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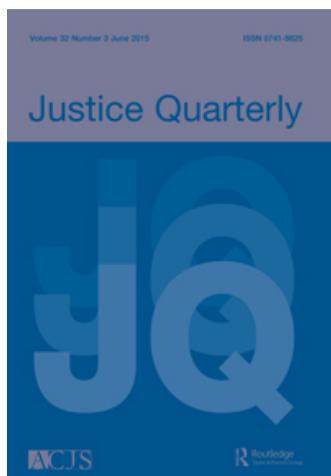
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Race, Social Bonds, and Juvenile Attitudes toward the Police

Yuning Wu, Rodney Lake and Liqun Cao

Relying on survey data collected from over 1,300 students of 13–18 years old across multiple US cities, this study attempts to integrate race into social bond theory to explain the variation in juvenile perceptions of the police. Results indicate significant differential outlooks between white and black teenagers, and to a lesser extent, between white and Hispanic juveniles. Social bonds, especially commitment to school and conventional beliefs, have significant effects on juveniles' attitudes. The effects of race and social bonds are more independent and social bonds do not mediate the race-attitudes relationship. Other factors, such as juvenile delinquency, victimization, and sense of safety, are also related to juvenile assessments of the police. Implications of the findings are discussed.

Keywords perceptions of the police; juvenile; race/ethnicity; social bond theory

Introduction

Although accumulating, the research devoted to juvenile perceptions of the police is still limited compared to that of the adult population (Hurst & Frank,

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2000; Nihart, Lersch, Sellers, & Mieczkowski, 2005). Juveniles are a nation's future. Today's teenagers will soon be tomorrow's adults and many of them will be in positions to influence laws, policies, and practices, including those that affect the police (Cockerham & Forslund, 1975). Research on the relationship between juveniles and the police thus warrants special attention. Previously, the issues of racially differential attitudes toward the police and the impact of social bonds on juvenile attitudes have not been fully explored.

Attention to juveniles' relationships with the police is important as juveniles compose one of the largest groups that have encounters with the police, especially involuntary encounters such as stops, frisks, and arrests (Hurst, Frank, & Browning, 2000; Leiber, Nalla, & Farnworth, 1998). Juveniles are at higher risks of both offending and victimization compared to adults. Official efforts to control youth and gang violence in the 1990s have promoted aggressive police actions against youth. In addition, there is more interaction between juveniles and the police that has a nonlaw enforcement nature in the past two decades. For example, police officers' visible presence in school settings has increased with various educational programs (Bazemore & Senjo, 1997; Brick, Taylor, & Esbensen, 2009; Taylor, Turner, Esbensen, & Winfree, 2001).

Juvenile perceptions of the police also represent a critical area for inquiry because police-youth relationships are often highly strained, particularly in urban minority neighborhoods (Friedman, Lurigio, Greenleaf, & Albertson, 2004; Taylor et al., 2001). Mistrust and dissatisfaction may reduce juveniles' willingness to cooperate with the police in crime control endeavors, and subsequently, lower police effectiveness. In the long run, negative sentiments may undermine police legitimacy. Indeed, satisfaction with the police, especially regarding police civility and fairness, captures the concept of procedural justice (Tyler, 2001). How police officers interact with citizens, including officers' demeanors, attitudes, and behaviors, have important implications for citizen compliance with the police. When citizens perceive that the police are fair, recognize citizen rights, treat people with respect and dignity, and care about their concerns, they are more likely to comply with the law and cooperate with the police (Cao, 2011; Sunshine & Tyler, 2003; Thurman & Reisig, 1996; Tyler, 1990).

In addition, there is an added value in the study of juvenile perceptions of the police because adolescence is a stage when attitudes are forming (Danigelis, Hardy, & Cutler, 2007). Once formed, attitudes tend to last and are difficult to change (Fagan & Tyler, 2005). Thus, juvenile attitudes will shape future relations between the people and the criminal justice system. Meanwhile, adolescents tend to rely heavily on peer experience, thus any belief about the police may be passed along quickly and have an amplification effect. Negative perceptions, unfortunately, are likely to have lasting effects on individual outlooks (Leiber et al., 1998).

Existent research on juveniles' attitudes toward the police has rarely been guided by a cohesive theoretical framework or perspective (but see Leiber et al., 1998 and Brick et al., 2009). This study aims to expand the literature by integrating race with social bond theory in explaining variations in juvenile

attitudes. Unnever, Cullen, Mathers, McClure, and Allison (2009) called for an effort to bring race back into social bond theory in theorizing criminality. The current study attempts to integrate race into social bond theory and use the integrated model to investigate juvenile perceptions of the police, assessing potential mediating effects of social bonds on race-perception relationships, and testing whether race still matters after controlling for a variety of demographic, crime and safety, and locality variables.

Juvenile Perceptions of the Police

Race and Juvenile Perceptions of the Police

Concern about racial disparity is an enduring feature of twentieth-century American politics and policy. The influence of race in public attitudes can be understood from three perspectives. First, race indicates a group position in society (Blumer, 1958; Cao, 2011). Members of the dominant group (i.e. the in-group) tend to share a sense of superiority, view members of the subordinate group (i.e. the out-group) as intrinsically different and alien, as well as significant competitors for a greater portion of dominant group prerogatives (Bobo & Tuan, 2006). Subsequently, whites are more likely to hold favorable opinions of the police, because they perceive this social institution as protectors of their interests and superiority. Conversely, blacks and other minorities are more likely to view the police negatively as they see this social institution as a means of controlling subordinate groups and maintaining the status quo (Weitzer & Tuch, 2006; Wu, Sun, & Triplett, 2009).

Second, race is an ascribed group position in a highly stratified society (Blau & Blau, 1982). The effects of race can thus be confounded with social class. Wilson (1978) in *The Declining Significance of Race* argues that although race remains a factor, social class has become a more important factor in determining people's lives and attitudes in the post-Civil Rights era. Though not addressing the issue of juvenile-police relation, Wilson's (1978) general assertion that race is declining in significance suggests that blacks and whites, especially those growing up in the post-civil rights era, would be similar rather than dissimilar in their attitudes toward the police (Browning & Cao, 1992).

