

The Vicarious Bases of Perceived Injustice

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Abstract. In the United States, profound differences exist in how African Americans and citizens from other racial and ethnic groups view police and court officials. These gulfs stem partly, but not entirely, from differences in individuals' personal experiences with the justice system. In this paper, we argue that vicarious experiences also contribute to the racial and ethnic divide in evaluations of police and courts. Drawing on research on social communication, social network homophily and negativity biases in perception and judgment, we devise a theoretical framework to articulate how and why vicarious experiences may magnify racial and ethnic disparities in evaluations of judicial actors. Five interrelated hypotheses derived from this framework are tested using original survey data, with sampling from the four largest racial and ethnic groups in the state of Washington. Results provide strong evidence that vicarious experiences influence citizens' evaluations of both police and courts, and do so in a manner that widens racial divides in how those actors are perceived.

Police officers and courts officials serve as the public faces of the American judicial system. While only a few citizens see federal and state courts, many have visited local courts, appeared as plaintiffs or defendants in civil cases, defended themselves against traffic citations, faced trial on criminal charges, and served as witnesses and jurors. Encounters with the police occur with even greater frequency. Police speak with citizens who may have witnessed accidents or crimes, provide assistance to people involved in those incidents, stop people for questioning, issue citations, and place people under arrest.

These encounters bring an experiential basis to evaluations of the police and courts. A stark characteristic of those evaluations is their divergence on the basis of race (e.g., Peffley and Hurwitz 2010, Bobo and Johnson 2004, Weitzer and Tuch 2006). Compared with Whites,¹ Blacks are much more likely to see the justice system as unjust, and to view the behaviors of that system's actors as arbitrary, disrespectful and unfair. These racial differences emanate in part from differences in direct experience: people's good or bad encounters with judicial actors give rise to positive or negative evaluations of police and court officials and of the justice system as a whole. However, personal experiences alone provide an incomplete account of both the sorts of evaluations people offer and the racial divide in those assessments. Clearly, something beyond people's immediate personal experiences influences their evaluations of the justice system.

Our position is that vicarious experiences also matter for how people view police and court officials. The suggestion that vicarious experiences are consequential in this realm has been made before (e.g., Peffley and Hurwitz 2010, Weitzer and Tuch 2006). We seek to build on that initial claim. Drawing on broader lessons regarding the nature and significance of social influence in human behavior, we construct a theoretical framework to account for why and how

¹ In this paper, when we refer to Whites we mean non-Hispanic Whites. The empirical analyses reported below examine data from a survey with targeted samples of White, African-American, Asian-American and Latino-American respondents.

vicarious experiences inform people's views of judicial actors, and with what effects. We then derive five interrelated hypotheses that are tested via examination of original survey data acquired in the state of Washington. These hypotheses provide the foundation for two fundamental claims: vicarious experiences influence people's evaluations of police and courts; and they do so in a manner that magnifies racial and ethnic disparities in those evaluations.

The Importance of Vicarious Justice Encounters

In outlining why we posit a special role for vicarious experiences as determinants of justice evaluations, we first review the case as developed previously. We then build on that perspective by incorporating insights from research on social interaction and social networks. Lastly, we delineate the five hypotheses that will be examined in the present study.

Extant Evidence of Vicarious Effects

The role of vicarious experiences in influencing evaluations of the justice system, and in contributing to a racial divide in such evaluations, is highlighted by Peffley and Hurwitz (2010):

(A)n experiential basis on which opinions about the justice system are formed is not necessarily personal in nature. Additionally, many such experiences are acquired vicariously, by hearing, reading, or seeing the experiences of others in one's community (42).

Many Blacks doubtless encounter a wide range of information and experiences that lead them to conclude that the justice system is unfair, including secondhand information of negative encounters with the police and other agents from family members and friends, Black opinion leaders, and others (93).

In that study, vicarious experiences are measured with two survey items asking

respondents how serious a problem it was in their community that a) police stop and question Blacks more often than Whites; and b) courts give harsher sentences to Blacks than to Whites. These two measures strongly affect evaluations of the fairness of the justice system, even after controlling for the influence of respondents' own personal experiences with judicial actors.

These results provide evidence that evaluations of the justice system are based on more than just personal experience; they are also based on perceptions of the experiences of others. We therefore believe that further inquiry regarding vicarious experiences is likely to be fruitful, and that efforts to approach those experiences with additional theoretical and empirical precision are warranted. Regarding the former, reexamining possible vicarious effects with guidance from the perspective of social networks will help us specify why vicarious experiences should matter and which sorts of experiences should produce the most pronounced effects. Regarding the latter, as Peffley and Hurwitz (2010) note, their measure of respondents' community-level perceptions may be informed, in part, by respondents' own experiences. For instance, an African-American respondent who has been stopped and questioned repeatedly by the police might conclude that such police behavior is problematic within his community. Under such conditions, it is not clear what mix of personal and vicarious experiences underlie this conclusion. Hence, we see utility in an approach that expressly highlights the actual experiences of respondents' acquaintances.

Weitzer and Tuch (2006) also called attention to possible vicarious effects. Survey respondents were asked a series of questions regarding their own negative experiences with police, and were then asked parallel items about other individuals in their households. That approach offers a useful foundation for the present study. We build on their approach in two important ways. First, we delineate a series of hypotheses that combine to offer a more precise theoretical account of why vicarious effects should be important, and why those effects may

magnify racial gaps in perceptions of judicial actors. Second, we develop broader empirical measures. Our measures provide data on a range of acquaintances, not just members of respondents' households; we seek to ensure that respondents had specific individuals in mind; our approach allows attention to the number of vicarious encounters respondents have had; and our measure represents both positive and negative vicarious experiences.

The Logic of Vicarious Effects

This study's central empirical propositions are, first, that vicarious experiences influence people's assessments of judicial actors, and second, that they do so in a manner that magnifies racial and ethnic gaps in those evaluations. Taken together, these propositions necessitate a framework that provides theoretical insight on several matters: the types of information about police and courts people are likely to encounter vicariously; whether such vicarious experiences should influence individuals' evaluations of police and courts; and whether any influence on evaluations contribute to racial and ethnic differences in those appraisals.

Our approach focuses on people's justice encounter networks, or circles of acquaintances who have had experiences with judicial actors. The first issue regarding these networks is their composition, and especially whether to expect racial and ethnic differences in the information people receive vicariously. On this matter, we make two key claims. First, we expect racial and ethnic homogeneity, or homophily, in networks. If social encounters occurred entirely randomly, the racial and ethnic composition of networks would be uncorrelated with a survey respondent's race and ethnicity, and vicarious experiences would be more likely to mute rather than magnify racial divisions in evaluations of judicial actors. But social encounters are far from random. Homophily abounds in social networks (McPherson et al. 2001),² and race and ethnicity are

² For examples of research on racial and ethnic homophily in a variety of types of social networks, see Ibaarra 1995; Marsden 1988; Mollica et al. 2003; and Shrum et al. 1988.

perhaps the most powerful structuring forces of network composition. Here, we examine the justice encounter networks of residents of the state of Washington who represent four groups: Blacks, Whites, Latinos and Asian Americans. Past research on homophily provides a strong basis to expect high degrees of racial and ethnic homogeneity in these networks.

Racial and ethnic homophily implies that justice encounter networks reported by African Americans are disproportionately composed of African Americans, that networks of Whites are mostly composed of other Whites, and so on. Such homogeneity would matter for the valence of vicarious experiences only if there is a racial divide in network members' judicial experiences. Our second expectation regarding network composition is that such a racial divide exists. Past research makes clear that Blacks and Whites report starkly different experiences with police and courts (Peffley and Hurwitz 2010, Weitzer and Tuch 2006). Thus, if African Americans report disproportionately negative experiences with police and court officials, and if the justice encounter networks of Blacks tend to be racially homogeneous, then the typical African American's vicarious experiences will be negative.

