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“Got it Bad Cause I’m Brown”: An Intersectional Analysis of Policing and Legal
Cynicism in Inland Southern California

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Humberto Flores

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Thesis Committee:
Dr. Sharon S. Oselin, Chairperson
Dr. Randol Contreras
Dr. Tanya Nieri

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The Thesis of Humberto Flores is approved:

Committee Chairperson

University of California, Riverside

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to the following people who were murdered by law enforcement
in Riverside and San Bernardino during my data collection:

Anthony Armenta

Shyheed Robert Boyd

Mark Bender

Jehlani Black

Ernie Serrano

Santos Villegas

ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

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by

Humberto Flores

Master of Arts, Graduate Program in Sociology
University of California, Riverside, June 2021
Dr. Sharon S. Oselin, Chairperson

Across the United States, Latinx and Black Americans disproportionately experience the brunt of policing, contributing to high rates of legal cynicism. Much research examines policing and legal cynicism in the Black community, especially among Black men; yet, we know far less about the legal cynicism of Black women and in the Latinx community. Using an intersectional analysis, this study draws upon 20 interviews with Latinx and Black men and women in Riverside and San Bernardino California to address the following research questions: How do experiences with police vary by race and gender, and how do they contribute to legal cynicism? Tied to legal cynicism, does “the police talk” vary across Latinx and Black respondents and their families? This study finds that experiences with the police vary by race and gender, and contribute to differences in the ways respondents express legal cynicism.

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Now I dialed 911 a long time ago
Don't you see how late they're reacting?
They only come and they come when they wanna
So get the morgue truck and embalm the goner
They don't care 'cause they stay paid anyway
They treat you like an ace that can't beat a trey
A no-use number with no-use people
If your life is on the line then you're dead today.

[911 Is A Joke, Public Enemy, 1990]

Introduction

Across the United States, Latinx and Black Americans disproportionately experience the brunt of policing. Due to historical disparities in policing and sentencing, minority communities are more likely to have negative perceptions and distrust of law enforcement, a phenomenon scholars refer to as legal cynicism (Sampson and Bartusch 1998). Legal cynicism is defined as a cultural frame in which the law and the agents of its enforcement are viewed as illegitimate, unresponsive, and ill-equipped to ensure public safety (Kirk and Papachristos 2011; Sampson and Bartusch 1998). To that end, Latinx and Black individuals indicate high rates of distrust of the police and the criminal justice system overall (Bell 2017). Legal cynicism can lead to parents having the “police talk,” with their kids, a socialization practice designed to prepare children for police encounters so they remain unharmed (Gonzalez 2019).

The literature on policing primarily focuses on Black men and finds that they are disproportionately arrested and more likely to be killed or injured during police encounters than any other race-gender group (Davis 2017; Ferguson 2017). Scholars speculate that Latinx people occupy a disadvantaged middle ground where they experience the less intensive focus of criminalization compared to Black folks but are more at risk than whites (Hagan et al. 2005). Yet, little is known about the legal cynicism of Black women and Latinx communities, and how experiences with the police inform it. The existing research on these latter groups finds that Latina and Black women have similar, negative direct and vicarious experiences with the police and similarly distrust police (Hitchens et al. 2017). Research also concludes that Latino and Black men have similar negative experiences with the police but despite high levels of legal cynicism, Latino men are more likely to say positive things about the police (Carr 2007).

One drawback of this literature is that it often conflates Latinx and Black individuals' experiences, and therefore does not differentiate between racial-ethnic groups, and rarely examines how gender produces disparate experiential outcomes (Weitzer and Tuch 2006). In addition, much of the research overwhelmingly relies on quantitative measures to document disparities in policing and legal cynicism (Kirk and Papachristos 2011; Sampson and Bartusch 1998; Epp et al. 2014; Correll et al. 2006). While it is valuable to understand statistical group differences, how individuals experience, understand, and respond to such encounters remains murky and are integral to making policy changes (for exceptions, see Hitchens et al. 2017; Cobbina 2019).

In light of the aforementioned limitations, this study examines the following research questions: What are Latinx and Black individuals' experiences with police and how do they contribute to their legal cynicism? Do they vary by race and gender? As both a product of legal cynicism and a way to mitigate damage by police, how does "the police talk" vary across Latinx and Black men and women? This study draws upon twenty interviews in the Inland Empire California to establish how legal cynicism impacted racial, ethnic, and gendered groups in different ways.

Literature Review

Legal Cynicism

Legal cynicism or anomie of the law is a product of neighborhood structural conditions and police-resident interactions (Sampson and Bartusch 1998). Direct and vicarious experiences with police harassment may influence individual cynicism, but it becomes cultural and transmitted generationally through social interaction (Kirk and Papachristos 2011). Legal cynicism can be passed on from one generation to the other through "the police talk."

Intersectionality

I use intersectionality as an analytical framework to understand how policing affects legal cynicism while considering identities such as race, ethnicity, and gender (Crenshaw 1989). The intersectional lens accounts for categorical identities in relation to one another and how they are affected by systems of power, such as law enforcement agencies (Collins 2015). Intersectionality allows for an understanding of the complex human experiences of Latinx and Black men and women in the study (Collins and Bilge 2016).

Further, intersectionality emphasizes the importance of multiply-marginalized people, especially women of color (Choo and Feree 2010). The intersectional analysis shifts from independent categories of inequality to multiple institutions of intertwined and overlapping inequalities. Therefore, the utility of intersectionality captures the intricacy of legal cynicism as it varies across groups.

To highlight these complexities, I use Patricia Hill Collins' intersectional "matrix of domination" (2000). This approach shows how legal cynicism is affected by police experiences and oppression as tied to interlocking demographic categories, such as race, ethnicity, and gender. Analyzing Latinx and Black men and women comparatively acknowledges the variation of experiences people have with the police and how that translates to individual and group levels of legal cynicism.

