

Attitudes and Marginalization: Examining American Indian Perceptions of Law Enforcement Among Adolescents

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This article examines minority youth perceptions of and attitudes toward the police, with particular attention given to American Indian youth. Using data gathered from the national evaluation of the Gang Resistance Education and Training program, we included a sample of 5,477 eighth-grade students across 11 U.S. cities in analyses. Results indicated a strong negative correlation between American Indian youth and perceptions of the police. Controlling for perceived neighborhood safety and socioeconomic status increased the magnitude of these negative perceptions. We conclude by discussing possible explanations as to why American Indian youth hold negative perceptions of police and directions for future research.

KEYTERMS Police, American Indians, attitudes toward the police, attitudes, juveniles

INTRODUCTION

Studies that have examined attitudes toward the police have typically investigated those among adults to the exclusion of adolescents (Brandl, Frank, Worden, & Bynum, 1994; Decker, 1981; Erez, 1984; Frank, Brandl, Cullen, & Stichman, 1996). The extant literature suggests that adolescents typically hold less favorable views of the police than adults (Griffiths & Winfree, 1982; Hurst, 2007; Hurst & Frank, 2000; Hurst, Frank, & Browning, 2000; Leiber, Nalla, & Farnworth, 1998; Taylor, Turner, Esbensen, & Winfree, 2001). In

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particular, African American youth (Adams, 1996; Borrero, 2001; Decker, 1981) as well as Hispanics (Ben-Ali, 1992; Flanagan & Vaughn, 1996) have been found to hold negative attitudes toward the police. This sentiment is interchangeable for both the adolescent and adult populations. Although the majority of the literature is oriented around the Black–White dichotomy (Decker, 1981; Taylor et al., 2001), recent research suggests that the discourse on adolescent attitudes toward the police has widened to include Hispanic perceptions (Lurigio, Greenleaf, & Flexon, 2009; Martinez, 2007). As a result, researchers draw conclusions based on White, Black, and Hispanic observations. Although the literature on citizen attitudes toward the police has continued to grow, the attitudes of American Indians are given little attention, especially with regard to American Indian youth.

Widening the literature and empirical study of adolescent attitudes toward the police may remedy long-held perceptions by minority communities of mistrust and reluctance to interact with the police. For adolescents in particular, carrying these perceptions into adulthood can have an adverse affect, as these strong perceptions are likely passed to their children, creating an intergenerational effect on future perceptions (Brunson, 2007). The little focus given to American Indian youth is a disservice to scholarly research and is surprising considering the historical maltreatment of American Indians, the implementation of the reservation system, governmental influence over Indian affairs, and the structure and practice of aversive treatment and negative history of policing throughout Indian country¹ (see Wakeling, Jorgensen, Michaelson, & Begay, 2001). An oversight such as this does little to help experts understand the current state of police–community relations for American Indians residing both on and off the reservation. Indian country is largely made up of adolescents, making this population more susceptible to coming into contact with the police. More research is needed to ascertain police–youth encounters among the American Indian population and the resulting attitudes that form. This study aims to fill this gap in the literature by examining American Indian youth and their attitudes toward the police.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

A small body of research has examined the role of police in the lives of early American Indians (Barlow, 1994; Bureau of Indian Affairs, 1995; Gilman & Schneider, 1987; Hagan, 1980; Peak, 1989; Wachtel, 1980; Wells & Falcone, 2008). Wakeling and colleagues (2001) delineated the history of reservation policing. They argued that in the early stages of the reservation system (the 1800s), the role of the police was to maintain and reinforce preexisting laws established by non-Indian settlers. Federal troops served as law enforcement agents whose primary goals were to prevent American Indians² from interfering in economic gains, limit criminal behavior to

reservation boundaries, ration food and supplies, uphold policies restricting tribes from moving off the reservation, and ban cultural expression and traditional activities. Crimes that took place on the reservation were largely ignored by mainstream society until the passage in 1885 of the Major Crimes Act, a law that placed "jurisdiction for most serious crimes with Federal agencies" (Wakeling et al., 2001, p. 45). To this extent, scholars have noted that American Indians were aggressively policed under the rule of colonialism (Barlow, 1994; Peak, 1989; Wachtel, 1980).

In 1860, American Indians were given the opportunity to participate in the policing of their own reservation lands. Although they were afforded the chance to engage in police practices, it was not without prejudice, as the policing system as a whole continued to serve its own interest. Policing arrangements shifted among tribal members, Indians from adjacent reservations, and nontribal members. However, despite the inclusion of American Indians in their own policing systems, the U.S. government continued to manage Indian country (Wakeling et al., 2001). Tension mounted between enrolled tribal members (those registered with a specific tribe) and American Indians working alongside law enforcement.

Gilman and Schneider (1987) suggested that although American Indians began to accept the necessity of police officers and their presence on tribal land, they were still reluctant to fully embrace their presence and remained distrusting of the government system overall. Heavily burdened by acts of historical maltreatment, the 1960s ushered in a stream of social activism. Just as other minority groups were beginning to revolt against government oppression, so too did American Indians. This is illustrated in the development of the American Indian Movement and its goal of combating past and present government oppression (Wells & Falcone, 2008). This social progression had a profound impact on Indigenous policing in two ways: The professional model of policing was integrated into tribal police departments in an effort to (a) more effectively maintain police management and policies and (b) establish the presence of the Bureau of Indian Affairs division of law enforcement services over reservation policing (Wakeling et al., 2001). Although both factors were an impetus to improved reservation policing, they did little in the way of improving police–community relations. In fact, tribes were afforded less control over policing policies and were significantly displaced from their police departments.

