

Police Narratives about Racial and Ethnic Identities on Patrol

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Abstract: Police are caught between the contradictory imperatives of containing and regulating populations—largely people of color—that have historically been excluded from wealth, while simultaneously including those same populations among the beneficiaries of equal protection before the law. This article, based on an archive of 188 statements by an ethnically diverse group of police officers, examines what police say in order to navigate this exclusion/inclusion contradiction. The archive shows that many are aware of multicultural values and the equal protection ideal. It also shows that police are subject to accusations of racism, either as white racists or as black or Hispanic “sell-outs.” In either case, these accusations can cause fear and stress. Some officers dismiss such accusations, while others say that they have directly experienced or witnessed racially discriminatory policing. Conclusions address the similarities and differences among the patterns of phrases, storylines and narratives, how they relate to the ethnicity of the police that use them, and what they suggest about racial hierarchies in the 21st century.

The NYPD, not unlike smaller police departments in the US, has struggled with accusations of racist policing for over a century (see Johnson 2003). In the late 19th century there were cries against the clubbing of ordinary people, especially blacks and Jews, by the likes of Clubber Williams. In the middle 20th century, the “muss ‘em up” treatment of criminal suspects, especially of blacks and Puerto Ricans by a mostly white police force, sparked several protests and demonstrations. Through most of those decades, from the late 19th to middle 20th century, accusations of racism were often answered with charges that the accusers were communists intent on destroying law and order in the US. Indeed, communists often raised the issue of racism in the criminal justice system most vociferously, but many others were in the mix.

Today, the situation is not quite as simple. The NYPD, although still disproportionately white, has become more diverse, spent resources of training and monitoring the racial sensitivity of officers, and made efforts to communicate with communities across the city and in most precincts. Although high profile cases of excessive force against people of color still punctuate the news, today’s accusations of racism in policing in New York City are focused more on racial disparities in the number of stops and frisks (Center for Constitutional Rights 2009; Center on Race, Crime and Justice 2010). The NYPD argues that if critics used “benchmarking” methods, which take into account the racial disparity in crime complaints and other factors, their stop and frisk practices do not show racial bias (Ridgeway 2007). Regardless of how stop and frisk statistics are framed, extensive research shows that “a large gulf” separates whites from blacks and Hispanics when it comes to personal and vicarious experiences of perceived unfair treatment by the police; Weitzer and Tuch report that about a quarter of Hispanics, and about a third of blacks, but almost no whites reported being stopped or treated unfairly by police in their city because of their race (2005: 1018). In New York City, the Civilian Complaint Review Board reports steadily

rising numbers of complaints. Regardless of whether it is a problem of greater incidence or just greater reporting,¹ African Americans are significantly over-represented among the alleged victims in these complaints, while whites and Asians are significantly under-represented (Civilian Complaint Review Board 2009). African Americans, Hispanics, Native Americans, other people of color and youth are more likely to have negative attitudes about police and are less likely to consider their authority legitimate (Taylor, Turner, Esbensen and Winfree 2001; Weitzer 2000; Weitzer and Tuch 1999, 2005; Fine et.al. 2003; Solis, Portillos and Brunson 2009; Delgado 2008).

Public accusations of racially discriminatory policing are a staple of critical criminology, drive law suits in US courts, and capture the headline from time to time, but how do they play out for police officers? Is this just a controversy for journalists, civil liberties activists and social scientists, or is it an issue for police on patrol? What do police say about the accusations of racist policing? How do the tensions around these racial inequalities affect what they say about patrol experiences?

I. Exclusion and Inclusion: the Catch 22 in 21st Century Policing

Cops are caught in a contradiction—damned if they do, and damned if they don't. On the one hand, they are asked to control problems that arise among populations suffering from the growing inequality of wealth and opportunity in the US. Deregulation, deindustrialization, neoliberal globalization, call it what you will, for decades the US has witnessed the diminution

¹ Some police suggest that CCRB cases are rising because of publicity generated by civil libertarians and the increasingly greater ease of telephone reporting, (telephone reports jumped from 1,401 in 2001, before New York City's 311 hotline, to 4,100 in 2005,) not deteriorating police behavior. Regardless of whether it is increased incidents or increased reporting, the numbers show that police are under greater scrutiny.

of social welfare, the privatization of the commons, the degradation of employment, and the accumulation of massive wealth by a small few, all resulting in greater overall inequality. “One key form in which these inequities take spatial expression is in practices of exclusion, most notably in urban areas. Spaces are increasingly subject to a variety of regulatory mechanisms that work to separate the desired from the undesired; social divisions are mirrored in spatial ones” (Herbert & Brown 2006: 756; Low 2003). Several authors (Parenti 2000; Herbert & Brown 2006; Websdale 2001) have argued that today’s police must regulate and contain the “surplus populations” of post-industrial America in confined zones of exclusion. These authors also point out the well-known fact that since the 1990s law enforcement’s main strategy in these zones is saturation policing, sometimes called quality of life or broken windows policing. Coupled with legislative mandatory minimum sentencing, this wealthy country has extraordinarily high rates of incarceration especially of blacks and Hispanics (Parenti 2000; Mauer 1999, 2007; Waquant 2000). For most residents of these zones these policies mean more stops, frisks, summonses, arrests, and jail time.