Third, race is a strain variable (Unnever et al., 2009). The continuing salience of racial discrimination and animus in the USA has produced a cumulative disadvantage for blacks, which whites do not suffer (Sampson & Lauritsen, 1997). Negative relations that stem from perceived racial discrimination can foster crime and delinquency (Unnever et al., 2009). Further, injustices perpetrated by the legal system against minorities, historically and contemporarily, can promote mistrust of the system. Black citizens, especially, are found to hold less positive views about crime control and stronger beliefs about criminal injustice than other Americans (Browning & Cao, 1992; Henderson, Cullen, Cao, Browning, & Kopache, 1997).

Empirical research on the effect of race on public perceptions of the police has been extensive (see Brown & Benedict, 2002 and Decker, 1981 for a review). By and large, nonwhites, African-Americans particularly and to a lesser extent Hispanic and Asian Americans, are significantly less satisfied with the police and police services than whites (Brown & Benedict, 2002; Garcia & Cao, 2005; Lai & Zhao, 2010; Wu, Sun, & Smith, 2011). Such attitudinal discrepancies are most evident in areas such as police fairness and equal treatment (Hagan & Albonetti, 1982). Nonetheless, some researchers find that race has a weak or nil effect on citizens' evaluations of the police (e.g. Jesilow, Meyer, & Namzzi, 1995). Still others find an opposite pattern, that racial minorities have more positive views of the police than majority citizens. For example, Sims, Hooper, and Peterson (2002), through a random sample of citizens in Harrisburg, PA, found that blacks thought more positively of the police than whites. They explained this with a "begrudging reliance on police" argument suggesting that since blacks constituted a disproportionate percentage of crime victims, they were more interested than whites in the protective services that police could provide and thus depended more on the police (Radelet & Carter, 1994). Frank, Brandl, Cullen, and Stichman (1996) actually found that African-Americans in Detroit held more favorable views of the police than did white residents. They explained this "Detroit exception" by suggesting that a number of American cities were going through an ethno-racial political transition, which has dramatically enhanced African-Americans' political influence, including the election of black mayors and the appointment of black police chiefs. A replication of this study in Washington, DC, however, reached a contradictory conclusion, with African-American respondents reporting lower levels of satisfaction than whites (Smith, 2005).

Regarding Hispanic Americans, most studies reveal that their attitudes are in the middle ground between whites and blacks, with satisfaction levels lower than those of whites yet higher than those of blacks (Buckler & Unnever, 2008; Garcia & Cao, 2005; Lai & Zhao, 2010; Schuck & Rosenbaum, 2005; Weitzer, 2002). Some researchers, however, found that Hispanics have even more critical views of the police than African-Americans. For example, Mirande (1981) showed that Hispanics in a Southern California barrio were more supportive of limiting police power and likely to believe that fear of the police was most intense among Chicanos. Brown and Benedict (2002) cautioned that as the Hispanic sample in Mirande's study came from southern California, it might not be representative enough to be compared to other racial/ethnic groups whose data were collected nationwide. Meanwhile, there are also studies indicating that Hispanic attitudes toward police are similar to those of whites (Cheurprakobkit, 2000 and in some evaluative areas, such as accountability and misconduct, more positive than whites (Schuck, Rosenbaum, & Hawkins, 2008; Weitzer & Tuch, 2006).

Evidence on the effect of race on juvenile perceptions of the police is limited. A few studies found that nonwhites, including black and Hispanic youths, have less favorable attitudes toward the police than white youths

(Brick et al., 2009; Hurst et al., 2000; Hurst & Frank, 2000). There is some preliminary evidence suggesting variations between minority groups. For example, Hagan, Shedd, and Payne (2005) found that black students were more likely than Latino students to have police encounters, but Latino students were more likely to react negatively to these encounters than black youths. The paucity of research on Hispanic juveniles prevents definite conclusions. Further, the effects of social bonds on juveniles are not controlled in these studies. In light of the mixed findings and a lack of attention to social bonds, a new study is warranted.

Social Bonds and Juvenile Perceptions of the Police

Social bond theory (Hirschi, 1969) is based on the premise that human beings naturally will commit crime if left to their own devices. The theory proposes that people conform to the law and social conventions because they are bonded to conventional order, including conventional institutions and role models (Cao, 2004). Hirschi (1969) conceptualized social bonds through four elements. The affective element, attachment, refers to one's psychological affection for and sensitivity to prosocial others, such as family members, friends, and school. The material element, commitment, refers to the rational self-investment one has in conventional society and the risks one takes when engaging in deviant behavior. The temporal element, involvement, refers to the amount of time and energy one commits to conventional activities. The moral element, belief, refers to the perception of the moral validity of a society. Values relative to law and the legal system, such as respect for local police and respect for the law, can inhibit delinquency.

Social bond theory has an "enduring contribution to criminology" (Gibbons, 1979, p. 121). However, in rejection of strain theory's discrimination hypothesis, Hirschi sanitized social bond theory of race-related considerations (Unnever et al., 2009). In light of Unnever et al.'s assertions, it is reasonable to integrate race into social bond theory and extend it to explain juvenile attitudes toward the police. Social bonds, especially prosocial ones to family, school and rules, can insulate juveniles from the influence of antisocial forces and behaviors, keep them away from deviant values and subcultures, and nurture positive sentiments toward conventional institutions, including the police. A small number of studies have started to make the connection between social bonds and policing views, yet most fail to adequately or directly measure social bonds consistent with Hirschi's theory. For example, Cao, Stack, and Sun (1998) used four socio-demographic variables as proxy variables for social bonds, including marital status, parenting status, employment status, and religiosity. They found that parenting was a significant predictor of confidence in police among the surveyed respondents from Japan and the USA. Wu, Jiang and Lambert (2011) employed a single item, attachment to significant others, and found that this variable was significantly related to support for community

policing among college students in China. Flexon, Lurigio, and Greenleaf (2009) used two items of parental identification to indicate attachment to parents and found limited effects on juveniles' perceptions of the police.