Policing Race and Ethnicity: The Black and Latinx Communities

An abundance of research finds implicit negative racial stereotypes of Latinx and Black criminality lead officers to surveil and stop Black and Latinx people at higher rates than whites (Epp et al. 2014; Brunson and Miller 2006; Rios 2017; Stuart 2016). Further, research finds that Latinx and Black people share a "minority-group perspective" toward the police that is distinct from a white "majority perspective," as a result of adverse personal experiences with police officers that alienate residents from law enforcement (Weitzer and Tuch 2006). As a result, quantitative research finds that Latinx and Black people have high levels of legal cynicism (Sampson and Bartusch 1998).

Legal cynicism stems from the disproportionate policing of Latinx and Black neighborhoods. Consequently, communities of color hesitate to call the police due to

distrust and lack of confidence in the police. For example, a national survey found that 61 percent of whites have confidence in police in contrast to 30 percent of Black Americans and 45 percent of Latinx Americans (Gallup 2017). Confidence in police plummeted to a record low in 2020, after the murders of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor for white and Black people: 56 percent and 19 percent, respectively (Gallup 2020). Latinx confidence in police in 2020 was unknown, but we can also expect to find a similar decline.

Researchers who conducted a survey in three Philadelphia neighborhoods found that only 10 percent of Black and Latinx youth would call the police under any circumstance (Carr et al. 2007).

Quantitative research on legal cynicism is limited in understanding an individual's lived experiences. Additionally, legal cynicism research on Latinx individuals is almost non-existent. Despite decades of research, much remains unknown about police-civilian relations (Weitzer and Tuch 2006). We know that race plays a significant role in shaping people's attitudes and experiences with the police. But little is known about Latinx relations with law enforcement. Additionally, most studies highlight the importance of race and ethnicity but fail to analyze differences between racial and ethnic groups. Consequently, much remains unknown about the characteristics that shape each racial and ethnic group's attitudes and experiences with the police (Weitzer and Tuch 2006). This study acknowledges these limitations and seeks to go beyond the Black-white binary by incorporating the Latinx legal cynicism perspective through their lived experiences.

Policing Gender

In addition to race, gender adds another layer of complexity to policing. Men report that negative contacts with police are connected to racism. Women report similar experiences as men, but women also report unwanted sexual advances during their encounters with police (Solis et al. 2009). Gender is often ignored in research on race and police; research samples often include men and women but fail to attend to gender (Hurst et al. 2000; Brunson and Miller 2006).

A youth survey found that men report police harassment regardless of their participation in delinquency (Brunson and Miller 2006). In contrast, women report harassment primarily while engaged in delinquency. Men and women report similar perceptions of police, stating that police often mistreat and harass people in their neighborhood. Brunson and Miller (2006) also found that police are less aggressive when men are accompanied by women. Women report being stopped more often for curfew violations and also express concerns about police sexual misconduct (Brunson and Miller 2006).

The intersections of race and gender play a role in women's interactions with the police (Britton 2016). Thus, Black women are targets of racial profiling. The year before the murder of Michael Brown, Black women residing in Ferguson, Missouri were stopped by police for traffic violations more frequently than any other category of motorists. Black women reported experiences of being targeted and harassed by police that are comparable to those of Black men (Cobbina 2019).

The criminal justice system, which includes the police, encourages expressions of hypermasculinity, such as toughness and violence by threatening men's masculinity (Rios 2011). In fact, some police officers seek to effeminate men by manhandling them during police contact (Rios 2011). Hence, while race determines how a young person is treated by the criminal justice system, hypermasculinity during police encounters prompts Latinx and Black men to respond with violence.

“The police talk” prepares Black children for police encounters (Gonzalez 2019). Black mothers teach their youth strategies to stay alive when they encounter police. Although this approach is useful, it marginalizes Black girls who are conceived as collateral targets or secondary victims of masculinized racial violence. Black girls are seen as vulnerable because of race but not because of their race *and* gender (Gonzalez 2019). Hence there is a further need for research on “the police talk” as given to Black girls. In addition, I found no study that analyzes “the police talk” in the Latinx community. The present study aims to fill these gaps.

Despite pervasive legal cynicism among poor Black neighborhoods, research finds that Black mothers occasionally rely on the police, resulting in situational trust and legitimacy of the law (Bell 2016). For example, during moments of trust, some mothers exert social control over their partners and children through the use of police. This work can be used as a springboard to incorporate the experiences of Latinx people. My current study recognizes that there is only a small amount of research on the situational trust of Black women and none on the Latinx community and seeks to build on this work by

incorporating Latinx men and women and how they are socialized into distrusting the police (Bell 2016).

A study of legal cynicism among Latina and Black young women found that Black women reported the most negative police encounters and Latinas reported more gender-based police sexual harassment than white women (Hirchens et al. 2018). Further, Black and Latinas respondents were most likely to witness negative police encounters of family, friends, or neighbors. Consequently, Latina and Black women are more likely to mention police ineffectiveness than white women (Hirchens et al. 2018). My research builds on this prior study by further interrogating the experiences of Latinas, Black women, and men.

Considering the limitations of the previous research, I aimed to explore the legal cynicism of Latinx and Black men and women. Twenty in-depth interviews allowed for the examination of similarities and differences in the levels of legal cynicism, each racial and gendered group's views of each other, and "the police talk."

Methods

Interviews were conducted with Latinx participants from the Eastside, a neighborhood in the City of Riverside, Riverside County, California, and Black participants from the Northside, a neighborhood in the City of San Bernardino, San Bernardino County, California. These research sites were chosen because they are understudied. The majority of policing studies focus on major cities, such as Los Angeles, Chicago, and New York City (Felker-Kantor 2018; Vera Sanchez and Adams 2011; Solis et al. 2006). Riverside and San Bernardino Counties, located in Inland Southern California, known as the Inland

Empire, have one of the largest Latinx populations in the nation. Yet little research focuses on these counties (De Lara 2009).