On the other hand, while carrying out intensified policing the excluded, police are simultaneously expected to be inclusive by providing equal protection under the law. Police are asked to show courtesy and respect to all individuals including criminal suspects. Police leaders know that their officers are under greater scrutiny than ever. Over recent decades police leaders have taken steps to make Fourteenth Amendment protections more robust. Police departments have become more diverse. In the NYPD diversity has spread up the ranks to lieutenants and captains.² Policing practices have also changed in an effort to mitigate these larger social and

² In 1974, minorities represented 11.6% of the NYPD, but rose to 31.1% by 1999, with 13.4% black and 17.2% Hispanic. As of 2009, the NYPD is 47.5% Caucasian, 28.9% Hispanic, 17.9%

historical inequities. The NYPD's Community Patrol Officer Program was pioneered in the mid-1980s. The NYPD Academy introduced ethnic studies around the same time. In 1997, the NYPD began the Courtesy, Professionalism and Respect (CPR) initiative that increased training and monitoring of community relations for all officers. In 2007, it began the Advancing Community Trust, or ACT, program that takes recruits to Harlem's Apollo Theater to hear from staunch critics of the police including Hip Hop celebrity Wyclef Jean (Stampfl and Gendar 2007).

Paul Amar (2010) points out "that intersections and contradictions between these trends are often managed through agendas that continue to essentialize and reproduce race and ethnic identities and hierarchies, even as law-enforcement professionals insist on the eradication or denial of racial and ethnic discrimination" (Amar 2010: 577). The value of community trust has become a "global 'gold standard' of police professionalism" alongside the development of repressive counterinsurgency technologies; police pose as models for diversity, while "elaborating crime-mapping and surveillance technologies that place entire communities into suspect status, thus cementing their racial status in the optic of the state" (Amar 2010: 585). Such a contradiction should not be surprising. Gerald Sider's (1987) theory of race in America argues that from the very beginning--from the time of Columbus--there has always been a contradictory imperative to both incorporate and separate Native Americans, blacks, and other subordinate groups. The critical question that Amar demands we ask in regard to 21st century policing, and which is pursued in this article, is "What mechanisms allow these two trends to coincide and sometimes to reinforce each other?" (Amar 2010: 577) In particular, how do the contradictory imperatives of exclusion and inclusion manifest for police on patrol? What are the phrases, storylines and

African American, and 5.5% Asian compared to a city that is 35% Caucasian, 27% Hispanic of any race, 25% African American, 10% Asian and 4% other.

