

# Officer Race, Role Orientations, and Cynicism toward Citizens

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Communities are heavily reliant upon officers to help maintain order and reduce fear of crime. Officers, however, may construe their roles narrowly as encompassing only law enforcement. They may also develop cynicism toward citizens. The present study examines officers' role orientations and cynicism for variations across officer race. Previous research has delved into officer role orientation, but has not systematically tested for racial differences. No empirical evidence exists with respect to race and cynicism. Findings from a roll-call survey of officers in a municipal police department serving a diverse community show moderate racial differences suggesting Latino and black officers adopt a more expansive role orientation than white officers do. Strong effects emerge for cynicism, with black and Latino officers evincing significantly less negativity. These results suggest that diversifying police agencies may benefit communities in need of police help to reduce fear and strengthen informal controls.

**Keywords** police; officer race; perceptions of citizens; role orientations

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## Introduction

Crime prevention has traditionally been viewed as divided into formal and informal types of social control. The police are the most prevalent, visible embodiment of formal control. Policing in recent history, however, has taken on a more aggressive crime-fighter stance. Rifts opening up between police and disadvantaged communities—particularly those of color—highlight the limits of formal control imposed at the expense of community engagement and collaboration. Officers assigned to beats in distressed urban areas with high rates of crime and disorder may become cynical and develop negative attitudes toward citizens, whom they see as provoking their own victimization (Klinger, 1997). In these areas, victims and concerned residents frequently report feeling that police neglect them, even as many in the same neighborhoods simultaneously report feeling overly surveilled and scrutinized (e.g. Brunson & Miller, 2006a; Gau & Brunson, 2010).

Long-term, sustainable crime prevention requires neighborhoods and communities to have strong mechanisms of self-regulation by which residents actively participate in area safety. The private, parochial, and public levels of control (Hunter, 1985) ultimately interlock in mutual dependence (Bursik & Grasmick, 1993; Carr, 2003). Police need to be responsive to communities and adopt a holistic view of their role to incorporate more than reactive responses to criminal events. Controlling disorder and fear is often as important as enforcing the law (see generally, Lewis & Salem, 1986). The manner in which officers approach their role, and how they treat the citizens who call them for help, materially impacts the extent to which police foster and strengthen informal controls.

Recent years have seen a push for greater racial diversity on police forces. Little is known, however, about how officers' race may affect their occupational attitudes, and even less about such differences in views toward citizens. Some previous research has suggested that race may not matter because on-the-job socialization washes out the demographic differences officers may bring to the job (Paoline, 2001; Paoline & Terrill, 2014; Van Maanen, 1974). In the past, however, officers of color have occupied a token status (see Kanter, 1977) which suppresses minorities' voices and generates an artificial appearance of homogeneity. With recent increases in racial diversity among police (Reaves, 2015), officers of color may be exiting their period of tokenism and forming distinct, independent attitudes. Some research has hinted at the existence of sporadic differences between white and minority officers (see Paoline, Gau, & Terrill, 2016 for a review), but these effects have been inconsistent and hampered by the frequent practice of lumping officers of color together into a single "nonwhite" category.

The present study examines municipal police officers' role orientations and cynicism toward citizens, with an emphasis on how these dimensions may vary across officer race. Data come from an officer survey conducted during roll

calls in a police department serving a mid-sized urban area in South Florida. Officers' role orientations are analyzed to determine if there are racial differences across black, Latino, white, and other officers in the extent to which they endorse law enforcement, order maintenance, or community policing, and in evidence of cynical attitudes.

The results have implications for relationships between police and disadvantaged communities, particularly those of color, in need of stronger support from the police in developing positive police–community partnerships, protecting victims, and boosting informal social control. Race differences in the form of minority officers holding more expansive role orientations and positive views toward citizens could signal important advances in efforts to reconnect police and distressed urban neighborhoods. Absence of differences may mean that officers of color continue to be socialized into dominant (i.e. white) occupational attitudes and are vulnerable to becoming hardened toward the people who lean on them for help. Both the presence and absence of race-based variation have implications for police policy and practice in an increasingly diverse society.

### Formal Controls as necessary for Neighborhoods' Self-Regulation

Many neighborhoods experience crime problems, but crime is not the only (or even the main, in some neighborhoods) defining feature of troubled areas' social landscapes. Residents may experience reduced quality of life arising from fear of crime, the presence of incivilities, isolation from the city at-large, and mistrust in police. In these communities, winnowing the multifaceted policing function down to a narrow focus on law enforcement may be destructive to police–community relationships (e.g. Gau & Brunson, 2010) and misses the opportunity to use policing as a means of mobilizing neighborhoods' self-regulatory capacities for more enduring, sustainable social control.

Drawing from the systemic model of social disorganization (Kasarda & Janowitz, 1974), scholars have argued that social control can be broken down into three spheres: private, parochial, and public (Hunter, 1985). The private sphere consists of the family and close friends in the area, the parochial level contains local neighborhood groups and organizations, and the public sphere is made up of external, governmental agencies. The three levels of control are not mutually exclusive; in particular, public controls are vital in fostering neighborhoods' ability to self-regulate at the parochial level (Bursik & Grasmick, 1993; Carr, 2003).

Neighborhood networks and social ties alone are insufficient to accomplish the task of effective informal social control (Markowitz, Bellair, Liska, & Liu, 2001; Sampson, Raudenbush, & Earls, 1997) and can actually be detrimental to crime-control capacity when they become overly dense such that neighborhood-wide networks are sacrificed in favor of smaller, more isolated groups (Bellair, 1997; Granovetter, 1973; Warner & Rountree, 1997). Moreover,

disadvantaged minority neighborhoods are also not necessarily socially disorganized or lacking any sense of shared understanding about norms and values. Instead, many suffer from isolation caused by deficient ties to surrounding neighborhoods and to the city as a whole (Whyte, 1993; see generally Massey, 1995). Some are characterized by oppositional cultures in which people place a premium of respect earned through one's reputation for toughness and a willingness to employ retaliatory violence (Anderson, 2000). Antisocial values are generally harbored by only a small fraction of the residents of these communities, and the majority of occupants disapprove of the minority's deviant and criminal behaviors (Anderson, 2000), but legal cynicism runs deep and even those who want to put a stop to endemic crime and violence frequently do not call or cooperate with police because they see it as a futile endeavor (Sampson & Bartusch, 1998). What troubled neighborhoods need, then, is not (solely) a greater sense of solidarity among residents but, rather, an infusion of support from the public level.

