Political Ideology, Racism, and American Identity:

An Examination of White Americans' Support for the Police Use of Excessive Force



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Abstract

Under what conditions do white Americans support police violence? And what are the terms by which they do so?

This thesis explores how those who evince the strongest support for police, namely white Americans, "experience" incidents of excessive force, and examines the ideological mechanisms by which they make appraisals about policing. Across two online surveys of white American adults, varying the racial identity (white/black) of a police officer and suspect in a fictional scenario of violence showed no effect on respondents' assessments of the encounter. Instead, ideological commitments to individualism, as measured in in just-world (Lerner 1980) and libertarian-authoritarian (Heath et al. 1994) attitudes, were associated with strikingly high levels of support for excessive force.

I situate these empirical findings within a broader theoretical argument about white American identity, and the ideologies, mythologies, and pathologies that sustain it, namely the American Dream emphasis on desert, merit, and self-enterprise. I argue that excessive force is made legible through a frame of personal responsibility, with national and political identities influencing how white Americans, specifically, perceive and reconcile inequality. I suggest this way of "seeing" may explain why so many white Americans, in particular, continue to support the police.

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This research moves beyond identifying socio-demographic correlates for the approval of police violence, and uses rich theoretical examination and original survey data to investigate the role that racism and political ideology play in explaining white Americans' beliefs about the appropriateness of excessive force.

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Chapter 1

A Theoretical and Empirical Exploration of White Americans' Support for the Police Use of Excessive Force

I. Introduction

Police violence, and especially lethal violence, has been a widely debated issue around the world. In the United States, the extent, nature, and disproportionality of the police use of excessive force has sparked outrage, bewilderment, and even at times, indifference. The scope of American exceptionalism in rates of police brutality is evocatively captured in the statistic that US police killed more people in the first 24 days of 2015 than British police killed in the previous 24 years (Lartey 2015).

Social science research and public opinion polls in the United States (Gallup 2018), however, show the vast majority of Americans still express strong support for police, even as news and social media stories, public debate, and fictionalized accounts of police brutality continue to proliferate. Among white Americans, polling data has found that 74% of adults rate police "warmly," compared to 30% of black Americans (Pew 2017). Yet as Davies (2018) notes: "it's one thing to measure public attitudes, but quite another to understand what shapes them." This is crucial, as according to Locke (1995), public attitudes toward police use of force may be just as important from a public policy and law enforcement perspective as the issue itself.

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This thesis is an attempt to understand what shapes public attitudes toward excessive force, and by extension attitudes toward police and the social world more generally, from a section of the population that still evinces some of the highest levels of support for police: white Americans. I test two possible underlying dynamics animating how this particular subset of Americans might "experience" – that is process, understand, and cognitively reconcile – incidents of excessive force: racism and political and national ideology.

Across two online surveys (*n*= 1132 and 1325), I find no effect for implicitly or explicitly varying the race of an officer and/or suspect on white respondents' appraisals of excessive force. Instead, ideological commitments to a belief in a just world and libertarian-authoritarianism – or what I describe as individualist preferences – were associated with strikingly high levels of support for excessive force. Individualist orientations also predicted attributions of trust and legitimacy to police. I situate these empirical findings within a broader theoretical argument about white American identity, and the ideologies, mythologies, and pathologies that sustain it, namely the American Dream emphasis on desert, merit, and self-enterprise.

Focusing exclusively on (self-identified) white Americans comes with many limitations, and of course means that the findings presented in this thesis cannot be extrapolated to an increasingly diverse and multicultural America. And to be sure, existing scholarship has shown that similar criminal justice orientations, such as punitive sentiment and

support for tougher sentences are expressed by – and sometimes higher in – minority populations (Cohn et al. 1991). Yet, in many ways, white Americans relationship to police *in particular* seems to hold something of a Teflon quality: able to withstand and recover from news of violence without any apparent long-term erosion in confidence or trust. Nevertheless, I make this disclaimer at the outset, and repeatedly throughout this thesis, to make clear that these findings are confined to a racial subset of Americans.

II. Main Points of the Thesis

There are four principal arguments advanced in this thesis. The first is methodological, highlighting the problems of the apparent orthodoxy which has resulted from racism becoming *the* dominant explanation for disparate rates of – and thus apparently, attitudes toward – police brutality in the United States (Chapter IV). While racism is undeniably important to any valid explanation for understanding excessive force and public sensibilities towards it, I argue that the *way* that it matters might be different to what is often portrayed; yet this frequently mischaracterized and misunderstood in much of the extant scholarship.

Following from this, the second objective of this thesis is to establish the importance, meaning, and historical legacy of another dimension by which to interpret police use of excessive force: individualist political ideology. I argue that personal responsibility and self-management in America are both integral and defining constructs of national identity – of what it means to be *American* – and that it has functioned as an *interpretive*

lens to make sense of one's social world (Simon 2006), both good and bad (Chapter III, IX). I describe the way that that the narrative of personal responsibility has become such an ingrained founding national ideology, mythology, and pathology, inculcated and developed through stories of meritocracy and desert – the "Land of Opportunity," the New Frontier – such that anyone who cannot pick themselves up from their proverbial bootstraps, who cannot successfully cultivate the American Dream, is often considered a failure, and even deserving of misfortune (Bandura 1990, Lerner 1980) (Chapter VII,VIII, IX).

This dovetails with the third overarching argument: that the corollary of this unique hyper-individualism is that its apparent converse – *dependency* – is especially pejorative in the U.S., overlaid with a particular subtext about volition and culpability, through which criminality is often made legible (Lerman and Weaver 2014). I draw out political parallels, using welfarism as a case study, to demonstrate how dependency and criminality *in particular* are seen as the superlative failures of self and of the American Dream (Chapter IX).

And fourth, I aim to re-situate policing within this individualized ideological tradition. Specifically, I argue that attitudes toward excessive force may be a species of a wider libertarian politics regarding the appropriate preserve of the individual in American society, thus distilling latent anxieties pertaining to dependency and self-reliance (Chapter VIII, IX).

III. The Organization and Structure of the Thesis

This thesis is both empirical and theoretical in nature, drawing on both original quantitative research and existing literature in sociology, criminology, and social psychology. The analysis and chapter structure follow a similarly mixed-methodological format.

I begin with a review of the literature (Chapter II) to orient the reader and this work, and to lay some of the theoretical foundations which motivate the empirical hypotheses. I also describe some of the cultural sensibilities toward and historical legacies of American police. I consider how certain foundational American self-concepts (e.g., the Western frontier, the Land of Opportunity, the self-made man) shape both policing and crime narratives.

Next, Chapter III provides an overview of the methodological approach used, namely the research questions, experimental design, structure of the samples, statistical treatment, restrictions and ethical limitations, and why a quantitative online survey was ultimately chosen. Additional consideration of the unorthodox empirical-theoretical methodological approach is discussed.

In Chapter IV, I empirically test the first main point of interest: does varying the race of a police officer and/or suspect affect how excessive force is read by white Americans? In this chapter, I *implicitly* varied the race (i.e., white/black) of the protagonists in a

fictional scenario excessive force. Results showed no effect of race on nearly any of the outcome variables. These findings are considered both epistemologically, as they appear to contravene much of the scholarship attesting to the salience of racial identity in policing, as well as reflexively, as I reassess my own bias in the research process. I conclude with some of the emergent methodological consequences of considering racism as a dominant paradigm of inquiry. The findings motivate a subsequent survey.

In Chapter V, I describe a second survey conducted to replicate and corroborate the null effect of race. I detail this process, first considering some of the methodological flaws in the first survey, and then discuss additional features included in the follow-up survey, such as *explicitly* varying the actors' race, adding a manipulation check, and including a control condition. Ultimately no significant effect for race was found.

In Chapter VI, I depart from racism as a predictor for whites' approval for excessive force and move to consider the (ostensibly) non-racial, ideological and psychological factors which may generate support for police violence. I look to social identity, just-world attitudes, and libertarian beliefs – or what I group under the ambit of "individualist orientations." These constructs were analyzed either before *or* after respondents read the fictional story of excessive force, which enabled me to better home in on their effect: did reading about excessive force shift respondents' underlying attitudes and orientations? or did these orientations shape the way stories about police violence were "read"? Experimental results showed that individualist preferences predicted white support for excessive force and, interestingly, these ideologies were

themselves unaffected by stories of violence, despite assessments of trust and legitimacy in police deteriorating. Implications for the public's broader relationship to the police is considered.

In Chapter VII, I build on the findings of the previous chapter, testing the relationship between individualist preferences and white respondents' trust in and normative alignment with police. Results show that individualist ideologies predict both trust and normative alignment with police, which may provide a clue into why large groups of Americans continue to support the police, despite over half a century of scandals and violence: because even as trust and normative alignment deteriorate in the short term, at least, from news of excessive force, they may ultimately "rebound" as they draw on deep-seated ideological commitments to individualism, which remain virtually unaffected by news of violence.

Chapter VIII situates these empirical results in a rich theoretical argument about the American Dream. This chapter has three main aims: to (1) broadly underscore the importance of free will and personal responsibility as foundational national ideologies and mythologies; (2) to provide historical context to many of these meritocratic myths, and discuss how they have been harnessed pejoratively to delineate between "deserving" and "dependent"; and finally, (3) to re-situate policing within these hyper-individualized terms in order to contextualize how excessive force may be "experienced" by many white Americans.

The final concluding chapter (IX) reiterates the main points of the thesis and identifies avenues for future research, but also offers an appeal to publish null findings and expand policing scholarship's critical repertoire. The structure of this chapter takes a bird's-eye, holistic format, which locates this work in political and historical time. Specifically, emphasis on how and why this study of police violence is of particular importance *now*, not only as a historical artifact of 2019 in an age of Black Lives Matters and President Donald Trump, where police brutality seems to have captured the zeitgeist, but also as a testament to, and species of, a long-standing American sensibility toward individual responsibility. The practical and political implications of this research is discussed, as well as its role in the wider academy. The overall aim of this chapter is to clarify and refine the claims of the thesis, establishing its originality and integrating into the literature across the siloed domains of criminology, sociology, and social psychology.

IV: Some Notes on Writing about Police Violence in 2019

I believe it is also important at the start of this thesis to offer a brief personal and anecdotal account of what it was like to write about American police violence in 2019 and outside of the United States. This is not intended to serve in any formalized methodological or even truly reflexive way, but rather to offer modest insight into a topic which became a wellspring of public sentiment immediately prior to and during the course of writing, and thereby serving as a snapshot into the historical time into which the thesis was written.

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There appears a distinct ambiguity with which many seem to approach the enterprise of policing: at once, as artisanal and jargoned (insulated by abstruse, technocratic terms like "hotspots," or acronyms like COMPSTAT), rendering it specialized and esoteric and which people may feel both deferential to (see Chapter II) and mystified by; but at the same time, a sense in which police decisions occasion public discussion, deliberation, expression, and prosecution.

Indeed, at the mere mention of my thesis topic – to fellow students, conference attendees, friends, acquaintances, and so on – nearly everyone and anyone, Americans and (often especially) non-Americans alike seemed to feel license, even *compulsion*, to share with me their opinions – *why* police violence in America happens; their sympathies for the victims, or for the police; the over-reactions and under-reactions of the public; the role of the Black Lives Matter Movement, the Blue Lives Matter Movement; the global shame or misunderstanding many felt as Americans or as Republicans; the righteous indignation and frustration many felt as Democrats or non-Americans; the moral superiority directed *at* Americans; and inevitably, the snowball into a more general lamentation of The Problem With America: a refrain almost invariably followed by the triumvirate diagnosis of guns, race, and Trump. At least within the parameters of my social orbit, "police brutality" seemed a catalytic phrase, around which a swarm of overlapping and contradictory emotions coalesced: righteous liberal rage, racial validation or rebukes, American self-consciousness, and calls for police – or by proxy, conservative – redemption in a strange Venn diagram of mixed and

misdirected sentiment. At times, it seemed place for catharsis, as invocation of "police brutality" offered a forum to voice this maelstrom of complex opinion; to externally process the turbulent political landscape and to make sense of the Trump presidency, the socio-politically fractured nation, and what is felt, by many, as a palpable decline of American respectability, or for some, empire. Frequently expression of these opinions was unsolicited, and I often rarely had a chance to expound upon my thesis beyond a titular introduction. Yet the urgency with which people expressed their views on police brutality, an almost purging of emotion, and often the answerability with which non-American audiences, in particular, held me to account for their diatribes as some transatlantic oracle for All That Is Wrong With America, simply from the utterance "police brutality" – reveals that the topic is, in many ways, a pressure-point on the pulse of America and Americans, an insight into, or microcosm of, the politics and cultural sensibilities of the nation.

Perhaps this is reflective of the ways in which *policing* has become (or indeed maybe always has been[1]) not only a social ordering or crime-fighting activity, but a transmitter of cultural artifacts: less a part of the self-contained, professional world of emergency services, in the way medicine or firefighting might invite interested, but insulated commentary – friend-of-a-friend anecdotes about so-and-so's hypertension or brush with a kitchen fire – but as an x-ray into the social and historical context in which it takes place. That is, policing seems to function as a digestible cipher for the cultural

[1] This phenomenon is likely not new; I imagine policing served as a similar condensation symbol (Turner 1974) in the early-1990s following the brutal police beating of Rodney King or in the mid-1960s during the Civil Rights era.

zeitgeist: both a metaphor for and manifestation of the schisms in America, distilling complex racial tensions, class conflicts, generational cleavages, and so on within the familiar plotline of a detective story. This is not to overstate the symbolic or existential faculty of policing, but rather to underline how, anecdotally and within my social circle, it seemed to me how nearly everyone felt a need to express their State of the Union through the lens of policing.

Of course, all of this must be qualified by bias, as I imagine all researchers feel a certain urgency about their work: a sense that it taps into something unique and profound about human nature, about the world in which we are living – otherwise why would we do it? And while the empirical results here, and perhaps much quantitative work in general, do not necessarily offer the textured responses and reactions I encountered in the course of my daily life or witnessed on social media and via pop culture, to say that the public examination and adjudication of my topic did not seep into – and indeed actively inform and motivate – its analysis would be untruthful. These vexed ruminations and socially mediated kangaroo courts directly and indirectly form part of the very core of this thesis: as others struggled to make sense of the social world through the prism of policing, so too did I. And while I expound upon this argument – that policing serves as a template through which to make sense of one's social world in the course of this thesis – on a personal level, I felt it important to caveat the emotionality, immediacy, and often confusion with which I approached my topic at the outset – as a topic which was actively *being* made sense of and processed during the course of writing.

Chapter 2

Developing a Better Understanding of Public Attitudes toward Excessive Force: A Review of the Criminological and Social Psychological Literature

I. Introduction

The literature on police violence in America is extensive; from theories examining why brutality occurs in the first place (e.g., violent subcultures, "bad apples," machismo, and so on), to explanations for its racially disparate and exceptional levels in the U.S., to even how perceptions and thresholds of "appropriate" violence vary across groups (i.e., between genders, states, socioeconomic groups, political affiliation, ethnicities, and so on). Yet few studies have examined why groups of Americans accept and justify the police use of excessive force (though see Gerber and Jackson 2017), or the terms by which they ultimately "make sense of" violence; and none, to my knowledge, have examined this from both an empirical and theoretical perspective.

This chapter seeks to integrate the largely siloed fields of social psychology, sociology, and criminology in an effort to both empirically and theoretically examine if and how white Americans accept the police use of excessive force in the United States. In

particular, I explore if (a) racism and/or (b) the extreme American premium on personal responsibility – or what I call individualist political orientations – can explain some of the enduring public attachments to otherwise violent police.

I begin this chapter by describing some of the symbolic and affective orientations toward police in America: who and what are police and policing? and how might policing be differentially experienced by white Americans?

Next, I consider some of the extant sociological and criminological literature examining Americans' attitudes toward and support for violent police, as well as the various publics' relationship to, affinities for, and myths about policing more broadly. This includes work in the domains of critical race theory, police legitimacy, and social identity, as well as some of the prevailing symbolic and emotional beliefs about police. I also discuss the importance of US national identity and political ideology as it relates to policing. The third section focuses on the social psychological accounts of why certain groups justify unequal, unfair, and often violent outcomes, drawing on theories detailing outgroup racial prejudice, just-world beliefs, and intergroup bias.

II. The Symbolism of and Sensibilities toward American Police

Who and What Are Police and Policing?

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It is hard to speak of "police" in America – or elsewhere for that matter – as any sort of unified or discrete entity. Rather, it is a messy and often uncoordinated composite of various public and private bodies: a confederation of federal, state, municipal, and neighborhood institutions loosely tied under a shared charge of "law enforcement" (though an appellation rooted more in cultural projection than in any mandate or reality). "The police" might be better construed as a symbol or metonym, connoting more affective and emotional coherence than any single or articulable "purpose" as such. As Egon Bittner (2005: 162) describes, police fulfill a broad, nonspecific competence: licensed to and called upon to perform a miscellany of tasks that "[lie] within the vocational competence of physicians, nurses, [and] social workers." While scholars such as J.P. Brodeur (2010: 103-128) reject the notion that police should be defined by the expansive ambit of their powers, particularly those which they rarely or never use (including the use of force[2]); it is perhaps in this realm that much of policing resides. According to Markus Dubber (2005), effective policing frequently results from the *potential* for force. Having the recognized (and more often than not, *unexercised*) ability to forcefully (even lethally) attend matters, to move along groups, to stop and search suspicious persons, to intervene in riots and fights is often the basis for public support for police.[3]

[2] According to J.P. Brodeur (2010: 103-128), conceptualizations of policing cannot be detached from the reality of the actual policing function and grounded in what they rarely or never do (i.e., "fight crime"), thus for him distinctions between *competence* and *performance* should be made.

[3] It also should be noted that the police capacity for force is not *prima facie* "bad;" and indeed, force (even excessive force) is both necessary and constructive to effective policing. As described, it entitles police to a catch-all mandate which extends beyond the archetypical role of fighting crime, enabling police to attend a wide and ambiguous remit of "things-which-ought-not-to-be-happening-and-about-which-somebody-ought-to-do-something" (Bittner 1970: 132). Remediation of "things awry" need not always be violent or aggressive – and in fact Bittner argues this very point, emphasizing the police faculty for everything from custodian of the mentally ill, to the rescuing of cats from trees. But the ability to move along groups, stop and search suspicious

The Symbolism of Police: "Good Cop, Bad Cop"

This is not to dismiss policing as some cosmetic nation-building or myth-making enterprise (though undoubtedly an integral part of their function), but rather to highlight the symbolic and cultural capital of police. Whether mall cop or S.W.A.T. agent, when conjured, law enforcement for many Americans signal safety, order and authority – an intuitive cue for rectitude when crime is invoked (Loader and Mulcahy 2003 in the U.K.). Alternatively, for marginalized groups, police can also evoke the opposite: feelings of degradation, insecurity, fear, unfairness, and discrimination (cf., Feagin 1991). Yet in many ways, police and policing have been woven into a national story – at least in fictionalized portrayals and crime-fighting narratives (Loader and Mulcahy 2003) – wherein they are synonymous with Justice – with *Americanness*. Policing can elicit a cultural mythology related to nationhood and the self: good guys and bad guys, sheriffs and cowboys, a frontier mentality, borders watchfully guarded, enemies kept out – an entire moral ecosystem pithily evoked within the synecdoche "police."

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persons, intervene in riots and fights, or perhaps most of all, having the putative power to do so – the very *potential* for this recourse (Brodeur 2010) – is often the basis for public support for police. In other words, the recognized (and more often than not, *unexercised*) power to forcefully attend matters and inflict sanctioned violence, even death, may be both part and parcel of effective policing and public support for it. To this end, Diarmaid Harkin (2015: 48) contends that police violence may in many ways be a *good* thing, at least for the police. He writes, "[while] at a certain level of unfairness and brutality, legitimacy [of police] would diminish… it is also true that *not enough* aggression or violence… from police would also bring their legitimacy and social approval into question." That is to say, as Harkin puts it, that it is possible police "*gain* legitimacy from use-of-force, violence, and inflicting types of injury."

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For Robert Berki (1986), policing can and has evoked an epic, almost romantic quality: defenders of a delicate Hobbesian balance between Good and Evil, custodians of a "thin blue line" guarding *us* from *them*. As G.K. Chesterton (1901) famously described in his *Defense of Detective Stories*:

> When the detective… stands alone, and somewhat fatuously fearless amid the knives and fists of a thieves' kitchen, it does certainly serve to make us remember that is the agent of social justice who is the original and poetic figure, while the burglars and footpads are merely placid old cosmic conservatives, happy in the immemorial respectability of apes and wolves. *The romance of the police force is thus the whole romance of man.* It is based on the fact that morality is the most dark and daring of conspiracies. It reminds us that the whole noiseless and unnoticeable police management by which we are ruled and protected is only a successful knight-errantry (1901: 83, emphases mine).

While this mythic characterization of police is wistfully detached from the reality and mundanity of issuing brake-light citations, it nevertheless captures an almost filial public reverence for, and perception of, police as fundamentally *good*. Practically, as Kjeldgaard-Christiansen (2015) writes, this can function such that in any narrative involving police, whether in news story or procedural, police are defaulted to as protagonists. This may stem, in part, from the police power to "pronounce" about society: to classify, diagnose, assign criminal identities (Loader and Mulcahy 2003), and pen "the first drafts of a great deal of our cultural knowledge" (Wilson 2000: 6). But it also emerges from the symbolism and semantics of policing; the very word "law enforcement," Herbert (1998: 360) contends, is a descriptive and exonerative indicator of rightful behavior, propriety, and ethical conduct.

Defending the Thin Blue Line: Doing "Whatever it Takes"

Related to this is the idea that police can and should do "whatever necessary" in the putative aims of justice[4] – in many ways a riff on Bittner's (1970: 132) classic characterization of the police entitlement to attend "things-which-ought-not-to-be-happening-and-about-which-somebody-ought-to-do-something." That remediation of "things awry" be tantamount to extralegal, even violent, measures be necessary or *just*, is a powerful self-justifying logic. There seems a counterintuitive, almost *immoral* fascination to the "thin blue line" mentality, a consequentialist distortion in which the more dramatic or subversive the means, the more virtuous the end. In describing the "supreme paradoxicality of law-enforcement," Berki (1986: 56-67, emphases in the original) writes:

> The point is, surely, that morality, though in a way natural and innate to all of is, is precarious and thus must constantly be defended in a non-moral, or indeed *immoral* way… [We] enjoy the *double* thrill of seeing morality victorious through being pushed to its very margin, to the point of embracing *immorality*. The police are morally permitted, nay *obligated*, to do things (coerce, forcibly arrest, incapacitate, injure, shoot, interrogate, etc.) which would be forbidden in ordinary circumstances and might in fact be morally reprehensible *per se*; yet at the same time, its context elevates police work to become the highest embodiment and epitome of morality as such, the first-line defense of society at points where it is most vulnerable, its security against itself. Policing is both central and marginal to the state and to moral consciousness; hence its fascination.

[4] This idea recalls Markus Dubber's (2005) conceptualization of "policing" as an arm of the state licensed to do "whatever necessary" to reproduce and maintain what is felt, or deemed, social order (Bradford et al 2016: 30). According to Dubber (2005: 110), the origin and perpetuation of police power stems from an effort to sustain this diffuse notion of "good order" vis-à-vis the maintenance of extant power relations and norms (Bradford et al. 2016: 25). To police, on this account, is to patrol the boundaries of what constitutes acceptable behavior, classifications of people, and moral status (Bradford et al. 2016: 25; Bradford et al. 2014).

Carl Klockars (1980) and others have termed this phenomenon in its many guises the "Dirty Harry syndrome," in reference to the Clint Eastwood films in which a fictional protagonist deals effectively with criminals by and through the defiance of legal and departmental rules and regulations (Reiner 1985). This Hollywood glorification of extralegal resolution as a crime control method taps into a broader cultural conflation of vigilantism with reverence for law, whereby promotion of the latter is pursuit of the former. Indeed, there seems a simultaneous approval, even encouragement, in America for taking matters into one's own hands, circumventing the very thing one is endeavoring to promote (see for example the related discourse in support of the Second Amendment to the U.S. Constitution and "Stand Your Ground" legislation; cf., Carlson 2015), and often soliciting notions of personal agency in doing so. And at the same time, there is a high cultural regard for authority, order, and "the Law" in an abstract or sublime sense – that is, less so the actual black-letter procedure or regulative faculty of law, but rather the notions of order, justice, and morality it frequently evokes.

While the "Dirty Harry syndrome" seems a universal feature of much of Western culture there does seem something distinctly *American* about the glorification of rogue, "maverick" behavior in the aims of justice, even to the extent that Senator John McCain appropriated the title as his USP for his 2008 presidential bid (as, in many ways, did Donald Trump[5] in 2016), and an entire Wild West mythology has been constructed

[5] President Trump has also seemingly endorsed more "maverick" policing. In a July 28, 2017 address to police at Suffolk County Community College in Brentwood, Long Island, New York, President Trump said, "And when you see these towns and when you see these thugs being thrown into the back of a paddy wagon — you just see them thrown in, rough — I said, 'Please don't be too nice.' Like when you guys put somebody in the car and you're protecting their head, you know, the way you put their hand over? Like, don't hit their head and they've just killed somebody— don't hit their head. I said, you can take the hand away, O.K.?... For years and

around this libertarian reverence for individualism, of taking matters into one's own hands – particularly as it relates to matters of life, liberty, and property.

III. Attitudes toward Excessive Force: Sociological and Criminological Accounts

Reviewing the Literature on Americans' Attitudes Toward Excessive Force

1. Racialized Attitudes toward Police Brutality

As earlier noted, public opinion polls in the United States (Gallup 2018) show the vast majority of Americans – and particularly white Americans (Pew 2018) – express strong support for police, even as news and social media stories, public debate, and fictionalized accounts (e.g., television and music video portrayals) of police brutality continue to proliferate.

To the extent that extant sociological and criminological literature has addressed public support for violent police, a handful of theories have been proposed. Many, perhaps unsurprisingly given the disproportionate impact of police brutality on young men of color (cf., Goff et al. 2016; Brown and Langan 2001), have focused most especially on racial prejudice, such as types of implicit racial bias and structural racism (Richardson and Goff 2014; Alpert 2015; Smith 2015; Pickett 2015).

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years, [laws have] been made to protect the criminal…Totally protect the criminal, not the officers. You do something wrong, you're in more jeopardy than they are. These laws are stacked against you. We're changing those laws."

Among the most consistent findings in the criminological literature related to this strain of research is the prevalence of a so-called "racial perception gap" in how incidents of police violence are interpreted. According to scholars, white Americans tend to be far more likely than black Americans to positively assess the police use of force[6], and blacks tend to be more likely than whites to perceive an unequal application in the use of force (Johnson and Kuhns 2009; Weisburd et al. 2001; Flanagan and Vaughn 1996; Arthur and Case 1994; Halim and Stiles 2001; Thompson and Lee 2004; Williams et al. 1983; Barkan and Cohn 1998).

Johnson and Kuhns (2009) and Jefferis et al. (2011), among others, attribute this racial divide to long-standing concerns about, and sensitivity to, racial bias in the criminal justice system in the black community, owing to both personal and vicarious experiences of racial discrimination. As a result, Johnson and Kuhns (2009) find that both the race of the respondent and the race of the offender (for black respondents, but not white) in a fictional scenario predicted positive attitudes toward the police use of excessive force. Other scholars have similarly found racial identity to be a critical predictor affecting respondents' perceptions of police malpractice, which was not only limited to use of force. Weitzer and Tuch (2004), for example, found that race was the most salient factor in structuring public attitudes toward police misconduct, even after controlling for personal and vicarious experience with police officers, exposure to

[6] Again, it should be noted that much of the literature on the subject (e.g., Johnson and Kuhns 2009; Weisburd et al. 2001; Flanagan and Vaughn 1996; Arthur and Case 1994; Halim and Stiles 2001; Thompson and Lee 2004; Williams et al. 1983; Barkan and Cohn 1998) examines *justifiable* police use of force, as opposed to *excessive* police use of force, which is the focus of this thesis.

media coverage of police behavior, and neighborhood conditions. The authors (2004: 321) write:

> The proclivity of whites to discount or minimize police misconduct reflects their basic affinity with the police. Allegations of police misconduct, often made by leaders within the minority community, may be perceived as interfering with the pursuit of law and order…

2. Other Socio-Demographic Correlates of Supportive Attitudes Toward Police Violence

Research has also documented other important non-racial socio-demographic predictors for more accepting attitudes toward excessive force, such as men tending to be more condoning of brutality than women (Arthur and Case 1994; Barkan and Cohn 1998; Thompson and Lee 2004; Johnson and Kuhns 2009). Education level has also been inversely correlated with support for police violence (Arthur and Case 1994; Halim and Stiles 2001). Evidence for age has been mixed: some studies have found a negative effect (Arthur 1993), others a positive (Arthur & Case 1994; Williams et al. 1983), and still others none at all (Thompson & Lee, 2004). Fear of crime has been similarly equivocal: some studies (Arthur 1993; Barkan and Cohn 1998; Pickett 2015) have found that individuals who are more fearful tend to be more supportive of police use of force, and others (Cullen et al. 1996; Johnson and Kuhns 2009) show no relationship. Additionally, residing in southern (Halim and Stiles 2001; Barkan and Cohn 1998; Johnson and Kuhns 2009; Thomson and Lee 2004) and border states (Hirschfield 2016), and exhibiting punitive personality traits (Arthur and Case 1994; Williams et al. 1983) have been correlated with a greater allowance for punitive

policing. Right-leaning political ideology, too, has been shown to correlate with support for both excessive and justified use of force in the U.S. (Silver and Pickett 2015; Gerber and Jackson 2017).

Apart from identifying socio-demographic correlates, however, few studies have excavated the underlying psychological and ideological predictors which generate support for excessive force in the U.S. (see Gerber and Jackson 2017 as a notable exception).

Literature Examining Sources of Support for Police Violence

1. Racial Animus and Stereotyping Theories

Among the theories behind the sources of support for police violence, many home in on the racially disparate levels of support for police more generally (Weaver 2018; Johnson and Kuhns 2009) as their point of departure. Conflict theory and cognate iterations within the tradition of group threat/position (Blumer 1958; Blalock 1967) suggest that ingroup support for police violence stems, in part, from support for the police's ability to maintain the status quo which keeps the dominant group(s) in power. Many of these theorists contend that agents of the criminal justice system, as microcosms of wider society, perform social ordering functions vis-à-vis the interests of the dominant classes, which in the highly racialized U.S., tend to be the interests of white Americans (Spitzer 1975; Chambliss 2001; Holmes and Smith 2008). On this account, Johnson and Kuhns

(2009: 598) write that, as the dominant group, whites' approval for police may be directly linked to the police's successful ability to subordinate the outgroup, or black and minority ethnic groups. Empirical analyses of the conflict model show that the relative proportion of the black population has been linked to the number of traffic stops resulting in searches (Petrocelli et al. 2003), arrests (Liska et al. 1985), and the use of deadly force (Jacobs and O'Brien 1998; Johnson and Kuhns 2009) on both local and state levels.

Silver and Pickett (2015), Barkan and Cohn (1998), and Johnson and Kuhns (2009) also find that racial animus, or negative racial stereotyping and antipathy, have been linked with the approval of the use of force. However, it is important to note that Silver and Pickett (2015) and Barkan and Cohn (1998) make this claim on the basis of general attitudinal measurements of racial animus (e.g., Smith's 1990 racial animus scale); they do not directly test whether support for the police use of excessive force was affected by varying the race of the suspect, as this thesis does. Moreover, none of these studies tested for an effect of the police officer's race.

Additionally, many of these findings (e.g., Williams et al. 1983; Arthur and Case 1994; Halim and Stiles 2001; Thompson and Lee 2004; Wilson and Dunham 2001; Johnson and Kuhns 2009l Silver and Pickett 2015) are based on data from the General Social Survey (GSS). The GSS data are drawn from a set of five questions which measure respondents' approval of a police officer striking a citizen in a variety of situations. The questions have been asked annually to a random sample of Americans since 1973.

However, as Gerber and Jackson (2017: 81) point out, much of this work has focused on public attitudes toward police use of *reasonable* force, and to the extent that *excessive* use of force is considered, as in this thesis, the distinction is often crude.[7]

2. Other Explanations for Support for Police Violence: Heuristics, Social Identity, and Legitimacy

Alternatively, Loader (1997; with Mulcahy 2003) has framed the enduring popular affinity for British police, at least, as less a product of prejudice or racial enmity, than of habit and socialization (cf., Bourdieu 1990). That is, as Loader and Mulcahy (2003: 43) write, policing forms part of an "*unthought* category of thought that habitually and unquestioningly leads people to construe the connection between crime, social order, and police as obvious, natural, something that goes without saying" – an instinctual dial of 9-1-1 when something is awry (cf., Bittner 2005). While this is far from reality for many Americans, especially people of color, undocumented migrants, those under some form of carceral supervision, and other vulnerable groups; the tendency to construe policing and justice as dyadic and remedial has been culturally ingrained and socialized for many, perpetuated by fictional portrayals and crime-fighting myths.

[7] As Gerber and Jackson (2017: 91) write of the General Social Survey distinction between *excessive* and *reasonable* use of police force: "Respondents [are] asked whether they approve or disapprove (binary response) of police use of force in four different situations. Researchers typically treat two of these situations (striking an adult who was attempting to escape from custody and striking an adult who was attacking the policeman with his fists) as instances of reasonable use of force, while the two other situations (striking an adult who has said vulgar and obscene things and striking an adult who was being questioned as a suspect in a murder case) are usually considered examples of excessive use of force."

To some extent, this association between police and moral correctness is something of a default or *heuristic* (Kahneman 2011): a cognitive shortcut by which large sections of the population come to automatically judge acts committed by police as right. These automatic judgments, or quickly identifying police signal "safety," for example, serve to be advantageous in economic pay-off type games (Jordan et al. 2014; Peysakhovich and Rand 2016). Behavioral economists, such as Peysakhovich, Rand, and Jordan (2016: 476) caution, that behavior based on social heuristics is rarely based explicit moral reasoning nor is it particularly sensitive to context; it may "spillover" to disadvantageous or irrational settings. Policing may be one such instance, having become a "habit of virtue" (Peysakhovich and Rand 2016; Bourdieu 1990), which attaches to police activity irrespective of context. The result may be that certain groups default to a judgment of "police-as-right" when assessing claims of brutality.

Building on this, Bradford et al. (2017: 4), again in the context of the U.K., frame this automatic response in terms of social identity and police legitimacy, and its associated aspects such as trust, which encourage decision-acceptance (Tyler and Huo 2002), generate support for authorities (Sunshine and Tyler 2003), and is intimately bound up with deference, compliance, and a moral duty to obey police (Tyler 2006). The authors write (2017: 6) "when people categorize themselves as a members of a social group to which they feel police belong – and represent – they are motivated to support the police and perceive the police to be legitimate authorities of that group." Research in both the U.K. and Australia (Bradford et al. 2014, 2015) has found consistent associations between identifying with this social group, or the "law-abiding citizens" of these

communities, and a tendency to grant more legitimacy to police, and possibly, support police action against those conceived of as *non*-law-abiding citizens (Bradford et al. 2017: 7).

That is not to suggest an uncritical or blind deference to police, but that people who, in a general sense, believe police and police activity are broadly aligned with societal expectations regarding the appropriate use of power – that police tend to "do the right thing" – will also tend to judge police action positively (Bradford et al. 2017: 5-6; Jackson et al. 2012a, 2012b). Thus, certain people may justify police violence to the extent that they generally justify police. Though Harkin (2015a, 2015b) suggests that something more sinister may be at play: that for some, it is the very *fact* of police violence which generates support for police.

Loader and Mulcahy (2003) locate this default attribution of "rightness" and positive intent to police, which may ultimately predispose certain groups to forgive or allow violent behavior, within a wider cultural and ideological tradition that couples policing with justice – which, it must be said, is in many ways unique to the British context in which the authors write. On this account, police seem almost frozen "in imagined historical time, and thus in effect *outside* of time" and of reality (Loader and Mulcahy 2003: 147). There is both a timeless, depersonalization of police, and yet at the same time a sense in which police are immediately colored with local inflection and proximal intimacy ("*our* boys in blue;" "the bobbies on the beat" in the U.K.). This depersonalization of police may be such that officers become interchangeable, not least

semantically, with the overarching – and indeed overwrought – police mission of law-enforcement. This fits within the heroic, even romantic narrative frequently built around policing activity, quite detached from the reality of paperwork and parking tickets[8] (Berki 1986). As discussed in the previous chapter, it feeds into a mythology of a "thin blue line" (Manning 1977), precariously flickering between order and chaos, licensing the broad brief of "whatever necessary" required to ensure safety (Klockars 1980; Dubber 2005).

According to Miccuci and Gomme (2005: 489-490), this also stems from the unique police power to name and define (Loader and Mulcahy 2003; Bourdieu 1987; Hall et al. 1979) the "criminal category" – or at least the putative existence thereof:

> …[A]ny uses of police force are legitimated by the application of situational and abstract moral criteria that may be illegal but are nonetheless defined as necessary and "normal"…[E]xcessive force can be appropriate, or at least an understandable, response to threatening or disrespectful actions by certain groups of people…. Defiant, threatening, disrespectful, and disorderly individuals, many of whom possess the low socioeconomic and minority status attributes of the marginalized, also represent what Skolnick (1994: 44-47) refers to as "symbolic assailants," or people who give signs that they may be dangerous because of their dress, the way they walk, and the bulges in their clothes that might indicate a weapon.

Chevigny (1993, 1995), Hunt (1985), Livingston (1995), Manning (1997), Van Maneen (1985) Skolnick (1994; with Fyfe 1993), and others have made similar claims, suggesting the "the use of force… is not a question of should or whether, but of when and how much" (Rubenstein 1973: 323) – a question almost always embedded in and

[8] Though J.P. Brodeur (2010: 103-128) argues that conceptualizations of policing cannot be grounded in what police rarely or never do, and distinctions between competence and performance must be made.

defined by policing priorities. Under this pretext, police violence can be justified and accepted under a unique police competence (Bittner 1973; Dubber 2005) or special wartime exceptionalism.

Furthermore, this sense in which policing priorities can and should define propriety may engender a feeling that public adjudication of policing is seen as ill-informed or unwarranted. As David Bayley (1995: 97-8) describes, in portraying policework to the public, emphasis is often placed on "the scientific nature of the work, the subtleties of making decisions on the spur of the moment in dangerous and complex situations, the legal expertise required, and the stressful and dangerous nature of their work." There is an artisanal, experiential component to policing – an idea in part perpetuated by police culture itself – which often prioritizes time, hierarchy, years over innovation, and a sense in which on-the-ground, insider-knowledge is both gradual and superior to anything quick, novel, or learned by book or dataset. The result often, is that evaluating the (im)propriety of operational police decisions by the public may be felt as opaque, mitigated by specialized knowledge, or perhaps even "not one's place" (Manning 1977; Bayley 1995; Cohen 2002). Though this may understate the ability of the public to form views about the police – particularly as people have become increasingly critical of institutions of all kinds, and policework itself has become more "visible" (cf., the role of video and mobile phone technology in police transparency, Mawby 1999) – it nevertheless captures the deference and presumption of "rightness" people often feel toward police. This presumption may be reinforced by a feeling that one has a moral duty to obey police, that police are, in some ways, arbiters of moral behavior, and

relatedly, that they are licensed to act as needed in pursuit of justice (Bradford et al. 2016; Hough et al. 2016; Gerber and Jackson 2017).

Moreover, there may be something uniquely *American* about justifying behavior which is seen as roguish, individualist, *doing-whatever-is-necessary* which predisposes certain groups to accept and justify excessive force. As earlier noted, the glorification of extralegal resolution as a method of crime control, or the subversion of justice in the ostensible pursuit of it (cf., Klockars 1980 "Dirty Harry Syndrome"), fits within a broader cultural reverence for individual (and state) autonomy, personal armament (e.g., Stand Your Ground), and masculinity (getting one's hands dirty to protect one's own; Carlson 2015). Hirschfield (2016), Carlson (2012, 2015), and other scholars have variously described an "American-style individualism that emphasizes self-reliance and such corollary values such as decentralized government (i.e., self-rule) and individual moral responsibility" (Hirschfield 2016: 1112). While the link between this strain of American individualism – or what I later describe as individualist ideologies and orientations – is often construed of in terms of its unique gun culture (e.g., Carlson 2015), and the taking-matters-into-one's-own-hands sensibility that frequently accompanies it, it also finds application in policing. For many of these individuals, police brutality may be an extension and embodiment of taking-matters-into-one's-own-hands, defying departmental rules and regulations and bureaucratic red-tape (Reiner 1985) in the putative aims of justice (more on this in the following section on political ideology).

Indeed, Gamson and McEvoy (1970), suggest that support for police violence may be a "norm" for large sections of Americans. The authors (109-10) write:

> …. if police violence [truly] violated widely held norms in American society, then a public outcry against such behavior might serve to constrain it and mobilize institutional pressure against it… [but] we have not found any support for the proposition that police violence seriously violates any American political norms.

3. Political Ideologies, American Identity, and Support for Excessive Force

Building on this, other scholars working in criminology and sociology find evidence for approval for police violence as a function of a deeper set of ideological "preferences for how society should be organized and how institutions should be designed and operate" (Gerber and Jackson 2017: 84). These ideologies and orientations can represent their own *politics*, functioning as a lens (Simon 2006) through which incidents of brutality are filtered and read. In this regard, Gerber and Jackson (2017) model public approval for police use of excessive force on two linked psychological and political orientations: right-wing authoritarianism (RWA) and social dominance orientation (SDO). Broadly, these psychological orientations tend to show a preference for security, order, authority, control, and conventionalism (Altemeyer 1988), on the one hand, as well as hierarchical, ingroup dominance, and lower empathy toward outgroups, on the other (Pratto et al. 1994).

Silver and Pickett (2015), too, frame support for police use of force as a function of political ideology, with what they term "consistent conservatives," or those motivated by more "symbolic" concerns, which include "long-term political goals" (Tyler and

Boeckmann 1997: 257), rather than "utilitarian" ones, such as "the detection and control of deviance" (Silver and Pickett 2015: 653), to be more inclined to approve of violence.

For Carlson (2012, 2015), writing about attitudes towards firearms rather than police brutality specifically, another salient political orientation is what she describes as "neo-liberal gun politics." On this account, gun ownership is justified as a private solution to the perception of a state failure to protect. According to Carlson (2012: 1114) "individualist-oriented Americans are more likely to arm themselves, eschewing state-dependency and embracing self-reliance through their guns." For them, the espousal of firearms becomes a means to self-protect, to take matters into their own hands, or "responsibilize" (O'Malley 1992), and recoup and express a sense of lost (masculine) identity and autonomy.

Rather than distinguishing between conservative and liberal sentiment, which Carlson (2012: 1115) contends is "intuitively plausible but ahistorical as [it] rarely unpack[s] the… longstanding cultural meanings attached to guns," she locates this attachment to guns in a neoliberal, individualist orientation premised on "self-reliance, responsibility, and individualism… [as] celebrated civic virtues" (1118). The ways in which guns are socially and culturally deployed, to express anxiety and recoup identity, as well as to articulate and respond to the role of the individual in relation to the state is a unique feature of American identity.

Paul Hirschfield (2015: 1112) too argues that American's gun culture is but one manifestation of a prevailing ethos about the role of the individual vis-à-vis the state, with the U.S.'s "elevated levels of police killings rooted in American-style individualism that emphasizes self-reliance and such corollary values as decentralized government (i.e., self-rule) and individual moral responsibility." He traces the exceptional rate of police lethality to the culture of self-reliance and "rugged individualism," finding that "states that once formed America's western frontier… which have the richest tradition of rugged individualism" are also among the states[9] with the highest rates of police killings – which exhibit killing rates nearly triple those in Northeastern states and are higher than even the Southern states, despite the latter maintaining the highest rates of poverty, homicide, and divorce (2015: 1112). While this sheds little light on the public's attitudes toward police violence, it is possible that the culture and ideologies these states sustain and reflect also contributes to the high rates of police lethality and the maintenance of certain police practices.

Broadly speaking, these ideologies fit into the American Dream narrative regarding the importance of and reverence for the "self-made man," or "rugged individual" (Caruso 2014), in the U.S. This is the prevailing ideology (and mythology) in America that anyone can – and *should* – pull themselves up from their bootstraps; that, as the Land of Opportunity, anyone who fails to succeed in a meritocracy reflects a failure of will. As Nietzsche long ago described in his formulation of the "causa sui" (1881/1992: 218-19):

[9] These include New Mexico, Arizona, Oklahoma, Montana, Utah, Nevada, California, Mississippi and the District of Columbia.

> The *causa sui* is the best self-contradiction that has been conceived so far; it is a sort of rape and perversion of logic. But the extravagant pride of man has managed to entangle itself profoundly and frightfully with just this nonsense. The desire for "freedom of the will" in the superlative metaphysical sense, which still holds sway, unfortunately, in the minds of the half-educated; the desire to bear the entire and ultimate responsibility for one's actions oneself, and to absolve God, the world, ancestors, chance, and society involves nothing less than to be precisely this *causa sui* and, with more than Baron Munchhausen's audacity, to pull oneself up into existence by the hair, out of the swamps of nothingness.

In the U.S. there appears a prevailing ideology, that despite some tacit acknowledgment of the "self-contradiction" described by Nietzsche, or of systemic disadvantage, caprice, and gross American inequality, persists a deeply-rooted ethos which transcends any liberal-conservative binary (Carlson 2012), and draws on a set of beliefs clustering around individualism, self-reliance, and a narrow understanding of American identity, which shapes how incidents of police brutality are understood and ultimately reconciled.

IV. Relevant Social Psychological Theories Explaining Support for Police Violence

Within the social psychological tradition, public approval of excessive force is less directly considered. However, other dynamics – such as support for disparate, unfair, and often violent outcomes – can and have been extrapolated to the policing context (cf., Bradford et al. 2017 in the U.K.). The following section will consider some of the most relevant social psychological accounts insofar as they address: (a) whether approval for the use of excessive force varies by the race of the actors involved; and (b) some of the

other ideological and psychological predictors of support for police use of excessive force.

Racial Outgroup Prejudice and Support for Disparate Policing Outcomes

Again, one of the most pervasive theories behind support for excessive force and other differential criminal justice outcomes centers on racial animus, and specifically, racial outgroup prejudice. Racial outgroup prejudice is, broadly speaking, the fundamental human tendency to favor one's self and one's group, or in this case, one's race – as the so-called ingroup – with respect to judgments and attributions, at the expense of the other, or outgroup (Pettigrew 1979; Campbell 1967). According to this line of thinking, assessments and judgments become group relational (Tajfel and Turner 1984), with dynamics of ingroup favoritism and outgroup disadvantage taking on particularly pernicious and material impacts when projected into racialized settings. Phillip A. Goff, Jennifer Eberhardt, and Joshua Correll, among others, have written extensively about the detrimental effects of racial outgroup prejudice for African Americans in the criminal justice system (Chapter IV for more detailed account), such as the higher rate of arrest, capital sentencing, police stops, and shootings. Hurwitz and Peffley (2005: 765) even argue the very concept of "fairness" is entirely race-relational in the American criminal justice system, "taking on radically different meaning for different races."

Several scholars (cf., Pickett and Baker 2014; Pickett et al. 2014; Unnever and Cullen 2009, 2010) have shown that outgroup prejudice is among the strongest predictors of Americans' crime control attitudes. Researchers theorize that dominant groups in racialized societies and those that associate crime with minority groups (cf., Eberhardt et al. 2004; Atler et al. 2016), have come to view these groups not only as "other," but also as "*criminal* other" (Unnever and Cullen 2009, 2010), thus often translating into support for aggressive crime control methods toward them (Weitzer and Tuch 2006; Hurwitz and Peffley 2005). Prior research has linked racial animus to support for police use of reasonable force (Barkan and Cohn 1998; Johnson and Kuhns 2009) and excessive force (Silver and Pickett 2015).

Though as earlier noted, much of the research on policing brutality bases this link on a more general attitudinal disposition of racial animus, rather than a direct testing of the racial identities of the actors involved in a police encounter. Moreover, when Johnson and Kuhns (2009) have experimentally manipulated the race of the offender (but not police officer) in a scenario of brutality, they find the role of race to be more nuanced than is typically portrayed. The researchers write (2009: 615): "whites' support for police use of force was largely unrelated to the race of the offender. Whites were equally likely to approve of police using force if the offender was a black teenager or a white teenager." While the race-of-offender experimental manipulation did not appear to affect white respondents' approval for police brutality, Johnson and Kuhns (2009: 616) ultimately conclude that anti-black racial stereotyping was a significant predictor of support. However, the somewhat equivocal results of these studies that have examined

whether approval for violence varies by race show that racism has been frequently misunderstood and oversimplified, and thus requires further empirical examination.