The Inland Empire has transformed from a rural backwater of Southern California to an extension of the Los Angeles greater metropolitan region. With this change came a rapid demographic transformation from white to majority Latinx region and from a majority to a majority-minority region (Gonzales 2013). Riverside and San Bernardino Counties are home to 15.8 percent of California's incarcerated population, despite comprising only 11.8 percent of the state's general population (Center on Juvenile and Criminal Justice 2016), suggesting over-policing. Additionally, they have a history of civil gang injunctions that criminalize non-gang-involved Latinx and Black residents. Because gang injunctions are associated with greater police-resident interactions, this site is ideal for this study (Maxson et al. 2004).

Research participants were recruited through snowball sampling. Drawing on my personal social networks, I identified one person in each research site. My primary participants shared my contact information with prospective respondents who fit the study criteria. Prospective participants contacted me to schedule interviews.

To conduct an intersectional analysis, I recruited a similarly sized, diverse sample of participants that represent each of the four groups of investigation. The sample includes a total of 20 interviews: 5 with Latino men, 5 with Latina women, 5 with Black men, and 5 with Black women. Respondent's ages ranged from 23 to 68. To qualify for the study, participants had to self-identify as Latinx or Black adults, be current or

previous residents of the two selected neighborhoods of Riverside and San Bernardino, and have had either direct or indirect encounters with police.

Interviews were voluntary and participants provided verbal consent. Due to the 2019 coronavirus pandemic, all interviews were conducted online through Zoom or by phone with the exception of one. The one interview was conducted in person in a San Bernardino park with face masks and 6-feet of social distance, following COVID-19 state guidelines. I worked around participant's schedules to ensure they had access to a private space during their interview. During the Zoom interviews, I assured participants I was the only one in the room interviewing them. Interviews typically lasted an hour and a half. Respondents were compensated \$10 for the interview.

The one-time interviews were in-depth and semi-structured. Semi-structured interviews enable researchers to consistently address key topics across participants while remaining open to other issues and concerns participants want to share (Corbin and Strauss 2015; John W. Creswell, J and David Creswell 2018). Open-ended questions in the interviews elicited detailed opinions about the police and about individual encounters and perceptions of them. Interviews covered five major themes. In the first theme, participants were asked to reflect on their community, their family, and whether or not they received the police talk. The second theme was attentive to participants' perceptions of the police in general. The third theme inquired about their first or second-hand experiences with the police. The last two themes focused on participants' perceptions of policing in regards to race and gender and community trust in the police.

After conducting interviews, I wrote field notes to identify emerging themes and biases. In addition to field notes, I engaged in memo writing. Memos facilitate the analytic process and allow for reflections to check biases (Corbin and Strauss 2015). Memo writing is part of the analysis since it forces researchers to dialogue with the data. In memo writing, researchers make comparisons, ask questions, make meaning, and explore relationships between concepts. It is also a space to record feelings, impressions, and responses during the research process. Memo writing allows researchers to be conscious of how and when biases and assumptions influence interpretations (Charmaz 2006; Corbin and Strauss 2015).

Interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim by two trained undergraduate research assistants. The transcripts were coded using Atlas.ti 9. Analysis software makes sifting and sorting data easier (Corbin and Strauss 2015). Before reading the interview transcriptions, I reviewed the memos. As I read the transcripts, I coded emerging themes. I also engaged in memo writing after coding each interview. The interviews provided detailed experiences of the participant's life histories.

I coded for emerging themes about police socialization, experiences with the police, and perceptions of policing. I began by coding for race and gender. After, I coded for conversation or no conversation if participants received or did not receive the police talk. For direct experiences themes such as physical violence and procedural injustices emerged. In regards to vicarious experiences, the themes of family, friend, and partner exposure to policing arose. I coded for difference or no difference of race and gender

according to participant's responses in relation to policing perceptions. Lastly, I coded for negative cases that contrasted the emerging themes.

In this study, I occupied both an insider and outsider status that varied across participants. I grew up in the Inland Empire which allowed me to gain participants' trust. I spent the first five minutes before starting the audio recording building rapport with participants. Like the participants, I was exposed to policing first-hand, which gave me an insider position. Furthermore, being Latino contributed to insider status with the Latinx participants. Being a Latino man may have made Black participants view me as an outsider. Furthermore, though I am from the Inland Empire, I am an outsider to the two selected neighborhoods in the study.

Findings

Similar to past studies on this topic (Hitchens et al. 2017; Sampson and Bartusch 1998; Carr et al. 2007), legal cynicism in this study was high across Latinx and Black men and women. In this study, legal cynicism was measured based on trust level, on a scale of 1 through 10. Participants were asked, "On a scale of 1 to 10 (1 being not at all, 10 being the highest level), how much do you trust the police?" The overall mean reported trust was rated 3.7. My findings were consistent with Sampson and Bartusch's study (1998), Latino and Black men's trust in the police was rated as 3.0 and 3.8, respectively. Both Latina and Black women reported an average of 4.0 trust in police. The interviews in this study allowed for interrogation of legal cynicism beyond quantitative responses. The majority (19) of respondents in the study did not feel comfortable calling the police. It is also important to note that according to participants, the police in San Bernardino did not

respond to 911 calls promptly, which contributes to their cynicism. Below I unpack how different types of experiences with police contribute to legal cynicism, and how the police talk varies by race, ethnicity, and gender.

Racialized and Gendered Police Interactions

Men's Direct Experiences with Police

Past research often conflates the experiences of Latino and Black men with police as if they are a monolithic group finding that both have similar experiences and share a minority-group perspective toward police (Weitzer and Tuch 2006). I find that while there are some shared experiences between Latino and Black men, there are notable differences that illustrate how gendered and racialized dynamics play a role in police-civilian interactions. Eastside Riverside and Northside San Bernardino provided context to disentangle Latino and Black men's direct experiences with the police. While both groups of men had first-hand experiences and were hyper-policed (Rios 2017; Stuart 2016), I found that Black men reported harassment by law enforcement more often than Latinos, even when Black men were not engaging in crime. In comparison, Latinos in the study were "let off the hook" more often than Black men, meaning they still had largely negative encounters but were not arrested and charged with crimes as frequently.