Drawing on past research, current expectations are strongest as they pertain to differences between Blacks and Whites. Because the present study examines data from Washington, our expectations must be situated within the state context. The survey includes respondents from the state's four largest racial and ethnic groups: Whites (72.1 percent of the population), Latino Americans (11.6 percent), Asian Americans (including Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islanders, 8.2 percent) and African Americans (3.8 percent).³ Although necessarily speculative, our expectation regarding Latinos and Asian Americans is that their justice encounter networks, and corresponding effects of exposure to those networks, will more closely resemble those for

³ The remainder of the state population is composed of individuals identifying on the Census as being American Indian or Alaska Native, individuals who report two or more races, and individuals who selected "other."

Whites than those for Blacks. That is, we expect patterns for African-Americans to be distinct from those for respondents from the other groups. There are two reasons for this. First, while not downplaying potential discrimination targeted at Asian Americans and Latinos, the collective history of racially-charged incidents involving police and courts focuses overwhelmingly on Blacks. Second, in Washington, data on the state's prison population provides a tangible indicator of unfavorable justice encounters. Relative to their distribution in the state's population, Whites (60.1 percent of prisoners) and Asian Americans (3.6 percent) are underrepresented, and Latinos (11.8 percent) are represented in proportion to their share of the state's population.⁴ In contrast, African Americans constitute 18.6 percent of Washington's prison population, an overrepresentation of nearly five-fold compared to their share of the state's population. If rates of imprisonment correspond with perceptions of unfair treatment by police and courts, this unique and dramatic overrepresentation of Blacks in Washington's prisons suggests that the personal and vicarious experiences of African Americans should stand apart from those of others.

Vicarious justice experiences should vary by race and ethnicity, but should they affect citizens' perceptions of police and courts? The role of social influence in politics has been recognized since the pioneering efforts of the Columbia researchers (e.g., Berelson et al. 1954; Katz and Lazarsfeld 1955). Most relevant for present purposes is research on discussion networks. Social communication—conversation—serves many purposes. Beyond its basic social function, it provides efficiency for citizens interested in better understanding aspects of the social and political worlds (Huckfeldt and Sprague 1995). When interacting, people share information, such as by relaying something they saw in the news (e.g., the unemployment rate has changed), something they heard from someone else (e.g., the new restaurant on Main St. has poor service),

⁴ Information about Washington's prison population is taken from the December 31, 2012 version of the Washington State Department of Corrections Fact Card, www.doc.wa.gov/aboutdoc/docs/msFactCard_008.pdf.

or something they learned through personal experience (e.g., two lanes on the bypass are closed). People on the receiving end are exposed to information that holds the potential to influence their subsequent attitudes and behaviors. Research on political discussion documents that discussion influences a host of important attitudes and behaviors including political participation, vote preferences, political tolerance and levels of political expertise (e.g., Huckfeldt 2001; Huckfeldt and Sprague 1995; Mutz 2002, 2006; Sokhey and McClurg 2012).

Key lessons from research on political discussion link nicely with the possibility that what people learn about their acquaintances' encounters with police and courts influences their evaluations of the justice system. Information is received at no cost, typically comes from trusted sources, and potentially provides a relevant, on-point basis for gauging the actors in question.

Research on discussion effects provides a rationale for why vicarious experiences may influence judgments about police and courts, and suggests a means to investigate those effects empirically. The norm in survey research on discussion effects is to ask respondents to identify and provide information about three or more specific discussion partners. The researcher can ask about conversations pertaining to broad matters such as "important problems" (e.g., Marsden 1987), narrower concerns such as politics (e.g., Huckfeldt and Sprague 1995), and even very specific matters such as politics within the workplace (Finifter 1974; Mutz and Mondak 2006) or single issues such as educational policy (e.g., Schneider et al. 1997). We adapt these approaches by asking respondents to identify acquaintances who have had encounters with the police or courts. Collectively, the identified acquaintances will provide our operational measure of a respondent's justice encounters network.⁵

⁵ The prompts researchers use to cue respondents to think of their discussion partners are referred to as "name generators." For assessment of the implications of the use of different name generators in research on political discussion, see Klobstad et al. 2009. In the present study, we offer a first attempt at crafting a name generator for the

We focus on what people learn about their acquaintances' *actual* experiences because we expect such personal anecdotes to be especially influential. The relaying of anecdotes, or “storytelling” (e.g., Mandelbaum 2013), is a central part of conversation.⁶ Tales of personal experiences can be quite vivid. Certainly this can be the case when a neighbor or coworker tells us of the car accident she witnessed yesterday, the case she heard while on jury duty last week, or how she received a warning instead of a speeding ticket from a police officer. Because it is vivid, detailed, and comes from a trusted source, storytelling has a privileged position in terms of influence. In Walsh's (2007) research on community dialogues, for instance, she finds not only that the sharing of personal anecdotes is a central way people communicate in such forums, but also that “narratives of personal experience, particularly of first-hand experience with bearing the burden of discrimination, held a special authority in these groups” (152). Extrapolating from Walsh's observations, we envision comparable effects when anecdotal experiences are shared through casual day-to-day exchanges.

Racial homogeneity in justice encounter networks, combined with the prevalence of unfavorable justice experiences among African Americans, dictates that the vicarious justice experiences of Blacks will tend to be more negative than those of people from other groups. The efficiencies associated with social communication, and especially the attributes of personal anecdotes, indicate why these vicarious experiences are expected to influence individuals' assessments of police and courts. Taken together, it follows that the collective effect of vicarious justice experiences should be a widening of the racial divide in evaluations of judicial actors.

specific purpose of identifying members of respondents' justice encounter networks. Building on this initial effort, research that devises and tests alternate name generators for this purpose is to be encouraged.

⁶ Some research suggests that this is particularly true among African Americans; see, for example, Harris-Lacewell 2004.

Due to a pervasive negativity bias, learning of acquaintances' bad experiences with police or courts should be especially influential on assessments of those actors. "Bad," according to Vohs and Luce (2010 736), "is stronger than good. . . . [Across a variety of domains,] events that yield negative outcomes have a significantly greater psychological impact than equivalent events that yield positive outcomes." Psychologists have generated an abundance of evidence that people typically assign negative information more weight than positive information (e.g., Baumeister et al. 2001; Fiske 1980; Pratto and John 1991). For example, negative impressions and stereotypes are quicker to form and more resistant to disconfirmation than positive ones (e.g., Skowronski and Carlston 1987).⁷

Negativity biases have been found to operate on judgments in the political realm (e.g., Lau 1982, 1985; McGraw and Steenbergen 1995), including on evaluations of the Supreme Court (Grosskopf and Mondak 1998). Likewise, in his research on the role of perceptions of fairness in evaluations of judicial actors, Tyler (e.g., 1990, 2001) emphasizes that negative experiences are especially consequential. Personally and vicariously, people have positive encounters with police and courts that influence subsequent evaluations. However, we expect negative experiences—seen much more commonly among African Americans—to exert disproportionately strong effects on how police and court officials are evaluated.

Hypotheses

To recap, our objective is to shed new light on the antecedents of racial and ethnic differences in perceptions of the justice system. Our framework posits a pivotal role for vicarious

⁷ According to some, the asymmetry between good and bad information is even highly functional. Baumeister et al. (2001 325), for example, argue "From our perspective, it is evolutionarily adaptive for bad to be stronger than good. . . . A person who ignores the possibility of a positive outcome may later experience regret at having missed an opportunity for pleasure or advancement, but nothing directly terrible is likely to result. In contrast, a person who ignores danger (and the possibility of a bad outcome) even once may end up maimed or dead. Survival requires urgent attention to possible bad outcomes, but it is less urgent with regard to good ones."

experiences. What people learn about others' encounters with police and courts may shape perceptions of the justice system in a manner that accentuates racial and ethnic differences. This framework gives rise to several interrelated hypotheses, the first being that experiential patterns previously seen among survey respondents also will be observed among their social contacts:

H1: Negative experiences with police and courts are more abundant among members of African Americans' justice encounter networks than among other members of other networks.

