ABSTRACT

WARREN, PATRICIA YVONNE. Race, Class and Trust: Perceptions of the Police in North Carolina. (Under the Direction of Donald Tomaskovic-Devey.)

The purpose of this research is to re-examine factors that affect perceptions of the police. Previous research has consistently argued that African Americans are more likely to question police legitimacy (Reis 1971; Bayley & Mendelsohn 1969; Weitzer 1999; Weitzer & Tuch 2004; Sampson & Bartusch 1998). Much of this research has emphasized the importance of race, social class, and community context. However, there has been little effort in this research to situate these findings in a theoretical context.

This dissertation used two theoretical frameworks – identity theory and cognitive bias theory - to explain the race gap in perceptions of the police. There are several goals of this study. The first, is to push researchers who study perceptions of the police into clearly articulating what factors affect perceptions of the police as well as what factors best explain the continuing race gap in trust in the police. The second goal is examine how identity and cognitive bias as theoretical mechanisms might further explain the race gap in perceptions of the police, compared to the more experiential models identified in previous research. Previous research has primarily relied on direct experiences with the police are the primary mechanism through which information about police gets transmitted. This study uses the experience model while also examining how racial and class identity along with stories about the police get circulated within social networks ultimately impacting perceptions of police fairness.

Weitzer and Tuch (2005) are among the first researchers who study attitudes towards the police, to stress the importance of social networks in shaping attitudes and opinions. Stories are important because they not only give information about police behavior but identity theorists argue that they are particularly useful in shaping identity. Therefore, this research also uses social networks and the stories that are generated within them to emphasize how both racial and class identity are developed and then reinforced. In general it is hypothesized that African American citizens are less likely to trust the police because of their racial identity, which is developed out of discriminatory or oppressive personal experiences as well as those that are shared within their social networks. The more long-standing distrust of institutions in society was also expected to influence trust of the police. Weitzer and Tuch (2005) maintain that because African American citizens are less likely to trust governmental institutions in general they are less likely to trust police because police are viewed as agent of the government. For White citizens, distrust of the police is likely to result when they observe or believe police are overtly racially biased because White identity is at least in part developed and reinforced through the rejection of overt discriminatory practices in society.

Two outcomes were estimated to assess the race gap in perceptions of the police behavior – perceptions of police treatment and perceptions of police fairness. The first models captured how racial and class identity impact perceptions of police treatment. In essence these models assessed what are the race and class differences in perceptions of disrespect by the police. They also examined the extent to which perceptions of disrespect are tied to identities are a more generic process. The next, set of models examined the importance of race and class identities and their impact on perceptions of police fairness.

These models were estimated in order to assess what factors people use to make assessments about the police.

It is the case that African American citizens, respondents who have heard negative stories about police behavior, those who believe police engage in racial profiling and those respondents with more long-standing distrust of social institutions in society are less likely to trust the police and they are also more likely to perceive disrespect by the police. It is also the case that personally experiencing disrespect by the police, hearing negative stories about police behavior, belief in police profiling and distrust of the other governmental institutions explains a large portion of the race gap in perceptions of the police.

RACE, CLASS AND TRUST:
PERCEPTIONS OF THE POLICE IN NORTH CAROLINA

By
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APPROVED BY:

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Chair of Advisory Committee

DEDICATION

This dissertation is in loving memory of my phenomenal mother, Peggy Annette Warren (1944-2000) who provided me with all the love and support a child could ask for. Her enduring belief that I could achieve all things if I put God first has left a significant impact on my life. She stressed the idea, 'that if you have faith the size of a mustard seed nothing shall be impossible unto you.' So, from the bottom of my heart I say 'thank you' for always showing me how much you loved me. Words could never express my boundless gratitude for every kind word and deed. I hope I have made you proud of me.

BIOGRAPHY

I was born in South Bend, Indiana but moved to Raleigh, North Carolina during my teenage years. My quest for knowledge began when I was a very small child. I love to read all kinds of books. Whenever I would get punished I would go to my bedroom and read all the books that I could. At a very early age my mother stressed the importance of reading and education more generally. I am thankful and feel fortunate to have had a mother who valued education and encouraged me throughout my years of schooling.

Upon completing high school, I enrolled at North Carolina Central University (NCCU) where I majored in both Political Science and Criminal Justice. I always believed that my purpose in life was to be an attorney. I enrolled in a lot of classes that prepared me for the challenges that I would face upon being accepted to law school. The encouragement of Dr. Joseph Aicher and Dr. Elliot at NCCU was greatly appreciated. Both were particularly influential in helping me complete my undergraduate degree.

After graduating from NCCU, I was admitted to UNC-Chapel Hill's Law School. After careful thought and contemplation I realized that law school was not the career choice that was going to make me feel like I was making a significant difference in the world. It was a difficult decision but I decided to end my tenure at law school. After leaving law school I worked in the Public Defender's Office in Durham County. While working for Attorney Robert Brown, I began to see many of the injustices that people of color face in the criminal justice system. In particular, they were often given longer sentences and their legal representation was not equivalent to their White counterparts. Witnessing the apparent differences in treatment I quickly came to realize that I cared about racial inequality in the criminal justice system. I knew then that I wanted to pursue graduate studies in sociology

because those were the people who were writing about and studying the social problems that I cared most about.

In August of 1999 I began my journey in the Sociology department at North Carolina State University (NCSU). While in graduate school life has presented me with challenges but I have learned a lot and have met a lot of wonderful people who have significantly impacted the way I think about the social world. After many years of hard work I successfully defended my dissertation. I have also accepted a faculty position at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst. I am extremely excited about this opportunity and look forward to making a difference in the lives of many students in the same way that my faculty mentors have made a difference in my life. I look forward to the intellectual journey that I am about to embark upon.

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As I reflect on this journey there have been so many wonderful people who have come into my life and assisted me in accomplishing this major goal. I would first like to thank my awesome dissertation advisor, Donald Tomaskovic-Devey for being an extraordinary mentor and friend. He has been an inspiration to me and I thank him for pushing me to achieve heights that I never thought I could. He and his family welcomed me into their home and hearts and for that I am eternally grateful.

I would also like to thank members of my committee, William R. Smith (Bill), Matthew Zingraff (Matt) and Melvin Thomas for all their support as I worked hard to finish this dissertation before starting my new job. Bill, thank you teaching me the importance of writing syntax and being a critical methodologists. Matt, thanks for hiring me on the Driving While Black (DWB) project. This project has significantly helped me in establishing a research agenda as well as getting my first job. Without this project, acquiring these goals would have been much harder. Thank you from bottom of my heart. Melvin, thank you for pushing me to think about, how my dissertation has implications for improving minority community-police relations.

I would also like to give a special thanks and appreciation to Barbara Risman who has embraced me as her student and friend. Barbara, thank you for always listening, and having a solution to problems that seem insolvable. Your continued support has meant a lot to me throughout my graduate school career. I will miss you greatly and hope the best for you as you start your journey as chair of the department at the University of Illinios at Chicago(UIC).

Since my matriculation into graduate school I have been fortunate enough to have friendships that provided me with support as I faced this demanding task. A very special thanks goes out to my 'dear heart' Darryl A. Walker. His tender love and support has made ending this journey so much sweeter. Thank you for your patience and I look forward to the future. I will carry with me the scripture that we both hold dear to our hearts, Patricia and Darryl went on and grew great and the Lord God of hosts was with them.'

I would also like to thank my special friends, LaKasha Fredlaw, Ann Hoo, Kecia Johnson, Andrea Johnson and Spencer Davis. I am thankful for the growth of my friendship with each of you. LaKasha and Ann thanks for being there before this journey began. You two are very special people to me and I will miss you both. Kecia, thank you for always being there for me when I needed you. Even though you were not here when I defended my dissertation you were always available for discussions and for that I am grateful. We also had some great times as graduate students and that tradition will continue now that we are colleagues. Andrea, your sense of humor is a blessing to everyone you come into contact with. Never change. You are so dear to me. Spencer, thanks for all the discussions. Look forward to more of them. To my officemates, Katrina Bloch and Katya Botchkovar thank you for all the lively discussions and simply being support structures for me. Katya, I wish you many blessings as you start your new job at University Denver-Colorado. Katrina, keep working hard your journey will be ending soon. Keep that easy-going personality. I will miss you both.

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my enormously supportive family. I am grateful for the spiritual foundation that you have fostered in me. It is that foundation that has helped me to accomplish this goal. A very special thanks goes to my mother 'Peggy

Warren'. Her enduring support remains in my heart. Her death left a tremendous void in my life but my strong and courageous grandmother, Nora Marshall continued to pray for me and help get through that difficult time. Grandma, thanks for everything. I also want to give a special thanks to my aunt, Janice Sims. She has been there to support, admonish and encourage me. Thanks auntie. Your love has made this process easier for me. To my Godparents, Rev. and Mrs. Sylvester White, thank you for your consistent prayers and the reminder that, 'all things work together for good, for those who love the Lord and are called according to his purpose.'

To my First Baptist Church family thank you so much for all the prayers and kind words. It is a blessing when people love you. There are so many people in the world who are without the love and support of a church family. I am thankful to God that I am not one of those people. Your love has left an indelible impression on my heart.

I have learned a lot during this journey and am thankful to God that it is over. I can now proudly say, 'that if you have faith the size of a mustard seed, nothing shall be impossible unto you.'

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CHAPTER 1

THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

Racial discrimination continues to be an important and prevalent phenomenon in the lives of African Americans. Research shows a consistent belief among African Americans that they are victims of discrimination in education, housing, employment and the criminal justice system (Feagin 1991; Thomas and Hughes 1993; Tuch and Weitzer 1997; Weitzer and Tuch 1999; Hagan and Albonetti 1982). Davis (1997) suggests that during the 21st century no other problem will have more deleterious effects on the African American community than the discrimination that they face in the criminal justice system.

In recent years, the problem of discrimination in the justice system has garnered both public outcry as well as an enormous amount of scholarly attention. Much of the scholarly research has focused on examining the impact that race has on law enforcement and sentencing outcomes (Brownsberger 2000; Steffensmeier and Demuth 2000; Bass 2001; Bushway and Piehl 2001). This research has consistently found that African Americans are disproportionately stopped, arrested and incarcerated relative to their representation in the population. As a result, some African American citizens have questioned the legitimacy of the criminal justice system generally, and the extent to which they can trust the system to treat them fairly. Thus, the experience of discrimination becomes a potential explanation for the high levels of distrust that African Americans hold toward the criminal justice system.

While previous research has documented that minority citizens are less likely to trust the criminal justice system to treat them fairly, much of this research has focused almost exclusively on perceptions of police behavior (Bayley and Mendelsohn 1969; Reiss 1971; Hagan and Albonetti 1982; Alpert and Dunham 1988; Weitzer and Tuch 2004). These studies

have found that minority citizens[1] are less likely to trust the police because they believe that

law enforcement officers often use race as an excuse for stopping, searching and interrogating

them. This research has also found that social class, personal experience and neighborhood

context all significantly impact perceptions of the police. Because minority citizens are more

likely to report negative experiences with police as well as live in communities that have

higher police visibility they are significantly more likely to hold negative views of the police

(Reiss 1971; Sampson and Bartusch 1998; Weitzer 1999). These attitudes along with the

aggressive policing tactics used by some law enforcement agencies have severely impaired

police-community relations. The consequences of these unfavorable perceptions of police are

multifaceted. First, they severely constrain the relationship between the community and the

police such that even when police are not unfairly policing minority citizens their legitimacy

may be brought into question. Next, these beliefs can severely hinder community policing

efforts. Reisig and Correia (1997) found that citizens who question police fairness were less

likely to engage in collaborative relationships to address crime-related issues. Reisig and

Giacomazzi (1998) maintain that law enforcement agencies should examine and understand

pre-existing negative attitudes toward the police in order to reduce the social distance between

the police and citizens.

  Although previous research has demonstrated that minorities are more likely to

question police legitimacy, Weitzer and Tuch (2004) argue that this research has not done an

adequate job of articulating the theoretical mechanisms that structure attitudes towards the

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[1] Much of this research has focused exclusively on the perceptions of African American and White citizens with the idea that understanding perceptions within these communities might improve the relationship between them and law enforcement more generally. More recent research like Rice et al (2004) emphasizes the importance of including other minority groups like the Latino/a populations in studies about perceptions of police because they have increasingly become the largest ethnic minority in the US. In their 2004 study, Rice et al. found that the Latino communities are less likely to trust the police compared to White citizens but the effects are much stronger for African American citizens.

police. They further suggest that the lack of theoretical development in this area has inhibited researchers from more fully understanding why racial and sometimes class differences exist as well as adequately articulate what accounts for such differences.

This dissertation addresses Weitzer and Tuch (2004) concerns by developing a theoretical framework drawing from identity and cognitive bias theory. Identity theory suggests that there are many identities that a person has – race, social class, gender and sexuality. These identities structure how people experience and interpret the social world around them. Situating perceptions of the police in a theoretical context will shed light on which mechanisms significantly influence attitudes about police behavior while also introducing into this literature a way to examine citizen-police relations in a larger social context. Thus citizen-police relations are simply about what is directly experienced but also identities, what is heard from others, the media and larger perceptions of justice and/or injustice in society.

The literature assessing perceptions of the police has primarily focused on race and social class as two of the most salient correlates affecting attitudes towards the police. These identities have been examined to better understand how they individually as well as interactionally account for racial differences in perceptions of the police. While previous research has consistently examined both correlates, race has consistently been found to affect perceptions of the police, with minority citizens holding more negative views. Social class analyses have yielded inconsistent findings – some researchers have found that class significantly effects trust in the police (Riess 1971; Hagan and Albonetti 1982) while others have not (Weitzer and Tuch 1999; Weitzer 1999). Hagan and Albonetti maintain that much of the inconsistency in the class effect is tied to the measurement of social class. Previous

research has often used education or income as the indicator of class and as a result it has failed to consistently demonstrate how and why class impacts perceptions of police fairness. In essence much of the inconsistency is due to the over-emphasis placed on objective class measures (i.e., education and income) instead of utilizing measures that would help researchers understand how individuals perceive their own class standing and how this affects their perceptions of the social world generally as well as perceptions of the police.

It is also the case that social class is fundamentally different than race for two reasons: 1) social class is not a tangible reality that people can readily identify in general interactions with others and 2) studies have found that the average American self-identifies as middle-class despite their occupational or educational attainment. The point here is that while class affects how people view the social world, according to identity theory it is only likely to impact perceptions when people are aware and attach themselves to that identity. Objective measures of social class are typically not sufficient to capture class identity, because these objective measures are not necessarily the class categories that people feel attached to (Welsh et al. 2004). It is also important to note that in the US most people despite their occupational status report that they are middle-class. Having stated that, it is plausible to expect that if class identity is likely to be realized it is more likely to exist at the two extremes – lower and upper classes. The idea here is that the extreme differences between these categories may lead to differences in expectations of and experiences in the social world. At the extremes the differences in how class experiences are processed, might impact perceptions of fairness in the social world.

While measurement of both race and social identity are important issues raised in the social psychological literature (Frable 1997; Sanders-Thompson 1999; Howard 2000; Welsh

2004) it is important to note here that in this research identity is really defined as the process through which the observed correlations between status, experiences and perceptions gets generated. Such that, even in the absence of direct measures of race and class identity, it is expected that these identities will shape how people understand their experiences in the social world. Thus, attaching oneself to an identity can inform how one will interpret and understand everyday interactions in society. As will be argued later, it is expected that because race is a significant and recognizable organizing principle in society it is likely to have stronger affects on perceptions of the social world. This is not to suggest that class will or cannot influence perceptions but because it is fluid, not easily recognizable, and often misunderstood in everyday life it is expected to be a relatively weak identity.

The identity literature is particularly important in this context because it allows perceptions of the police to not only be shaped by direct experiences but also the experiences that people have with other social institutions. These experiences can then get generalized across all institutions. This literature also highlights the importance of social networks and how they reinforce identity development. In particular, identity develops and gets reinforced through interaction with others, particularly others within intimate social networks (Frable 1997; Howard 2000). It is the case that much of the policing literature has failed to take into account how social networks impact perceptions of the police. For example, it seems reasonable to expect that the information people receive from others within their social networks about police and other social institutions will affect their opinion of such institutions. Therefore, drawing on the identity literature this dissertation will examine how vicarious experiences or experiences that are shared within social networks impact attitudes about police behavior.

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Cognitive bias theory suggests that there are many factors that affect how people make evaluations of the social world. However, when making evaluations people do not exhaust every possible explanation. Rather, people will use information that is readily available to them. If minority citizens and lower class citizens are significantly more likely to leave a police stop feeling mistreated, they are likely to use this experience as a source of information about police behavior generally. Cognitive bias cannot be easily empirically observed using quantitative data. However, it seems plausible that if minority citizens and lower class respondents have more negative experiences with police they are likely to use the experiences as information that gets generalized across all law enforcement. The generalization can then become sources of information that gets circulated through social networks, thus becoming a community story about police bias. Because racial networks are likely to be more homogenous compared to class networks, the circulation of stories are likely to influence perceptions of police more strongly within these networks.

Both identity and cognitive bias theories make important contributions to the literature assessing attitudes towards the police. In general the body of research examining citizens' evaluations of the police has primarily relied on the experience model to account for the racial and sometimes class differences observed. The experience model is one where perceptions of the police are significantly driven by direct experiences with them. While this research effort does not refute the importance of direct experience it attempts to broaden the understanding of perceptions by incorporating how perceptions are structured not only by direct experiences but also identities stories that are heard from others within social networks along with more long-standing trust in other institutions. Therefore, this effort examines perceptions of the police as a function of direct police-citizen relations as well as a more general process that is tied to

identities and cognitive schemas that could get generalized across institutions. These generalizations can reduce institutional legitimacy. Thus, what structures citizens' evaluations of the police is a more complex process than articulated by the experience model. In this context, it is a process which incorporates what people directly experience along with identities, the stories people hear from friends and family, the media, and trust of other governmental institutions.

Both identity and cognitive bias theory will be used to situate previous findings as well as more clearly identify how and why these mechanisms contribute to racial differences in attitudes towards the police. These theoretical frameworks will be used to answer four general questions: 1) How do race and class identities influence trust in the police? 2) How do race and class identities influence perceptions of experiences with police? 3) Do the vicarious experiences shared within personal networks reduce the race gap in trust in the police?

This dissertation emphasizes the importance of clearly stating the theoretical mechanisms that might explain the racial variation in attitudes about police behavior. Without a clear understanding of the theoretical process that shapes attitudes about police behavior very little can be understood about why and how individual as well as contextual factors affect perceptions of the police.

Previous Research

From the earliest studies of attitudes about police behavior to the most recent, one finding is consistent – compared to White citizens, African Americans are significantly more likely to question police fairness (Bayley and Mendelsohn 1969; Reiss 1971; Jacob 1971;

Decker 1981; Weitzer and Tuch 1999; Weitzer and Tuch 2002; Rietzel and Piquero 2003).[2]

This research has focused on race, social class, personal experience and neighborhood context in identifying which factors are most salient in predicting attitudes about police fairness. Much of the earlier research, particularly that of Reiss (1971) and Bayley and Mendelsohn (1969), emphasized the importance and race and social class. There is however, very little consensus about how race and class individually, as well as how their interaction shapes attitudes about police fairness (Weitzer and Tuch 2004).

Bayley and Mendelsohn (1969) argued that race is more salient than any other factor because it affects every aspect of a person's life. They stated that, 'the views minority citizens hold towards the police….are not materially affected by the success they achieve in life in terms of social and economic position.' Their point is that despite the material gains achieved by minority people race still has a major impact on their quality of life. This argument has been heavily debated in more recent research in part because of Wilson's (1978) *Declining Significance of Race* argument. He argues that because African Americans are no longer class homogenous, they no longer have a racially homogenous quality of life or experiences with society's dominant institutions. In theory Wilson's (1978) argument really suggests that as African Americans gain materially, their experiences with discrimination will be both more diverse and of less consequence.

Although articulated earlier than Wilson's declining significance of race argument, Reiss' (1971) agrees that class is more salient in structuring experiences that people have

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[2] Recent research has started to compare the attitudes of African Americans to those held by Hispanics. However, these studies are very limited both in number and in their scope (Reitzel et al 2004). The increasing population size of the Hispanic community in the United States has forced policing efforts in their community to also change. Thus, comparing their perceptions of police and experiences with them might further help to understand how attitudes about police fairness are formed and how law enforcement might better address how to build a better relationship with different minority populations.

generally, as well as with the police. In his classic work Reiss maintains that 'a person's class, rather than their race, determines perceptions of police misconduct.' He suggests that because minorities are more likely to live in poor, high crime areas they are more likely to question police fairness simply because they have more contact with police, thus increasing the opportunity for conflict.

