Late-adolescents who intend a career as police officers hold more far-right social and political views than their peers

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One longstanding explanation for bias and excessive force in policing is selection—the assertion that those who select to work in law enforcement are more likely to hold far-right, intolerant, and anti-egalitarian views than the general public. While intuitive and widely believed, the evidence in support of the selection hypothesis is surprisingly thin. We offer a vital contribution to the literature by exploring selection at one of its earliest phases: late-adolescents entering adulthood and the career-formulation stage of life. Utilizing surveys of over 13 million late-adolescents collected across 44 years in the United States, we find that those intending a career as a law enforcement officer hold more far-right views on race relations, immigration and intercultural relations, women and gender roles, homosexuality and gay rights, freedom of speech, and criminal justice than their peers intending other careers or their modal peer who is undecided with respect to career intentions and serves as a "blank slate" comparison group. Critically, these findings largely hold among Whites and non-Whites but are attenuated among women. These sources of heterogeneity are noteworthy in light of recent evidence suggesting that hiring more non-White officers may ameliorate bias and excessive force in policing and accompanying pushes to diversify police forces. Our findings add caution to such pushes by suggesting that the non-Whites who select into law enforcement may hold views that reproduce, versus attenuate, existing police bias. In contrast, our findings direct reform efforts toward expanding the ranks of female officers in police forces and bias testing, filtering, and training during police recruitment.

Policing | Public Opinion | Political Attitudes |

Significance Statement

Recent high-profile cases of excessive force and racial bias in U.S. policing has drawn international attention and raised questions about policy solutions to plummeting police legitimacy. While it is well established that police hold more right-wing views than the general public, it is less clear whether this is the result of selection—more intolerant and anti-egalitarian individuals choose to become police officers—or socialization—police become more intolerant and anti-egalitarian throughout their careers as a function of internal culture. Using a survey of over 13 million late-adolescents collected across 44 years, we provide robust evidence for the selection hypothesis, highlighting the importance of policies aimed specifically at screening and training of candidates in early stages of the police recruitment process.

In addition to documented bias against ethno-racial minorities (1, 2), the scholarly literature offers evidence of unfavorable police treatment of immigrants (3, 4), women (5, 6), gay and transgender individuals (7, 8), and the poor (9, 10). In short, in societies with multifaceted stratification, decades of scholarship uncover bias in policing against various lower status and minority groups. While scholarship offers several explanations for the sources of this bias, one longstanding hypothesis points to the type of people who select into police work in the first place. This selection hypothesis posits that people who choose a career in law enforcement harbor far-right, intolerant, and anti-egalitarian social and political views (11–13).

The selection hypothesis is grounded in literature on personality, social, and organizational psychology yielding person-organization congruence theory (14). This theory contends that people seek out and thrive in organizations that suit their inclinations, motivations, and worldviews (15). Individuals who vehemently uphold group-based social hierarchies are argued to locate themselves and flourish in "hierarchy-enhancing" institutions that produce or reinforce the subordination of lower status groups (16). These institutions are defined as those that maintain social hierarchy and intergroup inequality by making "disproportionately greater positive social allocations (or fewer negative social allocations) to dominant groups than subordinate groups" (14). A prime example of hierarchy-enhancing institutions are law enforcement agencies in the United States, which historically functioned to maintain racial caste systems (17) and continue to operate with systemic bias toward ethno-racial and other minority groups (1, 2). In short, this framework contends that people who gravitate toward employment in law enforcement endorse social hierarchy and harbor animus toward subordinate social groups.

While typically not stated in formal academic terms, the selection hypothesis frequently underlies popular discourse and investigative reports about race and policing in America. Historical perspectives on contemporary racial bias in American policing often point to slave patrols as one of the earliest forms of policing and the overlap between racist institutions (e.g., the Ku Klux Klan) and law

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enforcement bodies in the 19th and 20th centuries (17, 18). These historical accounts imply a routine practice of racist Whites seeking out posts in law enforcement to participate in the subjugation of non-Whites and the maintenance of racial hierarchy. Over the past decade, multiple reports have been issued documenting the entry, presence, and leadership of White supremacists in law enforcement agencies throughout the United States (19, 20). One report contends that "it is widely acknowledged that racist officers subsist within police departments around the country" and that explicit racism is "an especially harmful form of bias, which remains entrenched within law enforcement" (19). Even prominent reforms intended to redress racial bias in policing are predicated upon belief in the selection hypothesis. For example, a key assumption underlying implicit bias training for police officers is that bias in policing partially derives from negative stereotypes held by incoming officers (21). Perhaps more explicit, initiatives to diversify police forces are rooted in the logic that, "if you draw from a demographically different pool of recruits, one with overall lower levels of racial bias, then there should be less of a problem with racism on the force" (22). In short, the selection hypothesis appears axiomatic among activists, journalists, and policymakers in the United States as a component of systemic racism in law enforcement.

When reviewing decades of empirical social science research, however, the evidence in support of the selection hypothesis is surprisingly thin. Four veins of empirical literature bear on the selection hypothesis. One vein of research relies on surveys of law enforcement officers (13, 23–25) or administrative personnel records matched with voter files (26) to contrast officers' social and political orientations with those held by civilian comparison groups. These studies typically find that officers are more right-leaning in their social views and political orientations than civilian comparison groups. Such studies, however, are unable to adjudicate between selection versus police culture and occupational socialization (11) as sources of observed differences in attitudes between officers and civilians.

An alternative approach taken in a second vein of research is to survey police cadets and junior officers—who have yet to undergo, or experienced only brief, occupational socialization—and compare their attitudes to civilian samples (27–29). These studies, however, typically rely on small samples of cadets and junior officers collected within single jurisdictions. Moreover, these studies are conducted outside of the United States, leaving a conspicuous opening for replication in a nation where bias and excessive force in policing have been highly salient over the past decade. A third vein of research investigates cadets' and junior officers' self-reported motives for joining the police force (30–32). While this literature finds that having power and authority are consistently important motives, studies in this vein do not compare the strength of these motives to that observed among persons in civilian professions. Moreover, they do not ask questions that situate power and authority motives within the context of group hierarchies (e.g., having power and authority *over ethno-racial minorities, immigrants, or LGBTQ+ people*).

A fourth vein of research explores interest in entering law enforcement among samples of late-adolescents. Instead of studying people who have already selected to work in law enforcement—even if only recently (e.g., cadets)—this approach "rewinds" the process further back in time by studying interest in law enforcement among those in the career-selection stage of life (33–35). This approach is promising as a means of studying the genesis of selection early on in life; however, studies in this vein typically suffer from one conspicuous limitation: they *do not* measure attitudes toward lower status or stigmatized groups. One study within this vein of research comes close: relying on samples of undergraduate students at a single American university, Sidanius and colleagues (16) found that students who viewed a career as a police officer as "very attractive" scored higher on social dominance orientation than peers viewing this career choice as "very unattractive." However, while the social dominance scale used in this study captures general inegalitarian views (e.g., "This country would be better off if inferior groups stayed in their place"), this study did not measure animus toward specific subordinated or stigmatized groups (e.g., Blacks, Latinos, immigrants, women, homosexuals). Using a sample of undergraduates from a different American university, Sidanius and colleagues (12) found that those majoring in business or law (labeled the "power sectors") were more unfavorable to racial equality and opposed to intimate interracial relations than peers in other majors. This study, however, observed students' reported major and did not specifically capture interest in law enforcement or the intention of becoming a police officer.

Taken as a whole, these four veins of research inform us that individuals already working as law enforcement officers typically hold more right-leaning views than various comparison groups, though it remains unclear whether this is due to selection as opposed to occupational socialization. Moreover, individuals already working in law enforcement typically report that having power and authority were important motives for their career choice, though it is unknown if such motives reflect the desire to have power and authority over specific lower status or stigmatized groups. When evaluating the handful of studies on late-adolescents focused on the relationship between interest in hierarchy-enhancing careers and group-oriented attitudes, we find these studies come up short either by only measuring general inegalitarian orientations (versus antipathy toward specific groups) or by not measuring interest in specific occupations (e.g., being a police officer). In sum, across these four veins of published research, there is a surprising scarcity of studies directly testing whether people drawn to a career in law enforcement hold more far-right and antipathetic views toward ethno-racial minorities, immigrants, women, homosexuals, drug-users, criminals, and other subordinated or stigmatized groups than people drawn to alternative careers.

Our research builds on these past veins of scholarly work. First, we focus on the genesis of selection by examining the career intentions of American late-adolescents (16-20yrs) who are age-normatively entering adulthood and the career-selection stage of life. Unlike prior work using this approach (i.e., the "fourth vein" of research mentioned above), we leverage data containing a wealth of measures of views toward ethno-racial minorities, immigrants, women, homosexuals, drug-use, free speech, criminal justice, and the military. This allows us to test the following research question: do late-adolescents who gravitate toward a career in law enforcement

hold more far-right, intolerant, and anti-egalitarian social and political views than their peers leaning toward non-police careers or those who have yet to formulate a career path?