The Latino men in the study felt targeted and harassed by local police in their neighborhoods. Police frequently rely on racialized and masculinized Latino gang associates to initiate contact with individuals (Rios 2020). Latino men described being profiled as cholos [gangsters] for having a shaved head and wearing Dickies-brand pants and Nike Cortez-brand shoes. The shaved head and baggy clothes are described as

masculine gang bodily displays that lead to heightened police surveillance (Flores 2016). Latinos in the study expressed being profiled in their lowriders and for “driving while brown.” Participants also reported that the police perceive Latinos walking on the Eastside as being “up to no good.”

Latino respondents in the study reported negative interactions with police mainly when engaged in some type of crime. Lucky, for example, a 43-year-old Latino man, detailed hanging out and being pulled over by the police with his “homie” and unregistered fully automatic assault rifles in the car. Lucky mentioned that the police confiscated the weapons and let them go: “They took the two guns and none of us went to jail or got a ticket. The guns just magically disappeared.” In another instance, he stated that police caught him firing a pistol in his backyard; in this case, police also confiscated the handgun but did not report it or make any arrests.

Lucky mentioned that he did not trust the police because of his negative interactions with law enforcement. Like other participants, he explained that the Eastside was family-oriented and they practiced informal social control rather than relying on the police. On a scale of 1-10, he rated his trust in police officers as a 1 and mentioned that he would rate them a negative number if possible. He further elaborated that the only circumstance in which he would call the police is in a life or death situation. This community distrust contributes to individual’s legal cynicism and it becomes generationally transmitted in the community (Kirk and Papachristos 2011).

Likewise, Anthony, a 41-year-old Latino mentioned being pulled over while walking on the Eastside with his cousin, who had a bench warrant. Both Anthony and his

cousin were young Latino men at the time. His cousin did not want to be arrested; so he challenged the police to a fistfight. After they fought, police still arrested him for the bench warrant but not for fighting the cop. Anthony recounted:

He [cousin] pretty much called him out, telling him ‘I bet you if you didn’t have your gun or your handcuffs you wouldn’t be messing with us.’ And the cops said ‘Well what’s up then let’s get down’ and they got down. He started socking up the cop and the other one jumped in and they beat him up. They took out their batons and started beating him. They just arrested him for the warrant they had but they didn’t file any assault charges or anything. I think it’s because they socked him up good. They busted his head open.

Anthony recalled how his first and second-hand experiences contributed to his legal cynicism. He rated his trust in the police as a 4 and mentioned that it had increased because he began working alongside the police since he started working for the city. He also mentioned that the only reason he would call 911 is to report stolen property. Anthony mentioned that before his cousins fought with the police, he used to view them as there to protect him, but after that situation, he began to view the police as “gangsters.”

Anthony mentioned:

They’ll [police] kick your ass. If you don’t listen to them, they sock you up too just like a big homie would if you disrespect them or your rival gang member because they actually jumped him. So to me, like they just jumped my cousin, like foos [fools] from other neighborhoods would come and jump my cousin. So nah, when I look at cops, I didn’t feel safe or protected, it was like another gang in the neighborhood.

To be clear, Latinos described harassment by police even when not engaged in crime but in general, this was less common. For instance, Victor, 45 years of age, recalled being punched in the head by a police officer in Downtown Riverside, just a few streets away from the Eastside:

As a kid, I was punched by a biker cop on a bike in Downtown, all because he told me to take off my hat and I said no. I didn't commit no crime. And he said 'Take off your fucking hat' and I said 'No!' and I walked away, and he pulled up in his bike and got closer and slugged [punched] me, bro. So yea, he slugged me right on the fucking side.

Victor's trust in the police, as measured by the quantitative scale, was not recorded due to the interview being cut short, but his distrust in the police was evident throughout the interview. He mentioned that "the Riverside cops are probably the most corrupt organizations." Victor mentioned that he hates the police and detailed a conversation with his co-worker, an ex-police officer:

He [co-worker] was a police officer in his 20-year career, and he laughs about it, man, about beating up Chicanos, beating up Black guys, you know, and thank God there were no bodycams around. So I kinda take that personal when I hear his stories, you know. Like, 'Fuck you.' He committed an actual crime and he said he was above the law because he was the law, which I believe was some bullshit. You know, fuck that guy.

Victor repeatedly stated that "the police will not hesitate to kill you." He also mentioned various instances where he was verbally threatened by police. Further, he emphasized that the police made him feel unsafe in his neighborhood. Victor's legal cynicism was apparent and a consequence of his first-hand experience with the police.

In contrast to Latino men, Black respondents experienced harassment by the police without justification more often. Controlling images of Black people lead to biased oppression (Collins 2000); stereotypical images frame Black men as "ideal criminals" which contributes to their hyper-criminalization (Madriz 1997; Rios 2011). In line with these theories, Black men in the study reported being profiled and hassled by the police for no reason in circumstances where they were not engaged in illegal activities.

Demond, age 65, described his experience of being unjustly incarcerated as a high school student. He was booked to photograph a woman for her banquet with the school's photography equipment. The police pulled him over at the bus stop and wrongfully detained him because the officers believed the equipment was stolen. Demond mentioned his biggest concern was being robbed of the camera equipment at the bus stop. Instead, he ended up incarcerated and lost the money for the photography shoot:

I'm sitting at the bus stop a little after 10 at night, nervous and I'm in the wrong hood and have all this expensive school equipment on me. I'm sitting there waiting for the bus and police come up and keep going right. They went around the block and got out and came to ask me where I was going. I told them, so they put me in the car, took me to the police station, took my cameras and I'm tryna figure out what's going on and I said 'Call my momma' and tell her to come and get me then. This was like 10 something at night and come to figure it out they didn't call my momma till almost 2 o'clock in the morning.

