The Vicarious Bases of Perceived Injustice

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Abstract: *Profound differences exist in how Americans from various racial and ethnic groups view police and court officials. We argue that vicarious experiences contribute to this racial and ethnic divide. Drawing on research on social communication, social network composition, and negativity biases in perception and judgment, we devise a theoretical framework to articulate why vicarious experiences magnify racial and ethnic disparities in evaluations of judicial actors. Four hypotheses are tested using original survey data from the state of Washington. Results provide strong evidence that vicarious experiences influence citizens' evaluations of both police and courts, and they do so in a manner that widens racial divides in how those actors are perceived.*

Replication Materials: The data, code, and any additional materials required to replicate all analyses in this article are available on the *American Journal of Political Science* Dataverse within the Harvard Dataverse Network, at: http://dx.doi.org/10.7910/DVN/QTG6FQ.

In recent years, a litany of high-profile incidents has emphasized not only the significance of race within the criminal justice system, but also the racial divide in how that system is perceived. Regarding the latter, a wealth of research has sought to explain profound differences in how, and how favorably, African Americans and Whites view the justice system and its actors (e.g., Bobo and Johnson 2004; Peffley and Hurwitz 2010; Tonry 2011; Unnever 2008; Weitzer and Tuch 2006). Although the bases of this racial divide are multifaceted, part of the explanation appears to be experiential. Blacks and Whites report starkly different experiences with police and courts, experiences that shape views of the justice system.

While acknowledging the role of direct encounters, we focus on the possibility that information beyond the realm of personal experience also matters. We posit that the racial gulf widens as a function of social interaction: Differences in Blacks' and Whites' *vicarious* encounters with the justice system exacerbate corresponding differences in how that system is perceived.

Prior scholars have noted the possible significance of vicarious experiences on views of the justice system and have provided preliminary evidence that such effects are consequential. For example, Weitzer and Tuch (2006) posed questions about respondents' negative experiences with the police and any similar experiences among others in their households. Rosenbaum et al. (2005) asked Chicagoans about both their personal experiences with the justice system and whether they knew of anyone who had been arrested in the past year. Results in these studies suggested that vicarious experiences influence individuals' views of the police.

Although prior works offer initial evidence regarding the possible significance of vicarious experiences, none provides a holistic theoretical or empirical account. Missing is a rationale for how and why vicarious experiences should be expected to matter and, most critically, for why

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these experiences may widen racial disparities in how the criminal justice system is perceived. Prior works also have used coarse empirical indicators. At most, data have been obtained about only a single acquaintance rather than about respondents' broader networks. No information has been reported about experiences with actors other than the police, about gradations of positive and negative experiences, or about the race and ethnicity of respondents' acquaintances.

We seek to study vicarious effects more systematically. We delineate a precise theoretical account of why vicarious effects should be important, and why such effects magnify racial gaps in perceptions of judicial actors. Each of our four hypotheses enjoys support in past research and comports with intuition regarding the nature of social experience. It is in combination that our hypotheses gain their full power. The first three hypotheses provide a step-by-step case for why patterns of social interaction give rise to a widening of racial disparity in perceptions of the justice system. The final hypothesis incorporates insights from psychology to explore not the existence of vicarious effects, but rather their magnitude. To test these hypotheses, we draw on original survey data from the state of Washington. Central to this effort are empirical measures designed with the intent of generating insight on whether, how, and to what extent vicarious experiences influence views of the justice system.

Vicarious Effects

Our central empirical proposition is that vicarious experiences influence people's assessments of judicial actors in a manner that magnifies racial and ethnic gaps in those evaluations. This proposition necessitates a theoretical framework addressing several matters: the information about police and courts people encounter vicariously, whether such information should influence evaluations, and whether such influence contributes to racial differences in those appraisals. Our approach focuses on people's *justice encounter networks*, or circles of acquaintances who have had experiences with judicial actors.

We employ survey batteries on which respondents are asked to identify acquaintances who have had encounters with police and courts. A prefatory matter concerns network composition. Homophily abounds in social networks (McPherson, Smith-Lovin, and Cook 2001),[1] and race and ethnicity are powerful structuring forces. We examine the justice encounter networks of Washingtonians from four groups: Blacks, Whites, Latinos, and Asians. Drawing on research on homophily, we assume that the justice encounter networks reported by African Americans are largely composed of African Americans, the networks of Whites are mostly composed of Whites, and so on. Evidence consistent with this assumption is presented below. For now, the key matter is that our hypotheses presuppose homophily.

The first portion of our theoretical framework pertains to whether people's experiences with police and courts vary by race. The people we have in mind, of course, are our survey respondents' acquaintances, the members of our respondents' justice encounter networks. There are several reasons to expect a racial divide. First, racial and ethnic gaps exist in the nature and frequency of encounters with the justice system. Comparing Blacks and Whites, disparities exist in rates of arrest (Walker, Spohn, and DeLone 2004), prosecution and sentencing (Spohn 2013), and incarceration (Harrison and Beck 2003). Washington's racial and ethnic composition (72.1% White; 11.6% Latino; 8.2% Asian, including Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islanders; and 3.8% African American) permits us to explore racial differences beyond those between Blacks and Whites. In Washington, Whites (59.4% of prisoners) and Asians (3.7%) are underrepresented, and Latinos (12.1%) are slightly overrepresented, in proportion to their share of the state's population.[2] In contrast, African Americans constitute 18.7% of the prison population, an overrepresentation of nearly fivefold compared to their share of the state's population.[3] Second, numerous studies reveal racial profiling and discrimination in police behavior, including in traffic stops and the use of force (e.g., Engel and Swartz 2013; Jacobs and O'Brien 1998; Wilson 1978). Third, these differences affect perceptions. Peffley and Hurwitz (2010, 42) report that 29.6% of Black respondents claimed to have been treated unfairly by the police in the past 5 years, versus only 12.7% of Whites. Together, these rationales support our first hypothesis:

> *H1*: Perceived negative experiences with police and courts are most abundant among individuals' African American acquaintances.

[1]For examples of research on racial and ethnic homophily in a variety of types of social networks, see Ibarra (1995), Marsden (1988), and Shrum, Cheek, and Hunter (1988).

[2]Information about Washington's prison population is taken from the December 31, 2013, version of the Washington State Department of Corrections Fact Card, www.doc.wa.gov/aboutdoc/docs/msFactCard_012.pdf.

[3]Compared to the other 10 states in the West Census region, Washington falls near the center of the distribution both in terms of the percent of the total and prison population that is African American (Sakala 2014).

