

RACE, CLASS AND ATTITUDES TOWARDS
USE OF FORCE BY POLICE

by

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Abstract

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Another unarmed victim of police violence. Another acquitted officer. In recent years, this tragic course of events has repeated itself on multiple occasions in courtrooms, living rooms and social media spaces throughout the nation. Each new, widely-publicized fatal police encounter has added to an ongoing and contentious national debate around policing and minority rights. This intractable debate, which has been argued along racial lines, seems to be at an indefinite impasse. But what if this debate persists because we have not accounted for the role that both race and class play in shaping views towards use of force? Therefore, this paper contributes to the existing debate over police use for force by examining the effects of both racial group membership and class position on the beliefs of the black middle class. Specifically, this paper addresses the following questions: (1) How does class position effect attitudes towards reasonable use of force? (2) Are the effects of class position on approval attitudes experienced similarly by both blacks and whites? (3) Are higher status blacks more likely than lower status blacks to approve of use of force by police officers? Using data from the 1973 – 2016 years of the General Social Surveys (GSS), this study compares and contrasts middle class blacks' beliefs about use of force by law enforcement with the attitudes of lower status blacks and middle class whites. Results indicate that blacks are generally less approving than whites of a law enforcement officer striking an adult male citizen. However, blacks increasingly approve of police use of force as their educational attainment and household income rates rise. These findings suggest that class position plays an influential role in shaping the attitudes of blacks towards police violence.

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Introduction

National media headlines and social media spaces alike have been filled with multiple stories of unarmed black women and men dying from interactions with police officers. According to *The Guardian* (2017), a total of 2,239 people have been victims of fatal police encounters during the years of 2015 and 2016. Most of these deadly encounters have been characterized by the deployment of lethal force for the purpose of protecting the involved officer. However, a few deaths, such as in the cases of Freddie Gray and Eric Garner, have been unintended consequences of efforts by police to physically restrain, and not kill, the individual. These notable deaths from officers' attempts to deploy non-lethal, physical restraining force, have added to an ongoing national debate around use of force by law enforcement. This intractable debate has largely been argued along racial lines due to the nation's history of discrimination and the disproportionate number of blacks represented in the criminal justice system and victimized by police violence (Alexander 2010; Nix et al 2017).

Nonetheless, the racialized nature of the police violence debate has persisted even with the increasing economic success achieved by an upwardly mobile black middle class in the post-Civil Rights Era (Lacy 2007; Wilson 1980). Likewise, despite the effects of both race and lower socioeconomic status to negatively influence interactions with the criminal justice system, police violence remains an issue that is largely discussed on a racial basis (Goffman 2014; Petit and Western 2004; Reiman 2001). Thus, lost within the midst of this national conversation around police violence are considerations of how race and class shape attitudes towards use of force. Specifically, the attitudes of the black middle class are

overlooked despite the uniqueness of their class position and racial group membership. As privileged members of a racial group that is disproportionately affected by police violence, the black middle class may possess valuable insights into the connections of race, class and beliefs about use of force.

This study seeks to add a combined analysis of race and class to the debate over acceptable use of force among police. My thesis contributes to the current literature in three ways. First, I analyze data from the 1973-2016 General Social Surveys by comparing blacks' and whites' beliefs about the use of force. To date, only a handful of studies have investigated racial differences in this area. Second, I further explore this topic by utilizing research techniques that permit a comparison of views among blacks and whites with similar levels of socioeconomic attainment. This approach will reveal new insights on the extent to which middle class blacks, for example, differ from middle class whites. Third, I examine a range of instances in which respondents approve or disapprove of use of force. Thus, I am able to determine whether middle class blacks, for instance, are more likely than middle class whites to approve use of force among suspects questioned for murder. Taken together, these contributions allow me to present the most comprehensive analysis to date of the links between race, class and beliefs about use of force among police. Findings presented here indicate that while blacks and whites often differ in their beliefs about use of force, a privileged class position often operates similarly in shaping blacks' and whites' beliefs.

Existing Research on the Use of Force among Law Enforcement

For several decades now, researchers have devoted meaningful attention to law enforcement and its use of force. Police are entrusted by society to employ force for the

purposes of maintaining peace and social order. In order to preserve peace, society expects law enforcement to deploy force in a reasonable and appropriate manner. (Bittner 1970). Sherman (1980) suggests that balancing peacemaking and the use of force creates a *troublesome paradox* for law enforcement. Within the *troublesome paradox*, officers must, at times, resort to violence as a means to prevent others from engaging in violent behavior. Thus, navigating the *troublesome paradox* could cause law enforcement to deploy force, which may neither be reasonable nor appropriate, for the purposes of containing a suspect's violent behaviors.

Scholars have developed numerous theories to explain the causes of police use of force. Hays (2011) argues that nearly all theory-driven use of force literature can be categorized into either sociological or criminal threat theories. Sociological theories generally contend that social dynamics influence police behavior in citizen-police interactions (Black 1976; Black 1980; Blalock 1967). For instance, traditional conflict theory argues that police use of force is formal social control of disadvantaged groups by more powerful groups (Jacobs 1979; Jacobs and Britt 1979; Sorensen, Marquart and Brock 1993). Under these theories, police are depicted as agents employed by privileged groups to maintain control over disadvantaged groups. However, criminal threat theories posit that law enforcement employs use of force in response to actual and perceived threats posed by individuals, situations, and environments (Fyfe 1980; MacDonald, Alpert and Tennenbaum 1999; MacDonald, Kaminiski, Alpert, and Tennenbaum 2001; Sherman and Langworthy 1979). According to Bittner (1970, pp.46), officers form judgments based upon situational factors which affect the possible deployment of force in a given encounter. For example, force may be applied at a greater rate and extent against citizens in high-crime

neighborhoods due to the officer's heightened perceptions of environmental threats (Holmes et al 1998; Kania and Mackey 1977; Sorenson et al. 1993; Terrill and Reisig 2003). Thus, within criminal threat theories, use of force is regarded as a reactionary function of law enforcement's role.

Law enforcement's use of force is limited by several factors, such as public opinion, legal controls, police culture and law enforcement policies and procedures (Manning 1980). Bittner (1970, pp. 37) suggests that there are three formal limitations to use of force. First, deadly use of force is constrained in most jurisdictions. Law enforcement can only exercise lethal force in certain situations, such as self-defense. Secondly, officers can only employ force within the scope of their job; they cannot use force legally for their private interest. Lastly, officers cannot use force in a frivolous or malicious manner. Their deployment of force must be reasonable and justified by the facts of the incident.