Researchers have yet to examine the individual-level predictors that may be necessary for officers to provide high-quality support to troubled neighborhoods. Public–parochial partnerships (e.g. neighborhood watch) and policing tactics intended to produce greater volumes of positive encounters between officers and citizens (e.g. foot patrol) first require officers to possess the right mindset for these tasks. If officers view citizens negatively or do not believe citizens have a legitimate role to play in crime reduction, then their willingness to provide effective forms of public controls will be compromised. As such, officers' role orientations and cynicism toward citizens materially affect their capacity to engage in the techniques of formal control that support parochial controls and foster jointly produced reductions in crime, disorder, and fear.

### Officers' Role Orientations

Operational philosophies of police are guided largely by the manner in which officers carry out and prioritize their law enforcement, order maintenance, and community policing roles. While individual officers can vary in their orientation toward different roles (Brown, 1988; Muir, 1977; Paoline, 2004; Paoline, Terrill, & Rossler, 2015), the occupation itself, at different times, can prioritize some roles over others. For the better part of the 20th century, the ideals set forth as part of the professional reform movement included the prioritization of aggressive and efficient crime fighting (Walker, 1977). Independent reviews of police later highlighted the collateral damage of these aggressive crime-fighting approaches in terms of strained police–community relations (Christopher, 1991; President's Commission on Law Enforcement & Administration of Justice's, 1967), especially among communities of color (Kerner Commission, 1968).

The community era of policing promoted a broader role orientation for officers by embracing order maintenance and community policing objectives (e.g. police–community partnerships). The prioritization of lower-level signs of disorder and problematic conditions was geared toward getting at the root causes of neighborhood-level issues, while also mending the fractured relationship between the public and the police (Mastrofski, Worden, & Snipes, 1995). After the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, police agencies across the United States reverted back to aggressive bottom-line, detached, crime fighting approaches (Paoline & Terrill, 2014). Similar to criticisms noted during the professional reform era, strained police-community relations have again prompted independent reviews of police. The President’s Task Force on 21st Century Policing’s (2015), in addressing the causes of the contemporary deterioration of community trust in police, identified concerns over the narrowly focused, crime fighting “warrior mentality” (p. 12). In rebuilding trust and legitimacy in American police, the task force suggested that police embrace a “guardian rather than a warrior mindset” (p. 1). Such an approach aligns with a broader conception of the police role, and more collaborative relationships with the public, like that which was prominent during the community-policing movement (i.e. embracing order maintenance and community policing).

The endorsement of order maintenance<sup>1</sup> and community policing as high priorities represents a more inclusive role orientation. These goals broaden the police role beyond a singular emphasis on crime fighting and seek to reduce fear and promote quality of life. A community (guardian) approach can help reduce perceived incivilities and fear, and enhance social solidarity. Feeling strongly connected with police through police–community partnerships can dampen fear of crime and perceptions of incivilities (Reisig & Parks, 2004). Foot patrol and other tactics that increase the number of positive contacts between officers and residents has been shown to reduce fear (Moore & Trojanowicz, 1988; Weisburd & Eck, 2004). Moreover, the benefits of community approaches are not limited to citizens—officers aligned with such approaches express more positive attitudes about serving the public (Myhill & Bradford, 2013). The reduction of social and physical incivilities, likewise, can suppress fear and encourage citizens to engage in more outdoor activities (Wilson & Kelling, 1982). Use of public spaces facilitates informal social control by creating a network of “eyes upon the street” that serves as a protective buffer against crime and victimization (Jacobs, 1961, p. 35). Order

1. The order-maintenance role orientation is distinct from order-maintenance policing strategies such as those seen in New York City and other cities which have embarked upon disorder-reduction campaigns largely revolving around the widespread use of pedestrian and vehicle stops (and, sometimes, accompanying frisks). Order-maintenance policing (also known as zero-tolerance or broken-windows policing) has come under fire as racially discriminatory (Gelman, Fagan, & Kiss, 2012) and procedurally unjust (Gau & Brunson, 2010). The order-maintenance role orientation is not an endorsement of aggressive, stop-based tactics; rather, it taps into officers’ beliefs about whether officers should (or should not) get involved in matters involving nuisance offending, disputes, or other matters that pertain more to the public peace than to crime fighting.

maintenance and community policing objectives may be integral to public–parochial partnerships and officers’ positions as pillars supporting informal social control.

### Cynicism toward Citizens

Burnout and cynicism are endemic problems in the police occupation. While always being on guard in the presence of citizens is an occupational necessity taught to prevent officers from being taken by surprise (Skolnick, 1994), some officers come to view citizens as untrustworthy and undeserving. Perceptions that rules are overly restrictive and supervisors and the management unfairly scrutinize officers’ street behavior contributes to a general cynical outlook (Niederhoffer, 1969). Cynicism is linked with negative behaviors, such as becoming overly forceful toward citizens or withdrawing entirely and trying to avoid interacting with them at all (Muir, 1977).

Officers working beats saturated with crime and disorder sometimes develop a callousness toward victims, viewing most as having brought the negative event upon themselves or as criminals themselves who finally got what they had coming. Independent of workload, this cynical view about victims leads officers to approach crimes in high-crime areas with less vigor. Arrest rates (with crime as the denominator) may be lower in high-crime areas relative to low-crime ones because officers working socially tumultuous beats develop a higher tolerance for crime (Klinger, 1997).

