

Does the Race of Police Officers Matter? Police Officers on Interactions with Citizens and Police  
Procedures

By  
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Submitted to the graduate degree program in Public Affairs and Administration and the  
Graduate Faculty of the University of Kansas in partial fulfillment of  
the requirements of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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Does the Race of Police Officers Matter? Police Officers on Interactions with Citizens and Police  
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Date Approved: May 6, 2014

# Does the Race of Police Officers Matter?

## Police Officers on Interactions with Citizens and Police Procedures

BY

Solomon Woods

### Abstract:

Racial tensions in policing are as salient today as ever. While police departments face different challenges in the 21<sup>st</sup> century compared to the tumultuous years of the civil rights movement, the minority community still sees the police as the enemy. However, this relationship has taken on a considerably different dynamic as police departments have responded, in their own ways, to civil rights laws and norms. Civil rights activists fought hard for police departments to be more diverse, thinking that diversity would reduce the level of police abuse and conflict with minority communities. Fifty years later, police departments are more diverse (either through their own efforts or by court order), but many scholars argue that this has had little impact on policing. Many studies find that black officers act little or no differently than white officers, perhaps because of the socialization process into the role of a police officer. Most of these studies are based on statistical analyses of data on arrests and uses of force, not on interviews with officers themselves. This project is based on interviews with officers and concludes that the race of the officer does matter, in key ways. This dissertation asks the following questions: 1) How does having black officers on the police force affect interactions with citizens? 2) How does having black officers on the police force affect interactions among officers? Specifically, how does it affect conversations about race among officers? 3) How does having black officers on the police force affect officers' advocacy for changes in departmental policies? To address these questions, interviews were conducted in 2014 among black and white officers in a large metropolitan police

department in the Midwestern United States. With regard to the first question, the interviews revealed that black and white officers in my sample are very aware that the black community has a strong level of distrust, and even hatred towards the police, but black and white officers have responded differently to this realization. Black officers I interviewed indicated they have empathy for black citizens' distrust of the police, based in part on their own life experiences, particularly experiences of police stops. As a consequence, in many cases, black officers in my sample reported that they attempt to deescalate tensions with members of the minority community by the way they communicate and the level of respect that they attempt to show. White officers were less likely to accept that black citizens might have understandable reasons to distrust the police, and, as a consequence generally did not try to reduce tensions in encounters with minority citizens. They reported that if the citizen was disrespectful or uncooperative, they would respond forcefully as authorized. Equally importantly, some white officers described poor African Americans as having a sub-culture of distrust and criminality that they suggested could not be changed but only policed. White officers I interviewed were more apt to take black citizens' ill feelings as unjustified aggression. With regard to the second research question, the interviews reveal that having black officers on the police force has eroded solidarity among officers by opening disagreement among officers over how to conduct policing in poor minority neighborhoods. Following the writings of David Sklansky, this dissertation suggests that this is ultimately a positive development in policing in that black officers are changing these departments from white monolithic institutions to departments that are more accepting of the concerns of minority communities. Nonetheless, the interviews also reveal that black and white officers do not discuss racial tensions and how to address them as much as scholars once believed. Additionally, the interviews reveal that black officers overwhelmingly do not feel fully

accepted into policing. These findings contribute to the answer with regard to the third question: whether black officers try to bring about change in police policies. The interviews reveal that black officers want to make recommendations to supervisors which would improve police departments' relationship with the black community but they do not actually make those recommendations because they lack a voice in the department. This lack of voice for black officers occurs regardless of the race of the chief, as it is the mid-level supervisors who most influence whether front-line officers are heard. Taken together, these findings may have significant implications for future research and police reform. The dissertation concludes by suggesting that having black officers may considerably improve the quality of interactions with black citizens, but that there is an unrealized potential for improvements in police policy on the basis of these officers' knowledge. Simply having black officers is not enough for departments to learn these lessons and improve their policies and training. To gain these benefits, departments would need to make their organizational climate more accepting of suggestions from black front-line officers. These findings also suggest that having diversity at the mid-grade supervisory level and at the top is as important as having diversity on the front-lines.

## Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Dr. Foreman from the University of Maryland, College Park, for the best advice an aspiring PhD student could ever ask for; find a PhD program that is committed to seeing you graduate. This best describes my experience at the University of Kansas. I am forever grateful to the entire faculty for shaping my perspectives on bureaucracies, diversity, and emphasizing the important of public service.

Words cannot describe how grateful I am for having met and worked with Dr. Charles R. Epp (Chuck). I recall our initial conversation seven years ago when I called and inquired about the program in 2007. I dutifully reported to him that I had all my political science classes, and after a very brief pause, Chuck replied that we study bureaucracy not political science, which is a little different. After years of studying public administration, I realize how wrong I was in my initial phone call and have gained a better appreciation for the interdisciplinary nature of the field. Although I had almost two decades of work experience, I was as green as a PhD student could be. More than a decade had passed since I attended a graduate school and I was passionate about completing this lifelong dream. My initial experience in your Constitutional Law class forever changed my perspectives on our country's founding documents. It has also helped me realize how far the nation has advanced over the past few centuries. I knew exactly the issues I wanted to study and thank Chuck for helping me to understand. Your classes had an impact on me professionally and personally, and helped me formulate meaningful research topics in most other classes. My family thanks you for your unwavering support during multiple deployments to Afghanistan and for guiding me through a difficult dissertation topic, which we both felt was worthy pursuit.

I also want to thank Mr. Gary Hobin for graciously supporting my pursuit of this degree in 2008 during my first year at KU. Without this initial support, I would not have been able to complete the initial requirements. Only he and I know how gracious he was with my work schedule. I will always be grateful for helping me through this process.

To Marilu Goodyear; thank you for continuing to hire the best faculty a KU SPAA doctoral student could ever want. I was warned for almost two decades about how political PhD programs can be. However, I cannot describe how wonderful my experience has been here at KU and you had a significant role in setting the right climate. You expertly managed the School of Public Affairs and Administration (SPAA) through massive personnel changes and somehow always hired faculty that did not compromise SPAA's organizational climate. I am sure I speak for all students in thanking you for your willingness to listen to our concerns. SPAA was lucky to have you and your leadership will be missed.

Dr. Goerdel, thanks for showing me what the standard is for PhDs in KU's SPAA. You held me to the standard at every opportunity. This initial baptism in Public Administration and Democracy set the conditions for my ultimate success. You properly defined rigor, passion, and creativity.

Dr. Dehart-Davis, thanks for being a great inspiration. You may never fully know the appetite instilled in me for original research. I look back at how passionate you were about field research and realize that my desire to answer the many knowledge gaps in our field came from you. I will always appreciate how you supported my decision to study topics on diversity in public administration. I also appreciate you for introducing me to so many important bodies of literature, especially on gender studies and for encouraging me to take on challenging and meaningful research topics. You pushed me to excel in so many ways, and your famous "debate

me” quote ensured I thought before I spoke and was ready to defend my position. Thanks for your willingness to hear me make my case, and for entertaining my analytical leaps.

Dr. Elaine Sharp, thank you for imparting your knowledge and experience researching issues associated with Urban Policy and local politics. I knew how passionate I was about diversity, but spending time with you, hearing your ideas, and reading your research on race, diversity, and policing solidified my desire to tackle the subject. I am also grateful to you for allowing me the opportunity to explore my ideas at a critical time in my PhD studies.

To Dr. Kelly Chong (Sociology); I never imagined I would take a class on feminist theory in this lifetime. I also never imagined that I would love it as much as I did. You have given me such a passion for gender studies and the importance of considering alternate perspectives. Likewise, to Dr. Haider-Markel (Political Science), Gay, Bisexual, Lesbian, and Transgendered (GBLT) studies are perhaps the last subjects I thought I would ever research. You have helped me realize that diversity is not just about race or gender, but other dynamics facing millions of public servants. I now have a holistic perspective on these important subjects.

To my dissertation committee: Dr. Charles R. Epp, Dr. Steven Maynard-Moody, Shannon Portillo, Dr. Rosemary O’Leary, and Dr. William Staples; your knowledge and experience has helped shape this dissertation from a raw idea to something that will contribute to the field’s body of knowledge on race and policing. I thank you for supporting my challenging research agenda and for ensuring this was the best product I could generate.

I would also like to thank all of the members of SGI-USA for their thoughts and prayers. Many of you have been an inspiration for me and have helped me spiritually in ways I cannot explain.



To my family: wife LaVonda, and sons Solomon Jr. and Colin; thanks for your patience and support. You endured seven years of rigorous academic work, late nights, and sometimes all-nighters. You never complained about the long hours associated with being an active duty Army Officer trying to complete his PhD on his “off time”. You endured four years of non-stop deployments, only for me to return home and constantly fly back to Kansas so I could complete the requirements I needed to graduate. You never complained about the funds required for me to travel from three different duty station, rent cars, and rack-up hotel bills. This degree would not be possible without your love and support. I love you all very dearly and I thank you wholeheartedly for allowing me to I fulfilled my mission in life.

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## **Introduction**

Michelle is an older black female officer. She is currently a lieutenant of police, has over twenty years of experience in law enforcement, and has spent considerable time working in minority neighborhoods. After discussing issues of race and policing for time, I asked her how her views of race have changed over the years in the context of policing. She pauses, and then says her views have not changed, but she is more informed.

She goes on to describe one of her more memorable calls for service. She was responding to a disturbance at an African American family's residence in a low income minority community on Christmas Eve. She indicated that two siblings were at their mother's home to celebrate the holidays. They had been there a few days, so she suspected tempers were high. This particular incident involved a dispute and the police were called to investigate whether the altercation was an assault. The sister stabbed the brother, because she told him not to eat the last piece of food and he did.

My perception of Michelle, while listening to her reflect on this story, was that she was deeply thinking and wrestling about this experience and what she might learn from it to improve her interactions with black citizens, even many years after the actual event. I felt her concern as she describes the story, but I wasn't quite sure where she was going with the story. This was one of my initial interviews with black officers and I did not understand her perspective until after I repeatedly heard the same concern for the black community from other black officers I interviewed.

Michelle indicated that her initial perception of the incident was that the sister stabbed her brother because he ate the last piece of food after she told him not to. She simply thought that the sister was so upset that she couldn't control her anger. Looking back, Michelle realized

that the incident had little to do with food. She indicated this particular call for service may have been about the stabbing *that* day, but in her view this incident “delved deep into the family.” Her point was there were underlying causes that extended beyond this incident.

Upon further inquiry, Michelle told me that the mother was on welfare. The brother and sister were on welfare and unable to get work. She indicated that many of her calls for services in black neighborhoods were attributable to pre-existing issues as much as the particular event. Sure, she was responding to a crisis situation at that moment, but in her mind, the root cause could be traced back to long entrenched issues within “the family” and their struggles to find work and make a good living.

Michelle went on to state that it would take an entire network to resolve these issues. Michelle and the black officers I spoke with were adamant that they were going to be part of this network.

As I heard more stories from police officers, I began to see a big contrast between the stories of black and white officers. It boils down to a difference in empathy. Black officers<sup>1</sup> seem to have empathy toward poor citizens, both white and black, but especially poor black citizens. This empathy is based on shared experiences that help black officers understand the challenges facing poor black citizens. Based on my conversation with black and white officers, I got the sense that white officers are less empathetic. This difference especially shapes how black and white officers respond differently to the widespread distrust and sometimes noncooperation that they experience from poor black citizens in impoverished high-crime areas. Both white and

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<sup>1</sup> I commonly reference the term “black officers” in this dissertation. Although black officers have shared their knowledge of other black officers with whom they often interact, the term “black officers” specifically addresses those with whom I had direct contact during interviews.

black officers I interviewed widely acknowledge the fact that the black community is distrustful of the police, but white and black officers have chosen to respond in different ways.

Many of the black officers I spoke with seemed to have strong personal feelings about their interactions with minority citizens. Black officers' stories describe a deep empathy toward poor citizens, both black and white, and recognition that poverty, widespread crime, and the heavy policing that occurs in response to these problems often leads people in these neighborhoods to be deeply distrustful of the police. Black officers I spoke with believed that black citizens had a right to know why they were being stopped and were owed a level of respect, regardless of their socio-economic status. Black officers described themselves as trying to deescalate situations when interacting with black citizens they know are on the edge when forced to interact with the police. In sum, black officers in this sample displayed a deeply-felt empathy with black citizens. To be sure, these officers were willing to use force and make arrests if necessary. But they described trying to avoid these outcomes if possible.

White officers<sup>2</sup>, by contrast, describe simply accepting black poverty and crime as a given, and they see their role in this context as simply enforcing the law. They seem to feel no responsibility to deescalate tense situations or avoid arrests if possible. For example, Thomas, a white officer, had a very different perspective from Michelle's, as I will describe in more detail in chapter three. Thomas stated "We can't change a mindset within a subculture or a culture. You just can't, when it's been brought to them." White officers like Thomas describe their interactions with minority citizens as merely transactional and procedural. They simply follow

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<sup>2</sup> I commonly reference "white officers" in this dissertation. To be sure, I reference the white officers with whom I directly interviewed, and how black officers perceived white officers. Thus, readers should note that the sample size affects the extent to which my analysis is fully generalizable, which is a common issue when conducting qualitative research.

the rules when interacting with citizens; if a citizen is rude or uncooperative, as black citizens in poor areas often are, these officers describe using the procedures and the level of force that is authorized to deal with such a problem. Brad, a mixed white and Hispanic officer suggested members of these communities liked to be talked to like they were five years old, meaning that officers have to control these citizens like children. Unlike Michelle, these officers rarely describe thinking further about how to better address the situation.

Further, officers seem to be aware of these racial differences within their ranks, and this awareness is a source of tension within the department. Black officers described with some resentment how their white peers respond to black citizens' disrespect with aggression. Nate, a black officer, described white officers as having a "war zone mentality." Billy, a black officer, called it "big game hunting." Black officers want to influence their fellow officers to be less punitive but often lack the means to do so. They are hesitant to directly challenge a fellow officer's choices. They feel they have little influence over the department's official protocols for interacting with citizens. The best they can do is form a black union to better represent black officers' interests and to counter the dominant influence of the main police union, which is controlled by white officers. White officers, in turn, were described as being resentful of the black union, feeling that it has introduced racial tensions into the police department. Indeed, a few officers I interviewed validated this. White officers are uncomfortable talking openly about issues related to race in the department, preferring not to engage the issues that black officers would like to talk about.

I was caught by surprise by these differences between the white and black officers I interviewed, because I anticipated that officers' sense of identity and responsibility would be shaped mainly by the police role, not their race. My presumption was based on a long stream of

research suggesting black officers behave no differently than other officers, even when interacting with members of the black community. These earlier studies suggest that black and white officers are so powerfully influenced by socialization into the police role, and by the situational pressures that they confront on the street, that their racial identity fades into insignificance (Moskos 2008). In this view they are *officers* first and foremost, and their identity is defined by their blue uniform, and not by their black or white skin. My interviews with black and white officers have led me to believe otherwise.

As this brief summary has indicated, in this study I address how police officers' race affects three dynamics: 1) officers' interaction with African American citizens; 2) officers' discussions of the issue of race within the department; and 3) whether black officers make recommendations to supervisors on the tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTPs) used when interacting with members of the minority community.

These issues are especially relevant in light of the theory of representative bureaucracy, which claims that having diverse public employees improves how well public agencies serve a diverse population. Scholars have long argued that employee diversity has a positive effect on organizational performance (Krislov 1981, Pitts 2005, Selden 1997). In examining key research, these scholars suggest modern societies are reliant on bureaucracies more so than ever to implement policy (Krislov 1981). This is especially the case in policing, as officers are expected to implement hundreds of local and state laws, regulations, statutes, and ordinances with a significant level of autonomy and discretion.

Some have also suggested that an ethnically diverse employee base results in a more equal distribution of goods and services (Frederickson 2005, Harmon 1974). The ranks of the

police, like those of other public agencies, are increasingly racially diverse. At the same time, however, the police still disproportionately stop African Americans (Epp, Maynard-Moody, and Haider-Markel 2014) and disproportionately arrest African Americans for drug related offenses even when the primary users are white (Provine 2007). Although the police are racially diverse, it is thus hard to accept the claim that citizen race has no bearing on police enforcement.

Moreover, if past research is accurate, one can conclude that police department's enforcement policies are not equally distributed, even when police departments are more diverse than ever.

Scholars of “representative bureaucracy” have distinguished “passive representation” (meaning that the demographics of agency employees match those of the population at large) from “active representation” (meaning that black employees advocate for policy changes that would benefit the black population, or women employees advocate for policies that would benefit women) (Keiser et al. 2002, Krislov 1981, Meier et al. 1984, Meier and Jr. 2006, Meier and Nicholson-Crotty 2006, Meier et al. 1992, Pitts 2005, Selden 1997, Selden, Brudney, and Kellough 1998, Wilkins 2006, Wilkins and Williams 2005). Some scholars have shown that female and minority employees do indeed engage in “active representation,” at least in some circumstances. More specifically, public servants who are representative of the public, in the context of race or gender, are said to better understand the impact of policy on citizens from the same demographic background, because they may have experienced the problem at hand (Meier et al. 1984, Meier et al. 1992, Selden 1997, Selden, Brudney, and Kellough 1998).

In this dissertation I will describe how black officers I interviewed suggest they and their black peers do act differently than white officers. I will suggest that they do so in three ways. First, they deliberately interact with minority citizens differently than do white officers. Second,



black officers seek to have richer conversations with other officers about race and racial discrimination than white officers are comfortable with. Nonetheless, a stultifying organizational climate significantly limits the extent to which officers discuss these issues openly within the department. Last, I argue that diversity has been positive for policing, because it has contributed to an erosion of solidarity in what was once a white male-dominated profession. Moreover, my contribution to this argument is that this erosion in solidarity is shaped by black officers' concerns regarding racial disparities in the application of internal police policies **and the fact that black officers I spoke with are frustrated with how members of the black community are treated by white officers.**

I also explored whether black officers in my sample advocate for changing police policies in ways that would benefit African Americans. I found that officers do not much engage in this advocacy, even though they strongly prefer some changes in policy. In making this argument, I want to be clear about what I mean by "policy." While it is true, as shown by previous research, that police officers do not believe they make policy (Maynard-Moody and Musheno 2003), their discretionary decisions clearly do shape what police policy means on the street. To better understand how officers think about the policies they carry out, and whether they advocate for changes in these policies, I have substituted a term that is more understandable to officers: tactics, techniques, and procedures. As we will see, officers recognize that they might have some influence over tactics, techniques and procedures, even if not over "policy." Interestingly, no research has examined whether minority public servants advocate ("active representation") for procedural changes in tactics, techniques, and procedures affecting minority citizens. As such, this research intends to distinguish whether black officers advocate for change to decision-makers or whether their ability to affect change is limited to the discretion they exercise when

interacting with black citizens (Wilkins and Williams 2005). I find that black officers I spoke with would like to advocate for changes in tactics, techniques and procedures but feel their voice will not be heard within the department, and so they do not engage in this advocacy. Their ability to bring about change is thus limited to their street-level discretion.

My three-part thesis grows from a rich article by David Sklansky (Sklansky 2006). Examining policing, Sklansky argued that racial diversity has impacted policing with respect to competency effects (distinct abilities of minority officers), community effects (relationship with citizens of similar demographic backgrounds), and organizational effects (disrupting old solidarities based on white organizational control) (Sklansky 2006). But Sklansky frankly acknowledged that there was only loose empirical support for his claims, and that more research was needed. He noted that other scholars have found that black officers *believe* they have a positive effect on minority communities (Bolton and Feagin 2004). However, if previous research on race and policing is an indicator, diversity in police departments may have limited impact on department culture and on enforcement of department policies (Sklansky 2006).

Sklansky (2006) suggests that greater diversity within policing may affect the internal dynamics within policing more than police interactions with members of the public on the street. Internal dynamics may include such things as how much command-level officers include front-line officers in establishing departmental policies and enforcement priorities, and what are these enforcement priorities. Additionally, he notes that whether an officer will have longevity on the force, regardless of ethnicity, is partly determined by his or her ability “to make peace with the white, masculine, heterosexual ethos of policing” (Sklansky 2006).

My research in this dissertation explores these ideas through interviews with black and white officers in a large Midwestern police department in a major urban area that I will call “Larandia.” I will describe my research methods in detail in chapter two.

### **The Context: Continuing Tensions between Minority Populations and the Police**

There is no question that race and policing remains as salient today as it did in the 1960s, even in the wake of major police reforms. The sheer volume of contact between police and citizens creates the possibility that some major event will set relations back. Lipsky indicates Americans will have more contact with police than any other government institution (Lipsky 1980). Epp et al note police made more than 18 million traffic stops in 2005 (Epp, Maynard-Moody, and Haider-Markel 2014) not to include other police contact with citizens, such as stop and frisk on streets and investigatory stops. This volume of stops provides the conditions for explosive violence between African Americans and the police in some stops.

Incidents of police violence against African Americans, often in the context of police stops, often occur and quickly gain immediate national attention. One does not have to look hard to find sufficient evidence of police abuse or documented evidence of police mistakenly killing unarmed citizens, as social media now has the ability to stream high profile cases in almost real time on You Tube, Facebook, Twitter, and other social media outlets. Moreover, a long list of racially charged police misconduct incidents the last decade has provided the media much to discuss. A few unforgettable incidents include: Rodney King incident in California (1991); Howard Morgan, an off duty black police officer shot 28 times by four white policemen in Chicago (2005); Robert Davis, a black unarmed 64 year old retired teacher brutally beaten in

New Orleans (2005); Sean Bell, unarmed, shot 31 times while leaving a Queens, NY bachelors party before his wedding (2006); and the Professor Henry Louis Gates arrest in Cambridge Massachusetts that was widely compared to racial profiling. The Gates arrest incident became so heated that the President intervened (2009). A final example is that of Iraqi war veteran Walter Harvin, unarmed, brutally beaten in New York (2010). These cases are part of a common pattern in which African Americans are beaten or shot by police officers even though unarmed and posing no danger. Every case has gained national media attention.

The problem extends beyond race-based police brutality. Numerous studies outline the disproportionate number of minorities jailed over the last 30 years. Provine argues that drug arrests for racial minorities are persistently disproportionate and grow from police practices that target minorities (Provine 2007). For example, 81% of those in prison for crack related offenses are black, even though the majority of users are white. Racially disproportionate incarceration in turn leads to a disproportionate impact on minority communities (Clear 2007). Moreover, many states disenfranchise persons that committed serious crimes (Provine 2007), suggesting the impact has lasting political effects as well. The latest DOJ report also indicated arrest rates for black teenagers were nine times those of whites; Hispanics older than sixty five were arrested three times the rate of whites, and blacks of all ages were arrested five times that of whites (USDOJ 2012, pg. 8).

Unfortunate as these tensions have been, it is possible that they may get worse. The growing involvement of local police in immigration enforcement, e.g. the Arizona show me your papers law, AZ S.B. 1070 (Stoughton 2011, Zalman and Smith 2007), and the fact that racial minorities are often seen as fitting terrorist profiles that trigger invasive procedures (Moeckli 2007) are likely to deepen these tensions.

A number of studies show that racial disparities in enforcement do not reflect underlying differences in the extent of law violation, and this suggests that minorities' feelings of being treated unequal under the law may have validity (Provine 2007). A number of studies suggest that police departments are larger and adopt more punitive enforcement tactics the greater the proportion of the population who are black (Holmes 2000, Jackson 1989, Smith and Holmes 2003, Stults and Baumer 2007). Research suggests police reportedly talk down to minorities, use inflammatory and racially charged language, and reportedly assault them at higher rates than whites (Seron, Pereira, and Kovath 2004, Urquijo-Ruiz 2004). These racial disparities in police enforcement contribute to minorities' distrust of the police. While this study does not exclusively focus on citizens' perceptions, it's important to note how Americans perceive police actions so that this consideration can be taken into context when evaluating officers' stories on their interactions with minority citizens. Research suggests minorities perceive themselves as violated by the police (Epp, Maynard-Moody, and Haider-Markel 2014), treated as hard core criminals that are uneducated and mistreated by police (Weitzer and Brunson 2009), perceive the police to doubt their credibility unless they have a video to prove police are brutal (Stuart 2011), unfairly stopped because of race (Dominitz and Knowles 2006, Epp, Maynard-Moody, and Haider-Markel 2014, Lundman 2004) and subject to unwarranted stop and frisk for unknown reasons (Gelman, Fagan, and Kiss 2007, Miller 2006, Moeckli 2007, Solis, Portillos, and Brunson 2009). Minorities generally have negative perceptions of police (Brown and Frank 2006, Kelly and Swindell 2002, Van Ryzin, Muzzio, and Immerwahr 2004) due to distrust (Sharp and Johnson 2009). These perceptions date back many years (Alex 1969, Black 1976). Minorities also perceive police as dishonest (Ivković 2003), illegitimate in some cases (Theobald and Haider-Markel 2008, Weitzer and Brunson 2009), and untrustworthy (Howell, Perry, and Vile 2004).

Another common perception is that police routinely violate minorities' constitutional rights, and there is some research support for this claim (Gould and Mastrofski 2004). At the same time, some studies find that racial minorities perceive the law itself as biased against their interests and as authorizing the police to carry out too-intrusive control (Brown and Frank 2006), especially when it comes to how police question citizens (Clymer 2002).

Ron Weitzer and Rod Brunson have conducted extensive interviews with citizens under the age of 18 in Saint Louis who indicated their experience with police resulted in verbal abuse, excessive force, and street stops. In many cases, the officer's demeanor was adversarial and provocative. The tone was belligerent and antagonistic with the intent to elicit a response (Weitzer and Brunson 2009). This behavior is prohibited by police rules against use of unnecessary force, abuse of authority, speaking discourteously, and use of offensive language (Seron, Pereira, and Kovath 2004, Williams and Stahl 2008).

Equally informative was research highlighting how media can shape citizen perception when it comes to race and high profile events. Huspek's research provides support for the claim that white and black media portray issues concerning race and police shooting very differently in terms of language used to describe the events and how the background of the victim or officers were portrayed. More specifically, a newspaper with majority black readers looked at the training and state of mind of the police officers, ultimately putting the onus on the police to justify their actions. The newspaper with majority white readers focused on the victim's low grades in schools, the amount of alcohol, and personal history in a manner that questioned the victim's credibility (Huspek 2004). These differences may contribute to black citizens' distrust of the police, and white officers' expectation that their aggressive enforcement activities are justified.

There is no question that middle and low income minorities have negative perceptions of police (Brown et al. , Kelly and Swindell 2002, Sharp and Johnson 2009, Van Ryzin, Muzzio, and Immerwahr 2004). Documented abuse, altercations, invasive procedures, and high profile news coverage contribute to why citizens have negative perceptions. These negative perceptions have led to a problem of police legitimacy in the eyes of minorities. The lack of police legitimacy results in lack of trust. Mistrust affects minorities' willingness to work with police, ultimately negatively affecting police officers' ability to do their jobs well.

The police have addressed these tensions by training officers to be respectful when interacting with citizens in order to reduce public dissatisfaction (De Cremer and Tyler 2007, Huq, Tyler, and Schulhofer 2011, Schulhofer, Tyler, and Huq 2011). In this sense the police recognize that there is a problem in police treatment of racial minorities and are at least taking some steps to address it. However, racial minorities continue to indicate a moderate to high dissatisfaction with policing as a service delivery (Kelly and Swindell 2002, MacDonald, Stokes, and Macdonald 2012, Sharp and Johnson 2009, Van Ryzin, Muzzio, and Immerwahr 2004). Whether officers on the street have fully learned these lessons and take seriously the problem of minority distrust of the police, and whether officers respond to this knowledge by trying to be more respectful, however, is unclear.

The persistence and even worsening of these dynamics makes study of police attitudes toward the issue of race all the more important. Learning officers' perspectives, and, especially, learning *black* officers' perspectives, may shed light on why these tensions persist and what might be done about them.

## **Theoretical Focus: Street Level Bureaucracy**

This study builds on the theory of street-level bureaucracy to assess how front-line police officers understand the meaning of officers' race in the racially tense context described above. Studies of street-level bureaucrats have shown that front-line workers exercise wide discretion and commonly reshape policy when they carry it into practice. Therefore, to understand administrative policy, scholars have to study front-line workers. The theory of street-level bureaucracy suggests frontline workers have a significant impact on policy implementation because they remake policy while interacting with citizens. These public servants exercise wide discretion in doing so. One common finding in studies using this theory is that policy ultimately is not made in executive offices, but through procedures front-line workers use to cope with uncertainties and work pressures. In this context, front-line workers have a level of autonomy from the organization decision-maker and discretion that allows them to make decisions (Lipsky 2004, 1980).

Lipsky's original thesis traced street-level workers' discretion to two key considerations: public agencies often have scarce resources and as a result street-level workers are forced to choose which citizens will receive these limited resources, and, in making these choices, street-level workers are guided by self-interest and use discretion to make their work easier, safer, and more rewarding. Therefore discretion, when taken into account with individual actions – or the choices they make when deciding who gets what among scarce resources, amounts to *agency behavior*. Agency behavior, Lipsky suggests, eventually translates into policymaking (Lipsky 1980).



Even in the context of many organizational rules, street-level workers exercise wide discretion in carrying out their jobs. As Lipsky argues, “rules may actually be an impediment to supervision. They may be so voluminous that they can only be enforced or evoked selectively” (Lipsky 1980). Such is the case with police officers. They decide who to stop, whether to detain, or whether and when to seek citizen approval to conduct vehicle searches. As noted by Epp et al, citizens, when detained by police, are unable to leave without the officers’ permission. In essence, they are temporarily arrested and must comply (Epp, Maynard-Moody, and Haider-Markel 2014), or at least have the sense that lack of cooperation may lead to an unfavorable circumstance if they challenge an officers’ discretion.

Lipsky’s thesis rested on a large body of observational research on the police, stretching back into the 1950s, that demonstrated that officers exercised wide discretion in enforcing the law, and often treated black citizens differently than white citizens in exercising this discretion (Black and Riess 1970, 1967, Goldstein 1963, 1967, Riess 1971, Walker 1992). This past research, when considered in the context of black citizens’ negative perceptions of police officers, makes this study even more important.

While Lipsky’s groundbreaking work from 1980 has been the dominant perspective of frontline worker behavior by scholars, other research adds to the discussion in a meaningful way. A revision of the theory of street-level discretion by Maynard-Moody and Musheno (2003), instead, traces discretionary choices less to self-interest than to moral judgment. They suggest that street-level bureaucrats choose to allocate time and resources to people who seem morally “worthy” and not to those who seem “unworthy” of these things. Maynard-Moody and Musheno’s thesis was based on front-line workers’ stories of exercising discretion. Workers

indicate through stories that their actions and use of discretion is a response to “individuals” and “specific circumstances.” They discount the importance of self-interest and are often willing to work harder and make their jobs more dangerous in order to respond to the needs of individual citizens who are perceived as worthy (Maynard-Moody and Musheno 2003). In my conversations with black officers, I have come to the realization that this theory best describes black officers’ interactions with black citizens closer than any other theory.

Maynard-Moody, Musheno and Palumbo have extended this thesis by arguing that the “positive aspects of street-level influence can be maximized and the negative aspects minimized, when service organizations are designed to engage, rather than mute, street-level worker perspectives on how policy should be implemented” (Maynard-Moody, Musheno, and Palumbo 1990). This suggests the type of organization and the extent to which the organizational culture fosters an environment for feedback is important. It is important to understand whether and how police, specifically black officers, provide feedback to decision makers.

While these perceptions of how front line workers behave is important, there is another perspective that adds to the discussion in a meaningful way. Perhaps the type of demeanor important in maintaining positive relations with citizens can be explained by the theory of emotional labor. This theory suggests that front-line workers must manage their emotions in certain circumstances with the intent to create a particular state of mind in others. More specifically, this theory suggests some jobs require emotional performance that becomes a public act (Mastracci, Newman, and Guy 2006).

Early work on this subject was conducted by Hochschild, who found that service agents were expected to behave in an emotionally sensitive or supportive way when providing services to citizens. In many cases, workers were being paid not only to do a physical task but also to

convey a demeanor that puts citizens at ease. Her research later found that service workers were expected to provide this unique experience to customers – being nice and courteous – even when citizens behave disrespectfully or offensively (Hochschild 1983).

This line of research also suggests that institutions are perhaps governed by gendered norms in accordance with stereotypes of male and female workers. In keeping with these stereotypes, women are especially expected to be warm and emotionally supportive toward customers or clients. Scholars suggest that these norms are observed clearly through interpersonal actions. With respect to emotional labor, scholars argue that the institution plays a role in how workers do their jobs, because organizations are not gender neutral (Mastracci and Bowman 2013).

The literature on emotional labor has implications for this dissertation, particularly raising the question whether black and white officers have a different emotional state when interacting with members of the minority community. As scholars suggest, “the role of emotion in the workplace has been a constant though often implicit theme in the organizational behavior literature” (Ashforth and Humphrey 1993) but we do not know whether police officers’ emotional labor differs depending on their own racial identity and their perceptions of citizens’ reactions to police activity. As this dissertation will show, black citizens’ distrust of the police has implications for officers’ emotional labor, and black and white officers seem to engage in different kinds of emotional labor in response to this distrust.

Thus, the concept of emotional labor may help to describe how officers respond to an important conflict that occurs in nearly every interaction with citizens. This is the conflict between citizen disrespect and the professional norms of policing favoring respectful treatment

of citizens. Officers are taught that being respectful and polite will help them meet their agency's mission – to deter crime and maintain order.

### **Black Officers' Unique Perspective**

Scholars have not examined whether black officers favor or advocate different kinds of police enforcement policy than white officers, or whether their presence in a department affects internal police department processes by undermining a form of solidarity based on white dominance of the organization, as Sklansky (2007) has suggested. But, as he and others have noted, associations of black officers have often taken different positions on key policing issues than the positions of the typical white-dominated police organizations like the Fraternal Order of Police.

