

Police Officers' Attitudes toward People of Color: A Case Study of One American Midwestern Police Department

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ABSTRACT

In a city where race figures prominently in the socio-political milieu, this article utilizes surveys of police officers to gauge their views of minority residents in the city of Cincinnati. The study's purpose is to determine if the reported longstanding mistreatment of African Americans by police officers is the byproduct of police officers' belief systems about Black motorists and pedestrians. The results, while intriguing reveal a more complex set of opinions than was anticipated.

KEYWORDS

Police attitudes, Cincinnati, Ohio, Whites, and African Americans

INTRODUCTION

There is perhaps no other state agent in the United States about whom so much scholarship has been devoted than the American police officer. Over the past fifty years a substantial body of literature has been written on police-community relations. Much of this work, however, is one-sided. The police-community relations literature is saturated with studies of citizens' assessments of local policing (Bridenhall & Jesilow, 2008; Payne & Gainey, 2007; Frank, Smith & Novak, 2005; Weitzer, 2000; Tuch & Weitzer, 1997; Parker, Onyekwuluje & Murtz, 1995). However, relatively, few scholars have studied police perceptions of the citizens that they purportedly are charged to serve (Ikner, 2005; Kakar, 2003; Sun, 2002; Worden, 1995). This paper seeks to fill that void.

The 1960s were the first era in which extensive polling about law enforcement was conducted (Hahn & Jeffries, 2003). Although prior to that time, law enforcement had been a somewhat neglected area of policy analysis, the turbulent events of the 1960s attracted researchers from a myriad of disciplines. For twenty years scholars produced a steady stream of

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books, journal articles, book chapters and position papers on various aspects of policing or the police generally. As the 1980s neared, police work appeared to lose some of its appeal within academic circles.¹ A renewed interest in the study of the police was, however, triggered by trends that emerged during the 1990s such as the well publicized beatings, killings and harassment of both famous and non-famous people of color, often under suspicious circumstances. Furthermore, a number of big city police departments such as the Los Angeles Police Department, the New York City Police Department, the New Orleans Police Department and the Chicago Police Department came under public and media scrutiny not only, because of the overly-aggressive manner in which its officers treated people of color, but also because of entrenched corruption that was ultimately uncovered by media personnel as well as investigators with the U.S. Department of Justice.

Some of the high profile events of that decade involved police use of excessive force against Black² motorists and pedestrians. Among them were Abner Louima, the Haitian immigrant who was beaten and sodomized in a Brooklyn police precinct in 1997, the shooting death of Amadou Diallo in the Bronx in 1999 as well as the shooting death of Demetrius DuBose, former NFL linebacker and co-captain of the Notre Dame Football team by San Diego police officers that same year. However, no incident involving extra-legal force was more infamous than the 1991 incident involving members of the Los Angeles Police Department, California Highway Patrol and Rodney King, an African American motorist who was beaten savagely after leading police officers on a high speed chase. The videotape of the beating, captured by a local resident who had happened to view the horror from his balcony, was broadcast throughout the world. This high profile event and the resultant uprising one year later sent academics and pundits scurrying to write journal articles, books and book chapters that attempted to offer new theories on police-community relations generally as well as police relations with African Americans specifically (McClain & Stewart, 2009; Cannon, 1999). Not surprisingly, some maintained that the officers, all of whom were White were racist and that had King been White himself, the officers would have been more restrained (McClain & Stewart, 2009).

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1. A cursory review of the major journals in the fields of political science, sociology, criminal justice and other pertinent outlets reveals that the amount of scholarship pertaining to the police was not as abundant as years earlier.
 2. The words Black and African American are not only used interchangeably according to sound and context, but also to avoid repetition.

Those who took this position argued that police officers treat Blacks and other people of color differently than they do Whites. Opponents of this line of thinking submitted that King got what he deserved; that the type of beating that King received is reserved for hardened criminals only. Many believe perhaps correctly that the majority of police officers are law-abiding public servants whose primary concern is to serve humanity in the best way possible (Hahn & Jeffries, 2003). Others, however, believe that a fair number of White police officers are racist and that this racism manifests in their beliefs and more importantly, the way they police people of color (Weitzer, 2000).

