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Racial Differences in Conceptualizing Legitimacy and Trust in Police

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Abstract
Scholarly debate on how best to conceptualize legitimacy and trust in police has generally assumed these conceptualizations are stable across demographics. Recent evidence, however, suggests that this may not be the case. We examine how the public conceptualizes legitimacy and trust in police, how public conceptualizations relate to academic debate on these terms, and how public views differ between and within racial groups. This work is exploratory, though it is rooted in differences found in theoretically driven empirical work on the subject. Data are from online, national samples of White ($N = 650$), Black ($N = 624$), and Hispanic ($N = 626$) adults in the United States that are approximately representative of each racial group on key demographics. We asked participants to define legitimacy and trust and to indicate whether or not they view the terms as synonymous. We found numerous between-race and within-race differences in citizen-driven conceptualizations of legitimacy and trust. Results suggest that legitimacy and trust mean different things to different groups of people. Additionally, results show that public definitions of legitimacy and trust align with some academic conceptualizations but not others. We expect this research to inform the academic literature on defining legitimacy and trust.

Keywords Legitimacy · Trust · Race · Procedural justice · Law enforcement

On August 9, 2014, a police officer in Ferguson, Missouri shot and killed Michael Brown, an unarmed Black teenager. This event marked the beginning of mass protests, demonstrations, and unrest throughout the St. Louis suburb, which soon emanated

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across the United States. In response to Brown's death and other high-profile instances of police brutality against Black people, President Obama convened the Task Force on 21st Century Policing (Ramsey & Robinson, 2015). The first pillar of the Task Force's recommendations was to build trust and legitimacy through procedural justice, transparency and accountability, and proactive community engagement. These recommendations echoed those of both policing researchers and practitioners (International Association of Chiefs of Police, (n.d.); Maguire & Wells, 2009). Increasing public perception of police legitimacy and trust has positive downstream implications. When people view police as more legitimate and trustworthy, they are more likely to cooperate with police, comply with their directives, and report crimes (Sunshine & Tyler, 2003; Tankebe, 2013; Tyler, 2001; Tyler & Fagan, 2008; Tyler et al., 2015). Further, viewing police as more legitimate lowers the likelihood of committing crime (Reisig et al., 2011) and increases cooperation among those who have been arrested (White et al., 2016). Thus, it is important to measure and improve public perceptions of legitimacy and trust in police.

Currently, there is an academic debate on the meaning of *legitimacy* and *trust* (Hawdon, 2008; Hough et al., 2010; Jackson & Gau, 2015; Jackson & Kuha, 2015; Johnson et al., 2014; Kaina, 2008; Tankebe, 2013; Trinkner et al., 2018; Tyler, 2006; Tyler & Huo, 2002). The theoretical approach to conceptualizing legitimacy and trust has yet to yield clear answers on the optimal way to define these terms. To date, scholars have not directly asked the public how they understand these terms themselves. We address this dilemma with our first two research questions: 1) How does the public conceptualize legitimacy and trust in police? and, 2) How do public conceptualizations of legitimacy and trust in police relate to the academic debate on these terms? Further, scholars have largely focused on between-race differences in perceived levels of legitimacy and trust in police. It is unclear, however, how conceptualizations may vary both across and within each racial group. We address this with our final research question: 3) How do conceptualizations of legitimacy and trust differ both between and within racial groups?

Our paper is organized as follows. First, we outline the literature on police legitimacy and, relatedly, trust in police. We then discuss how race is related to views of law enforcement and outline our research questions and methodology. Then, we present our results and discuss their meaning in the context of the broader literature. We conclude with theoretical implications, the study's limitations, and suggestions for future directions of research.

Background

In recent years, procedural justice theory has featured prominently in studies examining people's attitudes toward police. Procedural justice theory rests on the premise that authorities' decision-making processes and interpersonal interactions with citizens are the foundation for individuals' perceptions of authority figures, including law enforcement (Lind & Tyler, 1988; Thibaut & Walker, 1975). When law enforcement officers' decisions are fair and neutral, when they treat citizens with respect, and when they allow citizens to voice their questions and concerns, citizens will view the police as trustworthy and legitimate authorities, regardless of whether the eventual outcome of an

interaction is positive or negative. According to procedural justice theory, increased police legitimacy then translates into greater cooperation with police and compliance with the law (Lind & Tyler, 1988; Mazerolle et al., 2013; Sunshine & Tyler, 2003; Tyler, 2005; Tyler & Blader, 2003; Tyler & Huo, 2002). Procedural justice has gained a great deal of attention from scholars, both in the U.S. and abroad (e.g. Bradford, 2014; Johnson et al., 2014; Mazerolle et al., 2013; Reisig et al., 2014; Sahin, 2014). Further, the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing (2015) and a range of law enforcement professionals have promoted procedurally just policing (Carignan, 2013; International Association of Chiefs of Police n.d.; Masterson, 2014; Serpas & Braden, 2016).

Although the basic propositions of procedural justice have been widely tested, scholars have argued that the theory remains underdeveloped with "insufficient attention to the conceptualization and the measurement properties of theoretically meaningful constructs" (Maguire & Johnson, 2010, p. 721; see also Bottoms & Tankebe, 2012; Gau, 2014; Tankebe, 2014). Questions remain regarding the definition of key concepts that have been variously defined in the procedural justice literature, namely *legitimacy* and *trust*. The following sections outline diverging perspectives on the underlying elements constituting these two concepts, as well as a discussion of why definitions of these concepts may vary by race.

What is Legitimacy?

The concept of legitimacy plays a central role in how fair and respectful treatment translates into its associated prosocial behavioral outcomes (primarily cooperation and compliance with police). Conceptualizations of police legitimacy today fall into three main categories. In early procedural justice research, legitimacy was conceptualized as "a property of an authority or institution that leads people to feel that that authority or institution is entitled to be deferred to and obeyed" (Sunshine & Tyler, 2003, p. 514). As applied to policing, legitimacy refers to citizens' willingness to obey law enforcement. Importantly, this willingness is freely given, without the need for coercive force by police or threat of punishment. In this vein, many contemporary studies of procedural justice in policing use this basic framework and conceptualize legitimacy as the degree to which citizens feel an *obligation to obey* police directives as well as their level of *trust* in police, measured either in combination or separately (Gau, 2014; Jonathan-Zamir & Weisburd, 2013; Kochel et al., 2013; Murphy & Cherney, 2011; Sunshine & Tyler, 2003; Tyler, 2006; Tyler & Huo, 2002).[1] Although obligation to obey and trust are common conceptualizations of legitimacy, Reisig et al. (2014) found that only trust in police, not obligation to obey, significantly predicted cooperation with police and compliance with the law.

The idea of legitimacy stems from an older body of literature, however. Prior to its adoption in criminal justice, legitimacy played a key role in theorizing within political science, where it refers to authorities' right to govern at the state level and claim power over

[1] For example, Sunshine and Tyler's survey of New York City residents asked people the extent to which they agreed with the statement "You should accept the decisions made by police, even if you think they are wrong" (p. 543) and "I have confidence that the NYPD can do its job well" (p. 543). Some variations exist on this basic measurement of legitimacy, such as Tyler and Fagan's (2008) addition of identification with the police or cynicism about the law (Sunshine & Tyler, 2003; Tyler & Huo, 2002).

citizens (Weber, 1978). Key scholars in this area include Beetham (1991) and Coicaud (1997), who consider the legality of authorities' actions, shared values between authorities and citizens, and citizens' consent to be governed to be precursors of legitimacy.

