

**PERSISTENCE OF POLICE LEGITIMACY:
UNDERSTANDING ASIAN AMERICAN PERSPECTIVES**

by

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ABSTRACT

Many studies have been conducted over the past few decades to assess people's perceptions of the police. Racial minorities, particularly Blacks, have consistently rated the police less favorably than Whites. Although this vein of inquiry has greatly strengthened our understanding of public attitudes toward the police, Asian Americans and immigrants have been noticeably under-investigated in the existing literature.

The main purpose of this study is to examine Asian Americans' perceptions of the police, focusing on how they construct support of the police. I draw upon the system justification theory, which posits that people tend to support the current institutional structures even when the system is disadvantageous to them. Applying it to the arena of policing, one may speculate that Asian Americans are likely to express their support of the police because they perceive regulatory authorities as legitimate.

Data used in this study came from in-depth, semi-structured interviews with 20 Asian Americans residing or working in mid-Atlantic states. Findings indicate that police legitimacy is associated with perceptions of neighborhood safety and amount of personal police contact. Additionally, police legitimacy is accomplished through multiple forms of rationalizing individual police misconduct. Finally, participants discussed police-Asian American community relations, informing policy implications relating to race and policing.

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Research on public perceptions of and relations with the police have been heavily concentrated on White, Black, and Hispanic individuals. While studies on Blacks' and Hispanics' attitudes toward the police are necessary to understand police-minority community relations, other racial minority groups have been largely absent from the police literature. Specifically, the existing literature on Asian Americans' relations with the police remains limited. Even as studies have examined the relationship between immigration and policing, the literature has largely excluded Asian Americans and immigrants from the scholarly conversation (Wu et al., 2011, 2012). A handful of studies that have examined Asian Americans' or immigrants' perceptions of the police are primarily quantitative in nature (e.g., Chu & Song, 2008; Wu et al., 2011), leaving many questions unanswered, such as the social mechanisms that impact how individuals perceive and potentially support the police.

Purpose of the Present Study

The main purpose of this study is to examine Asian Americans' perceptions of the police, focusing on how they construct support of the police. It is theoretically and practically important to expand our knowledge of police relations with various racial and

ethnic, particularly minority, communities. Theoretical explanations of racial/ethnic minorities' and immigrants' views of the police have drawn primarily upon evidence from studies on Blacks and Hispanics (Wu et al., 2017). A study focusing on Asian Americans and immigrants can enhance our understanding of complex, group-specific social dynamics that shape how communities interact with the police.

Furthermore, this study applies system justification theory to understand how Asian Americans and immigrants construct support of the police. This theoretical framework is relevant because it seeks to understand the tendency to support institutions among marginalized groups who have historically not benefitted from them (Jost & Banaji, 1994). To date, the literature on system justification among racial minority groups has yet to examine the experiences of Asian Americans. Thus, this study would provide significant insight into how Asian Americans legitimize social control systems, such as the police, and contribute to our understandings of system justification theory. In other words, system justification theory would be refined to better fit the experiences of the Asian American population. Additionally, this theory helps us comprehend the permanence of police institutions, as racial minority groups may support the police even if such social control institutions could structurally harm them.

Racially marginalized groups, such as Asian Americans and immigrants, may have complex notions of supporting police because they likely construct this support while simultaneously harboring community or cultural distrust of the police. Based on qualitative data collected from Asian Americans, this study can shed light on the possible nuances related to the persistence of current policing structures, despite increased

knowledge and documentation of police violence. Such information can facilitate theoretical developments of public evaluations of the police for particularly non-Black and non-Hispanic minority groups.

Significance of the Present Study

Findings of this study help us understand some of the prominent portrayals of the police, which are likely to impact our perceptions of and interactions with these institutions and individual officers. Indeed, research on Asian Americans' views of the police furnishes valuable insight into the state of policing during a time of social movements when the legitimacy of legal institutions has been increasingly questioned and challenged. The recent wave of hate crimes against Asian Americans also calls for better policies and policing structures to ensure fair and just protection for all groups in society. Information generated by this study can assist policy makers and police administrations in implementing policies and programs designed to improve police-Asian American community relations.

Relying on interview data collected from 20 Asian Americans residing in mid-Atlantic states, this study contributes to the existing literature on Asian American perceptions of policing in the United States, particularly as it pertains to constructing ideas of supporting the police. This study also explores how such constructions help us understand the permeance of police institutions, despite increased awareness of police brutality and misconduct in recent years.

Chapter 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Race and Public Attitudes Toward the Police

Public attitudes toward the police have been fairly researched, particularly in relation to social characteristics, such as race and ethnicity. Scholars have learned that Black and Hispanic populations are significantly more likely to be distrustful of the police state, compared to their White counterparts (Brown & Benedict, 2002; Lai & Zhao, 2010; Schuck et al., 2008; Wu et al., 2009). Additionally, the effects of mass incarceration, police brutality, and other forms of carceral violence on marginalized communities have been extensively documented (Alexander, 2010; Bittner, 1970; Ritchie, 2017; Sewell, 2017). Following multiple years of Black Lives Matter protests triggered primarily by deadly police-public encounters, we have seen calls to reform, defund, and even abolish the police. In fact, police and prison abolition are not exclusively modern concepts, with many critiques of the prison industrial complex focusing on its extension of slavery (Davis, 2003). However, albeit significant amounts of evidence detailing the harm that police often enact upon marginalized groups, we still see much public resistance against restructuring this institution as we know it.

It is important to study Asian American perceptions of the police, which are likely to be shaped by complex and conflicting factors that differ from other racial groups. For

example, there may be a cultural sense of distrust of the police, particularly among older Asian individuals who are immigrants in the United States (Wu et al., 2011). Immigrants may not only have negative experiences with American police due to their immigration status but may also harbor distrust of police because of negative police experiences in their home countries (Culver, 2004; Davis & Miller, 2002; Pogrebin & Poole, 1990). If such distrust largely exists among these communities, it is crucial to examine the sources of this distrust and the extent to which it impacts individuals' constructions of the police, as it pertains to individual and community safety.

Additionally, support for police may be incredibly influenced by notions of safety in one's neighborhood or surrounding community. Recently, in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic, the United States has witnessed a large spike in anti-Asian hate crimes and violent incidents (Reny & Barreto, 2020; Wu et al., 2021). This perceived lack of safety and concern for one's well-being may be associated with an increased need or support for police, further legitimizing this institution. In addition to potential calls for increased policing, there may also be calls for police reforms that emphasize cultural sensitivity and diversity awareness related to the Asian American community. Diversity trainings have been frequently proposed as a police reform over the past few decades to address the problem of police brutality against Black Americans (Barlow & Barlow, 1993). Although anti-Asian sentiments are not specifically occurring among the police in the context of COVID-19, there may be a desire for the police to effectively respond to hate crimes and uphold the safety of this particular group.

On the other hand, public concerns for Asian American safety have occurred parallel to ongoing conversations regarding Black Lives Matter, police brutality, and calls for restructuring policing institutions. Thus, while some civilians may argue that anti-Asian hate crimes must be addressed, they may also argue that the police are not the most advantageous solution due to their history of mistreating people of color. Finally, for complex reasons, Asian Americans have had historically low levels of political engagement and may possibly be detached from political protests and issues surrounding the detrimental effects of policing (Diaz, 2012; Lien, 2004). For example, some Asian Americans may not cite the Black Lives Matter movement in their constructions of supporting or even advocating against police because they may not view it as applicable to their own experiences. If racial tension plays a significant role in constructions of police support, perhaps some Asian Americans may individualize cases of police brutality, rather than perceive it as part of a larger, structural issue.

