

## **“Black-on-Black” Policing: Ethnic Identification Among African American Police in Washington, D.C. and Oakland, CA**

The study advances an emerging literature on African American intra-ethnic distinction in examining the phenomenon in the context of policing. Data from the study derives from in-depth interviews with African American police officers in Oakland, California and Washington, D.C. – two cities with substantial African American authority in the police department and in local government. I find that the African American officers interviewed in the study situate themselves within "ethnic mobility" narratives in which their work in the criminal justice system furthers African American group interests, in contrast with the perceptions of police work expressed by friends and family. I show that these narratives conceptualize low-income African American communities in both inclusive and exclusive terms, depending on how officers define ethnic mobility and ethnic welfare. The findings lend credibility to research on the malleability of ethnic solidarity, while also informing socio-legal scholarship investigating ethnic diversity as an avenue toward police reform.

*Keywords:* police, African American, race, ethnicity, urban.

The Negro, more than perhaps a member of any other group, is bound by his ethnic definition even when he becomes a policeman.

Nicholas Alex, *Black in Blue* (1969)

“If it were up to me, I’d build big walls and just flood the place. Biblical like. Flood the place and start a-fresh. I think that’s all you can do...*I’d let the good people* build an ark and float out. Old people, working people, line ‘em up two by two” [emphasis added].

Response from an African American police officer regarding a low-income African American neighborhood in Baltimore, MD; Peter Moskos, “Two Shades of Blue: Black and White in the Blue Brotherhood” (2008)

## INTRODUCTION

The relationship between the African American community and police changed in the 1970s as ethnic minorities entered the ranks of big-city police departments. In the last quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, police department integration has moved beyond the realm of tokenism (Dulaney 1996) and toward a level of representation reflective of local demographics. The diversity trend line suggests that majority non-white metropolitan departments may soon be the norm across the nation (Sklansky 2006).

The number of non-white full-time personnel in big-city police departments grew from 30 to 38 percent between 1990 and 2000. Over the same period, the ratio of non-white police officers to non-white citizens increased from .59 to .63, and the African American police-citizen ratio rose from .64 to .74 (Bureau of Justice Statistics 2000). Today, the black-white racial dichotomy no longer maps neatly onto citizen-police relationships in poor urban neighborhoods as African Americans often hold positions at all levels of the police institution. In big cities, African American officers increasingly police African American residents.

Socio-legal scholars argue that this forty-year demographic shift opens a promising avenue toward a more civil and just system of metropolitan policing. A few have even argued that the growing diversity justifies easing 1960s Supreme Court decisions regulating police conduct such as *Mapp v. Ohio*, 367 U.S. 643 (rendering inadmissible at trial evidence obtained in an illegal search); *Terry v. Ohio*, 392 U.S. 1 (specifying the limits of a warrantless search of a person absent probable cause); and *Miranda v. Arizona* 384 U.S. 643 (requiring suspects to be informed of various procedural rights prior to interrogation) (Brown and Frank 2006; Kahan and Meares 1998; Sklansky 2006).

The prospect of majority ethnic-minority police departments highlights the need for more research of minority officer *perspectives*. In this study, I investigate African American police perspectives regarding low-income African American individuals, neighborhoods, and communities. I find that respondents express ethnic solidarity with low-income African American communities, but

also, somewhat paradoxically, conceptualize low-income African American communities in both inclusive and exclusive terms.

Political scientist Cathy Cohen is among a group of scholars who probe intra-ethnic social relations to study the conditional quality of ethnic solidarity. In her study of the African American political response to the HIV epidemic, Cohen describes the potential for “secondary marginalization” within the African American ethnic group along the lines of class, sex, and sexuality:

Those marginal group members who are close to the edges of dominant power . . . confront incentives to promote and prioritize those issues and members thought to “enhance” the public image of the group, while controlling and making invisible those issues and members perceived to threaten the status of the community. It is from such a conflictual position that we increasingly find traditional black elites engaging in their own indigenous form of marginalization—*secondary marginalization*—replicating a rhetoric of blame and punishment and directing it at the most vulnerable and stigmatized in their communities (Cohen 1999:27).

The present study examines how African American officers in two urban police departments relate to African American residents they encounter in low-income neighborhoods and, likewise, how these officers conceptualize their ethnic identification in the highly racialized context of policing. In my interviews with African American police officers, I tried to avoid moral, ethical, and professional judgments and instead focused on the *relational frameworks* officers conveyed through their responses.

I begin with a discussion of the Weberian theory of social group distinction and a related literature on intra-ethnic relations, particularly among African Americans. I follow this conceptual discussion with my interview data. The data suggest that the respondents assert *intra-ethnic status distinctions* within particular narratives of ethnic advancement, while asserting *intra-ethnic status uniformity* in others.

## **AFRICAN AMERICANS, ETHNIC WELFARE, AND INTRA-ETHNIC STATUS DISTINCTION**

Nicholas Alex published *Black in Blue* in 1969, when the vast majority of police departments

had small, closely-knit cadres of African American officers. Alex concluded that Negro policemen worked in a professional “nutcracker” in which racial identity was inescapable and delegitimizing when they policed in white neighborhoods, and professional identity was equally so when Negro officers policed in Negro neighborhoods (1969).

I distinguish my curtailed study from Alex’s more expansive work by social and institutional context. Today, African American officers in city police departments work in contexts in which African American ethnic communities maintain more varied political, status, and class identifications. Moreover, city police departments often systematically pursue an ethnically diverse police force, and African American officers frequently rise to the top of the institutional hierarchy. Thus, African American police find themselves partially (and in many cases fully) integrated into the penal power structure of large American cities.

In response to this institutional transformation, scholars of policing have gradually turned to the question of relations between police officers and residents of the same ethnic group. Regarding *policing outcomes*, scholars have found that police officers give more severe sanctions to “other-race” drivers and are more likely to search these drivers during traffic stops (Close and Mason 2006), but also that African American and white officers discharge their firearms with equal frequency (Fyfe 1981), make arrests under similar circumstances (Worden 1989), and are both prejudiced against African American citizens (Kuykendall and Burns 1980; Sklansky 2006). Some studies show African American officers to be more coercive in responding to conflicts in the field (Sun and Payne 2004), but also as having less favorable views of “aggressive patrol” than their white colleagues (Paoline, Myers, and Worden 2001).