Non-Racial Predictors: Just-World Theory and Intergroup Bias Applied to Policing

Within the wider field of attributional psychology (Heider 1958), and perhaps most germane to this research, is the role that another set of intergroup preferences, called just-world attitudes, have in predisposing individuals to support and justify unequal and often harmful outcomes. This cognitive desire to maintain order, meaning, and a sense of "cosmic justice," is hallmarked by a preference for the stability and predictability of one's (and one's group's) social world and status (Lerner 1980; Hewstone et al. 2002). According to just-world theory, observers to injustice – anything from classroom cheating to terrorism – tend to rationalize victimization as deserving out of an implicit need to restore the observers' belief in a just world, or "to allow [observers] to invest in long-term goals and to do so according to society's rule of deservingness"(Hafner 2002).

Noting that this bias is "fundamentally delusive," Lerner (with Simmons 1966; and Miller 1978) describes the various cognitive coping strategies observers may engage in to justify injustice, including rationalizing war atrocities (Selznick and Steinberg 1969; Opton 1971), sexual assault (Jones and Aronson 1973; Smith et al. 1976), poverty (Furnham and Gunter 1974), and a host of other negative outcomes as somehow rooted in choice. Smith and colleagues (1976: 346) note that observers tend to "[alter] their

perception of a victim and/or his (sic) behavior so that he becomes more 'deserving' of his fate."

Just-world attitudes also interact with other intergroup preferences: tending to predict outgroup prejudice for a range of disadvantaged groups, such as refugees (Montada 1998; DeVaul-Fetters 2014), the unemployed (Riechle et al. 1998), the elderly (Lipkus and Siegler 1993), and the poor (Furnham and Gunter 1984). Conversely, they tend to be associated with ingroup favoritism and attributions, as Rubin and Peplau (67-68) describe:

> … [T]he converse of the tendency to blame the victim also seems to be a common perceptual link between reward and virtue… newspaper features on state lottery winners frequently mention the winner's hard work, good deeds, and admirable qualities, as if these characteristics helped to account of this or her purchase of the lucky ticket.

This cognitive bias may, in part, emerge from a desire to impose meaning and order; or as Hall et al. (1978: 166) write, to draw events back into the framework of "*things understood*" – things we can work on, manage, prevent, *do* something about. In the context of police brutality, not only might strong just-world preferences predispose individuals to blame the suspect, but also to arrogate responsibility for themselves for *not being victimized* – resulting in a kind of dual-source of support for the use of excessive force: one the one hand, perceiving the victim as culpable, and on the other, seeing themselves as virtuous.

This asymmetry of perspective builds room for a conception of choice and volition – linking victimization, however obliquely, in a causal chain to culpability (e.g., the choice to wear certain clothes, to loiter outside of a convenience store, to truant from school) – without a corresponding degree of humanization or empathy. This process, or what Kjeldgaard-Christiansen (2015: 6) terms a "magnitude gap," is an intrinsic feature of intergroup bias. We by very definition know little about an outgroup and may come to further discount or disregard other complex causal factors, interpreting events on the basis of what is cognitively "available" to us – which is also filtered by police-defined and media-curated narratives (Kjeldgaard-Christiansen 2015; Ben-Porath and Shaker 2010). Simultaneously, observers may exaggerate their own ostensibly ethical choices in a long, imprecise causal chain: reference to ethical self-management, discipline, restraint, and personal will (Rose 2000; Gillies 2005).

Taken to its superlative conclusion, such a foregrounding of personal autonomy in the framework of desert and harm can have gross distortive and material implications for how victims and perpetrators are perceived. As Rose (2000: 335) writes, "those who refuse to become responsible, to govern themselves ethically, have also refused the offer to become part of our moral community. Hence for them, harsh measures are entirely appropriate." For members of the "law-abiding" community – or those who have apparently and appropriately self-governed – violent police encounters may be cast within a highly rational moral framework: understood as indicators of personal failure; as non-contact with police comes to telegraph the opposite: self-restraint, moral

principle, affirmation of the *type* of person you are (Maruna and King 2009), which is to say, law-abiding.

While this may overstate the terms by which people view policing, it nevertheless captures the sense of indignation enabled by just world attitudes in an intergroup framework. Those who have not had negative (let alone violent) interactions with police may, on some level, attribute this fact to a sense of moral superiority – a belief in which they have avoided hostility not (only) because of any structural, external prejudice, but because of their *deliberate*, principled cultivation of the "self-steering forces" available to us all (Rose 2000: 324); because of the *type* of person they are (Maruna and King 2009). As Cohen (2001: 96-7) contends, "in a just world, suffering is not random; innocent people do not get punished arbitrarily." A belief that the law, in its institutional sense, is mobilized only rarely, discerningly, in the last-instance, and above all, upon a select few – a cornerstone of just world thinking – may provide a basis by which individuals may rationalize their *lack* of police violent contact and the dispensation of violence (Hall et al. 1978; Berki 1986).

In addition to distorting the nature of causality and blame, just-world orientations tend to express differently across cultures and countries. While BJW attitudes are typically highest in individualistic (as opposed to collectivist) cultures and those with a strong neoliberal traditions, many scholars (cf., Frank et al. 2015; Hamby in Roberts 2016) find that just-world attitudes are strongest in Anglophone countries, and especially in the

U.S., making Americans the most likely to infer culpability and desert for misfortune (Montada 1998; Montada in Correia et al. 2007).

Curiously, while previous studies have linked just-world attitudes with punitivity, blame, and conservative sentiments toward immigration (De-Vaul Fetters 2014) and religion (Finamore and Carlson 1987), for example, a surprising few have examined its application to criminal justice settings (though see Finamore and Carlson 1987; O'Quin and Vogler 1989); and none, as far as I am aware, have examined these attitudes' relationship to support for police brutality.

"Whiteness" in America and Attributions of Blame

Additionally, within this context, it is important to acknowledge that the way police excessive force is "experienced" – the way it is processed, understood, justified, neglected, ignored, and politicized – is crucially a function of race. Prior perceptions of police, trust in the police, fear of crime, and so on, are all just as much informed by preferential treatment by the police as they are by police discrimination. Jacques (2016), for example, explains that while fruitful to examine US policing from the standpoint of those discriminated against, it is also crucial to investigate those who have no contact with police, or so-called "negative evidence." That is, the experience of *not* being pulled over or arrested, which might emerge from the privilege of certain identity characteristics, like passing as white, or female, or socioeconomically advantaged. Jacques (2016: 10-11) explains that for white drug dealers in a suburban

American city, police perceived them as low-risk and the visible role of law enforcement in their community was primarily restricted to "enforcing traffic laws." This is contrasted with many black and minority ethnic communities' experience as aggressively policed. To the extent that whiteness functions as a byword for "low-risk," these are the individuals who may be afforded the "privilege" of believing contact with police is a barometer of character, whereas marginalized groups may experience police encounters as a function of caprice/race.

V. The Present Research

I have thus far sought to provide an overview of some of the relevant research pertaining to public attitudes toward and sources of support for excessive force in the U.S. While this is far from an exhaustive account of the prevailing criminological and social psychological theories, it provides scaffolding from which to address some of the unanswered questions and remaining gaps in the scholarship on policing.

The purpose of the present research is to examine the possible factors which influence how incidents of excessive force are "experienced" and accepted by the American public; namely, to determine (a) if race shapes whites' approval of excessive force; and (b) whether some of the other psychological and political factors identified in the literature impact respondents' assessments. To do this, this thesis both extends and departs from extant literature in at least three chief ways:

First, as underscored throughout this chapter, previous studies have rarely tested the effect of *directly* varying both police officer and suspect racial identity on respondents' approval of police violence. Rather, they have based conclusions on scores on a racial animus scale; or on the stated race of the suspect (e.g., Silver and Pickett 2015; Johnson and Kuhns 2009; Barkan and Cohn 1994). In line with recommendations from Johnson and Kuhns (2009), the current research manipulates both suspect and officer racial identity *implicitly* and *explicitly* to determine whether it influenced respondents' assessments of violence (Chapters IV and V).

Second, as highlighted by Gerber and Jackson (2017: 81), little scholarly work in the U.S. and elsewhere (though see Bradford et al. 2017) has tried to uncover the reasons *why* people justify and support police violence; and even less has addressed this from an ideological and psychological perspective, with the few studies on the topic considering the socio-demographic correlates, and often from the same set of data (i.e., GSS) (e.g., Silver and Pickett 2015; Johnson and Kuhns 2009; Barkan and Cohn 1998; Arthur and Case 1994). The current research examines one such ideological dynamic: the effect of strong individualist dispositions, measured in belief in a just world and libertarian attitudes, as a mechanism by which people "read" and approve of police (Chapters VI and VII).

Third, and relatedly, to my knowledge, no scholarly work has examined if stories of excessive force can themselves affect or shift these preexisting individualist orientations or identities (Chapter VII); or has explored these individualist ideologies'

relationship to other assessments of and attitudes toward police, as a means of developing insight into the public's long-standing attachment to police in the face of scandal and violence (Chapter VII). This research can contribute to and extend policing scholarship and provide new understandings of the public's relationship to American police.

Chapter 3

Research Methodology and Design

I. Introduction

This chapter describes and justifies the research strategy and methods selected for this thesis. In addition to defining the scope and limitations of the research design, I will also situate this work among the existing empirical traditions in criminology. This chapter is divided into three principal sections. The first lays out some the main modes of inquiry in the field of criminology and considers their utility and epistemological relevance to my research aims and questions. Next, I will describe my research approach and strategy: specifically, the reasons for selecting quantitative methods, implementing an online survey, and using implicit measures. I will discuss some of the rationales behind the sampling procedure, the use of Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk), as well as the ethical and analytical limitations that resulted. Finally, I will conclude with some of the limitations, ethical considerations, and problems I encountered in the course of my research.

II. Selecting Quantitative Methods

While a great deal of research in criminology uses qualitative methods to investigate sensitive or nascent sociological questions, I instead selected a quantitative approach for this project because I believed it could better address my research question.

As a yet under-explored focus of study (though see Johnson and Kuhns 2009), this research firstly aimed to test if a sample of white Americans evaluated police use of excessive force directed at a black suspect as more appropriate than that at a white suspect, and if so why. I then moved to consider some of the individual-level, psychological factors that shape how people "read" and "experience" scenarios of police excessive force, and to extrapolate (if possible) patterns of approval and condemnation in order to develop a better rubric for understanding how, why, and when police violence is judged appropriate.

I reasoned that quantitative methods were better suited to such an endeavor, as an experimental study would enable me to draw more direct causal inferences as to the role of racial identity and ideology. Testing theories and extrapolating phenomena for attitudes toward police brutality could later provide a template for future research, from which more fine-tuned, nuanced research could be established, including qualitative approaches which could further draw out and clarify any emergent themes. While funding limitations ultimately precluded additional qualitative investigation in this doctoral project, the quantitative research presented in this thesis is complemented and developed through rich theoretical research and analysis. It was important to include this theoretical element in the research, not least because some of my initial

ideas about the role of racism, developed through a reading of the extant literature, did not "make sense" in the way I had initially hypothesized (see Chapter IV), but also because complex results must be always be considered beyond statistical abstractions. As Crewe (2009: 474) describes, it is the role of the researcher to interpret and find meaning in their results: "the experience is made sense of, not simply downloaded." As such, the thesis is structured in a combined theoretical-empirical format to contextualize and consider the quantitative survey data with greater, theoretical nuance.

III. Research Design, Approach, and Strategy

Research Questions

Do white Americans' approval of excessive force vary by the racial identity of a police officer and suspect involved? What non-racial factors explain approval for excessive force; and are these factors affected by stories of police violence?

Hypotheses

The above research question can be distilled into three principal empirical hypotheses, with more specific, corollary hypotheses tested in the subsequent empirical chapters:

H_1: Interracial encounters, specifically when the police officer is white and the suspect is black, will be positively associated with more accepting attitudes toward excessive force among white Americans.

H_2: Psychological orientations favoring "American-style individualism" (Hirschfield 2015) – as represented by a strong belief in just world and/or libertarian-authoritarian preferences – will be associated with support for excessive force. That is, those who believe that we get what we deserve, and what we deserve is predicated on moral choices and ethical self-management, will correspondingly believe people get the policing outcomes they deserve.

H_3: Identifying with the police (e.g., high social identity) will be associated with more forgiving attitudes toward police misconduct.

Participants and Procedure

Data are drawn from two convenience samples of white American adults (aged 18+) recruited via the online crowdsourcing service Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk). Participants were remunerated with a small payment ($0.75). A request for the completion of a survey involving "police behavior" was posted on the website to be seen by a pool of American participants at two points of collection, in October 2016 (Survey 1) and October 2018 (Survey 2). After data collection, only white respondents were selected for analyses, in line with the research question.

As earlier emphasized, the choice to use only self-identified white respondents intrinsically limits the generalizability of these findings. A representative US sample could and should be used in follow-up analysis in order to extrapolate to the broader American population. However, a major theoretical point of interest was how *white* Americans, in particular, process and understand – or "experience" – news of excessive force, because this subset of the population typically evinces the highest support for police. Moreover, as the majority group in the United States – or racial "ingroup" – how white Americans make sense of police violence directed at others in their racial category (i.e., fellow ingroup members), compared to those in a racial outgroup was important to consider (see previous chapter for further discussion).

However, in examining how and if and in what ways race is implicated in white Americans' attitudes toward contemporary American policing practice, I am wary of flattening the complexity of race/racism into a single dimension of identity or using "whiteness" as a default or "non-race." As Smith and Linnemann (2015: 101) explain:

> [F]or much of the mainstream study of crime, to speak of race is to invoke a relation of binaries, in which 'race' really means non-white, black, or Hispanic. This sort of binary ontology or 'dummy variable' approach, positions whiteness as a 'reference category' and helps it to escape careful scrutiny or disappear altogether.

While it is difficult to avoid binary categorization and reductionism of this nature in quantitative analyses, I endeavor to move beyond a binary conception of race and include a theoretically rich discussion of American identity and the privileges, misconceptions, and power dynamics wrapped up within this.

In Survey 1, participants were randomly allocated to one of four experimental treatments varying the race of the officer and suspect to determine any effect on respondents' evaluations of excessive force. In each of these conditions, the race of the police officer and suspect were manipulated *implicitly* through the use of names.

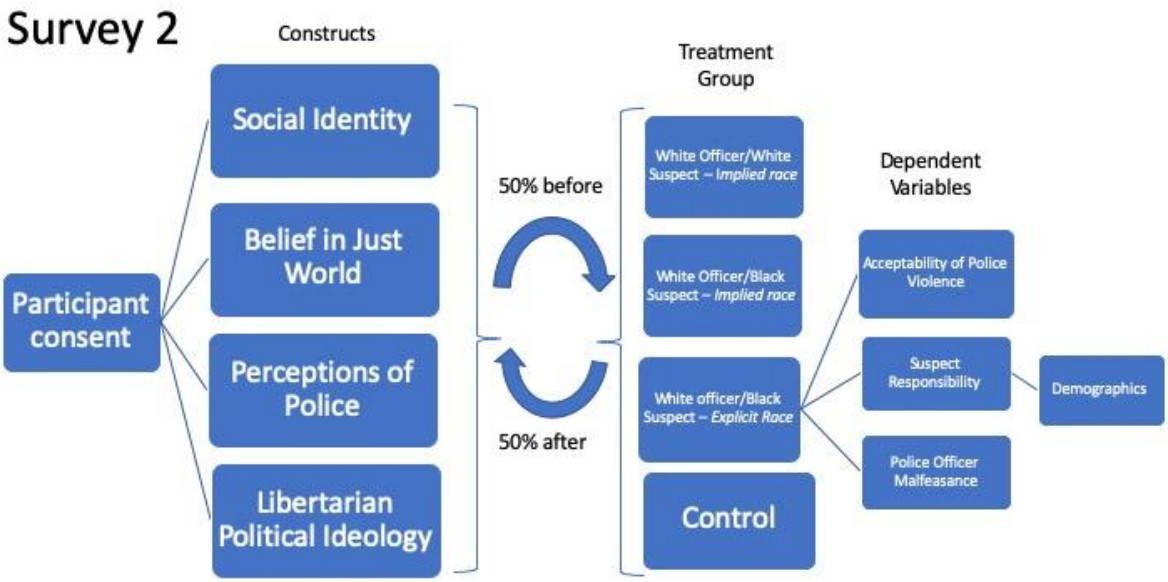
In Survey 2, the procedure is slightly more complicated. Participants were randomly assigned to either a treatment condition, depicting the same scenario of excessive force used in Survey 1, or an experimental control, describing a mundane nightly police patrol in which the officer's actions would likely be justified. Because those allocated to the control were not technically evaluating incidents of excessive force, these respondents (n=169) were excluded from various pieces of analyses. Additionally, in Survey 2, race was manipulated *implicitly* as well as *explicitly*.

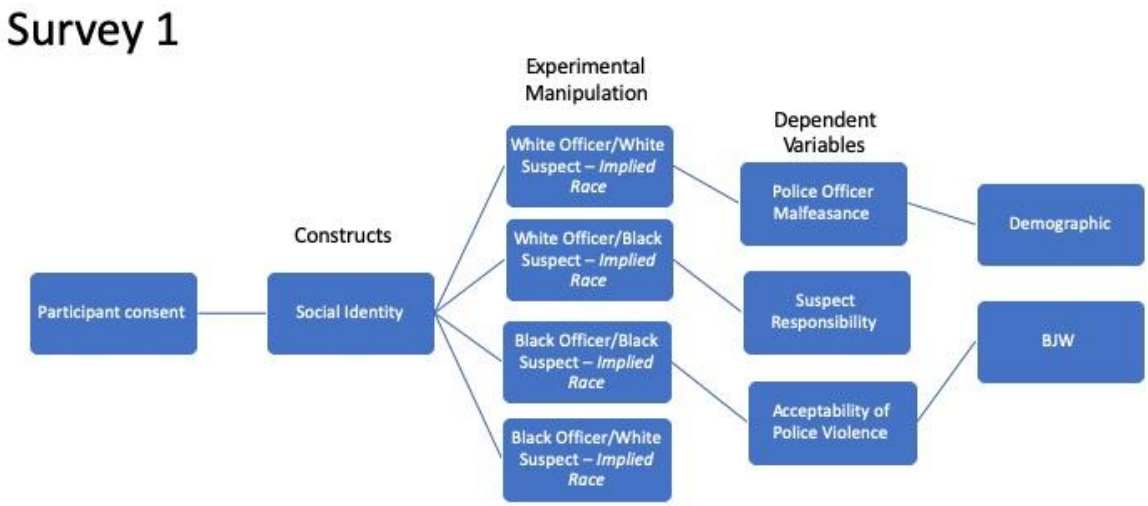
Finally, in Survey 2, half of respondents answered a battery of items before the experimental manipulation, and the other half answered them after. The pretest/posttest split allowed me to test (a) the experimental effects, if any, news of excessive force had on respondents' assessments of, and identification with, police, on the one hand; and (b) the what attitudes and ideological orientations shape how police violence was understood, on the other.

The basic structure of the two surveys is diagramed below:

Political Ideology, Racism, and American Identity:

An Examination of White Americans' Support for the Police Use of Excessive Force





Constructs and Measures

Taking both studies together, there were three main response variables testing participants' appraisals of the violent police encounter itself: (1) Appropriateness of Violence, (2) Police Malfeasance, and (3) Suspect Culpability (see appendices and Chapters IV, V, VI for detailed discussion).

There were five additional test variables examined: (1) Social Identity, (2) a Belief in a Just World, (3) Police Legitimacy, (4) Libertarian Authoritarianism, and (5) Economic Libertarianism (see appendices and Chapters IV, V, VI, and VII for full item details). These latter three items were included in Survey 2, after the results of Survey 1 motivated a follow-up study (discussion in Chapters IV and V). For various pieces of analyses, these items were treated as independent variables, when half of respondents answered them before exposure to the vignette, while at other times they comprised dependent variables when respondents answered them after exposure to the vignette.

Several demographic controls were included in some analyses. Age was recoded into five-category variable, coded 0 for 18-25, 1 for 26-35, 2 for 36-45, 3 for 46-55, 4 for 56-65, and 5 for 66+. Gender was a dummy variable, coded 0 for female and 1 for male. Self-report political ideology was a 7-point single-response variable from left to right in order of political preference. It was recoded into a dummy variable, 1 for "right-leaning politics" , and 0 for left. Education was a six-category variable, ranging from "less than

high school" (0) to "doctorate" (6). Descriptive statistics for both surveys are depicted in Table 1.

Table1: Table 1. Participant characteristics, full sample Survey 1 and 2

Participant characteristic		Study 1		Study 2	
		% of sample	N	% of sample	N
Gender	Male	47	753	48	779
	Female	53	656	52	839
Age range	18-24	8.7	122	4.1	67
	25-34	40.9	575	39.9	648
	35-44	26.7	376	27.4	445
	45-54	14.0	197	14.1	230
	55-64	7.3	103	10.3	167
	65+	2.4	34	4.2	69
Ethnicity	White	80.1	1132	81.4	1325
	Black	7.8	110	9.8	159
	Native American	--	--	1.2	20
	Asian	--	--	4.8	78
	Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	--	--	0.1	1
	Other	12.1	171	2.6	43
Politics*	Left	46	647	33	533
	Moderate	30	417	43	695
	Right	25	348	24	398
Education	<than high school	.2	3	0.6	9
	High school/GED	11.94	169	18.8	147
	Some college	26.01	368	13.9	306
	2-year degree	11.80	167	13.9	226
	College	37.53	531	42.1	684
	Professional degree	10.95	155	14.1	229
	Doctorate or equivalent	1.48	21	1.5	24

Percentages calculated with missing values excluded
*The way "politics" was measured changed between Survey 1 & 2, shifting from a 7-category Likert response scale to a 6-category response, possibly accounting for the apparent differences between samples.

Using Amazon Mechanical Turk to Recruit the Sample: The Benefits and Pitfalls

While scholars have debated the representativeness of Amazon Mechanical Turk (cf., Landers and Behrend 2015; Stewart et al. 2015; Paolacci and Chandler 2014) and other online crowdsourcing marketplaces, I selected MTurk to recruit respondents for the surveys for a number of reasons. The first was practicality: as a researcher based in the U.K. studying public attitudes in the U.S., prohibitive travel, cost, and time considerations became a main factor behind much early-stage decision-making. In addition, as MTurk has become a widely used form of data collection in the psychological and social sciences. The appeal of quick, relatively low-cost results presented a promising source of data for a self-funded researcher under both time and funding pressures. Bates and Lanza (2013) advocate the value of MTurk for this very reason, suggesting its application for doctoral candidates and early-career researchers with limited funding opportunities should not be over-looked.

In addition to the cost and time efficiency, MTurk offered a large, relatively geographically heterogenous and demographically diverse population that would not otherwise be available to me if using traditional data collection techniques. Moreover, as Buhrmester et al. (2011) and Rand (2012) have shown, participants selected through MTurk are more socio-demographically diverse than respondents from other sampling pools, and data is at least as reliable as that collected through traditional methods.

Though as Paolacci and Chandler (2014) caution, while MTurk data tend to be more reliable than those drawn from traditional samples of undergraduate students, for example, they are not always generalizable to the wider American population. The

authors write, "[respondents] tend to be younger (about 30 years old), overeducated, underemployed, less religious, and more liberal than the general population … Within the United States, Asians are overrepresented, and Blacks and Hispanics are underrepresented relative to the population as a whole." These characteristics were also true of my data, as depicted in Table 1 above.

Another possible issue with recruiting my sample from MTurk is that many subjects on sites such as these rely on the service as a primary source of income. Accordingly, websites including TurkerNation, TurkOpticon, Reddit, and Dyanmo, among others, have emerged as vetting forums for respondents to discuss and advise the best quality MTurk "HIT's," or "human intelligence tasks," in an otherwise highly competitive and unregulated market. As elaborated by DeSoto (2016), these online communities can function as a kind of "digital watercooler," enabling MTurk participants to rate experiments, labs, and researchers on a variety of dimensions, including compensation and ease of task, which has prompted a subreddit entitled "HITs Worth Turking For" on the social content and forum site Reddit.com. Though whether and how sites such as these and MTurk's low compensation and dubious labor practices affect the quality of subjects and responses is still unclear (more on this in ethics selection below).

Survey Design

1. Choosing a Survey-Based Experiment

While prior research has documented several trends in attitudes toward police violence, many of these findings (e.g., Williams et al. 1983; Arthur and Case 1994; Halim and Stiles 2001; Thompson and Lee 2004; Wilson and Dunham 2001; Johnson and Kuhns 2009; Silver and Pickett 2015) are based on correlational data from the same set of five questions in the General Social Survey (GSS) (cf., Gerber and Jackson 2017). The present research goes beyond socio-demographic correlations by testing the psychological and ideological bases of support for police brutality in a survey-based experiment that both explicitly and implicitly varies the race of the suspect and police officer. As Johnson and Kuhns (2009: 600) elaborate: "survey-based experiments combine the capacity to generalize to important populations characteristic to sample surveys with the experimental control that allows stronger conclusions as to cause and effect." By experimentally varying the race the actors, this research can determine with greater certainty whether public approval for police violence varies according to the race of the suspect, the officer, and the interaction between the two (Johnson and Kuhns 2009: 600).

2. The Selection of an Online Survey

Another important aspect of the research design was the use of an anonymous online interface. According to DeSoto (2016), participants tend to trust and appreciate the anonymity offered by an online interface in ways which are often underestimated by face-to-face or even anonymous telephone interviews. To this end, it is worth noting that the *mode* of anonymity is also important: specifically, the kind of anonymity offered

by the Internet; as opposed to telephone interviews, for example. According to a survey conducted by the Pew Research Center (2015): "there may be advantages to online surveys, particularly if the survey seeks to measure topics that are sensitive or subject to social desirability because of the willingness of respondents to express more negative attitudes about their personal lives or toward political figures on the Web." Ye et al. (2011) similarly find that in telephone interviews, respondents may answer in ways that are less likely to produce an uncomfortable interaction with the interviewer, or else they may otherwise self-censor or moderate their views in ways they would not online.

In the contexts of measuring attitudes toward police violence – particularly as they relate to acceptance, desert, and race, as this thesis explores – it was important to heed the fact that such beliefs may not be openly shared or even operate within the remit of conscious awareness. As Niemi and colleagues (2016: 2) write, presenting views that violence was justified, or perhaps worse, that a victim "deserved it" or "had it coming," are often unlikely to emerge freely in the course of conversation. I therefore sought to bypass motivations to suppress or conform moral judgments to socially desirable norms by using what might be felt as a relatively "safe" space to share otherwise controversial, or in many cases, socially condemnable, views.

Nevertheless, using an online, anonymous platform also entails several pitfalls, including the issue of satisficing, or responding with minimal effort and attention (Krosnick et al. 2002), which is particularly common in low-reward, unmonitored online tasks with relatively high cognitive burdens (such as those that measure

sensitive or difficult topics, like police violence) (Johns 2005). Examples of satisficing include "straight-lining" when a battery of questions asks for ratings on the same response scale; selecting the first reasonable looking option; randomly selecting a response; skipping items; choosing the "no-opinion" or "don't know" option; rushing surveys (Krosnick 1991, 1999). While I excluded neutral mid-point options as well as the "no-opinion" and "don't know" options, forced respondents to answer almost every question, varied response categories and question wording to more natural responses, and excluded those who answered the survey in less than a few minutes, the quality of online responses was still a major concern.

Table 2: Survey 1, Excluded Data Flow Chart

	Total Sample	Experimental Group 1	Experimental Group 2	Experimental Group 3	Experimental Group 4
		(White Cop/Black Suspect – Implicit)	(White Cop/White Suspect – Implicit)	(Black Cop/White Suspect – Implicit)	(Black Cop/Black Suspect – Implicit)
Started Survey	1648	--	--	--	--
Excluded because answered in under 3 minutes	160	--	--	--	--
Balance after exclusion	1488	--	--	--	--
Excluded missing data	7	--	--	--	--
Balance after missing data dropped	1481	371	378	368	364
Analytic sample of white respondents	1134	286	282	288	278

Table 3: Survey 2, Excluded Data Flow Chart

	Total Sample	Experimental Group 1 (White Cop/Black Suspect – Implicit)	Experimental Group 2 (White Cop/White Suspect – Implicit)	Experimental Group 3 (White Cop/Black Suspect – Explicit)	Control Group
Started Survey	1792	--	--	--	--
Excluded because answered in under 3 minutes	106	--	--	--	--
Balance after exclusion	1686	--	--	--	--
Excluded missing data	13				
Balance after missing data dropped	1673	418	418	419	418
Analytic sample of white respondents	1325	328	330	322	345

Instruments

1. Exclusions of Neutral, Midpoint, and Non-response Options

As already alluded to, due to the nature of the survey design, I opted to exclude the neutral, midpoint, and non-response options commonly utilized in Likert-type scale responses, in an effort to reduce satisficing. While many scholars (Bishop 1987) advocate for the inclusion of "no opinion," "don't know," and forms of non-response options as a boon against false responding and as part of an ethical concern that omission of such options qualifies as a *de facto* forced response, others (cf., Kalton el al. 1980, Krosnick 1991, 1999, et al. 2002; Johns 2005, Lavrakas 2008) argue that the

presence of neutral and non-response options increases the likelihood of participants selecting these choices, often as a result of satisficing, social desirability, or ambivalence. As Johns (2005) observes, particularly when unmotivated – as is frequently the case in relatively unmonitored, low-reward online surveys – participants tend to satisfice and choose a neutral or "not applicable" option to avoid the cognitive effort required to answer attitude reports (Krosnick et al. 2002). Lavrakas (2008) finds that "Don't Know" option effects are more common as the cognitive strain of questions increase, which is particularly apparent for sensitive subjects like racism and police violence. As a result, the only questions in the surveys which allowed for a "prefer not to say" option were demographic.

2. Implicit Measurement

Another crucial aspect of the survey design was the use of implicit measures, or more specifically the insinuation of racial identities through names. As earlier described, rather than explicitly identifying the police officer and suspect as "White" or "African American," these identities were signaled through the names Demarco Stephens/Ryan Anderson for the suspect, and Jamal Washington/Brian Weber for the police officer. Though in the second survey, race was explicitly indicated.

The names selected for this study were generated by a free online name generator tool. According to Niemi and colleagues (2016), signaling race through name, dress, or other form of insinuation, may be more subtle and powerful manipulations as participants

may be reluctant to answer questions explicitly pertaining to race for fear of social reprisal or appearing prejudiced.

Furthermore, a substantial body of research indicates the power of names to elicit prejudice. As a swath of recent highly publicized studies indicate, racial and gender discrimination on the basis of names is widespread, for everything from job hiring (Wood et al. 2009) to Airbnb listings (Edelman et al. 2016; Badger 2015), to responses to eBay (Ayres et al. 2015; Swanson 2015; Bertrand and Mullainathan 2004) and classified ads (Doleac and Stein 2013), prompting hashtags such as #AirBnbWhileBlack and tactics of so-called "résumé whitening." The authors of the study detailing discrimination on Airbnb, the online house-sharing platform, for example, find that strength of this name bias with remarkable consistency: it persisted for both black and white hosts, men and women, for expensive and less expensive listings, for properties in both diverse and homogenous neighborhoods, and, most surprisingly, *even* when it was costly for the hosts (Edelman et al. 2015). That is, even when rejecting a black guest meant an inability to find a replacement customer and recoup lost earnings. The researchers calculate that individual instances of name-based discrimination accrued losses of approximately $65-$100 in potential revenue for each host (Badger 2015; Edelman et al. 2015).

While implicit measurements are not without problems – see, for example, the multitude of critiques of Banaji and Greenwald's Implicit Association Test (Singal 2017; Oswald et al. 2013, to name a few) – my aim was not to bait or hoodwink respondents

into answering in a more prejudiced or extreme fashion. Rather I sought to reduce participants' impulse and ability to edit their responses in accordance with what they might feel to be socially acceptable or desirable attitudes regarding race, violence, and the proper role of the police within them. I hoped that by using subtler signals of racial identity, insinuated by name rather than explicit reference to race, participants might feel more comfortable and able to share unfiltered beliefs about police violence. Moreover, by tapping into these more intuitive, "gut-level" moral judgments, I believed the survey responses collected here to be a better way to explore whether, why, and to what extent people will support police violence.

It is also important to note that the names selected can (and do) signal more than just race. For instance, Gaddis (2017) points out that names such as "Jamal" and "Brian" differ than more than just the color of their skin, but also on socioeconomic characteristics, education, racial stereotypicality, and other relevant indices of identity. Additionally, respondents may impute other identity judgments on the police officer/suspect from these names, which cannot be controlled for. However, this was not considered a major concern in this thesis as a second study tested the same scenario, substituting explicit reference to race instead of names, and found more or less identical findings.

Data Collection, Processing, and Analysis

1. Data Collection

The survey was developed on the online subscription software service Qualtrics and distributed through Amazon Mechanical Turk. Data was collected in October 2016 and October 2018. Though the results of both studies produced similar findings, these two different points of data collection were, though unintended, important, as the first survey launched approximately three weeks before the 2016 presidential election of Donald Trump and the second almost exactly two years after. As many of the theoretical themes explored in this thesis focus on personal responsibility, political ideology, and the American Dream as they relate to the acceptance of police brutality, and President Trump has at various times appeared to condone punitive policing[10], I wanted to determine whether attitudes have changed, strengthened, or have even become more legitimized between these two snapshots in time, not least after the seeming presidential endorsement. Therefore, it was important to check whether views across the two surveys changed, in a general sense, as it could affect the research findings.

As the summary statistics in *Table 2* represent, approval of police violence appears to have increased between 2016 and 2018, in line with Silver and Pickett's (2015) arguments regarding increased public support for punitive policing. However, these effects are not statistically significant, as indicated by the chi-square statistics for each

[10] In a July 28, 2017 address to police at Suffolk County Community College in Brentwood, Long Island, New York, President Trump said, "And when you see these towns and when you see these thugs being thrown into the back of a paddy wagon — you just see them thrown in, rough — I said, 'Please don't be too nice.' Like when you guys put somebody in the car and you're protecting their head, you know, the way you put their hand over? Like, don't hit their head and they've just killed somebody— don't hit their head. I said, you can take the hand away, O.K.?... For years and years, [laws have] been made to protect the criminal…Totally protect the criminal, not the officers. You do something wrong, you're in more jeopardy than they are. These laws are stacked against you. We're changing those laws."

sub-table and expanded in Chapters IV and V. Moreover, I argue that the same dynamics which underpin support for police will have persisted, if strengthened, between these two periods; thus, the same analysis and theoretical inferences may be drawn.

Additionally, the two-year gap between points of data collection was important because after the sampling issues in the first survey (see sections below) it left enough time for the negative Reddit/Google search posts to crowd out. Moreover, because I took appropriate precautions to anonymize myself within the limits of ethics requirements (i.e., I still had to disclose my name once respondents agreed to participate in the survey, but was able to use a different email address and MTurk handle), I was not concerned about the same individuals taking the second survey

Table 4: Chi-square for approval of excessive force, from 2016 to 2018

Violence Appropriate?	Total Sample (*n*)		White Cop vs. Black Suspect (Implicit)		White Cop vs. White Suspect (Implicit)		Black Cop vs. White Suspect (Implicit)		Black Cop vs. Black Suspect (Implicit)		White Cop vs. White Suspect (Explicit)	
Year	2016	2018	2016	2018	2016	2018	2016	2018	2016	2018	2016	2018
Yes	15%	19%	18%	22%	13%	18%	15%	---	14%	---	---	21%
No	85%	81%	82%	78%	87%	82%	85%	---	86%	---	---	89%
Summary	1131	980	285	328	281	330	287	---	278	---	---	322
X^2	2.92	2.11										

2. Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using the statistical software SPSS Statistics 25. Descriptive statistical analyses were performed on the sample groups in both studies to obtain a clear understanding of the population. Measures of central tendency (means, medians, and other percentiles) and dispersion (standard deviations, ranges) were computed. Bivariate analyses were conducted in order to assess the strength of direction of the relationship between vignette condition and each of the response variables, as well as between the outcome variables. In keeping with criminological convention, regressions and/or chi-square tests were computed for each piece of analysis, rather than ANOVAs, as is often typical for analysis of 2x2 factorial design.

The first set of hypotheses – that there would be a significant difference between white Americans' appraisals of the appropriateness of intra- and inter-racial use of excessive force – was tested using chi-square tests. Appropriateness of police violence was

recoded into a binary variable (0=appropriate; 1= appropriate). A series of additional chi-square and binary logistic and linear regression analyses based on the model were estimated. Detailed discussion of these analyses is included in Chapter IV and V.

Analysis for the second set of hypotheses – that beliefs about personal responsibility/individualist ideologies would predict white Americans' judgments of the appropriateness of excessive force – took much the same form. A series of binary logistic and linear regressions were estimated. Detailed discussion of these analyses is included in Chapter VI and VII.

IV. Research Limitations and Ethics

Limitations and Delimitations

The only delimitation – or limitation deliberately imposed on the research (Rudestam 2007) – was restricting analysis to white participants. While this of course limits the generalizability of the findings, this restriction was imposed in line with the research question. As earlier stated, one of the main research questions behind this project was to consider why public support for police remains so high despite evidence of brutality – and public support remains high particularly among white Americans (Gallup 2014; Pew 2017) – it was important to home in on this subset of the population to better understand the reasons generating support.

There were, however, many unintended limitations to this research. In addition to the researcher bias which affected the early-stage hypotheses, detailed at length in Chapter IV, there were many methodological shortcomings attendant to any quantitative survey. First, the data presented here are cross-sectional and thus provide only limited insight into the long-term development of attitudes toward the appropriate use of police violence. However, the causal effects from the experiments provide some evidence of how these dynamics interact (as detailed in Chapter VII).

Second, as earlier described, there are the typical concerns about the reliability and validity of the data, not only as a result of the MTurk sample and online questionnaire design, but also due to the self-report format and sensitive subject matter, which can be affected by social desirability bias, satisficing, and other response biases. Additionally, by virtue of the quantitative nature of the research, there will inevitably be questions as to the validity of the conclusions, as experimental conditions and fictional vignette scenarios can hardly replicate real instances of police brutality, and the conclusions drawn here do not provide the full texture or complexity of meaning behind what motivates support for police or police brutality. Funding limitations prohibited supplementing my quantitative surveys with qualitative focus group interviews, as initially planned, but future research should explore these themes more fully with a multitude of research approaches to garner a better understanding of how Americans process and justify police violence.

A third possible limitation to this research may be the vignette of excessive force itself. As discussed throughout the thesis, it is feasible that the incident of excessive force used across experiments was not salient or strong enough to elicit a response from participants, resulting in null findings (see Chapter IV and V). While increasing the magnitude of police-inflicted violence across experiments could be one effective solution to this, it was important to maintain the idea of a "low information environment" in order to approximate the conditions under which most people hear about instances of police violence (i.e., fleeting soundbites and headlines, 140-character tweets, and so forth). Moreover, these types of "low information" contexts tend to elicit the gut-level, non-deliberative reactions that people tend to experience in their everyday lives. As Bradford et al. (2017: 6) expand: in the absence of full information or knowledge about what transpired in a given situation, people tend to draw on belief systems (i.e., social identity, normative alignment, duty to obey, and so on) and heuristics to make assessments. For example, a strong sense of normative alignment with police, in particular, might encourage people to judge police actions as justified, even observers lack full knowledge, precisely because they believe in a general sense that the police "do the right thing" (Bradford et al. 2017).

Fourth, to my knowledge, no other academic wok has investigated personal responsibility as a basis for "making sense" of police violence. As a result, many of the work in this thesis drew from other disciplines and scholarly literature focusing on police legitimacy and just-world rationalizing, but accordingly there are gaps,

generalizations, oversights, and nascent themes which require further development and explication, as is inevitable to any original research.

Finally, as highlighted by Sampson (2008), there are both conceptual and empirical challenges intrinsic to any experiment which purports to manipulate race. In some sense, it is impossible to experimentally manipulate race; race is, in so many ways, overdetermined by context, social conditions, habitus, stereotypes and so forth. Using words like "convenience store," or even "police," may preconfigure race, gender, age, and class. Experiments are, by definition, socially artificial and this ersatz quality may be no more apparent to respondents than in a description of a fictional violent police encounter, devoid of the emotional intensity, fear, and litany of stereotypes and prejudices in any violent interaction. Police encounters which unfold identically, except for race, are a likely impossibility in the real world. Thus, while many other scholars (for example, Rome et al. 1995; Seron et al. 2004; Johnson and Kuhns 2009) use a similar vignette-based experimental approach, varying the race of the suspect/police officer to measure respondents' judgments, I make all claims of causality cautiously and with acknowledgment of the multiple operative social mechanisms at play. Indeed, throughout this thesis, I reiterate that all findings must be further investigated and considered with other experimental and observational social research.

Ethical Considerations

1. Labor Practices of MTurk Respondents

As previously alluded, a major ethical consideration involved the use of Amazon Mechanical Turk to recruit participants. In particular the highly exploitive, low-waged, and repetitive labor practices of online crowdsourcing software, and what it can mean for the subjects and the quality of the data collected. A *PBS NewsHour* (2015) investigation entitled "the Internet science factory" documents various workers who estimate completing upwards of 20,000 academic surveys over a five-year period calling it a "digital sweatshop." Many MTurk Workers have responded to the low-paying and repetitive tasks by petitioning Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos to improve labor conditions (Harris 2014), and one MTurk review site called Dynamo has proposed an MTurk code of conduct for academic requestors stipulating a minimum payment of $0.10 per minute. In 2015, a class action lawsuit was brought against a crowdsourcing supplier similar to Amazon Mechanical Turk, called CrowdFlower, by crowdsourced workers alleging a breach of the U.S. Fair Labor Standards Act, however it was settled before a decision was made (Chen 2015).

The twin pressures of the research demand for novel findings, backed by large, cheap, quick, and replicable samples, alongside the economic availability for this type of on-demand labor now enabled by technology, has created something of a modern conundrum. It is unclear what Amazon's moderating or regulative role is exactly, despite their 40 percent collection fee. It is also unclear whether and how sites such as these and MTurk's low compensation and dubious labor practices affect the quality of subjects and responses.

2. Personal Reflections on Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk)

While the use of MTurk has increased rapidly in recent years, owing in part to its ease and accessibility for recruiting and custom-selecting participants, low cost of labor, rapid collection of data, and sample outside of the typical demographic of undergraduate students (cf., Rand, 2012), it is not without its problems. While some methodological issues have been alluded to previously, such as satisficing, a similarly biased sample (i.e., white, underemployed, heterosexual, younger men; though as Rand observes they still tend to be a more representative sample than undergraduate research participants), and the ethical issues attached to exploiting a large, frequently underpaid pool of research subjects, the focus of this discussion pertains to the apparent lack of guidance, instruction, and regulation by MTurk.

In this research, a number of issues emerged with regard to what appeared to me to be MTurk's hands-off (if any) policy toward researchers and research participants. One of the benefits (and later, as I came to find out, drawbacks) of MTurk is the opportunity to custom select preferences for participants. Researchers, or so-called "requestors," are able to set specific age ranges or residential restrictions for participation, as well as modify the criteria for having successfully completed a "HIT," or study. In this particular HIT, I set the parameters for my participants, or "workers," as adults aged 18 and older residing in the continental United States. MTurk also allows requestors to reject any worker on whatever basis they deem appropriate, in my case any worker who

completed the estimated 15- to 20-minute survey in less than 2-minutes. I believed that anyone who finished the survey in under 120 seconds probably had not sufficiently attended to the material and the quality of their responses would be poor. Following a rejection, the HIT is reposted on MTurk for another worker to complete and the rejected worker is not paid for their participation in the survey and their approval rating drops. The worker approval rating is a cumulative percentage of the successful HIT's a worker has completed, and it is used as a quantitative index of participants' "quality" as a research subject (though from what I have gathered, it seems common practice to "approve" all workers, thus for this and many reasons it seems to me a poor indicator of quality).

To my knowledge, at no point was I clearly informed of the effect a "rejection" would have on a worker's approval rating nor of its apparent importance to workers (requestors can custom select workers above a certain approval threshold, so this frequently remains an important figure for workers). Indeed, much of the process felt very opaque. Common practice seemed to be to piece together instruction from various advice blogs, YouTube videos, and other informal secondary sources. Indeed, suggestions from one such advice blog were the impetus behind my rejection of workers who completed the survey in less than 2-minutes. An estimated 200 workers were rejected on this basis.

Almost immediately, rejected workers flooded my personal email (linked to my Amazon account which I used to set-up MTurk and which includes both my first and last name)

with angry, and many threatening, messages imploring me to pay them the $0.75 for participation and restore their approval rating. Several workers also posted to MTurk blogs and Reddit discussion boards mentioning me by name and warning against completing my HIT. Some contained threats to "light her up" and to "go fuck herself," though much of these discussion boards were private, requiring a login username and password to access, so I could not see the full extent. After trying repeatedly to get in touch with Amazon (two employees had never heard of MTurk; several emails were left unanswered until days later), and receiving nearly 100 more such emails, I felt compelled to pay the rejected workers.

After this most of the emails stopped, though a few angry workers continued to email me (I was eventually able to block many of the accounts through Gmail) and one reported me to my university ethics board as well as my departmental administrator with a screengrab of a MTurk discussion board in which other workers had also threatened me. Throughout the process, I felt Amazon's – or any oversight body, for that matter – role was opaque, and it was unclear to me what, if any, regulatory capacity they had. Indeed, I felt there was very little recourse apart from paying the rejected workers, and even then, I continued to be harassed for weeks later by disgruntled workers who managed to locate my alternate university email address. This left me paying *both* the rejected workers, as well as those who had subsequently completed my HIT after it was reposted to MTurk.

In now reflecting on my experience with MTurk, I struggle to understand how I might have done anything differently (apart from implementing the "tips" I've now gained from experience, such as using an alternate email address, or indiscriminately approving all workers). In fact, in many ways, I feel compelled by circumstance to use it again – albeit with great apprehension. In my particular case, I had both limited funding options and access to my desired sample population (i.e., large swaths of Americans whilst conducting research from the U.K.), thus the availability of a large, fairly diverse, low-cost, and above all, rapid sample of participants appealed to me. I would imagine other researchers, particularly early-career researchers and doctoral students, would feel increasingly compelled to use crowdsourcing platforms like MTurk for these same reasons: in the absence of abundant research funding or a captive population of incentivized undergraduates, and increasingly baited by the pressure to produce novel or noteworthy results, researchers may find MTurk to be a tempting solution, as I did. However, without any proper regulation or guidance, I fear this same cycle will continue to repeat, with both young and experienced researchers alike building large-scale research projects on the back of anecdotal information gathered from advice blogs or word of mouth, resulting in both the researchers and their participants feeling exploited. And while the effort to democratize and demystify the research process, to make rapid, low-cost data available outside the exclusive preserve of academe and industry, is a noble one, it is not without hidden costs to both researchers and participants.

3. Using MTurk Again in Survey 2

In light of my previous experience in dealing with respondents, or "Workers," on Amazon Mechanical Turk, I was needless to say quite reluctant to use the crowd-sourcing platform again. In terms of research practices and ethics, I was split on the matter. On the one hand, to as closely replicate the conditions of the first study, using the same crowd-sourcing platform in order to recruit a similar sample would help corroborate my otherwise controversial previous findings. However, from a personal perspective, I had reservations about again using an exploited workforce and possibly making myself vulnerable to internet harassment.

These two reservations, I felt, were inextricably linked: the harassment and exploitation both symptomatic and constitutive of the dubious ethics of crowdsourced labor. Indeed, this type of vigilante vetting of "Requestors," or researchers on MTurk, seems to have emerged from respondents creating their own *de facto* labor protections, in the absence of any formalized measures by Amazon or any other governmental or regulative body. Websites such as TurkerNation, TurkOpticon, Reddit, Dyanmo, and a host of others serve as vetting forums for Workers to discuss the "best" quality MTurk "HIT's," or "human intelligence tasks," in an otherwise highly exploitative, competitive, and unregulated market. Often these discussion boards will tip off users to the "least mind-numbing" task, or those that pay the best and take the least amount of time (Semuels 2018). Subreddits have emerged on the social content and forum site Reddit called "HITs worth Turking For," which enabled MTurk workers to rate – in theory, at least – the highest paying, lowest effort tasks. These were also the very same sites that

published my name and personal details when I rejected Workers who failed to complete my task, or "HIT."