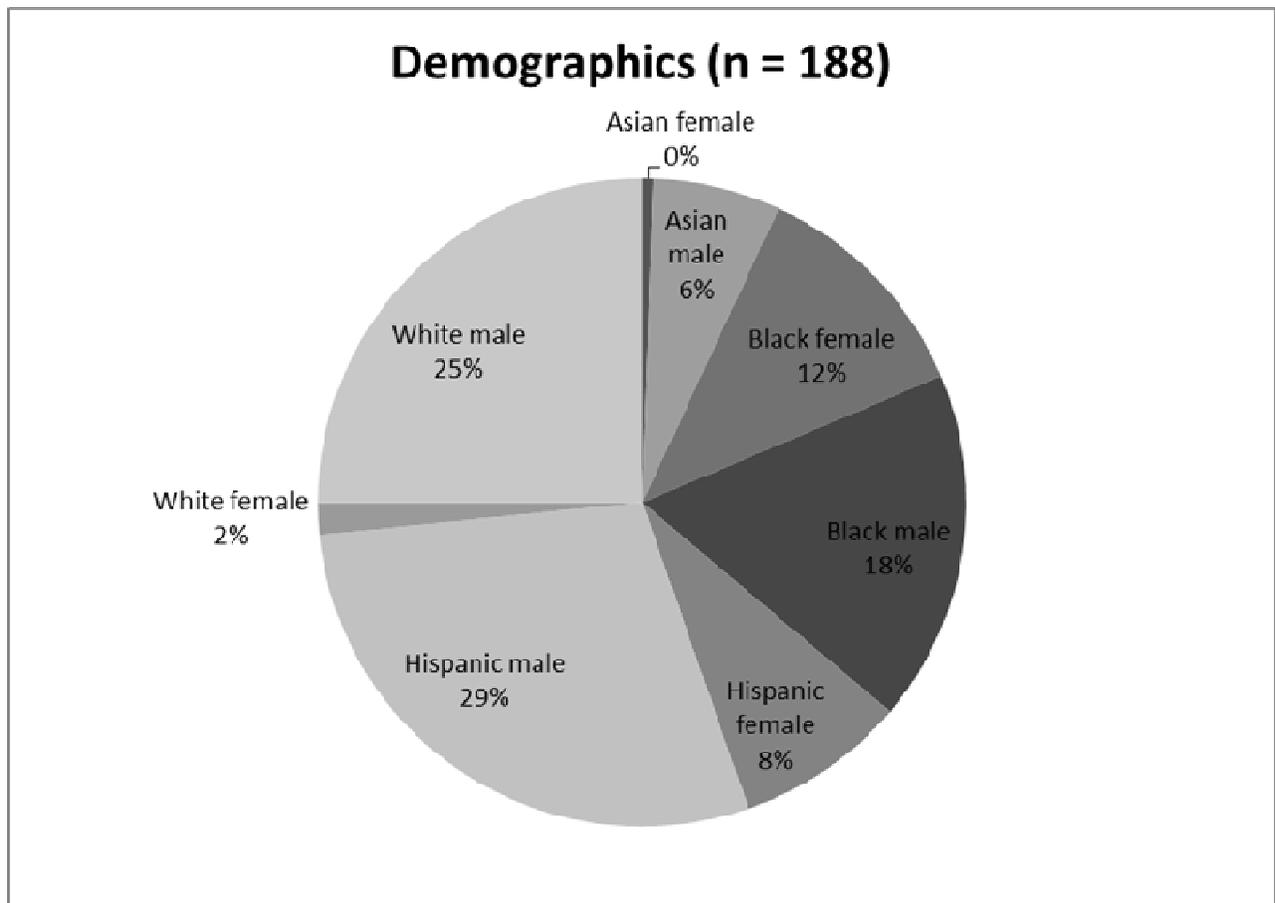
narratives that are used to navigate these contradictions in practice? Do officers of color understand things differently than white officers?

This research analyzes the language that police use to talk about race on patrol. By examining patterns of language, researchers can uncover the socially produced phrases, storylines and narratives that individuals have at their disposal to think through their actions. Their words are not analyzed to uncover an individual psychological state, but to explore the shared narratives that allows people to understand their world and their actions in it, and sometimes to rationalize and reduce the cognitive dissonance produced by life's contradictions. This approach to analyzing race in America builds on the work of Bonilla-Silva (2006) who analyzed the words of ordinary Americans and the way they talk about race and racism. Bonilla-Silva documented a discourse of color-blindness that allows Americans to deny and defend ongoing racial segregation and inequity and still claim to be non-racists.

The data in this research is drawn from an archive of statements by police officers written over several years in an ethnic studies course only for members of the NYPD. The assignment and the course are designed to draw out the voices of students, and use students' expertise to make everyone co-teachers and co-learners (Bornstein et.al. 2011). Starting in 2001, police officers were asked to write an autobiographical essay about how race comes up in their lives. The goal was to use their stories to begin a dialogue about race, to teach officers to identify and analyze the racial patterns of interaction in their jobs, and to begin conscious anti-racist strategizing. Within the first few semesters, patterns in the essays became evident and an informal record of responses was begun for use in class. Students were shown that many responses were not idiosyncratic, but part of larger patterns. Starting in 2005, anonymous copies of the essays were regularly saved, sorted, analyzed and presented back to students. Eventually,

the archive was analyzed using text analysis software to assist in coding and counting phrases and storylines.

Total	Ethnicity	Male	Female
13	Asian	12	1
55	Black	33	22
70	Hispanic	54	16
50	White	47	3



Narrative Code	Total(188)	W(50)	H(70)	B(55)	A(13)
multiculturalism celebrating	23	13	5	4	1
multiculturalism toleration	14	5	7	1	1

accused of racism	27	16	10	0	1
white visibility	6	6	0	0	0
uncle tom/sell-out	15	2	4	9	0
ethnic favors	13	1	9	2	1
Bilingualism	25	3	19	0	3
ethnic bridge	9	0	5	4	0
I'm colorblind	19	8	6	3	2
I'm fair/respectful of all	10	2	6	2	0
there's no discrimination	4	1	3	0	0
individual responsible for crime	9	3	5	0	1
available pool	7	3	3	1	0
fit the description	10	5	4	0	1
being profiled	14	0	7	7	0
I'm on the job	8	0	2	6	0
witnessing white privilege	3	1	0	2	0
witnessing profiling	13	3	5	4	1
witnessing disrespect	5	1	0	4	0
reverse discrimination	11	8	2	0	1
they don't like police	8	1	5	2	0
race as crutch	3	2	0	1	0
culture of poverty	7	2	2	3	0
Stress	23	4	7	12	0