The race-based experiential disparity suggested in our first hypothesis will contribute to perceptual differences only if race and ethnicity matter for the composition of social networks. Our expectation is that race and ethnicity do matter for network composition. We predict that African-American survey respondents will tend to report on the justice encounters of other African Americans, Whites primarily will report on the experiences of other Whites, and so on:

H2: Individuals' justice encounter networks are disproportionately populated by members who share those individuals' racial and ethnic identifications.

The first two hypotheses combine to account for the dominant valence of socially-communicated information about the justice system. If Blacks are especially likely to have bad experiences with actors in the justice system and if networks are racially homogeneous, then their vicarious exposure to the justice system will tend to be negative. Aggregated across networks on the basis of the race and ethnicity of survey respondents, the expected consequence is that Whites, Asian Americans and Latino Americans will be exposed to more positive information about police and courts than will African Americans:

H3: Social exposure to information about negative experiences with police and courts is more prevalent among African Americans than among others.

Collectively, the first three hypotheses summarize our expectations regarding the information about police and courts that citizens may be exposed to via social interaction. Our final two hypotheses speak to the expected effects of this information on perceptions of the justice system. First and foremost, we posit that these vicarious experiences will matter:

H4: Exposure to information about acquaintances' justice encounters influences individuals' evaluations of the justice system.

This fourth hypothesis implies that respondents who report that members of their justice encounter networks had positive experiences with the police or courts will, as a result, voice more positive assessments of those actors. Conversely, those who learned about negative encounters from social contacts will respond by expressing more negative appraisals of such actors. Building on this hypothesis, the final step is to incorporate the logic of a negativity bias:

H5: Exposure to information about acquaintances' negative justice encounters influences individuals' evaluations of the justice system more strongly than does information about positive justice encounters.

Compared with Whites, Asian Americans and Latino Americans, Blacks express more critical views of police and courts. The hypotheses delineated here outline our rationale for how vicarious experiences heighten this disparity. In the remainder of this paper, these hypotheses are examined in tests using survey data gathered in the State of Washington. The properties of the data and measures are discussed in the next section, followed by presentation of results.

Data and Methods

Data for this study are from the 2012 Justice in Washington State Survey, an internet survey administered in Washington by YouGov. Surveys were completed between June 14 and July 2, 2012. The survey was designed to obtain oversamples of Black, Asian American and

Latino respondents. Specifically, the intention was to obtain 1,500 completed surveys: 600 from Whites, and 300 from each of the other three groups. In actuality, the data set includes responses from 611 Whites, 320 respondents who identified themselves as being Asian American/Pacific Islander, 305 Latino Americans, and 288 African Americans.

Because our chief tasks involve comparisons of the four groups, we retain the oversamples in their unweighted form—i.e., group samples are not weighted to reflect Washington’s racial and ethnic composition. However, weights calculated using Census marginals for education, age, and gender are employed *within* each group to help ensure that results reflect the attitudes and experiences of members of the respective groups. As with any survey, caution must be exercised in generalizing to the larger population, particularly given the small size of the present study’s minority group samples.⁸

Our measures of respondents’ justice encounter networks were informed by literature on political discussion networks. A key question is what sort of “name generator” to employ to prompt respondents to mention different sorts of acquaintances. One approach, used most prominently on the General Social Survey, asks respondents to identify the specific individuals with whom they most frequently discuss important problems. A second approach, more prevalent in research on political matters, cues respondents to identify the people with whom they discuss politics (e.g., Huckfeldt and Sprague 1995) and even very specific topics such as education policy (Schneider et al. 1997).

⁸ In no instance do results with respect to this study’s five hypotheses change when analyses are conducted using unweighted data. IP addresses and respondent self-reports are used to confirm that respondents are, in fact, residents of Washington. Residence also was confirmed with Zip Codes where possible. Eight cases are omitted because Zip Codes on file for those respondents either are located in states other than Washington or were entered incompletely (two Zip Codes were entered with four digits, preventing confirmation that these respondents reside in Washington). Zip Codes are not available for 15.2 percent of respondents. Based on the eight ineligible cases detected from Zip Codes from the 1,293 respondents for whom Zip Codes are available, it is possible that a handful of the 231 cases where Zip Codes are lacking are respondents who do not reside in Washington.

The justice network battery we devised follows the latter approach. Respondents first read the following prompt:

Many people have friends, relatives and other acquaintances who have had encounters with the justice system. These can be anything involving the police or courts, such as calling the police for help, talking with the police after a traffic accident, being stopped by a police officer for questioning or for a traffic violation, being placed under arrest, going to court as a witness in a case, going to court to serve as a juror, or being a party in a criminal or civil court proceeding. How many people do you know who have had these kinds of encounters?

Respondents could answer that they knew zero, one, two, or three or more individuals who had had some of these types of encounters. To help ensure that respondents had particular acquaintances in mind, respondents then were asked to type in the first name or initials of up to three such acquaintances. Overall, 26.1 percent of respondents provided zero names, 18.2 offered one, 15.2 percent named two, and 40.5 percent listed three acquaintances.

Respondents were asked up to four follow-up questions for each specific acquaintance: the person's race and ethnicity; whether the encounter was with the police, courts, or both; for police encounters, how the police had behaved as evaluated on a seven-point scale ranging from -3 (very unfair and disrespectful) to 3 (very fair and respectful); and, for court encounters, how court officials had behaved, using the same seven-point scale.⁹ These data provide our central measures of the valence of police and court encounters, both for individual network members

⁹ Research on political discussion often asks respondents about the nature of their relationships with discussion partners, the frequency of discussion, and so on. In contrast, in the current case we focus on the bottom line in terms of what respondents' learned about their acquaintances' experiences. The survey did not include items regarding how, or how often, respondents and their discussants had communicated, or about how the individuals knew one another. Exploration of the possible nuances of communication within justice encounter networks is of conceivable value, but that next step should be taken only after we have addressed the key prefatory matter of whether such networks are consequential for evaluations of judicial actors.

(Hypothesis 1) and for each respondent's network (Hypotheses 3, 4, and 5). Among respondents who named at least one acquaintance with a police encounter, the network mean is 0.09 (s.d. = 4.01, N = 1,063). The corresponding mean for court networks is 0.70 (s.d. = 3.61, N = 964).

The network measures serve as our dependent variables in tests of Hypothesis 3, which concerns whether the race and ethnicity of respondents corresponds with differences in the valence of network-level justice encounters. The network measures are then used as independent variables in tests of Hypothesis 4 and 5, which concern the possible effects of vicarious justice encounters on respondents' assessments of police and courts. For Hypothesis 5, where we posit a negativity bias in vicarious effects, each network measure is split into separate measures of positive and negative encounters.

The analyses conducted below to test Hypotheses 4 and 5 focus on two dependent variables, *evaluations of police* and *evaluations of courts*. These variables incorporate data from two pairs of survey questions included early in the instrument. Importantly, the items are worded neutrally, and they allow for both positive and negative appraisals. For police, the battery begins with the prompt "Here are some questions about the police in the U.S." Respondents are then asked "Based on what you have heard or your own experience, how often would you say the police generally treat all people with respect?" and "About how often would you say that the police make fair, impartial (unbiased) decisions in the cases they deal with?" The court battery begins with the introduction "Here are some questions about the criminal courts in the U.S. that deal with crimes such as house burglary and physical assault." Except for a reference to courts, the first item has wording identical to the first police question, whereas the second asks "How often do you think the courts make fair and impartial decisions based on the evidence available to them?" All items used six-point metrics (0 to 5). Summing the police questions yields a 0

(“never” on both items) to 10 (“always” on both items) scale (mean = 4.80; s.d. = 2.18; $r = 0.69$). A comparable scale is formed using the two court items (mean = 5.24; s.d. = 2.18; $r = 0.70$).