By asking and answering this question, we can shed vital light on whether the longstanding problem of bias in policing toward lower status and stigmatized social groups is present as early as late-adolescence when Americans are prompted to contemplate possible careers and identify occupations they feel drawn toward. Second, we utilize a dataset containing the reported career intentions and social and political views of over 13 million late-adolescents collected across 44 years of time spanning every state and region of the United States. Using these data, we are able to overcome small sample issues plaguing prior studies and precisely estimate parameters of interest. What is more, the immensity of these data enables us to investigate and compare the relationship of career intentions to social and political views among important subgroups, such as Whites and non-Whites, men and women. These subgroup analyses allow us to speak to research and reform initiatives aimed at enhancing ethno-racial and gender diversity in police forces as a means of mitigating bias and excessive force in law enforcement (36).

Data and Methods

Our analysis uses the 1967-2010 waves of The Freshman Survey (TFS) conducted by the Cooperative Institutional Research Program. The TFS data, codebooks, and information about sampling and methods, are archived at the Higher Education Research Institute (https://heri.ucla.edu/). The TFS is administered to incoming first-year American college students during orientation before the start of classes each Fall and has a very high response rate (typically about 75% or higher). Every wave of the TFS contains (1) a question soliciting respondents' intended career occupation, and (2) a module of questions soliciting respondents' social and political views. Given our focus on late-adolescents at the career-selection stage of life, we restrict our analysis to respondents 16-20 years of age who comprise 95.2% of the total sample from 1967-2010. These 44 waves include N=13,203,930 respondents 16-20 years of age, an average of 300,089 respondents per wave, collected across 1,775 post-secondary institutions spanning 44 years. The institutions vary considerably in terms of size, geographic location, selectivity, student demographics, and public or private status. All TFS respondents after 1981 report their 5-digit home zip code; we find that the TFS includes respondents from all 50 states and covers nearly all counties (N=3,228) and zip codes (N=32,671) in the United States.

The TFS is not designed to be a nationally representative sample of late-adolescent Americans; nevertheless, its unequaled immensity and wealth of measures provides an unrivaled opportunity to investigate the selection hypothesis, rendering it of high scientific value and able to offer a large contribution to our knowledge. When compared to young adults (i.e., those under 21yrs) from a gold-standard representative survey like the American National Election Study (ANES), the late-adolescents in the TFS do not drastically deviate on key dimensions from their peers sampled from the general population across decades from the 1960s to the 2000s. As we show in Appendix Figure S3, the late-adolescents in the TFS are slightly more white, less female (especially in the 1960s and 1970s), and drawn more from the Northeast and less from the South, than their peers appearing in the ANES. This corresponds roughly to what we expect the college-attending population to look like relative to the general population among this age cohort and across these decades. Perhaps most important, across all four decades for which we have data in the TFS and ANES, there are no appreciable differences in ideological self-placement (i.e., those who self-identify as politically "conservative") between the TFS and the ANES. While it is possible that the late-adolescents who appear in surveys like the ANES are more liberal than their peers who are harder to reach or less likely to consent to participate in social surveys, the comparisons in Figure S3 suggest that the late-adolescents appearing in the TFS who selected to enter college are not markedly different in their liberal-conservative leanings from their peers dispersed among the general population.

Independent Variables. TFS respondents are presented with roughly 47 distinct intended occupations and we constructed three binary variables each coded "1" for respondents who selected "law enforcement officer" as their likely career. The three different binary measures vary in terms of the comparison group: the first codes as "0" respondents who chose any other occupation (labeled "all other"), the second codes as "0" respondents who chose any other non-military occupation (labeled "all other civilian"),* and the third codes as "0" respondents who reported being undecided (labeled "undecided"), which is the model category (13.6%) in the data, with all others excluded from the analysis. We analyze three measures with distinct comparison groups to ensure our findings do not significantly vary depending on to whom late-adolescents intending a career in law enforcement are being compared. Across the 1967-2010 TFS, 108,400 respondents in total reported a likely career in law enforcement, with roughly N=2,464 (less than 1%) of respondents per annual wave intending to be law enforcement officers. We plot the proportion of the sample that indicates a desire to be a police officer by year in Figure S1. The number of individuals in each annual wave of the TFS who intend a career in law enforcement vastly exceeds the typical number of self-reported police officers contained in nationally representative samples of the American public (23, 25) or convenience samples of officers surveyed from cooperating law enforcement agencies (13).

One concern worth addressing in using the TFS is that samples of first-year college students may differ from the people who enter and work in law enforcement. In other words, if few law enforcement officers have college degrees, or even enter college in the first place, it may limit the real-world applicability of information gained from studying first-year college students. Two considerations are relevant in guiding our use of the TFS to study the attitudes of people gravitating toward law enforcement. First, these late-adolescents complete the TFS during orientation before the start of classes; thus, while these individuals have selected

*We include this version of the comparison group excluding respondents who intend a career in the military because the literature on person-organization congruence and social dominance orientation (14) identify the military as a prime "hierarchy enhancing" institution, yielding the expectation that those selecting into the military harbor far-right views relative to those entering civilian professions. Thus, there is *a priori* reason to expect including respondents intending to enter the military in the comparison group to bias our estimates toward zero. Ultimately, their inclusion or exclusion do not meaningfully alter our findings

Table 1. Items Analyzed from The Freshman Survey (TFS), 1967-2010

Issue Area	Wording	Label in Figures	Reverse Scored?
Race Relations	"Racial discrimination is no longer a major problem in America"	Discrimination	
	"Affirmative action in college admissions should be abolished"	Abolish AA	
	"How much consideration should college admission officers give to Whites? [Blacks / Hispanics / Asians]	Admit White – [Group]	
	"Busing is O.K. if it helps to achieve racial balance in the schools"	Busing	✓
	"The federal government is not doing enough to promote school desegregation"	Desegregation	
	In past year R – "Socialized with someone of another racial/ethnic group"	Past Socialize	✓
	Chances R will – "Have a roommate of different race/ethnicity"	Roommate	✓
	Chances R will – "Socialize with someone of another racial/ethnic group"	Future Socialize	✓
Immigration & Intercultural Relations	"Undocumented immigrants should be denied access to public education"	Deny Education	
	"Children of undocumented immigrants should be denied access to public education"	Deny Children	
	"All official federal and state documents should be printed in English only"	English Only	
	Chances R will – "Participate in a study abroad program"	Study Abroad	✓
	Importance to R – "Improving my understanding of other countries and cultures"	Understanding	✓
	R's self-rating – "Ability to work cooperatively with diverse peoples"	Cooperation	✓
	"How much consideration should college admission officers give to foreign students?	Admit White - Foreign	
Women & Gender Roles	"The activities of married women are best confined to the home and family"	Stay Home	
	"Women should receive the same salary and opportunities for advancement as men in comparable positions"	Equal Pay	✓
	"Just because a man thinks that a woman has 'led him on' does not entitle him to have sex with her"	Sex Entitled	✓
	"Abortion should be legal"	Abortion	✓
Gay Rights	"It is important to have laws prohibiting homosexual relationships"	Prohibit Relations	
	"Same-sex couples should have the right to legal marital status"	Marriage	✓
	"Gays and lesbians should have the legal right to adopt a child"	Adoption	✓
Drug Use & Control	"Marijuana should be legalized"	Marijuana	✓
	"Employers should be allowed to require drug testing of employees or job applicants"	Drug Testing	
Free Speech	"Colleges have the right to ban extreme speakers from campus"	Ban Speakers	
	"Student publications should be cleared by college officials"	Publications	
	"Dissent is a critical component of the political process"	Dissent	✓
	"Most college officials have been too lax in dealing with students protest on campus"	Protest	
Criminal Justice	"There is too much concern in the courts for the rights of criminals"	Criminal Rights	
	"The death penalty should be abolished"	Death Penalty	✓
Military	"Federal military spending should be increased"	Spending	

to enter college, we observe their career intentions and social and political views before they are "treated" with any college education. Second, according to the Bureau of Justice's Law Enforcement Management and Administrative Statistics (LEMAS) report from 2013, 32% of entry-level police officer positions required some college education, with 22.5% requiring at least a 2-year degree and 1.9% requiring a 4-year degree.[†] This 2013 report, helpfully, provides educational requirements for entry-level officers going back to 2003 and 1993, where it was found that 34% (2003) and 16% (1993) of entering officers were required to have some college education. The actual level of education of police officers in the U.S., however, greatly exceeds these baseline requirements. A 2017 CSU-Fullerton survey of 958 police departments in the U.S. found that more than half of sworn officers in the U.S. had at least a two-year degree, 30.2% had a four-year degree, and 5.4% had a graduate degree.[‡] These figures greatly mitigate the concern that first-year college students and those entering law enforcement are starkly different subsets of the American population. On the contrary, as large percentages of law enforcement officers have some experience in college, these figures suggest considerable overlap between first-year college students and those entering law enforcement. Put simply, it is plausible that many TFS respondents intending a career in law enforcement go on to become police officers, rendering these large samples of late-adolescent Americans extremely useful in testing the selection hypothesis. On a final note, to the extent our sample over-represents those with initial entry into college among late-adolescents intending a career in law enforcement, this feature of our sample should lead our analysis to understate the differences in social and political views between those tracked toward law enforcement and their peers selecting into different career tracks. This is due to the expectation that late-adolescent college entrants intending a career in law enforcement likely hold more liberal views, on average, than their peers who skip college and go directly into police academy from high school (37).