Prior research also shows that African American officers are better positioned to police the African American community due to greater familiarity with their own ethnic group, greater sympathy for its unique social circumstances, and greater sensitivity than non African American officers for

police abuse of minorities (Walker 1982). However, more recent studies indicate that the police institution socializes white and African American officers similarly, and that the distinctive ethnic experience each officer brings to policing loses significance over time as officers adapt to a powerful occupational culture (Fielding 1986; Haarr and Morash 1999; Paoline et al. 2001; Holdaway 1997). For instance, both African American and white officers have been found to espouse “conservative” social ideology, circulate and defend negative stereotypes of the residents of low-income African American neighborhoods. However, while white officers tend to describe these neighborhoods as “only bad,” African American officers describe the neighborhoods as consisting of both good and bad elements and individuals. In this sense, African American officers have been found to moralize a class struggle between African American workers who (according to officers), much like themselves, have risen above the ghetto and the negative influence of the unemployed African American poor. African American officers have thus been found to portray themselves as protecting the “good” people of the ghetto from “street” characters and street culture (Moskos 2008).

I frame the forthcoming analysis within sociological literature on social group formation and African American in-group relations. According to the Weberian model of group formation, all social groups grow from *symbolic distinctions* that facilitate the selective distribution of material and cultural resources. In his classic essay “Class, Status, Party,” Weber argues that such distinctions are a form of “social closure.” Social closure establishes a social grouping and facilitates specific forms of social stratification (Gerth and Mills 1946). Weber considered ethnic grouping to be one way that humans secure status and status group hierarchy. He also asserted that in certain circumstances status groups develop *within* an ethnic group, a condition I identify throughout the article as *intra-ethnic status distinction*. (Intra-ethnic status distinction is thus imagined as one system of status distinction (e.g., class) embedded within another (e.g., ethnicity.<sup>1</sup>))

Research on African American in-group status distinction has generated a rich body of literature

over the past thirty years. William Julius Wilson (1980) investigated African American class, status, and cultural distinctions stemming from the residential mobility of the African American the professional class of the 1970s. As the African American middle class exited the ethnically homogeneous spaces of U.S. city centers these areas became spaces of racial stigma blended with concentrated poverty. Researchers have described the contemporary African American ethnic group as culturally and ethnically bifurcated, providing fertile ground for intra-ethnic class *and* status distinctions (Pattillo 2008; Waters 1999).

The study of status distinction, or “boundary work,” through in-depth interview is core to cultural sociology. Among other things, this line of social theory accounts for and illuminates the “cultural toolkits” containing the “symbols, stories, rituals, and worldviews” that operate in particular social contexts (Swidler 1986); the “mental maps” common to particular social groups (Luker 2008); and the formation of identity through narrative (Somers 1994). Social boundaries or “distinctions” have been modeled as the fundamental building blocks of larger cultural narratives (Lamont and Molnar 2002), and are therefore critical to tracing the construction of meaning in social life.

Ironically, African Americans have been found to draw status distinctions within narratives of ethnic-community solidarity and uplift. African American school children, for instance, have been found to diminish the in-group status of academically successful ethnic peers under the rationale that good grades amount to “acting white” and affirming the ideology and objectives of a racially biased education system (Fordham and Ogbu 1986). Historical study of African American politics reveals a “masculine” politics of ethnic mobilization that excludes African American women from meaningful participation and implicitly lowers their standing within the ethnic group (Carby 1992; Cohen 1999). More recently, scholars have argued that middle-class and well-educated African Americans promote a “politics of respectability” that in effect distinguishes them from low-income ethnic peers in an effort to cultivate individual or ethnic group honor and respect (Anderson 2000; Kennedy 1997). *Institutional*

*affiliation, morality* (or “decency”), *work ethic* (Smith 2007), *occupation* and *income* (Frazier [1957] 1997; Watkins-Hayes 2009), and *masculinity* have each been identified as mechanisms of African American in-group distinction and, by extension, in-group status stratification.

Drawing on interview data, I show how African American officers understand their own social location relative to that of low-income African American residents they encounter in the field. In essence, the study is intended as an investigation of the presence, process, and quality of intra-ethnic status distinction in American policing. It is *not* an analysis of the objective differences between African American officers and the African American residents they police, or a comparison of the professional behavior of African American and white officers in the field. Rather, I focus my data collection and analysis on African American *officer subjectivities*. This focus reveals discourses of ethnic solidarity and intra-ethnic distinction that African American officers employ in the uniquely racialized context of the U.S. penal system.

## **DATA AND METHODS**

To probe how African American police negotiate their position at the intersection of racial and professional identities, I conducted interviews to the point of data saturation – that is, until each new interview merely repeated the social processes or mechanisms articulated in prior interviews. Qualitative researchers have referred to this condition as “theoretical replication,” as it aims for logical rather than statistical inference. The goal of the method is to generate *hypotheses* through theoretical modeling (Small 2009). In keeping with the case study approach, I interviewed respondents until I felt that additional questions would not elicit new and relevant information.

The data I collected is particularly valuable for both its fine-grained quality and its rarity. It conveys a richness of perspective unattainable via survey methods. Moreover, in-depth interviews with police are difficult to secure because police officers and institutions remain wary of participation in

social science research for numerous reasons. [In retrospect, I believe that my ethnicity (African American) played a significant role gaining access to African American officer networks and eliciting the candor evident in the interview data.]

Michael Burawoy described empirical data collection as “a prolonged and surreptitious power struggle between the intrusive outsider and the resisting insider” (Burawoy 1998:22; Luker 2008). This struggle is readily apparent in policing research, particularly work raising issues of racial and ethnic stigmatization in the field of state surveillance and punishment. The relative scarcity of such qualitative work speaks to this challenge.

### Interview Sites

I conducted seventeen semi-structured, in-depth interviews with African American police officers working in Washington, D.C., and Oakland, CA. The demographics within the two cities allow for an analysis of African American in-group class and status interaction in the context of policing. Both metropolitan areas have large, widely recognized African American middle-class and poor neighborhoods, and all of the respondents spent considerable time policing poor African American neighborhoods and interacting with the residents in this unique social context.

Although the racial and class demographics in both cities have changed significantly over the past three decades, both have maintained strong African American representation in city government and law enforcement (U.S. Census Bureau 2000). Washington D.C. has the highest percentage of African American officers in the country and, since 1980, African American police chiefs have lead the police department for all but a few years (Weitzer 2000). D.C.’s residential population and full-time sworn law enforcement were predominantly African American—standing at 57 percent and 62 percent, respectively, at the time of the interviews— whereas Oakland's African American population constituted a plurality of the city at 35.7 percent. African Americans made up 25.9 percent of the



Oakland Police Department (table 1). In 2000, the African American officer-citizen ratio in D.C. and Oakland were 1.11 and .73, respectively. African American representation in the prison population of both cities appears to be considerably higher than their residential representation, standing at 92.8 percent for D.C. Parallel statistics for Oakland are difficult to determine given that the local prison system operates at the county rather than the city level. Alameda County, which contains Oakland and a number of smaller cities and suburbs, was the nation's sixteenth largest county prison system by number of inmates in mid-year 2000 (Bureau of Justice Statistics 2000). African Americans represented 15 percent of the Alameda County population, but 60 percent of its incarcerated population (City and County of San Francisco 2003).

