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Race and Sexual Orientation: An Intersectional Analysis and Confirmatory Factor Analysis of the Perceptions of Police Scale

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Research suggests that, owing to bias and discrimination in policing, members of historically marginalized groups—such as Black/African Americans and sexual minority people—report more negative perceptions of police than individuals from more privileged groups. However, research has yet to explore whether racial minority and sexual minority statuses contribute additively or interactively to perceptions of police. To this end, we compared perceptions of police across racial (Black and White) and sexual orientation (sexual minority and heterosexual) groups. The sample was composed of 86 Black heterosexual individuals, 127 Black sexual minority individuals, 129 White heterosexual individuals, and 58 White sexual minority individuals. Before conducting these comparisons, multigroup confirmatory factor analyses (MG-CFAs) were performed to determine whether the measure of perceptions of police demonstrated evidence of measurement invariance across racial and sexual orientation groups. Results of the MG-CFAs suggested that the Perceptions of Police Scale demonstrated adequate fit and that configural and metric invariance was obtained across racial and sexual orientation groups. However, only partial scalar invariance was obtained across racial groups. Analysis of covariance results indicated that there were significant main effects of racial minority status and sexual minority status that were qualified by a Race × Sexual Orientation interaction. Specifically, White heterosexual participants reported significantly more favorable perceptions of the police than the other three groups, who did not differ significantly from each other. Implications for future research and practice are discussed, such as the need to examine psychological effects of negative perceptions of police within marginalized communities.

Public Significance Statement

This study found that racial minority and sexual minority statuses contribute additively and interactively to individuals' perceptions of police and supported the use of the Perceptions of Police Scale for use with Black and sexual minority participants. The observed group differences in this study suggests that White heterosexual individuals may enjoy more positive perceptions of police given their positionality, whereas there were minimal differences and less favorable perceptions of police for White sexual minority, Black heterosexual, and Black sexual minority individuals. Results of this study may be helpful in understanding the effects of bias in policing on diverse racial and sexual minority communities and in working to address racism and heterosexism in policing.

Keywords: intersectionality, LGB, perceptions of police, race, sexual orientation

Individuals from historically marginalized groups report more negative perceptions of police as compared with their more socioculturally privileged counterparts, which may be attributable, in part, to bias and discrimination in policing (Brown & Benedict, 2002; Kahn & Martin, 2016; Owen, Burke, Few-Demo, & Natwick, 2018; Peck, 2015). Scholars have defined perceptions of police as the belief that the police are friendly, fair, and trustworthy and are unbiased and care about one's community (Nadal &

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Davidoff, 2015). Black and sexual minority (e.g., lesbian, gay, bisexual, pansexual, asexual) people have been shown to report more negative perceptions of police than White and heterosexual people, respectively (Briones-Robinson, Powers, & Socia, 2016; Owen et al., 2018). Although there may be many reasons for these differences, it is possible that negative perceptions of police are influenced by the fact that Black and sexual minority people are more likely to experience excessive force or discriminatory practices (e.g., profiling, hate speech, derogatory language) during their interactions with the police (Owen et al., 2018). Understanding factors related to perceptions of police is also important given that less positive perceptions of police are related to poorer mental health, lower social support, and disinclination to report hate crimes (Briones-Robinson et al., 2016). Thus, it is important to understand Black and sexual minority individual's perceptions of police to better inform interventions designed to improve relationships between police and the diverse communities they serve.

Although a growing body of research examines how perceptions of the police vary across populations, very few studies on this topic use an intersectional lens (see Dario, Fradella, Verhagen, & Parry, 2020 for a review). Using an intersectional framework to examine such differences may help highlight the unique, cumulative influences that one's intersectional identity—in this case, race and sexual orientation—have on one's experiences, attitudes, and beliefs. Additionally, few scales evaluating perceptions of police have been validated in samples of marginalized populations (Nadal & Davidoff, 2015; Reynolds, Estrada-Reynolds, & Nunez, 2018). Therefore, this study adds to the extant literature by examining perceptions of police through an intersectional lens—specifically, the intersection of race and sexual orientation—while also seeking to further validate the Perceptions of Police Scale (POPS; Nadal & Davidoff, 2015) with racial and sexual minority samples.

Black/African Americans' Perceptions of the Police

Scholars have described how race and ethnicity are powerful factors in understanding the public's perceptions of police (Cochran & Warren, 2012; Kahn & Martin, 2016; Lurigio, Greenleaf, & Flexon, 2009). Racism in policing appears to be one of the predominant contributors to negative perceptions of police, particularly among Black people (Kahn & Martin, 2016; Lurigio et al., 2009). Certainly, all communities of color have experienced racism in policing and thus may demonstrate strained relationships with the police (Peck, 2015; Weitzer & Tuch, 2004). However, given the substantial historical (Alexander, 2012) and contemporary mistreatment of Black people by the police (e.g., recent killings of unarmed Black individuals by police officers) and the significant disparities in arrest and incarceration rates between Black and White people (Chaney & Robertson, 2015; Ridgeway, 2006), we focus our attention (as it pertains to race) on the differences between Black and White individuals.

Research has demonstrated that Black individuals express less trust in, satisfaction with, and more negative perceptions of police, which may stem from negative interactions with, and discriminatory treatment and aggressive behaviors by, police officers (Huggins, 2012; White & Fradella, 2016). For example, police stop Black individuals at higher rates than Whites, which leads to disproportionately higher arrest rates (Ridgeway, 2006). Police are also more likely to use excessive force (e.g., physical restraints, unwarranted use of weapons) during their encounters with Black people than White people (Walker, Spohn, & DeLone, 2007). One study that examined officers' body camera footage found that police were more likely to use disrespectful language in traffic stops of Blacks than of Whites (Voigt et al., 2017). Encounters such as these may understandably lead Black individuals to have more negative perceptions of the police.

