

**Racial Profiling or Racist Profiling?**  
**Perception and Opinion on the Profiling of Arabs and Blacks**

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## Introduction

America is consumed by race. Race figures into the most mundane of everyday behaviors and the most monumental of historic changes. Many Americans believe that *racism*, or animosity toward members of a distinct racial or ethnic group, severely impinges the lives of minorities, particularly African Americans. There is probably no area of contemporary American life where perceptions and accusations of racism have greater gravity and volatility than in the criminal justice system (CJS). Four of the most sensational and highly-publicized trials of the past ten years – the Rodney King, O.J. Simpson, Amadou Diallo, and Abner Louima cases – all involved accusations of racially-motivated police misconduct. Civil unrest in Cincinnati ignited during the summer of 2001 after the shooting of an unarmed Black suspect by White officers and subsequent publicity about the number of Black suspects who have suffered a similar fate. Meanwhile, debate simmers over the prevalence and legitimacy of “racial profiling.” While much of the attention in recent years has been devoted to racial profiling of young Black males, this practice has been identified with respect to Hispanics and Asian Americans as well. Most recently, the events of September 11th and beyond have brought “ethnic profiling” of Arab Americans into public view.

These incidents, policies, and outcomes all involve strong, *but by no means universal*, claims of racism. Indeed, at the heart of each controversy is *whether and to what extent* racism caused or contributed to these phenomena. We are engaged in a broad study of perceptions of racism in the criminal justice system. The present paper reports on one part of that project: attitudes toward “racial profiling” of Blacks and “ethnic profiling” of Arabs following the September 11th terrorist attack. We report on a series of experiments that examined college student opinions toward these two law enforcement practices, including whether or not they are perceived as racist. We examine individual predispositions that might be related to these attitudes, and conduct an experimental manipulation designed to see whether participants see parallels between racial profiling and ethnic profiling.

Historically, the African American community has had an uneasy relationship with law enforcement. During the hearings of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders (Kerner Commission) in 1967, one issue that came up repeatedly was “the stopping of Negroes on foot or in cars without obvious basis” (Harris 1999). Since then, the relationship between African Americans and law enforcement has become perhaps even more contentious. Many would argue that the root of the problem continues to be racial profiling, a topic of increasing public debate and legislative action. States like Maryland, Minnesota, and New Jersey enacted laws to document the racial characteristics of those stopped by the police. Citing the need for biracial coalitions to rally against this practice, members of Congress such as Russ Feingold and John Conyers sponsored bills that demanded a thorough investigation of racial profiling, with the ultimate goal its abolishment. Still, the practice continues, as do the complaints: “Six years after the ACLU forced the Maryland State Police to become the first major police agency in the country to collect data on highway traffic stops...Maryland troopers continue to stop and search minority drivers at rates higher than their numbers on the highway can explain” (Montgomery 2001).

Blacks and Whites differ greatly in their perceptions of the frequency of racial profiling. Participants in a 1999 Gallup poll were asked the question:

It has been reported that some police officers stop motorists of certain racial and ethnic groups because police officers believe that these groups are more likely than others to

commit certain types of crimes. Do you believe that this practice known as “racial profiling” is widespread or not?

77% of Blacks said that racial profiling is widespread, compared to 56% of Whites. When asked this question again in February of 2000, 84% of Blacks and 54% of Whites believed that racial profiling was widespread (Newport 2000). This dramatic difference in beliefs and perceptions is echoed in the views of Blacks and Whites on the racial fairness of the criminal justice system more generally (Newport 2000). This racial divergence in perceptions extends to personal experience with law enforcement of. When asked the question, *Have you ever felt that you were stopped by the police just because of your race or ethnic background?*, 38% of Blacks responded affirmatively in comparison to 4% of Whites.

It is possible that the scorn within the Black community toward racial profiling may heighten this group's sensitivity and sympathy to Arab-Americans, and hence their distaste for ethnic profiling. In the aftermath of September 11<sup>th</sup>, various Black political elites at the national level lobbied against profiling practices aimed at Arabs, which they viewed as a fundamental threat to citizens' civil rights and liberties. Black leaders such as the Reverend Al Sharpton and Louis Farrakhan denounced the profiling of all people of color. Rev. Sharpton argued that, “We have a common adversary, a common enemy... so we should have a common struggle.” Sharpton's sentiments speak to the belief amongst various leaders and organizations that the common enemy is government-supported discrimination that further oppresses people of color. As a result, many of these leaders rejected efforts to expand the government's authority in this respect. On the other hand, a very influential cadre of national Black leaders have raised doubts about the need to embrace the plight of Arab Americans who feel discriminated against. Rev. Jesse Jackson, Sr., who led numerous marches and boycotts to bring attention to the issue of racial profiling (particularly DWB—driving while Black), suggested that Blacks should support the government's efforts to protect its citizens from future attacks. Aside from offering to go to Afghanistan and meet with the Taliban, Jackson did little to encourage tolerance and understanding of the plight of Arabs in this country. Reflecting this hesitance, Black members of Congress such as Maxine Waters, Juanita Millender-McDonald, and Jesse Jackson, Jr. all supported increasing the government's power by voting for the Patriot Act of 2001.

Several factors mitigate interethnic solidarity among ordinary citizens as well. Competition for scarce resources has been shown to limit Black-Hispanic solidarity, for example (Welch, Karnig, and Eribes 1983; Mollenkopf 1990). Isolation of minority communities from one another may also prevent feelings of common interest (Dyer, Vedlitz, and Worchel 1989). Arab and African Americans have a history of contentious relations predating September 11<sup>th</sup>. Much like the battle between Koreans and Blacks in Los Angeles in the 1990's, Blacks in cities like Detroit, New York, Chicago, and Washington, DC have expressed their distrust of Arab merchants who they feel disrespect and exploit their communities. This tension has erupted into a number of violent clashes between the two groups, including confrontations between the Arab merchants and Black customers in Detroit just prior to September 11th. In August of 2001, several Black civil rights organizations across the country organized boycotts of Arab-owned stores in support of African Americans living in Detroit. The boycott came in the wake of numerous violent encounters between Arab merchants and Black customers that included the beating death of a Black father by two Yemeni immigrants, as well as an assault on a Black teenager by an Arab gas station owner (Coleman 2001). As a result of these incidents, many Black community leaders and organizations have cautioned against fighting for the rights of

Arabs that they believe have so often disregarded the rights and dignity of African Americans in their community. Black leaders have also noted the reluctance of Arab community organizations to support Black efforts to fight against racial profiling prior to the September attacks. Reverend Wendell Anthony cautioned Black community that, "...we cannot spend all of our energy concerned with our Arab-American brothers when at the same time they do not express the same concerns about us" (Jeffers 2001).