At least four scenarios may generate perceptions consistent with Hypothesis 1: (1) criminal justice actors target African Americans for unduly negative treatment; (2) the valence of individuals' experiences with police and courts varies with socioeconomic status, which, in turn, is correlated with race and ethnicity; (3) experiences with the police and courts involving serious matters are most likely to be perceived negatively, and African Americans are disproportionately likely to interact with justice system actors over serious matters; and (4) Blacks and others view similar experiences differently, with Blacks being more likely to perceive justice system encounters as negative. Our theory is agnostic about these scenarios. Hypothesis 1 pertains to *whether* perceived negative experiences are more abundant among African Americans, not *why*.

The first hypothesis accounts for the valence of socially communicated information about the justice system. If circles of acquaintances are composed randomly with regard to race, then the race and ethnicity of our *respondents* would be uncorrelated with vicarious exposure to positive or negative information; in the aggregate, all racial and ethnic groups would be exposed to similar information. Conversely, if networks exhibit racial and ethnic homophily (and if, as per Hypothesis 1, people's Black social contacts are especially likely to perceive that they have had bad experiences with actors in the justice system), then vicarious exposure to the justice system will vary in valence as a function of the *respondent's* race and ethnicity:

> *H2*: Vicarious exposure to information about negative experiences with police and courts is most prevalent among African Americans.

Vicarious justice experiences should vary by the recipient's race and ethnicity, but should they affect subsequent perceptions? The role of social influence in politics has been recognized since the efforts of the Columbia researchers (e.g., Katz and Lazarsfeld 1955). Beyond its basic social function, social communication provides efficiency for citizens interested in better understanding aspects of the social and political worlds (Huckfeldt and Sprague 1995). When people share information, recipients are exposed to insights that hold the potential to influence their attitudes and behaviors. Political discussion affects political participation, vote preferences, tolerance, and political expertise (e.g., Huckfeldt 2001; Huckfeldt and Sprague 1995; Mutz 2006; Sokhey and McClurg 2012).

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

The norm in work on political discussion is to ask respondents to identify and provide information about three or more discussion partners. The researcher can ask about conversations regarding broad matters such as "important problems" (e.g., Marsden 1987), narrower concerns such as politics (e.g., Huckfeldt and Sprague 1995), specific matters such as politics within the workplace (Mutz and Mondak 2006), or single issues such as educational policy (e.g., Schneider et al. 1997).[4] We adapt these approaches by asking respondents to identify acquaintances who have had encounters with the police or courts. These acquaintances will provide our operational measure of a respondent's justice encounters network.

We focus on what people glean from acquaintances' experiences because we expect such anecdotes to be especially influential. The relaying of anecdotes, or "storytelling" (Mandelbaum 2013), is a central part of conversation.[5] Such tales can be vivid, such as when a neighbor or coworker tells us of the car accident she witnessed, the case she heard while on jury duty, or how she received a warning instead of a ticket from a police officer. Because it is lively, detailed, and comes from a trusted source, storytelling has a privileged position in terms of influence. Walsh (2007) finds that the sharing of anecdotes is a key way people communicate in community groups, and that "narratives of personal experience, particularly of first-hand experience with bearing the burden of discrimination, held a special authority in these groups" (152). We envision comparable effects when anecdotal experiences are shared through casual exchanges:

> *H3*: Exposure to information about acquaintances' justice encounters influences individuals' evaluations of the justice system.

Racial homogeneity in networks, combined with the prevalence of perceived unfavorable experiences among African Americans, dictates that Black respondents' vicarious justice experiences will be especially negative. The efficiencies associated with social communication show why vicarious experiences are expected to influence individuals' assessments of police and courts. Together, the first three hypotheses indicate why the collective effect of vicarious justice experiences should be a widening of the racial divide in evaluations of judicial actors.

[4] For discussion of the attributes of different forms of name generators, including the benefits of more targeted name generators, see Sokhey and Djupe (2014), Klofstad et al. (2013).

[5] Some research suggests that this is particularly true among African Americans; see, for example, Harris-Lacewell (2004).

Our final hypothesis addresses the magnitude of this divide. Learning of acquaintances' bad experiences should be especially influential. "Bad," according to Vohs and Luce (2010, 736), "is stronger than good. . . . [Across a variety of domains,] events that yield negative outcomes have a significantly greater psychological impact than equivalent events that yield positive outcomes." Psychologists have generated abundant evidence that people assign negative information more weight than positive information (e.g., Baumeister et al. 2001). Negative impressions and stereotypes are quicker to form and more resistant to disconfirmation than positive ones (e.g., Skowronski and Carlston 1987).

Negativity biases have been found to operate in the political realm (e.g., Lau 1982; McGraw and Steenbergen 1995; Soroka 2014), including on evaluations of the Supreme Court (Grosskopf and Mondak 1998) and on perceptions of fairness in evaluations of judicial actors (Tyler 1990). People may have positive encounters with police and courts that influence subsequent evaluations, but we expect negative experiences to exert disproportionately strong effects on how police and court officials are evaluated:

H4: Exposure to information about acquaintances' negative justice encounters influences individuals' evaluations of the justice system more strongly than does information about positive justice encounters.

Data and Methods

Data for this study are from the 2012 Justice in Washington State Survey, an Internet survey administered by YouGov. Surveys were completed between June 14 and July 2, 2012. The survey obtained oversamples of Black, Asian, and Latino respondents.[6] The data set includes responses from 611 Whites, 320 respondents who identified themselves as being Asian/Pacific Islander, 305 Latinos, and 288 African Americans.

Because our tasks involve comparisons of the four groups, we retain the oversamples in their unweighted form—that is, group samples are not weighted to reflect Washington's racial and ethnic composition. However, for all analyses, weights calculated using Census marginals for education, age, and gender are employed *within* each group to help ensure that results reflect the attitudes and experiences of members of the respective groups.[7] As with any survey, caution must be exercised in generalizing to the larger population. A related matter is whether there is anything unique about Washington that might skew tests of our theoretical framework. Because Washington has a relatively small African American population, the potential for racial homophily in networks is more limited in Washington than elsewhere. This makes Washington a conservative test case. Conversely, relative to the state's population, the overrepresentation of African Americans in Washington's prisons slightly exceeds the national average. If incarceration rates are a proxy for negative judicial experiences, this would produce a liberal effect with respect to our hypotheses. On balance, with these effects cutting in opposite directions, we see Washington as a reasonable test case.

The survey employed a focused prompt to cue respondents to think about acquaintances who had interacted with police and courts:

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

To help ensure that respondents had specific acquaintances in mind, they were asked to type in the first name or initials of up to three such acquaintances. Overall, 26.1% provided zero names, 18.2% offered one, 15.2% named two, and 40.5% listed three.[8] Respondents were asked up to four follow-up questions per acquaintance: the person's race and ethnicity; whether the encounter was with the police, courts, or both; for police encounters, how the police had behaved, evaluated on a scale ranging from –3

[6]Ten cases are omitted because respondents' ZIP Codes on file either are located in states other than Washington or were entered incompletely. ZIP Codes are not available for 17.6% of respondents.