Scholars define *force* as the physical action taken to control the movement or freedom of another individual (Alpert and Dunham 2004). Law enforcement is expected to exercise force in a reasonable manner in order to fulfill its social promise of maintaining peace and order. However, due to the temporal nature and situational factors of police-citizen interactions, scholars have had difficulty defining what constitutes *reasonable force* within an encounter. This debate over reasonable force has extended to courts, law enforcement agencies, the general public and street level cops (Terrill and Paoline 2010). *Graham v. Connor* (1989), added some clarity to the reasonable force debate by establishing a case law definition for illegal use of force. In the case, the Supreme Court ruled that illegal use of force is any force that is not *objectively reasonable*. Per the ruling, objective reasonableness is determined by whether another, reasonable officer in that same

situation, would have used the same amount of force, in light of the information available to the officer at the time. In its establishment of the objectively reasonable standard, *Graham v. Connor* helped to provide a decision framework for assessing reasonable use of force. Additional Supreme Court cases, such as *Tennessee v. Garner* (1985), helped to clarify reasonable use of force within an encounter. In this case, the Supreme Court found that police cannot use deadly force unless there is a probable cause that the suspect poses a physical danger. Nonetheless, reasonable force remains an ambiguous concept as objective reasonableness is dependent upon a variety of factors, including a reasonable officer's perceived judgment and the suspect's offense and level of resistance (Alpert and Smith 1994).

Due to the observable nature of use of force and heavy reliance on official police records, obtaining information on both lethal and non-lethal police-citizen encounters is difficult (Alpert and Dunham 2004). However, despite media depictions, current research suggests that police-citizen interactions involving force occur infrequently. For example, the Police Public Contact Survey administered by the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) observed that only 1.9% of 40 million citizen-police encounters in 2008 involved the threat or actual use of force by police. This statistical finding is similar to the prior estimated rate of citizen-police encounters involving the threat or actual use of force in 2005 (2.3% of 43 million encounters) (Eith and Durose 2011). Despite these numbers, recent high profile deaths involving unarmed black women and men have caused increased focus on the issue of use of force from the media, law enforcement agencies and general public.

Race, Class, and Attitudes about the Use of Force

Researchers across various fields of study have examined the links between race, class, and Americans' beliefs about the use of force. Regarding the former, most research on race and use of force attitudes focuses on whites. For instance, a number of studies have found that whites generally hold more punitive attitudes than non-whites (Bobo and Johnson 2004; Green, Starkle, and Sears 2006 ; Young 2004). Additionally, use of force studies find that whites support use of force at higher levels than other racial groups due to their existing *racial resentment* and prejudice against non-whites (Barkan and Cohn 1998; Carter and Corra 2016; Johnson and Kuhn 2009). Kinder and Sanders (1996, pp. 293) write that *racial resentment* is, "a combination of racial anger and indignation, on the one hand, and secularized versions of the Protestant ethic, on the other." Within the *racial resentment* conceptual framework, racial antagonism towards blacks is due to their individual and cultural non-adherence to traditional American values. For instance, Carter and Corra (2016) found that racial resentment does play a role in shaping whites' attitudes towards use of force. The enduring effects of racial resentment are illustrated by the high approval levels of police use of force among whites that have remained consistent for three decades, despite economic and social gains by blacks. Carter and Corra (2016) suggest that the influential role of racial resentment may be due to the prevalent social messages of criminality and deviance that are typically associated with blacks. Therefore, this study suggests that a racial attitudinal gap persists due to the enduring power of racial resentment to shape whites' views towards use of force.

Concerning the latter, numerous studies have sought to examine blacks' attitudes towards the criminal justice system. Generally, these studies have found that blacks are less

supportive of crime control and punitive measures than other racial groups. For instance, scholars have discovered that blacks are less approving of capital punishment and racial profiling (Cao, Frank and Cullen 1996; Halim and Stiles 2001; Unnever and Cullen 2007; Weitzer and Tuch 2002). Also, similar studies have observed that blacks are more likely than non-blacks both to perceive police racial bias against non-whites and to support criminal justice reform (Weitzer and Tuch 2004; Weitzer and Tuch 2005).

Furthermore, several scholars have explored blacks' punitive attitudes in comparison to whites. For instance, Cullen et al (1996) interviewed 103 black and 136 white residents to examine racial attitudinal differences towards use of deadly force by law enforcement. Specifically, Cullen et al (1996) seek to assess whether whites and blacks differ on their approval of *illegal deadly force*. The scholars define *illegal deadly force* as lethal force against persons who do not have a manifested past evidence of dangerousness. In the interviews, the authors asked respondents to indicate whether they approve of deadly force against a fleeing person who had committed one of eight crimes. The eight potential crimes include purse snatching, motor vehicle theft, larceny from a store, drunk driving, selling drugs, burglary, rape and armed robbery. The study measures a manifested past evidence of the fleeing person's dangerousness by the nature of the crime described in the provided scenarios. For example, armed robbery would suggest dangerousness while purse snatching would not. Deadly force against a person without a manifested past evidence of dangerousness would be in excess of the reasonable force standard established by the *Garner v. Tennessee* ruling. Cullen et al (1996) found that whites were more likely than blacks to support the use of deadly force against a fleeing house burglary. Additionally, regardless of household income or educational attainment, blacks were less

likely than whites to support illegal use of force against a suspect. Although Cullen et al (1996) limit their analysis to deadly force, their conclusions are important to understanding the attitudes of both racial groups towards use of force.

Other studies have also shown that blacks report substantially less approving attitudes towards use of force than other racial groups (Elicker 2008). For example, Thompson and Lee (2004) assess the validity of conflict theory in explaining police use of force attitudes among whites and blacks. Their results show that race is more important than class position, political views, education, and gender in determining an individual's views on police use of force. Despite the study's findings, socioeconomic status has been found to be a strong determinant of criminal justice system outcomes for both blacks and whites. Generally speaking, lower income individuals experience harsher criminal justice consequences than their middle class counterparts (Reimann 2001). In comparison to the middle class, lower income individuals are more likely to perceive criminal injustice and report less satisfaction with local law enforcement (Hagan and Albonetti 1982; Weitzer 2000). Additionally, studies related to the effects of socioeconomic status upon attitudes towards use of force suggest that class position shapes the opinions of individuals. For instance, using data from the 1973 to 1991 GSS surveys, Arthur and Chase (1994) explore whether white and black respondents of varying income and educational attainment levels believe that an officer should ever strike an adult male citizen. They examine this question in conjunction with conservative indicative independent variables, such as gun ownership, religious fundamentalism and political orientation. The authors find that social privilege and class position increase the likelihood that an individual would approve of use of force. For example, the best-educated blacks were at least as likely to support use of force as

white individuals. Their study reveals that only age, and not race, contradicts the increasing effects of socioeconomic status on attitudes. Therefore, Arthur and Chase (1994) concluded that social status is more salient than race in shaping attitudes towards police use of force. These findings highlight the significance of class position to influence the use of force attitudes among blacks. Thus, this study provides additional insight into the effect of class position on shaping the views of blacks, especially towards the criminal justice system and use of force.