Although our theoretical account emphasizes the likely importance of vicarious experiences for appraisals, personal experiences also are expected to affect these judgments. To measure personal experiences with the police, respondents were asked how many times they had been treated disrespectfully by a police officer, and how many times they were treated unfairly by the police because of their race or ethnic background. Parallel questions were used to measure personal experience with criminal courts. On all four of these items, responses range from 1 (never) to 5 (seven or more times).¹⁰ Descriptive statistics for these variables are as follows: police unfair, mean = 1.87, s.d. = 1.06; police rude, mean = 1.58, s.d. = 1.01; courts unfair, mean = 1.32, s.d. = 0.80; courts rude, mean = 1.31, s.d. = 0.74. These means differ substantially as a function of the race and ethnicity of respondents. First, on all four measures, African-American respondents report significantly worse personal experiences than do all other respondents. Second, on seven of eight tests (all but police rude for Asian American vs. Latino American), Latino-American respondents report significantly worse experiences than do Whites and Asian Americans. Third, on both measures of disrespectful treatment, Asian-American respondents report worse experiences than do Whites.

In addition to variables differentiating the four racial and ethnic groups, all multivariate models include seven control variables. In selecting these controls, we sought to include factors that might alter patterns of social exposure to information about police and courts, along with

¹⁰ These items are somewhat narrower in scope than are the items used to measure vicarious experiences. First, the personal experience questions pertain only to negative experiences. Second, the court items follow a preface that refers specifically to criminal courts. Third, rather than measuring all perceived instances of unfair treatment, the items measure only incidents in which respondents perceived the unfair treatment was rooted in race or ethnicity. The most likely collective consequence of these points is that any observed effects of these variables on perceptions of police and courts will be weaker in magnitude than what would have been seen had we used broader measures.

factors that might correspond with systematic variation in evaluations of those actors. Controls include age in years (mean = 45.03; s.d. = 16.59); gender (1 = female, 0 = male; 49.6 percent of respondents are female); education (0 = less than high school degree to 5 = post-graduate; mean = 2.22; s.d. = 1.44); marital status (1 = married, 0 = other; 50 percent of respondents are married); employment status (1 = employed full time, 0 = other; 41.1 percent of respondents are employed full time); importance of religion (0 = not at all important to respondent, to 3 = very important; mean = 1.72; s.d. = 1.15); and party identification (1 = strong Democrat, to 7 = strong Republican; mean = 3.47; s.d. = 1.93).¹¹

Exploring Vicarious Effects

Drawing on data from the 2012 Justice in Washington State Survey, we report tests of our five hypotheses regarding the nature and significance of vicarious justice experiences. The first three hypotheses pertain to the types of justice encounters people are likely to learn about from their acquaintances, whereas the final two hypotheses focus on the expected effects of vicarious experiences on survey respondents' evaluations of police and courts.

Race, Ethnicity and Acquaintances' Encounters with Police and Courts

The first hypothesis concerns the nature of encounters with police and court officials experienced by survey respondents' network members. We hypothesized that the experiences of African-American network members will be perceived as having been more negative than the corresponding experiences of other network members.

Two aspects of our test warrant emphasis. First, the focus of the Hypothesis 1 is the race and ethnicity of the network member, not of the survey respondent. Second, all data on network members' experiences reflect how those experiences were understood by the survey respondents;

¹¹ To minimize loss of cases, respondents who did not answer the party identification item are assigned the scale's middle value of 4.

we do not have direct reports from the network members themselves. Because our ultimate objective is to gauge whether the lessons learned from their acquaintances' experiences influence respondents' justice evaluations, this use of respondent reports is not problematic. One reason is that people's perceptions of their social contacts tend to be highly accurate. Huckfeldt and Sprague (1995) show this in the context of perceptions of presidential vote preferences. We assume that justice encounters are more vivid and salient to most people than are their vote choices, and thus should be at least as likely to be perceived accurately. When speaking with a friend, we may or may not be accurate when gauging her vote choice, but we probably will get a relatively accurate read on whether she had a good or bad day in court. A second key point, also noted by Huckfeldt and Sprague (1995), is that perception underlies influence. If Mary perceives that Max was mistreated by the police, Max most likely would agree with that assessment. After all, it probably was something Max said to Mary that led her to perceive that he had been treated poorly. However, even if Max happens to disagree, Mary's perception of his justice encounter still holds the potential to influence her subsequent evaluations of police.

Survey respondents named 2,589 acquaintances who had had justice encounters. Of these, we omit 95 (3.7 percent) who were not identified as being Black, White, Asian American or Latino American. Our analyses pertain to 2,214 encounters with the police and 1,810 court experiences. Each of these encounters was gauged as positive or negative on a seven-point scale. To test Hypothesis 1, the evaluative data are aggregated within racial and ethnic categories. Descriptive statistics are reported in Table 1.

Data are summarized in two manners. First, for each group and target of encounter (police or courts), we report the percentage of experiences identified as positive (scale values of 1 to 3), neutral (0) and negative (-1 to -3). Beneath these entries, we report the mean and

standard deviation for the full seven-point scale. In Part A, for instance, we see that for network members who are White, respondents reported 55.0 percent of police encounters to be positive, 10.2 percent neutral, and 34.7 percent negative, with a mean on the seven-point scale of 0.49.

At question is whether experiences differ across groups. The answer is quite clear. On average, both the police and court experiences of Whites and Asian Americans are positive, negative for Latinos, and sharply negative for Blacks. These differences are statistically significant, as are the differences between Latinos and Blacks. For both police and court encounters, the difference in experiences for Blacks and Whites is more than one full point on the -3 to 3 scales. In Part A of Table 1, we see that solid majorities of encounters with the police by Blacks and Latinos were reported as being negative, rates starkly different from those for Whites and Asian Americans. Court experiences are perceived as more positive than police experiences among all groups, but the differences *between* those groups are quite similar, with Whites and Asian Americans once again being linked with relatively few negative encounters.

In light of racial differences in justice experiences shown in past studies (e.g., Peffley and Hurwitz 2010, Weitzer and Tuch 2006), present data are perhaps unsurprising. Still, they confirm that the race-based divide in people's personal experiences also is found, or at least is perceived to exist, among their social acquaintances. By providing strong support for our first hypothesis, these data mark the first step in establishing that vicarious experiences contribute to the racial gap in evaluations of the justice system. One finding outside the scope of our hypothesis, but consistent with evidence reported by Weitzer and Tuch (2006), warrants note: the police and court experiences of Latino members of respondents' justice networks are significantly more negative than White and Asian-American network members (but, as we hypothesized, still significantly less negative than the experiences of African-American network members).

Racial and Ethnic Homogeneity in Justice Encounter Networks

Census data show that Whites constitute over 72 of the population of Washington, whereas fewer than four percent of the state's residents are Black. If justice encounter networks were composed entirely randomly, in most cases people would learn of the typically positive experiences of Whites; only rarely would they be exposed to information about an African American's justice encounter. Hence, if encounters were random with respect to race and ethnicity, such exchanges would be unlikely to magnify the racial divide in perceptions of the justice system.¹² Yet, a wealth of research on homophily has shown that social networks are not random but, instead, are racially and ethnically homogeneous. Thus, as posited in Hypothesis 2, respondents' encounter networks should reflect the group characteristics of the respondent.

Data on the composition of respondents' justice encounter networks are reported in Table 2. Networks, which could include up to three contacts, average roughly the same size for Blacks, Whites and Latinos, whereas Asian Americans identified slightly fewer acquaintances reporting encounters with police or courts. Consistent with our second hypothesis, networks for all four groups are more homogeneous than would be seen if justice encounters were random within the population. For both Asian Americans (8.2 percent of the Washington population) and Latinos (11.6 percent of the population), half of respondents' network members share their race and ethnicity. Homogeneity is even more striking for African-American respondents (3.8 percent of the population), who report networks in which 76.1 percent of members are also Black.