To say that police officers play an especially important role in the relationship between community residents and local governments is an understatement. Not only are police officers arguably America's most powerful street-level bureaucrats, but they are the state agents that many Americans are most likely to encounter on a daily basis (Lipsky, 1983). Few agencies function twenty four hours daily as do police departments; consequently police officers are called upon by citizens across the country to assist with any number of emergency and non-emergency related matters. Some citizens recognize that although police department's main objective is to combat crime and keep people safe, police departments are uniquely positioned to provide various kinds of other services. Few agents of the state are as involved in the lives of American citizens on a daily basis as are police officers (Lipsky, 1983).

Police officers are also the first, and perhaps the most important, cog in the wheel of criminal justice. Given the large body of scholarship on police and the belief among some, that race figures prominently in the way many police officers interact with and police people of color, few have examined police attitudes about people of color. This article examines police attitudes of citizens of color in the city of Cincinnati, Ohio.

1. WHY CINCINNATI AS A CASE STUDY

Cincinnati is a good case study for several reasons. First, forty-three percent of the city's residents are Black giving Cincinnati a sizeable African American population (U.S. Census, 2010). Given the Black community's size, one might expect to see at work such dynamics as the racial threat hypothesis, which posits that the larger the Black population the more likely Whites may

Society is composed of competing individuals and groups, all seeking to maintain or advance their positions on a wide range of issues (Dahl, 2006; Browning, Marshall & Tabb, 1984; Dahl, 1957). The racial hypothesis suggests that Whites feel threatened by Blacks when their numbers are large enough to perhaps alter the balance of power between the races. Logically then, some White Cincinnatians might, given the size of the Black population in their city, feel more threatened by Blacks than Whites who live in cities with small Black populations. This real or imagined fear of Black Power on the part of some Whites manifests itself in attitudes, even to the extent of envisioning a Black take-over.

Second, Cincinnati police officers have a reputation for policing Blacks differently than Whites. *City Beat*, a local magazine, published a study that pointed out the disparate treatment received by African American motorists. Its researchers found that of the 141,000 traffic citations issued by Cincinnati police officers over a two year period, African American drivers were twice as likely as Whites to be cited for driving without a license, twice as likely to be cited for not wearing a seat belt and four times as likely to be cited for driving without proof of insurance. This widely publicized report validated the complaints of those Blacks who had long complained that Blacks were disproportionately mistreated by police officers.

Third, in 2001 the city experienced the most devastating uprising of the 21st century (OsBorne, 2011). The uprising, which lasted several days, was confined to several of Cincinnati's Black neighborhoods, but resulted in millions of dollars worth of damage. The disorder was sparked by the shooting death of Timothy Thomas, yet was the culmination of years of pent-up frustration that many believe was fomented by years of police repression. From 1996 to 2001 fifteen Black males were killed by members of the Cincinnati Police Department. That no Whites were killed by police officers during that same time frame prompted many Blacks to believe that African Americans were unfairly targeted (OsBorne, 2011). Given these developments, it is not unreasonable to assume that some Whites [including police officers] may have developed strong opinions about people of color, thus making Cincinnati a fine case study.

2. SIGNIFICANCE OF RESEARCH

A rapidly evolving society requires police departments that are equipped to meet the demands and needs of the people they are sworn “to serve and protect” (Hahn and Jeffries, 2003). Therefore this article is important for several reasons. First, it is important to gain insight into the kind of people that are joining and/or being recruited by police departments in Cincinnati. The rapidly changing racial demographics of some major and mid-size cities may require a different kind of police officer than has historically been recruited by police departments. Historically, police departments have employed young white males with little more than a high school diploma who were reared in nearly all-white areas; and therefore had little interaction with people of color (Hahn & Jeffries, 2003). In today's rapidly evolving world, it may be necessary to broaden the recruitment base to include women as well as college educated and more culturally sensitive police recruits. Second, it is important to ascertain what police officers think about people of races different from their own. In other words, are police officers generally open and/or tolerant of people of other races or do they resent or feel threatened by them? This issue is important, because some view the rise of certain racial groups as a threat to American mores and values.

In his book, *Who Are We? The Challenges to America's National Identity* Harvard University's Samuel Huntington argues that Latino immigration threatens Anglo-Saxon American culture as well as the political integrity of the country (Huntington, 2004). Along those same lines, there is the belief among some that the influx of Latinos (especially those who enter the country illegally) adversely impacts the job prospects of White Americans (Bush, 2010; Bonilla-Silva, 2009). Simply put, some Whites believe they are losing out on employment opportunities to unqualified Blacks and Latinos as many Latinos (especially those who enter the country illegally) are purportedly willing to work for less money. Third, it is vital to know whether police officers harbor stereotypical views about people of color, as these notions may manifest in the way certain individuals or communities are policed. Finally, the results could have far-reaching policy ramifications that could impact the ways in which police departments recruit potential officers.