Importantly, these encounters need not be experienced firsthand. Weitzer and Tuch (2004) found that witnessing an officer mistreat others and engage in wrongdoing significantly and negatively impacted Black people's views of the police. Thus, whether experienced directly or indirectly, research suggests that experiences of racism in policing lead to negative views of police. Furthermore, these perceptions of police may be transmitted across generations in Black families. Research on racial socialization practices indicates that Black parents express a need to teach their youth to be cautious when interacting with the police in light of the history of police mistreatment of Black communities (Berkel et al., 2009). These socialization practices likely represent Black parents' attempts to preemptively protect their children from racially biased interactions with the police.

Importantly, as explicated by Alexander (2012), racial bias in policing and law enforcement may not be incidental but rather the point of policing. Indeed, historians have argued that modern policing systems in the United States arose in the 1820s as a mechanism of controlling freed-slaves in the southern United States (Hollowell, 2009). The intentional and arbitrary criminalization of Black people was built into the structure of the U.S. penal system and thus in law enforcement and policing practices in general (Alexander, 2012). Nonetheless, racism is not the only system of oppression that shapes modern-day policing. Sexual minority individuals and communities also have a longstanding history of mistreatment during their interactions with police, which may also impact their perceptions of the police (Owen et al., 2018).

Sexual Minority Individuals' Perceptions of the Police

Compared with research focused on Black individuals and other communities of color, relatively fewer studies have focused on sexual minority people's perceptions of the police. However, the few studies available suggest that sexual minority people view the police more poorly than heterosexual people, which may be attributable in part to a history of heterosexist bias in policing and the criminal justice system (Gillespie, 2008; Owen et al., 2018). For example, Owen and colleagues (2018) highlight the fact that a watershed moment in lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) rights movement was a clash between sexual and gender minority people and police that occurred at the Stonewall Inn in New York City in 1969. The Stonewall Riot occurred after sexual and gender minority people were arrested simply for assembling, a heterosexist law enforcement practice designed to punish individuals who challenged society's heteronormativity and/or cisnormativity (Hegarty & Rutherford, 2019; Owen et al., 2018). Having recently commemorated the 50th year anniversary of the 1969 Stonewall uprising, it is important to continue to examine the facets of sexual minority individuals' interactions with the police, because these historical accounts may very well contribute to individuals' present-day perceptions of the police and

speak to the need for law enforcement to repair relationships with sexual minority communities.

Oppression of sexual minority individuals and communities by the police also extends to discriminatory laws. For example, until the Supreme Court's ruling in *Lawrence v. Texas* (2003), sexual minority people (or anyone engaging in same-sex sexual activities) living in certain municipalities were subject to antisodomy laws that criminalized private same-sex sexual behavior (Owen et al., 2018). The Stonewall Riot and antisodomy laws represent just some of the ways in which law enforcement have enacted heterosexism against sexual minority people and communities in the United States.

Mistreatment by police likely influences sexual minority people's perceptions of the police and subsequent interactions with the police. For example, research suggests that some sexual minority people seek to conceal their sexual orientation in public to minimize police harm (Dwyer, 2014; Wolff & Cokely, 2007). Sexual minority individuals' fears of discrimination and violent encounters with the police were found to be related to whether they would report the occurrence of hate crimes (Herek, Cogan, & Gillis, 2002). Similarly, another study found that sexual minority individuals were less comfortable with reporting the occurrence of same-sex intimate partner violence—particularly if they had previously experienced police intervention for intimate partner violence (Guadalupe-Diaz & Jasinski, 2017). This study also found that participants were less likely to report intimate partner violence to the police if they were also male or a person of color, which suggests the importance of understanding perceptions of police through an intersectional lens. Indeed, though scholars have argued that individuals' intersectional identity may work uniquely to shape perceptions of police (e.g., Nadal, Davidoff, Allicock, Serpe, & Erazo, 2017), few empirical studies have utilized an intersectional framework.

Black Sexual Minority Individuals' Perceptions of the Police

Although limited, past research has explored Black sexual minority individuals' perceptions of the police (Finneran & Stephenson, 2013; Nadal & Davidoff, 2015). For example, Finneran and Stephenson (2013) found that, compared with White sexual minority men, Black sexual minority men were significantly less optimistic that the police would be helpful to a gay/bisexual male victim of intimate partner violence than to a heterosexual female victim. This suggests that Black sexual minorities have less confidence in the police. Further, in a qualitative study with 16 sexual minority focus group participants, Nadal and colleagues (2015) observed that participants believed racial privilege mitigated negative treatment by police for White sexual minority participants, whereas racial and ethnic sexual minorities reported that their negative treatment was likely exacerbated by their race. These studies suggest that both race and sexual orientation are factors that shapes individuals' perceptions of the police.

Alternatively, research has suggested that race may not be a salient predictor of sexual minority individuals' perceptions of police (Dario et al., 2020; Gillespie, 2008; Owen et al., 2018). For example, Gillespie (2008) examined perceptions of police among participants at a gay pride festival and noted that participants' perceptions of police did not differ significantly by race. Rather, there were significant differences based on age and socioeconomic status (SES) such that individuals 40 years or older and lower-SES people reported less favorable perceptions of police. However, only 29% of participants included in their study identified as Black and/or members of another racial or ethnic minority group. In addition, the fact that participants were recruited at a gay Pride event may have influenced perceptions of the police given that police often oversee these events.

Given the methodological limitations of prior studies and that we live in a racially stratified, heteronormative society, Black sexual minority individuals may have more cause to distrust the police than Black heterosexual individuals or White sexual minority individuals. It is therefore important not only to understand the additive influence of racial minority and sexual minority identity on perceptions of police, but also the potential interaction of racial and sexual minority identity on perceptions of police.