Dependent Variables. The dependent variables in our analysis include questions appearing in various years of the TFS related to several issue areas: race relations, immigration and intercultural relations, women and gender roles, homosexuality and gay rights, drug use and control, free speech, criminal justice, and the military. These issue areas cover a broad range of stigmatized and subordinated groups and group-relevant policies in the United States and generally correspond to attitudes held by those higher in social dominance orientation (38). Our inclusion of views on the drug use and control, free speech (e.g., protest and dissent), criminal justice, and the military can be viewed as validity checks, as we would expect those interested in a career in law enforcement to subscribe to "law and order" views on drug-use and control, free speech and protest, and more punitive orientations toward criminals and to support other protective services organizations.

Table 1 presents the specific items analyzed in each issue area, their wording, their label used in analyses, and whether they were reverse coded. We coded all variables so that higher values indicate holding more far-right positions. For example, for the question with the label "Discrimination," higher values indicate stronger agreement that racial discrimination is no longer a problem; for the question with the label "Future Socialize," higher values indicate a lower self-reported likelihood of socializing with someone of another race or ethnic group in the upcoming year. Additional information on variables and coding can be found in Table S1. Since no outcome was asked in every wave of the data, each analysis relies on a subset of data for years in which each item was asked. Some items were asked nearly every year (e.g. *Marijuana*) and others in just one year (e.g. *Deny Children*) (the average number of years a question was asked is 14). We

[†] https://bjs.ojp.gov/content/pub/pdf/lpd13ppp.pdf

[‡] https://www.nu.edu/blog/law-enforcement-education/

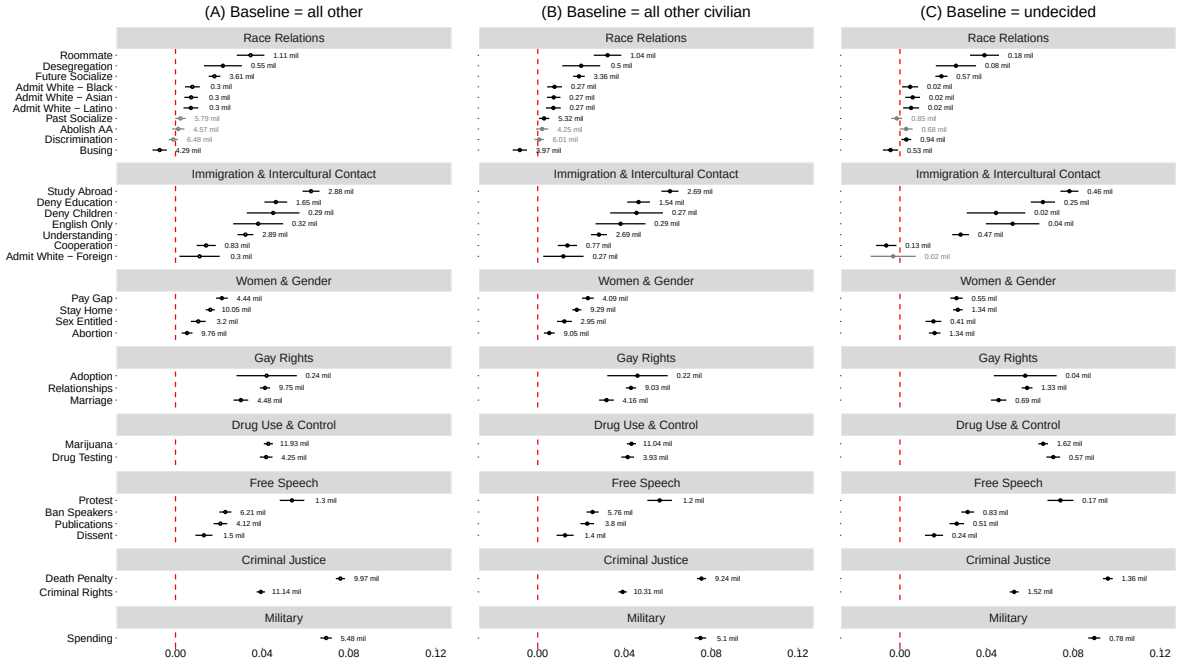

Fig. 1. Late adolescents who intend to be police officers are more conservative on a number of attitudinal dimensions

include appendix figures that illustrate when each question was asked (Figure S2) and run within-year models to show that the relationships we uncover are not solely confined to certain years but rather remain relatively stable in magnitude over time (Figure S4).

Models. We use ordinary least squares (OLS) models to regress each attitude on a dummy indicator for likely career in law enforcement (labeled *Police Career*) using each reference category operationalization ("all other", "all other civilian", and "undecided") across three separate models. We control for confounders that are theoretically linked to selecting into a career in law enforcement and social and political views. These controls include: gender, first-generation college student status, ethno-racial self-identification, citizenship status, high school GPA, liberal-conservative ideological self-identification, parental education, parental income, and parental employment in law enforcement. We pool the surveys and include a fixed-effect for survey year to control for time trends from external events. For our main models, we include missing dummies for covariates with missing values but show in Figure S5 and S6 that our models are substantively identical when estimated without controls (bivariate) or when list-wise deleting respondents with missing observations. All models use heteroskedastic-robust standard errors.

Results

In Figure 1, we display the coefficient for likely career in law enforcement (*Police Career*) on each attitudinal outcome net of controls with 95% confidence intervals. Sample sizes for each model are noted to the right of each estimate. The different panels present results from models where respondents intending a career as law enforcement officers are compared to those intending all other careers (Panel A), all other non-military civilian careers (Panel B), and the modal category who are "undecided" in their career intentions.

We begin with views on "Race Relations." Across Panels A-C, we find late-adolescents gravitating toward a career as police officers are more likely than their peers to convey aversion to prospective interracial contact—reporting lower inclinations toward taking on roommates from different ethno-racial backgrounds or socializing with members of ethno-racial outgroups. These findings are statistically significant regardless of the comparison group used, and extend to self-reported prior socializing with ethno-racial outgroups when restricting the comparison group to those intending all other civilian careers (Panel B). Next, we find that those intending a career as police officers are significantly more likely to endorse discrimination against non-Whites in favor of Whites when it comes to college admissions—a clear indicator of racial bias. Across the board (Panels A-C), intended police officers desire college admissions officers to consider White applicants over Black, Latino, and Asian applicants. With respect to views on race-related policies like desegregation, school busing, and affirmative action in college admissions, we uncover mixed findings. We find consistent and pronounced opposition to desegregation among intended police officers relative to their peers; however, support for abolishing affirmative action in college admissions, while greater among intended police officers, is more modest in size and only significant at the $p<.10$ level in Panels B and C. Assuming views over college admissions serve as an arena for expressing racial animus, we find this animus more present among intended police officers when focusing on questions explicitly mentioning White students and various ethno-racial minority groups. The denial of racial discrimination is not consistently observed to a greater degree among intended law enforcement officers—we only observe a positive and significant coefficient for *Police*

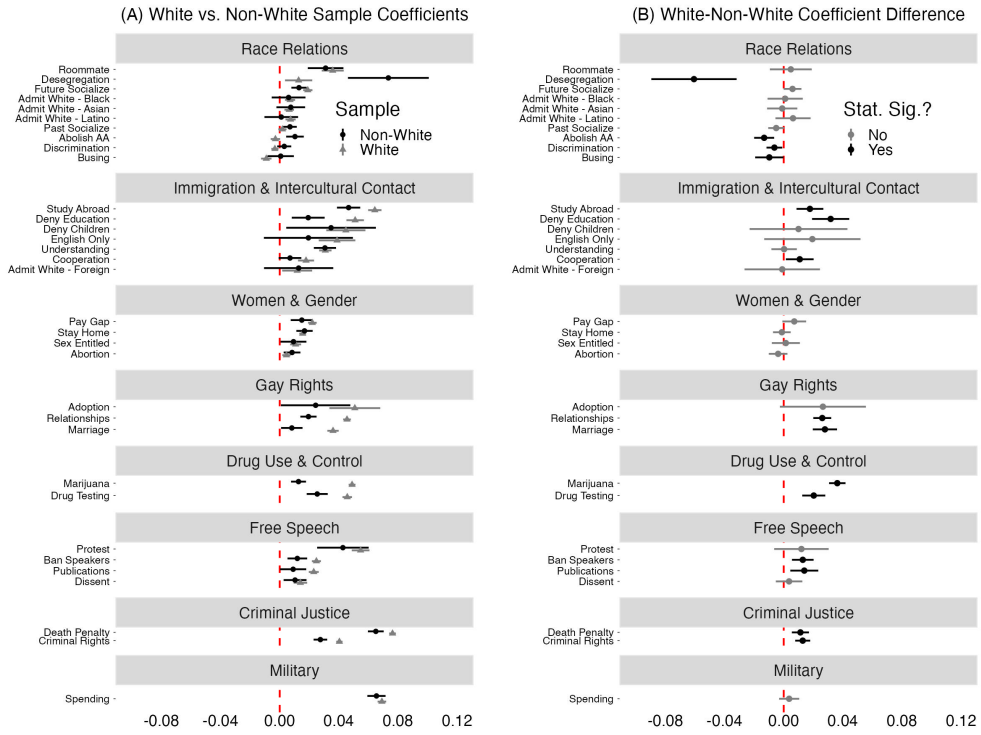

Fig. 2. Association between police officer intention and conservative attitudes conditional on race among late adolescents. Panel A characterizes the association between police officer intention and the different outcomes by race (white, non-white, denoted by color). Panel B characterizes the difference in the police officer intention coefficient for whites and non-whites (white - non-white). Higher values on Panel B mean the association between police officer intention and conservative attitudes is stronger for white late adolescents relative to non-white late adolescents.