It is when seen together that the data in Table 1 and Table 2 gain their full significance. Justice network members' encounters with the police and courts vary by race; they are relatively

¹² There is at least one hypothetical scenario in which random exposure to information about other people's justice experiences conceivably could magnify the racial gap in perceptions of the justice system: if information about other people's experiences helps individuals to contextualize their own experiences. For example, an African American who felt that he was treated poorly by the police may become all the more convinced police have targeted him on the basis of race upon hearing of positive encounters with the police from several white acquaintances.

positive for Whites and Asian Americans, moderately negative for Latinos, and sharply negative for Blacks. Due to network homogeneity, a racial gap necessarily emerges with respect to citizens' vicarious justice experiences. For Whites and Asian Americans, some 85 percent of their encounters are with individuals who are themselves Whites and Asian Americans—and who generally have had positive experiences. Conversely, for Latinos, over 60 percent of network members are Latino or African American. For Blacks, just under 80 percent of network members are African American or Latino. Hence, for these two groups, but especially for African Americans, vicarious justice encounters most often convey negative information.

The Valence of Vicarious Justice Encounters

Our third hypothesis holds that social exposure to information about negative justice experiences is more prevalent among African Americans than among others, a virtual truism now that we have support for our first two hypotheses. Still, two tasks remain. First, it will be useful to devise precise network-level estimates of how positive or negative the information is that respondents are exposed to through social contact. Second, to help ensure that we can be confident that vicarious justice encounters truly vary by race and ethnicity, these estimates should be derived from a multivariate analysis in which we also account for respondents' other relevant attributes and predispositions.

Justice encounter networks are devised separately for police and court encounters. Because respondents could identify up to three acquaintances, network-level measures range from -9 to 9.¹³ At question is the extent to which these values vary across groups, and especially whether any such racial and ethnic differences persist in multivariate specifications.

¹³ For now, we focus only on respondents who named acquaintances with justice encounters. Below, when the justice network measures are used as independent variables, we include all respondents; those individuals who did not name acquaintances who had had police or court encounters receive values of zero on the network measures, indicating that they reported no vicarious exposure to positive or negative information.

Results from four regression equations are reported in Table 3. The first models for police and courts include only indicator variables for race and ethnicity, with African American as the excluded category; thus, these models merely test for differences in group means. The second model for each dependent variable adds controls for age, education, gender, marital status, employment status, importance of religion, and partisanship. Inclusion of these controls enables determination of whether apparent racial and ethnic differences in vicarious exposure to information about the justice system trace, in actuality, to respondents' other core attributes.

For police encounters, Whites, Asian Americans and Latinos are exposed to more positive information from their acquaintances than are African Americans, providing consistent support for the third hypothesis.¹⁴ The basic pattern across the four racial and ethnic groups and is similar irrespective of whether control variables are included. Among the control variables, only one produces a significant effect in the police model. Specifically, being married is associated with exposure to more positive information about police encounters.

Results for court-related networks are similar. However, the coefficients for Latino-American respondents, while possessing the expected positive signs, fall short of statistical significance. Coefficients for the control variables again indicate that social exposure to positive information about courts is more common for respondents who are married.

What people learn from their acquaintances' encounters with police and courts differs systematically as a function of the race and ethnicity of the individuals themselves. Results in Table 3 reveal the magnitude of these differences, and establish that apparent racial and ethnic disparities in vicarious justice experiences persist even after introduction of controls for a host of

¹⁴ We did not hypothesize differences between Whites, Asian-Americans and Latino-Americans. In Table 3, such differences emerge in that network valence for both the police and court measures is significantly more negative for the networks of Latino respondents than for the networks of White and Asian-American respondents. Given what was seen in Table 1 and Table 2—half of Latino-American respondents' network members are also Latino, and their police and court experiences are relatively negative—at this point this difference is not surprising.

other factors. These results provide support for the third hypothesis in five of six tests, the one exception being the African American versus Latino American contrast with respect to court networks. What has not yet been determined, though, is whether learning of other people's experiences influences their assessments of the police and courts.

Vicarious Experiences and Evaluations of Judicial Actors

Our central question is why African Americans consistently offer relatively critical appraisals of the judicial system. Although the racial and ethnic composition of Washington's population has led us to include Asian Americans and Latinos in our account, the fundamental puzzle pertains to the Black-White difference. Building on research that points to an experiential basis for justice appraisals, our core argument is that vicarious experiences also matter, and in a manner that accentuates racial differences in how favorably judicial actors are assessed.

Hypothesis 4 posits that the information obtained from people's justice encounter networks influences evaluations of police and courts. We test this with focus on a pair of ten-point measures, one for the police and one for courts, representing respondents' assessments of how often these actors treat people fairly and with respect. Our expectation is that the evaluations of police and courts will be shaped by vicarious justice encounters.

Results of six OLS regression models are reported in Table 4. For both the police dependent variable (first three models) and the court measure (last three models), the first model includes the indicator variables for race and ethnicity, along with our battery of control variables. The second model then adds measures of whether respondents themselves have been treated disrespectfully and unfairly. The appropriate network measure, pertaining to acquaintances' encounters with police or courts, is then added in the last model for each dependent variable.¹⁵

¹⁵ In order to retain observations from those respondents who identified no acquaintances who had had police or court encounters, the network valence measures are set at zero for these individuals.

We note three results from the police models. First, the coefficient for the justice encounter network variable is statistically significant, and substantively impressive. The dependent variable ranges in value from 0 to 10 and has a standard deviation of 2.18. A shift across the full range of the network measure corresponds with a predicted 3.24-point swing in the average respondent's assessment of the police. Second, personal and vicarious experiences account for a considerable portion of the variation in respondents' evaluations of the police and courts. For instance, adding the three experiential variables to the ten-variable control model more than doubles the adjusted R^2 value. Third, respondents' personal and vicarious experiences also account for much of the baseline racial and ethnic variation seen in the first model. The coefficient for the indicator variables differentiating African Americans from other respondents all drop once we account for personal experiences in the second model, and they drop even further upon introduction of the network measure in the third model. The coefficient for Asian American even becomes insignificant. To a large extent, racial and ethnic gaps in evaluations of the police are rooted in differences in individuals' personal and vicarious experiences.

Of these three points, the first two also are seen in the court models in that the network measure again produces a strong effect, and attention to personal and vicarious experiences substantially improves our account of variation in views of courts. However, the residual racial and ethnic gaps shrink only modestly in these models. Put differently, even after accounting for personal and vicarious experiences, Blacks remain significantly more critical of courts than are Whites, Asian Americans and Latinos.¹⁶

¹⁶ A second difference between the police and court models involves which aspect of personal experience most influences individuals' judgments. In the police models, it is primarily unfair treatment that drives respondents' assessments, whereas it is disrespectful treatment that matters for judgments about courts. We do not have an explanation for this distinction. However, it is worth noting that, for both court measures, 81 percent of respondents indicated they had never had a bad personal experience. Only a third of respondents indicated they had ever been treated disrespectfully by the police, but 53 percent said they had been treated unfairly.

Collectively, the results in Table 4 provide compelling evidence that individuals' vicarious justice experiences matter for appraisals of both police and courts, contributing to racial and ethnic differences in those judgments. We will gauge the substantive magnitude of these effects momentarily. First, though, the possibility of a negativity bias must be explored.

Positive vs. Negative Vicarious Justice Encounters

In evaluative situations, a negativity bias exists when decision makers systematically give negative information disproportionately more weight than positive information. Our fifth hypothesis posits that a negativity bias plausibly exists when people form evaluations of police and court officials. In police encounters, for instance, when an officer behaves helpfully and professionally, a person's interpretation may be that the officer has merely done her job as she should, and warrants no special credit for having done so. Conversely, an officer who behaves gruffly or rudely may be seen as out of line, and this memory may remain salient to the individual, and thus markedly consequential for the person's broader evaluations of police.

To test our fifth hypothesis, we estimate variants of the full models from Table 4, but this time with the network measures split into separate positive and negative scales. For each, values range from 0 (no network exposure to information with that valence) to 9. The coefficients on these variables should produce opposite signs, with positive effects emanating from positive encounters and negative effects resulting from perceived unfairness and disrespect. At question is the relative *magnitude* of the two types of effects. The hypothesis is supported if the absolute values of the coefficients for negative encounters exceed those for positive encounters.