The Importance of Intersectionality

Influenced by U.S. Black feminism and women of color activism, the theoretical framework of intersectionality examines how interactions between one's multiple identities intersect and result in qualitatively different experiences (Cole, 2009; Crenshaw, 1994; Grzanka, Santos, & Moradi, 2017; Moradi & Grzanka, 2017). Cole (2009) stated that "intersectionality makes plain that gender, race, class, and sexuality simultaneously affect the perceptions, experiences, and opportunities of everyone living in a society stratified along these dimensions" (p. 179). Importantly, as emphasized by Moradi and Grzanka (2017), systems of power, privilege, and oppression shape the experiences of both individuals with minority identities (Black, sexual minority) *and* majority identities (White, heterosexual). Thus, for example, racial privilege among White individuals of all sexual orientations may be associated with better treatment by police (and thus more positive perceptions of police). In addition, this effect may be strengthened among White heterosexual people—who also experience heterosexual privilege—but weakened by heterosexist bias for White sexual minority people. Similarly, although Black people of all sexual orientations may be treated more poorly by the police because of their racial minority identity (and thus have less favorable perceptions of the police), this effect may be attenuated by heterosexual privilege among Black heterosexual people but strengthened by heterosexist oppression for Black sexual minority people. It is also possible that the influence of White privilege on perceptions of police could be stronger for heterosexual participants or the influence of racial bias could be stronger for sexual minority participants. To better understand how to work with law enforcement and to improve conditions for marginalized individuals and communities, it is important to explore whether and how race and sexual orientation interact to shape participants' perceptions of police.

The Present Study

Although some research has focused on differences in perceptions of police between Black and White individuals and between sexual minority and heterosexual individuals, it still remains unclear whether racial minority and sexual minority statuses contribute additively or interactively to perceptions of police. Further-

more, popular measures of perceptions of the police such as the Perceptions of Police Scale (Nadal & Davidoff, 2015) have not been validated with samples with considerable representation of Black or sexual minority people. First, the current study sought to validate the use of the POPS in racial and sexual orientation diverse samples. Next, we examined the unique associations of race and sexual orientation with perceptions of police in a sample composed of Black sexual minority people, Black heterosexual people, White sexual minority people, and White heterosexual people. In addition, the interactive association of race and sexual orientation on perceptions of police was examined.

Specifically, it was predicted that the POPS would demonstrate measurement invariance across race (Black or White) and across sexual orientation (sexual minority or heterosexual; Hypothesis 1). Next, we predicted that race and sexual orientation would be significantly and independently associated with perceptions of police, such that Black participants would report less favorable perceptions of police as compared with White participants and sexual minority participants would report less favorable perceptions than heterosexual participants (Hypothesis 2). Last, we explored whether there would be a significant interaction between race and sexual orientation on perceptions of police (Research Question 1). Given the dearth of research on this interaction, we did not make a prediction regarding the precise nature of the interaction.

Method

Procedure

After receiving IRB approval, we recruited participants via psychology e-mail listservs and social media (largely Facebook and Instagram). Participants were informed about the study purpose, which was to examine the relationship between their social and political attitudes and their perceptions of police. We sought to get comparable numbers of diverse participants, including racial and sexual minorities, thus we utilized specific Facebook groups pertaining to racial and LGBT justice. Study participants were offered the incentive to have their name included in a drawing for one of five $20 Amazon gift cards following their survey completion. To participate, individuals had to identify as either Black/African American or White/European American, be 18 years old or older, and a U.S.-born citizen. Individuals who identified as Biracial or Multiracial were asked to identify their racial classification in terms of their phenotypical appearance (as being either Black or White). After providing informed consent by electing to continue with the study, and after being presented with the study information, a link routed individuals to the survey, which was hosted on SurveyMonkey.

The survey took approximately 15 min to complete. IP addresses were screened to identify duplicate entries, but none was found. Little's MCAR indicated that data were missing completely at random, $\chi^2(71) = 33.13$, $p = .06$. Further, because less than 5% of the data were missing per measure and by categorical variable, we used expectation maximization to impute missing values (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). Of note, this study is based on a portion of data from a larger study on perceptions of police (Taylor & Wilcox, 2020); however, the demographics questionnaire used to identify participants' race and sexual orientation (as well as other demographic variables) and the POPS were presented before all other survey measures and thus were not influenced by the remaining measures.

Participants

Overall, a sample of 410 Black/African American ($n = 213$) and White/European American ($n = 197$) participants of diverse sexual orientations (heterosexual, $n = 225$; bisexual, $n = 76$; gay/lesbian, $n = 94$; pansexual, $n = 8$; asexual, $n = 5$; different identity, $n = 2$) was obtained. Approximately half self-identified as Black (51.9%), followed by White (48.1%). A chi-square test of independence showed that the proportion of participants who reported being a sexual minority differed significantly by race, $\chi^2(1, N = 410) = 37.65$, $p < .01$, $'' = .30$. The age of participants ranged from 18 to 71 ($M = 28.62$, $Mdn = 24$, $SD = 12.09$). See Table 1 for further demographic characteristics of the sample.

Measures

Demographics questionnaire. Participants completed a demographics questionnaire asking to identify their gender identity, sex, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, age, region of residence, political party identification, religion, highest level of education obtained, and annual household income. In addition, participants were asked to identify their subjective social class.

Perceptions of Police Scale (Nadal & Davidoff, 2015). The POPS is a 12-item self-report measure that was designed to measure general attitudes toward the police and perceptions of police bias. Participants respond using a 5-point, Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*strongly agree*) to 5 (*strongly disagree).* Sample items include, "Police officers treat all people fairly" and "The police do not discriminate." Potential scores range from 12 to 60 such that higher scores are indicative of more favorable perceptions of the police, whereas lower scores represent less favorable perceptions. The measure was originally validated with a sample of 145 university students attending a large Northeastern Latinx-serving institution, as well as individuals throughout the larger general community (e.g., community organizations and online listservs). In support of content validity, 144 of the 145 (99%) participants reported that they believed POPS items assessed perceptions of police.

