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Final Technical Report

Rethinking Minority Attitudes toward the Police

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Views expressed in the report are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice.

Summary Report

Rethinking Minority Attitudes toward the Police

Ronald Weitzer & Steven Tuch

Project Objectives

Race is one of the most consistent predictors of attitudes toward and reported experiences of the police and other criminal justice institutions. Much of the literature on police-citizen relations documents these race differences, but does not adequately explain them. This literature has concentrated on individual-level demographic predictors of attitudes and experiences with the police (with the notable exception of a few studies on neighborhood-level effects). The present study examined a number of micro- and macro-level factors, in addition to the standard demographic variables, in order to better understand *why* race structures attitudes toward the police. More specifically, the project examined the role of personal experience, knowledge of others' experiences (vicarious experience), mass media reporting on the police, neighborhood crime conditions, and several demographic factors.

Data and Methods

Data for this study come from a national survey of white, African American, and Hispanic residents of U.S. metropolitan areas (N = 1,792 adults). The sample is representative of adults living in telephone households in urban and suburban areas with at least 100,000 population. The survey instrument was pretested twice, and revised after each pretest, and subsequently

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administered to the full sample in 2002. Under supervision of the principal investigators, the survey was administered to respondents by Knowledge Networks, Inc. (KN), which provided the full data set and a report to the investigators. KN is an innovative and highly respected web-based survey research firm that combines probability sampling with the reach and capabilities of the Internet to yield representative samples of respondents without sacrificing data quality. Research comparing the quality of data yielded by KN's survey methodology with that of random digit dial (RDD) telephone surveys has found that KN yields representative samples that produce parameter estimates very similar to the estimates of RDD samples.

The survey is distinctive in several key respects: (1) it has large subsamples of African Americans and Hispanics, in contrast to the small number of minority respondents in most surveys of police-citizen relations; (2) it includes a number of questions never or rarely asked in prior studies; (3) it focuses on both respondents' attitudes and experiences with the police; (4) it examines perceptions and experiences in both the respondent's neighborhood and elsewhere in their city of residence; and (5) it includes both fixed-choice and open-ended questions.

Independent variables include race/ethnicity, other demographic variables, neighborhood crime conditions, personal/vicarious experience with police misconduct, personal/vicarious experience with racially biased police conduct, and citizen exposure to mass media reports on police misconduct.

Four major substantive issues constitute the dependent variables: (1) overall satisfaction with the police in one's city and neighborhood (2) perceptions of four types of police misconduct (corruption, verbal abuse, excessive force, unwarranted stops), (3) perceptions of police racial bias and discrimination (differential treatment of minority and white individuals, differential services in minority and white neighborhoods, racial profiling, perceived police prejudice), and (4) evaluations of and support for a large number of changes or reforms in policing (racial diversification of police departments, enhanced mechanisms of accountability, ways of increasing procedural justice during encounters, increasing police sensitivity and responsiveness toward the

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public, and intensification of law enforcement). Each dependent variable is a construct referring to several types under the general conceptual rubrics of Satisfaction, Misconduct, Racial Bias, and Reform. Reliability analyses indicated high alpha reliability coefficients for each of the multi-item dependent variable indices. Both bivariate and multivariate analyses were performed for each of the four substantive issues.

Major Findings and Conclusions

Major study findings are summarized very briefly below:

(1) *Racial differences* in attitudes toward the police are found across the four substantive domains examined. With the exception of overall Satisfaction, these racial differences remain after controlling for other variables.

- ❑ *African Americans* are more critical of the police than whites.

- ❑ *Hispanics* are also less likely than whites to hold favorable opinions of the police. On some issues, they are less likely than African Americans to view the police negatively, while on other issues they tend to align with blacks. With regard to police misconduct and racially biased policing, we find that blacks and Hispanics do differ significantly; on some questions, Hispanics are *much* less likely to perceive problems than are blacks. They do not differ statistically from blacks, however, on the issue of police reform. When it comes to the question of reforming the police, in various ways, both minority groups are strongly supportive.

- ❑ *Whites*, often in large numbers, express positive views of the police. Many whites reject the idea that police engage the four types of misconduct examined here, and they tend question whether police discriminate against minorities. More than three-quarters of whites, for example, believe that police treat Hispanics and blacks the same as they treat whites. That many whites are skeptical with regard to police racial

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discrimination, or see it as isolated rather than widespread, is consistent with their views of racial discrimination elsewhere in American society. For most whites, racial discrimination in general, and police discrimination in particular, is not a serious problem in America. Whites are also less likely than Hispanics and blacks to support various reforms in policing.

(2) *Demographic factors*, with the exception of race, play a limited role in shaping general satisfaction with police as well as citizen views on misconduct, racial bias, and reform.

(3) *Neighborhood crime conditions* exert an effect on some of the dependent variables, especially satisfaction and misconduct. Personal safety in one's neighborhood and the perception that crime is not serious increase overall satisfaction with the police and decrease the perception that police misconduct occurs frequently.

(4) Citizen *experiences* with police officers strongly influence citizen attitudes in two areas explored in this study. Either personal or vicarious experience of police abuse increases citizens' belief that police misconduct and racially biased policing occur. Experience has mixed effects regarding overall satisfaction with the police (it depends on the racial group) and it does not predict support for reforms in policing. Reform preferences are shaped by larger views of the police (such as the belief that misconduct is widespread), which transcend one's experiences with officers. But experience with the police is a fairly robust predictor in two of our areas—perceived misconduct and racial bias.

(5) The *mass media* influence perceptions of the police. Repeated exposure to media reports on police abuse was found to be a strong predictor of perceptions of police misconduct, racialized policing, and support for reforms. Previous studies have documented the impact of single incidents of misconduct on coloring the image of the police in a particular city, and our results extend this finding to persons who are exposed to recurrent media reports over time. The role of the media has not received the attention it deserves from policing scholars; it may be an important dimension of any comprehensive explanatory framework of police-citizen relations.

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In sum, our findings address the question of why race structures attitudes toward the police by highlighting several micro- and macro-level factors that foster or reinforce racial differences in evaluations of the police. The greater tendency for blacks and Hispanics to hold critical views of the police is largely a function of their disproportionate adverse experiences with police officers, exposure to media reports of police abuse, and (less consistently) residence in high-crime neighborhoods where police practices may be contentious.

While several of the findings could be interpreted as having policy implications, one in particular is most salient for policy—citizen support for reforms in policing. Prior to this study, very little was known about the level of public support for specific kinds of reform or about the determinants of public evaluations of changes in policing.

Our findings identify the kinds of reform that register the greatest public approval. Where popular support for a specific change is widespread, this may be indicative of a problem that needs to be addressed. If implemented, the reform (e.g., recording drivers' race, intensive sensitivity training, greater monitoring, etc.) may help to *reduce the amount of police misconduct or improve police practices* more generally. Moreover, certain kinds of reforms may have a significant impact on *public trust and confidence in the police*. Whether or not police practices actually change (e.g., by hiring more minority officers) certain kinds of reforms may thus be *symbolically* important and enhance public confidence in a police department. Finally, reforms that affect police-citizen encounters (e.g., explaining the reason for a stop) may increase citizen compliance with the police. Although this effect on citizen demeanor and cooperation has rarely been studied, the limited data available suggest that citizen behavior is indeed influenced by officer behavior, and when officers communicate well and treat citizens with respect, citizens respond in kind. Police can do more to dispel beliefs that stops are racially motivated, for example, and also prevent altercations with citizens, by offering more information to justify stops. Citizens are much more likely to cooperate with officers when they are given a reason for the stop, and people put a premium on officers being polite, listening to citizens, and explaining their actions.

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Abstract

Rethinking Minority Attitudes toward the Police

      This study of citizen attitudes and reported experiences with the police in the United States is based on a nationally representative sample of 1,792 African Americans, Hispanics, and whites. Though citizen attitudes have been surveyed in past research, much remains unknown about the factors that shape relations with the police. The study (1) systematically examined and compared the responses of the three groups (Hispanic opinion of the police has rarely been examined), (2) investigated both attitudes and personal experiences, (3) included an adolescent subsample, and (4) contained a number of questionnaire items never or rarely asked in previous surveys, questions that address key aspects of police-citizen relationships.

      Data for this study come from a national survey conducted by the authors between October and December, 2002 of residents of U.S. metropolitan areas with at least 100,000 population. The sample is representative of persons living in telephone households in urban and suburban areas that meet this population size criterion. The survey data were collected by Knowledge Networks—an innovative, web-based survey research firm that combines probability sampling with the reach and capabilities of the internet to yield representative samples of respondents without sacrificing data quality.