The twin pressures of the academic demand for novel findings, backed by large, cheap, quick, and replicable samples, alongside the economic availability for this type of on-demand labor now enabled by technology, has created something of a modern conundrum. It is unclear what Amazon's modulating or regulative role is exactly, or why they collect a 40% fee (20% fee on the reward to Workers; and 20% on HITs, or surveys, with more than 10 participants). Though these allegedly exploitative practices and what – if any – role should be played by the companies which operate them in the so-called gig economy have also been under scrutiny, most notably with Uber and Airbnb. Out of both reluctance to exploit respondents and fear of harassment from these same respondents, I was hesitant to use MTurk again but nevertheless decided it was my best course of action; and indeed, as a self-funded researcher, it soon presented itself as the only course of action available to me (though to say the ability to collect 1600 responses in a matter of hours was not also an enticement would be a lie).

At the outset, however, I took several precautions to as best as possible protect myself from another barrage of harassment on MTurk. After poring over countless blogs posted by other researchers, I came to realize this type of abuse seemed fairly commonplace. A cursory Google search of "MTurk workers" quickly populated with articles both of the exploitative industry of crowdsourced work, and of the apparently abusive behavior it seemed to engender. Indeed, the first link which cropped up was a

Reddit post querying "how to handle abusive workers?". It seemed that any time a Worker was rejected, or not paid immediately (it is typical for Requestors to review responses before payment; MTurk advises Requestors give themselves at least 3 days to review HITs) an onslaught of emails ensued. This was at once both a profoundly unsettling and bizarrely comforting realization: highlighting again the poorly-paid conditions of crowdsourced labor and often the urgency with which they require remuneration, but also because depersonalizing my harassment affirmed that it was nothing particular to me or my study which precipitated it – a need made no less exigent by the fact that it was the topic of my thesis – but an important qualification for the fragile ego of an early career academic.

Next, I consulted an array of blogs by other academics with experience integrating Qualtrics, the online survey software I used to develop and collect my data, with MTurk. One such blog was by Amazon Mechanical Turk's itself titled: "Tutorial: Getting great survey results from MTurk and Qualtrics," offering a step-by-step guide to ensure the survey is taken properly. Of particular relevance, it offered guidance on the suggested period of time to review a HIT before paying a Worker (3 days) and other criteria such as requiring Workers to input a completion code at the end of the survey to enable Requestors to track responses and validate that Workers have completed the survey only once. I also consulted a blog by an academic named Brent H. Curdy, which encouraged researchers to post the Amazon Mechanical Turk terms and conditions at the beginning and end of the survey, which stipulates that "a Requester may reject work if the HIT was not completed correctly or the instructions were not followed."

Additionally, though I specified that my workers be both from and located within the United States through Amazon Mechanical Turk recruitment parameters, I added an extra layer of location validation through Qualtrics, the online survey platform through which I developed and administered my survey. If Qualtrics detected any respondent's IP address was located outside of the U.S., it prevented them from taking the survey. I also included this additional location validation field in my previous survey, on the advice of several academics' blogs, such that as by Gilad Feldman, who warned that respondents often use VPN, proxies, firewalls, and other forms of IP-masking technologies to take surveys outside their geographic restrictions. This also served as a protection against the apparent problem of MTurk BOTs, or an autonomous internet program which can interact or "behave" with systems or users like a respondent; though I also included a reCAPTCHA in the survey, per the advice of a blog called TurkRequestors, to protect against this.

Like the previous survey, anyone who completed the >20-minute survey in less than 3 minutes was excluded (and subsequently denied remuneration) based on the assumption that they failed to pay sufficient attention. However, in this survey, a message was included in the consent prior to starting the survey and at the end which alerted participants to this fact, citing MTurk terms and conditions:

> Please note: your response will only be recorded, and payment will only be made, if you have fully completed this survey to the best of your ability, in a reasonable and timely manner. This survey should take no more than 30 minutes, however anyone who completes in less than 3 minutes will not be paid

> on the assumption they have not paid sufficient attention to the questions, following the Amazon Mechanical Turk policy, which states: "a Requester may reject work if the HIT was not completed correctly or the instructions were not followed."

Of course, participants could have simply skipped through questions and then let the timer run until it hit the 3-minute mark before submitting; and I could have timed each question to ensure participants did not do this, but it would have been an arduous task to have timed each question and checked that against all 1600 participants to ensure they sufficiently attended to each question.

Finally, I linked my Amazon Mechanical Turk account to a different email address that did not include my name or identifying details, as last time my inbox was so inundated with abusive emails that it my personal email account became overloaded. While my personal information and contact details were still available to survey respondents, as per the requirements of the University consent forms, they were not directly connected to the Mechanical Turk user-interface, and therefore – I hoped – creating one more barrier between me and a Worker.

Chapter 4

Looking Beyond Racism:

Making Sense of Racial Null Findings in White Americans' Attitudes toward Excessive Force

I. Introduction

Over the last several years, the issue of racial discrimination in policing, both conscious and increasingly unconscious or implicit, has captured public attention across the U.S. and elsewhere. In particular, the high-profile police killings of Michael Brown[11], Eric Garner,[12] and Tamir Rice[13], and the widespread public backlash to these events on social media, in political debate, and in the Black Lives Matter Movement, has brought a spotlight to the long-standing racial disproportionality of police violence in America.

Yet, while there is a substantial literature detailing the implicitly and explicitly racist tendencies of American police (cf., Fagan and Davies 2002; Voigt et al. 2017), there is

[11] On August 9, 2014 18-year-old black teen Michael Brown was fatally shot in Ferguson, Missouri by a white police officer, Darren Wilson. While FBI investigations found no evidence that Brown held his hands up in surrender before he was shot – contrary to the testimony of Dorian Johnson who was accompanying Brown at the time – the event ignited unrest in Ferguson, with protesters using the slogan "Hands Up, Don't Shoot."
[12] On July 17, 2014 in Staten Island, New York, NYPD officer Daniel Pantaleo placed Eric Garner in a chokehold while arresting him on suspicion of selling single cigarettes from packs without tax stamps, ultimately killing him. Video footage of the incident, including Garner repeating the words "I can't breathe" eleven times as multiple officers restrained him, circulated in the aftermath, generating widespread national attention.
[13] On November 23, 2014, a 12-year-old African American boy was shot by officer Timothy Loehmann in Cleveland, Ohio on suspicion of brandishing a firearm, though what later emerged was an airsoft replica gun that lacked the orange-tipped barrel, denoting it was a nonlethal weapon.

surprisingly scant work investigating if white Americans' views toward police violence are also shaped by racism (though see Johnson and Kuhns 2009; Silver and Pickett 2015). This chapter presents the empirical results from the first of two online surveys testing whether white Americans' attitudes toward excessive force are dependent upon officer and/or suspect race.

Results indicate that racial identity does not influence white respondents' assessments of excessive force. Evidence for the importance of other measures related to political affiliation, social identity, and a belief in a just world are discussed. These findings clarify and extend previous literature (e.g., Johnson and Kuhns 2009; Silver and Picket 2015) about the role of race in public understandings of police violence and shed light on how white Americans might "make sense" of these incidents.

The chapter begins by enumerating some of the relevant scholarly literature documenting the importance racism in policing America, and then seeks to deconstruct this lens of analysis – from both a personal and methodological perspective – demonstrating how the dominance of racism as a taken-for-granted lens of inquiry both shaped and misinformed the initial hypotheses of this research. Next, survey results are presented and discussed. Evidence for other (at least ostensibly) non-racial predictors for white Americans' approval of excessive force, such as just-world beliefs, political affiliation, and social identity, are considered. The chapter concludes with some of the implications attached to null findings for scholarship on police violence, as well as reflections on the dangers of a methodological orthodoxy.

II. "Black and Blue": Racism, Violence, and Attitudes Toward the Police

A Brief of History of Racism and Police Violence in America

At the outset it must be noted that no discussion of policing in America, or criminal justice for that matter, can begin without first addressing the question of race and racism; as a September 2017 banner proclaimed at a Red Sox game at Fenway Park "racism is as American as baseball" (Mather 2017); or as a May 2018 music video by artist Childish Gambino depicting police brutality proclaimed, "This *is* America" (emphasis mine).

Long before the race riots of the 1960s, or the televised police beating of Rodney King in 1991, or the dashboard-camera captured killing of Philando Castile in 2016, the story of policing in America has been one ensnarled in – and perhaps even hallmarked by – a history of violence toward people of color. This trend, while not dissimilar from other criminal justice and institutional practices in America, has in many ways become emblematic of the relationship between African Americans and police, *in particular*: the two counterposed at archetypical, antithetical odds; evoked as a metaphor for the "race issue" in America.

Political Ideology, Racism, and American Identity:
An Examination of White Americans' Support for the Police Use of Excessive Force

According to Nodjimbadmen (2017), the trope of racist police can perhaps most clearly be traced to the zenith (or perhaps, nadir) of the Civil Rights Movement – though racialized police brutality no doubt pre-dated the heightened racial consciousness of 1960s. For many, the graphic imagery of police officers of the 1960s attacking young black (and white) activists with firehoses, police dogs, batons, and riot shields is one often indelibly and irreparably associated with policing – not only of that era but *policing* full stop. While enumerating the entirety of cultural developments since this period would be better left to a dedicated history on the subject, and much has been done in the intervening half-century to rehabilitate police-community relations, it still speaks to the residual skepticism, mistrust, and ambient unease many people of color and other marginalized groups feel toward police. Public polling, for example, shows that only one in four urban blacks express confidence in the police (Gallup 2014).

As Soss and Weaver (2017: 575, emphasis in original) write, "to the extent that race and class organize the American political order, it is fundamentally the *policing* of race and class that '[holds] this precarious system together'" (Kelly 2016: 22). For Weaver (2018), "police are central to black political thought," defining, granting, diminishing, and revoking place and political status from an early age – a process Weaver terms a "state baptism" because it is such a modal and formative life-event for so many. For many people of color, police intervention may be elicited for a range of seemingly innocuous behaviors, prompting phrases such as "driving while black" (and inspiring song lyrics such as "doing 55 in a 54" in Jay-Z's "99 Problems," in reference to the stringent, if pedantic, enforcement of speed limits for black motorists); or the free use of

public space as tantamount to probable cause if involving a person of color (Wacquant 2005). Certain "visible stigmata" (Cohen 2002: 140-2), be it baggy dress, geography, or some combination thereof, may become probative of criminal activity and grounds for police suspicion. Even certain words, according to Wacquant (2005: 129), such as "'urban' and 'ghetto' have become…. re-lexified in a…segregated fashion… They have gradually become code for…places where only blacks reside, and consequently, 'hotbeds' of crime – a phenomenon not diminished by the oft-sighted patrol car idling through such areas." Feagin (1991:114, emphasis in original) highlights the importance of the accumulation of these "*daily* large and small events" in blacks' appraisals of the police, built of both *direct* experiences with officers and *vicarious*, indirect forms of exposure within their communities, often imparted to them via ambient, word-of-mouth channels of knowledge (Feagin and Sikes 1994; Weitzer 2002).

Appraisals of policing as an activity which is both implicitly and explicitly highly racialized is a view that resides not only in the historical imagination of many African Americans or as a particular set of liberal sensibilities toward police, but is also borne out in empirical findings which consistently document a racial bias in American policing. The Center for Policing Equity, for example, finds that African Americans are nearly four times more likely to be subject to police use of force than white Americans (Goff et al. 2016) and five times more likely to die at the hands of police than whites (Brown and Langan 2001). Voigt and colleagues (2017) use evidence from police body-worn cameras to show that black individuals were consistently treated less respectfully and with less procedural justice than white individuals in police encounters.

Literature examining implicit bias in policing further corroborates a racial effect. In a fictional shooter game involving undergraduate students, Correll and colleagues (2014) find that participants were far more likely to shoot black targets than white, which was associated with stereotypes linking blacks with the concepts of "danger." Others have found that this increased perception of danger has also been linked with other negative outcomes such as an increased likelihood of blacks being mistakenly shot when unarmed (Kahn and Davies 2011; Ma and Correll 2011). In other criminal justice domains, Eberhardt and colleagues (2006) have even found that the perceived "stereotypicality" of African Americans' features (i.e., as more or less "Afrocentric") predicted the likelihood of a capital sentence, with darker skin and wider noses predisposing them to a higher likelihood of a death sentence. Whereas white phenotypic racial stereotypicality was found to be a protective factor against police use of force (Kahn et al. 2016a) and other negative policing outcomes (Kahn et al. 2016b).

According to Atler et al. (2016), many of these effects stem from an entrenched "black is bad" effect, in which people mentally associate darkness with moral negativity – a reason Kjeldgaard-Christiansen (2015) argues that Disney villains are often portrayed as darker hued. Across six studies, Atler and colleagues (2016) find that people use skin tone as a heuristic in rendering social judgment – a bias which can begin from an early age and extend to adulthood. In a similar vein, Goff et al. (2014: 526) find that black children are considered less "child-like" and more responsible than their same-aged white peers, which the researchers claim renders black children "more suitable targets

for police violence." This finding also holds true for black adults in the context of more general social problems (e.g., poverty, unemployment, incarceration), with white Americans more likely to cite individualized, internal explanations (e.g., laziness, moral character) when they believe those affected are black instead of white (Iyengar 1990; Ben-Porath and Shaker 2010).

Many, including Loïc Wacquant (1999, 2010), Satnam Choongh in the U.K. (1998), Jonathan Simon (2001), and Vesla Weaver (with Lerman 2014; with Soss 2017), to name a few, locate these patterns of minority-directed violence within wider structural and societal power hierarchies, noting the role that police play in social control and the maintenance of a particular status quo. Extending this argument, Michelle Alexander (2010) and others (cf., Zimring 2003; Garland 2010; Steiker and Steiker 2015) have traced the end of codified discrimination in Antebellum Jim Crow laws to its *de facto* reincarnation in other, more diffuse forms, such as disparate drug sentencing laws, capital punishment practices, and the dispensation of zero-tolerance policing strategies. Modern trends in mass incarceration, stop-and-frisk/search, and law-and-order electability (e.g., 1988 U.S. presidential election between George H.W. Bush and Michael Dukakis), so the argument runs, have been fueled not by raw trends in violence and crime in black communities, but by targeted and electorally expedient agendas oriented toward subjugating disenfranchised African Americans (Soss and Weaver 2017).

Policing the Trope of Black Criminality: "Justifying" Excessive Force Toward African Americans

Political Ideology, Racism, and American Identity:
An Examination of White Americans' Support for the Police Use of Excessive Force

The nature and extent of the fraught relationship between police and black communities in America, is in part, a result of trenchant cultural stereotypes about crime, and the different legal and social standards applied to the definition of "crime" itself. For the better part of the last century in America, the face of the "criminal" has been frequently portrayed – in fictional and news accounts, as well as police-defined narratives – as young and black and male (Wacquant 2005). The images and vocabulary with which notions of crime are conjured, as well as the etiology of crime itself (i.e., the culture of drugs, gangs, absentee parenting), have been routinely overlaid with implicit and explicit reference to race.

Eberhardt and colleagues (2008) have described this black-crime association as near-ubiquitous and indeed the defining feature of modern criminal justice orientations. Through numerous investigations (Eberhardt et al. 2004; 2008), she and other researchers have documented the scope of this black-crime association, as well as the effects it bears on various outcomes, such as memories of who was armed with a deadly razor at a subway scene (Allport and Postman 1947), evaluations of ambiguously aggressive behavior (Devine 1989), the speed and probability with which people decide to pull the trigger at someone in a fictional shooter game (Correll et al. 2002), the threshold at which people perceive danger (Eberhardt et al. 2008), and the likelihood with which they believe a black individual is criminal and vice-versa (Eberhardt et al. 2004; 2008).

Perceptions of black criminality are also reinforced and reproduced by the different legal thresholds applied to what is considered criminal behavior and how crime is dealt with in the criminal justice system (e.g., the historic disparity in crack-cocaine and powder cocaine; the use of public space as probative of criminal activity; varying perceptions of what constitutes "disorderly" conduct) (Wacquant 2005, Davis 1999). These racialized criminal stereotypes are often expressed through – and the policing of them legitimized by – sinister messaging about "objective" rates of crime, grounded in the supposedly high concentration of crime in predominately black communities (or low rates of employment, marriage, education, or any other middle-class marker of moral decay). According to Bowling and Phillips (2002: 129), the designation of "high crime areas" often becomes coded language for "black communities." Crime control strategies like "hot spots," "broken windows," "problem-oriented policing," and increasingly actuarially informed policing tactics, may claim to lack normativity, informed by patterns, not moral disposition or race, but they are often no more than thinly veiled tactics of discrimination and operate on and reproduce an assumption of black crime as taken for granted. As Cohen (2002: 140-1) maintains, "charges which [require] highly subjective definitions of what [constitutes]….'insulting,' 'disorderly,' or 'unruly behavior'…acquire an objective and reified status through the acceptance of situational logic, which in turn, [is] based on a belief system." In New York City, for example, Fagan and Davies (2002) found "broken windows" strategies to home in on specific types of *people*, rather than on specific types of *disorder*. The result is that police often regard "black areas as intrinsically criminal and black people as a potential threat to public disorder" (Institute of Race Relations 1979: 2).

This is not to paint police as an institution riven by racism, but rather to highlight the significance of a black-crime association in the public consciousness and how it manifests across policing and public understandings of it. Moreover, it is to suggest that to the extent that this association is salient for Americans, it, hypothetically at least, may influence how white Americans, in particular, evaluate incidents as appropriate for excessive force. Taken together, the extensive history of racialized policing, deep-seated implicit racial bias, and pervasive association of blackness with criminality, seem to gesture towards an ingrained and seemingly normalized sensibility in which racism pervades much of the thinking about police. It might also suggest that for white Americans, at least, police violence might be understood firstly, as a black phenomenon, and secondly, as part and parcel of modern law enforcement.

III. Racism and Just-World Thinking

Does Racism and Racial Identity Mobilize Just-World Rationalizing?

In addition to affecting whites' attitudes toward excessive force, I expected the racial identity of the protagonists to have important impacts on other outcome variables related to a belief in a just world, which would, in turn, reinforce respondents' judgments about the appropriateness of police violence.

Political Ideology, Racism, and American Identity:
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According to Melvin Lerner (1980), a "belief in a just world" is the widespread cognitive bias based on a belief that people get what they deserve, both good and bad. In order to maintain predictability in our social worlds, we tend to rationalize harm and misfortune as the product of choice and desert: merit and fate correspond with each other (Rubin and Peplau 1975: 66; Bandura 1990; Opotow 1990, 1995). Scholars have documented how this type of thinking has functioned to rationalize war atrocities (Selznick and Steinberg 1969, Opton 1971), sexual assault (Jones and Aronson 1973; Smith et al. 1975), poverty (Furnham and Gunter 1974), and a host of other negative outcomes. Strong just-world attitudes also tend to predict prejudiced attitudes to a range of disadvantaged groups, including refugees (Montada 1998; DeVaul-Fetters), the unemployed (Riechle et al. 1998), the elderly (Lipkus and Siegler 1993), and the poor (Furnham and Gunter 1984). Additionally, just world attitudes also predict positive attributions of choice and responsibility to oneself, whereby one's own success becomes a sign of virtue (Rubin and Peplau 1975: 67). As Rubin and Peplau (67-68) write, "the converse of the tendency to blame the victim also seems to be a common perceptual link between reward and virtue… newspaper features on state lottery winners frequently mention the winner's hard work, good deeds, and admirable qualities, as if these characteristics helped to account of this or her purchase of the lucky ticket." In this way, just-world attitudes are double-edged: on the one hand, serving to denigrate victims and minimize the apparent harm to others (Lerner and Miller 1978), while on the other hand buoying one's self-worth and agency. As Heider (1958: 235) writes,

> The relationship between goodness and happiness, between wickedness and punishment is so strong, that given one of these conditions, the other is

> frequently assumed. Misfortune, sickness, accidents, are often taken as a sign of badness and guilt. If [the other] is unfortunate, then he has committed a sin.

A substantial body of previous research (cf., DeVaul-Fetters 2014) has found just-world beliefs strengthen after learning about negative outcomes directed at racial out-groups (see also work in attributional psychology, Feather 1999, 2006; Heider 1958; Narin 2005; Sedikides and Strube 1997; van Dijk et al. 2011). On the basis of this literature, I expected racial identity to influence respondents' just world beliefs, as well as other measures of responsibility related to police officer malfeasance and suspect suspiciousness, thus in turn strengthening the link between race and support for excessive force.

IV. Current Research

The Effect of Racial Identity on Assessments of Police Brutality

The current study seeks to develop and expand this strain of research, testing the hypothesis that racial identity motivates white Americans' assessments (and ultimately, acceptance) of police brutality. In line with recommendations from Johnson and Kuhns (2009), the study varies the race of both the suspect and police officer involved in a fictional scenario of violence to determine its effect on white respondents' assessments of (a) the encounter and (b) broader perceptions of fairness and identity.

Political Ideology, Racism, and American Identity:
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While prior research documents several trends in attitudes toward police brutality, as well as some of the socio-demographic factors that help explain support for police violence, few studies have examined the effects of intra- and inter-racial identity on public evaluations. The present study clarifies and extends work on this topic in a number of critical ways to provide a better understanding of the role race plays in approval of police brutality:

First, this study varies racial identity *implicitly*, insinuating race through the use of names. The inclusion of an implicit manipulation was important as expressing views that police violence was justified, or that a suspect "deserved it" or "had it coming," may not emerge openly – particularly when such beliefs appear racially motivated. In signaling racial identity through name, description of dress, place, and so on, Niemi et al. (2016) suggest it is possible to bypass explicit motivations to suppress, conform, or otherwise edit moral assessments in accordance with socially desirable norms. Additionally, as described in the previous two chapters, a substantial body of research indicates the power of names alone to elicit prejudice: from job hiring (Wood et al. 2009) to Airbnb listings (Edelman et al. 2016; Badger 2015), to responses to eBay (Ayres et al. 2015; Swanson 2015; Bertrand and Mullainathan 2004) and classified ads (Doleac and Stein 2013), prompting hashtags such as #AirBnbWhileBlack and tactics of so-called "résumé whitening."

Second, a number of previous studies correlate support for police violence with a more general attitudinal disposition of racial animus, rather than directly varying the racial

identities of the actors involved in a police encounter (Johnson and Kuhns 2009; Silver and Pickett 2015). Moreover, when Johnson and Kuhns (2009) have experimentally manipulated the race of the offender (but not police officer) in a scenario of brutality, they find the role of race to be more nuanced than is typically portrayed. The researchers write (2009: 615): "whites' support for police use of force was largely unrelated to the race of the offender. Whites were equally likely to approve of police using force if the offender was a black teenager or a white teenager." While the race-of-offender experimental manipulation did not appear to affect white respondents' approval for police brutality, Johnson and Kuhns (2009: 616) ultimately conclude that anti-black racial stereotyping was a significant predictor of support. However, the somewhat equivocal results of these studies that have examined whether approval for violence varies by race show that racism has been frequently misunderstood and oversimplified; additionally, these findings are based on data from nearly 20 years ago. Thus, the current research provides further necessary and topical empirical examination of subject.

Third, this research expands assessments of police brutality across a number of dimensions, including assessments of officer malfeasance, suspect culpability, and belief and a just world, to provide a more robust understanding of how and what the public come to interpret as incidents of brutality.

Fourth, as highlighted by Gerber and Jackson (2017: 81), the surprising few studies that have actually examined reasons *why* people justify and support police violence – as

opposed to identifying reasons why police might commit violence in the first place, or highlighting populations most vulnerable to brutality – tend to consider the socio-demographic correlates, and often from the same set of data (i.e., GSS) (e.g., Silver and Pickett 2015; Johnson and Kuhns 2009; Barkan and Cohn 1998; Arthur and Case 1994). In contrast, this research is based on original data which uses a survey-based experiment, allowing stronger conclusions as to cause and effect (Kinder and Palfrey 1993; Johnson and Kuhns 2009). Results are replicated across a second survey (Chapter V), again strengthening causal arguments.

V. Methods

Hypotheses

To test whether white Americans' approval of excessive force (and other related assessments) varied by the race of the actors involved, the experiment employed a 2x2 factorial design which altered the implied race of both the police officer and suspect.

The first set of experimental hypotheses concerns respondents' appraisals of excessive force, and corresponding assessments of officer malfeasance and suspect responsibility, and whether these assessments vary across the racial dyads.

$H1_a$: The racial identity of the police officer/suspect will predict respondents' attitudes toward police violence**.** White respondents will find inter-racial violence (i.e., white officer/black suspect) most "appropriate."

H1$_b$: The racial identity of the police officer/suspect will predict respondents' ratings of police officer malfeasance. Specifically, white respondents will rate a white police officer more positively when violence is committed against a black suspect.

H1$_c$: The racial identity of the police officer/suspect will predict respondents' perceptions of the suspect's responsibility for the encounter. White respondents will be more likely to find black suspects responsible.

H1$_d$: Interracial excessive force against a racial outgroup will strengthen just world beliefs. That is, white respondents will have the highest BJW after learning about an incident of police violence against a black suspect by a white officer, and the lowest when force is against a white suspect by a black officer.

The second set of correlational hypotheses relates to the factors that shape how violence is "read" across these racial dyads: specifically, if factors relating to group identity will shape the way that police violence is processed and justified.

H2: Social identity will shape the way stories of police violence are interpreted. Those who classify themselves strongly with the law-abiding community will consider police action – even violent police action – as more appropriate.

Participants and Procedure

As described in the Methods Chapter and noted above, participants were randomly allocated to one of four experimental treatment conditions, varying the implied race (i.e., black/white) of a suspect and police officer in a fictional scenario of police violence (see *Appendices*). The race of both the police officer and suspect were implied through the use of names (i.e., Demarco Stephens/Ryan Anderson for the black and white suspect, respectively; Officer Brian Weber/Jamal Washington for the white and black officer, respectively).

Measures and Constructs

There are three main response variables related to participants' evaluations of the violent police encounter. **Appropriateness of Violence:** Respondents were asked: Under the circumstances, how appropriate do you think it was for the officer to use force against the suspect? Response alternatives ranged from 1= "very inappropriate" to 6= "very appropriate," but were dichotomized (0=inappropriate; 1= appropriate) for analysis as they skewed toward the negative scale-points (e.g., 85.15% rate violence as inappropriate) – although it is worth noting that more than one in nine found violence appropriate in each condition; see Table 3.

Police Malfeasance: Three items measured respondents' assessments of police wrongdoing: (1) To what extent do you think that another officer would have behaved like Officer [Washington/Weber] in this situation?; (2) To what extent do you think that

Officer [Washington/Weber] was acting with the community's best interest at heart?; (3) To what extent do you agree or disagree that the way Officer [Washington/Weber] behaved was wrong? Response options ranged from "strongly disagree" (coded 1) to "strongly agree" (coded 6) but were dichotomized (0= right; 1= wrong) for analysis as they skewed toward the positive scale-points; see Tables 4 through 6.

Suspect Culpability: Respondents were asked to report the extent to which they evaluated the suspect as "responsible for provoking any suspicion that night" on a four-point Likert-type response from (1) "not at all responsible" to (5) "completely responsible." Unlike the previous two items, responses to this item were more evenly distributed therefore this item was not dichotomized.

Additionally, two key items measured respondents' general worldview and membership to the "law-abiding" category. **Social Identity:** To assess respondents' identification as law-abiding American citizens, seven items adapted from Jackson and Bradford (2014) were used: (1) Others in my community generally have similar values to mine; (2) Being a member of my community is important to how I think of myself as a person; (3) I generally see myself as a law-abiding citizen; (4) It is important to me that others see me as an honest, law-abiding citizen. (5) The laws in your community are generally consistent with your own intuitions of right and wrong; (6) Obeying the law ultimately benefits everyone in the community; (7) A person who disobeys laws is a danger to others in the community. Response alternatives ranged from 1= strongly disagree to 6= strongly agree. N=1132 (α = .74), M= 18.11, *S.D.*= 3.23.

Belief in a Just World: Participants were asked to evaluate the following five statements from 1= strongly disagree to 6= strongly agree: (1) I am confident that justice always prevails over injustice; (2) I think that basically the world is a just place; (3) I am confident that, in the long run, people will be compensated for injustices; (4) I firmly believe that injustices in all areas of life (e.g., professional, family, political) are the exception rather than the rule; (5) I believe that, by in large, people get what they deserve. Cronbach's alpha was characteristically high, N=1131 (α = .91), M= 17.35, *S.D.*= 5.53. Note: this item was asked after the experimental treatment, thus it is treated as a dependent variable in most pieces of analysis in this chapter.

Research has also identified several demographic and contextual variables that predict support for use of force, including gender, age, education, and politics (Barkan and Cohn 1998; Johnson and Kuhns 2009; Thomson and Lee 2004; Silver and Pickett 2015). As described in the methods section, several demographic variables were included in the correlational analyses. Age was a six-category variable, coded 0 for 18-25, 1 for 26-35, 2 for 36-45, 3 for 46-55, and 4 for 56-65, and 5 for 66+. Gender was a dummy variable, coded 0 for female and 1 for male. Education was a six-category variable, ranging from "less than high school" (0) to "doctorate" (6). Self-report political ideology a seven-category variable, ranging from 1= completely left to 7 = completely right from the question, "In politics people sometimes talk of 'left' and 'right.' On a scale of 1 to 7, where do you place yourself politically?" It was recoded into a dummy variable, coded 1 for right-wing and 0 for for all else.

Descriptive statistics for demographic and dependent variables are depicted in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics, Survey 1

	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Gender (0: female)	1409	0	1	.47	.50
Race (0: white)	1413	0	2	.32	.68
Age	1407	0	5	1.78	1.16
Right-wing (0: left-center)	1412	0	1	.12	.32
Education	1411	0	5	2.14	1.29
Appropriateness of violence	1439	1	6	2.05	1.26
Police officer acting in community's best interest	1428	1	6	3.15	1.36
Another police officer would've done the same thing	1438	1	6	3.40	1.31
Police officer wrong	1410	1	6	4.82	1.19
Suspect culpability	1432	1	5	3.02	1.15
Belief in a just world	1415	1	6	3.46	1.11
Social Identity	1474	1	6	4.51	.81

Analyses

Analyses draw on data collected via Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk) in October 2016. The analytic sample includes approximately 1130 white American adults (aged 18+), though the precise *n* varies by less than ten cases due to missing data on either the dependent variables or demographic controls.

The analysis proceeds in two stages. The first stage of analyses evaluates whether the extent and nature of support for excessive force varies according to the race of the

police officer and suspect. The second stage of the analyses evaluates the correlates of support for excessive force across these intra- and interracial dyads.

I then discuss supplemental correlational analyses which treat some of the relevant response variables as explanatory variables. This piece of analysis is purely exploratory but can be justified on the basis that (a) the effects from experimental aspects of the study were all essentially zero, and (b) because this analysis motivates a second study. This is discussed further throughout the chapter.

VI. Results from the Experimental Analyses

First, bivariate correlational analyses were computed in order to assess the strength and direction of the relationship between each of the outcome variables (pictured in Table 2 on the following page).

Table 2: Bivariate correlation matrix of outcome variables, Study 1

	SID	BJW	SUS CULP	PO Same	PO Interest	PO Wrong	VA
Social Identity	1	.48**	.21**	-.20**	.20**	-.11**	0.05
Belief in a Just World	.48**	1	.24**	-.22**	.34**	-.32**	.28**
Suspect Culpability	.21**	.24**	1	-.12**	.32**	-.28**	.24**
Another officer behaves the same	-.20**	-.22**	-.12**	1	.17**	-.24**	.35**
Officer best interest	.20**	.34**	.32**	.17**	1	-.62**	.55**
Officer wrong	-.11**	-.32**	-.28**	-.24**	-.62**	1	-.70**
Violence appropriate	0.1	.28**	.24**	.35**	.55**	-.70**	1

*Correlations significant at the <.01 threshold
**Correlations significant at the <.05 threshold

Assessments of Excessive Force

I open my analyses by evaluating whether significant differences exist in support for excessive force, net of controls. I examine this issue by estimating a chi-square test for the dichotomized "violence appropriate" item for each of the experimental treatment dummy variables. The frequency distribution of responses is displayed in a contingency table to better compare attitudes across experimental groups.

Table 3: Assessments of police excessive force

Violence Appropriate?	Total Sample	White cop, black suspect	White cop, white suspect	Black cop, black suspect	Black cop, white suspect
Yes	15%	18%	13%	15%	14%
No	85%	82%	87%	85%	86%
N	1131	285	281	287	278
Chi square	2.92				

Contrary to expectations, white respondents were not affected by the experimental treatment. As shown in Table 3 above, neither the race of the suspect nor the race of the police officer affected respondents' evaluations of excessive force in any of the four treatment conditions, X^2 (3, N = 1131) = 2.92, p = .45. However, results indicate fairly high percentages of approval of excessive force, with more than one in nine of respondents supporting police violence.

While these findings were surprising for many reasons, most notably in relation to the substantial empirical literature outlined in the course of this chapter, they confirm Johnson and Kuhns' (2009) finding that whites' support for police use of force is unrelated to the race of the suspect and extend findings to show that support is also unrelated to the race of the officer.

In their research, Johnson and Kuhns (ibid: 616) make sense of this seemingly contradictory null effect for race by suggesting "[whites] attitudes toward police use of force are nuanced and vary based on the nature of the police-citizen interaction." Moreover, while the race of the officer has been shown to be an important factor shaping public views toward the police (Weitzer 2000; Weitzer and Tuch 2006; Gilliard-Matthews et al. 2008), and suspect (Jefferis et al. 1994; Hurwitz and Peffley 2005) more broadly, how or when racial identities activate prejudice in incidents of excessive force is not always as clear-cut as is frequently portrayed. To that effect, I suggest that racism in policing can and has been mischaracterized and is elided by other biases. Findings such as these help specify the conditions under which prejudice can influence whites Americans' criminal justice attitudes.

However, there are a number of other dimensions by which an incident of excessive force might be evaluated, including appraisals of police officer and suspect conduct and culpability. These are explored below.

Assessments of Police Officer Malfeasance

I now examine whether respondents' appraisals of officer misconduct vary according to the racial identity of the actors involved in the encounter. As above, I estimate a separate chi-square test for the dichotomized officer malfeasance item for each of the experimental treatment dummy variables. Tables 4, 5, and 6 below present the chi-square results of respondents' appraisals of police officer (mis)conduct as well as contingency tables displaying the frequency distribution of responses.

Table 4: Assessments of police officer acting in "community's best interest"

Officer acting in community interest?	Total Sample	White cop, black suspect	White cop, white suspect	Black cop, black suspect	Black cop, white suspect
No	55%	51%	58%	56%	55%
Yes	45%	49%	42%	44%	45%
N	1128	284	280	287	277
Chi square	3.09				

Once again, respondents reported no significant difference in appraisals of police officer malfeasance according to the race of the of the actors involved, rejecting the hypothesis. As depicted in Table 4 above, the race of the suspect and officer did not influence respondents' belief that an officer was acting in the community's best interest, X^2 (3, N = 1128) = 3.09, p = 0.38.

Though, interestingly, over 40% of respondents in each condition believed the officer was acting in the interest of the "greater good," especially in the scenario of interracial violence against a black teenaged suspect (e.g., 49%).

This may fit with the idea, discussed in Chapter II, that underlying police activity, and almost distinct from the actual outcome of these activities, is a presumption of good *intention*. That, as an institution tasked with crime-fighting, and culturally embedded in often-fantastical narratives of crime and justice and the defense of a thin blue line, police might be defaulted to as the "good guys" – perpetuated not least by their ability to define crime narratives (Loader and Mulcahy 2003). Bradford et al. (2017) build on this, suggesting there are a number of reasons why people might excuse police misconduct, one simply being that it is cognitively "easier" to accept that powerholders, like police, "do the right thing." Relevant to this account is fairness heuristic theory (van de Bos et al. 1997; Kahneman 2011): lacking the referent information to judge whether police are distributively or substantively fair, people may resort to relevant identity information. These are often quick, automatic judgments about the propriety or ethics of police officer conduct deduced from the wider reputation or cache of legitimacy commanded by the institution (see Chapter II). To the extent that police are associated with a certain vision of order, safety, and protection, people may thus instinctively default to the heuristic of "police-as-right" when assessing claims of violence. Again, important in this regard is the distinction between *intention* and *outcome*. Excessive force may be seen not only as a final (even unintended) recourse, used when all other options have been exhausted or found to be ineffective, but also as a defensive *reaction*, compelled by

provocation (Berki 1986; Bradford et al. 2017). Most importantly, police may be seen has having tried to "do the right thing," even if the result is less than optimal.

A similar pattern emerges for respondents' appraisals that "another police officer would have done the same thing" (Table 5). A chi-square test for the dichotomized malfeasance item was estimated and the frequency distribution of responses are shown below.

Table 5: Assessments that another police officer would've done the same thing

Another officer would've done same?	Total Sample	White cop, black suspect	White cop, white suspect	Black cop, black suspect	Black cop, white suspect
No	56%	55%	55%	55%	57%
Yes	44%	45%	45%	45%	43%
N	1131	285	281	287	278
Chi square	.24				

Here, the experimental manipulation still showed no significant effect, X^2 (3, N = 1131) = .24, p = 0.97. The hypothesis that perceptions of officer (mis)conduct would vary according to the race of those involved in the encounter was rejected.

Yet once again, a large proportion of respondents (nearly 45%) reported a belief that another officer would have behaved similarly. There are perhaps two interpretations of this. One possibility is that respondents, again, distinguish between outcome and

intention, suggesting a tendency to believe the police generally do the right thing and, given the same situation, another officer would have also done the same thing (a strong possibility given the results presented in Table 4 above). Another interpretation is that it is suggestive of a deeper skepticism toward police and of a systemic issue of violence within the institution. On this account, respondents might believe that the use of excessive force is "typical" of police, and that violent measures are perhaps less selective or sparing. Yet in either reading, respondents do not seem to model officer misconduct individualistically or believe the officer's actions to be those of a roguish "bad apple," but instead, to be reflective of wider institutional practice (e.g., 56% said another officer would have done the same thing).

These findings are echoed in Table 6 below, which models respondents' overall appraisals of officer wrongdoing on the treatment condition. The same analysis as above was repeated: a chi-square test for the dichotomized dependent variable "police officer wrong" was estimated across each of the experimental treatment dummies. The frequency distribution of responses is shown in Table 6.

Table 6: Assessments that police officer was wrong

Officer wrong?	Total Sample	White cop, black suspect	White cop, white suspect	Black cop, black suspect	Black cop, white suspect
Yes	88%	87%	89%	86%	89%
No	12%	13%	11%	14%	11%
N	1127	283	280	287	277
Chi square	1.73				

Again, the experimental manipulation showed no effect: varying the race of an officer and suspect did not significantly impact the level of misconduct respondents attributed to police, X^2 (3, N = 1127) = 1.73, p = 0.63, rejecting the hypothesis.

In this context, a large propensity (e.g., 88%) of respondents evaluated the police officer's behavior as "wrong," though both incidents of excessive force which implicated a black teenager were judged to be the least offensive (e.g., ≥13% of respondents approved). Yet the fact that so many respondents believed another officer would have behaved similarly and the officer was acting in the interests of the greater good, provides some clues to how excessive force is cognitively and emotionally legitimized.

Importantly, respondents appeared to "make sense" of violence, at least in part, according to the perceived intent of the officer, which seems to be unrelated to race of those involved in the encounter. This, firstly, reiterates Johnson and Kuhns (2009: 616) contention that attitudes toward excessive force are nuanced and vary according the nature of the encounter. And second, it seems to suggest, that some of the same attitudes and processes that might lead to or promote a sense of police legitimacy and identification, may also promote the acceptance of police use of force and/or malpractice (Bradford et al. 2017: 6). Fairness heuristic, as previously mentioned, or a "default" perception that police generally act in a fair manner might be one such factor. A broader sense that the motives of the police are the correct ones, and that officers make the right decisions for the right reasons, can allow observers to make a cognitive

delineation between the officer's intentions and what actually transpired. A similar explanation, documented in work in the UK (Bradford et al. 2017), relates to social identity: that affiliating with, and wanting to be affiliated with, a particular social category and group represented by police can predict greater support for police activities. This will be explored in further analyses below.

An additional dimension by which respondents might "make sense" of police violence is in relation to the perceived culpability of a suspect, or the sense in which a suspect "brought it on" themselves. This also ties in with the intentions of an officer: to the extent a suspect is seen as responsible for the encounter, officer wrongdoing might be mitigated, contextualized, or seen as reactionary to suspect instigation.

Assessments of Suspect Culpability

To examine whether respondents differentially attributed the culpability of a suspect according to the race of the protagonists involved in a scenario of police violence, I estimated a linear regression from the experimental treatment dummy variables, using the black officer/black suspect as the reference category. Unlike the police officer malfeasance variables above, responses for this item were not dichotomized as they were more evenly distributed. Therefore, a linear regression was considered the appropriate statistical test.

Table 7: Linear regression for "suspect culpability" from experimental treatment (n=1127)

Treatment Condition	*B*	*S.E. B.*	*β*	*t*	*p*	*95% CI*	
White Cop vs. Black Suspect	.15	.10	.06	1.53	.13	-.04	.34
White Cop vs. White Suspect	.05	.10	.02	.54	.59	-.14	.24
Black Cop vs. White Suspect	.14	.10	.05	1.40	.16	-.06	.33
Black Cop vs. Black Suspect (REF)	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
R^2	.003						

Contrary to the hypothesis, varying the race of an officer and suspect had no significant effect on respondents' belief that the suspect was culpable for precipitating the violent event. This was rather surprising and a little harder to explain, as it contravened much scholarly literature documenting an association with blackness and increased responsibility (cf., Goff et al. 2008; Eberhardt et al. 2004; Iyengar 1990; Ben-Porath and Shaker 2010).

One plausible explanation is that a relatively weak experimental treatment does not elicit strong reactions among respondents, though others might argue the opposite, suggesting that lacking referent information tends to further polarize responses toward identity heuristics (c.f., Jordan et al. 2016). Another possibility is that race and racism do not always manifest in obvious or expected ways (cf., Johnson and Kuhns 2009). The subsequent analyses in this thesis will explore the latter possibility.

Belief in Just World

In addition to the outcome variables directly measuring respondents' appraisals of the incident, I analyzed whether the stories of excessive force had any effect on participants' belief in a just world – or their sense of just deserts, that things happen for a reason. I estimated a linear regression model (Table 8) for each experimental treatment dummy on just world attitudes.

Table 8: Linear regression for "belief in a just world" from experimental treatment (n=1130)

Treatment Condition	*B*	*S.E. B.*	*β*	*t*	*p*	95% CI	
White Cop vs. Black Suspect	.01	.09	.01	.15	.88	-.17	.20
White Cop vs. White Suspect	-.02	.09	-.01	-.24	.81	-.21	.16
Black Cop vs. White Suspect	-.08	.09	-.03	-.81	.42	-.26	.11
Black Cop vs. Black Suspect (REF)	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
R^2	.001						

Again, the experimental manipulation had no effect on white respondents' sense of cosmic justice, rejecting the hypothesis. This too was surprising, as this finding seemed to contravene much scholarly literature documenting a tendency for just world beliefs to strengthen after learning about misfortune directed at denigrated outgroups and to intersect with interracial biases (Lerner 1980; DeVaul-Fetters 2014). As with perceptions of suspect culpability, documented above (Table 7), this null result may be the consequence of a weak treatment. Another, perhaps related, explanation, however, is that just world attitudes are stable and fairly entrenched ideological constructs, unable to be shifted by what might be perceived as a – at least putatively, speaking –

commonplace negative encounter between teen and cop. Yet given the perplexing nature of these results, these themes will be explored further in a follow-up study (Chapter V).

VII. Correlates of Support for Excessive Force

Because the experiment seemed to have no significant effect on white respondents' evaluations of excessive force, across a number of dimensions, I moved on to consider some of the correlates of support for excessive force. Here, several demographic variables are included in the analyses which have been identified in the literature as having been associated with support for use of force (wider discussion in Chapter II). As noted above, I hypothesized that respondents' social identity – or identification with the category represented by police – would be associated with more forgiving attitudes toward excessive force. Extant literature, most notably in the UK (cf., Bradford et al. 2017), has documented an association between identifying more strongly with the group police may be plausibly said to represent, and the acceptance of police use of force, whether or not that force seemed to be justified. Therefore, I expected those who stake a claim to a shared group identity with police to condone excessive force, because these individuals might feel police are (and behave as) the prototypical representatives of their group (ibid: 6). I also expected social identity effects to be exacerbated by intra- and inter-racial dynamics.

Assessments of Police Violence

Table 9 shows a multivariate logistic regression model predicting the main binary response variable: support for excessive force. Dummy variables indicate experimental treatment group, with the black officer/black suspect group excluded so that their attitudes can be compared with those of the other inter- and intra-racial treatments.

Table 9: Binary logistic regression correlates of support for excessive force (*n*= 1122)

Treatment Condition	*B*	*S.E.*	*Wald* X^2	*p*	*OR*	*95% CI*	
White Cop vs. Black Suspect	0.12	0.23	0.24	0.62	1.12	0.71	1.77
White Cop vs. White Suspect	-0.16	0.25	0.43	0.51	0.85	0.53	1.38
Black Cop vs. White Suspect	-0.14	0.25	0.33	0.56	0.87	0.54	1.41
Black Cop vs. Black Suspect (Reference)							
Gender (0: female)	0.26	0.17	2.22	0.14	1.30	0.92	1.82
Right-leaning politics (0: else)	0.85	0.21	16.05	0.00	2.33	1.54	3.53
Age (0: <18-25)	-0.19	0.08	5.66	0.02	0.83	0.71	0.97
Education (0: < high school)	0.10	0.07	2.17	0.14	1.10	0.97	1.26
Social Identity	-0.03	0.11	0.07	0.80	0.97	0.78	1.21
Omnibus Test of Model Coefficients			26.51	.00			

The results presented above partially reject the hypothesis that social identity is associated with more forgiving attitudes toward police violence, as respondents reported no significant difference in their support for excessive force. Contrary to work in the UK, those who identified more strongly with the police (i.e., high social identity) did not appear to express more significant support for the use of excessive force in this case. This may be because when police act beyond the legal or ethical parameters of what is considered appropriate conduct, they are seen as deviating from the norms and values of the group, relinquishing their claim to represent the group. According to Bradford et al. (2017: 11-12):

> 'Strong identifiers' are motivated to believe police do the right thing because this is in a sense to believe that they themselves to the right thing… [yet] it is also likely that violence can shift people's sense that they share group membership with police. Hearing about or seeing unjustified acts of violence might lead people to infer that police do not share their values, encouraging a sense that police are representatives of a group to which they would *not* want to belong… or, perhaps more likely, that police have lost their claim to represent the community of the law-abiding.

There are likely important feedback loops in how people process and react to stories to excessive force (ibid), how and when social identity with police is activated is still unclear and requires further examination.

However, consistent with much other extant literature (Gerber and Jackson 2017; Bradford et al. 2017; Silver and Pickett 2015; Johnson and Kuhns 2009), right-leaning

political affiliation showed a strong positive association with approval for excessive force. This chimes with work across criminal justice research, which has shown that political conservatism is one of the strongest and most consistent predictors of views about criminal justice policies (King and Maruna 2009; Picket 2015; Unnever et al. 2007). Silver and Pickett (2015: 653) explain that this may be, in part, due to differential sensitivity to and fear of crime, expectations of government, and thresholds of interpersonal trust among conservatives, which render them more approving of punitive measures. The authors also suggest that some of the broad cultural and ideological beliefs espoused by those on the right are, at least theoretically, associated with anxiety about intergroup relations, offender deservingness, adherence to gun culture, and general retributiveness (ibid: 654), which again feed into approval for forceful police recourse. Gerber and Jackson (2017), relatedly, attribute the approval for excessive force among those on the right to a more general pattern of legitimizing the behavior of authorities.

Respondents' age was negatively associated with support for police use of force, with younger respondents less likely to evince approval. Respondents' educational attainment and gender showed no significant association.