Career in Panel C when using undecided respondents as the comparison group. This weaker result may be due in part to the denial of racism representing a more recent means (e.g., following the rise of the Black Lives Matter movement) for those harboring prejudice toward non-Whites to channel their racial animus (39). Finally, we observe a negative coefficient for *Police Career* across Panels A-C when analyzing views about school busing. This findings stands in contrast to the relationship of *Police Career* to most other outcomes in the "race relations" category and could potentially be due to ambiguity in question wording and potential variation in respondents' interpretation of the meaning of "achieve racial balance." Aside from this outlying finding, the results for race relations indicate an overall pattern where late-adolescents gravitating toward a career in law enforcement are significantly further to the right than their peers.

Turning to views on "Immigration & Intercultural Relations," the results are striking: late-adolescent Americans in the TFS interested in a career in law enforcement convey significantly more anti-immigrant views than their peers—supporting the denial of access to public education to undocumented immigrants and their children. When it comes to cultural concessions to immigrants in the form of accommodating non-native speakers, those intending to be law enforcement officers are significantly more supportive of an "Official English" policy of making government documents available in English-only. With respect to intercultural relations, those gravitating toward a career in law enforcement convey significantly less interest in broadening their cultural horizons by studying abroad or attending college to improve their understanding of different countries and cultures. Moreover, we find evidence in Panels A and B that those interested in pursuing a career in law enforcement view themselves as less competent in navigating interaction with diverse peoples than their peers. Finally, those interested in being police officers evince bias in the form of favoring the admission of Whites in college over foreign students, though this finding becomes null when the comparison group is career-undecided respondents. In sum, young Americans planning to enter into law enforcement are strikingly more anti-immigrant, parochial, and xenophobic than their peers.

Views concerning "Women & Gender" and "Gay Rights" follow similar patterns. Starting with views on gender equality, gender roles, sexual relations, and reproduction, respondents intending a career as law enforcement officers clearly hold more hostile sexist views than their peers and are less supportive of women's reproductive rights. These individuals are more likely than their peers to believe that women should not receive the same salary and opportunities for advancement as men in the same positions and that the activities of married women are best confined to the home and family. Strikingly, those intending a career in law enforcement express significantly more sex entitlement than their peers—being more likely to think that men are entitled to sex with women if the women in question lead them on. This finding offers a window of insight into the observed lack of rigor of police investigation into sexual assault against women (40), suggesting it may derive in part from those that select into being police officers harboring more hostile sexist views that incline them to blame female victims for

experiencing assault than their peers. Turning our attention to "Gay Rights," we find that young Americans planning on becoming police officers are more likely than their peers to oppose laws allowing gay and lesbian couples in the U.S. to engage in sexual relationships, adopt children, or get married. Taken together, we find robust evidence that late-adolescent Americans gravitating toward a career in law enforcement have more right-leaning and anti-egalitarian views than their peers on gender, sexual relations, reproduction, and gay rights.

Finally, we examine the relationship between intending a career in law enforcement and support for "law and order" stances on drug use, free speech, criminal justice, and military funding. First, those intending a career in law enforcement are substantially more opposed to the legalization of marijuana and more supportive of drug test requirements for employees. These relationships are large and consistent across panels A through C. Those interested in becoming a police officer are also more intolerant of free speech on campus, registering stronger opposition to college protesters, support for banning extreme speakers, support for oversight by college administrators of student publications, and opposition to dissent in the political process. The relationship between the intention to be a police officer and belief that colleges have been "too lax" in dealing with college protesters (i.e., a call for order on college campuses) is particularly strong, which aligns with these other findings given it can be viewed as a campus-based analog of broader "law and order" situations in society. Finally, these associations are particularly strong when it comes to support for increased military spending (i.e. international law and order), belief that there is too much concern in American courts for the rights of criminals, and support for the death penalty.

Although we have described the association between *Police Career* and our outcomes in terms of sign and statistical significance, we also provide evidence these associations are *substantively significant*. We benchmark the size of the law enforcement intention coefficients in Figure 1, Panel A, by comparing them to the size of the liberal-conservative political ideology coefficient from the same models. We use political ideology as a benchmark because prior research establishes this variable as one of the most prognostic factors of egalitarian beliefs (41). For models where the comparison group is all other TFS respondents who do not intend to pursue a career in law enforcement, the *Police Career* coefficient is between 3-135% of the ideology coefficient for statistically significant outcomes, with an mean (median) ratio of 19% (15%). Although 19% of the liberal-conservative ideology coefficient may seem small, this is a substantively significant estimate for two reasons. First, our *Police Career* coefficient is derived after conditioning directly on ideology, which may be partially post-treatment to law enforcement career intention, implying our estimated *Police Career* coefficients may be conservative estimates relative to the true total direct effect of law enforcement career intention on our outcomes. Second, as mentioned, political ideology is one of the most prognostic and highly correlated factors of egalitarian beliefs. Thus, two-tenths of the ideology scale is substantively significant given the established theoretical and empirical import of ideology in shaping egalitarian attitudes.

In sum, prior to even joining police academy or being socialized into police forces, those simply *leaning* toward pursuing a career in law enforcement evince a strong inclination toward silencing protest and dissent and using institutional authority to censor and suppress speech. These findings ultimately have important implications for the prospect of democratic integrity in the United States. Oppressed groups often use social protest as a tool for elevating public awareness of their experienced prejudice and discrimination (42); however, we know that state repression is a common response to social protest and that police forces are routinely deployed to suppress social protest (43, 44). The findings presented here suggest that the people who select into law enforcement may not only hold hostile views toward lower status social groups likely to engage in social protest but are amenable to the suppression of the exercise of free speech and engagement in protest by such groups.

Heterogeneity by Race and Gender. One proposed means of reducing bias and excessive force in policing is to diversify police forces, which have largely been dominated by Anglo-White males (26). Recent research finds that police use of lethal force against civilians is lower in departments headed by non-White leaders (45) and that non-White and female officers are less likely to use force against civilians than their White and male counterparts (36). Accompanying this, prior research comparing the attitudes of police officers to civilians only finds elevated levels of anti-egalitarian views among officers vis-a-vis civilians when focusing on Whites (13) and that holding anti-egalitarian views is most strongly correlated with use-of-force against civilians when analyzing White officers (46). Taken together, these findings suggest that, to the extent negative attitudes toward lower status groups are visible among those selecting into law enforcement, this relationship should be most present among White and male late-adolescents relative to their non-White and female peers who are members of lower status and subjugated groups. This expectation aligns with the rationale behind efforts to recruit more non-White and female officers (36), as the former are presumed to harbor less bias against non-Whites, the latter are presumed to harbor less bias against women (e.g. in sexual assault or other gender-related cases), and both groups are believed to be less inclined to use unnecessary force against civilians.

Opposing these expectations, however, is the notion that the occupational culture and socialization process within police departments are so powerful that non-White and female officers may ultimately adopt the views and in-the-field practices of their White or male peers (47). Assuming that one were to observe non-White and female officers behaving similarly to their White or male colleagues, it is unclear whether this derives from socialization or selection. Indeed, it may in fact be the case that the non-White and female young adults that select into becoming police officers start out with more hostile views toward lower status groups than their fellow peer group members gravitating toward non-police career tracks. If this were the case, it would predispose them to behave more similarly on the job to their Anglo-White and male colleagues. This expectation is supported by research finding that non-White young adults holding more punitive attitudes toward criminals are more likely to express a desire to work as a law enforcement officer (48). This expectation

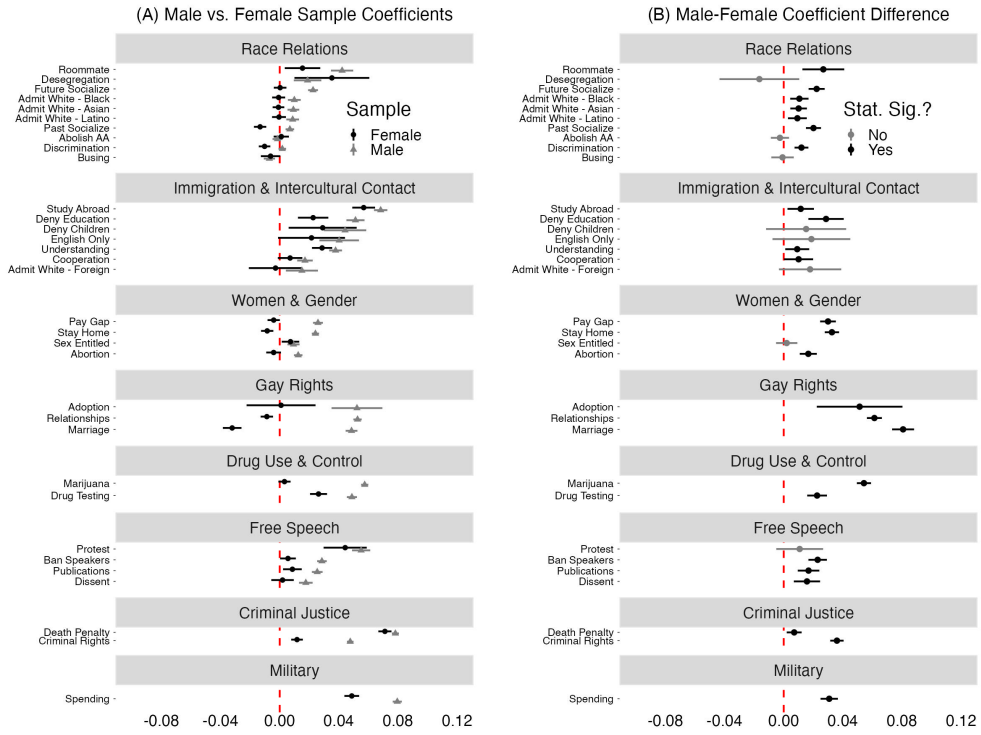

Fig. 3. Association between police officer intention and conservative attitudes conditional on gender among late adolescents. Panel A characterizes the association between police officer intention and the different outcomes by gender (man, woman, denoted by color). Panel B characterizes the difference in the police officer intention coefficient for whites and non-whites (man - woman). Higher values on Panel B mean the association between police officer intention and conservative attitudes is stronger for late adolescents who are men relative to late adolescents who are women.

is also supported by research finding that White and Black and male and female police officers report similar power and authority oriented motivations for entering law enforcement (32). To dig into these competing possibilities, we re-analyze the results in Figure 1 by re-estimating our models among subgroups defined by the reported race/ethnicity or gender of TFS respondents.