      The findings yield important information on the scope and dimensions of problems in the relations between police and minority citizens, data that are crucial to formulating effective policies and remedies to these problems.

Final Technical Report

Rethinking Minority Attitudes toward the Police

Ronald Weitzer & Steven Tuch

June 26, 2004

Relations between the police and minority groups are a continuing problem in the United States and other multiracial societies. While a majority of the public appears to be satisfied with the police at the most general level, specific aspects of policing generate more critical assessments. Moreover, surveys consistently document racial differences in perceptions of the police, with minorities more likely than whites to harbor negative views. While racial differences have been amply documented, less is known about the sources of these differences. Our study explored this and related issues through an examination of citizens' perceptions of police and policing in four major areas: overall satisfaction with the police, perceptions of police misconduct, perceptions of police racial bias, and evaluations of and support for policing reforms.

EXPLAINING PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS OF THE POLICE

Race is one of the most consistent predictors of attitudes toward the police and other criminal justice institutions. African Americans are significantly more likely than whites to be dissatisfied with the police. Much less is known, however, about Hispanics' views of the police. Do Hispanics take a

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perspective similar to that of African Americans, are their views are more closely aligned with those of whites, or do they take an intermediate position between whites and blacks? Studies that examine Hispanics' relations with the police typically focus on Hispanics alone (Carter 1985; Mirande 1981) or in comparison to whites (Holmes 1998); only a few studies compare all three groups (Bayley and Mendelsohn 1969; Weitzer 2002). The literature is thus insufficient to determine how Hispanics' perceptions of the police relate to the modal views of whites and blacks.

Little is also known about the factors (other than race) that influence citizens' perceptions of the police. One recent review concluded that "there is no consensus as to which combinations of variables explain the greatest variance in attitudes toward the police" (Brown and Benedict 2002). Certain factors (e.g., age) are fairly reliable predictors of attitudes toward the police, but the literature has also produced mixed findings on the effects of other variables (e.g., social class) (Weitzer and Tuch 2002).

Most of the literature is exclusively centered on individual-level, demographic characteristics. The role of other factors remains underexamined, and this is particularly true for "the public's personal experiences with the police, what they learn second-hand from friends and acquaintances, and what they learn from the media" (Gallagher et al. 2001:v). The project examined each of these potential predictors of perceptions of the police—personal experience, vicarious experience, mass media—in addition to demographic factors. We investigated how citizens' views and experiences of the police are shaped by race and ethnicity, other demographics, neighborhood crime, personal experiences, knowledge of others' experiences, and exposure to media reporting on the police.

Experiences with the Police

Personal experiences with police officers have at least some influence on general satisfaction with the police. However, unpleasant contacts tend to have a stronger effect than positive contacts. The former tend to lower opinions of the police, while the latter may or may not engender favorable views of the police. Moreover, it appears that police treatment of citizens during encounters has a larger effect on

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citizens' views of the police than the positive or negative outcome of the encounter (e.g., problem resolution, a citation, an arrest) (Tyler 1990; Tyler and Huo 2002). When police treat citizens in a discourteous, brusque, or unfair manner, this experience colors not only citizens' assessments of the immediate encounter but also their overall opinions of the police (Reisig and Chandek 2001; Skogan and Hartnett 1997; Wortley et al. 1997). There also appears to be variation by race. African Americans are more likely than whites to report negative experiences with, and to feel that they have not received fair treatment from, the police (Tyler and Huo 2002; Walker et al. 1972).

Personal experience is not a necessary condition for evaluating the police. Some persons who have had no contact with officers still view police negatively. For example, far more people believe that police verbally and physically abuse citizens than the number who report a personal experience with these actions. Similarly, positive contacts with officers do not necessarily translate into favorable attitudes. Some people who have had a good interaction with the police still hold very critical views of the police, and experiences themselves may be colored by preexisting opinions of the police (Brandl et al. 1994). While personal experience appears to influence at least some types of attitudes for those who have had contact with police, perceptions are also shaped by other predictors.

One such factor is an individual's knowledge of other persons' encounters with the police. Such information may be internalized and "vicariously experienced" by an individual and may be communicated to yet other friends, family members, acquaintances, and neighbors—amplifying the effect of the initial experience and perhaps reinforcing larger (neighborhood, subcultural) beliefs about the police. Researchers have rarely explored the frequency and effects of such vicarious experience, but it is likely that minorities are more likely than whites to know someone who has had a negative interaction with the police. We expected that both personal and vicarious experiences with abusive police behavior will increase negative perceptions of the police, and that such experience will have a more pronounced effect on the attitudes of blacks and Hispanics than on whites.

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Mass Media Reporting on the Police

It is reasonable to expect public opinion regarding the police to be shaped by media reports on police actions, though this has rarely been studied. Indeed, it is surprising that researchers have given so little attention to media influences on citizens' views of the police, especially in light of the abundant research documenting media influences on citizens' views of crime and fear of crime. Some research has found that attitudes toward police appear to be influenced by media coverage of incidents of police misconduct. These studies document an increase in negative views of the police immediately after news coverage of brutality incidents (such as Rodney King) or corruption scandals (such as the Rampart Division scandal in Los Angeles) (Kaminski and Jefferis 1998; Sigelman et al. 1997; Tuch and Weitzer 1997; Weitzer 2002).

If exposure to media reports on a single incident of police misconduct influences public opinion, cumulative exposure to media coverage of separate instances of abuse should also affect citizens' views of the police. The study therefore treated the frequency of consumption of media reports on misconduct as a possible predictor of citizens' views of the police.

Neighborhood Crime Conditions

The present study examined the effect of selected aspects of neighborhood context, but only to a limited extent. Research designs best suited to the examination of neighborhood-contextual effects are single-city case studies, where the number of neighborhoods, and the number of respondents in each neighborhood, is substantial (Sampson and Bartusch 1998). As a national-level survey, our study did not focus on neighborhoods. However, some questionnaire items did ask respondents about certain neighborhood-level factors, namely neighborhood crime conditions. Such conditions may affect at least some types of citizen attitudes toward the police—such as overall satisfaction or assessments of the job performance of the police in one's city and neighborhood. Such conditions include the amount or seriousness of crime, residents' fear of crime, and personal victimization. Some research has found that

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living in a high-crime community lowers residents' approval of the police—whether the measure is residents' perception of neighborhood crime (Reisig and Parks 2000) or officially recorded local crime rates (Sampson and Bartusch 1998). Regarding residents' fear of crime, a twelve-city study found that fear of neighborhood crime increased dissatisfaction toward the police who work in the respondents' neighborhood (Bureau of Justice Statistics 1999), but overall, the literature reports mixed results on the association between fear of crime and opinions of the police (Brown and Benedict 2002).

While the literature is inconclusive, there appears to be a slight preponderance of evidence that neighborhood crime conditions have some influence on residents' *overall satisfaction* with the police. But do neighborhood crime / personal safety also increase the perception that police *misconduct* is pervasive? It is possible that our two crime measures are related to local policing problems. High-crime areas are also the sites where police-community relations tend to be problematic—where police, in their efforts to fight crime, are more prone to act obtrusively and aggressively against residents. Residents of such areas are more vulnerable to being stopped on the street, verbally abused, and physically roughed up (Fagan and Davies 2000; Mastrofski, Reisig, and McCluskey 2002; Smith 1986; Terrill and Reisig 2003). Also more prevalent in high-crime areas is police corruption—including theft of money or drugs from suspects, bribe-taking, and falsification of evidence (Mollen Commission 1994). Police appear to cast a wide net of suspicion in neighborhoods that they view as especially troublesome, resulting in more indiscriminate treatment and mistreatment of residents (Smith 1986). Police typifications of residents of high-crime neighborhoods may thus increase the aggregate level of police misconduct toward those residents. Therefore, we expect perceptions regarding police misconduct to be influenced by residents' personal safety (a proxy for fear of crime) and assessment of the seriousness of crime in their neighborhood.

* * * * *

Based on the literature reviewed above, we predicted that—net of other variables—attitudes toward the police and policing practices will be affected by:

❑ citizens' race and ethnicity,

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- ❑ citizens' personal and vicarious experience of police misconduct,

- ❑ citizens' personal and vicarious experience of racially biased police action,

- ❑ exposure to media reports on police misconduct, and

- ❑ perceived neighborhood crime conditions.