The earliest record of black officer interviews conducted by Alex in the 1960s suggests black officers were perceived by the black community as those responsible for upholding the standards for a white society. Many black officers, during the 1960s, were specifically responsible for patrolling black ghettos and this caused some resentment within the community (Alex 1969, Black 1976). Moreover, many black officers rationalized their decision to become a police officer based on the fact that policing was one of the few high paying jobs blacks could obtain in the 1960s (Alex 1969).

In light of this early contribution, it is important to hear from black officers whether they believe they have a responsibility to improve relations with members of the black community, despite the fact that they have no authority to change department enforcement priorities or whether there are other dynamics that impact how black officers police minority communities.

On a separate and equally important point, it is also necessary to determine whether officers know that they are disliked (Brown and Frank 2006, Kelly and Swindell 2002, Van Ryzin, Muzzio, and Immerwahr 2004) and whether this has any impact on how they choose to enforce department priorities.

The scant interview-based research does not provide scholars with a clear picture of the officer's perspective. Focus-group based interviews suggests officers are pressured for results. Indeed, some police departments are going to great lengths with new technological (COMPSTAT) programs to deliver results focused on reduced crime, violence, and drugs (Willis, Mastrofski, and Weisburd 2007). Pressure to control crime by making is understandably high in large metropolitan areas where violence continuously increases no matter how admirable police perform.

These pressures on officers to engage in proactive crime control lead to increased numbers of stops, especially of racial minorities. As Epp, Maynard-Moody and Haider-Markel (Epp, Maynard-Moody, and Haider-Markel 2014) have shown, investigatory police stops are widely and repetitively used in many police departments, and these stops tend to target African Americans. Likewise, stops and frisks of pedestrians are widely made in many urban areas (Gelman, Fagan, and Kiss 2007, Moeckli 2007, Solis, Portillos, and Brunson 2009, Epp, Maynard-Moody, and Haider-Markel 2014). These involuntary stops, whether in cars or on foot, lead to heightened tensions between police and minority communities. While I do not make a normative argument that police should limit the way police do their jobs, I think it is important to examine how officers address these tensions when interacting with the minority community,

especially since previous research suggests legitimacy is associated with respect (Sunshine 2003, Tyler 1990).

In many cases, police do not perceive themselves as conducting racial profiling, but looking out for the interest of the community (Williams and Stahl 2008). One study suggests police perceive themselves as having unique training allowing them to properly identify criminal activity, and that their actions are conducted based on their deep desire to stop drug traffickers and crime (Antonovics and Knight 2004). They also believe most police action is justified (Lundman 2004), because they are properly trained problem solvers that know and respect laws and procedures (2009). Last, some police see themselves as especially concerned with trust and fairness (Charbonneau et al. 2009), but this point is often overshadowed by high profile cases.

The evidence on how police officers view racial minorities is scarce, as many police officers will not discuss their feeling about minorities. This analysis is derived mostly from reported from interviews and surveys. Findings suggest police see Hispanics as hard workers, but routine violators of the law. In one story, a police officer noted that Hispanics have a high DUI arrest rate, because they release stress by drinking at local bars then drive home intoxicated. This group also reported a high use of crack cocaine by African Americans (Williams and Stahl 2008). A separate article suggests these problems are not perceived by officers to be prevalent among whites (Lundman 2004) (a perception that is strikingly inconsistent with empirical research on whites' use of drugs and alcohol) (Provine 2007). Some police officers also see themselves at risk with minorities (Harvard 2009), which causes them to make split second decisions about how to respond to potential threats. The cited article is especially pertinent

because it highlights a few of many instances in which police have shot unarmed minority citizens.

### **Past research on how black representation in policing may influence police activities**

Studies of policing generally find that the race of the officer has little impact on police enforcement, but the findings on this subject are conflicting, inconclusive, and rarely based on interviews with black officers. Some studies suggest that black officers are able to interact in more culturally appropriate ways when dealing with other minorities (Black 1976, Mastrofski et al. 2000, Bolton and Feagin 2004). This line of research also suggests “when an officer and a citizen are of the same race or ethnicity, it is hypothesized that officers will be more likely to be lenient and less likely to exercise formal authority to its fullest degree” (Brown and Frank 2006), but few scholars have found this to be true (Moskos 2008, Sun 2003).

One scholar suggests that the race of the officer can have both positive and negative consequences with regard to arrests, racial profiling, and relationships with minority communities (Moskos 2008). Scholars found that black officers were as likely to arrest as white officers (Worden 1989b) and more likely to arrest black citizens than whites (Alex 1969, Brown and Frank 2006). Blacks were also as likely use deadly force (Fyfe 1981, Plant and Peruche 2005), but the presence of a black mayor reduces the phenomenon (Jacobs and O'Brien 1998). One study suggested that arrest rates vary with the race of the person with whom the officer is interacting: minority officers in general arrest non-minorities at a higher rate than non-minorities and Caucasian officers arrest minorities at a higher rate than minorities (Donohue and Levitt 2001). A possible explanation for higher arrest rates by black officers is that white officers

generally have an easier time getting compliance from minority citizens (Mastrofski, Snipes, and Supina 1996).

Although some studies thus have suggested that the race of the officer affects such things as arrest rates, most studies have concluded that officers' race does not significantly influence key officer behaviors. Scholars have found that in situations of same-race encounters, officer and citizen race had no impact on final disposition (Mccluskey, Mastrofski, and Parks 1999) and there is no difference between black and white officers in the incidence of complaints (Cao and Huang 2000). Furthermore, race was found to have no impact on street-level behavior (Brooks 2001, Council 2004b, Riksheim 1993, Worden 1989a). The key perspective in this research is that police identify with their job as officers and not race (Moskos 2008), and the subsequent outcome of citizen arrests between black and white officers is similar (Alex 1969, Barlow and Barlow 2000, Leinen 1984, Sun 2004).

Still, some recent studies suggest that officer race may influence interactions with members of the public more than believed by past studies. In concluding a quantitative study, two leading scholars stated: "our findings suggest that the commonly accepted viewpoint (or perspective) of officer race having little to no influence on arrest decisions needs to be re-examined, since in our sample officer race exerts a statistically significant effect. Furthermore, when we examined the factors that influence the arrest decisions of white and black officers, an analysis that is not reported in most (if not all) research, we find the factors differ" (Brown and Frank 2006). Likewise, Moskos, reporting on a study of officers' views (2008), observes: "clear and meaningful differences exist between Black and White police officers' beliefs regarding crime fighting, departmental politics, and the African-American community. Black police, more than White police, see crime to be a direct result of the root causes of poverty, racism, and poor



education. White police are more likely to believe crime escalates from general social disorder. White officers, more than Black officers, see the role of police as “crime fighters” locking up “bad guys.” Black police are more likely to see their role as “peacekeepers,” protecting the “good people” in the ghetto. Black police officers emphasize class struggle between the “decent” working class and the “street” or “ghetto” culture within the community. White police officers see the “ghetto” more as a miasma that pollutes all in its midst. A fraternity of blue coexists with but does not eliminate nor significantly lessen these differences.”

In sum, previous studies are sharply divided on whether the race of the officer matters in interactions with members of the public. Perhaps part of the explanation for this wide disagreement is that scholars have not been able to gain access to officers to get additional data points. These patterns may simply differ from city to city, but scholars will not know unless more qualitative research is done on these issues. In addition, many of the studies rely on data gathered no later than the 1980s, and it is possible that the racial context in policing has changed since those years. Certainly deliberate support for racial discrimination seems to have declined since then. Further, many of the studies rely on simple statistical measures like arrest rates. While such measures capture a key dimension of interactions between officers and members of the public, they probably also miss important nuances and contextual factors that may shape these interactions. Thus, as noted, one explanation for why black officers may make arrests at higher rates than white officers is because members of the public may challenge or resist the authority of black officers at higher rates. But we need fuller information about the dynamics of interactions between officers and members of the public to know whether this may be true.

By contrast, there is strong evidence that the presence of black officers in a police department changes dynamics within the department. A key goal of the civil rights movement was to increase the hiring of black officers by departments that were often, in the 1960s, virtually entirely white (Walker 1985). Growing diversity within the ranks of the police was accompanied by resistance from white officers. Bolton and Feagin interviewed black officers on whether black officers felt accepted into policing, and they found that minority officers believe they are not fully accepted (Bolton and Feagin 2004). Many of their research subjects had been on the job for decades and often referenced circumstances in which they were subjects of racism from peers in the 1960s to 1980s. Some stories were specific to the civil rights movement, and most of their supporting research identified in the bibliography was from the 1960s-1990s, with the exception of a few articles published after 2000 (Bolton and Feagin 2004). We need information about black officers' perceptions in the contemporary period.

A second key study on race and policing was conducted by Sklansky, who finds that minority officers think their race affects policing in a positive way, but these positive effects may be limited to internal department dynamics (like development of policy) and may not extend to how officers interact with people on the street (Sklansky 2006). Sklansky's citations are interesting but preliminary and not widely confirmed. His key contribution is that police departments saw a spike in the hiring of minority and female officers when court-ordered hiring quotas were imposed, but the diversity of departments regressed when the quotas were lifted. However, he concludes that diversity has weakened the social solidarity of police culture, which may allow minority police to take advantage of their special competencies. (Sklansky 2006)

To conclude this review of the literature, many scholars believe that because the racial divide persists in American society, the race of police officers surely must matter in some way—but efforts to confirm this expectation have been met with mixed results. Past studies have been limited in ways that a new study may address. Many rely on data that date to the 1960s to the 1980s. But much has changed since then: the ranks of police officers are more racially diverse, the vast majority of the public has come to reject deliberate racism, but at the same time policing has developed institutionalized practices like investigatory stops and order-maintenance arrests that have deepened racial disparities in who is stopped and arrested. Another limitation is that very few of the studies on when officer race matters have asked officers themselves for their views on this question. The few interview-based studies have focused on the effect of officer race on internal departmental dynamics, and these studies have strongly affirmed that the growing presence of black officers affects these dynamics. But no study has asked black officers whether being black affects interactions with members of the public. The statistically-based studies that have found differences between black and white officers (for example, in arrest rates) have speculated that these differences may result from greater challenges and resistance by members of the public to black officers' authority. Interviews with officers might shed some light on this speculation.

### **Summary of research questions and expectations**

As Lipsky notes, too often scholars make generalization about organizations and policy without directly observing the actions of individuals at the front lines of public bureaucracies who actually carry out the policies. He has suggested that “policy conflict is not only expressed as the contention of interest groups, but is also located in the struggles between individual

workers and citizens who challenge or submit to client-processing. One aspect of the way workers, clients, and citizens at-large experience street-level bureaucracies is the conflicts that they encounter in wanting their organizational life to be more consistent with their own preferences and commitments” (Lipsky 1980).

Following Lipsky’s suggestion, this dissertation examines officers’ perspectives on the conflicts that they have experienced in the context of race during their time on the job. This research aims to tease out how officers view their own racial identity as police officers, and how officers have adjusted to interacting with minority citizens when they know that minorities distrust them. This research allows officers to tell in their own words how they believe their own racial identity affects how they do their job. In addressing these issues, this dissertation seeks to answer three specific questions arising from past research.

- 1) How does having black officers on the police force affect interactions with citizens?

As summarized above, past studies provide conflicting answers. Some studies suggest that African American officers are better able than white officers to interact with African American citizens in culturally appropriate ways (Black 1976, Mastrofski et al. 2000, Bolton and Feagin 2004). Other studies, particularly statistically-based studies, suggest that black officers are just as likely as white officers to make arrests and just as likely, or even more likely, than white officers to use force (e.g., Fyfe 1981, Plant and Peruche 2005, Brooks 2001, Council 2004, Riksheim 1993, Worden 1989a).

Generally, the studies that conclude that black officers act no differently than white officers suggest that this is so because both black and white officers are socialized into the role of a police officer (Moskos 2008, Bolton and Feagin 2004). As such, there is a presumption that

the socialization process makes officers more attentive to their professional police identity than their racial identity. These studies pose an additional question under this first heading: Do black officers view their role as police officers differently than white officers?

Very few of the studies on the impact of officers' race on interactions with citizens are based on interviews with black and white officers, and of these interview-based studies, most are quite old. My research aims to address these questions—both whether officers' racial identity affects their sense of their role and whether having black officers affects interactions with citizens--through interviews with both black and white officers.

2) How does having black officers on the police force affect interactions among officers?

Specifically, how does it affect conversations about race among officers?

Research suggests that greater diversity within policing may affect the internal dynamics within policing more than police interactions with members of the public on the street (Sklansky 2006), but this expectation has not been confirmed. Sklansky's analysis is based on an interview-based study by Bolton and Feagin (2004) that found that black officers talk with their white counterparts about issues of race within policing, and that these discussions seem to provide white officers with ideas on how to better interact with members of the black community. Another study suggested that female officers likewise encourage their male counterparts to take sexual assault seriously and that this results in an increase in sexual assault reporting and arrests (Meier and Nicholson-Crotty 2006). But the study by Bolton and Feagin is based on very old interviews, and the latter study on female officers is based statistical patterns in sexual assault reporting and arrests, and not on interviews.

I relied on interviews with both black and white officers to address how these officers discuss among themselves the issues of racial tensions and interactions with minority citizens on the street. I was particularly interested in learning whether the nature of officers' discussions about race could serve to educate white officers about how to better interact with minority citizens.

- 3) How does having black officers on the police force affect officers' advocacy for changes in departmental policies?

A number of studies address whether public employees who are racial minorities or women advocate for policy changes that would benefit these groups (Meier et al. 1992, Selden 1997, Selden, Brudney, and Kellough 1998, Keiser et al. 2002, Riccucci and Meyers 2004, Wilkins 2006). Many of these studies find some evidence that minority and women employees advocate for policy changes in these ways. The only study to directly examine whether black police officers advocate for policy changes that may benefit African Americans found that the presence of African American police officers increased the racial disparity in the division (Wilkins and Williams 2005). But even this study did not interview black officers to find out whether, in their view, they advocate for policy changes that might benefit African American citizens.

My interviews with black officers thus focused as well on whether black officers advocate for changes in department policy that would benefit African Americans in interactions with police officers. For reasons discussed above, officers generally do not think they have influence over "policies," but they do think they may have some influence over what are called "tactics, techniques and procedures." Therefore, my questions focused on whether black officers

advocate for changes in these tactics, techniques and procedures that would improve interactions with black citizens. My questions focused specifically on whether these officers advocate in these ways to supervisors who have direct influence over the nature of these tactics, techniques and procedures.

After careful analysis of my findings and consideration of existing theoretical perspectives, I will argue that current theories do not fully address key dynamics I discovered during this research, and therefore I propose two contributions to public administration theory to better describe these dynamics. The first is what I will call “moral labor.” Moral labor consists of action, in the face of organizational resistance, to improve the treatment of people whom the worker believes to be disrespected or mistreated. My findings suggest that among black police officers there is a strongly felt need for this advocacy. Black officers want to advocate for policy, but generally do not for several reasons. Black officers interviewed for this study are hesitant to speak out on issues affecting low-income African Americans for fear that they would be labeled as militant. Some black officers indicated that their voice is not heard. While black officers I interviewed for this study want to make recommendations on issues affecting black citizens, they often did not take action.

Still, two officers interviewed for this study emphasized that they *do* advocate for policy changes to improve how black citizens are treated by officers, mainly white. This advocacy is moral labor. It is akin to what is commonly called “emotional labor.” Emotional labor, as noted above, consists of working to portray a friendly, emotionally supportive, or respectful demeanor toward clients or other members of the public, even when these people are not fully respectful in turn. By contrast, moral labor, as this dissertation will describe it, is deliberate advocacy for better service for particular members of the public whom the worker believes to be worthy but

not sufficiently accorded this service. A condition for moral work, then, is for the public employee doing this work to believe that the citizens being served are morally worthy. Another condition is perceiving that other employees are not sufficiently respectful or helpful toward these morally worthy members of the public. These perceptions are necessary for the worker to risk his or her reputation – or even employment – for speaking out on the issue. When these conditions are met, the essential component of moral labor is action to demand change. Taking action here is defined as advocating up the chain to a supervisor or eliciting support from an external actor such as a non-profit (e.g. NAACP) to help give voice when bureaucrats believe they do not have one. As I will describe in this dissertation, some public employees are willing to advocate for change—to engage in moral labor—even if the organizational climate discourages this advocacy and prevents others from doing so.

My second contribution is to emphasize the importance of mid-level supervisors in giving effect to representative bureaucracy. Although representative bureaucracy examines whether and how women and minorities advocate for change, this theory mainly looks at the relationship between front-line workers and citizens, and does not focus on the relationship between the front-line worker and his or her supervisor. As I will argue, the former has the limitation of being relevant only in particular interactions between front-line workers and citizens. Interactions up the chain of command, by contrast, have the potential to change policies or procedures, and thus to affect street-level work more generally. Moral labor is a key means of changing these policies or procedures. But whether the voice of those engaged in moral labor is *heard and acted upon* depends on how receptive are mid-level supervisors to this voice. A key observation in this dissertation is that, at least in the police department studied here, while front-line officers have become increasingly diverse, mid-level supervisors have not become more



diverse. This lack of diversity at the supervisory level seems to mute the influence of diversity at the front lines, by limiting the changes in policies or procedures that are advocated by front-line black officers. In sum, representative bureaucracy has two dimensions: diversity at the front-lines and diversity at the mid-level. Having the former without the latter may limit the voice and influence of diversity among front-line workers.

### **Dissertation outline**

The remainder of this dissertation proceeds as follows. I discuss the methods of my research in chapter two. This chapter contains the protocol I used when interviewing officers and how I conducted data analysis. Chapter three discusses the main differences in how black and white police officers conduct their jobs when interacting with members of the minority community. I often use the word black community and minority community interchangeably in this research. Chapter four discusses the extent to which officers discuss race and why officers believe the subject is contentious. Chapter five discusses the extent to which black officers advocate for changes in tactics, techniques and procedures that might positively affect how all officers interact with members of the minority community. The concluding chapter, chapter 6, discusses the implications of my findings for policing and recommends future research areas on the subject.

Readers should note that I make no claims that officers' narratives or descriptions were objective descriptions of events or practices. They are, however, important measures of how officers understand the meaning of race in their professional practice.

## **Chapter 2: Methodology and Study Design**

In an effort to understand how diversity has impacted police departments, I conducted semi-structured interviews with 27 officers in a large metropolitan area.

This chapter will summarize my study design and methods.

### **Selection of the department for study**

The site of the research reported in this dissertation is the police department of a large metropolitan city in the Midwest. To maintain the confidentiality of my interview respondents, I will call this city “Larandia.” I chose this geographical area and this particular police department because they met the specifications of my research agenda better than other departments. I wanted to focus on a city with a population of at least several hundred thousand people, and with a substantial African American population (between 30% and 50%). This size and diversity is typical of major Midwestern urban areas. I did not want to select a relatively small city and police departments because these cities often do not share the racial tensions that are typical in major urban areas, and I wanted to see how police officers navigate their job responsibilities in the context of these tensions.

I chose not to interview officers in areas with very low African American populations, as I wanted a city in which officers had a higher probability of contact with these citizens. Likewise, cities with high African American populations were excluded because they are relatively rare and because patterns of policing may be different in a city whose population is virtually entirely black than in the more typical urban area with some “white” areas and some “black” areas.

Larandia fits these target parameters. It has a large metropolitan population with a county population of over 1,000,000 citizens, and a combined statistical area population in excess of 2.8 million citizens.

The metropolitan area is diverse, but, as is typical of large Midwestern cities, there is considerable geographic segregation by race within the city. The largest percentage of the city's minority population is in the northern part of the city. There are some low income citizens of all races in the central portion of the city, but the southern part of the city is predominantly white, which is where many of the middle and upper class citizens reside. African Americans account for roughly 49% of the population, whites account for 43% in the city, and Hispanics account for 2.4% of the city population. The demographics change tremendously when looking at Larandia County as a whole. In the county, whites account for 70%, and blacks and Hispanics account for 23.5% and 2.6% of the population.

As is typical of large urban police departments, the Larandia Police Department has faced litigation for officer excessive use of force, wrongful imprisonment, and also for its hiring practices, where a white officer recently sued the department for reverse discrimination.

I used two criteria when finalizing which police department best met my research agenda: 1) percentage of black officers; and 2) race of the police chief. Each is discussed below in order of importance.

### **Percent Black Officers**

This research specifically examines differences in the views of black and white officers, and so it was necessary to select a department where black officers represented a substantial proportion of the force. As such, I selected a police department where black sworn officers represent a third of the workforce population.

The percentage of black officers is important to the theory of street-level bureaucracy, because I am interested in their interaction with black citizens and supervisors of all demographics. I wanted to ensure that I had a sufficient pool of black officers from which to interview. I also wanted to ensure that there was sufficient black representation in specialized departments. This research was not interested in the views only of black police officers so I excluded Departments in which black officers comprised greater than 40% of the officer population.

Theories of organizational subcultures, such as the Kanter's Theory of Proportions suggest populations greater than 25% can form sub-cultures. She specifically suggests members of a minority group begin to form alliances when the proportion of a group is between 20-40% (Kanter 1977). The most prominent research on the views of black police officers examined police departments of varying sizes, ranging from 50 or fewer officers, 51-150 officers, and departments of 200 or more officers, but the authors did not break down the figures proportionally (Bolton and Feagin 2004). The other key research evaluated departments with populations of more than 250,000, but did not disclose why each department was chosen. However, the author did cite the average percentage of black officers in large departments was 20% based on 1990 figures (Sklansky 2006).

The Larandia police department falls well within the size and racial percentage ranges found in these past studies. The total number of sworn officers in the department as reported in the 2012 annual report is one thousand three hundred a nine (1309). The department has eight hundred forty seven white officers (estimated by percentage in original report) and four hundred twenty eight black officers. Only a very small percentage of officers are Asian or Hispanic – thirty six in total.

### **Police Chief Race**

I expected that black officers' advocacy for policy affecting black citizens would resonate more with black police chiefs than with white police chiefs, and to test this expectation I wanted to find a department that had had both black and white police chiefs in recent years. The Larandia department currently has a white police chief, but their previous chief was black. In fact, this department has had three black chiefs over the last fifteen years. This variation in the race of the chief helped me to assess whether the chief's race has any effect on black officers' voice in the department, at least in the view of these officers.

### **Methods: In-Depth Interviews**

My methods consisted of in-depth interviews with both black and white officers. I specifically sought stories of interactions in which race or racial tensions played a role. But I also asked a number of direct questions aside from the narratives.

Data collection began once I received authorization from the Police Chief to conduct interviews. The approval process lasted three months. I made initial contact through the department's media relations department by telephone and then sent a follow-up email clarifying the parameters of my research.

The Chief reviewed my request for interviews and directed a sworn officer to contact me for final coordination. During initial contact, I requested to interview a diverse group of officers. The gender and demographics of each officer is listed in Table 1.

**TABLE 1 HERE**

The initial point of contact was critical to the success of this research, because he ensured I was given ride-alongs and that I had access to the North, South, and Central Police stations. Additionally, once I chose the officers with whom I wanted to speak, this officer was able to reduce friction and reiterate that I was there with permission of the Chief.

I spent time speaking with officers from the Headquarters, Central and Northern police districts before beginning interviews. Although my main goal was to get acclimated to the Department, I wanted officers to get comfortable with me and to let them know that I was there seeking interviews on their perceptions of diversity within the Department. I also conducted two ride-alongs with officers, lasting four and six hours each. The intent of the ride-alongs was to get a feel for the Department, the current issues, and see first-hand the areas many officers would likely discuss during interviews. During these ride-alongs, I was able to see how the districts differed in terms of the population they served and the level of crime in each, and refine my list of questions so that I could focus specifically on areas that were populated by citizens of low economic status. I also confirmed the areas in each district that had higher concentrations of minorities and ensured I was driven through these areas to hear from officers what their initial perceptions were. I was also able to see and hear from officers how the three policing districts have changed over the years. I spent time in the high crime areas and got a better perspective of how officers conduct their jobs.

I conducted the first round of interviews at the Police HQ building in small offices with four officers working in the special victims unit and auditing. Although these officers were in specialized units, my interviews focused on their time working the beat.

Subsequently, I interviewed officers from the central district and the northern district. All of the officers interviewed were either officers currently patrolling or supervising officers.

The fourth round of interviews was conducted at the HQ building with officers that patrolled the southern district. Officers identified during interviews that the Police Academy was responsible for new officer training as well as routine training of senior officers on diversity and other issues specific to my research. As such, four officers I interviewed during this round were staff members from the academy.

I conducted all interviews in person, face to face. Although the average interview lasted thirty five minutes, many officers spent additional time with me off the record to further elaborate on comments made during the formal interview.

My primary aim in the interviews was to elicit stories that focused on officers' perceptions of whether (and, if so, how) their own racial identity has influenced interactions with members of the public and/or development of police department policies or practices toward members of the public. In answering these questions, all officers but one addressed other areas closely related to my research agenda.

I asked officers for stories describing instances in which they believed their race made a difference in each of these matters (interactions with citizens and development of police department policies), and stories of instances in which they believe race made no difference. The interviews included some open-ended questions to elicit officers' perceptions on which of these types of situations are more common or typical. At this point it is important to acknowledge two elements of my own identity that undoubtedly shaped the interviews. First, I am a black man and this may have helped black officers to be more trusting of me and be more forthcoming in answering my questions. In most cases, I felt very comfortable in discussing these contentious issues with black officers and I suspect they were comfortable in being candid with me about

their experiences. It is also possible that these black officers tried to impress me, a fellow black man, with their sympathy for black citizens.

Although I suspect that white officers were truthful in the stories they shared with me, I did not feel the same level of comfort with white officers as I did black officers. My perception was that these contentious topics were uncomfortable for both the white officers and for me. While I do not believe that white officers were untruthful, it is possible that they did not volunteer information as much as did the black officers.

A second element of my identity, that I have been a military officer the past 18 years, my entire adult life, also may have influenced the interviews. Although I had no prior contact with these officers before this project, I did get a sense that many of the officers I interviewed were ex-military, and, knowing of my status as a military officer, they may have trusted me more than other researchers who do not have this status.

I do not believe these factors impacted my data in a negative way. It is plausible that black officers portrayed themselves in a more favorable light – and their white peers less so, but I did not feel this during my interviews and believe the data I obtained were truthful and based on their honest perceptions.

### **Semi-structured one-on-one interviews, focusing on narratives**

During this project, I used semi-structured interviews, because traditional survey methods would not provide the unique and contextual details that were important in answering my research questions. Additionally, there has been a significant amount of quantitative research on this area, with little qualitative research to supplement such findings. I was interested in whether officers' answers would add specific detail or explanations that might help to interpret or expand beyond the quantitative findings summarized in chapter 1. These prior studies, using large data



sets of arrest records and use of force records, have been able to identify statistical patterns by race of officer, but by their nature these statistical studies do not speak to black and white officers' perceptions of how their racial identity affects their interactions with citizens and their voice within the department. In-depth interviews seem especially suited to address these questions.

Storytelling is especially useful when considering my research topic. Racial discrimination is especially contentious in policing, as many departments have been the subject of lawsuits over discriminatory police practices. Some of the high profile cases - those which make this research so important - were highlighted in chapter one. In addressing contentious topics like this, people being interviewed may be more likely to give "socially desirable" answers rather than more frank or truthful answers when asked direct questions. When telling narratives, however, they may reveal perceptions and assumptions that they might never say in answer to a direct question. Accordingly, I asked for narratives as they provide a unique window into interview respondents' understanding and framing of the experience, and of its cultural and social context (Oberweis and Musheno 2001).

Stories were not considered to be precisely factual descriptions of events but rather they are a lens through which participants view the world of race and policing. As Maynard-Moody and Musheno suggest, stories offer unique insight into how actors make choices. Thus, the aim of my research was to elicit officers' views on how they use discretion and whether race matters in these decisions. Moreover, these same authors suggest stories allow the researcher to see how participants understand their motives and their actions (Maynard-Moody and Musheno 2003). This latter point is important, as police officers are often far removed from supervisors and enjoy a high level of autonomy while enforcing department priorities. Officers' stories illustrated

where they place their own priorities in carrying out their discretionary duties, and how they navigate racial tensions in doing so.

Stories were gathered during flexible, semi-structured interviews because this provided an atmosphere where the “participant can best voice their experiences unconstrained by any perspectives of the researcher or past research findings” (Creswell 2012).

These interviews were conducted in several phases. Phase I consisted of an entry interview with the intent to develop a relationship with officers, which was critical step in the process. Phase II focused on initial officer perspectives on the meaning of officer race in their interactions with black citizens. The purpose of this phase was for officers to discuss how their own racial identity affects their interaction with members of the minority community. Questions about racial identity seemed somewhat sensitive for some white officers, especially since the primary interviewer is black. As such, I used a conversational approach to put officers at ease.

Phase III focused on officers’ views on whether an officer’s race has any bearing on departmental processes, particularly regarding departmental guidance to officers on tactics, techniques and procedures (TTPs) to be used when interacting with black citizens. Officers were asked a series of open-ended questions focused on uncovering a deeper understanding of their views. I also focused on officer’s perceptions of whether the race of the chief had any impact on how officers may raise issues for discussion within the department or propose changes in tactics, techniques and procedures.

### **Phase I: Entry Interviews**

During this phase I was escorted by a sworn officer into each department’s secure area. I was introduced to individual officers and leaders by my point of contact. I then informed

officers that I was conducting scholarly research for publication. In some cases, my point of contact was able to help reduce initial apprehensions associated with me being an “outsider” and the topic. After making rounds with my point of contact, I requested interviews with specific individuals, ensuring that I had a balance of female officers, white males, and minority officers.

After received approval from the officer, I provided each one with an oral consent form and story instructions. The oral consent form contained a summary of my research project and the name and contact information for my dissertation chair. I also included the University of Kansas’ Human Subjects Training contact information and indicated that I was trained in guarding officer’s identity and that my research was reviewed and approved by the University. This also helped to reduce tension. The oral consent form is listed in Table 2.

**TABLE 2 HERE**

Officers were also provided an information sheet requesting they tell stories about how being black, or having black officers present, might have affected interactions with citizens... First, it specifically asked officers to think of stories describing situations in which an officer’s race made a difference in how they interacted with minority citizens. Second, it asked officers to describe circumstances in which race made no difference in their interaction with minority citizens. Ideally I wanted officers to share their most memorable stories, which would allow me to ask probing questions to gain a fuller appreciation for how the officers view race.

**TABLE 3 HERE**

After discussing my research project with officers, I verbally asked for their permission to record the interview. Twenty-six of 27 officers (26/27) allowed me to record the interview with an audio recorder. The story instructions are listed in Table 3.

Many of the officers I interviewed suggested that we begin the interview immediately after this phase I. This had both positive and negative consequences. In most cases, officers agreeing to interview immediately without time to think of stories gave better, more candid interviews. Additionally, these officers tended to be less guarded, which allowed me to probe deep into the issue of race and policing. Stories told by officers that I briefed ahead of time seemed more guarded. Moreover, some officers in this category became “unavailable” for interviews.

The greatest difficulty I faced during this phase was getting officers to be willing to be interviewed. Most officers declined interviews when they were told that the interviews would last forty-five minutes. However, officers that wanted to speak with me initially stated they had limited time. In all cases, interviews with these officers lasted more than forty-five minutes after discussions began. Moreover, many white officers indicated that they were not interested in participating in this research.

### **Phase II: Subject Interviews**

I began interviews by asking non-contentious questions, such as “how long have you been on the force” and “what made you decide to join.” I also asked officers to describe some of their more memorable stories of these matters. I then followed with separate questions for white and black officers, because I was sought to explore slightly different issues with these two groups.

For example, with regard to how having black officers on the force affected interactions with citizens, I asked white officers to “describe a time in which they prefer and black officer to take the lead in a situation when interacting with members of the minority community.” This question would allow me to get a perspective on how having black officers present in a department was beneficial in the perception of white officers. I asked black officers how a particular “situation would have been different if a white officer had been present” after they described a story in which race mattered. The particular questions posed to each officer is addressed below and summarized in tables 4.1, 4.2, and 4.3

**Table 4.1 here**

**Table 4.2 here**

**Table 4.3 here**

### **White officers**

After the officer concluded their story on circumstances in which race mattered when interacting with black citizens, I asked white officers to “describe a circumstance in which they prefer black officers take the lead.” I suspected white officers would appreciate having a black officer in tense interactions with black citizens that might have the potential to escalate into a major controversy or in situations in which white officers could be accused of racism.

The next question I posed specifically to white officers was “how have black officers altered your views of black citizens?” This question had the potential to reveal information on the extent to which black officers socialize the importance of race to non-minority officers.

Additionally, I was examining whether white officers have adjusted their procedures when interacting with blacks in some way after discussions with fellow black officers.

Subsequently, I asked for a “story in which officer race made no difference when dealing with a minority citizens.” I suspected officers would indicate routine traffic stops or taking citizen generated police reports, such as thefts or vandalism. However, most officers focused on serious crimes such as felonies or misdemeanors. I asked a series of follow-up questions, such as “why do you think that the race of the officer makes no difference” and “what are characteristics that all officers share, regardless of officer race?” This last question intended to gain white officers’ perceptions of the core aspects of the police identity so that I could compare and contrast their perception with those of black officers.

### **Black officers**

The questions I asked black officers were slightly different. In interviewing white officers, I was mainly concerned with how the presence of black officers has affected their own (white) officers’ perceptions of the meaning of the race of officers and of citizens. I also wanted to hear whether these officers believed that black officers’ presence has affected white officers’ interactions with members of the minority community. By contrast, my interviews with black officers focused on their perceptions of how being a black officer affected interactions with citizens and affected interactions with other police officers.

I began these interviews with black officers by asking the same opening questions: “how long have you been on the force;” “what made you want to join the force;” and “what areas do you mainly patrol?”

I then asked for “narratives of situations in which being black made a difference.” The follow-up question was designed to tease out any differences between how black officers and white officers act in these interactions with citizens. My intent here was to find out whether black officers believe that the only color in policing is “blue,” as many studies have claimed, or whether being black leads them to act in ways that are different from white officers. To further clarify black officers’ answers, I would ask them to describe how the circumstance would have been different if a white officer was present, or if a black officer was not present. The next set of questions addressed situations in which black officers believed that being black made no difference. These questions were intended to help clarify whether black officers believed that being black affected interactions much of the time or only rarely.