[7]All results with respect to our hypotheses also are found in replications using the unweighted data.

[8]For readers familiar with research on political discussion, these numbers may seem high. We were not surprised by these marks. First, the prompt we used did not focus on a limited time period. Second, we expect justice encounters to be noteworthy, providing fodder for conversation. Third, encounters with police and courts are sufficiently common for most people to have acquaintances who have had such encounters. For example, over 60 million people interact with the police each year, with the majority of these being traffic stops (Langton and Durose 2011).

(very unfair and disrespectful) to 3 (very fair and respectful); and, for court encounters, how court officials had behaved, using the same scale. We take the average across respondents' acquaintances to produce final scales of respondents' justice encounter networks for the police and courts. These data provide our measures of the valence of police and court encounters, both for individual network members (Hypothesis 1) and for each respondent's network (Hypotheses 2, 3, and 4). Among respondents who named at least one acquaintance with a police encounter, the network mean is 0.06 (s.d. = 1.79, N = 1,062). The corresponding mean for court networks is 0.41 (s.d. = 1.69, N = 958).

The analyses testing Hypotheses 3 and 4 focus on two dependent variables, *evaluations of police* and *evaluations of courts*. These use data from four survey questions included early in the instrument. For police, respondents were asked, "Based on what you have heard or your own experience, how often would you say the police generally treat all people with respect?" and "About how often would you say that the police make fair, impartial (unbiased) decisions in the cases they deal with?" The court battery begins, "Here are some questions about the criminal courts in the U.S. that deal with crimes such as house burglary and physical assault." Except for a reference to courts, the first item has wording identical to the first police question, whereas the second asks, "How often do you think the courts make fair and impartial decisions based on the evidence available to them?" All items used 6-point metrics (0 to 5). Summing the police questions yields a 0 ("never" on both items) to 10 ("always" on both items) scale (mean = 4.80; s.d. = 2.18; r = 0.69). A comparable scale is formed using the two court items (mean = 5.24; s.d. = 2.18; r = 0.70).

Although our account emphasizes vicarious experiences, personal experiences also are expected to be consequential. To measure personal experiences with the police, respondents were asked how many times they had been treated disrespectfully by a police officer, and how many times they were treated unfairly by the police because of their race or ethnic background. Parallel questions were used to measure experience with criminal courts. Responses range from 0 (never) to 4 (seven or more times). Descriptive statistics are as follows: police unfair, mean = 0.87, s.d. = 1.06; police disrespectful, mean = 0.58, s.d. = 1.01; courts unfair, mean = 0.32, s.d. = 0.80; courts disrespectful, mean = 0.31, s.d. = 0.74. The means differ substantially as a function of the race and ethnicity of respondents: on 11 of 12 contrasts, African American respondents report significantly worse personal experiences than do others; on seven of eight tests, Latinos report significantly worse experiences than Whites and Asians; on both measures of disrespectful treatment, Asians report worse experiences than Whites.

Multivariate models include the following as controls: age (mean = 45.03; s.d. = 16.59); gender (1 = female, 0 = male; 49.6% of respondents are female); education (0 = less than high school degree to 5 = postgraduate; mean = 2.22; s.d. = 1.44); marital status (1 = married, 0 = other; 50% of respondents are married); income (an ordinal categorization with a maximum value of 16; mean = 5.97; s.d. = 3.04); employment status (1 = employed full time, 0 = other; 41.1% of respondents are employed full time); importance of religion (0 = not at all important to respondent, 3 = very important; mean = 1.72; s.d. = 1.15); religious attendance (0 = never, 5 = more than once a week; mean = 1.77; s.d. = 1.67); justice encounter network size (0 to 3 acquaintances; mean = 1.70; s.d. = 1.24); and party identification (1 = strong Democrat, 7 = strong Republican; mean = 3.47; s.d. = 1.93).[9] We also include quartile markers for population density.

Exploring Vicarious Effects

Our theoretical framework builds on the assumption that justice encounter networks will exhibit racial and ethnic homophily. Networks, which could include up to three acquaintances, average approximately the same size (1.72 to 1.83) for African Americans, Whites, and Latinos, and are slightly smaller (1.44) for Asians. Homophily is suggested if networks for each racial and ethnic group are dominated by fellow members of that group. Strong evidence is found. For Whites, 84.9% of network members are White. For Asians, 50.0% of network members are Asian. Fellow Latinos account for 50.2% of Latino respondents' network members. Homophily is most noteworthy for African Americans. Although accounting for under 4% of Washington's population, 76.1% of Black respondents' network members are also African Americans.

Acquaintances' Encounters with Police and Courts

Our first hypothesis posits that the experiences of African American network members will be perceived as having been more negative than the experiences of Whites,

[9]Respondents who did not answer the party identification and income items are assigned the scales' middle (PID) or mean (income) values. For both PID and income, indicator variables are included to parse out any effects associated with nonresponse.

TABLE 1 Acquaintances' Encounters with Police and Courts

	Acquaintances' Race/Ethnicity			
	White	Asian	African American	Latino
A. Encounters with police				
(–3 = most negative to 3 = most positive)				
Percent positive encounters (scale values of 1 to 3)	55.3	47.7	25.3	32.2
Percent neutral encounters (0)	10.0	24.9	13.3	12.9
Percent negative encounters (–1 to –3)	34.7	27.4	61.4	54.9
Mean	0.50	0.49	−0.80	−0.49
Standard deviation	2.04	1.71	1.94	1.91
Number of acquaintances	1,150	228	527	294
B. Encounters with courts				
Percent positive encounters (1 to 3)	59.7	59.2	30.9	36.9
Percent neutral encounters (0)	13.2	22.8	16.3	19.4
Percent negative encounters (–1 to –3)	27.1	18.0	52.8	43.7
Mean	0.71	1.00	−0.46	−0.13
Standard deviation	1.89	1.67	1.97	1.82
Number of acquaintances	995	172	405	227

Source: 2012 Justice in Washington State Survey.
Note: A total of 2,644 acquaintances were identified. An acquaintance can appear in both sections of this table if that person's interactions involved both the police and the courts; 102 acquaintances identified by respondents are omitted because they were either identified as being Native American (37) or their race and ethnicity were not provided (65). All means for African Americans are significantly lower than means for the other groups, and all means for Latinos are lower than means for Whites and Asians; the latter two groups do not differ significantly.