While the events of September 11<sup>th</sup> have perhaps magnified existing Arab-Black tensions, they might paradoxically have eased the historic difficulties between the Black and White communities. A New York Times/CBS News Poll (Murphy and Halbfinger 2002) reported that many New Yorkers perceive a marked change in race relations since 9/11. In particular, 53% of Blacks, and 69% of White respondents indicated that racial relations in their city were good. Further, respondents also agreed that people in New York City were less likely to overreact to perceived prejudices and injustices. Though the authors use these numbers to suggest a widespread change in tolerance, many Middle Eastern respondents indicated an increased sense of alienation and uneasiness since the attacks. In other words, it is conceivable that Blacks see their interests aligned more with Whites than with Arab-Americans. As patriotic Americans, Blacks may believe that they are every bit the target that White Americans are, and their rage against the attackers may equal Whites'.

Perceptions of racism vary considerably between the races, but also *within* racial categories, especially in the White community. Personal racial prejudice might be an important contributor to such judgments. Racial norms in America have changed dramatically over the last 50 years, with overt racism now strongly condemned in all but the most isolated pockets of American society (Schuman, Steeh, Bobo, and Krysan 1997). Some scholars, however, see the rise of a "modern" form of prejudice that combines negative feelings toward Blacks with a moralistic resentment toward Black claims of poor treatment and demands for justice and equality (Kinder and Sanders 1996). And while racism *per se* is anathema, America remains divided over the kinds of incidents, behaviors, and conditions that qualify for that abhorrent label. Many scholars argue that expressions of racial prejudice have become *covert*, concealed beneath an ostensibly nonracial veneer (Mendelberg 2001). Racism, in other words, is often in the eye of the beholder. Precisely because racism is so often hidden, and also because definitions of the concept vary, the same phenomenon can reinforce radically different prior expectations. Indeed, some scholars conceptualize the denial of continuing racism as a principle component of modern prejudice (Entman and Rojecki 2000). Such modern racists look upon claims of racism as opportunistic and self-serving. Other scholars have characterized much of White opinion towards Blacks as *ambivalent* -- combining egalitarian sympathies with resentment and fear (Katz and Hass 1988; Dovidio and Gaertner 1986). Racially ambivalent Whites are outraged by clear, unmistakable examples of racial prejudice, but are wary of Black claims for "special treatment" and unjustified accusations of racism. As one scholarly team puts it, "Everyone has been accused by someone of racism nowadays" (Sniderman et al. 1993).

The controversy over racial profiling is perhaps the perfect arena where sensitivities and suspicions about racial prejudice drive perceptions. While some see any consideration of race in police work as potential, if not actual, racism, others, including the police, see it as rational law enforcement (Kennedy 1997). As one police officer put it, "Why shouldn't I look at race when I'm looking for crime? It is no state secret that Blacks commit a disproportionate amount of crime, so 'racial profiling' is simply good police work" (Goldberg 1999).

As much as individual factors contribute to perceptions of racism, situational variables also play a critical role. Not every law enforcement practice that affects the races differentially is condemned as racist. The circumstances and precise details of a behavior can be critical in determining whether it is seen as a legitimate means of protecting the public, or an unfair expression of latent prejudice. The power of circumstances has been made especially vivid in the aftermath of the September 11<sup>th</sup> terrorist attacks. African-Americans, in particular, feel pulled in different directions by safety concerns, patriotic rage, and skepticism toward any law enforcement practice that presumes guilt based on racial or ethnic heritage. When asked about someone of Middle Eastern descent boarding the same aircraft as him, a Black man stated, “I’d be nervous. It sickens me that I feel that way, but it’s the real world.” For Whites living in a post-September 11th world, racial profiling of African-Americans may seem less urgent and legitimate, compared to the suddenly more vivid and realistic threat of terrorism. On the other hand, thinking about profiling of Arabs *in comparison to* profiling of Blacks may make the parallels too obvious to overlook, and skepticism towards one could affect feelings toward the other.

In a simple but powerful experiment on the influence of context, Hyman and Sheatsley (1950) showed that opinion on a national security issue was profoundly affected merely by the order in which the questions were asked in a survey. Hyman and Sheatsley asked two questions: (1) whether respondents favored or opposed allowing reporters from Communist countries to visit the United States to report on events taking place here; and (2) whether respondents felt that Communist countries should admit American reporters to report on events taking place in those countries. Opinion was much more favorable toward allowing Communist reporters into the United States when that question appeared after the parallel question about American reporters in Communist countries, rather than when it was asked first.<sup>1</sup> Apparently, asking the question about American reporters first *primed* a norm of reciprocity or fairness, forcing respondents to extend the same courtesy to Communist reporters, for fear of appearing hypocritical.

We drew from this simple demonstration to create our own research design. Participants were asked a parallel set of questions concerning their attitudes about profiling of Arabs, and profiling of Blacks. We randomly manipulated the order of the sets, so that approximately half of the respondents received the set of questions about Blacks first, and the remaining respondents received the set of questions about Arabs first. We assumed that, regardless of order, there would be more support for profiling Arabs than for profiling Blacks. With this in mind, if respondents perceive parallels between the two scenarios, then we predict that support for profiling of Arabs should be lower when it follows the set of questions about Blacks than when it precedes the questions about Blacks. Given their group’s history, if Black respondents feel a special urgency to remain consistent in their judgments of these two scenarios, then the effect of the order manipulation should be magnified for this group.