[Insert Table 1]

Washington, D.C., and Oakland face other challenges common to large cities. Both have relatively high rates of poverty and unemployment, and high-school graduation rates of both cities fall far short of the national average (table 2). In 2000, the African American poverty rate was 3.5 times higher than that of whites in D.C., and 3.8 times higher in Oakland (table 2). Public high schools in D.C. graduate 58.2 percent of students, while Oakland is significantly worse at 45.6 percent. The national high school graduation rate is 70 percent. ( Swanson 2008).

[Insert Table 2]

### Sample

I developed the pool of respondents through snowball sampling. Ten of the respondents in the sample worked for the Oakland Police Department and seven worked for the D.C. Metropolitan Police Department.

In Oakland, I e-mailed the leader of an African American police organization about the study. She invited me to a group meeting where I described the project and asked for assistance in

recruitment. The meeting attendees agreed to send my recruitment e-flier to their listserve. The e-flier described the study as an effort “to gain further insight into the value of diversity in police departments, and to better understand the experience of African American officers in law enforcement institutions and in their interaction with minority communities.”

Officers inclined to participate in a study described in these terms would likely be less inclined to affirm that the penal system is a construction site for intra-ethnic distinction. Thus, the bias inherent in the sample could be interpreted as more likely to produce evidence against rather than in support of the study’s main findings and conclusions.

In Oakland, six officers contacted me in response to the e-flier, and I secured another four interviewees in the snowball progression. Several of the officers I contacted through referrals told me that their superiors would not allow them to participate. On other occasions, an officer would agree to do the interview and ask me to call back to schedule a meeting, but fail to return my subsequent calls. I found it difficult to secure interviews at both sites.

In Washington, D.C., I secured three interviews through my relationship with city public defenders who connected me to officers they knew from regular contact at the local courthouse. The first interview (with a detective) took place at a café near the city courthouse at 500 Indiana Avenue, N.W. After the interview, a few other detectives walked into the establishment and the respondent immediately asked them if they would be willing to participate. Two agreed. I secured the remaining two D.C. respondents through the snowball progression.

The respondent pool represents a range of institutional rankings, professional experiences, and formal education levels, though the age range is relatively narrow and the Washington, D.C., sample contains a disproportionately large number of detectives. The average age of the respondent pool is 40 (range: 32 to 46). Three respondents were female and 14 male. All but one had at least some college education, and two respondents held master's degrees. Respondents averaged 14 years of experience in

policing and had a broad range of prior work experience. A few had worked in security-related positions (e.g., probation officer, private security guard) before entering the police academy, whereas others entered law enforcement from unrelated careers (e.g., auto mechanic, administrative assistant). Several officers entered the police academy immediately after leaving college.<sup>ii</sup> All respondents were active police officers at the time of interview and participated on a voluntary basis.

The interviews took place in a variety of settings and circumstances. Most occurred in cafes and eateries, though a few took place at Oakland police stations, and one in a squad car in D.C. I interviewed three of the officers on the phone and the other fourteen in-person. All of the interviews were recorded on a digital audio recording device and subsequently transcribed. Although the disparate settings may have affected the responses, I did not detect discernible differences in the data based on interview context. Interviews ranged in length from 30 to 75 minutes, with only two interviews lasting less than 60 minutes. All interviews were cordial and reflective in tone. One respondent, however, seemed genuinely annoyed at my attempts to probe the significance of ethnic identification in her work and the perceived implication that African American officers may experience police work differently than their colleagues. At one point, she stated that her fellow African American officers “pull out the race card, but I don’t believe in any of that stuff.”

I crafted my interview questions to reveal the frames through which the respondents viewed local African American residents, their perceptions of how these residents viewed African American officers, and their off-duty experiences with the police system. Questions about the officers' on-duty experiences targeted (but were not limited to) interactions with low-income African American communities and individuals. The off-duty line of questioning probed interactions the respondent and his or her family and friends had had with police.

In the process of data analysis I developed a coding system to track common themes in the interviews. I first read through the transcripts and listed the common themes emerging from the data

such as “tropes of African American youth,” “ineffectiveness of the criminal justice system,” and “disrespect from the African American community.” I then read through all of the transcripts and coded them against the list of themes to identify the most prevalent themes and develop a conceptual framework for data presentation.

## **FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS**

The data suggest that respondents articulate their role and significance in law enforcement through two parallel “ethnic mobilization” narratives. I intend the term *ethnic mobilization narrative* to indicate the discursive means by which respondents convey their contribution to the betterment of their ethnic cohort (Somers 1994). Within the first narrative, African American officers mobilize ethnic community by improving safety and order in low-income African American neighborhoods. African American youth stand as the primary threat to this project. In the second narrative, officers mobilize ethnic community by giving low-income African American residents greater control over the police department. Control is thought to derive from greater African American representation within the police ranks and input from low-income African American residents as to the quality of local policing, both of which are thought to produce racially equitable policing practices. The two narratives portray policing as a means toward ethnic uplift. However, the narratives also project two distinct conceptualizations of the African American community: one based on intra-ethnic status distinction, the other on intra-ethnic status uniformity (table 3).

[Insert Table 3]

### ***Policing and Ethnic Identification***

A variety of factors draw African Americans to law enforcement work, but the most influential may be financial compensation (Moskos 2008; Alex 1969).

Officer Brooks<sup>iii</sup> of the Oakland Police Department was 36 years old and had 11 years on the

police force at the time of her interview. She held a master's degree, and more years of formal education than any other respondent in the study. At the end of the interview, I asked Brooks whether I had missed any issue pertinent to the topic.

Did you ask about what motivates black... African Americans to become police officers? . . . [I]t is the money—straight up. . . . A lot of people say, “I want to know about [the] community.” That is not straight up [laughs]. When they see that you can make over \$100,000 without even blinking and not even trying . . . and you can make \$150,000, to \$200,000 if you work hard enough—doing overtime for no-brainer stuff. When I say no-brainer I mean, “I have my G.E.D. and now I am going to work.”