On the trust scale, Demond jokingly rated his trust in the police a 0 several times before confirming his rate as a 1 on the 1-10 scale. He described the police as "paid killers" and mentioned that the only reason he would call the police is if someone was getting murdered. He felt this way because of his encounter with the police and because they never showed up when he called them in the past. He described watching a man beat his wife and him calling 911, the operator told him they would send the next available officer. Demond asked me "You know when that officer showed up?" I asked "When?" and he responded, "He ain't here yet!" The second time he called after his home was broken into, the police took 6 hours to arrive. Demond's negative accumulated experiences contribute to his distrust of the police as an institution.

Quincy, a 25-year-old Black man, described being racially profiled during his first job in voting registration. Mondays through Fridays, Quincy walked door-to-door to get

people to register to vote with his clipboard. One day in a predominantly white neighborhood, after twenty minutes of working, the police pulled him over. He was asked to leave the neighborhood despite the officers finding his voter registration equipment in his backpack. Quincy narrated being stopped and searched by the police:

They [police] pulled up and said ‘You need to sit on the curb.’ And I was like ‘Why do I need to sit on the curb? I am not bothering anyone. You can check my bag. It’s literally just voter registration stuff.’ So I got searched. They put me on the curb in handcuffs. I’m sitting there waiting and after a while they took off the cuffs, gave me my stuff back, and said ‘You just need to leave this area.’

Quincy also jokingly rated his trust in the police as a 0 before conforming to a 1. Quincy mentioned that he would only call the police if it was a “dire emergency” such as if someone is dying. Additionally, he mentioned that in the event that he did call 911, he would stress that he is a Black man. He also stated that he would tell the 911 operator “send me here with so-and-so and I need help. I’m in blue, please do not shoot.” Like other participants, Quincy’s experience revealed that the effects of racial profiling and procedural injustices often lead to higher legal cynicism among Black men.

Women’s Vicarious Experiences with Police

In contrast to men, the majority of Latina and Black women in the study had primarily vicarious experiences with the police, which informed their legal cynicism. The extent of their legal cynicism stemmed from the experiences of their loved one’s interactions and mistreatment at the hands of the police (Bell 2016; Hurst et al. 2007). Most of the women recounted negative stories about their fathers’, brothers’, and partners’ contact with law enforcement: vicarious accumulated experiences with the police that directly contributed to their legal cynicism (Hitchens et al. 2018). Despite high levels of legal cynicism,

women may be more likely to exhibit situational trust in the police than men (Bell 2016). Contrary to Brunson and Miller's findings (2006), Latina's vicarious experiences in the study reveal that Latino men were treated more aggressively with women present, even while not involved in crime.

Leah, a 36-year-old Latina woman, illustrated various second-hand experiences with the police and one direct encounter. Her first significant experience was the murder of her best friend at the hands of the police. Growing up, she had also heard about her cousins and parents' friends being killed by the police. Additionally, Leah experienced police brutality and police injustices through her brother, father, and sister. She described an incident where the police beat her brother and his best friend and dropped them off in a rival Black neighborhood after a party they attended in the predominantly white neighborhood in Riverside:

A bunch of white guys jumped my brother and his best friend and the cops came. They [police] beat up my brother and dropped them off in a field, and just left them there. Mind you, they didn't just drive them to an empty field somewhere in Riverside, they drove them to another neighborhood.

The police came and just assumed that it was literally two guys against 15 white Boys. The white guys left, took off running. My brother was still upset, yelling and cussing and they started hitting him. Threw them, both in the back seat, and drove them to an all-Black neighborhood. And drop them off in an empty field. And told them, basically what my brother told me, they told him, 'let's see you make it out of this.'

Further, Leah watched her father get arrested for an old warrant while they were on their way to the store. She mentioned that her father was racially profiled for being brown, wearing khaki pants, and a bandana. Additionally, Leah also mentioned vicarious experiences of sexual harassment through her sister:

Leah: I've seen it [sexual harassment] done with my sister, you know. She's dark-skinned really, she's shapely. And I have heard cops tell her, 'Hey take a ride with me, you'll be alright. We won't be messing with you.' She actually had a cop in Riverside that was really obsessed with her. I forget his name. He would harass her. She would stay at hotels and he would go find her, search her room and tell her, 'Oh well you do this and you do that.' She never did it because he would take her to jail. But he would definitely try her.

Humberto: What kind of things would he tell her?

Leah: To go have sex with him and he wouldn't let her go.

Humberto: To prevent her from getting arrested?

Leah: Yeah, but she still went to jail because she didn't do it. He would call her by her last name. 'You want to go to jail? Or are you going to take care of me?' And she would tell them: 'I'm going to jail.'

While most described instances of vicarious policing, some women in the study reported direct experiences that contributed to their legal cynicism. Leah disclosed that a police officer pulled her over and began to search her car a week after they murdered her best friend. During the encounter, Leah noticed that the officer attempted to plant narcotics in her car:

He [police] opened my car and then he kind of was trying to tell me 'Where's the dope?' And I was like 'Well it's in your hand. You brought that.' I told him, 'I see you, that is yours. That is not mine.' He was calling me a bitch. A bitch this and a bitch that. 'Fuck your neighborhood.' Because they all knew where we were from. I stood my ground and I told him 'That is not mine, I'm not going to let you put that down on me.' He cussed me out and then he got in his car and took off. I was still sitting on the curb when he left.

Leah mentioned that because all of these experiences made her feel angry and scared and made her dislike the police. She rated her trust in the police as a 3. She also mentioned that growing up she was raised to not call the police, instead she would call her brothers. But now as a 36-year-old, she reported that she was willing to call the police because she would not want her brother or husband to get incarcerated for exercising informal social

control. Although Leah did not trust the police, she would call them if needed, which is consistent with Bell's (2016) findings on situational trust.