Few studies specifically examine high and middle status blacks' beliefs about the criminal justice system. Results from these studies reveal attitudinal differences within the black community by socioeconomic status. For instance, Wilson and Dunham (2001) found that the black middle class supports crime control measures at levels similar to their white middle class counterparts. However, they also find that middle class blacks are more suspicious of the implementation of crime control methods than the white middle class. These skeptical views towards implementation closely mirror the attitudes of lower status blacks who generally do not support crime control methods. Wilson and Dunham (2001) conclude that this convergence of views is a product of the *ethclass* perspective among high and middle status blacks. According to Milton Gordon (1964), *ethclass* accounts for the combined effects of "ethnicity" (or race within the context of the present study) and class position. More specifically, Gordon (1964) argues that privileged members of minority groups benefit from the status quo due to their elevated class position. However, these privileged members concurrently experience a sense of shared fate with members of their minority group. For example, studies of blacks' attitudes towards racial inequality have shown that middle class blacks exhibit a dual consciousness that simultaneously

acknowledges the role of persisting racial inequality and the importance of personal responsibility (Wellburn 2016; Shelton and Greene 2012). Therefore, high and middle status blacks' beliefs often differ from both their racial and class counterparts.

In fact, attitudes towards the criminal justice system, including approval of police use of force, is one area where the impact of the ethclass perspective among middle class blacks is best illustrated. Class-based attitudinal differences among blacks can be found in the distinct views held by middle class blacks towards racial profiling, local police satisfaction, and perceptions of racial discrimination within the criminal justice system (Parker, Onyekwuluje, and Murty 1995; Weitzer 2000; Weitzer and Tuch 2005). Weitzer and Tuch (2002) found that middle class blacks that reside in high socioeconomic neighborhoods hold views of police that were more similar to whites in middle class neighborhoods than lower status blacks. Similarly, Cao, Frank and Cullen (1996) observe that perception of community disorder, not race, is considered to be the strongest indicator of confidence in police. These attitudinal differences are a product of a class privilege that affords middle class blacks greater opportunities both to live in better neighborhoods and to interact within integrated environments (Lacy 2007; Wilson 1980). Thus, the unique social position of higher status blacks results in an ethclass perspective that differentiates their attitudes from lower status blacks and higher status whites.

This paper fills a gap in policing research literature by examining the attitudes of the black middle class towards use of force by law enforcement. To date, attitudes of the black middle class have not been explored despite their membership in a racial group that is disproportionately represented in the criminal justice system (Alexander 2010). This study will show how the simultaneous class privilege and racial marginalization of the black

middle class influences their views towards law enforcement practices. Additionally, this paper explores attitudinal changes of both blacks and whites of varying income over the course of forty-five years. An examination of attitudes changes over time is warranted given the national debate around police use of force and minority rights that has persisted from the 1968 Race Riots to the modern-day Black Lives Matter movement protests. Therefore, this paper contributes to existing public opinion of use of force research literature in two ways by: (1) examining the attitudes of middle income blacks and (2) exploring attitudinal changes between whites and blacks over the course of four decades.

Research Methodology

This study uses data from the 1973-2016 General Social Surveys (GSS) to analyze attitudes towards use of force. The GSS is a nationally-representative survey that assesses Americans' beliefs about various political and social issues in society. It is designed and conducted by the National Opinion Research Center (NORC) at the University of Chicago, From 1972 to 1994, the GSS had been distributed on an annual basis; since 1994, the survey has been administered bi-annually.

The goal of this study is to explore the links between race, class, and beliefs about the police use of force. More specifically, I compare and contrast the effects of income and education among blacks and whites. In order to compare attitudes between the two racial groups, only respondents who self-identified as black or white have been included in the sample population. I have limited my analysis to whites and blacks due to the legacy of racial antagonism between both groups.

Dependent Variables

The GSS includes five questions regarding police use of force against an adult male citizen. In this series of questions, respondents are first asked if they could ever imagine a situation in which they would approve of a police officer striking an adult male citizen. The GSS provides respondents with the three following answer choices: “Yes”, “No”, and “Don’t Know.” Respondents who reply, “No”, are thereafter moved onto another topic in the GSS. However, respondents who select either, “Yes”, or, “Don’t Know”, are then asked whether they approve of police use of force against an adult male citizen in four given scenarios. The scenarios include police physical force against an adult male citizen who is: (1) attempting to escape custody, (2) attacking a police officer with his fists, (3) being questioned as a murder suspect, and (4) verbally abusing an officer. In answering these questions, respondents are presented with the following answer selections: “Strongly Agree”, “Agree”, “Disagree”, or “Strongly Disagree.” However, I have recoded these responses into binary, “Agree”, and, “Disagree”, categories in order to clearly assess approval attitudes. Table 1 presents codes and percent distributions for all dependent variables.

Independent Variables

Socioeconomic status is measured by indicators for the respondent’s educational attainment and household income. Educational attainment ranges from less than high school to graduate/advanced degree status. Further, the original continuous income variable was recoded to the following scale: 1 (less than \$11,200), 2 (\$11,201 to \$23,000), 3 (\$23,001 to \$27,000), 4 (\$27,001 to \$43,500) and 5 (\$43,501 and above). For the purposes of this study, middle income blacks and whites occupy the middle of the income distribution at annual earnings of \$23,001 to \$27,000. It must be noted that the GSS

variable analyzed in this study, REALINC, adjusts for inflation and uses 1986 as the base year for adjustments. Other independent variables such as gender, age, and political ideology have been added to the model. Gender is coded as a dummy variable. Age is treated as a continuous variable that ranges from 18 to 89 years old. Further, political views are measured as an ordinal variable from liberal to conservative. The study's regression models also include independent variables related to political conservatism such as Southern regional affiliation, and rural and suburban residence. These variables have been incorporated into this study's models due to their proven effects to increase negative attitudes among whites against racial minorities (Carter 2005; Unnever, Cullen and Applegate 2005; Green, Staerkle, and Sears 2006). Table 2 presents codes and percent distributions for all independent variables.