When asked why they entered law enforcement, most respondents did mention either “helping victims” or “helping the community.” But most also mentioned the financial security the work provides. In Washington, D.C., officers in their thirties spoke of owning and managing multiple real estate properties. One officer in his late thirties had opened a barbecue restaurant in the southeast quadrant of the city. A few respondents believed they could retire comfortably by age 50 and rely on their property and business investments for retirement income. It is unlikely that comparably educated local residents would find similar economic opportunities outside of law enforcement work. However, respondents also noted that their departments have had difficulty finding non-white recruits despite offering highly competitive salaries and benefits.

The promise of financial security is somewhat offset by the disapproval of friends and family who view police as the adversary of either African Americans generally or specific African American neighborhoods. Officer Fisk, a D.C. patrol officer with 18 years' experience, recalled losing a close friend when the friend discovered that Fisk had joined the police force.

T.G.: How did your friends feel about you joining law enforcement?

Fisk: I had one of my buddies. . . . Let's see when he started talking [to me again] [laughs loudly]. . . . I was out [of] the academy at the time. I might have been out [of] the academy by the time he started [talking to me again]. . . . He was mad. I said, “I told you I'm trying to be the police.”

“Man, but you didn't tell me you was serious.”

“Why the hell you think I'm joking? I told you I'm gonna be the police, I can't just sit out here and do nothing.” Yeah, he was a little upset at that.

T.G.: He has problems with the police?

Fisk: Yeah.

T.G.: What were his problems?

Fisk: He's a bad man [laugh]. And I told him, "Man, you know once I become the police I just can't hang out like I used to." So he was a little hurt about that. So I guess he thought he was losing a buddy. And he kinda did. . . . He really lost one. He did.

T.G.: How'd your relationship go from that point?

Fisk: When I see him in the neighborhood—I do go back to the neighborhood now and then—and he keeps telling me, "I'm gonna take your hood pass." But I see him every now and then. But that was my buddy, man [laugh].

Fisk described having to distance himself from friends who operated on the wrong side of the law, and how those individuals in turn believed that he had severed ties with the neighborhood's social network. Fisk grew up in D.C. and described himself as aimless throughout his teenage years. Police work gave him structure and opportunity, but also drew sharp divisions in his social life.

Several respondents spoke about falling into disfavor with loved ones after joining the force. Some were cast as "sellouts" or ethnically disloyal. Prior research has both confirmed (Moskos 2008) and refuted (Weitzer 2000) the claim that African American residents view African American police employment as disloyal to ethnic community.

One respondent said that although some African American residents believed that he would treat them fairly given their shared ethnicity, others chastised him for his affiliation with the police: "Man, how could you arrest me? You are working for the white man, you are working for the establishment. You sold out." A 46-year-old sergeant in Oakland said that sentiments casting the police and African Americans as adversaries were well circulated within his community when he was a child: "I was always afraid of the police car. . . . So, when we saw them, we were pretty much [scared] and kind of stood back. . . . Parents basically would tell you that police were racists. My mother was not happy at all [about me becoming a police officer] and my father was just kind of, 'OK, whatever you want to do.'" The officer later commented that his mom "definitely did not trust the police."

Officer Thompson of Oakland said that her father studied police brutality extensively and that before she formally entered law enforcement he told her that she was entering an institution that

frequently used deadly force against African Americans without justification. Thompson grew up in the northeast and her father, through his research, had contacts in many city police departments.

Thompson's father connected her with a number of high-ranking police officials during her job search, but forbid her from applying to the New York Police Department because of his belief that officers at the department routinely abused African American residents.

The prevailing distrust between the police and the African American community – demonstrated in prior research (Bobo and Thompson 2006 Weitzer et al. 2008; Butler 1995; Ogletree 1995) and in this study – serves as a backdrop for the article's central discussion of how African American police officers frame their relationship with the African American citizens they encounter in the field, specifically African Americans in low-income neighborhoods.

### ***Ethnic Mobilization Narrative 1: Protection from Predators***

Within the "Protection from Predators" narrative, respondents framed their police work as an effort to secure poor African American neighborhoods, and described African American youth as the primary threat to the viability of these neighborhoods.

#### Order and Status Distinction

Officer Watson, a 46-year-old patrol officer with eight years on the D.C. force, expressed that African American youth failed to respect neighborhood residents, which diminished the quality of life of local African Americans.

T.G.: Talking about that younger generation, could you explain a bit more about your day-to-day interaction with African American young people when you're on the job?

Watson: Ok. In the District here you'll see people hang out on the block. You know. And it's [well-known that the city does not have a loitering law.] But, to me, if I keep getting the same calls every day for individuals hanging out on this particular block, smoking or drinking or whatever they're doing . . . [I]t's a recurring problem. It's totally disrespectful to the community. . . . They come back there every day and do the same thing. So to me, this younger generation really doesn't care about what they do or

whatever the future holds for them. And that's just a simple thing . . . [but] so many times you find that people do drive-by shooting[s] and one innocent person who may be just walking by that particular time or moment get[s] caught up in the situation. To me, that's total disrespect to the community, and to, you know, people.

T.G.: Do you feel as though that is disrespectful to you as well?

Watson: I think so. I strongly believe so. Because if I come up to an individual on a daily basis and say, "Hey, sir. We're getting a call. You all hanging out. You can't be doing this here." And I have to go back and see the same set of people every time—to me that's just total disrespect.

To Officer Watson, the African American youth loitering on the corner are one source of disorder in African American neighborhoods. The perceived acts of disorder may not be formally criminalized, but to Watson this behavior calls for formal police engagement. Within the ethnically homogeneous triangle connecting officer, resident complainant, and youth congregating on the street, Officer Watson draws the line between "order" and "disorder," "deviants" and "community," "insiders" and "outsiders."

Respondents regularly employed terms, ideas, and narratives that, while acknowledging an ethnic commonality, frequently identified low-income African American male youth as quintessentially different from them. Similar to Elijah Anderson's (2000) description of "street" versus "decent" as a labeling dichotomy that residents of low-income African American neighborhoods frequently employ, officers in this study depicted young African American men through moralizing tropes.

Officer Daniels, a 32-year-old male patrol officer in D.C. with 13 years on the police force, explained the high local rates of African American incarceration as a result of local youth failing to take advantage of the opportunities available to them. At one point, Daniels asserted that most of the people committing crimes in the District were young and African American. I asked whether this concerned him:

Daniels: No. It don't concern me at all, 'cause if I can abide by the law, born and raised in the city, they can do the same.

T.G.: How do you feel about the high rates of incarceration for young black men generally?