The psychological literature on social judgment makes a strong case that opinions and other subjective impressions are powerfully influenced by social context (Manis, Nelson, and Shedler 1988). In particular, the presence of a strong comparative standard may influence perceptions, judgments, and evaluations of objects. When two social objects are seen as belonging to the same category, *assimilation* of the target to the standard may occur. When, however, they are judged as belonging to two different categories, *contrast* might take place, with perceivers exaggerating the differences between the standard and target (Schwarz and Bless

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<sup>1</sup> Schuman and Presser (1981) replicated this effect in the 1970s.

1992). To the extent that individuals see racial profiling of Blacks and ethnic profiling of Arabs as the essentially the same kind of practice, they should be equally approving (or disapproving) of both. On the other hand, if they perceive them as radically different categories of law enforcement practice, they will probably find profiling of Arabs to be more acceptable when they have been “primed” to think of racial profiling of Blacks than when they have not been primed.

Our research design also incorporates individual difference variables that, regardless of question order, may contribute to opinions towards profiling. In particular, we measure participants racial/ethnic identity, level of racial prejudice, perceptions of threat from Arabs and Blacks, and general opinions about police and values relating to crime punishment. Our goal is to examine the individual and combined effects of situational variables, represented by question order and individual variables on attitudes toward profiling.

## **Methods**

### **Overview**

Three separate experiments were run, each using student participants. The same basic design was applied in each experiment, with some variations in the instruments and procedures. For each experiment, participants expressed their opinions about ethnic profiling for people of Arab descent, and racial profiling for African-Americans. They also reported whether or not they found these practices to be racist. The order of presentation of the Arab and Black question sets was randomly manipulated. The second and third experiments added a few more detailed questions about these practices, as well as a general racial prejudice scale. Each experiment included a set of demographic and political attitude questions, as well as a racial group identification scale.

Extra efforts were made to recruit Black participants, however none of the three studies by itself contains enough Black participants for statistically meaningful racial comparisons. We therefore pooled the data for several of the analyses, leaving us with 52 African-American participants. In light of this data analysis strategy, we take a slightly unorthodox step of describing the methods for all three experiments first before moving on to the results.

### **Experiment one**

Participants were undergraduate students who were compensated with a small amount of extra credit. Participants were told that the study concerned the quality of news coverage provided by the Internet. This cover story concealed our primary interest in opinions about race and law enforcement. The experiment was presented via an interactive computer program. Participants were shown a mockup of the CNN web site. They first viewed 20 news photographs depicting scenes related to the September 11th attacks (horrified onlookers; rescue workers; a candlelight vigil; etc.).<sup>2</sup> Then they answered a few filler questions concerning these pictures. Next they answered two set of questions about profiling: one set about racial profiling of African-Americans, the second about ethnic profiling of people of Arab descent. The order of the sets was randomized so that approximately half of the participants received the racial

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<sup>2</sup> These images were systematically manipulated as an independent experimental factor. Some participants saw relatively aggressive images depicting the attacks and the American military response. Other images depicted humanitarian gestures involving individuals of all races and ethnicities (including Arab-Americans). The analysis revealed that this manipulation had no detectable effect on attitudes relating to profiling of Blacks or Arabs, and so we will not consider it further.

profiling set first, and the other half received the ethnic profiling set first. The first question within each set asked how common participants believe the practice to be; the second question asked if they approved or disapproved of the practice; the final question asked if they found the practice racist or not (see Appendix A for the complete set of items). Lastly, participants answered a set of questions measuring relevant demographic and political variables, including political ideology and party identification. They also answered a question inquiring about the balance between security and civil liberties concerns. Participants indicated their racial and ethnic identity, and completed a four item strength of racial identification scale (Prentice and Miller 1999). At the end of the experiment, participants were debriefed about the true nature of the study, and were dismissed.

### Experiment two

The design and procedures of experiment were the same as in experiment one, with a few exceptions. The selection of images was somewhat different than in experiment one, and a few more items were added to the questionnaire (see Appendix A). Participants were asked to judge the seriousness of the threat of criminal behavior from these two groups, and also to indicate how effective they thought profiling would be for the two groups. Participants also answered two questions relating to general racial prejudice, adapted from the racial resentment scale (Kinder and Sanders 1996). Finally, participants answered a question concerning their beliefs about the most effective way to combat crime (catching and punishing criminals versus addressing the underlying causes of crime).

### Experiment three

Experiment three dispensed with the computerized presentation of images in favor of a simple paper and pencil questionnaire. One question was added to each profiling set: the extent to which participants judged profiling to be a matter of security or a matter of race. The two item racial prejudice scale was replaced by a four item prejudice scale.

## Results

Although certain aspects of the procedures and materials varied from one study to the next, each experiment included the same core independent and dependent variables, as well as the question order manipulation. For this reason, and in order to boost the Black sample size, we pooled the data from the three experiments.<sup>3</sup> Refinements in our instruments and procedures allowed us to test more specific hypotheses in studies two and three. We present those results as well, although the limited number of Black participants in those two studies prevents us from reporting reliable results for that sample.

Figure 1 displays the means for our two key dependent variables (opinion toward profiling; perception that profiling is racist), separately for those participants who received the Arab set first vs. the Black set first. Data for Black (N = 52) and White (N = 297) participants appear separately. A wealth of intriguing effects is contained in these graphs. First, we observe that race matters – both the race of the *participant* and the race of the *target* make significant differences in opinion. Black participants are much less sanguine about profiling, regardless of target. They expressed more disapproval of profiling Blacks and Arabs, and are far more likely

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<sup>3</sup> Because of slight variations in scale values across studies, we have converted all of the variables to a common 0 to 1 scale.

than Whites to consider profiling of Blacks and Arabs to be racist. Secondly, as expected, there is more tolerance for profiling of Arabs than of Blacks, *but this was true regardless of participant race* ( $p < .001$  for both samples).<sup>4</sup> Clearly, although Blacks were far less approving than Whites of profiling Arabs, they found that practice to be significantly more acceptable than profiling members of their own group.