Data Analysis

This paper analyzes each dependent variable separately in order to examine the nuance that is presented by the four given scenarios. Thus, this study can assess whether approval attitudes among racial and class groups differ when an adult male citizen engages in varying levels of resistance towards responding police officers. Additionally, analyzing education and income separately allows this study to explore the individual effects of both variables upon shaping attitudes. Due to the dichotomous nature of the dependent variables, the paper uses logistic regression to analyze blacks' and whites' beliefs towards use of force. In addition to the GSS use of force dependent variables, this study includes a number of sociodemographic control variables in its statistical models. Lastly, this study conducts an over-time trend analysis of blacks' and whites attitudes to examine changes from 1973-2016.

Findings

Table 1 shows that, across all five questions, a majority of both whites and blacks report similar beliefs about use of force by law enforcement against an adult male citizen. However, the approval levels of whites exceed (sometimes to a great extent) blacks in four of the five use of force questions. Notably, over three-fourths of whites and 50% of blacks can imagine circumstances when police use of force against an adult male citizen is warranted. Only when the citizen is a murder suspect do blacks approve of force at higher levels than whites. Attitudinal differences among whites and blacks are most apparent in questions pertaining to the overall assessment of force and the scenario involving a citizen attempting to escape custody. An approval gap of 27% exists between whites (78%) and blacks (50%) regarding whether use of force by police against an adult male citizen is ever warranted. This gap would indicate that there is a significant difference between whites and blacks in regards to the nature and appropriateness of force against a citizen. Further, approximately 60% of blacks compared to 80% of whites approve of force when a citizen is attempting to escape police custody. This variance suggests that a majority of whites, and a sizeable number of blacks, differ on the extent and nature of resistance behavior that requires physical force. Whereas whites are uniform in their responses, blacks' support levels were largely split on two questions. Fifty percent of blacks could not imagine a situation in which force by law enforcement is ever warranted. Thus, the appropriateness of use of force within a police-citizen encounter is an issue that evenly splits black respondents. This attitudinal divide among blacks is further illustrated by the 43% of black respondents who disapproved of force against a citizen attempting to escape custody. The notable number of blacks who disapprove of force against an escaping citizen suggests a

divide regarding whether an escape attempt is a form of resistance that should be met with physical force.

TABLE 1 Survey Questions/Statements, Answer Possibilities, and Overall Percent Distributions by Race for Approval of Use for Force Against an Adult Male Citizen.

	Blacks	Whites	T-Values
Q: "Are there any situations you can imagine in which you would approve of police officer striking an adult male citizen?"			
Yes (1)	50.1	77.9	35.367***
No (0)	49.9	22.1	
A. Had said vulgar and obscene things to the policeman?			
Yes (1)	7.6	11.6	9.034***
No (0)	92.4	88.4	
B. Was being questioned as a suspect in a murder case?			
Yes (1)	13.0	7.8	-9.963***
No (0)	87.0	92.2	
C. Was attempting to escape from custody?			
Yes (1)	57.6	80.1	28.797***
No (0)	42.4	19.9	
D. Was attacking the policeman with his fists?"			
Yes (1)	85.0	94.5	17.349***
No (0)	15.0	5.5	

NOTES: *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001; t-values assess differences between blacks and whites on the variable overall; (2-tailed tests).

Table 2 displays the independent variables and percentile distribution of blacks and whites throughout the sample population. Over 60% of black respondents are represented in the lowest two income categories, while white respondents are more evenly spread throughout the five income categories. Approximately 70% of white and 80% of black respondents have attained only a high school degree or less. Moreover, 12% of black respondents have attained at least a bachelor degree compared to 22% of white

respondents. These sample population distributions are consistent with those of other nationally representative studies that reflect contemporary racial inequality.

As for the sociodemographic indicators, women are over-represented at 54% and 60% respectively for both whites and blacks. Among both races, political moderates outnumber liberals and conservatives at 40% respectively for whites and blacks. Regionally, more than 50% of the black respondents reside in the American South compared to 32% of whites. Further, 54% of blacks live in an urban environment whereas only 25% of whites reside in a city. Therefore, the study's respondent profiles reflect a lower income, under-educated, urban, southern-affiliated black population and a suburban-to-rural, mixed-income, non-southern, white populace.

TABLE 2 Codes and Percent Distributions by Race for all Independent Variables.

	Blacks	Whites	T-Values
<u>SES Indicators</u>			
Income ^a			
Lowest Category	34.0	15.7	31.178***
Second Lowest Category	28.2	22.9	-9.416***
Middle Category	6.9	8.0	3.159***
Second Highest Category	17.9	25.9	16.222***
Highest Category	13.0	27.5	32.229***
Education ^a			
Less than High School	29.9	18.8	20.934***
High School Degree	52.4	53.2	1.291*
Some/Junior College	6.0	5.4	-2.150***
Bachelor Degree	8.0	15.3	21.376***
Graduated/Advanced Degree	3.6	7.3	15.892***
<u>Sociodemographics</u>			
Political Views ^a			
Liberal	34.7	25.2	15.408***
Moderate	39.3	38.3	-1.574**
Conservative	26.0	36.5	18.011***
Age ^a	(42.85)	(45.53)	-13.653***
Gender (women=2, men=1)	59.0	53.7	-9.011***
Region (South=1, non-South=0)	54.3	32.4	-37.218***
Rural	25.0	43.2	34.742***
Suburban	21.2	32.4	22.600***
Year R Participated in the GSS ^a	(1994.21)	(1992.87)	-8.438

NOTES: *p<.05. **p<.01, ***p<.001; means appear in parentheses; ^a analyzed as a continuous variable in the multivariate models; (2-tailed tests).

Before proceeding, it is worth noting that I conducted a factor analysis on the dependent variables examined in this study. Results for this procedure reveal that three of the five variables load onto the same dimension; the two remaining outcomes load onto a separate dimension. More specifically, the three dependent variables that examine the overall assessment of police use of force and force against an escaping citizen and an attacking citizen report an eigenvalue of 1.727. Similarly, the two remaining variables examining force against a potential murder suspect and a verbally abusive citizen report an

eigenvalue of 1.294. Additionally, results from a Cronbach Alpha ($\alpha = .594$) reliability analysis show that the variables loaded onto the first dimension are highly reliable. However, a similar test of the variables loaded onto the second dimension ($\alpha = .435$) is comparatively weak. These results illustrate the importance of examining the five outcome variables separately, rather than as a sole, recoded variable. Analyzing the data as a series of separate variables permits a more comprehensive set of results across the five outcomes than has been attained in prior research literature.