The normalizing of crime and the belief that victims tend to be deserving of their fate (Klinger, 1997) may help explain the seeming paradox between underpolicing and overpolicing in disadvantaged minority neighborhoods. At the same time that people of color report feeling harassed, surveilled, and scrutinized for their every move (Brunson & Miller, 2006b; Gau & Brunson, 2010), they accuse police of failing to respond quickly to serious crimes and protect victims (Brunson & Gau, 2015; Brunson & Miller, 2006a). Even people of color in high-crime areas who harbor negative attitudes toward police want more (and better) police protection (Brunson & Gau, 2015; Carr, Napolitano, & Keating, 2007). Improved services might not be forthcoming, though, because officers working the area have become emotionally hardened toward residents.

### Occupational Attitudes among Officers of Color

Empirically, very little is known about minority officers’ attitudes toward the occupation or toward citizens. The research that has been done is largely specific to a single race, such as investigating black officers’ unique interpersonal dynamics with black citizens (e.g. Alex, 1969). There has not been systematic inquiry into minority officers’ role orientations or perceptions of citizens, or how officers of color compare to white officers on these

dimensions. Similar to research into minority citizens' views about police (Weitzer, 2014), there is particularly stark neglect of Latino police officers' experiences and beliefs. Research that has included officer race as a predictor (usually as a statistical control) of occupational attitudes has uncovered some differences, but they are inconsistent.

For example, dichotomizing officer race as white-versus-nonwhite, Paoline, Myers, and Worden (2000) found that nonwhite officers in one of two departments were more supportive of order maintenance and community policing and less supportive of aggressive tactics and selective enforcement of the law. In the other department under examination, there were no race-based role-orientation differences and the only race effect that emerged showed nonwhite officers to be more (not less) supportive of selective enforcement. There were no differences between nonwhite and white officers' opinions about crime fighting, citizen cooperation, or distrust.

In a more recent examination of officers' occupational attitudes, Paoline et al. (2015), utilizing survey data of patrol officers from six agencies, found that nonwhite officers (compared to their white counterparts) were less inclined toward the law-enforcement role, while more favorably disposed to community policing objectives and top management. The authors reported no race differences for job satisfaction and order maintenance role orientation. Conversely, Johnson's (2012) analysis of survey data of 293 officers from 11 Southwest police department revealed that African American officers reported higher levels of job satisfaction compared to whites and Latinos, while whites and Latinos did not statistically differ from one another. In another study utilizing the aforementioned Paoline et al. (2015) data from six police agencies, Gau, Terrill, and Paoline (2013) found that nonwhite patrol officers expressed higher aspirations for promotion and expected rank at retirement compared to their white occupational peers.

Absence of strong, consistent race effects in previous literature may be a product of socialization and resultant cultural processes whereby officers teach (and learn from) one another regarding the ways to effectively deal with the conditions and strains of the job (Paoline & Terrill, 2014; Van Maanen, 1974). In this sense, what one brings to the police occupation (e.g. race, sex, education) may be washed away and/or less important in shaping orientations compared to other facets (e.g. when and where an officer works). One's assigned area of patrol (i.e. high versus low crime and disorder) and shift (i.e. day versus night) have been shown to influence the various ways in which officers view external (and internal) facets of their occupation (Paoline, 2001).

In recent years, police agencies nationwide have become more racially diverse (Reaves, 2015; Sklansky, 2006), much of it spurred by pressures for local police forces to be more demographically similar to the communities they serve. In 2013, approximately 27% of sworn officers in municipal and county agencies were minorities, up from a mere 15% in 1987 (Reaves, 2015). Consistent with the notion of tokenism (Kanter, 1977) and viable minorities (Roper, 1980; Valenti & Downing, 1975), we suggest that racial differences may be

emerging as officers of color gain sufficient representation to establish themselves as independent groups rather than token members of the dominant (i.e. white) group. As such, their attitudes toward the occupation and toward citizens may be diverging from those of white officers.

### Current Study

This study proceeds from the premise that police play a vital role in fostering informal social control through community partnerships and efforts to reduce fear and incivilities. Their attitudes toward these activities may materially affect the manner in which they approach their job duties and the citizens who rely upon them in times of need. Positive feelings about community policing and more compassion (less cynicism) directed at citizens who call the police for assistance is critical to a long-term strategy of promoting informal social control, especially in disadvantaged communities facing serious obstacles to self-regulation.

While the research is too sparse and conflicting to offer a basis for formal hypotheses about race effects, we tentatively advance the prediction that officers of color will manifest different occupational role orientations and cynicism toward citizens compared to their white counterparts. A limited quantity of evidence from previous research has uncovered a similar trend (Paoline et al., 2000). However, there are reasons to be skeptical that racial variation will emerge. As reviewed previously, occupational socialization is a powerful homogenizing force that may erase whatever racial (and other demographic) variation that may have existed among officers prior to the start of their police careers (Paoline, 2001; Paoline & Terrill, 2014; Van Maanen, 1974). The present study offers a contemporary test to determine whether officers' racial backgrounds stand out as significant attitudinal predictors or, conversely, whether race is overshadowed by other factors, presumably on-the-job socialization. These research questions can be framed as two competing hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: Racial differences will emerge, with officers of color endorsing order maintenance and community policing more than white officers do, and expressing less cynicism toward citizens compared to white officers.

Hypothesis 2: There will be no racial difference in role orientation or cynicism, suggesting that socialization is the primary determinant of officers' occupational attitudes.

We expand upon prior research, too, by breaking minority officers out into black, Latino, and other nonwhite racial groups. Much of the research using race as a predictor of occupational attitudes treats it merely as a control variable and codes it as white/nonwhite, an operationalization that obscures important variation between different racial groups. In a time of expanding racial diversity in policing, individual racial groups may be gaining sufficient

traction to shed their token status (Kanter, 1977) and become viable subgroups (Roper, 1980) with their own set of attitudes and behaviors. Racial differences in role orientation and cynicism could foretell material changes to the policing landscape as local agencies become increasingly representative of communities.