A small number of studies have employed more measures of attachment and commitment to examine juvenile attitudes toward the police, yet they do not examine all elements of social bonds simultaneously. For instance, Nihart et al. (2005) found that feelings toward parents and teachers were positively related to feelings toward the police. The effects of commitment to school on adolescents' perceptions of the police have been established in three studies (Flexon et al., 2009; Levy 2001; Lurigio, Greenleaf, & Flexon, 2009). To date, there is no specific testing of the impact of involvement on juvenile attitudes. Engagement in unlawful activities, however, has been examined in a snowball sample of Canadian students and shown to be negatively related to the respondents' overall assessment of the police, measured by a single item (Chow, 2011). Another study illustrated that students who used drugs and students who were involved in greater deviance reported more negative views of police instructors of prevention program (Hammond et al., 2008). Only one study, relying on a sample of Chicago public school students, examined the effects of prosocial values on adolescents' respect for the police and willingness to assist the police (Lurigio et al., 2009). Prosocial values, such as disapproval of delinquent acts, were found positively related to Latino students' respect for the police, but not African-American students' respect. Meanwhile, disapproval of delinquent acts, contrary to expectations, was negatively related to African-American students' willingness to assist an officer in need of help. Three studies investigated how antisocial subculture and norms were related to negative views of legal institutions, including the police (Giordano, 1976; Leiber et al., 1998). Leiber et al. (1998) found that subcultural preferences, particularly commitment to delinquent norms, negatively influenced juveniles' attitudes. An earlier study (Giordano, 1976), with a focus on youths' behaviors, found that involvement in delinquent behaviors was linked to significantly less positive views of the police.

To more comprehensively explain the variations in juvenile attitudes toward the police, we integrate race/ethnicity into social bond theory and improve on previous measures by including all four elements of social bonds (i.e. attachment, commitment, involvement and belief), together with a range of important control variables, to predict juvenile perceptions.

Other Predictors of Juvenile Perceptions of the Police

Gender and class are frequently examined variables in the literature on public attitudes toward the police, generating inconsistent results. Most scholars found gender a nonsignificant factor (e.g. Chermak, McGarrell, & Weiss, 2001; Huang & Vaughn, 1996; Jesilow et al., 1995; Sampson & Jeglum-Barusch, 1998). A few studies found that males held more favorable views than females

(e.g. Correia, Reisig, & Lovrich, 1996; Hurst & Frank, 2000), while others found that males held less favorable views (Cao, Frank, & Cullen, 1996; Huebner, Schafer, & Bynum, 2004; Taylor et al., 2001). Similarly, some studies found that individuals of lower socioeconomic status had less favorable opinions on the police (e.g. Cao et al., 1996; Lai, Cao, & Zhao, 2010), whereas others found class a nonsignificant predictor (Frank et al., 1996; Wu et al., 2009).

Crime- and police-related factors are also important in investigating public perceptions of the police. Prior police contact, as the most proximate manner by which citizens observe and learn about the police (Rusinko, Johnson, & Horning, 1978), can significantly influence citizens' assessments. Research has shown that negative or involuntary interactions with the police are more likely to lead to negative public attitudes (Ren, Cao, Lovrich, & Gaffney, 2005), especially among African-Americans (Walker, 1997). Individuals who had recently been stopped, arrested, detained, or ticketed by the police generally have less positive sentiments toward the police than those without such contact (Jesilow et al., 1995; Leiber et al., 1998). Arrest, especially, appears to have significant negative effects on juveniles' attitudes (Smith & Hawkins, 1973). Recently, Brick et al. (2009) showed that arrest was in fact the primary type of negative contact leading to negative sentiments toward the police among juveniles.

Researchers have started to explore the influence of subcultural involvement on attitudes. Leiber et al. (1998) showed that juveniles' delinquent attitudes and behaviors had significant negative influences on their respect for the police. Brick et al. (2009) uncovered that nonserious delinquency was not significantly related to juveniles' perceptions of the police, but serious delinquency undermined positive perceptions. Gang membership has also been investigated regarding its effect on distrust of the police. Evidence has suggested that gang members are highly distrustful of the police (Jackson & McBride, 2000). Friedman et al. (2004) found that among Chicago high school students, those who self-reported as gang members were more likely to feel disrespected by the police than nongang members. It is not surprising that gang members are more hostile toward the police than the rest of the population as they are among the major targets of aggressive law enforcement in many jurisdictions.

Research has also examined the relationship between prior victimization and attitudes toward the police. Those who have been recently victimized may feel that the police let them down (Smith & Hawkins, 1973). By and large, studies have found that victims of crime have less favorable attitudes than nonvictims (Payne & Gainey, 2007; Priest & Carter, 1999), including among juveniles (Brick et al., 2009; Hurst & Frank, 2000). Cao et al. (1996) found that recent victimization experiences and fear of crime had a greater impact on citizen confidence in police than any other demographic variables.

Sense of safety has been examined in a small number of studies as a contextualized variable. Its effect on policing views is generally significant (Cao, 2011; Garcia & Cao, 2005; Payne & Gainey, 2007; Wu & Sun, 2009). Indeed, in the public's eyes, the police represent one of the most visible and prominent government agencies in handling crime and safety issues. Sense of safety in

one's school or in the neighborhood around one's school may be especially relevant for juveniles' perceptions. Instead of relying on their personal experiences, juveniles may evaluate police performance using their immediate context, most often the real or perceived crime conditions at school and in the surrounding area, as reference.

Locality has received growing research attention as more multi-site data are available in recent years (Frank et al., 1996; Taylor et al., 2001; Weitzer, Tuch, & Skogan, 2008; Wu, Sun, & Smith, 2011). Taylor et al. (2001) conducted mean comparisons on juvenile attitudes toward the police across 11 cities, revealing most favorable perceptions in Pocatello and least favorable views in Kansas City. They explained that students from smaller rural areas with predominantly white residents (Pocatello and Will County) held the most positive views while students from larger cities with predominantly black residents (Kansas City and Milwaukee) were more critical about the police.

In sum, a large amount of research has reported a positive effect of age on public perceptions of the police, yet studies focusing on juvenile groups (e.g. 13–18 years old) remain limited. With the inclusion of both black and Hispanic youths, improved measures of social bonds, and a range of theoretically relevant variables, this study contributes to a better understanding of the patterns and determinants of juvenile evaluations of the police.

