

Asymmetry in the Impact of Encounters with Police

Wesley G. Skogan

This article examines the impact of personal experience on popular assessments of the quality of police service. Following past research, it addresses the influences of personal and neighbourhood factors on confidence in the police. It then focuses on the additional impact of positive and negative personal experiences with the police. Several studies of police encounters with the public have noted that the relationship between how people recall being treated and their general confidence in the police may be asymmetrical. At its worst, the police may get essentially no credit for delivering professional service, while bad experiences can deeply influence peoples' views of their performance and even legitimacy. This proposition is tested using survey data on police-initiated and citizen-initiated contacts with police in Chicago. The findings indicate that the impact of having a bad experience is four to fourteen times as great as that of having a positive experience, and the coefficients associated with having a good experience—including being treated fairly and politely, and receiving service that was prompt and helpful—were not statistically different from zero. Another section of the article replicates this finding using surveys of residents of seven other urban areas located in three different countries. The article concludes that this is bad news indeed for police administrators intent on solidifying their support among voters, taxpayers and the consumers of police services.

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Introduction

You have ten positive encounters with the police and that's good; but one negative encounter, and all the positives disappear. (Hillard, 2003)

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This article examines the impact of personal experience on popular assessments of the quality of police service. This is an important issue for policy and practice. Research has documented that a broad range of factors influence public confidence in the police. At the individual level, race and age are among the personal characteristics that colour people's views. Neighbourhood-level factors are also important, providing indirect evidence that people hold police accountable to some degree for the condition of their community. There is also new research on the impact of the views of family members and friends, and of the mass media. Finally, there is an emerging body of evidence concerning the importance of personal experience with the police. This is of particular interest because, compared to social, economic, media and environmental factors, what police do when they interact with the public is more squarely in the hands of police administrators. Through recruitment, training, supervision and even separation, they can hope to ensure a high standard of professionalism in their dealings with the public. To the extent to which this makes a difference in popular confidence in the police, they can hope to sustain the support of the citizenry—as taxpayers and voters, as well as consumers of police services.

However, there are hints that this unfortunately may be difficult. Better service may *not* automatically produce better results, as measured by public confidence. Several studies of police encounters with the public have noted that the relationship between how people are treated and their general confidence in the police may be *asymmetrical*, rather than balanced. Good days may not balance out bad days. At its worst, the police may get essentially no credit for doing a good job, while a bad experience deeply influences people's views of their performance and even legitimacy. Research also documents that this phenomenon extends to government agencies of many kinds, not just the police, further highlighting the importance of learning in more detail about the impact of experience on popular assessments of public services.

This article first tests the asymmetry proposition with data on contacts and evaluations of the police in Chicago. Data from a survey conducted in 2003 are used to contrast the influence of individual and neighbourhood factors with that of recent personal experience with police, on people's general confidence in the police serving in their neighbourhood. The multivariate findings indicate that, for both police-initiated and citizen-initiated encounters, the impact of having a bad experience is four to fourteen times as great as that of having a positive experience. The coefficients associated with having a good experience—including being treated fairly and politely, and receiving service that was prompt and helpful—were very small and not statistically different from zero. Because of the importance of this finding, another section of the article re-examines the issue by replicating the analysis among seven other samples of residents of urban areas in three different countries. The pattern remains basically the same. The article concludes that this is bad news indeed for police administrators intent on solidifying support among their voters and taxpayers by improving the quality of service they are delivering on the street.

Confidence in the Police

This research tests the potentially asymmetric impact of experiences with the police within the context of a larger model of attitudes toward the police. There is an immense body of research on opinions of the police, both in the United States and elsewhere. The review below highlights some of this work, confining its attention to research that is directly relevant to the issue of asymmetry in the impact of encounters with police.