There are 188 cases in the archive. According to their own descriptions, the individuals represented in the archive can be counted as 27% white, 37% Hispanic, 30% black, 6% Asian (this combines east, south and west Asia), and 22% women. In this manuscript coded quotations are counted by the writers sex (M or F) and ethnic identity (W, H, B, or A). Because the texts analyzed were responses to one open ended question, and because some wrote about intra-police

and non-police experiences, 3 or 4 examples of a phrase or storyline (out of 188) are enough to identify a social pattern, while 10 or more examples are a strong pattern. All the numbers given are tentative and may be revised as analysis continues.

II. Race in Your Face

When asked to write about how racial or ethnic identity comes up in their life, in regard to policing the public, a large number, 32, articulated the values of multiculturalism. Twenty-three officers (W13, H5, B4, A1) described their enjoyment and appreciation for diversity that comes with the city and their job.

P28 MW: I personally enjoy the diversity of the city I live and work in. I enjoy the ethnic parades and celebrations, the great choices of different foods at ethnic restaurants.

Whether it be Little Italy, Little Brazil, or India Row. I can also honestly say, I generally enjoy my job as an NYPD officer. I work with people from many different backgrounds, who I feel I can depend on regardless of where he or she may come from.

Fourteen officers (W5, H7, B1, A1) describe the need for tolerance of customs, especially as police officers, in a multicultural city.

P160 MH: For example with regards to certain Asian cultures it is customary for them to practice Tai Chi in many of our public parks with a sword. This can potentially be considered a crime, but since there is no criminal intent it is tolerated and accepted as a cultural norm.

Hispanic, European and Asian immigrant officers (W3, H19, A3) these same values of multiculturalism when they write about their bilingualism as an important and satisfying way

that their identity can serve the department and their community. In a similar vein, nine Hispanic and black officers (H5, B4) describe their ability to be an ethnic bridge with their community.

P43 MB: My ethnicity sometimes is used as a way into the minds of inner city kids that are doing petty crimes, from single parent homes, and aren't being taught the importance of their deeds that virtually affect their futures.

These are the positive aspects of diversity that officers describe. These comments reflect the dominant multiculturalism approach to race in criminal justice that frames the issue in terms of the mutual benefits of and respect for diversity. Exercises in the NYPD Academy encourage officers to learn about different holidays, customs, cuisines, and the contributions of minority groups to the city, the country or civilization, to cultivate inter-cultural appreciation.

Ideologically this approach can support diversity recruitment and promotion efforts that have tried to get precinct personnel to look more like the community they police.

However, there is another side to the story. Twenty-seven officers (W16, H10, A1) report being accused of racism, and 6 more wrote about being made to feel self-conscious about the visibility of their whiteness (W6).

P34 MW: Race and ethnic identity come up in my life in ways that are sometimes hard to explain to someone who is not in the law enforcement field...I am constantly accused of doing things to people, like summoning, arresting, or even questioning them, because they are Black, Hispanic, or some other minority group. I am the ultimate version of the evil white oppressor to these people because I enforce the laws and rules that they perceive to be racially discriminatory. There have even been times in my career when I have been accused of making up the law I was enforcing just so that I could harass a certain person.

P6 MW: As a white male New York City police officer you deal with the topic of racism often. Sometimes it is there for everyone to see and hear but sometimes it can't be seen or heard but you feel it.

Peggy MacIntosh (1998) describes whiteness as invisible for most whites, something they can take for granted, but white police officers do not have that white privilege. White officers are regularly confronted with being white in ways that other white people rarely experience.

Several officers (W1, H5, B2) report experiencing similar antagonism, but do not attribute it to their ethnic identity as much as their identity as police officers, or because they are 'blue.'

P51 FH: When they saw me in the blue uniform, I was now one of them. I was seen now as them vs. us. It was really hard to see the community so divided with the Police Department. Everything became a race issue.

Fourteen black and Hispanic officers (B10, H4) also write that they are accused of being sellouts or Uncle Toms.

P41 MB: My profession as a police officer along with my ethnicity causes me to face many challenges. When I am dressed in my uniform I am no longer seen as an African American by people of my own race, I am now seen as a sellout that wants to harass them.

P45 MB: I've been told "I've sold out," been called an "Uncle Tom."

