



In the Shadows of Ferguson: The Role of Racial Resentment on White Attitudes towards the use of Force by Police in the United States

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Abstract

This paper uses data from the National Opinion Research Center's General Social Survey (GSS) to assess the effects of beliefs about race on whites' attitudes toward police use of force. Our main dependent variable is a composite index ("Police Force Index") constructed from four survey items from the 1972-2012 GSS. Results show that beliefs about race do indeed influence attitudes toward police use of force. "Racial resentment," as defined in the symbolic racism literature (see below), is found to be directly related to support for the use of force by the police. This relationship, however, is found to be conditioned by the type of question asked: racial resentment is more strongly associated with support for the use of force by the police when the question asked is more specific (i.e., when the citizen is described as a murder suspect) than when it is general (i.e. when the police action is said to be against a citizen). Theoretical and practical implications of these findings are discussed.

Keywords: Racial Resentment, White Attitudes, Ferguson, Police.

Introduction

The current state of race relations in the U.S. has been shaken by an incident at Ferguson, Missouri, where a white police officer shot and killed an unarmed black teenager, Michael Brown. A New York Times/CBS News (August 19–20, 2014) nationwide poll recently revealed a vast divide between blacks and whites in how they see the police in general and the shooting of Michael Brown in particular. According to this

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poll, blacks are more likely than whites to feel discriminated against by the police and feel the police are more apt to resort to deadly force against blacks than they are against whites. With respect to the Michael Brown case, blacks are more likely than whites to see the shooting as unjustified and are more likely to state that protesters have *not* gone too far. Given that both sides lay claim to wanting justice in the end, why is there such significant divide in perspectives? Research on white attitudes toward various racial issues, including racial policy aimed to alleviate racial inequality (e.g. affirmative action), the punitive nature of law-enforcement and law, continue to debate whether whites' views are grounded in a pure justice orientation or persistent racial animus (Green Staerkle & Sears, 2006; Kinder & Sanders, 1997; Soss, Langbein & Metelko, 2003). With that said, the purpose of this research is to assess whether white attitudes toward the use of force by police is impacted by feelings of racial resentment.

Given the tenuous relationship between minorities and the police mentioned above and the general importance of the citizen/police relationship, a great deal of effort has gone into tracking public attitudes toward the police in the United States (Apple and O'Brien, 1983; Benson, 1981; Bartsch & Cheurprakobkit 2004; Brandl et al., 1994; Brown & Benedict, 2002; Cao, Frank & Cullen, 2006; Cao, Stack & Sun, 1998; Cullen et al., 1996; Dean, 1980; Decker, 1981; Dunham & Alpert, 1988; Flanagan, 1985; Furstenburg & Wellford, 1973; Hindelang, 1974; Liu & Crank, 2010; Rosenbaum et al., 2005; Lai & Zhao, 2010; Maguire & Pastore, 2004; Ren et al., 2005; Schuck, Rosentbaum & Hawkins, 2008; Scaglione & Condon, 1980; Sherman, 2002; Skogan et al., 2003; Tuch & Weitzer, 1997). Cao, Stack and Sun (1998) argue that understanding public opinion toward the police is important for three reasons, because: 1) citizens are consumers of police services and may reflect an accurate description of the job the police are doing; 2) a positive relationship between the police and citizens is important for police to do their job, and 3) while studying attitudes you can also study correlates of these attitudes. Generally speaking, studies suggest that, while suspicion toward state power exists in the U.S. (Bayley, 1976; Lipset & Schneider, 1983), Americans generally express positive attitudes toward the police (Brown & Benedict, 2002; Liu & Crank, 2010).

The positive image of the police among U.S. citizens, as discussed above, is not uniform across social groups however. In evaluating the police, females, those who are older, hold a more conservative political ideology, have higher income and education tend to show higher levels of support than their male counterparts (Liu and Crank 2010). Most notably, and more poignant to this project, race and ethnicity have also been inextricably connected to police evaluation, with whites expressing more positive views than their racial and ethnic minority counterparts (Frank, Smith & Novak, 2005; Maguire & Pastore, 2004; Reisig & Parks, 2000; Skogan et al., 2003; Walker, Spohn & DeLone, 2000; Weitzer & Tuch, 2006). The lack of support expressed by minorities is often attributed to the tense and often strained relationship between them and the police (Weitzer & Tuch, 2006).

