

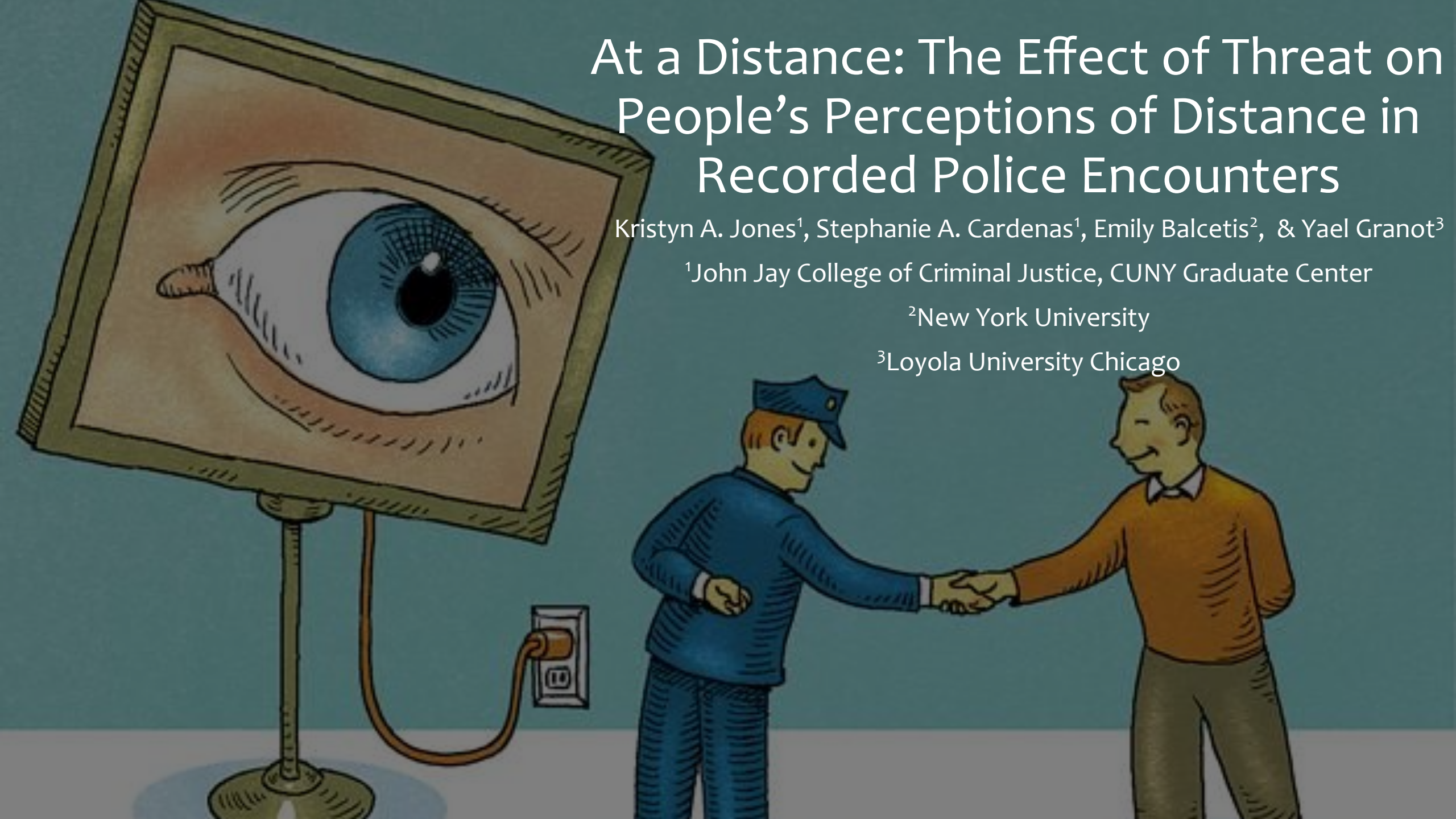
At a Distance: The Effect of Threat on People's Perceptions of Distance in Recorded Police Encounters

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police footage

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Will the '21 Foot' Defense Work for the Chicago Cop Who Shot Laquan McDonald?

Revisiting a 30-year concept that is used to justify deadly force.

Baltimore's 21-foot rule necessary to protect police

'Outdated' 21-foot rule for police shootings finally bites the dust

Commentary: Was Officer Van Dyke simply following the '21-foot rule'?