Some recent empirical research in criminal justice has shifted toward this political science-based notion of legitimacy (Hough et al., 2013; Jackson et al., 2012; Jackson et al., 2014). For instance, Jackson et al. (2014) measured legitimacy via citizens' perceptions of the degree to which police act in accordance with the law, their shared sense of right and wrong with the police, and their consent to submit to the authority of police (p. 141). Similar tripartite conceptualizations of legitimacy can be found in other European-based work (Hough et al., 2013; Jackson et al., 2012).

Finally, Bottoms and Tankebe (2012) also draw from Weber (1978), Beetham (1991), and Coicaud (1997) to propose a third model of legitimacy. In contrast to Tyler's work, the authors argue that legitimacy and obligation to obey are "… conceptually distinct, conflating them can only obstruct efforts to understand both concepts" (p. 106). The authors argue that legitimacy is more accurately understood as the right of an authority to wield power, which is itself fostered by four elements: 1) police lawfulness – whether the police follow the law, 2) procedural fairness – fair and respectful treatment by police, 3) distributive fairness – fairness in outcomes, and 4) police effectiveness – the degree to which police keep citizens safe. This model is a departure from previous theorizing, in part because procedural justice is considered to be a component of legitimacy, rather than a precursor, as in Tyler's and Jackson et al.'s models.[2] Importantly, Bottoms and Tankebe (2012) do not expect that these elements are equally weighted across groups and contexts, which introduced the possibility of variation in conceptualization. Further, Bottoms and Tankebe (2017) note that these four elements are not an exhaustive conceptualization of legitimacy.

When considered together, these diverging definitions of legitimacy, as well as the precursors of legitimacy, reflect a lack of consensus in how this central idea should be conceptualized and measured. As Johnson et al. (2014) noted, "The criminological and sociolegal literature on legitimacy and its antecedents and consequences are at a crossroad because the nomological network in which these concepts are enmeshed is not yet well understood" (p. 952). Adding to the lack of consensus, each set of authors generally finds support for their model using their respective data. The present study builds upon these different ways of understanding legitimacy and attempts to clarify its conceptualization. In doing so, however, we do not rely upon the idea of what theoretically *should* constitute legitimacy, and rather use a more concrete approach involving citizen-generated definitions of legitimacy.

What is Trust?

In addition to the diverging concepts associated with legitimacy, there is an ongoing scholarly debate on the conceptual relationship between trust and legitimacy. Some scholars use the terms interchangeably, while others view them as conceptually related,

[2] In this vein, it is important to note that a distinction must be drawn between the attitudes that *foster* legitimacy and the concepts that *comprise* legitimacy. While the former are actions or attitudes that cause citizens to feel that authorities are legitimate, the latter are the underlying concepts that constitute legitimacy itself. These must be carefully differentiated as conflating them adds to the confusion in the literature regarding the concepts associated with legitimacy.

but distinct (Hawdon, 2008; Kaina, 2008). Criminal justice scholars have distinguished trust and legitimacy in one of three ways. First, trust can be viewed as one of three component parts of legitimacy along with obligation and shared goals and values (Tyler & Jackson, 2014). Here, trust is a facet of—and often considered a precursor to—legitimacy (Hough et al. 2010), but they are not interchangeable. In Tyler's early procedural justice work, trust in police constitutes a key component of legitimacy together with obligation to obey police (Tyler, 2006; Tyler & Huo, 2002). Trust, within this conceptualization, is either institutional—the extent to which police are "honest and care for the members of the communities they police" (Tyler, 2005, p. 324)—or motive-based—the extent to which police have "benevolent and caring intentions when they deal with the public and make a good faith effort to respond to the needs and concerns of the public" (p. 325).

Second, legitimacy can be a precursor for trust (Kaina, 2008). Referring to institutional trust and institutional legitimacy only, Kaina (2008, p. 514) argues that legitimacy "stands for a *reflection* of norms" whereas trust "is related to *performance* in light of certain norms." She argues that institutional legitimacy can be a precursor to institutional trust, as one must first have preconceived expectations of behavior against which to judge the trustworthiness of the institution's agents. Within her framework, trust and legitimacy are analytically distinct, yet are both related to institutions only.

Third, trust may refer to individual-level views while legitimacy refers to views of the institution (Hawdon, 2008; Hough et al., 2013; Jackson & Gau, 2015; Jackson & Kuha, 2015). In this framework, trust is "believing that the police have the right intentions and are competent to do what they are tasked to do" (Hough et al., 2013, p. 333). Trust speaks to the goals and capabilities of police officers. Trust requires three things: "a trustor, a trustee, and some behavior or outcome that the trustor wishes from trustee" (Jackson & Gau, 2015, p. 5). Legitimacy, on the other hand, is "recognizing and justifying police power and authority" (Hough et al., 2013, p. 333). Here legitimacy refers to law enforcement's authority as an institution and is, again, a precursor to compliance.

In a separate body of social psychology and organization literature, trust has been conceptualized as the acceptance of vulnerability (Mayer et al., 1995; see Hamm et al., 2017 for a discussion). In this conceptualization, trust is a psychological state in which a person recognizes a potential for harm from another and accepts this possibility. Viewing trust in this way may be especially helpful in the context of policing, as the public is inherently vulnerable to the police and an acceptance of this vulnerability can help foster a positive relationship (Hamm et al., 2017). In short, there is no clear scholarly consensus on the conceptual relationship between trust and legitimacy, or what constitutes either trust or legitimacy.

The Role of Race

In recent years, the relationship between police and minority communities has been the subject of intense debate. Tensions between minorities and law enforcement have long existed, yet perceived excessive use of force incidents—including those against Michael Brown, Eric Garner, and Sandra Bland—have recently brought this issue to the forefront of public discourse (BBC, 2016; Levin et al., 2015; Santora & Baker, 2014). Amidst this environment of police-community tension, public confidence in police has declined dramatically, especially among minorities (Jones, 2015; Newport, 2016).

Broadly speaking, race impacts interactions with and perceptions of the police (Berthelot et al., 2018; Callanan & Rosenberger, 2011; Decker, 1981; Johnson et al., 2017; Lundman & Kaufman, 2003; McNeeley & Grothoff, 2016; Murphy & Cherney, 2011; Najdowski et al., 2015; Scaglion & Condon, 1980; Taylor et al., 2015; Tyler & Huo, 2002; Weitzer & Tuch, 2004, 2005). In the U.S., minorities are consistently more likely to hold negative views of police (Brunson, 2007; Hagan et al., 2006; Johnson et al., 2017; Tyler, 2005; Tyler & Huo, 2002; Weitzer & Tuch, 1999, 2005; Wortley et al., 1997). Additionally, minorities are systematically less confident than Whites that police will protect them from violent crime (McCarthy, 2014).[3] Further, the link between two legitimacy themes—fairness and effectiveness—differs by race (Taylor et al., 2015). Despite cross-racial differences in levels of support for police and willingness to cooperate with them, Sunshine and Tyler (2003) found that the antecedents to legitimacy and cooperation are consistent across ethnic groups. It has not yet been established, however, whether or not the components of legitimacy and trust are constant across racial groups.