Police Officer Malfeasance

Next, I analyzed the correlates of respondents' appraisals of police officer malfeasance, estimating a series of multivariate logistic regression models predicting each of the

three binary outcome variables (i.e., officer acting in community interest, another officer would've done the same thing, and the police officer is wrong). As before, dummy variables indicate experimental treatment group, with the black officer/black suspect group excluded so that their attitudes can be compared with the other treatments. Table 10 presents the results for "officer acting in community interest" item," Table 11 for the "another officer would've done the same thing" item, and Table 12 for the "police officer is wrong" item.

Table 10: Binary logistic regression predicting belief that officer acting in 'community interest' (n=1120)

Treatment Condition	*B*	*S.E.*	*Wald* X^2	*p*	*OR*	95% CI	
White Cop vs. Black Suspect	0.17	0.17	0.94	0.33	1.18	0.84	1.66
White Cop vs. White Suspect	-0.09	0.17	0.24	0.63	0.92	0.65	1.29
Black Cop vs. White Suspect	0.08	0.18	0.20	0.66	1.08	0.77	1.52
Black Cop vs. Black Suspect (Reference)							
Gender (0: female)	0.13	0.13	0.98	0.32	1.13	0.89	1.45
Right-wing (0: left-center)	0.89	0.18	25.39	0.00	2.44	1.73	3.45
Age (0: <18-25)	-0.12	0.05	4.68	0.03	0.89	0.80	0.99
Education (0: < high school)	0.05	0.05	1.07	0.30	1.05	0.96	1.16
Social Identity	0.31	0.08	14.02	0.00	1.36	1.16	1.60
Omnibus Test of Model Coefficients			55.25	.00			

In Table 10 above, social identity showed a positive association with a belief that the officer was acting in the community's best interest, partially confirming the hypothesis that those who identify with the social category represented by police tend to support the police in general, and by extension, police activities. This perhaps, again, links back to the cognitive delineation between outcome and intention. While not exculpating police behavior, those who see themselves as "law-abiding citizens" might be motivated to support policing activity because they perceive excessive force through the lens of what they imagine to be common values and norms, and, possibly, adjudicate officer intent accordingly.

Right-leaning political affiliation also significantly and positively correlated with a belief that the officer was acting in the community's best interest. These findings echo work by Gerber and Jackson (2017) and Jost and Hunyady (2005), who find that those expressing right-leaning political preferences tend to favor and legitimize the actions of powerholders, like police. It also reiterates Silver and Pickett's (2015: 653) arguments about "consistent conservatives," who tend to express more support for police violence on the basis of "utilitarian concerns" (see further discussion in Chapter VII). Extending this argument, those on the right may, accordingly, believe that police are behaving violently under a greater moral imperative.

Respondents' age showed a negative association. Respondents' gender and education had no significant effect.

Table 11: Binary logistic regression predicting belief another officer would've done the same thing (n=1123)

Treatment Condition	*B*	*S.E.*	*Wald* X^2	*p*	*OR*	95% CI	
White Cop vs. Black Suspect	-0.02	0.18	0.01	0.92	0.98	0.70	1.38
White Cop vs. White Suspect	-0.03	0.18	0.02	0.89	0.98	0.69	1.38
Black Cop vs. White Suspect	-0.10	0.18	0.31	0.58	0.91	0.64	1.28
Black Cop vs. Black Suspect (Reference)							
Gender (0: female)	0.18	0.13	1.95	0.16	1.19	0.93	1.53
Right-wing (0: all else)	0.66	0.19	12.32	0.00	0.52	0.36	0.75
Age (0: <18-25)	-0.24	0.06	19.06	0.00	0.79	0.70	0.88
Education (0: < high school)	0.08	0.05	2.56	0.11	1.08	0.98	1.19
Social Identity	-0.36	0.08	19.66	0.00	0.70	0.59	0.82
Omnibus Test of Model Coefficients			75.12	.00			

A slightly different picture emerges in Table 11 above. Social identity in this case showed a negative association with a belief that another officer would have done the same thing. One explanation for this is that the use of force, in this instance, was not perceived as antinormative behavior and/or grounds to attenuate and renegotiate social identity. There is, as earlier mentioned, a reflexive aspect to social identity in which "people judge police behavior against established norms of probity and fairness, and actively assess if police can and should be considered representative of their group" (Bradford et al. 2017: 6). To the extent that police (mis)conduct is seen as a violation of expected group behavior, respondents may revoke or renegotiate their shared membership with police. In this instance, respondents did not categorize themselves as

part of the same group as this officer. The hypothesis that social identity will predict more forgiving attitudes toward police is, in this case, partially rejected.

However, right-leaning political affiliation again strongly correlated with a belief that another officer would have done the same thing, as, those who evince more conservative ideologies tend to legitimize the actions and behaviors of authorities. Respondents' education and gender showed no significant effect, though age showed a significant positive relationship.

Table 12: Binary logistic regression for police officer wrong (n=1129)

Treatment Condition	*B*	*S.E.*	*Wald* X^2	*p*	*OR*	95% CI	
White Cop vs. Black Suspect	-0.13	0.25	0.25	0.62	0.88	0.54	1.44
White Cop vs. White Suspect	-0.22	0.26	0.73	0.39	0.80	0.48	1.33
Black Cop vs. White Suspect	-0.25	0.26	0.88	0.35	0.78	0.47	1.31
Black Cop vs. Black Suspect (Reference)							
Gender (0: female)	0.22	0.19	1.35	0.25	1.25	0.86	1.80
Politics (0: left)	0.87	0.22	15.50	0.00	2.38	1.55	3.66
Age (0: <18-25)	-0.21	0.09	5.70	0.02	0.82	0.69	0.96
Education (0: < high school)	0.00	0.07	0.00	0.99	1.00	0.87	1.15
Social Identity	0.26	0.13	4.32	0.04	1.30	1.02	1.67
Omnibus Test of Model Coefficients			29.29	.00			

In Table 12, social identity showed a positive association with a belief that the officer was not wrong. Indeed, while sharing group identity with the police does not seem to predispose respondents to justify or exculpate violence outright (Table 9), it does seem to contribute to a sense in which the actor (police) and act (excessive force) are delineated. The former being, in some sense, an agent of social justice, acting on behalf of the greater good, and the latter being an unjustifiable act distinct from the perpetrator (cf., Cushman et al. 2006; Niemi et al. 2016). On this account, extensive research in moral psychology has demonstrated how perceptions of causality and wrongdoing frequently hinge on perceived intent: hostility toward misdeeds tends to increase when these acts are seen as intended, foreseen, and deliberated (Gray et al. 2012). Though the somewhat equivocal[14] results regarding the role that social identity plays in shaping how white Americans process and react to instances of excessive force requires further clarification and will be explored in future analysis (see results in proceeding sections).

Right-leaning political affiliation was strongly associated with a tendency to believe the officer was not wrong, again likely due to the conservative tendency to legitimize and uphold actions by powerholders, particularly those to do with maintaining and preserving social order (Gerber and Jackson 2017).

[14] The literature in moral psychology is similarly ambiguous about how social identity affects perceptions of blame and causality, particularly in instances of implied race. Niemi et al. (2012: 6) write: "future work [must] investigate the influence manipulations of implied race… and the extent to which… post hoc moral condemnation or exculpation of agents with whom one feels at risk of being identified (Heider 1958; Morgan et al. 2010) [is affected by] experimentally manipulating group membership (e.g., Masten et a. 2010)"

Respondents' gender and education showed no significant effect. Younger age was associated with a stronger belief that an officer was wrong.

Suspect Culpability

Next, I analyzed the correlates of white respondents' attributions of suspect culpability (Table 13), estimating a multivariate regression model, with dummy indicators for the experimental treatment groups. As before, the black officer/black suspect group is used as the reference category.

Table 13: Linear regression predicting suspect responsibility (n=1119)

	B	*S.E. B*	*β*	*t*	*p*	95% CI	
Treatment Condition						Lower	Upper
White Cop vs. Black Suspect	0.12	0.09	0.05	1.32	0.19	-0.06	0.31
White Cop vs. White Suspect	0.06	0.09	0.02	0.64	0.52	-0.12	0.24
Black Cop vs. White Suspect	0.15	0.09	0.06	1.64	0.10	-0.03	0.34
Black Cop vs. Black Suspect (Reference)							
Gender (0: female)	0.00	0.07	0.00	-0.04	0.97	-0.14	0.13
Right-wing (0: all else)	0.58	0.09	0.18	6.16	0.00	0.39	0.76
Age (0: <18-25)	0.01	0.03	0.01	0.21	0.83	-0.05	0.06
Education (0: < high school)	-0.01	0.03	-0.01	-0.37	0.71	-0.06	0.04
Social Identity	0.25	0.04	0.18	5.86	0.00	0.17	0.34
R^2	.08						

As hypothesized, social identity showed a significant and positive relationship with respondents' attitudes toward suspect culpability. That is, those who categorized

themselves as "law abiding citizens" were more inclined to believe a suspect was responsible for precipitating the encounter with police. This chimes with the findings in Tables 10 and 12, showing that strong identifiers tended to think the officer was acting in the interest of the greater good and were less inclined to believe the officer was wrong. One therefore might expect these individuals to believe the officer's actions were, in some sense, "instigated" by the suspect's actions.

Right-wing politics was again a significant and strong predictor for evaluations of suspect culpability. This extends and clarifies another dimension by which those on the right process and evaluate instances of excessive force: though the lens of victim-blaming. In many ways, this echoes the substantial work in the political psychology literature which documents marked left-right ideological differences in blaming victims. Williams (1984), for example, finds self-identifying conservatives to blame a victim more than liberals across a range of domains, including assault, theft, receipt of welfare, and so forth. This tendency to infer responsibility for misfortune is likely compounded by the simultaneous tendency of those on the right to conceive as legitimate the decisions and behaviors of authorities.

Respondents' educational attainment, gender, and age showed no association.

Additional Correlational Analyses: Clarifying the Role of Social Identity

Because many of the results regarding the role that social identity plays in respondents' appraisals of excessive force were equivocal, I conducted additional analyses to determine whether participants identification with police (and by extension attitudes toward excessive force) varied according to the racial condition to which they were allocated. For example, is identification with the police confounded by inter- and intra-racial dynamics and identities?

This was important not only to clarify the hypothesized relationship between social identity and the acceptance of excessive force, but also to build upon the burgeoning literature in the UK and elsewhere documenting a positive association between identifying with the police and supporting their actions, justified or not. Little of this extant work, for example, considers how shared group membership with the police interacts with the racial identities of the officers or suspects involved (however Bolton and Feagin 2004 explore how "black" and "blue" identities intersect from the perspective of a police officer, though not from a social identity perspective).

Table 14 presents results from a logistic regression model testing first if identifying more strongly with the police correlates with support for excessive force (Model 1), and second if this association varies according to the racial identity of the protagonists involved (Model 2). Model 2 introduces four interaction terms between social identity and the experimental treatments to test this variation. This was again important to clarify if and how identification with the "law-abiding" group intersects and interacts with racial dynamics.

Political Ideology, Racism, and American Identity:
An Examination of White Americans' Support for the Police Use of Excessive Force

Political Ideology, Racism, and American Identity:

An Examination of White Americans' Support for the Police Use of Excessive Force

Table 14: Binary logistic regression predicting support for excessive force (n= 1132)

	Model 1						Model 2					
Treatment Condition	*B*	*S.E.*	*Wald X²*	*OR*	*95% CI*		*B*	*S.E.*	*Wald X²*	*OR*	*95% CI*	
White Cop vs. Black Suspect	0.12	0.23	0.24	1.12	0.71	1.77	1.12	1.37	0.67	3.06	0.21	44.56
White Cop vs. White Suspect	-0.16	0.25	0.43	0.85	0.53	1.38	-1.40	1.50	0.87	0.25	0.01	4.64
Black Cop vs. White Suspect	-0.14	0.25	0.33	0.87	0.54	1.41	0.49	1.34	0.14	1.64	0.12	22.53
Black Cop vs. Black Suspect (Reference)												
Gender (0: female)	0.26	0.17	2.22	1.30	0.92	1.82	0.28	0.17	2.62	1.33	0.94	1.87
Politics (0: left)	0.85**	0.21	16.05	2.33	1.54	3.53	0.84**	0.21	15.48	2.31	1.52	3.50
Age (0: <18-25)	-0.19**	0.08	5.66	0.83	0.71	0.97	-0.19**	0.08	5.79	0.83	0.71	0.97
Education (0: < high school)	0.10	0.07	2.17	1.10	0.97	1.26	0.10	0.07	2.18	1.10	0.97	1.26
Social Identity	-0.03	0.11	0.07	0.97	0.78	1.21	0.02	0.22	0.01	1.02	0.66	1.56
White Cop/Black Suspect*SID Interaction							-0.22	0.30	0.55	0.80	0.45	1.43
White Cop/White Suspect*SID Interaction							0.27	0.32	0.71	1.31	0.70	2.44
Black Cop/White Suspect*SID Interaction							0.14	0.37	0.15	1.15	0.56	2.36
Omnibus Test of Model Coefficients			26.51**						29.39**			

**Correlations at the <.01 level of significance

*Correlations at the <.05 level of significance

As Table 14 demonstrates above, social identity did not significantly influence white respondents' support for excessive force, and this remained true regardless of the race of the actors involved. That is, respondents' identification with police did not predict support for excessive force, whether or not the encounter involved inter- or intra-racial police violence, as the interaction terms showed no significant effect.

Right-leaning political affiliation, however, again showed a strong positive association with respondents' approval of violence. Younger age, also, showed a positive association with approval of excessive force, however gender and education did not have a significant effect.

VIII. Exploratory Analyses

At this stage of the analysis, it appeared nothing "worked" as hypothesized and the main experimental manipulation (i.e., varying the race of the offender and suspect) showed no statistically significant effect for most of the test variables. Yet, many of my outcome variables were highly correlated with each other, as shown in Table 2, and right-leaning political affiliation, in particular, showed a strong positive association with support for excessive force. Additionally, social identity showed, at least partially, a somewhat exculpatory effect in how respondents processed police behavior.

To delve more deeply into this and to begin exploring what factors *were* affecting participants' views of excessive force, beyond race, I estimated a multivariate logistic

regression model predicting the main binary outcome variable (i.e., support for excessive force), and including key variables of interest, namely social identity, just world beliefs, and right-leaning political affiliation. The results are shown in Table 15. Note that, again, at this stage the analysis is purely exploratory as some of the relevant items (e.g., belief in a just world) were asked *after* respondents had been allocated the treatment. This can be justified on the basis that (a) effects from experimental aspects of the study were all essentially zero, and (b) because the analysis motivated a second study, as outlined in greater detail in the Methods Chapter.

Table 15: Binary logistic regression predicting attitudes toward excessive force (n=1132)

Treatment Condition	*B*	*S.E.*	*Wald* X^2	*p*	*OR*	95% CI	
White Cop vs. Black Suspect	0.12	0.24	0.25	0.62	1.13	0.71	1.80
White Cop vs. White Suspect	-0.18	0.25	0.51	0.48	0.84	0.51	1.37
Black Cop vs. White Suspect	-0.21	0.25	0.68	0.41	0.81	0.49	1.33
Black Cop vs. Black Suspect (Reference)							
Gender (0: female)	0.25	0.18	1.93	0.16	1.28	0.90	1.82
Rightwing (0: all else)	0.50	0.22	5.15	0.02	1.65	1.07	2.55
Age (0: <18-25)	-0.14	0.08	2.97	0.09	0.87	0.74	1.02
Education (0: < high school)	0.12	0.07	2.97	0.09	1.13	0.98	1.29
Social Identity	-0.49	0.13	13.45	0.00	0.61	0.47	0.80
Belief in Just World	0.72	0.11	44.87	0.00	2.05	1.66	2.53
Omnibus Test of Model Coefficients			77.85	.00			

As the Table 15 shows above, the strongest correlate of support for excessive force was a belief in a just world (*B* = .72), or a respondents' own sense of just deserts – that things happen for a reason. This makes sense, as according to Bénabou and Tirole (2006: 699):

> Most individuals feel a strong need to believe that they live in a world that is just, in the sense that people generally get what they deserve, and deserve what they get. When confronted with data that conflicts with this view they try to ignore, reinterpret, distort, or forget it – for instance, by finding imaginary merits to the recipients of fortuitous rewards, or assigning blame to innocent victim.

Those expressing strong just world preferences, correspondingly, tend to believe that excessive force is deserved, warranted, and just. Also interesting is that once just-world attitudes were introduced into the model (Table 15), social identity became significant and more salient, demonstrating a strong negative association with the support for excessive force (*B* = -.49). In many ways this result also makes intuitive sense, as previous research has documented an association between just world beliefs and group identity (cf., Novak and Lerner 1986; Opotow 1995), and in this work, these two constructs were strongly correlated (*r*= .48, *p* <.001, in Table 2).

According to Correia et al. (2018), these two constructs can often share an inverse relationship, depending on the context. The more that is at stake in terms of social identity, the greater the just-world motive, or fundamental need to "restore" a sense of cosmic justice. Critical to discussions of social identity and to threats to it (such as when

"prototypical" representatives are perceived to violate group norms) is a construct described by Campbell (1958) and others as "entitativity." That is, the extent to which a group is perceived as a unified social entity, or relatedly, the degree to which an individual identifies with his or her group. As Henri Tajfel (1978; and Turner 1984) outlines in his formulation of "Social Identity Theory," and later "Self-Categorization Theory," individuals often derive some aspect of their self-concept and definition from the group(s) to which they belong. Groups with higher perceived entitativity, or existential and social relevance, carry a greater "identity value" for individuals: the more individuals identify with their group, the more that group is integral to their self-concept and worth.

While in many – and in fact, most – cases, positive self-esteem and identity judgments emerge from biasing evaluations in *favor* of one's own group (e.g., ethno- and ego-centric attributions); in certain instances, it is possible that positive esteem arises instead from *denigrating* members of one's group (Lewis and Sherman 2010). As Lewis and Sherman (2010: 212) describe, there are circumstances in which individuals struggle to maintain a coherent, uniformly favorable group identity, such as when a member of their group behaves in an extremely negative or deviant manner (possibly, in instances of excessive violence). Shared membership with that individual, or set of individuals, might foster embarrassment, shame, or self-conflict – a sense of "guilt by association." Deviance may thus not reflect only on the ingroup perpetrator, but in fact on the entire group and, of course, the observer rendering judgment.

In response to this threat to identity and cognitive dissonance, individuals may resort to denigration and distancing in an effort to salvage group and, consequently, self-image. The higher the "social identity value" (Sherman et al. 1999) of a relevant group, the greater the potential threat to self- and social image, and thus need to restore esteem and belongingness. Indeed, as Marques and colleagues write (2001: 140), an ingroup member might be "derogated precisely *because* they are seen as ingroup members" – *because* they so profoundly reflect on group and self.

When absent the opportunity to recategorize individuals such that they no longer form part of the group (see, for example, recent immigrants' delineation between "legal" and "illegal" migration), denigration may serve to buoy group and self-image through distinction and distancing. As Wohl and Branscombe (2008: 988-99) describe, "group membership constitutes a fundamental part of people's social identity…. when the morality of an ingroup is questioned, group members…[can] shield themselves from self-sanction by… shifting focus." According to Correia et al. (2018), the stronger the perceived just-world value of an event, the stronger this motivation to renegotiate identity: "in these situations, individuals are motivated to solve the threatening incongruence by restructuring the situation in order to perceive it as just and legitimate."

In other words, those who identified strongly as part of the "law-abiding" community and who tend to internalize the values the police might be plausibly be said to represent (Bradford et al. 2017), evaluated violence in this context more negatively, in part, to

restore a sense of order and justice. Insofar as police are considered prototypical representatives of their group, and to the extent that violence is seen as antinormative group behavior, there may be an increased need to "recategorize" these individuals and distance oneself from the act, in order to maintain a sense of just world.

Finally, in a similar vein to Gerber and Jackson (2017) and Silver and Pickett (2015), right-leaning political affiliation (B = .50) was strongly and significantly associated with more generally positive views toward excessive force, reiterating the findings above.

. Respondents' education and age showed a slight association, though not technically significant at the threshold of (p<.05). Respondents' gender showed no statistically significant effect.

The results of this exploratory analysis thus point to something other than racism, at least consciously or structurally, which seems to underpin how white Americans evaluate instances of excessive force. Indeed, quite aside from a "racial effect," these findings highlight an ideological basis for how white Americans make sense of police violence. Specifically, right-leaning political affiliation, just world beliefs, and social identity form at least part of the cognitive alchemy by which these processes are understood.

IX. Discussion of Results

A key and consistent finding of this chapter is that the race of the police officer and suspect involved in a scenario of violence do not appear to have any effect on white Americans' appraisals of excessive force, across a number of dimensions.

However, for the strikingly high number of respondents that evaluated excessive force favorably (nearly 15% – see Table 3), it seems this support is animated less by racial dynamics, than by a wider sense of social and political embeddedness and affiliation. Among each of the regressions modeled, the most consistent and salient predictor of support for excessive force was right-leaning political affiliation. The implication is that for those on the right, the police use of excessive force is perceived under different terms and motivations which, in some sense, exculpate (or at least delineate) the officer from the violent outcome. These ideological preferences, particularly when coupled with strong just-world motivations, lend support for excessive force, and are further facilitated by a heightened perception of suspect culpability and a more generally forgiving disposition toward law enforcement misconduct.

However, as Silver and Pickett (2015: 669) point out, "persons who self-identity as politically conservative are not a homogenous group… research should therefore disaggregate conservatives… to account for the possibility that the attitudes… of the group… may be dissimilar." Indeed, in subsequent empirical chapters (Chapters VI and VII), I investigate this relationship more directly and robustly, parsing out right-leaning political affiliation from more discrete libertarian and authoritarian orientations.

Another consistent finding throughout this chapter is the role that social identity plays in influencing white Americans' attitudes toward excessive force. Though extant scholarly work in the UK (Bradford et al. 2017) has shown that identifying with the social category represented by police is associated with more favorable views toward excessive force, I do not find this to be the case. Social identity, did, however, predispose respondents to impute a higher moral imperative onto police conduct, and to evaluate the officer in a more generally forgiving manner.

Finally, in an exploratory analysis, I demonstrated a strong, positive effect for just world attitudes in predicting support for excessive force. Research has shown that just world preferences are associated with "tough" responses to crime and justice (Jost and Hunyady 2005), but few studies have investigated this from the perspective of punitive policing outcomes, or the acceptance of violence. Moreover, as this piece of analysis was only exploratory as the measure for just world beliefs came *after* the treatment, inferences drawn from this finding must be made with caution, though this finding motivates a second study (detailed in the following chapter, Chapter V).

The findings reported in the course of this chapter help clarify and add to extant work regarding the role of racial identity (Johnson and Kuhns 2009) and political affiliation (Silver and Pickett 2015; Gerber and Jackson 2017) in influencing attitudes toward excessive force. Rather than a simple, linear causal link between racism and support for police violence, as most studies (cf., Johnson and Kuhns 2009; Silver and Pickett 2015) or else some generally-accepted commonsense wisdom seem to suggest, there is likely a

more subtle and indirect relationship between racism and the acceptance of police violence, perhaps mediated through or conditional upon ideological and political preferences. There are of course, many limitations to this research. It is possible that the racial manipulation used in this study was unsuccessful or insufficiently attended, which is analyzed in a follow-up study presented in the subsequent chapter. Additionally, as Silver and Pickett (2015: 670) emphasize, "it is important to distinguish between global and specific attitudes toward police use of force, as well as attitudes toward reasonable and excessive force." While this study focuses only on specific attitudes toward excessive force, future research should implement a more robust and differentiated analysis to identify patterns in approval across ideological and racial groups. Nevertheless, these findings provide grounds to revise some popular assumptions about the dynamics that generate white Americans' support for policing and open up new lines for future research.

X. Interpreting the Null Findings in Light of the Academic Literature

Re-examining Methodological Orthodoxies in Academia

The null effect for police officer and suspect racial identities in white respondents' support for excessive force is both important and surprising for many reasons. First, as with any online survey there were limitations to this research, including the representativeness and quality of the sample. It is possible, and indeed likely, that police violence bears an accretive, long-term impact, which was insufficiently captured by a

relatively weak treatment, clearly confined to the artificial parameters of an experimental study. Additionally, this study was based on convenience samples of US citizens; a representative replication would allow better generalizability to a broader population. Moreover, because these findings were based on a sample drawn from unknown populations, their generalizability to the wider US population must be qualified. Though other scholars (cf., Rome et al. 1994; Johnson and Kuhns 2009) have similarly found no association between suspect race and how white respondents interpret incidents of police violence – and therefore it is likely these findings are not anomalous – it is important to take heed of the fact that these results may well be biased and cannot be extrapolated.

Findings presented here also suggest that support for police violence is highly ideological in nature, with political affiliation and social identity being relevant predictors. Future empirical research is required to examine the different reasons why individuals high in these political and group orientations express support for excessive force, and whether these are applicable to the justifiable use of police force or in contexts of more patently excessive force.

Additionally, it is very unlikely that racial identity had *no* effect on participants' views of police violence, as an ample body of academic literature (cf., Correll et al. 2002, 2007, 2009) indicates its critical importance in public decision-making vis-à-vis police. Indeed, it is likely the case that race may have indirectly or implicitly affected ratings of police violence (and other outcome variables) via other more subtle forms of bias. Yet

these findings speak to a kind of academic tunnel vision when it comes to thinking about race and police violence in the U.S., and the ways other non-racial factors can be frequently overlooked and eclipsed. While racism is undeniably important to any valid explanation of America's exceptionally lethal (and likely, more violent) police, it fails to capture the full picture or range of other distinctive cultural, social, and political factors which shape Americans' attitudes toward policing and the (im)propriety of police conduct.

A Call for Intersectional Approaches in Scholarship on Police Brutality

One possible solution to counter this academic tunnel vision in policing scholarship is to include more intersectional approaches. Despite increased efforts in recent years to do this (cf., Parmar 2011, 2017; Phillips and Webster 2013; Phillips and Bowling 2003), much work in policing is still constrained by methodological norms which give race explanatory priority (May 2015). On this account, May (2015: x) argues that basic intersectional insights regarding identity and oppression are frequently flattened into a single-axis mode of inquiry (e.g., gender-first or race-first logics). This can still leave wider penal logics un-interrogated, their underlying and interconnected rationales obfuscated by dominant, confirmatory, and popular categories of analysis (May 2015). Purdie-Vaughns and Eibach (2008: 377) contend that even within intersectional academia, the politics or basic misunderstandings of intersectionality can result in a "score-keeping contest" in an ever-more grotesque "game of one-upsmanship, each trying to prove that [his or her] own group has experienced more suffering." This again

can result in a single identity or category given explanatory priority to account for a phenomenon, even if other factors are acknowledged insofar as they further corroborate the prevailing sociological explanation (typically, race or gender) (May 2015).

That is not say that the dominance of race (or gender, for that matter) as an explanatory criminological tool is totally unfounded.[15] Rather it is to highlight the ways in which such explanations can be, as Goff (2014, quoted in Heath) put it, "seductively misleading," offering clues only to how racial inequalities *play out*, not what causes them or how they intersect and animate other important sociological factors, especially those that fall between the gaps or interstices of the dominant categories of analysis (May 2015). Explanations that begin and end with race have in many ways enabled a kind of academic inertia when it comes to interrogating other factors affecting the public acceptance of police violence.

Moreover, as Hirschfield (2016: 237) writes, "all major American institutions bear deep scars of racism just as they are all infused with individualism. Lending causal primacy and autonomy to only racism would be reductionist and probably inaccurate." Clegg (2016) also cautions that lending causal primacy to racism can in fact compound *other* biases, such as elite stereotypes of the white working class, who tend to form the majority of police recruits (Clegg 2016: 335). He argues that attributing police violence

[15] Rates of arrest (Heath 2014), sentencing (Mustard 2001), imprisonment (Nellis 2016), and parole (Hartney and Vuong 2009) unequivocally indicate that African-American men in the United States are markedly over-represented.

wholly to the single cause of racism contributes to a classist narrative in which police brutality, and by implication racism, are seen as the preserve of blue-collar individuals.

I am, of course, not the first to advocate for a reconsideration of the centricity of racism in criminological understandings of American police violence. Hirschfield (2015) argues that "racism cannot explain the fact that police lethality is greatest in states where African Americans are least prevalent" – though intergroup contact theorists (Allport 1954) might say that that is precisely why. Rather, Hirschfield (2015) points to prevailing American ideologies and mythologies pertaining to self-reliance and limited government. Similarly, Clegg (2016) argues that class is arguably a more important determinant shaping public responses to police violence, but such dynamics are often elided by the dominant focus on racism. Richardson and Goff (2015), themselves critical race theorists, suggest that masculinity-threat is frequently a more important factor affecting a police officer's decision to shoot and suggest it likely affects public responses to police-inflicted harm (Gee 2014).

In order to deepen our understanding of racial bias and expand policing scholarship's explanatory agenda, it is necessary to disentangle the role that racism can (and frequently *has*) played in how the public "makes sense" of police violence, from other, often-overlooked forms of prejudice. While not undercutting the significance of race in American life, not least as it pertains to policing and public opinion, if academic focus is collapsed entirely into a monolithic catch-all of "racial discrimination," we may fail to adequately account for how other aspects of identity animate, exacerbate, or in some

instances, sideline racial discrimination, and more broadly, how and why the public continue to tolerate and accept violent policing.

Personal Reflections on Null Findings

I believe it also important to note that after producing negative findings, in the face of overwhelming evidence and my own personal intuitions to the contrary, I felt an immense crisis of confidence as a researcher. This was for a multitude of reasons: financial pressure (as this was a self-funded project, I would have to again find the means to fund another study); questioning of my research design, survey questions, and even ability to properly analyze my data; but most of all, because I felt under-equipped to deal with null results in an academic culture which both implicitly and explicitly encourages the publication novel findings. Many have described a "replication" or "reproducibility" crisis in academia, as well as cases of *p*-hacking, or the phenomenon of significance-fishing for a desired result (Smaldino and McElreath 2016). Social media and news media outlets have proliferated with exposés and cautionary tales of academic misconduct (Ioannidis 2015; Devlin 2016; Smaldino and McElreath 2016). Particular emphasis has been placed – rightly, in my opinion – on the institutional and cultural pressures behind academic "production." I believed the racial null finding to be the result of poor research design, or worse, bad researcher. I questioned my ability to successfully run a survey, analyze quantitative data, and conduct empirical research. At no point during any of my (albeit limited, at this stage) quantitative training, did I encounter even the prospect of an entire "unsuccessful" project, let alone what to do if

encountered. This is not an indictment of my institution or training, but rather a personal evaluation of the state of the academy and a call for change: if we are to conduct better research, produce more robust results, and maintain the integrity of our researchers and our work, the publication of null findings must be both expected and encouraged.

Reflexivity in Research

It also should be noted that part of my "crisis of confidence" emerged from what I perceived to be a finding contradictory to my own personal experiences having grown up in the Deep South of America. In developing my thesis, and reviewing the extant literature, and drawing on my personal experiences, having spent my entire pre-graduate life between Louisiana and Texas[16] (though it should be said, in diverse, liberal, and for those reasons, likely anomalous, metropolises), the implicit, almost instinctiveness with which I believed racism should be a fundamental part of how white Americans make sense of excessive force was absolute. This was not only because the topic involved Police Brutality – the recurrent refrain in news headlines, editorials, and political debate – but because *racism*, I believed, percolated into every facet of American life: from what schools we attended, to what sports we watched and played, to how we

[16] I make reference to Louisiana and Texas in this way because of the long and fraught history of racialized criminal justice in the Deep South of America. For example, Louisiana maintains the highest rate of incarceration in the world and Texas the fifth (*Times Picayune*, 2012), with these statistics highly stratified by race. Moreover, the year I was born (1991), David Duke, a white supremacist and former Grand Wizard of the Ku Klux Klan, beat the incumbent governor of Louisiana, Buddy Roemer, in the gubernatorial primaries to enter into a run-off election with Democratic candidate Edwin Edwards. I say this not to play into tropes of the American South as racist or small-minded, nor as an apologia for my blinkered early-stage thinking, but rather to give the reader a sense of my cultural upbringing.

make sense of food and art and culture – a punchline on *Saturday Night Live* or increasingly the criterion by which many millennials judge the worthiness of movies and television (e.g., the 2016 movement #OscarsSoWhite).

Indeed, this mode of thinking and this deep-seated analytic tradition of considering class, inequality, success, violence, death, housing, education, healthcare, and so on, through the prism of race – a pervasive and perverse patina overlaying much of daily life in America – influenced much of the initial thinking and early hypotheses. As Richardson and Goff (2014: 117) describe, "discrimination is pervasive and inevitable because it has become embedded not only within institutions and society, but also within our minds, such that it is often practiced unconsciously and consequently, without malice;" the power of race is so omnipresent, so pernicious *because* it is "invisible" (Kang 2005: 1506). That is to say, I took for granted the omnipotence of racism in America, as some ubiquitous and accepted *fact*, much like gravity: so large, so pervasive and constant as to be almost unnoticed. Therefore, it was something of a shock when these hypotheses were rejected.

All of that being said, I believe it important to interrogate *why* this methodological paradigm of racism predominates to such an extent in academia and mainstream media, and to deconstruct its latent effects on policing scholarship and American identity more broadly. It hardly needs qualification to state that not every problem is reducible to a racial one, and to collapse all social ills into a full-stop of "racism" precludes both debate and analysis entirely. But there seems to be some universally acknowledged covenant of

American life where but cursory allusion to race in the U.S. serves as an acceptable, if unquestioned, explanation: a multi-purpose catch-all for an array of different, multi-sourced issues which are somehow neatly united under a bow of "racism." Rates of violence, obesity, incarceration, truancy, poverty, neighborhood cohesion, even the availability of healthy food choices or access to technology, somehow find their source not in the diffuse and complex inequalities which vex nearly all modern Western liberal democracies, but in an entrenched and uniquely idiosyncratic brand of *American* racism (another tick in the ledger of exceptionalism; "American made"). It is the age-old problem which persists no matter the pithy new solution plucked from the remedial arsenal (mixed-income housing programs, community gardens, after-school basketball clinics, new iPads for this or that).

There is, of course, merit to this view of American society. One need only note the social and spatial segregation of nearly every major American city, or the drastically different rates of employment, wealth, and morbidity and mortality between white and minority ethnic communities. But that racial discrimination can serve as some undifferentiated academic nostrum to diagnose a range of varied problems; that it can quite seamlessly, timelessly, and almost without qualification serve as a satisfactory justification for the patterns of inequality and deprivation that have persisted across states, governments, and generations without tailoring or revision, seems deeply flawed.

Chapter 5

It isn't (Just) Racism:

Replicating and Corroborating the Null Effects of Racial Identity on White Americans' Appraisals of Excessive Force

I. Introduction

In order to clarify and draw out the implications of the null findings produced in the first survey vis-à-vis the effect of racial identity on respondents' attitudes toward excessive force, I ran a second survey to both replicate and corroborate these results. Indeed, given the extensive empirical evidence documenting the influence of race not only in predisposing men of color, in particular, to a higher risk of police brutality (Goff et al. 2016) and procedural injustice (Kahn et al. 2016), but also in shaping public attitudes toward differential criminal justice outcomes (Gilens 1996; DeVaul-Fetters 2014), it was important to see if these null effects would repeat and, if so, what that might mean for policing scholarship.

The research design of the ensuing survey thus adopted three key features: first, *implicitly* manipulating the racial identity of the suspect and officer in the same manner as the first survey to replicate the initial design; second, *explicitly* varying these identities to ensure respondents attended to the racial manipulation; and third,

incorporating a control condition – a vignette in which no police violence occurred – to understand whether policing, regardless of its racial dynamics, had an effect on the outcome variables (see Chapter VI for more extensive discussion of this).

This chapter begins with a review of the initial survey, and then details some of the methodological differences and aims of the second survey, and closes with the empirical and theoretical implications of the two surveys' cumulative impact for policing scholarship.

II. Replication and Corroboration: The Research Design of the Follow-up Survey

Reviewing the First Survey: The Null Effect of the Racial Identity

At the risk of repetition, it is worth rehashing some of the key objectives and procedures implemented in the first survey to clarify the research design used in the second survey. In the first survey, I varied the race of the police officer and suspect in a fictional story of excessive force to determine any effect on white respondents' assessments. To do this, I manipulated the *implied* race of the suspect and police officer through their names (i.e., Demarco Stephens/Ryan Anderson for the black and white suspect, respectively; and Officer Jamal Washington/Brian Weber for the black and white police officer, respectively). As further detailed in the last two chapters, the motivation for implicitly signaling race through via name was twofold: firstly, by insinuating race indirectly through dress, location, and name, Niemi and colleagues (2016) argue that it is possible

to measure implicit biases which frequently operate outside the remit of conscious awareness. Implicit measures, the authors argue, might better tap into intuitive, heuristic responses, which bypass explicit motivations to conform to socially desirable norms (Niemi et al. 2016). Participants might therefore feel "authorized" to share otherwise controversial or socially condemnable views – an important criterion to an empirical study investigating the appropriateness of excessive force. The second reason I chose to implicitly signal race through names was because there is a substantial body of research indicating the power of names alone to elicit prejudiced decision-making (cf., Wood et al. 2009; Edelman et al. 2015, 2016; Badger 2015; Ayres et al. 2015; Swanson 2015; Bertrand and Mullainathan 2004; Doleac and Stein 2013).

However, one possible explanation for this null effect was that the manipulation insinuating race through names was too weak, or the magnitude of the violence itself was not strong enough. In order to root out some of these methodological problems, in the follow-up survey I again varied race *implicitly,* using the same names from Survey 1, as well as varied the race *explicitly*, stating plainly the race of the suspect (i.e., African American/white) and officer (i.e., white) (see Appendix for full vignette). I also included a manipulation check asking respondents to state the race they believed the suspect to be to ensure the manipulation was successfully attended.

Additionally, rather than increase the magnitude of the violence in Survey 2, it was important to keep the nature of the events the same across surveys (i.e., a "low information" environment) in an effort to reproduce the conditions in which people

hear about incidents of excessive force in everyday life (i.e., fleeting, piecemeal, and short) and render judgment on the basis of this information (see discussion in Methods Chapter). Moreover, as will be discussed in the next two chapters, the experimental manipulation did have an effect on some of the dependent variables (see Chapters VI and VII).

The Second Survey: Objectives and Aims of the Follow-up Study

In addition to repeating the racial manipulation, one of the principal objectives of the follow-up survey was to as closely as possible replicate the other conditions of the first survey, recruiting approximately the same number of participants, from the same survey platform (Amazon Mechanical Turk) and even during the same calendar month (the first survey launched in October 2016, and the second in October 2018). Given the results of the first survey, it was important to check whether (a) this was a methodological fluke, or (b) if what I was testing for was in fact something *different* from the previous academic literature. That is, if my unexpected findings in the first survey emerged from having parsed out a latent factor (i.e., political ideology) which had hitherto been collapsed under the banner of "racism" in much previous academic work.

To test this, participants were randomly allocated to one of four conditions, either *implicitly* or *explicitly* indicating the race of a suspect in a fictional scenario of police

violence. I also introduced a control condition which detailed an ostensibly mundane scenario of a nightly police patrol (more on this below and in the following chapter).

Figure 1:

1	2	3	4
White Cop vs. Black Suspect (**Race Implicit**)	White Cop vs. White Suspect (**Race Implicit**)	White Cop vs. Black Suspect (**Race Explicit**)	Control Group

III. Methods

Hypotheses

Because the nature of events remained the same across surveys, the overarching hypothesis of the follow-up survey is that the results of Survey 2 will match those of Survey 1, corroborating the null effect of suspect/police officer racial identity on support for excessive force.

$H1_a$: The racial identity of the police officer/suspect will have no effect on respondents' attitudes toward police violence, regardless if race is implicitly or explicitly manipulated.

$H1_b$: The racial identity of the police officer/suspect will have no effect on respondents' appraisals of police officer malfeasance, regardless if race is implicitly or explicitly manipulated.

$H1_c$: The racial identity of the police officer/suspect will have no effect on respondents' attitudes toward suspect culpability, regardless if race is implicitly or explicitly manipulated.

$H1_d$: Exposure to excessive force will have no effect on respondents' just world beliefs, regardless of race is implicitly or explicitly manipulated.

Like Survey 1, in Survey 2 a second set of correlational hypotheses relates to the factors that shape how violence is "read" across these racial dyads:

H_{2a}: Social identity will shape the way stories of police violence are interpreted. Those who classify themselves strongly with the law-abiding community will consider police action – even violent police action – as more acceptable in certain conditions, irrespective of the race of the actors involved.

H_{2b}: Following on from the analyses of Study 1, people with strong just world beliefs are more likely to support, or at least discount, police violence because they are motivated to believe that the victim "had it coming"

H_{2c}: In line with the findings of the previous chapter and extant scholarly work (Silver and Pickett 2015; Gerber and Jackson 2017), right-leaning political affiliation will correlate with support for excessive force, as those on the right tend to approve of and endorse punitive criminal justice sanctions and uphold the behavior of powerholders if perceived to be in the maintenance of a social order.

Measures and Constructs

Appropriates of Police Violence: As in the first survey, respondents were asked to rate the appropriateness of police violence on a six-point Likert scale, though responses were dichotomized into binary categories (0=inappropriate; 1= appropriate) for analysis as they heavily skewed toward the negative scale-points (e.g., 79% rated violence inappropriate, see *Table 3*).

Police Officer Malfeasance: Three items asked respondents' appraisals of officer misconduct: whether the officer was acting in the community's best interest, whether another officer would have behaved similarly in the same situation, and if the officer was wrong. Response alternatives were based on a Likert type scale ranging from 1= very unlikely/totally wrong, to 5/6= very likely/not at all wrong. Responses to each of these items were dichotomized into binary categories (0= wrong; 1= right) for analysis as they skewed toward the negative scale-points (see summary statistics in *Tables 4, 5,* and *6*.)

Suspect Culpability: As in the previous study, respondents were asked to report the extent to which they evaluated the suspect as "responsible for provoking any suspicion that night" according to four response categories ranging from (1) "not at all responsible" to (4) "completely responsible." Because responses were more evenly distributed than for the previous two items, responses were not dichotomized.

Belief in a Just World: As in Survey 1, in Survey 2 I wanted to confirm that exposure to inter-racial and intra-racial excessive force had no effect on just world beliefs. Cronbach's alpha was characteristically high, $\alpha = .93$, $M = 18.51$, $S.D. = 5.98$.

Social Identity: Once again, I wanted to check whether social identity shaped how people responded to accounts of police violence. Cronbach's alpha was .69, just below the generally accepted threshold ($\alpha > .70$). $M = 17.95$, $S.D. = 3.01$.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics, Survey 2

	Full Sample					White Respondents				
	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD	*N*	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Gender (0: female)	1626	0	2	0.46	2.52	1325	-99	2	0.46	2.781
Race (0: black)	1626	0	2	1.01	0.43	--	--	--	--	--
Age	1626	0	5	1.99	1.22	1325	0	5	2.09	1.25
Politics	1626	0	2	0.92	0.75	1325	0	2	0.93	0.75
Education	1625	0	6	3.36	1.26	1325	0	6	3.34	1.26
Appropriateness of violence	1237*	1	6	2.27	1.40	1325	1	6	2.22	1.33
Police officer acting in community's best interest	1236*	1	6	2.77	1.54	1325	1	6	2.74	1.51
Another police officer would've done the same thing	1236*	1	6	3.56	1.31	1325	1	6	3.44	1.29
Police officer wrong	1236*	1	5	4.08	1.01	1325	1	5	4.07	1.01
Suspect culpability	1236*	1	4	2.62	0.92	1325	1	4	2.64	0.91
Belief in a just world	1653	1	6	4.50	0.76	1325	1	6	4.49	0.75
Social Identity	1634	1	6	3.73	1.21	1325	1	6	3.72	1.20
Trust in the Fairness of Police	1647	1	6	4.38	0.97	1325	1	6	4.44	0.95
Trust in effectiveness of police	1645	1	4	3.05	0.58	1325	1	4	3.07	0.58
Duty to obey	1639	1	5	3.75	0.84	1325	1	5	3.77	0.83
Normative alignment	1640	1	6	4.28	1.11	1325	1	6	4.34	1.08
Libertarian-authoritarianism	1630	1	6	3.76	1.21	1325	1	6	3.75	1.21

NB: sample size smaller because excludes control condition

The same demographic controls were used in Survey 2. Age was a six-category variable, coded 0 for 18-25, 1 for 26-35, 2 for 36-45, 3 for 46-55, and 4 for 56-65, and 5 for 66+. Gender was a dummy variable, coded 0 for female and 1 for male. Education was a six-category variable, ranging from "less than high school" (0) to "doctorate" (6). Self-report

political ideology a six-category[17] variable, ranging from 1= completely left, to 6 = completely right from the question, "In politics people sometimes talk of 'left' and 'right.' On a scale of 1 to 6, where do you place yourself politically?" It was recoded into a dummy variable, coded 1 for right and 0 for all else. As in the previous survey, and extant literature (Bradford et al. 2017; Gerber and Jackson 2017; Silver and Pickett 2015), I wanted to check whether right-leaning political affiliation influenced how incidents of violence were "experienced."

Participants, Procedure, and Analytic Strategy

Analyses draw on data collected via Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk) in October 2018. The sample includes approximately 1325 white American adults (aged 18+), though there are two important notes about the analytic sample. First, in order to match the conditions of the initial survey, the sample analyzed in this chapter focuses primarily on respondents allocated experimental treatments. In most pieces of analysis, respondents allocated to the control condition, which portrayed a mundane nightly police patrol in which the officer's actions would likely be justified (see *Appendix*) – a fact participants seemed to clearly attend – were excluded from analyses as these were not technically assessments of excessive force. Also, that only one respondent rated this action as "inappropriate" in this instance, likely speaks to the quality of the sample, as participants appeared to have understood the manipulation and not to have "satisficed."

[17] As noted in the methods section, in the first survey, self-report politics was coded on a seven-category left-right scale, therefore there is some variation in how respondents categorized their political affiliation between surveys. See p. Table 1 in Chapter 3.

Second, the full sample allocated to an experimental treatment is used for analyses *(n* ≈ 980[18]). As enumerated in the Methods Chapter, in the follow-up survey, participants were divided into a pretest/posttest split, with half of respondents answering a set of theoretically relevant items (e.g., social identity, belief in a just world, etc.) *before* the experimental treatment, and the other half *after*. Here, all respondents, regardless of the order in which they answered these items, are used to check against results in Survey 1. Additional analyses are included in the appendices to check for any priming effect of the experimental treatment.

To replicate the analytic strategy implemented in the initial survey, the analyses proceeded in two stages. The first stage of analyses evaluates whether the extent of support for police excessive force varies across the implied/explicit race of the suspect and officer involved. The second stage evaluates the correlates of support for police excessive force across experimental treatment groups.

IV. Experimental Analyses

As with the procedure of Survey 1, I open my analyses of Survey 2 by computing bivariate correlations between the outcome variables to assess the strength and direction of the relationship between items. Results are presented in Table 2 below.

[18] The precise *n* varies by less than ten cases due to missing data on either the dependent variables or demographic controls.

Table 2: Bivariate Correlation Matrix, Survey 2

	SID	BJW	SUS CULP	PO Same	PO interest	PO Wrong	VA
Social Identity	1	.45**	.18**	-.13**	.14**	-0.02	.08*
Belief in a Just World	.45**	1	.30**	-.16**	.38**	-.30**	.35**
Suspect Culpability	.18**	.30**	1	-.03	.41**	-.37**	.39**
Another officer behaves the same	-.13**	-.16**	-.03	1	.29**	-.28**	.33**
Officer best interest	.14**	.38**	.41**	.9**	1	-.72**	.74**
Officer wrong	-0.02	-.30**	-.37**	-.28**	-.72**	1	-.76**
Violence appropriate	.08*	.35**	.39**	.33**	.74**	-.76**	1

*Correlations significant at the <.01 threshold
**Correlations significant at the <.05 threshold

Political Ideology, Racism, and American Identity:
An Examination of White Americans' Support for the Police Use of Excessive Force

Assessments of Excessive Force

Following on from the analyses of Survey 1, I begin the analyses of Survey 2 by evaluating whether significant differences exist in support for excessive force, net of controls. I examine this issue by estimating a chi-square test for the dichotomized "violence appropriate" item for each of the experimental treatment dummy variables. The frequency distribution of responses is displayed in a contingency table to better compare attitudes across experimental groups. These results are compared to those of the first survey.