Figure 1 also makes clear that the order of questions made a significant difference in opinions, and impressions of racism. The fairness priming hypothesis would predict that participants would express less approval for profiling Arabs when the Black question set appeared first than when the Arab question set appeared first. A very different pattern of results emerged. For both Blacks and Whites, opinions toward *both* kinds of profiling were *more* favorable when the Black question set preceded the Arab set ( $p = .04$  for Black sample;  $p = .001$  for the White sample). Indeed, the effect is strikingly similar for both Arab profiling and Black profiling, and for Black and White participants. Participants maintained an unmistakable gap between their approval toward profiling Blacks and profiling Arabs, and the question set appearing first seemed to create the standard by which the subsequent questions would be judged. When the Black set appeared first, Arab profiling seemed that much more acceptable than when it appeared first itself; when the Arab set appeared first, Black profiling seemed that much *less* acceptable than when it was preceded by nothing. Contrary to the fairness priming hypothesis, therefore, neither Black nor White respondents seemed compelled to treat Arab and Blacks the same with respect to profiling.

Contrary to profiling opinion, the effect of question order on impressions of racism is not constant for Black and White participants. Black participants reveal a question order effect on impressions of racism that is similar to its effect on opinion. Black respondents are more likely to judge the two practices as racist when the Arab set comes first ( $p = .057$ ). In other words, profiling of Blacks seems more racist to Black participants when they have been primed to think about profiling Arabs; likewise, profiling of Arabs seems *less* racist these participants have been primed to think about profiling Blacks. Overall, we do not see a powerful tendency among Black participants to judge profiling of Arabs as strictly the same as profiling of their own group.

Whites are a different story, however. Like Black participants, Whites judge profiling of Blacks as more racist when it follows similar questions about Arabs than when it appears first. The profiling of Arabs, however, does not seem more or less racist to Whites when they have been primed to think about Blacks first (target race x order interaction,  $p = .004$ ).

At first glance, therefore, it appears that both Black and White participants see an appreciable difference between profiling Blacks and profiling Arabs. If participants truly see these law-enforcement practices as belonging to qualitatively different categories, their impressions might indeed reflect a kind of judgmental contrast effect. To test this possibility, Experiment 3 included a question asking participants if they perceived the two different kinds of profiling as “a matter of race” or “a matter of security.”

Figure 2 shows the results for this item. Once again, race of participant and race of target have strong and significant effects. Blacks are more likely than Whites to judge both kinds of profiling as racial matters, rather than security matters. But Blacks *as well as* Whites are more likely to perceive profiling of Arabs as a security matter, and profiling Blacks as a racial matter. Furthermore, question order again has an effect, conditional upon the race of the perceiver and target. When the set of Black profiling questions comes first, Black participants are more

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<sup>4</sup> By repeated measures analysis of variance (ANOVA)

inclined to see both types of profiling as security measures, compared to when Arab questions come first. White participants do much the same for Black profiling, however their judgments of Arab profiling do not vary by question order.<sup>5</sup>

We next conducted a series of regression models. These analyses had two purposes. First, we wished to test our hypotheses about individual level factors that might contribute to opinions on profiling, and perceptions of profiling as racist. Secondly, we hope the regression models would illuminate some of the question order effects.

Tables 1 and 2 show the effects of individual and situational predictors on opinion about racial profiling across all three experiments. We start with the full sample of subjects controlling for race of the participant, question order, and race of the target. Then we divide the sample by race (Blacks and Whites) and look at the factors that influence their respective opinions. We then analyze opinions toward profiling Blacks and Arabs while controlling for the experimental manipulations and the participant's race. Finally, we distinguish between participants who receive the Arab questions first and participants who receive the Black questions first. The results yield many numbers, but the story is straightforward.

Table 1 yields strong findings. Generally, participants have less favorable opinions about racial profiling Arabs if they believe it is a racist practice. Respondents who think profiling does not happen a lot still have less favorable opinions about the practice, but the effect washes away when we add the experimental manipulations in Table 1. The story is more interesting in Table 2. For Whites, the more common they think racial profiling is, the more favorable their opinions of it are. The opposite is true for Blacks – the more common they perceive profiling to be, the more they reject it.

Looking at the demographic factors, conservatives support profiling more than liberals. By and large, gender has little effect on profiling opinions. When gender is significant, women are mildly supportive of profiling both groups. On the other hand, the race of the participant affects general opinions about profiling. Compared to Whites, Blacks hold less favorable views towards it.

Tables 3 and 4 provide a more detailed picture of attitudes about racial/ethnic profiling. Here we include variables that tap attitudes about race and crime, which turn out to be crucial. Support for profiling goes up significantly when participants believe Arabs pose a serious threat; and, excluding the results for the Black sample, participants support profiling in general if they believe it will reduce crime. There is also a question order effect. In the full sample as well as the White sample, respondents who answered the Arab questions first had more favorable opinions about Arab profiling. Interestingly, the trend reverses in the sample for Blacks. This may be explained by group-interest. The general trend is that participants support profiling Arabs more than profiling Blacks. It is possible that Blacks may not oppose profiling their own group as much if they got the Arab questions first. This means that the difference between their profiling opinions does not change from one target group to another. However, when they get the Black questions first, group-interest matters so much that the gap between their support for profiling Blacks and profiling Arabs is significant.

Regardless of the target group, opinions about racial profiling are generally less favorable if participants think it is racist. This result is similar to what we find for Table 1. Also, if a

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<sup>5</sup> Caution is warranted when examining order effects among the Black sample, due to the small number of Black participants in this experiment (N = 15).

participant scores higher on the racial prejudice scale (and they are not Black) then they are more approving of profiling Blacks. The trend is less pronounced when looking at profiling Arabs.

### Discussion and Conclusions

Comparing Black opinion to White opinion yields no simple conclusion. On one hand, there are clear differences between the two. Our Black participants took a much stronger stand against profiling for both Arab and Black targets than White participants. Likewise, Blacks were more likely than Whites to judge both practices as racist. Based on these results, therefore, one could conclude that Blacks reject profiling of Arabs for the same reason that they reject profiling of members of their own groups: because they see both practices as unjustifiable uses of color and background to make inferences about likely criminal behavior.

From a different perspective, however, Black opinions on these matters are strikingly similar to White opinions. Blacks and Whites responded nearly the same to our question order manipulation. When questions about Black profiling came first, they created a kind of context in which both forms of profiling seemed more permissible. Our best explanation for this effect is a kind of judgmental contrast: Arab profiling considered alone seems moderately acceptable, but significantly *more* acceptable when compared to profiling of Blacks. Conversely, profiling of Blacks seems moderately unacceptable when considered alone, but strongly objectionable when compared to profiling of Arabs. Of course, we did not explicitly instruct participants to draw comparisons between the two cases. Still, while the two practices are technically independent of one another, participants' thoughts about one was clearly influenced by their thoughts about the other. These results decisively contradict the norm-priming hypothesis (Hyman and Sheatsley 1950). If participants, Black or White, felt compelled to extend the same consideration to the two groups, the order effects should have moved in the opposite directions.