Scholars indicate black officers are able to interact in more culturally appropriate ways when dealing with other minorities (Black 1976, Mastrofski et al. 2000, Bolton and Feagin 2004). However, none of these scholars clarify why this might be so. Is it because black citizens are automatically more trusting of black officers, and so interactions with black officers are different from the start? Is it because black officers are able to speak in ways that black citizens understand? Is it because black officers have better insight into how to get compliance from black citizens? I wanted to get black officers’ perspective on this matter. My follow-up question asked officers to “describe qualities black officers have that are helpful in dealing with black citizens”. I expected officers to discuss shared language and culture. However, their responses were not as expected. As we will see in chapter 3, the majority of black officers focused specifically on how they police differently in these neighborhoods than their white counterparts.

When officers were vague about whether the race of the officer played a role in interactions with members of the minority community, I probed the subject with the following

question, “what are the characteristics that all police share?” The intent was to get a black officers perspective on the meaning of **blue** (meaning the shared police identity), using an indirect approach. I asked black officers “how have their views on race changed since s/he joined the force?” Black officers’ views on this subject are critical, because much of the literature portrays black officers as socialized into the role of a police officer, and in the process as socialized to consider themselves as officers first and as black only a distant second. As such, there is a presumption that the socialization process makes these officers more attentive to their professional police identity than their racial identity.

Researchers also suggest that when an officer and citizen are of the same race, officers will be more likely to be lenient and less likely to exercise formal authority to its fullest degree (Barlow and Barlow 2000, Black 1976, Sun 2003, Moskos 2008). As we will see in later chapters, my findings are similar to other research (Sun 2003), but my assessment of the reasons behind this dynamic differs greatly. Moreover, much of the quantitative research focuses on arrest rates and disorderly conduct. Hardly any of this research addresses situations in which citizens are NOT arrested. As such, I asked black officers to “please tell me of a time when you could have arrested somebody, but decided not to for some reason. Why did you not make the arrest?” And “do you think the officer’s race makes any difference in these sorts of decisions?” Based on previous research (Sun 2003, Moskos 2008), I expected that black officers would describe “giving a break” especially to citizens of low socioeconomic status and in extremely low income areas because, as Sun found, black officers are more likely to be assigned to disadvantaged areas and are more likely to display attitudes that are consistent with the underlining values of community policing. Again, as the following chapters show, my findings



are similar in some ways but reveal a rather different underlying dynamic than the class-based sympathy.

I also asked officers to describe how they discuss among themselves the subject of race or racial tensions with citizens. In asking these questions, I wanted to see whether the presence of black officers had led to discussions about racial tensions that might help white officers to improve their interactions with black citizens. To examine this, I asked whether “white and black officers ever discuss the issue of race,” and, if so, “how often?”

### **Phase III: Race and Internal Police Discussions of Police Practices**

Phase III focused on how officers make recommendations to change the tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTPs) used when encountering black citizens. I asked officers about their willingness to recommend changes to the tactics, techniques, or procedures (TTPs) they use to interact with black citizens to peers or supervisors. Research in this area focuses on how citizens of similar backgrounds use discretion to make de facto “policy.” More specifically, not enforcing – or selectively enforcing - a policy is considered the same as policy. However, I intended to focus on whether officers advocate for change to decision makers.

The first question I asked was “whether front-line officers ever make recommendations to supervisors regarding police practices?” I was specifically examining whether officers would make procedural recommendations or just follow orders without question due to the hierarchical nature of policing. This question aimed to gain an appreciation for how the process works, since there is virtually no literature on this subject.

Next I asked officers to “describe a circumstance that would lead you to recommend changes to TTPs?” The follow-up question asked “what would be a circumstance in which you

would voice your opinions about procedures affecting black citizens and their relationship with the department? I expected that black officers in particular would provide feedback on police practices that appear to anger or frustrate black citizens. I also wanted to get officers' views on circumstances in which they would *not* voice their opinions about procedures affecting black citizens.

To learn whether officers believe that their suggestions are heard and affect the department's official policies, I asked follow-up questions that focused on how command-level officers perceive recommendations from front-line officers. Here, I wanted officers to describe whether the climate encourages or discourages feedback. My first question asked "how are recommendations perceived by these commanders?"

The last question tried to distinguish whether there were differences in whether the race of the police chief affected black officers' willingness to make suggestions and perception of whether their suggestions were heard and were influential. I was fortunate in that all officers have served under a black chief and a white chief. As such, I asked "how many chiefs have you served under?" Subsequently, I asked whether "black chiefs focused more on maintaining positive relations with the minority community more than white chiefs?"

### **Data Analysis**

Thus far I have detailed the methods used to conduct fieldwork. This chapter now focuses on data analysis. After qualitative data was been collected, I organized the audio files into folders under the three main areas I examined: 1) officer race and interactions with citizens; 2) officers' discussions on race; and 3) the extent to which representation matters. (Creswell 2012, Trochim and Donnelly 2007). I uploaded the audio files into ATLAS.ti and created

individual file names for each audio recording, based on the contact number I assigned each officer. There was one circumstance in which the officer did not authorize audio recordings. In this case, I transcribed the interview as closely to verbatim as practical (Creswell 2012). I then began organizing the data so that it could be analyzed directly into ATLASTI.

During this stage, I began using structural analysis, which is designed to help scholars develop the underlying meaning behind participants' communicative acts. This method focuses on how content is organized so that interviewers can generate insights beyond what is said in a narrative (Riessman 2000, 2008). Because the majority of officers allowed me to record interviews, I was able to also focus more on the officers' body language and micro-expressions.

I coded audio segments with a set of predetermined labels. This allowed me to organize the data into specific areas closely aligned with the questions I asked. Here I created a set of general codes specifically so I could search audio files by general topics. To complete this step, I listened to all recordings twice to confirm that the initial labeling was accurate. I also jotted down several ideas that came to mind to ensure I accounted for all possible codes.

I then begin the process of coding each audio file by assigning a code that describes the meaning of the text. For example, I used the code Chief race when officers responded to questions about whether black chiefs emphasized the importance of maintaining positive relations with the minority community any more than white chiefs. I did this for each interview. After coding segments within the interviews, I reviewed the list of codes removed redundant ones.

I then listened to every audio file within a code to determine whether new codes emerged. I was able to see the frequency audio segments were referenced using a particular code. This assisted me in developing the major themes associated within the individual codes I assigned.

After developing the themes related to my research questions, I transcribed the most important quotes into a word text for further analysis (see pages Creswell pages 236-254) (Creswell 2012).

The following chapters contain findings from my interviews in 2014. I present quoted material, verbatim, with no editing of “ums,” “you knows” or other grammatical mistakes as presented by the officer. This will allow the reader to appreciate the context of each quote. I have removed the names of officers mentioned in interviews, to include previous Chiefs as agreed to with participants.

### Chapter 3: Officers on interactions with Citizens

This chapter addresses police officers' views on whether (and how) the race of the officer affects interactions with citizens on the street. The topic could not be more important in studies of the police because so much effort has been made to diversify police forces and because so much research suggests that this diversification has had surprisingly little impact on officers' interactions with citizens. A key rationale for increasing the number of African American police officers was that these officers would *improve* police relations with members of the minority community (Sun 2003).

Several statistical studies suggest that these hopes have been dashed, because the race of the officer seems to have no significant bearing on police decisions (Riksheim 1993, Brooks 2001, Council 2004a). This is so for two reasons. The first is that black officers are socialized into policing, and this socialization generates a common approach to interactions with members of the public. Scholars continue to find that the only color of police officers is "blue," meaning that wearing the uniform and being socialized into policing shape's an officer's role (Moskos 2008). The second reason is that officers' actions are powerfully influenced by the behavior of the person they confront. Thus, the more seriously the person has violated the law, the more likely is the officer to arrest the person, regardless of the race of the officer. The more disrespectful is the demeanor of the person, the more likely the officer is to act punitively toward the person, again regardless of the race of the officer.<sup>3</sup> In keeping with the work of Maynard-

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<sup>3</sup> To be sure, some research suggests that black officers act *more* punitively. Brown and Frank, in quoting Walker and Katz, note that there is evidence that black officers have had an unintended negative consequences in police-citizen interactions (Brown and Frank 2006). More specifically, this research suggests that black officers are more likely to arrest black citizens (Alex 1969; Friedrich 1977) and more likely to be involved in the use of deadly force (Chermak 1993). Moreover, Mastrofski et al suggests white officers are more likely than black officers to get citizens to comply (Mastrofski 1996).

Moody and Musheno, it might be said that police officers, whether white or black, try to help the worthy and punish the unworthy.

Nonetheless, for decades some writers have speculated that black officers think they act differently than white officers (Alex 1969, Black 1976, Bolton and Feagin 2004, Brown and Frank 2006, Moskos 2008). This speculation, however, has not been deeply explored or confirmed. My interviews with police officers show that black officers I spoke with *believe* that they act differently than white officers in ways that truly matter, and my interviews provide an understandable explanation for how and why they may act differently. The foundation for this chapter's analysis is the theory of street-level bureaucracy, as first developed by Michael Lipsky and then substantially modified by Steven Maynard-Moody and Michael Musheno. Lipsky argued that front-line workers in public agencies, which he called "street-level bureaucrats," face tremendous challenges in the work place because the demands for their time and agency service exceed the available resources. Consequently, street-level bureaucrats must make difficult choices on how to distribute government services. They exercise *discretion* over who to help and who not to help. Lipsky argues that their choices are based on self-interest: they try to make their jobs easier and safer. In doing so, street-level bureaucrats remake public policy on the street (Lipsky 1980).

Maynard-Moody and Musheno agree that front-line workers remake policy through their discretionary choices, but they suggest that these choices are based less on self-interest than moral judgment. They suggest that front-line workers allocate time and resources to citizens they deem morally worthy, sometimes at great cost to themselves in terms of time, effort, and even money. In many cases, these front-line workers are willing to make their jobs more dangerous and difficult to satisfy the needs of citizens they deem worthy. Front-line workers put

out less effort for people they deem morally unworthy; they may also use existing rules to punish the unworthy (Maynard-Moody and Musheno 2003). Maynard-Moody and Musheno's thesis at first glance may be seen as consistent with the findings of statistical studies that officers' race has little impact on their interactions with people on the street, but I will argue that it helps to illuminate how officers' race deeply shapes these interactions. My interviews with officers suggest that both black and white officers are influenced by their perceptions of who is worthy and unworthy, but that black and white officers perceive moral worthiness somewhat differently.

The thesis of this chapter is that black officers in my sample have more empathy than white officers for the challenges facing poor black citizens (as well as poor *white* citizens). Black officers in my sample also indicated that they have more empathy for black citizens' distrust of the police. Acting on this empathy, black officers describe deliberate efforts to gain black citizens' trust and avoid unnecessary escalations in encounters with citizens. White officers, by contrast, describe simply responding to citizen distrust in a procedurally neutral fashion. Efforts by black officers to avoid escalation may forestall the need to make an arrest; white officers' procedurally neutral response leads to more arrests. The interviews and narratives presented in this chapter even suggest that, far from empathy, some white officers dehumanize poor blacks – for example, by calling these citizens thugs and gangbangers –whereas black officers are not. Black officers' empathy is shaped by shared experiences of ongoing racism in everyday life that reminds them that even though they are middle-class police officers, they are still black and that many whites still discriminate on the basis of race. This common experience of racism is called “linked fate” by Michael Dawson, and it works to prevent black officers, unlike many of their white colleagues, from giving up on poor black communities.

## **Black citizen distrust of police, and police knowledge of it**

Racial minorities in comparison to whites are much less likely to trust the police and accept the legitimacy of their actions; commonly they believe that police actions are too aggressive and punitive (Kelly and Swindell 2002, MacDonald, Stokes, and Macdonald 2012, Sharp and Johnson 2009, Van Ryzin, Muzzio, and Immerwahr 2004). Blacks' distrust is shaped in part by invasive police procedures such as investigatory stops (Epp, Maynard-Moody, and Haider-Markel 2014), stop and search (Moeckli 2007), and racial profiling (Antonovics and Knight 2004, Dominitz and Knowles 2006, Gelman, Fagan, and Kiss 2007, Lundman 2004, Miller 2006, Moeckli 2007, Stoughton 2011, Williams and Stahl 2008).

*All* police officers, regardless of their race, are very aware that the black community is distrustful of most police officers. Officers also understand that these ill feelings have festered in black communities for decades.

For example, Michelle is a black female lieutenant with almost twenty years on the force. She suggests that the relationship between minorities and officers will always be problematic, because blacks feel hunted. Her story is important, because it provides a rare glimpse into the thoughts of officers on the subject of race and policing. Michelle notes:

Michelle: I'm not originally from Larandia, so it's a little hard for me too when I moved here. People talked this dividing line in the city. And there's this major street called Martin Luther King Boulevard. And, um, the cross street called Ramsey street, and um, people would always say, black people, African Americans don't go past Ramsey. And so, police officers, black police officers would say that, the ones that were from here. So that's where it starts. So if, as you know what I'll say, is that when African Americans did move south, down south, then crime moved there also. So African Americans feel like they were still hunted for lack of a better word. Even as African Americans trickled down to a new area of the city, they were still hunted in those areas. So crime kind of made its way down there. So now it's one of the higher crime areas of the city. So when you have that going



on and African Americans feel like they still have this issue with the police it's like they are following us. Picking us out of the crowd. You know, casing us, whatever, whatever, then I don't know. You know that's a hard one. I will say, I will always say that law enforcement will always follow crime. And unfortunately crime brings us into certain communities more than others. And as long as those two correlations happen, crime - high crime and African American communities; as long as those two correlate then I don't know that it will get better.

Most officers, Michelle included, had a sense that there was a deep-seated mistrust among some citizens within the minority and low-income communities. Brad is a young detective who is half white and half Hispanic. He has been on the force for 2 years. He stated:

SW: How often do you get nasty attitudes from members of the minority community?

Brad: I would say 50% of the time.

SW: Wow that's a lot.

Brad: Um hum, but I see it like, you know they grew up and where they grew up, I mean they hate the police ever since they were kids, so. The majority of them, they don't even know why they hate the police. If you ask then then it's like, cause we just hate the police. And I am like why? Because we hate the police.

SW: Do you think that's regardless of age?

Brad: Oh yeah. Oh yeah. If you interact with this young kid who is nineteen, been locked up a couple of times, and then you interact with this guy who is an old G, been in the pen and all that, he would give you respect because he knows what the game is. This kid is trying to prove himself. So you know for whatever mistakes they have done they think we are responsible. Not them. It's not that they stole the car, it's that we caught them with the stolen car. So it's my fault so that's how they see it.

Chad, a young white detective and has been on the force for six years. Chad indicated that he is occasionally called derogatory names and is accused of stopping citizens because they were black. Chad suggests both white and poor blacks hate the police, but his response to my

follow-on question focused specifically on blacks. Chad went on to describe the dynamics involved with interacting with a younger community that is distrustful of the police.

SW: Going back to the hate, I think you said hate. Do you feel that there was tension between the community and you?

Chad: It was interesting. There was a lot of tension from the younger people. Like in the State street area [the black part of town] for example. A lot of the older people were welcoming to us, actually. But um, a lot of these houses we got to on these calls, typically it was teenagers that were running the household. There were no fathers, so. We are definitely not liked or welcomed by youth twenty five and younger, so. Most of the adults were welcoming, but there were the occasional immature adults that would provoke or promote these perceptions towards the police.

SW: why do you think the younger African American males, was it males and females?

Chad: Both, but typically it's the males we're dealing with. Typically it's not the females that are the problem. Here's what I've kind of noted and think. I don't think, first it's easy to say it could be like a racial thing, but I've noted in research I've done that the average wage for blacks in Larandia versus whites in Larandia. I think they earn like \$10,000 less than the average white family does. So sometimes you might think it's the black youth that's against the police, but I kinda notice, I know the occasional poor white family that I've dealt with seems like the white kids were the same way so I think it's more of a poverty thing. Sometimes, cause there's a lot of disparity in poverty among the city. I can't remember, this was years ago in the city, that I saw an article about how I think the average black family makes over \$10,000.00 less than the average white family. If you went out to like out to Hamlet County, which is a predominately white area, and it's more Billy Bob, or lower class in certain areas. I think you'd have the same problems with white people that you would with black people here. So that's what I've noticed.

Whether minorities feel hunted, as Michelle suggests, or have a sense of hatred for the police as Brad indicates, or poor and minority citizens in general dislike the police as Chad suggests, these interviews reveal that minorities' distrust of the police is powerfully felt by police officers.

Thomas, a white officer who has served on the force for fifteen years, put it powerfully in describing how mistrust of the police spreads in the black community. In this story, an officer was shot and killed in the heart of the African American community. Thomas goes on to describe a sub-culture that he suggests will be very difficult to influence. Thomas describes what he experienced when arriving to the scene after the officer was shot and killed:

Thomas: When we got there the black community starts to come out. This kind of sub-culture as you will. I only had two years on. And I can't tell you. There were probably sixty or seventy people out there. Um, many of them were high fiving, saying it's about time we got one. It's about time one of them got killed. They are always killing us. So how do you change that? You, we, we can't change that. We can't change a mindset within a subculture or a culture. You just can't, when it's been brought to them. You know we've walked into homes where there were posters of black lynchings. I've seen this in two homes. So it wasn't a lot of homes, but I've seen this in two separate homes. So you walk in and there are kids and they are seeing this. Pictures of black and white photos of, you know blacks being killed and stuff. So kids are being brought up and they are looking at that. This is the family room. It's not a library. It's a family room. So how do you change that? I don't think you can change that.

SW: Do you think the mistrust in the black community is ingrained from a young age?

Thomas: Within some families. Without a doubt. There is no doubt in my mind.

### **Empathy versus neutral procedure: How black and white officers respond differently**

This powerfully-felt mistrust sets the stage for deep tensions between officers and black citizens, and every police officer knows this and feels it viscerally. Officers are on edge when interacting with black citizens, knowing that resentment may cause unpredictable escalation.

What I have found is that black officers I interviewed have responded to this realization differently than their white counterparts. When prompted on the differences in the way black and white officers interact with minority citizens, virtually all black officers (16 out of 17

officers: contacts number 1-2, 4, 8-14, 17-19, 24, and 26-27) suggested that black officers in my sample were more empathetic to black citizens and, except for some black officers they described as anomalies, these officers indicated that they felt they deliberately tried to proactively defuse and head off escalations in interactions with black citizens.

By contrast, when I asked white officers the same question, virtually all (8 out of 10 officers: contacts number 3, 5, 7, 15-16, 20-21, and 25) indicated that race was not an issue when interacting with black citizens. I went on to ask Thomas whether there were ever situations in which he would have preferred a black officer take the lead. He stated:

Because of his race? No.

Sandy is a middle aged white female officer. She has been an officer for twenty one years. When asked the same question, she stated:

SW: Does the race of the officer affect interactions with black citizens?

Sandy: Um, in my career, um, not really. I've never had that come up.

Catherine is a young white female sergeant. She has served for twelve years and when asked the same questions stated:

Catherine: You know, none really come out. I've always been pretty good at communicating.

Curt, a young white officer has been on the force for twelve years. When asked whether there were ever situations in which he would have preferred a black officer take the lead, similar to Sandy and Curt, he stated:

Curt: I don't feel a difference, but if a victim of a crime or suspect wants to speak solely to a black officer and refuses to speak to me after I've explained myself, or the other officer has explained the situation. We are both policeman. That's all we are. We are not race. We come in a blue

uniform. You know, we are blue. We are not black, white, yellow, or green. We are blue. Um after that then that's what they want to do, if that creates an easier situation then that's what we go by.

Tina, a white female lieutenant is older and has been on the force for twenty years after working for several years in a different profession. Her thoughts on the same question were similar, but equally revealing. Tina stated:

Tina: Again, we don't have any procedures in place for dealing with a particular segment of the community. I mean, because ok. We can say that if you are going to deal with the Hispanic community here are some warning words, you know that are hostile towards police. Ok. Um, we can say if you are Bosnian, there is that. We can't say that about African Americans. You know. We are the same. American. We speak the same language. It's not like we have warning words. And so, procedures in place. No, we don't have any.

Brad is a mixed officer of Caucasian and Hispanic descent. He has been on the force for two years. When asked about how it was patrolling in predominantly black areas, he responded:

Brad: People like to be talked to like they are five years old. But, that can be understandable. For, I guess the way the situations are now. So far I don't have any complaints. I deal with a lot of low income people ninety-five percent of the time. So I'm kind of used to their behavior. And what they want so.

Thus, white officers assert that the race of the officer rarely mattered and when it did, it was based on the actions of the *citizens*, not the officer. I found that many of these white officers truly believed that they did not consider race when interacting with minorities. Moreover, I did not get the perception that these officers were racist or did not care about the feelings of the minority community. They did, however, present their stories as guileless, transactional, and procedural when discussing their interactions with these communities. In fact, many of them were aware that the tension between them and the minority community was very real, but their

perceptions of the problem, unlike the perceptions held by black officers, did not seem steeped in the history between the police and the black community.

Many of the black officers I interviewed indicated, in their own way, that there was a difference in how black officers enforce department priorities. I addressed the same issues with black officers and their response was very different. Q is a black officer that has served over a decade on the force. When asked about being a black officer on the force and interacting with minority communities, he had this to say:

Q: Where do I start. There has been quite a few, just for the simple fact of being a black officer. Up north [in the black part of the city], you have your stereotype, of you know we'll be able to handle it differently. We'll be able to... And I truly believe that. Only for the simple fact that it depends on what type of person you are first. OK. And first of all yes, I am a black man first. Second I'm a police officer. So, when you've got that mindset and not the reverse, where I am a police officer first then I'm black. I am a black man first. Bottom line.

Q's candor was unexpected, because of the long stream of research suggesting the only color in policing is blue. What I would later find is that Q's feelings were not an anomaly but widely shared among the black officers with whom I spoke. Many seemed very eager to distinguish themselves from *the only color is blue* style of policing used by their peers. What I sensed was that these officers believed the way they interacted with members of the minority community was very different.

Shirley suggested that an officer's race was a factor because of black citizens' previous experiences with white police officers. To gain a better appreciation for what she was saying, I asked her more directly:

SW: So in your experience you think the race of the officer always matters?

Shirley: Yes, yes.

SW: Why is that?

Shirley: I can't really answer that. Um, I can't answer, because you do have you know a lot of black people out here that would rather deal with a black officer than a white officer. Even if the white officer is nice as the day is long. But because they had a run in with another white officer that they felt was just totally disrespectful...cause on a lot of scenes and in a lot of cases I have to always tell them this officer is not like that officer, I mean someone being white. All the time I have to say that.

Nate's explanation illuminated how black officers respond differently than white officers to this pervasive mistrust by black citizens. Nate is a black officer and has been on the force for over eighteen years. Nate was emphatic that black and white officers have approaches to policing. Nate stated:

Nate: We look at policing totally different. And we do. They look at it, and I'm talking about whites, and like I said I'll be just as candid and blunt, because this is more and more times... I've seen this over and over again. They come in the neighborhood, these neighborhoods, your black neighborhoods, and you can see the difference in the way they treat the citizens, as opposed to the way they treat citizens in the white neighborhoods.

Nate: Black neighborhoods, basketball is a major pastime. And it's nothing wrong with it at all. Nothing wrong with it, but... And it's just not only a police issue, I'll have to tell you the caveat with this because I'm ma tell you this example. But we have a responsibility to the entire community. So we see them post their basketball goals out on the street. And you've seen them, the portable goals. And it's on the street. So a lot of those areas in north Larandia, the houses are designed so where they don't have the big driveway or even if it's a backyard. I was telling you how the public services are. The alleyways are unpaved. They are not smooth. They are actually very hazardous to be thinking you are going to go out there and play around in the back of the house and have fun. No, they can't do it. Cobblestone and grass. So you're not going to put a basketball goal back there. So most of them will put them in the street and kids go play. So we get calls from the neighbors of course and it's like "hey they are playing basketball here and I don't want the ball to hit my car." OK, I got it. I can understand that. I would be of the same way and you would too. So I can understand that. Um, that's one aspect of it. But the other is an officer is riding down the street and see this and say they say no, you got to take that

down. But the way they do it. White officers go tear the thing down. Tear it apart. You can't have it here. And really, tear it apart. Really.

SW: Can you do that?

Nate: No. But you see they do different things. And who is going to say anything? Who is going to challenge it, because the threat is you should be getting arrested for this because it's impeding the flow of traffic. So instead we are going to break it down so you don't play it again. But when those white kids are out there playing roller hockey. Street hockey with those little PVC goals in the street. They're not taking those goals, banging them down and tearing them apart, and breaking them up and so forth. It's just not happening. That's one way to look at it.

What Nate was describing was the different ways officers choose to police. Scholars have suggested that the race of the officer may have only limited effects on interactions with members of the public, because these interactions are shaped, in part, by departmental enforcement priorities that have authority over individual officers. More specifically, Epp et al suggest the disproportionate level of contact with minority citizens is the product of institutionalized practices, not the decision of the officer (Epp, Maynard-Moody, and Haider-Markel 2014). Interestingly, officers with whom I spoke confirmed that departmental procedures indeed do greatly shape officers' actions. For the most part they are required to follow departmental enforcement priorities. Nonetheless, black officers I interviewed emphasized that their white peers enforce these policies differently in poor and minority communities versus middle and upper class areas. More specifically, black officers voiced genuine concern with how aggressive some officers are when policing poor minority communities.

To further examine the extent to which an officer's race mattered in interactions with the black community, I asked black officers to describe the qualities that black officers have that are particularly helpful when interacting with members of the minority community. All black officers (17/17) said that compared to white officers, they have a better ability to communicate



with the minority community and a better understanding of how to best interact with these citizens, as has been reported in other literature. However, black officers' stories revealed that they perceived their role differently when policing black neighborhoods. These officers did not describe their interactions with black citizens as transactional; i.e. that they simply respond according to defined procedures to a call for service. Instead, they used words such as empathy, sympathy, and respect. Black officers' stories, like the story told by Michelle in the introduction, suggested that they empathize with the issues facing the black community more than non-black officers. Moreover, black officers did not share the sense of hopelessness that Thomas, the white officer, had when describing how to improve the situations between the black community and the police.

While many white officers' stories revealed a sense of deliberate detachment from the interaction, many black officers told stories conveying a sense of emotional involvement in their interactions. Some also voiced their frustration at the tension between officers and the community. Most black officers emphasized the level of crime committed by black offenders, but the stories they told suggested that they were not ready to give up on these communities. They emphasized that they are still looking for ways to bridge the gap between citizens and the department. Indeed, black officers presented their stories like they were actively looking for answers on how to bridge that gap. They tie some of the tension to systemic issues facing the black community. Michelle had this to say:

Michelle: I have worked with some programs where um, the students are given free bus passes; sponsorship to pay tuition, and all of those things that I thought people would show up in droves. And then to work with those programs, and see that even though, despite being given a bus pass, despite being given sponsorship with free tuition to some of these programs and things like that, people weren't coming. I mean African Americans weren't showing up to be trained. And to do all of this. So I started recognizing all of this. That's not just an issue. It's one that delves deep into the family.

And the family dynamics have to change in order for somebody to be able to accept that gift of education, or learning a trade. So I think that I've been educated in that there is just not a one-step answer. It's so systemic that it's not going to take not one program, not two programs, but an entire network to help what's going on in society right now.

Q mentioned that his most memorable experience was working in the black community, specifically with middle aged youth and the elderly. Q stated his most memorable experience in policing:

[I] was coaching the PAL leagues, which is our police athletic league. I was coaching 6<sup>th</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> grade, or no six through eight year olds. That was one of my most memorable because it was great to get these kids out there and get them involved and not out here running around, even at that age. If they don't have anything to do then they are not being productive they are being counterproductive so they are going to be out there doing things that they don't need to do. That was a great experience. I did that for two years, with the different kids and to see them now. You know I did that ten years ago so you got these six, seven, eight year olds now they are sixteen - seventeen years old; still playing ball; still into sports; still not getting into trouble. You know that's a great accomplishment. You know, to know I had some influence. I'll see some of them and they'll call me up – hey, you remember such and such. Yeah, I remember him. Well here he is now. He's fifteen. You know and he is doing great and that's the best part. Going to the community meetings and interacting with and I say some of the elderly and the older people in the community is a big thing for me because a lot of them are so head strong. What I call old school. They are not bowing down to the neighborhood despite all that's going on around them. They are still holding their ground. They are still holding it down. That is very you know positive on my part. I will see them and they'll be welcoming, you know come on in hang out and they'll talk. They'll tell you everything you need to know. And they'll tell them. This is my house. You know and these people worked hard for these homes. Some of them paid them off. They are not going anywhere. You know what I am saying. That's a major part so that's what keeps the community going. You know despite that you've got run down houses over here. And you got nuisance properties over here. They are still holding down the neighborhood.

Black officers in my sample suggested that these empathetic feelings have some impact on how they chose to police. In assessing their statements, I find that black officers give some consideration to what impact their decision has not only on the individual, but the black community as a whole. Rosa, a middle aged black female, suggests she identified with how citizens feel when being mistreated by the police.

Rosa: I wouldn't want an officer coming into my house disrespecting me, and talking to me like I am crazy

Nate suggests that white officers interact with black citizens somewhat differently than how these officers interact with citizens in middle and upper class neighborhoods. He portrayed his peers as aggressive and confrontational in poor black neighborhoods. Nate stated:

Nate: It's very common to see any day, you go up in north Larandia and see black guys spread out over the car. Being patted down. Sitting on the curb hand-cuffed. I am all for it. Ok, be safe, but you don't see that in South Larandia. The moment I start roughing up somebody that's white, got em over the car patting them down, a white sergeant commander come say "hey, hey, hey. Relax! Calm down! They are ok. Just sit him down." They want to be Professional now - and those are the differences - the disparities that you see in our approaches.

Black officers indicated that they have witnessed the disparities between how black and white citizens are treated by non-minority officers, and these experiences have altered the way they choose to police. Many officers suggested a basic call for service involving black citizens could quickly spiral out of control, depending on whether a minority officer was at the scene. For example, Shirley, a black female officer who has served on the department for twenty two years, describes why she feels the need to be present and vocal in situations involving black

citizens and white officers in order to de-escalate situations with the potential to become a spectacle:

Shirley: Because you have more white officers on the department than blacks, I knew that, um, when you go to these scenes, you got to be pretty much visible and very outspoken. Um, one particular story, I remember several, but one particular story. We had gotten a call for a, um, suspicious individuals. And basically it was a bunch of black males on vacant property on the lots drinking. And so I knew I pretty much better get there first before some things go down. And what I mean by that is um, white officers showing up just being totally disrespectful to the individuals that was there. So, I got there and um, I of course asked for other assistance, but I basically took the scene over. I told everybody what was going to take place, how it was going to take place. We didn't want any problems, so don't try to give anybody any problems. If you wanted, be up front and let us know you wanted. And we'll determine if we're going to take you in for what you're wanted for. But if you lie, that's an automatic. You're going in. So, um, it was literally about eighteen or nineteen individuals out there we had to go through, run checks. And um, you have a few little folk with some small bench warrants, but they told you so we didn't trip off of it. We just explained to them how to go about getting them taken care of. So they don't always have to see the police and be afraid. And so, um, at that time the lieutenant was white, a couple of white sergeants.

Several scholars have argued that black officers have a unique advantage of having lived an experience (Barlow and Barlow 2000) or distinct abilities (Sklansky 2006) that make it easier for black officers to interact with citizens of similar background. Shirley's story suggests precisely how shared experience or background matters: it leads black officers to understand why many black citizens distrust the police, and to not simply react punitively to the disrespect that often accompanies this distrust. Shirley, Nate, Louis, Michelle, Q, and the other black officers indicated that they felt the need to counterbalance the experiences that black citizens have with the police, because many officers had become so disrespectful and aggressive in their interactions with black citizens. This officer goes on to explain that her goal when interacting with the minority community is to reduce the probability that a simple call for service involving black citizens would spiral out of control. Shirley expressed the need to be vocal in situations

described in her story, because of her previous experience seeing routine situations become major incidents. She went on to say that:

Shirley: All of the guys were very thankful. The guys that we had to deal with. All of them were very respectful and thankful that nobody didn't, you know was very thankful that didn't nobody try to dog them out or trying to cuss em out, or make them sit on the ground. You don't have to sit on the ground. I don't need you to sit on the ground. Just stand up, keep your hands where we can see them and we're gonna go from there.

Although Shirley described a few more details of the case, I asked a pointed follow-up question to gain a better appreciation for what she was suggesting.

SW: Do you think it would have been different if it was all white officers?

Shirley: Oh yeah, you would've had folks been slammed. Would a had a person, like the person that had a simple warrant, it was just a simple warrant for, I wanna say like driver's license, or running a stop sign or something like that. That person would have ran. Then you would've had one of the white officers running after them. Then you would've had a big foot pursuit going through the district. And, you know, it just would have been like, been like *why*? You didn't have to go through all of that?

SW: Why would the person have run?

Shirley: Because they said the white officers are just nasty and mean to them. Hit on them. You know. They'd rather not have any kind of dealings with them they just run. You know.

Although many black officers indicated that policing was done differently in the minority communities versus the middle and upper class areas, they officers suggested that until they were assigned to white neighborhoods later in their careers they were unaware of this. They reported that after being assigned to white neighborhoods they discovered that department policies were being enforced much more vigorously in minority and low income areas than in in middle and upper income areas.