Panel A of Figure 2 displays covariate-adjusted coefficients for *Police Career* (baseline = all other) for each outcome with 95% CIs conditional on whether the respondent identifies as non-white (e.g., Black, Latino, Asian, American Indian) or white. Figure 2, Panel B presents the differences in the coefficients plotted in Panel A between white and non-white respondents for each outcome. Out of 33 social and political views analyzed, we observe statistically significant differences between Whites and non-Whites (Panel B) in the relationship between *Police Career* and attitudes in 15 instances—less than half (45%) of the time. Of these 15 instances in Panel B where significant differences in the relationships under investigation are observed between Whites and non-Whites, 4 of these instances pertain to views on race relations and involve *negative* coefficient differences—indicating that the size of the relationship between intending to be a police officer and holding more racially conservative views than their relative peers is *larger* for non-Whites than Whites. Indeed, for 4 of the 10 race relations outcomes ("Desegregation," "Abolish AA," "Discrimination," and "Busing") the coefficient for non-Whites is statistically larger than the coefficient for Whites (at least $p < 0.05$). And, for 1 of these 4 race relations outcomes ("Abolish AA"), the coefficient for non-Whites in Panel A is positive and statistically significant while the corresponding coefficient for Whites is negative and insignificant—indicating that non-Whites who intend to be law enforcement officers oppose affirmative action more than their non-White peers likely pursuing other careers while the same difference in views on affirmative action by career intentions is not present among Whites. Of the remaining 11 instances in Panel B where there is a positively-signed statistically significant coefficient difference between Whites and non-Whites, 9 of these 11 instances still involve a positive and statistically significant coefficient for *Police Career* for non-Whites in Panel A—indicating that non-Whites who planned to be police officers still held more anti-immigrant, anti-gay, and conservative "law and order" views than their non-White peers planning other career tracks. In the remaining 2 of these 11 instances ("Cooperation" and "Publications"), the coefficient estimates for non-Whites in Panel A are positive and marginally significant ($p < 0.10$).

In short, the results in Figure 1 are not solely driven by White Americans; to the contrary, we observe support for the selection hypothesis for both White and non-White late-adolescent Americans gravitating toward a career in law enforcement. Non-White young Americans who viewed it as likely they will become law enforcement officers held more racially conservative, anti-immigrant and xenophobic, sexist, anti-gay, and conservative "law and order" views than their non-White counterparts interested in pursuing other occupations. While the magnitude of these relationships are somewhat smaller for non-Whites nearly half of the time, they are nonetheless largely still present in these instances. Taken

together, across over 40 years of data, these findings suggest that the non-White late-adolescent Americans planning to enter law enforcement were predisposed *relative to their non-White peers* toward the maintenance or enhancement of social hierarchies, as evinced by their relative opposition to policies intended to ameliorate racial inequality (e.g., desegregation and affirmative action), endorsement of punitive immigration policy and lack of interest in gaining cultural competence, support for traditional gender roles and gender inequality, opposition to homosexuality and gay rights, punitive orientations toward drug users and criminals, and support for suppressing protest, controversial political speech, and dissent.

Turning to our analyses by gender, Figure 3, Panel A displays covariate-adjusted coefficients for likely career in law enforcement (baseline = all other) on each outcome with 95% CIs conditional on whether the respondent identified as a female or male. Figure 3, Panel B presents the differences in the coefficients plotted in Panel A between male and female respondents for each outcome. Out of 33 social and political views analyzed, we observe statistically significant differences between males and females in the relationship between *Police Career* and attitudes in 25 instances—roughly 75% of the time. Importantly, in each of these 25 instances, the coefficient for *Police Career* is larger among male than female respondents; what is more, in 15 of these 25 instances, the coefficient for *Police Career* among female respondents in Panel A is either statistically insignificant (e.g, "Future Socialize") or significant but *negatively* signed (e.g., "Marriage"). Focusing specifically on the 10 items concerning race relations, we observe significant gender differences in coefficients in Panel B for 7 of the outcomes and for 6 out of these 7 outcomes the results in Panel A indicate that women who intend a career in law enforcement either hold views similar to, or significantly *more racially liberal* than, their female counterparts intending other careers. In contrast to the results in Figure 2, the findings in Figure 3 suggest that hiring more female officers may alleviate racially disparate outcomes in policing deriving from officer bias. The late-adolescent women tracking themselves toward law enforcement hold racial views comparable to, or more liberal than, their female peers whereas their male counterparts intending to be police officers are consistently more racially conservative than their male peers interested in non-police occupations.

One area where women interested in law enforcement appear as distinct among their gender as their male counterparts intending a law enforcement career is in the issue domain of immigration and intercultural relations. Indeed, we observe positive and significant coefficients for *Police Career* among female respondents in 4 out of 7 instances, and in the three instances in Panel B where there is a significant gender difference in the *Police Career* coefficients, we observe positive and significant coefficients for women in Panel A in each instance ("Study Abroad," "Deny Education," and "Understanding"). Thus, while women tracking themselves toward law enforcement do not appear distinctly racially conservative relative to their female peers, they are distinctly anti-immigrant, averse to intercultural contact, and uninterested in gaining cultural competence. Several additional forms of heterogeneity by gender are worthy of note. First, female respondents intending a career as a law enforcement officer exhibit lower levels of sexism and more pro-gay attitudes than their female peers interested in other occupations. The *opposite* is true for male respondents in these issue domains. Finally, when it comes to various "law and order" views linked to drug use, free speech, criminal justice, and the military, we see that the coefficients for *Police Career* for women, even when they significantly differ (Panel B), are nonetheless positive and statistically significant in Panel A (e.g., "Drug Testing," "Publications," "Death Penalty," "Criminal Rights," and "Spending").

In sum, across over 40 years of data, the findings presented here suggest that, while subscribing to more conservative "law and order" views than their female peers, late-adolescent American women planning to work as law enforcement officers were not distinctly hostile toward ethnic or racial minorities, leaned feminist in their views toward women and gender, and were decidedly pro-gay. These findings stand in stark contrast to male late-adolescent Americans interested in a career in law enforcement, as this subgroup of males is markedly more racially conservative, sexist, and anti-gay than their male counterparts. Where male and female late-adolescents interested in law enforcement seemingly converge is in their aversion to immigration and intercultural contact, punitive orientations toward drug users and criminals, and support for suppressing protest and censorship of written materials. In short, female young adults gravitating toward law enforcement appear predisposed relative to their female peers toward maintaining or enhancing social hierarchy for several groups (drug users, criminals, protesters and dissidents) while simultaneously predisposed toward attenuating such hierarchy with respect to women and homosexuals.

While the results presented in Figures 2 and 3 provide information about the presence and magnitude of differences in views between those intending to be law enforcement officers versus other occupations among White, non-White, male, and female late-adolescent respondents, they do not provide an overall picture of the comparative proportions of each subgroup of intended police officers reporting right-leaning positions across the 33 solicited views. Providing such a overall picture would allow us to compare the levels of far-right social and political views between these four subgroups of intended officers, which would give us a sense of which group falls the furthest to the right or left in their views. Figure 4 depicts the proportion of White, non-White, male, and female late-adolescent TFS respondents intending to be law enforcement officers reporting right-leaning positions on each view. For example, in the domain of race relations, we plot the proportion that agreed with abolishing affirmative action, agreed that racial discrimination is no longer a problem in America, opposed school desegregation, reported little-to-no past or future interracial contact (e.g., cohabitation or socializing), and favored Whites over each non-White group in college admissions. As an additional example, in the domain of free speech, we plot the proportion that agreed with banning extreme speakers from campus, agreed that colleges were being "too lax" in dealing with protests on campus, agreed with college officials censoring student publications, and disagreed with the notion that dissent is a critical component of the political process.