Nadal and Davidoff (2015) reported a full-scale reliability of .94, along with subscale Cronbach's alpha of .91 (General Attitudes toward Police), and .87 (Perception of Police Bias). In the present study, the POPS full scale yielded a Cronbach's alpha of .94 for the full sample, .92 for Black sexual minority participants, .91 for Black heterosexual participants, .95 for White sexual minority participants, and .93 for White heterosexual participants. In addition, Cronbach alphas for the subscales (General Attitudes toward Police and Perceptions of Police Bias) were .94 and .90 for the full sample, .92 and .81 for Black sexual minority participants, .93 and .87 for Black heterosexual participants, .96 and .94 for White sexual minority participants, and .93 and .94 for White sexual minority, respectively. During initial validation, Nadal and Davidoff (2015) obtained a sample that was approximately 24% White and 15% Black. Additionally, however, approximately 90% of the sample identified as heterosexual, 2% identified as gay/lesbian, 4% identified as bisexual, and 4% did not report their

Table 1
Sample Demographic Composition Across Racial and Sexual Orientation Groups

Variable	Black heterosexual		Black sexual minority		White heterosexual		White sexual minority	
	n	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%
N =	86	21	127	31	139	34	58	14
Sexual orientation								
Heterosexual	86	100	—	—	139	100	—	—
Gay/Lesbian	—	—	67	53	—	—	27	47
Bisexual	—	—	56	44	—	—	20	34
Asexual/Pansexual/Different identity	—	—	4	3	—	—	11	19
Gender								
Cis man	34	40	115	91	35	25	30	52
Cis woman	51	59	9	7	102	73	22	38
Trans man/Trans woman/Nonconforming	1	1	3	2	1	<1	6	10
Age								
18–30	62	72	108	85	84	61	38	66
31–50	14	16	18	14	31	22	17	29
51–75	10	12	1	<1	24	17	3	5
Political affiliation								
Democrat	62	72	81	64	55	40	32	55
Republican	3	3	4	3	29	21	3	5
Independent	5	6	15	12	22	16	5	9
None/Other	16	19	27	21	33	23	18	31
Subjective social class (U.S.)								
Lower SES	11	13	21	17	9	7	7	12
Lower-middle SES	32	37	51	40	44	33	19	33
Upper-middle SES	30	35	47	37	58	45	26	45
Upper SES	13	15	8	6	28	10	6	10
Education								
Completed some high school	4	5	17	13	1	<1	0	0
High school diploma/GED	26	30	34	27	11	8	4	7
Completed some college	22	26	34	27	28	20	19	33
Associates degree	6	7	18	14	9	6	5	9
Bachelor's degree	13	15	12	9	48	35	14	24
Master's degree	9	10	7	6	22	16	12	21
Doctoral, or other professional degree	5	6	5	4	19	14	4	7

Note. SES = socioeconomic status. Where possible, some categories were collapsed where $n < 3$.

sexual orientation. Thus, as the authors noted, their sample lacked adequate diversity with regard to race and sexual orientation.

Results

Test of Measurement Invariance Across Race and Sexual Orientation

A multigroup confirmatory factor analysis (MG-CFA) was conducted to compare the two-factor structure of the of the POPS across racial groups (Black and White) and sexual orientation groups (sexual minority and heterosexual). MG-CFA is a test of measurement invariance that allows researchers to investigate the extent to which a research tool is measuring the same underlying construct across important subgroups (Sass, Schmitt, & Marsh, 2014). An EFA by Nadal and Davidoff (2015) suggested a two-factor model (General Attitudes toward Police and Perceptions of Police Bias) composed of 12 items, nine on the first factor and three on the second. However, based on an acceptable Cronbach's alpha, they reported that a full-scale score may be used for interpreting results. As presented above, the reliability coefficients for the full-scale and both factors demonstrated adequate to good internal consistency. The interfactor correlation between the POPS subscales was .35 ($p < .05$) for the full participant sample.

We performed a MG-CFA using AMOS v.24 structural equation modeling software (Arbuckle, 2015). We used the default general analysis, which uses maximum likelihood parameter estimates as compared with other estimation methods because the data were distributed normally (Kline, 2005). Maximum likelihood parameters also yield conventional standard errors and a conventional chi-square statistic. We evaluated the assumptions of multivariate normality and linearity and observed no univariate or multivariate outliers.

Multiple fit indices were considered to evaluate model fit (Hooper, Coughlan, & Mullen, 2008), specifically chi square, the comparative fit index (CFI), the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), and the standardized root mean squared residual (SRMR). Fit was considered adequate with CFI values above .90, RMSEA values below .08 (with the lower value of the 90% confidence interval [CI] no worse than 0.05 and the upper value less than .08), and an SRMR value below .08, (Hooper et al., 2008; Hu & Bentler, 1999). Of note, in larger samples, the chi-square value is almost always statistically significant and is thus less useful for evaluating model fit (Meade, Johnson, & Braddy, 2008).

Two series of MG-CFAs were conducted: one for race and one for sexual orientation. MG-CFA is a multistep process. Considering that the primary interest in the current study was to compare group means, establishing configural, metric, and scalar invariance was of most importance. For each MG-CFA, we first examined a configural model in which factor loadings and thresholds were allowed to vary between groups. The configural model indicates whether or not the same general structure of a scale (e.g., acceptable model fit, number of factors, allocation of items to specific factors) is observed across groups. Next, a metric model in which loadings are constrained to equality between groups was estimated. Metric invariance is useful because it suggests that the construct of interest has the same meaning across groups. If the metric model yields significantly poorer fit than the configural model, one or more factor loadings vary significantly between groups, which does not allow for meaningful group comparisons. Finally, the metric model fit was compared with a scalar model, in which item thresholds (i.e., observed variable means) were also constrained to equality between groups. If the fit of the scalar model was worse than the fit of the metric model, one or more item thresholds vary significantly between groups. In other words, scalar invariance helps to justify mean comparisons across groups by suggesting that the origin or starting value of the factors for the scale is the same across groups and is without concern of measurement bias.

Fit was compared across models using the chi-square difference test ($\Delta\chi^2$). In addition, because scholars have recommended using multiple indicators of model difference or similarity (Cheung & Rensvold, 2002; Meade et al., 2008; Sass et al., 2014), change in CFI (ΔCFI), RMSEA (ΔRMSEA), and SRMR (ΔSRMR) were also calculated. Cheung and Rensvold (2002) recommended cutoffs of ΔCFI $>$ .01 and ΔRMSEA $>$ .015 to indicate noninvariance, and Chen (2007) suggested a change in SRMR cutoff criterion of .03 (for metric invariance) or .015 (for scalar invariance).