DATA AND METHODS

Data for this study come from a national survey of the United States conducted by the authors between October and December, 2002 of white, African American, and Hispanic adult residents of metropolitan areas (N = 1,792).[1] The sample is representative of persons living in telephone households in urban and suburban areas with at least 100,000 population.[2]

The survey: (1) had large over-samples of African Americans and Hispanics, in contrast to the small number of minority respondents in many other surveys of police-citizen relations; (2) included a number of questions rarely or never asked in prior studies; (3) focused on both attitudes toward and reported personal and vicarious experiences with the police; (4) examined perceptions and experiences in both the respondent's neighborhood and elsewhere in the city; and (5) included both fixed-choice and open-ended questions. This report summarizes the quantitative findings; the qualitative data will be presented in other writings.

The survey instrument was pretested twice. After each pretest, the instrument was amended, including reordering of questions, addition of new questions, and restructuring of other questions. The investigators also benefited from feedback from NIJ officials and other experts at two formal workshops on Minority Trust and Confidence in the Police, sponsored by NIJ and held in Washington, DC in 2002

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[1] We also sampled 310 adolescents aged 13-17, in equal proportions from each racial group. Since the adolescents do not constitute an independent random sample—only those adolescents living in households already selected for inclusion in the sample were eligible—we excluded them from the current analyses. Adolescent responses will be analyzed in a separate context.

[2] Only respondents living in cities or suburban areas adjacent to cities were included in the sample because it is cities where policing is likely to be especially salient for residents (Weisheit, Falcone, and Wells 1995).

and 2003. This feedback was utilized in refining the instrument and informing our subsequent data analysis.

Sampling

The survey was conducted for the authors by Knowledge Networks, Inc. (KN), a web-based survey research firm that combines probability sampling with the reach and capabilities of the Internet. The advantages of using the Internet as a mode of survey data collection include economy of cost, elimination of interviewer-related bias, and fast turnaround, but do these advantages come at the cost of data quality, either in terms of population coverage or sample representativeness? Fortunately, the answer is no: research comparing the quality of data yielded by KN's web-based survey methodology with that of random digit dial (RDD) telephone surveys has found that KN yields representative samples that produce parameter estimates very similar to the estimates of RDD samples (Baker et al. 2003a, 2003b; Berrens et al. 2003; Krosnick and Chang 2001).

Knowledge Networks utilizes list-assisted RDD sampling techniques on a sample frame consisting of the entire United States telephone population, so any household with a telephone has the potential to be selected for the KN panel, including computer users and non-users alike. In exchange for free internet hardware (such as a television set-top box), connectivity (an internet connection paid for by KN), and on-site installation, participants agree to complete a maximum of 3-4 surveys per month. Selected households remain on the panel for two to three years. Currently, KN has over 25,000 households in its web-enabled panel.

Panel Representativeness

When using panels for survey research, potential sampling bias can occur at different stages. First, respondents consent to become panel members; this is referred to as the panel acceptance rate. At the time of this study, Knowledge Network's panel acceptance rate was 40 percent, calculated by

standards established by the American Association for Public Opinion Research (AAPOR).[3] Second, the within-survey completion rate—or percentage of panel members who completed our questionnaire among those who received it—was 67 percent.

Despite KN's modest panel acceptance rate, the panel is representative of and closely mirrors the U.S. population on key demographic, geographic, economic, and social characteristics. Four factors account for the representativeness of the panel. First, as mentioned above, the panel is selected using list-assisted RDD telephone methodology, providing a probability-based starting sample of telephone households.[4] Second, the panel weights are adjusted to Census demographic benchmarks to reduce error due to noncoverage of households without telephones and to reduce bias due to nonresponse and other nonsampling errors. Third, samples selected from the panel for individual studies are selected using probability methods and sample design weights for each study are calculated based on the specific design parameters. Fourth, nonresponse and poststratification weighting adjustments are applied to the final survey data to reduce the effects of nonsampling error. The result is that the weighted demographic estimates from the Census and the KN panel differ very little across gender, age, race/ethnicity, education, and region. Moreover, analyses of panel attrition indicate that no significant differences differentiate those who remain on the panel from those who do not (Dennis and Li 2003).[5]

Compared to whites, blacks and Hispanics in our sample report significantly less education and lower incomes; are younger; reside in cities rather than suburbs; live in neighborhoods with more serious crime; feel less safe in their neighborhoods; report greater exposure to media coverage of police misconduct; and have more frequent experiences with, and greater perceptions of, both police racial bias and police misconduct (verbal and physical abuse, improper street stops, and corruption). Blacks and Hispanics do not differ on income or neighborhood safety/crime, or personal/vicarious experience of police misconduct, but blacks are more likely than Hispanics to report media exposure to police

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[3] The AAPOR response rate definitions can be viewed at www.aapor.org.
[4] According to the 2000 Census, 98 percent of white households, 95 percent of Hispanic households, and 94 percent of African American households have telephone access.
[5] A detailed demographic panel analysis is available at www.knowledgenetworks.com.

misconduct, personal/vicarious experience with racially biased policing, and to perceive the existence of our four types of police racial bias.

Independent Variables

Race. We use the term "race" broadly to include both racial and ethnic groups—blacks, whites, and Hispanics. Our sample consists of respondents who self-identify as African American, non-Hispanic white, or Hispanic on KN's demographic profile of panel members.[6]

Experiences with police misconduct. Questionnaire items address both personal and vicarious experience with several types of police misconduct: unwarranted police stops, use of insulting language, use of excessive force, and corruption. Each question stipulates the site of misconduct as either the respondent's own neighborhood or elsewhere in his/her city (but outside the neighborhood), and with the exception of the corruption item, the questions examine both personal and vicarious experiences: (1) "Have you ever[7] been stopped by police on the street without good reason?" (2) "Has anyone else in your household ever been stopped on the street by police without good reason?" (3) "Have the police ever used insulting language toward you?" (4) "Have the police ever used insulting language toward anyone else in your household?" (5) "Have police ever used excessive force against you?" (6) "Have police ever used excessive force against anyone else in your household?" and (7) "Have you ever seen a police officer engage in any corrupt activities (such as taking bribes or involvement in drug trade)?"[8] We used responses to the four misconduct questions to create two composite indices of experience with misconduct: personal experiences (questions 1, 3, 5, 7)[9] and vicarious experiences (questions 2, 4, 6). The

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[6] Hispanics were asked to identify their ancestry: 50% were Mexican, 14% Puerto Rican, 3% Cuban, 13% Central or South American, and 22% Caribbean or other Hispanic. Because of the low Ns for some of these groups, the within-Hispanic findings presented below should be considered tentative. It is also for this reason that our primary analyses compare the three main racial groups rather than the Hispanic nationality groups.

[7] The recall window ("Have you ever…?"), while frequently used in survey research, is, admittedly, open-ended. Some caution is thus in order in interpreting the personal/vicarious contact findings.

[8] Corruption takes many forms, but the two examples in the question are central: bribery is the quintessential form of corruption and the control of drug crimes is especially prone to corrupting the police (Newburn 1999).

[9] Observation of police corruption is treated as a personal, rather than vicarious, experience because the actor has

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indices are coded such that higher scores reflect more frequent experiences with misconduct. The alpha reliability coefficient is .78 for the personal experience index, and .86 for the vicarious experience index.

Experiences with police racial discrimination. Personal and vicarious perceived experiences with discriminatory police behavior were measured by the following questions: "Have you ever felt that you were treated unfairly by the police specifically because of your race in [your city/your own neighborhood]?" "Have you ever felt that you were stopped by the police just because of your race or ethnic background?" Parallel questions tapped vicarious experience, with reference to whether this had happened to "anyone else" in the respondent's household.[10] Responses to the personal experience questions were combined to form an index of reported personal experience with police bias; responses to the vicarious experience questions were combined to create an index of reported vicarious experience with police bias. The alpha reliability coefficient is .80 for the personal experience index and .84 for the vicarious index.[11]

Media exposure. We asked the following question in order to gauge respondents' exposure to media accounts of police misconduct: "How often do you hear or read about (on the radio, television, or in the newspapers) incidents of police misconduct (such as police use of excessive force, verbal abuse, corruption, and so on) that occur somewhere in the nation?" Response options were "never," "rarely," "sometimes," and "often" on a 4-point scale coded so that higher scores indicate more frequent exposure. This item has the advantage of tapping respondents' specific exposure to reports on police misconduct, unlike some other studies that measure exposure to media sources more generally.[12]

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personally witnessed it, rather than learning of it from others.