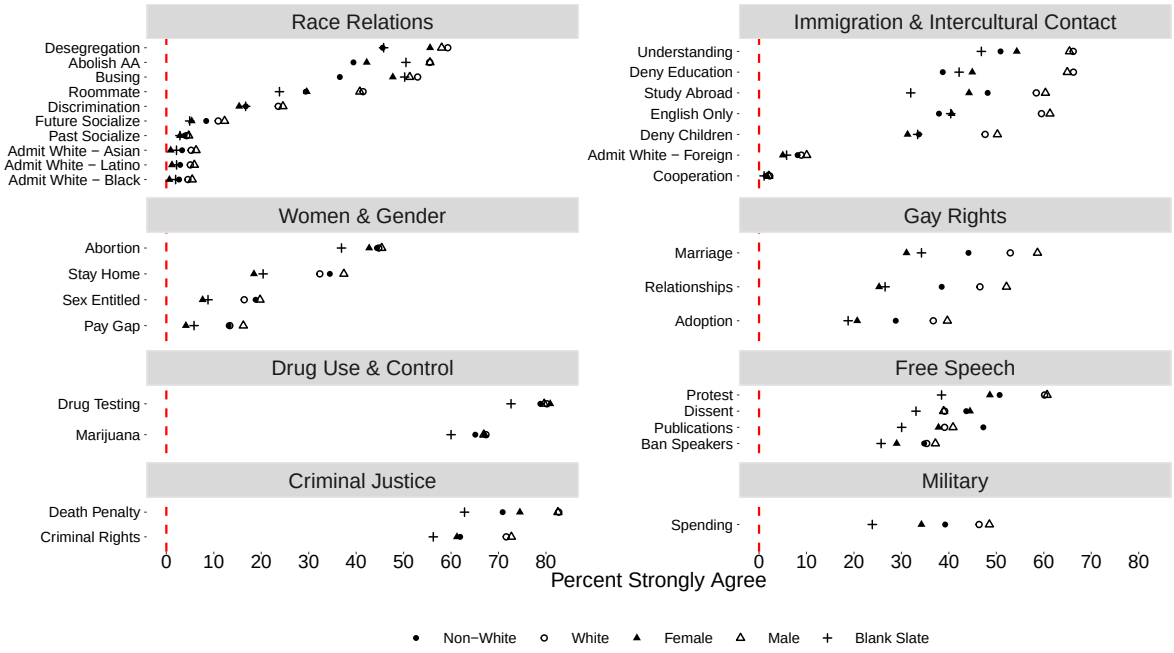

Fig. 4. Proportion of Each Subgroup of Intended Law Enforcement Officers (and Blank Slate Non-Intending) Holding Right-Leaning View

For ease of interpretation, we arrayed the outcomes on the y-axis of Figure 4 in order of highest to lowest proportion of right-leaning views. Moreover, to aid readers in comparing the proportion of right-leaning views among these four subgroups to a general peer group, we also plot for each outcome the proportion of career-undecided respondents (i.e., the modal category first-year American college student) reporting right-leaning positions on each view.

Beginning with race relations, we observe consistently higher proportions of racially conservative, biased, or contact-avoidant responses among White or male intended-cops relative to non-White or female intended-cops. Focusing specifically on policy-related items (e.g., "Desegregation," "Abolish AA," and "Busing"), we find that non-White intended cops have the lowest relative proportion of right-leaning views and the differences in proportions between Whites and non-Whites are largest. When it comes to explicitly favoring Whites over non-Anglo groups in college admissions, we see overall the lowest levels of bias; yet, such explicit bias is more prevalent among male or White intended cops. Turning to immigration and intercultural contact, the picture is largely the same: we observe consistently higher proportions of anti-immigrant and contact-avoidant responses among White or male intended-cops than non-White or female intended-cops. This said, one thing that is notable within this attitude domain is that lack of interest in intercultural contact ("Study Abroad") or gaining cultural competence ("Understanding") are both higher among non-White and female intended-cops than their career-undecided peers. Turning to views on women and gender, we observe the lowest proportion of sexist or gender inegalitarian views among female intended-cops, though the the four subgroups tend to cluster together in terms of the proportion opposing legal abortion. Similarly, we see the lowest proportion of anti-gay views among female intended-cops. Finally, when it comes to views toward drug use, free speech and political dissidence, criminal justice, and the military, we observe consistently higher proportions of "law and order" oriented right-leaning views among each subgroup than their career-undecided late-adolescent peers.

In sum, not only are white and male intended officers more conservative across attitude domains than their peers indicating interest in other careers, but among the subset of respondents who indicate an interest in becoming cops, they also evince the most conservative attitudes. With the exception of non-white intended cops, who are more liberal than their peers on many of the attitudes related to race-relations, it is women who, nearly across the board, hold the least conservative attitudes and look most similar to their "undecided" peers, lending additional evidence that women who select into policing who hold the lowest levels of potentially problematic attitudes and are potentially less likely to engage in biased behavior toward marginalized groups once in uniform.

Conclusion

This article makes a vital contribution to the scientific study of bias and excessive force in law enforcement by offering a much-needed test of the selection hypothesis. Utilizing survey data on over 13 million Americans spanning 44 years of time, we offer the most comprehensive picture to-date of the social and political views of late-adolescents selecting into a career in law enforcement. Compared to their peers planning to enter other occupations or who have yet to formulate a career path, young Americans gravitating toward a career in law enforcement harbor more antipathetic and inegalitarian views toward ethno-racial minorities, immigrants and foreigners, women, homosexuals, drug-users, political dissidents, and criminals. Prior research demonstrates that law enforcement officers are politically right-leaning, authoritarian and anti-

egalitarian, and inclined to various forms of bias against lower-status or marginalized groups in society. Our findings strongly suggest that these characteristics of police forces are partly the product of *selection*.

In light of recent leading research on ethno-racial and gender diversity in law enforcement (36), we sought to explore whether or not our results were driven by White or male young Americans. Critically, we uncover evidence for the selection hypothesis among non-White Americans intending to enter into law enforcement. Indeed, non-White young Americans gravitating toward a career in law enforcement consistently held more far-right social and political views than their non-White peers intending other occupations. This said, while more right-leaning than their non-White peers, non-Whites who plan to enter law enforcement are overall less right-leaning than their White peers aiming to become police officers. In short, the non-Whites who sign up to be police officers may be the most likely among their group to engage in biased and forceful policing but may do so at an overall lower rate than their White counterparts signing up to be police officers.

We observed the most significant attenuation in selection among women who plan to enter law enforcement: female late-adolescent Americans intending to be police officers typically held views similar to their female peers intending to enter other occupations and in some issue domains—such as women and gender and gay rights—we found that female intended-cops held significantly more *liberal* views than their female peers intending other occupations. Furthermore, in several cases where we observed a significant relationship between career intentions and right-leaning views among females, the size of this relationship was smaller for females than it was for males—suggesting stronger selection among males. Finally, while in some instances females gravitating toward law enforcement were more right-leaning in their views than females leaning toward other occupations, females who plan to enter law enforcement were overall less right-leaning than their male peers who aimed to become cops.

In considering reform efforts aimed at reducing bias and excessive force in policing, our findings suggest that hiring non-Whites may not fully substitute for bias testing or filtering, as non-White recruits may harbor bias toward their own and other groups and have authoritarian impulses and inclinations. The presumption that non-White intended-cops will be overall less hostile than White intended-cops to ethno-racial minorities finds support in our data. However, this finding is met with countervailing evidence that they might be the most hostile among their non-White peers toward fellow non-Whites and harbor animus toward other groups—such as immigrants, women, homosexuals, drug-users, political dissidents, and alleged criminals—that may be normatively unappealing if the goal is to comprise a police force most likely to treat all civilians respectfully and enforce the law in an impartial and dispassionate manner.

One area of striking convergence in our findings is the markedly right-leaning and punitive views on protest, free speech, and criminal justice observed among White and non-White, male and female, intended law enforcement officers. Indeed, all subgroups expressed a significantly greater desire than their respective peers planning to enter other professions to crack down on college campus protest and limit oral and written political speech on campus. Moreover, all subgroups intending to be police officers expressed a notable absence of concern for the rights of the accused and considerable support for restrictive drug-control and punitive criminal justice practices. In short, with respect to the growing literature on the mass incarceration (17) and democratic backsliding (49), our findings suggest the troubling reality that the individuals planning to enter police forces across time and space in the United States may be distinctly predisposed toward the maintenance of the "carceral state" and participation in political repression.

Our research suggests that an important focus of reform efforts in law enforcement should be tests and filters implemented during officer recruitment. While hiring more non-White and female cadets may yield officers with lower levels of antipathy toward *some* societal groups, our findings suggest such individuals may still possess authoritarian and negative orientations toward many other groups they will likely encounter in the line-of-duty. According to the International Association of Police Chiefs (IAPC), in addition to tests for physical fitness and basic communication skills, hiring processes in law enforcement typically involve psychological testing—with the stated purpose usually being preemptive determination of a new recruit's emotional stability and psychological suitability for the job. Of particular concern in psychological testing is determination of a recruit's possession of a constellation of traits found to be associated with successful performance in the field. These sought-after traits may include: adaptability, assertiveness, dependability, attention to safety, integrity/ethics, and stress tolerance. Advocates of police reform argue that bias testing and other filters should be added to the arsenal of tests falling under the umbrella of psychological testing of police recruits (50).