Following Reiss's (1971) argument, contemporary researchers have incorporated community contexts, and personal experiences with police into their explanations and observations about factors which impact attitudes towards the police (Alpert and Dunham 1988; Weitzer 1999; Weitzer and Tuch 2004). Community context is important because where you live not only impacts how often you interact with the police but the nature of the interaction as well. For example, Sherman et al. (1989) argues that lower class, high crime neighborhoods are often considered 'hot spots' and are patrolled more frequently and intensely by police. Weitzer (1999) contends that because of the intensive and often invasive policing that takes place in such communities, residents are significantly more likely to believe that police are abusive and unfair. The type of intrusive policing that results from policing 'hot spots'- high crime areas - as well as the widely recognized media accounts of police misconduct such as the Rodney King beating and the Amadou Diallo shooting, are likely associated with more recent accusations of racial profiling by law enforcement officers (Meeks 2000).[3]

Although racial profiling has become a term that refers to a wide range of race-based discretionary policing decisions, the practice is most commonly associated with drug profiling. The U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency has been credited with introducing race as a variable in

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[3] Racial profiling refers to the practice of conducting traffic stops for petty offenses under the pretext that individuals stopped are likely to be involved in more serious criminal activity (Kennedy 1997; Bass 2001).

drug courier profiles (Glasser 2000). Drug profiles claim to establish specific criteria for identifying drug couriers. However, these profiles are typically vague and include a range of characteristics such that anyone could be considered a drug trafficker if the police deemed them so (Russell 1998).

It is also the case that racial profiling can have a strong link to spatial context (Tomaskovic-Devey et al. 2004). That is, in some geographical contexts out-of place profiling is likely to happen. Out-of-place profiling is defined as using race as a proxy to stop or question citizens because it is assumed that they are not residents of or do not belong in that particular community. African American citizens often argue that they are likely to stopped by police in middle-class White neighborhoods because police will assume that they are involved in criminal activity. Meehan and Ponder (2002) found that the patterns of police investigation and stops significantly increased among minority drivers in neighborhoods that are predominately White and more well-to-do. It is the case that White citizens can also experience out-of-place profiling. That is, when they are in geographical contexts that are highly criminalized, which tend to be disproportionately minority they are often placed under more police surveillance.

To date only a few studies have examined citizens perceptions of racial profiling (Weitzer and Tuch 2002; Rice et al. 2003) and how these perceptions affect their support of the police. Weitzer and Tuch (2002) were the first researchers to empirically demonstrate that citizens who believe that racial profiling is widespread within law enforcement are less likely to trust police to treat them fairly. Much of the research examining racial profiling has focused on the extent to which police systematically engage in it. This research comes after allegations of racial profiling in Maryland, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina and California – just to

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name a few (See Lamberth 1997; Parker 2002; Smith et al. 2003). Much of this empirical work has tried to demonstrate the existence of racial profiling as an organizational phenomenon (Smith et al. 2003; Walker 2001). However, very little is known about the general public's view about the extent to which police actually engage in racial profiling and even less is known about what accounts for the racial variation in perceptions of police profiling.

The empirical research that has examined perceptions or attitudes towards the police has typically linked citizens' attitudes to individual-level demographic characteristics such as age, race and gender (Brown and Benedict 2002). There are however, two important contexts that have not received adequate attention in this body of research – neighborhood conditions, and what people learn about race and the police from friends and family (Gallagher et al. 2001). Weitzer and Tuch (2004) suggests that neighborhood conditions are important because characteristics of communities like the crime rate significantly affects the frequency of police interaction, the nature of the police interaction, as well as attitudes about law enforcements' ability to protect and secure communities. It is also the case that understanding stories or what people hear from those people within their personal networks as well as from media outlets is likely to be a particularly important source of information when there are no direct experiences to draw from. To date no study has compared the influence of stories about police behavior on attitudes towards the police among those who have had more frequent contact with police to those who have had little to no contact with police. It might be the case that stories about police misconduct are particularly influential among those who have limited contact with police. The assumption here is that those with more personal experiences will have more information with which to corroborate their own experience. When limited personal experiences exist, then the

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stories that are shared within personal networks become one of the few sources of information from which to draw when making an assessment about the police.

While the influence of neighborhood factors on participation in crime and delinquency has been extensively explored (Anderson 1978; Dunham and Alport 1988; Morenoff and Sampson 1997) little is known about how such factors affect attitudes towards the police. Sampson and Bartusch (1998) suggests that neighborhood factors such as concentrated disadvantage and residential segregation are important factors because in these areas economic constraint is greatest, and it breeds greater perceptions of injustice. Hagan and Albonetti (1982) wrote, that 'perceptions of justice and injustice are determined in large part by the places, and positions in the social structure from which they are derived (1982:352).' In other words, places where disadvantage is greatest, crime is highest, and legal norms are weak often warrant or encourage social distrust.

In sum, previous research has demonstrated that race, social class, experiences with police and neighborhood conditions all affect perceptions of the police. However, this body of work has really failed to clearly articulate a theoretical context that might explain the continuing significance of race. As a result there are several limitations in this body of research that has limited our understanding about how and why the racial gap in trust of the police continues to exist. One of the major limitations of this body research is the failure to use multiple cross-sectional designs This design would allow researchers to examine how perceptions of the police might vary across time. It could be that trust in the police shifts across time as a function of the political environments of the time. For example, the relationship between the police and the African American community was particularly conflictual during the height of the Civil Rights Movement in the mid to late 60's. The political environment

during this time fostered resentment between the police and the African American community. A longitudinal design would allow researchers to assess shifts in attitudes as political contexts change.

Next, research has not taken full advantage of multi-level modeling which might better assess how attitudes towards the police are not just individually specific but also place specific. The point here is that much of the research examining attitudes towards the police has focused almost exclusively on individual-level characteristics such as race, social class, gender and personal experience impact trust in the police across different geographical contexts. It is also the case that these mechanisms might interact with characteristics of places like the crime rate, and economic disadvantage to produce lower levels of confidence in the police.

It seems reasonable to expect that not all African American citizens, lower class citizens or even citizens who have had negative encounters with the police will distrust them. Rather, the point here is that there might be a generic process that structures attitudes towards the police. Identity theory and Cognitive bias theory would lead one to believe that trust in the police is not simply about personal experiences. Rather, perceptions are multifaceted because they reflect the social identities the people attach to themselves. Thus, people will view the social world and the experiences they have in it as a direct reflection of those identities.

Figure 1 presents a visual depiction of how previous research has examined perceptions of the police. The major findings in this research suggest that race, social class, personal experience with the police and neighborhood context all significantly impact attitudes towards the police. What is not dealt with very well in the literature is why and how these factors individually and interactionally impact attitudes towards the police. For example, why is it that African American citizens who infrequently have any contact with police do not expect they

will be treated fairly by them? In 1999, the *Contacts with Police* Study found that only 21% of U.S. residents in general reported having some contact with police with White citizens having higher rates of police contact (1 contact for every 4.5 White citizens) compared to African Americans (1 contact for every 5.3 African American citizens). This suggests that personal experience alone is unlikely to explain the race gap in perceptions of police fairness. This dissertation will try to advance previous research by emphasizing the importance of identity and cognitive bias as well as explain how these mechanisms work together to produce distrust of the police. These mechanisms along with characteristics of places will be further examined to assess whether trust in the police varies across geographical contexts.

Figure 1.1 General Theoretical Model of Race, Social Class, Personal Experience and Neighborhood Context on Trust in the Police

RACE

Reiss (1971)
Jacob (1971)
Hagan & Abonetti (1983)
Weitzer (1999)

PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

▪ Do you feel you were stopped by police because of your race?
▪ How often has a police officer treated you disrespectfully?
▪ How would you describe the police officers demeanor?

Wietzer & Tuch (2004)
Tyler & Wakslak (2004)
Reisig & Giacomazzi (1998)

POLICE LEGITIMACY

▪ How much confidence do you have in police to treat everyone fairly?
▪ Do you believe police officers deal with citizens in a fair and courteous manner?

Tyler & Wakslak (2004)
Davis, Henderson & Cheryachukin (2004)

SOCIAL CLASS

▪ Education
▪ Income
▪ Class positions at work

Reiss (1971)
Weitzer (1999)
Hagan & Albonetti (1983)
Alpert & Dunham (1988)

NEIGHBORHOOD CONTEXT

▪ SES of community
▪ Crime Rate
▪ % African American

Reiss (1963)
Sampson & Bartusch (1998)
Sampson & Groves (1989)

Present Study

This dissertation will extend previous research by developing a theoretical framework which synthesizes two major theories: 1) Identity theory and 2) Cognitive bias theory. The idea here is to situate the findings of past research in a theoretical context while also incorporating factors beyond race, that have been under-theorized in explaining the race gap in perceptions of police. The contribution of this research is really twofold: 1) it develops a theoretical framework drawing from the identity and cognitive bias literature in order to explain the race gap in perceptions of police fairness, 2) it incorporates the influence of family and friends by emphasizing the importance of social networks in shaping attitudes about the police, and 3) it examines how more long-standing trust/distrust of institutions more generally affect perceptions of police fairness.

It is the case that previous research has assessed trust in the in police through an experience model. That is, the direct experiences that people have both inside as outside of their community/ neighborhood with police is what primarily affects the racial differences in trust in the police. This dissertation again, does not refute that claim but also maintains that it is not solely about the direct experiences with police but also the identities that people attach to themselves that structures how they interpret and understand social experiences with police. These identities often come with historical context/stories that get circulated throughout social networks. These stories become a larger part of the cultural identity thus potentially reducing legitimacy in social institutions like the police. So, for African Americans the more long-standing distrust of the police is tied to both the historical as well contemporary conflicts that exist between them.

What follows is a theoretical discussion that accounts for racial differences in perceptions of police bias. The basic tenets of each theory will be outlined, as well as how they help explain the racial gap in perceptions of police bias. Through these theoretical frameworks it is possible to see that attitudes about police bias are not simply shaped by being a member of a particular racial group or membership in a social class category but rather by identities associated with group membership that then shape our understanding of the personal and vicarious experiences that help develop and reinforce identity. These experiences both personal and vicarious can potentially get generalized across groups thus affecting attitudes about social institutions, including the police.

The data used in this study are drawn from two different sources: 1) The North Carolina Highway Traffic Survey of licensed drivers in North Carolina (NCHTS), and 2) The North Carolina Division of Motor Vehicles Driving Records (DMV). The purpose of the NCHTS was to investigate racial disparity in police stops in North Carolina. Data were collected between June 22, 2000 and March 20, 2001 with a telephone survey of 1445 licensed African Americans and 1475 licensed White drives. The survey data used in this study contains measures of status characteristics, driving behaviors, attitudes about police and other social institutions in society as well as evaluations of personal and network experiences with police.

CHAPTER 2

IDENTITY AND COGNITIVE BIAS:
UNDERSTANDING PERCEPTIONS OF THE POLICE

African American and White citizens often perceive American social institutions in very different terms, and views of criminal justice are no exception. Indeed, previous research has demonstrated that race is one of the most salient predictors of attitudes towards the police - with African Americans being more likely than Whites to express dissatisfaction (Reiss 1971; Sims et al 2002; Weitzer and Tuch 2004). However, little is known about the sources of this dissatisfaction.

In this chapter, a theoretical model is developed drawing from identity and cognitive bias theory in order to understand the race gap in perceptions of police legitimacy. These theoretical frames are used to situate previous research findings which argue that race, social class, personal experience and neighborhood context all impact perceptions of the police. The core of the theoretical ideas suggests that the legitimacy of institutions, like the police as well as how we evaluate events in our lives are a reflection of the social identities that are developed and get reinforced across a person's life-course. These identities influence how we process information from our own experiences, the indirect experiences that we hear about from others within our personal networks and our own understanding of stories and events in the society more generally. Thus, legitimacy is not simply about material interest or experience, but also about identity and information processing. These theoretical ideas identify a different analytical approach to understanding race, social class or any other identity-linked, attitudinal disposition to police (or any other institutional) legitimacy.

The remaining portion of this chapter will explore previous research and how they explain the race gap in trust in social institutions, like the police and the criminal justice system. Identity and cognitive bias theories are used to connect status characteristics like race and social class to identities that potentially affect how experiences are processed and used as information about police behavior. Using these theoretical frames allows this research to identify the mechanisms or processes through which the observed correlations between status and perceptions gets created and reinforced.

Race, Social Class and Trust in Institutions

African Americans and other minorities are significantly more likely to question the fairness of governmental institutions (Hughes and Thomas 1996; Schuman et al.1997; Feagin 1991). This research emphasizes the importance of identity, as well as personal experience in producing minority distrust of dominant institutions. Thus, individuals with minority identities will tend to trust and/or distrust dominant institutions as a function of how they interpret their experiences. This is not to suggest that distrust of the police is not a reflection of police behavior, but rather a combination of factors that are about identity, police behavior and the stories that get circulated within networks about police behavior.

The impact of race on trust in institutions is a heavily debated issue in the sociological literature. Most of the concern is tied to the relative importance of race versus social class in predicting life chances as well as attitudes about a whole host of issues often related to civil rights. These issues have been particularly contested since Wilson's (1978) declining significance of race thesis which suggests that social class is more salient in shaping the experiences of African Americans. Under this assumption one might expect that after controlling for social class or the material conditions under which people live, race differences

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in perceptions of social institutions will be explained away. However, this effect has not been demonstrated in previous research (Feagin, 1991; Feagin and Sikes 1994; Hughes and Thomas 1996). In fact much of the research suggests that despite the relative life experience differences that may exist among lower and middle-class African Americans there does seem to be a fundamental 'groupness' that questions the fairness in many of society's dominant institutions. Feagin (1991) suggests that middle-class African Americans experience discrimination just like lower class African Americans. However, the difference is that middle-class African Americans have more of an opportunity to experience discrimination in a wider arena because of their extended access to many of society's dominant institutions – banking, housing and education. One of the respondents in Feagin's study noted,

> …..I do not wear whatever class status I have or whatever professional status I have in my appearance when I am in the grocery store. When I am in places where people cannot determine my class status, I am simply a part of the mass of African American women shopping. For most Whites that translates into negative status. This means that they are free to treat me the way they treat poor African Americans because they cannot tell that I am any different than that (109:1991).

Feagin and Sikes (1994) in their study of middle-class African American citizens argue that African Americans are not sheltered from discrimination. Instead, many of them could give vivid accounts of the hostility and discrimination that they have actually experienced. As a result, Feagin and Sikes (1994) maintain that while middle-class status gives access to a wider range of institutions like housing, banking, education, and employment it also increases the number of places where discrimination might be experienced.

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Ellis Cose (1993) found that many middle-class African Americans felt that they did everything and played by all the rules but were still stuck in jobs traditionally held by minorities. These kinds of arguments suggest that middle class status cannot shelter them from discrimination and in many cases might even subject middle-class African Americans to more acts of discrimination and negative treatment simply because of the wider range of access that they have to various societal institutions.[4] These negative or discriminatory experiences with societal institutions get generalized across institutional contexts. Such that, distrust becomes an emergent racial orientation reflecting contemporary experiences with discrimination (Schuman et al. 1997; Feagin 1991).

Race, Social Class and the Criminal Justice System

Previous research has consistently demonstrated that there is a fairly high degree of societal consensus with regard to crime seriousness and preferred sentencing (Wolfgang et al 1985; Cullen et al. 1982; Stinchcombe et al. 1980; Gottfredson and Hirschi 1990), however there are significant differences, particularly racial differences in perceptions of how criminal justice is applied (Wortley et al. 2001). The evidence suggests that African Americans are more likely to perceive the courts as well as the police as discriminatory (Hagan and Albonetti 1982; Mann & Wilbanks 1996). For example, in a study conducted by the American Bar Foundation (1977) African American respondents were less likely to believe that they could get a fair trial and they also maintained that judges are generally dishonest and unfair.

The racial gap in perceptions of the criminal justice system was also widely noted in the wake of the highly publized O.J. Simpson trial. Several public opinion polls revealed that while the majority of White Americans believed that he was guilty of the crime, the majority of

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[4] It is interesting that this argument resembles Reiss' contact theory, except that for middle-class African Americans racialized experiences are increased by class-linked interactions, rather than the reverse.

African American citizens thought that he was innocent (Tuch and Weitzer 1997).
Furthermore, African Americans were much more likely than Whites to believe that Simpson
was the victim of a police conspiracy scheme to frame him for murder (Whitaker 1995;
Wortley et al 1997). The racial differences observed in the Simpson trial also exist in public
opinion about the Rodney King beating. While only 50% of Whites believe that police used
improper force, 66% of Latinos and 83% of African Americans saw the incident as police
brutality. Tuch and Weitzer (1997) argue that the Simpson trail and the Rodney King beating
are clear examples of how police behavior is interpreted through a racial lens.

The fact that African Americans perceive higher levels of discrimination in the criminal
justice system is consistent with the studies showing that African Americans also tend to
evaluate police performance more negatively than White citizens (Parker et al. 1995; Apple &
O'Brien 1983; Peek et al. 1981). For example in a study of perceptions of the Miami police,
Alpert & Dunham (1988) found that African American respondents were more suspicious of
the police than White respondents. These authors along with others (Hagan & Albonetti 1982)
suggest that the differences in police treatment between African American and White citizens,
explains a large portion of the racial variation in attitudes towards the criminal justice system.

Other efforts to understand the racial variation in perceptions of criminal justice have
focused on social class. Conflict theorists argue that the criminal justice system protects the
interests of members in privileged social classes (Turk 1969; Chambliss and Seidman 1982).
In their analysis of how class conflict affects perceptions of justice Hagan and Albonetti (1982)
operationalized social class in relational terms, and members of the surplus population, defined
in their sample as unemployed, were found to perceive more criminal injustice than individuals
in other social classes. While they found significant class effects it did very little to explain the

racial differences in perceptions of injustice. In fact they found that racial differences in perceptions of injustice increased with class position. For example, in the professional/managerial class, African Americans were significantly more likely to perceive discrimination in the justice system relative to Whites. These findings are consistent with a number of other studies that demonstrate that higher-status African Americans hold just as negative or more negative views of the police and other social institutions as lower-status African Americans (Feagin 1991; Peek et al 1981; Alpert & Dunham 1988; Apple & O'Brien 1983). These findings suggests the need to explore more fully how race and social class might intersect to affect attitudes towards the justice system and law enforcement more specifically.

While there is general skepticism of the criminal justice system among both African American and White citizens, Robert and Staland (1997) maintain that the part of the criminal justice system that yields the least confidence is law enforcement. Although this point has been clearly articulated in previous research what is missing is a theoretical explanation that explains not only the racial differences in perceptions of injustice but also why the racial gap continues even after controlling for experiences. Much of the previous research has argued that minorities are less likely to trust the criminal justice system as well as the police because of the negative experiences that they have. The contention of this research is that it cannot solely focus on the material conditions and lived experiences. There needs to be a focus placed on identities and how they develop across the life-course as well as how these identities impact understandings of the social world more generally.

It is likely that a combination of contextual factors associated with both race and social class influence public perceptions of the criminal justice system. Previous research has demonstrated that public perceptions of bias in the justice system are associated with race

(Feagin 1991; Weitzer 1999), experiences with perceived discrimination (Weitzer and Tuch 2002; Alpert & Dunham 1988), and sometimes with social class (Hagan and Albonetti 1982). These factors in combination with each other have been used to explain the polarization of public perceptions of racial bias in the criminal justice system.

The next section will explore both identity and cognitive bias theory. These theories will be used to both situate previous research findings in a theoretical context while also expounding upon how and why race and social class affect perceptions of the police. Identity theory suggests that there are identities that people attach themselves to and as a result they understand the social world through these identities lens. People have multiple identities that shape who they are and how they understand the social world.

In this context, the identities that are most salient are race and social class because they have both been emphasized in previous research and they have also been under-theorized. This literature has primarily focused on the experience model. That is, much of the research is suggesting that African Americans are less likely to trust police or are more skeptical of police behavior because they are more likely to report negative encounters with them. This research argues that perceptions of the police are not simply a reflection of experiences with police but also a distrust of institutions in general that can be tied identities as well as the historical relationship that has existed between minorities and the police as well as other governmental institutions.

Cognitive bias theory suggests that when people are forming attitudes they do not exhaust all possible avenues for informing their opinion. Rather they use the most readily available information in their memory. Sometimes this information is directly about personal experiences but it could also be about the stories that are circulated within personal networks as

well as the media stories about police behavior. It is likely that the identities that people have will shape their understanding, thus impacting the cognitive schemas they form that are used to make sense of the world around them. The remainder of this chapter will explore both theories and how they can inform understandings of how race and social class impact attitudes about law enforcement.

Identity Theory

The study of identity focuses primarily on the formation of 'me'. This research does this by studying the ways in which interpersonal interactions mold an individual's sense of self. Identities are a reflection of historical events and cultural codes that are translated into experiences that help construct an individuals' understanding of who they are in the social world (Frable 1997). Karl Marx was among the first social theorists to stress the importance of identity. According to Marx, social identity reflects the common fate and interests shared with others within the same social category. When people come to see aspects of their social identity as being tied up in group membership, in Marx's case class membership, it creates solidarity with other in-group members. Group membership thus forces one to internalize the qualities of group membership thus pushing for a unified, singular social experience against which people can construct a sense of self.