Methods

Data Source and Sample

Data used in this study were collected as part of the "Evaluation of the Gang Resistance Education and Training Program in the United States, 1995–1999" (Esbensen, Osgood, Taylor, Peterson, & Freng, 2001). The participating students were surveyed and asked a number of questions regarding their perceptions of the police, neighborhood crime conditions, and gang-related activities, among other issues. The most recent wave of data from this series (1999) was used in this study, as it included the most comprehensive collection of the key theoretical variables. The 1999 wave included six cities varying in size, region, and level of gang activity: Las Cruces, New Mexico; Lincoln, Nebraska; Omaha, Nebraska; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Phoenix, Arizona; and Portland, Oregon. A total of 22 schools along with their 153 classrooms, were included. The survey was distributed to all students between the ages of 13 and 18 with an average age of 16 years old. A total of 1,376 respondents were included in the 1999 survey (80% response rate).

Measures

The dependent variable was an additive scale of seven items measuring juveniles' perceptions of the police. It is a modified scale based on the items

developed by Dunham and Alpert (1988) and Webb and Marshall (1995), focusing on officer demeanor and trustworthiness. The students were asked to what extent they agreed that: (1) Police officers are honest; (2) Most police officers are usually rude; (3) Police officers are hard working; (4) Most police officers are usually friendly; (5) Police officers are usually courteous; (6) Police officers are respectful toward people like me; and (7) Police are prejudiced against minority persons. The response options were on a five-point Likert scale ranging from "very strongly disagree" (coded as 1) to "very strongly agree" (coded as 5). Items 2 and 7 were reverse coded to be consistent with the directions of other items. The Cronbach's alpha for the scale was .87, suggesting good internal consistency of the scale. The demeanor items tap juvenile perceptions of police procedural justice: whether the officers are fair, recognize citizen rights, treat people with dignity, and care about people's concerns (Tyler, 2001).

The first set of independent variables was comprised of race indicators. Four dummy variables were created with a value of 1 representing, respectively, white, black, Hispanic/Latino, and "other" respondents. The second set of independent variables consisted of four elements of social bonds. Attachment included both attachment to mother and attachment to father. Each additive scale indicator was constructed using six survey items. Respondents were asked regarding each parent, whether they can "talk about anything" and "always ask his/her advice," and the parent "always trusts me," "knows all my friends," "always understands me," and "always praises me when I do well." The responses were on a scale of 1–7 with 1 representing the lowest level of attachment and 7 representing the highest level. The Cronbach's alpha for the scales were .87 and .90 for attachment to mom and to dad, respectively.

Commitment to school was measured by an additive scale of five items. The respondents were asked whether they agree that "I try hard in school," "Education is so important that it's worth it to put up with things about school that I don't like," "Grades are very important to me," "I usually finish my homework," and "If you had to choose between studying to get a good grade on a test or going out with your friends, I would study." A higher value indicates stronger commitment. The Cronbach's alpha for the scale was .82, showing good internal consistency.

Involvement in conventional activities was captured by three items asking respondents the number of hours per week during the past year they were involved in "school activities or school athletics," "religious activities," and "job activities or employment." These indicators were separately analyzed in the analyses because: a) they are not suitable to form an additive scale (Cronbach's alpha < .60)¹ and (b) we can test the potentially varying effects of

1. Additional factor analysis indicated that while school and religious activities were in the same dimension, job activities were not. This result reflects the importance of taking the type and nature of activities into account when testing social bond theory. For example, conventional job activities may promote conventional behaviors, but a job environment that exposes juveniles to opportunities for crime and association with delinquents and criminals may not promote conventional behaviors. We, therefore, tested different activity variables separately in this study.

involvement in different types of conventional activities on juvenile attitudes toward the police.

Conventional belief was measured with an additive scale of eight items. The respondents were asked how guilty or how badly they would feel if they "purposely damaged or destroyed property that did not belong to them," "stole something worth less than \$50," "stole something worth more than \$50," "went into or tried to go into a building to steal something," "stole or tried to steal a motor vehicle," "hit someone with the idea of hurting them," "attacked someone with a weapon," and "used a weapon or force to get money or things from people."² Response options included not very guilty/badly (1), somewhat guilty/badly (2), and very guilty/badly (3). The scale had strong internal consistency (Cronbach's $\alpha = .94$).

The first group of control variables was comprised of demographic characteristics, including age, class, and gender. Age was measured in years. Class was a proxy measure, asking the respondents to what extent they agreed that "I won't be able to finish high school because my family will want me to get a job," "I'll never have enough money to go to college," "Most people are better off than I am," and "I am as well off as most people" (reverse coded).³ The response categories included strongly disagree (1), disagree (2), neither agree nor disagree (3), agree (4), and strongly agree (5). A higher value indicates a lower level of subjective socioeconomic status. The additive scale had a Cronbach's α of .60, indicating merely acceptable reliability. Gender was a dichotomized variable (0 = female, 1 = male).

The second group of control variables consisted of five crime- and safety-related predictors. The first, prior arrest, asked the respondents if they had ever been arrested by the police (0 = no, 1 = yes). The second, gang membership, indicated whether the respondents were currently in a gang (0 = no, 1 = yes). The third, serious violent offender, was measured by the respondents self-reporting whether they had done the following during the past 3 months:

2. This measure of conventional beliefs is more of an affective than cognitive measure. Affective indicators, although different from those used in Hirschi's original thesis, are considered proper and valid for this study as it is reasonable to expect that people who feel guilty or bad when committing certain unlawful acts likely also have stronger beliefs in the legitimacy of moral rules and order. In addition, while the "beliefs" indicators in Hirschi's original thesis emphasized public views of the legitimacy of legal authorities, our indicators highlight public views of crime and delinquency, which arguably have a more reasonable "distance" and healthy distinction from our dependent variable, attitudes toward the police.

3. Traditional, objective measures of juveniles' social class, such as parents' occupation, income, and education, were not available in this dataset. Our measure could be especially useful in studying the juvenile population for two reasons. First, indicators such as "most people are better off than I am" and "I am as well off as most people" directly indicate juveniles' self-estimation of their class position in society, which further connects to the important concept of relative deprivation and the Mertonian strain tradition (Runciman, 1966; Webber, 2007). Second, access to education is a key indicator of students' social class. Education can influence juveniles' future occupation, income, way of life, and influence - all four important dimensions of the Weberian class notion (Kluegel, Singleton, & Starnes, 1977). Thus, juveniles' beliefs on whether their family can afford them to complete high school and/or go to college directly relate to, and reflect, their subjective class position.