Previous studies have also shown race to be strongly associated with opinions for and against the use of force by police, with whites more likely to accept the police using force than do blacks (Halim & Stiles, 2001; Skolnick, 2000; Stiles & Halim, 2001; Thompson & Lee, 2004; Weisburd et al., 2000). For minorities, the lack of support may again be attributed to the negative relationship they have with the police. However, for whites, one explanation holds that the higher level of support of law enforcement and the use of punitive sanctions is rooted in racial animus. While the literature on racial animus and

punishment is limited, research has connected racial resentment to attitudes toward the death penalty and other harsh punishments (Aquirre & Baker, 1993; Langbein & Metelko, 2003; Soss, Langbein & Metelko, 2003) and support for punitive and preventative crime policies (Green Staerkle & Sears, 2006). That is to say, individuals who maintain greater levels of racial animus will more likely support the use of force by police (Aquirre & Baker, 1993; Elicker, 2008; Green, Staerkle & Sears, 2006; Peffley & Hurwitz, 2002; Soss, Langbein & Metelko, 2003).

The purpose of this research again is to assess the impact of racial resentment on whites' support for police use of force when that use is said to be directed to crime in general (Police Force Index and 2) when the use is directed to a specific crime (i.e., a person evading arrest). More specifically, this study examines the extent to which racial resentment, as defined in the symbolic racism literature (Henry & Sears, 2002; Kinder & Sanders, 1996) plays a role in whites' support for police use of force. The second part of this analytical strategy assesses which conditions, if any, stimulated the negative underlying feelings of racial resentment when reflecting on citizen actions and the use of force by the police. Very little research has investigated how racial resentment as defined in this manner might influence support for police use of force (Green, Staerkle & Sears, 2006).

Background

Social science research is replete with studies investigating public attitudes toward the police in the United States (Cao, Frank & Cullen, 2006; Cao, Stack & Sun, 1998; Liu & Crank, 2010, to name a few). In general, research assessing attitudes toward the police have used various terminology, including citizens attitudes toward the police (Rosenbaum et al., 2005; Lai & Zhao, 2010; Tuch & Weitzer, 1997), quality of police-citizen interactions (Bartsch & Cheurprakobkit, 2004); perception of police (Brown & Benedict, 2002), trust in police (Murty et al., 1990; Sherman, 2002), and confidence in police (Cao, Frank & Cullen, 2006; Ren et al., 2005; Schuck, Rosentbaum & Hawkins, 2008). These studies suggest that, while U.S. citizens are deeply suspicious of state power (Bayley, 1976; Lipset & Schneider, 1983), Americans also generally hold positive attitudes toward the police (Apple & O'Brien, 1983; Dean, 1980; Brown & Benedict, 2002; Erez, 1984; Furstenberg & Wellford, 1973; Hindelang, 1974; White & Menke, 1978; Zamble & Annesley, 1987).

Despite a general positive image of the police among the U.S. population, however, it is also worth noting that this sentiment is not uniform across social groups (See the paragraph below). Moreover, a variety of variables have been linked to the public's evaluations of law-enforcement and the police (e.g., age (Brandl et al., 1994; Percy, 1980); sex (Percy, 1980; Brandl et al., 1994; Cao, Frank, & Cullen 1996); age (Wortley, Hagan, & Macmillan, 1997); conservative political ideology (Benson, 1981; Zamble & Annesley, 1987); income (Benson, 1981; Peek, Lowe, & Alston, 1981; Percy, 1980); education (Brandl et al., 1994; Scaglione & Condon, 1980); and socioeconomic status in general (Biderman et al., 1967; Bouma, 1969; Ennis, 1967; Gamson & McEvoy, 1970; Hindelang, 1974). For example, Females generally score higher than males in their evaluation of the police (Percy, 1980; Brandl et al. 1994; Cao, Frank & Cullen, 1996). Similarly, conservative political ideology is shown to be positively associated with evaluations of the police (Benson, 1981; Zamble & Annesley, 1987).

Yet, attitudes toward the police are, in many ways, linked to questions of race in contemporary U.S. society. Whites, for example, tend to evaluate law-enforcement more favorably than racial and ethnic minorities (Albrecht & Green, 1977; Bordua & Tiftt, 1971; Carter, 1985; Decker & Wagner, 1981; Frank, Smith & Novak, 2005; Hindelang, 1974; Jacob, 1971; Jefferson & Walker, 1993; Maguire & Pastore, 2004; Parks, 1984; Peek et al. 1981; Percy, 1980; Reasons & Wirth, 1975; Reisig & Parks, 2000; Scaglione & Condon, 1980; Skogan, 1978; Skogan et al., 2003; Walker, Spohn & DeLone, 2000; Weitzer & Tuch, 2006). The effect of race has been consistently shown to be stronger than many key variables previously shown to influence attitudes toward the police (e.g., age, sex, and conservative political ideology) (Biderman et al., 1967; Bouma, 1969; Campbell & Schuman, 1968; Ennis, 1967; Hadar & Snortum, 1975; Hindelang, 1974; McCaghy et al. 1968; McEvoy, 1970; Smith & Hawkins, 1973).