3. METHODOLOGY

This research is part of a larger project that examines police attitudes about their role in society, their work environment, their perceptions of people who belong to racial groups different from their own and their ability to handle certain types of crimes and/or situations. In 2008 the authors were granted permission by high ranking officials within the Cincinnati Police Department to administer a survey to the department's new class of recruits. The cohort consisted of fifty-two newly sworn police officers. Thirty-nine of the officers were white while thirteen were African American. Of the fifty two officers only four were female. The survey contained several sections, one of which was designed to examine officers' attitudes about people of color.³ Again, it is that topic on which this article focuses.

On October 17, 2008 each of the fifty-two officers were given the survey, under the direction of the first author, and instructed to answer every question therein. Respondents were asked questions across a broad range of issues. In one section of the survey officers were asked to identify their feelings, beliefs, and thoughts about individuals who may be different from them in terms of race and/or ethnicity. The cohort comprised a cross-section of the city's residents. The survey was developed by the first author in concert with the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center and pretested by interviews with the Strategic Research Group in Cincinnati. Each section of the survey contained a statement to which each officer was asked to respond on a scale. Each respondent was asked to circle the number on a Likert scale that best described where he/she fit on that scale. A Likert instrument is the most widely used approach to scale responses in survey research; generally the level of agreement or disagreement is measured.

The officers were assured that their responses would be held in strict confidence. It was conveyed to the officers that individual responses would not be linked to anyone in any way; consequently officers were instructed to refrain from putting their names on the survey. The objective was to generalize the findings, not single out peoples' perceptions and/or experiences.

3. Although the surveys query police officers about people of color, African Americans are the only minority group of any size in the city of Cincinnati. African Americans make-up forty three percent of the city's total population. The second largest minority group [Latinos] comprises less than three percent of the city's total population. Hence, it is not unreasonable to believe that when officers answered questions about people of color they had African Americans in mind.

Based on Key's racial threat hypothesis, Cincinnati's Black population is sufficiently large enough to make Whites feel threatened (politically, economically and socially) by Blacks. Furthermore, Cincinnati is considered one of the most racially segregated cities in the United States; hence most Whites do not live in close proximity to Blacks. Rather most Whites live in predominantly White neighborhoods and most Blacks live in predominantly Black neighborhoods. Therefore, what many Whites know or think they know about Blacks is filtered through the media (namely television), which has a history of portraying Blacks in an unflattering and stereotypical manner. It is not surprising then that relations between police officers in Cincinnati and its Black residents have been acrimonious.

4. HYPOTHESIS

In light of these dynamics we argue that Cincinnati's White police officers will not only possess hardened and unfavorable views of people of color, but are likely to feel uncomfortable interacting with them.

5. FINDINGS

In the following pages a presentation of officer's attitudes about people of color is provided. The first set of statements gauged police officers' beliefs about such things as achievement, work ethic and discrimination where people of color are concerned. A second set of statements measured police officers comfort level while interacting with people of color.

(1) Racial Beliefs

1) All Police Officers

When asked to respond to the statement "People of color are responsible for their lack of accomplishments in society," nearly two-thirds of the officers disagreed (see table 1).

Categories	Percentage	# of Respondents
Disagree Strongly	46.2	24
Disagree Somewhat	13.5	7
Disagree Slightly	3.8	2
Neither agree nor disagree	23.0	12
Agree Slightly	7.7	4
Agree Somewhat	5.8	3
Agree Strongly	--	0
Total	100	52

Table 1. People of color are responsible for their lack of accomplishments in society.

Of the two-thirds that disagreed, forty six percent strongly disagreed (see table 7). Oddly, twenty-three percent of the respondents neither agreed nor disagreed. A relatively small percentage of the officers agreed with the statement, with “7.7” percent agreeing slightly and “5.8” percent agreeing somewhat. Turning to the matter of work ethic, the overwhelming majority of officers rejected the statement that “People of color aren't as successful in the workplace as Whites, because they do not possess the same type of work ethic” (see table 2). Only two percent of the respondents, however, concurred with the statement, but “11.5%” curiously neither agreed nor disagreed.