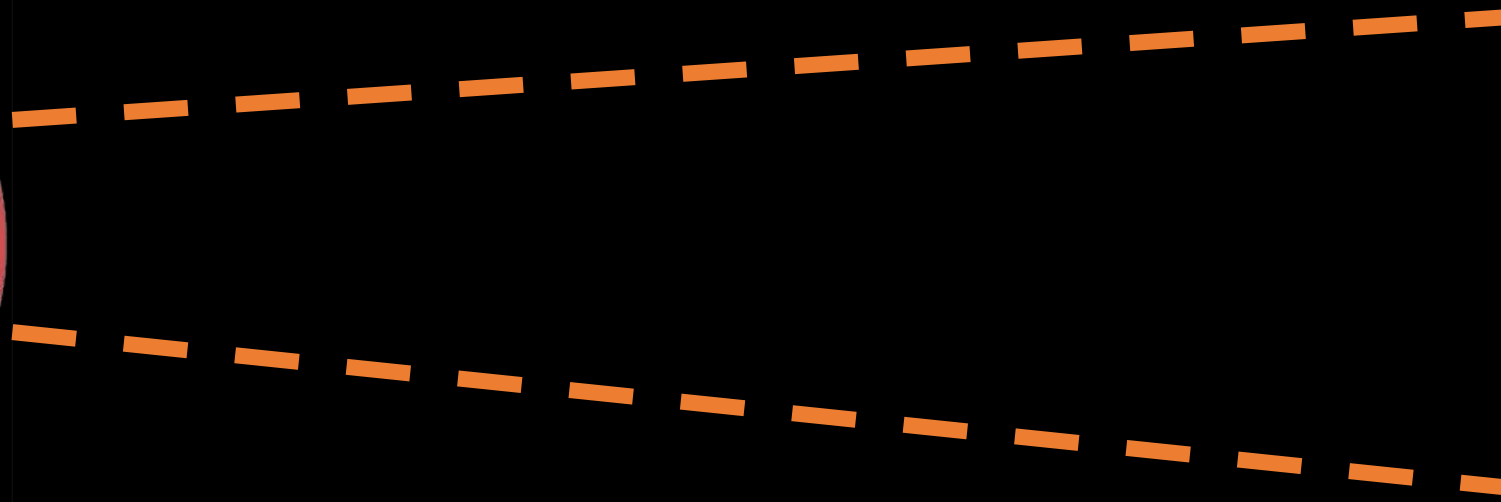
21-foot rule (Tueller Drill)

- ‘Perimeter of danger’
- *Sigman v. Town of Chapel Hill*
- Legal defense



Threat & distance perception

- We see threatening objects as being closer (Cole, Balcetis, & Dunning, 2013; Xiao & Bavel, 2012)
- Threatening objects can evoke approach behavior (Balcetis, 2016)

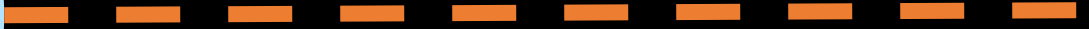


Can people experience threat vicariously in recorded police encounters, thus shaping their distance perceptions?

Psychological Closeness

- Attachment to another individual or group
- Self & Other interdependence
- Empathize, experience other's joy, embarrassment, and pain (Jackson, Brunet, Meltzoff, & Decety, 2006; Miller, 1987; Murray, Holmes, Bellavia, Griffin, & Dolderman, 2002)





Research design

- Correlational study



= 398

Dependent Measures

Distance

- In the image below...
 - How far do you feel that the civilian was from the officer? 1 (*Feels very far*) – 7 (*Feels very close*)
 - Estimate the distance in feet and inches from where the [civilian/officer] is standing in relation to where the [officer/civilian] is standing.



Dependent Measures Cont.

Threat

- How much of a threat do you feel that the civilian posed to the officer? 1 (*Not threatening at all*) – 7 (*Extremely threatening*)
- How dangerous did the woman seem?
- To what extent did the woman intend to harm the officer?

Dependent Measures Cont.

Punishment

- Imagine the officer is on trial for his actions. Indicate the likelihood that he would be punished 1 (*Extremely unlikely*) – 7 (*Extremely likely*)

Scales

- Identification with police (Tyler & Fagan, 2008)
- Right-wing authoritarianism (Zakrisson, 2005)
- Political ideology 1 (*Extremely liberal*) – 7 (*Extremely conservative*)
- Crime rate via zip code

Descriptives

	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
Total distance (inches)	24.00	6000.00	173.11	394.45
Felt distance	1	7	3.64	1.19
Threat	1	7	3.04	1.48

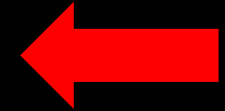
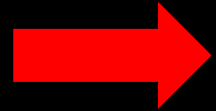
Correlates of threat

	Political Ideology	Crime Rate	Right-Wing Authoritarianism	Identification with Police	Felt Distance
Threat	0.27*	0.04	0.26*	0.23	-0.09