Latinos, and Asians. Two points warrant emphasis. First, the focus is the race and ethnicity of the network member, not the respondent. Second, data reflect how acquaintances' experiences were seen by respondents; we do not have reports from the network members themselves. This use of respondent reports is not problematic. People's views of their social contacts tend to be accurate. Huckfeldt and Sprague (1995) show this in the context of perceptions of presidential vote preferences. We assume that justice encounters are vivid and salient to most people, and thus should be at least as likely to be perceived accurately. When speaking with a friend, we likely will get the right take on whether she had a good or bad day in court. Another key point noted by Huckfeldt and Sprague (1995) is that perception underlies influence. If Mary perceives that Max was mistreated by the police, Max most likely would agree. After all, it probably was something Max said that led Mary to perceive that he had been treated poorly. However, even if Max disagrees, Mary's perception of his experience still may influence her evaluations of police. Lastly, the most likely complication with respondent reports is projection—that respondents extrapolate from their own experiences when gauging the experiences of their acquaintances—but all models include controls for personal experience, meaning effects in the multivariate models represent influence over and above any impact of projection.

Respondents named 2,644 acquaintances who had had justice encounters. Analyses pertain to 2,253 encounters with the police and 1,830 with courts. To test Hypothesis 1, the data are aggregated within racial and ethnic categories. We omit 110 who were not identified as being Black, White, Asian, or Latino. Descriptive statistics are reported in Table 1. For each group and target of encounter (police or courts), we report the percentage of experiences identified as positive, neutral, and negative. Beneath these are the mean and standard deviation for the 7-point scale. For instance, for network members who are White, 55.3% of police encounters are positive, 10.0% neutral, and 34.7% negative, with a mean on the 7-point scale of 0.50. On average, police experiences are positive for Whites and Asians, negative for Latinos, and sharply negative for Blacks. Court experiences are more positive than police experiences, but the patterns between the racial groups are identical for police and courts, and the average experiences of Blacks are more than one full point more negative than those of Whites and Asians.

It is when seen together with evidence of network homophily that the data in Table 1 gain their full significance. Due to network homogeneity, a racial gap

necessarily emerges with respect to vicarious experiences. For White and Asian respondents, some 85% of their encounters are with individuals who are themselves Whites and Asians—and who generally have had positive experiences. Conversely, for Latinos, over 60% of network members are Latino or African American. For Blacks, just under 80% of network members are African American or Latino. Hence, vicarious justice encounters most often convey moderately negative information for Latinos, and exceedingly negative information for Blacks.

The Valence of Vicarious Justice Encounters

Our second hypothesis holds that social exposure to information about negative justice experiences is most prevalent among African Americans, a virtual truism now that we have support for our first hypothesis. Still, it will be useful to devise precise estimates of how positive or negative the information is that respondents are exposed to through social contact. To help ensure that we can be confident that vicarious justice encounters truly vary by race and ethnicity, these estimates should be derived from multivariate analyses that also account for other relevant attributes and predispositions.

Network measures are devised separately for police and court encounters by taking the average of the reported encounters of respondents' acquaintances with the police and courts. We control for total number of acquaintances with justice encounters.[10] At question is the extent to which these values vary across groups, and especially whether racial and ethnic differences persist in multivariate specifications.

Results from six regression equations are reported in Table 2. The first models for police and courts include only indicator variables for race and ethnicity, with African American as the excluded category; thus, these test for differences in group means. The second model for each dependent variable adds our control variables. Inclusion of these controls enables determination of whether apparent racial and ethnic differences in vicarious exposure to information about the justice system trace partly to respondents' other attributes. Finally, we estimate a model for each outcome including a control for the respondent's personal experiences with the police and courts.

For police encounters, Whites, Latinos, and Asians report being exposed to more positive information from their acquaintances than are African Americans (and Whites and Asians to more positive information than Latinos), providing support for Hypothesis 2. The pattern across the four racial and ethnic groups is similar irrespective of whether controls are included. Results for court-related networks are similar, although the gap between African Americans and Latinos is now negligible. These differences remain, even when controlling for respondents' own experiences.

What people learn from their acquaintances' encounters with police and courts differs as a function of the race and ethnicity of the individuals themselves. Results in Table 2 reveal the magnitude of these effects and establish that racial and ethnic disparities in vicarious justice experiences persist after introduction of controls for a host of other factors, providing strong support for the second hypothesis.

Evaluations of Judicial Actors

Hypothesis 3 posits that information from people's social networks influences evaluations of police and courts. We test this with focus on assessments of how often police and courts treat people fairly and respectfully. Results of eight ordinary least squares (OLS) regression models are reported in Table 3. For both the police dependent variable (first four models) and the court measure, the first model includes the indicator variables for race and ethnicity, along with our battery of control variables. The second model adds measures of whether respondents themselves have been treated disrespectfully and unfairly. Our central measures, the network averages, are added in the third model, and the network variables are retained in Model 4 while the measures of personal experience are omitted.

We note three results from the police models. First, the coefficients for the network variable are substantively impressive. The dependent variable ranges in value from 0 to 10 and has a standard deviation of 2.18. A shift across the full range of the network measure corresponds with a predicted 2.40-point swing in assessments of the police. Second, personal and vicarious experiences account for a considerable portion of the variation in evaluations of the police and courts. For instance, adding the experiential variables to the baseline model more than doubles the adjusted R^2. Third, personal and vicarious experiences also account for much of the initial racial and ethnic variation seen in the first model. The coefficients for the variables differentiating African Americans from other respondents all drop once we add personal experiences in the second model, and they drop further upon

[10]For now, we focus only on respondents who named acquaintances. Below, when the network measures are used as independent variables, we include all respondents; those who did not name acquaintances who had had police or court encounters receive values of zero on the network measures.