Interestingly, while whites and blacks express the most and least confidence in the police, respectively; research shows that Hispanic experiences are indeed different than that of blacks (Reitzel, Rice & Piquero, 2004) and their attitudes toward police falls somewhere in between (Cheurprakobkit, 2000; Schuck & Rosenbaum; Skogan et al. 2003; Weitzer & Tuch, 2006). The lack of support expressed by minorities is often attributed to the tense and often strained relationship between them and the police (Weitzer & Tuch, 2006).

More generally, beliefs about race are directly related to all aspect of the U.S. criminal justice system—from the definition of crime to its enforcement to the way crime is portrayed in the media (Baldus et al., 1998; Campbell, 1995; Chiricos & Eschholz, 2002; Currie, 1998; Dixon, Azocar & Casas, 2003; Dixon & Linz, 2000a&b; Gilliam, 1998; Johnson, Farrell & Stoloff, 2000; Mendelberg, 2001; Oliver & Fonash, 2002; Oliver, Jackson, Moses & Dangerfield, 2004; Peffley & Hurwitz, 2002; Peffley, Shields & Williams, 1996; Roberts & Stalans, 1997; Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). Studies of media coverage of crime, for example, demonstrate that Blacks are more likely to be misidentified as perpetrators of violent crime than of nonviolent crime (Oliver & Fonash, 2002; Oliver et al. 2004). Moreover, while racial and ethnic minorities are frequently portrayed as law breakers than defenders of the law, whites are depicted more as defenders of the law (Dixon & Linz, 2000a&b).

Racial intolerance among whites has also been linked to greater support for law-enforcement that is punitive/harsh in nature (Aquirre & Baker, 1993; Barkan & Cohn, 1994; Peffley & Hurwitz, 2002; Roberts & Stalans, 1997; Soss, Langbein & Metelko, 2003; Young, 1991). Analyzing determinants of Whites' support for punitive and preventive crime policies, Green, Staerke and Sears (2006) recently found high levels of racial intolerance to be associated with support for tough, punitive crime policies and with opposition to preventive policies. Not surprisingly, racial and ethnic minority groups are disproportionately represented in the U.S. prison population (Currie, 1998; Gilliam, 1998; Johnson, Farrell & Stoloff 2000; Sidanius & Pratto 1999).

With respect to opinions on the police use of force, previous studies (Halim & Stiles, 2001; Skolnick, 2000; Stiles & Halim 2001; Thompson & Lee, 2004; Weisburd et al., 2000) have also shown race to be strongly associated with opinions for and against the use of force. Examining views on the extent to which it is justifiable for a police officer to strike an adult male, Tuch and Weitzer (1997), for example, found that “the long-term trend for [the question, Are there any situations you can imagine in which you would approve of a policeman striking an adult male citizen?] is clear: in every year, blacks are

less likely than whites to endorse this type of police violence” (Tuch and Weitzer 1997 cited in Elicker, 2008, p. 35). Halim and Stiles (2001), however, found that opinions as such are influenced by the situation in question: when the issue is whether or not police using force on citizens is ever justifiable, African Americans are less likely than whites to respond in the affirmative. Of those African Americans who supported general police use of force, however, nearly half were also less likely than whites to support the use of force on a suspect evading arrest. More recently, Elicker (2008) found whites to be significantly more accepting of police use of force on a citizen attempting to escape custody than blacks.

We add to this body of literature by investigating the impact of beliefs about race on whites’ support for police use of force when that use is said to be directed to crime in general (i.e. can you imagine a situation) and 2) when the use is directed to a specific crime (i.e., a citizen evading arrest). More specifically, this study examines the extent to which racial resentment, as defined in the symbolic racism literature (Henry & Sears, 2002; Kinder & Sanders, 1996; Sears & Henry, 2003, 2005; Sears, Henry & Kosterman 2000) influences whites’ support for police use of force: generally and specifically.

Racial Resentment

The symbolic racism explanation of current race relations proposes that racial attitudes are impacted by the persistence of negative racial affect. Explicit in this literature is that, regardless of the overt or subtle nature of prejudice, racism continues to find its roots in negative affect developed early in life (Kinder & Sanders 1996; Kinder & Sears 1981; Sears, Henry & Kosterman 2000).

More generally, scholars argue that while traditional racism might be declining, negative racial affect is not and is still a cornerstone of race relations in America. The “Modern” or “Symbolic” racism characterizing current race relations is more subtle in nature (Kinder & Sears, 1981; Kinder & Sanders, 1996; McConahay, 1986). In this “new” form of racism, Blacks are seen as violating long-standing American values of hard work and individualism (Kinder & Medelberg, 2000). And are not trying “hard enough to overcome difficulties they face and that they take what they have not earned” (Kinder & Mendelberg, 2000, p. 73).