A small number of studies have focused on the general patterns and influencing factors related to Asian Americans' attitudes toward the police. Wu and colleagues (2011, 2012) found that the majority of Chinese immigrants had positive perceptions of the police, shaped by neighborhood contextual characteristics (e.g., high collective efficacy, low crime levels), media reports of police misconduct, and perceptions of home country police. Specifically, police brutality events tend to negatively affect attitudes toward the police and positive perceptions of Chinese police were associated with similar ideas of American police. Additionally, satisfaction with police performance during a recent contact significantly affects general police perceptions (Wu et al., 2011). In another

study, Wu et al. (2012) also found that Whites held the most favorable opinion of the police (90%), followed by Asian or Pacific Islanders (89%), Hispanics (80%), and Blacks (78%). Similarly, Wu (2014) found that Hispanic and Asian Americans held more positive views of the police than Black Americans in some key areas (police harassment and racial profiling), but White Americans displayed more favorable attitudes overall. These findings indicate that Asian Americans' attitudes toward the police consistently fall in the middle of the spectrum compared to other racial groups, which illustrates a need to uncover the influencing factors of such attitudes and their related nuances.

Theoretical Framework

Several theories have been proposed to explain minority Americans' attitudes toward the police, as compared to those of White people. For instance, group position theory posits that White Americans display more favorable assessments of the police than their Black counterparts because their "in-group" status makes them perceive the police as critical social institutions that protect their interests and privileges (Weitzer & Tuch, 2006). Another theory focuses on minorities' sense-of-injustice, arguing that members of the poor and lower-class minority groups tend to rate the police less favorably because they perceive unfair treatment by the police (Wu et al., 2009).

Extending the group-position and sense-of-injustice arguments, this study uses system justification theory to account for Asian Americans' support for the police. System justification theory can be defined as a process in which "existing social arrangements are legitimized, even at the expense of personal and group interest" (Jost &

Banaji, 1994, p. 2). This tendency to justify the current status quo occurs on both a conscious and unconscious level. Additionally, system justification theory specifically focuses on lower status groups and why they continue to support current institutional structures, even when such groups are likely to be discriminated against by the prevailing social structures (Jost & Banaji, 1994). This presents a paradox to previous studies that argue for self-enhancement and ingroup bias (e.g., Brewer, 1979; Sidanius & Pratto, 1999; Tajfel & Turner, 1979), illustrating an internalization of cultural values and stereotypes that primarily oppress disadvantaged groups (Jost et al., 2002). In other words, individuals who belong to lower status groups may accept such statuses because they perceive institutions to be legitimate (Jost et al., 2002; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Specifically, Asian Americans may legitimize institutions because of Asian cultural values that emphasize obedience to and compliance with legal authorities. The model minority myth attached to Asian Americans somewhat reflects such cultural tendencies. For example, one may believe that negative experiences with the police are results of individual shortcomings, such as propensity toward criminality, rather than structural oppression.

To summarize, system justification theory is proposed as the theoretical framing for this study because it recognizes that variability in institutional support exists among a marginalized group, even if said group is historically less supportive of an institution overall. For example, while it is apparent that as a group, Black Americans are less supportive of the police, there are still individuals who support the police within this racial group. Thus, system justification theory examines why marginalized individuals

may support a system that does not structurally benefit them. While a few studies have reported evidence supporting the theory of system justification among racial minority groups, such as Black Americans (Shockley et al., 2016) and Latinos (O'Brien et al., 2011), a study that specifically looks at how system justification is illustrated among Asian Americans is lacking. Introducing Asian Americans to the theoretical framework would provide rich nuance in how non-Black and non-Hispanic minority groups construct meanings that serve to legitimize social control institutions.

As a racial group, Asian Americans hold a unique social position in the United States. While they do not hold power and privilege on the same levels as White Americans, Asian Americans have also not suffered the dire injustices of slavery and oppression that is rooted in the history of Black Americans. Of course, there are many historical events where Asians have experienced unique forms of oppression and discrimination specifically in the context of the United States. This includes, but not limited to, the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, the Immigration Act of 1924, anti-Japanese sentiments following Pearl Harbor, and recently anti-Asian sentiments related to COVID-19. Certainly, these events should not be erased or ignored. Additionally, positioning Asian Americans as “in between” White and Black Americans is not to simplify the experiences of these groups in assuming their perceptions of American institutions. As noted by Shockley et al. (2016), variability exists within a racial group as it pertains to system justification. But time and time again, research on race and institutions (e.g., policing) has operated on a Black-White understanding, consistently demonstrating that Black Americans are less likely than White Americans to support.

Thus, we must deeply examine the role of system justification across additional racial minority groups and their lived experiences, particularly during a time in which policing has remained a significant topic. It is crucial that we understand what contributes to Asian Americans' current understandings of the police and what motivates this group to continue legitimizing the police, when they do not necessarily reap the same privileges as their White counterparts. Since Asian Americans' attitudes toward the police tend to fall in the middle of Blacks' and Whites' attitudes (e.g., Wu et al., 2012), a deeper analysis of these attitudes can help us refine our theoretical accounts of the factors that influence perceptions of the police.

Model Minority Stereotype

Asian Americans typically experience the model minority myth in the United States, which reinforces the racial stereotype that this particular group is associated with success, intelligence, and other moral characteristics (Chou & Feagin, 2015; Shih et al., 2019; Wu et al., 2011). This persisting myth has been analyzed in terms of upholding white supremacy by reinforcing a social divide between Asian Americans and other marginalized racial groups, especially Black Americans (Shih et al., 2019). This is because it upholds meritocratic values and denies the existence of systemic racism in influencing opportunities for people of color, insisting that any marginalized individual can gain success by referring to Asian Americans as an example (Shih et al., 2019; Wu et al., 2011). Thus, the model minority stereotype may impact Asian American relations with the police and other institutions in significantly different ways compared to Black

and Hispanic individuals. For example, if Asian Americans are perceived as a “model minority” by the police, they may not experience discrimination or misconduct in ways that other marginalized racial groups have experienced.

Additionally, Asian Americans, specifically older generations, have been known to harbor prejudice against other racial groups, particularly Black individuals (Cheung, 2005; Weitzer, 1997). If Asian Americans subscribe to common racial stereotypes, such that Black and Hispanic individuals are associated with crime and danger, they may be more likely to support and legitimize the police. This feeds into the model minority myth that is ascribed to the Asian American community. This myth strengthens white supremacy and creates tension among racially marginalized groups, distilling opportunities for solidarity and awareness of power structures relating to systemic racism (Shih et al., 2019; Wu et al., 2011). The model minority myth serves to reassure Americans that racism is not foundational in the United States because of the many examples of Asian Americans who have acquired personal success. This then discursively alludes to ideas that Black Americans experience struggle because of their own personal inhibitions, rather than any structural reasons. Thus, the model minority myth and the racial strife that exists between Asian Americans and other racial groups may influence Asian American conceptions of policing, as well as the other way around.