P54 MB: When I first became a Police Officer I found myself caught in the middle of a struggle because I work in a predominately black community. I was no longer looked upon as a 'brother.' I was now looked upon as an 'Uncle Tom' and a traitor. In the eyes of the community I work in, I am not supposed to be on the other side of the law. The

community looks upon me as helping those who enslave them and violate their rights, instead of looking at me as an authority figure who wants to help. Even in 2007, African Americans still feel that we should not have a place in the police department and this comes from parents and the community advising these young children that it is taboo and not a well respected profession.

In addition, one white officers reports that his partner faces such accusations of betraying his own people. One Jewish officer said she received such an accusation from a fellow Jew.

Officers of color also describe (W2, H9, B2, A1) people asking for a break in the name of ethnic solidarity, but unanimously say that they could never grant such ethnic favors.

P77 MH: So if the male Hispanic is also Puerto Rican he tells me "yo bori (slang for my Puerto Rican brother) help me out here, see what you can do for me. I was just standing here minding my own business. Tu sabes (Spanish slang for: you know) they quickly want me to assume that because I am of the same ethnicity that I should take their side.

P81 MB: The problem was when I had to enforce the law, whether it was to summons, a doubled parked vehicle or make a domestic arrest where neither party involved wanted an arrest to be made, the black community felt that they were entitled to a pass. They assumed that a black officer would be sympathetic their situation because the black have always been treated unfairly by white police officers. The negative results came from the community that did things that were beyond my discretion and in some instances I was torn between the oath I took to uphold the law and my responsibility to the community.

No white officer reports being asked for favors based on white identity, however, two white officers describe being asked for such a favor on the basis of being Jewish. Requests for leniency

in the name of ethnic solidarity put police officers in an awkward situation. One explained that he is no different from white police officers to the public.

P12 MB I sometime struggle with the community making them understand that I am no different from the 'white' police officer standing next to me, and that my shield is no different either.

When asked to write about how racial or ethnic identity comes up in their lives, many describe that they enjoy and respect diversity, but just as many describe such identities as "in your face" too often. Given the impossible contradiction of exclusion and inclusion that they face, and the long history of white supremacy in the US, it is no wonder that police face such complaints. The next question is: how do officers explain this confrontation?

III. The Equal Protection Ideal

Complementing the multiculturalism narrative is the equal protection narrative. Many officers understand and assert the importance of providing equal protection and equal enforcement regardless of race or ethnicity. Nineteen (H6, B3, W8, A2) officers express this through the language of color-blind policing.

P73 MW: When I work I don't see skin color or ethnicity I see the description I am given over the radio or by a victim that's it.

P47 MB It has gotten to the point where I don't see color or race; I just see civilians and perpetrators.

Ten (W2, H6, B2) officers use language that asserts that they show respect or fairness and four assert that there is no discrimination (W1, H3).

P72 MW: As a police officer I try to treat people the way I would want to be treated as a citizen and always try and explain why I am doing something, and even try apologizing and admitting I was wrong if I was in fact wrong.

P183 MH: There is no question in my mind that officer treat every single citizen they encounter on the field equally. However, officers are constantly questioned about their actions.

Also affirming the equal protection and equal enforcement narrative, nine officers (W3, H5, A1) assert individual responsibility for crime/violation

P18 MH: This can be very frustrating at times because then they start to label you as a sell out to your own race. I find that to be very ironic and funny at times especially when they forget their criminal act.

P80 MH: People have to understand that the police are not stopping any general race just because of the color of skin or religion. You commit a violation deal with the consequences.

These expressions explicitly deny any racial intent in their own policing activity by drawing on dominant color-blind, individual-responsibility narratives.

Another set of responses is more unique to policing and more conscious of the pattern of racial disparities. These comments relate police stops to crime rates or reports of crime in the neighborhood. One version of this is to relate the stop to a specific crime and description. Ten officers (W5, H4, A1) said that individuals are stopped because they “fit the description.”

P56 MW: We as police officers are trained to see almost everyone as suspicious and there are data known to the public that support the notion that minority is more likely to be the

victim and the perpetrator, and most likely the reason for stopping a black male is how that person fit the description of a known perpetrator not the color of the skin.

P73 MW: What the officers were doing by picking out the Hispanic male in the groups wasn't racial profiling. Yes they may have been the only Hispanic male in the group but they were being stopped and questioned not to their race or ethnicity but because they fit the description of a suspect who stole a woman's purse.

Three officers explain that during a stop in order to prove that they are not racist they ask the radio dispatcher to read a description aloud so that their suspects can hear the dispatcher's description which presumably resembles the suspect.