Results for the two final models are reported in Table 5. Both models document negativity effects: the coefficients for negative encounters are roughly 60 percent greater in

magnitude than the corresponding coefficients for positive encounters.¹⁷ These negativity effects add to our explanation of racial differences in perceptions of judicial actors. Negative vicarious experiences with police and courts strongly influence individuals' assessments of those actors, and Blacks have disproportionately more such negative vicarious experiences.

To summarize the impact of vicarious experiences on racial gaps in evaluations of police and courts, we devise estimates under three scenarios. In each case, estimates draw on coefficients in Table 5, with all variables except race and ethnicity, personal experiences, and vicarious experiences held constant at mean or modal values. In the first scenario, we assume that respondents have had no personal or vicarious encounters with the police. Thus, values for racial gaps are simply the appropriate coefficients for the race and ethnicity indicator variables in Table 5. The second scenario adds in personal experiences. We do so using the racial and ethnic group averages on the two personal experience measures, with these averages multiplied by the appropriate coefficients from Table 5. For example, for the variable regarding instances in which the respondent has been treated unfairly by the police, the mean for Whites is 1.71, versus 2.28 for Blacks. Multiplication of the group means by the -0.24 coefficient in Table 5 yields an average reduction in evaluations of police of 0.41 for Whites and 0.55 for Blacks. Lastly, the final scenario adds vicarious experiences. Here, we also use the racial and ethnic group averages, this time for the positive and negative network measures, drawing on only those cases in which respondents named at least one acquaintance reporting a police or court encounter. For all three scenarios, separate estimates are calculated for the police and court dependent variables.

Estimates for the police measure are depicted in Figure 1. For each group contrast, we see that the gap increases as a function of both personal and vicarious experiences. The change in the

¹⁷ In both models, the difference in magnitude between the absolute values of the positive and negative coefficients is statistically significant ($p < .05$).

size of the gap is only modest when Blacks and Latinos are compared, rising from 0.54 points to 0.87 as we shift from respondents with neither type of experience to those with both. For Blacks versus Whites, the effects of experiences are stronger, with the racial gap nearly tripling when we account for both personal and vicarious experiences, and the gap itself exceeding one full point (1.03) on the police evaluation scale. The relative impact of experience is most pronounced when African Americans and Asian Americans are contrasted. Absent personal and vicarious experiences, the gap in these respondents' assessments of the police is negligible and statistically insignificant, but it more than quadruples once we factor in personal and vicarious experiences.

Figure 2 depicts the corresponding estimates for racial gaps in evaluations of courts. These effects are quite similar to those for evaluations of the police; disparities increase markedly as a function of both personal and vicarious experiences, and the effects of these experiences are least pronounced when African Americans and Latino Americans are contrasted. But there also is a key difference between Figure 1 and Figure 2 in that baseline estimates—racial and ethnic gaps for respondents with neither personal nor vicarious experiences—are much larger for assessments of courts. Put differently, once personal and vicarious experiences are set aside, African Americans are only modestly more critical of the police than are individuals from other racial and ethnic groups. Personal and vicarious experiences also contribute to racial and ethnic disparities in views of courts, but these disparities apparently run much deeper, with roots in something beyond the experiences of individuals and their acquaintances.

Conclusions

The racial divide in perceptions of police and courts conceivably could trace to numerous factors. In the framework developed in this study, we have emphasized the role of experience, especially vicarious experience. In this account, a chief reason many African Americans express

more negative views of police and courts than do others is the information they have obtained about their acquaintances' experiences. The experiences we have highlighted concern matters of process, not outcome. If people understand their acquaintances have been treated unfairly or disrespectfully by justice officials, they will be more critical of those actors.

Three aspects of our perspective warrant emphasis. First, although we have demonstrated that our framework helps in understanding racial divides in views of police and courts, race plays no *direct* role in the judgmental process that is our framework's centerpiece. While our fourth hypothesis posits that exposure to information about acquaintances' justice encounters influences individuals' evaluations of the justice system, race plays no necessary role in this hypothesis. For instance, this same process easily could be seen in an entirely racially-homogeneous context. The vicarious effects suggested in this hypothesis only contribute to racial disparities in views of police and courts because of the operation of two prior dynamics. The first is racial and ethnic homophily in network composition. On this point, most striking in our data is that over three-fourths of African-American respondents' network members were also African American, even though Blacks constitute less than four percent of Washington's population. Second, people's experiences with police and courts differ dramatically as a function of race and ethnicity.

Once we take these two prior dynamics into account, we see that, as an empirical matter, there are two quite different variants of the judgmental process outlined in Hypothesis 4. For Whites, exposure to information about acquaintances' *generally positive* justice encounters *favorably* influences individuals' evaluations of the justice system. Conversely, for Blacks exposure to information about acquaintances' *generally negative* justice encounters *unfavorably* influences their evaluations of the justice system. Taken together, the consequence of these disparate processes is an intensification of the racial divide in assessments of police and courts.

A second point we wish to emphasize is that present results most likely have understated the experiential bases of evaluations of judicial actors. Our measures of vicarious experiences provide information only about a respondent's immediate circle of acquaintances, and only about three individuals. The measures omit vicarious information acquired second-hand. Our measures may capture what Max told Mary about Max's experience, but not what Max told Mary about his cousin Mike's experience, and not what Mary learned from the media. Also, over 40 percent of this study's respondents named three acquaintances who had had justice encounters, suggesting that future work should seek information on four or five social contacts as a means to represent network content more comprehensively.

The third point that warrants emphasis is that present results, while providing general support for our hypotheses, also raise important new questions. Perhaps most importantly, our results suggest that personal and vicarious experiences account for more of the racial gap in evaluations of the police than the gap in assessments of courts. The police models consistently exhibited greater explanatory power, and residual racial and ethnic gaps—the remaining effects of the indicator variables for race and ethnicity, after accounting for personal and vicarious experiences—are modest. To be sure, experiences matter for assessments of courts. But the greater skepticism toward courts expressed by African-American respondents on our survey apparently also signals a deeper and more fundamental mistrust, one seemingly rooted at least partly in information and concerns beyond the realm of the immediate experiences of respondents and their acquaintances.

Moving forward, the nuances of justice encounter networks clearly require greater scrutiny. Our measurement strategy has built on familiar efforts to measure people's political discussion networks. Although we cued respondents to think of acquaintances who had been in

relatively specific circumstances, the vast majority was able to do so. Applications of similar approaches could be insightful in virtually any area in which social influence may operate. As to the specific effects identified in this study, they certainly are far from the final word on the vicarious bases of justice perceptions. In the political discussion literature, early findings of discussant influence on the vote choice gave rise to a wealth of research regarding matters such as the importance of different types of dyadic relationships, the frequency of interaction between discussion partners, the prevalence and significance of exposure to cross-cutting views, and so on. That history offers a model for future research on the social bases of evaluations of judicial actors. What we know thus far is that vicarious experiences influence people's appraisals of police and courts, and in a manner that accentuates racial gaps in those assessments. This initial evidence points to the likely value of more nuanced explorations regarding what specific sorts of information about police and courts actually are communicated, and what characteristics of discussant relationships moderate this form of social influence.