One approach to studying identity formation lies within the symbolic interactionist framework. The basic premise of symbolic interactionism is that people attach symbolic meaning to objects, behaviors, themselves as well as other people. As a result, they develop and transmit meanings through interaction (Cerulo 1997; Howard 2000). Symbolic interactionist approach to identity formation emphasizes two things: 1) the structure of identity, and 2) the processes and interactions through which identities are constructed. The first

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approach suggests that the characteristics a person develops as a member of various social groups are organized hierarchically, on the basis of importance to self and the degree to which people are committed to them (Stryker 1980). The second approach emphasizes the processes of identity construction and negotiation. The negotiations are about who people are fundamentally and how they make sense of the social world (McCall and Simmons 1978). Identities are thus social constructions created through interaction, with social and material consequences (Howard 2000).

Sociologists (Turner 1987; Lewin 1951; Deutsch & Gerard 1955; Kelley 1952) have long argued that group identities are important because they provide people with information about a variety of social issues in society. Research has demonstrated that group identification is particularly influential in attitude and belief formation (McConahay and Hough 1976; Tuch and Hughes 1996) because people turn to their salient social reference groups for validation about beliefs and attitudes (Merton 1957; Asch 1951; Sanders-Thompson 1999).

Since everyone has multiple potential identities, it is important to question how people choose which group identity is most salient and in what context specific group identities will be used (Stryker and Statham 1985; Semons 1991). Research has suggested that in the US African American and White citizens most salient identity is race because of the way in which race socially organizes our social interactions with others (Sanders-Thompson 1999; Helms 1995). For African Americans their racial identity is constructed around the common history of oppression and discrimination they face both currently and historically. Helms (1995) argues that although White citizens may not have experienced a similar history of oppression there is still a cultural experience that comes from accepting Whiteness in America, with some of contemporary White identity being tied to the rejection of overt racist practices.

In US society race has long been recognized as the basis for the development of group interests (Bobo 1988). Race in America has many powerful dimensions. It structures, who we interact with, how often we interact with them and our understanding of social circumstances. Schulz et al. (2002) argues that race fundamentally influences access to both social and economic resources. For example, institutional and structural forms of systematic discrimination can limit access to education, employment and housing opportunities. Thus, racial categories become the basis for economic, political and social organization in society. This is not to argue that there will not be other social identities, like gender or social class that may inform attitude structure, but rather racial identity is the most salient identity affecting experiences in the social world.

Race is unlike other identities because it is often viewed as a historical and contemporary symbol of oppression, subjugation and privilege. Therefore, racial identity is fundamentally important to the way people structure their interactions with others as well as how they come to understand the experiences and circumstances of their own lives. Smith et al. (2001) maintains race and ethnicity is one of the largest divides in social life, especially within social network. These authors argue that race fundamentally affects who one marries, confides in, becomes friends with and interacts with in the work environment. Louch (2000) found in his study that people are more likely to report that they feel connected to others who share their same race.

Because prior research has suggested that race socially organizes everyday life it is reasonable to assume then that racial identity is likely to be an identity that is activated in everyday interactions. Sanders-Thompson (1999) found that racial identity is more likely to be activated in contexts where one's racial status is in the minority. For example, in a sample of

African American high school students, Sanders-Thompson found that African American students are more likely to identify with their racial identity when they interact with students of other racial categories. Although Sanders-Thompson (1999) does not have a sample of White students it is plausible to assume that when difference is a recognizable trait, ones' own racial status becomes more apparent.

Kluegel and Smith (1986) argue that race is likely to be a salient identity even among White citizens, especially in cases where there are overt challenges to their privileged status. For example, in their study of attitudes towards affirmative action, Kluegel and Smith (1986) found that while lower class White citizens were more likely to favor these programs compared to middle-class White citizens, there was still strong White racial opposition to such programs. These authors maintain that the opposition to these programs do not lie in traditional explanations of racism. Rather, White citizens' challenges to these programs were primarily about resisting programs that pose a threat to their relatively privileged economic position. The authors further note,

> White citizens agree in principle that African Americans should
> have equal opportunity but lose enthusiasm for actual programs to
> affect it to the degree that these programs threaten economic loss for
> White citizens in general (Kluegel & Smith 1983:799).

Thus, even in context where the status that is being threatened is economic, racial identity still plays an important role in shaping how people make sense of the social world. The Kluegel and Smith (1986) is an excellent example of how racial identity seems to trump social class. Bobo (1998) maintains that this is in part due to people's own understanding about how race fundamentally operates in American society as well as how it impacts our everyday lives. Therefore, it seems likely that because race structures so much of our everyday interactions it

is likely to be a salient identity in most social contexts, especially in contexts where civil liberties are in question and given the historical conflictual relationship between minority communities and the police it is likely that race is the identity that most significantly conditions their understandings of experiences.

Although previous research has found that race is a status/identity that conditions most aspects of our everyday life, this does not preclude social class from being an organizing principle in American life. It is the case, however, that economic mobility can undermine the stability of class identity (Bullock and Limert 2003). According to identity theory, identities are salient the extent to which an individual understands it and finds it to be an important identity for their own life. Thus, social class is a weaker identity than race because of its instability and sometimes unrecognizable characteristics that make it more problematic to differentiate one's own class standing in comparison to others. These factors limit the contexts in which social class will be the most active identity.

In the context of assessing perceptions of the police, although some research suggests that lower class respondents are significantly more likely to question police fairness, these effects are often found in combination with race and are inconsistent at best. Thus, social class is a fluid identity and therefore a relatively weaker identity compared to race. Thus, it is less likely to be the identity that is activated in most social contexts.

Racial Identity

Racial identity is a learned aspect of an individual's personality and it is based on a shared history with other group members. To the extent that racial identity serves as one aspect of social identity, people come to view the world and understand it through the experiences they gain from being a member of that racial group. Racial identity is psychologically

important because it anchors relationships to others in society. It can provide both context and meaning for the events experienced in life.

Racial identification has an extensive history in the social psychological literature. Sanders-Thompson (1995) suggests that racial identification is a culture specific variable, providing information about unique orientations that reflect reactions to social experiences as well as provide information about the way an individual both perceives and responds to their social environment. According to Smith (1989) racial identity refers to the extent to which an individual 'has come to terms with their racial group as a salient reference group for them' (p.284:1989).

Much of the research in this area has theorized that racial identity among African American and White citizens develops differently. For White citizens, Helms (1984) argues that historically White Americans came to understand their Whiteness (racial identity) through the oppression and mistreatment of minority citizens in American society. For example, during slavery and the Jim Crow Era African Americans were viewed as chattel and seen as less than human. As a result, the racial identity associated with Whiteness became tied to viewing oneself as superior to others. White citizens who were categorically against the oppression of African Americans often struggled with accepting their Whiteness because they understood that accepting their identity meant accepting the racialized practices that were oppressive to African American citizens.

There are really three types of racism in America that White citizens have to resist in order to develop a contemporary White identity: 1) the belief that Whiteness is superior to any other race, 2) institutional racism which are policies, laws and regulations whose purpose is to maintain the social and economic advantage of White citizens over non-White citizens and 3)

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social beliefs and customs that promote the assumption that the products of White culture are superior to those of non-Whites. Because these types of racism are an active part of the fabric of America, they can potentially become a part of a White person's racial identity or consciousness. Therefore in order to develop a contemporary racial identity White citizens have to overcome one or more of these aspects of racism. Helms (1995) contends that White citizens have to adopt a sense of who they are as a racial being without depending on the perceived superiority of their racial group over another. Thus contemporary White racial identity really consists of two processes: 1) the abandonment of racism, and 2) the development of a nonracist White identity. These processes happen in stages where White citizens move from being naïve about race and racism to understanding the consequences associated with both overt and covert practices of racism.

There has been some research to suggest that Helms' (1984) view of racial identity development is too simple and ignores more contemporary or symbolic racism (Sniderman et al. 1991; Bobo 1998). This research argues that overt or blatant racism has almost completely disappeared in American society. Therefore, most White citizens do both deny and resist overt oppressive and discriminatory acts. McConahay (1986) suggests that most White citizens do not consider themselves racist because they do not hold old-fashioned racist attitudes nor do they overtly discriminate.

Symbolic racism maintains that racism no longer takes the form of overt practices but rather discrimination or prejudice are directed towards minority citizens in more subtle unobtrusive ways. For example, Sniderman et al. (1991) argue that White citizens will not say that they are opposed to African Americans getting help from the government. Rather they will say that they are opposed to African Americans getting help from the government because they

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are not making a genuine effort to solve their own problems. In this view, racial hostility is vented indirectly. Sears (1988) also found that White citizens often believe that 'the government pays too much attention to Blacks' or 'Blacks who receive welfare could get along without it if they tried.' In the context of thinking about police behavior, according to symbolic racism theory it could argued that racial profiling might be viewed as a viable policing strategy because it is taking a proactive approach to crime prevention.

This type of modern racism avoids expressions of overt, blatant prejudice which are no longer socially acceptable. It does however, point out the multidimensional aspect of race and racial identity among White citizens in American society. Symbolic racism does not suggest that White citizens have a racial identity that accepts racist practices but rather due to the historical nature of race in America there are subtle racial undertones that have serious consequences for minority citizens.

According to Helms (1984) Whiteness is reinforced by simultaneously rejecting racial oppression and denying contemporary discrimination, however, for African American citizens' racial identity gets shaped and reinforced by the historical and contemporary struggles with oppression and discrimination in American society. Demo and Hughes (1990) suggest that, even if there are no direct experiences with discrimination the shared stories that get circulated about experiences with discrimination, shapes African Americans' racial identity. Among African Americans racial identity gets developed and reinforced through the transmitted norms, values and expectations about how other racial groups will treat them. As a result, their racial identity becomes a function of the shared stories about past and contemporary oppression in America, along with more direct personal experiences with other racial groups and social institutions. For example, Sanders-Thompson (1999) found that racial identity for African

Americans is based in part on how they perceive other racial groups will receive them. Negative interactions with and discrimination by the out-group members might result in increased racial identity.

In sum, racial identity is important because it centralizes at least one aspect of how people come to understand the social world. In the context of understanding perceptions of police bias, it seems likely that both African American and White citizens are simply more likely to deploy their racial identity because much of the concern with police legitimacy is tied to issues of race or racial bias. Thus, the widespread pattern of race differences in trust in the police could reflect processes tied to both White and African American racial identity, as well as race differences in direct personal experiences.

It is also possible that White citizens who see police overtly discriminating against minorities, (i.e., Rodney King beating or engaging racial profiling) will bet less likely to trust police because the overtly discriminatory behavior might threaten their White identity (Helms 1995). On the other hand it can also be expected according to Bobo and Kluegel (1993) that White racial identity might get reinforced when police behavior is less overtly racist. For example, police aggressively patrolling neighborhoods or engaging in out-of-place profiling might not threaten their White identity because the police behavior is viewed as necessary or appropriate in order to control crime.

Racial Identity and Trust in the Police through Social Networks

Research suggests that racial identity gets formed and reinforced through interaction with others – in-group and out-group members. What is learned from the in-group and what is experienced from out-group fundamentally shapes racial identity. McPherson and colleagues (2001) argue that the things people learn from others within their networks are particularly

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important for the formation of racial identity because most social networks are racially homogenous. In this context, the homogeneity in personal networks affects the nature and type of discussion that individuals encounter. It is also the case that people are much more likely to develop new relationships with people within their same racial group (Kalmijn 1998; Schneider et al. 1997). In a national probability sample, only 8% of adults with network sizes of two or more reported having a person of another race with whom they discuss important matters (Marsden 1987). In this same study, White citizens reported larger network sizes compared to African Americans, although African Americans did report more family members within their social networks compared to Whites. Because White and African American citizens are more likely to have homogenous networks they are more likely to hear stories and share experiences that reinforce their racial identity.

In *The Call of Stories*, Robert Coles (1989) suggests that stories are 'everyone's rock-bottom capacity – a universal gift to be shared with others.' Stories and narratives represent ways in which people organize views of themselves, of others and their social world. Stories are not merely social constructions intended to protect self, rather they give individuals: 1) a greater sense of control and understanding of their environment, 2) they allow individuals to cope with emotionally charged and stressful events, 3) they produce some degree of closure and 4) they establish order in daily relational experiences. Thus stories or narratives are a way of making sense of social life.

While very little is known about the impact of stories about police behavior on attitudes towards them. It is the case that members of the African American community are more likely to hear negatives stories about police behavior from individuals in their personal networks (Weitzer and Tuch 2004). For example, when asked in one poll whether they knew of anyone

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who had ever been physically mistreated by the police 40% of African Americans but only 17% of White citizens answered yes. A similar finding was found for physical abuse of a family member (Gallup 1991). While very little is known about the impact of vicarious experiences with the police on the attitudes towards them, research does suggest that there are clear differences between African American and White citizens in the experiences with police in their networks (Weitzer and Tuch 2004).

The stories that are shared within community networks about police behavior not only serve as information about that particular interaction, but stories also provide cognitive shortcuts that people will use to predict how police will respond to other minorities in similar circumstances. The media's portrayals of police misconduct are a different kind of story about police fairness. For example, the numerous media accounts about the Rodney King beating in Los Angeles and the Diallo shooting in New York are important illustrations to minority communities about how police could potentially interact with them. When stories about police misconduct are generated and then circulated within communities, perceptions of police fairness are compromised (Lasley 1994).

The point is not that the stories that are reported are factual accounts. Rather, they represent narratives about police behavior that are categorized and processed and then remembered and retold as real. These narratives, when shared in a community become the building blocks of a larger personal and community expectations about police bias. These stories also become sources of information that community members might draw upon when they have encounters with the police. In many instances these stories about police encounters become a way to educate minority citizens about how to conduct themselves during a police stop. Generally, this kind of information sharing will happen in conversation in personal

networks but it may also be more formalized. For example, the American Civil Liberties Union has tried to outline for minority citizens how to protect themselves if they are ever stopped by the police (Meeks 2000). This type of information sharing encourages the community to mobilize around protecting themselves from negative treatment from the police. Of course, these mechanisms for self protection can also increase tension between minority communities and the police, even in the absence of contemporary bias in police behavior.

It is the case that because of the continuous influx of negative stories about violence and crime that minority citizens, particularly African Americans engage in (Weitzer and Tuch 2004; Hurwitz and Peffley 1997 law enforcement officers might be viewed by White citizens in a positive light because their actions are an attempt to reduce crime. So for White citizens hearing stories about the Rodney King and Diallo shooting could compromise trust in the police, but such stories are less likely to do so relative to African Americans because for White citizens such actions by police might simply be an aggressive form of policing aimed at controlling crime. Ultimately, African Americans are more likely to have members within their personal networks hold negative opinions of police, whether it is based on direct experiences or the experiences that they have heard about from other network members, television or media reports, and as a result they are less likely to trust the legitimacy of law enforcement in general.

Race and Racial Profiling

Stories about police bias were heightened in the late 1990's as many police jurisdictions across the United States were accused and virtually all came under suspicion for disproportionately stopping and searching minority citizens (ACLU 1999). As a result, many states such as Maryland and New Jersey began launching their own initiatives to investigate

the extent to which law enforcement actually engaged in racial profiling (see Lamberth 1996; Verniero and Zoubeck 1999). North Carolina was the first state to pass a law (Senate Bill 76) requiring all state law enforcement officers to record the race of every police initiated stop.

Racial Profiling refers to police organizations creating and acting upon a set of characteristics, which can include race, that are used to describe a typical offender or offending population (Harris 2002). Some law enforcement officials argue that the use of profiles increases the efficiency of officers, and consequently, the police organization as a whole. The problem is that criminal profiles are often based on stereotypes that are applied to groups differentially, thus criminalizing whole populations of people. As a result of this criminalization individuals in these groups are more closely scrutinized by police.

It seems reasonable to expect that citizens who believe that police use race in order to stop or search vehicles will be more likely to hold unfavorable attitudes towards them. In a recent study, Weitzer (2002) reported that 82% of African Americans believe that racial profiling is a widespread phenomenon. In North Carolina 81% of African Americans and 32% of Whites think that the racial profiling of African American drivers is widespread. Ultimately, the politicization of racial profiling becomes another source of contention between minority citizens and law enforcement resulting in more negative stories about police behavior circulating within communities (Weitzer 2002). While it seems reasonable to suspect that while racial bias in police vehicle stops occurs in some jurisdictions and not others, the politicization of racial profiling and the stories that get circulated about its impact on minority citizens is likely to undermine trust in the police in all jurisdictions. However, while it is argued here that belief in racial profiling will undermine trust in the police it is likely to have a stronger effect on the African American community given their negative historical and sometimes

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contemporary experiences with the police. Thus, racial profiling are stories about police bias that bring police legitimacy into question. These kinds of policing practices might reinforce negative perceptions among minority citizens, and not White citizens because police profiling might be viewed as a legitimate policing practices with the purpose of controlling crime. The next section will further examine identity. It will specifically assess the salience of social class as an identity and its importance to attitudes formation in general as well as those about police practices.

Social Class Identity

Social Class can be a potentially powerful social category or identity when it shapes an individual's perceptions of themselves as well as their interpretations of the experiences they have in the social world. Steedman (1986) writes that 'class and its articulates are the bits and pieces from which psychological selfhood is made.' Thus, the experiences that come from social class may affect how people make sense of the world around them. Social class can have tangible material consequences for individuals and their families such that people may experience privileges and disadvantages based on their class standing (Sennett and Cobb 1972; Moon and Rolison 1998).

Early social psychological research suggested that the origins of class identities are directly tied to the social experiences that people have with others within their social networks. Eulau (1956) suggests that social class influences the social networks that people choose to connect themselves to and the interactions that take place within these personal networks influences the development of a class identity.

In this context, class development is similar to the theorizing about the development of a racial identity. Symbolic interactionists maintain that identity takes place in interaction with

others (Howard 2000). It is through these interactions that we come to know ourselves as well as understand the world around. Although racial identity is developed through a similar generic process, there are generic differences between the two that makes class identity development more problematic. First, social class is fluid. In other words, people can change from one social class to another. As a result, understanding and interpreting experiences that can be directly attributable to social class is more problematic compared to race. Next, because social class networks are more heterogeneous compared to race it is much harder to develop a consciousness within classes that get adopted into an identity. Therefore, it is plausible to argue that while the identity process is generic, the conditions that foster identity are much weaker for social class than for race.

It is important to revisit the significance of social networks because identity theory argues that networks are one of the most fundamental aspects of identity formation. In the context of thinking about social class networks, McPherson et al. (2001) argues that there are two types of class networks – occupational and personal. Occupational networks are those networks that are formed in a work environment. Occupational networks are much more homogenous compared to the personal networks. For example some studies of the workplace have found that employees are more likely to have stronger ties to others who occupy their same job status in the occupational hierarchy (Brass 1985; Ibarra 1992; McPherson et al. 2001). Personal networks are much more heterogeneous and they are less likely to be tied to educational and/or occupational status. Louch (2000) found that education was less likely to affect friendship ties especially compared to other status characteristics like race and gender. Marsden (1988) found that only 30% of personal networks were class homogenous. It is the case that personal or intimate networks, like marriage are more likely to be class homogenous.

Kalmijn (1998) suggests that class homogeneity in marriages is directly tied to the class division that exists in many colleges and universities. Because class networks are more heterogeneous compared to racial networks there is likely to be lower levels of attachment to a particular class thus reducing the potential that one might understand and experience the world through a particular class identity.

Bullock and Limbert (2003) argue that one of the biggest challenges to the development of a class identity is economic mobility. Economic mobility undermines stable class attachment, such that people understand their own class category. This is really important to note because in the US most people self-identify as middle-class regardless of whether that is actually their objective class standing. Baxter (1994) contends that the desire to self-identify as middle-class is strong because most Americans are concerned with maximizing their class status. Maximizing class status may be particularly important because in the US hard work and drive are widely believed to determine one's social class location (Hochschild 1995; Weber 1998). Next, the instability associated with economic mobility inhibits people from developing a view of the world that is tied to their direct class experience, such that people will be less likely to interpret their experiences in the social world as a direct result of their class standing.

It seems plausible to suggest, according to identity theory, that if class identity is going to inform or affect perceptions of the social world at least one standard that must be met – an individual must have a fundamental understanding of their own class standing. This may happen through interaction with others within their neighborhoods or personal networks. This understanding could also be informed by the occupational status that an individual possesses. The point here is that there cannot be an attachment to a particular class unless a person self-identifies into a particular class category. Thus, it is expected that people who self-identify as

being a member of one class or another are likely to have a stronger attachments to those social categories compared with those who are not aware of their own class standing.

Given the difficulty of developing a class identity it seems plausible that if class identity is likely to develop it is more likely to develop at the extremes of the class hierarchy. Lower class respondents may be more likely to view the world as unfair given the economic constraints that many of them are placed under. Sampson and Bartusch (1998) suggest that lower class people are often very aware of their economic constraints because of the visibility of poverty around them. Thus, class identity is likely to be strongest amongst the lower and highest social classes. This is an interesting finding because it suggests a connection to the composition of social class networks. That is, in cases where extreme poverty or wealth exist the networks are likely to be more homogenous. In this case, the processes that give rise to class identity are likely to operate in similar ways as racial identity. Such that as class networks become more homogeneous they are likely to reinforce a 'groupness' that gets shared within social networks. The stories that get generated become real and affect how experiences are interpreted.