Personal Background

The personal attributes of individuals are important because they are directly related to the extent to which people are stopped by police or call them for assistance, and often they are linked to how deferentially or harshly they are dealt with when they do come into contact with the police. All research on American's views of the police begins with race. In reviews of the literature, Schafer et al. (2003), Brown and Benedict (2002), Tuch and Weitzer (1997), and many others conclude that African-Americans are more sceptical in their views of the police and more often report negative contacts and even mistreatment by them. They are also disproportionately stopped by the police (Langan et al., 2001), and they are more likely than whites to be victimized and subsequently report crimes to the police (Catalano, 2004). Racial minorities are more likely to believe that police had no legitimate reason for stopping them (Lundman & Kaufman, 2003; Walker et al., 1972). Many studies also find that African-Americans are relatively *undifferentiated* in their views of police. In other words, compared to whites, black attitudes do not vary much across most other demographic categories. For blacks, race constitutes a "master status" that seems to override other factors in their relationship with the police. On the other hand, Cao et al. (1996) find that the statistical effect of race disappears controlling for perceived levels of crime and disorder, suggesting that the "collective insecurity" of African-Americans accounts for much of their dissatisfaction. There is much less research on racial minorities other than African-Americans, but in Chicago they generally stand between African-Americans and whites in their views of the police, and closer to the former than the latter (Skogan & Hartnett, 1997).

Age is another powerful determinant of people's views of the police. Young people are more likely to get into trouble of all kinds with the police, including being stopped and arrested, and they are also more likely to be victims of violent crime. Reisig and Correia (1997) also propose that age differences in views of the police reflect the value attached to freedom and autonomy among younger people, versus safety and security among older people. In Chicago, the frequency of encounters with police also reflect a strong race-by-age interaction; in 2003, more than 70 per cent of young African-American males reported being stopped by police in the past 12 months (Skogan & Steiner, 2004), compared to the city average of about 20 per cent. On the other hand, studies of the effects of gender have found little relationship

between sex and many attitudes about police. This is despite the fact that men are far more likely than women to have contacts with them, both as victims and perpetrators of crimes, especially outside the context of traffic enforcement.

There is also research on the effects of socioeconomic status on attitudes toward the police. Correia (2000) and others think that those with more stakes in established society are more inclined to support them. On the other hand, lower income and less educated people are presumed to actually *rely* more heavily on police services of all kinds, and to have much more experience with them. Many hypothesize that police are more deferential toward middle- and upper-class citizens because police seek positive evaluations and support from influential members of society, and better-off people will in turn be more favourable in their views. However, if the asymmetry hypothesis is correct, the positive experiences of people at either end of the social spectrum would have little impact on their confidence in the police.

Empirically, research on social standing comes to mixed conclusions. Status is strongly correlated with other factors that are important in determining an individual's attitudes toward the police, including race. Sampson and Jeglum-Bartusch (1998) find a positive link between socioeconomic status and satisfaction with police performance net of many other individual and neighbourhood factors. On the other hand, Weitzer and Tuch (1999) found social class effects among blacks for general attitudes about the police, but not for their views of neighbourhood policing. They hypothesize that middle-class African-Americans are more attuned to racial discrimination as an abstract concept that impedes their class-based aspirations, and that they pay more attention to coverage of the police in the media. Brown and Benedict (2002) summarize the literature by concluding that confidence in the police is higher for higher status whites, and lower for higher status African-Americans, a complex interaction effect.

Neighbourhood Conditions

Does the public hold the police responsible for crime and disorder? Police are undoubtedly the municipal agency that is most closely watched and criticized by the general public and the media alike. They are the only local bureaucracy whose annual statistical reports routinely make front-page news. Of all the problems that we hold city agencies responsible for somehow solving, crime is probably the most compelling. Doris Graber's (1980) content analysis of network and Chicago news broadcasts revealed that 20 per cent of all local news stories and 10 per cent of all national stories concerned crime and criminal justice, with the police being mentioned frequently (and often quite critically). The survey data examined here were collected in a city where an ongoing publicity campaign has stressed the role of the police in bringing the crime rate down (cf. Skogan & Steiner, 2004).