Asian Americans may be motivated to justify current institutions in the United States if there is a general belief that traditionally participating in such institutions as it is currently structured grants them success. Although policing as an institution does not directly guarantee meritocratic success, as education or occupational roles would,

policing remains relevant to these institutions. For example, getting arrested or being convicted of a crime leads to disadvantages relating to one's education or job, either impacting its existing role or the possibility of eventually gaining it. Therefore, positive interactions with the police and the criminal justice system can be relevant in pathways toward success, exemplifying the relationship between the model minority myth and system justification theory.

Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY

Data Analysis

Qualitative methods, specifically interviews, are the best research approach for this study because they will help provide insight into how and why individuals behave and perceive in the ways that they do. Interviews will assist in conceptualizing individuals' perceptions as they relate to supporting or needing the police, especially alongside current political events that address police brutality and racial hate crimes or discrimination. Additionally, the strength of interviews is that they allow individuals to elaborate on the factors that shape their attitudes about a particular topic, such as the experiences that come to people's minds when they think about the police. Thus, interviews will effectively gauge participants' mental maps and the ways in which they construct meanings regarding their ideas of the police, the extent to which they support and comply with the police, and the social factors or events that contribute to such support.

Recordings of the interviews were transcribed and entered into NVivo 12 software for coding and analysis. During the analysis process, I wrote initial and integrative memos containing analytical notes regarding significant themes. Such themes related to how the participants interpreted their experiences relating to the police and how

they made sense of their police perceptions. These memos assisted with developing analytic ideas, regarding potential patterns and theoretical implications that emerged from the interview transcripts. Additionally, coding was a crucial qualitative research technique that was implemented in the analysis process. Saldaña (2012, p. 3) defines a code as “a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data.” Coding assisted with interpreting participants’ responses and characterizing meaningful patterns across interviews. I implemented initial coding with several interview transcripts, in which I worked closely with the data by inspecting the transcripts “line by line,” thus compiling hundreds of initial codes primarily based on participants’ own language (Charmaz, 2002; Lofland & Lofland, 2006). Then, I utilized focused coding, where I re-examined the initial codes and further specified them as they related to the relevance and importance of this study (Charmaz, 2002; Lofland & Lofland, 2006). I became more selective with the initial codes for the purpose of generating a focused analysis of the data, as it related to the theoretical framework of system justification and the main themes that this study would examine. Such themes include perceptions of safety, police contact and experiences, recent events in the United States, and so on.

Research Site

The data come from in-depth, semi-structured interviews that were conducted with 20 Asian Americans, ten of whom were women (50%) and ten of whom were men (50%). Sixty five percent (65%) of the participants were Chinese, while 25% were

Korean. A very small number of participants were Indian. The participants had a variety of occupational and professional experience, including state jobs, community organization roles, research positions, and teaching positions. Additionally, 65% of the participants received advanced educational degrees. Finally, the majority of the participants (85%) immigrated to the United States at some point in their life (see Appendix D for individual participant demographics).

Table 1. Participant Demographics (N = 20)

Variable	N	Percentage
Sex		
Male	10	50%
Female	10	50%
Age Range		
25 – 29	2	10%
30 – 39	5	25%
40 – 49	6	30%
50+	7	35%
Ethnicity		
Chinese	13	65%
Korean	5	25%
Indian	2	10%
Immigrant Status		
Immigrated to U.S.	17	85%
U.S. Born	3	15%
Highest Educational Level		
College Degree	7	35%
Advanced Degree	13	65%

Each interview lasted for approximately one hour and was audio recorded with the participant’s permission. Individuals were eligible for study inclusion if they identified as Asian American, were at least 18 years old, spoke English, and lived or

worked in the mid-Atlantic region. This research site was selected primarily due to the higher probability of conducting in-person interviews. Initially, I intended for the interview data to be collected in person due to the likelihood of gaining rich analysis that may otherwise be hindered by a virtual format. This includes the ability to recognize non-verbal cues (e.g., body language), ease of establishing rapport, and the higher possibility of avoiding interruptions or distractions resulting from technology use. However, due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and the likelihood that potential participants would be familiar or more comfortable with online platforms, interviews took place either in person or over Zoom. Of the 20 interviews, the majority were conducted over Zoom, except for two interviews that occurred in person.

Recent advances in communication technologies have opened new avenues in conducting qualitative research. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the need to social distance from others, Zoom – a video conferencing platform – has played a large role in qualitative research methods (e.g., conducting interviews). For this study, participants could choose between an in-person or virtual interview. Each participant was given a copy of the consent form but only needed to provide written consent if their interview was in person. For those who participated in virtual interviews, participants gave verbal consent prior to the start of the interview. In-person interviews adhered to COVID-19 safety guidelines, such as mask-wearing and conducting the interview outdoors to minimize risks of potential illness. It was no surprise that many of this study's interviews were conducted over Zoom due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, as well as for convenience and efficiency. For instance, researchers and participants do not need to

commute to interviews and the Zoom software is readily accessible to those who have internet connection (Archibald et al., 2019; Kobakhidze et al., 2021). When social distancing must be implemented, Zoom can be beneficial in developing rapport between researchers and participants, compared to telephone or e-mail communication (Archibald et al., 2019). Additionally, participants may feel more comfortable participating in a virtual interview in their chosen, private setting, which can facilitate rapport with the researcher (Jenner & Myers, 2019; Oliffe et al., 2021).

However, conducting virtual interviews can also present unique challenges to the qualitative research process. A key significance of the qualitative interview process is contextualizing participants' responses alongside their non-verbal cues (e.g., body language, facial expressions), making notes for later analysis and probing the participant for deeper meanings, if needed. Although Zoom allows face-to-face interaction between the researcher and participant, it can still limit the researcher's participant observations, compared to traditional in-person interviews. Additionally, other studies have argued that virtual interviews may pose difficulties in establishing rapport between the researcher and the participant, compared to in-person interviews (Cater, 2011). Since individuals may participate in a virtual interview at their home, distractions may occur, impacting the participant's responses and engagement with the interview (Oliffe et al., 2021).

Interruptions may also occur due to unstable internet connection, which can lead to difficulties in transcribing interviews and may result in incomplete quotes (Archibald et al., 2019; Kobakhidze et al., 2021; Oliffe et al., 2021). Transcriptions can also be affected by limited microphone functionality, which can create difficulties in clearly hearing a

participant's responses and accurately transcribing them. Thus, it is very likely that virtual interviews can impact a participant's responses, compared to if they were being interviewed in person. Despite some of the challenges that were posed by the virtual interviewing format, such adaptations were simply necessary due to the pandemic's presence and the need to respect each participant's personal comfort in the interview process. Overall, virtual interviews were successful for the current study's objectives and provided meaningful, nuanced data.

Participant Recruitment and Interviews

Initially, I received help from my advisor in identifying appropriate individuals for the study and eventually gained additional participants through snowball sampling. I also attempted to recruit participants through my professional network, registered student organizations at the University of Delaware, and local community and religious organizations that focused on the Asian American identity. I circulated flyers and emails that contained succinct details of the research study and my contact information, should individuals be interested in obtaining further information (see Appendix B for recruitment flyer). The participants' confidentiality is protected through the University of Delaware's Institutional Review Board (see Appendix C for IRB/Human Subjects Approval). Pseudonyms are used in place of participants' real names to protect their privacy and identity.