Categories	Percentage	# of Respondents
Disagree Strongly	80.8	42
Disagree Somewhat	5.8	3
Disagree Slightly	--	0
Neither agree nor disagree	11.5	6
Agree Slightly	1.9	1
Agree Somewhat	--	0
Agree Strongly	--	0
Total	100	52

Table 2. People of color aren't as successful in the workforce as Whites because they don't have the same work ethic .

Some of the more interesting reactions were in response to the statement “Most people of color are no longer discriminated against in this country.” Nearly three quarters of the respondents disagreed with the statement (see table 3); although the degree to which they disagreed varied. Seventeen percent of the officers, on the other hand, believed the statement to be true.

Categories	Percentage	# of Respondents
Disagree Strongly	30.8	16
Disagree Somewhat	26.9	14
Disagree Slightly	15.4	8
Neither agree nor disagree	9.6	5
Agree Slightly	3.8	2
Agree Somewhat	13.5	7
Agree Strongly	--	0
Total	100	52

Table 3. Most people of color are no longer discriminated against in this country.

2) African American Police Officers

When the officers' responses are disaggregated by race certain patterns emerge, making the findings even more illustrative. Eighty-five percent of the African American officers disagreed with the notion that people of color are responsible for their lack of accomplishments, sixty nine percent of which strongly disagreed. Only seven percent of the respondents found merit in the statement (see table 4).

Categories	Percentage	# of Respondents
Disagree Strongly	69.23	9
Disagree Somewhat	7.69	1
Disagree Slightly	7.69	1
Neither agree nor disagree	7.69	1
Agree Slightly	--	0
Agree Somewhat	7.69	1
Agree Strongly	--	0
Total	100	13

Table 4. People of color are responsible for their lack of accomplishments in society
On the matter of work ethic, more than ninety percent of the African American officers disagreed with the argument that the lack of success on the part of people of color is due to a poor work ethic (see table 5).

Categories	Percentage	# of Respondents
Disagree Strongly	84.60	11
Disagree Somewhat	7.69	1
Disagree Slightly	--	0
Neither agree nor disagree	7.69	1
Agree Slightly	--	0
Agree Somewhat	--	0
Agree Strongly	--	0
Total	100	13

Table 5. People of color aren't as successful in the workforce as Whites because they don't have the same work ethic

Nearly eight percent of the officers were noncommittal as several of them neither agreed nor disagreed (see table 5). Perhaps the most striking, but not entirely surprising reaction was to the statement “Most people of color are no longer discriminated against in this country.” Black officers were unanimous in their opposition to the notion that racism no longer exists; albeit some were more vigorous in their opposition than others (table 6).

Categories	Percentage	# of Respondents
Disagree Strongly	69.23	9
Disagree Somewhat	30.76	4
Disagree Slightly	--	0
Neither agree nor disagree	--	0
Agree Slightly	--	0
Agree Somewhat	--	0
Agree Strongly	--	0
Total	100	13

Table 6. Most people of color are no longer discriminated against in this country

3) White Police Officers

When comparing the officers' responses across race the findings are remarkably disparate. Less than fifty percent of the White officers disagreed with the statement that “People of color are responsible for their lack of accomplishments”; although again, the level of opposition varied. Conversely, fifteen percent of the officers found the statement to be valid (see table 7). Curiously, twenty eight percent neither agreed nor disagreed.

Categories	Percentage	# of Respondents
Disagree Strongly	38.5	15
Disagree Somewhat	15.4	6
Disagree Slightly	2.6	1
Neither agree nor disagree	28.2	11
Agree Slightly	10.2	4
Agree Somewhat	5.1	2
Agree Strongly	--	0
Total	100	39

Table 7. People of color are responsible for their lack of accomplishments in society

When the issue turned to work ethic approximately “85%” (when combining the categories of disagree strongly and disagree somewhat) of White police officers opposed the notion that people of color are not as successful as Whites because they possess a poor work ethic (see table 8). Both Black and White officers, overwhelming opposed the idea that the lack of success experienced on the part of people of color is attributed to a poor work ethic (see table 8).

Categories	Percentage	# of Respondents
Disagree Strongly	79.5	31
Disagree Somewhat	5.1	2
Disagree Slightly	--	0
Neither agree nor disagree	12.8	5
Agree Slightly	2.6	1
Agree Somewhat	--	0
Agree Strongly	--	0
Total	100	39

Table 8. People of color aren't as successful in the workforce as Whites because they don't have the same work ethic

Most White officers disagreed with the idea that minorities are no longer discriminated against, although their level of opposition varied. On the other hand, nearly a quarter of the respondents found the statement accurate, while “12.8%” purportedly had no opinion whatsoever on the matter.