Opinion research indicates there is a strong link between neighbourhood conditions and assessments of the police. In surveys, attitudes toward the police

are correlated with perceptions of neighbourhood crime (Maxson et al., 2003; Reisig & Giacomazzi, 1998), fear of crime (Cao et al., 1996; Smith & Hawkins, 1973), and perceived neighbourhood disorder (Reisig & Giacomazzi, 1998; Cao et al., 1996). These studies were all conducted at the individual level, so both attitudes toward police and perceptions of crime were gathered in the same questionnaires. Studies that embed survey respondents in their neighbourhood context and include independent measures of local conditions come to similar conclusions, however. In studies in different cities, Reisig and Parks (2000) and Sampson and Jeglum-Bartusch (1998) found that variations in officially recorded neighbourhood homicide rates are linked to differences in how people assess the police, even when controlling for important neighbourhood factors (such as poverty) and individual factors (including race and experience with the police). Cao et al. (1996: 13) concluded that: “[I]t appears that citizens hold the police at least partially responsible for the disorder—the ‘broken windows’—in their neighborhoods. . . . Our respondents appear to perceive the police as the government’s first-line representative, responsible for controlling neighborhood disorder.”

Neighbourhood conditions may be linked to people’s views of the police through other mechanisms. As Weitzer & Tuch (2004) and others have noted, police often *act* differently in high-crime, disorderly neighbourhoods. They are likely to be more aggressive in stopping people there, and more suspicious—and wary—of the people they stop (Terrill & Reisig, 2003; Mastrofski et al., 2002; Smith, 1986). They may perceive—often rightly—that they have fewer friends around. Police do not have a very good track record of working collaboratively with people from poor and disenfranchised communities, one of the requirements of community policing (Skogan, 1988). Furthermore, because of the confluence of drugs and corruption, police may also be more prone to this abuse of power in poor and minority neighbourhoods where the business is more likely to be conducted in public view.

Whatever the mechanisms, research is not uniform on the nature of the link between neighbourhood conditions and attitude toward the police: Brown and Benedict (2002) found no link between fear of crime and evaluations of the police, although confidence was lower among those who were personally victimized. However, Reisig and Correia (1997: 312) more likely have it right when they conclude: “In sum, citizens who inhabit low income, inner-city, minority neighborhoods which experience high levels of crime and disorder, where police abuses of power are widely noted, generally report less favorable evaluations of police performance.”

The analysis presented here includes measures of perceived crime and disorder, fear of crime, and satisfaction with their neighbourhood. In a multivariate analysis, measures of people’s personal experience with the police should pick up the component of confidence in police that is linked to how police behave rather than the degree to which they are being held responsible for neighbourhood conditions.

Personal Experience

Research on encounters with police routinely distinguish between citizen-initiated and police-initiated contacts; Clancy et al. (2001) refer to them as “sought “ and “unsought” contacts, which captures their essence. The legitimacy of police intervention is surer when they are contacted for assistance; police initiated contacts, on the other hand, may not be entered into voluntarily and are more likely to be of a suspicious, inquisitorial and potentially adversarial nature. People who have been arrested typically are less satisfied than others with police, as are those who report having been the targets of rude or abusive behaviour (Smith & Hawkins, 1973). In Britain, Southgate and Ekblom (1984) found that being involved in field interrogations and vehicular stops generated three times as much public “annoyance” (as they measured it) as other kinds of encounters with police. A survey of London using a satisfaction measure that is very similar to that employed in this study found that a bare majority of respondents were satisfied with how they were treated when stopped by the police, compared to two-thirds of those who had contacted the police about a crime-related matter (Fitzgerald et al., 2002). In an intriguing study, Sced (2004) distinguished between police-initiated contacts in which members of the public were singled out and targeted by the police, compared to being stopped but not being a particular target of their investigations, and to coming into contact with them informally or seemingly at random. Controlling for other factors, satisfaction rose across those three categories, with targeted individuals being the most negative. Differences in personal experience are also linked to race. Jacob (1971) found that a large proportion of African-Americans’ encounters with police involve the threat of sanction. He found, for example, that African-Americans in Milwaukee were more likely than whites to report being arrested, and most whites who ended up in the arms of the law did so as a result of traffic-related encounters.