Despite the aversive treatment and the negative history of police practices throughout Indian country, the criminological literature has largely ignored police–citizen encounters among this population. More specifically, there is little research in the way of understanding interactions between American Indians and police officers. It is not until this gap in the literature is filled that scholars will have an accurate measure of whether Native communities are over- or under-policed, face discriminatory treatment similar

to other marginalized groups, and experience victimization and/or criminalization as a result of hostile police tactics in the same way that Black and Hispanic communities do (Perry, 2009b).

POLICING AMERICAN INDIAN RESERVATIONS: DISCRIMINATION AND VICTIMIZATION

Crime in Indian country is significantly higher relative to the rest of the country, especially with regard to violent crime (Greenfeld & Smith, 1999; Perry, 2004), and furthermore, current estimates suggest that American Indians self-report violent victimization more often than other racial and ethnic groups in the United States. These rates are typically more than twice the national average (Perry, 2004). Consequently, tribal police departments are ill equipped to alleviate the crime inflation. Much of this is attributed to the unique challenges tribal police departments face compared to other urban police departments. These issues consist of cultural, geographic, and economic differences that are aggravated by limited administrative and technological resources, which are further exacerbated by disjointed communication between federal agencies like the Bureau of Indian Affairs and tribal police (Wakeling et al., 2001).

In addition, the lack of resources for American Indians in general is a driving concern. For example, in 2011 unemployment rates were highest for non-Hispanic Blacks (15.9%) and for American Indians and Alaska Natives (14.6%; Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2012). The issue of unemployment was compounded by higher poverty rates for American Indians and Alaska Natives at 27%, a rate of more than 10 percentage points higher than the overall U.S. rate (Macartney, Bishaw, & Fontenot, 2013). Unemployment issues and higher poverty rates increased overall resource deprivation for American Indians both on and off the reservation. This placed additional pressure on reservation communities and tribal police departments to curtail the swelling crime problem. Adding to the issue was the high number of alcohol-related offenses, especially among Native youth (Wakeling et al., 2001). Luna-Firebaugh (2007) argued that the existing police system implemented throughout Indian country is a reproduction of contemporary law enforcement practices and strategies. The difficulty with imposing Western institutions on Indigenous people is that their design fails to integrate pre-existing Indigenous customs.

Little research has examined the characteristics of police officers patrolling heavily populated Indian communities located in urban areas, let alone those on rural reservations. In the research that has been conducted, issues of over- and under-policing are evident across American Indian communities (Perry, 2009a, 2009b). For example, Perry (2009a) highlighted

the negative perceptions most American Indians have of the police regardless of jurisdiction, including interactions with “tribal and non-tribal, on- and off-reservation, Native and non-Native police officers and agencies” (Perry, 2009a, p. 266). Furthermore, myths about representative police departments—those having comparable racial characteristics to the communities they serve—are also debunked, as previous efforts argued this would deflate tension within racialized communities. Issues of discrimination, culture conflict, and double marginality are thought to be heightened for Native officers patrolling heavily populated Indian communities (Gould, 1999, 2002).

The Indigenous experience in the United States is a unique one. Issues of race, social class, and the disparities that result are inherent in the American criminal justice system; however, they may be more pronounced for American Indians. Like other marginalized groups, American Indians are grossly overrepresented at all stages of the criminal justice system (Skoog, 1996), including victimization, arrest, and incarceration (Perry, 2009a). The role of the police in perpetuating these disparities is well documented for other minority groups, namely, African Americans, though less documented for American Indians. Skoog (1996) suggested that Native people hold similar views of the police as African Americans and that policing is “discriminatory and lacking in cultural awareness” (p. 118). Overall, the ethos among American Indians holds that they view the police as representatives of an oppressive system (Guillemin, 1989).

AMERICAN INDIANS AND ATTITUDES TOWARD THE POLICE: UNDERSTANDING NEGATIVE PERCEPTIONS

Issues of discrimination based on race have often been linked to police–citizen encounters (Decker, 1981). To this end, race has been considered a robust predictor for examining citizen perceptions of the police (Skogan, 2006). The literature in this area, however, is dominated by the Black–White dichotomy. Research reaffirms the commonly held notion that minority communities generally distrust the criminal justice system and its agents. Donohue and Levitt (2001) posited that minority populations typically aim frustrations with the legal system at law enforcement officials because they are the first point of contact. Although experiences of minority interaction with the police have been well documented (see, e.g., Browning, Cullen, Cao, Kopache, & Stevenson, 1994; Ho & McKean, 2004), research that solely examines Black and White communities discounts the experiences of other racial and ethnic groups, such as Hispanics and American Indians.

In recent years, the literature on Hispanic encounters with and perceptions of the police has garnered considerable attention (Carter, 1985;

Martinez, 2007). The lack of empirical inquiry into Latinos and policing is believed to be a shortcoming of the study of race/ethnicity and the criminal justice system (Martinez, 2010; Peterson & Krivo, 2005; Rosenbaum, Schuck, Costello, Hawkins, & King, 2005). Martinez (2010) claimed that additional research on policing in Latino communities is warranted because of Latinos' unique cultural background. He maintained that cultural differences shape the way in which police officers interact with Hispanics. Furthermore, because Latino subgroups vary with respect to immigration, legal status, and "historical, cultural, political, demographic, economic, and religious patterns" (p. 436), more research is warranted—and the same can be said for American Indians.