Recruitment processes could screen not just for biases and propensity to misuse authority, but for cultural competency and skills needed to counteract bias as well. For example, in addition to requisite personality characteristics—open-mindedness, tolerance, flexibility—these screens could also include awareness of bias, blind spots, and ignorance (self-monitoring) and the motivation and demonstrated ability to counteract these (51). The state of California's Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST) manual, for example, requires psychologists to screen recruits to identify explicit and implicit biases toward groups based on their race or ethnicity, gender, religion, disability status and sexual orientation. Further, POST criteria include psychological screening to assess dimensions related to cultural competency like emotional stability, adaptability, empathy, and tolerance (52), though some psychologists have suggested additional screening for multiculturalism—a recognition of how varying cultural factors and identities shape the lives of individuals, groups, and society (53).

Finally, while these screening criteria could help filter out candidates who are most predisposed to engage in biased behaviors, our findings do not speak to what happens once new recruits are socialized by their peer officers in the field. Future research should investigate the extent which right-leaning, authoritarian, or anti-egalitarian attitudes change throughout a police-officer's tenure, the comparative magnitude of these changes across subgroups of police

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Supporting Information for

Late-adolescents who intend a career as police officers hold more far-right social and political views than their peers

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This PDF file includes:

Figs. S1 to S6
Table S1

1. Survey and Questions

In Table S1 we display the mean, standard deviation, minimum values, and maximum values for each variable used in our analysis. Full question wordings for each DV can be found in Table X in the main manuscript.

Table S1. Descriptive Statistics

Type	Variable Name	Mean	SD	Min	Max
DV	Discrimination	0.28	0.26	0	1
	Abolish AA	0.53	0.30	0	1
	Admit White - Black	0.49	0.09	0	1
	Admit White - Hispanics	0.49	0.09	0	1
	Admit White - Asians	0.49	0.08	0	1
	Busing	0.54	0.30	0	1
	Desegregation	0.49	0.30	0	1
	Past Socialize	0.17	0.27	0	1
	Roommate	0.35	0.31	0	1
	Deny Education	0.49	0.34	0	1
	Deny Children	0.39	0.33	0	1
	English Only	0.47	0.35	0	1
	Study Abroad	0.40	0.34	0	1
	Understanding	0.48	0.31	0	1
	Cooperation	0.22	0.19	0	1
	Admit White - Foreign	0.42	0.16	0	1
	Stay Home	0.27	0.32	0	1
	Equal Pay	0.14	0.23	0	1
	Sex Entitled	0.15	0.27	0	1
	Abortion	0.46	0.39	0	1
	Prohibit Relations	0.37	0.35	0	1
	Marriage	0.43	0.37	0	1
	Adoption	0.28	0.34	0	1
	Marijuana	0.64	0.35	0	1
	Drug Testing	0.69	0.30	0	1
	Ban Speakers	0.32	0.31	0	1
	Publications	0.37	0.29	0	1
	Dissent	0.41	0.25	0	1
	Protest	0.48	0.28	0	1
	Spending	0.35	0.29	0	1
	Criminal Rights	0.57	0.30	0	1
	Death Penalty	0.62	0.34	0	1
IV	Job cop	0.008	0.09	0	1
Controls	Ideology	0.52	0.19	0	1
	Father Education	5.03	2.26	0	8
	Mother Education	4.74	2.01	0	8
	Income	12.45	8.93	0	30
	Female	0.53	0.50	0	1
	First Gen	0.26	0.44	0	1
	White	0.78	0.41	0	1
	Citizen	0.72	0.45	0	1
	GPA	5.77	1.71	0	8
	Parent Cop	0.01	0.11	0	1

Note: descriptive statistics for all variables use across all analyses. For more on DV wordings, see Table X in the manuscript.

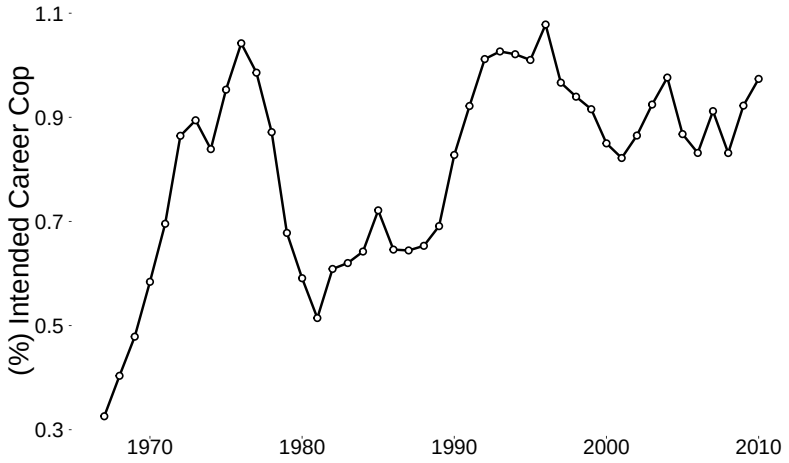

Fig. S1. Intention to be Cop Over Time

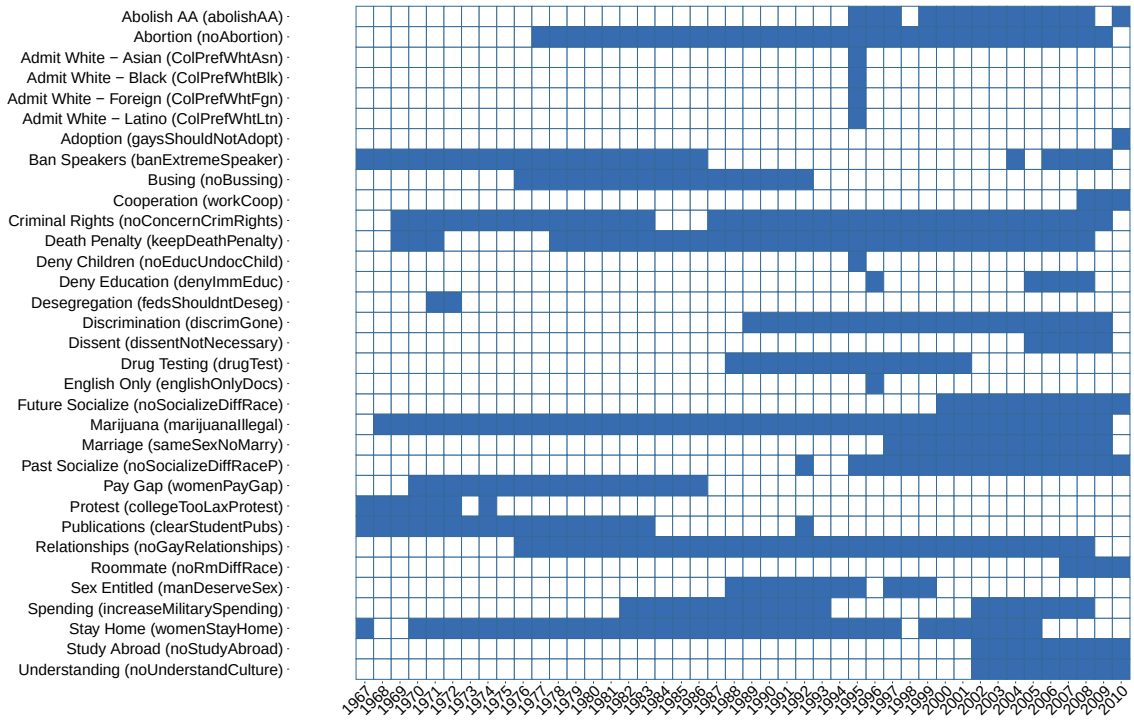

Fig. S2. Years DV Was Measured

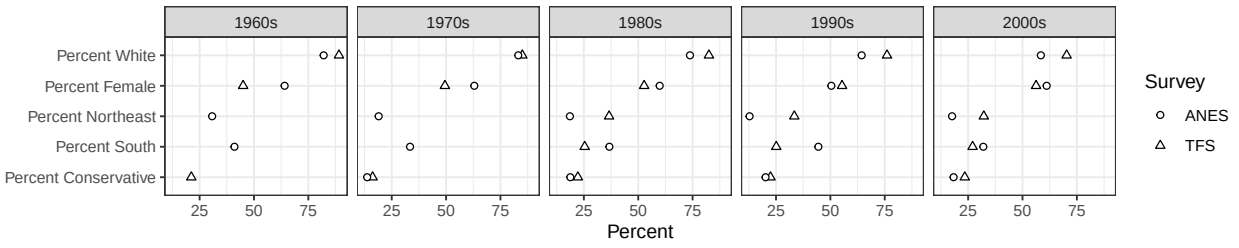

Fig. S3. Note: Demographic comparison of those under 21 in TFS relative to the cumulative American National Election Study (ANES) grouped by decade.