TABLE 2 Determinants of Vicarious Exposure to Positive vs. Negative Information about Police and Courts

	Valence of Police Encounter Networks			Valence of Court Encounter Networks		
	Baseline	With Controls	With Personal Contact	Baseline	With Controls	With Personal Contact
Constant	−0.62	−0.76	0.18	−0.09	−0.44	−0.19
	(0.12)	(0.31)	(0.31)	(0.12)	(0.32)	(0.32)
White	0.99	0.85	0.61	0.68	0.50	0.37
	(0.14)	(0.16)	(0.16)	(0.15)	(0.16)	(0.16)
Asian	1.03	0.96	0.85	0.89	0.77	0.66
	(0.17)	(0.18)	(0.18)	(0.17)	(0.18)	(0.18)
Latino	0.49	0.43	0.32	0.27	0.23	0.20
	(0.16)	(0.17)	(0.17)	(0.17)	(0.18)	(0.17)
Age		0.00	−0.00		0.00	0.00
		(0.00)	(0.00)		(0.00)	(0.00)
Gender		−0.06	−0.35		0.13	0.07
		(0.11)	(0.11)		(0.11)	(0.11)
Education		−0.03	−0.04		−0.04	−0.06
		(0.04)	(0.04)		(0.04)	(0.04)
Marital status		0.26	0.08		0.12	−0.00
		(0.12)	(0.12)		(0.12)	(0.12)
Employment status		−0.27	−0.25		−0.11	−0.18
		(0.12)	(0.11)		(0.12)	(0.12)
Importance of religion		0.02	0.04		0.01	0.04
		(0.07)	(0.07)		(0.07)	(0.07)
Religious attendance		0.03	0.07		0.04	0.04
		(0.05)	(0.05)		(0.05)	(0.05)
Party identification		0.02	0.00		0.03	0.05
		(0.03)	(0.03)		(0.03)	(0.03)
Don't know or missing on party ID		−0.16	−0.12		−0.43	−0.33
		(0.21)	(0.20)		(0.21)	(0.21)
Income		0.05	0.03		0.07	0.08
		(0.02)	(0.02)		(0.02)	(0.02)
Missing or prefer not to say on income		0.53	0.41		0.35	0.27
		(0.20)	(0.19)		(0.20)	(0.20)
Population: 2nd quartile		0.02	−0.04		0.02	−0.00
		(0.17)	(0.16)		(0.17)	(0.17)
Population: 3rd quartile		−0.26	−0.21		−0.01	0.03
		(0.16)	(0.16)		(0.16)	(0.16)
Population: 4th quartile		0.00	−0.03		−0.25	−0.00
		(0.16)	(0.16)		(0.19)	(0.16)
Missing ZIP Code		−0.32	−0.45		−0.24	−0.23
		(0.19)	(0.18)		(0.19)	(0.19)
Justice encounter network size		−0.03	0.05		−0.09	−0.06
		(0.07)	(0.06)		(0.07)	(0.07)

(Continued)

Table 2 Continued

	Valence of Police Encounter Networks			Valence of Court Encounter Networks		
	Baseline	With Controls	With Personal Contact	Baseline	With Controls	With Personal Contact
Respondent treated disrespectfully			−0.11			−0.20
			(0.07)			(0.11)
Respondent treated unfairly			−0.46			−0.32
			(0.07)			(0.10)
Adjusted R^2	0.05	0.07	0.16	0.03	0.05	0.10
N	1,083	1,066	1,045	980	965	950

Source: 2012 Justice in Washington State Survey.
Note: Cell entries are OLS regression coefficients with standard errors in parentheses. The dependent variables range in value from –3 to 3 and capture the average valence, at the network level, of vicarious experiences with police and courts. Cases are included here only if the network includes at least one member. For racial and ethnic classifications, African American is the omitted category.

introduction of the network measure in the third model. Racial and ethnic gaps in evaluations of the police are rooted largely in differences in individuals' personal and vicarious experiences.

Of these three points, the first two also are seen in the court models. However, the residual racial and ethnic gaps shrink only modestly in these models. Even after accounting for personal and vicarious experiences, Blacks remain significantly more critical of courts than are Whites, Asians, and Latinos.[11]

The results in Table 3 provide evidence that vicarious justice experiences matter for appraisals of both police and courts, contributing to racial and ethnic differences in those judgments. We will gauge the substantive magnitude of these effects momentarily. First, the possibility of a negativity bias must be explored.

Positive vs. Negative Vicarious Justice Encounters

Our fourth hypothesis posits that a negativity bias exists when people form evaluations of police and court officials. To test this, we estimate variants of the models in Table 3, but with the average network valence measures split into separate positive and negative scales, and the network size measure decomposed into separate counts of the number of respondents' acquaintances with positive, negative, or neutral experiences. For each of the valence measures, values range from 0 (no network exposure to information with that valence) to 3 (a network of acquaintances with uniformly extreme negative or positive experiences). Network size measures range from 0 (no acquaintances were identified) to 3. The coefficients on the valence and network size measures should produce opposite signs, with positive effects emanating from positive encounters and negative effects resulting from perceived unfairness and disrespect. The hypothesis is supported if the absolute values of the coefficients for negative encounters exceed those for positive encounters.

Both models in Table 4 reveal negativity effects. This is especially evident when looking at the network size variables. Adding another acquaintance with a positive experience with the police or courts appears to have no effect on respondents' evaluations (although receiving consistently positive information about these encounters does appear to move attitudes), whereas the effects of adding another acquaintance with a negative experience are large in both models. Negative vicarious experiences strongly influence individuals' assessments of judicial actors, and Blacks have the most negative vicarious experiences.

To summarize the impact of vicarious experiences on racial gaps in evaluations of police and courts, we calculate predicted values on the dependent variables under four scenarios. In each, estimates draw on coefficients in Table 4, with all variables except race and ethnicity, and personal and vicarious experiences, held constant at mean

[11]The coefficients for the vicarious experience variables indicate that vicarious effects exist beyond the influence of projection based on respondents' own experiences, as the models control for personal experience. Still, it remains possible that the bulk of would-be vicarious effects are rooted in projection, and the 0.40 coefficients in Table 3 merely represent what remains once we control for personal experience. To test this, the fourth models for each dependent variable exclude personal experience. If the network variables mostly capture projection, their coefficients should skyrocket once the personal experience variables are removed. As can be seen, this does not occur.

TABLE 3 Impact of Vicarious Justice Encounters on Evaluations of Police and Courts