Research suggests that a common misconception has been that American Indians are a solitary group with similar customs, traditions, and cultural practices (Wilson & Yellow Bird, 2005). Research, however, indicates that there is substantial variation across Native tribes (Wakeling et al., 2001; Wells & Falcone, 2008). This suggests that additional research is needed to understand American Indians, their contact with the legal system, and how they respond to the different systems. According to Skoog (1996), Native peoples strive for self-governance, especially with respect to the policing of their people on and off the reservation. Scholars suggest that American Indians view the police along the same continuum as African Americans, in a negative discriminatory light (Hamilton & Sinclair, 1991; Taylor et al., 2001). Iterating this point, Hamilton and Sinclair (1991) maintained that the police embody a system that reinforces the cultural oppression of Indigenous peoples and reprimands the use of their own institutions and traditional practices. In this light, American Indian experiences mirror the historical treatment of African Americans and may attest to their negative attitudes toward the police (Skoog, 1996; Skoog & Barker, 1989; Skoog, Roberts, & Boldt, 1980).

AMERICAN INDIAN YOUTH AND ATTITUDES TOWARD THE POLICE: DELINQUENCY, VICTIMIZATION, AND PEER INFLUENCE

Research suggests that adolescents generally view the police unfavorably compared to adults (Leiber et al., 1998; Taylor et al., 2001), with minority youth holding even less favorable views compared to their nonminority counterparts (Erez, 1984; Jacob, 1971; Taylor et al., 2001). Walker (1992) reasoned that the basis for negative perceptions among adolescents may stem from more substantial contact with juveniles (what he referred to as *hyper contact*). For example, the police are more likely to make contact with individuals younger than the age of 18 compared to their adult counterparts (Walker, 1992). A majority of these interactions is based on issues pertaining to order maintenance, loitering, and combative encounters with

adults as opposed to intrepid forms of crime and delinquency (Bittner, 1990; Walker, 1992). These adolescent-specific minor crimes likely lead to frequent encounters with the police and shape adolescent perceptions of the police. Walker argued that the police usually set the tone for the nature of contact, specifically because they are afforded much discretion when dealing with citizens.

Research that has examined juvenile attitudes toward the police highlights certain factors that tend to be more salient: race, socioeconomic status (SES), prior contact with police, and alignment with juvenile subcultures (Hurst & Frank, 2000; Leiber et al., 1998). Of these factors, contact is considered to be significant, especially in minority communities where aggressive policing tactics are well documented (Walker, 1992). The limited inquiry into adolescent police contact suggests that persistent interaction results in more negative attitudes toward the police (Griffiths & Winfree, 1982; Winfree & Griffiths, 1977), where the nature of the contact is instrumental in shaping perceptions (Leiber et al., 1998). Though direct contact is considered salient with regard to attitudes toward the police, indirect contact may be equally as telling. In fact, Brunson (2007) found that African Americans were likely to recount their direct personal contact with the police to family and peers. These instances of vicarious exposure result in equal resentment, still personal forms of racial discrimination argued to alter citizen perceptions of the police (Weitzer & Tuch, 2002). Persistent forms of racial discrimination and police contact are perhaps more relevant for minority youth given their frequent contact with and exposure to law enforcement (Brunson & Miller, 2006; Feagin, 1991). Although these experiences are well established in the literature that examines minority adolescent encounters with the police, minority status is typically defined as Black or Hispanic. Rarely in this body of work are American Indian youth observed. In fact, only a handful of studies have accounted for Native youth and their attitudes toward the police relative to their minority counterparts (Griffiths & Winfree, 1982; Taylor et al., 2001), and these are dated and thus less generalizable.

One such study examined attitudes toward the police in American and Canadian youth (see Griffiths & Winfree, 1982). For the American sample of adolescents, one of the race categories consisted of Native Americans. Although race was not found to be a significant predictor of attitudes toward the police, Griffiths and Winfree (1982) cautioned that demographics for race were not recorded in the Canadian sample of adolescents, and if they had been, perhaps different results would have been found. The authors noted that in Canada relationships between native Indians, other minority groups, and the police are marked by suspicion and distrust (Alberta Board of Review, 1978; Hylton, Mantonovich, Varro, & Thakker, 1979; Roberts & Skoog, 1979). Given the tension between minority-police relationships in the United States, the same argument can be extended to police and

American Indian adolescents. In this regard, Native youth are believed to hold the same negative perceptions of the police as their minority counterparts.

Similarly, Taylor et al. (2001) conducted research on attitudes toward the police, controlling for American Indians. Race was a major focus of their study and was found to be significantly related to attitudes toward the police. In particular, American Indian youth held less favorable views of the police relative to Whites, and their views mirrored the views of Hispanics. This again reaffirms the belief that Indigenous youth are likely to align their perceptions with those of other minorities and retain negative attitudes toward the police. As previously mentioned, although contact between adolescents and the police may generally explain the increased negative perceptions of the police among adolescents, this interaction effect may be more salient for Native youth. Young (1990) argued, "The arrest rate for Native Americans over the age of 14 is approximately three times that for blacks and 10 times that for whites" and "Native Americans have higher arrest rates than any other racial or ethnic group in the United States" (p. 111). These statistics suggest that Native American adolescents come into contact with the police in disproportionate numbers in comparison to their minority counterparts, warranting an examination of their attitudes toward the police. Although it is assumed that Native American youth generally retain the same perceptions of the police as other minority groups, they may in fact hold even less favorable views.

THE CURRENT FOCUS

The purpose of the present study is to expand the literature on adolescent attitudes toward the police. Much of the literature in this area is dated, which emphasizes the need for more contemporary research. Although much of the literature examining juvenile perceptions of the police is dominated by Black and White populations, it is important to assess how other racial and ethnic groups respond to the police in their community. The present study adds to the literature by specifically focusing on American Indian youth and their perceptions of the police. Although Native youth offend disproportionately in comparison to other marginalized groups, they are noticeably absent from criminological research.