Table 3: Assessments of excessive force, Survey 1 and 2

Study 1					
Violence appropriate?	Total Sample	White cop, black suspect	White cop, white suspect	Black cop, white suspect	Black cop, black suspect
Yes	15%	18%	13%	15%	14%
No	85%	82%	87%	85%	86%
N	1131	285	281	287	278
Chi-square	2.92				
Study 2					
Violence appropriate?				White cop, black suspect **Explicit**	Control
Yes	19%	22%	18%	21%	---
No	81%	78%	82%	89%	---
N	980	328	330	322	---
Chi-square	2.11				---
Independent Samples	Lower .02	Upper .08			

Confidence Interval (95)

Based on the findings in the first survey, I expected the race of the police officer and suspect to have no significant impact on respondents' assessments of excessive force. Chi-square results confirmed the null effect of the experimental manipulation in Survey 2, X^2 (2, N = 980) = 2.11, p = .35. Though, again, the summary percentages show strikingly high levels of approval for police violence, with nearly 20% of respondents expressing support in each condition. These results confirm the hypothesis and corroborate findings by Johnson and Kuhns' (2009), providing evidence that whites' support for police use of force is unrelated to the race of the suspect.

Also, as underlined throughout this thesis, it must be reiterated that the sample compared are drawn from unknown populations, and thus the generalizability of the findings must be made with caution.

Police Officer Malfeasance

Next, I checked whether the experimental treatment conditions had any effect on respondents' assessments of police wrongdoing, across each of the three binary malfeasance items. First, I estimate a chi-square test for the dichotomized "the police officer was acting in the community's best interest" variable in Table 4 below, in line with the analyses of the first survey.

Table 4: Assessments of police officer acting in "community's best interest," Survey 1 and 2

Survey 1					
Officer acting in community interest?	Total Sample	White cop, black suspect	White cop, white suspect	Black cop, black suspect	Black cop, white suspect
No	55%	51%	58%	56%	55%
Yes	45%	49%	42%	44%	45%
N	1128	284	280	287	277
Chi square	3.09				
Survey 2					
Officer acting in community interest?	Total Sample	White cop, black suspect	White cop, white suspect	White cop, black suspect **Explicit**	Control
No	67%	66%	70%	66%	---
Yes	33%	34%	30%	34%	---
N	980	328	330	322	---
Chi square	1.60				---
Independent Samples Confidence Interval (95)	Lower 2.87	Upper 3.05			

Congruent with the hypotheses, the experimental manipulation showed no significant effect: respondents reported no significant difference in their assessments that "another officer would have behaved the same," regardless of whether excessive force was directed toward a black or white suspect, X^2 (2, N = 980) = 1.60, p = .45.

Yet, as with results in Survey 1, a sizeable number of respondents suggested the officer was acting in the interest of the greater good (e.g., 33%), with roughly a third of respondents in each condition suggesting a utilitarian justification for violence.

However, compared to Survey 1, a smaller percentage of respondents in Survey 2 suggested the officer was acting under a greater moral imperative (e.g., 33% in Survey 2 vs. 45% in Survey 1). Though, interestingly, Survey 2 respondents more were inclined to find excessive force appropriate than in the first survey (Table 3 – e.g., 15% in Survey 1 vs. 19% in Survey 2).

Comparisons of this nature should, of course, be made with caution, nevertheless it may provide some interesting clues to how police violence is differentially understood and processed at different snapshots in time. One implication is that white Americans increasingly perceive excessive force as something "typical" of police (Table 5), or that excessive force might not carry the same emotional or cognitive weight it once did (Table 6) – particularly in light of President Trump's seeming endorsement of punitive police treatment. Indeed, it seems respondents in Survey 2 were less likely to rate the officer's actions as "wrong" (Table 6) and were more inclined to believe another officer would have done the same thing (Table 5) than in Survey 1. This may, in some sense, echo Silver and Pickett's (2015: 650) argument that Americans' support for excessive force has increased substantially during the first decade of the twenty-first century, sharply contrasting with trends in general punitive sentiment.

As with the analyses above, Table 5 below estimates a chi-square test for the binary "another officer would have done the same thing" item, and displays the frequency distribution of responses.

Table 5: Assessments that another police officer would've done the same thing, Survey 1 and 2

Survey 1					
Another officer would've done same?	Total Sample	White cop, black suspect	White cop, white suspect	Black cop, black suspect	Black cop, white suspect
No	56%	55%	56%	55%	57%
Yes	44%	45%	44%	45%	43%
N	1131	285	281	287	278
Chi square	.24				
Survey 2					
Another officer would've done same?	Total Sample	White cop, black suspect	White cop, white suspect	White cop, black suspect **Explicit**	Control
No	49%	45%	53%	48%	---
Yes	51%	55%	47%	52%	---
N	980	328	330	322	---
Chi square	3.96				---
Independent Samples Confidence Interval (95)	Lower .00	Upper .22			

As depicted in Table 5, there was no significant difference in respondents' appraisals that another officer would have done the same thing between conditions, X^2 (2, N = 980) = 3.92, p = .12. As noted above, participants in Survey 2 appeared more inclined to believe another officer would have behaved similarly, with over 50% suggesting this was "typical" of police, except for the condition involving force against a white suspect.

As in Survey 1, there are perhaps two interpretations of this finding. One possibility is that respondents, again, distinguish between outcome and intention, suggesting a

tendency to impute positive intent onto the police and, correspondingly, to believe the police generally do the right thing and, given the same situation, another officer would have also done the same thing. Another interpretation is that it reflects a view of that there is a systemic issue of violence within the institution – not simply a "bad apple," but a "bad orchard" (Punch 2003). On this account, respondents might believe that the use of excessive force is "typical" of police, rather than individualistic or rare. Yet, as in Survey 1, in either reading of this finding, respondents do not seem to subscribe to a belief that the officer was acting on individual (and, by implication, roguish) prerogative, but these are instead the behaviors characteristic of wider institutional practice.

Table 6: Assessments that police officer was wrong, Survey 1 and 2

Survey 1					
Officer wrong?	Total Sample	White cop, black suspect	White cop, white suspect	Black cop, black suspect	Black cop, white suspect
Yes	88%	87%	89%	86%	89%
No	12%	13%	11%	17%	11%
N	1127	283	280	287	277
Chi square	1.73				
Survey 2					
Officer wrong?	Total Sample	White cop, black suspect	White cop, white suspect	White cop, black suspect **Explicit**	Control
Yes	74%	72%	77%	72%	---
No	26%	28%	23%	28%	---
N	980	328	330	322	---
Chi square	2.62				---

Independent Samples Confidence Interval (95)	Lower .64	Upper .84

The chi-square results represented in Table 6 above also confirm the hypothesis: the race of the suspect and officer had no significant effect on how respondents evaluated police officer wrongdoing, X^2 (2, N = 980) = 2.62, p = .27. Respondents who were asked about inter-racial instance of excessive force did not report any significant difference in appraisals of malfeasance than those who were asked about an intra-racial instance of excessive force. As highlighted above, however, a surprising number of respondents (over 25%) suggested the officer's actions were not wrong (Table 6), and over 30% claimed his actions were in the community's best interest (Table 4). Even more striking as that approximately half of respondents believed violence was "typical" of police (Table 5).

While again, not definitive or statistically significant, these results bring into focus the terms by which white Americans might condemn – or alternatively, exculpate – police activity. That nearly half of respondents suggested this behavior was typical of police calls into question a "bad apple" justification for police misconduct, and instead gives credence to a utilitarian exemption or exceptionalism (Silver and Pickett 2015; Cohen 2002), with prevails irrespective of the race of those involved in the encounter. While not denied or justified outright, excessive force might be scaled and qualified under a higher moral imperative (i.e., police acting for the collective good), or at least rationalized as reactionary.

Assessments of Suspect Culpability

Building on this justification, I next tested whether the scenario of excessive force had any effect on respondents' attributions of culpability/responsibility to the suspect. Table 7 depicts a linear regression for respondents' evaluations of suspect culpability from the experimental treatment dummy variables, using the white cop/black suspect explicit race condition as the reference category, and compares these to the results of Survey 1. Responses to this item were more evenly distributed than to the police malfeasance items, therefore a linear regression was deemed the appropriate statistical test.

Table 7: Linear regression for "suspect culpability" from experimental treatment, Survey 1 and 2

	Survey 1 (n=1127)								***Survey 2 (n=979*)***						
Treatment Condition	***B***	***S.E. B.***	***β***	***t***	***p***	***95% C.I.***			***B***	***S.E. B.***	***β***	***t***	***p***	***95% C.I.***	
White Cop vs. Black Suspect - Implicit	.15	.10	.06	1.53	.13	-.04	.34	White Cop vs. Black Suspect **- Implicit**	.13	.07	.07	1.78	.08 †	-.01	.27
White Cop vs. White Suspect – Implicit	.05	.10	.02	.54	.59	-.14	.24	White Cop vs. White Suspect **– Implicit**	.07	.07	.03	.91	.36	-.07	.20
Black Cop vs. White Suspect – Implicit	.14	.10	.05	1.40	.16	-.06	.33	White Cop vs. Black Suspect **– Explicit (REF)**	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Black Cop vs. Black Suspect – Implicit (REF)	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	Control	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
R^2	.003							R^2	.003						

NB: Analytic sample is smaller because the control group is excluded from analysis as these were not technically responses of police violence; therefore, the white cop vs black suspect (explicit) was used as the reference category
****Correlations at the <.01 level of significance**
***Correlations at the <.05 level of significance**
†Correlations at the <.1 level of significance

In line with the hypothesis, the race of the suspect did not affect white Americans' belief in the culpability of the suspect in any of the treatment conditions. In other words, respondents did not report any significant difference in the likelihood the suspect precipitated the event, whether he was black or white.

As enumerated in the previous chapter, many scholars have documented an entrenched bias in the U.S. (and elsewhere) of increased perceptions of culpability toward people of color (cf., Goff et al. 2008), across a number of domains. Yet that this finding was replicated across two studies, and in both implied and explicit settings, suggests that the way white Americans process blame and culpability in instances of excessive force is far more nuanced than is often portrayed and requires further examination in the future.

Belief in a Just World

As with Survey 1, in addition to the outcome variables directly measuring respondents' appraisals of the incident, I analyzed whether the stories of excessive force had any effect on participants' belief in a just world, and compare these results to Survey 1. I estimated a linear regression (Table 8) for each treatment condition, using the control condition as a reference category, to determine if hearing about violence *per se* had any

influence on respondents' just world attitudes.

Table 8: Linear regression for "belief in a just world," Surveys 1 and 2

	Survey 1 (n=1130)								*Survey 2 (n=1324)*						
Treatment Condition	***B***	***S.E. B.***	***β***	***t***	***p***	***95% C.I.***			***B***	***S.E. B.***	***β***	***t***	***p***	***95% C.I.***	
White Cop vs. Black Suspect - Implicit	.01	.09	.01	.15	.88	-.17	.20	White Cop vs. Black Suspect **- Implicit**	-.10	.09	-.04	-1.12	.26	-.28	.08
White Cop vs. White Suspect – Implicit	-.02	.09	-.01	-.24	.81	-.21	.16	White Cop vs. White Suspect **– Implicit**	-.05	.09	-.02	-.58	.56	-.23	.13
Black Cop vs. White Suspect – Implicit	-.08	.09	-.03	-.81	.42	-.26	.11	White Cop vs. Black Suspect **– Explicit (REF)**	.07	.09	.03	.76	.45	-.11	-.25
Black Cop vs. Black Suspect – Implicit (REF)	--	--	--	--	--			Control	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
R^2	.001							R^2	.003						

Once again, the experimental manipulation had no effect on white respondents' sense of cosmic justice, in line with the hypothesis. Additionally, the control condition, in which an officer was effectively "doing his job," had no effect on just world beliefs. As with the results of Survey 1, this gives credence to the idea that just world attitudes form part of durable set of ideological beliefs, which appear unmoved by news of even obvious instances injustice (more discussion on this in the following two chapters).

V. Correlational Analyses

Because the experiment seemed to have no significant effect on white respondents' evaluations of excessive force, across a number of dimensions, I moved on to consider some of the correlates of support for excessive force: do the factors that predict support for excessive force vary depending on the race of the officer and suspect?

Assessments of Excessive Force

Table 9 below depicts a binary logistic regression for the correlates of support for excessive force, for Survey 1 and 2. The experimental condition in which a white officer used excessive force on a black suspect and the race was explicitly specified was used as the reference category.

Table 9: Binary logistic regression correlates of support for excessive force, Survey 1 and 2

	Survey 1 (*n*= 1122)							Survey 2 (*n*= 979)						
	B	*S.E.*	*Wald* X^2	*p*	*OR*	95% CI		*B*	*S.E.*	*Wald* X^2	*p*	*OR*	95% CI	
Treatment Condition						Lower	Upper						Lower	Upper
White Cop vs. Black Suspect – Implicit	0.12	0.23	0.24	0.62	1.12	0.71	1.77	0.10	0.20	0.23	0.63	1.10	0.74	1.64
White Cop vs. White Suspect – Implicit	-0.16	0.25	0.43	0.51	0.85	0.53	1.38	-.17	0.21	0.65	0.42	0.84	0.56	1.28
White Cop vs. Black Suspect – Explicit (Reference)														
Gender (0: female)	0.26	0.17	2.22	0.14	1.30	0.92	1.82	-.36*	0.17	4.36	0.04	0.70	0.50	0.98
Right-leaning Politics (0: left-center)	.85**	0.21	16.05	0.00	2.33	1.54	3.53	1.43**	0.18	62.21	0.00	4.19	2.94	5.98
Age	-.19**	0.08	5.66	0.02	0.83	0.71	0.97	-.38**	0.08	24.60	0.00	0.69	0.59	0.80
Education	0.10	0.07	2.17	0.14	1.10	0.97	1.26	-.02	0.07	0.06	0.81	0.98	0.86	1.12
Social Identity	-.03	0.11	0.07	0.80	0.97	0.78	1.21	0.15	0.12	1.59	0.21	1.16	0.92	1.47
Omnibus Test of Model Coefficients			26.51	.00						100.84**	.00			

****Correlations at the <.01 level of significance**
***Correlations at the <.05 level of significance**
†Correlations at the <.1 level of significance

As with Survey 1, in Survey 2 right-leaning political affiliation showed a strong, positive association with support for excessive force (B = 1.43, p<.05). Social identity showed no statistically significant relationship with support for excessive force. Respondents' age was negatively associated with approval of violence, also like Study 1. Respondents' level of educational attainment was not a significant predictor. Results indicate that women were more likely to support the use of excessive force than men.

Police Officer Malfeasance

Next, I analyzed the correlates of appraisals of police officer malfeasance, estimating a series of binary logistic regressions from the three dichotomized officer malfeasance items. The results of Survey 2 are compared to those of Survey 1.

As with Survey 1, social identity was positively and significantly associated with a belief that the officer was acting in the community's best interest (B = .25, p<.01). Respondents who shared a strong sense of group identity subscribed to a "greater good" justification for police violence.

Table 10: Binary logistic regression predicting belief that officer acting in 'community interest', Survey 1 and 2

	Survey 1 (*n*= 1122)							Survey 2 (*n*= 979)						
	B	*S.E.*	*Wald* X^2	*p*	*OR*	95% CI		*B*	*S.E.*	*Wald* X^2	*p*	*OR*	95% CI	
Treatment Condition						Lower	Upper						Lower	Upper
White Cop vs. Black Suspect – Implicit	0.17	0.17	0.94	0.33	1.18	0.84	1.66	0.01	0.17	0.00	0.96	1.01	0.72	1.42
White Cop vs. White Suspect – Implicit	-0.09	0.17	0.24	0.63	0.92	0.65	1.29	-.16	0.18	0.86	0.36	0.85	0.60	1.20
White Cop vs. Black Suspect – Explicit (Reference)														
Gender (0: female)	0.13	0.13	0.98	0.32	1.13	0.89	1.45	-.29*	0.14	3.97	0.05	0.75	0.57	1.00
Right-leaning Politics (0: left-center)	0.89**	0.18	25.39	0.00	2.44	1.73	3.45	1.19**	0.16	54.82	0.00	3.29	2.40	4.51
Age	-0.12*	0.05	4.68	0.03	0.89	0.80	0.99	-.15**	0.06	6.31	0.01	0.86	0.77	0.97
Education	0.05	0.05	1.07	0.30	1.05	0.96	1.16	0.03	0.06	0.34	0.56	1.03	0.92	1.16
Social Identity	.31**	0.08	14.02	0.00	1.36	1.16	1.60	0.25**	0.10	6.33	0.01	1.29	1.06	1.57
Omnibus Test of Model Coefficients			55.25	.00						84.71**	.00			

****Correlations at the <.01 level of significance**
***Correlations at the <.05 level of significance**
†Correlations at the <.1 level of significance

Additionally, right-leaning political affiliation again showed a strong positive association with a belief that the officer was acting in the community's best interest (B = 1.19, p<.01). These findings echo work by Gerber and Jackson (2017), Jost and Hunyady (2005), and Silver and Pickett (2015) regarding the tendency for those espousing conservative ideologies to support and legitimize the behaviors of powerholders, particularly when in the interest of order maintenance.

Respondents' age again showed a negative association (B = -.15, p<.05). Respondents' educational attainment was not significant in Study 2. Gender, again, showed a significant association with women (B = -.29, p<.05) evincing a stronger belief that the officer was acting in the community's best interest.

Table 11: Binary logistic regression predicting belief that another officer would've done the same thing, Survey 1 and 2

	Survey 1 (n= 1132)							Survey 2 (n= 979)						
	B	*S.E.*	*Wald X²*	*p*	*OR*	95% CI		*B*	*S.E.*	*Wald X²*	*p*	*OR*	95% CI	
Treatment Condition						Lower	Upper						Lower	Upper
White Cop vs. Black Suspect – Implicit	-0.02	0.18	0.01	0.92	0.98	0.70	1.38	.13	0.16	0.62	0.43	1.13	0.83	1.55
White Cop vs. White Suspect – Implicit	-0.03	0.18	0.02	0.89	0.98	0.69	1.38	-.16	0.16	1.04	0.31	0.85	0.62	1.16
White Cop vs. Black Suspect – Explicit (Reference)														
Gender (0: female)	0.18	0.13	1.95	0.16	1.19	0.93	1.53	-.05	0.09	0.27	0.60	0.95	0.80	1.14
Right-leaning Politics (0: left-center)	.66**	0.19	12.32	0.00	0.52	0.36	0.75	0.06	0.16	0.17	0.69	1.07	0.79	1.45
Age	-.24**	0.06	19.06	0.00	0.79	0.70	0.88	-.19**	0.05	13.06	0.00	0.83	0.75	0.92
Education	0.08	0.05	2.56	0.11	1.08	0.98	1.19	0.06	0.05	1.15	0.28	1.06	0.96	1.17
Social Identity	-.36**	0.08	19.66	0.00	0.70	0.59	0.82	-.29**	0.09	10.05	0.00	0.75	0.63	0.90
Omnibus Test of Model Coefficients			75.12**	.00						31.90**	.00			

****Correlations at the <.01 level of significance**
***Correlations at the <.05 level of significance**
†Correlations at the <.1 level of significance

As with Survey 1, a distinction between outcome and intention emerges in Study 2. While those who identified with police were inclined to believe the officer was acting

for the greater good (Table 10), they did not believe another officer would have done the same thing in this instance (Table 11, B = -.29, p<.01). This too may be because strong identifiers believe violence is not typical or characteristic of their group; but that when it is exercised, it is done sparingly, necessarily, and with higher moral purpose (e.g., results of Table 10). Another explanation, as highlighted in the previous chapter, is that this finding might underline the salience of the "bad apple" justification, but only for strong identifiers. Those with high social identity might distance the offending "bad apple" from an otherwise "clean" orchard in an effort to preserve intact a coherent group identity. Given that a majority of respondents (51% in Table 5) suggested violence was "typical" of police, it seems plausible that the bad apple justification only resonates for those whose group identity is at stake. As Lewis and Sherman (2010) write, the higher the "social identity value" of a relevant group, the greater the potential threat to self- and social image should a member of one's group – especially a *prototypical* member of one's group – behave in a negative or deviant manner. In response to this threat to identity, individuals may resort to cognitive distancing tactics in an effort to salvage group and, consequently, self-image. One such manifestation of this ingroup distancing is called "the black sheep effect" (Marques et al. 1988; Lewis and Sherman 2010), in which individuals "*outgroup*" the deviant ingroup member. Those who feel less aligned with the "law abiding" category, correspondingly, may feel less of a need to subscribe to the "bad apple" thesis (hence the results in Table 5).

In Survey 2, right-leaning political affiliation shared no significant relationship with a belief another officer would have behaved similarly. Respondents' gender and

educational attainment also showed no significant effects. Respondents' age was negatively associated with this view (B = -.19, p<.01).

Table 12: Binary logistic regression police officer wrong, Survey 1 and 2

	Survey 1 (n= 1132)							Survey 2 (n= 979)						
	B	*S.E.*	*Wald X²*	*p*	*OR*	95% CI		*B*	*S.E.*	*Wald X²*	*p*	*OR*	95% CI	
Treatment Condition														
White Cop vs. Black Suspect – Implicit	-0.13	0.25	0.25	0.62	0.88	0.54	1.44	-.05	0.18	0.06	0.80	0.96	0.67	1.36
White Cop vs. White Suspect – Implicit	-0.22	0.26	0.73	0.39	0.80	0.48	1.33	0.20	0.19	1.15	0.28	1.22	0.85	1.75
White Cop vs. Black Suspect – Explicit (Reference)														
Gender (0: female)	0.22	0.19	1.35	0.25	1.25	0.86	1.80	0.12	0.15	0.65	0.42	1.13	0.84	1.51
Right-leaning Politics (0: left-center)	.87**	0.22	15.50	0.00	2.38	1.55	3.66	-1.02**	0.17	37.55	0.00	0.36	0.26	0.50
Age	-.21**	0.09	5.70	0.02	0.82	0.69	0.96	0.20**	0.06	10.04	0.00	1.22	1.08	1.38
Education	0.00	0.07	0.00	0.99	1.00	0.87	1.15	0.05	0.06	0.81	0.37	1.06	0.94	1.19
Social Identity	0.26*	0.13	4.32	0.04	1.30	1.02	1.67	0.03	0.10	0.11	0.74	1.04	0.85	1.27
Omnibus Test of Model Coefficients			29.29**	.00						51.87**	.00			

NB: the way police officer wrong is coded in Survey 1 is such that 0=wrong; 1= not wrong. In Survey 2, 0= not wrong; 1= wrong
****Correlations at the <.01 level of significance**
***Correlations at the <.05 level of significance**
†Correlations at the <.1 level of significance

In Survey 2, social identity was not a significant predictor for respondents' appraisals that an officer was wrong. That is, sharing group identity with the police did not seem to predispose respondents to justify or exculpate misconduct. This rejects the hypothesis that strong identifiers tend to be more generally forgiving of police misconduct. These

equivocal results between the two surveys about how and when social identity is activated in decisions about appropriate police conduct thus require further examination in future research.

Left-leaning political ideology was strongly associated negatively with appraisals the officer was wrong (B = -1.02, p<.01), which fits with the idea that those on the left tend to be more skeptical and critical of authorities, like police, and opposed to punitive crime control measures generally.

Respondents' gender and education showed no significant effect. Respondents' age was positively associated with a more critical appraisal of the officer as wrong (B = .20, p<.01).

Suspect Culpability

Next, I analyzed the correlates of white respondents' attributions of culpability to the suspect, estimating a linear regression in Table 13.

Table 13: Linear regression predicting suspect responsibility, Study 1 and Study 2

	Survey 1 (*n*= 1118)							Survey 2 (*n*= 979)						
	B	*S.E. B*	*β*	*t*	*p*	95% CI		*B*	*S.E. B*	*β*	*t*	*p*	95% CI	
Treatment Condition														
White Cop vs. Black Suspect – Implicit	0.12	0.09	0.05	1.32	0.19	-.06	0.31	0.14*	0.07	0.07	1.99	0.05	0.00	0.27
White Cop vs. White Suspect – Implicit	0.06	0.09	0.02	0.64	0.52	-.12	0.24	0.07	0.07	0.04	1.05	0.30	-.06	0.20
White Cop vs. Black Suspect – Explicit (Reference)														
Gender (0: female)	0.00	0.07	0.00	-.04	0.97	-.14	0.13	0.01	0.01	0.02	0.73	0.47	-.01	0.02
Right-leaning Politics (0: left-center	.58**	0.09	0.18	6.16	0.00	.39	0.76	.52**	0.07	0.25	7.91	0.00	0.39	0.65
Age	0.01	0.03	0.01	0.21	0.83	-.05	0.06	0.02	0.02	0.03	1.09	0.28	-.02	0.07
Education	-0.01	0.03	-0.01	-.37	0.71	-.06	0.04	-.04†	0.02	-0.05	-1.77	0.08	-.08	0.00
Social Identity	.25**	0.04	0.18	5.86	0.00	0.17	0.34	.16**	0.04	0.13	4.27	0.00	0.09	0.24
R^2	.08							.10						

****Correlations at the <.01 level of significance**
***Correlations at the <.05 level of significance**
†Correlations at the <.1 level of significance

Social identity again showed a positive and significant association with evaluations of the suspect as culpable (B = .16, p<.01). These results confirm the hypothesis, as those who categorize themselves as part of the "law-abiding" community might, firstly, believe that as representatives of their group, police reserve punitive recourse for those most deserving, using it sparingly and discerningly. This fits with the earlier finding in which respondents suggested the officer was acting in the community's best interest (Table 10), thus perhaps rationalizing excessive force as reactionary. Second, those in

the law-abiding group might also adhere to a fairly moralistic view of policing, in which victimization by police is, in some sense, an index of character and social group: a barometer of the "law-abiding" and the "law-breaking."

Right-leaning politics again showed a strong, positive association (B = .52, p<.01) with evaluations of suspect culpability, building on the argument that those on the right tend to evince stronger victim-blaming tendencies (Williams 1984), as well as conceive as legitimate the actions and directives of authorities (Jost and Hunyady 2005).

Additional Correlational Analyses: Clarifying the Role of Social Identity

Because many of the results regarding the role that social identity plays in respondents' appraisals of excessive force were again equivocal in Survey 2, I conducted additional correlational analyses to further investigate the link between identifying with the police and accepting and justifying their activities. Table 14 presents the results from a series of binary logistic regressions testing if, first, identifying more strongly with the police correlates with support for excessive force (Model 1), and second if this association varies according to the racial identity of the protagonists involved (Model 2), for both Survey 1 and Survey 2. Model 2 introduces three interaction terms between social identity and the experimental treatments to test this variation. This was again important to clarify if and how social identity interacts with inter- and intra-racial dynamics: does group identity exacerbate extant racial prejudice, or does it run alongside inter- and intra-racial dynamics? As above, regression coefficients (Betas),

standard error, odds ratios, and significance levels are reported in Table 14 on the following page.

Table 14: Binary logistic regression predicting support for excessive force, with experimental treatment interaction terms, Study 1 and 2																							
	Study 1 (n=1132)												Study 2 (n=979)										
	Model 1						Model 2						Model 1						Model 2					
Treatment Condition	B	S.E.	Wald X^2	OR	95% CI		B	S.E.	Wald X^2	OR	95% CI		B	S.E.	Wald X^2	OR	95% CI		B	S.E.	Wald X^2	OR	95% CI	
White Cop vs. Black Suspect – Implicit	0.12	0.23	0.24	1.12	0.71	1.77	1.12	1.37	0.67	3.06	0.21	44.56	0.10	0.20	0.23	1.10	0.74	1.64	-.76	1.30	0.34	0.47	0.04	5.93
White Cop vs. White Suspect – Implicit	-0.16	0.25	0.43	0.85	0.53	1.38	-1.40	1.50	0.87	0.25	0.01	4.64	-.17	0.21	0.65	0.84	0.56	1.28	-.65	1.31	0.24	0.52	0.04	6.85
White Cop vs. Black Suspect Explicit (Ref)																								
Gender (0: female)	0.26	0.17	2.22	1.30	0.92	1.82	0.28	0.17	2.62	1.33	0.94	1.87	-.36*	0.17	4.36	0.70	0.50	0.98	-.36*	0.17	4.41	0.70	0.50	0.98
Right politics (0: left)	.85**	0.21	16.05	2.33	1.54	3.53	0.84**	0.21	15.48	2.31	1.52	3.50	1.43**	0.18	62.21	4.19	2.94	5.98	1.44**	0.18	62.39	4.21	2.95	6.01
Age (0: <18-25)	-.19**	0.08	5.66	0.83	0.71	0.97	-.19**	0.08	5.79	0.83	0.71	0.97	-.38**	0.08	24.60	0.69	0.59	0.80	-.38**	0.08	24.61	0.69	0.59	0.80
Education (0: < high school)	0.10	0.07	2.17	1.10	0.97	1.26	0.10	0.07	2.18	1.10	0.97	1.26	-.02	0.07	0.06	0.98	0.86	1.12	-.02	0.07	0.06	0.98	0.86	1.13
Social Identity	-.03	0.11	0.07	0.97	0.78	1.21	0.02	0.22	0.01	1.02	0.66	1.56	.15	0.12	1.59	1.16	0.92	1.47	0.05	0.21	0.06	1.05	0.70	1.57
White Cop/Black Suspect*SID							-0.22	0.30	0.55	0.80	0.45	1.43							0.19	0.28	0.45	1.21	0.69	2.10
White Cop/White Suspect*SID							0.27	0.32	0.71	1.31	0.70	2.44							0.11	0.28	0.14	1.11	0.64	1.94
Omnibus Test of Model Coefficients			26.51**						29.39**						100.84**						101.28**			
**Correlations at the <.01 level of significance; *Correlations at the <.05 level of significance																								

As Table 14 demonstrates above, social identity did not significantly influence white respondents' support for excessive force, and this remained true invariant by the race of the suspect as none of the interaction terms showed a significant effect. This corroborates the results of Survey 1, confirming the hypothesis.

Right-leaning political ideology, however, again showed a strong association with respondents' approval of violence (B = 1.44, p<.01), as did respondents' age (B = -.38, p<.01). Women tended to be less approving of violence (B = -.36, p>.05), in line with existing research (Barkan and Cohn 1984). Respondents' educational attainment showed no significant effect.

VI. Exploratory Analysis

At this stage of the analysis, I followed the same procedure of Survey 1 and conducted additional exploratory analysis to determine what factors affect participants' views of excessive force, beyond race. I estimated a binary logistic regression model predicting support for police excessive force among key variables of interest, namely social identity, just world beliefs, and right-leaning political affiliation. The results are shown in Table 15 (see Table 27 in appendix for respondents who answered these constructs all *prior* to the experimental treatment to avoid any priming effect).

Table 15: Binary logistic regression predicting attitudes toward excessive force, Survey 1 & 2

	Survey 1 (*n*= 1132)							Survey 2 (*n*= 979)						
	B	*S.E.*	*Wald* X^2	*p*	*OR*	95% CI		*B*	*S.E.*	*Wald* X^2	*p*	*OR*	95% CI	
Treatment Condition													Lower	Upper
White Cop vs. Black Suspect – Implicit	0.12	0.24	0.25	0.62	1.13	0.71	1.80	.17	0.21	0.64	0.43	1.18	0.78	1.78
White Cop vs. White Suspect – Implicit	-0.18	0.25	0.51	0.48	0.84	0.51	1.37	-.09	0.22	0.19	0.67	0.91	0.60	1.39
White Cop vs. Black Suspect – Explicit (Reference)														
Gender (0: female)	0.25	0.18	1.93	0.16	1.28	0.90	1.82	-.30†	.17	2.95	0.09	0.74	0.53	1.04
Right-leaning Politics (0: left-center)	.50**	0.22	5.15	0.02	1.65	1.07	2.55	1.13**	0.19	35.67	0.00	3.10	2.14	4.50
Age	-0.14†	0.08	2.97	0.09	0.87	0.74	1.02	-.33**	0.08	17.93	0.00	0.72	0.62	0.84
Education	0.12†	0.07	2.97	0.09	1.13	0.98	1.29	-.01	0.07	0.02	0.90	0.99	0.86	1.14
Social Identity	-.49**	0.13	13.45	0.00	0.61	0.47	0.80	-.26*	0.14	3.43	0.06	0.77	0.59	1.02
Belief in a Just World	.72**	0.11	44.87	0.00	2.05	1.66	2.53	.64**	0.10	41.54	0.00	1.90	1.56	2.30
Omnibus Test of Model Coefficients			77.85	.00						148.64	.00			

****Correlations at the <.01 level of significance**
***Correlations at the <.05 level of significance**
†Correlations at the <.1 level of significance

As with Study 1, right-leaning political affiliation (B = 1.13, p<.01) was strongly and positively associated with approval of violence in Study 2. Additionally, just world-beliefs also showed a strong, positive association with the acceptance of violence (B = .64, p<.01) in Study 2. Both of these effects seem to reiterate that there is an ideological

dimension underpinning white Americans' attitudes toward, and ultimately support for, excessive force, independent of the race of an officer and suspect involved in a scenario of violence.

Unlike Study 1, in Study 2, respondents' age showed a significant negative association with support for excessive force (B = -.33, p<.01). Though again respondents' gender and education had no significant effect. Due to the somewhat equivocal results of these demographic variables, both in these empirical analyses and in the extant criminological literature (cf., Johnson and Kuhns 2009), these variables will be dropped from subsequent analysis.

VII. Discussion of Results

Reviewing the Racial Null Finding

As the results of this replication study indicate, there appears to be no statistically significant effect of police officer/suspect racial identity on white respondents' support for police violence. Indeed, when tested across three different outcome variables relating to public approval of police violence, including assessments of officer malfeasance and attributions of suspect responsibility, the race of the actors involved in the encounter appeared to make no significant difference to respondents' assessments of excessive force. This held true whether race was explicitly or implicitly manipulated.

However, the results of these two surveys provide striking empirical evidence for fairly high levels of support for police violence in America (e.g., over 15% of respondents evaluated the use of excessive force favorably), which rather than racial dynamics, seems to be motivated by politics affiliation and a belief in a just world. This finding clarifies and adds to the findings presented in the previous chapter regarding the null effect of race, and contributes to a more robust academic understanding of how we might judge the appropriateness of excessive force (e.g., including measures of officer malfeasance and suspect responsibility).

Consistent with work in the U.K. (cf. Bradford et al. 2017) and a growing body of work in the U.S. (Gerber and Jackson 2017), the studies described here provide empirical evidence for political ideology to be a critical predictor influencing how respondents "experience" police violence in the U.S., regardless of the race of the protagonists. These findings not only corroborate the unexpected findings of the first online survey but also provide grounds to revise some popular assumptions about the dynamics that generate support for violent policing in America.

Debunking and Clarifying Other Explanations for Public Approval of Excessive Force

Additional attention has also been given to the so-called "bad apple thesis" as a theory behind the relatively neutral public, if at times favorable, responses to police violence. On this account, violence is committed by – and therefore contextualized and confined to – a few rotten apples in an otherwise "clean" barrel. These rogue officers have acted

outside the scope and ethos of the department, using violence and corruption as a matter of individual prerogative. As Loader and Mulcahy write (2003: 152), the bad apple thesis becomes a compelling and convenient explanatory device, for both institution and public alike: "[wrenching] it from its institutional setting and [relocating] in the heads and actions of discrete individual officers." In this way, it provides a *mea culpa* for police, still preserving intact the legitimacy of the larger institution. It also, importantly, places misconduct within the ambit of the "solvable," something attached to obvious and practical solutions: ferret out and fire the individual "bad apples," alter recruitment practices, shore up ethics training, establish monitoring committees, promote good behavior, or, as is often the case in instances of racist violence, underrepresented minorities – all resolutions based on minor practical restructuring and little moral maneuvering. Violent policing thus becomes a matter of individual discretion and behavior, something delineated from the wider institutional mandate. The fairly widespread public agnosticism to police brutality – at least among white Americans – as reflected in the stable levels of support for police over the last half-century, thus might be explained by what is seen as the actions of a few roguish individuals, not a systemic problem.

A similar explanation and a variant of the bad apple thesis relates to the police institution more broadly and its engendering of a distinctive subculture (Herbert 1998). Miccuci and Gomme (2005) describe a culture in policing characterized by suspiciousness, cynicism, and clannishness, as well as bravado, hyper-masculinity, respect for authority, valued experience, and hierarchy. The use of force, on these terms,

emerges from an entrenched "working personality" (Skolnick 1994), often serving both an expressive and instrumental function associated with preserving a certain status quo or pedagogy: the "teaching of a lesson" (Scheingold 1984), the disapproval and reassertion of normative boundaries (Jackson and Sunshine 2007), the demonstration of "pulling one's weight" on the force (Van Maanen 1974; Herbert 1998). Articulations of this theory often focus on themes of machismo, honor, and respect, and the attendant desire to reassert status and power when questioned (Chevigny 1969; Van Maanen 1974; Skolnick and Fyfe 1993). As Herbert (1998: 359) explains, promoting a sense of competency "often means ensuring [police] authority is respected… [and] commands followed… resistance to police authority is thus an anathema to officers and spurs a sometimes-violent response. Use of force, for example, frequently occurs at the end of pursuits; suspects receive a 'payback' for defying police commands." As with the bad apple thesis, this explanation again appears less a wholesale indictment of the institution, and more about the ethos it can reproduce, especially among lower ranking officers. It also positions violence – excessive, unjustified force – as a something that occurs essentially by mistake, while attempting to do the right thing (at least from the perspective of the officer), when officers are emotionally stressed, or due to an excess of zeal, or a momentary lapse of judgment. Subcultural explanations thus remain popularly compelling, both because they maintain intuitive appeal and offer readymade resolutions – those that, again, solicit pithy pledges to improve recruitment, training, and oversight.

However, it is unlikely that either of these explanations account for the racial null effect, or sustained support for police more broadly, at least in this thesis and at least for those respondents who do not identify themselves with the group represented by police (i.e., low social identity). As the analyses above showed, respondents tended to believe violence in these incidents to be "typical" of police (Table 5). While again it should be caveated that these tests were not significant at the commonly accepted statistical threshold (p>.05), the contingency tables show that even when violence was considered very explicitly wrong, over 30% of respondents believed the officer was acting in the community's best interest (*Table 4*) and roughly 50% believed another officer would've done the same thing (*Table 5*). Most staggering is that close to 30% of respondents in some instances believed the officer was not wrong (*Table 6*), despite evaluating the violence as inappropriate. In other words, respondents (or at least those not high in SID) did not seem to believe excessive force in this instance was the result of a few "bad apples" or bad judgment. Moreover, in real life, it is relatively rare that people have enough information to know the officer was explicitly wrong, which would presumably inflate these percentages still further.

VIII. Conclusion

Few pathologies of American politics have attracted as much media attention or scrutiny in recent years as U.S. criminal justice exceptionalism, and in particular, the seeming frequency and racial disproportionality of police brutality. In terms of lethal police shootings, the only officially collected national metric of police violence (though

not without its problems), the United States has averaged nearly 1,000 deaths per year since 2015 (Tate et al. 2018), compared with 1 in Iceland's 71-year existence as an independent country (Lartey 2015), around 7 per year in Germany, and 6 per year in Australia (Winsor 2016). The scope of this exceptionalism is often evocatively captured in the frequently cited statistic that American police killed more people in the first 24 days of 2015 alone than British police killed in the previous 24 years (Lartey 2015). Of course, such a comparison skirts over important apples-and-oranges issues, such as, with the exception of specialized units, British police are unarmed; the increased likelihood of American police to encounter armed individuals; the higher rate of homicide in the U.S. than other comparative industrialized Western nations; and of course, sheer size, scale, and population of the U.S. relative to these other countries. Yet it nevertheless illustrates the crux of a deeper phenomenon: that the United States is the only nation in the Western world with *daily* police killings (Hirschfield 2015), the victims of which, have been disproportionately young African American men (Swaine et al. 2015).

The frequency and racial disproportionality of this phenomenon has been correspondingly explained through the paradigm of racism – and increasingly *implicit* racism (cf., Correll et al. 2002, 2007; Plant and Peruche 2005; Kahn et al. 2016; Trinker and Goff 2016) – its historical lineage and subsequent corollaries traced to slavery and nearly three centuries of racial persecution (Wacquant 2001; Weitzer and Tuch 2004; Alexander 2010; Goffman 2014). There is both intuitive and empirical appeal to this explanation, with *The Guardian*'s analysis, for example, finding that African American

victims were over-represented by a factor of 2.3 in police killings (Swaine et al. 2015). While further analyses are necessary to determine whether race decisively influences black over-representation, studies such as these give credence to the idea that both explicit and implicit biases are deeply embedded in contemporary institutional practices in America (Hirschfield 2015). Voigt and colleagues (2017), for example, use evidence from police body-worn cameras to show that black individuals were consistently treated less respectfully and with less procedural justice than white individuals in police encounters. There is considerable literature – far too expansive to include in any exhaustive account here – attesting to the pervasiveness of this effect and racism in general in police encounters (cf., Hurwitz and Peffley 2004; Correll et al. 2002, 2007; Kahn et al. 2016).

But while racism is undeniably important to any valid explanation of America's exceptionally lethal (and possibly, more violent) police, it fails to capture the full picture or range of other distinctive cultural, social, and political factors which shape Americans' attitudes toward policing and the (im)propriety of police conduct. Indeed, as the empirical work in these two chapters have demonstrated, race showed no effect for white survey respondents' attitudes toward excessive force. Instead, other dynamics related to responsibility and individualism proved significant and salient. Therefore, the focus of the remaining thesis will home in on the role that these political and ideological orientations play in in shaping white Americans' attitudes toward the police use of excessive force.

Chapter 6

Personal Responsibility and Libertarian Politics: An Ideological Lens to Justify Police Violence

I. Introduction

As detailed in the previous two chapters, the racial manipulation had no significant effect on nearly any of the tested outcome variables or, importantly, the main response variable (i.e., support for excessive force). However, when ideological constructs, including a belief in a just world and political affiliation, were analyzed as predictors in exploratory analyses, they showed a strong positive association with support for excessive force – though, again, most of this analysis was exploratory as the just world item, at least, was tested after exposure to the vignette.

To further explore the theoretical relevance of just world attitudes, social identity, and political ideology, and these their relationship to white Americans' appraisals of excessive force, I conducted a second survey. Respondents were split equally into groups either receiving a set of attitudinal scales *before* or *after* exposure to the treatment condition (i.e., a vignette of excessive force varying the race of a suspect and officer). This experimental design better enabled me to address two fundamental

questions that emerged from the initial online survey. First, what effect, if any, do stories of excessive force have on white Americans' assessments of, and identification with, police, and indeed on their relationship to the wider world? And second, what attitudes and ideological orientations shape how police violence is read and understood?

To better answer these questions, I also introduced a control condition into the experimental design to isolate for whether police violence *per se* produced an effect on these ideologies. Additionally, I included items related to legitimacy and public trust in police to further home in on respondents' general perceptions of police, as well as to control for possible confounds between support for excessive force and support for police more generally.

Conducting this follow-up study was crucial to develop better insight into the ideologies and identities that shape how excessive force is processed for white Americans. For example, if as hypothesized, certain ideological preferences have a palliative effect on stories of police violence – with those high in just-world orientations and right-leaning political affiliation tending to be more supportive of excessive force – without suffering a concomitant loss of group identification or sense of general fairness from news of violence (as demonstrated in the last two chapters), then it may explain some of the reasons why large sections of the public continue to support police in the face of scandal and misconduct. Empirical results and theoretical implications are discussed throughout the chapter.

II. Further Developing the Notion of Personal Responsibility: Libertarian Ideology and the Acceptance of Excessive Force

Just-World Thinking in America: Applying Attributional Psychology to the American Dream

However, first it is worth revisiting and re-establishing what I mean by this individualist ideology, and specifically free will and just world attitudes (Lerner 1980) as they relate to blame and the justification of harm (Bandura 1990) in America. The idea that people have the capacity to make free, autonomous, and responsible choices is hardly specific to assessments of violent policing; it is a central assumption of all human behavior, from interpersonal relationships to monetary transactions (Feldman et al. 2016). More than an exercise in metaphysics, the concept of free will has real consequences in how we perceive others as accountable, worthy, or deserving (Kant 1788). An extensive body of literature has demonstrated that people differ in how much free will they attribute to themselves and to others (cf., Heider 1958). Those perceived as immoral, for example, are frequently seen as more responsible and blameworthy (Phillips and Knobe 2009) in "bad" situations. This can elicit retributive responses (Shariff et al. 2014) as well as lower the threshold for what is considered as harm in rendering punishment (Clark et al. 2014; Rubin and Peplau 1975). The same is also true for those seen as moral agents in "good" situations, with perceivers likely to believe they were driven by deliberate intent and free choice rather than whim or luck (Pronin and Kugler 2010).

As previous literature has demonstrated, the idea of free will intersects profoundly with identity and status, often bearing especially negative outcomes for women and minority ethnic groups (cf., Jones and Aronson 1973; Goff et al. 2008), but also within the particular socio-political framework of the U.S. This unique "American-style individualism," which Hirschfield (2016: 1112) describes as "[emphasizing] self-reliance and corollary values as decentralized government (i.e., self-rule) and individual moral responsibility," is particularly relevant in the context of just-world attitudes. While the just world orientation is exhibited across many individualistic (as opposed to collectivist) cultures and those with a strong neoliberal traditions, many scholars (Bénabou and Tirole 2006; Frank et al. 2015; Hamby in Roberts 2016) have found just-world attitudes to be highest in the U.S., predisposing Americans to a stronger tendency to infer culpability and desert for misfortune (Montada 1998; Montada in Correia et al. 2007).

As earlier noted, the exploratory analyses in the previous two chapters demonstrated strong correlations between those with high just world preferences and the acceptance of police violence, irrespective of the race of the actors involved. To draw out this literature further in the context of police violence and determine if there was any relationship between the extreme American regard for personal responsibility and the acceptance of excessive force, a main objective of the second online survey was to vary the ordering of this construct in relation to the experimental treatment. This, again, was

to determine if just world beliefs predicted the acceptance of violence and what effect, if any, news of excessive force had on just-world orientations.

Conservatism, Liberalism, or Something Else? Measuring Libertarianism and the American Premium on Individual Responsibility

Additionally, in order to further empirically develop the American reverence for personal responsibility beyond just-world preferences, I included two additional items measuring libertarian political ideology to examine if and how political ideologies affected judgments of appropriate police violence. The motivation for this was twofold: first, to expand upon the findings in the previous two chapters documenting an association between (right-leaning) political affiliation and support for excessive force. And second, to "zoom out" from specific views about police and policing and to capture the broader set of American ideological concerns for "how society should be organized and how institutions are designed and operate" (Gerber and Jackson 2017). It was important to capture these broader patterns and American cultural sensibilities, of which attitudes toward violent policing are constitutive, because, as Gerber and Jackson (2017: 91) write, "excessive use of force requires justification that goes beyond [beliefs about] police… it is [a justification] ideological in nature."

Such ideologies are not just political, but also relate to more ambient beliefs about nationhood and the self: ideas pertaining to personal responsibility, desert, and the role of the individual in society. As earlier noted in this thesis, there is a growing body of

literature (cf., Silver and Pickett 2015; Gerber and Jackson 2017) which finds an association between right-leaning political affiliation and support for the police use of force in the U.S. The analyses from the two previous two chapters corroborated this finding, with right-leaning political affiliation consistently predicting support for excessive force, as well as attributions of suspect culpability and more forgiving attitudes toward police malfeasance, when measured on a self-report "left-right" score.

However, building on these findings and previous literature, I hypothesized that white Americans' attitudes toward police and policing drew on a set of ideological preferences more discrete and nuanced than the one typically expressed by traditional political measures of liberalism or conservatism; an ideology, instead, which focuses on issues of desert and merit, unfairness, order, punitivity, and authority. Several scholars have suggested that in fact *libertarianism* or *authoritarianism* (Stenner 2005) better capture the spirit of this ideological preference, and the vortex of overlapping and contradictory interests, emotions, ideas, and conditions which give rise to the acceptance of violence.

It is even possible, as some scholars have argued (cf., Havercroft and Murphy 2018), that the left-right conceptualization of political ideology is too nonspecific and possibly inaccurate to capture these more libertarian and authoritarian preferences. On this account, Haidt (2012), Goren (2013), and Havercroft and Murphy (2018: 1024) suggest that libertarianism represents a latent ideological construct, *distinct* from, though often conflated with, the contemporary American right, or "traditional conservativism." Stenner (2005: 3-5) suggests that the tendency to elide libertarian-authoritarian

ideology under the umbrella of conservatism is in part a consequence of "theoretical permissiveness" as well as, quite simply, bad optics.