[10] Only one type of vicarious experience is measured by our question. It does not include others, such as friends, coworkers, neighbors, etc.

[11] Both of our experience-with-police measures (misconduct and racial bias) involve negative contacts with police. We do not examine the influence of positive contacts—something that should be included in future research.

[12] Because our media exposure measure is based on respondents' self-reports, some caution is in order in interpreting media effects. Some self-selection may be involved in exposure to media coverage of the police, with people who are acutely interested being more attentive than others. The media variable is also fairly broad, asking about exposure to reports of police abuse anywhere in the country. An alternative measure would ask specifically about media coverage of incidents in the respondent's own city.

Controls. We control on several demographic factors: *age*, in years; *gender* (1 = male, 0 = female); *place of residence*, measured with a dummy variable for central city (coded 1) vs. all other areas (coded 0); *region* (1 = south, 0 = nonsouth); *education*, measured on a 9-point ladder ranging from less than high school (coded 1) to doctorate degree (coded 9); and *household income*, measured on a 17-step ladder ranging from less than $5000 per year (coded 1) to $125,000 or more (coded 17). Respondents' assessment of *neighborhood crime* conditions were measured with the following questions: "Overall, how safe do you feel being alone outside in your neighborhood [during the day/at night]—very safe, somewhat safe, somewhat unsafe, or very unsafe?" "How serious a problem is crime in your neighborhood—very serious, somewhat serious, not serious, or not a problem at all?" Responses to these questions are coded so that higher scores reflect less safety and more perceived neighborhood crime.

Dependent Variables

Four major substantive issues define the dependent variables: (1) overall satisfaction with the police in one's city and neighborhood (2) perceptions of police misconduct, (3) perceptions of police racial bias,[13] and (4) evaluations of and support for reforms in policing. The dependent variables are referred to using the general rubrics of Satisfaction, Misconduct, Racial Bias, and Reform. The specific questionnaire items measuring each of the four constructs are presented in Tables 1, 3, 6, and 8 at the end of this report.

Reliability analyses indicated high alpha reliability coefficients for each of the multi-item dependent variable indices—Satisfaction .92; Misconduct .80; Racial Bias between .73 and .91; Reform between .68 and .79. Below, we summarize both the bivariate and multivariate analyses performed for each of the four substantive issues.

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[13] We use the term "racial bias" as a construct referring to differential treatment of individuals and neighborhoods, racial profiling, and police prejudice. We recognize that differential treatment of individuals and neighborhoods may or may not reflect outright racially motivated discrimination.

MAJOR FINDINGS

Satisfaction with Police

To measure citizens' overall satisfaction with police in their city and neighborhood, respondents were asked: "In general, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the police department in your city?" and "In general, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the police officers who serve your neighborhood?" Table 1 presents frequencies for these two items. In both city and neighborhood contexts, satisfaction varies significantly by race. Nearly half of whites are "very satisfied" with the police in their cities and neighborhoods, compared to only about a quarter of blacks and slightly more than a third of Hispanics.

Do these racial differences persist net of the influence of other variables? And what other factors besides race shape satisfaction? To answer these questions, we performed multivariate analyses, fitting OLS regression models to the data both for the total sample and for each racial group separately (see Table 2). In the total sample we fit, first, a term for race-ethnicity only and, next, we incremented the race-only model with the demographic, neighborhood, and policing predictors, in turn. We then fit the fully-specified model to the data for each group—whites, blacks, and Hispanics—separately, in order to examine across-group differences in the effects of the predictors on satisfaction with police.

The results from the race-only model (Model 1 in Table 2) were consistent with the findings reported in Table 1 as well as with the conclusions of other studies: blacks and Hispanics are significantly more dissatisfied with the police than are whites (the unstandardized regression coefficients were -.782 [p<.001] and -.474 [p<.001] for blacks and Hispanics, respectively).

Do these zero-order effects change once other potentially cogent predictors of attitudes toward the police are considered? To address this question, we fit the demographic, neighborhood, and policing variables in blocks. First, we incremented the race-only model with the block of demographic variables; in this model, the coefficient for blacks was -.523 (p<.001) and for Hispanics -.149 (n.s.). Next, we added the neighborhood variables; here, the black and Hispanic coefficients were -.286 (p<.001) and .065 (n.s.),

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respectively. Finally, we fit the block of policing variables, with the result that neither the black (-.065, n.s.) nor Hispanic (.029, n.s.) coefficients remained significant. Thus, for blacks, the effect of race on satisfaction with police persists net of the influences both of demographic and neighborhood factors, losing significance only when the policing variables are controlled. For Hispanics, on the other hand, these race differences disappear once the demographic variables are controlled, suggesting that it is the demographics, not race per se, that shape Hispanics' views. For blacks, however, the disparity with whites cannot be accounted for on the basis of demographic factors alone.

Turning to results for the race-specific models, we found that police effectiveness in fighting crime (as perceived by respondents) is a significant predictor for each racial group: Effective crime-control increases overall satisfaction with police. This is what we would expect, given that the public considers crime-fighting the core function of the police—even though officers actually spend more time on order-maintenance than crime-control per se. It would be surprising indeed if perceived effectiveness in controlling crime did not affect global satisfaction with the police.

The existence of community policing in one's neighborhood increases satisfaction with police in the total sample, and for whites and blacks in the separate sample models. This finding supports the claims of advocates of community policing, who argue that community policing leads to improved relations between residents and the police—a claim that has been empirically tested in only a handful of studies.

Frequent exposure to media coverage of incidents of police misconduct significantly decreases satisfaction only among African Americans. The perception that police misconduct is widespread in one's city or neighborhood decreases overall satisfaction with the police for all three racial groups. People who believe that police are frequently involved in corruption, verbal abuse, brutality, and unjustified street stops are inclined to be dissatisfied more generally with their local police.

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The results are more mixed for personal and vicarious experiences of police mistreatment. Personal experience of abuse lowers satisfaction with the police among whites, and vicarious experience decreases satisfaction among both whites and blacks.

Perceptions of Police Misconduct

Table 3 presents frequencies for each of the items that comprise the indices of perceived misconduct and experience with such misconduct. Questions 1-4 display respondents' perceptions of police use of inappropriate street stops, insulting language, excessive force, and corruption. For each type of misconduct, blacks are the most likely to harbor negative views, whites are the least likely, and Hispanics fall between the two. For example, only 16% of whites believe that police often stop people on the streets of their city without good reason, compared to 54% of blacks and 38% of Hispanics. Regarding the other types of misconduct, it is particularly noteworthy that almost half of the black respondents believe that police often engage in excessive force and corruption in their city.

African Americans are also much more likely than whites to take the extreme view that police misconduct occurs "very often." Depending on the question, blacks are three to five times more likely to believe that misconduct frequently occurs in their city and at least three times more likely to say that it happens very often in their neighborhood. The white-Hispanic gap is also wide, though less so than for whites and blacks.

The remaining entries in Table 3 present frequencies for our experiential variables—personal and vicarious experience of street stops, verbal abuse, excessive force, and corruption. In each case, blacks and Hispanics are more likely than whites to report experience with police misconduct. However, the two minority groups do not differ appreciably from each other, except with regard to unwarranted street stops. About a third of African Americans and a fifth of Hispanics report having been stopped by police in their city without good reason, and nearly as many say that this has happened to someone else in their household. Blacks may be stopped more often than Hispanics because skin color heightens their visibility.

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In addition to the question of whether one has *ever experienced* some type of police misconduct, it is important to consider the issue of *repeated* abuse. Respondents who reported that they had been subjected to misconduct were asked how many times this had happened. Whites differ from the two minority groups in their lower vulnerability to such repeated abuses (data not shown in table). Such repeated experience with police mistreatment is likely to have adverse, cumulative effects on the recipients and, if others are told about these experiences, on the latter's vicarious experiences.

People are somewhat less likely to regard police misconduct as common, and to experience some type of abuse, in their neighborhood than elsewhere in their city, and this is especially the case for blacks and Hispanics. One explanation for this is the police tendency to regard minorities as being "out of place" and more "suspicious" when they are observed in areas outside their own neighborhoods, which increases the chances of street stops and perhaps other abuse in the city context (Fagan and Davies 2000; Weitzer 1999).