Our study builds on the work of Taylor and colleagues (2001). Their research examined attitudinal differences among juveniles toward the police focusing on three main areas: race, gender, and location. The original question by Taylor et al.—Are there differences in attitudes toward police across different racial and ethnic groups?—is of particular interest in the present study. Using the same data (from 5,935 eighth-grade students in 11

cities), our research highlights race as significant in the attitudes toward the police literature. Although Taylor et al. found significant differences in attitudes toward the police across racial/ethnic groups (White, Black, Hispanic, American Indian, and Asian), their analysis did not focus on a particular group. We focus on American Indian youth in comparison to Whites and other minority groups (Blacks, Hispanics, Asians, and others) with regard to attitudes toward the police. In addition, we probe specific factors believed to contribute to the attitudes of these youth, such as individual delinquency and victimization, peers, and community and cultural context.

METHODS

Data that were used to address the research questions were obtained from the national evaluation of the Gang Resistance Education and Training (GREAT) program (see Esbensen and Osgood, 1999). Self-report surveys were administered in 1995 to schools in 11 different cities: Kansas City, Missouri; Las Cruces, New Mexico; Milwaukee, Wisconsin; Omaha, Nebraska; Orlando, Florida; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Phoenix, Arizona; Pocatello, Idaho; Providence, Rhode Island; Torrance, California; and Will County, Illinois. The cross-sectional sample obtained consisted of 5,935 eighth-grade students across 42 different schools.

Measures

DEPENDENT VARIABLE

The dependent variable, attitudes toward the police ($\alpha = .85$) was measured using a seven-item composite. The statements students responded to were (a) "Police officers are honest," (b) "Most police officers are usually rude" (reverse scored), (c) "Police officers are hardworking," (d) "Most police officers are usually friendly," (e) "Police officers are courteous," (f) "Police officers are respectful toward people like me," and (g) "Police officers are prejudiced against minority persons" (reverse scored). Response categories for these items ranged from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*. Each student's responses were summed, forming his or her attitudes toward the police score. Scores ranged from a low of 7 to a high of 35, with higher scores indicating more favorable attitudes toward the police.

INDEPENDENT VARIABLES

The main independent variables used in the current study included individual delinquency and victimization, peers, and community and cultural context. Individual delinquency ($\alpha = .646$)³ and victimization ($\alpha = .914$)⁴

were measured using two separate scales tapping into an individual's involvement in delinquent behavior and his or her level of reported victimization. Higher scores indicated a greater level of delinquency and individual victimization. Peers was measured using three separate scales tapping into an individual's affiliation with prosocial peers ($\alpha = .836$),⁵ affiliation with delinquent peers ($\alpha = .835$),⁶ and commitment to delinquent peers ($\alpha = .844$).⁷ Higher scores indicated a greater affiliation with prosocial peers, a greater affiliation with delinquent peers, as well as a greater commitment to delinquent peers. Community and cultural context included three separate scales tapping into perceived safety ($\alpha = .860$),⁸ with higher scores indicating a greater level of perceived safety; self-esteem ($\alpha = .862$),⁹ with higher scores indicating a higher level of self-esteem; and racial identity ($\alpha = .600$),¹⁰ with higher scores indicating a higher level of racial identity. In addition to these key independent variables, we also controlled for sex, and female was used as the reference category. Our race/ethnicity categories included American Indians, Whites, Blacks, Hispanics, Asians, and other minorities (including mixed races); the White group was used as the reference for analyses. We also controlled for age; here we broke the age category down into three groups: 13 and younger, 14, and 15 and older. Our 14 group was used as the reference category. We also controlled for family SES, in which both mother's and father's education were used as an indicator of SES. Lastly, we controlled for participation in the GREAT program.

ANALYTIC STRATEGY

In order to answer the research questions, we used two different approaches. First means for each scale were combined into a table by race in order to examine racial differences with regard to delinquency/victimization, peers, and community context measures (see Table 1). Next ordinary least squares regression models were run using Stata 12 software. One-way analysis of variance models were run in a series of steps. First attitudes toward the police were regressed on individual demographics, including SES and participation in the GREAT program (Model 1). This first model provided a baseline for subsequent models by testing the extent to which race/ethnicity affected an individual's attitudes toward the police while controlling for SES and participation in the GREAT program. Next individual involvement in delinquent acts as well as victimization were added to the model (Model 2). Model 3 introduced peer variables into the model, including both prosocial and delinquent peers and commitment to delinquent peers. Model 4 introduced community and culture variables, including the measures of perceived safety, self-esteem, and racial identity. These were combined with all other measures and controls in our full model, Model 5, as predictors of adolescent attitudes toward the police.