There has been a great deal of research on the views of people who contact the police, including crime victims. One consistent finding is that victims are less “outcome”-oriented than they are “process”-oriented—that is, they are less concerned about someone being caught or (in many instances) getting stolen property back, than they are in how promptly and responsibly they are treated by the authorities. Police are judged by what physicians might call their “bedside manner”. Factors like how willing they are to listen to people’s stories and show concern for their plight are very important, as are their politeness, helpfulness and fairness. Rapid response has positive effects as well. Studies by Furstenberg and Wellford (1973), Pate (1976), Percy (1980) and others document the impact of the speed of police response on victim satisfaction. Information sharing is also very important. Police willingness to give advice and to notify victims of progress in their case has a great effect on victim satisfaction, for example (Sunshine & Tyler, 2003; Tyler & Huo, 2002; Skogan, 1989). The bad news is that they may not do so very often; the 1988 British Crime Survey found 56 per cent of victims complained that police did not keep them informed about their case. This lack of communication between police and victims

was strongly related to general measures of victim dissatisfaction (Mayhew et al., 1989). Research on police-initiated contacts finds that fair and courteous treatment, giving people reasons for stopping them, and explaining their rights, all contribute to satisfaction with encounters (Skogan, 2004; Bland et al., 2000; Bucke, 1997; Quinton et al., 2000; Reisig & Chandek, 2001; Stone & Pettigrew, 2000).

The Asymmetric Impact of Experience

The hypothesis that the impact of encounters with the police might be “asymmetrical” (i.e., that favourable and unfavourable experiences may not have comparable consequences for people’s assessments of the quality of police service) was first proposed by Herbert Jacob, based on his study in Milwaukee (Jacob, 1971). More recently, Miller et al. (2004) found comparable asymmetry in a study of police-initiated encounters in New York City. Leiber et al. (1998) report that positive contacts with police may not translate into favourable attitudes toward them among juveniles, and Cheurprakobkit (2000) reports the same for Hispanics. In a recent sweep of the British Crime Survey, the most favourable attitudes were reported by those who had *no* recent contact with police; those who had contacts of any kind were generally unfavourable (Nicholas & Walker, 2004). Noting this sort of evidence, Weitzer & Tuch (2004) advance two incommensurate explanations for asymmetry: that many people may dismiss good experiences as exceptional rather than the norm, or (to the contrary) that they may expect good service to be the norm and only pay attention when they do not get it. Their own work only examines the impact of negative encounters, and only on perceptions of police misconduct.

There are contrary findings. Reisig and Parks (2000) found a significant link between satisfaction with encounters and the general views of the public regarding the police, but in their data the link between dissatisfaction and ratings of the police was much stronger. Comparing the regression coefficients found in their Table 4, the negative effect of negatively rated stops was about six times that of the positive effect of positively rated stops, for example. Correia et al. (1996), Jesilow et al. (1995) and Thurman and Reisig (1996) also report that positive, voluntary interactions enhance general satisfaction with police and state troopers. The classic studies of police-public contacts (including Dean, 1980; Poister & McDavid, 1978; Smith & Hawkins, 1973) all came to the same conclusion—that positive experiences help at least a bit. The fairly unsophisticated statistical models employed in most early studies do not readily yield evidence of the *relative* impact of negative and positive experiences, however, and they did not always include multivariate analyses. The effects of one type of contact may be statistically significant, but overshadowed by the effects of another. Because there are strong race, age and perhaps class bias in contacts with the police, it is also important to factor out their influence using multivariate statistical models. A recent study that satisfied all of these criteria is Schafer et al. (2003), and they find that under most circumstances both positively rated and negatively rated encounters with police have only negative outcomes.