These attitudes and beliefs are not expressed overtly; rather they are said to guide beliefs about racial policy subtly. Kinder and Sanders (1996), for example, noted that, among White Americans, prejudice is most pronounced in reference to race-specific policies and less so in relation to race-neutral policies, such as Medicare and education. In short, whether racism reflects traditional views of racial superiority or a new or modern form reflecting the belief that Blacks violate values related to hard work and individualism, the key variable here is negative racial affect.

With respect to law-enforcement, previous research has specifically shown that racial intolerance among whites is linked to greater support for law-enforcement that is punitive/harsh in nature (Aquirre & Baker 1993; Barkan & Cohn 1994; Peffley & Hurwitz, 2002; Roberts & Stalans, 1997; Soss, Langbein, & Metelko, 2003; Young, 1991). Analyzing determinants of Whites’ support for punitive and preventive crime policies, Green, Staerkl’e and Sears (2006) recently found high levels of racial intolerance to be associated with support for tough, punitive crime policies and with opposition to preventive policies. They also found that: “Sub-dimensions of symbolic racism qualified

these relationships, by showing that internal symbolic racism (assessing perceived individual deficiencies of Blacks) was most strongly predictive of punitiveness, whereas external symbolic racism (denial of institutional discrimination) predicted opposition to structural remedies” (2006, p. 435). They conclude that: “On the whole, despite the effects of race-neutral factors, the impact of symbolic racism on policy attitudes was substantial. Thus, White public opinion on both punitive and preventive crime policies is at least partially driven by racial prejudice” (p. 435–436).

With that said, the purpose of this paper is to investigate the impact of racial resentment, as defined by symbolic racism scholars, on whites’ support for police use of force. We ask and investigate two research questions. First, what is the relationship between racial resentment and whites’ support for police use of force when that use is directed to a general/diffuse police action (i.e., against a citizen)? And second, what is the relationship between racial resentment/affect and whites’ support for police use of force when the use is directed to a specific crime (i.e., a person such as Michael Brown in Ferguson evading/resisting arrest)?

Methods and Data Description

The Survey

This project analyzes data gathered by the General Social Survey (GSS, hereafter). The GSS is biannually administered by The National Opinion Research Center (NORC, hereafter,) to a full probability representative national sample of the non-institutionalized U.S. population 18 years of age and older. More specifically, the sample collected by NORC is a stratified, multistage area probability sample of clusters of households in the continental United States. Data are incorporated from several waves starting with 1972 through 2012. Because this analysis focuses on attitudes of a particular segment of the U.S. population (Whites), this analysis is restricted to white respondents.

Dependent Variable

The analytical strategy of this study has two primary components: Part A: we will assess the impact of racial resentment on police force in general. This analysis will assess attitudes toward police force using a police force index outlined below. Part B: we will deconstruct the index mentioned below and assess whether there are specific conditions where racial resentment plays more of a factor in attitudes toward police force. For instance, do respondents react differently to questions that generally ask about police action against a citizen and one that particularly describes the citizen as a murder suspect.

The composite index used for this analysis (“Police Force Index”) assesses attitudes toward police using force against citizens using four GSS items. Initially, respondents were asked the following questions:

1. Are there any situations you can imagine in which you would approve of a policeman striking an adult male citizen? (0=No; 1=Yes)

If respondents answered yes to the above question, they were then asked, “Would you approve of a policeman striking a citizen who:”

1. Had said vulgar and obscene things to the policeman? (0=No; 1=Yes)

2. Was being questioned as a suspect in a murder case? (0=No; 1=Yes)
3. Was attempting to escape from custody? (0=No; 1=Yes)
4. Was attacking the policeman with his fists? (0=No; 1=Yes)

Responses for these four questions were recoded such that the highest scores reflect the support for police force (range: 0–3). Principal component analysis (PCA), often used to explore data and reduce its dimensionality, was conducted. It revealed one prominent component with an eigen value of 1.435 that accounted for over 35 percent of the variance. Factor analysis, a similar procedure to PCA for extracting additional components was then run. The factor analysis also revealed a second component that accounted for over 32 percent of the variance. While not exactly reflective of a one-factor parsimonious measure of police force attitudes, we combined all measures into a one theoretically relevant index. The purpose for this is to look theoretically at the questions as a whole as each question focuses on views toward when police can use force and then split the index into individual questions and assess views toward particular examples.