The results in Table 3 point to race differences in perceptions of and reported experiences with police misconduct. To determine if these differences persist after controlling for other variables, we fit regression models to the data for the total sample (see Table 4) and separately by racial group (see Table 5). The total sample coefficients showed that significant race differences in perceptions of police misconduct persist net of the influences of the other predictors. Blacks in both the city (b = 1.161, p<.001) and neighborhood (b = .663, p<.001) contexts are significantly more likely than whites and Hispanics to believe that police engage in misconduct, and Hispanics (b = .297 and b = .229, respectively, p<.05) are significantly more likely than whites to hold this belief.[14]

As a general rule, the demographic factors other than race have fairly limited or inconsistent effects. Our micro- and macro-level variables, however, have more explanatory power. First, both

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[14]Net of the other predictors: (1) Puerto Ricans perceive significantly higher levels of police misconduct (in both their city and neighborhood) than all other Hispanic groups (the only exception being that no difference exists between Puerto Ricans and Central/South Americans on neighborhood misconduct); and (2) the other nationality groups do not differ among themselves. On the other major dependent variables in this study (Satisfaction, Racial Bias, Reform), we found no significant differences among the Hispanic nationality groups.

personal and vicarious experiences with police misconduct increase the view that misconduct is common in both city and neighborhood contexts for each racial group.

Second, we expected that frequent exposure to media accounts of police abuse of citizens would increase the belief that misconduct is common, for each racial group and at both the city and neighborhood levels. This expectation was supported (with one exception: whites' views about neighborhood misconduct). The effect of media exposure—especially among blacks and Hispanics—is robust, among the strongest effects in each model. Frequent exposure to media accounts of police abuse has a powerful influence, increasing the belief that police misconduct happens often.

Third, fears about personal safety at night (for whites and blacks) and a belief that neighborhood crime is serious (for Hispanics) increase the perception that police misconduct occurs frequently at the city level. But the more salient question is whether neighborhood crime conditions affect perceptions of the police in the neighborhood context. For all three groups, where neighborhood crime is viewed as serious, residents are more likely to believe that police misconduct occurs in their neighborhood (blacks and Hispanics significantly more so than whites). Fears about personal safety during the day (among whites) and at night (among blacks) also increase the perception of misconduct at the neighborhood level.

As indicated above, high-crime areas are also the sites where police-community relations tend to be problematic. Police in such areas, in their efforts to fight crime, are more inclined to act aggressively and indiscriminately against residents, which may thus increase the amount of police misconduct in these neighborhoods (Smith 1986). This may help to explain the association between the neighborhood crime situation and perceptions of police misconduct.

A final neighborhood condition was examined in the misconduct analysis. We expected that residents of neighborhoods with community policing would be less inclined than those living in areas lacking community policing to believe that police misconduct happens frequently. *Community policing* was defined in the questionnaire as follows: "Community policing involves police officers working with community members to address the causes of crime and to prevent crimes from occurring, rather than just

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responding to crimes after they have occurred. Based on this definition, do you think the police in your neighborhood practice community policing?"

Results show that community policing (as perceived by respondents) indeed makes a difference in assessments of the level of misconduct in either the respondent's neighborhood or elsewhere in their city. Whites and Hispanics who reportedly live in neighborhoods with community policing are less likely to believe that misconduct occurs frequently in their city, and blacks whose neighborhoods have community policing are less likely to believe that misconduct is prevalent in their neighborhood. Consistent with arguments advanced by advocates of community policing, it appears that community policing does engender better relations between citizens and the police in the neighborhood or more broadly at the city level.

Perceptions of Police Bias

Table 6 presents distributions on the racial bias items. The first set of questions (Questions 1-6) asks respondents about *police bias toward individuals*. A majority of blacks and Hispanics believe that police in their city treat blacks worse than whites, and treat Hispanics worse than whites. Few whites share this view; most whites (three-quarters) believe that police in their city treat whites and the two minority groups "equally." When asked to compare police treatment of blacks and Hispanics, most Hispanics, blacks, and whites group the two minority groups together, believing that blacks and Hispanics are treated similarly by the police. The same racial group patterns are evident with regard to *disparate treatment of neighborhoods* populated by different racial groups (Questions 7-9).

Citizen perceptions of *police prejudice* have almost never been explored in public opinion surveys. We find that the overwhelming majority of Americans believe that police prejudice is either very or somewhat common in the United States (Questions 10-12). And a substantial number of people take the view that police prejudice is "very common" throughout the nation: 60% of blacks, 46% of Hispanics, and 20% of whites subscribe to this position. Smaller percentages believe that racial prejudice among

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police officers is common in the respondents' own city or neighborhood. The substantial numbers of blacks and Hispanics who believe that police prejudice is widespread in the nation is consistent with data on police officers themselves (Jefferson 1988).

Respondents were asked to evaluate *racial profiling*, with follow-up questions tapping how firmly these views were held (Questions 13-15). There is substantial consensus that racial profiling is wrong: 90% of blacks, 73% of whites, and 77% of Hispanics disapprove of the practice. Moreover, people who *disapprove* of profiling tend not to alter their positions when confronted with the hypothetical possibility that profiling "works." Respondents who disapprove of profiling were asked whether they would still disapprove if it could be shown "that racial profiling helps to catch criminals." Substantial majorities in each group said they would still disapprove of the practice.

Respondents who initially *approved* of profiling were asked a similar hypothetical question— whether they would still approve if studies show that it "does not help to catch criminals." The approvers were more likely change their views than the disapprovers, when confronted with counter-evidence regarding profiling: A majority of all three racial groups said they would no longer approve of profiling if it was shown to be ineffective in catching criminals. Approval thus appears to be softer than disapproval of profiling.

Large majorities of each group—92% of blacks, 83% of Hispanics, and 70% of whites—believe that profiling is widespread in the United States (Question 16). A majority of blacks and Hispanics (but not whites) also believe that profiling is pervasive in their own city (Question 17), but they less so in their own residential neighborhood (Question 18). This is consistent with prior surveys, which show less criticism of police serving one's own neighborhood than elsewhere in their city or nationwide. Few whites (18%) believe that profiling is widespread in their own neighborhood, probably because so many white neighborhoods are predominantly or exclusively white.

Most African Americans (8 in 10) believe that black drivers are more likely than whites to be stopped by police for the same kinds of traffic violations; two-thirds of Hispanics, but only one-third of

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whites, concur (Question 19). Virtually the same percentages also believe that Hispanic drivers are more likely to be stopped than white drivers (Question 20). But, when asked to compare blacks and Hispanics, fewer people perceive a disparity in stops of members of these two groups (Question 21).

A large gulf separates minorities and whites when it comes to their experiences with racial discrimination by the police (Questions 22-27). Whether the question refers to being "stopped just because of your race or ethnic background" or the more general experience of being "treated unfairly by police specifically because of your race," significant percentages of Hispanics and blacks, but almost no whites (1-3%) believe that they have been the victims of discriminatory police treatment. The same pattern is found for the experiences of others in the respondent's household. Of course, perceived experience of police discrimination is not necessarily equivalent to actual discrimination—since the sheer exercise of police authority (typically in a brusque and authoritarian manner) may be misconstrued as racial bias by citizens. Still, respondents' self-reports, in the aggregate, are consistent with the limited independent evidence—from police records and street observations of police-citizen interactions— indicating that police indeed tend to target minorities, who are viewed with a high degree of suspicion and as having criminal propensities. Minorities tend to be stopped more often than whites (Fagan and Davies 2000; Harris 2002) and treated more harshly in encounters (Smith 1986; Terrill and Reisig 2003).

Multivariate analyses, reported in four models in Table 7, indicate that:

❑ race differences remain after controlling for other variables. In all four domains—differential treatment of individuals and neighborhoods, police prejudice, and racial profiling—blacks and Hispanics are significantly more likely than whites to adopt a critical view of the police;

❑ in every model, blacks' are significantly more likely than Hispanics to believe that police racial bias exists. This indicates that the two minority groups are far from monolithic, at least on the issue of racially biased policing;

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- demographic variables other than race have sporadic effects on citizen perceptions of police bias, with the exception of class effects on perceptions of racial profiling;[15]

- neighborhood crime conditions (perceived seriousness of crime, personal safety) have fairly limited effects;

- exposure to media reports of police misconduct as well as personal and/or vicarious experience with police discrimination increases perceived police bias with regard to each of the four types—either for all three groups or for the two minority groups, depending on the issue. The magnitudes of the standardized coefficients associated with many of these variables indicate that these effects are among the strongest in the analysis.

Popular Support for Reforms

We expected that blacks and Hispanics would be more likely than whites to support various reforms in policing. The types of reforms examined include racial diversification of police departments, enhanced accountability, and measures to increase officer sensitivity toward citizens. The specific items under each category, and the bivariate results, are presented in Table 8.