Table 3 presents logistic regressions assessing blacks' and whites' approval of a police officer striking an adult male citizen (Set A). The dependent variables in this table assess respondents' beliefs about physical force overall, and respondents' beliefs in specific situations involving a physically resisting citizen. First, as income increases, both blacks (OR = 1.09) and whites (OR = 1.12) are more likely to approve of an officer striking an adult male citizen, holding all other variables constant. Similarly, as education increases, blacks (OR = 1.40) and whites (OR = 1.39) also are more likely to approve of the use of force. In short, results for these variables indicate that both income and education operate similarly among blacks and whites in shaping their overall beliefs about the use of force on adult male citizens. Generally speaking, higher status blacks and whites tend to approve of police striking an adult male citizen.

Moreover, regarding an adult male citizen who is attacking with his fists, both blacks (OR = 1.16) and whites (OR = 1.21) are more likely to approve of force as their income level rise. However, for an escaping adult male citizen, whites are more likely to approve of force as both their income and education increase. Nevertheless, it is worth mentioning that increasing levels of income and education do not significantly influence blacks' views of use

of force against an escaping male citizen. Accordingly, income and education are critical to whites' beliefs about police use of force against adult male citizens who are escaping, but not blacks'.

TABLE 3 Logistic Regressions Assessing Blacks' and Whites' Approval of a Police Officer Striking an Adult Male Citizen.

Independent Variable	Ever Approve of Police Officer Striking an Adult Male Citizen?				Ever Approve of Police Officer Striking an Adult Male Citizen Attacking with Fists?				Ever Approve of Police Officer Striking an Adult Male Citizen Attempting to Escape Custody?			
	Blacks		Whites		Blacks		Whites		Blacks		Whites	
	O.R.	S.E.	O.R.	S.E.	O.R.	S.E.	O.R.	S.E.	O.R.	S.E.	O.R.	S.E.
<i>SES Indicators</i>												
Income	1.09**	0.03	1.12***	0.01	1.16***	0.04	1.21***	0.02	1.04	0.03	1.11***	0.01
Education	1.40***	0.04	1.39***	0.02	1.09	0.06	1.05	0.03	1.04	0.04	1.08***	0.02
<i>Sociodemographics</i>												
Political Views	0.95	0.05	1.22***	0.02	1.06	0.06	1.15***	0.04	1.00	0.05	1.18***	0.02
Age	1.00	0.00	0.99***	0.00	1.00	0.00	1.00	0.00	1.00	0.00	1.00***	0.00
Women ^a	0.58***	0.07	0.57***	0.03	0.67***	0.10	0.60***	0.06	0.75***	0.07	0.63***	0.03
Southerners ^b	1.01	0.07	1.12***	0.04	1.15	0.11	1.28***	0.07	0.86	0.08	1.14***	0.04
Rural ^c	0.99	0.03	1.02	0.01	1.00	0.04	1.03	0.04	1.01	0.03	1.04*	0.01
Suburban ^c	1.11*	0.05	1.00	0.02	1.05	0.05	1.02	0.04	1.05	0.04	1.04	0.02
Year	0.98***	0.00	0.98***	0.00	0.95***	0.00	0.97***	0.00	0.98***	0.00	0.98***	0.00
Pseudo R ²	0.08		0.08		0.06		0.04		0.02		0.04	
X ²	205.48***		1215.73***		120.85***		293.42***		53.53***		524.39***	
N	3658		23345		3801		24064		3688		23360	

NOTES: *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001; ^a Men reference group; ^b Non-South reference group; ^c Urban reference group; significant differences (p≤.05) between blacks and whites with similar levels of socioeconomic attainment appear in bold (2-tailed tests).

Table 4 presents logistic regressions for assessing blacks' and whites' approval of a police officer striking an adult male citizen (Set B). The variables in this table assess respondents' beliefs about police use of force in verbally-tense situations. Interestingly, as income increases, blacks (OR = 0.88) and whites (OR = 0.90) are less likely to approve of force against an adult male citizen that is being questioned as a murder suspect. Likewise, as education increases, blacks (OR = 0.75) and whites (OR = 0.76) are less supportive of force against an adult male citizen that is being questioned as a murder suspect. In this instance, income and education increases operate similarly to push both blacks and white to adopt beliefs that are opposite of the indicators in Set A. The effects of income and education to influence respondents towards disapproval of force may be due to the nature of the murder suspect scenario. For this question, the essence of the adult male citizen's resistance (or cooperation) is left to interpretation as he is not described as actively resisting law enforcement. Unlike the other scenarios, respondents are asked if the citizen's unconfirmed connection to a crime, rather than their actions, warrant the deployment of force. With regards to an adult male who is verbally abusing a police officer, as income rises, blacks (OR = .76) and whites (OR = 0.94) are less likely to approve of force. In other words, increases in income and education cause both whites and blacks to be less supportive of force in scenarios involving verbally-tense interactions between police officers and an adult male citizen.

Income and education influence whites and blacks similarly for the indicators in Sets A and B. Both blacks and whites are more likely to approve of force, as income increases, for two of the three indicators in Set A. Likewise, as education increases, blacks and whites are more likely to support the overall use of force against an adult male citizen.

On the other hand, as income increases, blacks and whites are less likely to support force for both indicators in Set B. Further, blacks and whites are less likely to approve of force, as education increases, against a citizen who is being questioned as a murder suspect. Taken together, these findings suggest that higher status blacks and whites permit use of force in situations where there is the potential for physical altercations. Thus, they approve of law enforcement deploying force when physical order is needed to be maintained. However, higher status blacks and whites do not approve of such force in verbally-tense (but not physical) situations. Hence, they may believe that an officer is able to maintain order regardless of the citizen's verbal resistance. Thus, higher status blacks and whites may not believe that verbal resistance warrants a physical response.

TABLE 4 Logistic Regressions Assessing Blacks' and Whites' Approval of a Police Officer Striking an Adult Male Citizen.