Lyric, a 41-year old Latina woman, detailed watching her husband being stopped in their apartment complex while he was washing his car when she was 20 years of age. The Latina women's vicarious experiences in this study revealed that Latino men were more likely to be targeted by the police when women are present, even while not engaged in crime. Lyric mentioned that the officers believed the car he was washing was stolen despite his attempts to show them the paperwork that could verify his ownership. Lyric watched this incident unfold and an officer pointed a gun at her. Afterward, Lyric and her husband attempted to file a report but she claimed that the officer interviewing them was very leading as he kept reframing their responses to the point where they were unsatisfied with the filed report. Lyric and her husband were disappointed to find that their complaint was deemed unfounded by the department. This incident changed both of their perspectives on law enforcement and significantly contributed to their distrust of the police. Lyric described:

He [the officer] came out to my house and interviewed me. I remember feeling like he took every last word I just said and turned it around. He would use my words against me. I didn't necessarily defend myself and my story. And I was so mad, I cried after because he took everything I said and turned it and just something else.

And of course, you know after months, a decision came up about the complaint and they're like 'Yeah no, we didn't find anything.' Of course! If you listen to the tape! I didn't even know what to say at the end. So, that was really hard. At that point it totally, you know, turned my view of what justice really is.

Lyric's vicarious experience of witnessing her husband being mistreated by the police and not receiving justice for the complaint submission resulted in a shift in how she viewed

police as an institution. Like the past two participants, Lyric also jokingly rated the police a 0 before confirming a 1 on the trust scale. Her second-hand experiences resulted in this low trust but also her experiences with calling the police. She recalled the university police being unresponsive to a custody call against the father of her daughter. She mentioned “I felt so dumb. I felt like it was not helpful.” Lyric mentioned that despite the police being useless twice, she would call again if she is in a situation that is out of her control.

Black women’s vicarious experiences highlighted that despite a loved one’s innocence, police involvement can result in punitive treatment. The media also played a role in Black women’s vicarious experiences. Brea, a 33-year-old Black woman, mentioned three policing experiences that involved her brother. During the first instance, she recalled her brother almost being shot by the police for having a BB gun. She heard the police officers had guns pointed at her brother’s head because they thought he was in possession of a real gun. Brea remembers her mother crying because this incident almost resulted in his death in spite of the gun being a toy. During the second incident, her brother called the police because their father because was choking their mother:

My brother ran next door and called the police and my mom told them [police] about the incident that he [dad] was choking her, and they ended up taking both of them. And she was really sad because she said she defended herself and still arrested her. So I remember them being in the back of a police car and having to stay with my grandmother. I know she felt like the police let her down and she did express you know like ‘I just defended myself and they still took me, I can’t believe it.’

The call for assistance for Brea’s mother resulted in both parents being arrested, despite their mother being the victim of domestic violence. Brea and her brother expressed

disappointment since the police were supposed to protect their mother but ended up arresting her. In the most recent incident, a white man in a truck was trying to get her brother on a motorcycle off the road. They both pulled over and the white man was trying to hit her brother with a stick so he tried to wave a cop down for assistance, but the police officer did not stop. When the white man left, the officers came back and arrested her brother. A few years later, her brother was incarcerated for a crime he did not commit, and it took five years to prove his innocence. Brea also detailed an unpleasant first-hand account of being pulled over for a speeding ticket on a San Bernardino freeway:

I was speeding on my way to church, and I'll take full accountability for that but the officer was being very rude and making racial remarks. This was during the time where everything was going on with Sandra Bland, where she got pulled over, so immediately it triggered me. He [the officer] literally in verbatim said to me 'If I come back and your stuff isn't correct in the way that you're telling me I am going to slap you in your face,' and I was shocked. I was holding on to the wheel, scared of what he was going to do. He said, 'I guess you were on PC time.' PC time means colored people time. It took me a minute to gather all my thoughts and I cried as I continued to drive because I was like you know the whole Sandra Bland thing really did happen, they really killed her, and what if that could have happened to me.

As a result of her negative experiences, Brea rated her trust in the police as a 2.

Additionally, she mentioned that she would not call the police ever again. Instead, she would try to find an alternative way so as to not get the police involved. Brea stated "It's just because of all these experiences that I have had they weren't helpful, and they don't make me feel like what's the point of calling, they never helped me before, you know. I do feel it's because we live in San Bernardino and a lot of things happen here." Lastly, Brea mentioned that she would call 911, but it would not be her first option.

Vicarious marginalization includes alienation from the police through other's experiences of others and the media (Bell 2017). Kiara, a 33-year-old Black woman,

displayed how the media played a role in Black women's estrangement from police. Kiara mentioned how the murder of Tyisha Miller, a local Black woman who was killed by the Riverside Police Department affected her distrust of police. Kiara mentioned that Tyisha's family called the police for assistance because she was unconscious in her car but was shot and killed by Riverside PD. Other Black women in the study also mentioned that media incidents such as Tyisha Miller, Breonna Taylor, and Sandra Bland hit close to home and contributed to their vicarious marginalization.

Oselin and Blasyak (2013) found that sex workers sometimes provide police officers with sexual services in exchange for protection. Kiara also mentioned her experience during outreach through her church and finding out that the police were sleeping with local sex workers, which shaped her degree of legal cynicism:

There's a street called Baseline they call the Hoestrow. We were out there praying for them [sex workers] and they are like 'You need to be praying for these old ratchet cops.' There is a hotel they take them to, they [police] will sleep with them. They will sleep with them in order for them not to arrest them because you know it's illegal. It's a whole system, they do it while they are at work, the officers, their buddies so they'll exchange throughout the night. One will go out looking in the neighborhood while one is sleeping with them and the next one comes with a new girl or the same girl.