Surface judgments of what libertarian-authoritarianism is and how it functions sit atop thin impressions of what it *looks like*: "obedience to authority, moral absolutism and conformity, intolerance and punitiveness toward dissidents and deviants, animosity and aggression against racial and ethnic groups," amongst other things (ibid). The focus on the negative connotations of libertarian-authoritarianism – to the extent that authoritarianism had been labeled a "syndrome" in much academic literature (cf. Adorno et al. 1950, Altemeyer 1981) – has, according to Stenner (2005: 5), meant that it has been ghettoized as an intolerant pathology of conservatism. These negative features have also consumed scholarly attention at the expense of necessary investigation into the ways in which these political ideologies and orientations differ. To this point, Havercroft and Murphy (2018: 1024) describe the contours between conservatism and libertarian-authoritarianism, as well as some of the seemingly contradictory and discrete ideological commitments frequently espoused by proponents of the latter:

> … [C]ommitments to smaller government on the one hand and calls for greater in areas such as morality and immigration on the other hand…. [Libertarians] seem to favor existing entitlement programs such as Social Security and Medicare, while opposing other programs such as Temporary Assistance for Needy Families and the Affordable Care Act… [they] are quite concerned about government intervention with respect to firearms, but are strongly in favor of increased intervention in terms of immigration enforcement and counterterrorism… [and] while [they] express deep concern about government programs aimed at trying to alter the behavior of citizens (such as Michelle Obama's anti-obesity campaign), [they] also express a general concern that America's moral collapse is at the root of most contemporary problems.

As Hochschild (2016b) explains, this libertarian ambivalence toward government is, in part, a cognitive (and emotional) delineation between what is considered *warranted* state intervention or *temporary* aid, contrasted with *handouts* and *welfare* (Fraser and Gordon 1994), the latter seen or felt as undeserved and indefinite (see discussion in Chapter VIII). These types of government – and importantly, *federal* – interventions can elicit equally emotional responses: concerns about fairness and desert, resentment (Hochschild 2016b), righteousness (Haidt 2012), and beliefs about "good" and deserving citizenship.

To some extent, previous literature has addressed the ideological ambivalence embodied in more libertarian-authoritarian political orientations, with Silver and Pickett (2015: 653) distinguishing between "consistent conservatives" and "conflicted conservatives," the latter of whom tend to be less supportive of use of force and are often motivated by what the authors call "utilitarian concerns," such as "the detection and control of deviance," rather than "symbolic ones," which include more "long-term political goals" (Tyler and Boeckmann 1997: 257). Gerber and Jackson's (2017) distinction is even more focused, finding that Americans with right-wing authoritarian (RWA) attitudes and social dominance orientations (SDO), two related political ideologies broadly rooted in a preference for authoritarian control, tend to express more support for excessive use of police force.

Yet neither of these studies – nor in fact any to my knowledge – considers libertarianism as a unique ideological construct predictive of white Americans' support

for excessive force; nor do any of these works examine if news of excessive force influences these underlying political orientations, or more general attitudes about fairness and desert. Thus, by disaggregating this unique, individualist strain of libertarianism – or what Havercroft and Murphy (2018) term "misarchism"[19] – from the typical left-right political spectrum, it is possible to tap into this more idiosyncratic and ambivalent American sensibility which might be both anti-government and pro-state (Havercroft and Murphy 2018: 1025; Carlson 2015; Gau 2008), on the one hand, and highly individualistic and moralistic, on the other.

To capture this libertarian political orientation, I included two additional items: (1) Heath et al. (1994)[20]'s *libertarian-authoritarian* scale as well as their (2) *libertarian left-right* scale, which I term "economic libertarianism." According to Evans et al. (1996: 99),

[19] Havercroft and Murphy (2018: 1023) invoke Nietzsche's (1887/2007) concept of "misarchy," from the Greek *misein* for hatred and *archos* for ruler, as the simultaneous aversion to government and support for the state and traditional morality. Misarchism, according to them, is an "an ideological constellation that combines three general attitudes: (1) anti-government, (2) pro-state, and (3) moralism. Anti-government attitudes are those that reflect opposition to using government policy to improve the condition and behavior of individuals and society in general. Misarchists will, generally, oppose wealth redistribution and any programs that aim at assisting individuals in need. They will also typically oppose government attempts to regulate individual behavior. Pro-state attitudes reflect support for the state using its monopoly on violence to maintain order and confront perceived threats to society. Moralistic attitudes are those that see the cultivation of individual morality rather than government regulation as the best way to promote a good society."

[20] It is important to note that while the Heath et al. scale was devised as two extreme poles to capture attitudes toward state intervention, rather than conflated sentiments, in the twenty-six years since the scale's development, scholars have suggested such a reading should be reconceptualized. In Stenner's *The Authoritarian Dynamic* (2005, CUP: pg. 60-65), for example, she writes it is a misconception to "…. locate authoritarians and libertarians at the opposite extremes of the same dimension… [T]he characters at the libertarian end of the dimension should be as committed to their particular resolution of a dilemma as authoritarians are to theirs, and should be 'activated' in defense of their resolution under the same conditions…. the conditions that challenge both authoritarians' *and* libertarians'… are the appropriate balance between authority and conformity…autonomy and diversity." Stenner suggests libertarians and authoritarians are "indistinguishable… in their perceptions of danger… normative threat…and just world." Moreover, she argues that rather than two extreme poles, this orientation might be better conceived of as part of the "same battle."

these two items "focus almost exclusively on issues of inequality and exploitation," which were critical concepts to tap into for views related to desert and dependency.

III. Public Perceptions of Police and Policing and Support for Excessive Force

In addition to the hypothesized links between an ideological commitment to individualism and support for excessive force, extant literature has also explored the relationship between public trust in police and perceptions of police legitimacy as two factors shaping attitudes towards the use of force (cf., Bradford et al. 2017; Gerber and Jackson 2017). The results presented in the last two chapters, too, document an association between identifying with the group represented by police and a tendency to exculpate their (mis)behavior, within certain limits. Thus, additional items measuring respondents' (a) trust in the effectiveness and fairness of police; and (b) perceptions of police legitimacy were included.

However, before enumerating the trust and legitimacy items, it is worth clarifying a few caveats about people's orientations toward police and police activity. It is necessary to distinguish between *reliance* on police, as an entity tasked with "fighting crime," on the one hand, and *active* support for police violence, on the other. Indeed, it is one thing to be structurally reliant on police and to, for example, phone them when burgled as a necessary (or only) recourse. Similarly, it is also one thing to simply allow police "to get on with it," and quite another thing to actively endorse police activity and violence, and support their decisions, violent or not. On this account, Gerber and Jackson (2017)

emphasize the importance of teasing apart *passive* authorization of police activity from a more *active* moral endorsement of it. Therefore, it was important in the follow-up study to empirically distinguish between two aspects of granting legitimacy to police: normative alignment and the duty to obey.

According to Gerber and Jackson (2017: 5-7): "to feel normatively aligned with the police is to believe that police officers wield their authority in ways that accord with societal expectations about appropriate group conduct" (Jackson et al., 2012a, 2012b; Tyler and Jackson, 2014). Duty to obey, on the other hand, represents a more "deferent stance" toward the institution (Gerber and Jackson 2017); it is about "about allowing the judgments, order and rules of an authority to supersede and replace one's own judgment" (ibid: 6). People who feel a strong duty to obey might allow the police to dictate what is and is not appropriate (ibid) – including, possibly, excessive force. By contrast, normative alignment with police represents a more active moral endorsement: deciding if police behavior accords with one's own values and expectations. Similar to trust, if authority figures act in ways which do not accord with societal expectations about desirable conduct, individuals may no longer feel normatively aligned with police and may withdraw legitimacy and support. To delineate these concepts and empirically test, for example, whether respondents were *actively* endorsing police behavior, normative alignment and duty to obey were included in the subsequent analyses, as well as perceptions of police fairness and effectiveness – or what Hough et al. (2014: 333) summarize as the "[expectation] the police to turn up quickly in emergencies (and assuming that the police treat people with fairness and dignity)."

Beyond an empirical distinction, it was important to include these constructs previous work has found an association between police legitimacy and trust and the support for police use of force (cf., Bradford et al. 2017; Gerber and Jackson 2017). In a representative survey of UK adults, Bradford and colleagues (2017) find that beliefs about the legitimacy of the police were associated with the acceptance of police use of force, but primarily where it appeared *prima facie* justifiable. Gerber and Jackson (2017) similarly find that legitimacy generates support and authorization for the police use of force in the U.S., but again within certain normative limits. Both studies suggest that to the extent that people believe, in a general sense, police are legitimate authorities, they may also judge their decisions and activities as legitimate, just, and proper.

Bradford et al. (2017: 4) explain that police legitimacy, and its associated aspects such as trust, encourage decision-acceptance (Tyler and Huo 2002), and tend to generate support for authorities (Sunshine and Tyler 2003), and is intimately bound up with deference, compliance, and a moral duty to obey (Tyler 2006). That is not to suggest an uncritical or blind deference to police, but that people who, in a general sense, believe police and police activity are broadly aligned with societal expectations regarding the appropriate use of power – that police tend to "do the right thing" – will also tend to judge police action positively (Bradford et al. 2016: 5-6; Jackson et al. 2012a, 2012b). To put it another way, people may justify police violence to the extent that they generally justify police.

Additionally, while these studies demonstrate that legitimacy and trust can generate support for normatively limited use of force, a substantial body of literature also documents the significant cost associated with violent and aggressive policing in relation to public trust and perceptions of legitimacy (cf., Bradford et al. 2014a, 2014b; Jackson et al. 2012; Tyler 2011). Tyler (2011: 256-257), for example, describes how the New York City Police Department's stop-and-frisk practices, considered by many as "harassing and degrading," impeded compliance and voluntary cooperation with police, and undermined both legitimacy and trust.

One might therefore reasonably expect that reading about an incident of unjustified police violence, as is in this study, would be accompanied by a concomitant loss of trust and legitimacy, across racial conditions (though Harkin 2015a, 2015b argues it is possible legitimacy may increase after learning about stories in which violence is directed at denigrated outgroups). Thus again, testing the scale items both before and after exposure to the experimental vignettes could determine the extent to which perceptions of trust and legitimacy predicted the endorsement of police violence; and the effect, if any, of police violence on public trust and legitimacy.

IV. Research Design

Research Question and Hypotheses

As discussed above, the principal aim of this survey was to determine (a) whether reading about excessive force caused variation in the attitudes and opinions represented in a battery of items (e.g., just world, social identity, libertarian politics, etc.); and/ or (b) whether these constructs predicted responses to police violence.

More specifically, the first set of hypotheses is that, congruent with the results of the first survey, the experimental manipulation describing an instance of excessive force will *not* have an effect on most of the theoretically relevant attitudes and ideologies represented in the scale items, with the exception of public perceptions of policing:

H_{1a}: Police violence will not affect just-world attitudes, congruent with the findings of the previous two chapters

H_{1b}: Police violence will not affect libertarian orientations, as like just-world beliefs, these are deep-seated ideological orientations unlikely to be moved by accounts of excessive force

H_{1c}: Stories of police violence will negatively affect social identity, or respondents' willingness to identify with the group police may be said to represent

H_{1d}: Police violence will negatively affect public trust in police and perceptions of legitimacy

The second set of hypotheses is that these attitudes and ideologies related to personal responsibility and group identity will shape the way that police violence is "read."

H_{2a}: Just world beliefs will positively predict support for excessive force, congruent with the findings of the previous two chapters as well as extant literature.

H_{2b}: Libertarian-authoritarian ideologies will positively predict support for excessive force, as those who value ethical self-management and governance, and maintain a deep respect for order and authority, will endorse the actions of powerholders, especially when directed at those perceived as "deviant."

H_{2c}: The relationship between individualist orientations and support for excessive force will not vary according to the race of the protagonists involved in the encounter, as in this case "responsibility" is more salient than "race"

H_{2c}: Social identity will be negatively associated with the acceptance of violence, per the previous experimental work

H_{2d}: Public trust and legitimacy will not predict the acceptance of excessive force, per work by Bradford et al. (2017)

Participants and Procedure

Participants were randomly assigned to either a treatment condition, depicting a scenario of police violence, or a control condition, describing a mundane nightly police patrol in which the officer's actions would likely be justified. Because these were not technically assessments of police violence, respondents in this condition were excluded in some pieces of analysis.

Additionally, half the respondents answered a battery of constructs before the manipulation, and the other half answered them after. The pretest/posttest split allowed better testing of the effect news of excessive force had on respondents' assessments of, and identification with, police, and on their relationship to the wider world; and what attitudes and ideological orientations shape how police violence was understood. See Methods Chapter for further explication.

Constructs and Measures

Five key items measured the theoretically relevant attitudes and ideologies. These constructs were used in different parts of the analyses as dependent variables or independent variables, according to the hypotheses and the order in which respondents received the measures in the pretest/posttest split. For example, they were treated as independent variables when participants answered them prior to exposure to the treatment condition, and as dependent variables if participants answered them after exposure to the vignette.

Belief in a Just World: See item details in previous chapter.

Social Identity: See item details in previous chapter.

Libertarian Political Ideology: Two dimensions of political ideology were considered: libertarian-authoritarianism and economic libertarianism. Libertarian-authoritarianism

was measured using a four-item scale adapted from Heath et al. (1994): (1) Young people today don't have enough respect for traditional American values; (2) People who break the law should be given stiffer sentences; (3) For some crimes, the death penalty is the most appropriate sentence; (4) The law should always be obeyed, even if a particular law is wrong. Responses ranged from 1=strongly disagree to 6=strongly agree. Cronbach's alpha for this index was .89. To measure Economic Libertarianism, respondents were asked to evaluate (1= strongly disagree to 6 = strongly agree) the following statements: (1) The government should redistribute income from those who are better off to those who are less well off; (2) Big business benefits owners at the expense of workers; Ordinary working people do not get their fair share of the nation's wealth; (4) There is one law for the rich, and one for the poor; (5) Management will always try to get the better of employees if it gets the chance. Cronbach's alpha was .82.

Trust in the Police: To assess respondents' trust in the fairness of police, they were asked to rate four statements about police in their community: (1) Police would treat you with respect if you had contact with them for any reason; (2) The police in my community treat everyone fairly regardless of who they are; (3) Police are dealing with the things that matter to people in this community; (4) The police in this area listen to the concerns of local people. Responses alternatives ranged from 1 = strongly disagree to 6 = strongly agree. Similarly, to measure respondents' trust in the effectiveness of police, respondents were asked to rate from 1= "not at all well" to 4= "very well": How well do you think police in your community… (1) Prevent terrorism; (2) Respond to emergencies promptly; (3) Provide a visible patrolling presence; (4) Tackle gun/knife

crime. The two sub-scales were combined into a single trust item. Cronbach's alpha for the combined scale was .88.

Police Legitimacy*:* Congruent with previous work (cf., Jackson et al. 2012; Gerber and Jackson 2017), legitimacy was considered across two dimensions: normative alignment and duty to obey. Respondents' normative alignment – or belief "that police officers wield their authority in ways that accord with societal expectations about appropriate group conduct" (Gerber and Jackson 2017: 84) – was measured using a five-item scale adapted from Jackson and Bradford (2014) (1="strongly disagree", 6 = strongly agree"): (1) The police usually act in ways that are consistent with my own ideas of right and wrong; (2) The police can be trusted to make the right decisions; (3) The police have generally the same sense of right and wrong as I do; (4); The police stand up for values that are important to people like me; (5) Most of the time when the police arrest a person there is a good reason to believe the person has done something wrong. Cronbach's alpha was .95.

The duty to obey police, or allowing the judgments, order, and rules of the police to supersede and replace one's own judgment (Gerber and Jackson 2017: 84), was measured using a two-item sub-scale asking respondents to indicate the extent to which they believed the following statements were their moral duty (1= "not at all my duty" to 4= "completely my duty"). This was again adapted from Jackson and Bradford (2014). (1) Do what the police tell you even if you don't understand the reasons; (2) Do what police tell you to do, even if you don't like how they treat you. The duty to obey the law

was assessed using a five-item sub-scale asking respondents to evaluate (1= "not at all" to 6= "always") the statements: (1) All laws should be strictly obeyed; (2) Doing the right thing always means obeying the law; (3); Even if you disagree with the law, you should always obey it; (4); The law represents the values and interests of the people in power, rather than the values and interests of people like yourself; (5); Obeying the law ultimately benefits everyone in society; (6) It is important that everybody obeys the law, no matter what position they have in society. The two sub-scales were combined into a single duty to obey item, with a Cronbach's alpha of .92.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for Test Variables

	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Appropriateness of violence	491*	1	6	2.17	1.31
Police officer acting in community's best interest	491*	1	6	2.76	1.51
Another police officer would've done the same thing	491*	1	6	3.51	1.28
Police officer wrong	491*	1	5	4.10	.98
Suspect culpability	491*	1	4	2.67	.89
Social Identity	660	1	6	4.50	.74
Belief in a just world	660	1	6	3.70	1.20
Libertarian-authoritarianism	660	1	6	3.78	1.20
Economic libertarianism	660	1	6	4.11	1.22
Trust in police	660	1	5	3.79	.70
Normative alignment	660	1	6	4.42	1.06
Duty to obey	660	1	5	3.80	.81

*NB: excludes those allocated to experimental control

Analyses

Analyses follow the pattern of the previous chapters, proceeding in two stages. The first stage of analyses evaluates whether exposure to the experimental manipulation – news

of excessive force – shifts attitudes toward the police and underlying ideological orientations and political preferences. The second stage of the analyses evaluates the ideological correlates of support for excessive force across these intra- and interracial dyads.

V. Experimental Results

Measuring the Effect of Reading about Police Violence on Individualist Ideologies

First, a series of seven fitted linear regressions were estimated to test, separately, the effect news of excessive force had on the key variables of interest. For this analysis, these key variables are treated as dependent variables, as this sample of respondents answered the constructs after exposure to the manipulation. A review of tolerance levels and variance inflation factors indicated that multicollinearity was not a concern in any of the analyses.

Table 2[21] shows the standardized regression coefficient (Betas) for respondents' just world beliefs, libertarian-authoritarianism, economic libertarianism, social identity, trust in police, duty to obey police, and normative alignment with police. The control condition is the reference category.

[21] Full regression, with unstandardized betas, standard errors, and significance levels, shown in Table 5 in appendices.

Table 2: Regression coefficients for test variables (n=664)

	White Cop/Black Suspect Condition – Implied Race	White Cop/White Suspect Condition – Implied Race	White Cop/Black Suspect Condition – Explicit Race	R^2
BJW	-.06	-.04	.03	.003
LIB-AUTH	-.03	.01	-.001	.001
Econ lib	.03	-.002	.004	.001
SID	-.06	-.03	-.08†	.005
Trust	-.15**	-.10*	-.12**	.02
DO	-.08†	-.02	-.06	.01
NA	-.14**	-.06	-.10*	.02

†p<0.10; *p<.05; **p<.01

Results suggest that, as hypothesized, news of excessive force does not have a wholesale negative impact, as it showed no effect for most of the response variables. Respondents' just-world beliefs, libertarian ideology, identification as law-abiding Americans (SID), and felt obligation to obey the police remained unaffected by news of police violence, regardless of the race of the actors involved. Respondents' trust in the police, however, declined, though again irrespective of race; as did their normative alignment with police. These latter two findings are important as this suggests that the experimental manipulation – news of police violence – *did* have the intended effect on some of the expected response variables.

Taken together, the results reported above indicate that quite unlike more immediate and interactional assessments of policing – like normative alignment with and trust in police – ambient attitudes about justice and identity seem to form a more durable set of beliefs, unmoved by news of even obvious instances of injustice. These findings echo Stenner (2005) and Friedersdorf's (2019) contention that "authoritarians and…

libertarians have powerful, largely innate and highly durable psychological predispositions that affect how they react."

Interestingly, and contrary to the hypotheses, social identity was not negatively impacted by the experimental manipulation. This was somewhat surprising, particularly given that normative alignment and trust deteriorated after exposure to the vignette. As Bradford et al. (2017: 4) argue, social identity is, by nature, reflexive and may attenuate or be withdrawn if people find that their "group representatives" do not live up to widely accepted norms of fairness. Yet these findings also speak to a resilience and entrenchment of group identity, and possibly, a sense in which strong identifiers' self-concept and membership to the law-abiding community is deeply embedded. However, it is also the case that a once-off, relatively weak treatment does little to replicate the complexity and intensity of the real world; a more striking manipulation or longitudinal design might demonstrate vastly different effects. Moreover, how and when social identity is activated and renegotiated still remains nebulous and requires further exploration in future research.

Nevertheless, the results speak to the likely deep-seated and resilient nature of these ideologies, which may form part of a bedrock of how white Americans "see" and "experience" the world, at least as it pertains to instances of excessive force. It also leaves open the relationship and extent to which these ideologies are affected by other assessments of legitimacy and trust in police – a topic explored in the following empirical chapter.

VI. Correlational Analyses

Do Individualist Ideologies and Attitudes Shape the Way Violence is Read?

Next, to determine if the attitudes and ideological commitments to personal responsibility, predicted support for police violence, I homed in on the respondents who received the scale items *before* exposure to the experimental treatments. Results from a series of binary logistic regression models are shown in Table 3. For each model, controls as well as key test variables of interest – e.g., just-world beliefs, libertarian-authoritarianism, economic libertarianism, and social identity – are included. A review of tolerance levels and variance inflation factors indicated that multicollinearity was not a concern in any of the analyses (see appendix for correlation matrix). The treatment condition implicating a white officer against a black suspect, in which both actors' race is explicitly stated, is used as the reference category. Participants in the control condition (n=169) are excluded as it depicts a scenario which cannot technically be evaluated as violence.

Models 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7 introduce a number of interaction terms between the treatment condition and the independent variables of interest. The interaction terms test if these ideological constructs vary according to the race of the suspect involved in the scenario.

Table 3: Binary logistic regression predicting approval of excessive force, for white respondents receiving constructs before experimental treatment (n=491)

	Model 1	*Model 2*	*Model 3*	*Model 4*	*Model 5*	*Model 6*	*Model 7*
Controls							
White Cop vs. Black Suspect– Implicit	.15	-.27	.70	-.08	-.06	-.63	1.14
White Cop vs. White Suspect– Implicit	-.24	1.21	.60	-.65	-1.09	1.30	1.08
White Cop vs. Black Suspect– Explicit (Ref)							
Trust in Police	-.01	.01	-.03	-.01	-.02	.001	.21
Police Legitimacy	-.56	-.56	-.56	-.56	-.56	-.54	-.58†
Independent Variables							
Social Identity	-.22	-.16	-.21	-.22	-.21	-.19	-.21
Belief in Just World	.72**	.72**	.84**	.73**	.73**	.73**	.71**
Libertarianism-Authoritarianism	.78**	.79**	.78**	.73**	.78**	.78**	.79**
Economic Libertarianism	.11	.11	.11	.11	.03	.11	.12
Interaction Terms							
White Cop/Black Suspect Implicit*SID Interaction		.09					
White Cop/White Suspect Implicit*SID Interaction		-.31					
White Cop/Black Suspect Implicit*BJW Interaction			-.13				
White Cop/White Suspect Implicit*BJW Interaction			-.20				

White Cop/Black Suspect Implicit*LIB-AUTH Interaction				.05			
White Cop/White Suspect Implicit*LIB-AUTH Interaction				.09			
White Cop/Black Suspect Implicit*Econ-Libertarian Interaction					.06		
White Cop/White Suspect Implicit* Econ-Libertarian Interaction					.22		
White Cop/Black Suspect Implicit*LEGIT Interaction						.18	
White Cop/White Suspect Implicit*LEGIT Interaction						-.36	
White Cop/Black Suspect Implicit*TRUST Interaction							-.25
White Cop/White Suspect Implicit*LEGIT Interaction							-.33
Overall Model Evaluation	72.65**	72.65**	73.00**	72.73**	73.35**	74.30**	72.65**

*p>.05
**p<.01
†p < .10.

Results show a significant and strong association between strong just-world and libertarian-authoritarian attitudes and the approval of excessive force, as hypothesized. However, economic libertarianism showed no significant effect, suggesting that the way people read and process news of excessive force may be through quite specific parameters, in which more distant issues of economic unfairness are not implicated.

Congruent with the hypotheses and the findings in the previous two chapters, social identity did not show a significant association with the acceptance of excessive force. Also congruent with the hypotheses, perceptions of trust and legitimacy in police were not associated with support for excessive force. This reiterates work by Bradford et al. (2017: 1), who find that "beliefs about the legitimacy of the police were associated with acceptance [of violence], but primarily in relation only to the use of force in situations where it appeared prima facie justifiable."

As hypothesized, the association between these attitudes and the appropriateness of police violence did not vary by the race of the protagonists involved in the encounter, as none of the interaction terms showed a significant effect. In other words, those high in just-world attitudes and strong libertarian-authoritarian orientations appear to support violence, regardless of the race of the actors involved.

VI. Discussion of Results

In reviewing the results of this study, it should first be noted that the data and subsequent inferences presented in this chapter are effectively drawn from two different cross-sectional samples, and thus direct comparisons between those who received the scale items prior to exposure to the experimental treatment and those who received the scale items after exposure to the experimental treatment should be made with caution. However, random assignment to the "before" and "after" groups means that several important implications can be addressed with some confidence.

First, the results of this study suggest that police violence does not have a *wholesale* negative impact (at least immediately), as is frequently and intuitively assumed. Rather, results suggest that excessive force had almost *no* effect on certain ideologies and dispositions related to personal responsibility. Respondents' sense of just deserts, that things happen for a reason, their libertarian political ideology, and their identification with and as law-abiding Americans remained virtually unchanged by the stories of violence committed by police, regardless of the racial identities of the actors involved. One interpretation of this is that these orientations and ideologies centering on personal responsibility are resilient and possibly distinct from more proximal judgments of trust in and normative alignment with police, and are able to withstand cases of excessive force. Moreover, that even as public trust in police and perceptions of legitimacy suffer from news of violence (in the short term, at least), overall identification with the police and ideological commitments to the ideals of individualism do not. This may, in part, explain the general maintenance of public support for police, in spite of over half a century of scandals and violence.

Therefore, the results presented above partially validate the first set of hypotheses, confirming that the experimental vignette depicting a story of intra- and inter-racial police violence did not shift underlying political orientations or ideologies related to personal responsibility. This echoes and extends Stenner's (2005) argument that libertarian-authoritarian beliefs as well as preferences for a just world are highly durable and powerful psychological predispositions. The experimental manipulation also showed no effect on respondents' social identity, contrary to hypotheses, which also speaks to the stability of group membership and respondents' willingness to identify with, and *be* identified with, the group a represented by police, even when police act outside the prescriptive legal and ethical norms of the group.

The second critical implication that can be drawn from these analyses is that these psychological orientations ideologies prioritizing individualism also predicted public support for police violence, while, again, themselves remaining largely unmoved by news of excessive force. This seems to lend support for the idea that the ideologies implicated in the reception and processing of stories of police violence have something of a one-way relationship with accounts of excessive force: they are able to shape and mobilize attitudes toward policing – the way violent accounts are "read" – without themselves being drastically affected. That is, judgments of police violence may sit at something of a cognitive break, in which people make normative judgments about the rightness or wrongness of violence based on more general assessments of the fairness of the world or their willingness to be a part of the group police may be said to represent (Bradford et al. 2017), but police violence doesn't necessarily seem to have

subsequent knock-on effects on these more general assessments. That is, reading about an instance of unfairness committed by those tasked with enforcing the law did not translate into a more ambient sense of unfairness in life, nor did it undermine respondents' sense of group membership to the law-abiding community.

Therefore, the results presented above also partially validate the second set of hypotheses, confirming that individualist orientations predict support for excessive force. Respondents with strong just-world and libertarian-authoritarian preferences were more likely to support violence, regardless of the race of the protagonists involved in the encounter, though economic libertarianism showed no effect. These findings reiterate Gerber and Jackson's (2017) argument that violent policing requires a justification that is highly ideological in nature. The simultaneous effects of belief in a just world (BJW) and libertarian-authoritarianism (LIB-AUTH) suggest that there are two different but related ideological motivations for supporting police violence, which both center on issues of desert, responsibility, and individual autonomy.

Taken together, these findings shed light on how police violence is understood and read; and to the extent that excessive force is filtered through this deep-seated ideological lens, the findings presented here may contextualize the long-standing public affinity toward police, and why news of violence often seems to mobilize little to no ideological shift for so many and elicit a neutral, if agnostic, reaction.

All of these claims, however, again must be qualified by the limitations of the current research. The cross-sectional nature of these studies only allows but a snapshot into respondents' ideologies and the impacts of police brutality; a longitudinal design would enable better tracking of these ideologies, and how they develop and change over time, or if and how there are more gradual and latent impacts to news of police violence. It is possible that police brutality bears a more accretive impact on individuals' ideologies and sense of group identity, or that its impact is and was insufficiently captured by a relatively weak treatment, clearly confined to the artificial parameters of an experimental study. Additionally, this study was carried out using a convenience sample of American citizens; a representative replication of this study would allow better generalizability to a broader population. Finally, findings presented here suggest that support for police excessive force is highly ideological in nature, with a belief in a just world and libertarian-authoritarianism being relevant predictors. Future empirical research is required to examine the different reasons why individuals high in these orientations express support for brutality, and whether these are applicable to the *justifiable* use of police force.

Chapter 7

Testing the Relationship between Individualist Ideology and Attributions of Police Legitimacy and Trust: Making Sense of the Impact of Brutality on Perceptions of Police

I. Introduction

The analyses in the preceding chapter documented two notable findings: first, exposure to news of excessive force resulted in a deterioration of public trust in and normative alignment with police, though it did not seem to affect any change in respondents' ideologies or commitments to personal responsibility and group identity (e.g., BJW, LIB-AUTH, ECON-LIB, SID). Second, many of these individualist orientations themselves predicted support for violent policing. That is, those expressing strong just-world and libertarian-authoritarian preferences were more inclined to support excessive force.

The analyses presented in the previous chapter therefore raised some important questions about the relationship these individualist orientations share with police legitimacy and trust, including how and why white Americans' affinities toward police persist in the face of a long and consistent history of brutality. One possible explanation for the resilience of many Americans' relationship to the police is that these ideologies which prioritize personal responsibility and desert also predict assessments of police

legitimacy and trust. In other words, while more immediate judgments of trust and normative alignment with police may suffer in the short term from news of excessive force, these assessments may ultimately *rebound*, as they draw on the deep-seated ideological commitments to personal responsibility and group identity, which remain unaffected by stories of police violence.

This chapter provides empirical evidence for this link, examining the relationship between individualist ideology (e.g., BJW, LIB-AUTH, ECON-LIB) and social identity, on the one hand, and perceptions of police legitimacy and trust, on the other. I conclude with some of the theoretical and material implications for these findings.

II. The Association between Individualist Ideology and Police Trust and Legitimacy

System-Justifying Ideologies and Motivations to Trust and Legitimate Authorities

As noted earlier, analyses in the previous chapter showed some of the significant, positive correlations between just-world attitudes, libertarian-authoritarianism, economic libertarianism, social identity, trust in police, and perceptions of police legitimacy (see pairwise correlation matrix depicted in appendices). However, questions remained as to the more specific relationship between these variables.

Moreover, this left open questions, on a theoretical level, about how or why individualist ideologies can or should predict trust and legitimacy in the police. Previous literature, such as work by Jost and Hunyady (2005), documents the association between certain ideologies, including belief in just world, and increased trust in and perceptions of legitimacy of authorities. The researchers (2005: 260) identify several distinct but related "system-justifying" ideologies, or belief-systems premised on psychological biases favoring "the way things are, so that existing social, economic, and political arrangements tend to be perceived as fair and legitimate." Psychological motivations, such as a desire for cognitive consistency, a motivational tendency to rationalize the status quo, and a differential perception of situational and dispositional factors, predispose individuals to believe that "the way things are" are as they *should* be (see also, "is-ought" fallacy, Hume 1739).

Among these types of belief-systems, as enumerated by Jost and Hunyady (2005: 260-263), are a belief in a just world and other political orientations similar to libertarian-authoritarianism, including political conservatism; right-wing authoritarianism; social dominance orientation; meritocratic ideology; and esteem for the Protestant work ethic (see *Table 1*).

Table 1: System-Justifying Ideologies, from Jost & Hunyady (2005)

Ideology	Descriptive Content
Belief in Just World	People typically get what they deserve; with regard to outcomes, what ''is'' is what ''ought'' to be (Lerner 1980).
Meritocratic Ideology	The system rewards individual ability and motivation; success is an indicator of personal deservingness (Jost, Pelham, et al. 2003).

Protestant Work Ethic	People have a moral responsibility to work hard; hard work is a virtue and is its own reward (Jost & Hunyady 2002)
Social Dominance Orientation	Some groups are superior to others; preference for group-based hierarchy (Sidanius and Pratto 1999).
Right-Wing Authoritarianism	People should follow conventional traditions and established authorities (Altemeyer 1998).
Political Conservatism	Traditional institutions in society should be preserved; social and economic inequality is acceptable and natural (Jost, Glaser, et al. 2003).

According to the researchers, these system-justifying ideologies correlate with each other, as well as with trust in and perceptions of legitimacy in authorities. Rubin and Peplau (1975), too, find a belief in a just world, specifically, to be linked to a value for authority and increased trust in the directives of authorities. Building on this, it is likely that those evincing strong just world preferences will be predisposed to support police activity (including violence, as shown in the previous empirical chapters) and to evaluate police behavior as normatively appropriate and legitimate. In part because, as Jost and Major (2001) argue, there is a tendency to (over) identify police with order, stability, and the maintenance and enforcement of the status quo: if the world is ordered as it should be, police too are behaving as they should.

Few academic studies have directly examined the impact of libertarian-authoritarian preferences on perceptions of US police. However, Gerber and Jackson (2017: 89) find that right-wing authoritarianism (RWA), a political orientation similar to libertarian-authoritarianism in its regard for order and "tough" responses to crime (see *Table 1*), to be associated with higher levels of police legitimacy in instances of justifiable police use

of force. Similarly, Silver and Pickett (2015) find "consistent conservativism," a political orientation concerned with the quality of government performance vis-à-vis their perceptions of social conditions, to be the strongest predictor of trust in the police (see preceding chapter for detailed discussion).

In France, Roché and Roux (2017) find that attributions of police fairness are not only interactional (i.e., related to what police actually do), but emerge, for the most part, from social and political ideologies. Specifically, the authors find that respondents' ideological levels of punitivism and conservatism predicted assessments of police fairness and procedural justice. Importantly, Roché and Roux (2017) also find the effect for respondent ethnicity to become less significant as individuals express more stringent attitudes vis-à-vis the enforcement of laws, or what the authors term, "legalism." This finding may give credence to the ideas presented earlier in this thesis (Chapter V and VI): that there is perhaps a more subtle and indirect relationship between race and racism and attitudes toward police, perhaps mediated through or conditional upon political ideology and more ambient beliefs about personal responsibility.

While, again, none of these studies test for libertarian-authoritarianism (though see work by Yesberg and Bradford 2018 in the U.K.) on attitudes toward excessive force or perceptions of police legitimacy and trust, it is important to note the growing literature in policing vis-à-vis the political and ideological antecedents of attitudes toward police and policing.

On the basis of this literature and the previous empirical findings presented in this thesis, I suggest that white Americans' attributions of legitimacy and trust to police, as perceived defenders of an existing social and political order, will be highly value-oriented: underpinned by and filtered through preferences for right-leaning values (Roché and Roux 2017). Without collapsing these distinct psychological constructs (*Table 1*) into a deference to or endorsement of all authority, it does seem likely that just-world and libertarian-authoritarian orientations – or "individualist ideologies" – will predict both trust in police and perceptions of legitimacy, as authorities symbolic of, and tasked with the maintenance of, law and order.

Individualist Orientations and the Relationship Between Trust and Legitimacy

It also should be emphasized that trust and legitimacy are two separate evaluations of policing. The former, in this case, being operationalized as an evaluation of police performance (e.g., the extent to which police are fair, effective, and instrumentally equipped to handle day-to-day tasks); the latter being a *felt* obligation to obey police and a sense that police and police behavior are normatively aligned with one's own values (e.g., tapping into a more expressive quality). While previous research has documented the importance of both trust and legitimacy in wider evaluations of policing (Tyler and Huo 2003; Sunshine and Tyler 2003; Jackson et al. 2012a, 2012b), and in relation to each other (Bradford et al. 2014; Huq et al. 2016; Bradford et al. 2017) (e.g., beliefs about police effectiveness/trust influence attributions legitimacy), it is

possible that individualist ideologies can alter the dynamic animating this relationship. That is, the stronger one's just world beliefs and libertarian-authoritarian preferences – and presumably, one's esteem for authorities and association of police with "how things should be" – the less important what police actually *do* is in terms of appraisals of legitimacy. Hypothetically, then, respondents expressing strong individualist preferences should still appraise police as legitimate, even as trust deteriorates.

This, in some sense, echoes Roché and Roux (2017), who assert that the interactional elements of policing (i.e., assessments of police performance and trust) are less important to attributions of fairness and legitimacy, than deeper underlying political ideologies. In a similar vein, Bradford et al. (2017: 6) suggest that "people's reasons for feeling a sense of shared group membership with police are unlikely to be limited to fairness/unfairness, and may instead relate in important ways to their social and political embeddedness and affiliation."

III. Research Design

Research Questions and Hypotheses

As discussed above, findings in the preceding chapter demonstrated some of the empirical links between individualist orientations, measured in just-world and libertarian-authoritarian attitudes, on the one hand, and support for police excessive force, on the other; as well as the apparently negative effect stories of police violence

had on respondents' trust and normative alignment with police, contrasted with the lack of impact they made on respondents' social identity, just-world attitudes, and libertarian orientations.

In order to clarify this relationship and test whether these individualist ideologies predicted positive perceptions of police, and therefore, in turn potentially buoying many white Americans' assessments of police in the face of otherwise deleterious stories of violence, three empirical hypotheses were tested:

H_1: Individualist orientations (BJW, LIB-AUTH, ECON LIB) and social identity will positively predict trust in police.

H_2: Individualist orientations (BJW, LIB-AUTH, ECON LIB) and social identity will positively predict perceptions of police legitimacy.

H_3: Individualist orientations (BJW, LIB-AUTH, ECON LIB) and social identity will positively predict perceptions of police legitimacy, net of trust, because these assessments are, in some sense, rooted less in what police actually *do*, and instead in deep-seated ideological beliefs about how society should be organized and ordered.

Participants and Procedure

The analyses in this chapter uses the data, measures, and constructs from the second online survey (see discussion in Chapters V, VI, and VII).

Constructs and Measures

See preceding chapter for detailed inventory of items and alphas (Chapter VI).

Analyses

Analyses focuses on three sub-samples, according to the order in which respondents received the battery of scale items in relation to the experimental vignette: (1) before exposure to the experimental vignette (*n*=665); (2) after exposure to the experimental vignette (*n*=669); (3) or the full analytic sample (*n*=1324). For more detailed account of the process and justification for this, see preceding chapter.

IV. Results

To test whether individualist ideologies predict trust in police (Table 2) and perceptions of police legitimacy (Table 3), I estimated a series of linear regressions for each sub-sample of respondents, according to when they received the battery of scale items. Model 1 in each table represents respondents who answered the battery of scale items before exposure to the experimental manipulation; Model 2 represents those who answered them after exposure to the experimental manipulation; and Model 3

represents the full analytic sample. The white police officer/black suspect condition in which race is explicitly stated is used as the reference category.

Table 2: Regression predicting trust in police

	Model 1 (n=659)					Model 2 (n= 664)					Model 3 (n=1324)				
	B	*S.E. B*	*β*	*t*	*p*	*B*	*S.E. B*	*β*	*t*	*p*	*B*	*S.E. B*	*β*	*t*	*p*
Controls															
White Cop/Black Suspect Condition – Implicit	.07	.05	.04	1.42	.16	-.10	.05	-.06	-2.02	.04	-.01	.04	-.01	-.41	.68
White Cop/White Suspect Condition – Implicit	.09	.05	.05	1.76	.08	-.06	.05	-.04	-1.24	.22	.01	.04	.01	.26	.80
White Cop/White Suspect Condition – Explicit (REF)															
Predictors															
Social Identity	.31	.03	.33	9.94	.00	.31	.03	.33	10.10	.00	.31	.22	.33	14.12	.00
Belief in Just World	.18	.02	.30	7.72	.00	.24	.02	.40	10.49	.00	.21	.02	.35	12.90	.00
Libertarian-Authoritarianism	.09	.02	.16	4.34	.00	.05	.02	.09	2.38	.02	.07	.02	.12	4.76	.00
Economic Libertarianism	-.05	.02	-.08	-2.54	.01	-.01	.02	-.02	-.72	.47	-.03	.01	-.05	-2.22	.03
R^2			.46					.46					.46		

NB: "economic libertarianism" is coded is such that negative = more libertarian
**p<.01.; *p<.05.; †p < .10.

Table 3: Regression predicting police legitimacy

	Model 1 (n=659)					Model 2 (n= 664)					Model 3 (n=1324)				
	B	*S.E. B*	*β*	*t*	*p*	*B*	*S.E. B*	*β*	*t*	*p*	*B*	*S.E. B*	*β*	*t*	*p*
Controls															
White Cop/Black Suspect Condition – Implicit	.07	.05	.04	1.49	.14	-.01	.05	-.05	-1.96	.05	-.01	.04	-.01	-.26	.79
White Cop/White Suspect Condition – Implicit	.05	.05	.03	1.03	.30	-.003	.05	-.002	-.07	.95	.02	.04	.01	.66	.51
White Cop/White Suspect Condition – Explicit (REF)															
Predictors															
Social Identity	.36	.03	.32	11.29	.00	.36	.03	.32	12.21	.00	.36	.02	.32	16.57	.00
Belief in Just World	.20	.02	.29	8.83	.00	.25	.02	.34	11.16	.00	.23	.02	.32	14.09	.00
Libertarian-Authoritarianism	.22	.02	.32	10.27	.00	.22	.02	.31	10.41	.00	.22	.02	.32	14.70	.00
Economic Libertarianism	-.06	.02	-.09	-3.37	.00	-.04	.02	-.06	-2.25	.03	-.05	.01	-.07	-3.93	.00
R^2	.62					.64					.79				

NB: "economic libertarianism" is coded is such that negative = more libertarian
**p<.01.; *p<.05.; †p < .10.

Hypothesis 1: *Testing if Individualist Ideologies Predict in Trust in Police*

Results reported in Table 2 indicate that each of the individualist ideological constructs and social identity were positively associated with trust in the police, consistent with the hypothesis. The most significant predictors of trust in the police in Model 1 were social identity (β = .31, p<.01) and just-world beliefs (β = .18, p<.01), and to a much lesser extent, libertarian-authoritarianism (β = .09, p<.01). This accords with the substantial literature (cf., Bradford 2014; Bradford et al. 2017) documenting a positive association between social identity and trust in police. It also echoes previous work, which has found system-justifying ideologies, like a belief in just world, to positively correlate with trust in authorities (Jost and Hunyady 2005), as well as work by Roché and Roux (2017) documenting an association between political conservatism and punitivism with attributions of fairness and legitimacy. These findings also make sense in light of the value libertarians and those high in just world beliefs tend to place on authority and trust in institutions, like police. Model 1 explains 46% of the variance in trust in police.

For those respondents who answered the scale items after the treatment conditions (Model 2), just-world orientations were again positively and more significantly associated with assessments of trust (β = .24, p<.01). This may, in part, be due to a heightened need to restore faith in the justice, or "the way things are," following an incident of uncertainty (Lerner 1980; Hogg 2003). Social identity, too, showed a positive association (β = .31, p<.01); as did libertarian-authoritarian attitudes (β = .05, p<.01)

and, to a much lesser extent, economic libertarianism (β = -.01, p<.01). Model 2 explains 46% of the variance in trust in police.

Model 3 shows the full analytic sample for respondents answering the scales both before and after the treatment conditions (n=1324). Social identity (β = .32, p<.01) and, to a slightly lesser extent, just-world attitudes (β = .21 p<.01) were again the most significant predictors of trust in the police, followed by libertarian-authoritarianism (β = .07 p<.01) and economic libertarianism (β = -.03, p<.01), to a much lesser degree. Model 3 explains 46% of the variance in trust in the police.

Hypothesis 2: *Testing if Individualist Ideologies Predict Police Legitimacy*

Results reported in Table 3 show a similar pattern, confirming the hypothesis that individualist ideologies and social identity predict legitimacy assessments. Across all three models, the most significant predictor of legitimacy was social identity ($\beta \geq .36$, p<.01), followed by libertarian-authoritarianism ($\beta \geq .22$, p<.01) and just-world preferences ($\beta \geq .20$, p<.01). This parallels earlier work (c.f., Bradford et al. 2017) documenting a positive association between identifying with the group represented by the police and conceiving of them as legitimate; as well as work by Jost and Major (2001), finding that those with high just world beliefs tend to legitimize the actions and behaviors of authorities. It also echoes work by Roché and Roux (2017) documenting an association between right-leaning political affiliation and attributions of legitimacy. Economic libertarianism was only slightly correlated with legitimacy ($\beta \geq -.06$ p<.01).

Table 3 explains over 60% of the variance in attributions of police legitimacy, suggesting a high degree of fit.

Hypothesis 3: Testing if Individualist Ideologies will Predict Police Legitimacy, net of Trust

Next, to test whether individualist ideologies predicted evaluations of police legitimacy, independent of evaluations of trust in police, I repeated the analyses as above but controlled for the trust item. Results are reported in Table 4 below.

Table 4: Regression predicting police legitimacy, net of trust

	Model 1 (n=659)					Model 2 (n= 664)					Model 3 (n=1324)				
	B	*S.E. B*	*β*	*t*	*p*	*B*	*S.E. B*	*β*	*t*	*p*	*B*	*S.E. B*	*β*	*t*	*p*
Controls															
White Cop/Black Suspect Condition – Implicit	.03	.04	.02	.80	.43	-.04	.04	-.02	-.97	.33	-.001	.03	.00	-.03	.98
White Cop/White Suspect Condition – Implicit	-.001	.04	-.001	-.03	.98	.03	.04	.02	.78	.43	.02	.03	.01	.63	.53
White Cop/White Suspect Condition – Explicit (REF)															
Trust in Police	.61	.03	.51	19.15	.00	.56	.03	.47	17.98	.00	.59	.02	.49	26.49	.00
Predictors															
Social Identity	.17	.03	.16	6.20	.00	.19	.03	.17	7.28	.00	.18	.02	.16	9.51	.00
Belief in Just World	.10	.02	.14	5.02	.00	.11	.02	.16	5.81	.00	.10	.01	.15	7.56	.00
Libertarian-Authoritarianism	.16	.02	.24	9.40	.00	.19	.02	.27	11.00	.00	.18	.01	.26	14.60	.00
Economic Libertarianism	-.04	.02	-.05	2.30	.02	-.03	.02	-.05	-2.24	.03	-.04	.01	-.50	-3.22	.00
R^2			.76					.76					.76		

NB: "economic libertarianism" is coded is such that negative = more libertarian
**p<.01.; *p<.05.; †p < .10.

Congruent with the hypotheses, results in Table 4 show each of ideological constructs correlate with legitimacy, net of trust. Across all three models, the strongest predictor of legitimacy was social identity ($\beta \geq .17$, $p<.05$), followed by libertarian-authoritarianism ($\beta \geq .16$, $p<.01$) and just-world attitudes ($\beta \geq .10$, $p<.01$); economic libertarianism showed only a small effect ($\beta \geq -.04$, $p<.01$). Importantly, these constructs predicted legitimacy independent of trust evaluations, suggesting these orientations "replenish" assessments of legitimacy regardless of what the police actually *do*. That is, despite the strong association between trust in the police and legitimacy (cf., Tyler 2004, 2011; Bradford and Jackson 2011; Jackson et al. 2012), individualist ideologies still predicted legitimacy, beyond appraisals of police fairness and effectiveness. The models in Table 5 explain approximately 76% of the variance in police legitimacy, suggesting a high degree of fit.

Testing the Interaction between Individualist Ideologies, Trust, and Police Legitimacy

However, while the analyses above showed that individualist ideologies predicted legitimacy, net of trust, it was important to test formally whether there were significant differences in the magnitude of the coefficients for each of the individualist orientations. That is, to test if as individualist preferences increase, whether the salience of trust decreases in respondents' appraisals of police legitimacy. I do this by estimating a series of linear regression models for each of the sub-samples of respondents, as before, and introducing a number of interaction terms between trust and just-world attitudes (*Table 5*) and then trust and libertarian-authoritarianism (*Table 6*).