Independent Variable	Ever Approve of Police Officer Striking an Adult Male Citizen who is Questioned as a Murder Suspect?				Ever Approve of Police Officer Striking an Adult Citizen who is Saying Vulgar or Obscene Things?			
	Blacks		Whites		Blacks		Whites	
	O.R.	S.E.	O.R.	S.E.	O.R.	S.E.	O.R.	S.E.
<i>SES Indicators</i>								
Income	0.88**	0.04	0.90***	0.02	0.76***	0.06	0.94***	0.02
Education	0.75***	0.07	0.76***	0.03	0.85	0.09	0.83	0.02
<i>Sociodemographic</i>								
Political Views	1.18*	0.07	1.05	0.03	1.18*	0.08	1.17***	0.03
Age	1.00	0.00	1.02***	0.00	1.01	0.00	1.02***	0.00
Women ^a	0.94	0.10	0.90*	0.05	0.83	0.13	0.69***	0.04
Southerners ^b	1.05	0.11	0.90*	0.05	1.18	0.14	1.22***	0.05
Rural ^c	1.03	0.04	1.00	0.02	0.97	0.05	1.04	0.02
Suburban ^c	0.98	0.07	0.99	0.03	0.87	0.09	0.96	0.03
Year	1.07***	0.01	1.01**	0.00	0.99	0.07	0.96**	0.00
Pseudo R ²	0.07		0.05		0.05		0.08	
X ²	145.23***		446.25***		70.40***		934.50***	
N	3818		23837		3806		23888	

NOTES: *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001; ^a Men reference group; ^b Non-South reference group; ^c Urban reference group; significant differences (p≤.05) between blacks and whites with similar levels of socioeconomic attainment appear in bold (2-tailed tests).

Interaction effects were created to examine the influence that the race variable paired respectively with income and education exhibit within the presented models. Both interaction terms were found to be non-significant across all models. These non-significant interaction terms suggest that the main effects of income and education operate similarly in shaping whites' and blacks' beliefs about use of force.

As for the sociodemographic indicators, gender exerts a strong and consistent effect on the beliefs of respondents from both racial groups. Black and white women are more likely than black men and white men to disapprove of force against an adult male citizen in each scenario of Set A. The effects of gender are less pronounced for Set B as only white women are more likely than white men to disapprove of force against a citizen involved in a verbally intense situation with law enforcement. Further, political conservatism among whites significantly increases their likelihood to approve of force in scenarios involving a resisting adult male citizen. White conservatives may believe that force is warranted when an adult male citizen fails to obey legal authorities (which suggests a disruption in the normative social order). For blacks, however, political conservatism is largely non-significant except when the citizen is either being questioned as a murder suspect or verbally abuses a police officer. Similar to political conservatism, whites who reside in the southern US are more likely than whites who reside in other regions to approve of force in scenarios involving a resisting adult male citizen. The identical effects of political conservatism and southern affiliation may be due to the political climate and history of racial relations in the American South.

TABLE 5 Logistic Regressions Assessing Blacks' and Whites' Approval of a Police Officer Striking an Adult Male Citizen Over Five Decades.

Years	1970s		1980s		1990s		2000s		2010s	
	Blacks O.R.	Whites O.R.	Blacks O.R.	Whites O.R.	Blacks O.R.	Whites O.R.	Blacks O.R.	Whites O.R.	Blacks O.R.	Whites O.R.
<i>SES Indicators</i>										
Income	1.01 (0.05)	1.16**** (0.05)	1.14** (0.05)	1.12**** (0.02)	1.06 (0.06)	1.09**** (0.02)	1.12* (0.07)	1.15**** (0.03)	1.12* (0.06)	1.12**** (0.03)
Education	1.70*** (0.16)	1.47**** (0.05)	1.51**** (0.09)	1.48**** (0.04)	1.35*** (0.09)	1.34**** (0.03)	1.40*** (0.10)	1.39**** (0.04)	1.29*** (0.08)	1.35**** (0.04)
<i>Sociodemographics</i>										
Political Views	1.16 (0.14)	1.15* (0.05)	0.96 (0.08)	1.24**** (0.04)	0.92 (0.09)	1.20**** (0.04)	0.84 (0.12)	1.22**** (0.05)	1.00 (0.10)	1.29**** (0.06)
Age	1.00 (0.01)	1.00 (0.00)	1.00 (0.04)	0.99**** (0.00)	0.99** (0.01)	0.99**** (0.00)	1.00 (0.01)	0.99*** (0.00)	1.00 (0.01)	1.00* (0.00)
Women ^a	0.60** (0.23)	0.68**** (0.09)	0.72** (0.14)	0.59**** (0.07)	0.42**** (0.15)	0.53**** (0.06)	0.56*** (0.18)	0.54**** (0.08)	0.63*** (0.16)	0.55**** (0.09)
Southerners ^b	1.18 (0.26)	1.11 (0.10)	1.08 (0.14)	1.22*** (0.07)	1.24 (0.17)	1.11 (0.07)	0.95 (0.20)	1.21** (0.09)	0.76* (0.17)	1.00 (0.09)
Rural ^c	1.06 (0.10)	1.01 (0.04)	0.95 (0.06)	0.99 (0.03)	1.06 (0.07)	1.07** (0.03)	0.88* (0.08)	1.00 (0.04)	1.03 (0.07)	0.99 (0.04)
Suburban ^c	1.00 (0.17)	1.11 (0.07)	1.02 (0.05)	1.02 (0.05)	1.11 (0.09)	0.97 (0.04)	0.88 (0.11)	0.99 (0.05)	1.08 (0.09)	0.97 (0.06)
Year	0.92 (0.09)	1.07* (0.04)	0.990 (0.01)	0.99 (0.01)	0.94 (0.05)	0.97* (0.02)	1.05 (0.06)	1.02 (0.03)	0.86** (0.07)	1.05 (0.04)
Pseudo R ²	0.08	0.07	0.10	0.09	0.08	0.07	0.12	0.09	0.07	0.08
X ²	21.26***	149.13****	77.52****	371.03****	68.24****	302.46****	46.35****	238.83****	41.45****	188.26
N	346	3470	1029	6424	889	6051	626	3816	768	3584

NOTES: *p<.10, **p<.05, ***p<.01, ****p<.001; ^a Men reference group; ^b Non-South reference group; ^c Urban reference group; significant differences (p≤.05) between blacks and whites with similar levels of socioeconomic attainment appear in bold (2-tailed tests).

Table 5 shows a time-trend analysis of logistic regressions for blacks' and whites' beliefs about use of force over the past forty-five years. Consistently, both income and education exert significant effects on whites' attitudes throughout each analyzed decade. Thus, over the past forty-five years, as income and education rise, whites are more likely to approve of force. The effects of income and education for blacks show greater variance through the examined time period. As educational attainment increases, blacks are more likely to approve of police use of force for all decades. However, income is significant for blacks in three of five decades. Therefore, as income rises in the 1980s, 2000s, and 2010s, blacks are more likely to approve of force. These findings suggest that, during the examined time period, class has operated similarly for both blacks and whites. Higher status blacks and whites consistently have been more likely than lower status blacks to approve of police use of force over the past forty-five years.