## Methods

### Study Setting

The present data were drawn from a survey of sworn officers in the West Palm Beach, Florida Police Department (WPBPD). According to the US Census Bureau, the city of West Palm Beach is home to approximately 107,000 residents. The city is 32.5% black, 22.6% Hispanic/Latino, and 56.7% white. Its Hispanic/Latino population is similar to that seen in Florida as a whole, but it has a substantially larger percentage of black residents compared to the state's 16.0%, and a smaller percentage of white locals (75.0% statewide). The city evinces a high degree of racial and economic segregation. For example, census tracts range from having no black residents to being approximately 94% black, the median income spans a low of \$6,964 to a high of \$137,604, and the percentage of households receiving public assistance ranges from none to 45%.

The WPBPD is also relatively diverse, compared to other municipal departments. At the time of the Law Enforcement Management and Administrative Statistics (Law Enforcement Management & Administrative Statistics [LEMAS], 2013) survey, the WPBPD employed 228 sworn, full-time personnel, of whom 82 (35%) were black, Latino, or part of another nonwhite group (e.g. Asian). This percentage puts minority representation well past Kanter's (1977) estimate that a minority group exits token status at 15% representation, and even slightly beyond the stricter 33% threshold approximated to be the point at which numerical minorities become viable (Gau, 2016). The WPBPD's diversity also compares favorably to the 27% minority composition of other municipal agencies nationwide (Reaves, 2015).

The WPBPD is larger than most departments; comparison to the LEMAS data shows that it is in the top 75%, well past the mean of 38 and median of 9 (see also Reaves, 2015). Nevertheless, there are approximately 250 municipal departments nationwide that have 200 or more sworn personnel (LEMAS, 2013), so the study agency is by no means an outlier. Using a larger department serving an urban area in a racially diverse city allows us to capture racial variation in officers' responses. More homogenous (i.e. whiter) departments would not permit a detailed analysis of between-race differences. Given that fifty-four percent of police officers nationwide are employed in agencies serving populations of 100,000 or more (Reaves, 2015), the findings have generalizability at the officer level.

## Methods and Data

The 89-item survey of officers was designed to capture perceptions of the work climate, as well as a variety of internal and external facets of the occupation. The survey also gathered information on officers' background characteristics. All sworn personnel of varying ranks (i.e. line and middle manager) and assignments (i.e. patrol, special operations, and investigations) who had high-frequency contacts with the public were included in the target population. The administration of the survey took place during roll-call sessions at the beginning of officers' assigned shift during a one-week period in July, 2016. Project staff administered the survey at the start of each of the four primary patrol shifts (5:30 am, 7:30 a.m., 5:00 p.m., and 7:00 p.m.), as well as during two additional shifts for investigators (2:00 p.m.) and special operations (8:15 a.m.). At each of the roll calls, researchers gave a brief overview of the aims of the survey, explained that participation was voluntary, described human subject protections, and assured confidentiality. Officers returned their completed surveys to project staff before the end of each roll call.

At the time of the survey, there were 271 non-command staff officers,<sup>2</sup> which represented the population to be queried. After accounting for officers' scheduled or unscheduled days off, training and court obligations, injuries, suspensions, and other roll-call absences, there were 204 officers physically present to be surveyed, of whom 203 participated. This resulted in a response rate of 99.5% of those present at the survey's administration, and 74.9% of the official count of sworn personnel in the department. The present study employs the responses from the 149 officers who reported having street-level assignments. This ensured that only those with consistent contact with the public were included in the analyses. Most of these respondents were in patrol (65.8%), and the remainder were in investigations (14.1%) and special operations (20.1%).

## Variables

### *Dependent variables*

There are four dependent variables in the present analyses. The first three measure officers' role orientation using scales consisting of three items each. Respondents reported their attitudes toward each orientation item on 4-point

2. Specifically, the WPBPD employs 221 officers at the patrol rank, 36 sergeants, and 14 lieutenants. In terms of command staff, there were seven captains, two assistant chiefs, and one chief.

Likert scales (i.e. “agree strongly,” “agree somewhat,” “disagree somewhat,” and “disagree strongly”)<sup>3</sup>. Responses were reverse coded so that higher values represent greater endorsement of each role orientation (Full item wording and factor loadings are located in Appendix A). *Law-enforcement orientation* tapped into officers’ beliefs that police should confine their activities to handling serious crimes and should present a detached demeanor (Cronbach’s  $\alpha = .468$ ).<sup>4</sup> *Order-maintenance orientation* measured respondents’ perceptions about whether police should be required to do something about social and physical disorder ( $\alpha = .641$ ). *Community-policing orientation* represented the extent to which officers endorsed police–community partnerships and co-production ( $\alpha = .822$ ). These scales, and the survey items used to construct them, have appeared in previous research into officers’ occupational attitudes (Cochran & Bromley, 2003; Engel & Worden, 2003; Ingram et al., 2013; Paoline, 2001; Paoline & Terrill, 2005; Paoline et al., 2000; Sun, 2003; Terrill, Paoline, & Manning, 2003).

The fourth dependent variable is *cynicism toward citizens*. This four-item index captures officers’ attitudes about whether people who call the police for help have problems worthy of police time and whether crime victims bring it on themselves ( $\alpha = .640$ ). Each item in the index was measured on a 4-point Likert scale (i.e. “agree strongly,” “agree somewhat,” “disagree somewhat,” and “disagree strongly”), so higher values represent more cynicism. These survey items were created to represent the core precepts of police cynicism, which revolve around victim deservedness and frustration about being required to handle non-crime calls (see generally Klinger, 1997; Niederhoffer, 1969). The three role-orientation variables are included as independent variables in the model predicting cynicism in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of the occupational attitudes that may influence officers’ views of citizens.