Categories	Percentage	# of Respondents
Disagree Strongly	18	7
Disagree Somewhat	25.6	10
Disagree Slightly	20.5	8
Neither agree nor disagree	12.8	51
Agree Slightly	5.1	2
Agree Somewhat	18	7
Agree Strongly	--	0
Total	100	39

Table 9. Most people of color are no longer discriminated against in this country

(2) Comfort Level

The second component of this research measured police officers' comfort level when dealing with people different from their own race. When asked "How do you feel when interacting with members of a different race?" seventy-one percent responded that they felt no worry whatsoever, while "28%" felt some level of anxiety (see table 10).

A.	Not at all Worried 1 (37) 71.1%	Slightly Worried 2 (13) 25%	Somewhat Worried 3 (1) 1.9%	Worried 4 (1) 1.9%	Extremely Worried 5 --
B.	Not at all Tense 1 (30) 57.69%	Slightly Tense 2 (15) 28.8%	Somewhat Tense 3 (6) 11.54%	Tense 4 (1) 1.9%	Extremely Tense 5 --
C.	Not at all fearful 1 (33) 63.4%	Slightly fearful 2 (12) 23.08%	Somewhat fearful 3 (4) 7.6%	Fearful 4 (3) 5.7%	Extremely fearful 5 --

Table 10. All Respondents

Interestingly, only fifty seven percent of all officers indicated that they were tense free when interacting with people of other races. Conversely, a little more than forty percent admitted feeling tense when dealing with people different from their own race. Officers responded similarly when it came to fear. Sixty three percent of the

officers indicated experiencing no fear when interacting with racial groups different from their own, but thirty percent did admit feeling some degree of fear when interfacing with people of different races.

Black Officers and White Officers: A Comparison

When the data is broken down by race, one finds that when it came to feeling tense while interacting with people of other races, both African American and White officers responded in similar fashion. However, when examining the officers' responses to either being “worried” or “fearful” while interacting with races different from their own, one finds vastly different reactions (see table 5). For example, eighty-four percent of Black officers reported not being worried at all while interacting with other people of races compared to only two thirds of the White officers who felt that way. Also, more than three-quarters of the Black respondents expressed having no fear at all when dealing with people from other races while slightly less than sixty percent of White officers indicated that they felt no fear while interacting with other racial groups.

Black	Not at all Worried 1 (11) 84.6%	Slightly Worried 2 (1) 7.69%	Somewhat Worried 3 (1) 7.69%	Worried 4 --	Extremely Worried 5 --
White	Not at all Worried 1 (26) 66.67%	Slightly Worried 2 (11) 30.77%	Somewhat Worried 3 (1) 2.56%	Worried 4 (1) 2.56%	Extremely Worried 5 --
Black	Not at all Tense 1 (8) 61.54%	Slightly Tense 2 (4) 30.07%	Somewhat Tense 3 (1) 7.69%	Tense 4 --	Extremely Tense 5 --
White	Not at all Tense 1 (23) 58.97%	Slightly Tense 2 (11) 28.21%	Somewhat Tense 3 (5) 12.82%	Tense 4 --	Extremely Tense 5 --
Black	Not at all fearful 1 (10) 76.92%	Slightly fearful 2 (1) 7.69%	Somewhat fearful 3 (2) 15.38%	Fearful 4 --	Extremely fearful 5 --
White	Not at all fearful 1 (23) 58.97%	Slightly fearful 2 (11) 28.21%	Somewhat fearful 3 (2) 5.13%	Fearful 4 (3) 7.69%	Extremely fearful 5 --

Table 11

6. DISCUSSION

When comparing the racial beliefs of both Black and White officers, some distinct and intriguing differences stand out. For instance, fifty percent of the White officers disagreed with the statement that “People of Color are responsible for their lack of accomplishments” compared to eighty percent of Black officers who disagreed. One could argue that, on the whole, people of color are indeed responsible for their lack of accomplishments. The same could be said of Whites. This is not to say that racism no longer exists. To be sure, race still plays an important role in the life chances of people of color, but it is not unreasonable to submit that there are a host of other factors [that are, dare I say, within people's control] that if navigated properly will serve people well as they aspire to certain goals and objectives; race notwithstanding. In light of this, it seems that the White officers who disagreed that “People of Color are responsible for their lack of accomplishments” may have a more realistic take on this matter than the eighty percent of Black officers who disagreed with the same statement.

