

Demeanor, Race, and Police Perceptions of Procedural Justice: Evidence From Two Randomized Experiments

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What we know

- Citizens value procedurally fair treatment by police (Tyler, 1990)
 - i.e., respect, neutrality, voice, and trustworthy motives
- When citizens perceive procedural justice, they are more likely to:
 - Accept decisions (Tyler & Huo, 2002)
 - Comply with orders (Murphy, Tyler, & Curits, 2009)
 - Cooperate with police (White, Mulvey, & Dario, 2016)
 - Empower the police (Sunshine & Tyler, 2003)
- Effects largely invariant across demographic traits and neighborhood contexts (Jackson et al., 2012; Wolfe et al., 2016; c.f. Madon et al., in press)

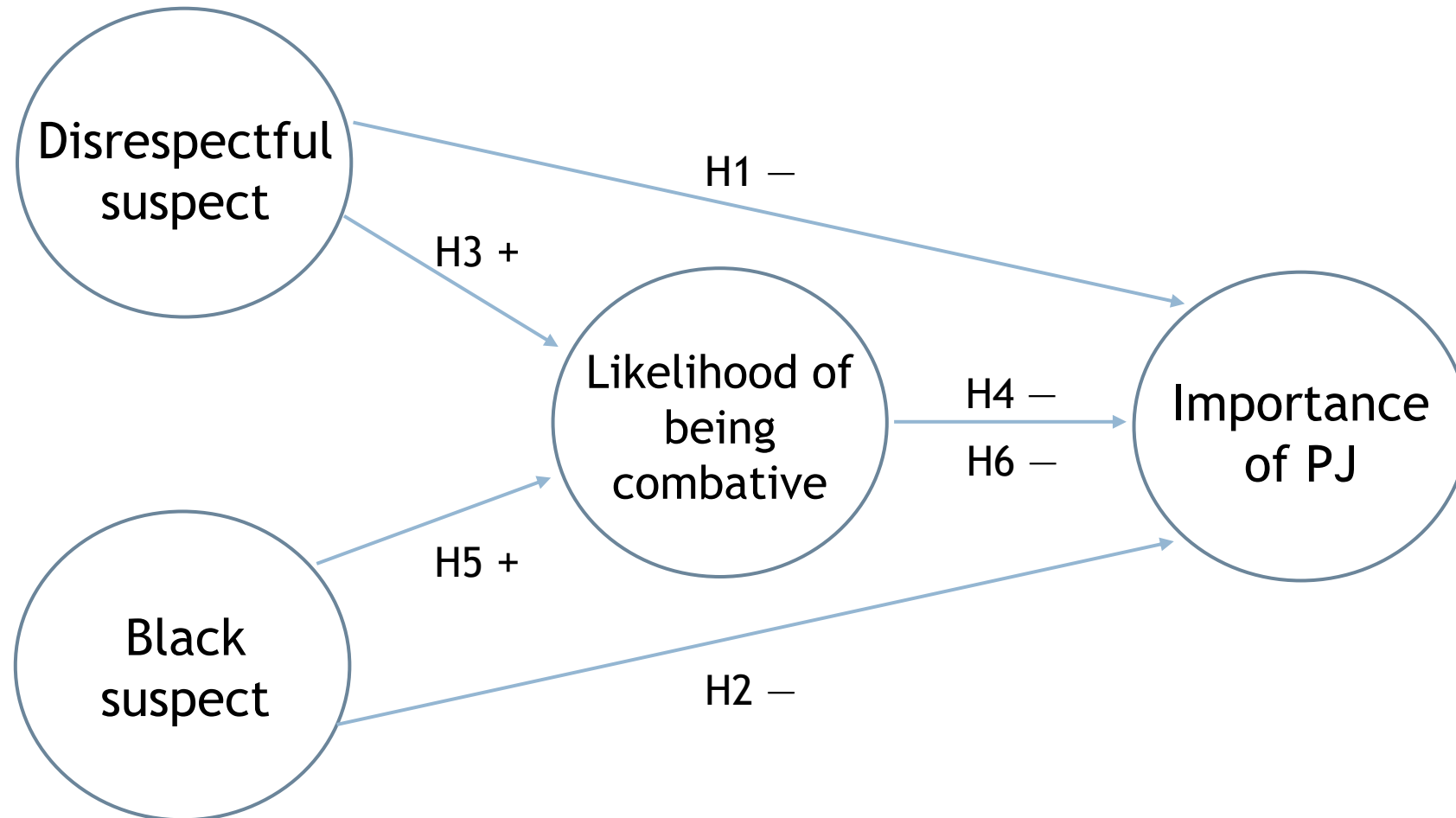


What we know less about

- When are officers more/less likely to **exercise** procedural justice?
- Some suspects may be viewed as less “morally worthy” of PJ (Black, 1976; Mastrofski et al., 2016; Pickett & Ryon, 2017)
- Or, officers may view some suspects as more dangerous, and therefore place less importance on exercising PJ
 - Disrespect (Bayley, 1995; Van Maanen, 1978)
 - Race (Pickett et al., 2012; Trinkner & Goff, in press)



Hypotheses



Study 1 – Experimental Procedure

- Mid-sized agency in a southeastern metropolis
- N = 242 (RR ~70 percent)
- 2 x 2 factorial design

While on patrol, you receive a suspicious person call. You arrive at the scene and make contact with a [white / black] male who fits the description you were given...