Measurement invariance by race. The first MG-CFA tested compared the factor structure of the POPS between the 213 Black participants and the 197 White participants. Fit statistics for all models estimated by race are presented in Table 2. As a first step, measurement models were estimated separately for Black participants and White participants. For both groups, CFI and SRMR values were acceptable, but RMSEA values were above the benchmark for acceptable fit. All factor loadings for were significant for both groups ($ps < .001$) and ranged from .72 to .84 for Black participants and from .72 to .96 for White participants. The interfactor correlation between the POPS subscales was .22 ($p < .05$) for Black participants and .50 ($p < .05$) for White participants.

In the next step, the configural model was estimated. The configural model yielded acceptable fit based on all three fit indices. All factor loadings were significant ($ps < .001$) in both groups and ranged from .73 to .84 for the Black sample and ranged from.72 to .96 for the White sample. The metric model was estimated by constraining factor loadings to equality between racial groups. The metric model yielded acceptable fit based on all three fit indices. Although $\Delta\chi^2$ was significant, ΔCFI, ΔRMSEA, and ΔSRMR did not meet benchmarks for significant difference; thus, the preponderance of evidence indicated that the two models did not differ significantly, which suggests metric invariance. That is, factor loadings did not vary substantively between Black and White participants.

In the next step, a scalar model was estimated by constraining thresholds to equivalence between racial groups. The scalar model yielded acceptable fit based on two of the three fit indices. Though ΔRMSEA did not reach significance, $\Delta\chi^2$, ΔCFI, and ΔSRMR each suggested that the scalar model yielded poorer fit than the metric invariance model. Thus, the preponderance of evidence did not support full scalar invariance. In other words, the mean values of the POPS appears to have different a theoretical meaning for Black and White participants, and as such, interpretation of mean differences for these groups should be taken with caution.

Considering that full scalar invariance was not obtained, we proceeded to conduct follow-up analyses to determine whether only some of the item thresholds varied significantly. This was conducted by examining modification indices, and releasing factor loading parameters for items that were deemed as not operating the same across the groups (Putnick & Bornstein, 2016). After placing equality constraints on parameter estimates for item 10 (*the police are reliable*), we continued our examination for partial scalar invariance, which then yielded adequate model fit. This partial invariant finding suggests that, aside from item 10, the remainder of the items and the underlying construct of perceptions of police operated equivalently across the two racial groups which is mean-

Table 2
Multi-Group Confirmatory Factor Analyses (MG-CFA) and Tests of Measurement Invariance Across Race and Sexual Orientation

Model	χ^2	*df*	$\Delta\chi^2$	Δ*df*	CFI	RMSEA	SRMR	ΔCFI	ΔRMSEA	ΔSRMR
Measurement invariance by race										
Black (n = 213)	167.586***	53			.924	.101 [.084, .118]	.055			
White (n = 197)	167.808***	53			.949	.105 [.087, .123]	.047			
Configural model	335.397***	106	—	—	.939	.073 [.064, .082]	.055	—	—	—
Metric model	375.739***	116	40.342***	10	.931	.074 [.066, .083]	.065	.008	.001	.010
Scalar model	401.721***	119	66.324***	13	.925	.076 [.068, .085]	.092	.014	.003	.037
Measurement invariance by sexual orientation										
Sexual minority (n = 183)	163.395***	53			.931	.107 [.089, .126]	.051			
Heterosexual (n = 225)	156.394***	53			.950	.093 [.077, .110]	.049			
Configural model	319.809***	106	—	—	.942	.070 [.062, .079]	.049	—	—	—
Metric model	325.361***	116	5.552	10	.943	.067 [.058, .075]	.049	.001	.003	.000
Scalar model	334.480***	119	14.671*	13	.942	.067 [.058, .075]	.053	.000	.003	.004

Note. CFI = comparative fit index; RMSEA = root mean square error of approximation [90% confidence intervals]; SRMR = standardized root mean squared residual.
* $p < .05$. *** $p < .001$.

ingful for analyzing group differences. Although item 10 appeared to be problematic, valid inferences about the differences between means can still be made given that there was still at least two loadings that were constrained equal across the groups (Byrne, Shavelson, & Muthén, 1989).

Measurement invariance by sexual orientation. The second MG-CFA compared the factor structure of the POPS between the 183 sexual minority participants and the 225 heterosexual participants. Fit statistics for all models tested as part of the MG-CFA by sexual orientation are presented in Table 2. First, to establish a baseline, CFAs were conducted separately for the sexual minority sample and the heterosexual sample. For both samples, CFI and SRMR values were acceptable but RMSEA values were above the benchmark for acceptable fit. For both groups, all factor loadings were significant ($ps < .001$) and ranged from .70 to .89 for sexual minority participants and from.72 to .91 for heterosexual participants. The interfactor correlation between the POPS subscales was .32 ($p < .05$) for sexual minority participants and .35 ($p < .05$) for heterosexual participants.

Next, the configural model was estimated and yielded acceptable fit. All factor loadings for both groups were significant ($ps < .001$) and ranged from .70 to .89 for the sexual minority sample and from .71 to .91 for the heterosexual sample. Subsequently, the metric model was estimated by constraining factor loadings to equality between sexual orientation groups. The metric model yielded acceptable fit. None of the comparisons provided evidence of significant difference across groups; thus, results suggests metric invariance. In the following step, a scalar invariance model was estimated by constraining thresholds to equality between sexual orientation groups. The scalar model yielded acceptable fit. Although $\Delta\chi^2$ was significant, ΔCFI, ΔRMSEA, and ΔSRMR did not reach benchmarks for significance. Thus, the preponderance of evidence supported scalar invariance between sexual orientation groups. That is, any observed sexual orientation group differences in POPS scores are likely to reflect true differences in the underlying construct of perceptions of police rather than bias in the measurement of perceptions of police. Taken together, these results suggest partial invariance for race and full invariance for sexual orientation, which nonetheless, supports the use of the POPS in samples of racial and sexual orientation diverse individuals (Hypothesis 1).