Moreover, police actions do not have a uniform effect across racial groups. For instance, although incidents of police brutality result in negative perceptions of police across racial groups, the effects are stronger among Black citizens than among White citizens (Tuch & Weitzer, 1997). Additionally, memories of brutality events last longer for members of Black and Latino communities than they do for members of White communities (Tuch & Weitzer, 1997). More recently, in the aftermath of Michael Brown's death, Black residents of St. Louis County maintained consistently more negative views of police than non-Black residents (Kochel, 2015). Most research on perceptions of police focuses on variance between racial groups, yet demographic factors like class and neighborhood help explain within-race differences in views of police (Taylor et al., 2015; Weitzer, 1999, 2000; Wu et al., 2009).

Some research suggests that the procedural justice approach to policing does not uniformly increase trust in police and cooperation with law enforcement across racial and ethnic groups. In a study comparing perceptions of police among two immigrant communities—Indian-Australians and Vietnamese-Australians—and the general Australian population, Sargeant et al. (2014) found that the minority groups were less focused on procedural justice when making judgements about cooperation with police. Additionally, among Vietnamese-Australian respondents, police performance was a stronger predictor of trust in police than procedural justice. Similarly, in Ghana—a country rife with police brutality and corruption—Tankebe (2009) found that individuals focused more on police efficacy than procedurally-just interactions when deciding to cooperate with police. Both of these studies suggest that—at least in some contexts and across some populations—procedural justice does not have a uniform impact on views of police and willingness to cooperate with them. However, more recently in the U.S. context, Wolfe et al. (2016) concluded that the link between procedural justice and perceptions of police (obligation to obey and trust) did not significantly vary by demographic variables (including race). These contrasting findings may suggest that race differentially impacts views of police and police-citizen interaction across contexts and cultures.

[3] While racial differences in attitudes toward police are found in the vast majority of the literature, this relationship is not always present (Jesilow, Meyer, & Namazzi, 1995). This may suggest that attitudinal differences toward police across races are not as stark as generally assumed, or that variance in how these concepts are measured across studies accounts for some of the differences.

These studies suggest that, for some groups in society, factors outside procedural fairness have a large impact in determining perceptions of police. A possible explanation for these findings is that the fundamental conceptualizations of legitimacy and trust vary by group. If these ideas are not uniformly conceptualized across ethnic or racial groups, this could, in turn, translate into different predictors of compliance with police.

Researchers agree that, broadly speaking, minorities view police as less legitimate and less trustworthy (Callanan & Rosenberger, 2011; Murphy & Cherney, 2011; Tyler & Huo, 2002; Weitzer & Tuch, 2004, 2005). However, as Sargeant et al. (2014) and Tankebe (2009) show, some minority groups may emphasize different aspects of police-citizen encounters when forming their impressions. As a result, researchers may not be measuring legitimacy and trust as some groups conceive it. Racially-based differences in perceptions of police legitimacy and trust may be rooted—at least in part—in how these concepts are measured.

The Present Study

We build on the scholarly debate regarding the conceptualization of legitimacy and trust by asking members of the public how they define these terms. Our overarching interest is in how the public conceptualizes police legitimacy and trust, how public conceptualizations relate to academic debate on these terms, and how those conceptualizations differ both between and within racial groups.

This work is exploratory, though it is rooted in differences found in some theoretically driven empirical work. Drawing from psychology research, cognitive-experiential self-theory posits a dual-process model whereby people process information through two separate routes: an analytical-rational route that relies on slow, deliberate, and logical processing and an intuitive-experiential route that relies on fast, automatic, and emotional processing (Epstein, 1991; Epstein et al., 1996). Reliance on the analytical-rational route is strongly associated with both educational advancement (Norris & Epstein, 2011) and subject-matter expertise (Thoma et al., 2015). Accordingly, we expect that procedural justice scholars would rely to a greater extent on the analytical-rational route to conceptualize legitimacy and trust. In contrast, members of the public should be more likely to rely on the intuitive-experiential route when asked to define these terms. From this, we expect that public conceptualizations of legitimacy and trust will more commonly rely on emotionally salient functions of police such as providing protection or behaving in a lawful, honest, or respectful manner. Drawing from cross-racial procedural justice research discussed above, we expect that racial minorities will be more focused on outcomes than processes when defining legitimacy and trust.

Methodology

Sample

We are interested in perceptions of legitimacy and trust in police among White, Black, and Hispanic adults in the U.S. We hired Qualtrics, an online survey research firm, to provide a sample of U.S. residents who meet these criteria. Qualtrics maintains a large

panel of potential participants who have agreed to receive email invitations to complete surveys for market research, academic studies, and political polls. Qualtrics keeps some basic demographic data on their panelists, which improves targeting of requests to participate in a survey. Using this targeting capability, non-U.S. residents or those whose primary racial identification is not White, Black, or Hispanic were not invited to participate in our study. To improve generalizability of results, we wanted three samples—one for each racial group—that were approximately representative of each population in the U.S. To create samples that were approximately representative of each racial group, we set a quota within each sample for each of five key demographic factors—gender, age, education, income, and region—using U.S. Census data estimates from 2014. We then asked screener questions for these variables before a potential participant could qualify for our study. For example, since roughly 51% of White people in the U.S. are women or roughly 35% of Black adults in the U.S. are between 18 and 34, our target was for women to comprise roughly 51% of the White sample and for roughly 35% of the Black sample to be between 18 and 34. Continuing with this example, once these quotas were reached, White women or Black respondents between 18 and 34 would no longer qualify to participate. The result of this process was a sample that approximates the demographic composition of the U.S. Informed consent was obtained from all participants included in the study.

Data for our project were collected between February and April, 2016. Qualtrics emailed potential participants who met our inclusion with a link to our survey. In total, 2293 people qualified to take our survey and the vast majority (82.9%) completed it.[4] The data are comprised of 1900 completed surveys with three samples: White respondents ($N = 650$), Black respondents ($N = 624$), and Hispanic respondents ($N = 626$). Table 1 shows demographics by race in both our sample and the general population.

Materials

Participation in the study took 10–15 minutes in a single, online session. Participants answered questions about their perceptions of what legitimacy and trust in law enforcement mean. Specifically, we asked participants to provide responses to two open-ended questions: "When thinking about the police, what does 'legitimacy' mean to you?" and "When thinking about the police, what does 'trust' mean to you?" We also asked one close-ended question: "When thinking about the police, do 'legitimacy' and 'trust' mean the same thing?" To control for order effects bias, the question order was randomized. At the end of the survey, participants answered demographic questions.

Procedure

To systematically examine participants' self-reported definitions of legitimacy and trust, we coded each qualitative response.[5] Responses consistently touched on a few key

[4] Each completed survey was reviewed to ensure that the participant was not straight-lining answers or providing nonsense responses. Data for participants who did this were discarded and replaced ($N = 111$; 5.5%).