Independent Variable

Paralleling past research on attitudes, several control variables were included in our analysis. If the impact of racial resentment is independent and not spurious, it should remain even with these variables controlled. Along with the racial resentment variable(s), the following controls are included in our analysis: sex, age, income, education, place of residency (region), level of church attendance, and a measure of economic individualism. Sex was treated as a nominal variable (1=male; 0=female). Age was treated as a linear variable, ranging from 18 to 89 (and over). Similarly, education was treated as a linear variable, ranging from 0 to 20. Income was treated as an ordinal variable ranging from 1 (lowest income level) to 12 (highest income level).

Past research also revealed a significant impact of place of residency, with individuals living in the South exhibiting greater levels of violence than their non-South and urban counterparts (Nisbett & Cohen, 1996). Therefore, region was dichotomized into a dummy variable in the analysis. South was treated as 1 whereas non-South was recoded as 0. The differentiation of the states into South and non-South regions followed previous studies that used the U.S. census definition of South and non-South (Carter, 2005; Carter & Corra, 2005; Tuch, 1987). We also control for religiosity. As a proxy for religiosity, we included respondent's level of church attendance (ATTEND), which was treated as an ordinal variable in the analysis, with lower scores equating to less attendance (0=never) and higher scores equating to greater attendance (8=more than once a week). We also include year as a trend variable to assess any change over time.

Finally, we also include measures of political conservatism and economic individualism both as ordinal variables. With respect to political conservatism, respondents were asked, on a seven point scale, to rate themselves on their political views. On this scale, 1 equated to extremely liberal while 7 equaled extremely conservative. This analysis also included a measure of economic individualism. The following was provided to respondents to the GSS.

Some people think that the government in Washington ought to reduce the income differences between the rich and the poor, perhaps by raising the taxes of wealthy families or by giving income assistance to the poor. Others think that the government should not

concern itself with reducing this income difference between the rich and the poor (1 = Government Should; 7 = Government Should not).

Finally, following the work of Tuch and Hughes (2012), we use three questions to create a racial resentment index. According to racial resentment scholars, racial resentment is a combination of negative affect and belief that minorities lack a strong work ethic (Kinder & Sanders 1996). The following statement was provided to GSS respondents, “On the average (Negroes/Blacks/African-Americans) have worse jobs, income, and housing than white people.” Respondents were then offered the following options:

- Mainly due to discrimination (Yes = 0; No = 1)
- Because most (Negroes/Blacks/African-Americans) don't have the chance for education that it takes to rise out of poverty? (Yes = 0; No = 1)
- Because most (Negroes/Blacks/African-Americans) just don't have the motivation or will power to pull themselves up out of poverty? (No = 0; Yes = 1)

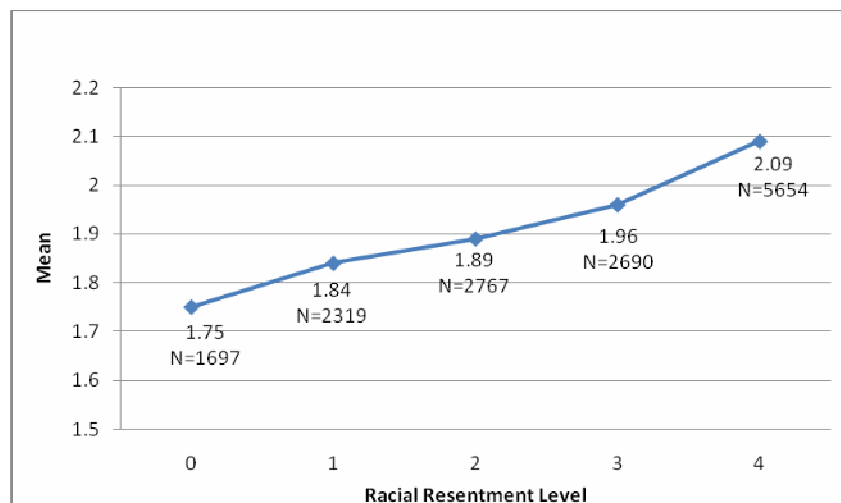
With a range of 0 to 3, responses were recoded so that greater scores equate to greater racial resentment while lower scores reflect less racial resentment. With an eigen value of 1.57 that accounts for over 52 percent of the variance, these questions load together and represent a one factor parsimonious measure of racial resentment.

Results

Part A

The first part of this analysis focuses on the police force index. The police force index is made up of several questions asking respondents under what conditions they accept the use of police force. As noted above, higher scores reflect acceptance of greater levels of police force while lower scores reflect less acceptance of police force. In this first analysis, we looked at police force index mean scores by levels of racial resentment. That is to say, we looked at support across different levels of racial resentment.