Racial and Sexual Orientation Group Differences in Perceptions of Police

There were no major violations in statistical assumptions pertaining to the general linear model, including normality, linearity, and multicollinearity (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). Because prior research indicates that perceptions of police may also vary by gender, age, political affiliation, and social class (Dwyer, 2014; Gillespie, 2008; Owen et al., 2018; Shelden, 2001), these variables were controlled for in the primary analysis.

Analysis of Covariance

To test the prediction that race and sexual orientation would be independently associated with perceptions of police (Hypothesis 2) and the influence of the interaction of race and sexual orientation on perceptions of police (Research Question 1), we conducted a factorial analysis of covariance (ANCOVA). Race (Black, White) and sexual orientation (sexual minority, heterosexual) were the predictors, and perceptions of police the criterion. Gender, age, political affiliation, and subjective social class were entered as covariates.

Regarding the covariates, gender was significantly associated with perceptions of police, $F(1, 408) = 7.65$, $p = .006$, $\eta_p^2 = .02$, such that cisgender men ($M = 33.66$, $SD = 9.03$) and women ($M = 35.66$, $SD = 8.49$) reported significantly more favorable perceptions than trans men, trans women, and gender nonconforming participants ($M = 21.00$, $SD = 7.78$), yet the difference in scores between cisgender men and cisgender women was nonsignificant. In addition, subjective social class was significantly related to participants' perceptions of police, such that higher subjective social class scores were associated with more favorable perceptions of police, $r(410) = .174$, $p < .001$. Neither age nor political affiliation were significantly associated with perceptions of police. After controlling for the aforementioned covariates, race was significantly related to participants' perceptions of police, $F(1, 408) = 6.18$, $p = .01$, $\eta_p^2 = .02$. Sexual orientation was also significantly associated with perceptions of police, $F(1, 408) = 24.05$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .06$. These main effects were qualified by a significant Race × Sexual Orientation interaction, $F(1, 408) = 12.39$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .03$.

Mean perceptions of police scores by race and sexual orientation are presented in Figure 1. Bonferroni-adjusted pairwise comparisons were conducted to decompose the interaction. First, we explored how racial group differences in perceptions of police differed by sexual orientation. Results indicated that, among sexual minority participants, perceptions of police did not differ significantly between Black participants ($M = 32.13$, $SD = 7.86$) and White participants ($M = 30.72$, $SD = 11.55$), $t(183) = 0.96$, $p = .33$, $d = .15$. In contrast, among heterosexual participants, Black participants ($M = 32.75$, $SD = 7.25$) reported significantly less favorable perceptions of police than White participants ($M = 38.45$, $SD = 8.43$), $t(223) = -5.19$, $p < .001$, with a moderate-to-large effect size ($d = -.72$).

Next, we explored whether sexual orientation group differences in perceptions of police were affected by race. Among Black participants, perceptions of the police did not differ significantly between sexual minority participants ($M = 32.13$, $SD = 7.87$) and heterosexual participants ($M = 32.76$, $SD = 7.25$), $t(211) = -0.59$, $p = .55$, $d = -.08$. In contrast, among White participants, sexual minority participants ($M = 30.72$, $SD = 11.55$) had significantly less favorable perceptions of the police than heterosexual participants ($M = 38.45$, $SD = 8.43$), $t(195) = -5.23$, $p < .001$, $d = -.76$, which was a moderate-to-large effect.

Finally, for the sake of completeness, we compared perceptions of police between groups who differ with regard to both race and sexual orientation. Results indicated that Black sexual minority participants had significantly less positive perceptions of the police than White heterosexual participants, $t(264) = -6.31$, $p < .001$, $d = -.78$ (a large effect), whereas perceptions of police did not differ significantly between Black heterosexual participants and White sexual minority participants, $t(142) = -1.30$, $p = .197$, $d = -.21$. Taken together, the results suggest both race and sexual orientation additively and interactively influence individuals' perceptions of the police.

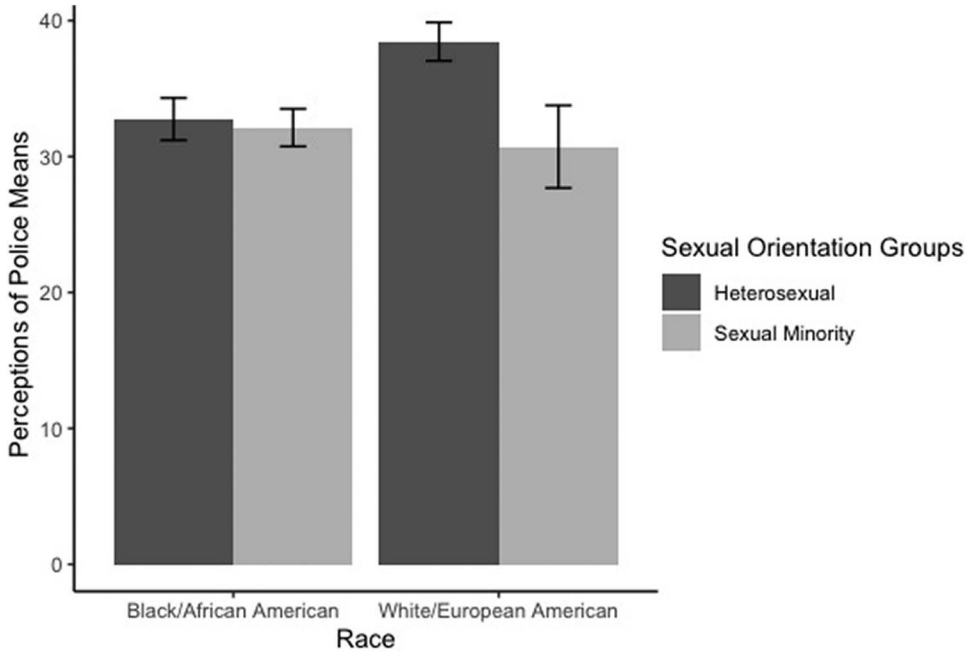

Figure 1. Mean perceptions of police scores by race and sexual orientation groups. Error bars: 95% confidence interval.