Kiara rated her trust in the police a 5. When asked if she had ever called the police she mentioned that she had called the cops on her "crazy roommate" in college. She was satisfied with this response and therefore she would feel comfortable calling the police again but she would prefer not to because of her vicarious experiences and the policing injustices against Black women she has seen in the media.

Perceived Differences and Similarities

Research respondents were asked about their perception of policing differences or similarities about the other racial and gender groups in the study. Although studies find that Latinx and Black people share the minority-group perspective (Weitzer and Tuch 2006), to my knowledge, no study has examined how Latinxs and Blacks view each other in regards to policing. For example, I asked Latinx participants if they believed there were differences in the way police treated Black folks versus Latinx folks. Conversely, Black people were asked if there were differences in the ways Latinx people were policed. Additionally, men were asked about women, and women were asked about men. Counterintuitively, the majority of Latinx and Black men and women in the study perceived that there were no differences in the ways Latinx and Black people were policed in the Inland Empire:

“Brown and Black people, I feel like we are all treated the same. Like you are a danger. We are already given a label before we are even asked for our names. I feel like we're all on the same page” (Kevonte, 24 years old Black man).

“I think they treat us both the same [Latinx and Black people]. If I'm going to talk about the cops who are the dicks, the jerks, I'm going to say that they treat us both the same” (Belinda, 36-year-old Latina).

Richard, a 39-year-old Latino, is the exception. He mentioned that Black people are policed worse than Latinx individuals unless they look like gang members:

I mean I can't really say cause I'm not Black, but I would imagine it's a lot worse. As a Latino, you're going to get messed with if you look like you're a gang member on the Eastside. But if you look like a regular dude and as long as you're not in a compromising situation or anything, I think they will leave you alone. But for Black people, they will always be looked at as a suspect or a threat because of their skin color. To the cops, if you're Black you look like a gang member.

In regards to gender, all participants agreed that there were differences in the ways men experienced policing compared to women. Men, and particularly Black men, reported being more likely to be stopped and racially profiled by law enforcement officers (Epp et al. 2014). There was a general consensus across all racial and gender groups that men were treated worse by the police:

My mom would always get pulled over. Because of the car she drove. She used to drive my uncle's car. It was a car that a Mexican cholo [lowrider] would drive. But once they approached the window, it was a completely different experience. Like they were not aggressive towards her. So I feel like initially, she wouldn't get pulled over because of what she was driving. But once they saw that it was an older woman, it was a different story. And I'm a girl you know? If I was a boy with the Riverside bell tattooed on me, I definitely think I would have a different experience here living in the Eastside. But because I'm a girl, I don't get bothered (Belen, 23-year-old Latina).

My girlfriends and I went to the beach. I had this girlfriend, she had big boobs, She would always just like oh, you know. Like 'Hi, officer.' We will get pulled over and they would just let us go. So when it came to the guys, hell no. We would be there forever (Pricilla, 42-year-old Latina).

Man, a girl I work with was just telling me how she is a terrible driver. She just uses her titties to get off on tickets. I'm like 'What?' I feel like men are held to a higher standard when it comes to driving (Bryant 27-year-old Black man).

Women are seen as less of a threat than men. Even Black women. Even Latina women. Sometimes they'll think the attitude is cute versus threatening. So anything we do would be considered less threatening unless you are this really big man-looking woman. (Tiffany, 28-year-old Black woman).

Belen details her mother being pulled over for driving a lowrider vehicle, often driven by Latino men. Lowriders are likely to be associated with masculinity and make drivers vulnerable to police stops (Epp et al. 2014). Further, women interpreted interactions with the police as objectifying women as sex objects, which the police did not do with men. Chivalry theory states that women receive preferential treatment during police encounters (Visher 1983). Despite critiques of chivalry theory (Britton 2016), women's experiences

in this study with the police were consistent with findings that women sometimes receive chivalrous treatment by police officers (Visher 1983).

The “Police Talk”

The police talk in the Black community is well documented whereby parents provide this to children for self-protection from harm. Black men receive the police talk as a strategy to keep themselves alive when they encounter police and Black women do not get the police talk (Gonzalez 2019). To my knowledge, no studies have focused on the police talk in the Latinx community. Consistent with Gonzalez (2019), I found that Black men received the police talk directly, from their parents, older siblings, and uncles. Even the Black son of a law enforcement officer reported receiving the police talk. I also found that the majority of Black women in this study did not receive the police talk.

Quincy mentioned that both of his parents gave him the police talk and tips about how to navigate being pulled over to make it home safely. He elaborated:

I've had this conversation [police talk] with my parents, I know my uncle, my mom's brother got it too. I've had it from a couple of different views of what you're supposed to do when you are being pulled over. And I know my sisters didn't have that same talk.

Quincey also detailed socializing his 3-year old nephew into legal cynicism for survival purposes:

I've had that conversation with him [nephew]. He's a Black boy. He is 4 in like 2 weeks. So he's cognitive of who he is. I told him repeatedly saying that I see him once a week, 'You know cops are not for you.' I told him I don't like cops and I told him why. I got hit by a paintball from protesting In the summer. I still have the mark for the rest of my life. I told him 'This is what the police did.' Then I'll tell him, 'I was out there in the street protesting for Black lives. For myself and for you.' I've taken a couple of his action figures and a policeman. They're gone now.

Kevonte, whose father was a law enforcement officer, also detailed receiving the police talk:

Even with my dad being in law enforcement, he still had the talk with me. 'Be careful,' you know? 'When you get pulled over, answer the questions and stay calm.' It's sad to say this, he gave us warnings as if we were dealing with wild animals. Like, 'Don't make any sudden movements.' As a kid, you learn to deal with [police]. Even after the George Floyd shooting, there were so many videos going around about parents teaching their kids how to protect their necks if they are ever pinned on the ground.