TABLE 1 Demographics by Race

Characteristic	American Indian	White	Black	Hispanic	Asian	Other Minority
Demographics (totals), <i>N</i> (%)						
Age (<i>M</i> = 15.2, <i>SD</i> = 10.65)						
13 and younger (<i>N</i> = 1,699)	37 (28.03)	735 (31.37)	348 (22.99)	308 (28.39)	143 (41.69)	112 (32)
14 (<i>N</i> = 3,530)	79 (59.05)	1,470 (62.74)	917 (60.57)	626 (57.70)	186 (54.23)	202 (57.71)
15 and older (<i>N</i> = 706)	16 (12.12)	138 (5.89)	249 (16.45)	151 (13.92)	14 (4.08)	36 (10.29)
Sex						
Male (<i>N</i> = 2,881)	54 (40.91)	1,158 (49.26)	734 (47.72)	539 (49.27)	154 (44.64)	150 (42.86)
Female (<i>N</i> = 3,054)	78 (59.09)	1,193 (50.74)	804 (52.28)	555 (50.73)	191 (55.36)	200 (57.14)
GREAT program						
Yes (<i>N</i> = 2,629)	55 (41.67)	1,033 (44.22)	684 (45.03)	554 (51.44)	134 (38.95)	136 (38.97)
No (<i>N</i> = 3,207)	77 (58.33)	1,301 (55.78)	835 (54.97)	523 (48.56)	210 (61.05)	213 (61.03)
SES (<i>M</i> = 4.53, <i>SD</i> = 1.5)	4.80 (1.60)	4.54 (1.31)	4.56 (1.42)	4.15 (1.84)	5.36 (1.39)	4.52 (1.49)
Delinquency/victimization, <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)						
Delinquent	0.080 (0.963)	-0.048 (0.999)	0.078 (0.963)	0.018 (1.02)	-0.236 (0.949)	0.164 (1.06)
Victimized	0.181 (0.968)	-0.077 (0.947)	0.118 (1.047)	-0.046 (1.03)	-0.045 (0.803)	0.167 (1.13)
Peers, <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)						
Prosocial peers	-0.067(1.18)	0.073(0.868)	-0.024(1.11)	-0.157(1.02)	0.084(0.740)	-0.036(1.14)
Delinquent peers	0.245(1.07)	-0.111(0.969)	0.088(0.981)	0.126(1.04)	-0.320(0.880)	0.191(1.08)
Commitment to delinquent peers	0.165(1.05)	0.036(1.01)	-0.137(0.944)	0.091(1.02)	-0.146(0.868)	0.172(1.14)
Community/culture, <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)						
Safety	-0.236(1.05)	0.181(0.954)	-0.288(1.05)	0.028(0.963)	0.143(0.812)	-0.078(0.992)
Self-esteem	-0.182(1.047)	-0.023(1.02)	0.251(0.876)	-0.155(1.01)	0.015(0.961)	-0.130(1.18)
Racial identity	-0.234(1.05)	-0.230(0.964)	0.271(0.953)	0.175(0.954)	0.124(1.01)	-0.100(1.11)
<i>N</i> (%)	134 (2.30)	2,343 (40.62)	1,514 (26.25)	1,085 (18.81)	343 (5.95)	350 (6.07)

Note. GREAT = Gang Resistance Education and Training; SES = socioeconomic status.

RESULTS

Table 1 presents both the demographics of the overall sample as well as descriptive statistics by race. Males compose approximately 48% of the sample. Six race categories were used, and the distribution includes 40% White (reference category), 26% African American, 18.5% Hispanic, 2% American Indian, 6% Asian, and 7.5% other. Two dummy variables were created for age: 13 and younger and 15 and older (age 14 was the reference category). The mean SES for our sample is 4.53. The mean age is 15.2 years. In addition to these control variables, we controlled for participation in the GREAT program—approximately 45% of our sample participates in the GREAT program.

Consistent with the literature, American Indian adolescents in our sample report a higher level of victimization, a greater number of delinquent peers, as well as the lowest reported level of self-esteem in comparison with all other race/ethnicity groups. Furthermore, American Indian adolescents also report a low level of prosocial peers and a relatively high level of self-reported delinquency in comparison to all other races. These mean differences support the notion that American Indian adolescents, as a minority, report higher levels of delinquency/victimization, higher numbers of delinquent peers, and lower levels of confidence in their community than other races, which the literature suggests are all factors in negative attitudes toward the police (Brick, Taylor, & Esbensen, 2009; Brunson & Miller, 2006; Cao, Frank, & Cullen, 1996; Frank et al., 1996; Lieber et al., 1998). With this in mind, we next examine the effect that these variables have on actual attitudes toward the police.

Table 2 contains the stacked analysis of variance results used to examine differences in attitudes toward the police among ethnic minority groups. Model 1 provides a baseline for the additional models used in this study and examines the extent to which race/ethnicity is a contributing factor to an individual's attitude toward the police while controlling for SES as well as participation in the GREAT program. These data show that males on average hold less favorable attitudes toward the police than females. With regard to age, analyses show that younger adolescents tend to hold more favorable attitudes toward the police. Previous studies examining juvenile attitudes toward the police (see Taylor et al., 2001) have indicated that juveniles generally hold indifferent perceptions of the police; however, when broken up by age group, our analyses show that there are marked differences between age groups. For example, juveniles in the 15 and older category on average hold the least favorable attitudes toward the police. In addition, Model 1 indicates that race/ethnicity as a factor continues to be more salient in attitudes toward the police differentials than other factors, such as age or gender. Analyses of individual ethnic minority groups indicate that all minority groups in the sample hold more negative attitudes toward the police

TABLE 2 Effects of Delinquency, Victimization, Peers, and Culture/Community Characteristics on Youths' Attitudes Toward the Police

Characteristic	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4		Model 5	
	Coefficient	SE	Coefficient	SE	Coefficient	SE	Coefficient	SE	Coefficient	SE
Age ^a										
13 and younger	.129*	.028	.084*	.274	.037	.025	.094*	.027	.048	.026
15 and older	-.213*	.044	-.162*	.042	-.092*	.039	-.154*	.043	-.083*	.041
Race/ethnicity ^b										
American Indian	-.414*	.087	-.341*	.082	-.222*	.077	-.282*	.083	-.183*	.078
Black	-.573*	.032	-.522*	.031	-.236*	.029	-.501*	.032	-.487*	.031
Hispanic	-.379*	.036	-.361*	.034	-.236*	.032	-.319*	.035	-.221*	.033
Asian	-.069	.056	-.121*	.053	-.141*	.049	-.082	.052	-.130*	.049
Other minority	-.491*	.056	-.392*	.054	-.317*	.050	-.368*	.053	-.281*	.051
Male	-.225*	.026	-.071*	.025	-.121*	.023	-.109*	.025	-.109*	.024
SES	.012	.008	-.000	.008	-.001	.008	-.002	.008	-.002	.008
GREAT program	.046	.026	.024	.024	.023	.023	.027	.024	.026	.023
Delinquency			-.353*	.013			-.322*	.013	-.106*	.015
Victimization			-.031*	.013			-.011	.013	.006	.012
Prosocial peers					.232*	.016			.204*	.017
Delinquent peers					-.268*	.013			-.205*	.016
Commitment to delinquent peers					-.197*	.013			-.177*	.014
Racial identity							-.024	.013	-.021	.012
Safety							.113*	.013	.095*	.012
Self-esteem							.135*	.013	.052*	.013
Intercept	.287*	.062	.270*	.046	.291*	.043	.262*	.046	.237*	.043
r ²	.095		.216		.334		.250		.355	
N	5,485		5,304		5,249		5,072		4,922	