(1) attacked someone with a weapon; (2) used a weapon or force to get money or things from people; (3) been involved in gang fights; and (4) shot at someone because they were told to by someone else. A positive response to any of the above questions was coded as 1 and nonoffending was coded as 0. The fourth variable, victimization, was gauged by a composite measure of four items asking the respondents whether during the past three months, they have "been hit by someone trying to hurt you," "had someone used a weapon or force to get money or things from you," "been attacked by someone with a weapon or by someone trying to seriously hurt or kill you," and "had some of your things stolen from you." A positive answer to at least one of these questions resulted in a score of 1, whereas negative answers to all these questions led to a score of 0, signifying no recent victimization. The fifth variable, perceptions of safety, was a scale of two items asking the respondents if they feel safe in school and in the neighborhood around their school (0 = no, 1 = yes). The Cronbach's alpha for the scale was .71, indicating acceptable internal consistency.

The third group of control variables contained locality indicators. Six dummy variables were created to represent respondents from Portland, OR, Lincoln, NE, Omaha, NE, Las Cruces, NM, Phoenix, AZ, and Philadelphia, PA.

Analysis

This study seeks to test (1) whether race has an independent significant effect on juvenile attitudes toward the police after holding social bonds and control variables constant, (2) whether social bonds have a mediating effect on the race-juvenile attitudes relationship, and (3) whether race and social bonds have an interaction effect on juvenile attitudes. A two-part analysis was conducted. First, sequential (hierarchical) Ordinary Least Squares regression (OLS) models were used with blocks of predictors entered into the regression equation one by one, following the sequence of race variables, social bonds variables and finally control variables. This part of the analysis enabled us to test whether race variables are significant predictors of juvenile perceptions holding social bonds and control variables constant, and to estimate the total and indirect effects of race variables on juvenile perceptions, with social bonds intervening (Baron & Kenny, 1986; Keith, 2006). Second, to examine the interaction effects between race and other independent variables including social bonds, we divided the sample into three groups of white, black, and Hispanic students, and ran a separate

4. The variance inflation factors were all below 4, indicating no serious multicollinearity problem among the predictor variables (Neter, Kutner, Nachtsheim, & Wasserman, 1996). An outlier diagnostic was performed and several cases with an absolute Studentized Residual value larger than 3 were dropped from the analyses. Both the histogram of the standardized residuals and the cumulative probability plot of standardized residuals showed that the residuals were normally distributed. The scatter plot of the predicted scores against residuals indicated no pattern, confirming the linearity of the relationship.

analysis on each group. For all regression analyses, missing data were excluded and the assumptions for conducting OLS analyses were examined.⁴

Results

Juvenile Perceptions of the Police

Table 1 presents the distribution of the responses to the seven items measuring juvenile attitudes toward the police. Results showed that 53% of the respondents believed that police officers are hard working, 49% thought that most police officers are usually friendly, and 44% perceived police officers as usually courteous, and that police officers are respectful toward people like them. The other items received relatively lower ratings from the surveyed students. Thirty-six percent of the respondents thought that the police are honest and 36% thought that the police are rude. Only 21% of the respondents disagreed that the police are prejudiced against minority persons, compared to 29% who believed that the police are biased against minorities. Overall, it appears that the respondents were more positive about police working ethics and civility than police integrity and impartiality.

Examining the "neither agree nor disagree" category, it is found that the surveyed juveniles were least certain about police racial prejudice. Almost half of the respondents reported that they neither disagreed nor agreed that the police are prejudiced against minority persons. The respondents were also ambiguous or uncertain about their opinions on whether the police are honest (37%) and the police are usually rude (34%). The students seemed to be most

Table 1 Frequency distributions of juveniles' perceptions of the police

	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean (SD)	<i>n</i>
Police officers are honest	6.4%	20.5%	36.9%	31.4%	4.7%	3.08 (.98)	1370
Most police officers are usually rude*	6.9	22.4	34.4	32.0	4.2	3.04 (.99)	1370
Police officers are hard working	3.3	8.6	34.7	43.9	9.5	3.48 (.90)	1370
Most police officers are usually friendly	3.9	15.2	31.2	42.8	6.9	3.34 (.95)	1370
Police officers are usually courteous	2.6	17.6	36.1	38.4	5.2	3.26 (.90)	1367
Police officers are respectful toward people like me	9.1	20.3	26.7	35.1	8.7	3.14 (1.12)	1369
Police are prejudiced against minority persons*	5.5	16.0	49.3	23.8	5.5	3.08 (.91)	1364

Note. Valid percentages are reported. SD = Strongly Disagree, D = Disagree, N = Neither agree nor disagree, A = Agree, and SA = Strongly Agree. SD stands for standard deviation.

*Reverse coded.

certain about police respectfulness, yet still 27% of the respondents reported that they neither agreed nor disagreed that “Police officers are respectful toward people like me.” Adolescents who selected the “neither agree nor disagree” responses show a vague opinion on the issue. It is uncertain whether this vagueness results from a lack of knowledge on police performance, indifference about the police, or a wish to simply decline providing an answer.

Table 2 Descriptive statistics of variables in OLS regression analyses ($n = 1,074$)

	Mean	SD	Min	Max
<i>Dependent variable</i>				
Perceptions of the police	22.61	5.05	7	35
<i>Independent variables</i>				
Race/ethnicity				
White	.61	.49	0	1
Black	.14	.34	0	1
Latino	.16	.37	0	1
Others	.09	.29	0	1
Social bonds				
Attachment to mother	29.57	7.56	6	42
Attachment to father	27.30	8.56	6	42
Commitment to school	19.01	3.50	5	25
School/athletic activities	6.36	8.33	0	90
Religious activities	1.49	3.15	0	48
Job activities	9.00	11.36	0	68
Conventional belief	20.63	4.37	8	24
<i>Control variables</i>				
Demographic variables				
Age	16.06	.59	13	18
Class	8.30	2.25	4	18
Gender	.45	.50	0	1
Crime and safety variables				
Prior arrest	.11	.32	0	1
Gang membership	.01	.09	0	1
Serious violent offender	.06	.24	0	1
Victimization	.25	.43	0	1
Sense of safety	7.48	1.56	2	10
Locality				
Portland, OR	.14	.36	0	1
Lincoln, NE	.26	.44	0	1
Omaha, NE	.24	.42	0	1
Las Cruces, NM	.16	.37	0	1
Phoenix, AZ	.12	.33	0	1
Philadelphia, PA	.08	.27	0	1

Note. SD stands for standard deviation, Min stands for minimum value, and Max stands for maximum value.