	Evaluations of Police				Evaluations of Courts			
Constant	2.73	3.99	4.07	3.28	3.74	4.30	4.59	4.16
	(0.28)	(0.29)	(0.29)	(0.27)	(0.28)	(0.29)	(0.29)	(0.28)
Respondent treated disrespectfully		−0.15	−0.13			−0.45	−0.39	
		(0.08)	(0.08)			(0.11)	(0.11)	
Respondent treated unfairly		0.44	−0.27			−0.15	−0.04	
		(0.07)	(0.07)			(0.10)	(0.10)	
Vicarious experience			0.40	0.46			0.41	0.44
			(0.04)	(0.03)			(0.04)	(0.04)
Justice encounter network size			−0.11	−0.15			−0.13	−0.13
			(0.04)	(0.04)			(0.04)	(0.04)
White	0.86	0.51	0.33	0.54	0.97	0.78	0.68	0.82
	(0.16)	(0.17)	(0.16)	(0.15)	(0.17)	(0.17)	(0.16)	(0.16)
Asian	0.68	0.41	0.14	0.27	1.10	0.97	0.74	0.83
	(0.18)	(0.18)	(0.17)	(0.17)	(0.18)	(0.18)	(0.18)	(0.18)
Latino	0.85	0.59	0.49	0.67	0.86	0.75	0.70	0.79
	(0.18)	(0.18)	(0.17)	(0.17)	(0.18)	(0.18)	(0.18)	(0.18)
Age	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.00	0.00	0.00
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Gender	−0.25	−0.48	−0.35	−0.21	−0.13	−0.26	−0.25	−0.15
	(0.11)	(0.11)	(0.11)	(0.11)	(0.11)	(0.11)	(0.11)	(0.11)
Education	0.03	0.01	0.03	0.05	0.02	−0.01	0.01	0.04
	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)
Marital status	0.19	0.13	0.11	0.13	0.18	0.10	0.11	0.16
	(0.12)	(0.12)	(0.11)	(0.11)	(0.12)	(0.12)	(0.12)	(0.12)
Employment status	−0.02	0.02	0.08	0.07	0.27	0.22	0.28	0.32
	(0.12)	(0.12)	(0.11)	(0.11)	(0.12)	(0.12)	(0.12)	(0.12)
Importance of religion	0.14	0.11	0.11	0.13	0.18	0.20	0.20	0.18
	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.07)
Church attendance	0.05	0.08	0.05	0.03	−0.01	0.01	−0.01	−0.02
	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.05)
Party identification	0.21	0.19	0.19	0.20	0.04	0.05	0.03	0.04
	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)
Don't know or missing on party ID	0.38	0.37	0.40	0.42	0.07	0.10	0.17	0.16
	(0.21)	(0.20)	(0.19)	(0.19)	(0.21)	(0.21)	(0.20)	(0.20)
Income	0.01	−0.01	−0.02	−0.00	0.00	0.00	−0.02	−0.02
	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)
Missing or prefer not to say on income	−0.03	−0.17	−0.31	−0.23	−0.31	−0.35	−0.44	−0.43
	(0.19)	(0.19)	(0.18)	(0.18)	(0.20)	(0.20)	(0.19)	(0.19)
Population: 2nd quartile	−0.28	−0.36	−0.34	−0.29	−0.02	−0.11	−0.10	−0.02
	(0.17)	(0.17)	(0.16)	(0.16)	(0.17)	(0.17)	(0.17)	(0.17)
Population: 3rd quartile	−0.18	−0.21	−0.15	−0.09	−0.08	−0.09	−0.08	−0.07
	(0.17)	(0.16)	(0.16)	(0.16)	(0.17)	(0.17)	(0.16)	(0.17)
Population: 4th quartile	−0.11	−0.17	−0.15	−0.10	−0.33	−0.35	−0.33	−0.31
	(0.17)	(0.16)	(0.16)	(0.16)	(0.17)	(0.17)	(0.16)	(0.16)
Missing ZIP Code	−0.38	−0.46	−0.32	−0.25	−0.34	−0.32	−0.21	−0.21
	(0.19)	(0.18)	(0.17)	(0.18)	(0.19)	(0.19)	(0.18)	(0.18)

(Continued)

TABLE 3 Continued

	Evaluations of Police				Evaluations of Courts			
Adjusted R^2	.11	.16	.23	.21	.05	.08	.14	.12
N	1,479	1,442	1,442	1,479	1,473	1,443	1,443	1,473

Source: 2012 Justice in Washington State Survey.
Note: Cell entries are OLS regression coefficients with standard errors in parentheses. The dependent variables range in value from 0 to 10 and represent the extent to which respondents assess police and courts.

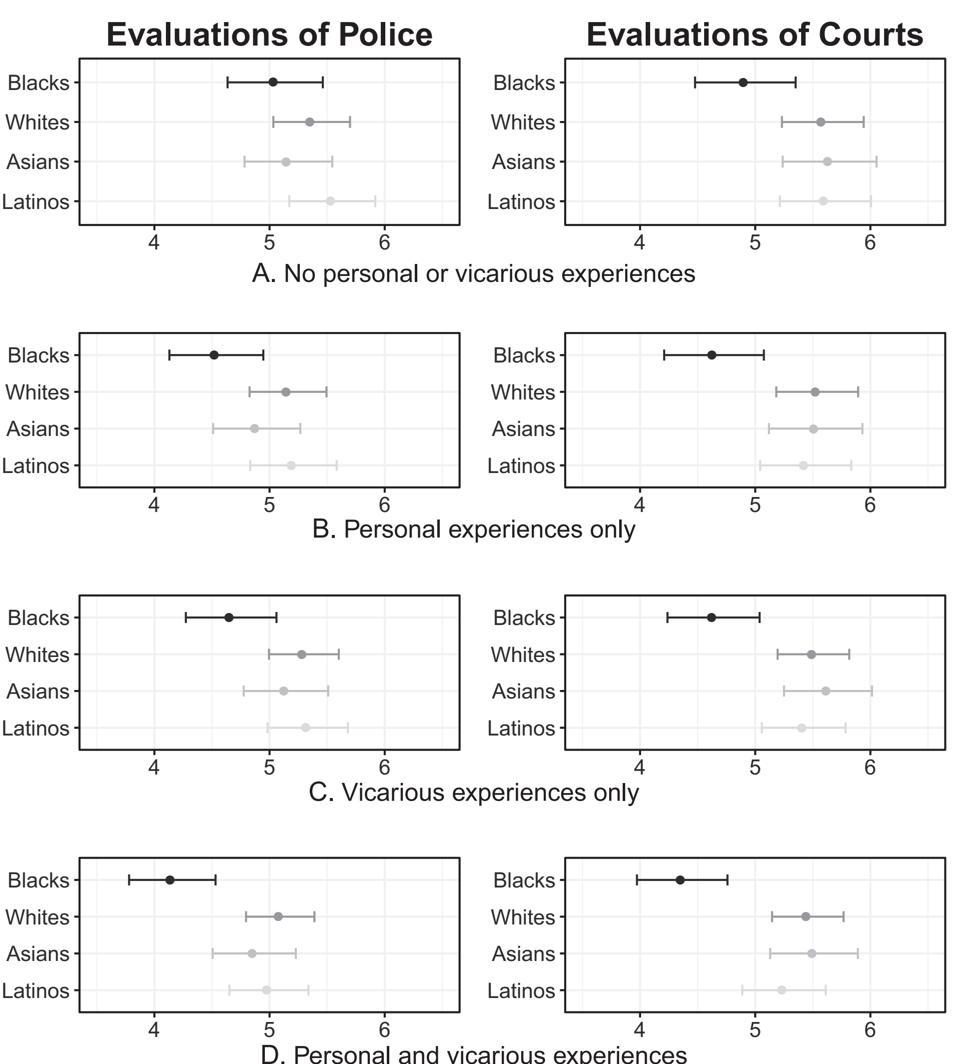
TABLE 4 Negativity Effects and the Impact of Vicarious Justice Encounters on Evaluations of Police and Courts