Note. SES = socioeconomic status; GREAT = Gang Resistance Education and Training.

^a14 is the reference. ^bWhite is the reference.

**p* < .05.

in comparison to Whites. In particular, analyses show that among all minorities, Black adolescents have on average the least favorable attitudes toward the police compared to White adolescents, with only the Asian adolescent group failing to reach statistical significance, though still negative.

Models 2, 3, and 4 present the addition of individual delinquency and victimization, all peer variables, as well as cultural measures. Both self-reported delinquency and victimization are significant factors in negative attitudes toward the police, with all minorities, including the Asian adolescent group, reaching statistical significance. Delinquency is more strongly associated with negative attitudes toward the police than victimization. The peer measures are introduced in Model 3. Prosocial peers have a positive effect on attitudes toward the police net of controls. In addition, both delinquent peers and commitment to delinquent peers have negative effects on attitudes toward the police net of controls. Model 4 introduces our community and culture measures, including measures of perceived safety, self-esteem, and racial identity, as predictors of attitudes toward the police. Although the results are not statistically significant, individuals who identify more closely with their race report slightly more negative attitudes toward the police than those who identify less with their race. In addition, individuals who report feeling safe in their neighborhood as well as having more self-esteem report more favorable attitudes toward the police.

Our full model, Model 5, includes delinquency and victimization measures, peer measures, community and culture measures, as well as all controls. Model fit increases with the inclusion of all measures ($R^2 = .35$). In the full model, data show that measures of both safety and self-esteem are significant indicators of adolescent attitudes toward the police. That is, the safer individuals report feeling in their neighborhood, the more likely they are to report positive attitudes toward the police. Similarly, higher reported self-esteem results in positive attitudes toward the police net of controls. Safety and self-esteem are important additions to our model, as our American Indian adolescent population reports low mean averages for safety¹¹ and self-esteem in comparison to other minority groups included in our sample.

Lastly, our race and SES interactions are presented in Table 3. Here we find significant effects prevalent among our Black and American Indian groups. Results show that Blacks with higher levels of SES also on average hold more favorable attitudes toward the police. Alternatively, Blacks with lower levels of SES also score lower on the attitudes toward the police scale. Earlier analyses indicated that American Indians and Hispanics held similar attitudes toward the police net of controls. In light of this, it was assumed that regardless of level of SES, this would remain true; however, our analyses of race and SES indicate otherwise. According to these data, American Indians who report higher levels of SES hold *less* favorable attitudes toward the police when the main effect is taken into account. This is particularly evident in the main effect for American Indians when interacted with SES—a decrease

TABLE 3 Race and SES Interactions

Characteristic	Model 1		Model 2	
	Coefficient	SE	Coefficient	SE
Age ^a				
13 and younger	.046	.026	.049	.026
15 and older	-.085*	.041	-.083*	.041
Race/ethnicity ^b				
American Indian	-.732*	.238	-.185*	.078
Black	-.487*	.031	-.311*	.091
Hispanic	-.223*	.033	-.218*	.033
Asian	-.127*	.049	-.138*	.049
Other minority	-.281*	.051	-.281*	.051
Male	-.110*	.024	-.109*	.024
SES	-.005	.008	.007	.009
GREAT program	.027	.023	.026	.023
Delinquency	-.106*	.015	-.106*	.015
Victimization	.007	.017	.007	.017
Prosocial peers	.203*	.017	.203*	.017
Delinquent peers	-.204*	.016	-.204*	.015
Commitment to delinquent peers	-.176*	.014	-.177*	.014
Racial identity	-.027	.012	-.021	.012
Safety	.095*	.012	.095*	.012
Self-esteem	.052*	.013	.052*	.012
AI_SES	.117*	.047		
B_SES			-.040*	.019
Intercept	.040		.040	
<i>r</i> ²	.356		.356	
<i>N</i>	4,922		4,922	

Note. SES = socioeconomic status; GREAT = Gang Resistance Education and Training; AI_SES = American Indian socioeconomic status; B_SES = Black socioeconomic status.

^a14 is the reference. ^bWhite is the reference.

**p* < .05.

in attitudes toward the police *triples* on the addition of this interaction term. These findings are explored further in the Discussion.

DISCUSSION

Key Findings and Implications

This study extends prior research by examining American Indian youth and their attitudes toward the police. With little research that explores police–citizen contacts for urban and reservation Native peoples and the nuances that accompany these interactions, this study approached police–citizen contact from a historical perspective by delineating policing tactics in the Native community and on the reservation. Furthermore, this study examined American Indian perceptions of the police as a result of these historical tactics. The findings suggest that American Indian youth hold

less favorable views of the police, similar to their minority peers. Overall, Native youth who report higher levels delinquency/victimization, delinquent peers, and SES; who report low levels of community confidence; and who identify closely with their racial group indicate negative attitudes toward the police; conversely, higher levels of self-esteem and perceived safety equate to an increase in attitudes toward the police. Although much of these findings are consistent with prior research, some key differences were found that require further discussion.