Characteristics of Respondents

Table 2 provides the descriptive statistics for the variables used in the multivariate analyses of the whole sample. There were slightly more males than females. The average age was 16. Sixty-one percent of the respondents were white, 14% were black, and 16% were Hispanic. About 11% of the respondents reported they had prior arrest record, 1% reported they were currently a member of a gang, and 6% reported that they had engaged in serious violent offending. One in four of the teenagers reported that they had been a victim of assault, robbery, or theft during the past three months. In terms of the geographic distribution of the students, 14% were from Portland, OR, 26% were from Lincoln, NE, 24% were from Omaha, NE, 16% were from Las Cruces, NM, 12% were from Phoenix, AZ, and 8% were from Philadelphia, PA.

With respect to social bonds, the surveyed students on average had slightly higher levels of attachment to mother than to father. The average level of commitment to school was fairly high with a mean score of 19 out of a 5–25 scale. During the past year, participated students had involved in more job activities (on average 9.0 h/week) than school/athletic (6.4 h/week) and religious (1.5 h/week) activities. The sampled respondents had moderately high levels of conventional belief with an average score of 20.6 on a scale of 8–24.

Do Race Variables Significantly Influence Perceptions?

The answer is yes according to the sequential regression analysis results reported in Table 3. Race variables persisted to be a significant factor influencing juvenile attitudes in all three models. Looking at Panel 1 of Table 3, without holding any other variables constant, nonwhite respondents, including blacks and Hispanics, showed significantly lower levels of satisfaction with the police than white respondents. Race alone explained about 2% of the variation in juveniles' satisfaction with the police.

Panel 2 of Table 3 presents the effects of both race and social bonds variables without including any control variables. Black and Hispanic students continued to show significantly less positive views of the police than white students. It is found that attachment to both parents, commitment to school, and conventional belief exerted significant positive effects on juveniles' perceptions of the police. Involvement variables were not significant predictors. Comparatively, the impacts of commitment and belief were greater in magnitude and statistical significance than those of attachment and involvement on juvenile perceptions. Race and social bonds variables together explained 26% of the variation in juveniles' perceptions of the police.

Panel 3 of Table 3 presents the effects of race, social bonds, and all control variables. Results showed that race persisted to be a significant influencer of surveyed students' attitudes toward the police. Both black and Hispanic

Table 3 Results of sequential OLS regression on juveniles' perceptions of the police ($n = 1,074$)

	Model1		Model2		Model3	
	<i>b</i>	β	<i>b</i>	β	<i>b</i>	β
<i>Independent variables</i>						
Race/ethnicity						
Black	-1.99***	-.13	-2.22***	-.15	-2.08***	-.14
Latino	-1.05**	-.08	-1.02**	-.07	-1.15**	-.08
Others	-.58	-.03	-.24	-.01	-.21	-.01
Social bonds						
Attachment to mother			.06**	.09	.04	.05
Attachment to father			.05**	.09	.05**	.08
Commitment to school			.38***	.27	.31***	.22
School/athletic activities			.01	.02	.00	.00
Religious activities			.01	.01	.01	.01
Job activities			-.01	-.03	-.02	-.04
Conventional belief			.31***	.27	.25***	.22
<i>Control variables</i>						
Demographic variables						
Age					.28	.03
Class					-.10	-.04
Gender					.17	.02
Crime and safety variables						
Prior arrest					-2.21***	-.14
Gang membership					-2.32	-.04
Serious violent offender					-2.31***	-.11
Victimization					-.58*	-.05
Sense of safety					.38***	.12
Locality						
Lincoln, NE					-.63	-.05
Omaha, NE					.50	.04
Las Cruces, NM					-.36	-.02
Phoenix, AZ					1.19*	.08
Philadelphia, PA					.24	.01
Adjusted R^2	.02		.26		.31	
ΔR^2	.02		.24		.05	
F statistics	7.23***		49.93***		7.56***	

Note. *b* is the unstandardized coefficient, β is the standardized coefficient.

* $p \leq .05$, ** $p \leq .01$, and *** $p \leq .001$.

respondents reported less positive views of the police than did whites, after controlling for all other variables. Additional analysis using black teenagers as the reference group indicated that Hispanic students had significantly more positive views of the police than black students. Social bonds variables and the control variables did not attenuate the effects of race on juveniles' perceptions of the police.

Except for attachment to mother, all the significant social bonds predictors in model 2 remained significant influencers in model 3. The influences of attachment to father, commitment to school, and conventional belief were only mildly attenuated after including all the demographic, crime, police and safety, and locality variables into the analyses. Thus, the relationship between social bonds variables and juvenile attitudes toward the police is rather direct and cannot be accounted for by a mediating effect of the control variables including delinquent/criminal behaviors.

None of the demographic control variables, including age,⁵ class, and gender, was significant predictor of juvenile assessment of the police. Regarding crime- and safety-related variables, except for gang membership, all the others exerted significant influences on students' attitudes toward the police. Those who reported having prior arrest experience and those who were serious violent offenders were significantly less favorable of the police than those without such experience. Students who had recent experience of victimization were also more negative about police performance than nonvictims. Sense of safety was positively related to students' evaluations of the police.

With respect to area differences, juveniles in Phoenix, AZ had significantly more positive views of the police than their counterparts in Portland, OR. Using different areas as the reference group in regression analyses showed that respondents from Phoenix, AZ also had significantly more positive views of the police than their counterparts in Lincoln, NE, and Las Cruces, NM. In addition, adolescents from Omaha, NE had more positive views on the police than respondents from Lincoln, NE. The predictor variables together explained 32% of the variation in juveniles' satisfaction with the police. According to the extra sums of squares tests, each block of the predictors had a statistically significant relationship with juveniles' attitudes toward the police, and thus was a necessary addition to the model.

Do Social Bonds Variables Mediate the Effects of Race?

Table 4 shows the standardized direct, indirect, and total effects of race on juvenile attitudes toward the police with social bonds intervening. As recognized (Keith, 2006), simultaneous regression can estimate the direct effects of race and social bonds variables, while sequential regression can estimate the total effects of race variables on juvenile attitudes. The indirect effects of race could be calculated via subtraction of the direct effect from the total effect. Results showed that the influence of race on juveniles' attitudes is primarily direct. The indirect effects of a minority membership (i.e. black or Latino) operating through social bonds only accounted for a small amount of the total effects of a minority membership on juveniles' attitudes toward the police.