Findings of asymmetry in popular assessments of government services are not confined to the police. In a national study in the United States, Katz et al. (1975) examined citizens' contacts with the bureaucracies that influence their lives, ranging from the Veterans Administration to the Job Corps and the Social Security Administration, and with important government programmes, such as Medicare and Workman's Compensation. They too found that the effect of negative bureaucratic encounters outweighed positive ones when people rated the promptness, fairness and consideration with which government agencies in general treat Americans. They concluded: "People's perceptions of fairness of their own treatment by a service agency are related to their evaluation of government offices in general, but only if their own experiences have been unfortunate. Those who report fair treatment are no more positive in their general evaluation of agencies than those who have had no experience with public agencies" (Katz et al., 1975: 125). They go on to note: "It appears . . . that bad experiences with specific agencies lower the individual's general appraisal of public offices, but good experiences do not raise it above the norm" (Katz et al., 1975: 126).

Like all of the research above, we assume here that the causal ordering involved is from particular recent experiences to global attitudes, but the asymmetry phenomenon does not depend on this. In a study that directly addressed the issue of causal direction, Brandl et al. (1994) found that the effect of experience on general attitudes was not very large, and that a counter effect (that of people's general views of the police on how they interpreted their recent experiences) was stronger. In their view, people stereotype the police and selectively perceive even their own experiences. Although they do not make the links since their 1994 article social psychologists have begun to stress the parallel hypothesis that general, pre-existing attitudes shape how people interpret their experiences. They find that people read their experiences in the light of their prior expectations perhaps more than specific experiences affect their general expectations. In this view, general attitudes affect people's evaluations of the encounters they find themselves caught up in, rather than the reverse. The possibility that this process emphasizes either negative or positive predispositions is another matter, however.

This research in psychology on the impact of experience reveals a strong "negativity bias" that shapes the interpretation that people give to their day-to-day experiences. Two reviews of that literature conclude that people give much more weight to negative experiences (Baumeister et al., 2001; Rosin & Royzman, 2001). Positive attitudes do not have as much effect on measured behaviours as negative attitudes or affect. In experiments, objectively equal negative and positive events are weighted differently. The lessons of bad things are learned more quickly, and forgotten more slowly, than the lessons of positive experiences. When people are faced with a mix of positive and negative experiences, the negative ones predominate in shaping both attitudes and behaviour. They pay more careful attention to negative experiences, and think about them and recall them later in more elaborate and fine-grained fashion. Baumeister et al. (2001) also conclude that people simply *remember* negative events more readily

than they do positive ones. The effects of negativity bias are very strong, affecting both humans and animals, and appear to be innate as well as learned. Negativity bias thus provides a psychological foundation for possible asymmetry in the consequences of police activity on the street. It is consistent with Brandl et al.'s (1994) hypothesis that the impact of general predispositions on people's rating of specific encounters is stronger than the obverse impact of encounters on those predispositions, and it adds a strong directionality to the net impact of the process.

Data and Measures

The Chicago city survey was conducted by telephone in Spanish and English by the Survey Research Laboratory of the University of Illinois. Sample telephone numbers were generated at random to ensure that both listed and non-listed number households were included. An advance letter was sent to all listed households. Respondents were selected randomly in households with more than one eligible adult (aged 18 and older). The most conservative measure of the response rate was 35 per cent. After dropping cases due to missing data, 3,005 of the original 3,141 respondents represented residents of the city. For descriptive purposes, the data are weighted to adjust for multiple telephone numbers (which increase the chance of a household being sampled) and the number of adults in the household (which decreases the chances of each individual being selected). The multivariate analysis and all tests of significance were conducted using unweighted data. For more information on the survey and specific questions, see Skogan and Steiner (2004).