Increases among socioeconomic indicators, specifically educational attainment, have influenced both blacks and whites to progressively approve of use of force. Interestingly, educational attainment has exerted differing levels of influence upon whites' and blacks' attitudes towards police use of force. Education's effects upon whites' beliefs have been largely consistent through the past five decades. The magnitude of its effects on whites range from a high in the 1980s (OR = 1.48) to a low in the 1990s (OR = 1.34). However, the magnitude of education for shaping blacks' attitudes has steadily lessened from the 1970s (OR = 1.70) to the 2010s (OR = 1.29). This finding suggests that education's ability to influence blacks towards supporting police use of force is waning as time

progresses. Therefore, if the current trend continues, increases in education may not equate to approval of use of force among blacks in the future.

Similar to the findings of Table 4, gender exerts a significant influence on both blacks and whites. Black and white women are both less likely than black and white men to support use of force during any examined decade. Thus, these findings suggests that, over the past forty-five years, women have been more likely than men to disapprove of police use of force.

TABLE 6 Percent Distribution by Race of Approval of a Police Officer Striking an Adult Male Citizen Over Five Decades.

<i>Years</i>	1970s		1980s		1990s		2000s		2010s	
	Early (‘70-‘74)	Late (‘76-‘79)	Early (‘80-‘84)	Late (‘85-‘89)	Early (‘90-‘94)	Late (‘95-‘99)	Early (‘00-‘04)	Late (‘05-‘09)	Early (‘10-‘14)	Late (‘15-‘16)
<u><i>All Blacks</i></u>										
Yes	42.40%	51.40%	51.70%	57.60%	54.40%	49.80%	42.80%	49.80%	51.40%	45.50%
<u><i>Middle Income Blacks</i></u>										
Yes	60.00%	64.90%	60.90%	67.50%	42.90%	72.20%	60.00%	63.00%	66.70%	40.00%
<u><i>Middle Income Whites</i></u>										
Yes	71.20%	81.00%	81.70%	76.30%	83.20%	78.40%	73.30%	76.00%	80.10%	82.70%
<u><i>All Whites</i></u>										
Yes	76.90%	81.30%	79.80%	79.10%	77.30%	74.90%	77.00%	78.10%	77.30%	79.60%

Table 6 displays whites' and blacks' attitudes towards the overall assessment of police use of force in five-year intervals from the 1970s to the 2010s. Specifically, the table shows the responses of middle class blacks and whites in comparison to all blacks and whites. For each five-year interval of the last four decades, whites report higher levels of approval for police use of force than blacks. Of the analyzed years, the widest approval gap between whites (77%) and blacks (42%) occurs in the early 1970s. Furthermore, whites' attitudes largely remain stable throughout the forty-five years of data. Whites' support for police use of force over the forty-five years averages at 78 percent. Likewise, their highest approval rates are in the late 1970s (81%) whereas their lowest are in the late 1990s (75%). On the other hand, blacks' approval of police use of force reaches its apex in the late 1980s (58%), while its nadir occurs during the early 1970s (42%). Over the five examined decades, blacks' average level of support for use of force is 50 percent. Blacks are evenly divided in their assessment of overall force across the forty-five year time frame; years of high support for force are equally met with years of low support. This divide among blacks around the overall assessment of police use of force mirrors similar findings from Table 1.

Middle class whites' beliefs largely reflect the attitudes of all whites over the course of the four decades. For each interval, white middle class approval rates remain within six percent of the support levels for all whites. Furthermore, when compared to their racial counterparts, middle class whites' support for police use of force exceeds middle class blacks for each interval analyzed. Support differentials between middle class whites and blacks vary from a low of six percent in the late 1990s to a high of 43 percent in the late 2010s. Further, approval averages of the past forty-five years for middle class whites

(78%) and blacks (60%) suggest a sizeable support gap within the middle class based upon race. This changing racial support gap within the middle class is largely due to the dynamic nature of middle class blacks' views. Middle class blacks report approval levels that range from 60% to 68% from the early 1970s to the late 1980s. However, middle class blacks' support for force drops to 43% in the early 1990s until it rebounds to 72% in the late 1990s. Middle class black support for force hovers around 63% through the 2000s until it sinks to 40% in the late 2010s. The staggering drops of support among the black middle class probably closely corresponds with highly publicized, use of force-related events such as the 1992 beating of Rodney King and the rise of the Black Lives Matter Movement in the early to mid 2010s. Thus, these dramatic swings of support suggest that use of force-related incidents that capture the nation's attention may substantially influence middle class blacks' attitudes toward police use of force. However, all blacks do not appear to be as equally impacted by use of force events; a majority of blacks (54%) support use of force in up to the early 1990s. Besides low points of the early 1990s and late 2010s, middle class blacks maintain approval levels that are nine to 22% higher than all blacks. These findings indicate that middle class blacks generally are more approving of use of force than all blacks.

Conclusion

Results of this study provide new insights into the connections between race, class, and attitudes about the use of force among law enforcement. Descriptive results of all relevant years of the GSS reveal that blacks and whites report contrasting levels of support for the use of force across various scenarios. However, multivariate results indicate that higher status blacks and white—by both income and education—often report similar

beliefs about the use of force. There may be several explanations for these racial attitudinal differences. As Sigelman et al (1997) write, “Whites were more likely to isolate police brutality from the historical context of racial discrimination against blacks. On the other hand, blacks were more likely to generalize incidents of police brutality by seeing them as a reinforcement of existing and past perceptions of racial injustice.” Thus, whites do not readily view police brutality and use of force as inherently racial issues.

Moreover, due to the prevalence of *colorblind racism*, whites can subtract race, and the country’s history of racial discrimination against blacks, from the issue of police violence. As Eduardo Bonilla-Silva (2014) writes, “Colorblind racism is an ideology, which acquired cohesiveness and dominance in the late 1960s, [that] explains contemporary racial inequality as the outcome of non-racial dynamics.” Therefore, whites are able to perceive acceptable police use of force as an issue of law enforcement practice, and not racial discrimination. By framing the issue within the purview of occupational practice, whites are more likely than blacks to approve of force against an adult male citizen of an unknown race. Similarly, the high level of support among whites may be due to their existing racial resentment as observed in past use of force studies (Barkan and Cohn 1998; Carter and Corra 2016; Johnson and Kuhn 2009). As a result of the dominant colorblind racial ideology, white racial resentment manifests itself in race-neutral terms, which involves blaming blacks for their individual and cultural non-adherence to traditional American values. As a result, white respondents can justify use of force against a citizen who is engaging in behavior, such as attempting to escape custody or attacking an officer, which does not adhere to the Protestant ethic.