Louis is an older black officer. He is currently a lieutenant and has served on the force for twenty years. He suggested that his peers had different ways in which they would enforce department priorities. Louis stated:

Louis: In this area, you know, I have mostly always worked in areas that have been predominantly black. And, if I'm stopping cars, guess what? Most of the people I stop are going to be black. Um, um, it becomes an issue when I start to start stopping people just because they are black. I remember I had a, he's no longer with the department, but when I was a younger officer we used to sit at a particular stop sign. And this um, white guy runs the stop sign and so I get behind him and I stop him and run the investigation. And this guy, I'm getting my ticket book ready and my partner says oh, you're messing with the tourist, huh. And I kind of lit him up later, but I could kind of see what he meant by that. You know. I'm messing with. Well he didn't feel that I should be writing a ticket for a white guy when we wrote tickets for black people running the stop signs all the time.

Previous research suggests that minorities were recruited to patrol the ghettos of citizens with similar demographics. Black officers I interviewed suggested their views of policing changed when they patrolled in other areas. Nate states:

Nate: It's a major difference. So it's predominantly black there and that's all I knew. And you are out there, knock down drag out. Kicking butt, taking names. It's all acceptable and no one is going to ask any questions. Even if you have a shooting, everybody is going to rally behind your and be on your side.

SW: Specifically in the north [an area that is over 98% black]?

Nate: Yes Sir. So until I started working the south side, and I started seeing....wait a minute, you guys are treating these guys different. You get a shoplifter, or you get this or you get that. You're not always locking them up like you do the blacks up here, you know. The only time they would cut them a break here is if it was something they didn't want to be bothered with or it's a crap case, or taking up my time and I don't feel like dealing with it. Um, but I told you I could be aggressive at times. Especially in my earlier days as a policeman. Very aggressive, very hands on. And direct and it's like. I'm a problem solver. This is how we're going to solve problems. And you think you're going to get ready to choke a white person or body slam them. Man, they'll stop you so fast. I was in this one white folk's house.

I'll never forget it. The teenage was wanted for all kinds of stuff. And it was word that he was living in his grandma's house. Over in the white area. I'll never forget this one white sergeant I told you about.

Nate: So we go in her house and she answers the door. And we're looking for this felon. And sure enough she's on an oxygen tank, breathing though. And she's like they been here all day here looking for him. And I'm like ok, ma'am, good and I'm looking through, looking all over the place and she's like what are you doing. And this is old white granny. Martha, now. So the white sergeant says ok [officer's name omitted]. I'm like, wait a minute, I'm still. He might be.

Nate quoting his partner: I don't think he's here.

Nate: We haven't even searched the basement. We haven't searched the upstairs.

Nate quoting his partner: I don't get that feeling. I don't think he's here. Let's just go. We'll just catch him another time.

Nate: I'm like you son of a gun. You know. That's what you get.

But only mid-grade and senior officers with experience in different areas of the city had learned this lesson. Officers that have only patrolled one area, such as the north did not see the disparity, until they gained exposure to other areas. One older black officer, Billy, thinking back over the years, had this to say:

Billy: When you are a younger officer I don't think you look at in as black or white. You are just out there trying to be the police you know. You know, I'm the police and you're trying to have fun and clean up the world. Um, start getting a little time on, between your experience, the number of years you've worked and what you see out here and you see how people are treated it kind of changes your whole mentality on things.

SW: How would you say your perception of being a minority officer has changed over the years?

Billy: I think we have taken some strides in the right direction. Unfortunately there is a culture amongst a lot of the white officers that no matter what, you know, they are going to treat black citizens a certain way, even black officers a certain way. A good buddy of mine, he's a boxing promoter now, boxing trainer now, we went through the police academy together, and he describes it as big game hunting. That a lot of these, um

white officers, um that's what they are doing. They're big game hunting and they are hunting black males.

SW: Is that um, when you say that are you referencing going after the big catch or just going after a specific demographic?

Billy: A certain demographic. Me, I hope I can get through my whole career without having to shoot anyone. You hear around here, you hear a lot of talk, you know it's like it's a badge of honor to have to shoot someone and I don't look at it that way. And um, one guy, he even goes around bragging about the number of people he's shot, which to me is crazy, but you know I've been in situations in which I could've pulled the trigger and I didn't. And I'm glad I didn't.

SW: Do you think in circumstances like that race does matter, race of the officer matters?

Billy: Absolutely. Absolutely. You don't. Very seldom do you hear black officers going around talking like that. Um, this one officer, he is named the "rifleman", a carbine, in the sergeant's corps because it's the only carbine that's ever been used to shoot somebody. He's even tried to buy the carbine from the police academy. So!

What was especially striking is that, at least in the perception of black officers, white officers have little empathy for poor *whites* either. Jim, a Hispanic officer, suggested:

Jim: You'll get a person that will go out on the street, and they are following all the rules, but they are being a d[\*\*]k about it. There is no thing you can do, they are just being cold, like a machine. And they don't realize that you can be replaced by a machine if you are going to be like that.

Jim: The bottom line is this. A cop can go out there, follow every single rule, and still be an a[\*\*]hole, you see what I mean because they have some indifference in them. And that can come based off biases.

Wesley (Wes) is a detective who is black. He has been on the force for over fifteen years. His perception on the differences in how black and white officers enforce department priorities is based on biases, similar to what Jim suggested:



Wes: The black officers don't seem to bring in some of these cultural biases that the white officers do. For example, the white officers kind of call the poor white in south Larandia as Billy Bob. Now I've never heard a black officer refer to a poor white person in south Larandia as a Billy Bob. Now I think that a lot of white officers bring in all these biases that the black officers don't necessarily bring in. Now the black officers don't necessarily see poor white in the south side through some economic lenses that the white officers do. You know! They don't. I've never heard a black person refer to a poor white person as a Billy Bob. So I think that most citizens in Larandia get better service, better treatment from the black officers than they do they white officers, because they're not bring all these biases, these um, biases into the interaction.

One theory of why black and white officers police differently was suggested to me by black officers. Jim stated:

Jim: I mean you look at the military. They use words like skinny or haji or something like that. It's to dehumanize them. In law enforcement you call somebody a gangbanger. That's dehumanizing them. You know, so they can do what they need to do if they have to. I think in law enforcement that officer doesn't get to ride around in the close to suburban or low crime areas. He has to see it day in and day out so he's gonna have that mentality.

Jim's point was that it was a lot easier to police if you dehumanize citizens so that officers can distance themselves from the citizens, especially in the high crime areas. In analyzing all of the stories officers told by officers of all race, I find that black officers are less able to *dehumanize* black citizens when compared to their counterparts. Shared culture is certainly one aspect, but black officers never mentioned sharing the same culture, music, style of dress, or similar communication dialect. They did, however, suggest they believed in displaying empathy. When discussing the traits that black officers have that are helpful when dealing with the black community, these officers stressed fairness. They focused on themes such as "not every black person is guilty," or not "judging people," and "fairness." They seemed to focus on treating people how they would want to be treated.

Bret is a middle aged white male, and his observations are a rare acknowledgment by a white officer of the dynamic described here. Bret is the civilian instructor who has the responsibility to conduct the annual racial profiling class required by State law. He is also responsible for training new officers at the Academy on the same subject and has served in this capacity for nine years. Bret spoke extensively on how the perceptions of non-black officers, particularly officers that have little to no exposure working in environments that are over predominantly black, are formed so easily. In his mind, it is very difficult for officers to not generalize based on their experiences prior to joining the force and the areas they currently patrol. He stated:

Bret: We have a district called the eighth. The eighth is 99.27% black. And in fact, it's debatable whether there are any white residents at all. But here's what kind of a not unusual scenario is. So you might have a white kid from Adams County, North Dakota. And he goes to the Army, and he goes to Fort Campbell, KY. Serves his time, decides he wants to come into law enforcement and then he comes here. And, he's never lived in a city. And he gets assigned out of the police academy to the eighth district. So in his class of 35, he'll have met ten black recruits, and he'll have met some people in the Army. So it's not like he hasn't had any exposure to diversity, but statistically, we are sending him to the eighth district where the median household income is about \$10,000 and he's only going to the houses that are trouble. So his first year he's going to accrue this sample. Of the first 1,000 African Americans he meet, ten will be from his academy class, there will be a few Army buddies, but the vast majority will be people that he locked-up, arrested. Left to his own devices, that kid is going to draw some erroneous conclusion about what's going on. Unless he's a statistician, and an academic, and a social scientist, he's not going to understand that he's looking at a biased sample. He's looking at a non-random sample and he's going to think at the end of that year that – gosh black people are crazy. That's the conclusion he's going to draw, left to his own devices. The only thing that will stop him from drawing that conclusion is not what we say in class, but it needs to be his peers.

Many of the officers described how some officers have a hard time not developing the mindset that “everybody is guilty” and developing a perception based on the frequency of

contact with minority and low income areas. In fact, nineteen officers (contacts 1-2, 4-6, 8-14, 17-20, 22-23, and 25) spoke at length about how it's hard for some officers to not develop this perception, because of the repeated and negative contacts with citizens of a particular socio-economic class. In fact, it was the majority of white officers that provided rich details about how many officers life experiences are very different from the poverty stricken areas they now experience in low income neighborhoods. Thomas, a white officer, stated:

Thomas: It wasn't necessarily black. It was the poverty more than anything. Going into homes, and it wasn't in every home, of course, but it was very common to see cockroaches on walls. And I'm not talking about one cockroach quickly scurrying up. I'm talking dozens, upon dozens. We've even been in house when people have laughed. You're with us here and the cockroaches. You'd here that and again, it's like, wow. I grew up just fifteen minutes away and we didn't have cockroaches. There were cockroaches all over this kitchen wall. And again, it wasn't every call, but it was common. And when you deal with that, all day long, call after call, day after day, week after week, and year after year. In looking back at it now, you look back at the violence and the poverty and think wow, how did I like, mentally, am I really? And I think the biggest thing that hits me is that I'm not in a third world country. I am just fifteen minutes away from where I live.

Nate suggests that this loss of empathy after many negative interactions with poor black citizens is not entirely unique to white officers. In fact he suggests many officers struggle with the repeatedly negative interactions officers have with the minority community day after day. Nate, in reflecting on a story from his earlier days, suggests even he didn't notice how he was less sympathetic until his partner, who was also black, scolded him. He recalled a story about a black female working the streets in the cold that he just arrested. The context of his story was an initial arrest for prostitution. Nate and his partner had argued for several minutes about why the officer kept his window down in freezing temperatures. Nate complained that the citizen smelled so bad that he kept the windows open to get the smell out of the car, despite the cold air

freezing her in the back seat. As he told the story, he suggested that his partner was scolding him for being like “them,” meaning white officers who were unsympathetic. In describing his partner’s words he stated:

Nate: Sometimes it takes someone like that to snap you back to reality, to put you in check. I’m like you know what, you’re right. You are right, you are absolutely right. Despite of what she did, despite of this that and the other, she is still a human being. And when he put it like that it kind of snapped me into perspective. But you don’t see that from, that same um, empathetic, or nah, I won’t even say empathetic in that regard, that’s sympathetic, approach from some officers, commonly whites on black citizens. It’s like hey I don’t care.

Both black and white officers observed that working in these neighborhoods is considered punishment for the officer. And this punishment sometimes impacts the attitude that officers have when interacting in these communities. Jim’s stated:

Jim: Because of cultural differences you want somebody that shows up at your house that maybe understands cultural differences and that’s not gonna be all of a sudden judgmental on you. When you are looking at a single mother that’s working three jobs to get these kids through you don’t want somebody showing up at your doorstep already hating you because you are on welfare.

Nate describes how he believes officers’ attitudes change based on this dynamic. He was describing a story, which is still under investigation, in which officers chased a suspect and eventually shot him. This was in the heart of the black community. Nate indicated there were still a lot of questions about what happened and went on to say:

Nate: The officers were seen on video from their in-car camera pulling out assault rifles that are not authorized by the department. So they in turn, during the interview process are actually disclosing that hey, we were giving instructions and support from our supervising officers to enter these areas with these types of weapons. We were authorized. We were given permission; granted approval from our sergeant and lieutenant to carry these weapons. And our sergeant, he even carries one. So that raised a lot of concern in the department. So it’s like excuse me. Just for a supervisor, a supervising commander to endorse that type of behavior it’s sending a

message that hey, now that you're in the northern district now you are in a war zone. And that's the mentality. That's definitely not my mentality.

SW: So you really think there is a difference in how police officers patrol the northern district?

Nate: Absolutely! You are in a war zone. That empathy, for the most part, isn't present. It isn't present from the white officers for the most part, when interacting with black citizens. And I'll just use those terms black and white for right now. You don't see it to where, you know I told you before the number of instances where there are white on black shootings, white officer on black citizen shootings. They are definitely much higher than white on white shootings. But then I can also um, conversely probably say the same thing about black on black shootings versus black on white shootings as well. I could say that, but that could be, I think I may have mentioned that to you before as well, but when a black officer shoots a black citizen for whatever reason, and of course I call him a suspect or a criminal, it may have been warranted, but there is an emotional stress, an emotional strain that follows that.

Billy recalls the response from one of his colleagues and how policing in these neighborhoods have affected officers' views:

Billy: I think a lot of the white officers lack compassion or understanding, you know. There was a guy in my police academy class. And if you know Larandia, you know Larandia, especially years ago, was very segregated. Um, he had never been North of Shalimar, which is kind of like the boundary. So when he found out he was coming north to police in a black neighborhood, he literally had tears in his eyes. Um, but my point being, he had never had any dealing with, maybe one or two in school or something, but he never had any dealings with the black community. So, people like me and a lot my other black officers around here grew up in these neighborhoods and we show a lot of compassion.

Seven officers (contacts one, eight, ten, twenty-two, twenty-three, twenty-five, and twenty six) described how some officers lacked the empathy needed to do their job in these communities. They also indicated that a lack of empathy was one reason why minorities have such poor interactions with the police. They suggested many officers developed a certain

“mindset” after patrolling in that are classified as low income and high crime – those similar to the officer contact number ten described as “rifleman.”

The stories told by white officers were different. Because white officers know black citizens are distrustful of the police, white officers seemed willing to escalate a situation faster when compared to black officers. Thomas, a white officer, stated:

Thomas: If you are going to resist, if you are going to behave in a manner that the norms of our culture dictate that you are outside the behavioral bounds then you are going to get locked up. If you are emotional, yelling, screaming or acting foolish you are going to get locked up. And again, it doesn't matter if you are white or black. It's the behavior. It's not the color of the skin. It's the behavior.

Me. Did you get a lot of that in your career?

Thomas: Some of these guys it's all they know. It's just what they know. They don't know any different. And so I don't know. As officers you can't change that attitude. As officers you can police it. You can, like you know suppress that behavior. Hey you are not going to be on this block, but the thing is you have all these working folks that are there for whatever reason and they don't want to deal with that. So to me, yeah, it comes down to a certain culture. And a set of behavior or patter within a culture or subculture.

Catherine, a white female sergeant shared sentiments that were similar to Thomas':

Catherine: Communication is huge. You know we work in a job where we can say sir can you sit down I need to talk with you. And it works for you. You know. Yes ma'am I'll sit right down. Because this uniform or a uniform means something. In a community, in some other communities I have to get dirty, I have to use words that people don't want to hear, but once I get past that barrier then I can communicate with you after that, then it's a different ball game. You have to learn how to turn it off and turn it on?

However, black officers believed that white officers often misinterpret black citizens' communication. Michelle, an older black female, speaking on the topic added the fact that many

white officers are uncomfortable with how minorities communicate with their body language.

She had this to say:

Michelle: There is a difference in communication style. I believe we as African Americans are much more emotional at expressing ourselves. And so when you go on a scene, because I am passionate about something in what I am saying doesn't mean I'm aggressive. And so it really takes, um, particularly people who have not been around African Americans, it takes a while for them to get them to understand that. Some may never get that. That, because I'm loud, because I'm moving my hands, because I'm in your face; I'm trying to get you to "get it". You know what I'm saying. You know what I'm saying man [as she mimics a typical situation]. I mean when you see and hear and feel all that going on, they take it as aggression. And I think that's the biggest misunderstanding that happens in communication. And so when they see that, the situation is much different to them, to some and they believe the person is aggressive and make them want to put them in handcuffs a little faster. And say you must be the problem person, because you are much more aggressive right now in communicating with me. Um, things like that so I think that how I see that come to the surface. In communication style.

Ike, a black officer, suggested that officers were "out here talking to people like they are crazy." He also suggested that the approach some officers use when interacting with the minority community is unbelievable. Ike stated:

Ike: When I show up on the scene, some officers change their approach. Black and white, but mainly white, because they know that I am outspoken and they know that I won't stand for them disrespecting or treating folks badly. Now if you have to put cuffs on them or arrest them, that's fine, but treating people like they are sub-human...I won't have that.

Ike: Now I've had people on the streets come to me and say officer such and such, man he is something else, man. He's out here always riding down on us man. He uses the N word. He does this and he does that. Once you start hearing it from more than three or four people, it's pretty much like... We look at it like the streets don't lie.

Black officers also indicated that black officers sometimes use less force than white officers. For example, telling a story about white officers using a taser on an elderly black grandmother, Nate stated:

Nate: Kind of like the grandma that was sixty, no seventy something year old grandma. A team went in, arrested her grandson, something like that, and she was asking questions. Why?

SW: this is a black family

Nate: Yeah, it was a black family and white police officers. And then they tased her!

SW: They tased her?

Nate: Yeah, they tased her! A seventy year old woman. And the use of force policy was changed because of that. Because that made the news of course. There was no justification for that. A frail seventy year old grandmother. You mean to tell me that even if she was interfering you couldn't set her down, unless she had a gun. You know some of these grandmas will carry a – have their little pistols or side piece. It was nothing like that.

SW: Was this a white officer that tased her?

Nate: Yes.

SW: Do you think the situation would have been different if a black officer was accompanying them?

Nate: Yes. Yes, especially if it was an assertive one. Like me, oh no. It wouldn't have happened. Cause they know. It just wouldn't have happened. Different ones know what they can get away with, with whom. You know, so no, it wouldn't have happened. That's what I was telling you before about the uh, different commanders you were asking about.

He went on to say:

Nate: You don't see the level of white citizens getting shot that you see blacks. A lot of discretion is used before they pull that trigger on a white person. I'm just saying. They got guns too. And they're getting arrested too. But the force, level of force and things, it just ain't happening. You don't see the level, the incidents, the level of instances where white



prisoners are dying in custody as opposed to black prisoners dying in custody. I think there's something to that that needs to be looked at a little closer. And of course I looked at it once and inquired about it and they were like, why are you nosing around with my stuff. I'm just like hey, I'm just asking a question. Why is it that we're always imposing this excessive force on a certain demographic group? Now if it's legitimate and it's right, I'm ok with it. But once you got the guy contained and hand-cuffed then you don't have to stay on his back, and put your knee it his - you know smash his lungs and ribs. Some of these people are on highs and stuff. I understand you might have to get aggressive at times. And I've gotten aggressive at times. Plenty of times. Had to use deadly force before. It happens. But, you got to be justified. But even it that. When a white person kills a black it's almost like a um, you, you, you get a medal for it. And, um, what, what is that you call it, a sort a like a um, um some sense... a trophy. Like a trophy or, you know an award. Like, I got one. I got a kill. But when a black has to kill one it's like man, it's devastating to them. You know it's like, hey, they take that emotionally.

The officer went on to describe how a black female officer, Monique, was still suffering as a result of a justified deadly shooting she carried out a few years back. What he concluded was that Monique suffered tremendously because she took one of her own. Much like Billy described, some officers celebrate killing "one" while others truly feel the remorse of taking the lives of a citizen, no matter how justified the shooting.

Jim stated:

Jim: Within our agency is there a race problem? Yes, there is a race problem. There is a group that doesn't believe that minorities can run things. And that's because it's old time policing. That old school policing, whether it's here or New York City, LA; there's an old time group that...that...they have a party every year and that's I killed a black guy party. You know they use the N word for that, you know. There's an old school group out here and they run those streets.

The majority of black officers felt a sense of pride when policing these communities and made decisions based on empathy they associated with shared culture and their experiences of how blacks are treated unfairly by police as a whole. Consider Shirley's story, where she goes

out of her way to help black people out, because she knows “the injustices” blacks receive when it comes to outcomes. She specifically stated:

Shirley: When I first came out for me, I was out to try and help everybody. It didn't matter, but I do go that extra mile to help somebody black. Even more so because I see how they don't get the same, they just don't get the same justice out here. They just don't. I see how some white officers when they go and they look at people's properties and they want to give them summonses because of their grass. But I've seen how they go to someone white's house and they grass can be the same and they won't say nothing to them. You know, so for me, I will sit there and I will let somebody know you gonna have to get that grass cut, or don't walk that dog without having a bag so you can pick up the poop because you will get summons for it. You know. I've just seen how some people are just not treated fairly.

Nate also described a story in which Lillian, a black lieutenant, refused to arrest a seventeen year old for crashing into a car while driving under the influence. Lillian instead directed the sergeant to call the child's mother. She did not want to ruin the kid's future. Nate stated that Lillian refused to arrest the young black kid because she would not be a participant in an injustice. Lillian went on to describe to Nate how large trucking companies knowingly drive down street they are not authorized, because they are too narrow. She indicated that these trucks do far more damage to vehicles than this kid did. Lillian told this sergeant that they don't write tickets for those big businesses and that she would not ruin a young black child's career for an incident in which white citizens are not ticketed.

Athena, a young black female sergeant has worked for the police department for thirteen years. She spoke about how service delivery was different in predominantly black neighborhoods than white neighborhoods. Athena indicated that squad cars are routinely parked in front of businesses in affluent areas to protect them from being robbed, but similar services are not provided for minority owned businesses in low income areas. Athena stated:

Athena: Do I think that south Larandia gets more, better services than north Larandia? Yes, because north Larandia is the most urbanized area. Your crime is a little bit higher over there. You're south side; you have more of your businesses, um. It's more of your, it's not as much poverty. Crime is everywhere in the city, let me stress that. But I think that the services that you get in midtown Larandia is a little better than what you get in north Larandia. I do believe that it is difference. I think that you know, the business owners in the hill are going to get a little more service than the business at this mom and pop store in north Larandia that's been robbed a hundred times. You know what I'm saying. Not that we're not going to send a car. But I do think the services are a bit different. And working at all three stations I know it is. I know it is. It's unfortunate, but what can you do. My job is when I get that call to give them the same service and the best service possible.

SW: Do you think citizens know that?

Athena: I'm sure. I'm sure. They might not know it to the extent that I know it, because I'm on the department and I see it. They might not know that we got a police car sitting in front of the Sandy's shop, the sausage shop every Christmas during the holiday time so they don't get robbed, versus their Harold's market in north Larandia. They might not know that. I've seen it.

Thus far, black officers described in some detail how they have empathy when it comes to policing minority communities and suggested many of their white peers do not. Billy suggested white officers lack empathy when interacting with black citizens. He also suggested that white officers are more eager to engage in the use of force when interacting in these communities. Nate stated white officers have less empathy, even when it comes to breaking about children's basketball goals or tasing an elderly grandmother. Wes suggested that white officers bring in too many biases, which does not allow them to be objective.

Jim suggests officers dehumanize citizens. Shirley suggested that white officers treat black citizens one way and white citizens another way, causing her to have a greater presence in order to deescalate situations involving black citizens. Moreover, Michelle suggests officers do not understand that blacks are more vocal and passionate. Some officers take that as aggression

and are quicker to use force. Officers provided tantalizing evidence suggesting these officers have reflected a great deal on policing these neighborhoods and that their connection was beyond shared traits. They rarely spoke about their connection with these communities in the context of listening to the same music, or similar style of dress, or any other cultural traditions common in the black community. Thus, I find that shared culture is a factor, but not the predominate factor that distinguishes how black officers and white officers police differently.

### **The source of empathy: linked fate**

I argue that black officers policed differently than their white counterparts because they have *no choice*: their life experiences give them empathy for poor black citizens, and for poor people generally. As will be seen below in Louis' story, officers know that they could very well be on the receiving end of this treatment. As such, they are unable to dehumanize poor black citizens to the same extent of their peers. Moreover, they police differently because they refuse to give up on these communities. This commitment is based on black officers' shared experience of racism in everyday life. Michael C. Dawson, in *Behind the Mule* (Dawson 1994) argues that this shared experience establishes a "linked fate" among African Americans that spans class, education, and other common divides.

There has been an argument among many scholars within the African American community that race becomes less important when minorities ascend to the middle and upper class. There is speculation that the black middle class distances itself from poor blacks based on economic polarization, meaning they begin to form coalitions with other racial groups based on shared economic interests and not race. Thus, some argue that class is the decisive factor, not race that binds groups. However, what Dawson argues is that there are societal prerequisites -

conditions that need to be fulfilled - before this phenomenon becomes realized. His argument is that the rich black man still faces the same racism that a poor black family faces in the eyes of some in American society, and until that changes, the individual preference of many African Americans will be partly shaped by one's ties to the black community. As Dawson suggests, this linked fate traces back to the period of reconstruction, when many blacks lost the right to vote. This was a time in which African Americans became a nation within a nation. He traces the lynching of African Americans through the Jim Crow South and concludes that the many African Americans believe that what happens to the group affects their own lives (Dawson 1994).

This powerful sense of a "linked fate" is what keeps many black officers, unlike their white counterparts, from dehumanizing poor black citizens. These officers understand that there is still a chance that they could face a similar circumstance, despite their official position or socio-economic status.

Louis, an older black lieutenant said:

Louis: I'm nervous when I get stopped by the police now. You know, I live in north county. If I get stopped by the police I'm nervous. I'm really nervous, but

SW: But you are a lieutenant so you shouldn't be nervous!

Louis: You are right. I shouldn't be. I shouldn't be. But, but it's just. And that's what people need to realize. That's what officers need to realize. Hey listen. I am a lieutenant of police. And once those lights hit you! And that. Its... its.... You know, you are nervous.

SW: Well I know I'm nervous, but I never thought you'd be nervous.

Louis: Oh absolutely. Absolutely!

SW: Why is that? You've been on the force twenty five years and you still get nervous?

Louis: Because regardless of who I am, or who I know, nothing can be done until this officer finishes with me. I can't get any help until this officer

finishes with me. This officer may have a thing against black lieutenants. This officer may have a thing against, you know, I mean may just have a things against city police. You know, you just never know. You never know. I think you have to be humble to do this job.

SW: Do you think officers know the power that they have? And I say officers now without regard to race.

Louis: Um, I think they learn it. I think they learn it over time.

Harold is a young black male in his early thirties. He has been on the force for over fourteen years. He described his experience in a store when he was in plain clothes.

Harold: I've run into situations where I'll go to the store and when I came on I was twenty one. And I looked twenty one. I looked young. So I'd have situations where you can kind of see the mistreatment. People watching you. I remember this one instance where I went up to the counter and instead of the female, which she was white, well instead of her putting the change in my hand, she put it on the table. On the counter. And I'm like, well I had to tell her I didn't put my money on the table when I gave it to you so I'd appreciate it if you'd put it in my hand. Well, which she apologized for it. The next time I went in there I was in uniform. She treated me completely different. I was in uniform. And I feel like I shouldn't be treated as a human just because I am a police officer. I should be treated like that regardless.

SW: Do you feel that situations like that affect how you feel as a black officer?

Harold: Oh Yes, because we are all human. And there is no difference. And you take a white female and she lives in the outskirts of North Dakota. Never dealt with blacks before in her life. Well if her first instance with a black person is a bad instance than the next four or five blacks she meets they are going to be bad. And it's the same way, because you have a lot of blacks that come to the police department. They've never dealt with whites or dealt with racism. In a certain aspect. So you deal with a situation like that it kind of puts you on guard when you deal with another white person. So I think it does have an impact on individuals, yeah.

Harold and Louis, like many of the other black officers, left no question that their experience in everyday life affects the way they choose to police black neighborhoods. And the

cumulative stories as told by Nate, Ike, Billy, Shirley, and many other black officers suggest blacks have a linked fate. Lieutenant Louis admits that he still is nervous when he is pulled over—even after serving as an officer for over twenty-five years.

By contrast, White officers suggested race played no role in their interactions with members of the minority community, except when the citizen made it an issue. Moreover, they never mentioned sympathy, empathy, or cultural understanding when I asked what traits were common to all officers. They described themselves as racially neutral and solely concerned with enforcing the law with no regards to historic grievances from any particular segment of the population. White officers described their interactions as a response to a situation. The officer would then use their judgment to adjudicate the situation and then wait for the next call for services. My perception was that these officers thought very little about the transactional interaction after their decision was made.

For example, consider the claim of Obadiah, an older white officer. He indicated that after more than twenty years on the force, he never considered race when interacting with minority citizens. He simply stated “I treat all citizens the same.” No black officer interviewed for this study would find this to be a plausible claim.

### **Punishing disrespect**

While black officers may display empathy more than some of their peers in normal day to day interactions, this empathy has limits. Black officers are as willing to make arrests as their white counterparts when faced with a serious violation of the law, and when faced with a persistently, deliberately disrespectful citizen. Often times the circumstances involved drugs, guns, felony charges or when black citizens were defiant or extremely rude. Most black officers

were very concerned about serious crimes committed by black criminals, particularly those who attack or take advantage of others. Shirley's comments amplify this point:

Shirley: Even when things don't go their way and we have to arrest them for something then the first thing they say is I can't believe you are doing me like that. We all the same. Then we have to break it down to them. Uh, no you committed a crime and I am here to do a job so we are not the same in that aspect.

Often times these stories of confronting serious crime involved an arrest. Black officers' stories in these situations were no different than those told by their peers. Their interactions in these circumstances were procedural and impersonal. Several stories illustrate these points. Apollo is a middle aged black officer. He has served on the department for sixteen years. He told a story when he was on the SWAT team and was faced with making an arrest of a black suspect, who turns out to be a close friend of his. The background of the story is that two members of his SWAT team put together a search warrant for a suspected drug dealer. This officer goes on to describe the details:

So, we go to this guy's house and we execute the search warrant. Um, within the search warrant, they knew the guy by his street name. And I did not know this guy's street name. So we execute the search warrant. We make entry into the house and as we make entry the suspect runs out the back door. He didn't know we got the house surrounded by virtue of what we do. We had already surrounded the house and prepared for him to run out the door. So he runs out the back as we come in through the front. Well he sees that we have officers in the back, so he runs back into the house. And in the motion of doing your search warrant, or taking control of any house or whatever, um, you have members of the team dropping off into empty rooms or unknowns to conduct their searches. And by the time we made it into the kitchen of the suspect's property, um, the suspect was running through the back door. We meet in the kitchen. The suspect and I meet in the kitchen, because I am up, everybody had dropped off or stacked into the different rooms, so I am up and I am making entry into the kitchen. The guy runs back in, we stop in the kitchen. He looks me in the face. I look him in the face, and it's my best friend from High School. You know, we went to homecoming together. He was the quarterback of my football team. I was a running back. So the relationship, you know between a



quarterback and his running back is pretty tight. Um, so, we stand there and I got my MP5 sub-machine gun pointed in his face, telling him to get down on the floor. You know, you have to get on the floor man, because that's what we are here for.

Apollo officer goes on to describe how he ended up arresting this suspect, his best friend from high school. In this particular situation involving contact with a minority citizen, race had no bearing on how officers interact with black citizens. His story, like others suggest that officers turn to training and closely follow procedures. In situations like these, officers have limited or no discretion on the outcome, because they are partially driven by actions that may be beyond the officer's control.

Earlier in this chapter, I shared Shirley's sentiments in which she indicated that she goes out of her way to help black citizens. Her perception, based on her first-hand knowledge, is that black citizens "don't get a fair break." However, Shirley indicated that although she tries to help blacks when she can, the action of the citizen has some impact on how she chooses to use her discretion. Shirley states:

Shirley: I happened to come up on a scene where, um three white officers, and there was this one female, she was cussing them. She was cussing them, cussing them, cussing them. And um, I kind of walked up and I'm the kind of individual that you are not just going to disrespect me or them like that. So I said let's find out what's going on and we'll go from there. So when I came up, I walked up on the scene and um, basically the officers were telling them that they had to move from this liquor store because there was no loitering. And, the one girl wanted to cuss them out and be disrespectful. And I'm sitting back and I'm seeing

SW: These are white officers?

Shirley: These are white officers and letting this black woman, she's in her mid, late twenties mid or upper thirties, and she's cussing them real good. And um, just because they told her to move and told the rest of them to move. They was barely moving [because the other individuals were] listening to her. So I sat there for about a minute, me and my partner, and I said I couldn't deal with it any more. And I jumped out the car and I said

forget this. Put cuffs on her and lock her up for peace disturbance. Because now she was so ignorant that a crowd started. And she looked and the officers were kind of timid. They really didn't know what to do. And they immediately did that and you know, and um, the girl was like I can't believe that. You gonna do that? I was like girl shut up. They asked you nicely.

Although Shirley shows empathy for some, this was a case in which she did not show empathy based on the citizen's actions, even though she shared the same gender and ethnicity. This officer offered additional details on the story, suggesting the citizen was cussing the officer out because they were white. Several officers suggested that they had low tolerance for citizens with attitudes. This officer also told of a story about how she was embarrassed because of the way a black citizen was behaving in front of white officers. Shirley stated:

Shirley: He just got out of jail, at the time I didn't know he'd just got out of jail. But I am looking at how he's being so defiant and disrespectful to the white lieutenant. And the white sergeant, and, because he was drinking on the street they were trying to get his information. He's being totally disrespectful. And I felt bad for the white lieutenant and the white sergeant, because I felt like if I had not been there that they probably would have got busy with him. But they was being very respectful in my presence to the point where I felt embarrassed. For them as an officer, and for me being black and this guy being black. And so then I had to deal with him.

Louis indicated that he felt many black youth would be defiant and disrespectful towards black officers on purpose. In his perspective, disrespect was greater among the younger generations. He suggested, as did many officers, that this form of disrespect was mainly displayed by young adults aged twenty-five and younger. What was interesting about Louis' recollection was that many of the youth aren't really sure they know why they hate the police; they just do. He indicated:

Louis: The older generation is proud to have black officers. They are proud of us. Younger, the younger generation like now, they resent us. They think we are sellouts. They think we think we're better than them, and they totally disrespect us, for the most part.