Daniels: Um, honestly? I really don't care about that. Because, like I said, I was born and raised in [D.C.] where drugs were around, guns, prostitution, and things of that nature, and I was able to stay focused and not get involved with any of those extracurricular



activities. So these guys and girls have the same opportunities that I had to simply get a decent job, go to college. They had—you know [The University of the District of Columbia] offers free classes, free college courses. They had all of those opportunities that I had and just chose to live a life of crime.

At the end of this exchange Daniels spoke about the relationship between crime and poverty, based on personal observations during his youth. He cited personal responsibility and individual choice as characteristics that distinguished him from peers who got in trouble with the law.

In the emerging popular discourse on contemporary African American social and economic marginalization, “personal responsibility” frequently serves as a thematic anchor (Dyson 2006; McWhorter 2001). And while African American officers may not bring overtly racial stereotypes to policing, more subtle “other-izing” understandings of their own social location relative to low-status ethnic peers persist and perform a distancing function (Holdaway 1997). For example, Daniels later added that his interactions with black men on duty were “all bad.” When I asked him whether his off-duty interactions with African American men were any better, oddly, he said that he was particularly leery of African American youth when off-duty.

T.G.: When you’re off-duty in similar areas with [African American male youth], how would your interaction change?

Daniels: I’d be more attentive. Young black males, as sad as it is, you have to pay attention to what they doin . . . what they looking at, uh, are they checking you out? You know, as opposed to if I’m working I don’t really, I should but I don’t really pay attention to them that much. But if I’m off, I always be more attentive when I see 'em.

T.G.: When you’re off-duty you’re more attentive?

Daniels: Yeah.

T.G.: And when you say "attentive," you mean you talk and interact with them or you're observing them?

Daniels: Observe 'em. . . . When I’m off they don’t know I’m a police. The only reason why I pay attention to 'em more 'cause they are the ones committing the most crimes. . . . If I’m in uniform, they won’t interact with me. But when I’m off I look like one of them.

In light of his age and local upbringing, Daniels' perspective on the African American male youth he encountered on and off-duty serves as a remarkable example of intra-ethnic social distancing. Though Daniels recognizes his shared ethnic, regional, and class origins with the African American men he interacts with on the street, he views those similarities as aiding him in the surveillance of the group he

frames definitively as “other.” Despite several shared identifications, Daniels sees himself as morally distinguished from these young men.

The articulation of a moral distinction between himself and African American youth was a common thread across interviews. For example, Officer Brooks, offered a similar perspective, describing contemporary African American city youth as violating even the traditional local norms of *criminal activity*.

T.G.: Can you describe how various segments of the African American community view the police?

Brooks: Unlike the old days when there was some respect for the game, you had local drug dealers who would say, “Okay, here comes the cops, our job is to run from the cops, and their job is to chase after us. If they caught us, you know, it is not our day. If they do not catch us, we lucked out this time and we will just do this all over again. We respect you for what you have to do. If you take us to jail [that means] we just got caught [being sloppy].”

These days it's not like that. These little crack babies—I don't know what they are—they just do not have respect for the game. They do not have any respect for themselves, they do not have any respect for authority, and they do not have any respect for their parents, so there is no respect whatsoever. . . . It is a whole new set of criminals now. . . . It is more chaotic, there is no structure—even in the crime world there is no structure. . . . It is almost like there is no reaching them. You cannot even come [up to them] and reason with them. They will just laugh and laugh in this kind of generation.

Brooks suggests that the previous generation took “care” in criminal activity and viewed the police more as referees than as the enemy. Likewise, respondents generally believed that the social boundary between police officers and African American youth was more rigid than in the past—and necessarily so. The officers thus aligned themselves with the trope of the “decent,” frequently victimized members of the community, regularly asserting social distance from African American youth, whom they believed to represent “street” culture (Anderson 1990; Moskos 2008).

In D.C., Officer Fisk offered a similar description of young African American males, insisting that these youth held a specific conception of black male identity (and freedom, incidentally) that was very different from his own:

Fisk: I tell brothers every day. I say, “Y'all gonna get locked up, and my black man's handbook, maybe my chapter on getting locked up is not in there. Mine didn't tell

I have to get locked up.” It's not a badge of honor. You don't have to get locked up because you're black. I tell them this all the time. And they go, “you right, man.” Do something. . . . [Bangs lightly on table] It makes me mad. [Bangs lightly on table]. It ought to make them mad to get locked up... I want to come when I want to. I want to go when I want to. I want to do whatever I want to do. I don't want anybody tell me, "OK, it's five thirty in the morning. Get up so we can go to breakfast. We let you take a shower today. . . .” That bothers me. It bothers the shit out of me to see us locked up.

T.G.: You think African American males see it as a badge of honor?

Fisk: I think a lot do . . . especially the younger ones. The younger ones feel that it makes them tough.

In a pointed discussion of the role of masculinity in law enforcement, law professor Angela Harris argues that African American men have traditionally been cast as possessing a deficient form of masculinity that makes them prone to immorality and criminal behavior. This and similar responses from respondents suggest that African American officers may subscribe to this characterization.

Culturally, African American men have been stereotyped by whites as docile and child-like in antebellum times, and in postbellum times as violent, unable to control their physical and sexual urges, and unintelligent. This latter set of stereotypes allows white men to see themselves as superior. Though African American men may possess a brutish maleness, they are lacking in the mental and moral qualities that are necessary for “civilized” men: gentlemen, patriarchs, rulers (Harris 2000: 783).

As African American representation in city police department rises, African American police themselves may come to embody a “civilized masculinity” which, in their view, the young African American men they police consistently lack.

The idea of an unhinged black masculinity ravaging African American neighborhoods frequently serves as justification for the aggressive policing tactics prevalent in African American neighborhoods – tactics which have been shown to foster African American distrust of police (Tyler 2005; Sunshine and Tyler 2003). Officer Brooks later shared her feelings on the police tactic of conducting more frequent stops and searches in “hot spots” – that is, areas with high or rapidly rising crime rates. The tactic momentarily lowers the standard of suspicion for cursory street investigations, increasing involuntary contact between residents and police and, in effect, asserting a strong police

presence in a given location.

T.G.: Do you think using aggressive “stop and frisk” tactics in high-crime areas is an effective policing technique, or is it largely ineffective?

Brooks: I think it’s an effective policing technique. . . . You mean just, you know, rolling up on folks, pullin’ them out?

T.G.: Yeah.

Brooks: A lot of the time it’s done for a show of force. That is a tactic. A show of force. You need to go out there and show folks that if you are going to be out here blatantly standing on this corner, we’ve got to roll up on you and shut it down. And sometimes you have to do that. You can only say no to drugs, say no to crime, say no to violence so many times. You can only roll past the block so many times before you have to step up the game. . . . I flipped the script, huh? [laughs] . . . I mean, it’s the truth. If you do not want your new Nikes to be scuffed, then you go in the house or go somewhere else. . . . Just because you have this goal in mind of making all this money, the rest of the community is held hostage by you and your rivals. . . . What about the little old ladies and the little kids and the regular families who are living here whose house you’re standing in front of?