3. The number of response items (i.e. four and higher), as well as the decision to include a neutral response, has been the subject of much academic discussion without a definitive resolution (e.g. Allen & Seaman, 2007; Boone & Boone, 2012; Borgers, Hox, & Sikkel, 2004; Cummins & Gullone, 2000; Garland, 1991; Krosnick et al., 2002; Leung, 2011; Raaijmakers, Van Hoof, ‘t Hart, Verbogt, & Vollebergh, 2000). Our choices to include four response categories without a “neutral” option were driven by past empirical police research (e.g. Ingram, Paoline, & Terrill, 2013; Paoline, 2004; Paoline & Terrill, 2014; Terrill & Mastrofski, 2002; Weisburd, Greenspan, Hamilton, Williams, & Bryant, 2000; Worden, 1989), although we acknowledge the validity of other approaches. We thank an anonymous reviewer for this insight.

4. The low alpha for the law-enforcement scale is typical of similar scales used in previous research (e.g. Gau et al., 2013; Paoline & Gau, 2016). It could be that more than three items are needed to ensure content validity; Cochran and Bromley’s (2003) 13-item scale had an alpha of .76. The present scale, though, is an improvement over single-item measures seen in much previous work (e.g. Engel & Worden, 2003; Ingram et al., 2013; Paoline, 2004).

### *Independent variables*

The independent variable of interest in all analyses is race. Race is coded as a series of dummy variables measuring whether respondents self-identify as *black*, *Latino*, *other non-white* (e.g. Asian, Native American, biracial) or *white*. In the regression analyses, *white* is omitted as the reference category so that officers of color may be compared against whites on the attitudinal items.

To account for the potential impact of officers' workload and the volume of their exposure to unpleasant and perilous incidents, a *crime and disorder* scale is included in the model. This scale consists of eight questions querying officers about the frequency with which social disorder, physical disorder, and crime occurs on their beats ( $\alpha = .885$ ). The survey directed officers to answer these questions in reference to their regularly assigned beats in order to capture the aspects of their immediate work environments. Officers working more troubled beats are at elevated risk for cynicism (Klinger, 1997). The disorder and crime items used here were drawn from previous research on incivilities and disorder (e.g. Gau & Pratt, 2008, 2010).

Several control variables are included in the models. Controls were selected on the basis of previous research demonstrating their effect on officer attitudes (see, for example, Dantzker, 1997; Gau et al., 2013; Ingram et al., 2013; Paoline et al., 2000; Telep, 2011; Worden, 1990; Zhao, Thurman, & He, 1999). Perceptions of support by *top management* tapped into officers' beliefs that commanders in the agency commended officers for outstanding performance and handled internal disciplinary matters fairly ( $\alpha = .828$ ). The three scale items are 4-point Likert scales coded such that higher values represent more positive assessments of support. Prior research, utilizing these same survey items, shows that officers' perceptions of organizational support significantly shape their attitudes toward the job (Gau et al., 2013; Sun, 2002) and their behavior (Terrill & Paoline, 2015; Terrill et al., 2003). *Patrol assignment* (patrol = 1; other assignment = 0) was included to control for possible exposure differences between those working the street and those with more specialized duties that do not entail answering calls for service. A *night shift* dummy variable (night = 1; day or both = 0) accounts for possible differences between those working nights—typically a more busy and dangerous shift—compared to those who only work days or who alternate between the two. Demographic controls include respondents' *sex* (male = 1; female = 0), *education* (a 7-point ordinal scale ranging from "high school diploma or GED" to "graduate degree"), and *experience* (measured continuously as years employed in the current agency, plus any years previously put in at a different department).

## Analytic Plan

The four dependent variables used here are continuous, so ordinary least squares (OLS) regression was chosen as the analytic strategy. Three variables were normally distributed. The only one that displayed nonnormality was *community-policing orientation*, which was negatively skewed due to a fairly high level of support for community partnerships among most officers. As a check on the robustness of the results for this dependent variable, the model was run using the natural log of this dependent variable. No substantive changes emerged, so the variable was retained in its original units to avoid the interpretation problems created by log transformations (Allison, 1999).

## Results

Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics for all dependent and independent variables in the analysis, and Table 2 shows the correlations between the primary variables. *Beat disorder and crime* is included as well; it is a control variable, but has theoretical relevance to cynicism and so is displayed in the correlation matrix. Several correlations were statistically significant and two were substantively strong as well. Cynicism toward citizens was associated with more endorsement of the law-enforcement role orientation ( $r = .401$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and was inversely related to endorsement of the order-maintenance role ( $r = -.322$ ,  $p < .01$ ). No correlations were high enough to raise the

**Table 1** Descriptives

Variable	Min.–Max.	Mean (SD)
Race		
Black	0–1	.11
Latino	0–1	.16
Other nonwhite	0–1	.06
White	0–1	.67
Law enforcement	3–12	6.85 (1.57)
Order maintenance	3–12	7.69 (1.73)
Community policing	3–12	10.56 (1.54)
Cynicism	4–16	9.92 (2.09)
Top management	3–12	7.83 (2.29)
Disorder and crime	8–32	28.03 (3.96)
Male	0–1	.87
Education	1–7	3.87 (MD = 4)
Experience	0–32	12.28 (8.66)
Patrol assignment	0–1	.53

**Table 2** Correlations between primary variables in the analysis

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
(1) Law enforcement	1.000				
(2) Order maintenance	-.170*	1.000			
(3) Community policing	-.217**	.174*	1.000		
(4) Cynicism	.401**	-.322**	-.067	1.000	
(5) Beat disorder and crime	.065	.112	.018	.185*	1.000

\* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ .

possibility of multicollinearity. (Variance inflation factors and tolerances were examined in the regression models, as well, and no signs of multicollinearity were present.)

A series of ANOVAs were run to test for race differences across the dependent variables. Interestingly, little variation emerged across race for the role-orientation items. There were no significant differences in means for law-enforcement orientation ( $F = 1.877$ ,  $p > .05$ ) or order-maintenance orientation ( $F = 1.495$ ,  $p > .05$ ). The mean differences on the community-policing scale fell shy of significance at .05 but was significant at .10 ( $F = 2.323$ ,  $p = .076$ ), with black officers' mean (11.27) standing out slightly from other races' means and the total group mean. This is not wholly unexpected from an occupational socialization perspective, which would posit that individual-level demographics, and their influence on perceptions of the police role, are diluted as part of "group" thinking and coping process (Paoline, 2001; Paoline & Terrill, 2014; Van Maanen, 1974).