[5] The survey was conducted in English. While participants could respond to open-ended questions in any language, only one responded in another language. As described in more detail below, most responses were merely a few words, which does not lend itself to qualitative analyses. Rather, we coded the responses into categories to analyze quantitatively.

components of both legitimacy and trust. To create coding classifications from participant responses, we took a random sample of responses ($N = 100$; 5.3%) and hired an undergraduate research assistant who was unfamiliar with the literature on legitimacy and trust to generate a list of categories into which responses fell.[6] Participants spontaneously described legitimacy as any combination of seven elements: following the law, acting in a fair manner, providing protection, behaving honestly, having the right to govern, behaving morally, and being effective.[7] Participants spontaneously described trust as any combination of eight elements, some of which overlap with legitimacy: following the law, acting in a fair manner, providing protection, behaving honestly, behaving morally, being effective, inspiring confidence, and being respectful.[8] For both legitimacy and trust, some self-generated conceptualizations— following the law or behaving fairly, honestly, morally, or respectfully—are clearly normative meaning that the focus is on the relational aspects of policing. Other conceptualizations—providing protection and being effective—are clearly instrumental as they focus on the outcomes of policing. While confidence could refer to either confidence in outcome or confidence in treatment, the overwhelming majority of participants who defined trust as confidence noted that this was confidence in outcome.[9] For both legitimacy and trust, we also included a "not sure" category and an "other" category[10] for respondents who were not sure how to define these concepts or who provided a definition that did not fall into one of the established categories. Table 2 shows prototypical responses for each of the codes.

Open-ended responses on the definition of legitimacy ranged from 1 to 63 words in length ($M = 6.19$; $SD = 4.60$; $Mdn = 5$). On the shorter end, frequent one-word responses included "lawfulness," "honestly," and "protection." Longer answers tended to convey the same themes, for example, "When thinking about the police 'legitimacy' to me means 'Is the officer here to protect & serve or is the officer here to uphold the law.' The badge means nothing without the consent of the People (sic)." The most common responses were somewhere in between these extremes in length, for example: "follow the law," "to be honest," "trusting that their actions and decisions are done and made with the highest level of good and fair judgement," and "that they do things correctly and follow procedures and rules, they are also honest."

Open-ended responses on the definition of trust ranged from 1 to 41 words in length ($M = 7.59$; $SD = 5.16$; $Mdn = 6$). Frequent one-word responses included "confidence," "respectful," and "competent." Longer responses again provided more nuance but

[6] When coding the remaining responses, we did not identify any additional categories that were not identified from this original subsample. Of note, one RA created the codes from a subsample of responses and a second RA (and co-author) coded all responses as described below.

[7] The tetrachoric correlations among these outcome variables ranges from −0.17 to 0.17.

[8] The tetrachoric correlations among these outcome variables ranges from −0.17 to 0.32.

[9] Of the 479 participants who defined trust as confidence, 88.7% indicated that they meant confidence in outcome only while 0.8% indicated confidence in both treatment and outcome. Another 10.4% simply said "confidence" so it is not possible to discern whether they were referring to confidence in outcome, treatment, or both. No participants indicated that they meant confidence in treatment only.

[10] For legitimacy, 9.4% of the responses were coded as "other." The most prevalent response ($N = 35$) was a circular definition of "being legitimate" followed by "training" ($N = 12$). For trust, 14.4% of responses were coded as "other." Again, the most prevalent response within the "other' category ($N = 131$) was a circular definition of either "trustworthy" or "not trustworthy." Further, 7.8% of people indicated that they did not know how to define the term legitimacy, while 0.9% participants indicated that they did not know how to define the term trust. The lack of other consistent conceptualization provides further confidence that our coding scheme is not missing meaningful elements.

Table 1 Demographics Variables by Race in our Sample v. the U.S. Population

Variable	White		Black		Hispanic	
	Our Sample	US Pop.	Our Sample	US Pop.	Our Sample	US Pop.
Gender: Male	49%	49%	42%	48%	43%	48%
Gender: Female	51%	51%	58%	52%	57%	52%
Age: 18–34	26%	26%	36%	35%	44%	35%
Age: 35–54	33%	33%	39%	36%	39%	36%
Age: 55+	41%	41%	26%	29%	16%	29%
Education: No college	37%	37%	42%	48%	53%	48%
Education: Some college	63%	63%	58%	52%	48%	52%
Income: Less than $49,999	42%	42%	61%	64%	57%	64%
Income: $50,000 or more	58%	58%	39%	36%	42%	36%
Region: Northeast	20%	19%	12%	10%	13%	10%
Region: Midwest	26%	27%	14%	12%	9%	12%
Region: South	36%	35%	41%	36%	32%	36%
Region: West	19%	19%	31%	42%	46%	42%

expressed the same themes as short responses, for example: "it means to be able to call the police and get respect and an officer who listens to the problem and trys (sic) to resolve it to the best of his ability to satisfy everyone involved." The most common

Table 2 Prototypical Responses Indicative of Each Component of Legitimacy and Trust

When thinking about the police, what does "legitimacy" mean to you?	
Follows the Law	that its legal; that they will follow the law/rules; will obey the law
Honesty	true/truth and honest; honesty/honest; real truthful
Fairness	being fair; consistent; equality and fairness; treat all the same
Right to Govern	authority from the people; authority/right to enforce the law
Moral	do the right thing; doing what is morally right
Effective	doing your job right; know what they're doing; efficient and reliable
Protection	protecting and serving; helping
When thinking about the police, what does "trust" mean to you?	
Confidence	you can rely on them; dependable; faith in them; can count on them
Protection	feeling safe; protect and serve; they will help me
Moral	do the right thing; integrity and honor; loyalty
Fairness	being fair; equal treatment
Follow the Law	follow/obey the law; uphold the law; enforce the law
Effective	they do their jobs; there to help
Honest	honesty/honest; truthful; not lying
Respectful	mutual respect; shows respect

responses provided similar descriptions, for example: "confidence in someone," "being able to trust that the actions of an officer will always be fair and done in regards to protecting the individual and community," "do the right thing," and "they are there for you when you need them and you can rely on them to uphold the law and protect you."

Next, two of the authors—one of whom was a second undergraduate research assistant we hired and was then unfamiliar with the literature on legitimacy and trust—separately coded the responses on each of the seven elements representing respondents' self-generated definitions of legitimacy and the eight elements reflecting respondents' self-generated definitions of trust. The "not sure" and "other" categories for both legitimacy and trust were also coded. Each variable was coded as yes or no. Interrater reliability for response coding ($k = 0.93$) was considered excellent and above the commonly held threshold of 0.7 (Landis and Koch, 1977). For additional confidence in our coding, however, we discussed all coding discrepancies and agreed upon a final code for each participant on each variable.

We created a total of 16 binary dependent variables for analyses: eight conceptualizations of *legitimacy* and eight conceptualizations of *trust*.[11] Categories are non-mutually exclusive; participants sometimes indicated that there were multiple elements to legitimacy or trust. While most responses were coded into a single category, some were coded into up to four categories for both legitimacy ($M = 0.99$; $SD = 0.74$) and trust ($M = 1.14$; $SD = 0.74$) when multiple themes were mentioned—for example "follow the law and is honest." Finally, we measured whether respondents considered legitimacy and trust to be synonymous by asking them: "When thinking about the police, do 'legitimacy' and 'trust' mean the same thing?" This item was measured by closed-response with three options: yes (1), no (2), or unsure (3).

We are interested in how perceptions of *legitimacy* and *trust* in police vary both between and within racial groups. Thus, we created a binary variable for each racial group in the overall sample: White, Black, and Hispanic. The literature shows that other demographic factors such as gender, age, education, and income also impact experience with and perceptions of law enforcement (Hinds, 2009; McNeeley & Grothoff, 2016; Tyler et al., 2014; Weitzer & Tuch, 1999). We created a binary variable for male participants. Age, education, and income are measured ordinally.