Here, as in several other interviews, respondents described “the community” worthy of police protection as small children and the elderly. Some respondents also mentioned families and women, but rarely if ever specified African American men as potential beneficiaries of the police department’s security efforts. This is not to say that respondents were invariably alienated from young African American male residents of low-income neighborhoods. Many gave examples of intentionally or incidentally bonding with young men while on the job. When speaking about neighborhood security in the abstract, however, they placed young African American men outside the community circle. Tropes of African American youth and their accompanying status distinctions served the “means-ends” argument in support of aggressive, constitutionally questionable policing tactics. Such intra-ethnic interactions show policing as a site for *secondary marginalization*, where privileged members of an ethnic group may stigmatize low-status members (Cohen 1999).

Respondents' reliance on tropes of the young urban predator at times seemed to obscure the troubled nature of the relationship between city police and African American neighborhoods. For example, officers complained bitterly about the challenge of persuading low-income African American city residents to cooperate in criminal investigations. When discussing the problem of witness

participation and information sharing, nearly all of the respondents applied a “fear frame” in which criminally involved residents intimidated or harmed the “decent” residents who cooperated with police inquiries. In this perspective, “street” residents not only raised the level of crime, but also hampered police from solving crimes and punishing lawbreakers through threats and violence.

The respondents’ perception of resident noncooperation may stem in part from the different moral frameworks that police and low-income minorities bring to government efforts at crime control. Whereas police apply the “fear” frame to explain the fissures in the police-community relationship (Moskos 2008: 73), research indicates that African Americans' cooperation with police is hindered instead by distrust of police (Tyler 2005; Bobo and Thompson 2006; Butler 1995; Pew Research Center 2007). From the officers’ perspective, African American low-income residents refuse to cooperate with police because they feel pressure from “criminals” to avoid police contact. Similarly, when witnesses are willing to give evidence to the police but fail to appear in court, the officers interpret this reluctance as the product of fear of retaliation from calculating local thugs. This view of citizen cooperation in police investigation fits the predator narrative, but fails to reconcile with the fact that African American distrust of the police is highest in neighborhoods where residents are least safe (Parker et al. 1995; Pew Research Center 2007; Tuck and Weitzer 1997). A few officers referenced this distrust in the abstract, connecting it to the history of police abusing their power in African American communities. But, when speaking specifically about the lack of witness participation in African American low-income neighborhoods, they viewed the phenomenon as arising exclusively from nefarious peer influence.

For instance, when I asked a homicide detective in D.C. what he liked least about his job, he cited the lack of cooperation from residents in crime-ridden neighborhoods as the most frustrating part of his work.

People in the neighborhoods—predominant[ly] black neighborhoods—don’t like getting involved. And I think one of the main reasons [is that] they [are] scared, I think there is not a lot

of protection out there for them. I think that we as a society don't do enough to make it easy for . . . people to come forward. We don't prosecute certain crimes that should be prosecuted, and we don't look out for their needs. We need to care more about the people who witness these crimes, and maybe some of these people will start coming forward, but right now it ain't happening.

The same officer later reiterated the complaint later in the interview:

T.G.: And why do you think [they don't like getting involved?]

Respondent: Fear. Retaliation. . . . They have to go to court about it. They don't want to go to court. They don't want to testify against anybody.

T.G.: Do you think that fear is real? Something legitimate?

Respondent: It could be real, it could be. . . . A lot of it has to do with [the fact that] people want to stick to the code. The street code of ethics.

The officer did not address the tension between a “street ethic” barring cooperation with police and the fear of retaliation. The case of retaliation is straightforward: a witness does not cooperate with police because of a belief that someone affiliated with the defendant will cause him or her harm. In contrast, the notion of a “street ethic” is more complicated. As the homicide detective mentioned, many in the African American community stick to a “code” or moral tenet. The street ethic is an expression of community solidarity *against* police (Goffman 2010). And though serial law breakers may exploit this code of silence, residents nonetheless adhere to the street ethic absent the threat of violence (Gardner 2011). The code represents a counterpoint to the moral frameworks police bring to their work in low-income urban neighborhoods. Some of the African American officers I interviewed seemed to recognize that two moral frameworks were at play in police-citizen relationships in poor African American neighborhoods.

By framing the participation problem as a simple issue of intimidation by serial lawbreakers rather than as a product of resident distrust of police arising from a history of police abuse of power, African American officers insulate themselves in the rhetoric of “community” and “order,” while obscuring the stigma they carry as police officers and their marginalization from segments of the African American community. Thus, for the African American officer, the stigma of working in law enforcement is diminished through the narrative of an African American community held hostage by

the local, unchecked deviants, identified concretely as young African American males. The respondents' stated efforts to facilitate greater community involvement in police investigation represent one strand of the predator narrative. As with other strands of the narrative, African American male youth represent a primary challenge to ethnic community welfare.

### ***Ethnic Mobilization Narrative 2: Protection from Police***

In contrast to the intra-ethnic distinctions between “street” and “decent” in the predator narrative, the “Protection from Police” narrative posed a solid, cohesive ethnic community against the bad behavior of the police institutions in which the respondents were embedded. In this thematic arc, respondents viewed themselves as important to the project of ending racially disparate policing, and officers insisted that racially disparate policing could be counteracted by encouraging local African-American neighborhoods to adopt the police department as their own. Specifically, several respondents advocated giving neighborhood residents more power over the police, increasing the number of African American officers in the local police department, and socializing African American children to appreciate rather than distrust local police.

### A Parallel Civilian Experience

The officers I interviewed were most animated about discriminatory treatment by police when describing instances in which they felt they had been racially profiled, sometimes by members of their own department. These findings lend support to prior research on the off-duty experiences of African American police *with* police (Barlow and Barlow 2002).

When I asked Officer Fisk whether he had ever been profiled he immediately replied, “I sure have. I sure have,” and recalled an instance when a white police officer from the U.S. Park Police pulled him over, claiming to have seen a “hand-to-hand” drug transaction just after a friend had helped

him load a carton of beer into this car.

Fisk: I'm just saying in terms of being racially profiled—oh, it's rough, it's rough.

T.G.: So it's almost like a [strategy] to police the area?