Black and White opinions diverge again, however, when we consider the effects of question order on perceptions of racism in the two types of practice law-enforcement practice. Black participants once more demonstrated a judgmental contrast effect: Arab profiling seemed less racist when participants had been primed to think about racial profiling of Blacks. Whites' judgments of whether or not Arab profiling was racist were not affected by question order. Data from Experiment 3 suggests that these complex order effects may in part be explained by how participants psychologically compartmentalized the two forms of profiling. While both Blacks and Whites were more likely to say that Arab profiling was a matter of security and Black profiling a matter of race, Blacks' judgments were more sensitive to question order than Whites. Blacks were more likely to consider Arab profiling a "security matter" when the Black question set appeared first.

However differently opinions and perceptions of racism may respond to context, the regression analyses showed that the two feelings were intimately connected. Judgments of racism were powerful predictors of opinion on racial profiling. As one might expect, the more racism one saw in these practices, the more one opposed them. The analyses also confirmed the tight connection between racial prejudice and perceptions of racism. Among White participants, racial prejudice strongly correlated with perceptions that profiling of Blacks is racist ( $r = .48$ ), and also with perceptions that profiling of Arabs is racist ( $r = .32$ ). Prejudice was an important predictor of support for Arab profiling and Black profiling. Our analyses thus far have entered these two as simultaneous predictors of profiling opinion; further work needs to be done on the complex causal chains interlinking prejudice, perceived racism, and attitudes toward profiling.

During times of conflict, particularly when the image of the other is based on race and/or ethnicity, racial and ethnic profiling takes on a changed persona. Individuals of particular racial and/or ethnic backgrounds become targets and potential threats to national security. Although the buzz about racial and ethnic profiling has heightened in the last 10 years, these are not novel practices. The most comparable example of racial and ethnic profiling pre- September 11<sup>th</sup> is the abuse that Japanese Americans experienced after the bombing of Pearl Harbor. Japanese Americans were profiled, harassed, abused, and falsely accused of various political crimes (Rich 1996). As a result, they became individual targets of violence and were the victims of legal segregation and discrimination. This example coupled with more recent profiling behavior leads to the belief that racial and ethnic profiling is worth understanding.

Throughout this paper, we have used the terms “profiling” to describe various policing practices. Our initial reasoning for doing so was the assumption that many citizens, particularly citizens of color, would perceive a common thread between the racial profiling practices that target African Americans, and the ethnic profiling practices that target Arab Americans. That common thread, we believed, was the use of an arbitrary characteristic like race or ethnicity to justify additional scrutiny. However, our research reveals that the public may actually perceive an important distinction between these two forms of scrutiny. Most importantly, this distinction appears to be particularly relevant to one of the two groups most likely to be the targets of these practices: African Americans.

The September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks have shown continuing Black-White differences of opinion on profiling, but have also revealed perceptions that transcend racial differences. Long considered a “Black” issue, racial profiling has been redefined as an issue that can similarly affect Arab Americans. Thus, the definition of “racial profiling” has become “ethnically inclusive”. Yet it not clear whether African Americans are open to an inclusive definition of racial profiling. Circumstances and situational factors may impact African American and White perceptions of Arab profiling. A study done by the Gallup poll shows that 71% of Blacks favor the racial profiling of Arabs at airports in comparison to 57% of Whites. This suggests that although Blacks have fought long and hard against instances of racial profiling on highways and in their neighborhoods, they are willing to support the act of racial profiling when national security is at stake. This experiment corroborates this inference.

Our investigation of both the individual and contextual factors that contribute to ethnic and/or racial profiling among Blacks and Whites have proven both commonsensical and revealing at the same time. First and foremost our inquiry has shown that racism and racial prejudice continue to influence individual opinions on political and social issues in society. Not surprising, racial profiling is another issue that corresponds nicely with the existing literature on race and public opinion: that racial prejudice is still an underlying mechanism when discussing issues that have an inherent racial slant.

Secondly, situational factors play an important part when distinguishing between racial and ethnic profiling. For Blacks, situation matters. Our data shows that there is a clear divide in how Blacks perceive racial profiling in comparison to ethnic profiling: for Blacks racial profiling is indeed a different situation than Arab profiling. This shows that although Blacks may be somewhat sympathetic in terms of Arab profiling, they are even more sympathetic to the Black community. Although a number of reasons could be given to explain this, one explanation is clear, the history and frequency of acts of racial profiling within the Black community are such that many Blacks may not be willing to align their grievances with Arabs. In this case, group interest becomes an important determinant of Black opinion on racial and ethnic profiling.

Lastly, Black and White elite opinion on the act of racial profiling span from staunch opposition to wavering support. Both national and community organizations like the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) have taken firm stances against the use of profiling within the criminal justice system. Although this project did not focus on elite opinion, both elite and mass opinion drive support (or non-support) for legislation to enact policy to curb or enforce racial and ethnic profiling. If this is truly an issue that similarly affects both Blacks and Arabs, leaders and organizations may want to coalesce together to create better combative strategies. Thus future analysis in this area should be expanded to look at individual, contextual, and elite driven factors that may influence support for profiling in its many forms.

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## **Appendix A: Questionnaire Items**

### **Experiment One**

It has been reported that some law-enforcement officers stop people of certain racial or ethnic groups because these officers believe that those groups are more likely than are others to commit certain types of crimes. We would like to ask your opinion about this issue.

Some people say that the police in many communities deliberately target young Black male drivers for random stops and searches on suspicion that these young men may be transporting drugs or involved in some other kind of illegal activity. This practice is sometimes called racial profiling. How common do you think racial profiling really is?

Do you support or oppose the practice of giving extra scrutiny to young Black males by law enforcement officers?

Do you consider the extra attention given to young Black males by certain police officers to be racist?