Results

The motivating questions for this project are: How does the public conceptualize legitimacy and trust in police? How do public conceptualizations of legitimacy and trust in police relate to the academic debate on these terms? And, how do these views differ both between and within racial groups? We first describe how citizens define both legitimacy and trust, and compare those definitions to academic conceptualizations of these terms. We then examine between-race differences in how citizens define legitimacy and trust and whether these terms are viewed synonymously or not. Finally, we

[11] We coded 19 total conceptualizations—9 for legitimacy and 10 for trust when including the "other" and "not sure" categories. Given the heterogeneity of "other" responses for both legitimacy and trust and the low frequency of "not sure" for trust, these were excluded from analyses as meaningful dependent variables. We do examine predictors of "not sure" responses for legitimacy given their prevalence.

examine how other demographics impact definitions of legitimacy and trust within each sample and compare results across the racial groups.

How does the Public Conceptualize Legitimacy and Trust in Police?

We first summarize respondents' self-generated conceptualizations of both legitimacy and trust in police, as shown in Table 3. The first column shows the overall frequencies of each self-generated conceptualization of both legitimacy and trust and whether or not people think the terms are synonymous. The next three columns break down these frequencies by racial group, which is discussed in more detail below. Respondents most commonly defined legitimacy as police lawfulness, followed by police honesty, fairness, the right to govern, effectiveness, moral behavior, and providing protection. Respondents most commonly defined trust as confidence in police, followed by police providing protection, moral behavior, fairness, lawful behavior, effectiveness, honesty, and respectful behavior. Further, approximately half of the sample indicated that

Table 3 How People Define Legitimacy and Trust Overall and Broken Down by Racial Group

Variable	Overall	White	Black	Hispanic
When thinking about the police, what does "legitimacy" mean to you?				
Follows the Law	36.6%	41.7%	**35.1%**	**32.8%**
Honesty	19.4%	18.3%	16.0%	**23.8%***
Fairness	10.7%	13.5%	11.5%	**7.0%***
Right to Govern	10.5%	11.2%	11.1%	9.3%
Moral	8.5%	10.0%	8.0%	7.4%
Effective	8.8%	9.9%	6.9%	9.7%
Protection	4.8%	3.9%	5.0%	5.6%
When thinking about the police, what does "trust" mean to you?				
Confidence	25.2%	22.0%	25.1%	**28.6%**
Protection	20.4%	22.0%	**16.0%**	23.2%*
Moral	16.8%	20.5%	**14.7%**	**15.2%**
Fairness	12.5%	13.4%	13.3%	10.7%
Follow the Law	11.8%	13.4%	12.0%	10.1%
Effective	10.5%	13.5%	**9.3%**	**8.5%**
Honest	10.0%	10.3%	9.6%	9.9%
Respectful	6.6%	8.0%	7.0%	4.8%
Legitimacy & Trust Mean the Same Thing				
Yes	29.2%	33.4%	**25.3%**	28.8%
No	48.2%	45.4%	**54.8%**	44.6%*
Unsure	22.6%	21.2%	19.9%	26.7%*

Bold font indicates that the percentage for that variable and racial group is significantly different from the White sample

*indicates that the percentage for that variable and racial group is significantly different from the Black sample

legitimacy and trust do not mean the same thing, while roughly a quarter each thought the terms are synonymous and are unsure.

Six of the constructs—lawfulness, honesty, fairness, moral behavior, effectiveness, and protection—appear for both legitimacy and trust. We used tetrachoric correlations to examine the degree of overlap in participants' own descriptions of legitimacy and trust. As expected, people who indicated that legitimacy and trust are synonymous had significant overlap in their definitions of both terms.[12] In contrast, and also as expected, people who indicated that legitimacy and trust are distinct had little overlap in their definitions of both terms.[13] People who indicated that they were not sure if legitimacy and trust were synonymous had overlap in some of their definitions of these terms but not others.[14]

Differences between Participant and Academic Definitions of Legitimacy and Trust

We next examined how public conceptualization of legitimacy and trust in police relates to the academic perspective. Academics conceptualize legitimacy as a combination of: obligation to obey, trust in police, police lawfulness, shared values between police and citizens, citizens' consent to be governed, procedural fairness, distributive fairness, and police effectiveness (Beetham, 1991; Bottoms & Tankebe, 2012; Jackson et al., 2014; Sunshine & Tyler, 2003). While scholars conceptualize legitimacy and trust using slow, rational, deliberative processing about what legitimacy means, we expected that members of the public rely on intuitive processing to define legitimacy and trust in police. Specifically, we expected that public conceptualizations would rely on emotionally salient functions of police such as providing protection, doing their job effectively, and behaving in a lawful, honest, and fair manner. Police lawfulness was the only component that explicitly appears frequently in both academic and public definitions of legitimacy. As expected, respondents did not specifically identify obligation to obey, trust, or shared values between police and citizens as defining legitimacy despite their prevalence in academic literature. The remaining four components of academic conceptualizations of legitimacy appeared infrequently in citizen-driven definitions: fairness, right to govern, moral behavior, and effectiveness. Additionally, citizens included two definitions of legitimacy that do not appear in academic conceptualizations—police honesty and providing protection.[15] These conceptualizations are actions that *foster* legitimacy rather than elements that *comprise* legitimacy—a distinction that the public reasonably does not make but scholars do. Taken together, the disconnect between some academic versus citizen definitions may further reflect

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[12] The tetrachoric correlation coefficients and *p*-values for each component is as follows: lawfulness (*rho* = .20; $p = 0.030$), honesty (*rho* = .23; $p = 0.014$), fairness (*rho* = .34; $p < 0.001$), moral behavior (*rho* = .20; $p = .038$), effectiveness (*rho* = .24; $p = 0.022$), and protection (*rho* = .40; $p < .001$).

[13] The tetrachoric correlation coefficients and *p*-values for each component is as follows: lawfulness (*rho* = .14; $p = 0.044$), honesty (*rho* = .10; $p = 0.221$), fairness (*rho* = .08; $p = 0.327$), moral behavior (*rho* = −.11; $p = .369$), effectiveness (*rho* = .11; $p = 0.280$), and protection (*rho* = .14; $p = .172$).

[14] The tetrachoric correlation coefficients and *p*-values for each component is as follows: lawfulness (*rho* = .26; $p = 0.098$), honesty (*rho* = .33; $p = 0.003$), fairness (*rho* = .40; $p = 0.001$), moral behavior (*rho* = .39; $p = .013$), effectiveness (*rho* = .26; $p = 0.046$), and protection (*rho* = .01; $p = 1.00$).

[15] Providing protection could be interpreted as a form of police effectiveness, which would line up with Bottoms and Tankebe's conceptualization of legitimacy. Even if these two definitions were combined, still less than one quarter of the sample spontaneously defined legitimacy as either effectiveness or protection.

that scholars tend to rely on analytical-rational processing whereas members of the public rely more on intuitive-experiential processing when thinking about police legitimacy.