- The suspect is compliant and respectful. It does not appear that he will be physically combative, he is calm, not using profanity, and refers to you as sir/ma'am.
- The suspect is noncompliant and disrespectful. Though it does not appear that he will be physically combative, he is being loud, using profanity, and calling you names.



Study 1 – Dependent Variable

How important to you are each of the following:

1. Being courteous toward the suspect
2. Explaining the reason you've made contact
3. Allowing the suspect to explain his side of the story
4. Listening to and considering the suspect's side of the story
5. Being respectful toward the suspect
6. Not making a decision about what to do until you've gathered all necessary information
7. Explaining why you ultimately resolve the situation as you do
8. Offering advice on how the suspect might handle the situation or deal with the problem



Study 1 – Findings

Perceived Importance of Exercising Procedural Justice

Variable	<i>b</i>	SE	95% CI
Black	0.08	0.07	-0.05, 0.21
Disrespectful	-0.28**	0.06	-0.41, -0.16
Intercept	4.54**	0.05	4.43, 4.64
R^2		0.08	

** $p \leq .01$



Study 2 – Experimental Procedure

- Large agency in a different southeastern state
- N = 236 (RR ~19 percent)
- 2 x 3 factorial design

While on patrol, you receive a suspicious person call. You arrive at the scene and identify a suspect who fits the description you were given - a [white / black] male, in his 20s, wearing baggy jeans and a t-shirt. When you approach the suspect, he seems uneasy and anxious. When you first begin to question him, he...

- is compliant and respectful, and refers to you as sir/ma'am.
- refuses to tell you anything. He is disrespectful, loud, uses profanity, and calls you names.
- backs away and starts to walk off while you are still talking.



Study 2 – Dependent Variables

- I. *How likely is it that the suspect will become physically combative?*
- II. *How important to you would it be to do each of the following:*
 1. Treat the suspect politely and with dignity
 2. Explain to the suspect why you made contact with him
 3. Give the suspect a chance to explain his side of the story
 4. Treat the suspect respectfully
 5. Listen to the suspect's side of the story
 6. Explain your decision to the suspect, once you decide how to resolve the situation
 7. Treat the suspect fairly



Study 2 – Findings

Perceived Likelihood of Suspect Becoming Physically Combative

Variable	<i>b</i>	SE	95% CI
Black	0.07	0.14	-0.20, 0.34
Verbal disrespect	0.98**	0.17	0.65, 1.31
Symbolic disrespect	0.74**	0.16	0.42, 1.06
Intercept	2.67**	0.13	2.41, 2.94
R^2		0.15	

** $p \leq .01$



Study 2 – Findings

Perceived Importance of Exercising Procedural Justice

Variable	Model 1			Model 2		
	<i>b</i>	SE	95% CI	<i>b</i>	SE	95% CI
Physically combative	—	—	—	-0.03	0.03	-0.09, 0.03
Black	0.04	0.06	-0.09, 0.16	0.04	0.06	-0.09, 0.16
Verbal disrespect	-0.12	0.08	-0.27, 0.04	-0.09	0.08	-0.25, 0.08
Symbolic disrespect	-0.19*	0.08	-0.34, -0.03	-0.16*	0.08	-0.32, -0.003
Intercept	2.47**	0.06	2.35, 2.60	2.56**	0.10	2.36, 2.77
Adjusted R^2		0.01			0.02	

** $p \leq .01$, * $p \leq .05$



Limitations

- Hypothetical vignettes
 - No real urgency or threat
 - Restricted to suspicious person call
 - Suspects depicted as male
 - Did not describe neighborhood context, time of day, etc.
- Few female officers in our samples
- Perceived importance of using PJ \neq Intent to use PJ



Implications

- Race **does not** appear to influence the importance officers place on exercising PJ
- PJ training should consider the importance of suspect demeanor
 - Difficult to exercise PJ with disrespectful suspects
 - Yet, interactions with these individuals are most likely to benefit from PJ
 - PJ could help de-escalate tense situations
- Research should continue to explore the factors that affect officers' use of (or intent to use) PJ



Thank you!

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