In general, support for police reform is more widespread among Hispanics and African Americans than among whites. For example, very high percentages of blacks and Hispanics favor "early warning" systems in police departments to help identify officers who receive several citizen complaints[16] and more sensitivity training for police officers to improve their relations with citizens. White support for reforms varies from substantial to tepid.

After controlling for other variables, race differences in views of police reform remain

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[15] An earlier study (Weitzer and Tuch 2002) reported class effects on attitudes toward racial profiling among African Americans, with more highly educated blacks expressing more disapproval of the practice and greater belief that it is widespread than less educated blacks. When we selected from our index of profiling attitudes the two questions that we replicated from our earlier study—approval and perceived scope of profiling—we found class effects consistent with the previous findings: higher income blacks are more likely than lower income blacks to disapprove of profiling and higher educated blacks are more likely than their less educated counterparts to believe that profiling is widespread.

[16] On early warning systems, see Walker, Alpert, and Kenney (2001).

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significant. Specifically, we regressed the three indices of reform preferences—support for racial diversity, accountability, and sensitive policing—on the demographic and policing predictors, both for the total sample and for each racial group separately (see Table 9). We found that:

- demographic factors, with the exception of race, play a limited role in shaping reform preferences,

- blacks are significantly more likely than whites to endorse every reform,

- Hispanics are more likely than whites to favor reforms in police diversity and in sensitive policing, and

- Hispanics and blacks generally do not differ significantly from each other in their views of reforms. When it comes to policing reforms, the two minority groups are on the same page.

We expected that either personal or vicarious experience with police misconduct would increase support for police reform among all groups, but especially among blacks and Hispanics. The regression results provide little support for these predictions. In the total sample, vicarious experience with police misconduct increases support for police racial diversification, but neither of the experience variables impacts endorsement of policies to increase police accountability or sensitive policing. Overall, therefore, experiences with police, whether personal or vicarious, matter little with respect to support for reforms in policing. As indicated earlier, the literature is somewhat mixed regarding the effect of police-citizen contact on larger attitudes toward the police. While negative contact has been found to influence general views of the police, it is by no means a necessary condition for the formation of either general or specific attitudes.

The mass media, however, does shape public opinion toward police reform. Frequent exposure to media reports on police abuse is one of the strongest predictors of support for reforms, net of other factors. People who frequently hear or read about incidents of misconduct, as transmitted by the media, are inclined to support police reforms, and such media effects are generally stronger among blacks and Hispanics than among whites. It appears that frequent exposure to such reports leads respondents to

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conclude that there are serious problems with their police department, problems that require substantial changes.

We expected that the perception that police misconduct is common in one's city or neighborhood would increase support for reform, and this prediction is generally borne out. Citizens who believe that corruption, excessive force, verbal abuse, and/or unwarranted stops are a serious problem in their neighborhood or city are more likely to feel that a host of reforms are necessary to reduce misconduct.

CONCLUSION

Several major conclusions can be drawn from this study:

- *Racial differences* in attitudes toward the police are found across the four substantive domains examined. With the exception of overall Satisfaction, these racial differences remain after controlling for other variables.

    - *African Americans* are more critical of the police than whites. This finding is supported by virtually all other studies.

    - *Hispanics* are less likely than whites to hold favorable opinions of the police. On some issues, they are less likely than African Americans to view the police negatively, while on other issues they tend to align with blacks. With respect to police misconduct and racially biased policing, blacks and Hispanics do differ significantly, with Hispanics being less likely to hold negative views. Indeed, on some questions, Hispanics are *much* less likely to perceive policing problems than are blacks. With regard to assessments and preferences concerning reform of the police, however, Hispanics and blacks do not differ significantly. They are fairly closely aligned in support for a whole host of policing reforms. These findings are especially noteworthy in light of the fact that few previous studies of citizen views of policing have examined Hispanics.

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- *Whites*, often in large numbers, express positive views of the police. Many reject the idea that police engage in the types of misconduct and racial bias examined here. Very few whites believe that the police frequently stop people without cause, abuse citizens verbally or physically, or engage in corruption. More than three-quarters of whites believe that police treat Hispanics and blacks the same as they treat whites, and a majority of whites believe that minority neighborhoods are treated the same as white neighborhoods.[17] That many whites are skeptical with regard to police racial discrimination, or see it as isolated rather than widespread, is consistent with their views of racial discrimination elsewhere in American society, such as education, housing, and employment (Schuman et al. 1997). For most whites, racial discrimination in general, and police discrimination in particular, is not a serious problem in America—episodic rather than routine. Whites are also less likely than Hispanics and blacks to support various reforms in policing.

- ❑ *Demographic factors*, with the exception of race, play a limited role in shaping general Satisfaction with police as well as citizen views on Misconduct, Racial Bias, and Reform.

- ❑ *Neighborhood crime conditions* exert an effect on some of the dependent variables, especially Satisfaction and Misconduct. Personal safety in one's neighborhood and the perception that crime is not serious increase overall satisfaction with the police and decrease the perception that police misconduct occurs frequently. (It should be noted, however, that the national sampling frame precluded definitive conclusions regarding neighborhood-level effects.)

  - As a sidebar to the neighborhood issue, police officers who work in the respondents' neigthborhoods are rated more favorably than police elsewhere in the respondent's city, especially by Hispanics and blacks. Police misconduct, for instance, is seen as more frequent outside one's neighborhood than inside.

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[17] The exception is that 70 percent of whites believe that racial profiling is widespread in the United States.

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□ Citizen *experiences* with police officers during face-to-face contacts strongly influence public opinion in two areas explored in this study. Either personal or vicarious experience of police abuse increases citizens' belief that police misconduct and racially biased policing occur. Experience has mixed effects regarding overall satisfaction with the police (it depends on the racial group) and it does not predict support for reforms in policing. Reform preferences are shaped by larger views of the police (such as the belief that misconduct is widespread), which transcend one's experiences with officers. Unlike some other research, which focuses heavily on the role of personal experience (Tyler 1990; Tyler and Huo 2002), our findings suggest that it is by no means the sole important factor shaping attitudes toward the police (cf. Brandl et al. 1994). It is a fairly robust predictor, however, in two of the substantive areas examined here, and has more mixed effects with regard to overall satisfaction with local police.

□ The *mass media* influence perceptions of the police. Repeated exposure to media reports on police abuse (i.e., excessive force, verbal abuse, corruption) was found to be a strong predictor of perceptions of police misconduct, racialized policing, and support for reforms. Previous studies have documented the impact of single incidents of misconduct on coloring the image of the police in a particular city, and our results extend this finding to persons who are exposed to recurrent media reports over time. The role of the media has not received the attention it deserves from policing scholars; it may be an important dimension of any comprehensive explanatory framework of police-citizen relations.

In sum, our findings speak to the question of *why* race structures attitudes toward the police. As indicated earlier, much of the literature documents race differences but does not adequately explain them. Our data point to the role of several micro- and macro-level factors in fostering or reinforcing racial differences in evaluations of the police. The greater tendency for blacks and Hispanics to hold critical views of the police is largely a function of their disproportionate adverse experiences with police officers, exposure to media

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reports of police abuse, and (less consistently) residence in high-crime neighborhoods where police practices may be contentious.

Finally, we wish to comment on one aspect of the study that is particularly novel and that has perhaps the greatest policy implications—the investigation of popular support for reforms in policing. Almost all of the research on citizen perceptions focuses on general satisfaction or on particular policing problems and misconduct, rather than on corrective measures that might help to reduce misconduct or to improve policing more generally. Perhaps it is simply *assumed* that the public overwhelmingly favors reforms: Who wouldn't want to improve the police? But this is an untested assumption. Little is known about the level of public support for specific kinds of reform or about the determinants of public evaluations of changes in policing.

Our findings identify the kinds of reform that register the greatest public approval, which may be useful in informing public policy. Where popular support for a specific change is widespread, this may be symptomatic of a problem that needs to be fixed. If implemented, the reform (e.g., intensive sensitivity training, greater monitoring, recording drivers' race) may help to *reduce the amount of police misconduct or improve police practices* more generally. Moreover, certain kinds of reforms may have a significant impact on *public trust and confidence in the police*. Whether or not the reform (e.g., hiring more minority officers) actually changes police practices, it may be *symbolically* important and enhance public confidence in a police department.