The interview questions focus on participants' ideas of the police, personal experiences with the police, conceptions of personal safety, police brutality events, use of

media, and other major events or experiences that impact the participants' perceptions of the police (see Appendix A for interview guide). These questions assessed whether participants potentially support the police because they idolize them on some level, merely view them as a necessary component of society for the purpose of maintaining public safety, or perhaps another explanation that helps explain police legitimacy in the context of Asian Americans. The main risk or discomfort from this research are that participants may feel emotional discomfort or stress from discussing police and related institutions, particularly police brutality and personal experiences with the police. Participants may also experience emotional discomfort or stress from discussing personal victimization and structural violence, particularly within the Asian American community. Thus, I attempted to alleviate potential discomfort by beginning each interview with broad, unemotional questions which then led up to questions that may elicit more emotional responses. Additionally, I reminded participants that they could skip questions or stop the interview at any time. Participants could also request that the recorder be stopped at any point during the interview, without consequence.

As an Asian American myself, I anticipated that my positionality to those who participated in this research would play a significant role. This included gaining access to the Asian American population and building rapport due to the shared racial identity between myself and the participants. For instance, potential participants may feel more comfortable discussing sensitive topics with me because of our shared racial identity, indicating that there is a sense of trust between us. This would allow me to develop rapport easily with such participants, as well as during interviews. Furthermore, my own

social identity as it is encompassed by multiple characteristics (e.g., gender, race, ethnicity, social class, education) surely impacts the way that I perceive and interpret the data, as coding is subject to my own analytical lens and is impacted by my personal experiences and awareness. As mentioned previously, I attempted to become immersed within the data through initial coding, ensuring that I centered the participants' meaning-making process and what holds most significance to them through their own realities and direct language (Charmaz, 2002).

Chapter 4

PERCEPTION OF NEIGHBORHOOD SAFETY AND POLICE CONTACT

This study's sample has primarily consisted of residents of mid-Atlantic states, most of whom are professors, engineers, or hold similar occupations. Many are also involved with community organizations. Typically, these occupations are socially constructed as respectable and are associated with a middle or upper socioeconomic status. Thus, it has made sense that many of the participants have described their neighborhoods as being safe and having little police presence, as current literature (e.g., Patterson, 1991; Reisig & Parks, 2003; Shaw & McKay, 1942) indicates a correlation between lower socioeconomic status and higher crime rates. Of the 20 participants, 18 have explicitly stated that they feel their current neighborhood is safe (90%). 13 participants expressed that they have experienced minimal personal contact with the police, excluding minor traffic violations (65%). Finally, 8 participants stated that there is minimal police presence in their neighborhood unless the police are directly called (40%).

For instance, Alex describes his own neighborhood as being a "middle-class suburb" where he feels relatively safe. He ties this feeling of safety to the lack of crime present in his neighborhood, which is also associated with a lack of need to report to the police. Similarly, Tim and Susan perceive their neighborhoods as being safe, using

descriptions like “it’s not too bad” and “it’s pretty safe.” When crime does occur in their neighborhoods, many participants stated that such crimes are typically non-violent. In Alex’s case, “domestic disturbances and potentially car accidents” may occur. Both Tim and Susan describe accounts of vandalism happening in their neighborhoods, while Tim recalls an event in which his neighborhood contacted the police to resolve said incident of vandalism.

Earlier studies (Cao et al., 1996; Reisig & Parks, 2000, 2003) have shown that a relationship exists between neighborhoods with disadvantaged structural characteristics (e.g., concentrated poverty, high violent crime rates) and low levels of satisfaction with police. The crimes that these participants describe are not necessarily involved in interpersonal violence, such as robbery, assault, or homicide. Although Tim mentions a time when police patrolled his neighborhood to address vandalism, the crimes that are typically discussed by these participants are likely not associated with a significant need for police.

Furthermore, the data has indicated that participants who feel safe in their neighborhoods and who have not had much contact with the police are more likely to describe positive perceptions of the police. For example, when asked if he has experienced victimization, Tim responded with, “No, not really. I live a very simple life. I never get into trouble.” Tim’s perceptions of the police have generally been positive, describing them as responsive and trustworthy.

Most of the time, non-emergencies, they will ask what happened. Then they say, they will either call me back later on... if there’s nothing they can do about it, whether or not they have a record, or they will ask me to stay there or send someone to come over to the site. And I will say it's not

that bad. Within 10, 15 minutes, the police will come over. So, they're pretty responsive.

Similarly, Susan has described her police contact as being minimal. When describing a direct experience that she did have with police, her perceptions of police remained positive.

I mentioned to you, my limited interactions with policemen are primarily through the car accidents, I do not have too many to mention... so actually my perception is that they have been very courteous and very helpful.

There is some evidence in current literature suggesting a linkage between little police contact and positive perceptions of the police. For example, a National Institute of Justice (2003) report identified police contact as one of the factors influencing public opinion of the police. Specifically, individuals with only informal contacts or no contacts with police held the highest opinions of police performance and officer demeanor. Those with only formal contacts displayed the least positive attitudes toward police (National Institute of Justice, 2003). Additionally, in a study that examines Black and Hispanic attitudes toward police, Dowler and Sparks (2008) found that individuals who experienced police contact and reported an incident were less satisfied with the police. Similar to the National Institute of Justice (2003), this suggests that being in formal contact with the police seemingly affects police perceptions in a negative way. In particular, the inverse connection between little police contact and police legitimacy should be noted; having less police contact is seemingly associated with higher justification of the police. Interestingly, this might suggest that increased rates of police interaction may negatively impact police perceptions. If individuals are more likely to

justify a system (e.g., police) when they have either not interacted or have had very few interactions with said system, this raises concerns about the system's structural nature and how it impacts the society it operates within.

Additionally, the National Institute of Justice (2003) found that prior victimization, especially violent crime victimization, significantly lowered residents' approval of the police. Regarding the participants of this study, many stated that they did not have much personal experiences of victimization except for car accidents or traffic incidents without perpetrators. Furthermore, participants mentioned that such incidents were often the only reason that they had some form of police contact.

Mary: I have very relatively little police encounter overall, other than traffic stops directly related to me. So, I don't have a strong opinion one way or another. I would say if you asked me, perhaps generally, a positive impression [of the police]. Again, it's a very limited data point from myself.

Briana: Eh personally, I don't have that many interactions with police. So, I abide by law... I don't go through lights or things like that, so they don't bother me. I don't bother them.

Rob: I have been stopped by police because of expired tags or maybe driving too slow or didn't make the right turn... things like that. More like traffic related.

Additionally, participants that have described their police contact as mainly occurring from some form of a car accident, have also indicated that such contact consisted of positive elements.

Tim: ...there was one time... I was driving with my daughter to go out to do something and all of a sudden, my car was hit by a stone. Fortunately, the window was closed, so my daughter did not get hurt... So, when I came back, I noticed a state police was there. So, I pulled over and I said 'what happened,' and apparently I was not the only car that got hit by a stone. Then I look at my car, said 'my gosh,' there's this huge dent on the

side of my car on the passenger side... and then actually the police, the state trooper. He went on and did a little search in the area, but of course couldn't find anything because it was dark.

Susan: ...I went into a car accident... and, at the end, it's no fault on both sides, but I was in such a shock that I probably couldn't think straight and then when the police finally came, the police over the phone was trying to, I think it was very courteous, trying to calm me down, ask all the relevant information, making sure it started with 'Are you okay?' I really appreciated that. So, when the other policeman came and asked me what happened and then asked me about whether anyone was coming down, I told him that I called my husband already and then I was going to call the insurance company. And he asked me about towing the car, I said I have no idea. At the end, he actually called the tow truck company for me.