First, the demographic variables were significantly associated with attitudes toward the police. We found that Native youth, like other young minorities, view the police less favorably; perceptions of American Indian youth were closely linked to the views held by Hispanic adolescents. Historical maltreatment and repression have long been implicated in the literature as catalysts for stifled relationships between minority communities and law enforcement and as a significant reason for varied attitudes toward the police between Whites and minorities (Walker, Spohn, & DeLone, 2000). Scholars suggest that American Indian communities in particular are still reeling from the effects of colonization and therefore are more likely to be distrustful of Westernized institutions altogether (Mander & Tauli-Corpuz, 2006). Acting as agents of social control, the police may be viewed as an extension of governmental practices that further monopolize Indigenous life (Perry, 2009a, 2009b; Waziyatawin, 2008; Wells & Falcone, 2008). Federal policies such as the Indian Relocation Program during the 1960s forcibly removed Indians from the reservation and into urban areas across the United States (Bell & Lim, 2005; Fixico, 1986, 2000). Headed by the Bureau of Indian Affairs, this aversive program reduced Indians to the likes of immigrants, causing them to gravitate toward metropolitan areas where larger portions of foreigners lived because they could more easily blend in (Fixico, 1986, 2000). This may explain why American Indians and Hispanics report similar levels of negative attitudes toward the police.

Second, we found that American Indian youth in our sample reported *higher* levels of victimization and association with delinquent peers and *lower* levels of self-esteem and confidence in their community. Each of these factors has consistently been shown to impact attitudes toward the police (Brown & Benedict, 2002; Cao et al., 1996; Reisig & Parks, 2000; Weitzer & Tuch, 2005). Our study mirrors the findings reported in other studies that Native peoples are generally more likely to be victimized (Bigfoot, 2000; Greenfeld & Smith, 1999; Perry, 2004). According to Bigfoot (2000), a considerable amount of modern victim vulnerability is attributed to the policies and procedures implemented by those first having contact with Native peoples and then later upheld and reinforced by the federal government. The literature suggests that there is a significant correlation between police satisfaction and perceived victimization (Brown & Benedict, 2002; Cao et al.,

1996; Reisig & Parks, 2000; Weitzer & Tuch, 2005). If Native people experience heightened victimization in comparison to their minority peers, the connection to dissatisfaction with the police becomes apparent.

Furthermore, self-esteem was controlled for, as it has been found to be a robust construct for Indigenous youth (Wilson & Yellow Bird, 2005) and may help to explain their interactions with and perceptions of Western institutions such as law enforcement. The association between American Indian youth and low levels of self-esteem is well established in the literature (LaFromboise, Hoyt, Oliver, & Whitbeck, 2006; Powers, 2006; Stiffman et al., 2007; Whitesell, Mitchell, & Spicer, & The Voices of Indian Teens Project Team, 2009; Wolsko, Lardon, Mohatt, & Orr, 2007). American Indians who are more culturally embedded in mainstream society are believed to have a higher self-concept (Pridemore, 2004). Therefore, Native adolescents who adhere to mainstream society may view institutions such as the police more positively and as operating in their favor. This is more likely to occur for urban Native peoples living off the reservation. Conversely, American Indian adolescents who retain a lower self-concept are likely to view Western institutions, including the police, more cautiously.

Third, our race and SES interactions resulted in interesting results. Understanding these interactions is important given that an individual's SES is believed to shape his or her perceptions of the police and is presumed to be tied to levels of concentrated disadvantage and its correlates (i.e., joblessness, segregation, and crime). Research suggests that this association is particularly relevant for minority groups because they are more likely to reside in underprivileged areas and are prone to hyper-criminalization by law enforcement (Brunson, 2007; Brunson & Miller, 2006; Rios, 2006). The close association between race and SES in shaping attitudes toward the police is firmly established in the literature for African Americans (Anderson, 1990; Massey & Denton, 1993; Sampson, 1987; Shaw & McKay, 1942; W. J. Wilson, 1987) and is slowly emerging for American Indians (Pridemore, 2004; Theriot & Parker, 2007). The basic premise implies that SES is closely related to neighborhood conditions that directly influence citizens' attitudes toward the police (Sampson & Bartusch, 1998; Weitzer, 1999, 2000).

The relationship between SES and perceptions of the police may be heightened for American Indians, particularly because Indian country accounts for lower generated income, higher poverty rates, and a range of issues associated with the two (Howard, Walker, Walker, Cottler, & Compton, 1999; Nielson, Moon, Holtzman, Smith, & Siegel, 1996; Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 1995). The poverty rate for American Indians is more than double the average for Americans in general (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010) and may account for their negative attitudes toward the police. Unlike other minority groups in our sample, despite having a higher SES American Indians retained less than favorable attitudes toward the police. This contradictory finding gives insight into the fact that American

Indians are less likely to favor law enforcement and may be reflective of their views toward other government-run institutions.

Limitations

This study has several limitations that should be considered. First, cross-sectional data were used to establish the results, and therefore causality cannot be determined. We specifically used Time 1 of the GREAT data; however, in future studies, using later waves of the data may permit the testing of causal relationships between American Indian youth and their perceptions of the police. This would allow for a better understanding of not only how youth perceive the police but also how their attitudes may vary over time and the factors contributing to these changes.