Kiara, a 33-year-old Black woman, highlighted the police talk experiences of women in the study:

For the women, it was more like in passing if it happened to come up. My mom taught my brother when he started driving, about driving while Black. How you interact with the police. He was taught that big time. I have some Black Panthers in my family who live in Oakland, they have a set of rules for the Black Panthers. They had a pamphlet on how to deal with cops. I remember my brother reading it. So I just think it is more of an emphasis with boys, but I will make sure to teach both my children regardless of their gender. But I'll keep it real, men got it harder.

Children of immigrants, Latinx men, and women in the study did not report receiving the police talk. Chris, age 40, mentioned that his experience with law enforcement was framed around Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE); so he received an "ICE talk" instead of the police talk. Chris's immigrant parents' primary concern growing up was ICE due to their documentation status and because of this, Chris was often told to avoid law enforcement. Hence, young Latino men acquired legal cynicism primarily from first-hand experiences with the police in their neighborhoods. Like Black women, Latinas also acquired legal cynicism from second-hand police experiences. As a result, Both Latino men and women in the study expressed that they would give the police talk to their second-generation Latinx children.

All of the Latino men in my study mentioned that their parents or family members had never talked to them about the police. But all Latinx participants mentioned they would have the police talk with their children. For example, Victor, mentioned having the talk with his daughter and four sons because of his experiences with the police, despite him not receiving the talk:

Humberto: Did your family ever talk to you about the police?

Victor: No, not really.

Humberto: Mother, grandparents?

Victor: Nah, I found out the hard way, man. I want to say in 2006, I was beaten by the police in front of my own house in Riverside. It was really bad, for nothing really. I had a paintball gun outside, and I tried to explain that to them but they didn't want to hear it. They barged inside my house, I wouldn't let them in. And I wound up getting jumped by like 6 cops, man. They broke my ankle. I went to county jail for the night.

Like the rest of the Latinas and children of immigrants, Lyric mentioned that she did not receive the police talk; rather, she had negative vicarious experiences with the police. She also expressed that she had the police talk with her son. But unlike the rest of the Latinas, who stated that they would give both of their second-generation children the police talk, Lyric did not give her daughter the talk. Despite Lyric being an exception and not having the conversation with her daughter, the majority of Latina women expressed that they would have the police talk with their sons and daughters.

Humberto: Have you had conversations with your kids about the police? And if so, what has that been like?

Lyric: So my son who is younger, we have had conversations. We have an older daughter, I don't remember having conversations with her.

Humberto: Only with your son?

Lyric: Yeah, and he's, and you know those conversations came up kinda while it was happening. We have kinda pointed out that police don't treat people the way they are supposed to be treated.

Humberto: And why did you think you would have the conversation with your son but not your daughter?

Lyric: Yeah, I don't know.

Black men in the study were equipped with the knowledge, gained from the police talk, that they believed would help keep themselves safe during police encounters. Black women and Latinx people did not receive the police talk.

Lastly, defunding the police is further evidence of legal cynicism in this study. Defunding the police became a topic of controversy in the midst of nationwide policing injustices and Black Lives Matter protests in the summer of 2020. Consequently, respondents were asked "Do you support defunding the police? Yes or no?" Defunding the police was described to participants as the shifting of funding from police departments to local community resources (UCLA School of Law 2020). Irrespective of race and gender, all with the exception of one participant supported defunding local police departments. One of the respondents remained neutral because she did not fully understand "defunding the police" enough to make an informed decision.

Discussion

Research on policing and legal cynicism does little to differentiate the experiences of Latinx and Black people's views on police and the criminal justice system (see Gonzalez 2019 for exception). Using an intersectional analysis, I highlighted the experiences of both racial groups and accounted for their gender. I find both race and gender played a role in the interviewees' direct and indirect experiences with the police and how each

contributed to their legal cynicism. The men had many direct experiences with the police, which greatly informed their legal cynicism. Latino men in the study were mainly targeted by the police when perceived as being associated with a gang or engaging in criminal behavior. Black men were targeted on the basis of their race and gender, reifying the stereotypes of the “Black man criminal.” Latinas and Black women in this study did not have many direct encounters with police but acquired legal cynicism through accumulated vicarious negative experiences of the men in their lives with police.

Despite research that finds otherwise (Weitzer and Tuch 2006), Latinx and Black respondents did not perceive differences in how each racial group was policed. Regardless of similarities and differences, Latinx and Black people should work in tandem against police brutality, without dividing social movements. In regards to the police talk, all Black men respondents received it from various family members. Black women and Latinx men and women did not receive the police talk. It is also worth noting that as a result of high legal cynicism, nearly all respondents supported the defunding of police.

Despite these contributions, there are limitations to this study. One limitation is the intersectional approach did not include a class analysis. Interrogating class is important since we know socioeconomic status impacts attitudes towards police due to the hyper policing of lower-class communities of color (Weitzer and Tuch 1999). Additionally, the findings in this study are not generalizable due to the sample’s small size. Nonetheless, these interviews revealed that legal cynicism, experiences and “the talk” indeed vary across racial and gender groups. Lastly, the novel COVID-19 pandemic

impacted recruitment and mainly allowed for the participation of those who have access to technology. Therefore, poorer participants or those without easy access to the internet were harder to recruit.

This study builds on previous research by including legal cynicism and police talk patterns of the Latinx community and how it compared to the Black community's police distrust. Further intersectional analyses of legal cynicism are necessary to push towards an end of inequitable policing practices. Future research should further explore how generational status can influence Latinx immigrants and their children's legal cynicism and "the talk" differently. Additionally, future research should explore defunding the police as it is tied to legal cynicism.

Ultimately, this current study's findings suggest that the actions of police officers do not make community members feel safe. The first step to create safer spaces and neighborhoods within minority communities is to identify inequitable policing practices and actions that generate distrust of police. Bringing attention to legal cynicism should implore law enforcement agencies to modify their actions if police officers want to secure greater trust among community members.

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