5. We also checked the possible curvilinear effect of age and found no significant effect.

Table 4 Standardized direct, indirect, and total effects of race with social bonds intervening ($n = 1,120$)

Variable	Direct effect	Indirect effect	Total effect
<i>Race/ethnicity</i>			
Black	-.14***	.01	-.13
Latino	-.08**	.01	-.07
Others	-.01	-.02	-.03
<i>Social bonds</i>			
Attachment to mother	.09**	—	.09
Attachment to father	.09**	—	.09
Commitment to school	.27***	—	.27
School/athletic activities	.02	—	.02
Religious activities	.01	—	.01
Job activities	-.03	—	-.03
Conventional belief	.27***	—	.27

* $p \leq .05$, ** $p \leq .01$, and *** $p \leq .001$.

These results suggested that social bonds are not a complete mediator of the effects of race on juvenile attitudes toward the police. For white, black, and Latino respondents, the effects of race were not reduced when social bonds variables were entered into the equation, thus social bonds were not a partial mediator of race effects on attitudes either. Thus, we concluded that social bonds are not a significant mediating factor of the relationship between race and juvenile perceptions of the police.

Do Effects of Social Bonds Vary across Racial Groups?

To examine whether or not the effects of social bonds on juvenile attitudes vary across different groups, we conducted three separate OLS regression analyses on the groups of white, black, and Hispanic respondents. Results (see Table 5) indicated that among the social bonds variables, conventional beliefs had a universal satisfaction-promoting effect across different racial/ethnic groups. For whites, attachment to father and commitment to school were also associated with higher levels of satisfaction with the police. For Hispanics, commitment to school was linked to more positive views of the police. Regarding the control variables, there was little similarity in their effects on the attitudes of the three groups of respondents. For white juveniles, subjective social class was associated with more positive views of the police. Having prior arrest, being a serious offender, and having victimization experience were associated with less positive views. For black juveniles, those who had prior arrest record and those who lived in Lincoln, NE showed significantly less favorable views of the police. Meanwhile, black respondents who had greater sense of safety were more favorable toward the police. Finally, for Hispanic

Table 5 Results of separate OLS regression analyses on whites, blacks, and Hispanics

	Whites		Blacks		Hispanics	
	<i>b</i>	β	<i>b</i>	β	<i>b</i>	β
<i>Independent variables</i>						
<i>Social bonds</i>						
Attachment to mother	.01	.02	.01	.01	.07	.11
Attachment to father	.07**	.10	.04	.09	-.01	-.01
Commitment to school	.35***	.24	.06	.04	.49***	.34
School/athletic activities	-.00	-.01	.00	.00	.03	.05
Religious activities	.09	.04	-.01	-.01	-.06	-.04
Job activities	-.02	-.04	-.04	-.09	.01	.01
Conventional belief	.25***	.19	.25***	.29	.25**	.22
<i>Control variables</i>						
<i>Demographic variables</i>						
Age	-.09	-.01	.50	.08	1.41*	.16
Class	-.27**	-.11	-.06	-.03	.08	.04
Gender	.64	.06	-1.38	-.15	.90	.09
<i>Crime and safety variables</i>						
Prior arrest	-1.80***	-.12	-3.06**	-.21	-1.83	-.10
Gang membership	-3.37	-.06	-4.14	-.10	3.68	.08
Serious violent offender	-2.92***	-.12	-1.84	-.11	-.68	-.04
Victimization	-.92*	-.08	-.71	-.07	.48	.04
Sense of safety	.14	.04	.63**	.23	1.04***	.30
<i>Locality</i>						
Lincoln, NE	-.38	-.04	-7.76**	-.20	-1.25	-.03
Omaha, NE	.43	.04	2.01	.19	1.17	.09
Las Cruces, NM	-.31	-.02	-1.84	-.03	-.51	-.05
Phoenix, AZ	1.51	.08	.87	.05	.71	.06
Philadelphia, PA	-.25	-.01	.96	.10	.43	.01
<i>n</i>	656		146		175	
Adjusted <i>R</i> ²	.32		.23		.30	

Note. *b* is the unstandardized coefficient, β is the standardized coefficient.

* $p \leq .05$, ** $p \leq .01$, and *** $p \leq .001$.

juveniles, age and sense of safety played significant roles, with older respondents and respondents who had greater sense of safety holding more positive attitudes toward the police. The predictor variables explained white and Hispanic respondents' perceptions of the police better than black perceptions.

Discussion and Conclusion

Relying on data from over 1,300 students aged 13–18 in six US cities, this study examines the patterns and correlates of juvenile perceptions of the police. Several main findings emerge. First, race/ethnicity remains significant

among adolescents. The differential satisfaction demonstrated between white and black teenagers, and to a lesser extent, between white and Hispanic juveniles, is significant, after controlling for a variety of demographic, experiential, and location variables. Both black and Latino students remained significantly less satisfied with the police than white students. The inclusion of social bonds variables does not attenuate the significant impact of race on juvenile attitudes. Thus, race and racial animus continue to be a lived reality of America (Unnever et al., 2009). Forty years after the seminal report by the 1967 President's Commission on Law Enforcement and the Administration of Justice, the black-white dichotomy remains one of the most prominent features of public sentiments toward and perceptions of the police (President's Commission, 1967).

Results also show that the effects of class and its interactional terms with race on juvenile perceptions of the police are very limited. Wilson's (1978) view of the declining significance of race, therefore, does not appear to apply to juvenile confidence in the police. It is not evident that the net effect of race has declined and that class, indicated by subjective socioeconomic status, has become more important than race in determining attitudes. This is an important finding and is consistent with previous findings among the general population that race was a dividing line for liberal and conservative ideologies (Browning & Cao, 1992) and for perceptions of criminal injustice (Henderson et al., 1997).