*Table 5: Regression predicting police legitimacy, belief in just world*trust interaction*

	Model 1 (n=659)					Model 2 (n= 664)					Model 3 (n=1324)				
	B	*S.E. B*	*β*	*t*	*p*	*B*	*S.E. B*	*β*	*t*	*p*	*B*	*S.E. B*	*β*	*t*	*p*
Controls															
White Cop/Black Suspect Condition – Implicit	.03	.04	.02	.86	.39	-.05	.04	-.02	-1.12	.26	-.003	.03	-.001	-.01	.92
White Cop/White Suspect Condition – Implicit	-.004	.04	-.002	-.09	.93	.03	.04	.01	.67	.50	.01	.03	.01	.51	.61
White Cop/White Suspect Condition – Explicit (REF)															
Trust in Police	.82	.06	.68	13.12	.00	.71	.06	.59	11.59	.00	.76	.04	.63	17.54	.00
Predictors															
Social Identity	.17	.03	.15	6.30	.00	.20	.03	.17	7.54	.00	.18	.02	.16	9.80	.00
Belief in Just World	.34	.06	.48	5.21	.00	.29	.07	.40	4.34	.00	.31	.05	.43	6.70	.00
Libertarian-Authoritarianism	.17	.02	.24	9.56	.00	.19	.02	.27	10.96	.00	.18	.01	.25	14.67	.00
Economic Libertarianism	-.03	.02	-.05	-2.16	.03	-.03	.02	-.05	-2.16	.03	-.03	.01	-.50	-3.09	.00
BJW*Trust Interaction	-.06	.02	-.50	-3.88	.00	-.05	.02	-.34	-2.76	.01	-.05	.01	-.40	-4.66	.00
R^2			.76					.76					.76		

NB: "economic libertarianism" is coded is such that negative = more libertarian; **p<.01.; *p<.05.; †p < .10.

*Table 6: Regression predicting police legitimacy, libertarian-authoritarianism*trust interaction*

	Model 1 (n=659)					Model 2 (n= 664)					Model 3 (n=1324)				
	B	*S.E. B*	*β*	*t*	*p*	*B*	*S.E. B*	*β*	*t*	*p*	*B*	*S.E. B*	*β*	*t*	*p*
Controls															
White Cop/Black Suspect Condition – Implicit	.03	.04	.02	.72	.47	-.05	.04	-.02	-1.19	.23	-.01	.03	-.003	-.19	.85
White Cop/White Suspect Condition – Implicit	-.001	.04	-.001	-.03	.98	.03	.04	.01	.66	.51	.02	.03	.01	.56	.57
White Cop/White Suspect Condition – Explicit (REF)															
Trust in Police	.81	.07	.67	11.56	.00	.85	.06	.70	13.77	.00	.84	.05	.69	18.17	.00
Predictors															
Social Identity	.17	.03	.15	6.34	.00	.19	.03	.17	7.56	.00	.18	.02	.16	9.80	.00
Belief in Just World	.09	.02	.13	4.79	.00	.11	.02	.15	5.82	.00	.01	.01	.14	7.35	.00
Libertarian-Authoritarianism	.37	.07	.54	5.48	.00	.50	.06	.71	8.28	.00	.45	.05	.63	9.90	.00
Economic Libertarianism	-.03	.02	-.05	-2.13	.03	-.03	.02	-.04	-1.85	.06	-.03	.01	-.04	-2.87	.00
LIB-Auth*Trust Interaction	-.06	.02	-.41	-3.18	.00	-.08	.02	-.59	-5.35	.00	-.07	.01	-.51	-6.14	.00
R^2			.76					.77					.76		

NB: "economic libertarianism" is coded is such that negative = more libertarian; **p<.01.; *p<.05.; †p < .10.

Results of both series of fitted linear regression models suggest that the relationship between individualist ideologies – or a belief in a just world (*Table 5*) and libertarian-authoritarianism (*Table 6*) – and police legitimacy, vary according to trust. The negative interaction coefficient in both instances indicates that trust becomes of a less salient predictor of legitimacy when just-world and libertarian-authoritarianism are high, confirming the hypothesis. These findings strengthen the argument that individualist orientations "restore" legitimacy assessments regardless of what the police actually do. The regression models estimated in Tables 5 and 6 explain approximately 76% of the variance in evaluations of police legitimacy, suggesting a high degree of fit.

V. Discussion of Results

Coupled with the results presented in the preceding chapter, these findings help clarify the empirical links and pathways between individualist orientations, assessments of police legitimacy and trust, and support for police violence. The results presented in these two chapters indicate that just-world and libertarian-authoritarian preferences predicted both (a) legitimacy and trust in police, and (b) support for the police use of excessive force. Moreover, while stories of excessive force undermined respondents' trust in and normative alignment with police, in the short term, their individualist ideologies remained largely unaffected (see discussion in preceding chapter). The upshot of this is that it is possible white Americans' assessments of trust and legitimacy, though clearly undermined by stories of police violence, recover in the long-term: with

the more immediate negative effects depreciating, as they draw on deep-seated individualist orientations that are less affected by hearing of police malpractice.

While the cross-sectional design of these surveys do little to enumerate the extent of the long-term impacts of stories of excessive force, or of the nature of the relationship between assessments of police legitimacy and trust and individualist orientations, it complements the experimental evidence presented previously, and may shed some light on the puzzle of why so many Americans continue to support the police in the face of over half a century of scandal. Echoing Roché and Roux (2017: 254), who lament, "political ideologies… is [sic] an often overlooked determinant of how people come to interpret policing," the results presented here demonstrate the salience of political ideology in shaping the way excessive force may be "experienced" and opens up for lines for new research.

Chapter 8

Personal Responsibility and the American Dream: A Theoretical Examination of Attitudes toward Excessive Force

I. Introduction

I have thus far empirically examined the role that racial bias and national political identity play in shaping white Americans' attitudes toward excessive force. Across two surveys, I found no effect for varying the racial identity of the protagonists involved in a fictional scenario of police violence on respondents' assessments of the encounter. Instead, ideological commitments to a belief in a just world and libertarian-authoritarianism were associated with strikingly high levels of support for excessive force.

In the chapter that follows, I unpack these empirical findings and situate them in broader theoretical argument about American identity and the ideologies, mythologies, and pathologies that sustain it. I suggest that the American Dream emphasis on desert, merit, and self-enterprise shape how white Americans, in particular, "experience" excessive force, which may explain why so many continue to support the police. I consider how victimization, culpability, and inequality are made legible through this frame of personal responsibility.

I begin this chapter by revisiting the concept of personal responsibility from a historical perspective, arguing that meritocracy and self-enterprise are pervasive national ideals filtering how many Americans perceive the social world. I then move to consider how this "bootstraps ideology" carries with it a subtext about what constitutes deserving citizenship, using welfarism and dependency as a case study. I close by examining excessive force from this individualistic framework, suggesting that for those who espouse libertarian ideological preferences, police violence may be mitigated by notions of desert and self-governance.

II. Personal Responsibility: A Lens though which to "See" Excessive Force

Individualism and the American Dream: A Founding National Myth

At the outset of this chapter, it is again worth revisiting the concept of "free will" and how it is deployed in a nation ostensibly built upon principles of individualism, responsibility, and self-determination, in order to situate my empirical findings in a richer theoretical argument about how excessive force is "experienced" by those who maintain the highest confidence in police, namely white Americans.

Broadly speaking, the concept of free will relates to ideas about personal agency, control, and the ability to exercise choice and deliberation. Within philosophical and psychological traditions, free will has typically been defined in quite narrow and abstract sense: often as a consequentialist (Murtagh 2013) or humanistic (Maslow

1943) defense of the idea behavior is not determined – biologically, environmentally, or otherwise – in contrast with theories of causal determinism. In this thesis however, I have used it to describe something slightly different and more discrete, though which still emphasizes choice and personal moral responsibility: something which is particular to America, encapsulating a national ideology and mythology associated with individualism and personal agency (Hirschfield 2016).

This "American-style individualism" (Hirschfield 2016) and its corollary tenets of self-reliance, self-rule, and ultimately self-actualization and happiness achieved through hard work, I argue, has its roots in the very founding of the nation. Though this ethos shares many of the core principles enshrined in the ideologies of neoliberalism (e.g., self-sufficiency and self-management; "responsibilization" and success and failure of one's own making; c.f., Garland 2001), it also gets at something deeper, unique, and *exceptional* to the United States – and its criminal justice output – which is perhaps most succinctly articulated in the notion of the "American Dream."

While there are entire scholarly literatures and extensive historical analyses dedicated to this single concept, I will borrow W.E.B. Du Bois' (1935: 585) pithier description of the American Dream as the widespread "American assumption of equal economic opportunity for all, which persists despite the facts." This often-delusive[22] fascination

[22] It should be reiterated that popular beliefs about the American Dream are often distinctly at odds with reality. As Bénabou and Triole (2006: 702-703) write), "there is a significant discrepancy between the widespread view of the United States as an exceptionally mobile society (especially in the minds of Americans themselves) and the actual evidence on intergenerational income or educational mobility, which, on average, shows no significant difference with European welfare states."

with upward socio-economic mobility on the basis of merit seems to inhabit the same sacrosanct stratum of the American consciousness as the Lockean guarantee for "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness," becoming something of an implicit covenant bound up in the struggle for independence and, of course, exceptionalism. On his visit to the United States in 1830, for example, Alexis de Tocqueville described the "charm of anticipated success" in a society cut loose from hierarchical moors and traditions of Europe and founded on the egalitarian promise of a new frontier (Vol. II, Chapter XVII). The myth of meritocracy was something De Tocqueville saw as defining to the new nation, the so-called "Land of Opportunity," and yet also as double-edged, presenting its own kind of non-hereditary caste system:

> As social equality spreads there are more and more people who, though neither rich nor powerful enough to have much hold over others, have gained and kept enough wealth and enough understanding to look after their own needs. Such folk… form the habit of thinking of themselves in isolation and imagine their whole destiny is in their own hands. Once this kind of seeming independence is a possibility, it also becomes a necessity, and *dependence is a kind of disgrace* (508-9, emphases mine).

Early on, De Tocqueville and others, such as Fredrick Jackson Turner in his "Frontier Thesis" (1893), recognized the Janus-faced nature of American Dream, insofar as it could also signal an *inability* to self-manage and worse, self-actualize. Dependency, as De Tocqueville described, alluded to weakness, impaired character, preclusion to the "good life." Though not necessarily codified in any formal sense, the ideals of this could be cited in turn-of-the-century exemplars like Andrew Carnegie, John D. Rockefeller, and Cornelius Vanderbilt. These folk heroes offered both an aspirational template for

the self-made man (as success of this nature was almost exclusively the prerogative of men), as well as cautionary parables for those unable to pull their weight or themselves up from their proverbial bootstraps – a kind of cadre of secular apostles who could be conjured in reminders to the importance of hard work and determination. As Jeremy Seabrook (1973: 79-81) elaborates:

> Those who are successful often seem pregnant with a sense of blame and indignation, which they lodge vociferously with a wide range of social deviants – the work-shy, the young, the immigrants the immoral [sic]… People who are successful believe that success is a reflection of some moral superiority. They rate enterprise and initiative as the most worthwhile of all human characteristics, and what they rather vaguely call fecklessness or spinelessness as the most contemptible. But because their own success stems from virtue, its opposite must be true, that failure stems from vice. People at the bottom of the scale are felt to be a vaguely menacing influence, not in any obvious revolutionary way, but they do undermine the beliefs which legitimate those who are in positions of superiority.

Though this ethos in many ways recalls the nation's Calvinist beginnings which glorified the ethics of work and self-reliance, perseverance and triumph in the face of hardship, as well as the evils of idleness – something America shared and indeed inherited from its Protestant forebears – it also established something unique, which served the basis for American exceptionalism and, by implication, its putative superiority. Following World War I, in which the U.S. was for the first time catapulted onto the global stage, President Herbert Hoover exclaimed:

> When the [Great] War closed, the most vital of all issues both in our own country and throughout the world was whether governments should continue their wartime ownership and operation of many instrumentalities of production and distribution. We were challenged with a peace-time choice between the

> American system of rugged individualism and a European philosophy of diametrically opposed doctrines – doctrines of paternalism and state socialism. The acceptance of these ideas would have meant the destruction of self-government through centralization of government. It would have meant the undermining of the individual initiative and enterprise through which our people have grown to unparalleled greatness (October 22, 1928, New York, NY).

The virtues of rugged individualism, non-conformity, "*cowboy-ness*" in the perceived face of paternalism, Big Government, and later, the Welfare or Nanny State became defining constructs for American identity, as foundational to the ideology of the nation as the frontier itself. While this is a brief and reductive – and possibly overstated – gloss over an entire history and literature dedicated to the notion of the American Dream, it is important to highlight the ways in which a national history centering the individual in stories of moral and professional success has been inculcated.

Just-World Thinking and American Individualism Today

While to some extent, accounts of the American Dream may be less resonant today, with growing acknowledgement of the ways in which structural inequalities and implicit biases impede equal access, this hyper-individualized worldview still finds purchase in other diffuse forms. Many in the social psychological literature, for example, point to instantiations of this "bootstraps ideology" in the cognitive bias known as a "belief in a just world" (Lerner 1980) (see Chapter II for wider discussion). While a belief in a just world is hardly specific to Americans, it is highly correlated with more individualistic, Anglophone cultures and tends to be more prevalent in the U.S. than other industrialized Western nations (Bénabou and Tirole 2006; Frank et al. 2015; Hamby in

Roberts 2016). According to Bénabou and Tirole (2006: 700): the American disposition is "characterized by a high prevalence of just-world beliefs and a relatively laissez-faire public policy. The… 'European' equilibrium is characterized by more pessimism and a more extensive welfare state. Agents are also less likely to blame poverty on a lack of effort or willpower."

The pervasiveness of this type thinking – that one gets what they deserve – may be perhaps no better exemplified than in its sheer idiomatic prevalence in the U.S. and other highly individualistic and, again, Anglophone cultures (e.g., "you reap what you sow"; "what goes around comes around"; "the chickens come home to roost"), or in the apparently vast diagnostic capacity of these figures of speech to attend to nearly any situation (e.g., job promotions and redundancies, breakups, even natural disasters[23]). Its semantic profusion is perhaps indicative of what Jonathon Simon (2006) describes as the ability of certain words or idioms (i.e., "crime") to express ambient anxieties that have little to do with the idiom itself. That is, narratives of "violent crime" (Simon 2006), "immigration" (Bosworth and Kaufman 2011), "handouts," (Hochschild 2016b), and "guns" (Carlson 2015, 2016), for example, can provide articulable stories through which to locate perceived social breakdown, which may not be directly linked to the idiom itself.

[23] In 2005, many religious leaders claimed that Hurricane Katrina was God's punishment on America, and New Orleans specifically, for homosexuality and sexual immorality as the storm was immediately preceded by the annual LGBT pride event, the Southern Decadence Festival. Similar claims were made following Hurricane Sandy in 2012 and the UK Floods in 2007 (Cooperman, 2005).

Much in the same way Simon (2006) argues that "crime" functions as a generalized way of *seeing* and *reading* issues only obliquely related to crime – an interpretive tool for understanding and making sense of social and economic insecurity in the world (cf., Carlson 2015) – I argue that personal responsibility is a mechanism by which Americans, in particular, *make sense* of their social world. That is, it provides a framework through which to understand (and ultimately accept) the interworkings and injustices of the world – the inequalities between rich and poor, the (continued) marginalization of minority groups, the gap between inner-city high-rise and white picket fence – and one's relative place in it all. This "American-style individualism," in this respect, may be rooted in a self-affirming myth that oneself – or one's father or grandfather or some other ancestral patriarch – also immigrated here, or was born in humble beginnings, or came from a broken household, and triumphed through personal will of his own. Iterations of this rags-to-riches narrative are frequently built into middle-class American families' own mythologies, invoked to evince the importance of work and will, to edify the new generation of their birthright. Almost universally, it has functioned to rationalize success and socioeconomic mobility as an earned right that exists beyond the caprices of race, place, or accident. Thus success, failure, and fortune, as enshrined in the hallowed if entirely imagined American Dream, can all be boiled down to a simple calculus of merit and desert.

III. Dependency: A Failure of Self and the American Dream

The Double-Edge of the American Dream: The "Disgrace of Dependency"

Insofar as achievement has been seen to be underwritten by volition, there is also a particular subtext attached to "failure" of the American Dream, or as De Tocqueville put it, "the disgrace of dependency." That is, the sense in which those "incapable" of pulling themselves up from their bootstraps are seen to be deserving of their hardship; or that those "unable" to appropriately self-manage or exercise self-discipline warrant strict policing and governance (cf., Hobbes 1651; Rose 2000).

It should, again, be reiterated that this individualistic ethos is not specific to America. The tendency to infer culpability from misfortune (Bandura 1990) and agency from success (Heider 1958; Rubin and Peplau 1975) is a central tenet of just-world thinking, manifest in nearly all societies. However, I suggest it has taken on an unusually insidious and pejorative quality in the United states, especially in the 20th Century, as America progressed toward the ideals of "equal opportunity." As Fraser and Gordon (1994: 320-325) elaborate:

> The long American love affair with independence… is in part built on the absence of a hierarchical social tradition [as in Europe] in which subordination was understood to be structural, not characterological, and facilitated hostility to public support for the poor… Absent coverture and Jim Crow, it [became] possible to claim that equality of opportunity exist[ed], and that individual merit determine[d] outcomes… With capitalist economic dependency already abolished by definition, and with legal and political dependency now abolished by law, post-industrial society appear[ed] to some conservatives and liberals to have eliminated every social-structural basis of dependency. Whatever dependency remain[ed], therefore, [could] be interpreted as the fault of individuals.

Deserving Citizenship: Welfarism as a Case Study for Failing the American Dream

The individual and characterological sourcing of both individualism and its converse – *dependency* – is perhaps no better exemplified than in the U.S. political rhetoric surrounding the state provision of welfare. As Fraser and Gordon (1994: 311) further explicate, bound up within debates pertaining to welfare is a particular subtext related to the causes of poverty, the nature of citizenship, race, gender roles, merit and desert, and what counts as work and a "contribution" to American society. "Welfare" seems to conjure connotations which are different from need or assistance – which carry some implication of worthiness, or in the latter case, temporariness: that one *will* get back up on their own two feet. Welfare, the authors write (ibid), has been portrayed as something pathologic, defective, even *anti-American*. As Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan (1973: 17, emphasis in original) famously described,

> The issue of welfare is the issue of dependency. It is different from poverty. To be poor is an objective condition; to be dependent, a subjective one… Dependency is an incomplete state in life: normal in the child, abnormal in the adult. In a world where completed men and women stand on their own feet, persons who are dependent – as buried in the imagery of the word denotes – *hang*.

Throughout the 1970s, 80s, and 90s, welfarism so viscerally captured public and political attention, in part, because it seemed to defy the ethos foundational to the nation: the basic assumption "that every adult be expected to 'work,' to be 'self-supporting'" (Fraser and Gordon 1994: 323). How could someone expect to achieve the

American Dream without these fundamental components?[24] In 1996[25] during one of the peaks of welfare reform in the U.S., a survey found that "most Americans say they feel disgusted by the welfare system – not because of its wastefulness, but because it undercuts the ethical cornerstone of an honest day's work" (quoted in Hancock 2006). This sense in which public assistance alluded not only to idleness, but also, opportunism and exploitation – "getting something for nothing" (Fraser and Gordon 1992) – was and is poignant for many. According to Hochschild (2016b), in her ethnography of the genesis of the Tea Party Movement[26] in Lake Charles, Louisiana, public assistance is, for many, felt as a "queue jump." She argues that many of those who self-identify as "good citizens" feel they are "waiting in line," on the path to achieve the American Dream, only to be consistently "cut in the line" by those perceived to be falsely entitled – frequently women, African Americans, immigrants, and other minority groups – who are felt to benefit unfairly from Affirmative Action programs and other types of support and "government handouts" (Hochschild 2016a, 2016b).

[24] Though these issues are still highly topical. In a statement about a "public charge regulation" issued by the Department of Homeland Security on August 12, 2019, Acting U.S. Citizenship and immigration Services Director Ken Cuccinelli said, President Trump's administration is reinforcing the ideals of self-sufficiency and personal responsibility, ensuring that immigrants are able to support themselves and become successful here in America."

[25] 1996 marked President Bill Clinton's signing of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act to "end welfare as we know it." It was called a "reassertion of America's work ethic" by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. The bill was part of the Republican "Contract with America," a document written by Newt Gingrich and Dick Armey during the 1994 Congressional election campaign based on former President Ronald Reagan's 1985 State of the Union Address, which included an act for the "American Dream." (Du Rose 2015: 56).

[26] The Tea Party Movement is an American conservative movement within the Republican Party which emerged in 2008 following the election of President Barack Obama, in large part in opposition to federal government spending and universal healthcare or so-called "Obamacare." The movement's name refers to the Boston Tea Party of December 16, 1773 which catalyzed the American Revolution.

Arguably one of the consummate folk devils (Cohen 1972) of the latter half of the 20th Century, due in part to floundering economic and social security, was (and perhaps still is, in other iterations[27]) one such perceived beneficiary of "handouts": the "Welfare Queen," a derogatory denomination typically assigned to African American women accused of committing welfare fraud in the 1970s, '80s, and, '90s (Hancock 2006; Levin 2019). As described by then-Governor Ronald Regan in a 1976 campaign speech, "[the Welfare Queen] uses 80 names, 30 addresses, 15 telephone numbers to collect food stamps, Social Security, veterans' benefits for four nonexistent deceased veteran husbands, as well as welfare. Her tax-free cash income alone has been running $150,000 a year" (quoted in Black and Sprague 2016). Such disavowals of welfare became not only acceptable, but in fact electable platforms. This is apparent in Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas' vilification of his sister during his confirmation hearing to the High Court: "She gets mad when the mailman is late with her welfare check. That's how dependent she is. What's worse is that now her kids feel entitled to the check, too. They have no motivation for doing better or getting out of that situation" (1980, quoted in Tumulty 1991).[28]

What these statements reveal are not simply electorally expedient agendas or pendulum swings toward social and fiscal conservatism, but, I suggest, deeper insights into the American psyche: views on desert and entitlement, conditions of citizenships predicated on work and an aspiration for social and economic mobility; and, relatedly, a

[27] Arguably immigrants either "taking our jobs" or benefiting unfairly from government aid programs are now more flammable folk devils.
[28] Thomas also made similar comments in reference to Affirmation Action programs.

deep-seated fear that dependency would engender laziness, a hindrance to the "good life." As Garland aptly summarizes (2016: 107), "the welfare state in America has historically been portrayed as a socialist monstrosity sapping the nation's spirit and ruining its economy… handouts [are considered] the opium of the masses, leading to dependency, idleness, drugs, and crime." The Welfare Queen became a metaphor for all that was wrong in society which could be linked back to free will: the unfair distribution of state resources, taking advantage of the moral and upright taxpayers' hard work, and anxieties related to the deterioration of the nation's *exceptionalism* – would there be anything left to set America apart from, as President Hoover put it, the "[European] doctrines of paternalism and state socialism"?

A Racial and Gender Subtext to Dependency

It also should be noted that while "dependency" is and was deployed as a pejorative across all party lines, it also denoted a particular racialized and gendered subtext pertaining to *who* and *what* were considered deserving citizens. As Fraser and Gordon (1994: 318) contend, it was perhaps no coincidence that the superlative trope to illustrate individual failure – the Welfare Queen – was both female and black. This, the authors argue, is not only because femininity and blackness come with their own negative stigmas pertaining to helplessness or lack of self-sufficiency (ibid); but also because, as Carlson (2016: 87-94) explains, *rejecting* state aid also comes with its own set of meanings and cultural connotations: a claim to a certain status or *type* of citizenship connected to independence, self-reliance, responsibility, masculinity, and

perhaps even whiteness (Madriaga 2005). On this account opposition to welfare is an embrace of personal responsibility and civic duty just as much as it is a refutation of the state, the overreach of government, bureaucracy, and successive regimes of coddling (Carlson 2016: 94). That is to say, refutation (or better yet, no need for) state aid is also an assertion of strength and autonomy; the type of citizen you are or want to be seen to be.

This racial subtext attached to the discourse on dependency may even be one unintended consequence of the supposed transition to a "post-racial" America (Guinier 2004; Lerman and Weaver 2014; Carlson 2015). As Haney-Lopez (2010: 1024) writes, the contemporary "cultural denial about the continuing salience of race created an opening into which revised narratives around black inequality surfaced; lacking a language of structural disparities, a powerful vocabulary of personal responsibility was able to take root." Lerman and Weaver (2014: 167-186) suggest a whole host of social problems in America have been filtered through this "bootstraps ideology," used to explain and justify persistent disparities in education, income, employment, and so forth; and even the extent to which African American language and dialect, or so-called African American Vernacular English[29], has been weaponized to this end. Inability to achieve widespread professional success, or even express oneself "properly" (McWhorter 2015), can be boiled down to choice: a choice to speak, dress, live, and behave in a certain way. The authors argue (Lerman and Weaver 2014: 167) that this

[29] African American Vernacular English (AAVE) is frequently – though not un-controversially – referred to colloquially as Ebonics, is a variety of American English spoken among some working- and middle-class blacks.

personal responsibility narrative whereby blacks are seen to be especially liable for inequality has in many ways been internalized by elites within the African American community, citing Bill Cosby's 2004 address to the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in honor of the 50th Anniversary of the landmark U.S. Supreme Court case *Brown v. the Board of Education* as a salient example:

> I am talking about these people who cry when their son is standing there in an orange [prison] suit. Where were you when he was two? Where were you when he was twelve? Where were you when he was eighteen, and how could you didn't know he had a pistol? In all of this work, we cannot blame white people. (May 17, 2004, Washington, D.C.)

According to McWhorter (2015), this "politics of respectability," in which blacks (young men, in particular) are told to "pull their pants up, keep their noses clean, stay in school, and learn to be self-reliant" (Lerman and Weaver 2014: 167), has become a dominant paradigm through which dependency and black inequality are made legible. Lerman and Weaver (2014: 168) describe how institutionalized self-help psychology programs in prisons, schools, and so on emphasize *behavioral* change: posters, fliers, and institutional-speak implore black students and prisoners, in particular, to "make better choices" and "take responsibility for [their] li[ves]." This, according to Cooper (2017), is part of the American psychology (and pathology): to individualize such problems instead of making them collective or political.

Though this personal responsibility narrative is far from straightforward and is often accompanied by, and overlaid with, an acknowledgment of structural inequalities, it is

nevertheless so ingrained that it often operates implicitly, outside the discursive or cognitive realm, to shape political and daily decision-making. Gilens (1995: 1010), for example, finds that a "belief that blacks' poverty reflects a lack of effort and that, economically, blacks have gotten what they deserve are strong predictors of whites' opposition to welfare." This notion draws on the pervasive stereotype characterizing African Americans as "lazy" (Gilens 1995; Hancock 2006). This deep-seated stereotype of the lazy African American figured prominently in the 18th- and 19th-Century positivism justifying slavery (Takaki 1979; Hancock 2006), and also has consistently featured in contemporary empirical studies detailing white (and, increasingly, black – cf., Lerman and Weaver 2014) Americans' views on welfarism. For example, in 1990, at the height of federal welfare reform, a General Social Survey (GSS) asked respondents to rate African Americans as a group on a seven-point Likert-type scale from "lazy" to "hard working" (Davis and Smith 1990). Forty-seven percent of white Americans placed blacks on the side of "lazy," and only seventeen percent placed blacks on the side of "hard working." A similar finding emerged in 2016, this time with a partisan political bent, with forty-two percent of white Republicans rating African Americans as being lazier than whites (compared to twenty-four percent of white Democrats). Similarly, a majority of white Republicans polled (fifty-five percent, compared to twenty-six percent of white Democrats) reported believing that "African Americans are worse off economically because most just don't have the motivation or will power to pull themselves up out of poverty" (Silver and McCann 2014; GSS 2016; Blake 2017).

However, as detailed throughout this thesis, racial identity showed no effect on white Americans' assessments of excessive force. As Lerman and Weaver (2016: 168) explain, the vigorous personal responsibility narrative so prevalent in the United States has made it increasingly difficult to define and articulate the role of race. Racism may be contingent upon or mediated through a measure of personal responsibility, for example (see discussion in Chapter VII). Without mischaracterizing the role of racism or how it interacts with narratives of responsibility, it is important to highlight how racial inequality has frequently been made sense of, reconciled, and even justified, through the prism of personal agency in order to advance a similar argument about how excessive force may be likewise "experienced" and made sense of on similar terms.

IV. "Making Sense" of Excessive Force in the Framework of Responsibility

Making America Responsible Again? Justifying Excessive Force

While opposition to the state provision of welfare is only one, though nonetheless salient, example of some Americans' ambivalence toward aid in a purported meritocracy,[30] it is likely that it taps into a deeper anxiety in the U.S about personal responsibility as a tenet of American identity.

[30] Other flammable and topical examples might include attitudes toward Affirmative Action programs and the Trump Administration's August 2019 pledge to reinforce the "ideals of self-sufficiency and personal responsibility" among new migrants to America.

What ostensibly had set America a part, what De Tocqueville had identified as unique, and what President Hoover had defined as imperative, was America's "healthy skepticism of state socialism… and [European] paternalism." Even on a rhetorical level, this seems such an accepted part of the American consciousness that Europe and especially Scandinavia, which have historically offered some of the most comprehensive welfare provisions – and incidentally, maintain some of the highest rates of citizen health and happiness (Helliwell et al. 2018) – are pejoratively invoked in U.S. political parlance to signify soft and ineffectual leadership (e.g., President Trump's February 2017 erroneous reference to Sweden, as an example[31]). Terms such as "coddling," "over-regulation," and "state over-reach" frequently trail reference to European governance, for both Republicans and Democrats alike. As Hochschild (2016a, 2016b) documents in her ethnography of the Tea Party Movement, opposition to President Barack Obama's universal healthcare initiative, the Affordable Care Act (ACA), or so-called "Obamacare," embraced much of this tone: declaring it an incursion from Washington and with remedial appeals to states' rights (and implicitly, individual ones) as a bulwark against the socialism of Europe (Foster 2013). And indeed, for many, President Donald Trump's 2016 campaign to "Make America Great Again," was an implicit pledge to return to an imagined era of unregulated self-enterprise: a vow to strip back government entitlements and their attendant barriers, and ultimately re-orient the country back to its founding principles of free will and self-determination.

[31] At a February 18, 2017 rally in Florida, President Trump alluded to the leniency of Sweden's immigration and asylum policies, falsely suggesting a terrorist attack had occurred the night prior as a result: "You look at what's happening. We've got to keep our country safe. You look at what's happening in Germany, you look at what's happening last night in Sweden. Sweden who would believe this? They took in large numbers. They're having problems like they never thought possible." Quoted in by Chan (2017) in the *New York Times*.

Drawing on a Belief in a Just World

At risk of exaggerating the existential capacity that attitudes toward policing can convey, it is possible that to some extent, these views articulate a specific set of beliefs and anxieties, and even constitute a distinct "politics" about the proper role of the individual, nationhood, and values related to law, order, authority, work, and desert. That is, attitudes toward policing and specifically excessive force may fit into a broader sensibility of distrust and skepticism many Americans feel about dependency and a loss of agency, as well as a need for hard work and tough choices as pillars of what it means to be American. Excessive force toward those seen as, to some extent, deserving, may be "experienced" as justified: a flexing of individual authority on behalf of the law-abiding citizen. To the extent that excessive force is made legible though the vernacular of "choice," something within the remit of control and thus avoidability, observers may not only come to minimize harm to those facing the brunt of violence, but also infer culpability on the very basis of it (Bandura 1990). Bad things don't happen to good people, so a "bad" action or encounter may logically come to signal a deserving recipient – "where there's smoke, there's fire." Police would not have acted that way without some sort of provocation or indication of suspicious behavior – a tautology, of course, cloaked in false pragmatism.

Excessive force, in these narrow, individualistic terms, thus may be construed as a matter of volition (i.e., the choice to stand outside a convenience store at 10:30PM), or

else a consequence of a preceding series of more diffuse choices (i.e., membership in certain social group, even receipt of welfare). For those evincing strong just-world and libertarian-authoritarian beliefs – or those who have apparently and appropriately self-governed – police encounters (violent or not) can be cast within this highly rational, moral framework whereby negative contact becomes as indicative of personal moral failure as non-contact is of self-restraint and moral principle; there is no need to police those who can police themselves. In other words, for those who have not had negative (let alone violent) interactions with police, they may believe it a result of their moral choices: they have remained immune from mistreatment not because of any structural or external advantage, but because of their *deliberate*, principled cultivation of the choices available to us all; because they have chosen to be the *right* kind of citizen.

To be sure, it is likely only white Americans that have the privilege of believing that interactions with police are, in some sense, a barometer of character, delineating the respectable from the disrespectable. However, tacit acceptance or support for punitive policing may in part be fueled by this moral indignation, by a desire for accountability, and an anxiety to identify (and be identified) with the law-abiding, the successful, as well as a corresponding aversion to, and fear of, being classified with the "criminal" category, the dependents.

It is also important to reiterate that insofar as personal responsibility is a lens through which some Americans interpret their social world, and incidents of excessive force are "experienced" and reconstrued, possibly even blunted and made legible through this

frame, police violence is likely never entirely mitigated or endorsed wholesale. This lens of experiencing excessive force does not anaesthetize or dilute the cognitive, emotional, and moral weight of police-inflicted harm, but rather it shrouds it in a flawed syllogism: I have not been beaten, therefore I am good; *he* has been mistreated, therefore *he* is suspicious, bad, deserving. Grounding this cognitive bias in literature on attributional psychology, Hewstone and Jaspars (1984) write, involvement in a "bad" encounter with police signals "bad" actions and the "bad" people who perform them.

While not denied outright, though perhaps scaled and qualified under a higher moral imperative, police mistreatment may in part be tolerated because it contributes, however indirectly, to a sense of self – and importantly, a righteous, coherent, and moral sense of self rooted in the American Dream. Observers can feel sanctimonious for having remained impervious to the injustices of law enforcement and assured that these types of events only happen if provoked or willed. As Cohen (1972/2001: 96-7) writes, "in a just world, suffering is not random; innocent people do not get punished arbitrarily." A belief that "the Law," in an institutional sense, is mobilized only rarely, discerningly, in the last instance, and upon a select few, can provide a basis from which individuals can rationalize both the existence of violent contact with police and *their* lack of it (Hall et al. 1978; Berki 1986).

Moreover, by reconciling harm as a product of choice(s), observers can restore meaning and order to otherwise cognitively dissonant events. They can, as Hall et al. (1978: 166) contend, draw events back into the framework of "things understood" – things we can

work on, manage, prevent, *do* something about – they can restore a "just world" (Lerner 1980). To accept police violence is a result of something other than that which we can control is to undermine deeper assumptions about the criminal him- or herself, questions pertaining to "motive, 'nature,' causation, and so on" (Hall et al. 1978: 168). Furthermore, it is to contemplate the deeply troubling possibility that it could be them – *they* could be stopped, searched, Tasered, and beaten at whim. Ascriptions of choice and volition can thus serve to buoy one's own self-image, carving distance between one's own positive actions and another's negative, and restoring one's sense of "cosmic justice" (Lerner 1980). It flips the status quo back on kilter.

Excessive Force and Libertarian Politics: A Response to the Failure of the American Dream

Without overstating what the sociology of policing can or should achieve, views on policing can and historically have conveyed important messages about value, status, membership, and belonging (Bradford and Jackson 2010; Bradford 2012; Bradford et al. 2013, 2014, 2017; Loader 1997; with Mulcahy 2003; 2006) and this idea – that excessive force communicates ideas about individual power and notions of desert – fits within that tradition. Violence toward certain individuals, or in certain neighborhoods, or even at certain times may signal competence, law and order, "doing what's necessary," or conversely, impropriety, unfairness, state impotence, and so on.

As discussed in Chapter II, the reverence for "doing whatever it takes" in policing, the aggrandizement, even "thrill" of seeing police "victorious through being pushed to

[their] very margin, to the point of embracing *immorality*" (Berki 1968: 56-67), can often elevate policing in America (and elsewhere) to a near-folkloric realm – modern-day cowboys in an urban frontier. This, again, taps into a broader cultural conflation in the U.S. of vigilantism with reverence for law, such that promotion of the latter often is pursuit of the former. Klockars (1980) describes this as the "Dirty Harry" phenomenon, or the glorification of extralegal police resolution as a method of crime control. But what it speaks to is both the high cultural regard in the U.S. for authority, order, and "the Law" in an abstract or sublime sense – that is, less so the proximate black-letter dictates and regulations of law (as this is often construed as government incursion), but rather the notions of order, justice, and morality it frequently evokes – and at the same time, the glorification of rogue, "maverick" behavior in the aims of justice: a Wild West mentality and mythology. This apparently consistent paradox – of taking matters into one's own hands, circumventing the very thing one is endeavoring to promote, respecting the law by disregarding it – is, I argue, a fundamentally idiosyncratic species of American libertarian politics, which is manifest in attitudes toward policing. Police may be seen as doing "whatever necessary," "acting on our behalf," rebelling against the bloat of government regulation and red-tape and getting back to the "purer" aims of justice (i.e., protection, defending the moral citizen, and the like).

For many, responses to excessive force may be a reaction to what is perceived as individual or, conversely, police failure. When individual officers act outside the prescriptive dictates of the law, when they are acting on behalf of the individual, when they circumvent regulation, they may be seen as "getting back" to the heart of

policework. Indeed, this type of (mis)conduct seems to enable a cognitive distinction between *police* and *policing*. That is, between Police *writ large*, the institution as an expression of order, justice, and the rule of law, and the state body as an appendage of Big Government. Police violence under this framework might be understood as an enactment of civic duty or a *taking back* of law-and-order: a refutation of the state and a reassertion of the individual (cf., Carlson 2015). In these cases, brutality might be considered excusable, even acceptable, at certain levels or when directed at certain groups or individuals, insofar as it is seen as subversive to a broken system.

Similar Arguments in the Criminological Literature

This is not to mount an entirely existential claim for policing, nor is it to rely on cultural arguments which are ahistorical, but rather to highlight the ways in which police violence does not occur in a vacuum, but instead can convey latent political and national anxieties about individual agency. And in many respects, these ideas have found articulation in other aspects of criminological scholarship. Carlson (2012: 1116) describes how guns, for example, provide a means for "white, conservative heterosexual men to reclaim masculine privilege as part of a broader conservative 'backlash' against New Deal politics." Citizen armament, she argues, fits within this thesis of libertarian politics, enabling those who feel slighted, or "cut in line" (Hochschild 2016b), by government handouts to recuperate lost agency and faith in the American Dream by, in this case, arming themselves (Carlson 2012: 1114). There is a sense in which attitudes toward policing (Gau 2008; Hirschfield 2015, 2016), or guns (Carlson 2012, 2015,

2016), or the carceral state more broadly (Garland 2000, Simon 2006), can distill deeper anxieties related to personal agency and skepticism about government as inhibiting the American Dream.

In a similar respect, Gau (2008) finds that gun advocates both mistrust the police in practice and yet identify with the values they represent (i.e., order, authority, respect), which perhaps gives credence to the idea that people make a cognitive distinction between *police* and *policing*, perceiving the former as a hindrance to the latter; or, more specifically, between the institution and the activity. It also contributes to the idea that ambiguity toward policing can speak to wider libertarian anxieties pertaining to the role of the individual and the state. Haas et al. (2014) also find that armed civilian self-defense is particularly high in contexts where confidence in police is low. This, the authors argue, is viewed less as rogue vigilantism than as citizens seen to be responding to the problem of state impotency and expressing personal responsibility (Haas et al. 2014).

In both cases, negative attitudes toward police (as a government institution) are felt to be reasonably solved through gun ownership: responding to law enforcement failure by and through *personal* law enforcement – taking matters into one's own hands. Carlson (2016: 93-4, emphases in original) finds that this type of citizen armament is "not so much a rejection of *police* per se, but rather a rejection of what gun owners felt to be their own *dependency* on law enforcement;" it is identity politics. Again, recurrent themes of state over-reach, individual autonomy, and fear of dependency emerge. This

is particularly apparent in the rhetoric surrounding the Second Amendment to the U.S. Constitution – the right to bear arms – and corollary self-defense laws, such as to Stand Your Ground[32], Concealed Carry[33], and the proposal to arm school teachers.[34] As Carlson (2018) describes, "for millions of Americans, gun politics is not just something you *believe* in; it is something that you *do*: it is an everyday practice… a way of moving through the world." Guns become suffused with moral meaning, with connotations of pro-sociality: they endow their owner with social utility, with agency, with the tools, to borrow from the National Rifle Association's (NRA) branding, to "refuse to become a victim"[35] (ibid). Much in the same way the gun debate in America centers so overwhelmingly on self-defense, on personal agency, on serving as an act of good citizenship (a means to achieve the American Dream) (Carlson 2012, 2016, 2018), so too do beliefs about policing.

Police and police violence, specifically, may convey important political and cultural meanings for the precariat – increasingly, many scholars (cf. Carlson 2012, 2015, 2016; Hochschild 2016a, 2016b; Vance 2016) contend, white working-class men. It may come to symbolize a revanchist reassertion of the fundamental American values of personal

[32] So-called "stand your ground" gun law, establishes the right to defend oneself and others from threats or perceived threats using deadly force, whether safely retreating from the situation may have been possible. It is distinct from the common law doctrine from which it is based, "the castle doctrine," because it establishes no duty to retreat and extends the self-defense standard to the public sphere. (Lartey 2018).
[33] Also known as "Carrying a Concealed Weapon" (CCW) is the legal practice of carrying a concealed weapon in public, either on one's person or in close proximity, which requires a permit.
[34] Following the school shooting in Parkland, Florida on February 14, 2018, President Donald Trump indicated that the federal government would consider raising funds to train and arm as many as a million school teachers, suggesting it would be a "great deterrent." (Quoted in *The Guardian*, Holpuch et al. 2018).
[35] The National Rifle Association (NRA) website "NRA Explore: Discover the Possibilities" section features a trademarked "Refuse to Be a Victim" program. https://rtbav.nra.org/

agency, individual achievement, and desert. Germane to the empirical work presented here, Hirschfield (2016: 1112) suggests that the exceptionally high levels of police violence in the U.S., specifically lethal shootings, are rooted "in [an] American-style individualism that emphasizes self-reliance and such corollary values as decentralized government (i.e., self-rule) and individual moral responsibility." He suggests that states which historically formed America's western and southwestern frontier (i.e., New Mexico, Arizona, Oklahoma, Montana, Nevada, Utah, California, and Colorado), and which have the richest tradition of "rugged individualism," exhibit the highest rates of police killings due to the pervasiveness of, and reverence for, this value. Specifically, he links America's ethos of self-reliance and police killings to its distinctive gun culture and the ethos it sustains and reflects (e.g., honor, self-reliance, masculinity), which materially raises the threshold of danger officers are likely to encounter and symbolically imbues policing with machismo and rewards displays of cowboy bravado (ibid: 1113).

While, as Lisa Miller (2016) rightly points out, this analysis is built around a set of questionable assumptions, namely the inference that Californians are, for example, somehow more committed to the principles of American individualism and self-reliance than white Southerners simply by dint of their more lethal police, it still lends support for the argument that areas with rich historical traditions of "popular justice" (or "frontier" and "southern justice," as the case may be), and a strong heritage of the American Dream, tend to be increasingly violent (Hirschfield 2016b: 238). It also speaks more widely to a social topography in which those jurisdictions with an especially high

regard for personal agency and distrust of state incursion (i.e., libertarian politics) often seem to exhibit a sensibility which tacitly allows, and possibly even endorses, police violence.

Within this vein, it does not seem unreasonable to suggest that for some white Americans, attitudes toward excessive force distill deeper political sensibilities about personal agency and national identity in the context of the American Dream. Similar ideas have long found purchase in the sociology of punishment, with many scholars positioning punitiveness and penal populism as a socio-emotional response to "ontological insecurity," distinct and often entirely detached from actual levels of crime (Tyler and Boeckmann 1997). Garland (1990), Giddens (1991), Bottoms (1995), Young (1999), and others have described how punishment is often a way to cope with more abstract anxieties related to modernity: the perceived decline of important social institutions, the decay of moral values, and so on. Of particular relevance is Gaubatz's (1995) contention that the emotional rejection of certain social practices is displaced onto attitudes about punishment and crime, with convicted offenders (or perhaps welfare recipients) being among the few groups that it is socially acceptable, even respectable to openly disparage (King and Maruna 2009: 148). The idea is that many of these existential threats and political insecurities can be "dealt with or 'treated' by singling out an 'other' to reinforce one's core values" (Voruz 2003: 247; King and Maruna 2009: 161).

Harkin (2014, 2015) has made similar claims in policing scholarship: that police and policework (including and even especially violence) serve vital socio-political and emotional functions. The corresponding register of public emotions which attend incidents of police violence (outrage, shock, horror, or more frequently, it seems, indifference, and ambivalence) seem to indicate that like other carceral institutions, policing is a realm for "emotional adjudication" (Garland 1990; Harkin 2014: 45). As I have argued, those who are seen to have failed to live up to the American Dream may be "dealt" with or emotionally adjudicated in the remit of policing.

V. Conclusion

In the course of this chapter, I have sought to build a theoretical argument to give texture and context to the empirical findings presented in this thesis. In particular, I have sought to (1) underscore the importance of personal responsibility in America as a founding national ideology and mythology: as an interpretive lens through which to perceive the social world; (2) as well as to highlight the pejorative subtext attached to dependency, using welfarism as a case study to illustrate the superlative failure of self and of the American Dream; and finally (3) to re-situate police violence within this context, suggesting that it may be mitigated by notions of agency and desert. The results of the empirical work taken together with the rich theoretical argument presented here, indicate the salience of libertarian personal responsibility in America as an interpretive lens through which to understand and accept events, especially police violence.

Chapter 9

Conclusion

I. Introduction

This concluding chapter summarizes the findings presented in this thesis and puts them into conversation with the wider scholarship on policing and political thought. The tone of this chapter is more comprehensive and holistic, locating this work in political and historical time. Emphasis is placed on how and why the study of police violence is of particular importance *now*, not only as a historical artifact of 2019 in an age of Black Lives Matter and President Donald Trump, where police brutality seems to have captured the zeitgeist; but also as a testament to, and species of, a long-standing American reverence for individual responsibility. The practical and political implications of this research is discussed, as well as its role in the wider academy. The overall aim of this chapter is to clarify and refine the claims of the thesis, establishing its originality, and integrating into the extant literature in criminology, sociology, and political science.

II. Locating this Work in Historical Time: The State of Contemporary Politics

Populism, Policing, and Public Opinion: What Does Excessive Force "Mean" in 2019?

At the time of writing[36], Donald Trump is president of the United States, the United Kingdom voted by popular referendum to leave the European Union, and across Europe scattered but powerful pockets of right-wing populism have seemed to knock Western geopolitics off its predominately leftward trajectory. The Western world, in particular, seems beguiled by a contrived sentimentality for *the way things were*: for Making America Great *Again,* for putting Britain (or Italy) *First*, for Taking Our Country *Back*. There is both political urgency and currency in the revanchist appeal to "get back one's own," however engineered or imagined the nostalgia. Without conflating events in American policing with the pendulum swing to the populist right (or to speak with condescension from a liberal perch), it is important to consider these strands simultaneously, as both symptomatic and constitutive of each other. Attitudes toward punitivity, authority, order, nationhood, and the social world more generally, are deeply embedded and reflected in political preferences. President Trump's seeming endorsement of police mistreatment[37], his call for increased personal responsibility[38], his persistent othering and wedding of economic and social insecurity to outsider

[36] This thesis was written and researched between October 2015 and September 2019.
[37] In a July 28, 2017 address to police at Suffolk County Community College in Brentwood, Long Island, New York, President Trump said, "And when you see these towns and when you see these thugs being thrown into the back of a paddy wagon — you just see them thrown in, rough — I said, 'Please don't be too nice.' Like when you guys put somebody in the car and you're protecting their head, you know, the way you put their hand over? Like, don't hit their head and they've just killed somebody— don't hit their head. I said, you can take the hand away, O.K.?... For years and years, [laws have] been made to protect the criminal…Totally protect the criminal, not the officers. You do something wrong, you're in more jeopardy than they are. These laws are stacked against you. We're changing those laws."
[38] In a statement about a "public charge regulation" issued by the Department of Homeland Security on August 12, 2019, Acting U.S. Citizenship and immigration Services Director Ken Cuccinelli said, President Trump's administration is reinforcing the ideals of self-sufficiency and personal responsibility, ensuring that immigrants are able to support themselves and become successful here in America."