Discussion

The primary aim of this study was to explore whether racial minority and sexual minority identity contribute additively and/or interactively to perceptions of police based on an intersectionality framework. As well, the POPS (Nadal & Davidoff, 2015) was tested for measurement invariance across race and sexual orientation groups. Evaluations confirmed the two-factor structure of the POPS for use within exclusive samples of racial minority and sexual minority participants; however, only partial invariance was found for race. In addition, consistent with our hypotheses, we found that race and sexual orientation both additively contribute to individuals perceptions of the police, as well as a significant Race × Sexual Orientation interaction. We discuss these findings in further detail below.

Concerning our evaluation of measurement invariance, separate CFAs of the POPS across racial and sexual orientation groups yielded acceptable fit according to at least two of the three fit indices used (i.e., the CFI and SRMR), which lends support for the use of the POPS among Black and White individuals with diverse sexual orientations. This contributes to the POPS' evidence of construct validity, responding to calls for research to investigate the measure's fit in exclusive samples of minority participants (Nadal & Davidoff, 2015). Although the RMSEA did not meet benchmarks for acceptable fit, alterations based on modification indices were not made because such modifications may result in inconsistencies in factor loadings across samples (Putnick & Bornstein, 2016). There is also disagreement in the extant literature (e.g., Kline, 2005; Marsh, Hau, & Wen, 2004; Tomarken & Waller, 2003) regarding acceptable RMSEA values. It is possible that alternative factor structures may yield better model fit (Nadal & Davidoff, 2015). However, that was beyond the scope of the current study.

Further, MG-CFA tests of measurement invariance indicated that factor loadings for the POPS were similar between Black and White people and between sexual minority and heterosexual people. This is informative because it supports the two-factor structure of the POPS and suggests that the theoretical meaning of the POPS items do not vary significantly by race and sexual orientation groups. Furthermore, the MG-CFA testing scalar invariance between sexual orientation groups indicated that POPS item means did not differ by sexual orientation. This suggests that any true differences observed between the sexual orientation groups reflect true differences in the construct of perceptions of police. However, results of the MG-CFA by racial group did not support the finding of full scalar invariance. That is, group comparisons of the POPS scale scores may reflect differences in how Black and White individuals respond to some POPS items rather than true differences in the underlying construct of perceptions of police. Follow-up analyses suggested that partial scalar invariance could be obtained by releasing noninvariant parameters associated with item 10 (*the police are reliable*). It is thus plausible that true differences between Black and White individuals beliefs concerning police reliability influences their understanding of perceptions of police as a whole. As a result, future use of the POPS should include race as a covariate, even if race is not a primary focus.

Our results also support previous findings that perceptions of police among racial minorities (in this case, Black participants) are less positive than those of White participants (Brown & Benedict, 2002; Cochran & Warren, 2012; Kahn & Martin, 2016; Peck, 2015), and that sexual minority participants hold less favorable perceptions of police than those of heterosexual participants (Nadal et al., 2015; Owen et al., 2018). Intersectionally, we found that White heterosexual people have significantly more positive perceptions of the police than the three other groups, and those three

groups do not differ from each other significantly. Thus, the joint experience of White privilege and heterosexual privilege yielded the most positive perceptions of police. Being Black, a sexual minority, or both was associated with poorer perceptions of police, but being both Black and a sexual minority did not result in the poorest perceptions of police. It is plausible that Black peoples' experiences as racial minorities so powerfully shapes their interactions with the police that the "addition" of a stigmatized sexual orientation does not incrementally shape those interactions. In contrast, for White people, sexual orientation–related stigma may very well be relatively more influential on interactions with the police as a result of this being their primary experience of stigmatization.

One important note is the framing of the POPS items. With the exception of two items, the POPS evaluates individuals' perceptions about how one views police and their treatment of others generally and is not focused on the police's treatment of individual and specific social groups. Thus, it is possible that participants' responses reflect their perceptions of police treatment of others in general, rather than police treatment of their own social group. That is to say, in theory, White sexual minority people's more negative views may not reflect a sense that White sexual minority people feel any more unfairly targeted or negatively treated by the police, but rather that they think the police unfairly target and/or negatively treat other individuals and communities. For example, a White respondent with a high awareness of systemic racial bias may feel as though the police would treat them fairly but have little faith that the police treat everyone fairly (and thus their score would suggest a very negative view of police). As such, the observed interaction between race and sexual orientation could be attributed to White sexual minority individuals' acknowledgment of oppressive police practices rather than the belief that they, as White sexual minority people, are treated more poorly by the police. This is particularly important given our finding that the primary differences in perceptions of police were between White heterosexual participants and all other groups; it may be that experiencing oppression on one dimension may facilitate awareness of oppression more broadly.

This substantial difference in scores between White sexual minority and White heterosexual participants is particularly interesting. As noted previously, many but not all Black families and communities make a point of educating their youth about historic and contemporary violence perpetrated by police against Black individuals and communities in an attempt to try to keep their youth safe from harm. In contrast, those conversations are less likely to happen in White families or communities. Thus, as sexual minority White individuals may come to learn later in life (as they come out and experience various aspects of marginalization and oppression) that the police are not safe, it might lead to a substantial drop in White sexual minority individuals' trust in the police. It is important to emphasize that, according to this conceptualization, trust is lost rather than being lower in the first place. Qualitative examinations of this phenomenon may more fully capture the experiences that influence sexual and racial minorities' perceptions of police. Mixed-methods studies may be useful in seeking to understand this complex and nuanced phenomenon.