The ANOVA for *cynicism toward citizens*, by contrast, revealed significant and noteworthy racial differences ( $F = 8.778$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Whites' mean cynicism score (10.42) was noticeably higher than that of any other racial group. *Post hoc* Bonferroni tests confirmed that it was statistically significantly higher than both blacks' (8.72) and Latinos' (8.87) means. The other nonwhite group did not stand out, which may have been a function of this category containing a small number of people of different races. At the bivariate level, then, it appeared that although officers' race is largely unrelated to their role orientations, race is a dividing line when it comes to viewing citizens through a negative lens. Officers of color may be more open to handling a variety of citizen problems and have a lower tendency to see them as unworthy. These are bivariate relationships, however, and it remains to be seen whether race effects will endure (or emerge) at the multivariate stage.

Table 3 shows the results for the three OLS models examining role orientations. The law-enforcement model was not statistically significant ( $F = 1.350$ ,  $p > .05$ ) and explained only 10% of the variance in this attitudinal dimension. The only race category that came close to statistical significance was Latino, which barely missed the .05 threshold ( $B = -.169$ ,  $p = .057$ ). Latino officers

**Table 3** OLS regression models predicting role orientation

Predictor	Role orientation					
	Law enforcement		Order maintenance		Community policing	
	<i>b</i> (SE)	<i>B</i>	<i>b</i> (SE)	<i>B</i>	<i>b</i> (SE)	<i>B</i>
Race						
Black	-.177 (.391)	-.027	.307 (.381)	.069	1.047** (.401)	.233
Latino	-.657 <sup>†</sup> (.342)	-.169	.929** (.333)	.233	.717* (.350)	.179
Other	.461 (.563)	.072	.886 (.548)	.134	.970 <sup>†</sup> (.577)	.146
Beat disorder and crime	.005 (.037)	.012	.086* (.036)	.207	.032 (.038)	.076
Top management	-.089 (.056)	-.138	.058 (.055)	.087	-.010 (.058)	-.014
Male	.607 <sup>†</sup> (.364)	.145	-.314 (.354)	-.073	-.332 (.373)	-.077
Education						
AA only	.246 (.327)	.075	-.948** (.318)	-.281	.048 (.335)	.014
BA or higher	.153 (.300)	.051	-1.038** (.292)	-.340	.420 (.308)	.136
Experience	.003 (.015)	.017	.016 (.015)	.096	.008 (.015)	.045
Patrol assignment	-.226 (.273)	-.073	.293 (.266)	.092	-.001 (.280)	.000
Night shift	.116 (.277)	.039	.102 (.270)	.033	-.186 (.284)	-.060
Constant	6.773*** (1.297)	—	5.159*** (1.262)	—	9.487*** (1.329)	—
<i>N</i>	144		144		144	
<i>F</i>	1.350 ns		2.757**		1.524 ns	
<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	.101		.187		.113	

\* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* $p < .001$ ; <sup>†</sup> $p < .10$ .

expressed less endorsement of the law enforcement orientation than their white counterparts did.

The order-maintenance model explained 19% of the variance and the model achieved statistical significance ( $F = 2.757$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Compared to whites, Latinos emerged as the racial group most supportive of police getting involved in nuisances, disputes, and other non-criminal or low-level matters. The slope was both statistically significant and substantively meaningful ( $B = .233$ ,  $p < .01$ ). (A supplementary analysis using blacks as the reference category showed no statistically significant differences between them and Latinos.) We have no basis for speculating as to why Latino officers appear uniquely predisposed toward order maintenance, but this finding is consistent with the prediction that officers of color (at least certain groups) accept a more inclusive definition of the police role. Latino officers appear less likely to believe that

police should confine themselves to enforcement of criminal laws, and more open to using their authority to assist citizens in diverse sets of circumstances.

The community-policing model explained just 11% of the variance in this orientation and failed to achieve statistical significance ( $F = 1.524$ ,  $p > .05$ ). Even so, black and Latino officers' community-policing attitudes were significantly higher than whites' were, and both slopes were substantively robust in addition to being statistically significant ( $B_{black} = .233$ ;  $B_{Latino} = .179$ ). The other nonwhite group also appeared more positive toward community policing relative to white officers ( $B = .146$ ), though this slope's significance level only reached the .10 threshold ( $p = .095$ ).

Overall, in contrast to some previous research (e.g. Paoline et al., 2000, 2015; Worden, 1990), we find evidence of officer-race effects. Differences emerge for the more discretionary policing functions where individualized approaches and styles might be expected to surface. Here, Latino officers endorsed order maintenance more than white officers did, and both black and Latino officers felt more favorably disposed toward community policing compared to white officers. For the law-enforcement role, which is a prime focus of the 21st century or post-9/11 era of policing, officers of all races are statistically indistinguishable from one another (Latinos being a tentative exception). In other words, it may be that minority officers continue to be socialized (along with white officers) into a pro-law enforcement orientation, but that they simultaneously continue to break from whites in their support of also addressing disorder and forming partnerships.

Results of the final model, predicting cynicism toward citizens, are located in Table 4. The three role-orientation scales were included as independent variables to guard against spuriousness. This model demonstrated remarkable strength, with 43% variance explained ( $F = 6.760$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Race effects stood out, with blacks and Latinos significantly less cynical than whites. The standardized slopes revealed robust inverse relationships ( $B_{blacks} = -.261$ ;  $B_{Latinos} = -.238$ ). This suggests that officers of color harbor much less negativity toward citizens and are more willing to see them as worthy of help, including for matters not involving serious crimes. Officers of color, then, may be well suited to the task of promoting healthy police–community relationships and aiding informal social control by making citizens feel that they can count on the police. We will return to this point in the discussion section.