Both Tim and Susan described positive experiences, such that the police were attentive to their issues and wanted to ensure that they were feeling safe. Tim's event appears to be more neutral, not necessarily describing the police contact as particularly positive or negative. However, a lack of negative experiences with the police may also impact an individual's perceptions of whether police are effective and resourceful. As noted previously, Tim primarily believes that the police are responsive and trustworthy, which are both positive characteristics.

Additionally, while Alex describes his own neighborhood as being safe, he also mentions other neighborhoods that he perceives as unsafe and refers to the victimization of Asian-owned businesses. Similar to Alex, Tim describes increased crime activity in other cities as it relates to these same businesses.

Alex: ...people who own restaurants... have a lot of issues with race and robbery and potential disturbances around their shops, and many of them are in statistically high crime areas... You know, if you go on Google, you see a lot of shootings and stuff like that. So when they report crimes, a lot of the time, the owners of the stores, they report to law enforcement agencies and many of them are very slow to react, even if a violent crime has been witnessed, even when there are videos of people, a lot of the

times- at least from the explanation and the perception from the store owner, they feel like the police officers rarely follow through with a lot of these issues.

Tim: I have not witnessed anything, but I have heard constantly that a lot of Chinese takeout restaurants, especially in the... downtown areas, they were robbed at least once. So, I don't know what the rate of those crimes are, but I do know they got robbed at least once.

Alex and Tim provide examples of Asian American experiences with the police, particularly in the small business perspective. Specifically, some individuals experience issues with policing as it relates to reporting crime, such as language barriers and lack of rapport between the community and the police. Although Alex and Tim are describing secondhand accounts of negative police and crime experiences, it highlights how a specific location impacts crime levels and police presence. Thus, being situated in a location with higher crime rates and police presence, which would increase one's likelihood of police interaction, could influence police perceptions in significant ways.

Contrasting with the previous participants who have described positive experiences with and perceptions of police, Danny stood out in that his perceptions were particularly negative. He holds similar characteristics as the other participants, such as having attained a higher education, holding a high-status occupation, and being involved with local community organizations. But one of the major differences that Danny has from the other participants is his location and perception of neighborhood safety. Danny lives in a different city in the same mid-Atlantic state, which he acknowledges has been associated with high crime rates. By stating that there is increased crime activity where he lives, Danny does not perceive a sense of safety compared to the other participants who have displayed more positive feelings relating to their neighborhoods. Additionally,

he describes his neighborhood as “very diverse, very mixed” and notes that there is a “constant cry for more policing,” which seems to be a contentious topic occurring between “middle-upper class White folks and people of color....”

However, Danny disagrees with this call for additional policing in his neighborhood, particularly because his personal experiences with the police have been incredibly negative. He stated, “I do [see the police often.] And my personal experience with [the police] have been just absolutely, I mean, gross. So, I mean, to *me*, they’re not a resource at all.” There are two significant elements of this statement. First, Danny acknowledges that there is an increased police presence in this particular city, which differs from the other participants’ characterizations of their neighborhoods. Second, he makes an interesting connection between police contact and police perceptions or justification, which was briefly mentioned earlier on. To reiterate, it is possible that less police contact may be associated with higher justification of the police. Thus, Danny provides evidence of the “other side” of this proposed statement. Increased police engagement, whether it is through formal contact or having high police presence in one’s neighborhood, may be linked to less favorable evaluations of the police as a system.

It is also important to note that Danny’s victimization experiences appear to be more disturbing and violent compared to the experiences described by other participants.

Let me see, where do I start? So, there was a time when I was walking... a few kids were throwing rocks at me, yelling at me with racial slurs. The police were right there, and they didn’t do anything, you know... One time, an electrical wire which belonged to the city somehow fell and landed on my car, causing damage and scratches. There was a police blocking my block... So, I went up to them and asked if they could take a look at my car and fill out a report, because I need the report to get the repairs... you know, she was very rude and later came with her partner.

Well, I could hear her on the radio referring to me as a ‘Chinaman’ to another policeman. ‘There’s a Chinaman here asking for a police report because a line fell on his car.’

In these descriptions, Danny does not specifically seek out the police, but rather, they were already present at the time of an event, further signaling that the police presence is more significant in his neighborhood. This also indicates the importance of location, such that where one lives and how they perceive the safety of their neighborhood seem to have a significant relation to their police perceptions. Additionally, Danny was discriminated against by police officers, which surely affects his overall police perceptions as it exemplifies the cultural barriers that may exist between Asian Americans and the police. I go into further detail on this theme in Chapter 6, which provides an overview of participants’ police perceptions as they relate to race and the recent increase in anti-Asian hate crimes.

This chapter highlights the correlation between perceived neighborhood safety and police legitimacy. Many of the participants described their neighborhood as being safe and having either little police presence or simply having police officers as neighbors. Any descriptions of crimes were typically non-violent, often referring to theft or vandalism. This is in line with current literature that indicates a correlation between lower socioeconomic status and higher crime rates. Additionally, current literature indicates that a relationship exists between neighborhood characteristics and police satisfaction, specifically that negative structural characteristics are associated with low police satisfaction. Furthermore, many of the participants described having little police contact throughout their life, unless it was for minor traffic violations. Some literature suggests

that having little police contact is associated with higher police satisfaction. Although there were only a small number of participants in the study who did not perceive their neighborhood as safe, these participants also shared that there were higher levels of police presence and were much less satisfied with the police. Overall, physical and social location, particularly as it relates to neighborhood safety and likelihood of police contact, impact police perceptions and legitimacy.

Chapter 5

INDIVIDUALIZING POLICE MISCONDUCT

In terms of legitimizing the police, many participants displayed a tendency of individualizing police misconduct. This contrasts with approaching police misconduct events with a more systemic framework, which has been a key argument in social movements addressing such events. In other words, when one rationalizes individual incidents of police misconduct, they describe such events as being isolated and resulting from individual officers' actions, rather than as being an element of the larger police system as it is currently structured. Many participants empathized with the Black Lives Matter movement and acknowledged systemic racism within policing but would contradict this idea by ultimately individualizing police misconduct. Based on the participants' personal experiences, they still felt that they could trust the police and perceived police brutality events as typically isolated. For example, one of the primary indicators of individualizing police misconduct was when participants referred to officers who committed such actions as "rotten apples." This is a common phrase that argues that most police officers do not engage in misconduct. Additionally, it is often referred to when there is a belief that media outlets are generally concerned with police brutality cases (i.e., the "bad apples"), resulting in a misrepresentation of entire police forces.

Like many of the other participants, Lynn mentions that she has had little police contact throughout her life. However, when describing a police interaction that she did have, particularly related to a car accident, she recalls that it was a primarily negative experience. Although Lynn was not satisfied with this police interaction, she states that it did not negatively influence her overall perceptions of the police.

...again there's always bad apples. So, my one incident over 10 years living here, doesn't really change my outlook on general police officers. I believe they do have their certain colleague and then I'm sure they walk in with the great intention to serve a community. I don't doubt that at all.

With this statement, Lynn associates positive characteristics with the police as a whole and perceives them as being a helpful and necessary service within communities.