Some people believe that, following the Sept. 11th attacks, airport security personnel and law-enforcement officers are deliberately targeting individuals of Arab descent for inspection and careful questioning on suspicion that these individuals may be potential terrorists. How common do you think this special targeting is?

Do you support or oppose the practice of giving extra scrutiny to people of Arab descent by airport security personnel and law enforcement officers?

Do you consider the extra attention given to people of Arab descent by airport security personnel and law enforcement officers to be racist?

How strongly do you agree or disagree with this statement: It is more important to protect the public than to worry about offending someone.

How often do you think about being a member of this group and what you have in common with others in your group?

Rate how important your membership in this group is to the way you think about yourself.

How proud do you feel when a member of your group accomplishes something outstanding?

Indicate the extent to which something that happens in your life is affected by what happens to other people in your group

### **Experiment Two**

Do you believe that giving extra attention to young Black males will be effective in preventing crime, or not effective?

How serious do you believe the threat of criminal behavior posed by this group is?

Do you believe that giving extra attention to (people of Arab descent/young Black males) will be effective in preventing crime, or not effective?

Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with this statement: Equality between the races may be an important idea, but it's not the government's job to guarantee it.

Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with this statement: Black leaders have gotten too pushy in their demands for equal rights.

Some people say the best way to reduce crime is to address the social problems that cause crime, like bad schools, poverty and joblessness. Other people say the best way to reduce crime is to make sure that criminals are caught, convicted, and punished. What is your opinion?

### **Experiment Three**

Do you believe that giving extra attention to people of Arab descent is a matter of racial or ethnic bias, or a matter of security?

Do you believe that targeting young Black males is a matter of racial bias, or a matter of security?

Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with each of the next four statements.

Generations of slavery and discrimination have created conditions that make it difficult for Blacks to work their way out of the lower class.

Most Blacks who receive money from welfare programs could get along without it if they tried.

Over the past few years, Blacks have gotten less than they deserve.

Irish, Italian, Jewish and many other minorities overcame prejudice and worked their way up. Black should do the same without any special favors.

**Table 1: General Predictors of Opinions toward Profiling Arabs**

	Full Sample			Blacks Sample			White Sample		
	Both Conditions	Blacks First	Arabs First	Both Conditions	Blacks First	Arabs First	Both Conditions	Blacks First	Arabs First
Is profiling Arabs Racist?	-0.41*** (0.05)	-0.41*** (0.07)	-0.40*** (0.06)	-0.47*** (0.13)	0.49** (0.25)	0.53*** (0.23)	-0.39*** (0.05)	-0.39*** (0.07)	-0.39*** (0.07)
How rare is profiling Arabs?	-0.17* (0.07)	-0.21 (0.11)	-0.13 (0.10)	0.13 (0.20)	-0.10 (0.28)	0.29 (0.32)	-0.21** (0.08)	-0.24 (0.13)	-0.19*** (0.10)
Security trumps civil liberties	-0.17*** (0.05)	-0.23** (0.08)	-0.11 (0.07)	0.03 (0.14)	-0.05 (0.22)	0.12 (0.23)	-0.20*** (0.06)	-0.27 (0.09)**	-0.13 (0.07)
Female participants	0.06* (0.03)	0.09* (0.04)	0.03 (0.04)	0.12 (0.08)	0.14 (0.11)	0.11 (0.14)	0.05 (0.03)	0.07 (0.05)	0.02 (0.04)
Ideology	0.14** (0.05)	0.13 (0.08)	0.14 (0.08)	0.18 (0.16)	0.05 (0.24)	0.24 (0.24)	0.13* (0.06)	0.13 (0.08)	0.12 (0.08)
Q. order (1 = Blacks first)	0.05* (0.03)	–	–	<.01 (0.07)	–	–	0.05 (0.03)	–	–
Black Participants	-0.15*** (0.04)	-0.16** (0.06)	-0.12* (0.05)	–	–	–	–	–	–
Constant	0.76*** (0.06)	0.82*** (0.08)	0.74*** (0.08)	0.48* (0.16)	0.47 (0.25)	0.33 (0.35)	0.78*** (0.06)	0.77*** (0.11)	0.76*** (0.10)
N	346	176	169	51	24	26	294	151	142
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.35	0.32	0.33	0.32	0.30	0.25	0.28	0.26	0.26

Sources: Experiments 1, 2, and 3.

Note: Table entries are unstandardized OLS regression coefficients with standard errors in parentheses. The dependent variables in this table are constructed such that higher values indicate more favorable opinions toward profiling **Arabs** on a 9-point Likert scale (ranging from definitely oppose to definitely support).

\* $p \leq .05$ , \*\* $p \leq .01$ , \*\*\* $p \leq .001$ , one tailed test.

**Table 2: General Predictors of Opinion toward Racially Profiling Blacks**

	Full Sample			Blacks Sample			White Sample		
	Both Conditions	Blacks First	Arabs First	Both Conditions	Blacks First	Arabs First	Both Conditions	Blacks First	Arabs First
Is profiling Blacks Racist?	0.55*** (0.48)	-0.56*** (0.08)	-0.50*** (0.06)	-0.18 (0.10)	-0.15 (0.20)	0.09 (0.07)	-0.56*** (0.05)	-0.57*** (0.08)	-0.54*** (0.07)
How rare is profiling Blacks?	-0.15* (0.06)	-0.27** (0.09)	-0.04 (0.08)	0.36** (0.11)	0.37** (0.17)	0.34** (0.11)	-0.21** (0.07)	-0.33*** (0.10)	-0.07 (0.08)
Security trumps civil liberties	0.11** (0.04)	-0.16* (0.07)	-0.05 (0.05)	0.05 (0.06)	0.12 (0.12)	0.02 (0.04)	-0.13** (0.05)	-0.20** (0.08)	-0.07 (0.06)
Female participants	0.00 (0.02)	<.01 (0.04)	0.01 (0.03)	-0.06 (0.04)	-0.15 (0.74)	0.03 (0.03)	<.01 (0.03)	0.09 (0.04)	0.01 (0.03)
Ideology	0.08 (0.05)	0.09 (0.07)	0.07 (0.06)	0.04 (0.07)	0.17 (0.14)	-0.02 (0.05)	0.11* (0.05)	0.10 (0.07)	0.10 (0.07)
Q. order (1 = Blacks first)	0.04 (0.04)	–	–	0.06* (0.03)	–	–	0.03 (0.03)	–	–
Black Participants	-0.09** (0.04)	-0.08 (0.06)	-0.11** (0.04)	–	–	–	–	–	–
Constant	0.68*** (0.06)	0.74*** (0.08)	0.59*** (0.07)	0.17 (0.09)	0.34* (0.17)	0.03 (0.08)	0.68*** (0.06)	0.77*** (0.10)	0.59*** (0.10)
N	346	176	169	51	24	26	294	151	142
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.38	0.35	0.41	0.42	0.30	0.30	0.37	0.34	0.36

Sources: Experiments 1, 2, and 3.