Figure 1. Mean Scores for Police Force Index by Level of Racial Resentment



As indicated on Figure 1, findings show a general increase in support for police force as the level of racial resentment increased. For instance, at the lowest level of racial resentment (0), the police force index mean score is 1.75 while the mean score for the highest racial resentment level (4) is 2.09, which reflects almost a 20 percent increase. More telling, this increase is quite linear and consistent, with acceptance of force increasing as the level of racial resentment increases. One-way ANOVA reveals that indeed this increase is significant at all levels, $F(4, 8101) = 28.149, p < .001$. For instance, the police force index mean at racial resentment level 4 is significantly higher than mean scores at levels 3, 2, 1, and 0. Likewise, the police force index mean score at level 0 is significantly less than mean scores at levels 1, 2, 3, and 4. These findings demonstrate that those with the greatest levels of racial resentment tend to support greater levels of police force against citizens.

In order to more thoroughly assess the impact of racial resentment on police force, we turn to OLS regression where we are able to control for various variables shown to impact attitudes toward police force. Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression is a multivariate statistical technique used to predict a single dependent variable using multiple independent variables. In this case, we attempt to predict attitudes towards police use force using the included independent variables.

Table 1: Estimated Main Effects and Standard Errors for the Racial Resentment Index and other Demographic Variables (Whites only)

IV	Main Effects	
	Model 1	Model 2
Racial Resentment	.074 (.007)***	.059 (.009)***
Sex (male = 1)		.151 (.020)***
Age		.005 (.001)***
Region (South = 1)		.055 (.021)***
Education		.005 (.004)
Family Income		.000 (.005)
Church Attendance		.000 (.004)
Political Views		.033 (.008)***
Economic Individualism		.003 (.005)
Year		-.004 (.001)**
R ²	.013	.044
Df	8105	5746

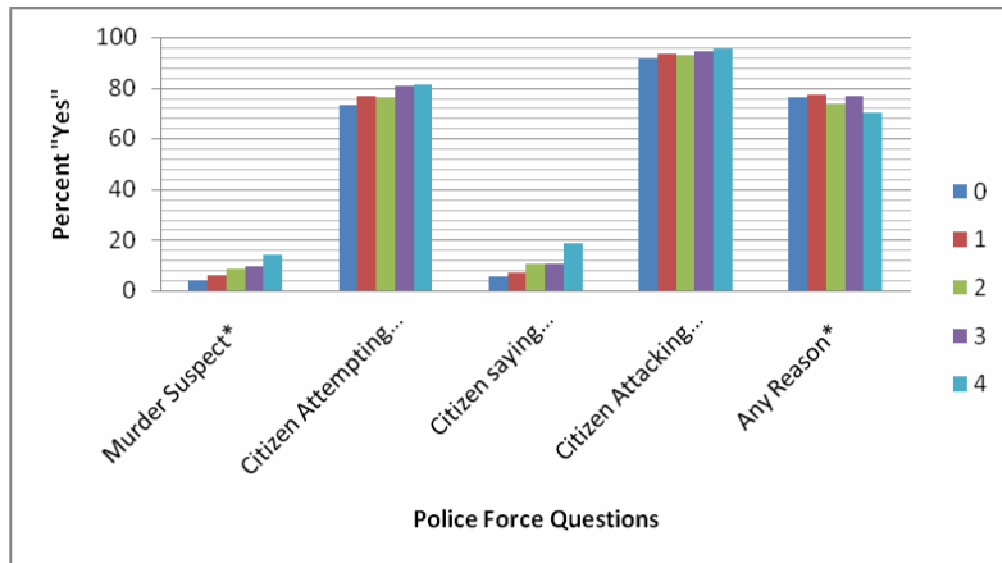
* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$

Model 1 of Table 1 includes a baseline model where no control variables are included. In this basic model, racial resentment is positively related to attitudes toward police force. That is, those individuals with greater levels of racial resentment are more likely to support greater levels of police force toward citizens. If the impact of racial resentment is independent, it should hold when we include control variables shown to impact attitudes toward police force in model 2. Before discussing the impact of racial resentment, we first summarize findings from the control variables. We found significant relationships for individuals who are male, older (opposite), from the South, and who labeled themselves as more conservative were more likely to support police force. In terms of trend, again over time respondents are showing less support. Turning to racial resentment, there continues to be a strong positive effect of racial resentment on attitudes towards the use of force toward citizens by police officers. Even after including several control variables, the racial resentment parameter estimate decreased 25 percent but remained significant. Thus, consistent with the findings from the one-way ANOVA, those who hold racial resentment were more likely to support the use of force than those who express less racial resentment.

Part B

The second part of this analysis deconstructs the index and assesses under what conditions, if any, racial resentment impacts support for police force. As noted above, White respondents were first asked whether there are any situations you can imagine in which you would approve of a policeman striking an adult male citizen? If respondents responded “yes,” they were given several conditions, including when the citizen is a murder suspect, attempting to escape custody, saying obscene or vulgar things, and attacking a policeman.