As observed in other use of force studies, blacks are generally more reluctant than whites to approve of police use of force. Nonetheless, this study finds that higher status blacks are generally more approving of police use of force than low status blacks. Hence, this study observes that class (e.g., higher levels of income and education) operates similarly for both blacks and whites. This study finds that increases of income and education among blacks and whites generally results in greater approval of police use of force. The strength of these socioeconomic indicators upon the beliefs of blacks illustrates the salience of class position to influence differing views among individuals within the same racial group. Thus, these attitudinal differences between middle class blacks and both their economic and racial counterparts reflect the potential effects of the ethclass perspective. Given their class privilege, higher status blacks may approve of force at greater levels than lower status blacks out of a desire to maintain the status quo and support existing social institutions. However, as a result of their marginalized racial identity, middle class blacks may be less approving of force due to their perceptions of potential racial discrimination in the implementation of criminal justice measures, such as use of force against a citizen (Weitzer and Tuch 1999; Wilson and Dunham 2001). Thus, as a result of their racial and class identities, middle class blacks are uniquely positioned to be both supportive and skeptical of law enforcement's use of force practices. This distinctive, black middle class perspective suggests that there is a divergence of views towards appropriate use of force within the black community along class lines. These findings support the *polarization thesis*, which states that there is an expanding gap between the everyday realities of blacks based upon class position (Wilson 1980). Thus, the differing beliefs of higher and lower status blacks towards use of force are shaped by their distinct, class-based, everyday

experiences. Hence, this study suggests that class matters in shaping the views of blacks towards use of force. Therefore, blacks do not monolithically agree on their definition of appropriate use of force, and by extension, police brutality.

Furthermore, the similar effects of class position on attitudes would suggest that the beliefs of higher status blacks are increasingly converging towards those of the white middle class. Studies measuring beliefs about racial inequality have found that middle class blacks are progressively rejecting structural explanations in favor of individualistic ones, such as *motivational individualism* (Hunt 2007; Shelton and Greene 2012). *Motivational individualism* posits that racial inequalities can be attributed to a lack of will or effort on the part of blacks, without an accompanying belief in innate inferiority (Kluegel 1990). Given its emphasis on the work ethic of the individual, motivational individualism closely mirrors the tenets of colorblind racism and racial resentment. Whereas they may (or may not) hold resentment towards members of their own racial group, blacks are can be susceptible to the influence of colorblind racial frameworks. Bonilla-Silva (2010, pp. 171) states “[Color blind racial ideology] blurs, shapes, and provides many of the terms of the debate for blacks.” As a result of the ideology’s dominance, higher status blacks may adopt a colorblind framework to explain their individual success in relation to the difficulties experienced by lower status blacks. Therefore, this conservative belief shift would suggest that, as a result of their class position, the views of the privileged blacks are becoming more color blind, and thus, closer to the white middle class.

Despite the race and class-based attitudinal differences, this study has also found that respondents generally have become less approving of police use of force over the last forty-five years. As each year of the GSS passes, respondents are less willing to support use

of force by law enforcement in the provided scenarios, except for striking an adult male citizen questioned as a murder suspect. This downward trajectory of support may be a result of notable use of force-related phenomena, such as the 1992 beating of Rodney King and the rise of the Black Lives Matter Movement, that have occurred between 1973 and 2016 (Cullen, Cao, Langworthy et al 1996). For instance, this study's findings suggest that, middle class blacks' beliefs may be influenced by these events to a greater degree than the views of either all blacks or whites. Other than the years corresponding to major, nationally-publicized use of force incidents, middle class blacks generally support use of force. During the years of these major events, middle class blacks' approval of police use of force drops precipitously. Thus, these widely-publicized use of force incidents may confirm privileged blacks' suspicions of racial discrimination within the criminal justice system (Weitzer and Tuch 2002; Wilson and Dunham 2001). Additional research will be needed in order to examine the effects of these events, or other factors, on contributing to increasingly less punitive attitudes among respondents.

Likewise, future research should focus upon the role that additional conservative indicators play in shaping views towards use of force. For instance, past studies have found that Protestant religious fundamentalism and evangelicalism strongly influence punitive attitudes among whites (Unnever, Cullen, and Applegate 2005; Young 1992). Exploring the effects of religious belief on use of force attitudes is important given the religious diversity and historical strength of Protestantism in the United States. Additionally, given the strong affiliation of Protestantism among blacks, future research should explore the effects of religious belief in shaping middle class blacks' attitudes towards punitive measures, including use of force.

Further, future studies should explore attitudes towards use of force based upon the social identifiers of the victim. For each GSS use of force question, the potential victim is defined as an adult male citizen. Given the United States' increasingly hostile climate for foreigners, the victim's country of origin and immigration status may have a noteworthy effect on attitudes towards use of force. Similarly, recent use of force incidents involving female victims, such as Sandra Bland, warrant exploration of whether respondents approve of force against a female citizen. Likewise, since 1973, technological advancements have expanded the scenarios available to assess attitudes towards use of force. Future studies should seek to expand the offered use of force scenarios to include questions about the appropriateness of using Tasers, pepper spray, and rubber bullets. Further, the GSS survey structure prevents the ability to obtain additional background context from the respondents. Therefore, this study cannot determine whether respondents' views towards use of force are influenced by non-controlled factors, such as past experiences with law enforcement. This limitation is notable, as prior studies have found that past negative experiences with law enforcement strongly influence views towards police misconduct (Weitzer and Tuch 2002). Therefore, a qualitative study should seek to examine the context for respondents' attitudes towards use of force, including whether they had ever been victims of police use of force.

Research into the attitudinal differences among whites and blacks towards acceptable police use of force is important given the persisting national debate about reasonable use of force. This study confirms that a significant support gap exists between whites and blacks. Therefore, acceptable force holds different meanings for whites and blacks. However, this study also finds that class position operates similarly in shaping

approval attitudes for both blacks and whites. Thus, the definition of appropriate police use of force for higher status blacks is increasingly diverging from lower status blacks largely due to the effects of their class privilege. Understanding the differing definitions of appropriate use of force will be necessary to examine blacks' beliefs towards other police violence related phenomena, such as support for the Black Lives Matter Movement. Nonetheless, as a result of their unique social location, the higher and middle status blacks holds distinct views towards use of force that are largely overlooked in the national debate over police violence.

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Christopher Everett Robertson attained a bachelor in business administration from the University of Texas at Austin and earned a masters of arts in sociology from the University of Texas at Arlington. Christopher's primary research agenda examines how racial group membership and class status collaborate to define the lived experiences of African Americans. In his research, Christopher explores the influence of race and class upon both privileged and disadvantaged African Americans within various social contexts, such as police interactions. Christopher intends to further his research interests at the University of Minnesota Twin Cities, where he has been accepted to the university's sociology PhD program.