Second, the data used were collected more than a decade ago. As a result, the statistical results may not be generalizable to other youth populations. Still, however, the data were a good representation of our target population of adolescents. Third, as with any large data set, there is the issue of missing data. To control for missing data, we examined each response to all measures to ensure that the missing or unanswered responses did not outnumber the actual responses. We then dropped all cases for which there was no answer. The level of missing cases is reflected in the change in *N* going from Model 1 to our full model. No American Indian participants were dropped or lost as a result. Lastly, our key demographic, American Indian youth, only comprised 134 participants in the study. In order to ensure that this small sample was sufficient to meet statistical power, we conducted an a priori test to compute the required sample size in G*power using the recommended effect size, probability, and number of predictors used in our study. Results indicated that to achieve an acceptable amount of power (.95), a total sample size of 74 would be required. This indicates that our sample size of 134 was sufficient for our analyses. Furthermore, although our sample of American Indians is small, it sheds light on the need for an increase in empirical research with the Native population and with American Indian youth in particular. Future research that overcomes these limitations will help move the research forward.

Future empirical research is needed that specifically gathers information from American Indian youth. Having a larger sample of Native adolescents will bolster confidence in the results obtained as well as provide further insights into this understudied population. Though very little data exist with regard to American Indian youth and their attitudes toward the police, even less empirical analysis has been done on the policing of Indigenous peoples and their land. This neglect in empirical study means that inhabitants in these communities, their encounters with the police, and responses to those encounters fail to inform the literature and expand researchers' understanding

of this particular group. More empirical analysis of this population is needed in order to make informed inferences about Native youths' perceptions of the police.

Conclusion

This study is one of the few to examine American Indian youth and their perceptions of the police. Specifically, we add to the literature by focusing on American Indian youth and the nuances associated with their attitudes toward the police. In doing so, we have a better conceptualization of how Native youth view law enforcement and the factors correlated with these views. The findings suggest that American Indian youth hold a less than favorable view of the police, a notion that is aligned with the views of other minority groups (see Adams, 1996; Ben-Ali, 1992; Borrero, 2001; Decker, 1981; Flanagan & Vaughn, 1996). Approximately 1.2 million American Indians live in urban settings while 800,000 live on tribal land (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). With this in mind, it can be asserted that American Indians have the potential to interact with the police under circumstances similar to those that other minority groups face. Given the polarization of race in American society and the contemporary effects of historical maltreatment among minorities, scholars argue that American Indians may retain similar attitudes toward the police as other marginalized groups (Skoog, 1996), a notion upheld in the findings of this study. Along these lines, encounters with law enforcement typically act as an initial contact point with the justice system that is believed to heavily shape citizen attitudes toward the police (Friedman, Lurigio, Greenleaf, & Albertson, 2004; Winfree & Griffiths, 1977). Among adolescents, this notion is potentially more salient, as research suggests that they interact with the police more frequently than adults (Leiber et al., 1998; Snyder & Sickmund, 1996; Walker, 1992). Understanding these interactions has the potential to reshape future beliefs, the ways in which adolescents form their perceptions of police officers, and subsequently the justice system as a whole. By making efforts to do this, any long-standing, negative perceptions these populations have of the police and justice system are likely to be reevaluated and possibly improved.

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NOTES

1. *Indian country* is a statutory term that includes all lands within an Indian reservation, dependent Indian communities, and Indian trust allotments (18 U.S.C. §1151; Minton, 2011).

2. Wakeling et al. (2001) used the term *Native American*; however, for consistency we use the term *American Indian*.

3. Level of reported delinquency was measured using a four-item scale that tapped into the individual's involvement in delinquent acts, such as "ever not paid for things," "ever destroyed property," "ever stole <\$50," and "ever hit someone." Responses included *no*, *yes*, or *no answer*. Higher scores represented a higher level of individual delinquency.

4. Level of victimization was measured using a three-item scale that tapped into an individual's self-reported victimization, such as "ever been attacked," "ever had something stolen from you," and "ever been robbed." Responses ranged from *strongly agree* to *strongly disagree*. Higher scores indicated a higher level of experienced victimization.

5. Prosocial peers was measured using a six-item scale consisting of questions related to friends of the respondent. Questions tapped into peers' involvement in school and community activities, such as "number of friends involved in community activities," "number of friends involved in school activities," "number of friends involved in religious activities," and so on. Responses included *none of them*, *few of them*, *half of them*, *most of them*, *all of them*. Higher numbers represented having more prosocial peers.

6. Delinquent peers was measured using a four-item scale that tapped into an individuals' friends' level of delinquency, such as "friends lie to adults," "friends destroy property," and so on. Higher numbers represented more delinquent peers.

7. Commitment to delinquent peers was measured using a three-item scale including "If your friends were in trouble at home/school/with police, how likely are you to hang out?" Responses ranged from *not at all likely* to *very likely*. Higher scores indicated a higher commitment to delinquent peers.

8. Safety was measured using responses to (a) "I feel safe at my school" and (b) "I feel safe in the neighborhood around my school." Response categories for these items ranged from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*. Higher scores indicated a higher level of perceived safety.

9. Self-esteem was measured using a six-item scale including "I'm a useful person," "I'm a person of worth," "Feel good about myself," and so on. Responses ranged from *almost never* to *almost always*. Higher scores indicated a higher level of perceived self-esteem.

10. Racial identity was measured using a four-item scale. Questions used reflected on an individual's satisfaction with his or her own race, and two were reverse coded. Responses to "I have a sense of belonging to an ethnic group," "I feel good about my ethnic background," "I don't have a sense of belonging to my ethnic group," and "I want to be a different ethnicity" ranged from *I strongly disagree* to *I strongly agree*, with higher scores indicating a higher level of racial identity.

11. Blacks report the lowest mean perceived safety within the community.

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