"threats" – whether from beyond the wall, or birthed on native soil[39] – undoubtedly animate conceptions of *who* and *what* constitute the "right" kind of citizen, and how policing should be conducted accordingly.

The interconnectedness between policing priorities and political concerns render it a febrile and frequent battleground for issues related to immigration (Parmar 2018 in the UK), masculinity (Carlson 2015), race (Lerman and Weaver 2014), identity politics, federalism, and so on. How policing is conducted, who is (over- and under-) policed, what constitutes policing, who should it administer it, and how policing is experienced are all questions that, on a microcosmic level, reflect some of the ambient anxieties vexing many Americans today.

And while policing as a platform of "law and order" governance may no longer command the same emotional resonance or electoral capital it once did (Loader 2018), authoritarian rhetoric related to policing still colonizes much of the discourse surrounding identity, nationalism, citizenship, duty, and desert. Loader (2018: 1, emphases in original) explicates this idea further:

> … [M]any observed proprieties of the 'law and order' era have today become features of [contemporary] political life *tout court*. Populism is not just a driver of penal politics; it is on the rise in political movements and rhetoric across the democratic world. Calls for tough action and authoritarian solutions are no longer limited to crime; 'strongman' leaders are being elected across the world…. Skepticism toward experts, and the trashing of 'liberal elites,' is no longer a local distaste target at judges, the Parole Board, or criminologists; it has become a

[39] In October 2018 and again in August 2019, President Trump advocated for a reconsideration of the Constitutional guarantee for birthright citizenship on the basis that it was a "burden" to US taxpayers.

> structuring feature of politics marked by fake news, post-truth, and tribal epistemology (we have our facts, you have yours). 'Fear of crime' may have receded as an object of enquiry and policy; but fear and its attendant emotions – anxiety, resentment, anger, blame, hostility – have found new referents (notably migrants) and are ripe for political exploitation.

Indeed in the last half-decade or so, the populist deposition of established modes of governance across the world seems to have functioned as something of a referendum on "out of touch" leadership (Loader and Sparks 2016: 326) and rule by technocracy, adopting much of the authoritarian tone once reserved for spaces of crime and punishment. In many respects, the rise of populism and co-optation of authoritarian language is reflective of the "sustained dialogue" (Loader 2018: 2) between issues of crime, policing, and politics, wherein issues of inequality and harm are "made sense of" through ideological frameworks. Those "requiring" policing and those "requiring" government aid for subsistence, are, in many senses, interchangeable and synonymous: both ill- or unequipped to self-manage, both drains on the system.[40]

This is not to say backlash politics necessarily explain attitudes toward policing (or crime and society, more generally). In fact, attitudes toward police and popular support for them has remained fairly constant over the last half-century (Montgomery 2017). As Bradford et al. (2017: 3) write, even despite countless revelations of malpractice, brutality, scandal, and corruption over the last several decades, modern policing in America has remained essentially unchanged (cf., Loader and Mulcahy 2003: 35 in the

[40] For example, the same "bad hombres" President Trump referred to in his 2016 presidential bid as the catalysts behind drug trafficking crime in the U.S., in many ways, comprise the same group he claims to be a burden to the system, or "public charges," in his 2019 immigration policy.

U.K.). In the face of Rodney King, Ferguson, and countless reform commissions, institutionally and politically, policing today looks nearly identical to that of thirty years ago, with polling data (Gallup 2018), documenting virtually the same (high) levels of support for police over the last three decades.

Yet while contemporary attitudes toward policing are neither a referendum on economic or social issues, nor as fickle and mutable as political passions, they do convey important meaning about how many Americans "experience" their social world. Enduring public support for police may in and of itself say something about how certain groups of white Americans interact with police, and what policing and excessive force "mean," culturally, politically, and emotionally. Moreover, the fact that policing is frequently invoked as a salient idiom (Simon 2002) to convey identity (Bradford et al. 2014), belongingness (Loader and Mulcahy 2003), remediation, as well as exclusion and disenfranchisement, reveals something about the role it plays as a site of norm-signaling and individual agency. Attitudes toward policing and excessive force, in a litany of ways, encode how certain groups of Americans relate to and experience dislocation, value personal responsibility, and internalize the American Dream.

Expanding Policing Scholarship in the Current Cultural Moment

Yet despite police brutality becoming a central feature of the zeitgeist over the last several years, little is actually known about rates of police violence[41]; or what forms, thresholds, and recipients of use of force might be considered more "acceptable"; or how incidents of excessive force might be differentially "experienced" across groups. As Diarmaid Harkin (2014: 48, emphases in original) explains:

> …[E]laborating on where [the] thresholds of acceptability and unacceptability are has not been a strong suit of police studies. Research focuses on the unacceptable: condemning; pillorying; exposing; and exploring the process of police "brutality" and degrading treatment… And rightfully so. The alternative focus – on *acceptable* police violence – establishing what would be precisely

[41] Police violence, especially instances of excessive force as defined by this thesis, is by nature hard to count. This is, often, an activity well hidden from public view. Indeed, enumeration of the wider category of police use of force (including justified violence) has proven difficult enough. In the U.S. no official national statistics on police shootings are recorded, despite the requirement of the 1994 Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act to "[maintain] data about the use of excessive force by law enforcement officers" (H.R. 3355, Sec. 210402). Rather, a patchwork of municipal, state, and independently-collected data is often piecemealed together by nongovernmental organizations, media outlets (especially coverage by the *Washington Post* and *Guardian* newspapers, for example), independent researchers, or increasingly, individuals with mobile phone recordings. *The Guardian* series "The Counted" estimates that 1,092 individuals in the US were killed by police in 2016 and 1,146 in 2015. This number varies considerably by race, as investigations by the *Tampa Bay Times* ("Why Do Cops Shoot?", 2017) show that in Florida, for example, about 40% of victims of police shootings are black, despite making up close to 17% of the population (US Census Bureau). These figures indicate not only the paucity of available statistics on the rates of police violence in the U.S., but also its disproportionate (and likely still understated) concentration upon marginalized groups. Set against these official and independently-collected sources, must be a recognition of the extent to which much use of force, and particularly violence, likely goes unrecorded. Data are, unsurprisingly, scant, but there is evidence to suggest that significant numbers of people – particularly those of color – do experience police violence, or at least use of force, at some point in their lives. A survey conducted in Ohio in 1992, for example, reported that among the 38% of respondents who had had contact with police in the previous 12 months, 7% reported verbally abusive treatment and 1% reported physically abusive treatment (Son and Rome 2004). A more recent 2016 online survey across four US cities (Baltimore, New York, Philadelphia, and Washington D.C.) found that 6% of respondents reported a lifetime experience of "physical victimization" at the hands of police (e.g., having been hit, punched, kicked, dragged, or beaten by on officer); 3% reported a lifetime experience of sexual victimization; and 3% reported an experience of physical victimization using a weapon (DeVylder et al. 2016). Black and Latino respondents were the most likely to report such experiences. Qualitative research has likewise produced copious amounts of evidence for commonplace experiences of excessive use of force with particular areas and populations, particularly black communities in the U.S. (e.g. Brunson 2007; Brunson and Miller 2006; Carr et al. 2007), which has unsurprisingly been linked to negative police relationships in those communities.

> justifiable, the allowable "error rate," what tactics and violence to advocate, whose suffering to tolerate and how much, is less well developed.

This research has sought to mitigate this gap in policing scholarship and deepen academic understandings of how excessive force is "experienced" and "made sense" of by white Americans. Indeed, despite the paucity of official statistics about police brutality in the U.S., and the *relative* infrequency with which it occurs[42], it continues to loom large in the consciousness of many Americans – metaphorically, vicariously, and putatively. A cursory glance on Google Trends, for example, shows that interest in the search term "police brutality" has increased fourfold in the last five years. It has also permeated mainstream media, becoming a feature on primetime television programs (e.g., *Orange is The New Black*, *Black-ish*), podcasts (e.g., *Embedded*, *Radiolab*, *Serial*), songs and music videos, (e.g., Childish Gambino's "This is America," Kendrick Lamar's "Alright," Beyoncé's "Formation"), reflecting as much as stoking popular attitudes about it.

Whether invoked in parables and cautionary tales (such as the comments made by New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio to his son in 2016[43] or in Ta-Nehisi Coates' 2015 *Between the World And Me*), regretful tropes illustrating the state of the nation, or even in

[42] To be sure rates of police violence in the U.S. are still staggeringly high, especially when compared to other OECD nations, with Frank et al. (2019: 16793) calling it a "leading cause of death for young men in the United States."

[43] Following the death of Eric Garner in Ferguson, M.O. in July 2014, New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio said that, as many fathers of black children, he had "the talk" with his son about how to behave when confronted with police so as not to escalate the encounter: "All of us in white America have to understand better that young men of color live in fear all the time… When I talk to Dante, it's come to the point that he assumes that this is a part of life and a part of the reality… If you have white children, you don't need to give them that particular warning." (quoted in the *New York Times*, 13 July 2016).

apologias for the inevitability of excessive force (i.e., "there's no smoke without fire"), police violence appears to occupy a strange realm of public consciousness, in which despite how little is actually known about it, it is deliberated and *felt* with a conviction and self-assuredness wholly disproportionate to its corpus of statistical or sociological knowledge.

To be sure, policing probably only occupies a very small portion of the headspace of the average white American, and, moreover, incidents of violence are far from the quotidian experience. Sparing, mundane, and low-level encounters comprise the vast bulk of interactions between police and public (Bradford et al. 2013: 7-8). Moreover, as Carlson (2015: 171-2) writes, "an exclusive emphasis on Americans (particularly young Black men) as aggressively policed, prosecuted, and punished obscures how everyday Americans participate in this system not as state or market actors, but as political actors." Indeed, to that extent that white Americans are thinking about excessive force, they are likely not conjuring probability statistics or metrics of police-inflicted violence, but instead more latent ideas about a preferred vision of order and type of civic duty – that policing, in some sense, is able to register moral choices and character.

And though this thesis does not illuminate the extent or nature of police violence in America, it does shed light on the mechanisms underpinning how it is perceived and justified, and thus, possibly, one of the reasons it is allowed to persist. Moreover, it provides fresh and deeper examination into support for police use of force amid a sparse literature and backdrop of heightened public awareness.

III. This Thesis

Summarizing the Findings

That being said, it is worth rehashing how, and in what ways, this thesis has expanded policing scholarship. In the course of this work, I have argued that strong preferences for individualism shape how white Americans "experience," and ultimately support, police and excessive force. Across four empirical chapters (Chapters IV, V, VI, and VII), I have demonstrated that (a) the effect of racism in shaping white Americans' appraisals of excessive force is less straightforward than is typically portrayed, and (b) ideological commitments to individual moral responsibility and libertarianism ultimately predict support for excessive force, as well as trust and legitimacy in police.

Specifically, in Chapter IV, I showed that the race of an officer and suspect had no effect on respondents' evaluations of excessive force, or indeed any other metric of the encounter or underlying ideological disposition (e.g., belief in a just world). I corroborated this in a follow-up study presented in Chapter V. In Chapter VI, I demonstrated that other, non-racial variables predicted support for excessive force, namely a belief in a just world, libertarian-authoritarianism, and social identity. Chapter VII established that these same variables – or what I describe in terms of individualist ideologies – also predict trust and legitimacy in police. Chapter VII additionally

illustrated that stories of excessive force corroded respondents' trust in and normative alignment with police.

Thus, empirically, I found that while news of excessive force resulted in a deterioration of public trust in and normative alignment with police, this news did not affect any change in respondents' ideologies or commitments to personal responsibility and group identity. Moreover, these strong individualist orientations themselves predicted support for violent policing. This may provide insight into how and why white Americans' affinities toward police persist in the face of a long and consistent history of brutality in the U.S. It is possible that while more proximal judgments of trust and normative alignment with police may suffer in the short term from news of excessive force, they may ultimately *rebound*, as they draw on the deep-seated ideological commitments to personal responsibility and group identity, which remain unaffected by stories of police violence.

Chapter VIII locates these empirical findings in a theoretical argument about American identity and the ideologies, mythologies, and pathologies that sustain it. I suggest that the American Dream emphasis on desert, merit, and self-enterprise shape how white Americans, in particular, "experience" excessive force, providing context to their disproportionately high levels of continued police support. I consider how victimization, culpability, and inequality are made legible – and, possibly, justifiable – through this frame of personal responsibility.

Future Research: Placing a Greater Emphasis on Ideology

To that end, I have advocated for a greater emphasis to be placed on the ideological and political sources of support for excessive force in the U.S. I argue that attitudes toward excessive force may be a species of a wider libertarian politics regarding the appropriate preserve of the individual in American society, thus distilling latent anxieties pertaining to dependency and self-reliance.

Of course, chalking up approval for excessive force to a historical and ideological tradition prioritizing personal responsibility effaces the contemporary (and increasingly, "woke") sensibility characterizing views on police practice, and the growing acknowledgement of structural inequality and implicit bias affecting everyday life. It is not simply whimsical parables about John D. Rockefeller or the Wild West that motivates groups of white Americans to condone violent policing. Indoctrination and ideological bias still require significant moral and cognitive maneuvering. As Bénabou and Triole (2006: 699-700) summarize:

> …[Americans] constantly struggle with the cognitive dissonance required to maintain and pass on to their children the view that hard work and good deeds will ultimately bring a better life, that crime does not pay, etc., in spite of signals that life may not always be that fair…. When confronted with data that conflicts with this view they try to ignore, reinterpret, distort, or forget it – for instance, by finding imaginary merits to the recipients of fortuitous rewards, or assigning blame to innocent victims.

While the significance of political ideology as a "lens" must be further clarified in future research, I echo Roché and Roux's (2017: 517) contention that "the role of political ideology and moral values has not been sufficiently considered" in policing studies.

Reconsidering the Primacy of Racism in Understanding Attitudes toward Excessive Force

Finally, I close with a call to publish null findings and reconsider the primacy of racism in shaping white Americans' views toward excessive force. As documented throughout this work, giving racism explanatory priority in accounting for discrepant attitudes toward policing and excessive force can still leave wider, latent penal logics un-interrogated and obscured. Moreover, the anxiety and apprehensiveness about publishing null findings, particularly those espousing seemingly heterodox views about racism in American policing, only further enable inertia in both academia and public policy. However, it must be reiterated that these findings are drawn from unknown populations, and thus the generalizability of the racial null findings must be made with caution – though they echo previous literature (cf., Rome et al. 1994; Johnson and Kuhns 1994) which finds no association between the race of a suspect and attitudes toward police in a fictional scenario of violence for white American respondents.

In order to deepen our understanding of racial bias and expand policing scholarship's explanatory agenda, it is necessary to disentangle the role that racism can (and frequently *has*) played in how the public "makes sense" of police violence, from other, often-overlooked forms of prejudice. While not undercutting the significance of race in

American life, not least as it pertains to policing and public opinion, if academic focus is collapsed entirely into a monolithic catch-all of "racial discrimination," we may fail to adequately account for how other aspects of identity animate, exacerbate, or in some instances, sideline racial discrimination, and more broadly, how and why white Americans continue to tolerate and accept violent policing.

Appendices:

Appendix A: Survey Materials

Survey 1:

1. Informed Consent
2. First, we'll start with some questions about the laws in your community.

   Generally speaking, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following:
   a. Others in my community generally have similar values to mine.
   b. Being a member of my community is important to how I think of myself as a person
   c. In general, I see myself as an honest, law-abiding citizen
   d. It is important to me that others see me as an honest, law-abiding citizen
3. And again, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following:
   a. The laws in your community are generally consistent with your own intuitions of right and wrong
   b. Obeying the law ultimately benefits everyone
   c. A person who disobeys the law is a danger to the community
4. Vignette Manipulation
   a. [**Implied Race – White Officer/Black Suspect**] During his usual nighttime patrol, Officer Brian Weber sees a 17-year old teenager, Demarco Stephens, standing outside of a convenience store with a group

of friends just after 10:30 PM at night. Officer Weber believes he sees an exchange of money along with a brown paper bag. Officer Weber begins to approach the group, when they suddenly flee.

Because he is patrolling alone, Officer Weber calls for backup before chasing the group on foot. After a short foot chase, Officer Weber is only able to apprehend Demarco Stephens. Once Demarco Stephens is in handcuffs, Officer Weber pushes him to the ground and kicks him in the stomach

b. **Implied Race – White Officer/White Suspect** During his usual nighttime patrol, Officer Brian Weber sees a 17-year old teenager, Ryan Anderson, standing outside of a convenience store with a group of friends just after 10:30 PM at night. Officer Weber believes he sees an exchange of money along with a brown paper bag. Officer Weber begins to approach the group, when they suddenly flee.

   Because he is patrolling alone, Officer Weber calls for backup before chasing the group on foot. After a short foot chase, Officer Weber is only able to apprehend Ryan Anderson. Once Ryan Anderson is in handcuffs, Officer Weber pushes him to the ground and kicks him in the stomach

c. [**Implied Race – Black Officer/Black Suspect**] During his usual nighttime patrol, Officer Jamal Washington sees a 17-year old teenager, Demarco Stephens, standing outside of a convenience store with a group of friends just after 10:30 PM at night. Officer Washington believes he sees an exchange of money along with a brown paper bag. Officer Washington begins to approach the group, when they suddenly flee.

   Because he is patrolling alone, Officer Washington calls for backup before chasing the group on foot. After a short foot chase, Officer Washington is only able to apprehend Demarco Stephens. Once Demarco Stephens is in handcuffs, Officer Washington pushes him to the ground and kicks him in the stomach

d. [**Implied Race – White Officer/White Suspect**] During his usual nighttime patrol, Officer Jamal Washington sees a 17-year old teenager, Ryan Anderson, standing outside of a convenience store with a group of friends just after 10:30 PM at night. Officer Weber believes he sees an exchange of money along with a brown paper bag. Officer Washington begins to approach the group, when they suddenly flee.

   Because he is patrolling alone, Officer Washington calls for backup before chasing the group on foot. After a short foot chase, Officer Washington is only able to apprehend Ryan Anderson. Once Ryan Anderson is in

handcuffs, Officer Washington pushes him to the ground and kicks him in the stomach

5. Under the circumstances, how appropriate do you think it was for Officer Brian Weber/Jamal Washington to use force against Demarco Stephens/Ryan Anderson?
6. To what extent do you think that another police officer would have behaved like Officer Brian Weber/Jamal Washington in this situation?
7. Based on what you have seen or heard about the police in your community, how often do you think events such as these occur?
8. Overall, how responsible do you think Demarco Stephens/Ryan Anderson was for provoking any suspicion that night?
9. To what extent do you think the way Officer Brian Weber/Jamal Washington behaved was wrong?
10. To what extent do you think Officer Brian Weber/Jamal Washington was acting with the community's best interests at heart?
11. From reading the short story, how much would you say you:
    a. Have in common with Demarco Stephens/Ryan Anderson
    b. Demarco Stephens/Ryan Anderson makes a positive impression on you
12. After reading the passage, do you imagine Demarco Stephens/Ryan Anderson to be a law-abiding citizen?

13. Now for some questions about yourself. Generally speaking, what do you think the probability is that you would be outside a convenience store at 10:30 at night?
14. Again, based on what you know about yourself or the police, what do you think the chances are that you would have been stopped by Officer Brian Weber/Jamal Washington had you been outside a convenience store at 10:30 at night?
15. Take a moment to think back on a personal achievement in your life. This could be related to friends, family, career, hobbies, and so on. How much of this would you say was due to....
    a. ...your hard work
    b. ...choices you've made
16. Where did the encounter between Demarco Stephens/Ryan Anderson and Officer Weber/Washington take place?
    a. Convenience store
    b. Playground
    c. Hospital
    d. Parking Lot
17. What time did the encounter take place?
    a. 9:45AM
    b. 10:30PM
    c. 3:00PM
    d. 7:15PM
18. To what extent you agree or disagree with each of the following:

a. The police usually act in ways that are consistent with my own ideas of right and wrong
b. The police can be trusted to make the right decisions
c. The police generally have the same sense of right and wrong as I do
d. The police stand up for values that are important to people like me

19. Now a few questions on your views on society more generally. Please indicate the extent to which you agree with each of the following statements.
    a. I am confident that justice always prevails over injustice
    b. I think that, basically, the world is a just place.
    c. I am confident that, in the long run, people will be compensated for injustices
    d. I firmly believe that injustices in all areas of life are the exception, rather than the rule.
    e. I believe that, by in large, people get what they deserve
20. Please indicate your ethnicity:
    a. White
    b. African American/Black
    c. American Indian/Alaska Native
    d. Asian
    e. Native American/Pacific Islander
    f. Other
21. In politics, people sometimes talk about being on the "left" or the "right." Where would you place yourself politically?

22. Do you identify as...
    a. Male
    b. Female
    c. Prefer not to say
23. How old are you?
    a. 18-24
    b. 25-34
    c. 35-44
    d. 45-54
    e. 55-64
    f. 65-74
    g. 75-84
    h. 85+
24. In which U.S. state do you live?

Survey 2:

1. Informed Consent
2. Please indicate the extent to which you agree with each of the following statements. There are no right or wrong answers.
    a. Others in my community generally have similar values to mine.
    b. Being a member of my community is important to how I think of myself as a person

   c. In general, I see myself as an honest, law-abiding citizen
   d. It is important to me that others see me as an honest, law-abiding citizen

3. Take a moment to think back on a personal achievement in your life. This could be related to friends, family, career, hobbies, and so on. How much of this would you say was due to....
   a. ...your hard work
   b. ...choices you've made
4. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about the police in your community:
   a. Police would treat you with respect if you had contact with them for any reason
   b. Police in my community treat everyone fairly regardless of who they are
   c. Police are dealing with things that matter to people in this community
   d. The police in my community listen to the concerns of local people
5. How well do you think police in your community...?
   a. Prevent terrorism
   b. Respond to emergencies promptly
   c. Provide a visible patrolling presence
   d. Tackle knife and gun crime
6. To what extent you agree or disagree with each of the following:
   a. The police usually act in ways that are consistent with my own ideas of right and wrong
   b. The police can be trusted to make the right decisions

   c. The police generally have the same sense of right and wrong as I do
   d. The police stand up for values that are important to people like me
   e. Most of the time when the police arrest a person there is a good reason to believe the person has done something wrong

7. To what extent do you think it is your moral duty to...
   a. Do what the police tell you even if you don't understand or agree with the reasons
   b. Do what the police tell you to do, even if you don't like how they treat you
8. Now a few questions about your duty towards the law in America...
   a. All laws should be strictly obeyed
   b. Doing the right thing always means obeying the law
   c. Even if you disagree with a law, you should always obey it
   d. Obeying the law ultimately benefits everyone in society
   e. It is important that everybody obeys the law, no matter what position they have in society
9. Now a few questions on your views on society more generally. Please indicate the extent to which you agree with each of the following statements.
   a. I am confident that justice always prevails over injustice
   b. I think that, basically, the world is a just place.
   c. I am confident that, in the long run, people will be compensated for injustices
   d. I firmly believe that injustices in all areas of life are the exception, rather than the rule.

e. I believe that, by in large, people get what they deserve

10. Please read the questions below and indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree.
    a. The government should redistribute income from those who are better off to those who are less well off
    b. Big business benefits owners at the expense of workers
    c. Ordinary working people do not get their fair share of the nation's wealth
    d. There is one law for the rich, and one for the poor
    e. Management will always try to get the better of employees if it gets the chance.
11. Please read the questions below and indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree.
    a. Young people today don't have enough respect for traditional American values
    b. People who break the law should be given stiffer sentences
    c. For some crimes, the death penalty is the most appropriate sentence
    d. The law should always be obeyed, even if a particular law is wrong
12. Manipulation
    a. [**Implied Race – Black**] During his usual nighttime patrol, Officer Brian Weber sees a 17-year old teenager, Demarco Stephens, standing outside of a convenience store with a group of friends just after 10:30 PM at night. Officer Weber believes he sees an exchange of money along with a brown paper bag. Officer Weber begins to approach the group, when they

suddenly flee.

Because he is patrolling alone, Officer Weber calls for backup before chasing the group on foot. After a short foot chase, Officer Weber is only able to apprehend Demarco Stephens. Once Demarco Stephens is in handcuffs, Officer Weber pushes him to the ground and kicks him in the stomach.

b. [**Implied Race - White**] During his usual nighttime patrol, Officer Brian Weber sees a 17-year old teenager, Ryan Anderson, standing outside of a convenience store with a group of friends just after 10:30 PM at night. Officer Weber believes he sees an exchange of money along with a brown paper bag. Officer Weber begins to approach the group, when they suddenly flee.

   Because he is patrolling alone, Officer Weber calls for backup before chasing the group on foot. After a short foot chase, Officer Weber is only able to apprehend Ryan Anderson. Once Ryan Anderson is in handcuffs, Officer Weber pushes him to the ground and kicks him in the stomach.

c. [**Explicit Race**] During his usual nighttime patrol, Officer Brian Weber, a white police officer, sees a 17-year old African American teenager, Demarco Stephens, standing outside of a convenience store with a group

of friends just after 10:30 PM at night. Officer Weber believes he sees an exchange of money along with a brown paper bag. Officer Weber begins to approach the group, when they suddenly flee.

Because he is patrolling alone, Officer Weber calls for backup before chasing the group on foot. After a short foot chase, Officer Weber is only able to apprehend Demarco Stephens, the African American teen. Once Demarco Stephens is in handcuffs, Officer Weber pushes him to the ground and kicks him in the stomach.

d. [**Control**] During his usual nighttime patrol, Officer Brian Weber drives by a closed convenience store just after 10:30 PM at night. Officer Weber believes he notices something move inside the convenience store. Officer Weber approaches the convenience store and shines his flashlight inside the building to determine whether there has been a break-in.

Because he is patrolling alone, Officer Weber radios his precinct to inform them he will inspect the store. After a short inspect, Officer Weber realizes it is a cat in the convenience store and resumes his nightly patrol.

13. Please answer the following questions based on the short story you just read. There are no right or wrong answers.

[**Implied Race**] Under the circumstances, how appropriate do you think it was for Officer Brian Weber to use force against Demarco Stephens/Ryan Anderson? // [**Explicit Race**] Under the circumstances, how appropriate do you think it was for the white police officer, Officer Brian Weber, to use force against the African American suspect, Demarco Stephens? // [**Control**] Under the circumstances, how appropriate do you think it was for Officer Brian Weber to behave this way?

14. To what extent do you think another police officer would have behaved like Officer Weber in this situation?
15. Do you think that Officer Weber was acting with the community's best interest at heart?
16. To what extent do you think the way Officer Weber behaved was wrong?
17. Based on what you've seen or heard about the police, how often do you think events such as these occur?
18. Overall, how responsible do you think Demarco Stephens/Ryan Anderson was for provoking any suspicion from the police that night?
19. Based on reading the short story, how much would you say that you yourself have in common with Demarco Stephens/Ryan Anderson?
20. From what you read, how much would you say Demarco Stephens/Ryan Anderson makes a positive impression on you?
21. After reading the short passage, do you imagine Demarco Stephens/Ryan Anderson to be a law-abiding citizen?

22. Based on the story you read, please indicate what race you believe Demarco Stephens/Ryan Anderson to be:
23. Earlier in this survey, you were asked to read a short story about an encounter between a police officer and a suspect. Where did the encounter take place?
    a. Playground
    b. Convenience store
    c. Hospital
    d. Parking lot
24. Please indicate your ethnicity:
    a. White
    b. African American/Black
    c. American Indian/Alaska Native
    d. Asian
    e. Native American/Pacific Islander
    f. Other
25. In politics, people sometimes talk about being on the "left" or the "right." Where would you place yourself politically?
26. Do you identify as...
    a. Male
    b. Female
    c. Prefer not to say
27. How old are you?
    a. 18-24

b. 25-34
c. 35-44
d. 45-54
e. 55-64
f. 65-74
g. 75-84
h. 85+

28. In which U.S. state do you live?
29. Please indicate your highest level of educational attainment:
    a. Less than high school
    b. High school graduate
    c. Some college
    d. 2-year degree
    e. 4-year degree
    f. Professional degree
    g. Doctorate
30. Debrief

B. Instructions to Participants and Consent Form

"General Information:

Political Ideology, Racism, and American Identity:
An Examination of White Americans' Support for the Police Use of Excessive Force

Thank you for your interest in participating in this questionnaire. Please read through these terms before agreeing to participate by ticking the "yes" box below.

We are investigating how people make decisions about police behavior. If you agree to take part, you will be presented with a scenario of police behavior and then be asked a series of questions about what you think. You will also be asked some sensitive questions about your own background (e.g. political views, your ethnic background), but you do not have to answer these questions if you would prefer not to. Finally, you will receive more information about the study and the opportunity to contact me with any questions you may have about the study.

Taking part should take no more than 30 minutes. Survey payment: $0.75. Your answers will be completely anonymous and kept confidential. Your participation is voluntary. You may withdraw at any point during the survey for any reason, before submitting your answers. However, we are only able to reimburse participants who complete the full survey.

The data will be stored in a password protected file for at least three years after publication of the PhD thesis and may be used in academic publications. This questionnaire is for a PhD project. The principal researcher is Jenna Milani, a student at the Centre for Criminology at the University of Oxford. This project is being completed under the supervision of Professors Ben Bradford and Ian Loader. This project has been

reviewed by, and received ethics clearance from, the University of Oxford Central University Research Ethics Committee.

What if there is a problem?

If you have a concern about any aspect of this project, please speak to the researcher (Jenna Milani: jenna.milani@crim.ox.ac.uk) or her supervisors (Professor Ben Bradford: ben.bradford@ucl.ac.uk; Professor Ian Loader: ian.loader@crim.ox.ac.uk), who will do their best to answer your question. The researchers should acknowledge your concern within 10 working days and give you an indication of how they intend to deal with it. If you remain unhappy or wish to make a formal complaint, please contact the chair of the Research Ethics Committee at the University of Oxford (Chair, Social Sciences & Humanities Inter-Divisional Research Ethics Committee; Email: ethics@socsci.ox.ac.uk; Address: Research Services, University of Oxford, Wellington Square, Oxford, United Kingdom OX1 2JD). The chair will seek to resolve the matter in a reasonably expeditious manner.

Please note: your response will only be recorded, and payment will only be made if you have fully completed this survey to the best of your ability, in a reasonable and timely manner. This survey should take no more than 30 minutes, however anyone who completes it in less than 3 minutes will not receive payment, following the Amazon Mechanical Turk policy, which states: 'a Requester may reject work if the HIT was not completed correctly or the instructions were not followed.'"

C. Debrief Forms

"Thank you for participating in this study.

I will now tell you more information about its purpose. This study aims to investigate the effects of presenting different contexts of police brutality on the appropriateness of the police violence described, as judged by ordinary people. The incident description that you read is the same as that presented to every participant, except for the race of the victim of the brutality and the alleged consensus behind police behavior. Once data collection is complete, we will compare the inferred appropriateness of the police response, as rated by participants who were presented with a different a different stated race of the victim of police brutality and different stated consensus behind police behavior.

The fictional police scenario that you read resembles a controlled set-up of what happens in real cases of police violence: news watchers judge the appropriateness of the police response. The results of our study may therefore have implications for the ways in which people interpret incidents of police violence. However, the data regarding the alleged consensus of your peers was created for the purposes of this experiment and is in no way an indication of real public opinions regarding the appropriateness of police violence.

Now that you know more about the study, please note that you are fully entitled to

withdraw the data we collected from you now or at any future point in time. Should you wish to do so, please inform the researcher now via email (jenna.milani@crim.ox.ac.uk). You will not be required to give any reason as to why you want to withdraw and this decision will not affect you in any way.

Please do not disclose any of the above information regarding the experiment's purpose to your friends, given that they may take part in the study too and participants will continue to be recruited. It is very important that they know no more than you did at the start of the experiment. If you have any more questions, please do not hesitate to ask me now or contact me later. Thank you again for participating in this research."

Appendix B: Measures & Constructs

Appropriateness of Police Violence

To measure respondents' attitudes toward police violence (the main response variable), respondents were asked: "Under the circumstances, how appropriate do you think it was for Officer [Weber/Washington] to use force against [Demarco Stephens/Ryan Anderson]?" Responses were based on a six-point Likert-type scale ranging from (1) very inappropriate to (6) very appropriate.

Police Officer Malfeasance

To measure attitudes toward police officer wrongdoing, respondents were asked: (1)"To what extent do you think that another police officer would have behaved like Officer [Washington/Weber] in this situation?"; (3) "To what extent do you think that Officer [Washington/Weber] was acting with the community's best interest at heart?;" (4) "To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following?: The way Officer [Washington/Weber] behaved was wrong." Response alternatives were based on a six-point Likert type scale ranging from 1=strongly disagree to 5/6=strongly agree.

Suspect Responsibility

To measure respondents' attributions of culpability to the suspect, respondents were asked to report the extent to which they evaluated the suspect as "responsible for provoking any suspicion that night" on a five-point Likert scale from (1) "not at all responsible" to (5) "completely responsible."

Belief in a Just World

As described in further depth in later chapters, the Belief in a Just World (BJW) Scale is a widely used five-item "agree-disagree" self-report scale which was used to operationalize a dimension of what I have termed "personal responsibility." First used by Lerner (1968) to describe the common psychological phenomenon in which people believe that we get what we deserve, both good and bad, and that harm can be causally traced (Bandura 1990).

The five-item measure asked participants to rate on a six-point Likert-type scale how much they agreed with the following statements: (1) "I am confident that justice always prevails over injustice; (2) I think that basically the world is a just place; (3) I am confident that, in the long run, people will be compensated for injustices; (4) I firmly believe that injustices in all areas of life (e.g., professional, family, political) are the exception rather than the rule; (5) I believe that, by in large, people get what they deserve." Consistent with much pervious literature, these items scaled together strongly.

Survey 1: N=1131 (α = .91), M= 17.35, $S.D.$= 5.53

Survey 2: N=1325 (α = .93), M= 18.60, $S.D.$= 5.98.

Libertarian Political Ideology

Respondents were asked to rate from 1= strongly disagree to 6 = strongly agree the following four Libertarian-Authoritarian statements adapted from Heath et al. (1994): (1) "Young people today don't have enough respect for traditional American values"; (2) "People who break the law should be given stiffer sentences"; (3) "For some crimes, the death penalty is the most appropriate sentence"; (4) "The law should always be obeyed, even if a particular law is wrong." These items also demonstrated high internal consistency. N=1325 (α = .89), M= 20.67, $S.D.$= 6.01.

Respondents were also asked on a five-item Left-Right Libertarian scale adapted from Heath et al. (1994) to rate (1= strongly disagree; 6 = strongly agree) the following statements: (1) "The government should redistribute income from those who are better off to those who are less well off"; (2)"Big business benefits owners at the expense of workers"; "Ordinary working people do not get their fair share of the nation's wealth"; (4) "There is one law for the rich, and one for the poor"; (5) "Management will always try to get the better of employees if it gets the chance." Similarly, these items scaled together strongly. N=1325 (α = .82), M= 15.01, $S.D.$= 4.85.

Social Identity

To measure social identity, respondents were asked seven items adapted from Jackson and Bradford (2014: *Fiducia*): (1) "Others in my community generally have similar values to mine"; (2) "Being a member of my community is important to how I think of myself as a person"; (3) "I generally see myself as a law-abiding citizen"; (4) "It is important to me that others see me as an honest, law-abiding citizen." (5) "The laws in your community are generally consistent with your own intuitions of right and wrong"; (6) "Obeying the law ultimately benefits everyone in the community"; (7) "A person who disobeys laws is a danger to others in the community." Response alternatives were ranged from (1) strongly disagree to (6) strongly agree.

Study 1: N=1132 (α = .74), M= 18.11, $S.D.$= 3.23.

Study 2: N=1325 (α = .69), M= 17.95, $S.D.$= 3.01.

Trust in the Police

In the second survey, respondents were asked a to rate "the extent to which you agree or disagree with these statements about the police in your community: (1) They would treat you with respect if you had contact with them for any reason; (2) The police in my community treat everyone fairly regardless of who they are; (3) They are dealing with the things that matter to people in this community; (4) The police in this area listen to the concerns of local people. Responses alternatives ranged from 1 = strongly disagree to 6 = strongly agree.

To measure trust in police effectiveness, respondents were on a four-point Likert response ranging from "not at all well" to "very well," to rate "how well do you think police in your community…" (1) Prevent terrorism; (2) Respond to emergencies promptly; (3) Provide a visible patrolling presence; (4) Tackle gun/knife crime."

These two scales were combined into a single trust scale. N=1325 (8, α = .88), M= 31.88, *S.D.*= 5.65.

Normative Alignment

In the second survey, normative alignment was measured using a five-item construct which asked respondents to rate on a six-point Likert-type response scale ranging from

"strongly disagree" to strongly agree." This was adapted from Jackson and Bradford (2014 Fiducia). (1)" The police usually act in ways that are consistent with my own ideas of right and wrong; (2) The police can be trusted to make the right decisions; (3) The police have generally the same sense of right and wrong as I do; (4); The police stand up for values that are important to people like me; (5)Most of the time when the police arrest a person there is a good reason to believe the person has done something wrong." N=1325 (α = .95), M= 21.68, *S.D.*= 5.42.

Duty to Obey

In the second survey, duty to obey the police was measured using a two-item construct which asked respondents to indicate the extent to which they believed the statements were their moral duty, on a four-point Likert-type response scale ranging from "not at all my duty" to "completely my duty." This was adapted from Jackson and Bradford (2014 Fiducia). "(1) Do what the police tell you even if you don't understand the reasons; (2) Do what police tell you to do, even if you don't like how they treat you."

The duty to obey more generally was measured using five-item construct which asked respondents to evaluate their "duty toward the law in America" on a five-point Likert-type response scale ranging from "not at all" to "always." This was adapted from Jackson and Bradford (2014 Fiducia). "(1) All laws should be strictly obeyed; (2) Doing the right thing always means obeying the law; (3); Even if you disagree with the law, you should always obey it; (4); The law represents the values and interests of the people in power,

rather than the values and interests of people like yourself; (5); Obeying the law ultimately benefits everyone in society; (6) It is important that everybody obeys the law, no matter what position they have in society."

These two scales were combined into a single duty to obey item. *N*=1325 (7, α = .92), *M*= 26.42, *S.D.*= 5.82.

Appendix C: Chapter 5 Additional Analyses

Table 16: Descriptive Statistics for Test Variables

	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Appropriateness of violence	491	1	6	2.17	1.31
Police officer acting in community's best interest	491	1	6	2.76	1.51
Another police officer would've done the same thing	491	1	6	3.51	1.28
Police officer wrong	491	1	5	4.10	.98
Suspect culpability	491	1	4	2.67	.89
Social Identity	660*	1	6	4.50	.74
Belief in a just world**	665*	1	6	3.70	1.20

*NB: includes those allocated to experimental control
** NB: respondents answered after experimental treatment, in line with Survey 1

Table 17: Crosstabs of Assessments of Excessive Force

Violence appropriate?				White cop, black suspect Explicit	Control
Yes	18.9%	20.7%	15.2%	20.9%	---
No	81.1%	79.3%	84.2%	79.1%	---
N	491	169	164	158	---

Table 18: Summary statistics for belief that police acting with community's best interest, Study 2

Acting with community's best interest?	Total Sample	White cop, black suspect	White cop, white suspect	White cop, black suspect Explicit	Control
No	67.2%	62.7%	72.6%	66.5%	---
Yes	32.8%	37.3%	27.4%	33.5%	---
N	491	169	164	158	---

Table 19: Summary statistics for belief that another officer would've done the same thing, Study 2

Another officer would've done the same?	Total Sample	White cop, black suspect	White cop, white suspect	White cop, black suspect **Explicit**	Control
No	45.2%	44.4%	47%	44.3%	---
Yes	54.8%	55.6%	53%	45.7%	---
N	491	169	164	158	---

Table 20: Contingency Table for belief that police officer was wrong

Police officer wrong?	Total Sample	White cop, black suspect	White cop, white suspect	White cop, black suspect **Explicit**	Control
No	25.5%	17%	29%	27%	---
Yes	75.5%	83%	71%	73%	---
N	491	169	164	158	---

Table 21: Regression coefficients for belief that officer acting in community interest

	Study 1 (n=1119)	*Study 2 (n=490)*
White Cop vs. Black Suspect	.19	.20
White Cop vs. White Suspect	-.04	-.24
Black Cop vs. White Suspect	.10	--
Gender (0: female)	.09	-.03
Politics (0: left)	.50**	.96**
Age (0: <18-25)	-.14*	-.07
Education (0: < high school)	.08	.03
Social Identity	.40**	.34*
Omnibus test of model coefficients chi-square	85.69**	66.94**

**p < .01.
*p < .05.

Table 22: Regression coefficients for belief that another officer would've done same		
	Study 1 (n=1122)	*Study 2 (n=490)*
White Cop vs. Black Suspect	-.04	.02
White Cop vs. White Suspect	-.05	-.07
Black Cop vs. White Suspect	-.14	---
Gender (0: female)	.17	-.02
Politics (0: left)	-.30**	-.06
Age (0: <18-25)	-.23**	-.23**
Education (0: < high school)	.07	.03
Social Identity	-.52**	-.26*
Omnibus test of model coefficients chi-square	96.78**	16.50*
**p < .01. *p < .05.		

Table 23 Regression coefficients for belief that officer behaved wrong		
	Study 1 (n=1118)	*Study 2 (n=490)*
White Cop vs. Black Suspect	-.10	-.07
White Cop vs. White Suspect	-.16	.65*
Black Cop vs. White Suspect	-.22	--
Gender (0: female)	.16	.03
Politics (0: left)	-.59**	-.81**
Age (0: <18-25)	-.25**	.05
Education (0: < high school)	.02	.11
Social Identity	.28*	-.11
Omnibus test of model coefficients chi-square	45.68**	46.36**
**p < .01. *p < .05.		

Table 24: Regression coefficients for attributions of suspect responsibility		
	Study 1 (n=1118)	*Study 2 (n=491)*
White Cop vs. Black Suspect	.05	.09†
White Cop vs. White Suspect	.03	.03
Black Cop vs. White Suspect	.06†	--
Gender (0: female)	-.002	.05
Politics (0: left)	.19**	.35**
Age (0: <18-25)	-.007	.09*
Education (0: < high school)	.004	-.03
Social Identity	.24	.05
R^2	.08	.16
**p < .01. *p < .05. †p < .10.		

*Table 25: **Regression coefficients for a** belief in a just world*		
	Study 1 (n=1114)	*Study 2 (n=489)*
White Cop vs. Black Suspect	-.004	-.06
White Cop vs. White Suspect	.01	-.03
Black Cop vs. White Suspect	.00	--
Gender (0: female)	.01	.001
Politics (0: left)	.25**	.35**
Age (0: <18-25)	-.10**	-.10**
Education (0: < high school)	.01	.02
Social Identity	.48**	.41**
R^2	.33	.35
**p < .01. *p < .05.		

Table 26: Regression coefficients for support for excessive force (n=490)		
	Model 1	*Model 2*
White Cop vs. Black Suspect	-.02	-1.26
White Cop vs. White Suspect	-.33	-.35
Gender (0: female)	-.03	-.03
Politics (0: left)	1.29**	1.30**
Age (0: <18-25)	-.24*	-.23*
Education (0: < high school)	.07	.063
Social Identity	-.12	.03
White Cop/Black Suspect*SID Interaction		.27
White Cop/White Suspect*SID Interaction		.01
Overall Model Evaluation	68.54**	69.06**
**p < .01. *p < .05.		

Table 27: Regression coefficients for attitudes toward excessive force, Survey 1 & 2						
	Survey 1 (n=1122)			*Survey 2 (n=490)*		
	β	SE	OR	β	*SE*	*OR*
Treatment Condition						
White Cop vs. Black Suspect	.13	.24	1.14	.05	.30	1.05
White Cop vs. White Suspect	-.13	.25	.88	-.22	.32	.80
White Cop vs. Black Suspect Explicit (Reference)						
Gender (0: female)	-.17	.18	1.19	-.03	.05	.97
Politics (0: left)	.38**	.11	1.46	1.07**	.21	2.91
Age (0: <18-25)	-.20*	.08	.82	-.20*	.11	.82
Education (0: < high school)	.13†	.07	1.14	.05	.10	1.05
Social Identity	-.61**	.15	.54	-.23	.21	.79
Belief in Just World	.73**	.11	2.07	.54**	.15	1.72
Overall Model Evaluation		70.60**			82.23**	

**p < .01.
*p < .05.
†p < .10.

Appendix D: Chapter 6 Additional Analyses

Table 4: Correlation matrix for outcome variables (n=660)

	TRUST	NA	DO	SID	BJW	LIB-AUTH	Econ Conservatism
Trust in police	1	.84**	.63**	.55**	.58**	.49**	-.31**
Normative alignment	.84**	1	.67**	.53**	.67**	56**	-.39**
Duty to obey	.63**	.67**	1	.54**	.54**	.61**	-.31**
Social identity	.55**	.53**	.54**	1	.48**	.38**	-.14**
Belief in just world	.58**	.67**	.54**	.48**	1	.58**	-.41**
Libertarian-authoritarianism	.49**	.56**	.61**	.38**	.58**	1	-.40**
Economic Libertarianism	-.31**	-.39**	-.31**	-.14**	-.42**	-.40**	1

Because the correlation between trust in police and normative alignment was high (Pearson's r = .84), I created a combined legitimacy scale including the normative alignment and duty to obey items, and kept the trust sub-scale separate. The combined legitimacy scale demonstrated high internal consistency: N=660 (α =.94), M= 47.53, $S.D.$= 10.39.

Table 5: Linear Regressions for Test Variables (n=664)

	Belief in Just World				
	B	*S.E. B*	*β*	*t*	*p*
White Cop/Black Suspect Condition – Implied Race	-.17	.13	-.06	-1.26	.21

White Cop/White Suspect Condition – Implied Race	-.12	.13	-.04	-.93	.35
White Cop/Black Suspect Condition – Explicit Race	-.09	.13	-.03	-.65	.52
		Libertarian Authoritarianism			
	B	*S.E. B*	*β*	*t*	*p*
White Cop/Black Suspect Condition – Implied Race	-.01	.13	-.03	-.72	.47
White Cop/White Suspect Condition – Implied Race	.03	.13	-.01	-.22	.82
White Cop/Black Suspect Condition – Explicit Race	-.004	.13	-.001	.03	.98
		Economic Libertarianism			
	B	*S.E. B*	*β*	*t*	*p*
White Cop/Black Suspect Condition – Implied Race	.07	.13	.03	.55	.58
White Cop/White Suspect Condition – Implied Race	-.01	.13	-.002	-.05	.96
White Cop/Black Suspect Condition – Explicit Race	.01	.13	.004	.09	.93
		Social Identity			
	B	*S.E. B*	*β*	*t*	*p*
White Cop/Black Suspect Condition – Implied Race	-.01	.08	-.06	-1.18	.24
White Cop/White Suspect Condition – Implied Race	-.06	.08	-.03	-.69	.50
White Cop/Black Suspect Condition – Explicit Race	-.15	.08	-.08	-1.78	.08
		Trust in Police			
	B	*S.E. B*	*β*	*t*	*p*
White Cop/Black Suspect Condition – Implied Race	-.24	.08	-.15	3.13	.00

White Cop/White Suspect Condition – Implied Race	-.17	.08	-.10	-2.24	.03
White Cop/Black Suspect Condition – Explicit Race	-.20	.08	-.12	-2.60	.01
		Duty to Obey			
	B	*S.E. B*	*β*	*t*	*p*
White Cop/Black Suspect Condition – Implied Race	-.16	.09	-.08	-1.71	.09
White Cop/White Suspect Condition – Implied Race	-.05	.09	-.02	-.50	.62
White Cop/Black Suspect Condition – Explicit Race	-.11	.09	-.06	1.19	.24
		Normative Alignment			
	B	*S.E. B*	*β*	*t*	*p*
White Cop/Black Suspect Condition – Implied Race	-.37	.12	-.14	-3.06	.00
White Cop/White Suspect Condition – Implied Race	-.16	.12	-.06	-1.37	.17
White Cop/Black Suspect Condition – Explicit Race	-.27	.12	-.10	-2.22	.03

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