After listening to his words, I later asked why? Why, in his opinion, are youth so frustrated with the police? Because this was an older black officer, I probed further to identify whether he felt these feelings were ramifications of police abuse that lingered from the 1960s or whether this hatred among youth under twenty five was based on current police practices. He stated:

Louis: I don't think they know what they are saying. I don't think a lot of them know what they are saying. You know, a lot of them just, that's something that they've heard. Something that they've heard, and used negatively. I will, I would be willing to bet if you were willing to interview ten, maybe five would know what a sellout is. Maybe half.

*There was a long pause*

Louis: Maybe half. Those are things that they hear in the music. And a lot of them say things and they don't know the meaning of it. I think a lot of these young guys, you can tell there is no male role model, no positive male role model. Because here, you know I grew up with my stepfather and I knew not to challenge my stepfather. And he was a person of authority, and that taught me that hey, there are people who are going to be in authority, that are going to be over you.

In the view of black officers, their whole approach was to be respectful to black citizens. To get a perspective on how important citizen actions are to officers, I asked what emphasis they place on citizens' actions in determining whether to arrest them, give them a ticket, or issue a warning, officers were very candid. Tim is an older black officer. He has been on the force for twenty years. Tim suggested:

Tim: It shouldn't, regarding whether they are breaking the law or not. We should treat everybody the same way. However, um, it seems like things can be escalated when you go from one call and a person continues to verbally abuse you. Then there is a disturbance there. Now sometimes to relieve that disturbance we have to lock them up. But for the most part, um, I would say a calmer person would tend to fare better than one that's hostile. Part of it is the disturbance factor; part of it is...policemen are human. Now sometimes they may have a bad day. Um, we do have discretion. And if

you are breaking the law sometimes there is an option of warning versus arrest. Um, that should never be based on race, but, you know, I'm not on every arrest.

Harold also suggested that he considers the attitudes of the citizen when determining the final disposition, in situations where he has discretion. I asked this officer the same question – do you place emphasis on a citizen's actions when making a determination on whether you will write a ticket or give a warning? He indicated:

Harold: It does, but it shouldn't because, we have a little lee-way when it comes to tickets. So if I stop you and I'm having a bad day, and you make a response I don't like, that shouldn't justify me writing you a ticket.

My findings are in stark contrast to the generally accepted view in the literature on policing, which suggests that the race of the officer has little bearing on how officers police. In fact, most black officers suggest race plays a significant role in how they choose to interact with members of the minority community in cases *not involving arrests*. Thus, I argue that the disconnect in prior research is based on the fact that this research focus on reportable data e.g. arrest rates, when scholars should focus equally on citizen-police interactions not involving arrest, and thus **not** officially reported. Officers I spoke with suggested their interactions with citizens during arrests were largely procedural, meaning all officers follow protocol without deviation. Thus, prior research suggesting officer race makes no difference is correct – *in that context*. Interestingly, officers suggested that arrests were the exception to their normal day to day interaction with the minority community. This suggests prior research evaluating arrest rates and officers' decisions to shoot – the reportable data – leaves the majority of officer contact untouched. What I find is that there is a significant intellectual gap, based on how prior research has been conducted.

## *Conclusion*

My findings suggest that diversity within policing affects interactions with citizens in many ways. The unique challenge for black officers I interviewed is that they face a difficult tension when policing minority and low income areas. On one hand, they are part of a fraternal bond shared between all officers who wear blue. They are indoctrinated into the force and expected to enforce all laws without regards to race, color, or gender. On the other hand, they feel a deep responsibility toward the black community, and a deep bond with members of that community.

As members of the black community, many of them indicated that they have empathy, and many times sympathy, for black citizens. Many black officers confirmed through their stories many of the injustices written from the citizen's perspective. They detailed many examples in which they believed their own race mattered deeply for how they carried out their duties, and they highlighted how it led them to act differently than their white peers toward poor black citizens. Black officers described deliberately working to avoid escalations with disgruntled and disrespectful black citizens; deliberately avoiding making an arrest in situations in which arrest was authorized by official procedures; and even avoiding the use of deadly force when this was authorized.<sup>4</sup>

Black officers' empathy thus leads them to avoid taking "official" actions of many kinds when white officers, in similar situations, are described as simply following "procedure" and issuing a ticket or making an arrest—or shooting a suspect. As we will see in the next chapter, this avoidance of official intervention is contrary to black officers' professional self-interest, as

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<sup>4</sup> From a procedural perspective, every officer indicated that they would arrest a black citizen for a misdemeanor s or felony charge.

making arrests is a key way to generate the “stats” that lead to promotion and advancement. Precisely as Maynard-Moody and Musheno have argued, many officers’ discretionary choices are less about self-interest than moral judgment. These scholars suggest that street-level bureaucrats choose to allocate time and resources to people who seem morally “worthy” and not to those who seem “unworthy” of these things. Further, they suggest front-line workers use of discretion is a response to “individuals” and “specific circumstances.” Officers are willing to work harder and make their jobs more dangerous in order to respond to the needs of individual citizens who are perceived as worthy. The key difference between white and black officers, when working in a context of poor, often disrespectful, black citizens, is that black officers are able to see through the veneer of disrespect and see a “worthy” person. Readers of this research should recall the important contribution of the theory of emotional labor as discussed in chapter one. In summary, this research suggests workers are expected to behave in a respectful manner that elicits similar respectful responses from citizens (Ashforth and Humphrey 1993, Hochschild 1983, Mastracci and Bowman 2013, Mastracci, Newman, and Guy 2006). My findings provide some evidence suggesting black officers display emotional labor in two important ways. Black officers seemed to ponder their interactions with black citizens in a different way and long after the encounter. Black officers I interviewed suggested they had significant concern for the deep underlining cause of issues facing blacks. Moreover, black officers in my sample suggested that they believe the system is unfair and unforgiving when comparing similar offenses committed by white officers. Many of these officers suggested that these concerns had some bearing on how they chose to interact with blacks and how they chose to use their discretion. As Shirley suggests, she goes out of her way to help out someone that is black.

Black officers in my sample also suggested that they were more willing to deescalate issues between blacks – to a point. I suspect they do so for many of the same reasons I just outlined. As Drake stated, he often asks black citizens who may be emotional to calm down and takes more time to explain to them the reasons for stopping them. He notes that his demeanor has some impact on how the citizen responds to him.

More research is needed to examine whether black front-line workers in other work settings such as social work engage in a similar sort of emotional labor to display respect toward African American citizens. In fact, it is imperative that researchers look for examples outside of policing to help determine the extent to which black public servants deliberately attempt to elicit comparably respectful responses from minority citizens.

## Chapter 4: Officers on Discussing Race

### Introduction

In chapter three I examined how police officers believe the race of the police officer matters when interacting with members of the minority community. As we have seen, officers' perceptions differ sharply by their race.

White officers I spoke with firmly declared that the race of the officer never played a role in their interactions with members of the minority community. The essence of their view is that "I just follow the rules, like any other officer." If the citizen's behavior justifies arrest, they declared, I will arrest him (or her). Unfortunately, the behavior of many poor African Americans when confronted by a police officer is seen to justify arrest: fleeing to avoid identification, persistent sarcasm and disrespect against the officer, and minor "public order" violations like having an open container on a public street all are taken to justify arrest. White officers accept these infractions as just a fact of life in poor African American neighborhoods. In fact, when they want to generate "stats" to improve their own record, they happily exploit these possibilities in order to generate more arrests, leading many poor African Americans to feel even more that they are "hunted" by the police.

Minority officers in my sample, as we saw, held a different perspective on the same facts of life and what to do about them. They, too, recognized that poor black citizens deeply distrust the police and therefore are likely to act disrespectfully toward a police officer or run from the officer if confronted in a threatening way. But black officers seemed to better understand the conditions of life that produce this distrust, having often experienced these conditions themselves. In particular, many black officers have experienced disrespectful or intrusive police scrutiny themselves in their earlier life or when off duty. These black officers *empathized* with



black citizens. Acting on this empathy, they told many stories of trying to approach black citizens in respectful ways intended to head off the sorts of escalations leading to arrest, even if this harmed their careers by generating lower arrest “stats.” To be sure, they described willingly making arrests when warranted by criminal behavior or persistent or willful noncooperation with police directives. For these black officers “race” obviously matters. Moreover, they expressed deep frustration with white officers’ seeming blindness to this obvious fact and its implications for good policing in minority neighborhoods.

This chapter extends this key observation by examining the extent to which, and how, officers openly discuss race and its implications for policing. The thesis of this chapter is that increasing diversity within policing has had little effect on the discourse in policing, except to make non-minority officers uncomfortable when discussing these issues. Following Erving Goffman (1959), it is useful to distinguish “front stage” and “back stage” discussion. Front-stage discussions are those meant for “public” consumption and presentation; back-stage discussions are those meant to be heard by only *some* participants. This chapter will show that legal reform of policing on issues of race has only served to drive substantive discussions of race within policing to the back stage. Minority officers commonly report that non-minority officers’ discussions of issues of race on the front-stage are limited to jokes, but backstage conversation is very real and candid.

My findings offer a sobering reality-check to the long-standing claim of research on the police that the presence of black officers in police departments can serve to educate non-black officers about how better to interact with black citizens. A large body of research has expressed the hope that interactions between officers of different racial and ethnic groups can help non-minority officers become more culturally sensitive and culturally competent when interacting

with these communities (Alex 1969, Barlow and Barlow 2000, Bolton and Feagin 2004, Brown and Frank 2006, Moskos 2008). I acknowledge that black officers have the necessary knowledge and understanding to perform this role, and they know that they *might* do so. But my interviews show emphatically that for the most part they do not, for very understandable reasons.

Instead, discussions of issues of race within policing are limited to what may be called “symbolic” expressions of the value of respecting all races and the wrongness of racial discrimination. These symbolic condemnations of discrimination ironically contribute to what I call a blue-line breakdown.<sup>5</sup> By this I mean that black officers I spoke with really do not believe that they and their white peers form a solid blue (police) line, and this suspicion is fostered in part by the limited shared conversations around the core issue of race. Given the lack of discussion white and black officers have on the subject, many of them are uneasy about the meaningless discussion of race and are left to speculate about what backstage discussions are happening when racially charged situation – shocks – happen within the institution. These sentiments, when considered in the context of the double standards black officers described in chapter three, have eroded solidarity within the force.

Nonetheless, I concur with Sklansky’s (Sklansky 2006) assessment that diversity within police forces has been positive for policing. My argument, however is that it is positive because minority officers have chosen a different way to police and for the fact that they are forcing the institution to acknowledge the “good old boy” white-dominated culture that has defined policing for decades.

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<sup>5</sup> Black officers also discussed how disparities in internal policies such as promotions and discipline have also led to the blue-line breakdown.

## **Legal Reform of Policing, and its Symbolic Character**

From the late 1800s until a few decades ago, as Dawson (Dawson 1994) notes, African Americans became a nation within a nation, fighting for their right to social and economic equality. The average black citizen was involved in a struggle for freedom against lynching and other double standards common in the Jim Crow south. Across many long decades the police either turned a blind eye to the violence against blacks or themselves contributed directly to it by brute force and such tools such as clubs, dogs, and water hoses in physical altercations with blacks.

During the mid-1960s, urban riots swept many American cities, and many of these riots, as the presidential Kerner Commission (Kerner 1968) observed, grew directly from heavy-handed policing of poor black neighborhoods. They left a legacy of deep hostility between minority ghettos and the police (Brown and Frank 2006).

In this context, the civil rights movement had two specific demands related to policing: increase the diversity within police departments; and ensure that officers were culturally sensitized to the issues facing these communities. Over subsequent decades police reforms addressed both of these demands: increasing numbers of black officers were hired, and departments began providing “cultural sensitivity” training.

The rationale for these reforms was to improve relations within the minority communities (Hubert and Murphy 1990, Skolnick and Fyfe 1993). African Americans accounted for roughly six percent of the force in 1973 (Walker and Katz 2002), but this percentage increased to almost twelve percent in 2000 (Hickman and Reaves 2003). The latest Department of Justice figures suggest one in eight police officers is female, compared to one in thirteen in 1987. One out of

every four officers is members of a racial or ethnic minority group in 2007, compared to one out of every six in 2007 (Reaves 2010). Thus, all indications are that departments are more diverse with respect to race and gender.

Law enforcement training has increasingly focused on eliminating discrimination by officers, and a key element of this training is in “cultural sensitivity.” The extent of this training is truly remarkable. A 2006 Department of Justice report notes that in 2006, 648 state and local law enforcement agencies were providing training to entry level recruits, and state agencies certified 98% of the training academies. Moreover, 97% of law enforcement training academies required instructors to be certified, and seven out of ten require these academies to provide periodic refresher training to law enforcement officers. The report suggests half of these academies are operated by colleges and universities. Sixty-eight percent required their instructors to have a minimum number of years in law enforcement to ensure their personnel have the sufficient work experience to instruct these recruits. One out of every five academies requires their full-time instructors to have a college degree (Reaves 2009).

The average basic recruiting class lasted 19 weeks and consisted of an average of 761 training hours in 2007. The report also notes:

Legal training was included in all basic training programs with a median of 36 hours of instruction in criminal law and 12 hours in constitutional law. Nearly all academies provided instruction on cultural diversity (a median of 11 hours), community policing strategies (8 hours), and mediation skills/conflict management (8 hours). Special topics covered by basic training programs included domestic violence (a median of 14 hours), juveniles (8 hours), domestic preparedness (8 hours), and hate crimes (4 hours).

Still, a large body of literature suggests that the rules and training against discrimination recounted above are little more than *symbolic reassurance* that agencies are trying to do the

right thing, and that this symbolism does not much change the underlying practices in these organizations.

The neo-institutional theory of organizational responses to civil rights laws suggest that these responses are mainly symbolic and allow organizations to carry on their work unchanged by the law. Edelman (Edelman, Uggen, and Erlanger 1999) argues that the legal ambiguity of the anti-discrimination law, and the weak mechanisms used to enforce it, have left the meaning of compliance open to organizational construction. As a response, organizations create visible symbols of their attention to law that nonetheless allow them to continue their underlying organizational practices. One type of visible symbol of compliance is formal written rules forbidding discrimination; a second is grievance procedures to hear and decide complaints of discrimination; a third is new organizational offices charged with implementing these rules and overseeing the grievance process (Edelman, Uggen, and Erlanger 1999). In Edelman's view, the genesis of these symbols of compliance is the ideas and recommendations of networks of organizational professionals rather than outside legal experts, and these symbols serve the organizational interests rather than to fairly comply with anti-discrimination law. Still, they allow organizations, if sued, to demonstrate that they are taking steps to comply with the law.

Over time, courts come to accept these steps as, in fact, what it means to comply with the law. In this view, symbolic organizational responses to law come to be accepted by courts as what the law requires. Scholars call this process "legal endogeneity," or the legal regulation of organizations according to standards that these types of organizations established (Edelman, Uggen, and Erlanger 1999).

While Edelman, Uggen, and Erlanger argue that organizational responses are largely symbolic and implemented with the intent to protect institutions during litigation, some scholars

disagree with this assessment. Walker argues that internal reforms have created new forms of accountability in policing, which ultimately reduces officers' excessive use of force. More specifically, beginning in the 1970s, police departments adopted new rules forbidding racial discrimination; they created complaint processes to hear and process citizen complaints; and they gave internal officials the authority to investigate these complaints (Walker 1993; Walker 2005).

Police departments adopted internal training, such as Police Academies, employing civilian instructors to implement educational programs like sensitizing officers to cultural diversity and racial profiling. They train new recruits using this methodology and recertify sworn officers every year. These rules and training protocols serve to emphasize the norm that deliberate racism is wrong. While all officers seem to recognize this norm, this does not mean that they well understand how to meaningfully carry it out.

Indeed, as this chapter reveals, classes on cultural sensitivity and racial profiling have been successful in getting officers to realize that outright racism is wrong. But in doing so, this training has sent a message to officers that they should be extremely careful to avoid saying anything that might seem to be "racist," at least when interacting with black citizens and when black officers are present. Avoiding racist epithets is surely a good thing, but white officers have become so fearful of having open discussions of racial issues that the real discussions on these issues are driven backstage – out of earshot of officers of different ethnic backgrounds. By driving discussions of race to the backstage, the official prohibition on deliberate racism has ironically undermined the ability of officers to learn from each other through frank conversations about race and respect. The official policies and training have made the subject too uncomfortable to discuss. Many black officers interviewed for this study firmly believe that this is a serious problem. As we shall see, they would favor a more open organizational culture in

which officers can discuss these issues front stage, with a focus on how white officers can learn how to improve relations with members of the minority community.

### **Officer discussion of race in the context of police reform**

It is time to examine how these changes in policing have affected how officers discuss issues of race. Although scholars should rightfully applaud the efforts by institutions to teach classes on cultural diversity and racial profiling, my findings suggest that for many officers the frank, open discussion of race ends with these classes. What remains is jokes about race that indicate how powerfully important is the issue, but also how uncomfortable officers have become to openly discuss the issue. At the same time, a different and more pointed discussion of racial issues occurs in the back stage.

After speaking with officers on the subject of race and policing, I find that police departments have emphasized the importance of the subject by mandating officers attend classes on cultural sensitivity and racial profiling. However, these classes have not ensured the discourse continues when the classes end; i.e. officers are trained to identify the phenomenon, but there has been little open discourse on how to alleviate it as a police issue from one-on-one officer interactions. More specifically, officers discussed the fact that they joke about it all the time, to be addressed in more detail below, but these conversations are in passing.

Half of the officers suggested that officers do not discuss race. In this sample, the majority of officers wanted to discuss race more or felt that officers needed to discuss race to improve the manner in which they do their jobs. After listening to these officers' views, I argue that the very solidarity, e.g. color-blind culture – enforce all laws equally regardless of race – is the same culture that prevents these officers from discussing race in a meaningful way.

This research finds that two basic conditions shaped officers' willingness to discuss race. First, officers indicated a fear of retribution from other officers or potential punitive measures if they talked about race in an improper way. Many were so fearful of saying the wrong thing that it seemed to them better to avoid the subject to ensure they were not punished for offending someone. One officer stated that people were "scared of being ostracized or alienated" by the department. Second, officers suggested that they were afraid of being judged negatively by others even if what they said did not lead to punishment. They were concerned that peers would interact with them differently if their true feelings about race were known. In many cases, these feelings have caused many officers to carry on discussions of racial issues in private among only trusted peers, and out of earshot of other fellow officers who are not so trusted.

The majority of officers stated the subject of race was just too uncomfortable. Many described situations in which officers shut down when the subject was brought up. Others mentioned that the room becomes quiet, a "shhh" moment, when someone walks in if they are discussing race. Some stated that they didn't know how to get the conversation started, but this uncomfortable feeling was displayed by many - even when given the opportunity to discuss these issues in an open forum by the department.

The most useful lens through which this phenomenon can be examined was set forth by Erving Goffman. In 1959, he argued that face-to-face social interactions are similar to theatrical performances. By this he suggested individuals manage the impressions they leave upon other individuals by adapting their behavior, in both appearance and subject matter of discussion, to different settings. Goffman suggests that people fear social embarrassment and engage in dramaturgical performance to avoid it (Goffman 1959).



These performances are deliberate and change based on whether the actor is on stage or backstage. On the *front stage* the player presents himself in the guise of a character to other characters. In this scenario, the audience is a third party. Acts on the stage are usually designed to leave a positive impression on an audience. Goffman calls this a promissory character. The real attitudes, beliefs, and emotions on stage are ascertained indirectly or through involuntary expressive behavior. The intent during these performances is for the actor to impress others. Most importantly, when an actor performs, he expects the audience to take his performance seriously. He also expects the audience to believe that he *actually* possesses the attributes that he *appears* to possess. Acts on the front stage, when performing before others that one wants to impress, thus often are “for show” (Goffman 1959).

Acts on the *backstage* are more real in the sense that they are acting less to “pretend” for another than to reveal their own thoughts and feelings. The backstage is where suppressed facts make an appearance and where performance can deliberately contradict what happened on stage. Actors hide things backstage that they do not want the audience to see while they are on front stage, often while the performance is still in progress. More importantly, the backstage is where one can behave out of one’s “for show” character.

Goffman’s analysis sheds light on the discourse about race contemporary police departments. What this chapter examines is how police officers perform on stage and backstage when discussing these issues.

Harold is a young black officer. Here he discusses how different actors perform when on stage. Harold stated:

Harold: We have to have racial profiling [meaning the state mandates officers attend the training yearly]. We have to have that. That’s mandated by the state. And in racial profiling we talk about race. I’m sitting at one table and there were three detectives sitting in front of me. And when the

issue of race came up it was like they wanted to crawl up under a chair and disappear. But it's something we don't talk about enough. Because we know race exists. We are all human. We all have some type of background. And it's one thing we don't discuss it enough. I wish we would, but we don't.

Harold's analysis helped me to understand how other officers responded to my questions. One officer I interviewed on this subject, Obadiah, an older white man, was the sole officer to decline recording interviews. He did not know why the issue was so contentious - he just knew it was. When pressed for further clarification, Obadiah suggested that the subject was just too difficult to discuss, because he did not want other officers judging him based on his beliefs. Although all officers offered vivid details on the subject, they admitted that race was an uncomfortable topic.

Although I knew this was a contentious and uncomfortable topic, I continued to ask the question. I asked Tony, an older black officer, whether officers discuss the issue of race on the force. Tony stated:

Tony: I assume officers speak amongst themselves. I haven't witnessed it, but I would hope they do. The neighborhoods that we work in are predominantly African American so you have to develop a line of communication. Because as police officers to do the job we do we need the help of the community. And if the community is your enemy then you can't be successful at what you want to accomplish so I would hope they communicate with themselves about how to improve those race relations.

While many believe race should be discussed to improve relations with the community, two officers, one black and one white, thought the subject was not helpful and should not be discussed at work. Apollo, a middle aged black officer, suggested that the subject was a distraction. He was very vocal about how race was something that hurt the solidarity of the

force. So for Apollo, these discussions did not help officers do their job. When asked whether officers ever discuss race, Apollo stated:

Apollo: I can't say that all of them do, but I talked about it with my partners. Um, for me I don't see things racially, or the black and white. We got a job to do and you can't do it effectively if you put those kind of parameters on it.

Curt is a young white patrol officer. I asked him whether officers discuss issues on race and his answer turned the topic toward racial quotas. Indeed many officers spoke about how there had been all white academy classes and all white promotions years ago. He suggested:

Curt: I think, and this is coming from a white male, but I think that whoever does the best. I would not want to be considered for something simply because they have to fill a quota of African Americans. Put a checkmark in. Or a female even. You know, if you are qualified for a position, your qualifications, just like if you type a resume. It doesn't say at the top of your resume when you are applying for positions. Now they ask you if you want to specify what your race is. You don't specify whether you are an African American.

Twelve individuals (contacts 8-10, 14, 16, 18, 20, 22-25, and 27) indicated that officers discuss race but their answers revealed that the character of those discussions varied depending on whether the performance was onstage or backstage. One of the more revealing examples of this was told to me by Bret, a civilian instructor at the academy. He is young, white, and very well educated. One of his main duties is to train new recruits on cultural sensitivity and recertify officers yearly. I asked Bret whether officers ever discuss race and policing issues. After thought, Bret recalled one of the more uncomfortable situations he had experienced. He was invited to a card game by some of the white officers. With no black officers present, we might think of the card game as a "backstage" setting:

Bret: Race has come up, pretty much from day one. I'll give you an example. When I was new here, I pretty much got invited to a card game.

And um, so you want to make friends in your new work place, so I went to this card game. Um, the way that I was raised, you didn't hear the N word in the house that I grew up in. You certainly didn't hear it in the schools that I attended or the college that I came from. So all of a sudden I'm in this card game with these guys and I hear that word spoken and you know not in anger and not by comedians or something for the first, not in the room, or a rap song I hear it for the first time. And I realize ok. So a little culture shock for me there. And, um, we are talking like nine years ago, so you learn who to avoid. And it's possible to live a life in this place that doesn't bring you in contact with that type of character, um but you just, once that you know it's out there; you know it's out there. So most of the time what you hear is not that. And it's something that's much more minor kinda like he alluded to. It's, someone will get a job, and get selected say to go to homicide. And you'll hear two guys talking and one of them will go – well you know what that's about. And the other guy would go, whew, yeah. And so, it's left to someone who knows the context so he's attributing that selection to race. And, um and then you just have to know. And it could go either way. If it's two black guys, they wouldn't be attributing it to race; they would be attributing it to political connections. They'll go like you know why he got that. If it's two white guys and they are talking about a black guy going to homicide then you'll know from context that their contributing that to race. And so that's what you usually hear. No one ever sits down and says man, I'm tired of these people from another race that I don't like. They don't say it like that. You would hear complaints about everything from what the car radio got left on in the car.....on magic instead of... Dusty Roads country station.

Jim, a Hispanic officer also stated:

Jim: It's not the idiot that you know is racist that you got to worry about. It's the one that hides and camouflages and smiles. You know and they are not overt about it, with that kind of stuff. But when they are in their hunting shacks and when they are at their little social clubs and they are drinking. Those are the ones, but this police department is much more tamer than what it was when I first came on so they are less likely to be killers like they were when I first came on the department.

Thomas is an older white male and has been on the force for fifteen years. He suggests the conversations on race take place, but only with officers with whom he is comfortable, which is to say, these conversations take place backstage:

Thomas: I have a unique perspective because of where I grew up. A lot of the black officers here, they tease me. They say I'm grandfathered-in. I mean I have a little bit more acceptance. I mean, I'm a very conservative guy. I'm really right wing. But I have perspective about other people. I was married to a Philippine for fourteen years so I am a little more accepted within some of the black officers. So I can actually speak my mind. Because a lot of the black officers we have are very left wing. And they're very like, you know, liberal. I'm very conservative. In fact, one who I was in the academy class with used to when he was up in north city, a black guy, kind of militant, and he said that um, you know people like me, because we used to disagree all the time. Normally he would consider guys like me his enemy. He is another police officer. And he says that because of my background, he will listen to me.

Sometimes racially-tense interactions between officers and members of the public give rise to discussions among officers about race. For example, Billy, an older black male, stated that the subject of race came up when his partner, who was white, made a statement that offended two black males. In this story, Billy, a black sergeant with twenty two years on the force, describes a situation in which he and his partner, who was white, were responding to a call at an African American family's home. Billy suggested that the subject came up because he and his partner were unable to resolve the dispute because his partner made a racially insensitive comment. Billy stated:

Billy: I can't speak for everybody. I have done it. I remember going into a home. It was two brothers. They were fighting. He [Billy's partner] said something he shouldn't have said and they forgot what they were fighting about and turned on us. I mean we literally backed out the door. So it was situations like that when I said hey, you can't be doing that. You have to show compassion, respect, and understanding.

SW: Have non-black officers ever approached you to see what they could maybe do better in those circumstances?

Billy: No.

Other officers suggested they joke about race all of the time, but in the context of recent events. For these officers, joking about race was the best way to break the ice. For example, Bret and Jim suggested many officers joke about what radio station was left on in the squad car. For another example, Jim, a Hispanic Officer, indicated officers joke in other ways, saying someone left “chicken bones” in the car. Likewise, Drake, a young black sergeant, and Chad, a white officer, suggested officers often say “those are your people” when interacting with citizens that may act a certain way. For example, Drake stated:

Drake: We joke about it all the time. One was of the running DC sniper... I think a lot of its stress and addressing each other’s culture. Once you start riding with individuals 8, 10, 12 hours, you develop. You start asking questions about family. Where you are from? How did you grow up?

SW: Have black officers had an impact on how white officers interact with the minority community?

Drake: I think so. I think so.

When asked whether officers discuss the issue of race Chad said:

Chad: Not as much as I think they should. I think they joke about it. [name omitted], who is a black officer, used to be in the office and he would. I rode with him a couple days and we would joke if we had someone that was white and acting weird he’d laugh with me and say those are your people. We were close enough that we could do that.

Chad: I think the basic stuff is covered, but not the little stuff. There’s a lot of things, not just with the police department, but in general I think we’ve changed a bunch of laws so now we have to be more open to talking about stuff. I never had a problem but I think a lot of people are guarded, which I can understand.

Harold, Jim, and Bret provided great insight on how actors perform on stage versus off stage. By using derogatory terms when in the confines of “friends” or skirting around the issue of race when with a broader group of officers, Jim and Bret observed that the nature of the

discussions made clear that the topic was uncomfortable and not to be discussed in a meaningful way “front stage.” This *uncomfortable feeling* was a theme that most officers, both black and white indicated was prevalent among the force. Jim, a Hispanic officer stated:

It just worries you when you hear people joke about certain things when you are not around them. What are they saying about you and what are they saying about your kind.

Ike is a middle aged black officer. He has been on the force for eight years. He suggests that repeated and negative racialized incidents within the department work to keep frank discussions of race from occurring in the open. He suggests even black officers prefer to have backstage discussions among themselves. When asked whether officers discuss these issues, Ike stated:

I think they do if it’s a non-racialized issue. If it’s a racialized issue, I think they’ll talk to other black officers. I do know this. There has been some issues where some racial epithets have been used and those, um, those instances don’t occur when a black officer is present. Although it has occurred and officers get punished. It has happened, and those officers are punished. So um, I don’t, necessarily think there is an issue. I think they’ll communicate non-racialized issues.

Many officers indicated that officers discuss race, but mainly among officers of the same ethnicity. Shirley discussed her thoughts on the subject and suggested that officers would have to be very close to each other to discuss these issues. Shirley also indicated that she has witnessed some of the backstage talk but it suddenly stops when other officers walk into the room. When asked whether officers discuss race:

Shirley: Those that’s probably close to each other. Those that, you know, that’s close to one another.

SW: Is that close defined as time they spent with that person on the job?

Shirley: Yeah, cause some of them just won't say. Like for instance, I used to be in the roll-call room, which is just like another room where the officers do their reports. And you would have some white officers, if it's just them in there then they're communicating. But if it's somebody black they won't say anything. Unless it's somebody that they are close, close black to. Because they feel like they don't have to worry about that person saying anything. Or we feel comfortable around that person because we don't know how that person's gonna be.

SW: Is this positive or negative?

Shirley: Negative I'm sure. The positive - nobody has any problem with, so I'm sure it's negative.

John is a young black officer. He suggested that the subject is just "uncomfortable" for some of his peers to discuss. John describes a conversation he was having with his sergeant, who was white. He suggested that his sergeant initially was ok with discussing the topic, but then suddenly stopped when other white officers walked into the room. When asked whether officers discuss race, John states:

John: I don't think it's meaningful. My sergeant, he was white. We would sit around here and talk about race issues, but when someone white came around he was like shhhh. I was like why don't we just put it out there and say hey, this is how we feel about this. What's your opinion? Well how do you feel about it without getting mad and wanting to argue and fight?

John: Hey, if you got an opinion that's different than mine it doesn't necessarily mean that I am a black militant. And it doesn't mean you are a white supremacist. The problem is we always skate around the issues. It's never really put out there to say hey, this is exactly how I feel. And when so and so said this it hurt my feelings and it made me look at you all in a different light. We never do that. We just skirt around it. Somebody said something wrong, they get disciplined. They' ain't gon get fired. They get disciplined or transferred. Then we're back to where we was. Nobody's really talking about it. So race relations in this department is better than what it was when I got on, but I think that when I got on to it was like a bubble. It was like what everybody wished the whole department was like.



I asked officers why issues of race are not discussed more frankly and openly. Tina is an older female officer who is white. She has been on the force for over twenty years. She suggests the topic is difficult for many because they are uncomfortable discussing ways of life that are different from how they were brought up. More specifically, many of the younger officers are experiencing this dynamic for the first time when they come onto the force. Tina states:

Tina: Well, I think there's a, um, when people come to the police academy and they are very young. And say they've never been exposed to certain lifestyles. Now, part of the south Stoney Island<sup>6</sup> area is all Asian. You get pockets that are all Bosnian. But the central corridor is fairly well mixed. But the further you get north and it's all African American. Some officers come on and never worked in a community like that. Never have seen or experienced such poverty. Never have experienced the desperation that comes with that poverty. Never experienced the violence that happens and so if I've never experienced that, and I'm a young white male, and I go to that and I think that particular group of people represent the entire African American community or the particularly obnoxious behavior of a certain group. We have a corner, a couple of corners, up in our district that marijuana, crack-cocaine, heroin, drinking. It's almost like an open supermarket. And you can drive by on any given day and see people lying in the middle of a liquor store parking lot sleeping. You know and you've never seen anything like it in your life. So is this exclusive to the African American community? No. But where you are working it's all African American.

I don't think we talk about cultural diversity enough. I don't think that we preach it enough. And it's very uncomfortable for a lot of people to talk about it. Like I said. We don't talk about it. How do you teach a class on cultural diversity these days? How do you?

Wes, a middle aged black officer, suggested that officers are afraid to discuss the subject. His response suggested many of the responses I would receive would be similar to the front stage performances this research has discussed thus far. Wes stated:

Wes: Some people are just afraid of these topics and just going to give you what you want to hear. Again, everyone's just got different perspectives

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<sup>6</sup> Name changed to protect the location of this research

and the way they were brought up, where they were brought up: their education; their life experiences. You're going to get a different answer from everyone I would imagine.

### **The benefit of more frank discussions of race**

Many of the black officers who observed that discussions of race occur only backstage also firmly believed that policing might be improved if these discussions were brought onto the front stage and addressed forthrightly by white and black officers together. They believed this might improve white officers' understanding. But they also doubted this would happen. As argued in the opening, many officers do not discuss race because of the color blind culture within policing. Moreover many fear retribution for saying something offensive or fear that they will be judged negatively. These comments are summarized in more detail below.

One officer in particular was very direct in his statement, arguing that officers should talk about race more. Q is a young black officer. He has been with the department for ten years. In his opinion, the very officers that "need" to talk about race do not. When asked whether officers discuss race, Q stated:

Q: Yeah, I... yes they do. Is it as common or often? That um. Not as often as I think it should be.

Q: Is it as many white officers that should be participating? No. Who you think would need it. Who would benefit. You are going to adapt, or lose it. Or just not going to care.