Although Lynn's police interaction was unfavorable, perhaps it did not negatively affect her police perceptions or justification because overall, she still had very little police contact. This is a characteristic that she shares with other participants who displayed higher likelihoods of police satisfaction and justification, as it is related to experiencing little police contact.

Additionally, individualization of police misconduct was sometimes associated with the acknowledgement of police officers' emotional states. Specifically, these emotions were referred to when discussing negative media representations of the police, or the stressful environments and exposures to dangers that are commonly present in the police job. For example, some participants described the frustrations that police officers may experience because of how police brutality events are represented in various media outlets.

Tim: Well um, those police officers, *I* know they are frustrated because they didn't do those things. Maybe their colleagues did. But they didn't do it. But they were among those who got blamed, but they still have jobs to do. They still have to go out and risk their lives. So, for that, you know, I feel for them.

Lynn: I mean, they're there for us. That I think everybody understands... Nothing really negative. Sometimes I feel a little bad. Because there's always, any group has a bad apple. And then always, the bad apple gets all the attention.

This exemplifies how participants displayed empathy toward the police and actively “humanized” them, particularly as a form of individualizing police misconduct. Such humanization allows participants to relate to police officers on a personal level and view them as simply another human, rather than as an authoritative figure. Participants illustrated empathy toward the police through statements such as “I feel a little bad,” as well as recognizing that the police job is associated with tremendous risks and dangers. As indicated, both Tim and Lynn are referring to the media portrayals of police when a police brutality event becomes highlighted in the news. They perceive such media representations as being negative during these events and thus, refer to the emotional states of police officers that result from such mainstream representations. Overall, they do not believe that such negative representations are accurate of police officers as an institution.

Police misconduct events are also individualized in ways that indicate that they will inevitably happen at some point. More specifically, they are likely to happen because police officers are human beings who can experience intense emotions and make decisions based on those emotions.

Tim: Um well, it's like everything, you will *not* see zero incidents. You will never see zero police brutality. Police are human beings too. When something happens, they lose their control. Of course, that is not acceptable... they still have jobs to do. They still have to go out and risk their lives. So, for that, I feel for them.

Nicole: They have a tough job, you know... I'm not saying I condone it, but I can see that you know, when they have to make a decision, they have to kind of like, run through the little Rolodex in their mind and say okay, which are the ones that I really need to pay attention? Which are the ones I can kind of relax? I think that if I were in that position, in a situation that calls for quick decision making, you know, it's hard. Once again, I'm not condoning some of the stuff that goes on, by how they can get very out of hand. So, I don't know what the solution is.

Jocelyn: Sometimes I feel like they're in between a rock and a hard place.

By relating police misconduct to the idea of police as “human beings too,” Tim seems to argue that police officers can react in various ways based on their emotional states.

Although he does not condone the idea that police misconduct can result from certain interactions, he acknowledges that this is a likely response. Participants also acknowledged the dangers associated with the police job, which is directly related to their empathy for police officers. Acknowledging that police officers are constantly placed in risky scenarios elicits empathy because for those who are not police officers, we may not be aware of the various nuances and complex decision-making that officers must make in any given situation.

Overall, with regards to humanizing and empathizing with police, there seemed to be this rationale among participants that police officers are inherently risking their life. As a result, this understanding seems to automatically place police officers in a position of authority or respect, with the argument that we need to be thankful for officers' service in our communities even when misconduct events do occur.

Harriet: So to me, I have high respect for the police force. And I know how much danger they have. So, I have a lot of arguments with my own kids about, you know, about the PTSD and so on.

Ralph: I just basically feel that for police officers, they kind of sign up to sometimes put their life in danger to save someone else or to step up to the plate when no one else is willing to in order to keep someone safe, someone else other than themselves. And it's a pretty big job to have.

Participants would seem to implement a sort of “back and forth” process in their thinking where they acknowledged some negative effects of policing, but then went on to state that the police job inevitably comes with risks and dangers that are undeniably hard to navigate. Thus, the process of humanizing and empathizing with police was found to be an incredibly interesting mechanism that contributed to police legitimacy.

This chapter demonstrates the significant ways in which participants individualized police misconduct, as opposed to conceptualizing such events in ways that signify the systemic nature of policing. Individualization of police misconduct was exemplified in the following ways. First, participants described misconduct as isolated events, specifically individual officers’ actions (e.g., “bad apples”). Second, participants referred to emotional states, such that they acknowledged officers’ emotions as they related to negative or dangerous aspects of the police job, or officers’ internalization of and reactions to negative media representations of the police. Emotional states were also connected with the idea that misconduct may occur at some point because “police are human beings too.” This leads to the third point, which is that participants actively humanized or empathized with the police in relation to the immense pressures associated with their job. Thus, it is clear that the processes of individualizing police misconduct were keyways in which police legitimacy remained salient among participants.

Chapter 6

“STOP ASIAN HATE”: CULTURAL BARRIERS BETWEEN ASIAN AMERICANS AND THE POLICE

As mentioned earlier, the recent increase in anti-Asian hate crimes during the COVID-19 pandemic have notably affected Asian Americans’ sense of safety in the United States. It is possible that such events may be tied to a perceived need for additional policing in Asian communities and as a result, would further reinforce police legitimacy. Thus, it was important to understand how participants perceived the police, particularly in relation to racial ethnic identities.

Some participants described that upon arriving to the United States, they carried a sense of fear toward the police based on common negative stereotypes that are associated with American police. In the following examples, the participants immigrated from different countries but demonstrate that American police are typically represented as more powerful, authoritative, and fearful. This is also described in comparisons with participants’ home country police, such as when Jonathan and Malcolm discussed common features of Korean police which contrast significantly.

Stephen: ...coming from India, for various reasons, I used to have hesitation and fear approaching and talking to the police...

Jonathan: It's very authoritative, they have really huge power compared to [Korean police]. Because among Koreans, we have kind of a myth that

we should not move, like even a finger when we're pulled up from the police because they're going to shoot us. And I guess those kinds of depictions of police is like, for us, it's very strict, very powerful. Authoritative. And they could exercise their power whenever they want.

Malcolm: ...because the U.S. police, they have the gun. So, I heard from people when I came to the U.S., if you met a [police officer], you have to follow their orders. If you do not, they're going to shoot me down, pretty much. But in South Korea, they cannot handle the guns but in U.S., they can use the guns. That's pretty much the fear.

Additionally, the participants note that police use of guns and force is a unique feature in the United States that is not common in their home countries. For example, Korean police are considered “powerless” and do not have the same authority as police in the United States. Jonathan also mentions that the media depictions of American police have significantly shaped his perceptions of the police and contributed to his fear. As another example, Rob shares his fears and uncertainties surrounding the police.

I do feel kind of scared to like, when I'm driving and a cop will stop me and I don't know what he's going to do, I don't feel really secure in that situation too. When you hear so many problems in policing, like they would use unnecessary force and things like that, and I feel like sometimes I'm really scared when I'm driving... that's always in the back of my mind. But at the same time, I'm really happy with them to police in our neighborhood to help keep us safe. And so, I don't know what the best way to do it.

Rob highlights a common sentiment among participants that seemed to be conflicting in itself. Specifically, many participants felt some sense of fear toward the police primarily based on misconduct events that have occurred against people of color. However, at the same time, they still felt that the police were important in providing safety for their communities.