Understanding the implications of class identity is critical because material inequality and differential access to resources has real social and psychological consequences for a persons' life. It has consequences for the values and attitudes that are associated with class location (Tajfel 1972). Social class is unlike other status characteristics because it is not easily identifiable and it is quite transitory. People are constantly moving from one class location to the next and as a result the attachment to a particular class status is more difficult to form.

Social Class and Trust in the Police

The research on social class and its effect on attitudes towards the police come out of researchers trying to better explain the racial gap in perceptions of police fairness. Some researchers suggest that lower class people are more likely to hold negative views of the police compared to the wealthy (Benson, 1981; Brown and Coulter 1983; Coa et al. 1996) while others suggest that middle-class people hold more negative views than lower class (Boggs and Galliher 1975; Hagan and Albonetti 1982), and still other researchers argues that class has no impact on attitudes about police behavior.

Boggs and Galliher (1975) studied perceptions of the police among African American 'street' and 'household' respondents. In addition to surveying African American 'household' residents, they mapped businesses and areas where African American men congregated. They interviewed 117 African American men between the ages of 20 and 40, who had steady residences (household respondents) and those who had resided in three or more places within the previous year (street respondents). They found that street respondents (lower class respondents) rated the police more negatively than household respondents.

Hagan and Albonetti (1982) found a similar pattern in their study. In their analysis of trust in the criminal justice system as well as law enforcement, lower class respondents (defined in their study as the unemployed) were significantly more likely to hold unfavorable attitudes towards the police. Another important finding from this research is that the interaction between race and social class and its impact on attitudes towards the police operated differently from African American and White citizens. That is, for African American citizens middle-class respondents were more likely to hold unfavorable attitudes towards the police. However for White citizens, lower-class people were more likely to question police legitimacy.

The inconsistent findings in the literature about the importance of social class might be tied to a variety of processes. First, because class is fluid it is likely to be realized thus reducing its impact on how people process and interpret the social world. Next, because of the lack of realization of or attachment to social class it is less likely to be an identity that is activated in this particular context. Thus, attitudes about police behavior might best be understood in the context of assessing racial and class identity simultaneously. That is, racial and class identity in an interactive context might better explain the observed racial gap in perceptions of the police. There has been sociological literature that criticized this approach because these theorists maintain that social class structure our everyday lives and it is important to understand how and why (Frable 1997). While I agree with this approach it does seem that in the context of examining perceptions of the police, class identity as a mechanism rarely accounts for what factors people use to examine and make sense out of police fairness.

For example, some research that has found regardless of race, socioeconomic status has no impact on perceptions of the police (Block 1971; Davis 1990; Parker et al. 1995). Weitzer and Tuch (1999) found that income has no effect on African American or White citizens' belief about the quality of policing in African American and White neighborhoods. Correia et al. (1996) also reported that a person's level of education (which is generally indicative of socioeconomic status) was not a significant determinant of perceptions of the state police. Thus, social class as an identity might simply be too weak to explain perceptions of police practices. If class is likely to matter it must be among citizens who understand their social class position in such a way that they attach meaning and understanding to it. That is, they must come to use the lens of social class a way to make sense of their experiences in the social world.

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In sum, much of the research assessing how class affects perceptions of the police is at best inconsistent in its results, with some research arguing class matters (Benson 1981; Brown and Caulter 1983; Cao et al. 1996) while others argue that either is does not significantly impact attitudes towards the police (Block 1971; Parker et al. 1995; Weitzer and Tuch 1999), or if it does it is influenced by race. Much of this research intends to use class to explain away the race effect. It seems likely that social class being a weak identity, because of its fluidity, can never explain away the race effect but rather they might in some contexts work together interactionally to reduce police legitimacy. Therefore, perceptions of police behavior are not simply a reflection of race and class status but rather the identities that are attached to these characteristics.

The identity theory articulated earlier in this chapter is a generic one that explains how identities are formed across status characteristics. The basic argument is that the race and social class status people have come with identities that get reinforced through interaction with other people. The interactions with other people within their social networks influence if and how these status characteristics develop into social identities. Race and social class are among the multiple identities that people actually possess. These identities were highlighted in this context because they have been under-theorized in previous research on trust in the police and they are the two main identities that have been used in prior research (Weitzer and Tuch 2004).

The next section will further explore these identities and how through identity formation cognitive schemas are then developed thus informing attitudes in general, but specifically about police behavior. The purpose of exploring cognitive bias theory or understanding the impact of cognitive bias on attitudes is demonstrated in how identities come with experiences that shape how we interpret interactions with others.

Cognitive Bias Theory

Cognitive bias theory argues that people are rational in their thought processes and they seek to understand the social world around them with some level of consistency. They do not do this by exhausting all possibilities but rather by using information that they have readily available to them. There are a large number of facts that are potentially relevant when making any judgment or decision. Considering all of them would simply cause information overload. Instead, people consider only a limited number of facts relevant to any judgment and decision without an exhaustive search of memory (Smith 1984; Wyer and Srull 1980; Sherman and Corty 1984). People form schemas (Sears et al. 1986) that are retrieved from their memory and serve as guides for making inferences and judgments. These schemas are informed by the cultural and personal experiences that people have across their life-course.

Stereotypes are also actively used in order to assist people in making judgments and assessments. In this instance, a stereotype is really a link in memory between a person or group and a particular trait. This is not to suggest that the process is necessarily conscious but rather, when an immediate explanation is needed people will draw on the stereotypes – consciously or unconsciously as a way to make sense of the event. When lacking individuating information about an event, people will focus on obvious status characteristics such as sex, race or age (Brewer 1988; Stangor et al. 1992).

Some research suggests that stereotype activation is related to the extent to which people endorse the use of stereotypes (Kawakami et al. 1998). Other research has found that regardless of one's endorsement of stereotypes, there is automatic activation following the creation of categories (Devine 1989). It has also been found that when information must be

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processed quickly that stereotype activation is much stronger (Devine 1989; Pratto and Bargh 1991).

Thus, it seems likely that experiences with the police may be colored by preexisting opinions of them. These opinions might be based on fact or they might not be. For example, more Americans believe that police verbally and physically abuse citizens than the actual number of those who actually report having any contact with police officers (Bureau of Justice Statistics 2001). Individuals who have encounters with police with preexisting unfavorable opinions may simply be more predisposed to construe the contact negatively (Brandle et al. 1994). Therefore, it seems likely that negative stereotypes of the police are more widespread in the African American community than in White communities given the historical and sometimes contemporary conflicts with police.

It is also the case that attribution errors can follow as the result of the use of stereotypes. Pettigrew (1979) suggests that attribution errors are often exaggerated in inter-group settings. When attribution errors are present desirable behaviors tend to be attributed to internal, stable (personality) causes when involving in-group members, while similar behaviors by out-group members are more likely to be attributed to external or situational causes. Conversely, undesirable behaviors are more likely to be seen as internally caused when committed by out-group members then when the same behavior is committed by in-group members. For instance, research finds that blame for an accident or other negative outcomes are more likely to be attributed to the personality of the driver when the driver was of a different ethnicity than the observer (Hewstone et al. 1983; Wang and McKillip 1978). Pettigrew (1979) calls this the ultimate attribution error and suggests that this error is most likely to take place when the groups involved have histories of intense conflict and possess

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especially negative stereotypes about each other, like the African American community and the police. Thus it is reasonable to expect that police may tend to stereotype African Americans as violent or dangerous and African Americans may stereotype the police as biased and unfair.[5]

It is important to understand that people will categorize themselves and others into groups automatically and unconsciously (Bower and Karlin 1974; McArthur and Baron 1983). People are not even aware that they are organizing information into categories. When encountering people we tend to use social categories that are immediately apparent, especially when we have little information about them. Lacking substantial and valid individual information, people are likely to categorize others on the basis of highly visible and easily attributable characteristics such as race, age, and gender (Brewer 1988). In turn, these categories have an automatic effect on our perceptual processes once people are categorized (Devine 1989), thus influencing our impressions of people and situations.

In the case of police, the experiences that people have with them will be one of the more salient factors that impact their perceptions. There are really two types of experiences with police – personal experiences and vicarious ones. In this context, vicarious experiences are those that are experienced by close or intimate people in the person's life. However, it can also be the experiences of other individuals within the same social category. For example, minority citizens who know of police abuse of other minority citizens from news stories or other second hand personal accounts might use this information to inform their own assessment of police practices and treatment of minority citizens. These stories may lead to expectations

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[5] Cognitive bias theory has also been utilized in the racial profiling literature. Tomaskovic-Devey et al (2003) used the concept to assess officer bias in police stops. They argue that police officers often have to make quick decisions in dynamic settings. As a result, like anyone else they are likely to use cues or schemas in order to make assessments. As a result, they are likely to over-estimate certain groups' criminal propensity. The potential result is a racial gap in police stops.

about how they might be treated in similar circumstances. Therefore, hearing negative stories or having a negative experience with police can serve as a quick source of information about police behavior.

Cognitive Bias, Identity and Experience with Police

Much of the research on citizens' attitudes towards the police has been guided by the experience model. This model views experience with police as the most fundamental predictor of attitudes, because experience directly conveys information to the individual about the motives and intentions of police officers. Early studies which used the experience model focused almost exclusively on the type of police-citizen encounter. For example, individuals who were stopped and then searched were more likely to report disrespectful treatment by the police compared to those who were not (Bourdua and Tifft 1971).

Other research (Scaglion and Condon 1980; Frank, et al. 1996) has included citizens' evaluation of police contact in general. Specifically, this body of research has examined the importance of citizen evaluations of police contact and service. The consistent finding has been that citizens who experience police behavior as disrespectful or unfair are more likely to hold unfavorable attitudes towards them, presumably because the negative contact becomes a memorable source of information about police behavior in general.

The experience model has been particularly important when assessing the attitudes of African Americans because past research has found that they are significantly more likely to report negative experiences with police (Jacob, 1971; Scaglion and Condon, 1980). It is also the case that African Americans more frequently argue that police are racially biased. They often cite police behaviors such as intensively policing their communities, routine excessive

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use of force, and even false arrests (Decker 1981; Flanagan and Vaughn 1996; Weitzer, 1999) as evidence of discrimination by police officers.

The identity literature suggests that experiences with the police are not only those personally encountered but also those experienced by friends and family as well. The stories that friends and family share about their interaction with police are potentially memorable sources of information about police behavior. Stories can be powerful sources of information about how police will interact with citizens. When these stories are negative illustrations of police behavior they can encourage suspicion among minority groups about police fairness. As stories are generated through past experiences with the police and passed from one community member to the next, perceptions of police fairness are compromised. Even amongst White citizens, media and network stories of police bias should serve as a type of information source as to how police might treat them in future interactions.

It seems reasonable that experiences can be a powerful mediating factor when making assessments about police. It is likely that people who do not have their own experience will rely on those they have heard about from friends and family. As a result, they may stereotype officers as bad or unfair. So, even in circumstances when officers are not being unfair it is possible that their legitimacy will be questioned because when people are evaluating them they will be using information that is most readily available to them. If the only information or even most of the information cognitively available is negative they are likely to view police negatively.

Because negative stories about police behavior are more likely to circulate through minority communities it is likely they will use this information to inform their assessment of the police. Pettigrew (1979) argues that because people make evaluations fairly quickly, and by

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doing so they only use readily available information they are likely to make errors. In other words, because negative stories flow so readily through minority communities it is likely that they could be potentially over-estimating the amount of racial bias that exists within law enforcement. This is one of the key lessons in the stereotyping and cognitive bias literature, changes in behavior by out-group members do not necessarily lead to changes in evaluation. Thus, police legitimacy can be expected to be at risk, long after police discriminatory behavior has been reduced or even extinguished.

Cognitive bias is a psychological theory that has really been under-utilized in the racial profiling literature. Tomaskovic-Devey et al. (2003) used the concept to assess officer biases in police stops. What they argue is that police officers often have to make quick decisions in a dynamic world. As a result, they are likely to use cues or schemas in order to make assessments really quickly. As a result, they are likely to over-estimate certain groups' criminal propensity. The potential result of this is a racial gap in police stops.

It is my argument that cognitive bias theory adds to our understanding of the race gap in perceptions of police fairness as well, by demonstrating how people use information to categorize others. Sometimes as a result of the categorization, police officers are grouped as bad or unfair even when they are not. Although some of their evaluations may result from direct past experience, much of the cognitive content and cultural stereotypes that produce this are a result of the historical and sometimes contemporary relationships between other minority community members and the police.

Cognitive bias and stereotypes might help explain some White citizens' distrust of the police as well, but only when identities are strong and negative stereotypes are present. The best candidate for oppositional identity relative to the police among White citizens is social

class. Both the identity and network literature both suggests that social class, at least in the US is a weak basis for identity. It is also the case that negative stereotypes about police behavior are not as widespread in White communities as they are in African American communities. A recent contact with police study in Seattle, Washington reported that 51% of White citizens believe that police actively engage in racial profiling (Davis et al. 2004). The authors also report that 39% of White citizens reported that police were verbally or physically abusive.

If cognitive bias is likely to be an influential mechanism in the White community it is more likely to operate within the boundaries of social class than race. The stories about police behavior that are shared are likely to be among White citizens who share similar class categories. Negative stories are likely to circulate most often in homogeneous class settings. The point here is that cognitive bias process is expected to operate differently for White and African American citizens. That is, for African Americans negative experiences with the police are likely to circulate throughout the community irrespective of class boundaries because of the strong racial identity and conflictual historical relationship between them and the police. However, for White citizens, if cognitive bias is likely to reduce trust it is less likely to happen at the community level and more likely to happen within relatively homogeneous social class networks. This condition may not be very common and so cognitive bias is more likely to be a mechanism used by minority citizens.

SUMMARY

The theoretical discussion presented suggests that there are several mechanisms which mediate the relationship between race, class and perceptions of police bias. Figure 2.1 presents a visual depiction of the relationship amongst the theoretical mechanisms. The purpose is to

specify how racial and class identity along with cognitive bias work together to reduce trust in the police as well as explain racial variation in perceptions of police bias.

The theoretical framework really begins with status characteristics which affects identity formation. In the context of this dissertation the two most powerful identities are race and social class, although other identities can exist. These identities are particularly salient when making judgments about the social world. They impact the personal experiences with societal institutions like the police as well the experiences that they hear about from friends and family. Racial networks tend to be homogenous. That is, they are likely to be reflections of the same race. Class networks are much more heterogeneous thus reducing the development of a class identity (McPherson et al. 2001). Because of the homogeneity of racial groups it is likely that the indirect experiences will reinforce the current experiences associated with the social identity.

It is also the case that while direct experiences will also serve as information about the police it is likely that the understanding of direct experiences are influenced by the identities that people attach to themselves. Much of the previous research has been guided by the experience model. That is people who have negative encounters with police will have lower levels of confidence in them. While I do not refute this claim, this research suggests that making sense out of police encounters is not solely about direct experiences with police but also about identities and the experiences with other social institutions in society.

It is also likely that social identities impact information processing. That is the experiences that people have that are associated with their race or class status, along with experiences they hear about from within their personal networks will be used as information to inform judgments or assessments. Because people do not thoroughly exhaust all possible

explanations when making judgments, it is likely they will draw on these types of experiences as well as the information gained from others to understand the world. These assessments could lead to stereotype formation about others or the police in this context, which then affects how people understand their interactions with them.

African Americans and the police have had a conflictual historical and sometimes contemporary relationship. Thus, they could use this information to make sense out of police conduct. In some cases, they might even be misinterpreting current police behavior because of previous experience that exists between them. Contemporary news stories as well as experiences with other social institutions in society are other sources of information, and so are likely to impact attitude formation.

While race and class identity along with cognitive bias are not directly observed in the data analyses in this dissertation the discussion is an advance relative to previous research because it emphasizes the importance of theorizing how these mechanisms produce more or less trust of the police. In particular, it is maintained that it is not simply the material conditions nor the lived experience that explains attitudes about police behavior, rather it is the identities of people that help them to make sense of the world around them. Therefore, this dissertation will test several hypotheses: 1) Do race and class identities affect perceptions of the police? 2) Is the impact of race and class identities more heavily influenced by the personal or vicarious experiences with police? 3) Do the stories shared within personal networks condition the affect of race and class identities on trust of the police?

Figure 2.1 Theoretical Model - Relationship between Race, Social Class, Identities and Cognitive Bias and their Impact on Trust in the Police

Experiences
Police stops, searches, arrests, harassment

Statuses

Race
Class
Other

Identities

Racial
Class
Other

Information Processing Mechanisms

Cognitive Schemas Stereotypes

Network Stores

Stories in network about police bias

Trust in Police

Evaluative Disposition in New Police Encounters

Network

Composition and Homogeneity

Media Stories

Contemporary stories in news about police bias

Trust in other Institutions

Education
Public Officials
Governmental
Official

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CHAPTER 3

DATA AND METHODS

This chapter discusses and describes the data as well as the modeling strategy used to investigate the impact of race and class identities on perceptions. These data also investigate the importance of stories in understanding attitudes about police behavior. The influence of stories about police behavior is used in this context to account for cognitive bias. Stories are both a recount of objective accounts as well as accounts that are filtered through identities. Cognitive bias theory suggests that people use cognitive schemas to make sense out of the social world. So, when people are asked to form judgments or opinions they do not go through an exhaustive process but rather they use the most readily available information in their memory bank. Therefore, respondents who have not had their own experience with police are likely to use this information which gets generalized across all police. Previous research suggests that for minority citizens, even if they have personally had positive experiences with police, hearing negative stories are more influential and have lasting effects (Weitzer and Tuch 2004).

In the chapters that follow two primary outcomes are examined – perceptions of disrespect by the police and trust in the police. The logic here is to first examine what factors are most salient in predicting perceptions of disrespect during police encounters. Previous research has shown that African Americans are more likely to leave a police stop believing that they have been mistreated (Weitzer 1999; Weitzer and Tuch 2004). It is expected that these perceptions are significantly affected by general trust in institutions in society as well as personal and vicarious experiences with police. It is also expected

that because racial networks are more homogeneous compared to class networks that race will more strongly impact perceptions of disrespect as well as trust of the police.

Data

The data used for the analyses are taken from The North Carolina Highway Traffic Study. The survey data are drawn from a telephone survey of 2,920 North Carolina licensed drivers conducted between June 2000 and March 2001. The telephone survey provides individual driver information about driving habits, the likelihood of being stopped and ticketed by both the local police and the North Carolina Highway Patrol, along with demographic information. The sample data are stratified by race with half the sample being comprised of African American drivers (N=1445) and the other half are White drivers (N=1475).

Respondents were selected using Division of Motor Vehicles (DMV) registration records. These records were used to get phone numbers and addresses that were relatively current. Unfortunately, it turns out that North Carolina Department of Motor Vehicles personnel rarely ask for or record telephone numbers, nor in the year 2000 did they require proof of home address for license renewals. Thus, we used a telephone match based on surname and address to develop useful contact information for our sampling frame. The return on the telephone match was 48.6%, lowest for black females at 39.0% and highest for White males at 62.8%. Cooperation rates on the survey were much better at 59.1%, with a high for African American females of 61.8% and a low for White males of 56.5%.

Because we use survey data to capture the number of police stops as well as the interpretation of the stop there are potential reporting errors. Previous research has argued

that respondents tend to underreport embarrassing behaviors like speeding and contacts with the police (Czaja et al., 1994). Therefore, I interpret citizens self-reports here as potential memorable sources of information. It is not my contention to argue that the number of stops reported and the interpretation of the police contact are strictly factual accounts, but rather they serve as readily available information that informs citizens' perceptions of police trustworthiness.

Dependent Variables

Disrespectful treatment

Survey respondents were asked to report information about the police stops in the last year. It is the case that some respondents have had more than one traffic stop in the last year. Therefore, this variable represents any police mistreatment during a traffic stop in the last year. Respondents were asked whether they felt they were treated with respect by police during their traffic stop. The response categories were coded as 0 = treated with respect and 1 = treated with disrespect.

This measure is being used as both an independent and a dependent variable. It is used as a dependent variable to assess which factors people use to make sense of police behavior. Previous research has suggested that African Americans are significantly more likely to leave a stop believing they have been mistreated by the officer. Thus, it is likely that these sentiments are tied to both police behavior as well as a larger culture of distrust of institutions within the African American community (Weitzer & Tuch 2004). Racial identity theory would lead me to believe that because of the negative experiences that minority citizens receive as a function of their racial identity they are potentially more likely to be skeptical of police fairness. Thus, it seems likely that they will question the

legitimacy of police because they have more negative cognitive schemas around institutions in society more generally.

Trust in the Police

The second outcome variable of interest is trust in the police. Trust in the police is measured by asking respondents about expectations of police fairness. In the survey, respondents were asked "In general do you trust the police to treat you fairly?" Respondents were also asked do they trust the local police as well as highway patrol to treat you fairly? Each question was asked separately. The response categories for each question was coded as follows: 1=Total distrust 2=Mostly distrust 3=Neutral 4=Mostly trust and 5=Total trust. These questions were combined into an additive scale with values ranging from 3 to 15 with higher numbers representing more trust in the police. In order to keep this measure in its original metric the summed scale was divided by three. Again, higher numbers represent more trust in the police. The Chronbach Alpha for this scale is .809.[6]

It is the case that in the measurement of trust of the police, respondents were prompted by asking the extent to which they expect the police to treat them fairly. There is no significant reason to expect that the wording here will significantly change the results. It is also the case that prior research on trust in the police has often used questions that mention police fairness, such as, "Do you feel you were treated fairly by the police?" or "Do you trust the police?" (Cao et al. 1996; Weitzer and Tuch 2004). Comparing the results in the Weitzer and Tuch (2004) study to those reported for trust in the police in this research, the results are quite similar. For example, the Weitzer and Tuch (2004)

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[6] The factor structure are the same for both African American and White citizen. Also, this measure was divided by 3 in order to maintain the original metric of the variable. The original metric allows for comparability to measures like trust in government.

study found that 80% of respondents generally believe that they were treated fairly by police. Therefore, it is expected that the trust measure used in this study is not systematically different from those in prior studies. It is also important to note that most respondents believe that police will treat them fairly.