Second, social bonds, particularly attachment to father, commitment to school, and conventional belief, are significant predictors of juvenile perceptions of the police. Emotional closeness from fathers is important in shaping children's views on the police. It is interesting that feelings toward fathers matter on juvenile evaluations, while feelings toward mothers do not, suggesting the importance of fathers in juveniles' lives. Research has shown that parent attitudes toward external authorities were positively related to their children's attitudes toward the police (Amoroso & Ware, 1986). Ambiguity remains, however, as some research revealed that women have more negative views of the police than men (e.g. Correia et al., 1996; Hurst & Frank, 2000), whereas others showed that men hold more critical views than women (Cao et al., 1996; Huebner et al., 2004; Taylor et al., 2001). Thus, the implication of a stronger influence of attachment to father, as compared to attachment to mother, on children's outlooks on the police needs further exploration.

Despite the limited interaction effects between race and social bonds, the effects of conventional belief and commitment to school on juvenile perceptions of the police are large in magnitude. Also, the influence of social bonds on juvenile attitudes is mostly direct and only mediated, to a limited extent, by juveniles' delinquent behavior, prior arrest experience, and recent victimization. These results, together with previous research showing significant associations between delinquent/nonconventional values and behaviors and negative perceptions of the police (Chow, 2011; Geistman & Smith, 2007;

Leiber et al., 1998), reinforce a strong link between general values and beliefs and specific perceptions of the police.

Third, there are slightly more juveniles who were positive about police performance than those who held negative views, and some aspects of police performance, such as police working hard and being friendly, received more favorable evaluations than others, such as police honesty and fairness. These results are consistent with earlier findings that attitudinal discrepancies are evident in areas such as police fairness and equal treatment (Cao et al., 1996; Hagan & Albonetti, 1982). It should be noted that a large number of juveniles seem to be rather uncertain or simply indifferent about the police and police services, with large proportions (27%–49%) reporting that they neither agree nor disagree with the survey items of policing. This finding is in line with what Hurst (2007) found, based on a sample of 9th to 12th graders from four rural towns in Southern Illinois, that juveniles are generally indifferent in their attitudes toward the police. Another study (Taylor et al., 2001), based on data from 11 US cities, reached a similar conclusion that juveniles were indifferent about the police.

Fourth, crime- and police-related factors are predictive of juvenile perceptions of the police. Consistent with the existing literature, contacts with the police, and especially arrests, reduce juvenile satisfaction with the police (Brick et al., 2009). An additional analysis was conducted replacing the serious violent offending variable with a nonserious violent offending variable and the latter did not exert a significant impact on juveniles' attitudes. This result was opposite to what Brick et al. (2009) found in their youth sample specifically, that it was involvement in less serious forms of delinquency rather than serious forms of delinquency that was linked to less favorable views of the police. This inconsistency invites more research. In addition, contrary to common wisdom and some previous evidence (Friedman et al., 2004; Jackson & McBride, 2000), gang membership does not influence juveniles' attitudes toward the police in this study. Our finding, however, is similar to what Flexon et al. (2009) illustrated, based on a purposive sample of Chicago public school students, that gang membership was unrelated to any dimensions of youth trust in police.

Students' beliefs about whether the police are effective in crime control and students' sense of safety in and around their school environment significantly influenced their satisfaction with the police. These patterns correspond with most literature on fear of crime, revealing that such fear is damaging to the confidence in and satisfaction with the police (e.g. Cao et al., 1996; Hurst & Frank, 2000; Leiber et al., 1998). Recent victimization experience also adds to juveniles' negative sentiments toward the police, supporting the existent evidences regarding the victimization-attitudes link (Hurst & Frank, 2000; Payne & Gainey, 2007; Priest & Carter, 1999; Smith & Hawkins, 1973).

Lastly, geographic location matters. Specifically, teenagers from Phoenix have significantly higher levels of satisfaction with the police than adolescents from other locations, even after holding all other variables constant. Compared with cities like Philadelphia, Lincoln, and Portland, Phoenix is a

relatively new city and remains in expansion. It is possible that the economic prosperity may be reflected in the more positive public views of the police. It is also possible that the Phoenix police are performing better in some areas, such as officer performance assessment and early intervention programs, than other cities, leading to more favorable public evaluations.

As with other studies, this one had shortcomings. Although data used here were collected from a number of public schools in multiple cities, they cannot be generalized to teenagers who are not currently enrolled in school or who are enrolled in private, vocational, and alternative schools. Also, data used for this study were collected in 1999. Although confidence in the police among the general public appears fairly stable over time, as revealed by longitudinal data from the Gallup Poll (Maguire, 2012), more recent data are needed to test whether findings of this study can be generalized to the present time, and subsequently whether juvenile attitudes are as stable over time as adult attitudes. In addition, there are other potentially important predictors of juveniles' attitudes that this study did not examine. For example, school-level factors, such as racial composition, class status, levels of informal social control, and the extent of police involvement in school activities, may all influence students' perceptions of the police. Neighborhood contextual variables should also be considered in future research (Hagan et al., 2005).

Findings from this study promote a better understanding of the racially differential policing views among juveniles; minority students, including blacks and Hispanics, continue to hold less positive assessments compared to white students, and such racial gaps cannot be explained by social bonding variables, subjective class status, or experience with crime and victimization. The results also demonstrate that social bond theory, one of the more significant theoretical contributions in the study of crime, is relevant to explaining juvenile perceptions of the police. Commitment to school and conventional beliefs, especially, promote positive sentiments toward the police across juveniles of different racial/ethnic groups. Thus, race and social bonds play equally important roles in shaping juvenile attitudes toward the police.

Our findings have two important implications for policing. In light of the significant effects of social bonds on juvenile sentiments toward the police, at the individual level, adequate attention should be paid to strengthening prosocial influences in people's early lives. Conventional social bonds can not only insulate juveniles against crime and delinquency, but also foster positive attitudes toward social establishment, the police included. It is possible that parents, teachers, and other conventional figures can serve as good buffers between the police and adolescents, and when tension rises between the two, as helpful mediators. In view of the racially differential assessments of the police, it is clear that concern about racial disparity, an enduring feature of twentieth-century American politics and policy, has been carried over into the new century. In the current third-generation community policing era (Oliver, 2000), continuing efforts should be put into ending racial inequality and delivering equal and quality services to minority neighborhoods. Thought-

ful, ethnically based reforms need to be developed, centering on improving the relationship between police and minority communities (Garcia & Cao, 2005). At the aggregate level, broad fundamental social changes are undoubtedly needed. Only united in the twenty-first century, this nation can move toward one nation, instead of two separate and unequal nations (Hacker, 1992).

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