Across the public, trust was most commonly defined as confidence in police and police providing protection—both of which suggest vulnerability to police. Citizens less commonly defined trust in police as: moral behavior, fairness, lawful behavior, effectiveness, honesty, and respectful behavior. Each of these definitions may also convey vulnerability to police. In sum, citizen-driven definitions of legitimacy and trust align with some academic conceptions but not others, drawing on the difference between the cognitive applications of the concepts.

Between-Race differences in Conceptualizing Legitimacy and Trust

We next used one-way ANOVAs with Tukey HSD post-hoc estimation to test differences in self-generated descriptions of legitimacy and trust across racial groups, and to test whether or not these terms were viewed as synonymous. Table 3 shows that respondents' self-generated conceptualizations of legitimacy and trust differed across racial groups. Based on prior research, we expected that minorities would focus more on outcome than on process when thinking about legitimacy and trust (Sargeant et al., 2014; Tankebe, 2009). Overall, we see mixed support for this. Supporting this expectation, White participants were more likely to equate legitimacy with police following the law than either Black ($p = .038$) or Hispanic ($p = .003$) participants. Similarly, White participants were more likely to view trust as being defined by police behaving morally relative to both Black ($p = .018$) and Hispanic ($p = .031$) participants. Contradicting this expectation, however, White respondents were more likely to think of efficacy when defining trust in police as compared to both Black ($p = .036$) and Hispanic ($p = .009$) respondents.

Finally, some conceptualizations of legitimacy and trust differ between groups in ways that partially support and partially contradict our expectation. Specifically, Hispanic respondents were more likely than both White ($p = .034$) and Black ($p = .001$) respondents to associate legitimacy with honesty and were less likely than both White ($p = .001$) and Black ($p = .027$) respondents to view legitimacy as police fairness. Hispanic participants were more likely than White participants to define trust as confidence in police ($p = .018$). Black respondents were less likely than White ($p = .022$) or Hispanic ($p = .005$) respondents to view trust as equivalent to police providing protection. Across the sample, other conceptualizations of legitimacy and trust did not differ across racial groups.

While approximately half of the overall sample indicated that legitimacy and trust do not mean the same thing, this was not consistent across racial groups. White people were more likely than Black people ($p = .004$) to say these terms were the same. Black people were more likely than both White ($p = .002$) and Hispanic ($p = .001$) people to state that these terms are different. Hispanics were more likely than Blacks to indicate that they were not sure whether these terms are synonymous or distinct ($p = .011$). Taken together this suggests cross-racial variation in how people conceptualize legitimacy and trust. Perhaps, since White people tend to view police more positively, they also tend to have or need less nuanced views of terms related to police. Relatedly, overpolicing of the Black population may explain why Black people tend to have more

nuanced views of legitimacy and trust in police due to more regular direct and vicarious contact with law enforcement (Weitzer & Tuch, 2004).

Within-Race differences in Conceptualizing Legitimacy and Trust

As described above, there are between-race differences in how people spontaneously conceptualize both legitimacy and trust. To probe within-race differences, we conducted exploratory analyses by estimating a series of logistic regression models to examine how other demographics—gender, age, education, and income—influence self-generated definitions of legitimacy and trust within each racial group.[16] Given the dearth of within-race theorizing, we do not have clear expectations. Table 4 presents results of these models where self-generated definitions of legitimacy were the outcome variables and models were estimated separately for each racial group. Across races, older respondents were less likely to define legitimacy as effectiveness. Otherwise, age did not have a consistent impact on how people conceptualize legitimacy. Similarly, both gender and education largely had no statistically significant impact on how people conceptualize legitimacy and income had no statistically significant impact at all. In short, while some other demographic factors influence citizen-driven definitions of legitimacy, there are not clear patterns that emerge from our exploratory analyses.

We next conducted exploratory analyses to examine within-race differences in how people define trust, as shown on Table 5. Here we took the same approach as in Table 4 except that the outcome variables were self-generated definitions of trust. We then estimated models to explore how participant demographics influence definitions of trust within each racial group. Similar to the exploratory analyses for within-race conceptualization of legitimacy, here we see that some demographic factors influence some citizen-driven definitions. Again, however, there are no clear, discernable patterns that emerge from these exploratory analyses.

Discussion

This project examines how members of the public conceptualize legitimacy and trust in police and compares these views to the academic theoretical debate on this issue. We also focus on how these conceptualizations differ by race and other demographics, specifically gender, age, education, and income. Broadly speaking, our results show that members of the public define legitimacy and trust in ways that have both similarities to and differences from academic conceptualizations. In part, the differences may arise from academics relying more on analytical-rational processing whereas the public appear to rely more on intuitive-experiential processing to define these terms (Epstein, 1991; Epstein et al., 1996). Additionally, race and other demographic factors condition how people define legitimacy and trust in police.

Building on Sargeant et al.'s (2014) and Bottoms and Tankebe's (2012) findings that minority groups emphasize different aspects of police-citizen relationships, our results

[16] The correlations among these demographic variables range from −0.12 to 0.38. We also examined the interactions between demographic factors though these interaction terms did not produce significant or consistent results and thus are not reported in text.

Table 4 How Demographic Factors Relate to Self-Generated Definitions of Legitimacy by Racial Group

	Follow the Law			**Honesty**			**Right to Govern**			**Fairness**		
Race	W	B	H	W	B	H	W	B	H	W	B	H
Male	1.15 (0.19)	0.76 (0.13)	0.89 (0.16)	0.92 (0.20)	1.08 (0.24)	1.00 (0.20)	1.25 (0.33)	**1.82*** **(0.48)**	1.36 (0.38)	0.78 (0.19)	0.75 (0.20)	0.88 (0.32)
Age	1.12 (0.06)	**1.12*** **(0.06)**	1.01 (0.07)	0.94 (0.06)	0.96 (0.07)	1.06 (0.07)	1.00 (0.09)	**1.20*** **(0.10)**	1.10 (0.10)	0.91 (0.07)	0.88 (0.07)	0.92 (0.11)
Edu.	**1.23*** **(0.10)**	1.14 (0.10)	1.13 (0.10)	0.84† (0.08)	1.04 (0.12)	1.04 (0.09)	1.24 (0.18)	**1.41**** **(0.18)**	**1.28*** **(0.16)**	0.82† (0.09)	1.06 (0.14)	**1.53*** **(0.24)**
Income	0.96 (0.06)	0.91 (0.07)	1.11 (0.08)	0.96 (0.08)	1.02 (0.11)	0.96 (0.08)	1.05 (0.12)	1.17 (0.13)	1.11 (0.12)	1.13 (0.10)	0.89 (0.10)	0.79 (0.12)
n	650	624	626	650	624	626	650	624	626	650	624	626
	Moral			**Effective**			**Protection**			**Don't Know**		
Race	W	B	H	W	B	H	W	B	H	W	B	H
Male	0.98 (0.27)	0.97 (0.30)	1.45 (0.46)	1.37 (0.39)	1.04 (0.34)	1.34 (0.37)	1.66 (0.75)	1.08 (0.43)	0.94 (0.32)	**0.31**** **(0.12)**	0.56 (0.21)	**0.44*** **(0.14)**
Age	1.03 (0.09)	0.99 (0.09)	0.95 (0.10)	**0.80*** **(0.07)**	**0.65***** **(0.08)**	**0.76**** **(0.07)**	0.88 (0.12)	1.00 (0.13)	1.11 (0.13)	1.08 (0.07)	1.12 (0.13)	0.94 (0.08)
Edu.	1.24 (0.17)	1.16 (0.18)	0.79 (0.13)	1.03 (0.16)	0.86 (0.14)	0.88 (0.12)	0.75 (0.17)	0.80 (0.16)	1.02 (0.16)	0.77 (0.13)	0.55 (0.14)	0.77† (0.12)
Income	1.20 (0.13)	1.00 (0.13)	1.18 (0.15)	1.00 (0.11)	0.98 (0.14)	1.15 (0.15)	0.92 (0.15)	1.08 (0.18)	0.94 (0.14)	0.92 (0.11)	0.99 (0.19)	0.75 (0.10s)
n	650	624	626	650	624	626	650	624	626	650	624	626