Quantitatively, one must also examine potential moderators that might affect perceptions of police. In particular, we must attend to the layers of intersectionality and further conceptualize how social class (as one example) may also simultaneously shape experiences for individuals within the groups examined. For example, Black sexual minority people in the sample had less education, lower annual incomes, and lower subjective social class than Black heterosexual individuals, White sexual minority individuals, and White heterosexual individuals. There were more similarities and closer mean averages for Black heterosexual and White sexual minority individuals. Taken together, this suggests that the intersection of race, sexual orientation, and social class may play an important role in the development of individuals' perceptions of police. Considering that subjective social class appeared to influence participants' perceptions of police, we encourage future researchers to explore this through other measures of social class to examine this more fully.

Overall, results of the current study add to the literature on racial and sexual minorities' perceptions of police, yielding new findings as compared with the extant literature (e.g., Dario et al., 2020; Owen et al., 2018) and providing a new direction for research concerning group differences among U.S. citizens' perceptions of police. Further, the implications and awareness of such differences in perceptions of police may be beneficial for psychologists as social justice and racial justice advocates in their work with Black, White, sexual minority, and heterosexual individuals alike. Our results present many directions for future research, practice, education, and advocacy.

Implications for Future Research, Practice, Education, and Advocacy

As delineated by Nadal and Davidoff (2015), sexual minority people—and to a greater extent, gender minority people—are underrepresented in studies of public perceptions of the police. Thus, it is essential that researchers examine perceptions of police among more groups of sexual minority people, sexual minority people of color, and diverse groups of transgender people. Research with transgender people of color is particularly needed due to their uniquely detrimental experiences with policing and discrimination (Briones-Robinson et al., 2016; Dario et al., 2020; Nadal & Davidoff, 2015). As previously mentioned, future research must also attend to potential mediating and moderating factors that may result in within-group differences in perceptions of police for racially diverse sexual minority individuals. Following Grzanka and colleagues (2017), we encourage researchers to continue considering, studying, and critiquing the interlocking and inextricable relationships among structural forms of inequity, such as racism, heterosexism, cissexism, capitalism, and other systems that work together to marginalize people. Given the results of the present study, for example, it may be particularly important for future research to examine the influence of marginalized group membership on awareness of how the police may treat other marginalized groups of which they are not a member. Qualitative research may help to illuminate such differences as it allows for a deeper insight and exploration of the unique cultural factors that negate individuals' realities, including their perceptions of the police. Joining with law enforcement agencies and individuals within racial and sexual orientation diverse communities for community-based participatory research is also a worthy avenue for psychologists to explore.

Within psychology training and practice, psychologists need to be aware of how perceptions of police may vary across racial and sexual orientation groups and the potential implications of these differences for the well-being of these communities. Clinicians working with diverse racial and sexual orientation groups may provide effective care by validating clients' concerns while also working alongside clients to navigate challenges endured throughout their lived experiences. Clinicians may also help clients navigate appropriate structural systems (e.g., criminal justice or other legal systems) to help ensure clients have access to the resources they need while recognizing how clients are genuinely treated by systems of law enforcement.

Finally, from an advocacy perspective, psychologists are uniquely qualified to engage in work that effects change at the systemic level for diverse racial and sexual minority individuals' safety within the law enforcement system (Varghese et al., 2019). For example, psychologists may work with police departments to provide training with regard to working with, and attending to the needs of, racial and sexual minority individuals and communities appropriately and affirmatively. Such consultation and training may also occur at the level of criminal justice education and training. Psychologists may also help law enforcement agencies assess needs and perceptions within the specific communities they serve (DeBlaere et al., 2019). Critically, psychologists can also engage in advocacy at the state and federal levels to safeguard and increase legal protections for sexual minority individuals, repeal laws that are harmful to racial minority and sexual minority communities, and continue to promote efforts for racial justice within the criminal justice system more broadly.

Limitations

There are a few limitations to the current study which should be addressed. First, although our results lend support to the POPS structure, as reported by Nadal and Davidoff (2015), future research should continue exploring perspectives across larger and more diverse samples. For example, future research should examine perceptions of police (and the fit of the POPS) across gender-diverse populations and sexual minority individuals of diverse racial backgrounds beyond the Black-White dichotomy. It is important to further understand nuanced between-groups differences in perceptions of police to effectively design interventions with law enforcement to improve police-community relations. In addition, the demographics of our study participants are not reflective of the general U.S. population, thus limiting generalizability. Also, as noted, the demographic composition of the four groups examined in this study varied significantly. For example, the proportion of Black people who identified as sexual minorities (60%) was higher than the proportion of White people who identified as sexual minorities (29%). This discrepancy may have influenced the results.

Furthermore, in the current study we used race and sexual orientation as proxies for biased interactions with the police. That is, we assumed that any observed demographic group differences in perceptions of the police are caused by the fact that Black people and sexual minority people are treated more poorly by the police than White and heterosexual people. Future research may directly test discrimination during interactions with police as a mediator of the association of minority identity with poorer perceptions of police. Last, it is worth noting that the current study conceptualized *perceptions of police* as individuals' general trust in the police as being fair and unbiased. Although Peck (2015) noted that minority individuals are more likely to hold negative perceptions of police regardless of the measures used to operationalize such attitudes, it is plausible that the current conceptualization of perceptions of police may or may not differ in comparison to other terms used in the literature (such as individuals' beliefs in police legitimacy or police helpfulness). Future research could explore the relations among these constructs in an effort to clarify precisely what perceptions of police do and do not entail.

Conclusion

Past research has examined the association of race and sexual orientation with perceptions of police; however, few studies have done so using an intersectional framework. The current study sought to determine whether racial and sexual minority identities contribute additively and/or interactively to individuals' perceptions of the police. First, we examined the model fit of the Perceptions of Police Scale (POPS) across race and sexual orientation groups. Support for partial invariance by race and full invariance by sexual orientation was obtained. The present study also found that race and sexual orientation were significantly independently associated with perceptions of police, but this was qualified by a significant Race × Sexual Orientation interaction. Follow-up group comparisons indicated that White heterosexual participants reported significantly more positive perceptions of police than Black sexual minority, Black heterosexual, and White sexual minority participants. Furthermore, perceptions of police did not differ significantly among the latter three groups. These findings may speak to the influence of White privilege and heterosexual privilege on interactions with and thus perceptions of the police.

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