In the absence of a shared discussion of racial issues, many black officers emphasized the importance of having an African American police union to speak on behalf of black officers in a department where the main police union is dominated by white officers. This was a subject of much debate by officers. To illustrate the significance of the tensions around it, consider an

observation made by Curt, a young white officer. Curt was frustrated that there are two distinct police officer unions. He could not understand why there was a need for a black union, when a white union already existed. Curt declared: “We are all stronger as one.”

The black officers who identified themselves as members of the black police union felt just the opposite. And while they understood the frustration their union causes for white officers, they suggested that the need for a union to protect officers from racism still exists today. Wes suggested:

Wes: We are in a police department where there is a black union and a white union. It exists for a reason. I think when there are institutionalized issues that are, you know, racist in nature that the white officers kind of gloss over it. Because they benefit from the institution. So, you know, they want to be institutionally ignorant about it. But the black officers know the things exist.

Harold also discussed the issue at length. In his view, there is a need for black officers to receive certain protections because they are not supported by white officers, and he felt that these issues are still very prevalent. Harold’s perception was that black and white officers see the disparities with respect to internal dynamics and in officers’ interaction with citizens, but many feel as if it’s better left unspoken. Harold had this to say about why officers do not discuss race and why they should:

Harold: Because it’s so uncomfortable. It’s so uncomfortable. And you have white officers. They don’t want to be looked at as racist. So they just choose to stay away from it. They stay away from it. It was just posed to me a few weeks ago, because we have an ethical society. Well, a lot of white officers don’t understand why it has to be separate. And I explained to them. It’s not that we want to be separate. It’s not segregated, because whites can join. But just, I had to explain the history of it. You know, back in the day blacks just weren’t supported by the white officers, so we had to join the ethical society in order to get that protection. We had to start our own organization to get a level playing field. And that’s what I try to explain to them. But they feel like, well right to this day we don’t have racism so therefore we don’t need separate um groups. But a lot of them don’t see it. I think they see it. They just don’t want to see it. And that’s

what it comes down to. But again. It's just so uncomfortable. And I think it's better left said. I'm sorry, if you don't talk about it then it doesn't exist.

Chad, a young officer who is white, suggested that officers felt the subject was touchy, but he felt that black officers appreciated when he made an effort to discuss these issues. While he engages on why it's so difficult, his opening line confirms what many black officers have been suggesting – that white officers never see race as an issue. Chad stated:

I never felt that race was an issue in this department [Meaning everything is ok and race is not something that the command structure needs to worry about]. It's such a touchy subject that white and black people are afraid to talk about. And like when you bring it up, other black officers I talk with are very perceptive and I feel like they actually appreciate it when you talking about it as long as you are being respectful.

When I was out with black officers and they were interacting with black people like in the state street area and I would kind of, I think get some pointers. Not that. I had a lot of interaction with black people well before I became a police officer, but I think sometimes that's interesting. I wouldn't want to grow up in an all white area, go to an all white school, and then work in an all black area. It would be a big learning curve to learn. Cause you have to talk to people differently. There are two different cultures and you sometimes do have to talk to them differently. Just like when I got to a rich white house I would probably address them differently than I would a poor white house because they have different expectations and mannerisms.

On the same subject, Ike's response was short but very revealing. I asked: "why is race such a difficult subject?"

Ike: Scared.

SW: Scared of what?

Ike: Either retribution or scared of being ostracized. I mean Larandia. The last slave state.

Ike: For a young officer to be outspoken he doesn't feel that he has the backing.

As discussed earlier in this chapter, Apollo, a black male, was one of only two officers that felt like frankly acknowledging issues of race did not help officers do their jobs well. I re-engaged the question after discussing other topics and Apollo's now put it rather differently, specifically when he described how a recent event in the department caused significant tension within the department. Apollo indicated that the topic was "touchy" but something officers should discuss more. In fact, Apollo indicated that it was in the department's best interest to discuss these issues more. I focused follow-up questions to him to help better define the why. This is what he said when asked why the subject was so touchy:

Apollo: Talking about race should happen, but it doesn't. We recently had a situation someone sent one of our black officers a threatening letter. Saying they were going to kill them and it came from inside the department. Saying they were going to kill them. We don't know who did it but

SW: Was it racial tones?

Apollo: Very. Very. Dropped the N bomb on him a couple of times. Called him black ass. And you should be killed and I'll kill you myself and all this kind of nonsense. It's a touchy subject. Sometimes they don't know how to approach it so they just leave it alone.

In sum, Black officers were frustrated and confused as to why many of their white peers were so uncomfortable discussing issues related to race. Their statements suggest they wanted peers to talk about the subject more, in a meaningful way. As this research has demonstrated, officers, regardless of race or gender, know that the real conversations on race happen backstage. What their comments suggested was that they wanted those conversations to happen on front stage. Many of them suggested that the front stage performances on the issue of race relations had been reduced down to jokes about how a citizens acted; e.g. those are your people," or what radio station was left on in the car; e.g. dusty roads or hip hop music. And when the backstage

talk came to light it caused intense controversy that made an uncomfortable situation even more uncomfortable.

We discussed a situation in which a cop was sending racist text messages from the onboard computer system to a supervisor, who was white. The supervisor dealt with the situation, but these issues can definitely have an impact on an institution. Moreover, Jim, a Hispanic officer, discussed how an old employee sent out racist email with colorful language to a large distribution list, suggesting the country was in trouble based on the actions of President Obama. Both officers asked: what made these officers think that sending this type of racially charged emails was ok? For many black and Hispanic officers, such expressions are obviously wrong. For many white officers they seem obviously “just jokes.” This is a sharp and deeply felt divide.

Tony’s sentiments capture my empirical findings thus far. Tony is a middle aged black officer. He has eighteen years on the force. I asked him why this subject was so touchy. Tony stated:

Tony: I would say it’s probably because of the blue line. I don’t know if you’ve heard that. And it’s because when you put the uniform on, you are not supposed to see color. You are supposed to be an officer of the law. Enforcing the law. And the rules and regulations should apply to all of us equally. And I think that’s a lot of reason why. You feel a certain brotherhood once you put the uniform on. And you would hope that that would be reciprocated from everybody else, but it’s not always. And you have to kind of maneuver through that.

Like Tony, many black officers strongly feel that the brotherhood of police officers is not as strong as it could be or as it *should* be. In my conversations with black officers, many of them suggested that they still did not feel fully accepted in the force. This was a theme that resonated in a very strong way with the minority officers with whom I interviewed. I asked fourteen black

officers and one Hispanic officer whether they felt accepted into the force. Seven officers said absolutely not, three suggested that some do and some do not. Moreover, four officers answered yes, but my assessment of their answer is no. Only one black officer said all officers really felt integrated into the force. When asked whether black officers feel truly accepted, Wesley a black detective with eighteen years on the force emphatically said “no.” Wes suggested that this dynamic could be seen by the way transfers and promotions are done. He stated:

Wes: White officers pretend that these things don't exist. We see it. It's part of our work environment

SW: Do you feel that black officers feel fully accepted into the force?

Wes: No, I don't think so. No. I think there are two police departments. A black police department and a white police department, and it goes down the line geographically, from north to south, and it goes just, internally from black to white.

SW: Do you think your views on race has changed since coming onto the police department eighteen years ago?

Wes: Yeah, I think it has changed. I think that the younger people coming on to the police department are different than the um, than the older, the veteran police officers. I think that the younger police officers are more color blind. They are more gender blind. You know, they don't hold the same biases that the older generation do.

SW: So do you think there is going to be a generational shift? What I mean by that is maybe in ten years when these young officers become sergeants and detectives that maybe race relations will change? When I say race relations I mean within the department and the minority community!

Wes: I think so. I think so. I believe that these officers, these younger officers are coming from backgrounds where they are not living in segregated - - - growing up like the veteran officers did. I think they are more likely to have minority friends and whatnot growing up as opposed to veteran officers.

Q is a black officer with ten years of experience as an officer. I asked him whether black officers feel fully accepted into the force and Q stated:

Q: Not. No. Not really. I can't say fully. And it depends. That also is how you look at it. To what degree? I am sure we are, because we are here. However, you know, could a lot of this be done without us? No. So, but fully? No, I can't say fully.

Shirley, a black female officer with twenty two years of experience, suggested that black officers are treated differently in many respects. She candidly declared that both black and white supervisors act differently towards black officers. When asked whether black officers feel accepted, Shirley stated:

Shirley: Not all. No. I just look at it as a job and I have to watch my back.

SW: Why do you think that?

Shirley: Just because the way we are treated. You even have black supervisors. We call that having a slave mentality. We even have some black supervisors that are just stupid. They dog out somebody black and treat somebody white like they are god's gift. And they can be the dirtiest white officers. But they won't say nothing to them. I don't understand it though.

Louis is a black lieutenant with fifteen years. He suggested that blacks do not feel as if they have the same opportunities as other officers. I asked Louis the same question: do you believe black officers feel fully accepted in to the force. Louis stated:

Louis: I don't think they do. I don't think they feel fully embraced. Some of that has to do with that. They see their classmates getting opportunities that they never get. You know, those are things that they see and they see it on a regular basis. They can do the same, um, you know, job in this person is receiving high praise and it's like, ok. Go do it again. And these guys are getting opportunities to go to detective bureaus. And they are getting opportunities to do other jobs among the police department and they are not getting it. And they see it. On a daily basis.



Tim, a middle aged black detective with twenty years on the force. His response was short but equally revealing:

Tim: No. I have not found that the case. Most of the black officers I have talked to believe they do not get the same backing that some of the white officers do.

Matt is an older black lieutenant. He has served on the force for over nineteen years. He feels that even though he has been promoted, most black officers do not feel fully accepted on the force. Moreover, Matt suggested that he believes diversity within the force is eroding rather than advancing. Matt suggested:

Matt: It seems like since the time I have been on this department that it's been in a state of regression for African American officers. I feel that even though I have gotten promoted I still feel like every day can be the last on this department. And there have been egregious violations by officers. I can't say the exact conversations, but I know they are told that everything is going to be ok. They are going to make it. A lot of times it feel like I have no support. There is no support for me, so I feel a lot of times like I am isolated.

SW: So you think a lot of the gains that have been made in the last decade and a half are regressing?

Matt: Yes, and you can see it. I don't know if anybody will give you, but look at the last list of promotions for sergeant. I believe out of twenty to twenty two candidates, um three to four of them are African American. I just find that, I find that number to be really underwhelming. I mean I just don't believe that's the case. I mean we have many qualified black African Americans that take this test. And also to be promoted, so I see that as regression. So then again, if you have less African American commanders or supervisors they are less likely to bring up more African Americans. So I don't think that one of the things that happen. Again, favoritism and nepotism. It one of those things [Matt begins to mimic a white officer] "well if there were more qualified then we would do it" – well, I understand, but people are going to promote people they know or someone they feel allegiance to and it's not always based on merit. And so I think that's what is setting us back. And if you promote a predominately Caucasian force then yes, it going to regress because they will go to the next level and the next level and the next level then we regress.

Rosa, a black female detective with eight years on the force, suggested that there have been too many instances where racially charged events were mishandled by the department, leaving many black officers wondering whether they are truly integrated into the force. When asked whether black officers feel accepted, Rosa stated:

Rosa: No. No I don't.

SW: Why not?

Rosa: There has just been, there has been a lot of different instances and events that have taken place within the department among police officers where racial things have been said from one police officer to another, but remained anonymous. But the way that it was handled, in my opinion, you know, I don't think that it was handled properly, but I don't know all the, um, circumstances behind it either. So I don't know what anybody could have done better, or whatever, but I just think there is still a lot of growing to do on this department as far as being solid and um, releasing of all the really racial tensions. I think there is a lot of racial tension between the police officers; black, white, and indifferent on this police department for several different reasons.

SW: What would make relations better between black and white officers?

Rosa: I have no idea.

While these seven officers felt strongly that they were not accepted, four black officers *said* they were accepted, but their answers suggested otherwise. One has to think hard about the choice of words they used and the scenes they described to better understand what they are saying. For example, Harold is a young black detective with fourteen years on the force. He indicated that although he feels accepted, he thinks that he is treated differently by white officers when compared to how these officers treat blacks on the street with whom they interact. In his mind, his perception of race has

changed tremendously since he has been an officer, because he clearly sees how race impacts policing. Harold stated:

Harold: Now is there racism? Yes, but it's not as blatant, because people do a good job at hiding it. And I think it's on both sides, whites and blacks. They do a good job of kind of concealing it. You know, and then if we are not accepted then they do a good job at hiding it, so I've never felt like I wasn't wanted.

SW: How have your views of race changed since you have been on the street?

Harold: Like, I've always been open minded, but I did not realize how prevalent it was until I became a police, because when I was younger I really didn't look at it. I didn't worry. I was never really hit with it. But then once I became a police, then you see how some of the white officers talk to people on the street. They will talk to a guy who is black completely different than the way they will talk to me. So you kind of pick up on that. Now, have I heard some white call someone an N on the street. No, but I can tell that I am more accepted than someone black on the street. I am up here, they are down there. It's almost like they are in the field and I am in the house. So, it's one of those feels, so.

SW: Have you ever been in a situation where there was a black guy being detained and things changed when you pulled up?

Harold: Yes. Yes, oh yeah. Oh yeah. I'll never forget. There was a guy. He was a black guy. When I pull up, I pull up right in front of a white female officer. Well, they got this guy chained to the fence like a dog. *[in a slow and accentuated posture]* We don't do that. So she had a fit. She had a fit. She is a white female. So they were talking to her trying to justify why they were doing that. But when they see me pull up everything just changes. So at that point they decide to handcuff him and be all friendly with him. But he could have been lying, which I don't think he was, but he was like "now I am cool, but at first I was the N word." So yeah, it's been cases like that!

John, a middle aged black detective. He suggests that although he feels accepted, there will always be cases where a peer will make a racially insensitive comment that will deteriorate the positive relationships officers have developed. John stated:

John: You know I will tell you my position. I feel accepted, but I think there is a lot of apprehension to say that we are fully accepted. It's like that N word train never ceases to stop rolling. Or the race train never ceases to stop rolling. Everything can be perfect and you can be here in harmony and then one person will do something. And then it's like see, that's why I can't fully say that I am accepted here. I think that's in society too, but I think here very much.

Apollo is a black officer with sixteen years on the force. Apollo declared that he did not care whether he was accepted, but one should pay particular attention to how he describes his feelings at work versus when he is not at work in the context of interacting with his white peers. I asked, "do you believe black officers feel fully accepted on the force"?

Apollo: Yeah, I think they do. For me, I come to work to work, you know. I don't care if you accept me or not. I am not here to make friends or anything like that. I got a job to do, um, and for eight hours a day nothing is going to get in the way of me doing that job, you know. I can hate your guts outside of that eight hours – want to see you burned at the stake. But for eight hours, of the day, or the time that I am here, I am required to give you the best that I can give you; to make sure that the fellow officers go home at the end of the shift and that's what I am going to do. Now outside of that, I don't have to invite you to barbeques, or babysit your kids or anything like that, but for the time that we are here until I go home, I am required to take care of you. And that's an automatic. That's what I would do.

Drake is a sergeant who is black. He suggests that he feels accepted, but the promotion system is unjust and subjective, which makes black officers feel like the playing field is not level. Drake stated:

Drake: I think they feel fully accepted, but I know there was a lot of rumblings about where promotions are ending up. Um, cause there are a lot of good minority officers that are taking the test, but they are not clustering – making the grades you know, to be listed for possible promotion. So that's where we are at.

SW: Do you think that is fully accepted? I mean are they qualified?

Drake: Absolutely. There is no doubt in my mind.. Um, I know it's been tossed back and forth to do another way of testing. Seventy five percent (75%) of the test is an oral interview, which is my objective opinion of how you are speaking and presenting the information. Only twenty five or thirty percent is written information as far as out state charges and the rules and regulations. We call them special orders, which are the rules and guidelines of how we govern ourselves as a police department. Um, that's only weighted twenty five or thirty percent. This part I agree with. I have been a sergeant for several years. Its stuff I don't have to have memorized. Its stuff I can look up in a charge book later. The first thing you are going to look at is calming the scene down. Scene preservation. Then after that we can look up everything else later as we develop information and interview witnesses and victims and stuff like this. So I understand why it's weighted like that, but there is such an objective, no subjective weight to it. You got to kind of scratch your head and like, um are we putting our best leg forward, so!

Three officers with whom I spoke suggested that some black officers do feel accepted and some don't. Their perception was that it depends on the situation. For example, Jim, a Hispanic officer with twenty years on the force, stated:

Jim: Some do some don't. It all depends on where you come from. That's my opinion, anecdotally.

Ike, a black officer with eight years on the force suggested:

Ike: Depends on the area, where they are and their supervisor. You still have some officers that feel ostracized because of their supervisor. And when I say supervisor I mean direct sergeants and lieutenants.

Athena, a black sergeant with thirteen years on the force suggested:

Athena: I think some do. Not all, but some.

Only one black officer, an older lieutenant named Tony, indicated conclusively that black officers feel accepted. His perception was that things were better than when he started, but later suggested that the playing field is not fully level. Tony stated:

Tony: It has changed and it has changed for the better. If you look at the command staff, there are an equal number of black sergeants and lieutenants as there are white. And when I first came on to the department that was not the case. It has changed. The opportunities are there for any minority to progress on the department. I am not going to say that it is a level playing field, because it is not, but knowing that and seeing that I am a lieutenant now. I never thought that I would make that, so with hard work, dedication and desire it is possible.

### ***Conclusion***

This chapter has described the deep tensions felt between white and black officers on the Larandia police force, and the limited and strained conversations about race among these officers. We have seen that the lack solidarity between black and white officers may be due to several factors. Black officers mentioned internal dynamics with respect to promotions. They mentioned the disparity in how black officers were disciplined for similar offenses. This was one of the major reasons black officers gave for why they needed a black police officers association as a means of providing black officers help and protection within the disciplinary process.

Equally important, however, were black officers' direct observations of how white officers treat black citizens on the street with disrespect. Black officers indicated that they are disappointed in how members of the minority community are treated by other officers. They were also sensitive to the double standards for black citizens when compared to the outcomes of officer interactions with white citizens for similar infractions. Thus, it seems that the general consensus among other black officers I interviewed is that the lack of solidarity between black and white officers was due ***not only*** to inequalities within the department but also to how officers treat people on the

street. Moreover, the deep gulf and tension between “onstage” and “backstage” discussions of race contribute to mistrust between black and white officers.

Camilla Stivers has argued that “public administration relies heavily on the wise and unbiased exercise of discretion, yet there is considerable evidence that judgment is often exercised according to the personal morality of the individual bureaucrat but also that, when examined more broadly, there is a pattern to such judgments that is biased against African Americans and the poor” (Stivers 2007).

This pattern is powerfully felt by minority officers in the Larandia police department. At the same time, this department, like most major police departments, has an official commitment to racial non-discrimination. It has adopted rules and training against racial discrimination, and it is clear that discrimination is regarded by all officers as officially “wrong” and subject to serious punishment. Moreover, police morale depends on a shared sense of police solidarity: that officers will support each other no matter their race or gender. This chapter has examined how police officers talk about race in the context of sharp tension between these two bedrock facts: an official commitment to nondiscrimination (and a cultural commitment to police solidarity), and the powerful experience of continuing discrimination.

Police solidarity and faith in the department’s commitment to non-discrimination is undermined in myriad subtle and not-so-subtle ways by how officers act in racially tense contexts and how they talk about race. As we saw in chapter three, black officers are confronted with ongoing acts of disrespect toward minority citizens by their fellow white officers. They feel strongly that white officers do not know how to act respectfully toward these citizens or do not seem to care. As John, a middle aged black officer with seventeen years on the force,

stated, “When you see someone mistreating your race, then it’s like – I’m a have to be against you.”

Frank discussions of racial disrespect and discrimination almost never occur out in the open among both black and white officers. Sometimes officers do discuss race onstage, but are limited to jokes. As Tony stated, the blue line discourages officers from introducing issues that would erode this solidarity. But frank and sometimes shockingly explicit discussions of racial issues occur backstage, among trusted fellow members of one’s racial group. There, white officers use banned, racially derogatory terms to describe blacks, complain of how departmental policies have, in their view, unfairly given job advantages to black officers, and complain of the black officer’s union that competes with the dominant (white) union. Backstage, black officers, too, engage in frank discussions of racial issues. They complain of white officers’ disrespectful treatment of black citizens on the street, of these officers’ double standard in going easy on white middle-class suspects while using the full force of legal procedures (and uses of force, including shooting) against black suspects, of how the white power structure in the department makes it necessary to have a black union to represent the interests of black officers, and of not being fully accepted as officers in the department. Sometimes these backstage discussions, especially those of white officers, are revealed on stage, setting off firestorms of controversy.

Would internal relations among officers be improved by discussing issues of race more frankly and openly within the department? Many of the black officers quoted in this chapter believe that open discussion would be helpful. One effect might simply be to bring to light the complexity of each officer’s views on the subject. This might reduce suspicions that those on the other side of the racial divide have nefarious attitudes and preferences. These assumptions grow from hints that leak from the backstage onto the front stage.



In conclusion, I return to Bret's quote, which addresses why dialogue is important.

Without the proper dialogue, many will never truly know whether a glimpse into the backstage that seems to reveal hidden racism is, in fact, a valid representation of what officers truly believe and how they really act. Bret states:

You have to learn to separate the crudity of language from actual hate. Because some of these same characters using the N word at this card game, then I later see them and they turn out to be best friends with this black officer married to this white woman. Now I'm thinking; not any true dyed-in-the-wool racist would do that, um and a true black person in favor of racial harmony wouldn't say those words. So a lot of times there are those confusing contradictions. And the differences between the words and actions.

## Chapter 5: Race and Representation

### Introduction:

In chapter three I examined whether police officers believe the race of the officer matters when interacting with members of the minority community. As I have shown, officers' perceptions of this dynamic differed sharply and their perceptions broke down along racial lines. White officers firmly declared that the race of the officer never played a role in their interactions with members of the minority community, whereas black officers suggested race played some role in these interactions.

I also found that police officers know the extent to which the black community is distrustful of the police and that officers feel it in a visceral way. Black and white officers however reacted to this phenomenon in differing ways. White officers were more apt to arrest based on the actions of black citizens, while black officers were more likely to respond with empathy and deescalate tensions with the black community. I argued that a shared (linked) fate has some bearing on this phenomenon and that black officers had an appreciation for black citizens' unresolved past grievances.

The findings from chapter three suggest black officers are disappointed by how their peers enforce department priorities in these communities. As John, a black officer with seventeen years stated "When you see someone mistreating your race, then it's like – I'm a have to be against you."

I found in chapter four that diversity has done little to shape the discourse within policing. Black officers are certainly **capable and willing** to discuss these issues in order to help white officers understand why they should show more compassion when interacting with the black community, but black officers often do not discuss these issues for valid reasons. Besides

being an uncomfortable topic, officers indicated they do not discuss the issue of race because they are concerned with being judged negatively or being ostracized by peers for either saying something that is insensitive or upsetting. Consequently, officers indicated that it was better to say nothing and pretend the problem does not exist. Officers, regardless of race, indicated that the limited “front stage” conversations they have on race are mostly symbolic, and that meaningful discussions have been reduced to jokes. This has left many officers wondering what discussions are *really* like behind closed doors.

Given these challenges, black officers suggested that there is less solidarity among the force than is commonly believed. Moreover, black officers overwhelmingly stated that they do not feel fully accepted into the force. These issues contribute to what I call a blue-line breakdown.

This chapter examines whether and how the increasing number of black officers has affected internal dynamics in police departments by specifically looking at whether black officers make recommendations to supervisors on the issues addressed in chapters three and four. The thesis of this chapter is that some black officers advocate for policy changes, but many choose not to do so because they do not want to be seen as militant.

### **Eroding Solidarity: A theoretical Perspective**

Sklansky has argued that today’s police department is very different than the white-monolithic department of the past, based primarily on the increase in female and racial minority officers into the force. This increased diversity has led scholars to one of two different conclusions: that almost nothing has changed as a result; i.e. blue is blue; or everything has changed (Sklansky 2006).

Sklansky ultimately theorizes that diversity has had a positive impact on policing for three reasons: first, minority officers have a better understanding of what minority communities want from officers, a term he calls competency effects; second minority officers have had an impact with respect to the number of positive interactions with these communities, based on a dynamic he calls the community effect. He speculated, however, that a third effect may be the most significant: that increased diversity has had an *organizational effect* by changing internal departmental decisions on policy and procedure (Sklansky 2006).

The heart of Sklansky's argument is that diversity has led to dissent and disagreement within police departments, which he suggests is a good thing because departments are presented with a range of conflicting perspectives and it is valuable to address these even if these leads to internal conflict. Moreover, this division within police departments is amplified when minority fraternal police officer associations work in collaboration with organizations outside law enforcement to argue for changes to law enforcement priorities. Sklansky argues that these changes are a positive development because they force departments to address long-standing concerns held by black community groups regarding departmental enforcement priorities (Sklansky 2006).

This line of thinking is similar to a prominent theory within public administration, called the theory of representative bureaucracy, which suggests that hiring a diverse employee workforce that mirrors the demographic composition of the population being served improves the agency's responsive to the needs and concerns of that population (see, e.g., Krislov and Samuel, 1981). In this vein, some scholars have examined how much an organization matches the general population. Others have examined how employee diversity affects organizational output (e.g., Pitts 2005).

Scholars have been especially interested in whether introducing representatives of previously excluded groups, particularly racial minorities and women, into agency employment has improved the extent to which these agencies are responsive to the needs and concerns of these groups. Some scholars suggest that female and minority public servants may be more willing to advocate for policy that positively affects women and minorities, because they may have experienced the problem at hand. If female and minority employees play this role, it is said that they are engaged not only in “passive representation,” or simply being present and increasing the diversity of the workforce, but also “active representation,” or advocacy of policy change (Meier et al. 1984, Meier et al. 1992, Selden 1997, Selden, Brudney, and Kellough 1998).

Most studies of “active representation” have examined whether increasing employment diversity affects outcomes through the discretionary choices of frontline workers. This chapter focuses on a different possible mechanism of change: whether black officers advocate for change up the chain of command, to those with the authority or influence to effect policy change. To my knowledge this is the first study to examine this question.

I asked black officers *what would be a circumstance in which you would recommend changing the tactics, techniques, or procedures used when interacting with members of the minority community?*<sup>7</sup> I also asked a number of follow-up questions to determine whether the command-level officer had acted on any such recommendations.

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<sup>7</sup> I used the terms tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTPs) based on previous research indicating officers do not consider themselves as policymakers (Maynard-Moody and Musheno 2003)

To summarize my research, I found that while the majority of black officers (16/17) believed they had good ideas for how to improve departmental tactics, techniques or procedures for interacting with black citizens, only five black officers (or 29.4% of the total: Nate, Ike, Billy, Q, and Shirley) *had* voiced these recommendations to a supervisor.<sup>8</sup> Equally importantly, of these five, all stated that they had been quite fearful of an adverse reaction to their recommendations, and so had made these recommendations cautiously and only after having done their own research carefully.

As I will show below, some officers were hesitant to speak out on department policies affecting the minority community because they did not want to be labeled as “militant.” Some officers suggested that they are less willing to speak out on these issues, because they do not feel that they have support from the department.

To discuss these findings in more detail, I begin with the recommendations officers would make that would improve how police officers interact with members of the minority community.

### **Common concerns among black officers about departmental policies**

Black officers proposed several recommendations that directly affect how officers interact with members of the black community. However, as I will show below, many of these officers believe that they do not have the support of the department and chose to address these concerns with other black officers, through the black police officers association, or remain silent on an issue instead of addressing it with a supervisor.

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<sup>8</sup> Although I asked about tactics, techniques and procedures, officers answered in their own way. I have included full text quotes so readers have a full picture of how the dialogue transpired.

Wesley suggested the department should change its focus from number of arrests to a measure that does not encourage one to get STATs in order to further their career. Wesley described this as his one major concern about departmental policy:

My only policy that I see is a negative is the, um, police department is stat driven from patrol. That officer are judged on the amount of arrests they make, and on their calls. So when we came on it was about the type of arrest you make. Now, it's just about the arrest. And officers can make um what I think are petty arrests for let's say a tiny amount of marijuana. Now this is what I see different in north Larandia and South Larandia. That officers, especially white officers in north Larandia, are more likely to arrest a black person for a tiny amount of marijuana than they are to arrest a person in the second district for a tiny amount of marijuana. But it's not because they are racist, it's because it's stat driven. So you understand that, hey listen, I can get a stat for this easy arrest that's not going to amount to anything as opposed to if I was on the south side or if the stat didn't mean anything I would just tell this person to throw this, you know this scant amount of marijuana in the wind. You know what I mean. That would be my policy and you can't change the policy on that. It's still a law violation. You can't tell somebody not to enforce the law.

And Q raised this as an issue as well. He suggested:

Q: You know and then you have your eager young kids that just want to come up north so they can get stats. You know so everybody has their reasoning, their different motives for why they want to be up north. Some feel that it's punishment. Some feel it's a stepping stone. And then some just don't care.

SW: The stepping stone is getting the stats?

Q: Making a name for yourself so that if you want to, you know, pursue uh, one of the specialty units. You know, especially like if it's a. You know, me being on the swat team; that was six years of that. You know, you either get asked or you try out. And I got asked, but that's because I was doing things already and getting noticed and didn't realize it. Where you'll have some people that that's all their goal is: "I'm a go get all the guns and all the dope I can get. Lock everybody up. Make all my numbers. Look great and when I start applying." Then they'll be like, oh, ok, oh, you've been kicking butt. But it's also the way you do it. You know. How did you get that gun? How did you get that dope? You know what I'm saying. And, everybody is not necessarily guilty. And that's my whole theory of it. Every black

person that's walking around is not guilty. And you've got some folk that believe that they are.

Q voiced concern over officers' lack of diverse assignments. He suggested that some officers have been at one station in excess of fifteen years. He suggested that requiring officers to work in different precincts would help them in interacting with citizens with varying socio-economic status:

Q: You should be able to spend a month or two at others districts, other stations, to see how, just to see how they do things, because we are all different. All three, with there being three, we all work differently. Even with there being the same department, but each one does things different. Period. Because you are interacting with different areas, interacting with different people. There is a whole world of difference between the north to the south and central. So that would definitely be something I would implement. Just having some type of interchanging of the different units and the different stations to expose officers to something that they have not been exposed to.

Q's recommendation is in line with the findings in chapter three for two reasons. First, Wes, Nate, Billy, Ike, and Q all stated that they were unaware of the disparity in enforcement priorities until they patrolled in multiple districts. In fact, Nate emphatically stated "You get a shoplifter, or you get this or you get that. You're not always locking them up like you do the blacks up here, you know." Second, as observed in chapter 3, most white officers viewed being sent up north as punishment, and making assignments more diverse might work to change this perception.

Nate was one of five officers that has advocated for change to how peers talk to minorities in the community. He indicated that officers were often disrespectful to minority citizens, because these officers were frustrated by the types of calls received from these communities. In Nate's experience, citizens in middle and upper class neighborhoods would call



for true policing issues such as thefts or vandalism, while citizens in minority areas would often call about the police about non-police issues, infuriating officers. Nate's point was that his peers should recognize who they are dealing with and change their approach and not act out of frustration so they do not make poor relations worse. Nate stated:

Nate: We have to be reasonable with the clientele. I say clientele, but I mean the citizen. The number one thing I try to remind officers and supervisors is that hey, we are an enforcement, law enforcement agency. So I understand that concept and ideals. But, at the same time, we have to be respectful. We have to be professional and respectful. That is not to be confused with or being taken as weak.

Nate: The officer's perspective, and those supervisors in that area, that patrol, that precinct, we have to understand who we are working with. It can be frustrating at times. It can be. You feel like hey, I am out here and I am working a problem area, or problem neighborhood trying to rid it of drug problems, drug trafficking, gang activity, but now I get a call cause someone's cable is cut off or because they is a scrapple. In saying that, I try to remind people who we are dealing with; what kind of services we provide. Don't go in there talking to them and being disrespectful because they don't know – knowing it's not your job to necessarily teach them life all again, but you can give them the resources they need. There's one thing about those people and that is when they call, they want a response right away. They want you to do something about it. They are relying on their police department to be the yellow pages. To be the yellow book, for the most part. And of course you know I am not speaking of everyone as a whole, but you know there is an abundance of those calls. It can be frustrating but it is up to us. What kind of mind, mentality, what class we are dealing with so that we can condition ourselves accordingly – to relax; whusa, a little bit.

Rosa is a black female officer with eight years on the force. Her stance is much like Nate's, but Rosa chooses to be less vocal. She indicated that there were instances where change is needed in how officers interact with members of the minority community, but she usually chooses to address the officers directly. The key issue she has with officers is how they respond to situations in the minority community. For example, Rosa indicated that many officers would respond to a nuisance property and make the situation worse. Instead of letting the citizens know

the reasons for police presence, officers would get upset and threaten the citizen. When asked to elaborate on her statement she stated:

Rosa: Us responding to a nuisance call and we are like if you keep doing that then we'll have to lock everybody up.

This officer went on to describe how officers' disrespect towards citizens is hard to address. From her perspective, officers make a judgment call on how they choose to interact with citizens. Moreover, she suggests officers choose to use their discretion in different ways. Perhaps she would handle situations differently than other officers, but that may not necessarily justify an officer advocating for changes to TTPs.

The most important thing that all black officers wanted to see changed was how officers speak to members of the minority community. The consensus was that officers did not give citizens the courtesy of explaining their justification for stopping the citizen. These situations would become exacerbated when the citizens asks the officer to articulate his reasons for the stop, because some officers take this as a challenge to their authority. Most officers stated that open communication would prevent these issues from unnecessarily escalating. Apollo, a black officer with sixteen years on the force stated:

Apollo: Because we are an authority figure communication is bad. It's like momma and daddy telling kids what to do around the house. I'm the momma. I'm the daddy and you don't tell me what to do. And we sometimes take that approach to dealing with people. You know and if a citizen makes a suggestion or a comment we sometimes take it negatively. And things escalate and go bad from there. You know so that's one thing we as law enforcement need to work on and that's how to communicate – with citizens, not just minorities, but all citizens.