Figure 3.1 presents the histogram which displays the sample distribution for trust in the police. Because most respondents in this sample trust police to treat them fairly, the distribution is negatively skewed. When data are negatively skewed there are several transformations that can be used to normalize the distribution. In this case the variable was transformed by using the following equation, natural log(maximum value of the variable + (1) – value of the variable). This transformation takes the natural log of the maximum value of the value of the variable plus one minus the variable itself. This switches the direction of the interpretation of the variable, creates a more normal distribution while also reducing the size of the scale.

Figure 3.2 presents a visual of the distribution before and after the transformation. Although the responses are more spread out and the scale range is smaller, the variable now more closely resembles a normal distribution. In preliminary analyses not presented here the substantive findings for both forms of the variable were the same. In keeping with parsimony, the analyses presented here will be for the untransformed variable.

Figure 3.1. Trust of the Police,
Simple Additive Scale
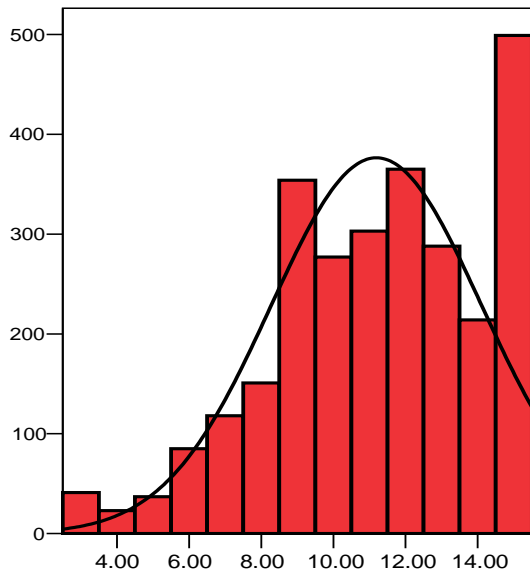
Figure 3.2. Trust of the Police,
Negative Log Transformation
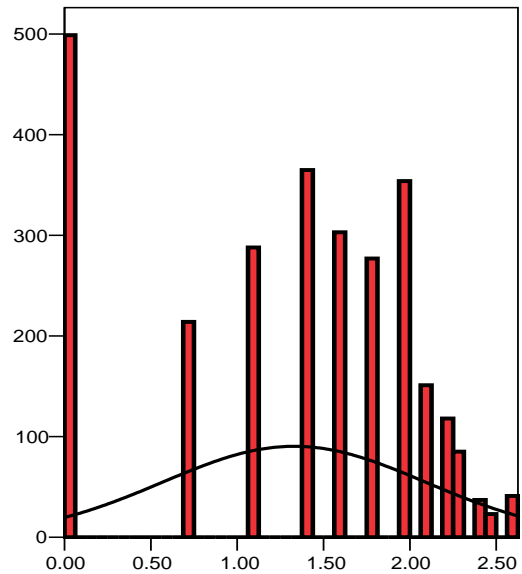
In the analyses which examines trust of the police it is expected that in general

White citizens will have more trust in the police compared to African American citizens.

This effect is expected in part because previous research has consistently found that

minority citizens on average have lower levels of confidence in the police compared to

White citizens (Reiss 1971; Jacob 1974; Dunham and Alpert 1988). The purpose of these

analyses are to assess which factors are most salient in predicting attitudes towards the

police. Identity theory leads me to expect that because minority citizens are more likely

to have negative experiences with as well as hear negative stories about police behavior

through media as well as friends and family, they are also less likely to trust the police to

treat them fairly. Identity theory also leads me to expect that trust is likely to be lower

among White citizens who view police behavior as overtly racist, but the effects of

perception of overt racism is still expected to be larger for African American citizens.

Independent Variables

<u>Race.</u>

The race variable was coded as 0=White and 1=African American. In this dissertation the race variable is intended to capture the self-reported racial identification of the respondent. Survey respondents were asked to self-report which racial group they most identify with. The idea here is that the racial group that respondents self-report being a member of is the one that they find most salient to their existence. There were only 10 respondents who would not self-report their race. Respondents who failed to answer the question were deleted from the analyses.

Although self-identifying as race does not completely capture the extent to which racial identity is an important identity in a persons' life it does provide some information about they see themselves in the social world. So, identifying as African American or White does not totally capture the importance of race in a persons' life or even the strength of the identity, however, it does allow for some understanding about how a person understands their status and even how they think others see them as well.

In the context of thinking about police, this research maintains that the extent to which a person understands their own status will have some affect on how they understand and interpret their interactions with police. It is the case that if race is likely to influence trust in the police, it is likely to happen through the racial identity lens. Thus, trust in the police is not simply a reflection of the direct experiences but also those heard about from family and friends as well as more long-standing trust in institutions in society more generally. This effect is expected to inform the analyses for both African

American and White citizens but it is likely to have stronger effects for African Americans.

<u>Social Class</u>.

Respondents were not asked to self-report what class category they believe they are in. Instead respondents were asked about education attainment. This measure is a crude indicator of social class. In part because allowing one to self-select into a particular class category more completely captures the extent to which they identify with a particular class. Again, the mechanism through which class is likely to matter is identity, but identities are expected to develop and then inform understandings of the social world, as well as inform the extent to which people understand how it impacts their own lives. This point is important because class identity requires a self-identity and then an attachment that helps one make sense of the world around them. In this context, it is expected that lower class respondents will have more negative views of the police compared to upper class respondents. In the original coding of this variable responses were coded as 1=Some high school, to 7=Graduate school/degree. This variable was reduced into two categories: 0 = High school diploma or less and 1 = Some college to graduate school.[7]

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[7] There are multiple ways in which this variable could have been coded to more closely capture class identity. Previous research on trust in the police does not adequately provide a guide for this. So, in order to get closer to class identity this measure in preliminary analyses was examined in two different ways. First, analyses included the measure as a dummy which coded less than high school as zero and everybody else as 1. The second set of analyses also dummied the variable except this time the variable was coded as zero high school diploma or less and 1 is for everybody else. It is understood that there are differences between people with a high diploma and no high school diploma. These differences also exist for respondents with some college and those with college degrees. After careful analyses the substantive findings did not change therefore the coding articulated above will be the measure used in the final analyses.

Network Disrespect.

  I expect that the experiences that friends and family have with police will also impact trust in the police. Respondents were asked whether they had heard of any negative/disrespectful interactions with police from their friends and family. The coding is the same as for personal disrespect. This variable is intended to capture stories of negative exposure that respondent's friends and family have had with police. In the survey we asked separate questions for friends and family members. In the analyses these responses were pooled because preliminary analyses show that the empirical effects are identical. Stories in this context are particularly important because they are likely to significantly impact trust in the police.

  In the context of thinking about social networks that get formed around race it is expected that the stories that circulate about police behavior are used by other members of the network as information about future police behavior. Racial networks are more homogeneous and stories about police bias associated with race are more likely to take place within these networks. McPherson et al. (2001) have argued that stories about race and racial bias are more likely to take place when the networks are racially homogeneous.

Network Size.

  We asked respondents to report in a typical week how many family and friends not living in their household do they regularly speak to? The purpose of this question is to capture the size of the networks that people associate with most frequently. The idea here is that as the size of the network increases the homogeneity of the network decreases. For both African American and White citizens it is expected that as the size of the networks increases it is less likely for them to be similarities across race and social classes.

<u>Frequency of Stories</u>.

Respondents were also asked to report the frequency of hearing stories about encounters with the police. They were asked to report the number of stories that they have heard from both their family and friends. These questions were asked separately for family and friends however, in this context they have been combined into one measure. It is expected that as stories about police increase trust is likely to decrease. The frequency of stories is important because as these stories get circulated throughout social networks they become used as sources of information that others might use to make good and/or bad assessments about the police.

<u>Trust in Government</u>.

Trust in government is another particularly powerful influence on trust in the police. It is expected that respondents with lower trust in governmental institutions will also have less trust in the police. The variable will be used in two capacities. First, it can capture the racial variation in historical experiences with governmental institutions that yielded negative expectations. Given the history of discrimination that African Americans argue they experience in many of society's dominant institutions they are potentially more likely to have lower levels of trust in governmental institutions in general, rather than the police as an autonomous institution. Police organizations may simply be viewed as just another extension of government. Next, it can also capture negative past experiences that respondents might have had with dominant societal institutions that get generalized across all social institutions. This measure is important because it controls for the experiences, direct or vicarious that people have with other institutions that might impact perceptions of law enforcement. This measure can

potentially be influential in explaining why African Americans might be more skeptical of police behavior for reasons unrelated to policing.

This variable is a 4 item scale which captures the extent to which the respondent trust teachers, county commissioners, judges and their congress persons to treat them fairly. The response categories ranged from 1 to 5 with 1 representing total distrust and 5 representing total trust. These items were summed and divided by 5 in order to maintain the original metric of the variable. The Chronbach alpha for the scale is .815. It is the case that there are many institutions in society other than the ones included in this scale that are considered governmental institutions. This measure is not intended to completely capture all of governmental institutions but rather it is being used as a proxy for experiences with other institutions that individuals have that then become generalized to all governmental institutions, including the police.

<u>Racial Profiling Perceptions</u>.

Perceptions of racial profiling are used to examine the influence of media and more general cultural stories of police bias and their impact on attitudes about police fairness. It is expected in general that respondents who believe that police are biased are less likely to believe they will be treated fairly by law enforcement. In this context, perceptions of racial profiling are another type of story that gets generated about police behavior that may reinforce or corroborate personal experiences or stories heard from friends and family about unfair law enforcement behavior. It is expected that even among White citizens those who believe that police engage in racial profiling are less likely to trust them.

Belief in racial profiling was measured by asking respondents whether they believe that police are more likely to pull over African Americans and Latino drivers. The questions were asked separately for African American and Latino drivers therefore these questions combined into an additive scale which reflect the extent to which citizens believe police profile and African American and Latino drivers. The responses were coded as 0 = if the respondent does not believe police are more likely to stop African American drivers and 1 = if they do believe it.

Risky Driving

Respondents were asked to report characteristics of their driving behavior. I expect that engaging in law violating behavior increases the risk of being stopped by the police. Respondents were asked to report whether or not they engage in risky driving behaviors such as frequently changing lanes in order to pass slower drivers, failing to wear seatbelts, speeding, and failing to signal before changing lanes or turning. A factor analysis was conducted on these items and a single scale was apparent. The regression score based on the factor loadings of these items is used to measure risky driving behavior.

Lifetime Stops

Respondents were also asked a series of questions about their frequency of interaction with police. Again, previous research has suggested that minority citizens are more likely to have interaction with police, thus increasing the potential for conflict with law enforcement (Reiss 1971). Lifetime stops across the respondents driving career is calculated as a direct measure of contact with police as well as an indirect measure of exposure to potentially negative contacts with police. This variable was created by

dividing the total number of stops across the respondent's driving career by total driving years. Drivers who have had more stops across their driving career have a higher probability of getting stopped by the police in the future and so may also anticipate higher rates of future negative interactions with police.

Stops in Last Year

In order to assess the frequency of police encounters respondents were asked to report the total number of stops in the last year. This is another measure that can examine the extent to which the number of police stops potentially increases conflict with police thus, reducing overall police legitimacy.

Cop Stopped to Help

In order to assess how positive experiences with the police influence both perceptions of disrespect as well as trust in the police a measure capturing positive police encounters have been included in these models. Respondents were asked to report whether a police officer has ever stopped to help them. The response categories are coded as 0 = No help and 1 = Police stopped to help respondent. The idea here is that respondents who believe police are helpful are more likely to have positive attitudes about police behavior.

Driving Convictions

Because the sample used in these data were drawn from DMV records I was also able identify the number of driving convictions in North Carolina that the respondent has received. Again, this measure can capture the frequency of interactions with law enforcement. This measure provides additional information about past risky driving behavior among respondents. This measure is particularly important because research has

demonstrated that respondents who break the law more frequently are significantly more likely to hold negative evaluations of police. This measure is primarily intended to capture baseline differences in police exposure along with other unmeasured heterogeneity associated with past experiences with police. In order to assess driving convictions per driving year this measure was calculated by taking the total number of convictions and dividing it by the total driving years. Although previous research has suggested that minorities citizens are more likely to stopped by the police, much of the recent research on police traffic stops have found that while minorities are more likely to be stopped compared to White drivers the disparity is relatively small (Smith et al. 2003).

Control Variables

Both age and gender in this research are used as control variables. Although neither mechanism was theorized in the previous chapter, previous research does suggest that males and younger people are less likely to trust the police (Jacob 1971; Wetizer 1999). Age is measured in years and gender is coded as 0=Males and 1=Females.

Modeling Strategy

Previous research consistently shows that African American citizens are less likely to trust the police. The theories outlined in the previous chapter leads one to expect that both racial and class identities may affect how people view the world. If there is a general distrust among White citizens it is likely to be among those citizens who have more homogenous and lower-class networks. It is expected for both African Americans and White citizens that negative or disrespectful experiences with police will lead to distrust of the police. African American citizens might be using cultural information gained from the stories of police bias that they have heard about from family and friends

as well as the media. It is also the case that African American citizens are likely to use this information to inform their understanding of police behavior, such that even when they are not being harassed in their interactions with police, police trustworthiness is still questioned. For White citizens they may be more likely to question police fairness when police practices are overtly racially discriminatory because it threatens their modern White identity. On the other hand, White citizens are more likely to believe that African Americans are more prone to violence. For example, in response to a question asked in the 2000 General Social Survey, 48% of White citizens believe that African American citizens are 'violence prone.' As a result, the aggressive policing practices that yield distrust of the police among African Americans might simply signal good policing among some White citizens. Thus, belief in racial profiling should undermine police legitimacy among both African American and White citizens but its effects may be weaker among White citizens.

African Americans are more likely than White citizens to have networks of people who tell negative stories about police behavior. As a result, they are more likely to use these stories as memorable accounts of how police will treat them in the future. For Whites the expectation is the same. Hearing negative stories will bring police legitimacy into question. However, this is likely to have a more powerful affect on African Americans than Whites because they are more likely to hear negative stories.

The analysis will be separated into three different chapters. Chapter 4 will use logistic regression to examine perceptions of disrespect during police encounters. These models are intended to capture the baseline differences in perceived treatment between African American and White citizens. Previous research has suggested that African

Americans are more likely to believe they were mistreated or treated disrespectfully during police stops (Weitzer and Tuch 2004). Thus, it is then expected that they should also have lower levels of trust in the police because they have past experiences that are likely to bring police legitimacy into question. These models will also be used to assess what factors people use when determining whether they were treated fairly during a police encounter. The expectation here is that African Americans are more likely to perceive disrespect because they are more likely to hear stories from their friends and family about negative police encounters. For White citizens it is expected that perceptions of disrespect are likely to more heavily influenced by the context of the police encounter itself. It is also the case that White citizens who report negative encounters should be more distrustful of the police.

The models will include demographic characteristics such as race, gender, social class, and age. These models will also incorporate driving behavior as well as self reported driving convictions across the respondents driving career. These measures are important because previous criminological research has suggested that people who break the law are more likely to question authority figures. Hearing negative stories about police behavior along with trust in government will also be included in these models. Trust in government is intended to serve as potential control variable for the unmeasured positive and negative encounters with societal institutions that are not about policing but will influence cognitive processing about police behavior.

Chapter 5 will examine the factors that predict trust in the police. Racial and class identity theories would lead us to believe that racial and class identities impact the way people view police as well as how they experience contacts. This chapter is important

because it empirically connects social identities (though not directly observed) to what people directly and indirectly experience along with their perceptions of other social institutions. The connection to cognitive bias is that the experiences both direct and indirect that are associated with these various identities will affect the kind of information that people use to make judgments and assessments. African Americans report more negative evaluations of police. However, I expect that even for White citizens their trust will be lower if they believe that police are engaging in overtly racially discriminatory behavior because White citizens identity formation is increasingly tied to the rejection of overtly racist behavior (Helms 1984). Although it is expected according to symbolic racism theory that there are some White citizens who will see police behavior like racial profiling as a law enforcement strategy necessary to deter crime (Weitzer and Tuch 2004).

The models predicting trust in the police include the same demographic variables included in the previous empirical models. These models will also include key experiences with police both directly and indirectly, frequency of hearing stories about police behavior, perceptions of racial profiling, and trust in governmental institutions.

It is the case that the models predicting disrespect by the police as well as trust of the police imperfectly captures these processes. There is measurement error associated with each process modeled in this research context. For example, there are a multiplicity of ways identified in the social psychological literature to capture identity. Some of these measures include measuring the strength of the identity, as well as measuring the extent to which an individual finds it to be important in their life (Sanders-Thompson 1999). The point here is that this research makes no claims at perfectly identifying the processes

that give rise to trust and/or distrust of the police but rather attempts to specify potential mechanisms that might capture this process. Identity is a mechanism that has not been explored in previous research. Thus, incorporating it into this literature at least presents a new mechanism that might further explain why minorities are significantly less likely to trust the police.

It is also the case that the results presented here are interpreted as processes are independent of one another. It is possible that trust in government, perceptions of racial profiling, and trust in the police are not independent of one another. It is expected that in general trust in government is likely to influence trust in the police because it is possible that police officers are viewed as agents of the government. Thus, there is some ambiguity in including trust in government in these models. By incorporating this measure it might over-estimate its relative importance. Therefore, model 5 and 6 in chapter 5 will examine trust in the government separately and then collaboratively to examine its overall influence on trust in the police. Collinearity tests have been examined and none of these measures violate OLS assumptions of no collinearity, except in the case of two interactions. .

Descriptive Statistics

Table 3.1 begins with race differences in personal experiences with police, stop experiences of friends and family, trust in the police and government generally, belief in racial profiling and driving behaviors and I conclude with race differences in the demographic characteristics of the sample. Race differences presented in this table were examined for significance and the differences are statistically significant unless otherwise noted.

Table 3.1. Means and Standard Deviations for the Explanatory Variables by Race

	African American	White
Sample Size	**1353**	**1477**
Personal Experience and Stories About Police		
**Treated with Disrespect During Stop in Last Year	6.6%	2.8%
**Network Disrespected by Police	7.3%	3.1%
*Size of social network	14 (12.5)	19 (17.2)
*Frequency of hearing stories	2.052 (2.65)	1.003 (2.806)
Attitudinal Measures		
***Trust in the Police	3.384 (.976)	4.044 (.857)
***Trust in government scale	3.41 (1.20)	3.61 (.79)
***Belief in Racial Profiling	75.8%	35.5%
Driving Behavior /Stop Events		
*Risky Driving scale	-.101(.97)	.107(1.01)
**Driving Convictions	.134(.25)	.065(.172)
***Lifetime Stops	.26(.53)	.23(.42)
Police Officer Stopped to Help in last Year	6.5%	5.2%
Demographic Characteristics		
**Age	42 (15.7)	45(15.6)

*p≤.05
** p≤.01
*** p≤.001

African Americans (6%) are twice as likely as White drivers (2.8) to report experiencing disrespect in encounters with the police. There is also a significant difference in the number of times African American and White citizens remember hearing stories about negative police behavior from their personal networks. Although African Americans hear or at least remember twice as many stories about disrespectful treatment from the police, the stories do not appear to be widespread in either community. White citizens on average report having larger social networks than African American drivers. This could potentially suggest that the networks that White citizens

form are more heterogeneous because they are larger than the network size of African American citizens. This might reduce the potential flow of information about police racial bias and even if it does not it may make the information more diffuse with less corroboration. It is also the case the White citizens (1.003) on average hear fewer stories about encounters with the police.

I expect that in both the African American and White communities' stories of police encounters circulate through the community, and it seems reasonable to expect that these stories would be more common in African American communities in part because they report more police contacts. Although vehicle stops are the most frequent type of police contact, there are other encounters that might also generate stories about police behavior. In addition, not all stories are negative. For example, 4% of African American drivers report that police stopped to help them. However, Weitzer and Tuch (2004) maintain that negative stories are more widely distributed and become more memorable than the positive experiences with police. It seems likely that positive stories would also increase with increased police contacts. I expected this to be more common in White communities both because of the nature of police contacts and more favorable cognitive schemas toward the police. There were however, no race differences in reporting being helped by the police.