Fisk: Yeah. For our white officers, that's the way they feel. Oh, yeah, 'cause we don't treat everybody as "he's the bad man," "she's the bad man." Mm-mm. We look at people and go, "OK, if he's doing something wrong it'll come out. Hopefully, he don't have a gun. Hopefully, he don't shoot me for no reason. Other than that, everybody's not a bad man. Everybody's not a criminal.

Here, Fisk argues that, rather than invoking generalizations about young African American males, African American officers only pass judgment on fellow African Americans when they observe them "doing wrong." Hence, Fisk conveys African American officers as *rejecting* racial stereotypes and supporting racially equitable policing practices.

Detective Vaughn of the D.C. police force complained that when he drove a department scout car Maryland police routinely pulled him over, claiming that stolen scout cars were a recurring problem in their county. "I've been stopped and they have no idea why they stopped me. I'd ask, 'Why'd you stop me?' And they have no explanation. I think we are targeted. . . . One of the first times [it happened] I had a black Jeep. I had to get rid of that Jeep because I got stopped three times [in a relatively short time frame]."

Detective Davis, a 14-year veteran of the D.C. police department, described an incident in which Virginia police just across the D.C. border physically assaulted him, putting him in a chokehold during a routine traffic stop. The two of us sat in a squad car on Fifth Street, N.W., while Davis waited to testify at a grand jury hearing at the Office of the United States Attorney. I asked him whether he had ever been watched or stopped because of his ethnicity.

Davis: Virginia. . . . Aw, man. That place is out of control. I'll be the first to tell you. I've been thrown down, handcuffed, elbowed, kneed in the back in Virginia.

T.G.: Did you let them know that you were an officer?

Davis: At some point, yeah. . . . I had nasty feelings about it. I think they [are] wrong. You know, and luckily I didn't sue 'em. Only reason I didn't sue 'em [is] because I go to a church where my pastor don't believe in doing that [laughs].

These and other anecdotes indicate that the off-duty experiences of African American officers likely



differ from those of their white colleagues. When the uniform comes off, African American officers often find themselves under the police microscope, like many others in their ethnic cohort.

Occasionally, respondents criticized actions of white officers that seemed similar to their own actions toward African American male youth. In Oakland, for example, Officer Fisher described an incident in which she stopped a group of African American teenagers who were routinely idling in her patrol area. Fisher said that she became friendly with the group because she suspected they were selling drugs, but lacked direct evidence. She spoke to the group from her squad car at the same spot every day, being careful to make them feel comfortable by making “small talk” from a distance. One day she surprised the boys by getting out of the car and searching each of them for drugs, which she found. Fisher claimed that she circumvented probable cause requirements for the search by checking to see if the boys were on probation or parole. She discovered that most of the group was under court supervision, which suspended their constitutional protections and allowed Fisher to search them without first establishing an articulable suspicion (*Samson v. California*, 547 U.S. 843).

Later in the interview, however, Fisher complained bitterly about a white officer who stopped her on the way home from the airport because her driver—a fellow officer—was a “young brother in a nice car.” According to Fisher, the patrolling officer used a trivial traffic violation as an excuse to take a look inside the car in the hope of finding evidence of criminal activity. In each story the officer performed the stop absent evidence of criminal conduct. Putting aside the legal parameters of “racial profiling” (with regard to which the U.S. Supreme Court and state authorities have been decidedly vague (*Whren v. United States*, 517 U.S. 1986; Carbado 2002; Barlow and Barlow 2000)), the basic facts of the two anecdotes show analogous standards in which the investigating police officer operates on the outer bounds of the requisite standard of suspicion in order to investigate African American citizens for illicit activity. The anecdotes also demonstrate the ease in which African American officers may switch between advocating for aggressive policing tactics and identifying similar tactics as racially

biased when directly subjected to them by white officers.

### “Black Power” in Policing

In response to a question about what drew him to law enforcement, Sergeant Clark, a 42-year-old Oakland officer who grew up in the South just after the collapse of Jim Crow, said that he decided he wanted to be a police officer when a white officer in his town showed what might normally be seen as an unremarkable gesture of respect. In his senior year of high school, Sergeant Clark, his brother, and a childhood friend vandalized vehicles and equipment at a construction site in his neighborhood. When the police investigated, no one in the neighborhood seemed to know what had happened until Clark's uncle told police that he had seen his nephews in the area of the construction site earlier that day. Clark said he was taken aback by the professionalism of the white officer who interviewed his uncle and eventually arrested Clark.

So, it was just that initial responding officer that came to our house, and. . . . It was in the South. So back then, it was segregation. And racism was just like an everyday thing back then. But this guy was actually professional—*he was actually professional*.

Throughout the process, I had some interaction with the guy, had to report [to him] about four times, and it was just professionalism all the way through with this guy. He talked to us after the trial as far as not doing it again—the strain and distress that it put to our parents, like that kind of stuff. And what we should be focused on [in the future]. That stood out with me because, for one thing, the guy was white, and secondly, my perception of the police [came from] TV and a lot of what we had heard about from other classmates in school, from their interaction with the police. I think that experience had a profound effect on me.

To Clark, the white officer in Arkansas, through simple acts of civility, created a powerful counter-narrative to the one of police as an oppressive force. Throughout his interview, Clark spoke about breaking down the boundaries between the police and young African American males, saying that he consistently made an effort to talk to the “young guys,” and that he consciously cautioned himself against developing animosity toward African American youth in light of his childhood experience and his teenage son's own social position.

In similar fashion, many respondents challenged their critics to join the police institution and

reform it from within. Officer Green advocated for African American communities to take control over local police services in an effort to eradicate racial discrimination in policing. "The psychological spin I put on it is this: you cannot change the whole from the outside. You have to do it from the inside. If they do not believe that the police department reflects the community in which they live, they should become a part of it and police it in the way that they feel." Moments later, in response to a closing question about the quality of the interview, the same officer said that he was encouraged by our talk and viewed the inquiry as supporting expanded African American participation in policing.

I think that we need more intervention on the part of the society to help African Americans to understand the need for them to serve within the community, become involved, to seek counsel, become a police officer. I mean, we have plenty of [African Americans working] in public services like street work, service maintenance, and [for] the upkeep of the city. But there is not as much desire for the African American community to become involved in law enforcement. And the attitude is, if you do not feel like something is right then you have to become a part of it and change it from within.

Another respondent indicated the difficulty in this reclamation project when speaking about his on-duty interactions with African American residents between the ages of 15 and 30.

They are in a position to have an influence on those younger kids. [It's to the point] where I wanted to shake the hand of a small child and [the accompanying adult] literally pulled that child away because of their despise for police. It is a funny dynamic and it just hurts my heart to see that because it perpetuates that negative mentality about what the police [institution] actually is and what they do and do not do.