Finally, certain reforms have the potential to improve the *behavior of officers and citizens* during encounters. A few questions, not included in Tables 8 and 9 because they were miscellaneous, are quite salient here. For instance, (1) 91% of whites, blacks, and Hispanics agree that the Miranda rights should be retained; (2) between 92%-96% of the three groups agree with the statement, "When a police officer stops a person on the street or in a car, the officer should be required to explain to the person the reason for the stop"; and (3) 77%-88% of the three groups believe that, "When a police officer stops and searches a citizen and his or her vehicle, and finds no evidence of a crime, the officer should be required to apologize to the

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citizen for the inconvenience of the search." Most members of all three groups *strongly agree* with each of these policies. These results confirm what others (using different questions) have reported about the importance people place on being treated fairly and with respect by officers.

These and other practices (e.g., sensitivity training) can improve police behavior during encounters, and may increase citizens' willingness to cooperate with the police. Although this effect on citizen demeanor and compliance has rarely been studied, the limited data available suggest that citizen behavior is indeed influenced by officer behavior, and when officers communicate well and treat citizens with respect, citizens respond in kind. Police can do more to dispel beliefs that stops are racially motivated, for example, and also prevent altercations with citizens, by offering more information to justify stops. Citizens are much more likely to cooperate with officers when they are given a reason for the stop, and people put a premium on officers being polite, listening to citizens, and explaining their actions (Skogan and Hartnett 1997; Stone and Pettigrew 2000; Tyler and Huo 2002; Wiley and Hudik 1974).

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Table 1. Satisfaction with Police

"In general, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with …

	the police department in your city?"**			the police officers who serve your neighborhood?"**		
	Whites	Blacks	Hispanics	Whites	Blacks	Hispanics
Very satisfied	46%	22%	36%	48%	26%	36%
Somewhat satisfied	40	51	44	39	51	43
Somewhat dissatisfied	11	19	13	9	15	13
Very dissatisfied	3	8	7	4	8	8
N (unweighted)	615	561	605	613	556	598

** p< .001 (chi-square)

Table 3. Police Misconduct

Perceptions of Misconduct

1. How often do you think police officers stop people on the streets of your [neighborhood/city] without good reason?*

	Neighborhood			City		
	Whites	Blacks	Hispanics	Whites	Blacks	Hispanics
Very Often	2%	18%	12%	5%	27%	18%
Fairly Often	5	18	15	11	27	20
On Occasion	46	46	46	62	36	51
Never	46	19	27	23	11	11
N	613	554	600	613	558	604

2. How often do you think police officers, when talking to people in your [neighborhood/city], use insulting language against them?*

	Neighborhood			City		
	Whites	Blacks	Hispanics	Whites	Blacks	Hispanics
Very Often	3%	11%	7%	4%	17%	9%
Fairly Often	4	14	11	5	18	13
On Occasion	36	44	33	48	45	41
Never	57	31	48	43	20	37
N	609	553	592	613	553	594

3. When police officers use force against people, how often do you think they use excessive force (in other words, more force than is necessary under the circumstances) against people in your [neighborhood/city]?*

	Neighborhood			City		
	Whites	Blacks	Hispanics	Whites	Blacks	Hispanics
Very Often	3%	15%	12%	5%	26%	16%
Fairly Often	4	15	11	8	22	13
On Occasion	38	43	38	59	43	51
Never	55	26	40	29	9	20
N	608	549	593	619	552	599

4. How common do you think corruption (such as taking bribes, involvement in drug trade) is in your city's police department?*

	Whites	Blacks	Hispanics
Very common	6%	22%	9%
Fairly common	11	26	20
Not very common	50	41	47
Not at all common	33	11	24
N	613	555	592

Personal Experiences

5. Have you ever been stopped by police on the street without good reason [in your own neighborhood/elsewhere in your city]?*

	Neighborhood			City		
	Whites	Blacks	Hispanics	Whites	Blacks	Hispanics
Yes	7%	20%	16%	13%	34%	20%
No	93	80	84	87	66	80
N	615	562	604	612	559	598

6. Have the police ever used insulting language towards you [in your own neighborhood/ elsewhere in your city]?*

	Neighborhood			City		
	Whites	Blacks	Hispanics	Whites	Blacks	Hispanics
Yes	4%	13%	11%	7%	18%	18%
No	96	87	89	93	83	83
N	617	561	602	614	559	597

7. Have police ever used excessive force against you [in your own neighborhood/elsewhere in your city]?*

	Neighborhood			City		
	Whites	Blacks	Hispanics	Whites	Blacks	Hispanics
Yes	2%	7%	5%	3%	9%	9%
No	98	93	95	97	91	91
N	617	561	603	613	555	600

8. Have you ever seen a police officer engage in any corrupt activities [in your neighborhood/elsewhere in your city]?*

	Neighborhood			City		
	Whites	Blacks	Hispanics	Whites	Blacks	Hispanics
Yes	2%	6%	4%	3%	10%	8%
No	98	94	96	97	90	92
N	618	565	601	619	562	600

Vicarious Experiences

9. Has anyone else in your household ever been stopped by police without good reason [in your own neighborhood/elsewhere in your city]?*

	Neighborhood			City		
	Whites	Blacks	Hispanics	Whites	Blacks	Hispanics
Yes	7%	25%	17%	11%	31%	21%
No	93	75	83	89	69	79
N	610	549	595	609	547	594

10. Have the police ever used insulting language toward anyone else in your household [in your own neighborhood/elsewhere in your city]?*

	Neighborhood			City		
	Whites	Blacks	Hispanics	Whites	Blacks	Hispanics
Yes	5%	17%	12%	7%	19%	18%
No	95	83	88	93	81	82
N	615	558	604	613	549	600

11. Have police ever used excessive force against anyone else in your household [in your own neighborhood/elsewhere in your city]?*

	Neighborhood			City		
	Whites	Blacks	Hispanics	Whites	Blacks	Hispanics
Yes	4%	10%	8%	5%	13%	10%
No	97	90	92	95	87	90
N	616	559	600	614	555	598

* $p<.01$ (chi-square)

Table 6.   Police Racial Bias

Police Discrimination against Individuals

1. Do you think the police in your city treat whites and blacks equally, do they treat whites worse than blacks, or blacks worse than whites?**

	Whites	Blacks	Hispanics
	%	%	%
Whites worse	1.5	2.2	2.7
Equal	74.9	22.7	43.6
Blacks worse	23.7	75.1	53.6
N	608	555	593

2. Do you think the police in your neighborhood treat whites and blacks equally, do they treat whites worse than blacks, or blacks worse than whites?**

	Whites	Blacks	Hispanics
	%	%	%
Whites worse	1.4	3.3	3.1
Equal	81.6	34.9	50.9
Blacks worse	17.0	61.8	46.1
N	604	551	591

3. Do you think the police in your city treat whites and Hispanics equally, do they treat whites worse than Hispanics, or Hispanics worse than whites?**

	Whites	Blacks	Hispanics
	%	%	%
Whites worse	1.2	3.3	3.4
Equal	76.6	22.2	43.2
Hispanics worse	22.2	74.4	53.4
N	597	546	590

4. Do you think the police in your neighborhood treat whites and Hispanics equally, do they treat whites worse than Hispanics, or Hispanics worse than whites?**

	Whites	Blacks	Hispanics
	%	%	%
Whites worse	1.2	2.2	2.7
Equal	82.3	31.9	50.2
Hispanics worse	16.5	65.9	47.1
N	605	546	591

5. Do you think the police in your city treat blacks and Hispanics equally, do they treat blacks worse than Hispanics, or Hispanics worse than blacks?**

	Whites	Blacks	Hispanics
	%	%	%
Hispanics worse	6.2	5.2	7.5
Equal	87.5	73.1	78.1
Blacks worse	6.3	21.8	14.4
N	594	545	588

6. Do you think the police in your neighborhood treat blacks and Hispanics equally, do they treat blacks worse than Hispanics, or Hispanics worse than blacks?**

	Whites	Blacks	Hispanics
	%	%	%
Hispanics worse	4.8	3.7	7.2
Equal	90.6	74.7	79.4
Blacks worse	4.5	21.6	13.4
N	602	545	587

Differential Treatment of Neighborhoods

7. In general in the United States, do you think that police services in white neighborhoods are better, worse, or about the same as in black neighborhoods?**

	Whites	Blacks	Hispanics
	%	%	%
Worse in white	6.8	2.9	3.7
About same	60.2	18.7	36.1
Better in white	33.1	78.4	60.2
N	609	562	596

8. In general in the United States, do you think that police services in white neighborhoods are better, worse, or about the same as in Hispanic neighborhoods?**