White citizens on average trust that the police will treat them fairly (mean = 4.04). African American respondents however, have a slightly more neutral expectation (mean = 3.38) of police trust. Although these differences are statistically significant the mean differences between the racial groups are fairly small. Table 3.2 also presents race differences in perceptions of police profiling. Approximately, 76% of African Americans

drivers in North Carolina believed that the police are more likely to stop African

American and Latino drivers. This finding is consistent with the recent work of Weitzer

and Tuch (2003) who in a national survey reported that 82% of African Americans

believe police use racial profiling as a tool to target minority drivers. In that same study

they also found that among White citizens 30% reported that police are more likely to

pull over minority drivers. This finding in this study is very similar, with approximately

36% of the White drivers believing that police are more likely to stop minority drivers,

particularly African American and Latino.

For both African American and White drivers' in North Carolina and nationally,

belief in racial profiling has probably been heightened by the media coverage and

political attention to racial profiling. These data were primarily collected in the year

2000, a year when police all over the country were being scrutinized for racial profiling

and President Bush promised to end racial profiling in the United States. In North

Carolina the Highway Patrol had been under media scrutiny for racial profiling in vehicle

searches since 1998, and in 1999 the state legislature passed Senate Bill 76 requiring

increased data collection on race and vehicle stops.

African Americans trust other governmental officials slightly more than the

police. However, they are still significantly less likely to trust government officials

relative to White citizens. This finding is consistent with past research which suggests

that given the discriminatory experiences that many minority citizens have faced in the

past they are less likely to believe that these dominant institutions will treat them fairly.

White citizens in contrast trust the police more than they do other government officials.

This contrast is consistent with the hunch that White identity is actually positively tied to

police legitimacy. This is, of course, only a speculation. If, however, it is found that racial profiling beliefs are less influential on trust in the police among Whites than African Americans this might constitute more compelling evidence for this speculation.

African American's have lower trust in the police than do White citizens. They also report more personal and social network encounters with the police. These encounters are more likely to be negative. They are also more likely to believe that the police profile minority drivers. Because African Americans are more likely to have negative encounters as well as hear more negative stories about police from friends and family, they are more likely to have negative experiences from which to draw from when making an assessment about the police. According to cognitive bias theory, we can then expect African Americans to have less trust in the police as well as more cognitive access to bias stories such that even in encounters with non-biased police officers they will be less likely to trust them. Because stories are so powerful and can get transmitted not only from person to person but through the media, even individuals that do not have experiences from which to draw may use these network and cultural accounts as a basis for there assessments of police.

White respondents report engaging in more risky driving behaviors. While it appears that White respondents report more driving patterns that make them slightly more likely to attract police attention, African American respondents report significantly more driving convictions (.134). African Americans (.26) report being stopped about 12% more often relative to White (.23) drives in North Carolina. Approximately 4% of African Americans question the legitimacy of the their last police encounter while 3%

percent of White citizens question whether they were stopped for a reason other than a traffic violation.

Table 3.2 presents the means, percents and standard deviations for the explanatory variables by class. While there does not appear to be many significant class effects there are a few that stand out. First, lower class respondents tend to have smaller networks (14) compared to the more educated upper-class (18). The social network literature suggest that the larger the social networks the more heterogeneous they become.

Interestingly enough, there are significant class differences in trust in government but no significant differences in trust in the police. Lower educated respondents are more likely to trust government than more educated respondents. Fifty-nine percent of lower-class respondents believe that police are more likely to stop minority drivers, while only 41% of upper-class respondents report the same feeling. It is also the case that lower-class respondents report slightly fewer risky driving behaviors (-.059) compared to upper-class respondents (-.035), they also report significantly more driving convictions.

In general these findings are very different than those for race. This maybe primarily due to the fact that class identity in this study along with most previous research has not been captured very well in the data. The objective measures of class simply do not capture class identity. Having stated that, it could also be that because of the fluidity of social class it simply harder to develop a consciousness around social class. On other hand, the size of the social networks tend to increase as class status increases, potentially suggesting that the networks are more heterogeneous therefore also making class identity development more problematic.

Table 3.2. Means and Standard Deviations for the Explanatory Variables by Social Class

	High School Diploma or Less	Some College to Graduate School
Sample Size	**1030**	**1800**
Personal Experience and Stories About Police		
Treated with Disrespect During Stop in Last Year	23.9%	20%
Network Disrespected by Police	19%	21%
***Size of social network	14.228 (15.7)	18.553 (17.6)
Frequency of hearing stories	.781 (1.89)	1.200 (2.59)
Attitudinal Measures		
Trust in the Police	3.767 (.996)	3.711 (.959)
*Trust in government scale	3.560 (.891)	3.476 (.804)
***Belief in Racial Profiling	59%	41%
Driving Behavior /Stop Events		
*Risky Driving scale	-.059 (.968)	-.035 (1.01)
***Driving Convictions	1.94 (2.79)	1.48 (2.12)
Lifetime Stops	.251 (.541)	.239 (.432)
Police Officer Stopped to Help in last Year	9%	7%
Demographic Characteristics		
***Age	47.9 (16.57)	41.54 (14.8)
***Race (1=African American)	41.2%	58.8%

*p≤.05
** p≤.01
*** p≤.001

CHAPTER 4

RACE AND CLASS IDENTITIES

EVALUATING POLICE TREATMENT

Much of the research on citizens' attitudes towards the police has been guided by the experience model. This model views experience with police as the most fundamental predictor of attitudes towards the police, because experience with police directly conveys information to the individual about the motives and intentions of police officers (Bourdua and Tifft 1971; Scaglion and Condon 1980; Frank, et al. 1996). This research finds that citizens who perceive police behavior as disrespectful or unfair are more likely to hold unfavorable attitudes towards them, presumably because the negative contact becomes a memorable source of information about police behavior in general.

The experience model has been particularly important when assessing the attitudes of African Americans because past research has found that they are significantly more likely to report negative contacts or experiences with police (Jacob, 1971; Scaglion and Condon, 1980). In an early study, Jacob (1971) found that African Americans consistently perceived experiences with police as biased. For example, respondents described police as,

> More corrupt, more unfair, more excitable, more harsh, tougher, weaker, lazier, less intelligent, less friendly, more cruel and more on the bad side, than on the good side (73:1971).

These types of assessments are likely to jeopardize police legitimacy more generally. Much of this research has exclusively examined racial differences in perceptions of being treated unfavorably by the police. However, it might also be important to asses how these

experiences vary across social class categories as well. It is expected that respondents from lower social classes are more likely to report disrespectful treatment by police because, like African American citizens, their own life experiences have caused them to question the legitimacy and fairness in many of societies' dominant institutions.

This chapter will demonstrate the fundamental differences between race and class categories in experiences with police. These differences become realized and get generalized such that they ultimately impact perceptions of police fairness generally. This section is expected to answer two general questions: 1) Do racial and class identities impact perceptions of disrespect by the police? and 2) How do stories about police bias impact the race gap in perceptions of being disrespected by police?

It is expected that for both White and African American citizens' perceptions of police behavior are affected by personal experiences. The direct experiences that people have with police can fundamentally undermine or legitimate perceptions of law enforcement. However, among African American citizens it is expected that they will also perceive police disrespect as a function of their larger distrust of institutions in general and the negative stories that get circulated within their networks.

Table 4.1 presents the race and class differences in the number of stops as well as differences in perceptions of being mistreated by the police. The first part of the table examines race differences in number of police encounters as well as number of negative interactions reported by each racial group. African Americans report twice as many negative encounters with police. Although the racial difference in disrespect per stop is fairly small, the difference is statistically significantly.

Table 4.1.   **Racial Differences in Perceptions of Police Treatment**

	Racial Identity	
	African American	**Whites**
Number of Drivers	1353	1477
Total Number of Stops Last Year	349	264
Total Number of Disrespectful Stops	89	42
Disrespect per Stop	26%	16%
Stops per Driver	.26	.18

Class Differences in Perceptions of Police Treatment

	Class Identity	
	High School Diploma or Less	**Some College to Graduate School**
Number of Drivers	1030	1800
Total Number of Stops Last Year	205	420
Total Number of Disrespectful Stops	42	73
Disrespect per Stop	20%	17%
Stops per Driver	.19	.23

It is important to note that African Americans also report more stops per driver. Reiss (1971) suggests that this is important because as contact between citizens and the police increase the potential for conflict also increases.

The second part of the table examines class differences in encounters with, and perceptions of, the police.[8] In the context of this discussion I will refer to respondents with some college or more as middle class and respondents who report having a high school diploma or less as lower class. Middle class respondents report more stops in the last year. They also report more unfavorable encounters with police than do lower class respondents. The differences observed here are contrary to previous research which

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[8] Social class was dichotomized as high school diploma or less and some college to graduate school in these analyses. Previous research has suggested that class identities are harder to establish because of the fluidity of class. This research does seem to suggest that given the economic constraints placed on lower class people they are more likely to question the fairness of most social institutions in society. Therefore, class is dichotomized to capture those respondents at the lower end of the social class hierarchy.

suggests that lower class respondents have more negative experiences with the police. Although in these data it appears that middle-class respondents are more likely to report stops by the police they are significantly less likely to report that they have been disrespected by the police.

These results suggest that African Americans and middle-class citizens may be more likely to question the fairness of their encounters with police. In the analyses that follow these factors will be further examined in a multivariate context. I will model perceptions of police disrespect during a stop using logistic regression. Logistic regression is an appropriate technique when the dependent variable is dichotomized. The idea is to assess how these identities along with other mechanisms influence perceptions of police treatment.

Given the results in table 3.2, I do not expect strong class effects. This is in part due to the fluidity of social class in general. The fluidity of social class reduces the potential for class identity development. The lack of significant effects does not rule out the importance of social class but rather speaks to how the weakness of social class as an identity might reduce its overall affect in understanding its affect on how people understand and interpret police encounters. Identity theory suggests that if identities are going to matter they have to be realized by the actor such that they come to understand the world them through that particular identity lens. Therefore, no significant findings in this context, provides a basis for future analyses of social class as an identity and its impact on perceptions of the police.

Police Encounters and Perceptions of Disrespect

Table 4.2 presents the odds ratio for the explanatory variables. These analyses only include respondents who reported a police encounter in the last year. It is the case that respondents might have had an encounter with police prior to the last year that could potentially impact their overall perception of the police. However, in these data it is expected that the most recent encounters will be the most salient encounters in the respondents' current memory. The purpose of these analyses are to examine which factors people use to determine whether they are being mistreated by the police. The sample size for these analyses is 625.

Model 1 includes the two measures - race and social class as well as age and gender. Model 2 and 3 represent both the cognitive bias and identity models which assess the importance of social networks and the stories that get generated through these networks. They also highlight perceptions of government generally as well as perceptions of racial profiling. Model 4 represents the experience model. Previous research that has examined perceptions of the police has used the experience model to explain race differences in perceptions, with African American citizens being more likely than Whites to report that police treat them unfairly as well as use excessive force against them and do not have legitimate reasons to search them (Bureau of Justice Statistics 2001; Cao et al. 1996). In this context it will be used to examine whether direct experiences produce feelings of disrespect in the race gap more or less than the identity and cognitive bias models. Model 5 is the full model. The results will be interpreted in general by comparing the experiences model (4) to the cognitive bias and identity models (2 and 3).

Table 4.2   Race, Class and Perceptions of Disrespect by the Police (N=625)

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
Race (1=AA)	1.672***	1.593*	1.393	1.685*	1.283
Social Class (1=MC)	.813	.793	.605*	.900	.613
Network disrespect		4.754***			3.449*
Size of network		1.003			1.004
Frequency of hearing stories		1.012			.995
Trust in government			.444***		.512***
Belief in racial profiling			2.923**		1.821
Risky Driving				.982	.981
Driving Convictions				1.023	1.017
Lifetime Stops				1.618**	1.408
Stops in the Last Year				1.225**	1.191
Cop Stopped to Help				.624	.734
Age	.973**				.994
Gender (1=Females)	.469				.695
Chi-Square	34.01***	40.815***	51.869***	58.827***	95.986***
Nagelkerke R-Square	.085	.101	.156	.149	.294

*p≤.05, ** p≤.01, *** p≤.001

In model 1 race and age are the only significant factors impacting perceptions of police treatment. African Americans are 1.67 times more likely than White drivers to believe that they were treated with disrespect by the police during an encounter in the last year. It is also the case that younger respondents (.973) are more likely to report being treated with disrespect by the police.

Models 2 and 3 directly compare more longstanding perceptions of the police to the direct experiences that the respondents reported having with police. In this case model 2 incorporates network disrespect, the size of the social network and the frequency of hearing stories about police behavior. Both race and hearing negative stories about police encounters from friends and family significantly influences perceptions of disrespect by the police. This provides some support for cognitive bias theory. Respondents who hear stories are potentially more likely to form negative cognitive schemas about police behavior.

In model 3 both trust in government and perceptions of racial profiling significantly affect perceptions of disrespect by the police. Respondents who report more trust in government are less likely to report being disrespected by police and those who believe that police engage in racial profiling are more likely to perceive disrespect by the police. Social class is now significant, with middle-class respondents being less likely to report disrespectful encounters with police. It is also the case that the race gap in perceptions of disrespect gets particularly small in model 3, relative to both models 1 and 2, suggesting that the more longstanding culture of distrust of the police within the African American community is not solely about experiences with police but also about the negative stories that are generated and then circulated through their social networks and in the media. It may also be negative and sometimes discriminatory experiences that they have in other governmental agencies that influence perceptions of police behavior. This suggests that perceptions of the police are not purely about direct experiences also about there perceptions of other institutions that may get generalized across all institutions in society.

Model 4 incorporates driving behaviors. Race, lifetime stops and number of stops in the last year all significantly influence perceptions of disrespect by the police. Respondents who report more lifetime stops are more likely to perceive disrespect by the police in a contemporary stop. Respondents who were stopped more often in the last year are also more likely to perceive disrespect by the police. Incorporating driving behaviors and police encounters explains away the social class effect but there is a significant race effect and it is as large as the original race effect in model 1.

Model 5 is the full model and the only significant effects are hearing negative stories about police from the respondents' social networks as well as trust in government. Together these models are particularly powerful because they directly speak to whether the perceptions of police behavior are about direct experience or more longstanding perceptions that are retold within social networks. This reality then gets generalized across all law enforcement thus reducing their legitimacy particularly within the African American community.

The theoretical framework articulated in chapter 2 led me to expect a race and social class interaction in understanding perceptions of police behavior. In other analyses not presented here this interaction along with the interaction between race and trust in government, class and trust in government were conducted to assess their affect on perceptions of police behavior. None of these affects were statically significant. Although it was not directly theorized in the theories an interaction between size of network and race and social class were examined as well. None of the effects were statistically significantly.

The data presented here demonstrates that distrust of social institutions in general as well as the stories that get circulated throughout social networks impact perceptions of police treatment. These results should be interpreted with some caution because there are no measures that specifically capture the demeanor of the police officer. It is possible that the types of questions that are asked by police as well as their overall demeanor when interacting with citizens significantly impacts whether a person views police behavior as disrespectful. It is also possible that characteristics of the officer like race might impact perceptions of police behavior. However, these data only include characteristics of drivers, no officer characteristics are included. The point here is that there may be other untheorized or unmeasured processes that are not included in these data. Thus, future research should consider examining data that includes both citizen perceptions of the police while also incorporating characteristics of the police officer.

In sum, the purpose of these analyses was to establish whether race and social class identities were significant predictors of perceptions of disrespect by the police. It was theorized in earlier chapters that African Americans will be more likely to perceive disrespect by the police because of the historical and sometimes contemporary conflict between them and the police. Ultimately, there were no significant class differences in perceptions of disrespect by the police. By model 5 the race gap in perceptions of disrespect by the police was explained away. The key findings that race differences in perceptions of police disrespect are tied to race differences in hearing negative stories about police bias, and general trust in governmental institutions. In general, identities do not amplify the influence of stories that are shared within networks but they do seem to make the stories more available.

Although cognitive bias is not directly observed, I do find some support for the theory. People who hear negative stories about police use this information to evaluate their own encounters with police. It is important to note here that this process appears to be generic instead of being specifically tied to identities associated with race or social class.

This research used perceptions of disrespect during a police encounter as the baseline for attitudes about police fairness. People who feel mistreated by the police are potentially less likely to believe that they will be treated fairly by the police. The findings in this chapter led me to expect that these factors will be most salient in predicting trust in the police. It is not direct experiences with police, but rather hearing negative stories about police behavior and more long-standing trust in dominant institutions in society that drives attitude formation.

CHAPTER 5

IDENTITIES AND TRUST IN THE POLICE

In this chapter I explore the linkages between race and social class and experiences with the police, memorable stories of police encounters in individual networks and perceptions of racial profiling. It is expected, as suggested by identity theory, that race but not social class will play a major role in the explanatory structure and model development that follows. Because race has been theorized to be a much stronger basis for contemporary US identity and cognitive schema formation, it is expected that there will be stronger race than class effects on police legitimacy.

Minorities, particularly African Americans, have lower levels of trust in the police than do White citizens (Decker 1981; Flanagan and Vaughn 1996; Jacob, 1971; Scaglion and Condon, 1980; Weitzer, 1999). These differences in trust are generally interpreted by social scientists as cultural differences in trust, reflecting the historical relationships between race and policing, as well as between race and dominant institutions of American society. Because many police forces historically discriminated against the African American community through routine excessive use of force and false arrests the legitimacy of police fairness was undermined. African Americans often viewed the discrimination that they suffered at the hands of the police as a reflection of a larger cultural acceptance of discrimination embedded within many of societies' institutions (Dillingham 1981; Leitzel 2001).

Racial differences in orientations toward the police, while potentially deep seated, are reinforced by direct and indirect experiences. Previous research has consistently demonstrated that negative interactions with the police generate unfavorable opinions of

the police (Scaglion & Condon 1980; Frank, et. al. 1996). Citizens who view their interaction with police as negative or disrespectful are less likely to hold favorable attitudes towards them. Negative contacts are memorable and produce distrust of future police behavior. That these experiences are likely to undermine trust more severely in African American communities because they corroborate more long-standing distrust of institutions in society more generally. Negative experiences with police will also undermine police legitimacy in White communities but these experiences are unlikely to be generalized across all institutions. If trust in the police is likely to be strongly undermined in White communities, it may be tied to practices that appear racially or culturally biased.

The theoretical framework articulated in this research leads me to develop some expectations for the processes that lead to race differences in trust in the police. It is expected that the race and class differences that might be observed are not simply about police treatment but also about the stories and perceptions held within the community more generally. For White citizens' trust is likely to be lower when police engage in overtly racist behavior. So in this context, White citizens who believe police actively profile minority citizens are expected to have lower levels of trust in the police. These effects are likely to be larger for African American citizens because some White citizens will treat racial profiling as a non-racist police behavior. Also, trust in government is likely to influence perceptions of the police. African American and lower class citizens generally have more long-standing distrust of institutions in society, therefore, it is expected that respondents with these identities will have lower levels of confidence in the police.

Although it is expected that there will be race and class differences in perceptions of police fairness, this research does a much better job at capturing race identity than class identity. Racial identity in this regard is much easier to capture because the race that people self-identify as is likely to be the identity they have attached themselves to. According to identity theory people use these identities as a lens through which to make sense of the experiences they have in the social world. In this context, people did not self-identity into a particular class standing, rather self-reports of educational attainment is used as a pseudo-measure of class identity.

In the analyses that follow trust in the police is modeled as a function of race and class identities, personal police contact experiences, network experiences with the police, trust in other institutions in society, and perceptions of police profiling. The models also control for other factors like driving behavior, age and gender. These factors are included to capture potential mechanisms that might also affect trust of the police.

Trust in the police is modeled by first establishing the size of the race and class gap, net of other status characteristics and driving behavior variables. The demographic variables allow me to statistically adjust race differences in trust in the police for class, gender, age, and driving behavior influences on trust in the police that may be correlated with race. Education serves as our indicator of social class identity. Driving behaviors include the risky-driving behavior scale. The driving variables are included to adjust for behaviors that may influence both encounters with and trust in the police. Trust in the police is measured as a continuous variable ranging from 1 to 5, thus Ordinary Least Squares regression is the appropriate statistical tool.

Trust in the Police

Table 5.1 presents the models which examine variation in trust in the police. The purpose is to examine how both race and class identities impact perceptions of police fairness while controlling for other status characteristics as well as driving behavior. These analyses also examine personal and network experiences with the police, along with belief in racial profiling and trust in other governmental officials and institutions.

The discussion focuses on model 6, and uses models 1 through 5 to identify the variables that are particularly influential for explaining race and class differences in trust in the police. The results in model 1 show that African Americans are less likely to trust the police than are Whites. Social class has no significant impact on trust in the police. Older respondents are more likely to trust the police.

Models 2 and 3 are the identity models. In model 2 race and hearing negative stories from social networks both reduce police legitimacy. The race coefficient is marginally strengthened in model 2, thus stories in networks are not directly implicated in the race gap in trust in the police. Respondents with more friends and family within their social network have more trust in the police than those with smaller networks. This variable was incorporated into these models because the network literature suggests that the size of the network makes the information flow more diffuse, thus this can potentially impact the development of both a racial and class identity.