P65 MH: The civilian in question many times questions the stop and states that they are being stopped for being a specific race, color or age and that police officers always stop people for no apparent reason. A majority of the time an officer asks for the description of who they are looking for using the radio or points out the specific problem for the stop that they are trying to correct which allows the civilian to step back and understand the real reasoning for the interaction between the police officer and civilian

Another storyline mirrors the department's explanations of statistical inequities although in a more terrestrial fashion. Seven officers (W3, H3, B1) make what might be called an "available pool" argument

P73 MW: Being a white cop in a predominately large black population territory wasn't easy at times. I would always get asked "why are you stopping me because I'm black?" I'm sorry if you feel this way but it's not because you're black. If I pulled over 10 cars a night for car stops 9 out of 10 would have a black person driving.

P89 MW: Sometimes where I work we hear from people in the neighborhood that all we do is arrest black people. The truth of the matter is in my precinct the majority of the population is black, and unfortunately the majority of the criminals are black. So maybe their statements are true but I wouldn't call it discrimination.

This approach points out that the city is geographically segregated. The fact that enforcement in some zones is more intense than in others is not considered a racial issue but something attributed to differentials in reports of crime.

Numerous officers say they are color-blind, treat everyone the same, and the person responsible for a stop, summons, or arrest is the individual on the receiving end, not the police officer. Two other storylines complement these comments of stops of people of color, and can be used even when the suspect is clean: "fit the description" and "available pool." These are, in many ways, text book answers to the question how does racial identity come up in your job. They affirm the departments need to be inclusive without addressing questions of differential enforcement. But does everyone stay "on-script," or do officers express opinions that are less in line with patrol book standards?

IV. Diversity in the Ranks

While police have learned to articulate equal protection narratives and strive to that ideal, they have more to say than that. Some explanations of racial antagonisms dismiss complaints of racist policing as signs of pathology, while others testify that they have witnessed or experienced discrimination first-hand.

Those who dismiss it use three storylines similar to those described in Bonilla-Silva (2006). One such explanation for the racial antagonism is the claim that white cops are victims of

reverse discrimination. Eleven officers describe experiencing reverse discrimination (W8, H2, A1).

P5 MW: I cannot say that I have been regularly discriminated against because of race. However, my racial identity has caused many people whom I encounter in my police duties to discriminate against me in a sense. This has occurred when a citizen who I am trying to render aid to refuses my help solely because I am a white male police officer. I have come across this situation many times during my police career. I do not allow this to negatively affect the way I work.

A few (W2, B1) used the term crutch to dismiss any mention of racism, meaning that it is an excuse for personal failure.

P75 MW: To all the people that use race as a crutch against cops, like C.C.R.B, defense attorneys and even the media I say let us do our job the way we were trained and, based off past experiences, sometimes the facts are the facts. If 9 out of 10 stops (or 90% as C.C.R.B sees it) are male Hispanics in their 20s than maybe each and every call for service in those stops had a description that called for a male Hispanic in his 20s.

A few more (W2, B3, H2) used a culture of poverty argument indicating that antagonistic feelings for police were related to a dysfunctional culture.

P54 MB: It seems selling drugs, ripping people off, killing people, or going to jail is accepted, and going to college and getting an education and a job that provides for your family is acting as if you're white. We as a race of people embraced all these negative attributes and convinced ourselves that being more than the average is not for us. Therefore we settle and remain stagnant and use terms "you're acting white", or "you speak as if you're white"

P40 MH: As a police officer you try not to be discriminatory, especially after having somewhat felt that firsthand, but it's hard for me to understand how minorities have opportunities but refuse to rise above. Every day I drive around the area that my precinct covers, and the amount of violence between those of us, the amount of young kids hanging on the corner, and pregnant teenagers destroying their lives is a number that surpasses any statistic. On top of everything else this presence of constant ignorance is astounding and you sometimes unfortunately are not surprised by the fact that you were once looked at the same way.

Just one officer attributed such accusation to an individual's emotional or psychological condition.

P125 MW: ...some people are just unfortunately angry at life and as a stable adjusted individual you cannot let it get to you.

Only two officers attributed such accusation to past experiences with police.

P182 MH: People do this, due to past experience with the police.

Use of these narratives, reverse discrimination, race as crutch, and culture of poverty, more than unstable individuals or past experiences, dismisses claims of discriminatory policing. As Bonilla-Silva (2006) describes, these are some of the standard frames, styles and stories of color blind ideology in the post-civil rights era.

On the other hand, there are police officers who testify to the racial character of policing. Fourteen officers (H7, B7) report being the victim of racial profiling by police.

P68 MH: My brother and I were stopped, searched, and tossed into police cars. The only explanation we got after the whole ordeal was that they were on the lookout for two Hispanic males suspected of a robbery. If that was really the case then, all Hispanic males

should have been picked up, but since my brother and I were the only Hispanic males in a predominantly white neighborhood, to the police we didn't fit there. I thought to myself, is this the department I will be working for one day? I have to admit that despite working for the greatest police department in the nation, one cannot escape racial discrimination or ethnic identity within the department.