	Whites	Blacks	Hispanics
	%	%	%
Worse in white	6.5	3.3	3.7
About same	59.4	20.0	35.8
Better in white	34.1	76.7	60.5

N	608	555	597

9. In general in the United States, do you think that police services in black neighborhoods are better, worse, or about the same as in Hispanic neighborhoods?**

	Whites	Blacks	Hispanics
	%	%	%
Worse in black	6.9	14.4	14.6
About same	85.5	80.6	77.6
Better in black	7.6	5.0	7.8
N	602	561	596

Police Prejudice

10. How common do you think racial or ethnic prejudice is among police officers throughout the United States?**

	Whites	Blacks	Hispanics
	%	%	%
Very uncommon	6.4	3.3	2.4
Somewhat uncommon	23.7	3.3	12.2
Somewhat common	49.5	33.9	39.2
Very common	20.3	59.5	46.3
N	606	556	597

11. How common do you think racial or ethnic prejudice is among police officers who work in your city?**

	Whites	Blacks	Hispanics
	%	%	%
Very uncommon	21.7	4.0	10.0
Somewhat uncommon	37.8	12.0	25.9
Somewhat common	32.4	38.0	35.2
Very common	8.0	46.0	29.0
N	603	554	586

12. How common do you think racial or ethnic prejudice is among police officers who work in your neighborhood?**

	Whites	Blacks	Hispanics
	%	%	%
Very	34.8	8.8	19.1

uncommon			
Somewhat	41.6	19.7	26.0
uncommon			
Somewhat	19.7	36.9	29.5
common			
Very common	3.9	34.7	25.3
N	599	554	582

Racial Profiling

13. There have been reports that some police officers stop drivers from certain racial groups because they think members of these groups are more likely to commit crimes. This is known as "racial profiling." Do you approve or disapprove of the use of this practice?**

	Whites	Blacks	Hispanics
	%	%	%
Approve	26.8	10.1	23.1
Disapprove	73.2	89.9	76.9
N	608	561	596

14. Suppose that studies showed that racial profiling helps to catch criminals. If this is true, would you still disapprove of racial profiling?** [asked only of those who disapprove of profiling]

	Whites	Blacks	Hispanics
	%	%	%
Yes	57.8	76.6	62.8
No	42.2	23.4	37.2
N	440	504	458

15. What if studies showed that racial profiling does not help to catch criminals? Would you still approve of racial profiling? [asked only of those who approve of profiling]

	Whites	Blacks	Hispanics
	%	%	%
Yes	40.5	40.7	49.3
No	59.5	59.3	50.7
N	166	50	135

Do you think racial profiling is widespread or not widespread…

	16. …in the United States?**			17. …in your city?**		
	Whites	Blacks	Hispanics	Whites	Blacks	Hispanics
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Yes	70.2	91.7	83.2	35.4	79.6	59.4
No	29.8	8.3	16.8	64.6	20.4	40.6

N	607	560	598	606	558	591

18. …in your own neighborhood?**

	Whites	Blacks	Hispanics
	%	%	%
Yes	18.3	57.0	46.4
No	81.7	43.0	53.6
N	606	551	586

19. Do you think that black drivers are more likely to be stopped by the police than white drivers for the same types of violations?**

	Whites	Blacks	Hispanics
	%	%	%
Yes	33.7	81.8	65.5
No	66.3	18.2	34.5
N	614	557	598

20. Do you think that Hispanic drivers are more likely to be stopped by the police than white drivers for the same types of violations?**

	Whites	Blacks	Hispanics
	%	%	%
Yes	33.5	79.9	64.7
No	66.5	20.1	35.3
N	612	554	596

21. Do you think that black drivers are more likely to be stopped by the police than Hispanic drivers for the same types of violations?**

	Whites	Blacks	Hispanics
	%	%	%
Yes	20.5	55.7	42.5
No	79.5	44.3	57.5
N	611	552	594

Personal and Vicarious Experience

Have you ever felt you were treated unfairly by the police specifically because of your race…

22. …in your own neighborhood?**

23. …elsewhere in your city, but outside your own neighborhood?**

	Whites	Blacks	Hispanics	Whites	Blacks	Hispanics
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Yes	1.3	24.3	15.8	1.1	37.0	22.9
No	98.7	75.7	84.2	98.9	63.0	77.1
N	617	559	600	612	554	599

Has anyone else in your household ever felt that they were treated unfairly by the police specifically because of their race…

	24. …in your own neighborhood?**			25. …elsewhere in your city, but outside your own neighborhood?**		
	Whites	Blacks	Hispanics	Whites	Blacks	Hispanics
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Yes	1.7	20.1	15.2	2.7	27.1	19.7
No	98.3	79.9	84.8	97.3	72.9	80.3
N	616	553	598	614	549	593

26. Have you ever felt that you were stopped by the police just because of your race or ethnic background?**

	Whites	Blacks	Hispanics
	%	%	%
Yes	3.3	43.1	26.2
No	96.7	56.9	73.8
N	614	559	601

27. Has anyone else in your household ever felt that they were stopped by the police just because of their race or ethnic background?**

	Whites	Blacks	Hispanics
	%	%	%
Yes	3.2	34.9	24.0
No	96.8	65.1	76.0
N	612	551	596

** p<.001 (chi-square)

Table 8. Policing Reforms

Racial Composition of Police

1. Do you think that minorities should be given preferences in hiring so that a police department will have a similar racial makeup to the racial makeup of that city?**

	Whites	Blacks	Hispanics
	%	%	%
Yes	20.8	53.6	46.7
No	79.2	46.4	53.3
N	473	386	417

Which of the following do you think would improve either the police department or police services in your city?

	2. Hire more minority officers.**			3. Assign more minority officers to minority neighborhoods.**		
	Whites	Blacks	Hispanics	Whites	Blacks	Hispanics
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Improve a lot	8.5	34.0	28.6	17.2	36.7	30.8
Improve somewhat	27.3	40.3	47.9	32.8	40.1	37.4
Not improve much	40.2	18.3	22.8	32.4	14.6	20.8
Not improve at all	24.0	7.5	10.7	17.6	8.6	11.1
N	593	539	583	592	541	584

Accountability

Which of the following do you think would improve either the police department or police services in your city?

	4. Stronger punishment for officers who engage in misconduct against citizens.**			5. An early warning system in the police department to help identify officers who receive multiple complaints from citizens.**		
	Whites	Blacks	Hispanics	Whites	Blacks	Hispanics
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Improve a lot	25.5	59.9	47.5	34.5	57.8	47.6
Improve somewhat	44.2	31.2	33.8	41.6	31.3	36.8
Not improve much	20.5	4.8	10.6	16.8	6.7	9.0
Not improve at all	9.8	4.1	8.1	7.2	4.1	6.6
N	597	545	582	604	543	586

6. Install video cameras in all police cruisers to monitor officer behavior.**

	Whites	Blacks	Hispanics
	%	%	%
Improve a lot	29.9	58.5	42.8
Improve somewhat	36.1	27.9	35.9
Not improve much	25.7	9.2	13.1
Not improve at all	8.3	4.4	8.3
N	595	552	586

7. Do you think that a police officer who is found to have used excessive force (more force than is necessary under the circumstances) against a citizen should receive some kind of punishment?*

	Whites	Blacks	Hispanics
	%	%	%
Yes	91.5	93.1	86.3
No	8.5	6.9	13.7
N	606	557	604

More Sensitive Policing

Which of the following do you think would improve either the police department or police services in your city?

	8. Give officers more sensitivity training to improve treatment of minorities.**			9. More police meetings with the community.**		
	Whites	Blacks	Hispanics	Whites	Blacks	Hispanics
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Improve a lot	19.0	57.0	39.0	23.9	50.2	39.6
Improve somewhat	40.9	27.4	36.2	46.0	34.9	39.9
Not improve much	25.1	10.4	14.5	22.3	10.4	13.2
Not improve at all	14.9	5.2	10.3	7.9	4.5	7.3
N	600	544	585	601	543	586

	10. More police programs for school children.**			11. Require police officers in Spanish-speaking areas to learn Spanish.**		
	Whites	Blacks	Hispanics	Whites	Blacks	Hispanics
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Improve a lot	26.1	48.0	42.4	29.5	42.3	44.6
Improve somewhat	48.6	37.9	39.3	40.2	39.6	37.4
Not improve much	19.0	8.9	12.4	17.7	12.1	10.4
Not improve at all	6.3	5.2	5.9	12.5	6.0	7.6
N	599	548	587	599	538	584

* p<.01; ** p<.001 (chi-square)