* $p < .001$

Predicting *felt* distance

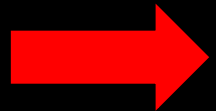
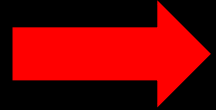
Variable	B	Std. Error	Sig.
Constant	3.543	0.27	.000
Threat	-0.088	0.04	.039
Identification with police	0.003	0.01	.682
Right-wing authoritarianism	0.004	0.004	.350
Political ideology	0.013	0.04	.742



$R^2 = .22, F(5, 397) = 2.0, p < .001$

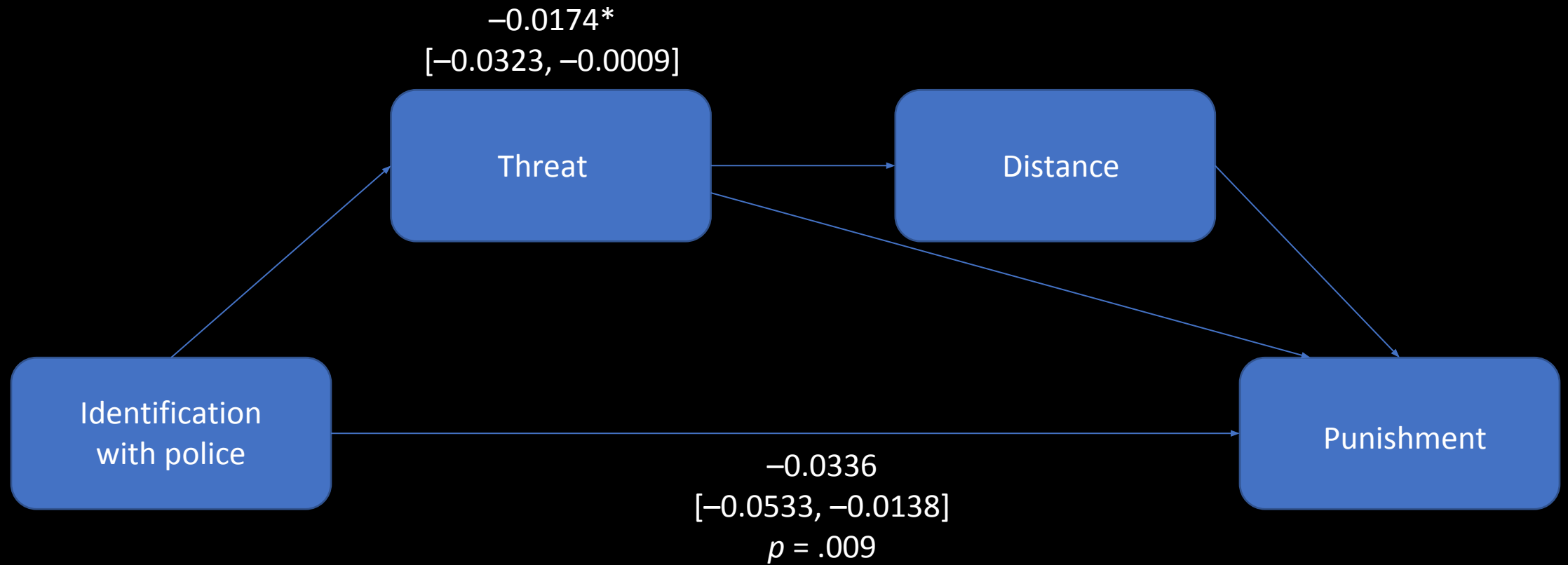
Predicting officer punishment

Variable	B	Std. Error	Sig.
Constant	8.075	0.40	.000
Felt Distance	0.032	0.06	.614
Right-wing authoritarianism	-0.006	0.01	.284