Measuring Confidence in the Police

Responses to six questions were used to assess resident's general views of the police, all using 4-point scales. Three questions tracked perceived police responsiveness to community concerns and whether police were dealing with problems that really concerned residents. There were also questions about "how good a job" police were doing in preventing crime, keeping order and helping victims. All of the questions referred to "police in your neighbourhood". The responses were single-factored, the average inter-item correlation between them was +0.63 and the reliability (Cronbach's alpha) of the resulting measure was 0.91. In the survey, these questions were asked *before* respondents were quizzed about possible recent contacts with the police in order to enhance recall.

Measuring Neighbourhood Conditions

To measure the perceived extent of neighbourhood conditions, respondents were requested to rate a list of things "that you may think are problems in your neighbourhood". They were asked to indicate whether "you think it is a big problem, some problem or no problem in your neighbourhood". Responses to questions about

gang violence and *street drug markets* dominated their views of neighbourhood crime problems. Responses to the two measures, which were correlated +0.73, were combined to form an index. Perceived problems with neighbourhood *social disorder* were measured by responses to questions about public drinking, loitering, and disruption in and around schools. The combined 3-item scale had a reliability of 0.77. To measure *fear of crime*, respondents were asked how safe they would feel alone outside in their neighbourhood at night and whether worry about crime prevented them from doing the things they would like to do in their neighbourhood. Responses to the two questions were correlated +0.51. Following Reisig and Parks (2000), a single question was used to measure how *satisfied* respondents were with their neighbourhood “as a place to live”.

Measuring Contact with Police

Respondents to the 2003 survey were asked a series of nine screening questions to establish whether they had contacted the police during the 12 months preceding the interview. They most frequently recalled contacting police to report a crime (26 per cent of all respondents did so), followed by reporting an accident or some other emergency (19 per cent). Between 11 and 13 per cent of those interviewed recalled reporting suspicious persons, suspicious noises or “things that might lead to a crime”. Some 14 per cent described contacting police regarding “some other neighbourhood problem”, 12 per cent gave police information, and 15 per cent reported contacting police to ask for advice or information. A total of 10 per cent recalled contacting them about a matter that was not on the list that was read to them. Taking into account the overlap, 52 per cent of Chicagoans recalled initiating contact with the police. Combining incidents involving possible and probable crimes, 36 per cent of adults contacted police about what they thought might be a criminal matter, while 40 per cent approached them about other concerns and problems. This suggests that popular views of the police are as likely to be affected by how they handle a broad range of events as by their “crime fighting” activities.

The survey also asked respondents about their involvement in police-initiated encounters: 19 per cent of those who were interviewed recalled having been stopped by police during the past year, either while driving or while they were on foot, and 16 per cent recalled a police-initiated traffic encounter during the previous year. An overlapping 6 per cent of all respondents described being involved in a foot stop. There was also a substantial overlap between police-initiated and citizen-initiated encounters. Among those who were stopped by police, 61 per cent also reported contacting them about some matter during the course of a year.

Assessing Positive and Negative Encounters

Respondents who had contacts with police were asked follow-up questions about what happened at the time and how satisfied they were with the way police handled

the incident. They were asked separately about public-initiated encounters and then police-initiated contacts. If they recalled more than one contact in each of those categories, they were asked to consider the encounter that had occurred most recently. In principle, the most recent of multiple contacts should constitute a random sample of encounters, and the most recent should be more memorable. Respondents were asked about the help they received and the politeness and fairness with which they were treated. The apparent effort that police put into a case was measured by perceived response time, and the extent to which police showed respect to respondents was measured by whether they reportedly paid attention to what respondents had to say. Attempts by police to establish two-way communication were measured by asking whether police told those who called what actions they were going to take in response to their complaint. At the end of each sequence, they were asked to rate how satisfied they were with their experience.