Drake's comments were similar. He said the recommendation he would make is for officers to inform citizens why they are being stopped. When asked about the TTPs he would change, Drake stated:

Drake: Information. A lot of the officers feel like they don't have to tell people why they are stopping them. Um, as a citizen in this community, born and raised, I would want to know why somebody is stopping me. I feel that you are violating my civil rights, because by law, technically on a pedestrian stop, if I am walking down the street I don't have to stop. You know and so now you got a gray area where an officer gets into resisting but has no other original charges on someone. You know, and so it's like, what you stopping me for? I know you want to A, B, C is why you want to stop them but you articulate that. Um, if you don't frame that picture and let them know then yeah, you are going to have a lot of resisting. So, like I said just having a technique of telling people why you stopping them. It's like hey, we have had a lot problems with burglaries in the area, so I am just stopping you. You know, I have never stopped you before. I just want to get your information. No harm no foul. If you ain't got any warrants or anything no problem, but don't lie to me or you are guaranteed to go to jail. You know you got to give them the whole spiel on why you are stopping them.

Although Drake suggested the department should reevaluate the way in which officers interact with black citizens, he also felt that officers should focus on de-escalation. He went on to say:

Drake: What people in the community need to understand is, even if you don't agree with the officer's action, you need to follow his instructions. Because, I've even encountered, I call it a "for instance". But over time I've learned to combat it, and I'm a give you an example. Say for instance I get a call, on 1000 Main Street for three suspicious males walking down the streets looking into cars. I stop them. They match the description, red hats, you know. Black shoes and whatever color, you know they all match what the description whatever the caller said are breaking into cars. I stop them, ask them what's going on. First thing, not first thing, but a lot of times "what I do? What you stopping me for?" A little chip on their shoulder. So, I always address it as, first of all knock the chip of your shoulder. Let me tell you why I'm stopping you.

Michelle suggested that she has tried to bridge the gap from training done internally at the academy by helping officers understand that they have to change their approach. Recall Michelle's statement in chapter three where she suggested African Americans are more passionate when speaking with police. She also suggested many officers would mistake this passion for aggression. She has tried to correct this common mistake by reaching out to officers, vice supervisors, to get them to understand that passionate expression is not the same as belligerent defiance. Michelle stated:

Michelle: Understanding. That's what I did do while I was at the academy is put people in those kind of situations so in their training, you know we do role playing, so I would have some of the recruits get up in their face in order to tell the story of what just happened so they will feel someone inside their space, you know what I am saying. Everyone has this space that they don't want people in so as officers we have to kind of get used to someone being in our space. Understanding that some people will communicate in that space and not draw our weapons so fast.

I asked Tony what changes in TTPs he would recommend and he suggested that changes had already been made. He indicated that:

Tony: The best thing that our department has done to change things is the racial profiling thing that we have done. And this has been in place for well over ten years now. What it does is allow the officer to put down why they stopped the person, how many people are in the car, did you write a citation? Did you give a warning? Was somebody arrested? Could you see or did you determine how many occupants were in the car before you stopped it? And what it does, and the age and race of everybody that was in the car is also on that form. And if its not completed, commanders and supervisors will get a notification the next day, or the next two or three days advising that that form has not been completed. And the officer has to go in and complete the form. And what it does is it tracks and makes sure that we are following our procedures as far as racial profiling to prevent racial profiling.

SW: You said ten years ago. Did that change come from officers, or the community, or the top down?

Tony: I think it was a mix. Um, what happened was that the community complained about it not only here in Larandia, but nationwide. And I think it is something that the departments adopted. Um, like I say, every state does it, and I know the majority of police departments do a racial profiling audit to make sure that they are not violating anybody's civil rights.

SW: if you can recall back then did officers talk about it?

Tony: No. Not at all.

Tony was the only officer that felt there was no need to change the department's TTPs used when interacting with members of the minority community. However, his perception of the issue between black citizens and the police came down to maturity. This officer, a black lieutenant, felt that the power held by officers was too much for some officers to handle appropriately and this was the catalyst behind the issues between the police and minority community. He states:

Tony: I think the protocol is fine. We are supposed to treat people with courtesy at all times. Let them elevate the situation. You know. I think the protocol is fine. I think it's the individual. This is a lot of power. It's a lot of power. I could not have done this job at twenty one. I was thirty when I took this job. At twenty one I was not ready to do this job. I don't think you should be able to do this job at twenty one. There are those that have done it. And there are those that have been indicted at twenty one. I think and officer, as long as you treat people with courtesy, normally, normally you get compliance from them. And you are able to leave them better than you found them. Because, I just don't think the problem is the rules we have in place. I think if we go in and elevate a situation, then the outcome won't be good for anybody. If we come in and we are having a bad day then say everybody is going to have a bad day. You know, that um, a lot of out trouble comes from – he didn't do what I said. Most of the resisting, that's when you get into a fight with someone, comes from a peace disturbance. You know what a peace disturbance is? Contempt of cop; didn't do what I said. He didn't do what I said.

Billy observed: “With racial profiling, I think something needs to be done about the training, because the training is not geared to help out here on the street.” His comments were in line with John, a middle aged black officer with seventeen years on the force. John stated:

John: We have a racial profiling class and stuff like that that we take, which to me it really doesn't help, because they still skirt around the issue of race. Um, would I say that, I would say that a person needs to be outside their element. If we hire people and we know they don't live in the city then we know they haven't been around black people for the most part. And we hire a lot of them. We put them in a car with a female, a black female, or male, or Asian male. You almost have to make them ride together and try to put up with one another to break down what they believe in. You know and once you are around a person that's different, then you start seeing what's different. And you see, yeah there are stereotypes. We joke all the time about Asians, blacks, and whites, but you know that stereotype is just a joke. But it's not the whole makeup of that person's race.

Although officers have specific issues in which they believe would help the department better interact with members of the minority community, only the five officers discussed above indicated that they had made specific recommendations for specific changes in tactics, techniques and procedures. What is unique about these five officers? Do they have more experience, or a position with more authority? Instead of these things, what seems to distinguish these officers from their black peers who did not make recommendations was that they would speak out no matter what the issue.

Consider the example of Ike. I asked Ike to describe a situation in which he would not speak out on an issue affecting the black community.

Ike: Nothing. Something that an officer is doing, and it's detrimental to the community? I can't think of one. Um, if I hear that an officer is racist and I do my own investigation and it turns out that officer is just aggressive, and he's locking people up then I am not going to speak up about that. Hell, you are breaking the law. You need to go to jail. I mean, you know what I am saying. I love my people, I love my community, but hey its folks that's been living here for forty or fifty years so if you are sitting on the porch next door to them and getting high and you causing all this havoc, and this

officer is just aggressive and he just shut your house down, why should I speak out about that?

SW: Has your views on race changed over time?

Ike: No, I have always been outspoken.

Billy, a black sergeant with twenty two years on the force suggested that the department considers him to be very outspoken on issues involving how police interact with members of the minority community. He suggested that as a supervisor, he can make changes on the spot, but also indicated that he was vocal as an officer too. I asked Billy, what would be a circumstance in which he would not voice his concerns?

Billy: Where I wouldn't voice my concerns? I laugh because I am outspoken. Some would say none.

SW: So you feel that if there was an issue you had that you would say something?

Billy: I normally do!

I also engaged this same question with Nate, a black sergeant with eighteen years on the force:

SW: What would be a circumstance affecting the minority community in which you would not speak out?

Nate: Only if there has been a scientific study that determines there is no racism, or disparate treatment.

I asked Q, a black officer with ten years on the force a similar question:

SW: What would be a circumstance that you would not speak up about an issue in which officers are interacting with the minority community?

Q: Something I would not speak up? I don't think there's anything. I mean if there is a problem or issue there is nothing that I would back down on.

Shirley was the last of five officers that advocated for change. She stated:

Shirley: I'm the kind of officer that I have already pushed for change.

These vocal officers seem to be rare.

### **Officers on being cautious when speaking out**

What is striking is how many black officers strongly felt there is a need for change but did not voice this concern. There is a potential for black officers to engage in “active representation,” but this potential is *latent*, because internal department dynamics played a significant role in preventing officers from making recommendation. Many black officers do not feel comfortable in speaking out on these issues. Wes, a black detective, indicated that black officers are less likely to make a formal recommendations to supervisors, but more likely to complain informally among themselves. However, they were careful around whom they complained.

Ike spoke in more detail on this issue:

Ike: Nobody wants to be out in the forefront anymore. And in a way I can't blame them. And I've even tempered it. I've learned that I can't be that, you know I've got kids now. I will go to bat for anybody, but I have to do it in a framework of manipulating the system. I can't be the Nat Turner out here ra ra ra. I'm not that guy anymore. I'm not going to do that, especially when you don't have any help on the department.

Ike admits that he is considered very outspoken by peers, but later suggested that he has learned to temper his feelings based on a lack of backing by supervisors in the department on issues affecting the minority community.

Ike: So for a young officer to be outspoken he doesn't feel that he has the backing. We have very few, high ranking African Americans on the



department who really stick up, really stick up for officers, unless they are females or family members. I happen to work for one that I would run through a wall for and that's Major [officer's name omitted]. I mean he is one of the few that are outspoken and really cares about what is going on in the community. You have a major going with me to interview a young guy that knows about a murder. He put his jogging suit on, went just the way I go. He talks the talk. Not too many, you don't even have lieutenants that do that. So why be outspoken, then get ostracized. And then I am left out here to.

Ike and Nate suggested one variable impacting the extent to which black officers speak out on these issues affecting the minority community is the burden of proof.

Nate suggests officers are hesitant to speak out, because they would need to provide corroborating information against another officer in order to affect change; i.e. one officer's allegations pitted against another. This would have a tremendous impact on the solidarity within an institution. In his view, this makes it hard for officers to advocate for change. This sergeant stated:

Nate: We get a lot of complaints about the way citizens were treated by the police. Talked to. I was disrespected. They talked down to me and they totally disrespected me. They didn't have to do that. When these issues came to the complaint process, you found there was usually no findings on behalf of the citizen to support their complaint. It was hard to substantiate the complaint and causation. They didn't necessarily warrant the level of discipline. When I say warrant the discipline, it didn't meet criteria for certain investigations, such as an officer would say no this isn't what happened. I found myself having to get more abrasive with this citizen because they weren't responding to my command. They weren't obeying my command. They weren't this or that and until I spoke in this harsh tone – and yes I spoke in the tone – it didn't get their attention. And that was everything short of me putting my hands on them; the citizen. A lot of times there are gray areas. It was difficult to find a credence in that complaint to cause some adverse action against the officer.

So for Nate, it is very difficult to call for sweeping change because the issue boils down to making an allegation that another officer has mishandled an interaction with a citizen.

Moreover, he suggests discretion is paramount to how officers execute their duties. Thus,

finding “credence,” as he put it, would imply that the department is taking a citizen’s word over the officer, and this would require proof.

Shirley, much like Ike, suggested that she has changed her approach over the years. She suggests that she is still vocal on certain issues, but the current organizational climate is very different than when she first joined the force. More specifically, she insists that she does not feel that the department is as united as it once was and that officers are less willing to support each other when speaking up on internal department dynamics. She suggests that this resulted in her being less vocal and given her genuine concern for how officers support each other. In an earlier exchange, she suggested that the solidarity had faded significantly. She stated:

Shirley: I have to be careful. May be years ago maybe you could say that we was all about trying to take care of the people, even each other. That’s not even the case anymore. You know if they don’t know you...it’s like a young group of people have come in, another generation has come in and they don’t understand to me some of them, not all of them, which leaves a bitter taste in your mouth. And I have to kind of watch not to judge all young ones. But just some that I have seen, they just won’t move. If an officer needs an aid call if they don’t know the person then they just won’t move, versus my day when it didn’t matter who it was. When they said an officer needs aid everybody left. But some of those guys are not.

Shirley’s comments, when considered in conjunction with the comments made by other officers as referenced above suggests that the internal climate within police departments have some bearing on officers’ willingness to advocate for policy change affecting citizens. More specifically, I argue that internal dynamics make officers less willing to be vocal on issues affecting a specific segment of the population, especially if they do not feel fully accepted. Moreover, as chapter four finds, officers are not discussing these issues in a meaningful way.

Some aspects of the department’s organizational structure seemed to discourage officers from making recommendations. Billy is a sergeant who is black. He has twenty-two years on the

force and suggested some officers want to make recommendation, but the problem could be the hierarchical organizational structure. When asked whether officers make recommendations,

Billy indicated:

Billy: I like to think that they would, but it's a matter of getting that information to the chief. That's the issue. I think if they, a lot of times you might have an off the record conversation with the chief. Our last chief I grew up with him. So being that, well, we wouldn't say this is off the record, but it would be a situation up and he'd be like; I didn't know anything about it. He can't change something if he doesn't know anything about. And that's the problem. Getting that information to the chief – the right way, you know. I could go right to the chief, but I like to do it the right way. You don't want to upset your chain of command, because you have to come to work every day.

As Billy has suggested, more officers might be willing to make recommendations if they were sure that these recommendation would get to the decision-maker.

Billy and Q alluded to the fact that supervisors determine what information gets to the chief, but Jim was more emphatic in his assessment. Jim, a Hispanic officer, describes this dynamic in detail:

Jim: Here is the problem. It's that, the Chiefs really don't have control over the police department like a lot of people think. Who really has control over the police department are the various deputy Chiefs. Think of like five families of the mafia. They decide who is in their particular bureaus. So they have the ability. So you have a black Chief, and then you got four white colonels underneath him, and maybe one black colonel. And those four white colonels will decide the racial make-up of the specialized units are going to be. You see what I'm getting at. That's where the power is.

### **Does having a black police chief help?**

The possibility that black officers would make more recommendations if they felt that these would be heard suggests that who is in positions of authority in a police department may make a considerable difference for whether black officers speak out. For this reason I

wanted to explore whether black police officers would feel more welcome and that their voice inside the department is more heard if the chief is also black.

It was difficult to examine this dynamic directly, so I asked twenty-two officers whether black Chiefs have emphasized the importance of maintaining positive relationships with the minority community any more than white Chiefs, to get a sense of whether black Chiefs would be more accepting of recommendations pertaining to department enforcement policies in minority communities. I hypothesized that black Chiefs would be more vocal and directive in how officers interact with citizens in minority and low socioeconomic communities given the fact that the majority of these citizens have negative views of the police. Officers interviewed for this research served, on average, under two black Chiefs and two white Chiefs. Many had served under three black Chiefs and were able to help clarify whether the race of the chief mattered in officer interactions with these communities.

The findings did not support my hypothesis. Three officers (Shirley, Nate, and Drake) suggested black Chiefs emphasized the importance of maintaining positive relations more than white Chiefs. One officer was neutral in his response (Billy), and eighteen officers believed that the race of the Chief made no difference, meaning both black and white Chiefs were vocal on the issue. A small sub-population of officers within the “no difference” category believed white Chiefs were more sensitive to issues facing the minority community.

Both officers that indicated the race of the chief mattered in these issues were African American and two of the five officers that stated they had made recommendations on changing how the police interact with members of the minority community. When asked about this dynamic, Shirley stated:

SW: So you've had about five or six Chiefs since your time on the force. Do you think the race of the chief matters in the emphasis put on maintaining positive relations with the black community?

Shirley: I can honestly say, I would give them all a positive nod, to where they really cared about what was going on and they wanted to make sure that things in the black community was being handled fairly. Um, I do know for sure, with like the last black chief, the last two black Chiefs, I know for sure, which was [names omitted], they were really, really like don't be f-ing up down here and that kind of stuff, you know. And really tripping, tripping, tripping cause we not gone have it. You know, so I guess.

SW: And he said that to mean, can you be more, um?

Shirley: They said that to mean we are not going to let you go out here and just dog out these people.

SW: Act any kind of way?

Shirley: Right and you're going to be alienated and you're going to lose your job, so you felt the pressure, um, when they were here.

SW: When you say "they" you mean the black Chiefs?

Shirley: Right. You felt - we're not going to let you go out here and act any old kind of way and do what you want to do, because a lot of the officers, a lot of white officers did get reprimanded for that. And a lot of them did get into trouble for cussing and stuff like that. Saying the N word and different things of that nature. Um, you know the chief prior to, the white chief prior to that one. Um you know he didn't play with you, um, messing over the black community, but his wrath wasn't felt, because it was his friends that were tripping. You know, and the only time something would be done was when the community come in and did all of that complaining. It had to go far like that. You know, put it on the news. It had to go far like that in order for him to say ok, I'm a have to do something - do something because you all know better. But you really didn't feel the wrath with him that you did the black Chiefs, so yes. So, just, yeah, to answer that question yeah, with the race. It did matter.

Nate indicated blacks Chiefs were more vocal and emotional about these issues in expressing their concerns to officers. He stated:

I do. I have seen that. However, when you are talking about these issues of race relations, it always a slippery slope when dealing with the chief -

especially a white chief. So you might see a more political response than you would from the black Chief. Black Chiefs are often more emotional and it shows. They are more direct. They see it. They might even be more vocal or boisterous in how they voice their response to such recommendations.

Drake, a black officer, suggested that the black community expects more of black Chiefs and were proud of the visible symbol of change. He had this to say:

I've had two black, two white [Chiefs]. I would say the minority community, I think they appreciate a black chief. Like with [chief name omitted], people, you know, they would often pull you aside, aw do you know [black chief name omitted]? I remember when he locked me up one time. They were excited that somebody they know could, I guess um, kind of had a feel for, you know. Visualize; see coming up. Aw, I remember when he was a lieutenant, or I remember when he was a sergeant. Yeah, I remember that. And so, the same thing with [name omitted]. Oh, I love, I remember when he was in the eight district. Yeah, he locked me up that one time. So you had that kind of tone. But you don't get that same tone with a white chief. Not in the minority community.

While these two officers perceived black Chiefs emphasized maintaining positive race relations more than white Chiefs, the majority of officers indicated that their perception was the Chief's race made no difference in these matters. Tony, a black officer, stated:

No. No. I've had black Chiefs that didn't interact well with the black community. We've had white Chiefs that did very well in the community. So, no I wouldn't say that.

Although some Chiefs are political, many officers indicated white Chiefs were more sensitive to the needs of the minority community than black Chiefs. Louis, an older black lieutenant said emphatically:

Louis: No. flat out no. I think the white Chiefs have been a lot more sensitive to the needs of the African American community.

SW: Why do you think that is?

Louis: I don't know. I don't know why it is. I think maybe you are more callous to your own people. Maybe you think that people have the same opportunities. I don't know. That would be difficult.

Apollo, a black officer stated:

No. I wouldn't say they were any more sensitive than the other Chiefs. I think the chief that we have that is white now is more sensitive to the issues in the minority community than some of the Chiefs in the past. No, I wouldn't say the minority Chiefs were any more sensitive than the white Chiefs.

Thomas, an older white officer stated:

I know that the white Chiefs we've had have made great strides to reach out. My experience with both of them. Does it matter who was black and white? To some people.

These two officers answered similar on other issues concerning race and policing. Their broader point was that when it comes to race and policing, an officer's race (including the Chief) makes no difference. From their perspectives race was an issue when citizens made it one.

Wes has served under three black Chiefs and two white. He stated no:

The institution remains pretty much static on that. I think it's institutionalized. I think it's a part of the institutional memory here.

Rosa, a black female officer, suggested that the chief's role only mattered in style. She suggested:

They have different styles of policing, but I think they are on the same page when dealing with the African American community. I think they have the same views. They might have gone about it differently, but I think they have the same views on how to handle things.

Her perception was part of a broader theme suggesting "politics" in the common denominator regardless of the Chief's race. Athena, a black female stated that:

All of them have a great rapport. A great relationship as far as I can see. I think that when you reach the rank of Chief, you are like a politician. You are going to cater to the community

Some officers were more direct in their response, suggesting a Chief's interactions with the minority community are calculated by whether he sees the minority community as a potential constituency. Curt, a young white officer stated:

If you think about it, if you want to be a mayor or a chief or whatever in the city and be successful, you have to treat everyone, especially African American community with respect and be out there and do the things that need to be done in those communities. You can't ignore them. I don't think [black chief name omitted] was out there any more than [white chief name omitted] as far as community relations. And if anything, [white chief name omitted] is in the media and in the spotlight. He's got a blog. He likes social media a lot, whereas [black chief name omitted] was not. I mean he was the face of the department when he had to be but he wasn't putting himself out there.

Ike was one of five officers indicating he had made recommendations, but he did not feel that his voice was heard more by blacks Chiefs when compared to white Chiefs.

Ike stated:

Some are responsive because they have political agendas. But they are still beholden to the white power structure on the south side.

Catherine, a white female officer, also believed politics play a role in whether the race of the chief matters in these issues. She stated:

I think they have. I definitely think they have. I think [name omitted] tried to be transparent across the board. He was very active in the minority community. But, you have a chief now that's politically minded. So he is very open in all the communities. Open to suggestions. Again, he can communicate across the board.

Billy, also one of the five indicating he made recommendations stated:



Billy: The first black chief that the city had period, I don't think he was [sensitive to race issues]. Chief [name omitted], Chief [names of two black Chiefs omitted] – I think they were [sensitive to race issues].

SW: What was different about the first one that made him less sensitive to issues facing the minority community?

Billy: I think he was kind of in denial. I think, I don't know, I won't say because he was the first black chief, um, I think he was more trying to impress the white community or for political reasons, because he became the mayor later on. Um, but he, I don't think he cared in my personal opinion. That's from the outside looking in.

Thus far, officers of all races suggested that the role of the Chief is “political” and that they are somewhat calculating in the emphasis they place on how officers interact with members of the minority community. This theme was echoed by many other officers, who suggested all Chiefs wanted to do well. Tony, a black lieutenant, indicated:

I think every chief has their own way of doing thing. I won't say it's for the betterment of a particular community, but each chief wants to do well in every community. Now each community requires a different attention. No, if that were the case, then we wouldn't be redistricting.

Michelle, a black female, indicated that the role of the chief was difficult regardless of race. Her perception was that black Chiefs had a hard time justifying why the police were always policing black neighborhoods hard. She indicated that the police follow crime and this has many black citizens feeling hunted by the police. From her perspective, this was always a difficult message to deliver to the black community after the years of strained relationships. She stated:

Michelle: I think it's always different. Probably for the black Chiefs, the community expects more. And then from the white Chiefs, they don't know what to do. So you have those two things going on. So what always happens is, is that really, when it comes down to crime; the core of what we are here for, what our mission statement is about is difficult, because we are looking for criminals. And unfortunately in the city of Larandia, 85% of a

crime is committed by African American males. So you know it's always difficult because the community thinks that we are um, always, um, trying to get a brother. I can't think of the word, driving while black.

SW: Racial Profiling?

Michelle: Racial profiling. We are always all of those things so I think it's just really hard for an African American Chief to stand up and say, you know that's who our crime is committed by and that's who we have to go after. That's always hard to say. Because the community, if it was 99.9% of the crime committed by the African American community, they are still not going to want to hear that. So we are always put between a rock and a hard place in trying to get the community to understand that.

Harold, a young black officer, was more neutral in his response. He suggests the power of social media has given the current chief a slight advantage, because it allows him to be closer to the public than previous Chiefs:

I would say the current chief now [who is white], that's because social media is so big now. Because he's actually out there in the community. In the black community, actually. The reason I know that is because I follow the department on twitter. And he does a blog and he talks about everything that he is doing. It would kind of be unfair for me to say because social media is so powerful now versus the other Chiefs. We didn't really use it like that, so.

Chad, a white officer suggested:

I think they both stress the fact that if you are doing something racially biased then you are going to be in trouble for it. I think, um, there is a lot of accountability, now for the officers. I think if you do something silly, or if you do something dumb and it's racially charged, I think one the media is going to know what is going on since we are so transparent now. That's what the last chief and this chief preach. I think that, um even if you are a racist officer, you would have to be a complete idiot or constantly afraid to do anything racially charged, which is a good thing because I think our police department is good at checking you on that. I think that if the police department doesn't then the media will, so. I don't think I've noticed any major change in racial policy from the last chief to this chief, because I think there has been a strong emphasis on it from the last chief to this chief.

While many officers were very direct in whether they perceived the race of the chief mattered, many were neutral in their responses. These officers were clear in that the race of the chief made no difference, but also focused on how each chief was dissimilar than previous Chiefs. Q, a black officer, who stated he had made recommendations earlier stated:

Depends on the chief. Definitely depends on the chief. And I stand on that. Just because you got a black chief don't mean the black people gonna be alright. So. And you would take that with black Chiefs all of the country. I mean – just cause he's black don't mean he's gonna be looking out for the best interest. You know, and you've had white Chiefs who have. Then we've had white Chiefs, you know that have – took care of the city, took care of everybody, so.

John, a black officer stated “it depends on the regime.” But he also suggested there was more to this dynamic than the race of the officer. In his view, some black Chiefs would not do enough, while others would overreact and do too much. He went on to say:

All the Chiefs I've had focus on the minority community in their own way. Let's say police abuse. Some would put a Band-Aid on it and the community knows what's going on. Some of them go in and do full surgery and don't realize that they are doing way too much. Not still really letting the police do their work. When you start limiting a guy in how he can approach the community then you are messing things up. You can't go up and start talking to a drug dealer – and say to him; hi buddy, how are you doing? I am officer so and so. I really would appreciate it if you would stay off the block. You can't do that. I don't care what nobody says. Political correctness or whatever. You got to let him know you mean business.

In general, black officers felt that the Larandia department was not open to front-line officers' suggestions for improvements Louis, a black lieutenant with twenty five years on the force indicated:

Louis: I would have to say I've yet to see a chief ask an officer what his thoughts are about the community. It's more lieutenant and above. Captain and above.

SW: Why is that?

Louis: I couldn't say. The way I look at it the officers are our most valuable resources. If I ever need any intel or information, that's who I go to. I don't go up, I go down. Because they are out there all the time. They will have the information I am looking for. Now to your question of why they don't do that. I don't know. I think they'll be a valuable resource.

Wesley, a black detective with over fifteen years on the force was more candid in his response. He indicated:

Wes: This department is not very friendly to suggestions from below. I don't see that happening too often. This department is not accepting of recommendations from officers or even detectives.

### **The key role of organizational support for officers' voice**

Nate suggested the black police officers association was very active in helping advocate for changes to how officers police minority communities. Nate suggested that although many officers are hesitant to advocate for change publicly, they seek assistance from this organization. He also mentioned the black police officers' association had the credibility to be very vocal on these issues and demand investigations, because it was not considered part of the police department. So I asked Nate who would be doing the investigations? He indicated:

Nate: One would be the ethical society of police. We often initiate such complaints. It may be something that we'll do independently or I can call in an independent agency or entity to investigate, such as the NAACP. Even the Department of Justice. Um, often times when we see those scenarios I will call for one. In that instance we don't find that then I will make our findings known why we are not making the recommendation. Hey, they are working in accordance with the law or procedures. They may have a conservative approach or be known to use aggressive tactics, but you have

to look at the circumstances as a whole. They are targeting the most violent of the bunch out there. Often times it calls for more forceful approaches. And also, um, the areas or neighborhoods that they might be targeting could be a derivative of citizens' complaints maybe predominately black, so in those cases I would make those findings known about why we are not making those recommendations.

Q's statements were similar. He indicated that he could not make recommendations straight to the chief, but would send them through one of two means. Q noted that anyone in the chain could unilaterally decide that the recommendations do not warrant the Chief's attention.

When asked who you would make recommendation to Q stated:

Q: Um, Some of the outreach, like some of our associations or the police board, something like that, then they would shoot it up to him. I mean I can't do it directly to him.

Michelle also discussed how she reaches out to organizations outside the department to try to get minority citizens to understand what they could do to de-escalate situations with officers. After asking about what TTPs Michelle would recommend, I asked whether there were any procedures that the minority community does not like. She stated:

Michelle: I think definitely. One of the things I did do was work with NAACP in coming up...we had a flyer that said what to do when you are pulled over. NAACP passed those out and I've been a part of different symposiums with the youth, with the Urban League. Kind of the same thing, work with the youth and have one on one session, not one on one, but group sessions where they could ask questions. What do I do? Why do you guys always? Just to kind of bridge that gap and get them to have a better understanding. Now, you know what, sometimes we can do all that and in the end they still don't, um, it still doesn't establish real faith in the police department, but I think as an organization that we have to keep striving for that. And I don't know that it is long lived. Because you build a positive relationship, but I am not who they are dealing with on the street when they get stopped, so I think it's always going to be a challenge for us is how we bridge that gap.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter, I examined whether black police officers make recommendations (advocate) for changing the official tactics, techniques and procedures for interacting with minority communities. Although all black officers firmly believed there is a need to change these official practices, only five officers made recommendations. Most remained silent.

Several key things keep officers from recommending change. Some officers chose not to advocate for change because they do not feel that the department backs them. Others were concerned about being labeled as militant. Many said they were careful to question another officer's judgment over how he or she had interacted with a citizen, especially if the officer who had concerns was not present at the interaction. In some cases, black officers stated they would have a personal conversation with an officer instead of voicing their concerns to a supervisor. Officers also suggested the organizational climate has an impact on whether they choose to advocate; i.e. speak out on circumstances affecting the minority community. First, some black officers indicated that the institution did not value input from subordinate officers. A few officers indicated that they would need to feel supported by the institution's leadership before they would feel comfortable advocating for change. Last, officers, regardless of race, did not feel that black chiefs were any more sensitive to issues facing the minority community than white chiefs. This could explain why black officers are less vocal about policy issues than I expected.

A broader implication is that increasing the representation of African Americans among the ranks of police officers does not necessarily increase their voice in the department. This clear finding casts some doubt on the presumption of theories of representative bureaucracy that diversity within institutions somehow provides minority groups with equal access to power.

More specifically, some suggest that diversity within public institutions gives the various groups something like an automatic vote in policy matters. But when the power structure within the organization remains dominated by the majority group, the minority members may *speak* but still have not effective *vote*. Some officers I interviewed strongly expressed their concerns but felt they had no real influence over departmental policies and procedures.. Police departments have mechanisms that provide them a voice, but not a vote. In fact, there no black officer believed that front-line workers have significant influence in police departments when it comes to policy matters. They felt that their only influence lay in how they choose to use discretion. While officers have an opportunity to voice their concerns, there are consequences that come with that opportunity. My research suggests bureaucrats have a voice, but there are consequences to using it. Said differently, this voice may not be as loud enough to have lasting change, especially if the organizational culture and climate do not allow it to resonate.

Officers also outlined the various mechanisms that provide them a voice, but also indicated that senior individuals within that chain could mute their voice. Thus, many officers indicate that they carefully voice concerns informally among peers, because speaking out could alienate them or affect their legitimacy. The former or latter would further reduce the limited voice they have. Moreover, officers that advocate for change to policy also run the risk of being labeled as “militant”, thus again, reducing their credibility.

Lastly, in hierarchical institutions where power is derived from rank, those with more rank have a bigger voice and face fewer risks from using it. Perhaps mid-level supervisors have influence, which is why scholars examining diversity and advocacy for policy implementation should focus more attention on in hierarchical public organizations minority employees have more influence over policy when they have attained at least a mid-level rank. In my view,

increasing the diversity of employees up through the supervisory chain is possibly more important than simply increasing diversity at the front lines. Having black mid-level managers may give these people greater direct influence over policy, and also may facilitate the voice and influence of front-line black and female employees.



## **Chapter 6: Conclusion**

The central question of this dissertation is: what difference do black officers make in police departments? Statistically-based studies suggest the answer is not much. I argue that scholars should not accept this conclusion without having first talked to black officers as well as their white colleagues. This dissertation has reported the results of twenty seven interviews with black and white officers in a major urban police department. The short answer to this question is that Black officers make an enormous difference. They told many compelling stories of how. In this concluding chapter I will summarize my main findings and discuss their broader implications.

### **Race matters in policing**

Police officers acknowledge the fact that the black community is distrustful of them. They also acknowledge that black citizens are more likely to be on edge when forced to interact with officers. As Drake stated, the typical interaction begins with a black citizen asking him “what are you stopping me for?” One of the key observations of this dissertation is that white and black officers have responded differently to this known fact.

Black officers indicated they have empathy for poor African American citizens (as well as poor whites) and, knowing that these people are likely to be distrustful and even belligerent when first approached by a police officer, are more apt than white officers to try to deescalate these tensions when interacting with members of the minority community. Black officers acknowledge that the black community still has unresolved grievances against police departments and these officers feel compelled to do more than simply follow rules or use force to the maximum legal extent when enforcing department priorities. Michelle, Nate, Q, Billy and

others indicated that the black community expects more from black officers and they have recognized the potential for unintended escalations, and the need to head them off, in ways that white officers do not.

Black officers' empathy for poor African American citizens seems based in what Dawson calls a *linked fate*, or the strong sense that, even with all the class differences among African Americans, all share a common experience of discrimination defined by race (Dawson 1995). Black citizens' common experience of police stops and the potential for disrespect and violent escalation in them are a key source of this sense of linked fate. As Lieutenant Louis stated "I still get nervous when I am pulled over by the police." Thus as Louis, Harold and other officers that spoke on this issue suggest, everyday racism is real and directly contributes to this linked fate: because these officers experience racism themselves they cannot completely disregard race like their non-black peers claim to do.

In some instances, this empathy leads black officers to take extra steps to help out black citizens who might otherwise be subjected to strict enforcement. As Shirley states, "when I first came out... I was out to try and help everybody. It didn't matter, but I do go that extra mile to help somebody black. Even more so because I see how they don't get the same, the just don't get the same justice out here. They just don't."

While racial tensions between citizens and police officers seem obvious to black officers, white officers overwhelmingly claimed that race had no bearing on their interactions with minority citizens. More importantly, white officers claimed they are not influenced by the historical grievances black citizens have with the police. White officers seemed to think there was no legitimate reason why black citizens were on edge when interacting with the police. If a

black citizen was belligerent or uncooperative, white officers said they simply wanted to correct this behavior, even punish a person for it, and move to the next issue.