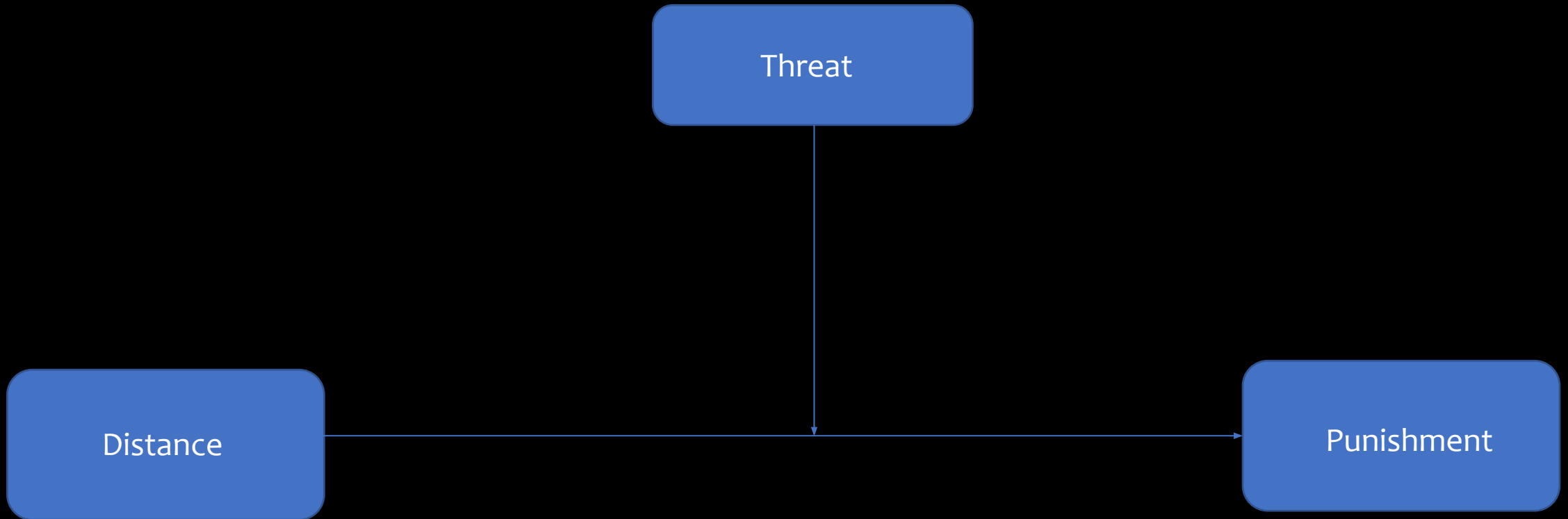
$R^2 = .22, F(5, 39) = 23.20, p < .001$

Exploratory models



Exploratory models

At 1 SD above the mean for threat ratings, there is a positive relationship between distance and punishment, $b = 0.27$, $p = .016$



Controlling for RWA, IPS, & ideology, $R^2 = .24$; Interaction: $b = .116$, $SE = .045$, $t(391) = 2.58$, $p = .0103$, 95% CI [.027, .205]

Summary & future directions

- Preliminary evidence that threat → distance judgments
- Relationship between identification with police, threat, and officer punishment
- Threat manipulation
- Further investigate role of identification with police

Study Two

- Manipulate, not only measure threat
 - Via a news article
 - Via the presence of a weapon



thecommunity

Officer deploys Taser on man carrying a knife



GROVESVILLE -- A Grovesville police officer used a Taser to stun a man wielding a knife on Monday, according to police.

A person in the community called 911 to report that a man was walking had been seen walking around the neighborhood swinging a knife around violently. One woman had been injured and was currently receiving medical assistance for lacerations sustained to her arms.

This information was communicated to the police officer via 911 dispatch along with information that the man had a known history of violent assault with a weapon and larceny. When the officer arrived on scene, the man refused to talk to the officer, wielded the knife, and threatened to harm the officer with his knife if he moved closer.

The officer used his Taser and the man was arrested.

Police Chief Eric Williams has opened an investigation. The officer, whose name was not released, has been placed on restricted duty, with pay, pending the outcome of the investigation. Chief Williams stated that there will be a very thorough review.

According to the police department's Taser policy, Tasers are for self-defense or to temporarily immobilize a subject who is actively resisting arrest. When properly used, Tasers generate electricity in a small, hand-held, battery operated unit about the size of a handgun. When properly used, a Taser generates an electrical current that dominates a person's neuromuscular and sensory system. People become physically incapacitated and unable to control muscle movement, allowing officers to gain control.

Study Two

- *Vicarious threat question*
 - If you put yourself in the officer's shoes, how threatening did the civilian seem?



Study Two

- Ask questions directly related to 21 ft.
 - This is what 21 feet looks like, is the civilian standing within this range?



Conclusions

- Reaffirms strength of identification with police
- Perceptions of distance might be another predictor to consider



Thank you!

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Predicting *felt* distance

Variable	B	Std. Error	t	Sig.
Constant	3.543	0.27	13.17	.000
Identification with police	0.003	0.01	0.41	.682
Political ideology	0.013	0.04	0.33	.742

$R^2 = .22, F(5, 397) = 23.20, p < .001$

Predicting officer punishment

Variable	B	Std. Error	t	Sig.
Constant	8.075	0.40	19.95	.000
Felt Distance	0.032	0.06	0.51	.614
Right-wing authoritarianism	-0.006	0.01	-1.07	.284

$R^2 = .22, F(5, 39) = 23.20, p < .001$

Dependent Measures Cont.

Justifiability

- To what extent...
 - Do you feel that the officer had other options instead of resorting to force? 1 (*Definitely had no other options*) – 7 (*Definitely had other options*)
 - Do you feel that the officer's use of force was justified? 1 (*Not at all justified*) – 7 (*Extremely justified*)