Thus, this complex police perception demonstrates a significant issue between citizens and the police, particularly Asian Americans. Even if confidence in the police is maintained, fear of the police is still likely to play an important role in police perceptions and willingness to interact with the police. Research has shown that fear of retaliation and lack of trust in the police will decrease an individual's chances of contacting or cooperating with the police (Messing et al., 2015; Papp et al., 2017). Additionally, it remains a prevalent issue that Asian Americans may be less likely to contact the police and report crimes (e.g., Torres & Vogel, 2001). This is particularly concerning in the face of recent anti-Asian hate crimes, in which many Asian Americans are experiencing violent victimization. Although research on this topic is still relatively new, current findings indicate that Asian American victims of hate crimes are still significantly less likely to report victimization compared to other groups (Lantz & Wenger, 2021).

Therefore, despite the overall positive police perceptions among the participants, it seems that the relationship between Asian Americans and the police ought to be addressed and improved. Racial tensions between people of color and the police are still undeniably prominent, which is illustrated in some participants' reflections of potential police encounters.

Stephen: I think over time, I have become comfortable but to be honest, if I am in a lonely area or somewhere in those kinds of circumstances, you know, like it's night or something and a police person stops me. I think I would be, you know, afraid, I would be a little scared because... the first reaction [from] Americans especially are most of them do not have the awareness about the turban and the long beard so they always- then the color of the skin because they know that I'm neither Black, I'm neither

White. So that's the only two things they seem to understand, anything in between, I have to guess somewhat, they're anxious...

Ellen: ...recently I think, I'm a little more aware of my skin color, and I think I'm making more of an effort to try not to do something that would probably get me into trouble with [the police]... But, you know, it's always been there, when you see a police car, you slow down, or you just, you know, whatever it is, but I guess the media has made me kind of become a little more wary. I definitely tell the children to be a little more careful because though they were born and brought up here, the first thing is skin color. And definitely, you know, we tell them that that would be the first thing they see.

Stephen and Ellen share concerns that specifically relate to their identity as an Indian person. Their primary concerns stem from the reality that police officers are likely to neglect and discriminate against individuals who have a similar skin color or are specifically from their racial community. Additionally, it is important for participants like Stephen and Ellen, that the police can demonstrate cultural awareness and understandings that could then mitigate police misconduct and discrimination against people of color.

Furthermore, participants stated that it was important for the police to effectively represent the Asian American community and understand such cultures. In addition to having negative emotions toward the police (e.g., fear), Asian Americans may not report to the police due to language barriers and other cultural misunderstandings. Thus, participants like Harriet and Ralph argued that a more culturally sensitive policing would be beneficial for Asian American communities.

Harriet: And the police are, again, they're serving the community, they should be representative of the community. So, if they're serving a community that's predominantly Asian, I sure would hope there will be enough representation of Asians on the police force.

Ralph: I think it would be really nice for the police to have more field trainings or have more out of the office trainings where they go to

different parts of the community, like say, Chinatown. And they get to experience the culture there. And you know, just the different things that go on in the Asian community. So, they're also more aware of our culture and of the people and just feel more comfortable as well and maybe establish some trust with that community.

This chapter illustrates participants' perceptions of the relationship between Asian Americans and the police. Cultural barriers are certainly present, along with elements of fear with regards to potential racial discrimination. However, participants still believe that the police are integral in keeping communities safe and highly support reforms that will improve police-Asian American community relations. This can include the police playing a significant role in effectively addressing anti-Asian hate crimes. In addition to discussing the importance of police providing safety for their communities, participants also acknowledged that there are generally "mixed feelings" toward the police as it relates to community trust and rapport. Specifically, racially marginalized communities have complicated relationships with the police and often experience oppression at their hands. Despite this acknowledgement of a more macro-level issue that exists within policing, participants still indicated that they maintained a sense of trust toward the police, or at least expressed a desire to continue trusting the police. Overall, participants conveyed that the police continue to play an important role in serving and protecting our communities.

Chapter 7

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Review of the Project

This study aims to contribute to the existing literature on Asian American perceptions of policing, focusing on how support for the police is constructed. First, police literature involving Asian Americans remains limited. The handful that are present are primarily quantitative studies. The purpose of conducting this qualitative study is to provide insight on the complex social mechanisms that are present in individual perceptions of the police. Second, understanding the factors that influence police support provides more nuance in assessing the consistency of police legitimacy. This is especially important to examine in the recent context of heightened awareness of police brutality and calls for restructuring policing as we are currently familiar with. Despite the significant presence of such messages, police institutions remain permeant. Thus, system justification theory is the most appropriate framework for this study because it examines why people legitimize current institutions, especially when it is not beneficial for their social group. This study also contributes to system justification literature by incorporating Asian American perspectives and the nuances that exist within their lived experiences, as it relates to policing.

Review of Major Findings

The data highlights multiple ways in which police justification plays out among the participants. This includes perception of neighborhood safety, police contact, individualizing police misconduct, and perceptions of the current relationship between Asian Americans and the police. Perceiving one's neighborhood as safe and having little police presence appeared to be associated with positive police perceptions and thus, a higher likelihood of police justification. On the other hand, not feeling safe in one's neighborhood and having increased police presence was seemingly associated with negative police perceptions, or a lower likelihood of police justification. Similarly, little police contact was associated with higher police justification, while increased police contact was associated with lower police justification.

Additionally, many of the participants individualized police misconduct, even alongside acknowledgements of structural issues related to policing, such as systemic racism. With regards to system justification, this seems to present itself as a particular way to justify the existence of police misconduct. By referring to police misconduct as actions of individual police officers, rather than as a part of a concerning structural issue that exists within policing, police brutality acts may then be perceived as simply "the way it is" due to the varying human nature of police officers. This leads to the idea of humanizing or empathizing with police. Such patterns were typically evoked in responses where participants argued that police officers are humans who experience negative emotions while working, particularly because their job is highly dangerous. Additionally, regarding more recent political contexts (e.g., Black Lives Matter), some participants

empathized with the negative emotions of police because they felt that police officers were negatively represented in the media in relation to police brutality events.

Finally, it was important to understand how the participants perceived the relationship between Asian Americans and the police, particularly whether the recent increase in anti-Asian hate crimes had a significant effect. Many of the participants displayed attitudes and concerns that are in line with current literature on race and police. For example, they are fearful of the police to some extent, are concerned with being racially discriminated by the police, and believe that cultural barriers are prominent between Asian Americans and the police. Participants believe that reforms will improve the state of policing, as well as community relations with the police.

Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

Some key limitations are present within this study. It is very likely that location played a significant role in the participants' responses regarding police experiences and justification. Many compared their current location to other states (e.g., California, New York) when discussing minimal police interactions and perceived safety. When examining police legitimacy in the future, it would be highly important to seek out the stories of those who live in larger, more urban areas where Black Lives Matter events and even discriminatory events against Asian Americans have occurred more often.

Additionally, since Danny was the only participant who expressed significantly negative police perceptions, it is difficult to claim that notable patterns exist as it relates to certain police experiences and the likelihood of police legitimacy. For example, we

cannot yet argue that an increase in police interactions will most likely be related to low chances of police legitimacy. Thus, future research ought to closely examine individuals who do not justify the police as an institution and what patterns or characteristics are common among them. This will make a significant and timely contribution to both the police and system justification literature, as we are entering a historical context in which policing is increasingly challenged by the public.