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Table 1. Acquaintances' Encounters with Police and Courts

	Acquaintances' Race/Ethnicity			
	1. White	2. Asian American	3. African American	4. Latino American
A. Encounters with police (-3 = most negative to 3 = most positive)				
Percent positive encounters (scale values of 1 to 3)	55.0	47.8	25.2	32.1
Percent neutral encounters (scale values of 0)	10.2	24.9	13.2	12.9
Percent negative encounters (scale values of -1 to -3)	34.7	27.4	61.6	55.0
Mean	0.49 ^{3,4}	0.49 ^{3,4}	-0.81 ^{1,2,4}	-0.49 ^{1,2,3}
Standard deviation	2.05	1.71	1.94	1.91
Number of acquaintances	1,161	228	530	295
B. Encounters with courts (-3 = most negative to 3 = most positive)				
Percent positive encounters (scale values of 1 to 3)	59.6	58.9	30.8	36.9
Percent neutral encounters (scale values of 0)	13.1	22.8	16.2	19.4
Percent negative encounters (scale values of -1 to -3)	27.3	18.3	53.0	43.7
Mean	0.70 ^{3,4}	0.99 ^{3,4}	-0.47 ^{1,2,4}	-0.13 ^{1,2,3}
Standard deviation	1.89	1.67	1.98	1.82
Number of acquaintances	1,003	172	408	227

Source: 2012 Justice in Washington State Survey

Note: Survey respondents were asked to name up to three acquaintances who had had encounters with the police, courts, or both. Data in this table are from respondents' reports of their acquaintances' experiences. Respondents were asked to gauge the extent to which their acquaintances were treated unfairly and disrespectfully versus fairly and respectfully by the police and court officials, using seven-point scales. A total of 2,589 acquaintances were identified by respondents. A given acquaintance can appear in both sections of this table if that person's interactions involved both the police and the courts; 95 acquaintances identified by respondents are omitted because they were either identified as being Native American (38) or their race and ethnicity were not provided (57). Superscript numbers following mean values indicate that the mean for that column is significantly different ($p < .05$) from the mean for the column indicated by the superscript.

Table 2. Racial and Ethnic Homogeneity in Justice Encounter Networks

Racial and Ethnic Composition of Members of Justice Encounter Networks	Race and Ethnicity of Survey Respondents			
	White	Asian American	African American	Latino American
White	84.5	34.0	15.9	32.2
Asian American	2.1	50.0	0.9	2.8
African American	6.6	8.5	76.1	11.0
Latino American	3.4	2.0	2.8	50.2
Other	3.4	5.5	4.2	3.7
Average network size	1.77	1.44	1.84	1.72
Number of cases	605	320	288	304

Source: 2012 Justice in Washington State Survey

Note: Survey respondents were asked to name up to three acquaintances who had had encounters with the police, courts, or both. Data are column percentages, indicating the average racial and ethnic composition of justice encounter networks for each of the four racial and ethnic groups represented among the survey's respondents.

Table 3. Determinants of Exposure to Positive vs. Negative Information about Police and Courts in Justice Encounter Networks

	Valence of Police Encounter Networks		Valence of Court Encounter Networks	
	Baseline	With Controls	Baseline	With Controls
Constant	-1.40*** (0.27)	-1.83** (0.55)	-0.37 (0.26)	-1.27* (0.52)
White	2.19*** (0.33)	2.08*** (0.36)	1.51*** (0.32)	1.35*** (0.34)
Asian American	1.98*** (0.39)	1.95*** (0.41)	1.81*** (0.38)	1.70*** (0.39)
Latino American	1.18** ^a (0.39)	1.08** ^a (0.39)	0.49 ^a (0.37)	0.41 ^a (0.37)
Age		-0.01 (0.01)		0.00 (0.01)
Gender		0.05 (0.25)		0.36 (0.24)
Education		0.02 (0.09)		0.02 (0.09)
Marital status		0.68** (0.26)		0.66** (0.24)
Employment status		-0.31 (0.26)		-0.05 (0.25)
Importance of religion		0.13 (0.12)		0.12 (0.11)
Party identification		0.09 (0.07)		0.07 (0.07)
Adj. R ²	0.04	0.05	0.03	0.04
Number of cases	1,063	1,062	9764	963

Source: 2012 Justice in Washington State Survey

Note: Cell entries are OLS regression coefficients with standard errors in parentheses. The dependent variables range in value from -9 to 9, and represent how positive or negative of experiences respondents' acquaintances had in encounters with police and court officials. Respondents could name up to three acquaintances who had had police or court encounters; cases are included here only if the network includes at least one member. For racial and ethnic classifications, African American is the omitted category.

*** p < .001 ** p < .01 * p < .05

^a Effect for Latino Americans differs significantly (p < .05) from effects for Whites and Asian Americans.

Table 4. Impact of Vicarious Justice Encounters on Evaluations of Police and Courts

	Evaluations of Police			Evaluations of Courts		
Constant	2.57*** (.24)	4.29*** (.29)	4.03*** (.28)	3.60*** (.25)	4.79*** (.29)	4.65*** (.28)
Personal experience: treated disrespectfully		-.16* (.08)	-.13 (.08)		-.46*** (.11)	-.41*** (.11)
Personal experience: treated unfairly		-.42*** (.07)	-.27*** (.07)		-.16 (.10)	-.05 (.10)
Vicarious experience: justice encounter network			.18*** (.02)			.18*** (.02)
White	.92*** (.16)	.56*** (.17)	.37* (.16)	1.00*** (.18)	.78*** (.17)	.66*** (.16)
Asian American	.70*** (.18)	.40* (.17)	.23 (.17)	1.05*** (.18)	.90*** (.18)	.76*** (.18)
Latino American	.90*** (.18)	.63*** (.17)	.54** (.17)	.89*** (.18)	.76*** (.18)	.74*** (.17)
Age	.01** (.00)	.01 (.00)	.01* (.00)	.01 (.00)	.00 (.00)	.00 (.00)
Gender	-.23* (.11)	-.45*** (.11)	-.38*** (.11)	-.13 (.12)	-.26* (.11)	-.27* (.11)
Education	.04 (.04)	.00 (.04)	.01 (.04)	.01 (.04)	-.02 (.04)	-.01 (.04)
Marital status	.21 (.11)	.11 (.11)	.08 (.11)	.20 (.12)	.13 (.12)	.06 (.11)
Employment status	-.01 (.11)	.01 (.11)	.04 (.11)	.27* (.12)	.24* (.12)	.26* (.11)
Importance of religion	.18*** (.05)	.20*** (.05)	.18*** (.05)	.17** (.05)	.21*** (.05)	.20*** (.05)
Party identification	.22*** (.03)	.20*** (.03)	.20*** (.03)	.05 (.03)	.05 (.03)	.04 (.03)
Adj. R ²	.11	.16	.23	.05	.08	.14
Number of cases	1,502	1,460	1,460	1,497	1,464	1,464

Source: 2012 Justice in Washington State Survey

Note: Cell entries are OLS regression coefficients with standard errors in parentheses. The dependent variables range in value from 0 to 10, and represent the extent to which respondents assess police and courts favorably (“how often would you say the [police/courts] [generally treat all people with respect/ make fair, impartial (unbiased) decisions in the cases they deal with]?”).

*** p < .001 ** p < .01 * p < .05

Table 5. Negativity Effects and the Impact of Vicarious Justice Encounters on Evaluations of Police and Courts

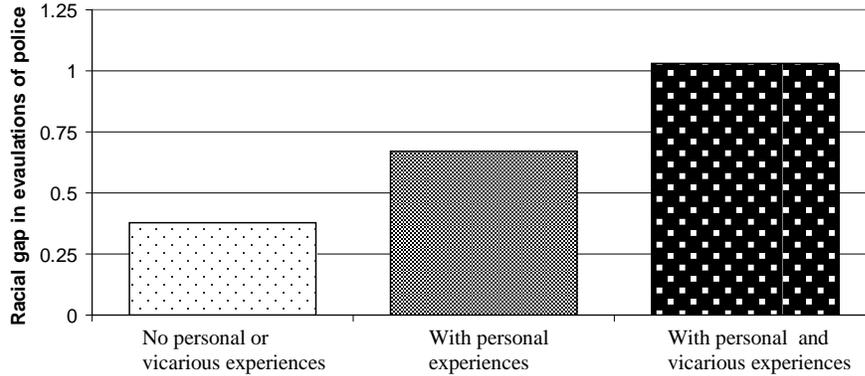
	Police	Courts
Constant	4.10*** (0.28)	4.68*** (0.28)
Personal experience: treated disrespectfully	-0.14 (0.08)	-0.41*** (0.11)
Personal experience: treated unfairly	-0.24** (0.07)	-0.03 (0.10)
Justice encounter network—positive encounters	0.14*** (0.02)	0.14*** (0.03)
White	0.38* (0.16)	0.66*** (0.16)
Asian American	0.19 (0.16)	0.72*** (0.18)
Latino American	0.54** (0.17)	0.73*** (0.17)
Age	0.01* (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)
Gender	-0.36** (0.11)	-0.26* (0.11)
Education	0.01 (0.04)	-0.01 (0.04)
Marital status	0.09 (0.11)	0.07 (0.11)
Employment status	0.05 (0.11)	0.26* (0.11)
Importance of religion	0.17*** (0.05)	0.19*** (0.05)
Party identification	0.20*** (0.03)	0.04 (0.03)
Adj. R ²	0.23	0.14
Number of cases	1,460	1,464