Logistic regression models. Constants not reported

Odd ratios are presented with robust standard errors in parentheses. Significant results in bold

† $p < 0.10$. * $p < 0.05$. **p < 0 .01. *** $p < 0.001$

Table 5 *How Demographic Factors Relate to Self-Generated Definitions of Trust by Racial Group*

	Confidence			**Protection**			**Moral**			**Fairness**		
Race	W	B	H	W	B	H	W	B	H	W	B	H
Male	**0.66* (0.13)**	1.02 (0.19)	0.84 (0.16)	0.73 (0.15)	0.73 (0.17)	0.86 (0.17)	1.07 (0.22)	0.90 (0.21)	**1.76* (0.42)**	0.95 (0.22)	**0.56* (0.14)**	0.71 (0.20)
Age	1.00 (0.06)	0.94 (0.06)	1.02 (0.07)	**0.74*** (0.05)**	0.89 (0.06)	**0.83** (0.06)**	1.12† (0.08)	**1.25** (0.10)**	1.11 (0.08)	1.08 (0.10)	1.16† (0.09)	1.11 (0.11)
Education	0.97 (0.09)	0.99 (0.10)	0.86† (0.08)	0.88 (0.09)	0.84 (0.10)	0.90 (0.08)	**1.22* (0.12)**	1.17 (0.13)	**1.35** (0.15)**	1.05 (0.13)	1.28† (0.17)	1.16 (0.14)
Income	0.91 (0.07)	0.94 (0.08)	1.06 (0.08)	**1.30** (0.11)**	1.02 (0.10)	1.04 (0.09)	0.99 (0.08)	1.15 (0.11)	0.98 (0.09)	1.19† (0.11)	1.19† (0.13)	1.03 (0.14)
n	650	624	626	650	624	626	650	624	626	650	624	626
	Honest			**Effective**			**Follow the Law**			**Respectful**		
Race	W	B	H	W	B	H	W	B	H	W	B	H
Male	1.23 (0.34)	0.90 (0.26)	0.98 (0.27)	1.14 (0.27)	0.89 (0.26)	0.88 (0.27)	1.31 (0.33)	0.77 (0.20)	0.89 (0.24)	**2.27* (0.77)**	0.97 (0.30)	1.24 (0.46)
Age	1.00 (0.08)	1.00 (0.08)	0.96 (0.09)	0.89 (0.07)	0.94 (0.08)	**0.77* (0.08)**	0.94 (0.08)	1.07 (0.09)	1.06 (0.09)	0.94 (0.09)	1.15 (0.11)	1.00 (0.11)
Education	0.96 (0.11)	1.21 (0.16)	**1.25* (0.13)**	**0.77* (0.09)**	1.13 (0.14)	0.98 (0.16)	1.01 (0.13)	1.10 (0.14)	1.01 (0.13)	1.02 (0.15)	1.20 (0.20)	0.89 (0.17)
Income	**0.80* (0.09)**	1.09 (0.12)	1.05 (0.11)	1.14 (0.11)	0.81† (0.10)	0.98 (0.13)	0.94 (0.09)	0.89 (0.09)	1.00 (0.12)	0.93 (0.11)	1.23 (0.16)	1.30† (0.20)
n	650	624	626	650	624	626	650	624	626	650	624	626

Logistic regression models. Constants not reported

Odd ratios are presented with robust standard errors in parentheses. Significant results in bold

$^{\dagger}p < 0.10$. $^{*}p < 0.05$. **p < 0 .01. $^{***}p < 0.001$

show similarities and differences in citizen-driven conceptualizations of both legitimacy and trust both between and within racial groups. Overall, citizen-driven definitions of legitimacy identify each of the elements that Bottoms and Tankebe (2012) outline: police lawfulness, fairness (procedural and distributive), and police effectiveness. Supporting Bottoms and Tankebe (2017), this is not an exhaustive list of conceptualizations of legitimacy according to the public. Further, and also supporting Bottoms and Tankebe (2012), results demonstrate that these components are not equally important across groups. While our exploratory results support Bottoms and Tankebe's (2012, 2017) model, the findings warrant more investigation before drawing conclusions about the most appropriate model of police legitimacy. Partially supporting both Sargeant et al. (2014) and Bottoms and Tankebe (2012), we found that minorities are more focused on outcome than on process when thinking about police legitimacy. Perhaps White people focus more on the legality of police actions because they assume that police will treat them well. Looking across the samples, other demographic factors influenced definitions of legitimacy for Black and Hispanic respondents more than White respondents. This may suggest that minorities have more nuanced views of police legitimacy because it is an issue more salient to their communities due to the greater risk of mistreatment by law enforcement and greater direct and vicarious contact with officers (Weitzer & Tuch, 2004).

While not explicitly stated in citizen-driven definitions of trust, many of the conceptualizations can reasonably be interpreted as vulnerability, which aligns with academic research on the subject (Hamm et al., 2017). Jackson and Gau (2015, p.3) define trust as "individual officers will (and do) do things that they are tasked to do." This could reasonably be interpreted that trust means the police protect the public, inspire public confidence, behave fairly, follow the law, and are effective—together, this partially supports and partially contradicts prior researchers (Bottoms & Tankebe, 2012; Sargeant et al., 2014). Members of the public most commonly defined trust in police as having confidence in them. Yet this is not a core element in academic conceptualizations of the term. When defining trust, our findings suggest that minorities are less focused on police behaving morally or effectively. Since fear of crime is higher among minorities in general, perhaps there is less confidence that police can effectively reduce crime in these communities (Davis, 2016). Additionally, Black respondents were less likely to define trust as police providing protection to them, which may be because they do not expect protection from law enforcement. Looking across the samples, other demographic factors influenced definitions of trust for White and Hispanic respondents more than Black respondents. In Black communities, it is more common to have regular, intergenerational conversation about police conduct where demographics like age, education, or income do not necessarily protect a person from mistreatment (Lopez, 2016). This may explain why Black participants had more uniform views of trust in police whereas members of White and Hispanic communities have more varied understandings of trust in law enforcement.

There are two main take-aways from our exploratory results. First, there are both similarities and differences between citizen-driven definitions and academic measures of legitimacy and trust. Drawing on cognitive-experiential self-theory, results suggest that members of the public may rely more on the intuitive-experiential route to define legitimacy and trust whereas scholars rely more on the analytical-rational route. If this is the case, scholarly attempts to measure legitimacy and trust may not fully capture public conceptualizations of these terms. Second, members of the public conceptualize

legitimacy and trust in different ways in accordance with their demographic group. Looking at variation in definitions within races, two key findings emerge that may help to explain inconsistency in prior research. First, our results demonstrate that, aside from race, other demographic factors also influence how citizens perceive legitimacy and trust. Second, these influences are inconsistent across races. In short, while the literature on procedural justice has traditionally assumed stability in these concepts across populations, our results here show variance both between and within racial groups.