While not of central importance to the present study, the effects of role orientation on cynicism are worthy of mention. Not surprisingly, law-enforcement orientations are associated with significantly greater cynicism ( $B = .345$ ,  $p < .001$ ). These two sets of attitudes align along the dimension of construing the police job narrowly and feeling frustrated at having to handle incidents they feel are outside that scope. Order-maintenance role orientations were inversely associated with cynicism ( $B = -.288$ ,  $p < .001$ ), which is consistent with the interpretation that officers who feel a sense of responsibility over non-criminal matters are more willing to help citizens deal with various types of problems and to not develop victim-blaming habits. The positive

**Table 4** OLS regression model predicting cynicism toward citizens

Predictor	<i>b</i> (SE)	<i>B</i>
Race		
Black	-1.587** (.457)	-.261
Latino	-1.313** (.414)	-.238
Other	-.907 (.652)	-.101
Law enforcement	.479*** (.100)	.345
Order maintenance	-.395*** (.104)	-.288
Community policing	.212* (.100)	.157
Beat disorder and crime	.077 <sup>†</sup> (.043)	.134
Top management	-.127 <sup>†</sup> (.065)	-.140
Male	.621 (.419)	.107
Education		
AA only	-.629 (.391)	-.136
BA or higher	-.495 (.365)	-.119
Experience	-.004 (.018)	-.015
Patrol assignment	.560 <sup>†</sup> (.315)	.128
Night shift	.062 (.844)	.015
Constant	6.282** (1.956)	—
<i>N</i>	142	
<i>F</i>	6.760***	
<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	.427	

\* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* $p < .001$ ; <sup>†</sup> $p < .10$ .

relationship between community policing and cynicism ( $B = .157$ ,  $p < .05$ ) is puzzling at first glance, but may be explained by the fact that the community-policing items in this survey tapped into partnerships. It could be that officers' support of citizen involvement in crime prevention and control could be part of a larger belief that citizens need to take on a greater chunk of the responsibility for public safety and stop relying on the police to do the bulk of it. In sum, while analytical models explaining variation in role orientations produced little in the way of consistent predictors, including (but not limited to) officer race, they were instrumental in helping to explain variation in officers' cynicism toward citizens.

## Discussion

This study analyzed police officers' role orientations and cynicism toward citizens in an effort to discern potential racial differences in these attitudinal dimensions. Some race-based variation emerged across role orientations. Officers of color did not differ from white officers in terms of viewing law enforcement as a central feature of the police job. Latino officers differed

significantly from whites in their support for order-maintenance activities such as handling disputes. Black and Latino officers were also significantly more enthusiastic about community policing than white officers were, but this finding is tempered by the fact that the total variance explained by this model was not statistically significant and thus the results remain preliminary. Thus, while replication of these analyses is needed before firm conclusions can be drawn, what emerged in the present analysis was a series of race effects setting black and Latino officers apart from their white colleagues in terms of having a more expansive role orientation.

Marked race effects were seen in the model predicting cynicism toward citizens. When queried regarding whether citizens who call the police deserve help or whether victims bring it on themselves, black and Latino officers were substantially more likely to reject these viewpoints, while whites displayed a greater endorsement of them. Even controlling for role orientation, other occupational attitudes, and officers' self-assessments of their beat-level crime and disorder, race emerged as a strong predictor of (lack of) cynicism toward citizens.

The main conclusion flowing from the present study is that black and Latino officers seem to view citizens more favorably than white officers do. They are significantly more likely to believe that victims deserve police assistance and that they are genuinely helping people when they answer calls for service. Previous research suggests that officers who become cynical may be less responsive to victims and less likely to arrest perpetrators when they judge victims harshly (Klinger, 1997). Non-enforcement of the law can lead to a loss of faith in the police among residents of distressed neighborhoods; they might stop calling the police for help or to provide information because they do not see any point in doing so (Sampson & Bartusch, 1998).

Interpreted in light of theory and research pertaining to the relationship between formal and informal social control, these findings indicate that black and Latino officers may be uniquely important to fostering the reliable public support that allows parochial social control to thrive. Carr (2003) described how citizens rely upon the police to help them engage in surveillance and control. For instance, most citizens do not feel comfortable personally intervening when they see a suspicious person or interpersonal altercation in the neighborhood. In these situations, they need to be able to rely upon police (Carr, 2003). If the officers who respond to their calls for service take a long time to arrive and display disinterested and uncaring demeanors, citizens will feel shut out and disconnected (Brunson & Gau, 2015). At its most extreme, failure to attend to the needs of crime victims can contribute to the persistence of a self-help ideology that supports the use of retaliatory violence partially out of the belief that going to the police is futile (Anderson, 2000).

The results of this study lend themselves to policy implications. First, they provide empirical support for the wisdom regarding the benefits of hiring more officers of color to serve racially diverse communities, which has been echoed in prior recommendations to police agencies dating back to the Kerner

Commission (1968). It must be said that this is not a panacea that will automatically improve race relations. There is ambivalence among people of color as to whether minority officers communicate better and are less prone to aggressive or abusive behavior when working in minority neighborhoods (Brunson & Gau, 2015; Weitzer, 2000). Black officers, in particular, frequently receive negative reactions from black citizens who see them as traitors (Alex, 1969).

Nonetheless, previous research suggests that, controlling for citizen resistance, black officers use lower levels of force against black suspects than white officers do (Paoline et al., 2016). The present study adds to this emerging evidence favoring targeted recruitment that generates more racial diversity in policing. A greater representation of minority officers may translate into better service provision and police–community relationships. The strongest evidence supporting this argument comes from the cynicism model showing significantly more positive views of citizens among black and Latino officers. Additionally, Latino officers appear predisposed toward helping reduce disorder and nuisances, while black and Latino officers (tentatively) seem to value partnering with businesses and getting citizens involved in crime-prevention efforts.