The officers with whom I interacted did not appear to be deliberately racist, meaning that they did not appear to want to harm black people because of their race, and I did not consider them to be racist. In fact, they presented themselves as working hard to act only in relation to a person's *behavior*, and not the person's race. In their stories of interactions with black citizens, white officers presented themselves as guileless and color-blind, as if the people on the street are not identified by race. These officers described their own actions as concerned solely with enforcing rules in a procedural and impersonal manner. As Jim, a Hispanic officer, indicated, an officer can be cold and procedural when interacting with "some" groups, in a way that simply follows and does not violate any department policies.

Still, while white officers denied that race has any bearing on their actions, they often implicitly acknowledged deep racial tensions and asserted that police officers need to be especially forceful when dealing with "some" people. As Thomas, a white officer, noted, some citizens have a subculture that cannot be changed and rather needs to be *suppressed through policing*. In fact he suggested that this behaving in a "certain way" is all that some of "them" (meaning blacks) know.

In sum, while *all* officers recognize that many African Americans distrust the police and are prone to act disrespectfully because of this distrust, black and white officers respond to this recognition in dramatically different ways. Black officers understand the sources of this distrust and empathize with black citizens. Using this knowledge, they try to head off unintended escalations. White officers too often see this distrust and noncooperation as a problem to be controlled with superior force.

It is important to note that some black officers' frustrations with their white peers' approach to black citizens was less a concern about department enforcement policies favoring proactive stops than about how white officers acted in these stops. In fact, a few suggested that proactive stops are perhaps a good way to reduce crime. Black officers, however, were frustrated with white officers' abrasive and disrespectful treatment of black citizens in these stops.

These observations about officers differing levels of empathy and respect for poor black citizens observation is significant in light of public administration research examining race, representation, street level bureaucracy, and citizen interactions. Following the work of Maynard-Moody and Musheno, police officers' actions toward people on the street seem based in their assessment of the moral "worthiness" of a citizen. However, black and white officers measure a citizen's worthiness differently. Black officers seemed to think that poor black citizens, and also poor whites, are morally worthy even if living in abject poverty and even if they are distrustful and initially uncooperative. Black officers believe these citizens are as deserving of being treated respectfully just as are affluent white citizens. Therefore, these officers believe that black citizens are due an explanation for why they are stopped, and are deserving of being given "a break" if it is possible to resolve an infraction without having to issue a citation or make an arrest. These officers describe working proactively also to avoid unnecessary escalations of tense interactions. White officers, on the other hand, seemed to measure a person's worth in terms of his or her socio-economic status and his or her level of respect and cooperation with the police. Thus, if a poor black citizen is distrustful and uncooperative in a way that offers a legal justification for arrest, white officers say they will

make the arrest. Black officers describe their white officers as equally abrasive to poor white citizens, but more accommodating when interacting with the well-to-do.

More research should examine how front-line workers measure a citizen's worthiness, and how the race of both the street-level worker and the citizen are implicated in these evaluations of worthiness. These evaluations of worthiness seem to directly impact how an officer uses discretionary authority over these citizens.

### **Cultural Biases and policing**

Second, officers suggest that the biases their peers bring into the job (specifically, their background and education) have some influence on how an officer chooses to interact with black citizens. Many officers, both black *and* white, indicated that white officers' tendency to have grown up in predominantly white neighborhoods and predominantly white schools did not adequately prepare them for the poverty they confronted in neighborhoods that are overwhelmingly black and poor. Officers also indicated that these biases were deepened and solidified through repeated and negative contact with minorities and citizens of low socio-economic status. Recall Tina's statement that it is common to see a certain demographic sleeping in a liquor store parking lot at noon, or Bret's suggestion that some officers do not know that their first one thousand contacts with black citizens in poor neighborhoods provide them with a biased sample. They come to think that *all* poor black people, or even all black people, are like the especially troubled people they have confronted on calls for service.

My findings suggest black and white officers respond to the widespread social problems in poor neighborhoods different ways. White officers were more apt to dehumanize these citizens by using derogatory terms. Conversely, black officers indicated they rarely hear other black officers use these derogatory terms. Equally important to this point is that while white

officers use derogatory terms to describe poor whites as well as poor blacks, black officers indicated that they (black officers) were less likely to use derogatory terms to describe poor white citizens. The officers I interviewed regarded these derogatory terms as a key expression of officers' views about different members of the public.

Public administration scholars should take seriously the terms used to describe members of the public and make them a subject of research. Scholars should examine how front-line workers talk about members of the public. Scholars should examine whether, as documented here, front-line employees from previously excluded groups, particularly racial minorities and women, are less likely to use derogatory and frankly dehumanizing terms to describe some citizens. In particular, public administration scholars would do well to take seriously Michael Dawson's thesis that black people share a strong sense of a "linked fate," and, as I have shown, are less willing to dehumanize black citizens. However, my findings do not address why black officers also seem less willing than white officers to dehumanize poor whites. At first blush, the concept of "linked fate" does not seem to offer an explanation. But it is possible that black officers' own experiences of difficult economic circumstances make them more empathetic of poor people, whatever their race. Scholars should examine whether this phenomenon exists in other institutional settings, too.

### **Neighborhood context: war zones versus white neighborhoods**

A third observation of this dissertation is that the neighborhood context powerfully shapes officers' perceptions of race and their own sense of their role and how to discharge their duties. Neighborhood context is increasingly recognized as a major influence on policing style and aggressiveness of enforcement (Smith 1986, Terrill and Reisig 2003, Weitzer 2000, Weitzer and Brunson 2009, Weitzer and Tuch 2006) In my interviews, many black officers spoke about

the mind-set that officers, mainly white, have when policing poor neighborhoods (mainly black). Some officers, mainly black, identified their role as providing a *service*. Others, mainly white officers, identified their role as *policing*, or as Thomas, a white officer, states, of suppressing problematic behavior. Nate, a black officer, described how white officers going into a poor black neighborhood prep for “battle” like they are going into a “war zone.” Billy, a black officer, described white officers’ behavior as “big game hunting,” meaning officers are going to be extremely aggressive in how they interact with citizens in these communities. Jim, a black officer, suggested that there is an “I killed a black guy party every year.” Black officers described how the same white officers who act so punitively in black neighborhoods have a completely different, more respectful, mind-set when interacting with citizens in middle and upper class neighborhoods.

It is hard to do justice to all of the detailed depictions by black officers of these neighborhood-based disparities in policing. These stories included tasing a 70 year old black grandmother for asking questions; breaking apart basketball goals in black neighborhoods when politely asking children to move their PVC hockey goals in upper class neighborhoods; how supervisors do not tolerate white citizens being spread over cars in the upper class neighborhood when blacks are treated like this routinely in black neighborhoods; or white sergeants and lieutenants authorizing rifles to police black neighborhoods, even though these weapons were not authorized by the department, thus sending a message that it is ok to use an extravagant level of force akin to a military occupation in a poor black neighborhood. For the black officers interviewed for this study, it was abundantly clear and viscerally painful how much white officers act differently when discharging their duties in poor black neighborhoods versus mainly white middle and upper class neighborhoods. To these officers this difference seems to boil

down to the race of the people being policed: while white people are treated as if they deserve respect and “a break,” black people, especially in poor black neighborhoods, are treated as if they deserve harsh control and zero tolerance for even minor violations.

Although incidents like these have been reported before from a citizen perspective (Brunson and Miller 2006, Gau and Brunson 2010) , little research before this study has examined *officers’* perspectives on these matters. Rarely will officers go on the record to discuss these controversial issues. As this study shows, however, it is possible to interview officers on these difficult topics and to learn their perspective. More studies like this are necessary to see whether the dynamics observed in Larandia also occur in other major urban areas. Scholars also would do well to pursue additional interview-based studies so as to understand why, from officers’ perspectives these race-based disparities continue to occur, even in the wake of litigation, pressures from civil rights groups, and attention from black law enforcement organizations. Officers may also be able to suggest ways to better address these disparities: whether, as various officers in this study suggested, this requires a change in departmental enforcement priorities, careful selection of which officers to assign to poor neighborhoods, promotion of more black officers to mid-level supervisory positions, or careful checks on the cues sent by officers in these supervisory positions, or a change in the entire organizational culture of the departments.

### **How police enforcement affects the composition of the police force**

The fourth theme of this study is that Black officers discussed how the disparities in police enforcement directly affect the police force itself. This occurs in two ways. The first is that high arrest rates of black citizens affect how many black citizens are considered as candidates to be a police officer and the type of black officer that is recruited onto the force.



Wes, a black officer, expressed frustration about how the definition of a *qualified* black applicant has changed over the years, based in part by the high number of blacks with prior arrests. He suggests *qualified* is now defined as not having a prior record. This excludes many worthy black people from even being considered. Instead, Wes believes that what should count as qualifications to be a police officer are a person's life experience, maturity, and education. Nate and Wes feel that the "system" has left many of the qualified black applicants behind. I had the opportunity to observe a black police recruiting meeting where officers were discussing these issues with four black youth under age twenty-five. Interestingly, two of the four recruits had prior arrests.

Nate spoke about how the *system* is unforgiving and shared his thoughts on the impact of disparities in police enforcement policies:

That background check eliminates some quality candidates. Because hey, at seventeen I may have done some things that I wouldn't do at twenty-five or thirty. And we are learning that our system is sort of – kind of unforgiving and I don't like that. You can't hold me accountable for some things I did at seventeen. I say you can't. I don't think it's right because you have to have room for error, room for growth. Whatever. Change of heart. What do they call it, those epiphanies? So you'll find that the immature, poor, irrational decision, let's just say to smoke marijuana at seventeen, eighteen, twenty. You know it's there presented to these youth – peer pressure. Some people might succumb to it. Some might not. But a lot of times you see those kids get arrested. Those white kids aren't getting arrested. They are getting breaks. I remember I was doing a performance appraisal on a guy. A white kid. He was arrested for stealing. Breaking into someone's car and stealing the radio out. That's pretty serious. Now you are a police officer? It was an adult arrest so it wasn't sealed. Most blacks, they won't get that opportunity.

As a consequence, there are fewer black officers on the police force than might otherwise be the case. Ironically, racial disparities in police enforcement contribute to racial disparities *in* the police force.

A second way in which racial disparities in police enforcement shape the police force is through how these disparities contribute to tensions between black and white officers. Sklansky (2006) observed that increasing racial and gender diversity within police departments has affected the solidarity within the institution, which he argues is a good thing. My findings concur with his assessment, but I also find that solidarity is eroding with police departments for internal *and external* department dynamics; specifically in how officers, mainly white, treat minority citizens.

Black officers expressed deep frustration with how white officers treat minority citizens. Black officers were sensitive to what they described as a double standard for black citizens, when white citizens received breaks for similar infractions. Some officers were vocal on this issue, but John's statement stood out; "when you see someone mistreating your race, then it's like – I'm a have to be against you." These frustrations led black officers in some instances to recommend changes in how white officers act toward citizens. Although black officers made these recommendations very rarely because they were leery of giving offense, white officers resented the suggestions. Among both white and black officers, these tensions over how white officers treat black citizens led to an erosion of internal solidarity between white and black officers.

Black officers also indicated that they did not feel fully accepted within the police department. They were especially concerned about lower and later promotions for black officers and disparities in discipline meted out to black and white officers for similar offenses.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> This was one of the major reasons black officers cited as needing a black police officers association – a dues paying organization that provides officers increased protections.

Future research should extend these observations beyond policing and should examine whether black or Latino front line workers feel less accepted in their agency based on how their colleagues treat black or Latino citizens, and whether these disparities in treatment are seen as shaping who is recruited as an employee.

### **The constrained discussion of race in policing**

A final key theme of this study is that officers indicated that they do not discuss issues of race and racial disparities in a meaningful way, and this contributes to something like a pent-up tension among officers regarding race. I have suggested that this artificially constrained discussion of race is based partly on the department's vigorous efforts to prohibit racial discrimination by officers and to encourage "cultural sensitivity." Another contributing factor is a professional culture that suggests the only color in policing is blue. Black officers strongly believed that deeper discussions about race, racial disparities in enforcement, and how to act respectfully toward people on the street would be necessary to improve the quality of policing in poor black neighborhoods. More specifically, black officers strongly feel that the institution does not create an environment where officers can freely discuss the issues of race and learn how to better connect with a segment of the population that is distrustful of the police.

I am persuaded that these officers are right to be frustrated. This opens a new question for future research: how can police departments better create an environment where officers are willing to discuss these important issues? The current approach, with a heavy emphasis on policies banning racial discrimination and training in "cultural sensitivity" seems to discourage the needed conversations. What alternatives might foster these conversations? This issue clearly extends beyond race and policing. Many institutions are struggling with how they can sensitize

public employees to social realities: whether GBLT issues in the workplace; sexual harassment within the Department of Defense; or other workplace issues that could potentially divide an institution e.g. equal pay or Affirmative Action.

### **Implications for theories of representative bureaucracy**

This dissertation has several implications for theories of representative bureaucracy. Diversity among police officers has had a very positive impact on policing as an institution. Many black officers shared stories of how they were improving relations with the black community and how they were trying to change minorities' perceptions of police one citizen at a time. To a lesser extent, black officers have been able to encourage white officers to see the importance of diversity within the department and to provide a counterbalance to the frequent and negative interactions non-minority officers have with police.

Nonetheless, black officers have been less successful in influencing police policies and procedures than scholars of representative bureaucracy might expect. In the context of black representation, policing, and racial profiling, Wilkins and Williams' quantitative study argues that the link between passive and active representation is broken because black officers possibly target black drivers (low hanging fruit) just as much as do white officers, or that black officers are socialized into policing and police these communities harder because they have a need to fit in, or because racial profiling as a policy targets blacks (Wilkins and Williams 2005). My empirical data suggests none of these is the case. My interviews suggest that black officers seem to have a rather different orientation to street-level policing in black neighborhoods than do white officers.

Most narrowly, this dissertation suggests that studies of representative bureaucracy and of policing should expand their conception of what are appropriate data for assessing how the race

of officers matters. The number of tickets written, complaint received, or arrests made have been the focus of many prior studies and certainly provide one perspective on officer behavior. As I have noted, on these measures black officers seem to act much like white officers. However, these measures miss other aspects of police action. The simple fact is that many officer-citizen interactions do not result in arrests, tickets, or complaints. The officers whom I interviewed suggest in cases not involving arrests, there is a considerable difference in how black and white officers behave. The key implication of this observation is that studies of representative bureaucracy should gather data other than simple measures of arrest or ticketing rates.

More broadly, this dissertation agrees with the basic presumption of theories of representative bureaucracy that black officers bring a rather different perspective to their work than white officers. As I have summarized above, black officers have different life experiences than white officers, and this includes the experience of racial discrimination. Black officers therefore have greater empathy for black citizens, and this leads them to act more respectfully toward black citizens.

But this does not mean that black officers engage in “active representation” in calling for changes in official policies, as expected by theories of representative bureaucracy. Black officers certainly *want* to advocate for change to supervisors, but choose not to do so for a variety of reasons. A restrictive organizational structure and climate seemed to limit these officers’ ability to influence the department’s formal policies and procedures. Many indicated that the institution does not value input from front-line officers. Some indicated that there are feedback mechanisms in place, but supervisors or committee representatives could filter out comments they do not believe are worthy of the Chief’s attention. Officers indicated that they are hesitant to question peers’ judgment, especially if they are not present so they are cautious to advocate

for change. They specifically indicated that issues they perceive as disrespectful could be perceived by other officers as necessary to gain compliance. Thus, black officers were cautious because advocating for change would further alienate officers along racial lines and earn some the label of “militant.”

This important aspect of these findings is that increasing the *presence* of racial minorities in public agencies is critically important, but mere presence is not enough. Equally important is whether these employees are given a *voice and a vote*: whether the agency’s leaders foster a climate and an organizational hierarchy that listens to the voices of minority employees and incorporates their recommendations into official policy—or ignores them. Scholars have argued that minority and female representation in government can somehow make public institutions more legitimate by allowing groups to have equal access to power. More specifically, the argument is that government institutions can ensure equality of policy output simply by increasing the presence of racial minorities and women in the ranks of workers. It is assumed that as long as the issue is salient and the employees are diverse and have discretion, they will have influence over the organization’s policies (Meier and Nicholson-Crotty 2006, Meier et al. 1992, Selden 1997, Selden, Brudney, and Kellough 1998, Keiser et al. 2002, Riccucci and Meyers 2004, Wilkins 2006). These studies suggest that minority and female front-line workers, *simply by their presence*, have a significant ability to impact policy – almost as if by being present they get a vote in policy matters.

The black officers I interviewed suggested just the opposite. Not only do they not get a vote, but they also do not have much of a voice concerning policies that directly affect black citizens. I argue that minorities within predominantly white organizations have a voice but often have no vote, and even their voice is not as prominent as scholars have implied. No officer,

whether black or white, felt that the race of the senior executive had any impact on the priority placed on maintaining positive relations with members of the minority community. Officers suggested, at the executive level, that all senior executives wanted to do well with these communities. Surely representation at the senior level has positively impacted these departments, but officers did not feel as strongly on this issue as I had expected. Instead, black officers emphasized the key role played by mid-level supervisors in shaping how much front-line officers are heard. Generally, front-line officers felt that mid-level supervisors are not particularly interested in hearing suggestions from front-line officers. I recommend that scholars of representative bureaucracy should examine more fully the factors that prevent minorities from voicing their concern to supervisors on controversial issues related to racial discrimination. Identifying these factors may help to make possible more substantive long-term change.

These observations suggest the need to extend theories of representative bureaucracy in a new direction: toward recognizing that *bureaucratic processes are more or less democratic* in the same way that political processes are more or less democratic. It is widely recognized that political processes vary widely in how much they facilitate open and equal participation. Thus, even though officials in the United States have been elected since the country's origin, for many years election processes were limited by poll taxes, literacy tests, white primaries, and other discriminatory mechanisms. Black voters may have been *present* but they were not given a *vote* or a *voice*. Knowing this, it is simply implausible to think that all elections are alike. Yet theories of representative bureaucracy treat all bureaucracies alike, and look only at how diverse are their employees. In fact, scholars pay some attention to whether minorities within bureaucracies have a voice, but we should look more closely at the factor preventing these workers from speaking out on important issues facing specific segments of the population.

I propose supplementing standard public administration theories with two new concepts to better address these dynamics. These concepts, as described in this dissertation's introduction, are "moral labor" and a distinction between *front-line* and *supervisory* representative bureaucracy. Together, these concepts contribute to a theory of *variations in the relative democracy of bureaucratic organizations*.

As my research suggests, bureaucrats want to advocate for change, but many feel uncomfortable in doing so. Thus, I argue that their desire is latent, because they never make the transition from wanting change to advocating for change. Although these workers do not actively advocate for change, they clearly have thought about how they want to make changes in a way that is beyond symbolic. Some did not want to be seen as snitches, like Rosa suggested, and prefer to speak with officers directly instead of challenging peers. As Nate described, officers often have the upper hand in these situations by admitting to such behavior then suggesting they had to behave in this way to gain compliance. Last, other officers, such as Ike, suggested that they do speak out, but only after doing their own investigation, to prevent a he said-she said incident from occurring. While these incidents were specific to my research, I expect that institutions are filled with bureaucrats that want to speak out on issues but don't for one reason or another. Perhaps they are too new to the job. Some public workers may fear retribution and are not comforted by whistle blower protection laws. Perhaps their organizational climate is such that they have no voice and no mechanism to speak out on issues. Moreover, some work in an institution where the organizational culture demands they execute their responsibilities, with no expectations of advocating for change – a do what I say environment -- which causes bureaucrats to not speak out..



Some bureaucrats *do* speak out, however, recommending changes to their supervisors or even reaching out to external advocacy groups for assistance in putting pressure on the organization to adopt change. I call this activity **moral labor**. As described in the introduction, moral labor occurs when a bureaucrat perceives a citizen or group of citizens to be morally worthy of respect and help but not being treated in this way, and the bureaucrat takes active steps to advocate for improvement in this treatment. Although this concept builds on ideas from the theory of emotional labor and Maynard-Moody and Musheno's observation that perceptions of moral worthiness influence bureaucrats' actions, no existing theory fully addresses moral advocacy of the sort that I have documented in this dissertation. An important aspect of this theory is for bureaucrats to believe the citizen is morally worthy of extraordinary acts on behalf of the bureaucrat.

While this concept of moral labor is based on interviews with black police officers and their concern for how black citizens are treated by the police, I expect that it may have wider relevance. For one thing, there is no reason to think that moral labor is limited to bureaucrats' concern about African Americans. We might expect some bureaucrats to engage in a similar kind of moral labor on behalf of other groups who are sometimes not fully accorded respect, among them GLBT citizens, undocumented immigrants, people living in poverty, or women. Past episodes of major change, for example the Civil Rights Movement, may be reinterpreted in light of moral labor. In looking back on the progress made during the Civil Rights movement, scholars find that there was a revolution from below that helped enable change, but there was also support from above, meaning those in positions of bureaucratic influence. Thus, future scholarship on moral labor should not be tied to whether minorities advocate for change affecting minorities,

but whether any bureaucrats, regardless of race or gender, advocates for change affecting women and minority citizens.

These findings have considerable implications for future research in public administration, as well as studies on race in general. My findings suggest that scholars should ask a new set of questions about how race matters in public institutions. The field has progressed from examining whether institutions' workforce mirror society as a whole, as Krislov's research suggested in the early 1980s. The second stream of research now looks at whether there is a link between passive representation (diversity) and active representation (advocacy for policy). However, scholars should consider a third and equally important question: where is diversity most effective? As my research suggests, having diversity at the front line is important, but we perhaps we should look at the implications for not having diversity at the middle management level, especially in hierarchical organizations, where anyone in the chain of command can unilaterally decide what information gets to the Chief (or senior executive in other institutions).

My findings also suggest that women and minority front-line workers would need some support from middle managers in order to speak out on important issues affecting citizens of shared demographics. In fact, my findings suggest the role of the middle manager is critical in hierarchies that believe in the supervisory chain of command. These institutions frown on subordinates going straight to the boss without the permission of their managers. Moreover, as we have heard from officers such as Billy and Q, getting important recommendations to the boss can be difficult. Consequently, employees may want to address supervisors directly when they have the opportunity, but they may face backlash from supervisors who may not support the employees' recommendations.

It is imperative that scholars conduct more research on the importance of supervisors to better determine what impact they have on an employees' willingness to advocate for change. Perhaps, as Jim suggests, the true power within an institution does not reside with the senior executive, but the middle managers that select important positions within the organization. In this case study, Captains play a key role in selecting the demographics of specialized units. They also determine which employees fill other important roles. This dynamic could be more important than we know, because as Nate suggests, commanders do play an important role in determining how officers treat citizens. Recall Nate's story that anything goes in black neighborhoods, but the moment an officer behaves similar in white neighborhoods then a white commander urges caution. Nate suggests supervisors then want to be "professional" in certain situations.

These findings have practical implications, to be discussed below. Perhaps having more diversity in middle management would create an environment where front line workers would feel more comfortable talking about the issues of race and its implication for interactions within the department and with citizens. As my research suggests, black officers with whom I spoke want to discuss these issues more in the work setting. In some ways, discussing these issues publically in break rooms and others locations would not leave black officers wondering where their white peers stand on issues involving race. I suspect increasing the discourse would also make black officers more willing to advocate for issues affecting black citizens and reduce the perception that they are militant for being vocal on these issues.

I suggest that scholars conduct more qualitative research on the issues of race and policing to explore more fully and in other settings how black and white officers may police differently in subtle and sometimes not-so subtle ways. More research is needed as well on

whether police departments are capable of learning from the experiences and perspectives of their black officers.

While this study has provided important new data on officers' perception of race and its implications for policing, it has two important limitations. First, this research obtained data from one department. Scholars should look for additional evidence in other police departments and other work settings outside of policing to gain a better appreciation of how officers and other front-line workers perceive racial dynamics between public workers and citizens. Interestingly, I attempted to gain access to seven police departments. Many of the departments declined to participate, based primarily on the contentious nature of the subject. This fact alone indicates the level of tensions on the topic and the need for more research on it.

Moreover, the sample size may affect the extent to which this study can be generalized. The size of my sample population was impacted by officers' willingness to participate; some were unwilling to participate because of the contentious nature of the subject. Thus, as I addressed in chapter two, my findings are based on the perceptions of 17 black, 8 white, and two Hispanic officers. Ideally, future research would interview a larger number of officers.

The city I chose is somewhat segregated, and it is possible that my findings are not generalizable to cities that are not segregated. However, many metropolitan cities are similarly segregated: their minority populations are concentrated in a one area of the city and their white middle- and upper-class neighborhoods are concentrated in other areas. Thus, even if these findings are limited to segregated cities, that is a large swath of American urban areas..

In my future research I hope to extend my dissertation research in several ways. First, I plan to conduct interviews with police officers in other departments so as to address the limitations described above. However, I also believe that my findings are not specific to policing,

and so I want to carry out similar research in other institutional settings. For example, I want to address whether public servants in other settings dehumanize citizens as part of their efforts to enforce institutional priorities, and whether this introduces tensions among these public workers based on their own identities and sense of empathy for these citizens. A possible setting for this research is military service departments. Additionally, I plan to address the extent to which workers in other institutions discuss the issues of race and how their perceptions of this issue affect their actions toward members of the public.

My future research will look to reframe current scholarship on street-level bureaucracy and representative bureaucracy. With respect to the former, I will look to extend Maynard-Moody and Musheno's observation that the front-line workers are not interested only in making their jobs easier, as is often claims, but are also willing to work on behalf of members of the public who they consider to be morally worthy. With respect to the latter, I expect to extend the theory of representative bureaucracy by examining more fully the organizational conditions that influence whether front line workers are hesitant to advocate for change in the treatment of a specific segment of the population or are willing to advocate for change to improve this treatment. As noted, my findings suggest the crucial importance of mid-level managers in shaping whether front-line workers are willing to engage in this advocacy and whether their voice is heard if they do engage in this advocacy. I expect that mid-level supervisors are similarly influential in other institutions, and I want to carry out research to consider this possibility. Addressing more fully these interactions between front-line workers and mid-level supervisors will allow scholars to better understand the conditions that shape treatment of members of the public by bureaucracies.

**Table 1.1: List of Police officers Interviewed**

INTERVIEW CODENAME	OFFICR RACE	SEX	JOB TITLE	AGE GROUP
NATE	BLACK	MALE	SERGEANT	MIDDLE AGED
WES	BLACK	MALE	DETECTIVE	MIDDLE AGED
SANDY	WHITE	FEMALE	DETECTIVE	OLDER
ROSA	BLACK	FEMALE	DETECTIVE	MIDDLE AGED
TINA	WHITE	FEMALE	LIEUTENANT	OLDER
MICHELLE	BLACK	FEMALE	LIEUTENANT	OLDER
CURT	WHITE	MALE	PATROL OFFICER	YOUNG
TONY	BLACK	MALE	LIEUTENANT	MIDDLE AGED
IKE	BLACK	MALE	DETECTIVE	MIDDLE AGED
BILLY	BLACK	MALE	SERGEANT	OLDER
Q	BLACK	MALE	DETECTIVE	YOUNG
SHIRLEY	BLACK	FEMALE	PATROL OFFICER	OLDER
LOUIS	BLACK	MALE	LIEUTENANT	OLDER
DRAKE	BLACK	MALE	SERGEANT	MIDDLE AGED
BRAD	WHITE/HISP	MALE	PATROL OFFICER	YOUNG
CHAD	WHITE	MALE	INVESTIGATOR	YOUNG
HAROLD	BLACK	MALE	INV ESTIGATIVE SGT	YOUNG
TIM	BLACK	MALE	DETECTIVE	MIDDLE AGED
JOHN	BLACK	MALE	OFFICER	MIDDLE AGED
THOMAS	WHITE	MALE	DETECTIVE	MIDDLE AGED
OBIDIAH	WHITE	MALE	DETECTIVE	OLDER
JIM	HISPANIC	MALE	LIEUTENANT	OLDER
BRET	WHITE	MALE	CIVILIAN INSTR	YOUNG
APOLLO	BLACK	MALE	OFFICER	MIDDLE AGED
CATHERINE	WHITE	FEMALE	SERGEANT	YOUNG
MATT	BLACK	MALE	LIEUTENANT	OLDER
ATHENA	BLACK	FEMALE	SERGENAT	YOUNG

### **Table 2.1: Oral Consent**

As a PhD student in the University of Kansas's School of Public Affairs and Administration, I am conducting a research project about how the growing racial diversity in policing has affected police work. I am specifically interested in how officers' race affects two processes: officer interaction with African American citizens and whether and how officers advocate for administrative changes to police tactics, techniques, or procedures used when interacting with African American citizens.

I would like to ask you to tell stories in which officer race mattered and in which officer race made no difference in your interaction with African American citizens. I would also ask you to provide me an example in which you made recommendations about procedures to peers and/or anyone that outranked you. It is not important whether they acted on your recommendations; I am just interested examples in which you have discussed ways that procedural changes could have better influenced your interaction with black citizens or made you more effective at your job.

Your participation is expected to take about 45 minutes at a time, in several meetings. . You have no obligation to participate and you may discontinue your involvement at any time.

Your participation should cause no more discomfort than you would experience in your everyday life. Although participation may not benefit you directly, the information obtained from the study will help us gain a better understanding of the extent to which race impacts officer behavior. Your identifiable information will not be shared unless (a) it is required by law or university policy, or (b) you give written permission.

This interview will be recorded. Recording is not required to participate. You may stop taping at any time. The recordings will be transcribed by me. Only my dissertation committee will have access to recordings which will be stored on my personal computer and password protected.

Participation in the interview indicates your willingness to take part in this study and that you are at least 18 years old. Should you have any questions about this project or your participation in it you may ask me or my faculty supervisor, Dr. Charles R. Epp at the School of Public Affairs and Administration (785) 864-9087 ([chuckepp@ku.edu](mailto:chuckepp@ku.edu)). If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, you may call the Human Subjects Protection Office at (785) 864-7429 or home (785) 832-9860 (home) email [irb@ku.edu](mailto:irb@ku.edu) and inform them that Solomon Woods is conducting field research at your department and you have questions pertaining to my research.

### **Table 3.1: Story Instructions**

Thank you for your willingness to participate in this interview. I want to remind you that your participation is voluntary and you can terminate the interview at any time. I also want to remind you that I am committed to guarding your identity. I promise not to share your name with anyone during my research. I seek your permission to tape the interview so I can reference it later when conducting my research, but this is not required for your participation.

Thank you for your willingness to participate in this interview. I want to remind you that your participation is voluntary and you can terminate the interview at any time. I also want to remind you that I am committed to guarding your identity. I promise not to share your name with anyone during my research. I seek your permission to tape the interview so I can reference it later when conducting my research, but this is not required for your participation.

I am looking to document the positive aspects of having minority officers in police departments. To document this, I am interested in a story in which your race made a difference when interacting with black citizens. I am also interested in stories in which your race made no difference when interacting with black citizens.

The story can be positive or negative.

I am also interested in situations in which you would recommend changes to protocol, procedures, or techniques used when interacting with members of the minority community.

If possible, please identify an example in which you would voice your thoughts about procedures to a supervisor. It is not important whether they acted on your concerns; just examples in which you have discussed ways in which procedural changes could have better influenced your interaction with black citizens.

Stories can involve an encounter between you and citizens. Stories can be about encounters between you and your agency, or among you and other members of your agency. You may also retell a story that happened to someone else, even if you are not a character in the story.



**Table 4.1: Questions Posed to White Officers During Phase II:**

Stories on how white officers' race has or has not made a difference when interacting with minority citizens

<u>Initial Question</u>	<u>Follow-up Questions</u>
How long have you been on the force?	
Why did you choose to join?	
Describe a story in which race made a difference in your interactions with minority citizens	
	How has having (or not having) a black officer present might have changed the situation
	Describe a circumstance in which you prefer black officers take the lead
	How have black officers altered your views of black citizens?
Describe a story in which officer race made no difference when dealing with a minority citizen	
	Why do you think that the race of the officer makes no difference

	What are characteristics that all officers share, regardless of officer race?
What can police can do to improve relations with the minority community?	
Please tell me of a time when you could have arrested somebody but decided not to for some reason?	
	Why did you not make the arrest?
	Do you think the officer's race makes any difference in these sorts of decisions?

**Table 4.2: Questions Posed to Black Officers During Phase II:**

Stories on how black officers' race has or has not made a difference when interacting with minority citizens

<u>Initial Question</u>	<u>Follow-up Questions</u>
How long have you been on the force?	
Why did you choose to join?	
Describe a story in which race made a difference in your interactions with black citizens?	
	Do you believe the situation would have been different if a white officer was present?
What characteristics of black officers matter in regards to policing when interacting with minority citizens?	
	Describe qualities black officers have that are helpful in dealing with black citizens?
	Do white and black officers ever discuss these qualities with white officers?
Describe a story in which race made no difference in your interactions with black citizens?	

What are the characteristics that all police share?	
How has your view on race changed since joining the force?	
Please tell me of a time when you could have arrested somebody but decided not to for some reason?	
	Why did you not make the arrest?
	Do you think an officer's race makes any difference in these sorts of decisions?

**Table 4.3: Race and Internal Police Discussions of Police Practices**

Questions posed to all officers regardless of race

<u>Initial Question</u>	<u>Follow-up Questions</u>
What are circumstances that would lead you to recommend changes to tactics, techniques, or procedures used to interact with minority citizens?	
	How do front-line officers make recommendations to supervisors regarding police practices?
What would be a circumstance in which you would voice your opinions about procedures affecting minority citizens and their relationship with the department?	
What would be a circumstance in which you would <b>not</b> voice your opinion about procedures affecting minority citizens?	
How are recommendations perceived by supervisors and commanders?	
	Have different chiefs been more or less receptive to recommendations from front-line officers?

	Does the race of the chief make any difference for this?
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