Furthermore, this study was open to any individual who broadly identifies as an Asian American. Of course, this racial group consists of many ethnic groups that each have their own unique experiences relating both to the police and the history of the United States. Therefore, no significant conclusion was reached regarding specific patterns of system justification and police perceptions among particular Asian American groups (e.g., Korean, Chinese, Indian). Future research should also examine specific racial ethnic groups and the extent to which such identities relate to police legitimacy.

The findings of this study contain rich details and complexities regarding police legitimacy among Asian Americans. It addresses key questions of what events and factors influence police perceptions and in turn, the likelihood of continuing to justify policing or not. But there is still much more to learn, both pertaining to the Asian American experience with the police and the overall relationships between racially marginalized groups and the police. Constant developments continue to occur within these topics in the United States and there is no doubt that we will uncover insightful understandings of group dynamics and the persistence of institutions, specifically policing, in the future.

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Appendix A
INTERVIEW GUIDE

Note: Interviews will follow a semi-structured format. Additional probes and follow up questions will be asked, depending on the participant's response. Questions will be adjusted based on the type of engagement.

Please tell me about yourself.

Probes: Ethnicity, age, social class, political affiliation, immigrant status, etc.

What ideas come to mind when you think of the police?

What do you think are the main goals of the police?

Probes: What do you think should be the main goals of the police?
Do the police generally meet these goals?

Have you had any personal experiences with the police? If so, how did that experience go?

Probes: Did this experience change your attitude about the police?
Have your friends or family interacted with the police? If so, how did that experience go?

Have you always thought about police in the same way throughout your life?

Probes: What are some differences between how you think about the police now, compared to when you were younger?
Why have these differences occurred?

What (else) would you say has been influential in shaping your ideas about the police?

How would you describe your neighborhood in terms of safety, police, and crime?

What are your thoughts on recent events that have been considered as an anti-Asian hate crime?

Probes: How has your safety been affected by this recent news?
Are you concerned about these hate crimes in the community that you're living in right now?

Are you concerned about these hate crimes happening to anyone you know?

Where do you typically get your news or hear about news?

Probe: Do you usually watch the news on television or get news from social media?

Recently, there has been a lot of coverage about police brutality. What are your thoughts on this? What does this mean to you?

Probe: When you see the news, how do you think the police are represented?

What does “police reform” mean to you? What are your thoughts on it?

Recently, there has been a lot of coverage about protests against police brutality. What are your thoughts on this?

Probes: How would you describe Black Lives Matter (BLM)?

Have your current ideas about the police been influenced by BLM? How so?

What does “defunding the police” mean to you? What are your thoughts on it?

Probe: Do you think there are services that you can access that do not involve the police?

Have you ever been victimized? That is, a victim of a crime? If so, can you share your experience of the incident(s)?

Probes: Did you report the incident to the police?

How did the police respond to your incident?

Were you satisfied with the way that the police handled your incident?

Think about your local police (i.e., police agencies and officers who serve the area where you live or work). Do you feel that your local police are doing the right things that they are supposed to do?

Probes: Do you think that the local police are trustworthy?

Would you say that in most circumstances, you’re willing to obey the police?

Are you willing to work or cooperate with the police to resolve community problems?

Appendix B

RECRUITMENT FLYER

UNIVERSITY OF DELAWARE STUDY PARTICIPANTS NEEDED FOR STUDY ON ASIAN AMERICAN PERCEPTIONS ON POLICING



ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA:
INDIVIDUALS 18+ YEARS
OLD WHO IDENTIFY AS
ASIAN AMERICAN, SPEAK
ENGLISH, AND LIVE OR
WORK IN DE/PA/NJ/MD

This research is for a Master's Thesis and is affiliated with the Sociology & Criminal Justice Department of the University of Delaware. It has been approved by the UD IRB Human Subjects Division as Study #1770551-1.

This study will explore how Asian Americans perceive the police and how they make those understandings. Examples of interview topics will include police officers, race, use of media, personal experiences with police, and social movements.

Individual interviews will be approximately 60-90 minutes long, are informal, and if permitted, will be audio recorded. No one besides the researcher will have access to any of the information you provide. Your name or any information directly identifying you will not be published in any report.

If you are interested, please email Stephanie Ha to schedule an interview at stephvha@udel.edu. Participation is completely voluntary.

Appendix C

IRB/HUMAN SUBJECTS APPROVAL



Institutional Review Board
210H Hulihan Hall
Newark, DE 19716
Phone: 302-831-2137
Fax: 302-831-2828

DATE: July 29, 2021

TO: Stephanie Ha
FROM: University of Delaware IRB

STUDY TITLE: [1770551-1] The Persistence of Police Legitimacy: Understanding Asian American Perspectives
SUBMISSION TYPE: New Project

ACTION: DETERMINATION OF EXEMPT STATUS
EFFECTIVE DATE: July 29, 2021

REVIEW CATEGORY: Exemption category # (2)

Thank you for your New Project submission to the University of Delaware Institutional Review Board (UD IRB). According to the pertinent regulations, the UD IRB has determined this project is EXEMPT from most federal policy requirements for the protection of human subjects. The privacy of subjects and the confidentiality of participants must be safeguarded as prescribed in the reviewed protocol form.

This exempt determination is valid for the research study as described by the documents in this submission. Proposed revisions to previously approved procedures and documents that may affect this exempt determination must be reviewed and approved by this office prior to initiation. The UD amendment form must be used to request the review of changes that may substantially change the study design or data collected.

Unanticipated problems and serious adverse events involving risk to participants must be reported to this office in a timely fashion according with the UD requirements for reportable events.

A copy of this correspondence will be kept on file by our office. If you have any questions, please contact the UD IRB Office at (302) 831-2137 or via email at hsrb-research@udel.edu. Please include the study title and reference number in all correspondence with this office.

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

www.udel.edu

Appendix D

INDIVIDUAL PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS

Pseudonym	Sex	Age Range	Ethnicity	Immigrant Status	Highest Educational Level
Kailey	Female	50+	Chinese	U.S. Born	Advanced
Stephen	Male	40 – 49	Indian	Immigrated	College
Jonathan	Male	25 – 29	Korean	Immigrated	Advanced
Danny	Male	30 – 39	Korean	Immigrated	Advanced
Mary	Female	40 – 49	Chinese	Immigrated	Advanced
Nicole	Female	50+	Chinese	Immigrated	Advanced
Lily	Female	30 – 39	Korean	U.S. Born	Advanced
Harriet	Female	40 – 49	Chinese	Immigrated	College
Brad	Male	50+	Chinese	Immigrated	College
Lynn	Female	30 – 39	Korean	Immigrated	College
Ellen	Female	40 – 49	Indian	Immigrated	Advanced
Jocelyn	Female	40 – 49	Chinese	U.S. Born	Advanced
Briana	Female	40 – 49	Chinese	Immigrated	Advanced
Rob	Male	50+	Chinese	Immigrated	Advanced
Ralph	Male	25 – 29	Chinese	Immigrated	College
Susan	Female	50+	Chinese	Immigrated	Advanced
Malcolm	Male	30 – 39	Korean	Immigrated	College
Tim	Male	50+	Chinese	Immigrated	Advanced
Alex	Male	30 – 39	Chinese	Immigrated	College
Toby	Male	50+	Chinese	Immigrated	Advanced