	Police	Courts
Constant	4.04 (0.29)	4.57 (0.29)
Respondent treated disrespectfully	−0.14 (0.08)	−0.41 (0.11)
Respondent treated unfairly	−0.25 (0.07)	−0.02 (0.10)
Vicarious experience—positive encounters	0.26 (0.08)	0.21 (0.09)
Vicarious experience—negative encounters	−0.33 (0.09)	−0.27 (0.11)
Network size—positive encounters	0.01 (0.10)	0.06 (0.11)
Network size—negative encounters	−0.21 (0.10)	−0.29 (0.13)
Network size—neutral encounters	0.03 (0.06)	−0.10 (0.06)
White	0.32 (0.16)	0.67 (0.16)
Asian	0.11 (0.17)	0.73 (0.18)
Latino	0.50 (0.17)	0.70 (0.18)
Age	0.01 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)
Gender	−0.36 (0.11)	−0.25 (0.11)
Education	0.02 (0.04)	0.01 (0.04)
Marital status	0.12 (0.11)	0.11 (0.12)
Employment status	0.11 (0.11)	0.28 (0.12)
Importance of religion	0.11 (0.07)	0.20 (0.07)
Church attendance	0.05 (0.04)	−0.01 (0.05)
Party identification	0.19 (0.03)	0.04 (0.03)
Don't know or missing on party ID	0.39 (0.19)	0.18 (0.20)
Income	−0.02 (0.02)	−0.02 (0.02)
Missing or prefer not to say on income	−0.29 (0.18)	−0.41 (0.19)
Population: 2nd quartile	−0.34 (0.16)	−0.12 (0.17)
Population: 3rd quartile	−0.14 (0.16)	−0.07 (0.16)
Population: 4th quartile	−0.15 (0.16)	−0.33 (0.16)
Missing ZIP Code	−0.33 (0.18)	−0.22 (0.19)
Adjusted R^2	.23	.14
N	1,442	1,443

Source: 2012 Justice in Washington State Survey.
Note: Cell entries are OLS regression coefficients with standard errors in parentheses. The dependent variables are the same as in Table 3.

or modal values. In the first scenario, we assume that respondents have had no personal or vicarious encounters. The second scenario adds in personal experiences. We do so using the racial and ethnic group averages on the two personal experience measures, with these averages multiplied by the appropriate coefficients from Table 4. For example, for the variable regarding instances in which the respondent has been treated unfairly by the police, the mean for Whites is 0.71, versus 1.28 for Blacks. Multiplication of the group means by the –0.25 coefficient in Table 4 yields an average reduction in evaluations of police of 0.18 for Whites and 0.32 for Blacks. The third scenario adds vicarious experiences but assumes the respondent has had no personal experiences. Here, we also

FIGURE 1 Estimated Effects of Personal and Vicarious Experiences on Respondents' Evaluations of Police and Courts



Note: Estimates are derived from regression results reported in Table 4. For personal and vicarious effects, estimates are calculated using the average valence of personal and vicarious experiences for members of the respective racial and ethnic groups. Vicarious experiences reflect both average network valence and size. Higher values indicate more positive evaluations. Scales on the dependent variables range from 0 to 10.

use the racial and ethnic group averages, this time for the positive and negative network measures, drawing on only those cases in which respondents named at least one acquaintance reporting a police or court encounter. The final scenario assumes respondents have had both personal and vicarious experiences equal to the average for their respective racial and ethnic groups.

Estimates are depicted in Figure 1. In the upper left section of the figure, Blacks' views of the police are modestly more critical than those of other respondents when personal and vicarious experiences are absent; the Black-White difference is 0.32 points. When personal experience is added in the second section, the gaps widen, including an increase to 0.62 points when Blacks and Whites are contrasted. Similarly large disparities emerge in the third section, where estimates are for respondents with no personal experience with police, but with vicarious experiences typical of those for members of their respective racial and ethnic groups. Here, the Black-White difference is 0.63 points, suggesting *vicarious experiences contribute as much to the Black-White divide in perceptions of the police as do personal experiences.* In the final section, we account for both personal and vicarious experiences. The Black-White disparity is now 0.94 points, nearly

triple the gap for respondents with neither personal nor vicarious experiences. A roughly similar pattern is seen for opinions about courts in the estimates on the right side of Figure 1: Vicarious experiences again exert as much or more impact as personal experiences, and the Black-White gap in the bottom section reaches 1.09 points.

It is noteworthy that baseline estimates—racial gaps for respondents with neither personal nor vicarious experiences—are larger for assessments of courts than the police. Once personal and vicarious differences are set aside, African Americans are only modestly more critical of the police than are individuals from the other groups. Experiences also matter for views of the courts, but estimates in the upper right section of Figure 1 suggest that racial disparities run deeper, with roots beyond the experiences of individuals and their acquaintances.

Inferring Social Influence

We have assumed that any correspondence between our network measures and respondents' views of police and courts reflects the causal influence of the former on the latter. In actuality, the definitive establishment of social influence is not possible with observational data (Huckfeldt et al. 2013, 674–78). In the present case, the observed widening of the racial gaps in perceptions of police and courts stems from three key forces: (1) people's African American acquaintances are disproportionately likely to be perceived as having had negative experiences with police and courts, (2) African American respondents are disproportionately likely to have African American acquaintances, and (3) what people perceive about their acquaintances' experiences influences their own views of police and courts. Compared to many instances of possible social influence, we see a stronger prima facie case here, as we are aware of no meaningful controversy pertaining to any of these claims. Nonetheless, it remains conceivable that the racial gap in vicarious experiences is somehow illusory. One possibility is that African American respondents see the justice system as discriminatory and thus *assume* that their African American acquaintances have been treated unfairly and disrespectfully by police and court officials. A related possibility is that respondents who hold negative views of the justice system find it easiest to call to mind acquaintances who have had bad experiences.

The first scenario presupposes that Black respondents exaggerate the poor experiences of their Black friends. An indirect test is possible by considering only the views of Whites, Asians, and Latinos. If these respondents report that their African American acquaintances are treated disproportionately unfairly by the police and courts, their views would lend credence to those reported by Black respondents. Non-Black respondents named 153 Black acquaintances with police encounters, and 117 with court encounters. Of these, 61% and 54%, respectively, were reported to be negative. In contrast, among these respondents' White and Asian acquaintances,[12] the results are 32% negative for police encounters and 26% negative for court encounters. Hence, there is consensus among all respondents that African American acquaintances have been treated especially poorly by judicial actors. Results with respect to a widening of the racial gap are not the consequence of Black respondents seeing a different reality than Whites, Asians, and Latinos. Instead, because of homophily, Black respondents vicariously *experience* a different reality.