On the issue of work ethic, the data reveals some variance between Black and White officers' responses, but the difference is not huge. On the matter of discrimination, however, Black and White officers differed greatly. It is unfortunate, but not entirely surprising that only sixty percent of White officers disagreed with the idea that “People of color are no longer discriminated against”. Equally curious is the thirty percent of Black officers who “disagreed somewhat.” Given the longstanding history of racism in the U.S. where Blacks are concern, one wonders why thirty percent of the Black officers were so tempered in their response; especially since there are arguably relatively few African Americans in the U.S. who have not experienced racism (either directly or indirectly) at some point in their lives.

Finally, a cursory examination of the racial belief data reveals a peculiar pattern. There are a number of White officers who chose to remain neutral on certain questions, as evidenced by the percentage that neither agreed nor disagreed. Given the provocative nature of the questions, it seems strange that persons would not have an opinion on matters that pertained to race. It is possible that despite assurances from the authors of this article that all responses would be kept confidential, some officers may have felt compelled to adopt a neutral posture rather than express their true feelings for fear of

being found out somehow. Unfortunately their noncommittal approach may have adversely impacted the study's findings, thus undermining our attempt to accurately gauge police attitudes about people of color, especially on the matter of accomplishments where eleven of the thirty nine officers selected neither agreed nor disagreed.

As far as the interaction data goes, there seemed to be little difference between Black and White officers when asked to indicate how tense one feels when interfacing with people of other races. However, there are significant differences between Black and White officers where worry and fear are concerned. As mentioned earlier, thirty five percent of White officers admitted feeling worried [to some degree] when interacting with races of people different from their own: compared to only fifteen percent of the Black officers who felt that way. Forty one percent of the White officers also admitted to being fearful when interacting with people of other races compared to just twenty three percent of the Black officers who felt similarly.

Some of the anxiety felt on the part of White officers may simply be a natural response to being thrust into an unfamiliar setting. Additionally, it is not unusual for persons to experience some level of anxiety when in the presence of unfamiliar faces. Still though, it is likely that the level of angst felt by some White officers while interacting with Blacks can be attributed to race.

CONCLUSION

The data gleaned from the surveys do not wholly support the hypothesis that (in light of the city's unique racial dynamics), Cincinnati police officers will not only possess hardened and unflattering views of people of color, but are likely to feel uncomfortable interacting with them. It was our hope that the surveys would help us tap into the attitudes of White police officers in a way that would perhaps help us explain why African American residents appear to be disproportionately victimized by police use of excessive force.

An examination of the White officers' racial beliefs did not find widespread hardened and/or unflattering views of people of color. There is a relatively small cohort of White officers whose views do not reflect well on people of color, but in general the White officers do not appear to harbor any widespread resentment toward minorities. Having said that: one cannot ignore the fact that nearly a quarter of the White officers concurred with the

statement that “People of Color are no longer discriminated against in this country” (see table 9). Possible explanations include the following: 1) the officers are not in touch with reality 2) they are in a state of denial or 3) they harbor some resentment toward people of color. For example, some whites erroneously believe that programs such as Affirmative Action are put in place to uplift Blacks at the expense of more qualified Whites. In their minds, if a Black gets a good job, he or she got the job because of his or her race, but if a White gets the job he or she did so because they were highly qualified. Consequently, when employers hire Blacks they are hiring an unqualified worker at the expense of qualified White workers. This type of thinking is not uncommon among some White Americans (Bush, 2010).

The data measuring police officers' comfort level when interacting with people of color may be more instructive than the data on racial beliefs. These data did show, that a significant number of White officers [as compared to Black officers] not only admitted to being fearful or worried when interacting with other races, but that White officers experience higher levels of distress when dealing with people of other races. This may explain in part why some White officers are more likely to fire on Black motorists and pedestrians than are Black officers likely to fire on White suspects.

In sum the data only partially supports our hypothesis. Clearly there are other factors that account for the reported disproportionate treatment of African Americans over the years by White police officers in the city of Cincinnati. It should be noted that this study's challenge lay in demonstrating the linkage between police officer's attitudes about race and the seemingly disproportionate number of Blacks who are beaten, killed, or harassed by Cincinnati police officers. Scholars who embark on case studies of this kind in other U.S. cities would do well to keep this challenge in mind.

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