Trust in government and belief in racial profiling are incorporated into model 3. Respondents with more trust in government also have more trust in the police. Respondents who believe that police engage in racial profiling are less likely to trust them to treat them fairly. It is important to note here that the R-square for model 3

explains a higher proportion of the variation in trust in the police compared to models 1 and 2. The race gap in trust in the police also gets substantially smaller in model 3 compared to the first two models. This suggests that the negative experiences and beliefs about other governmental institutions get generalized across all institutions thus reducing trust in the police. It is also the case that respondent who believe that police are more likely to profile African American and Latino citizens are less likely to trust the police. Again this finding is consistent with previous literature which suggests that the perception of racial profiling is more likely to exist within the African American community, thus it explains a significant portion of their distrust of the police (Weitzer and Tuch 2002).

Model 4 is the experience model, it most closely resembles the empirical models reported in previous research (Jacob 1971; Tuch and Weitzer 1999). Just like previous research, African American drivers are less likely to trust the police. Respondents who report negative encounters with police also have significantly lower levels of trust in the police (-.884). The only other variables significant in this model are risky driving behavior and lifetime stops. Respondents who report more stops across their driving career as well as those who report more risky driving behavior are less likely to trust in the police. It is likely the case that respondents who engage in more risky driving behaviors are likely to have more police encounters because they are engaging in driving patterns that attract police attention thus increasing their opportunity for conflict with the police. This effect is consistent with previous research which suggests that increased police interaction can potentially lead to increased conflict with law enforcement (Reiss 1971; Weitzer 1999).

Table 5.1. Identity, Experiences and Perceptions of Police Fairness (N=2,830)

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
Race (1=AA)	-.619***	-.625***	-.447***	-.612***	-.392** (-.196)	-.355** (-.178)
Social Class (1=MC)	-.035	-.096	-.020	-.110	-.031 (-.015)	-.038 (-.018)
Personal Disrespect				-.884***	-.713*** (-.277)	-.476*** (-.184)
Network Disrespect		-.828***			-.703*** (-.210)	-.569*** (-.169)
Size of Network		.002*			.002 (.041)	.002 (.045)
Frequency of Hearing Stories		-.009			.005 (.021)	.005 (.022)
Trust in government			.665***			.510*** (.428)
Belief in Racial Profiling			-.265***		-.533*** (-.153)	-.220** (-.104)
Risky Driving				.089*	.085* (.087)	.093* (.096)
Driving Convictions				.001	-.006 (-.024)	-.003 (-.013)
Lifetime Stops				-.201***	-.197*** (-.161)	-.132** (-.113)
Cop Stopped to Help				-.065	-.054 (-.014)	-.064 (-.016)
Stops in Last Year				-.021	-.013 (-.005)	-.011 (-.015)
Age	.012***				.006* (.086)	.007* (.098)
Gender	.024				-.211 (-.106)	-.114 (-.057)
R-Square	.155	.157	.484	.308	.368	.532

*p≤.05, ** p≤.01, *** p≤.001, Standardized coefficients are presented in parentheses in model 5 and 6

Comparing model 4 to model 3 the race gap is larger in model 4 and the R-square explains a smaller proportion of the variation in trust in the police suggesting that relative to direct experiences, distrust of other institutions and perceptions of police bias has a stronger impact on reduces police legitimacy, particularly among African American citizens.

Model 5 presents the standardized coefficients for the full model without trust in government. There is some ambiguity associated with regressing trust in government on trust in the police. Thus, the models are estimated with and without trust in the government. Model 6 will present the analyses for the full model.

In model 5 being personally disrespected by the police significantly reduces trust in the police and it has the largest effect on trust in the police. It is also the case that being African American, hearing negative stories about police from friends and family, believing that police engage in racial profiling, having more lifetime stops and being a younger driver all significantly reduce trust in the police.

The results in model 5 to 6 do not significantly change however, the estimates for the significant variables get smaller once trust in government in incorporated into the models. The race effect is smaller in this model compared to model 5. The R-Square is larger here (.532) compared to that reported in model 5 (.368) which suggest that a larger portion of the variation in trust in the police is explained by perceptions of other governmental institutions. It is the case that in model 6 perceptions of personal disrespect by the police (-.184) and trust in government (.428) have the largest impact on trust in the police. The effect is almost 4 times bigger than the other effects suggesting that trust in

government is particularly influential in explaining the racial variation in trust in the police.

In order to asses which mechanisms are most influential in producing the race gap in trust the regression decomposition method is utilized. According to Coleman et al. (1972) regression decomposition is an arithmetic calculation which examines differences between two groups. In this context, the calculations will demonstrate which variables in model 5 are most influential in explaining the race gap in trust in the police for both models 5 and 6. Please refer to Table 5.2 and Table 5.3 for these results. The arithmetic computation that calculates which factor has the strongest affect on the race gap in trust in the police is:

$$(X_{1 \text{ mean for African American}} - X_{1 \text{ mean for White}}) * \text{unstandardized beta coefficient.}$$

Table 5.2. Regression Decomposition Without Trust in Government

	Race Gap in Independent Variables	Unstandardized Coefficient	Contribution to the Race Gap in Trust in the Police
Personal Disrespect	.038	-.713	.-.027
Network Disrespect	.042	-.703	-.029
Belief in racial profiling	.403	-.533	-.021
Lifetime Stops	.03	-.197	-.006

For example, as reported in model 5 of Table 5.1 the unstandardized beta coefficient for personal disrespect is -.476. The mean differences between African American and White citizens in reports of disrespect by the police is .038 (See Table 3.1 for means by race). When .038 is multiplied by -.713 the result is -.027 which is an estimate of the race gap in trust produced by the frequency of reports of disrespect. In this table the strongest

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predictors of the race gap in trust in the police is belief in racial profiling. Hearing

negative stories from friends and family about police conduct and being personally

disrespected by the police also contributes to the race gap in trust in the police, although

their effect sizes are small. Interestingly enough, hearing negative stories has a slightly

stronger effect than negative personal experiences with police. Belief in racial profiling

also has a particular strong influence on the race gap in trust in the police. Its effects size

is ten times larger than hearing stories and negative direct experiences. The effect size of

lifetime stops is quite small suggesting that it has little impact on the racial variation in

trust in the police.

Table 5.3 presents the results of the regression decomposition with trust in

government in the models. The strongest predictors of the race gap in trust in the police

are trust in government, followed by belief in racial profiling. The influence of personal

and network disrespect are quite small. Trust in other governmental institutions is

contributing slightly more to the race gap in trust in the police than belief in racial

profiling.

Table 5.3. Regression Decomposition with Trust in the Government

	Race Gap in Independent Variables	Unstandardized Coefficient	Contribution to the Race Gap in Trust in the Police
Personal Disrespect	.038	-.476	.02
Network Disrespect	.042	-.569	-.023
Trust in government	-.20	.510	-.102
Belief in racial profiling	.403	-.220	-.08
Lifetime Stops	.03	-.132	-.004

Also, comparing these results to those reported in table 5.2, the contribution of personal and network disrespect is not particularly influenced by the incorporation of trust in government. Thus, trust in government seems to have a fairly large and independent impact on trust on the race gap in trust in the police.

I anticipated that negative experiences with the police, stories about police bias, belief in racial profiling and trust in government might condition the effects of race and social class on trust in the local police. Therefore, I investigated interactions between race and education, race and personal disrespect, race and belief in racial profiling, race and trust in government. These results are presented in table A.3 in the appendix. The variance inflation factors were also examined to assess collinearity among the variables once the interaction terms were included in the models. These results are reported in Table A.4. None of the interaction effects were statistically significant. The models which include the interactions between race* perceptions of racial profiling (9.732) along with race* trust in government (10.625) violate the assumption of no collinearity, therefore there is really not enough information in these data to test the effects of these interaction terms. The bivariate statistics reported in the table 3.1 show that 80% of African American citizens believe that police engage in racial profiling. Thus, in these data racial profiling and race might actually be capturing similar pieces of information.

It is also the case that there is a fairly large residual in the race gap in trust in the police. This probably represents a combination of African American and White community differences that are specifically about trust in the police as well as measurement error in the indicators of experience with the police, community stories, and exposure to varying accounts of police bias. These measures are captured imperfectly in

these data. However, the incorporation of measures such as trust in other institutions, network stories about police bias is a significant contribution to this literature because including these measures allows us to assess the extent to which hearing stories about police, as well as trust in other institutions like school, county commissioners and judges, impacts trust in the police. In this study, stories and trust in government seem to most profoundly impact trust in the police. Thus, even the imperfect measures do make a contribution to this body of research.

It is the case that there are processes that give rise to trust/distrust of the police that are not included in the processes modeled here. The experience model, most commonly used by previous researchers would lead us to expect that characteristics of the community, like the crime rate, might also influence trust in the police (Sampson and Bartusch 1998). The extent to which incivilities are high in communities might lead to higher perceptions of injustices in the social world. Other important characteristics include how often a person feels disrespected by police across their driving career, as well as asking respondents to explain the kinds of police behavior or questions that make them question police legitimacy.

There are other factors that also impact trust in the police that come closer to the cognitive bias, identity models identified in this research. For example, the officer's race is likely to play a part in reducing trust because the sharing of negative stories about police officers are quite frequently about White officers thus, in interactions with these officers, minority citizens are more likely to question their legitimacy. It is also the case that White officers are often depicted in the major media stories about abuse of minority citizens such as the Rodney King beating and the Diallo shooting. Minority citizens

might view this as information that can be used to evaluate all police, both before and during their interaction with them.

These models might also have included measures that come closer to capturing racial and class identity. For example, measuring the strength of identity, the extent to which the identity is important and how important one thinks the identity is in their everyday life. Helms (1994) suggests that identity should be measured using multiple indicators because there is no one measure that can fully capture identity and its importance in our everyday lives.

In sum, the basic theoretical model is that trust in the police is a function of racial and class identities that structure experiences with the police. These models included personal experiences with police, stories that circulate within personal networks about police conduct, trust in government and perceptions of racial profiling. Ultimately, these factors can either enhance or undermine trust in the police.

In general, stories about the police get circulated within social networks, trust in government, and perceptions of racial profiling, all tend to vary by race as a result of different cultural histories and contemporary experiences. Negative interactions with police strongly compromise perceptions of police fairness and encourage a larger culture of skepticism among citizens. This skepticism becomes a source of information in the local community, leading to the sharing of stories about police misconduct, ultimately resulting in a larger culture of distrust. This process holds true for both African Americans and White Americans. Treating citizens with disrespect ultimately undermines police legitimacy irrespective of race and social class. The high levels of belief in racial profiling in the African American community demonstrates how stories affect personal

evaluation of police contact and serve as community-wide information about police misconduct. This belief is not just about personal experience, but also about media accounts and the community as a whole.

Negative experiences with police get reinforced in the media and the personal network stories that circulate within groups. Even in the absence of direct experience of police bias these stories can demonstrate cultural proof of police misconduct. Thus, police forces interested in better community relations must pay attention not only to the behavior of officers but also the cultural stories and legacies that threaten police legitimacy. As a result, of the stories that get generated about negative police behavior people form cognitive schemas that they use to judge and evaluate police fairness. These schemas are used even in instances where police have not mistreated citizens. Given the results in this study, it is likely that the cognitive schemas about police are more likely to be negative in the African American community than in White communities because of the increased conflictual relationship that exists between law enforcement and the African American community. Even in the absence of direct police contact, it is also likely that these schemas will be formed because of the frequency and increased number of negative stories that get generated about police behavior.

Figure 5.1 demonstrates the results from the analyses presented in this and the previous chapter. In general these findings suggest that racial identity affects perceptions of the police through several mechanisms – including negative encounters with police, hearing negative stories about police behavior from others within social networks, trust in other governmental institutions. Having negative personal encounters with police significantly reduces police legitimacy. The direct experiences that people have with

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police are important because they can directly shape expectations of treatment in future encounters with police. It is the case that previous research has found that African Americans are significantly more likely to leave a police encounter feeling that they have been mistreated or disrespected by the officer. As such, they are likely to use this experience as information about how all officers will treat them in the future.

It is also the case that hearing negative stories about police bias reduces trust in the police. Because African Americans are significantly more likely to hear negative stories about police behavior they are also less likely to trust the police. Although hearing negative stories with personal networks generically reduces trust among both African American and White citizens the effect is stronger for African Americans because they simply hear more stories. Also, within the African American community there is a more general distrust of social institutions that reduces legitimacy of all dominant institutions in society including the police. Identity theory suggests that it is not simply lived experience but rather social identities that affect attitude formation.

It is important to note here that there are many social identities that people have such as race, social class, gender and sexuality. It is plausible to assume that each of these identities will have a significant impact on how people understand and interpret the social world around them. Identity theory would argue that each identity has an impact on interpretation of experiences in the social world. Therefore, each identity will have some impact on how citizens interpret their interactions with police. Having stated that, this research highlighted race and social class because they there the two identities that previous research have found to be most salient in predicting perceptions of police fairness. The continuing significance of race is in part tied to the historical relationship

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with police and social institutions in society as well as the sometimes problematic

interactions that lead minority citizens to question police fairness and legitimacy.

Figure 5.1 Identity and Experiences with Police – How they Impact Trust in the Police
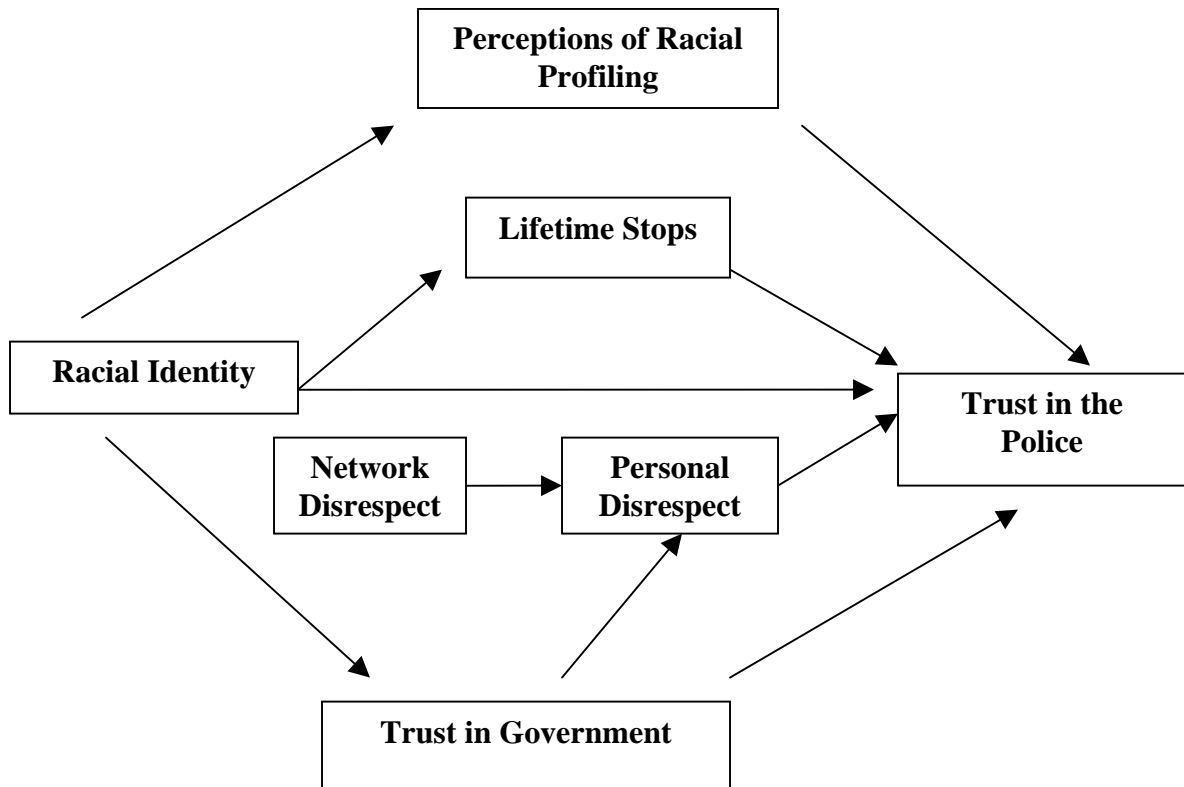
CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSIONS

Project Summary

Over the last several decades there have been many studies to investigate citizens' perceptions and satisfaction with police (Jacob 1971; Scaglion and Condon, 1980; Weitzer, 1999; Reisig & Parks, 2000). These studies have endeavored to identify the mechanisms which produce distrust of the police in general as well as explain why minorities are significantly less likely to perceive the police as trustworthy and fair. Race differences in perceptions of police fairness are often explained by the reference to historical and contemporary relationship between minority communities and the police (Dillingham 1981; Harris 2002).

Previous research has primarily assessed racial variation in trust in the police as a direct result of the historical and sometimes contemporary experiences that many minority citizens have faced. Thus trust in the police or perceptions of the police are viewed as an experiential or material process as oppose to viewing trust as a property that emerges out of social identities. By incorporating identities perceptions are not simply viewed as a response to negative encounters with police but also how race and class identity development shapes how people make sense out of the social world. Understandings of experiences will primarily be informed through identities. Identities help us make sense out of experiences while also informing the kind of information that we have available to use.

In this study, trust in and perceptions of the police were modeled as an emergent property of social identities – race and social class – as well as cognitive bias. These

identities were expected to shape perceptions of the police through the experiences that people have as a function of their particular identity. It is also the case that the perceptions that people form about police through these identities can be used to type-cast all law enforcement thus reducing their legitimacy. This is particularly likely to happen in both poor and African American communities if they are more likely to experience police bias. These experiences are often retold within local communities and can be used as information about how police will interact with all citizens. Cognitive bias theory suggests that when people are making decisions and judgments they do not go through an exhaustive process but rather use the most readily available information that they have in their memory. This is important to understanding the race gap in perceptions of the police because members of the African American community are consistently more likely to report that they have been treated unfairly by the police (Tyler and Huo 2002; Weitzer and Tuch 2005), Thus African American citizens are potentially more likely to have negative stories about police behavior. As a result, police legitimacy is likely to be lower among African American citizens even in the absence of personal negative experiences with the police.

Although race and social class are the two identities highlighted in this research, there are others like gender and sexuality that impact perceptions of the social world. There is theory to suggest that in order to understand identities and how they affect lived experiences they must all be theoretically incorporated and empirically examined as salient factors that affect how people experience the social world (Hill-Collins 2000). This research does not take this suggestion lightly, however much of the previous research on attitudes towards the police has primarily focused on understanding how and

why race and social class affect perceptions of the police. Identity theory also argues that there are multiple identities that inform understanding of the social world. However, race is likely to have a stronger influence on our understanding of experiences in social world in part because of the negative historical and sometimes contemporary relationship between White and minority citizens in the United States.

Wilson (1978) has argued that as class status among African American citizens became more heterogeneous experiences will also become more heterogeneous. In essence Wilson has argued that class will become the stronger identity for African American citizens. Much of the previous research examining trust in the police simply does not support Wilson's (1978) argument. Rather these researchers maintain that race continues to be significant even after controlling for the direct experiences with police (Weitzer 1999; Weitzer and Tuch 2002). This research effort also found no support for the idea that diversity in class status will supercede race as a cognitive lens. It is the case that all identities may inform how people understand and process social experiences, however when assessing attitudes about police behavior and fairness, racial identity seems to be the identity that is most salient.

Weitzer and Tuch (2005) have argued that the research on trust in the police is theoretically light, and is not doing an adequate job of specifying how, why and under what conditions race and social class will be salient to predicting attitudes about the police. This dissertation theoretically articulated why and under what conditions race and social class matter to our understanding of the race gap in perceptions of the police. There were several questions that this research attempted to answer: 1) How do race and class identities impact perceptions and trust in the police? 2) Is the race gap in perceptions of

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and trust in the police primarily a function of direct experiences with police or the vicarious experiences that are shared within social networks? 3) Is the race gap in perceptions of and trust in the police a function of trust in other governmental institutions?

Summary of Empirical Findings

This study focused on reports of disrespect in police stops as well as trust in police. In particular, this research attempted to identity the factors that are most salient to understanding perceptions of disrespectful treatment by the police as well as trust in the police. The empirical models presented in chapters 4 and 5 examined identities, personal experiences with police, vicarious experiences with police, perceptions of police racial bias and more long-standing trust in other governmental institutions. Previous research has demonstrated that direct experiences along with perceptions of police bias significantly predict perceptions of the police, with those respondents who have negative experiences and believe that police are racially biased holding lower levels of confidence in the police (Gallagher et al. 2001; Weitzer and Tuch 2002; Weitzer and Tuch 2005).

It seemed reasonable to expect that the experiences people have in the social world both good and bad will be re-told as stories that will then get shared within social networks. Some of these stories will be about police bias and disrespect while others will be about fairness and generosity. Communities with few positive experiences will have few positive stories to tell and they may develop a culture of distrust. Shearing and Ericsson (1991) contend that sharing stories is critical to how people come to understand the social world around them. When we extend this insight to identity groups it is reasonable to expect that collective stories of police bias and respect become powerful

sources of shared cultural knowledge about police behavior. It is the case that vicarious experiences with the police are likely to erode police legitimacy in both the African American and White communities. However, the effects are more influential for African American citizens because they have more negative personal encounters and they are more likely to hear stories about police bias from their friends and family.