Figure 2. Percent who say “Yes” to Police Force for particular examples by levels of Racial Resentment



*Chi-Square test of independence = <.05

Figure 2 provides percent of respondents who said “yes” to each of the conditions outlined above. Figure 2 also includes the percent “yes” for the more general question that asked respondents whether there were any situations they could imagine in which they would approve of a policeman striking an adult male citizen (“Any Reason”). Figure 2 provides several interesting insights into these questions. First, some questions get more support for police force than other questions. Respondents were less likely to support police force if the citizen was only a murder suspect (percent range: 4 to 14.3 percent) or if they were simply saying obscene or vulgar things (percent range 5.7 to 18.7 percent). Respondents were more likely to support the use of force if the citizen was actively attempting escape (percent range: 73.5 to 81.4) or attacking a police officer (percent range: 91.7 to 95.3). Interestingly, the “for any reason” question revealed that respondents can imagine instances where police force is appropriate (percent range: 70.2 to 76.2).

Second, except for the more general “Any Reason” question, there appears to be a positive and linear relationship between racial resentment and acceptance of police force. Indeed, a chi-square test of independents revealed in each case the variables were quite dependent upon each other, with higher levels of racial resentment being associated with greater levels of support for police force. However, a chi-square test of independence revealed just the opposite for the “Any Reason” question. If anything, lower levels of racial resentment were related to greater support for police force.

Table 2: Binary Logistic Regression: Estimated Odds Ratios and significant levels for the Racial Resentment Questions and Control Variables on the Police Force Index (Whites only)

IV	Murder Suspect	Citizen Attempting Escape	Citizen saying obscene/vulgar things	Citizen Attacking Policeman	Any Reason
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
Racial Resentment	1.247***	1.108***	1.241***	1.193***	.996
Sex (male = 1)	1.080	1.653***	1.438***	1.861***	1.926***
Age	1.021***	1.006**	1.023***	.926	.994**
Region (South = 1)	.882	1.192*	1.2777**	1.214	1.233**
Education	.920***	1.044***	.987	1.102***	1.168***
Family Income	.936**	1.048***	.929***	1.060**	1.032*
Church Attendance	1.006	1.005	1.007	.965	1.003
Political Views	1.063	1.107***	1.084*	1.131**	1.129***
Economic Individualism	.918**	1.064***	.981	1.070*	1.100***
Year	1.021***	.991*	.985**	.963***	.978***

* p < .05 ** p < .01 *** p < .001

Similar to the analytical strategy used in Part A, if the impact of racial resentment is said to be independent, it should hold when control variables are included in the models. While including various control variables mentioned in the methods section and in the OLS models above, this modeling technique allows us to predict odds of supporting police force against male citizens under varying conditions rather than in general (as predicted by using the index in part A).

Before discussing the findings from our primary independent variable, we would like to first discuss results from the control variables (in general as this did not hold absolutely across all models as some variations were noted). Although results for the control variables were consistent, some interesting variations occurred. In general, however, individuals who are male, younger, and who are from the South (see Model 1 for exception) were more likely to espouse greater force toward citizens by the police. Furthermore, individuals who labeled themselves more conservative (see Model 1 for exception) were more likely to espouse greater force toward citizens by the police as well. There were, however, some glaring exceptions that could possibly point toward future research. Increased in education and income actually predicted greater odds of supporting police force when looking at a citizen who was escaping custody, when a citizen is attacking a policeman, and for the general question as well. Conversely, increased education and income were associated with greater odds of *not* supporting police force when considering the citizen to be a murder suspect or the citizen is speaking obscene and vulgar language. Interestingly, the odds of supporting police force or not paralleled general support for the example. That is to say, greater education and income was associated with a lack of support for police force for the murder and obscene/vulgar conditions, which did not receive much support in general. Finally, the economic individualism question reflected the same pattern. Future research should attempt to tease this issue out.

Turning now to the racial resentment item, findings for Models 1 through 4 are quite consistent: individuals with greater racial resentment show an increased odds of supporting police force across each of the conditions. However, looking at the more general “Any Reason” question, the impact of racial resentment becomes negligible at best. That is to say, findings show very little impact of racial resentment on views toward police force when asked generally. Such a finding reflects a notion that racial resentment is possibly a state rather than an omnipresent trait of the individual. Blumer (1958) argued that not all situations stimulate racial animus; it is only under certain conditions that threat and negative emotions occur.