Second, police leaders and supervisors should work toward finding ways to keep officers of all races sensitized to the importance of their actions during face-to-face interactions with citizens. In the present study, on a scale of 4 to 16, white officers' mean cynicism score was just shy of 11. This represents a fairly strong general tendency to discredit and discount citizens. Without calling white officers out, this negative leaning seems to suggest a need for police leaders to pay attention to officers' attitudes and the way in which they approach citizens. The importance of being responsive to citizens in order to promote informal social control was described previously. In addition, the substantial body of theoretical and empirical work on procedurally just policing highlights how important it is that officers treat citizens with dignity and respect, listen to what they have to say, and show concern for their troubles and needs (e.g. Mazerolle, Bennett, Davis, Sargeant, & Manning, 2013). The present study thus indicates that police chiefs and others in management or supervisory roles should be cognizant of signs of cynicism and should work toward ameliorating these negative views with training, counseling, or beat (re)assignments. The utilization of prosocial police peers (i.e. those with lower cynicism toward citizens) could be instrumental in such training, counseling, and work assignments.

While the current study contributes to empirical knowledge regarding officer race and occupational attitudes, it is not without its limitations. This inquiry was based on a fairly small sample of officers from a single department. While our study site would generalize fairly well to many American police departments, given the low percentage of large agencies (Reaves, 2015), the number of officers in our sample placed restrictions on our analyses. The models had modest statistical power and it is possible that real effects were not detected due to

the moderate sample size. This may be particularly the case for race effects, since although black and Latino officers made up a sizeable chunk of the total sample, their raw numbers were on the small side. Officers of other nonwhite races were particularly scarce. A larger sample may have produced more evidence of race effects, but this is not a guarantee, given alternative theoretical socialization models. Further, we also did not study every citizen- or role-related attitude that may have important variation across officer race. Finally, we cannot speak to whether or how these attitudinal findings may translate into behavioral differences.

In addressing these limitations, future research should expand the number of dependent variables (such as officers' perceptions of other officers' use of procedural justice) to gain a broader understanding of how race may shape outlooks on citizens and police–citizen relationships. Replicating these findings in other departments would boost the sample size and allow for more powerful statistical analyses. Additionally, in-depth qualitative interviews with police officers could also lend important insight into this area of research. Systematic social observational techniques paired with surveys could allow for an assessment of the extent to which officers of different races treat citizens (behaviorally) with more or less respect and care. Post encounter qualitative debriefing sessions with officers of varying races, would assist in assessing the degree to which attitudes and behaviors relate to one another in police decision-making. Our study highlighted some racial differences in the attitudes of officers but could not capture *why* such differences occur. Varying methodologies, like the ones proposed here, could assist in our understanding of the motivations behind variation in attitudes (and subsequent behaviors). Some have speculated that officers of color have a greater appreciation for the life experiences of citizens with whom they share a racial background (Durand, 1976; Flanagan, 1985; Paoline et al., 2000; Schuman & Gruenberg, 1972). To date, systematical empirical studies of these assertions have yet to be undertaken.

Finally, future research should employ longitudinal data designs to capture the socialization processes among police of varying races. The cross sectional approach utilized in the current study did not enable us to measure the degree to which race differences among police were affected by teaching and learning. That is, differences present at the outset of officers' careers may have disappeared (like that for law enforcement orientation) or been enhanced (like that of citizen cynicism) as a result of the socialization process. Ideally, longitudinal designs would track officers from the academy through the early stages of their career when socialization forces are heightened (Van Maanen, 1974) to tease out when (and if) racial differences in orientations become secondary to overall police orientations.

In sum, this study contributes to the understanding of the attitudinal differences—and similarities—between white officers and those of color. The finding that black and Latino officers harbor significantly less cynicism toward the citizens who call police for assistance suggests that these groups bring important

qualities to the job that may be materially impactful in helping police be supporting agents of informal social control. Black and Latino officers may be uniquely situated to help communities self-regulate and to improve citizens' trust in police among people and groups who have lost faith. Police agencies nationwide should strive for racial diversity as part of a generalized, multi-faceted effort to reach out to communities and bridge divides. Supporting mechanisms of informal control can help achieve lasting, sustainable public safety and quality of life.

## Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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## Appendix A. Scale Item Wording and Factor Loadings

Scale and item	Loading
<i>Law-enforcement role orientation</i>	
An officer is most effective when she or he focuses only on serious crimes, rather than dealing with minor misdemeanors or traffic infractions	.824
Police are required to spend too much time handling calls that are unimportant and not crime related	.675
A detached approach to dealing with citizens is more effective than a friendly one	.577
<i>Order-maintenance role orientation</i>	
Police should be required to do something about nuisances such as panhandlers and people drunk in public	.769
Police should be required to do something about neighbor disputes	.752
Police should be required to do something about litter, trash, and vandalism	.769
<i>Community-policing role orientation</i>	
Police officers should involve local businesses in anti-crime efforts	.887
Police officers should involve citizens and citizen groups in anti-crime efforts	.936
Citizens should partner with the police in solving problems in their neighborhoods	.741
<i>Cynicism toward citizens</i>	
Most of the citizens who call the police have real problems that need police attention	.727
Many citizens who are victims of crime bring it upon themselves (reversed)	.679
Citizens call the police for too many non-crime matters that they should handle themselves instead of involving police (reversed)	.653
In general, when I answer a call for service, I believe I am truly helping someone	.717
<i>Top management support</i>	
When an officer does a particularly good job, top management will publicly recognize his/her performance	.864
When an officer gets written up for rule violations, he or she will be treated fairly by top management	.809
When an officer contributes to a team effort rather than look good individually, top management here will recognize it	.916
<i>Crime and disorder ("Thinking about the area where you work most often, how frequently do each of the following occur?")</i>	
People drinking alcohol or drunk in public	.796
Groups of teens or others hanging out harassing people	.734
People buying, selling, or using drugs in public	.728
Physical disorders like vandalism, graffiti, and litter	.670
Property crimes like burglaries and auto thefts	.685
Serious violence like muggings, assaults, and robberies	.827
Domestic violence	.775
Altercations such as fights between friends or neighbors	.782