Table 1 summarizes the measures and presents the percentage of respondents who responded in a favourable manner regarding police actions in their case. In general, reviews of citizen-initiated encounters were favourable. Overall, 62 per cent of those who contacted police indicated that they “came right away”, scheduled an appointment to meet with the police (which was also coded a satisfactory police response) or handled the matter over the telephone. Other aspects of these encounters were rated using 4-point scales, and those who contacted the police were very favourable about the politeness with which they were treated (89 per cent gave police a favourable rating). They were also very positive that the police paid attention to what they had to say (86 per cent) and were helpful (81 per cent). Police were least successful at making it clear to the public what they were going to do about their complaint (71 per cent were favourable on this dimension). Asked to rate how satisfied they were overall, 78 per cent gave the police positive marks.

Not surprisingly, those who were pulled over or stopped while they were on foot were less satisfied with their experience. However, even a majority of them responded on the positive end of each evaluative question. They were positive about the fairness with which they were treated (68 per cent were favourable) and about the care police took to explain the situation to them (69 per cent favourable). They were least satisfied with how politely they were treated (61 per cent) and police attention to what they had to say on their own behalf (65 per cent). Overall, 58 per cent of those who were stopped rated their experience as very or somewhat satisfactory.

For the analysis that follows, ratings of police-initiated and citizen-initiated encounters with police were created by summing the number of positive responses to the questions presented in Table 1. The average correlation among the six ratings of police-initiated encounters was +0.54; among the six citizen-initiated encounters it was +0.37. If half or more of each respondent's ratings were positive, they were classified in the “positive encounter” category; if they rated the police positively on less than half of the questions, they were classed as having had a negative encounter. In all, 63 per cent of those who were stopped were classified as having a positive experience, and they constituted 12 per cent of all Chicagoans. A total of 79 per cent

Table 1 Descriptions of Police Actions

Citizen-initiated encounters	Percentage favourable	Police-initiated encounters	Percentage favourable
Police came right away, scheduled an appointment or handled the case by telephone	62	Police clearly explained why they wanted to talk to them	71
Police paid careful attention to what they had to say	86	Police paid careful attention to what they had to say	65
Police clearly explained what action they would take in response, or none was necessary	71	Police clearly explained what action they would take or none was necessary	69
Police were very or somewhat helpful versus not very helpful or not at all helpful	81	Police were very or somewhat fair versus somewhat or very unfair	68
Police were very or somewhat polite versus somewhat or very impolite	89	Police were very or somewhat polite versus somewhat or very impolite	61
Very or somewhat satisfied versus somewhat or very dissatisfied	78	Very or somewhat satisfied versus somewhat or very dissatisfied	58
(Unweighted number of cases)	(1,539)	(Unweighted number of cases)	(542)

Note: Weighted data; see text.

of those who contacted the police gave them a positive rating, and this was 41 per cent of all Chicagoans. The reference category in the analysis that follows is persons who did not have an encounter; they were scored a “zero” on the four dichotomous measures of positive and negative police and citizen-initiated encounters.¹

Analysis

Table 2 presents an OLS regression analysis of the correlates of confidence in the police, as measured by the six survey questions described above. The left-hand panel of Table 2 describes the impact of the personal characteristics of respondents, which proved significantly related to confidence in the police. The personal background factors are all represented as dichotomies so their coefficients can be compared in magnitude. Race was represented by dichotomies for the groups listed, with those of other races (3.3 per cent of respondents) or undetermined race (2.3 per cent) classified together. Whites made up the “omitted category” against which the effects of race are benchmarked. Race differences were strong, with both African-Americans and Latinos expressing more dissatisfaction with policing in their neighbourhood. Older Chicagoans were more positive about the police, but being a younger person was significant only in conjunction with race. Being both young *and* African-American had an added negative impact, and this was the group in which more than 70 per cent of respondents recalled being stopped in the past year (Skogan & Steiner, 2004). Married-couple households were represented by more optimistic residents.