In Oakland, an officer who had been on the force for 25 years said that neighborhood partnerships could convey to African American residents that the safety of the local community was in their hands. When I later asked the officer whether he found certain field tactics in his department problematic, he replied that he preferred building community partnerships to aggressive tactics in high-crime areas, and that he believed the future of dangerous neighborhoods should be placed in the hands of the people who live there.

Respondent: [I]f we know that and we engage them in the beginning—and that is what we really need to be aware of—and invite them into the process and get them to buy in and [get their] input on the front end, then again on the back end, they also retain responsibility for sustaining an area after we come in and try to come to

whatever solution or decision and enforce a plan that we have decided upon.

The officer's comment suggests that strained neighborhood-police relationships in effect transfer responsibility for neighborhood security from residents to the police. In contrast, when neighbors feel that they have input into police policy and practice, they take more responsibility for keeping the neighborhood safe.

In offering similar prescriptions for African American power in policing, nearly all of the respondents advocated for increased ethnic diversity and, likewise, a diversity of personal experiences within their respective departments. Respondents believed that the institution would develop stronger relationships with marginalized ethnic communities if officers could relate to residents' life experience. In discussing ethnic empowerment in relation to dangers posed by police, respondents referenced the African American community as a single unit collectively subject to the traditional biases of the police institution.

## **IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS**

In *Black in Blue*, Nicholas Alex placed his respondents into two categories: those who viewed police work as advocacy for the “welfare of the Negro community” and those who viewed police work as an impersonal, apolitical enterprise (1969). In contrast to Alex’s findings, nearly all of the officers in this study indicated that the welfare or “mobilization” of the African American community figured prominently in their approach to police work.

The respondents conceptualized ethnic community welfare in two mobilization narratives. The first narrative stressed the need for “order” and stability in the African American neighborhoods where crime and victimization rates tend to be inordinately high. The second called for systemic reforms to police culture through community control over the police institution. In the latter narrative, respondents maintained that the divide between low-income African American citizens and police prevented local

residents from dictating the terms of neighborhood policing and, as a result, conceded greater autonomy to police officials.

Though the two narratives emphasized ethnic community uplift, they also produced two distinct conceptualizations of African American solidarity and connectedness. The predator narrative was steeped in intra-ethnic status distinctions, many of which have been documented in previous sociological research on African American social fragmentation (Waters 1999; Smith 2007; Patillo-McCoy 2008). When speaking within the predator narrative, respondents split African Americans into two populations: predatory young African American males and everyone else (“little children,” “the elderly,” “women,” “regular families,” and “victims,” generally). The predatory youth distinguished themselves through their weak moral fiber, poor work ethic, and twisted perception of masculinity. Discursive frames dividing the African American community into the “predatory” and the “victimized” parallel the tropes of the “street” and the “decent” revealed in Elijah Anderson’s work in low-income African American neighborhoods (2000). The assignment of status and stigma *within* the ethnic group is a process of social closure that fosters intra-ethnic social distance and narrow, essentialist perspectives.

The predator-victim dichotomy was entirely absent from the second ethnic mobilization narrative, which emphasized the threat posed by police, as well as intra-ethnic homogeneity rather than intra-ethnic status distinctions. The Protection from Police narrative presented African American male youth – similar to other African Americans – as a group in need of group of protection *from* police. (This assertion of intra-ethnic homogeneity serves as better political footing upon which to advance an ethnic politics in relation to police power.)

Narratives of ethnic mobilization may thus employ frameworks that either draw status distinctions within the ethnic group or, alternatively, convey status uniformity in accordance with the “linked fate” ethnic perspective, which captures the entire ethnic group as locked into a collective

struggle against structural oppression (Cohen 1999; Dawson 2003). This study thus illuminates the variable and shifting quality of ethnic solidarity within broader group narratives regarding ethnic welfare, ethnic group honor, and ethnic mobilization. My primary analytical point does not concern the value of African American officers to the police department *relative* to their white colleagues. It instead speaks only to the prejudices and social distancing practices that may persist in “black-on-black” policing. Both white and black officers, for various, reasons, may be inclined to invest in derogatory stereotypes of poor minority residents, “us/them” social dichotomies, and social closure practice more generally.

The question of intra-ethnic social connectedness should receive more scholarly attention, particularly with respect to African Americans. The contemporary African American case is especially compelling as many African Americans have risen to positions of state institutional authority in the same moment that many more co-ethnics descend into advanced marginalization.

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**Table 1. Ethnic makeup of Washington, D.C., and Oakland, CA**

	Washington, D.C. (% of population)	Oakland, CA (% of population)
African American	60.0	35.7
White	31.7	31.3
Hispanic	8.2	21.9
Asian American	3.2	15.2

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000.

**Table 2. Economic characteristics of Washington, D.C., and Oakland, CA**

	Washington, D.C.		Oakland, CA	
	African American population	Total population	African American population	Total population
Individuals below poverty line <sup>a</sup>	24.5%	19.1%	24.4%	19.1%
Per-capita income, 1999 <sup>a</sup>	\$17,734	\$28,659	\$17,557	\$21,936
Police officer starting salary		\$48,716 <sup>b</sup>		\$69,000–\$87,000 <sup>c</sup>

a. Data from U.S. Census Bureau 2000.

b. Data from Metropolitan Police Department 2008.

c. Data from Oakland Police Department website 2008.

**Table 3. Conceptual framework of officers' narratives.**

Literature	Conceptual Framework
Construction site (Schwalbe et al. 2000)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Penal system (policing)</li> </ul>
Ethnic mobilization narratives (Neuwirth 1969; Weber [1922] 1978)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Narrative 1: Protection from Predators</li> <li>▪ Narrative 2: Protection from Police</li> </ul>
Ethnic-group connectedness (Brubaker 2004; Weber [1922] 1978)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Intra-ethnic status distinction</li> <li>▪ Intra-ethnic status uniformity</li> </ul>

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<sup>i</sup> I use *ethnicity* in the Weberian sense in which *race* is considered a subtype of ethnicity (Weber 1978; Wimmer 2008).

<sup>ii</sup> The D.C. pool of respondents is skewed toward detectives because one of the sample lines initiated through a local detective. The detectives started as patrol officers and rose through the ranks, passing through a number of intermediate positions in the department. Conversely, the Oakland respondent pool was more diverse and representative with respect to professional ranking at the time of the interview. Both pools were disproportionately male. The three female respondents were from Oakland; the D.C. pool was exclusively male.

<sup>iii</sup> To protect confidentiality, respondent names were changed to pseudonyms.