The second scenario is that respondents who view the justice system negatively find it relatively easy to call to mind acquaintances who have had negative experiences. Here, rather than social influence, our results would signal an accessibility effect. An indirect test is again possible. If we account for the possibility that responses on our dependent variables drive what respondents recall, then we can test whether any signs remain of a racial gap in acquaintances' experiences. To do this, we focus only on respondents who reported neutral or positive opinions on our dependent measures, the evaluations of police and courts. Among these respondents, 40% report that their Black acquaintances had negative experiences with the police, and 34% had bad experiences with the courts. For White and Asian acquaintances, the results are, respectively, 23% and 22% for police experiences and 21% and 15% for court experiences. The experiences of respondents' African American acquaintances are disproportionately negative, even among respondents whose personal views of the police and courts are favorable.

As a final test, we make use of four 101-point scales that ask respondents how fair the justice system is to each of the four racial and ethnic groups under consideration. Using these data, we selected only those respondents who feel that Blacks are *not* treated more unfairly by the justice system than all other groups. We then examine the reported experiences of these respondents' Black and non-Black network members. These respondents report that 53% of their Black network members' police experiences were negative, and that 49% of their court experiences were negative. The corresponding figures for the remainder of network members are 36% for police

[12]We omit Latino acquaintances. In Table 1, the experiences of Latino acquaintances were more positive than those of Blacks, but considerably more negative than those of Whites and Asians.

and 29% for courts. Hence, even among respondents who are not prone to assume that African Americans are treated more unfairly by the justice system than are members of all other racial and ethnic groups, the reported experiences of these respondents' Black network members are more negative than the reported experience of their other network members.

We believe the present case is highly compelling. No matter how we disaggregate our data, perceived negative encounters are most common among respondents' African American associates. The most plausible interpretation is that, in actuality, Blacks are disproportionately likely to be treated unfairly and disrespectfully in their encounters with police and court officials. If there is any degree of racial and ethnic homogeneity in people's networks, and if respondents are not oblivious to the experiences of their acquaintances, then the consequence of vicarious experience will be a widening of the racial gap in perceptions of the justice system.

Conclusions

The racial divide in perceptions of police and courts conceivably could be traced to numerous factors. In this study, we have emphasized the role of vicarious experience. In this account, a chief reason many African Americans express characteristically negative views of police and courts is the information they have obtained about their acquaintances' experiences. The encounters we have highlighted concern matters of process. If people understand their acquaintances have been treated unfairly or disrespectfully by justice officials, they will be more critical of those actors.

Three points warrant emphasis. First, although we have shown that our framework helps in understanding racial divides in views of police and courts, race plays no *direct* role in the judgmental process we have outlined. Our third hypothesis posits that exposure to information about acquaintances' experiences influences individuals' evaluations of the justice system. Race plays no necessary role in this hypothesis. This same process could be seen in a racially homogeneous context.[13] Vicarious effects contribute to racial disparities in views of police and courts because of two prior dynamics. The first is racial and ethnic homophily in network composition. Second, perceived experiences with police and courts differ dramatically as a function of race and ethnicity. Across all racial and ethnic groups, our respondents report that their African American acquaintances receive the worst treatment in the justice system.[14] Given racial homogeneity in network composition, it follows that African American respondents are vicariously exposed to disproportionately more negative information than are Whites, Latinos, and Asians.

A second point we wish to emphasize is that the present results likely understate the experiential bases of evaluations of judicial actors. Our measures of vicarious experiences provide information only on immediate acquaintances, and only about three individuals. The measures omit information acquired secondhand. They may capture what Max told Mary about Max's experience, but not what Max told Mary about his cousin's experience, and not what Mary learned from the media. Also, over 40% of respondents named three acquaintances who had had justice encounters, suggesting that future work should seek to represent network content even more broadly.

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

[13]The key point is that what differs among racial and ethnic groups is the valence of the information to which they are exposed, not the processes by which information is used to guide subsequent judgments. We have no basis to hypothesize process differences (e.g., that Whites care about personal experiences but not vicarious ones, whereas Latinos care only about vicarious experiences). However, as a post hoc check, we ran models separately by group. No noteworthy differences emerged with respect to our hypotheses. For instance, in Table 3, the network measures produce coefficients of 0.40 and 0.41, respectively, in the police and court models. When estimated separately by group, the police network coefficients are 0.41 (Whites), 0.32 (Asians), 0.37 (Blacks), and 0.35 (Latinos); the court coefficients are 0.44 (Blacks), 0.43 (Latinos), 0.33 (Whites), and 0.53 (Asians).

[14]As we emphasized earlier, the perceived poor treatment of African Americans within the justice system *may* reflect actual unfairness and disrespect on the basis of race, but other scenarios, ones rooted in factors such as the severity of the incidents in question, also may underlie these perceptions. Put differently, both our theoretical account and our empirical analyses start with what is perceived, *not* with the forces fueling these perceptions.

Moving forward, the nuances of justice encounter networks require greater scrutiny. The specific effects identified in this study are far from the final word on the vicarious bases of justice perceptions. In the political discussion literature, early findings of discussant influence on the vote choice gave rise to a wealth of research regarding different types of dyadic relationships, the frequency of interaction between discussion partners, the significance of exposure to crosscutting views, and so on. That history offers a model for future research on the social bases of evaluations of judicial actors.[15] What we know thus far is that vicarious experiences influence people's appraisals, and in a manner that accentuates racial gaps in those assessments. This initial evidence points to the likely value of more nuanced explorations regarding what specific sorts of information about police and courts are communicated, and what characteristics of discussant relationships moderate this form of social influence.

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[15] Our data permit some more specific tests inspired by past work on political discussion. One test pertains to the intimacy of dyadic relationships. If first-named acquaintances are more closely linked to respondents and if intimacy matters for the strength of social influence, then network effects should be strongest for first-named acquaintances. We find evidence consistent with this for courts, but not for police. A related possibility is that group cohesiveness magnifies social influence. In this scenario, network members from the respondent's own racial or ethnic group should be more influential than members from other groups. In contrast with this hypothesis, our tests yielded strong evidence that network members from all racial and ethnic groups are equally influential.

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Supporting Information

Additional Supporting Information may be found in the online version of this article at the publisher's website:

Table A1: Descriptive Statistics