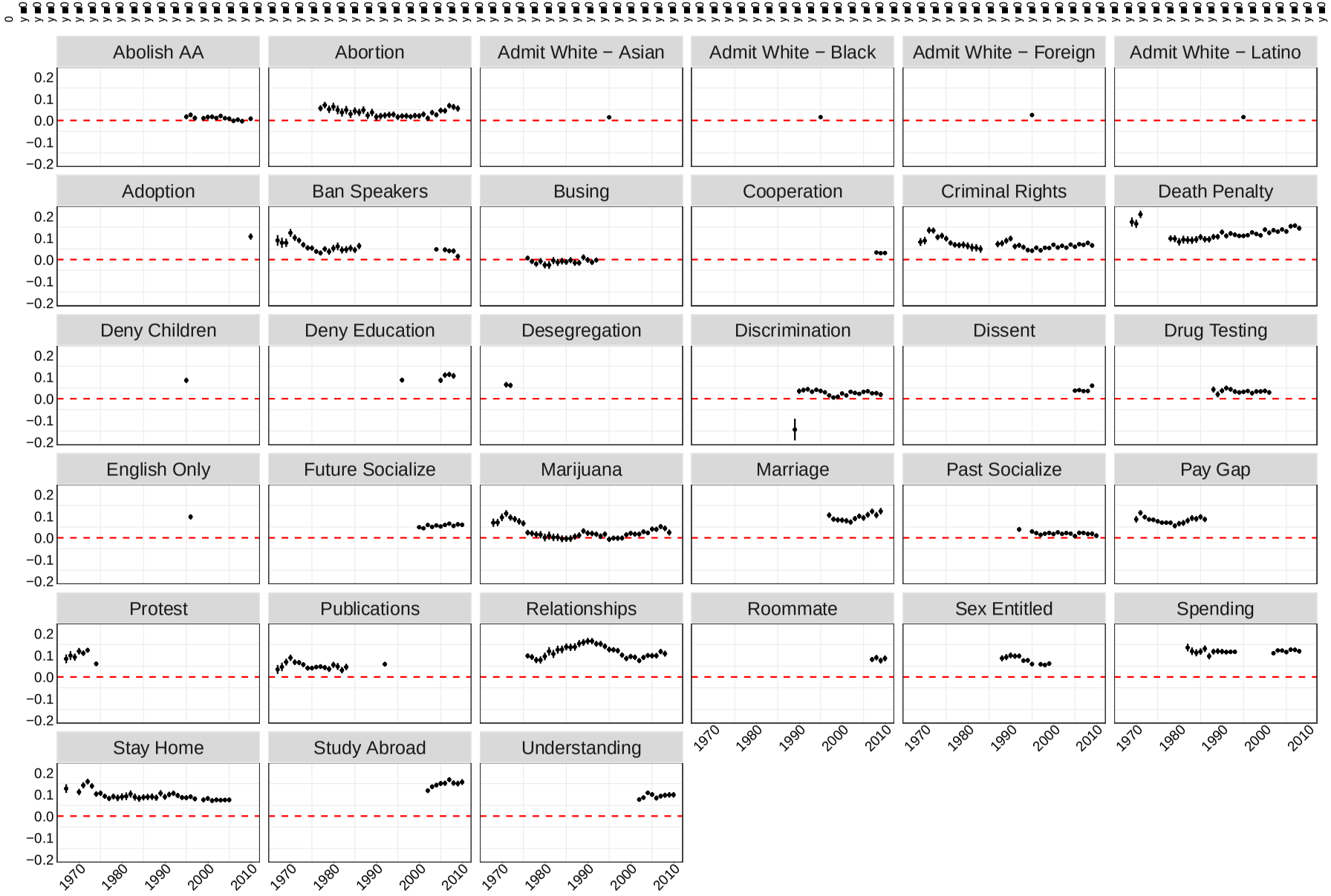

Fig. S4. Bivariate Model Results by Year

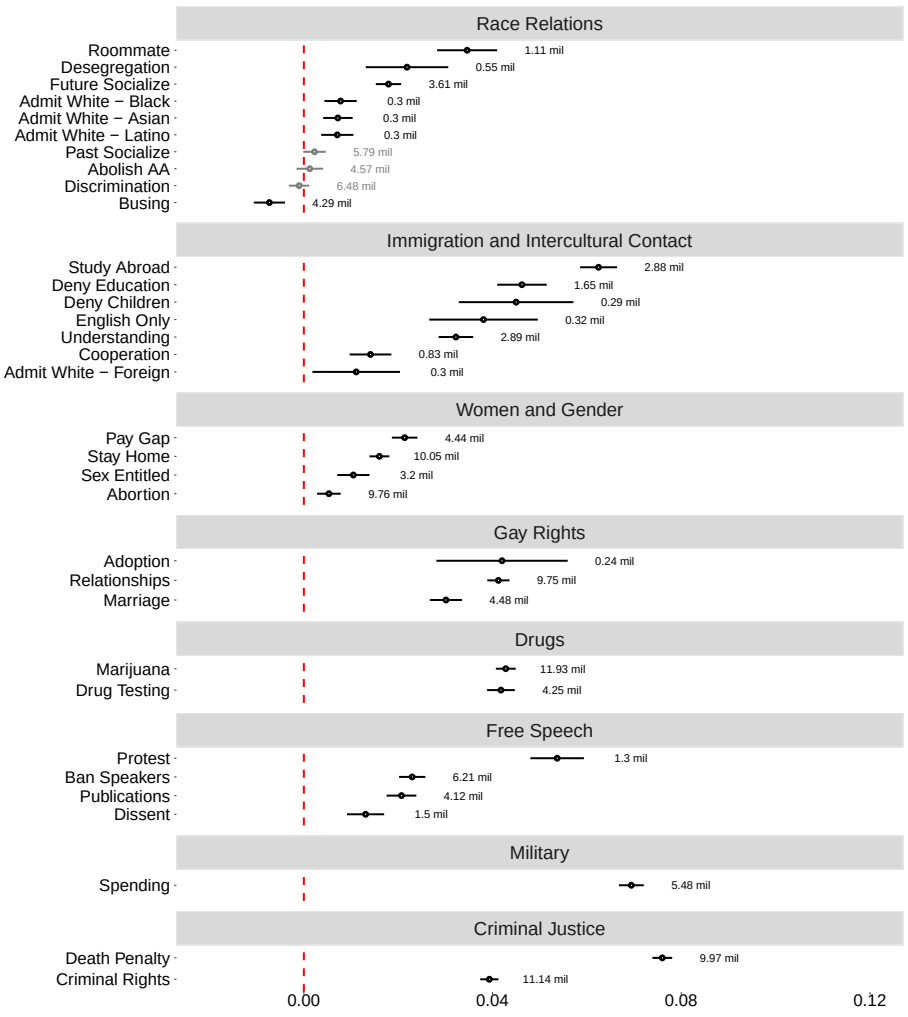

Fig. S5. Bivariate Model Results

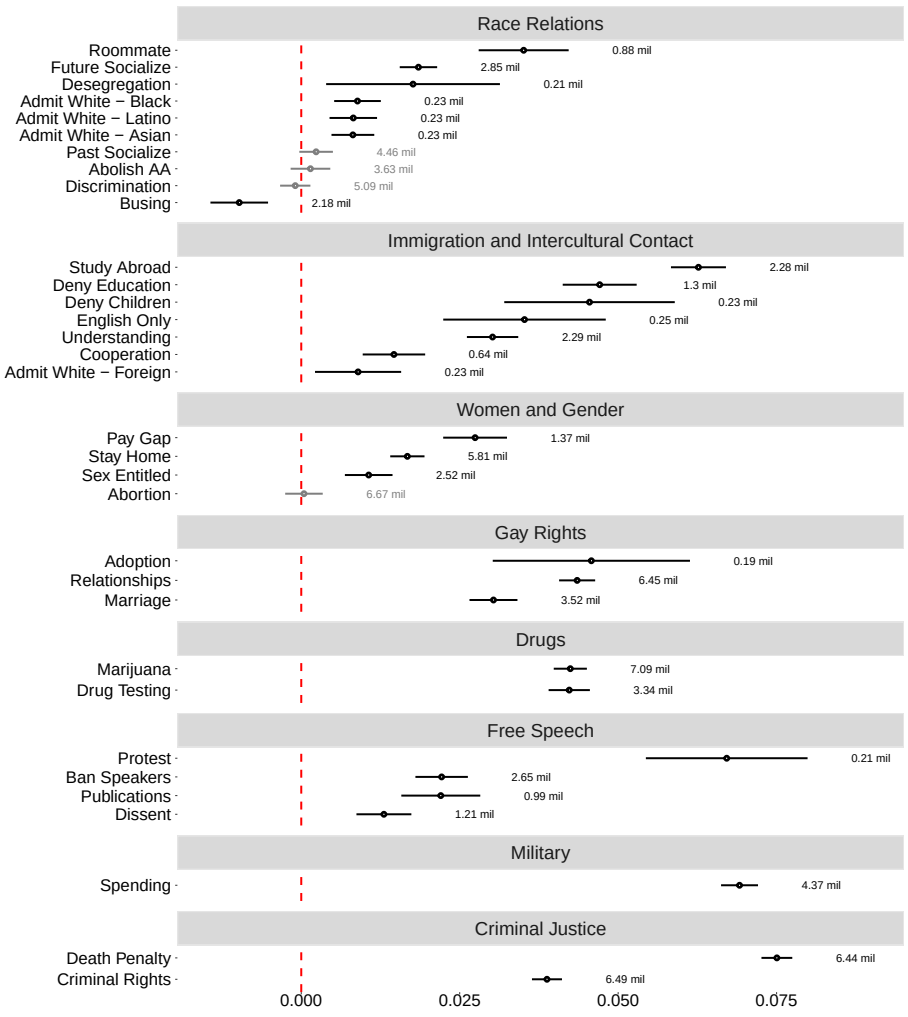

Fig. S6. List-wise Deletion for Missing Data Model Results

References