Eight officers (H2, B6) report being stopped for something less than reasonable suspicion, or were treated disrespectfully during a stop. They were generally able to diffuse the situation by saying "I'm on the job."

P1 FB: Once stopped the officers were very rude and never once explained why they are stopping me or the purpose for the stop. However, once I identified myself as a police officer the tone of voice, the body posture, the demeanor and the conversation of the officer would change.

Thirteen officers (W3, H5, B4, A1) describe witnessing other officers engaging in racial profiling either in word or in deed.

P13 MH: I was on patrol with four other officers in a predominantly black neighborhood. One of the officers stated "I love to work this post because black people like to rob people for a living."

P23 FB: As for patrol itself, I remember being a rookie out of the academy about two weeks and working with another rookie from my academy class, who happened to be a white male comment one day when we saw several African American and Hispanic children coming down the block about "there are our future perps" at that moment I remember feeling ashamed to be a police officer, and when I said your being a racist, he

stated what are you talking about, what else are they doing on the street at ten o'clock, you know their up to no good.

Other examples describe having witnessed the profiling as deeds.

P1 FB: On certain occasions I have observed that if a Hispanic person is driving or walking in a white neighborhood, they are more likely to get pulled over or stopped by police officers. But if a white person is driving or walking in a Hispanic neighborhood they are not questioned by police officers. Why does this happen? I questioned a fellow officer and his response was that "the Hispanic person has no reason to be in a white neighborhood unless he was committing a crime" and then he laughed.

P64 FB: Unfortunately, I've witnessed contextual discrimination on this job. I've worked with other officers who treat people differently based solely on their race and/or ethnicity. I was even told at one point to stop and question more people fitting certain descriptions (mainly young, black men that look like they could be up to something).

P32 FB: We are convicted for everything from riding a bike on the sidewalk, spiting, obstructing pedestrian traffic, etc. we are arrested. The majority if not incarcerated on parole, probation including the younger generation growing up in the black community.

Five officers (W1, B4) said they witnessed racial disrespect to the public.

P39 MW: For example, a partner of mine pulled over an Arab American and when he realized that there was a language barrier, he proceeded to make fun of the motorist and insult him just for not speaking the same language.

On the other hand, three officers (W1, B2) write that they witnessed white privilege in the form of differential policing.

P23 FB: My partner asked what they were doing, and the male black stated they were just hanging out, my partner told the male white to leave, and be careful in this neighborhood, and issued the male black a ticket for trespassing. When I asked him why he didn't issue the other guy a ticket he said "you never know who he may be related to."

One officer provided an explicit critique of the "fit the description" explanation that other officers commonly give.

P17 MH: "You fit the description," such a choice of words coming from Police officers creates a lot of tensions within the locals. Most officers who preferred the use of such phrases are considered to be "white" patrolling such communities. In these cases Contextual Discrimination comes into play, personally affecting me and those whom I am protecting and serving in such neighborhoods.

One male white officer describes ambivalent feelings about the stops.

P73 MW: Sometimes it's hard when you have such a vague description it feels like your racial or ethnic identity profiling but in truth you're only criminal profiling.

This officer brings up a key point about the vagueness of descriptions and how much discretion it gives to police.

Officers display a diversity of opinions about enforcement. Some dismiss accusations of discriminatory policing with storylines drawn from the dominant "color-blind" culture such as reverse discrimination, race as a crutch, and cultures of poverty. Others affirm the accusations with personal testimonies of being victims or witnesses of racial profiling and acts of disrespect. These comments go beyond the equal protection narrative. The color blind ideology allows officers to ignore the problems created by zones of exclusion and differential policing in those 'bad neighborhoods' compared to "safe" areas. On the other hand, those who assert that they have

witnessed or experienced discriminatory policing locate it within the bigoted acts of individual officers. This also insulates them from the larger contradictions of exclusion and inclusion.

V. Costs to Police

Tyler (2005, 2006) argues that those who perceive and experience disrespect, whether personally, vicariously or from the media, are less likely to cooperate and follow laws. Kane (2005) even argues that compromised police legitimacy is a predictor of violent crime in extremely disadvantaged communities. Experiences of such noncompliance and fears of violent resistance due to racial antagonism are expressed in the archive.

P6 MW: The majority of the cops responding to the situation are white and the majority of the population in the precinct are black. This many times can cause a violent and dangerous situation as more and more people want to unite and fight the cops.

P64 FB: I work in the communities where people attack officers due to constant harassment. This makes my job harder and more dangerous. Not only is it often hard to communicate with people, there's greater potential for rebellion.