Source: 2012 Justice in Washington State Survey

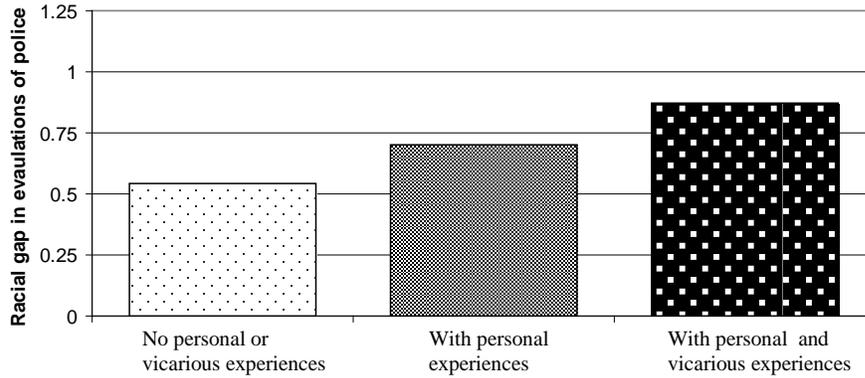
Note: Cell entries are OLS regression coefficients with standard errors in parentheses. The dependent variables range in value from 0 to 10, and represent the extent to which respondents assess police and courts favorably (“how often would you say the [police/courts] [generally treat all people with respect/ make fair, impartial (unbiased) decisions in the cases they deal with]?”).

*** p < .001 ** p < .01 * p < .05

A. African Americans vs. Whites



B. African Americans vs. Latino Americans



C. African Americans vs. Asian Americans

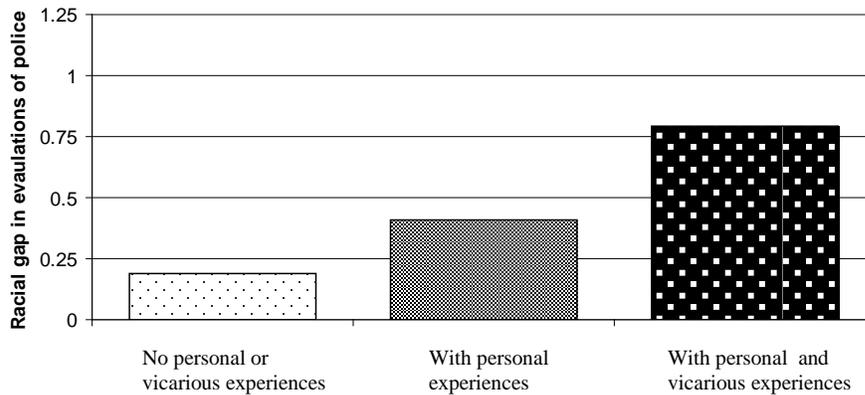


Figure 1. The Effects of Personal and Vicarious Experiences on Racial and Ethnic Gaps in Evaluations of the Police

Note: Evaluations of the police are measured using a 0-10 scale. Depicted is the extent to which average evaluations of members of other racial and ethnic groups exceed those of African Americans under conditions in which individuals have had no personal or vicarious experiences with the police; personal, but not vicarious, experiences; and both personal and vicarious experiences.
Source: Table 5.

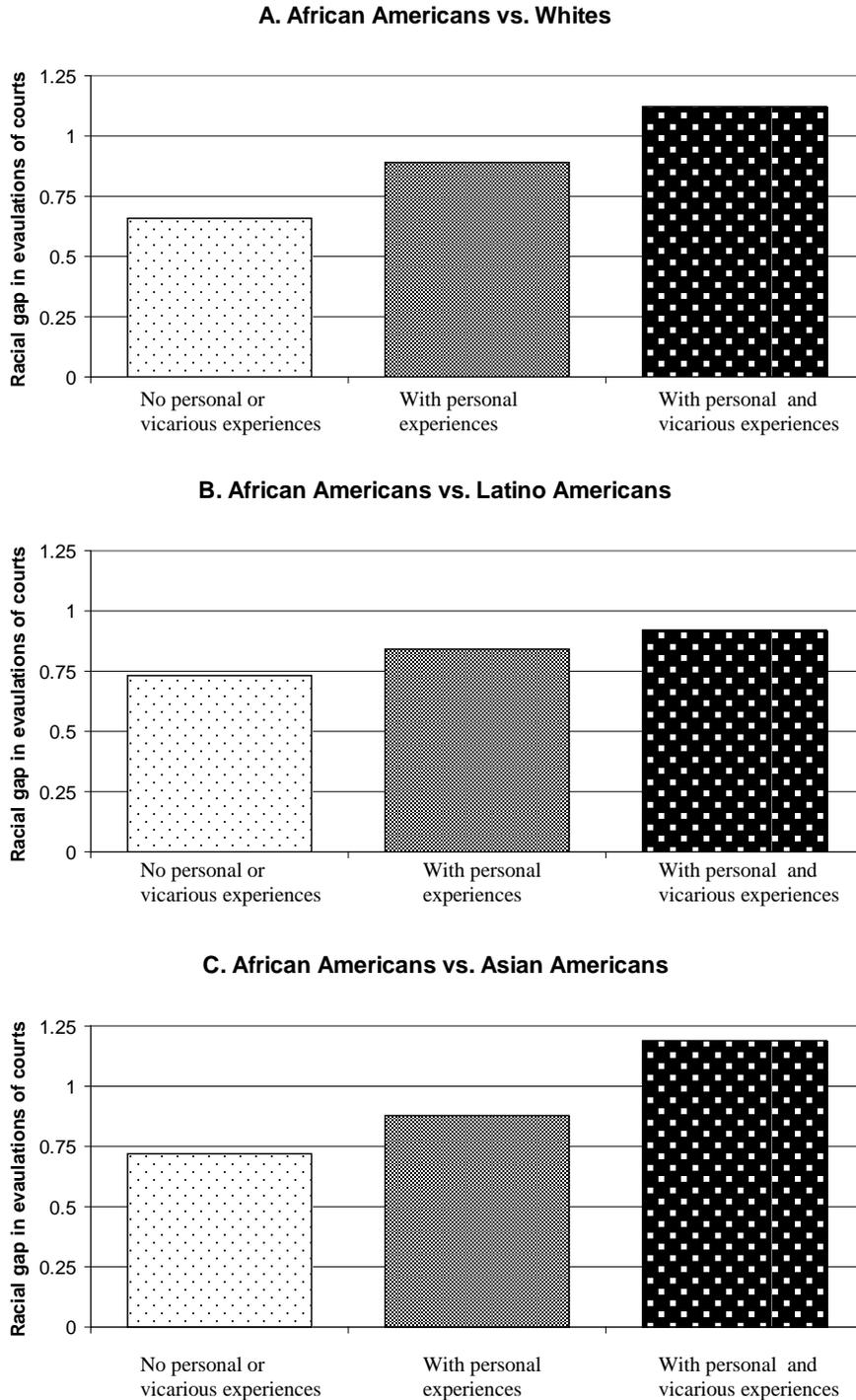


Figure 2. The Effects of Personal and Vicarious Experiences on Racial and Ethnic Gaps in Evaluations of Courts

Note: Evaluations of courts are measured using a 0-10 scale. Depicted is the extent to which average evaluations of members of other racial and ethnic groups exceed those of African Americans under conditions in which individuals have had no personal or vicarious experiences with courts; personal, but not vicarious, experiences; and both personal and vicarious experiences.

Source: Table 5.