Note: Table entries are unstandardized OLS regression coefficients with standard errors in parentheses. The dependent variables in this table are constructed such that higher values indicate more favorable opinions toward profiling **Blacks** on a 9-point Likert scale (ranging from definitely oppose to definitely support).

\* $p \leq .05$ , \*\* $p \leq .01$ , \*\*\* $p \leq .001$ , one tailed test.

**Table 3: The Effect of Crime and Racial Attitudes on Opinions toward Racially Profiling Arabs**

	Full Sample			Blacks Sample			White Sample		
	Both Conditions	Blacks First	Arabs First	Both Conditions	Blacks First	Arabs First	Both Conditions	Blacks First	Arabs First
Perceived Threat of Arabs	0.18** (0.06)	-0.04 (0.07)	0.19** (0.07)	0.30 (0.16)	0.71** (0.23)	0.25 (0.23)	0.14* (0.06)	0.11 (0.11)	0.19** (0.07)
Profiling is ineffective	-0.09*** (0.01)	-0.06*** (0.01)	-0.52*** (0.08)	-0.09* (0.03)	-0.08 (0.23)	-0.68** (0.22)	-0.10*** (0.02)	-0.47*** (0.13)	-0.50*** (0.08)
Is profiling Arabs Racist?	-0.20*** (0.05)	-0.35*** (0.07)	-0.16** (0.06)	-0.24 (0.15)	-0.33 (0.24)	-0.47* (0.20)	-0.20*** (0.05)	-0.26** (0.09)	-0.14* (0.06)
How rare is profiling Arabs?	0.04 (0.08)	0.01 (0.07)	-0.05 (0.08)	0.21 (0.23)	-0.25 (0.42)	0.10 (0.28)	-0.10 (0.08)	-0.11 (0.16)	-0.11 (0.09)
Security trumps civil liberties	-0.05 (0.05)	0.03 (0.05)	-0.00 (0.06)	0.14 (0.17)	-0.36 (0.26)	0.44 (0.25)	-0.08 (0.06)	-0.13 (0.10)	-0.03 (0.06)
Racial prejudice scale	0.11 (0.6)	0.22*** (0.06)	0.20** (0.06)	0.10 (0.22)	-0.46 (0.31)	0.64 (0.33)	0.10 (0.06)	-0.01 (0.10)	0.19** (0.06)
Female participants	0.05 (0.03)	-0.04 (0.03)	0.01 (0.03)	0.11 (0.09)	0.08 (0.12)	0.08 (0.14)	0.03 (0.03)	0.07 (0.05)	-0.02 (0.03)
Ideology	0.03 (0.06)	-0.02 (0.06)	-0.02 (0.07)	0.11 (0.17)	0.13 (0.28)	0.11 (0.24)	0.02 (0.06)	0.05 (0.09)	-0.02 (0.07)
Q. order (1 = Blacks first)	0.06* (0.03)	–	–	0.02 (0.08)	–	–	0.06 (0.03)	–	–
Black Participants	0.06 (0.04)	-0.02 (0.04)	-0.02 (0.47)	–	–	–	–	–	–
Constant	0.68*** (0.08)	0.61*** (0.09)	0.66 (0.09)	0.50* (0.21)	0.87 (0.15)	0.60* (0.27)	0.84*** (0.10)	0.87*** (0.15)	0.69*** (0.09)
N	256	121	134	37	16	20	216	104	113
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.54	0.52	0.60	0.39	0.39	0.54	0.55	0.37	0.58

Sources: Experiments 2 and 3.

Note: Table entries are unstandardized OLS regression coefficients with standard errors in parentheses. The dependent variables in this table are constructed such that higher values indicate more favorable opinions toward profiling **Arabs** on a 9-point Likert scale (ranging from definitely oppose to definitely support).

\* $p \leq .05$ , \*\* $p \leq .01$ , \*\*\* $p \leq .001$ , one tailed test.

