
 - Also, individuals may display **differences in these nonverbal behaviors** for a variety of reasons:
 - **Emotional agitation**
 - E.g., use more hand gestures
 - **Racial differences**
 - Both African Americans and Hispanics have shown an increased use of gaze aversion and hand gestures when telling the truth compared to Caucasians
 - **Social anxiety**
 - Those with social anxiety (FNE is a component of social anxiety) may display “safety behaviors” aimed at maintaining a sense of safety in interpersonal situations that feel threatening
 - E.g., gaze aversion, fidgeting, etc.
- Due to their training, **police officers may mistake the use of nonverbals as indicators of lying**



Implications

Results have implications for police training techniques