Future Research and Limitations

Future research should delve further into the differences we have identified in order to improve theorizing in procedural justice. To date, research has largely assumed that legitimacy and trust hold the same meaning across segments of the population. Yet, our results show that is not the case. In the ongoing scholarly debate on legitimacy and trust, our results suggest a few theoretical implications for police legitimacy research. First, perhaps the partial differences between scholarly and public definitions is because academics are not fully measuring what they intend to or perhaps it is because scholars and the public use different cognitive routes to process and describe the same terms or similar concepts. Further theorizing and measurement should test these alternative possibilities. Second, since subsets of the population interpret legitimacy and trust differently, surveys measuring these concepts may not fully tap into these concepts as the public, or segments of the public, conceive of them. The disparity between these perspectives on legitimacy and trust may explain, in part, the inconsistent conceptualizations in academic scholarship. Additional research in this area may illuminate the most accurate model of procedural justice.

Of course, this work is not without its limitations, which we outline here and suggest avenues for future research to address. The benefit of an online, national sample is that researchers are able to survey a highly diverse and approximately representative group of the public. One limitation of this approach, however, is that only people with internet access and English proficiency can participate. While our samples approximate the national population of each racial group on demographics including education and income, there are still some segments of the population who are excluded from participating due to lack of internet access. It is possible that these people may conceptualize legitimacy and trust in a different manner than those who could participate. To bolster support for our findings here, future work could include in-person studies and studies conducted in languages other than English, including with immigrant populations within the United States. Another limitation of this approach—particularly in a study focused on trust—is that people who agree to complete online surveys may be more trusting of others than those who do not opt into these studies. While this would be more of a concern if we were trying to estimate average levels of trust in police among the broader population, a more trusting sample could influence results.

Both the similarities and differences between academic and public views on legitimacy and trust highlight the complexities behind the concepts and raises additional questions for future research to explore. Our results show that conceptualizations vary across racial groups, but we do not yet know why these differences exist. While we found some within-racial group variation in definitions of legitimacy and trust, the basic demographics we examine did not present clear patterns. Future research should focus on how citizen definitions of legitimacy and trust vary across other individual-

level factors. Recent cross-national work shows that procedural justice has varying impacts across subsets of the population. For example, in a U.S. sample Wolfe et al. (2016) found that the effects of procedural justice on trust in police were significantly stronger for individuals with prior victimization experience. Relatedly, research with Australian samples suggests that procedural justice has a stronger positive impact on willingness to report terror threats among Muslims who feel more stigmatized (Murphy et al., 2018) and that viewing one's group as separate from broader society moderates the relationship between procedural justice and willingness to cooperate with police (Murphy et al., 2015). Taken together, these findings suggest that people who feel more marginalized interpret and respond to procedurally just actions in different ways than people who feel less marginalized. Perhaps these and other individual-level factors, such as personal experience interacting with law enforcement, should also be examined in future research on conceptualizing legitimacy and trust.

Preliminary results from international procedural justice scholarship suggests that there may be differences in legitimacy and trust across countries and across cultures in the same country (Bottoms & Tankebe, 2012; Sargeant et al., 2014). Perhaps models of procedural justice and legitimacy, and how these concepts impact prosocial behavior, are not as generalizable as previously believed. Relatedly, there is a growing "second wave" of procedural justice studies recognizing the importance of culture on the factors conditioning attitudes toward the police (see, for example, Barak, 2016; author citation omitted). In this vein, future work should examine differences in definitions of legitimacy and trust across other racial groups both within the U.S. and abroad.

In the present study, participants provided spontaneous, open-ended definitions for legitimacy and trust. While this approach minimizes the risk of contamination or suggestibility, one limitation is that it does not conclusively inform us about the similarities or differences between public and academic conceptualizations, especially if—as we expect—scholars and the public use different cognitive routes to spontaneously define these terms. To address this, future research should present people with elements common to academic conceptualizations of legitimacy and trust and ask them to assess the suitability of each element to define each concept. Conversely, we only provide a close-ended option when asking participants whether legitimacy and trust were the same. Results here show that there is a split, which suggests that these two concepts may be similar, yet distinct, in the public eye as well. A limitation of our approach is that participants were not given space to provide an explanation of why they think legitimacy and trust are the same or different. This is an avenue for future exploration.

Another limitation stemming from the open-ended nature of the responses was that some responses could not be categorized and instead fell into the category of "other." Responses in the "other" category did not consistently identify any other conceptualizations of either legitimacy or trust that would indicate that our coding scheme missed something. Rather, these findings provide additional evidence for the lack of conceptual clarity among the public.

Further, in the present study we used open-ended, abstract questions to assess how the public defines legitimacy and trust. These hypothetical assessments may vary from more concrete, situation-based scenarios. Contextual factors impact many aspects of police-citizen relationships (Kearns, 2017; Stein & Griffith, 2017) and how people define legitimacy and trust may also change based on the situation. Future research could explore what actions respondents would categorize as legitimate or trustworthy using real-life

scenarios. Further, in much of the literature, questions about trust are linked with specific issues or behaviors (i.e. trust police to make fair decisions) that focus people's attention to certain elements of trust. Our open-ended questions suggest that there are additional components to trust in people's minds. Future research should examine the extent to which these additional components of trust impact socio-legal behaviors.

Conclusion

In sum, similar to academic debate on the meanings of legitimacy and trust, there was no consensus among our sample of citizens about what legitimacy or trust mean or whether these terms are synonymous or distinct (Kaina, 2008; Tankebe, 2013; Tyler, 2004). Drawing from psychology research, we expected that scholars conceptualize legitimacy using slow, deliberate, rational processing while public conceptualizations rely on fast, automatic, and emotional processing (Norris & Epstein, 2011; Thoma, et al., 2015). Our results partially support this hypothesizing. Amidst the current debate on how to conceptualize legitimacy and trust, our results show that scholars have measured these concepts in ways that both support and diverge from citizen-driven definitions of the terms. Thus, it is possible that researchers have not fully been measuring legitimacy and trust as the public conceives of these terms. The results reported here highlight the need to revisit scholarly conceptualizations of legitimacy and trust with the aim of explaining and addressing differences in definitions across segments of the population.

Further, we find partial support for the idea that minorities focus more on outcome than on process when defining legitimacy and trust (Sargeant et al., 2014; Tankebe, 2009), providing evidence that views are not racially invariant in the U.S. Our citizen-driven approach to defining legitimacy and trust can be a valuable addition to procedural justice issues, particularly with diverse samples of the public where further variance in conceptualizations may be identified and potentially integrated into future theorizing. Greater attention to variance in conceptualizations of legitimacy and trust both between and within subgroups can help scholars identify what components of these definitions are more or less universal and how various components predict (or don't predict) compliance with police.

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Compliance with Ethical Standards

Ethical Approval All procedures performed in studies involving human participants were in accordance with the ethical standards of the Institutional Review Board and with the 1964 Helsinki declaration and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards.

Conflict of Interest The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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