P120 MW: My partner and I arrive on scene. Just outside of a housing project an African American teenager has been slashed and a good chunk of his thumb is missing. My initial reaction is of concern, I ask central dispatch to "put a rush on the bus" (a request for the ambulance to arrive forthwith) and begin trying to get a description of the perpetrator.

Immediately I am answered with hard stares and blank faces. My concern quickly turns to indifference as I am once again told that no one has seen "nothing". I over hear the victim say "these white boys don't know what it's like in the hood". This doesn't surprise me. Because I'm a Police Officer, a white Police Officer, he feels I cannot identify with

him, his race, or his situation. This unfortunately is not the first or last time racial identity will be an issue for me at work.

However, a more common problem is the stress that twenty-three (W4, H7, B12) officers say is caused by the racial antagonism.

P9 MB: While working the beat in Harlem...they see a black man and often times the question is 'what are you doing in a white man's job?' Insults like 'you are a poor excuse for a brother,' 'you are a sell out because you are arresting and giving a ticket to your people,' 'you should quit and find yourself another job.' The psychological effects sometimes stay with me for a while until I take the time to think it over and adjust my state of mind. Being a police officer is my job, not my life.

P81 MB: I felt betrayed and angry. I was put in a situation where doing the correct thing turned out not to be the correct thing. Instead of embracing the concept that a black officer would do well in the community, I was told I was not wanted, and that I was not capable of doing my job objectively.

P125 MW: It is incredibly frustrating situation and it is disheartening at times to have to deal with these racial tensions. One really has to develop a thick skin in order to survive. I often have to remind myself that I work nights and most of the honest people in the community are home eating dinner and spending time with their families, as well as preparing themselves for the next day of work.

There are numerous expressions of stress and even fear related to racial antagonism in the archive. While the training of police officers in the NYPD exposes officers to such accusations in its ACT components (described in section I of this manuscript), this early and safe exposure does

not seem to inoculate them. They are caught in a situation that cannot be resolved: the paradox of exclusion and inclusion.

VI. Conclusion

Beyond merely describing the words, phrases and narratives used by police officers to talk about racial identities on patrol, there are at least two types of conclusions that can be drawn from the data. The first conclusion is that white, Hispanic, black and Asian officers sometimes say similar things, but sometimes do not. Officers of all ethnic groups are aware of the values of multiculturalism, (including the need for bilingualism and “ethnic bridges” in the department,) and the equal protection ideal. Officers of all ethnic groups also say that they are unfairly accused of violating the equal protection ideal by engaging in racist actions, but the manner in which this happens is quite different. White officers are accused of being racists or feel that they are despised because of their whiteness. Black and Hispanic officers are accused of being sell-outs or Uncle Toms, which is an accusation of betrayal. While white officers don’t know what it is like to be profiled compared to Hispanics and blacks, white officers do report witnessing acts of profiling and racial disrespect. Phrases and storylines that are often used to dismiss a community’s hostile feelings to police, such as culture of poverty, race as crutch, or “they don’t like police,” might be said by an officer of any ethnicity. However, it seems that some things are not likely to be said by black officers: reverse discrimination, there is no discrimination, individuals (not police) are responsible for arrests or summonses, and fit the description. Black officers avoidance of these phrases or storylines may indicate that they are incongruous with their experiences. Stress is felt by all, but black officers seem disproportionately burdened by stress, perhaps because they are most aware of irresolvable contradictions that they face.

Second, diversity in the ranks means that some officers dismiss accusations of racially discriminatory policing as statements from the pathological, while others say they experienced or witnessed racially discriminatory acts by individual officers. However, both affirmers and deniers of racist policing bare the common feature that they locate the problem of racism and policing in the individual prejudice of misbehaving police officers. Both kinds of frames obscure the primary mechanisms regulating and containing America's excluded and surplus populations. All of these officers frame the events as though there is nothing racist about their policing. They are providing more enforcement in 'high crime' neighborhoods and race is only accidentally or coincidentally relevant because that is who lives in those neighborhoods. Their motivation, furthermore, is not racist, but if anything, careerist because activity (stop & frisk reports, summonses, and arrests) count as measures of productivity. The differential policing in zones of inclusion and zones of exclusion becomes naturalized.

What is missing is the ability to move beyond an understanding of racism that is based in concepts of individual acts of discrimination to a more systemic approach that can put the pieces together. Police, whether whites, blacks or Hispanics, help reproduce extreme racial inequities, not because they have racist personalities, but because of a specific management schema operating within a particular social geography which is largely cloaked by narratives of equal protection. Color-blind narratives that employ vague descriptions of suspects and individual responsibility for getting caught, obfuscate differential policing in zones of exclusion. Bringing this to the attention of law enforcement begins a deconstruction of these narratives and facilitates a reconstruction of policy informed by anti-racist perspectives, not simply non-racist, color-blind ones.

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