In this study, African American citizens reported more personal disrespect by police as well as hearing more negative stories about police. In fact in both cases African American citizens were twice as likely to report and hear about disrespect. This finding is consistent with previous research (Weitzer and Tuch 1999; Weitzer and Tuch 2002). This research theorized that networks were important to both identity development as well as access to stories about police behavior. McPherson et al. (2001) maintain that the larger the social network the more information will become diffuse. Class networks are more heterogeneous compared to racial networks. In these data African Americans (14) on average report smaller social networks than White citizens (19). Although African Americans report smaller social networks they do have a higher frequency of hearing stories about the police. There are also significant race differences in all the trust measures as well as perceptions of police profiling. On average White citizens have less trust in government (3.61) than they do police (4.004) and the difference seems fairly large. For African Americans they have fairly neutral trust in government as well as the police. African American citizens are twice as likely to report that they believe police profile African American and Latino citizens.

These findings are all consistent with previous research which has found that minority citizens are more likely to leave to police stop feeling as though they have been

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mistreated. Again Weitzer and Tuch (1999) report a similar finding. However, the contribution in this research is that it incorporates social networks, and more long-standing trust of institutions more generally, while also capturing experiences with the police. By incorporating social networks and trust in institutions this research was able to identity mechanisms outside direct experiences with police that help form perceptions as well as interpret experiences with police.

The results in table 3.2 are dramatically different than those reported in table 3.1. Almost none of the variables significantly vary by social class, while almost all do vary by race. The major finding is that lower class respondents have smaller social networks than middle class respondents. Social class does not explain much of the variation in any of the variables. This is also consistent with previous research much of which yields inconsistent class findings more generally. This is in part because class is a weaker identity more generally because most people often are not aware of their own class-standing. Ostrove and Cole (2003) maintain that most citizens in the US self-identify as middle-class despite their objective class standing. They suggest that most citizens do that because they hold firm to middle-class values and ideals. Thus, these ideals might cloud their understanding of their objective class standing. It is also the case that social class is a weaker identity than race because of economic mobility. People are often shifting from one social class to the next, thus potentially reducing their understanding about how and why class matters in their everyday life.

Chapter 4 examined perceptions of disrespect by the police. Identity theory suggests that racial identity is likely to have a stronger influence on perceptions because class is more fluid and class networks are larger and more heterogeneous, thus the stories

that are generated are more diffuse than those circulated within racial networks. In table 4.2 perceptions of disrespect by the police are influenced by hearing negative stories about the police from friends and family and more long-standing trust in government. Once the models controlled for hearing stories and trust in government the race effect is explained away. This suggests that these two variables, rather than police behavior, explain race disparity in perceptions of the police.

The models presented in chapter 5 assess variation in trust in the police. The influential predictors of trust in the police are perceptions of disrespect by the police, network disrespect, trust in government, belief in racial profiling, and lifetime stops. When examining which of these factors has the strongest effect on the racial gap in trust in the police, trust in government explains a larger portion of the race gap. Weitzer and Tuch (2004) predicted that vicarious experiences are likely to have just as strong effect on trust in the police as direct experiences. The standardized coefficient reported in model 6 of table 5.1 supports this expectation, however, trust in other governmental institutions and belief in racial profiling explains a larger portion of the race gap in trust. This is particularly important to note because prior research has primarily examined trust in the police as a function of the experiences that people have with police. While this is reasonable to do, identity and cognitive theory lead me to model trust in the police not simply as a result of direct experiences but also of identities and information processing. It is also the case that in this research race and social class did not condition any of the effects of the other explanatory variables on trust in the police or perceptions of disrespect. This suggest that for both African American and White citizens identities are not affecting how they make sense out of police behavior, but rather African American

citizens have more negative experiences and hear more negative stories about police behavior and so they are more likely to question police legitimacy.

This research imperfectly measures personal experiences, stories that circulate in personal networks, and stories about police bias that get generated through social networks and trust in other governmental institutions as well as perceptions of racial profiling. However, the findings are similar to those reported in previous research (Weitzer and Tuch 2002; Weitzer and Tuch 2005). There is also a fairly large race residual suggesting that there are other processes that impact trust in the police that are not included in these models. Factors such as race, gender and demeanor of officer might all significantly affect how citizens perceive their interaction with law enforcement.

The theory and evidence presented in this research has clear implications for the problem of police-community relationships. In order to build legitimacy in the minority community police forces need to not only control racial bias in policing, but also work on changing the larger distrust of the police that exist within the African American community. The results reported here suggest that this distrust arises from both past and present experiences with police. Even in the absence of racial bias, a high rate of police-citizen contact in communities can potentially generate high rates of conflict and more stories about police bias. In addition, negative experiences with police get reinforced in the personal network stories that circulate within groups. Even in the absence of direct experience of police bias these stories can demonstrate cultural proof of police misconduct. Thus, police forces interested in better community relations must pay attention not only to the behavior of officers but the stories and the legacies that threaten police legitimacy.

Major Contributions

Race has long been one of the most consistent predictor of attitudes towards the police, with African American citizens being significantly more likely than White citizens to hold negative views of the police (Reiss 1971; Bayley & Mendelsohn 1969; Sampson & Bartusch 1998; Weitzer 1999; Weitzer & Tuch 2004; Weitzer and Tuch 2005). The question that has continued to plague this research is why racial differences in perceptions of the police continue to exist. Are these differences simply a reflection of being in different status groups? Are they a reflection of differing experiences with the police? Are they a reflection of media accounts of police conduct? Are they a reflection of neighborhood conditions or the stories that get generated and are circulated within various social networks? Previous research has suggested that all of the aforementioned factors significantly affect perceptions of the police. However, what has not been sufficiently explained is how and why these factors matter. Weitzer and Tuch (2005) who are really the scholarly leaders in this area of research have critiqued their own work as well as others for failing to theoretically explaining why the race gap in perceptions of justice is so consistent. In many ways they argue that this body of research has engaged in variable- chasing, rather than allowing theory to inform their understanding of trust in the police.

This research uses identity and cognitive bias theory to explain the racial gap in perceptions of the police. Identity theory suggests that identities are important to understanding how people make sense of their social experiences. While there are many identities, race and social class are the two that are highlighted in this research. It is the case that racial identity is a stronger identity in American society because unlike social

class it has become a fundamental basis for organization of social life (Bobo 1998). The racialized experiences that people have are likely to inform attitudes and assessments about social institutions, including the police.

Identity theory suggests that there are two fundamental differences between race and social class which makes social class identity development more complex. First, social class unlike race is fluid. People can change from one social class to the next. As a result, understanding and interpreting experiences that can be directly attributable to social class is less likely. Next, because social class networks are relatively heterogeneous compared to race, it is harder to develop a consciousness groups consciousness that then gets adopted into an identity (Cerulo 1997; Bullock and Limbert 2003). Thus, while the identity process is generic, the conditions that foster identity are much weaker for social class than race.

Cognitive bias theory maintains that when people are making judgments and assessments they do not go through an exhaustive search in their memory for all relevant information that might help them make a judgment. Rather, people form cognitive schemas that they will later use to make sense of the social world. In the case of the police, when people have negative information about police behavior, they will use this as information about police bias. This effect is likely to be stronger for African Americans than Whites because they will have more negative information from which to draw.

This dissertation was an attempt to understand what information people use and how they use that information to make assessments and form judgments about police more generally as well as their interactions with police. While it is a common

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understanding that African Americans are more skeptical of institutions of the state, there have been few attempts, to better understand in a clearly articulated theoretical framework why these attitudes continue to exist, particularly for the police. The primary contribution of this research is the theoretical frame which attempts to explain why race and sometimes social class differences in attitudes about police fairness continue to exist.

Research Limitations

Although this research is the first to use identity and cognitive bias theory to explain the race gap in perceptions of the police there are several limitations to this study. First, there was not a direct measure of social class identity. Unlike racial identity, respondents were not asked to self-identify their class status. This is fundamentally important because previous research suggests that the identity that people claim is the one that they often attach their experiences too.

It is also the case that the data used in this study could not assess the relative strength of racial and social class identity. It is plausible to assume that the stronger the identity the more impact it is likely to have on citizens' information processing. In the context of identity theory to, it is likely that the stronger the racial identity for African American citizens the less likely they are to trust the police. For White citizens, according to Helms (1995) the stronger the White racial identity, the more likely they are to distrust the police when they engage in overtly racist behavior. Given this argument it does not seem plausible to argue that racial and class identities are dichotomized such that you either have an identity or you do not. Rather, identities may exist on a continuum that can range from no identity to strong identity. It is likely the case that those who self identify as into one identity or the other are likely to have a pretty strong understanding of their

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race and/or class identity. This is an empirical question that could not be examined in these data. In general, although this research theorized about how and why race and social class matter in understanding attitudes about the police, it needed to do a better job at actually capturing identity and assessing how the strength of the identity impacts perceptions of police fairness.

A singular measure to capture race and class identities are probably not sufficient for understanding how the strength of identity impacts the lenses that people will use to make evaluations. Helms (1994) maintains that in order to identify the strength of racial identity for White citizens the following types of issues should be considered: knowledge of their own racial identity, along with noticing and identifying other racial groups, promotion of social equality as well as things like the importance of redefining whiteness from a non-racist perspective. According to Helms these measures could begin to capture not only how people self-identify but also influence the consequences of identity in their own lives.

For African American citizens Sanders-Thompson (1995) maintains that there are several factors that determine the extent to which African American citizens understand their own racial identity – psychological, physical, and cultural. It seems plausible to argue that the psychological factors are likely to be the most influential on perceptions because these measures include issues such as: the extent to which the individual is concerned about African American problems, how committed they are to the strength of the African American family, and how strong of a attachment does the person feel to other African American people. These measurement strategies present options for future research examining how racial identity impacts perceptions of the police. It is the case

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that the incorporation of these measures will not completely capture the lived reality of racial identity however, they do offer a solution to the singular measures used in most research.

Future Research

There are several other under-explored areas in this research that might better inform our understanding of racial and class differences in perceptions of the police. First, much of this research uses citizen survey data, which often lacks data about the police officer. For example, in the data used in this study respondents were asked to report about there experiences with police in the last year. However, no questions about the race, and gender of the officer were asked. It is plausible to argue that the demeanor, race and gender of the police officer are likely to inform citizens' evaluation of the officer's behavior. Anderson (1990) suggest that the race of police officers may be important because African American youth, particularly boys, are likely to shift their behavior when they are forced to interact with White officers because of the fear that they will not be treated fairly. Reisig et al. (2004) argues that interactions between the police and African American citizens is particularly important because they are more likely to leave a stop feeling mistreated. These researchers also found that African American citizens unlike White citizens are more likely to be questioned about their visibility in certain neighborhoods. Thus, these questions are perceived by African American citizens to be discriminatory. Because White citizens perceive their racial experience with police differently than African American they may generally be less likely to tie these types of questions to police racial bias.

This point is not to suggest that perceptions of the police are solely about citizen attributes, identities or experiences with other social institutions. Anderson (1990) suggests that police officers demeanor also influences how they will be perceived. Officers who have demeanors that are intended to instill fear are often deemed as unfair. For example, in his study of inner-city youth he found that African American boys were fearful and often 'check themselves' in order to keep the White police officers from unfairly approaching, searching and arresting them. This interactional dynamic according to Anderson (1990) significantly influences how African American boys interact with as well as perceive law enforcement. Anderson (1990) suggests that these racialized experiences become a larger part of how African American boys learn to interact with police both within as well as outside their communities. Thus, these experiences become sources of information about law enforcement practices, ultimately reducing police legitimacy throughout the African American community. Therefore, trust in the police is not solely about individual characteristics but also the interactional dynamic between law enforcement and citizens in general.

Previous research has also shown that community characteristics such as the crime rate, percent living in poverty, and percent female-headed households all significantly reduce trust in the police (Sampson and Bartusch 1998). These neighborhood characteristics seem to be important in places where civil disorder is highest. Sampson and Bartusch (1998) argue that civil disorder breeds legal cynicism. Residents within these communities will question the legitimacy of law enforcement because of the constant disorder or unrest. Thus, because minority citizens are more

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likely to reside in these communities this partially explains the level of distrust of the police.

Neighborhoods are also likely to impact trust in the police through the racial composition or racial identity of that area. In particular, in racially homogenous areas it is likely that racial identity is likely to be highest because of the common experience that will be shared by many of the neighborhood residents. In areas that are more racially homogenous there is less likely to be a common group experience that gets shared from one community member to the next.

Therefore, while characteristics of communities like the crime rate signal disorder and raise questions among community members about police legitimacy it is also likely that the racial composition of a given area affects the racial identity of that area thus potentially affecting attitudes about the police. To date no study has specifically examined how the racial identity of neighborhoods impacts trust in the police. This is in part due to this research being guided by the ecological literature which is grappling with how and why neighborhood conditions affect the crime rate (Sampson and Bartusch 1998) instead of how these characteristics might impact identity formation.

There is also some research to suggest that perceptual measures of community might be more important than the objective measures of community context in assessing perceptions of the police (Cao et al. 1996). Although previous research has used objective indicators such as crime and poverty rate, these factors have actually explained very little of the variation in perceptions of the police. Thus perceptions of neighborhood conditions may well be more salient to the respondent than the actual objective conditions. Therefore, beliefs about local community conditions are more likely to be cognitively

accessed, which is expected to then in turn influence attitudes towards the police. This is consistent with both identity and cognitive bias theories which emphasize the importance of information processing as opposed to objective realities.

The literature on attitudes towards the police has been guided primarily by the experience model. This research has attempted to identify how and under what circumstances people have varying experiences with police with the intention of explaining how these experiences impact perceptions of the police. I maintained that while this is a worthwhile effort, researchers also need to assess how the identities that people attach to themselves affect attitudes towards the police as well as how these attitudes vary across time and space.

There are also no longitudinal studies to date that can assess racial and class variation in trust in the police across time. The time element is important because identities like race and social class might also be impacted by the political environment or social climate of the time. Thus, attitudes and identities are not necessarily stable or constant across time. Understanding this variation might further explain why there continues to be significant racial variation in trust in the police.

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APPENDIX

Table A.1. Correlation Matrix for Explanatory and Dependent Variables

	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.	11.	12.	13.	14.	15.
1. Race	-------														
2. Social Class	-.122**														
3. Officer Treatment	.113*	-.045													
4. Network Disrespect	.100*	.012	.261**												
5. Network Stories	-.129**	.067	.065	.129**											
6. Freq Stories	-.023	.017	.059	.205**	.171**										
7. Trust in Government	-.103*	-.028	-.294*	-.148*	-.050	.001									
8. Trust in Police	-.333**	-.005	-.442*	-.324*	.014	-.100*	.562**								
9. Belief in Racial Profiling	.398**	.098*	.213**	.182*	-.041	.050	-.262*	-.371**							
10. Risky Driving	-.114**	.173**	.111*	.042	.059	.037	-.039	-.123**	.088*						
11. Driving Convictions	.162**	-.075	.110**	.040	.143**	.078*	-.057	-.139**	.078	.154*					
12. Lifetime Stops	.028	-.097*	.262**	.147**	.053	.240**	-.120*	-.273**	.089	.210*	.236**				
13. Stops in Last Year	.102*	-.059	.232**	.068	.139**	.120**	-.127*	-.171**	.081	.088*	.097*	.465**			
14. Officer Helped	-.003	.055	-.007	-.048	.054	-.030	-.017	-.004	-.015	-.088*	.031	-.005	-.007		
15. Age	-.074	-.131*	-.122*	-.069	.037	-.030	-.111*	.231**	-.087*	-.293**	-.019	-.341**	-.075	.036	
16. Gender	.007	.102*	-.139*	.002	-.119*	-.074	-.020	-.003	-.052	-.115**	-.270*	-.266**	-.132*	.044	-.021

*p≤.05, ** p≤.01, *** p≤.001

Table A. 2. Race, Social Class and Perceptions of Disrespect by the Police w/ Interactions

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
Race (1=AA)	3.274	1.440	2.314	1.234	1.435
Social Class (1=MC)	.713	.554	1.186	.734	.509*
Network disrespect	3.761**	3.864***	3.994***	3.736**	3.816***
Size of network	1.005	1.005	1.004	1.001	1.002
Frequency of hearing stories	1.005	1.010	1.003	1.002	.993
Trust in government	.582*	.466**	.478***	.489***	.494***
Belief in racial profiling	1.264	1.213	1.234	1.205	1.283
Risky Driving	1.029	1.035	1.023	1.029	1.032
Driving Convictions	1.026	1.025	1.027	1.024	1.018
Lifetime Stops	1.441	1.419	1.421	1.421	1.381
Stops in Last Year	1.207	1.211	1.214	1.217	1.245
Cop Stopped to Help	1.020	.967	1.017	.992	.942
Age	.985	.984	.984	.984	.983
Gender (1=Females)	.637	.637	.636	.639	.937
Race*Class			.480		
Race*Trust in government	.763				
Class*Trust in government		1.094			
Race*Size of Network				1.007	
Class*Size of Network					1.021
Chi-Square	97.734***	97.209***	98.693***	97.585***	100.046***
Nagelkerke R-Square	.289	.288	.292	.289	.295

*p≤.05, ** p≤.01, *** p≤.001

Table A.3. Identity, Experiences and Trust in the Police w/ Interactions

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
Race (1=AA)	-.342**	.389***	-.342***	-.247	-.541*	-.355***
	(-.171)	(-.195)	(-.172)	(-.124)	(-.271)	(-.178)
Social Class (1=MC)	-.033	-.031	-.041	-.030	-.028	.370
	(-.016)	(-.015)	(-.019)	(-.014)	(-.013)	(.174)
Personal Disrespect	-.544***	-.708**	-.564***	-.544***	-.541***	-.540***
	(-.225)	(-.293)	(-.233)	(-.225)	(-.224)	(-.223)
Network disrespect	-.519***	-.524***	-.522***	-.516***	-.513***	.531***
	(-.154)	(-.156)	(-.155)	(-.153)	(-.152)	(-.158)
Size of network	.002	.001	.002	.002	.002	.002
	(.036)	(.034)	(.036)	(.035)	(.036)	(.035)
Frequency of Stories	.005	.005	.005	.005	.005	.005
	(.023)	(.025)	(.023)	(.024)	(.024)	(.025)
Trust in government	.496***	.499***	.495***	.496***	.460***	.563***
	(.417)	(.419)	(.416)	(.417)	(.386)	(.473)
Belief in racial profiling	-.364**	-.355**	-.362**	-.292	-.374**	-.359*
	(-.104)	(-.102)	(-.103)	(-.084)	(-.107)	(-.103)
Risky Driving	.099*	.099**	.099**	.098	.100*	.096*
	(.102)	(.102)	(.102)	(.101)	(.103)	(.099)
Driving Convictions	-.003	-.003	-.003	-.003	-.003	-.004
	(-.012)	(-.012)	(-.012)	(-.011)	(-.013)	(-.014)
Lifetime Stops	-.114*	-.109*	-.114*	-.115*	-.117*	-.110*
	(-.098)	(-.093)	(-.097)	(-.098)	(-.100)	(-.094)
Stops in Last Year	.002	-.001	.002	.003	.004	.002
	(.003)	(-.001)	(.003)	(.004)	(.005)	(.003)
Cop Stopped to Help	-.044	-.043	-.403	-.041	-.051	-.040
	(-.011)	(-.011)	(-.011)	(-.011)	(-.013)	(-.101)
Age	.007*	.007**	.007*	.007*	.007*	.007*
	(.098)	(.096)	(.098)	(.101)	(.096)	(.097)
Gender (1=Females)	-.125	-.123	-.125	-.128	-.127	-.128
	(-.063)	(-.062)	(-.063)	(-.064)	(-.064)	(-.064)
Race*Class	.002					
	(.004)					
Race*Officer Treatment		.248				
		(.089)				
Race*Racial Profiling				-.154		
				(-.062)		
Race*Trust in Gov.					.060	
					(105)	
R-Square	.542	.544	.542	.542	.543	.545

*p≤.05, ** p≤.01, *** p≤.001, Standardized coefficients in parentheses.

Table A. 4. Variance Inflation Scores – A Test of Tolerance Among the Explanatory Variables

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Race (1=AA)	3.660	1.502	7.043	18.821
Social Class (1=MC)	2.740	1.077	1.083	1.086
Personal Disrespect	1.169	2.066	1.165	1.166
Network disrespect	1.150	1.156	1.148	1.154
Size of network	1.197	1.190	1.191	1.190
Frequency of Stories	1.130	1.132	1.133	1.131
Trust in government	1.121	1.126	1.113	2.779
Belief in racial profiling	1.266	1.267	2.326	1.279
Risky Driving	1.075	1.075	1.078	1.075
Driving Convictions	1.251	1.249	1.251	1.251
Lifetime Stops	1.425	1.433	1.424	1.426
Stops in Last Year	1.1019	1.048	1.052	1.052
Cop Stopped to Help	1.048	1.016	1.016	1.021
Age	1.232	1.234	1.249	1.239
Gender (1=Females)	1.220	1.222	1.223	1.222
Race*Class	3.586			
Race*disrespect by officer		2.350		
Race*Racial Profiling			9.732	
Race*Trust in Gov.				10.625

*Mernard argues that scores above 5 suggest collinearity is a problem.

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