Discussion and Conclusion

The purpose of this research was to assess the impact of racial resentment on whites’ attitudes toward the use of force by the police. While the incident in Ferguson, Missouri, where a white police officer shot and killed Michael Brown, an unarmed black teenager, is only one case, it seems to represent a larger undercurrent of animosity that exists between minorities and the police. Ferguson resulted in numerous police protests and has become a rallying case for the Black Lives Matter movement in the United States. Moreover, this incident brings focus, once again, on the great racial divide that exists when assessing attitudes or confidence in the police (New York Times/CBS News Poll, August 19–20, 2014). This with this in mind, findings from this project provide some insight into factors among whites that play a role in producing this divide.

The analytical strategy we employed first analyzed a general index of police force (Police Force Index) and then separated the questions out to assess the impact of racial resentment on specific situations involving citizens. The second part of the strategy assessed which conditions, if any, stimulate the underlying feelings of racial resentment when reflecting on citizen actions and the use of force by the police.

Consistent with the work of Green, Staerkle and Sears (2006), our general findings show a strong and consistent relationship between racial resentment and attitudes toward the use of force by the police toward citizens. What this finding in essence means is that views toward the police using force is partially rooted in negative racial resentment among Whites. Racial Resentment scholars (Kinder & Sanders, 1996) pose that such feelings and understandings of racial and ethnic minorities are the result of social learning that occurs early in a person's life.

While interpersonal interactions at home may play a role, such widespread beliefs, according to Blumer (1958; p. 6) often "takes place in the area of the remote and not of the near." What this means is that outside sources play a very strong role in the production and reproduction of meanings associated with minorities. In our society, these meanings may be tracked back to the media where Blacks are more likely to be misidentified as perpetrators of violent crime than of nonviolent crime (Oliver & Fonash 2002; Oliver et al. 2004) and where racial and ethnic minorities are frequently portrayed as law breakers than defenders of the law, whites are depicted more as defenders of the law (Dixon & Linz 2000a, 2000b). In many instances, this seems to be the narrative created by various media sources in the coverage of the Michael Brown case in Ferguson, Missouri. Protestors were often portrayed as breaking the law and disturbing otherwise peaceful demonstrations. Likewise after the shooting, Michael Brown was often portrayed as a criminal in the media with many images released portraying Brown as a gangster, theoretically contributing to his image as a threat. Blumer (1958) posed that such outside entities even play a much stronger role in producing attitudes/beliefs than do individual level factors, such as interpersonal discussions.

Turning to the specifics of our study, some interesting findings were observed. First of all, when questions are separated out, the impact of racial resentment continues to play a strong role in affecting attitudes toward the use of force by police toward citizens. That is to say, those with greater levels of racial resentment are more likely to express support for the use of police force against citizens who 1) said vulgar and obscene things, 2) is a murder suspect, 3) is attempting to escape custody, and 3) is attacking a police officer. Such specific findings reflect the notion that race is often intertwined with views toward crime and the criminal justice system (Green, Staerkle & Sears 2006). We would like to note that, unlike many of the policy questions that direct attention to African Americans and other minority groups, these questions simply asked respondents their level of support toward broadly defined instances of citizen law breaking. As you can see, these examples range from quite mild instances of law breaking (saying vulgar/obscene things) to more serious instances of crime (attacking a police officer). Given this range, it seems clear that a cumulative understanding of crime indeed involves minorities and the belief that minorities are more likely to commit even the most basic of crimes.

A final finding, and one that produces theoretical ideas needing more attention, is the idea that racial resentment is not always associated with views toward the use of crime. When respondents were asked, "Are there any situations you can imagine in which you

would approve of a policeman striking an adult male citizen?” racial resentment did not impact views toward the use of police force toward citizens. What this seems to suggest is that vague mentioning of support for the use of force by the police does not appear to elicit any levels of threat or concern, which in turn racial resentment is not a factor in producing attitudes toward force stated in this general and vague manner. That is to say, when dealing with issues that are race based or tinged with racial connotations (e.g. crime), racial animus is not always a driving force in producing such attitudes. This idea that resentment may actually be a state of consciousness rather than trait that is always there is a quite underdeveloped area (Bobo & Tuan 2006) in the race literature in general and in the symbolic racism literature specifically.

Turning to Blumer’s (1958) group positioning theory may provide some insight into this complicated notion that resentment may actually reflect a state rather than a trait. Blumer (1958) posed racial prejudice is a combination of racial resentment, group level positioning and feelings of felt threat to value resources. Most interesting about this perspective, and one that relates to this finding, is the notion that not all racial issues stimulate the feeling of group positioning and felt threat that is the root of racial prejudice. Thus, whites are not always in defensive mode and seeking to protect their proprietary claim to valued resources. In parallel with this research, it appears that racial resentment may simply be a state, rather than a trait, that manifests itself when certain racialized issues are broached. With that said, a great more research is needed to explore this idea that racial resentment reflects a state rather than a trait.

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