**Table 4: The Effect of Crime and Racial Attitudes on Opinions toward Racially Profiling Blacks**

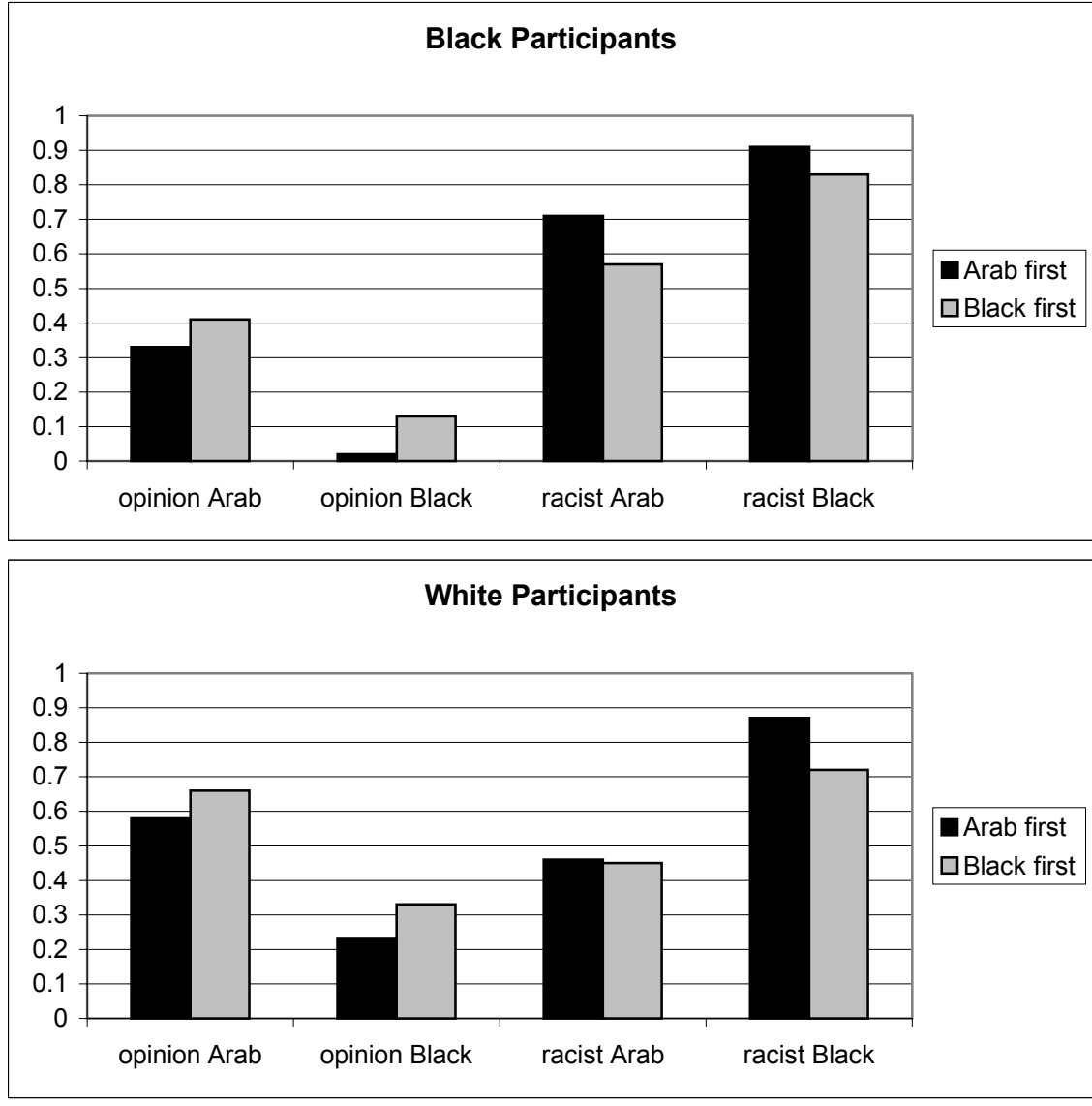
	Full Sample			Blacks Sample			White Sample		
	Both Conditions	Blacks First	Arabs First	Both Conditions	Blacks First	Arabs First	Both Conditions	Blacks First	Arabs First
Perceived Threat of Blacks	0.05 (0.06)	0.12 (0.09)	-0.04 (0.07)	-0.05 (0.09)	0.04 (0.17)	-0.03 (0.06)	0.07 (0.07)	0.17 (0.10)	-0.04 (0.08)
Profiling is ineffective	-0.37*** (0.05)	0.09*** (0.02)	-0.06*** (0.01)	-0.02 (0.02)	-0.19 (0.14)	0.01 (0.10)	-0.08*** (0.01)	-0.52*** (0.10)	-0.32*** (0.07)
Is profiling Blacks Racist?	-0.30*** (0.06)	-0.22* (0.09)	-0.35*** (0.07)	-0.11 (0.12)	0.27 (0.26)	0.14 (0.10)	-0.30*** (0.06)	-0.19* (0.10)	-0.37*** (0.08)
How rare is profiling Blacks?	-0.12 (0.60)	-0.24* (0.10)	0.01 (0.07)	0.30 (0.17)	-0.03 (0.30)	0.34 (0.16)	-0.13* (0.06)	-0.24* (0.10)	0.00 (0.08)
Security trumps civil liberties	-0.00 (0.04)	-0.06 (0.08)	0.03 (0.05)	0.12 (0.08)	0.55* (0.22)	-0.02 (0.05)	-0.02 (0.05)	-0.11 (0.08)	0.03 (0.06)
Racial prejudice scale	0.23*** (0.05)	0.24 (0.09)	0.22*** (0.06)	0.14 (0.12)	0.39 (0.28)	0.11 (0.11)	0.21*** (0.06)	0.22* (0.10)	0.21** (0.07)
Female participants	0.03 (0.02)	-0.05 (0.04)	-0.04 (0.03)	-0.06 (0.05)	-0.26* (0.10)	-0.02 (0.03)	0.03 (0.03)	0.01 (0.04)	0.04 (0.03)
Ideology	-0.00 (0.05)	0.03 (0.07)	-0.02 (0.06)	<0.00 (0.05)	0.22 (0.19)	-0.02 (0.07)	<0.00 (0.05)	0.02 (0.07)	-0.10 (0.07)
Q. order (1 = Blacks first)	0.04 (0.02)	–	–	–	–	–	0.04 (0.03)	–	–
Black Participants	0.04 (0.04)	-0.07 (0.06)	-0.02 (0.04)	0.04 (0.04)	–	–	–	–	–
Constant	0.57*** (0.07)	0.72*** (0.13)	0.61*** (0.09)	0.19 (0.14)	-0.22 (0.30)	0.09 (0.10)	0.67*** (0.09)	0.65*** (0.13)	0.59*** (0.10)
N	254	121	132	37	16	20	218	104	111
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.56	0.53	0.60	0.39	0.43	0.34	0.48	0.55	0.57

Sources: Experiments 2 and 3.

Note: Table entries are unstandardized OLS regression coefficients with standard errors in parentheses. The dependent variables in this table are constructed such that higher values indicate more favorable opinions toward profiling **Blacks** on a 9-point Likert scale (ranging from definitely oppose to definitely support).

\* $p \leq .05$ , \*\* $p \leq .01$ , \*\*\* $p \leq .001$ , one tailed test

**Figure 1: Attitudes toward Profiling of Arabs and Blacks, by Participant Race and Question Order (Exp. 1-3)**



Note: higher values indicate more favorable opinion towards profiling, and more agreement that profiling is racist.

**Figure 2: Judgments of Whether Profiling of Blacks and Arabs are Racial or Security Matters, by Participant Race and Question Order (Exp. 3)**