Table 2 Regression Analysis of Confidence in the Police

	Personal characteristics		Perceived conditions		Recent experience	
	Coefficient	Standard error	Coefficient	Standard error	Coefficient	Standard error
Intercept	2.91	0.03**	2.64	0.08**	2.72	0.08**
Personal characteristics						
African-American	-0.37	0.04**	-0.13	0.03**	-0.12	0.03**
Latino	-0.26	0.04**	-0.03	0.03	-0.04	0.03
Other/undetermined race	-0.13	0.06*	-0.04	0.05	-0.05	0.04
Age 60 & older	0.28	0.04**	0.11	0.03**	0.08	0.03**
Age 30 or younger	0.03	0.04	-0.02	0.03	-0.02	0.03
Young & black	-0.19	0.06**	-0.12	0.06*	-0.09	0.05
Income over US\$40,000	0.02	0.03	-0.10	0.02**	-0.08	0.02**
Married	0.07	0.03**	0.07	0.02**	0.06	0.02**
Perceived conditions						
Drug and gang problems			-0.11	0.02**	-0.09	0.02**
Social disorder problems			-0.24	0.03**	-0.24	0.03**
Fear of crime			-0.04	0.02**	-0.04	0.02*
Neighbourhood satisfaction			0.28	0.01**	0.25	0.02**
Recent experience						
Positive citizen-initiated					0.02	0.02
Negative citizen-initiated					-0.46	0.04**
Positive police-initiated					0.06	0.03
Negative police-initiated					-0.24	0.04**
R ²	0.09		0.35		0.40	
(Number of cases)	(3,005)		(3,005)		(3,005)	

Notes: *p < 0.05; **p < 0.01.

Personal factors such as education, having children at home and home ownership were not significant once this short list of personal factors was taken into account, and they are not included here. Income played a significant role only when other factors are taken into account, and neither income nor education had any significant interactive relationship with race and attitudes concerning the police.

The middle column of Table 2 adds measures of the perceived extent of crime and disorder problems, fear of crime and neighbourhood satisfaction to the list of independent variables. These were all significantly related to assessments of the quality of neighbourhood policing, and they raised the overall R^2 from 0.09 to 0.35. It is important to note that taking neighbourhood conditions into account had a substantial effect on the coefficients associated with race. Once their perceptions of neighbourhood crime and disorder, fear of crime and neighbourhood satisfaction were included, the coefficient for African-Americans dropped by two-thirds, and that for Latinos by almost 90 per cent. The concentration of these problems in minority neighbourhoods in Chicago covaries highly with perceptions of the quality of police service. Conditions tend to be better where older residents are concentrated, and the coefficient associated with being age 60 and older dropped by half. Income differences become significant at this point and stay strong, perhaps because those abstract stakes in the established order discussed earlier do not shine through until objective conditions are accounted for.

The right-hand column of Table 2 then adds four measures of experience with the police, raising the overall R^2 to 0.40. Statistically, the effects of these positive and negative experiences are being contrasted with each other (for the 12 per cent of all respondents recalling *both* police and self-initiated encounters) and with not having *any* recent experience to report (the 40 per cent of all Chicagoans in the non-contact reference category). Chicagoans' personal experiences strongly affect their general views of the quality of police service. A sign that these effects are independently related to confidence in the police is that their introduction scarcely affects the coefficients that are associated with the personal and neighbourhood factors already included in the model.

The impact of encounters is strongly asymmetrical. Having a positive experience helps little; neither of the coefficients associated with positive experiences was significantly different from zero. Having a bad experience hurts a great deal. The coefficient associated with a negative experience when respondents contacted the police (-0.46) was 23 times that of having a positive experience ($+0.02$), in the opposite direction. The coefficient associated with having a bad experience when stopped by the police (-0.24) was four times that of having had a positive experience ($+0.06$).² Interestingly, for all of the policy interest in the quality of police-initiated traffic and foot stops, the largest impact on dissatisfaction—with a “blame-to credit” ratio of 23 to 1—was from citizen-initiated encounters. While most Chicagoans reported being well treated when they called the police, the minority who did not see themselves as well treated were negative indeed.

These findings are bad news for the police, for among the most important determinants of general satisfaction with what they do are the negative things that happen when citizens encounter the police. These include police being seemingly impolite, unhelpful, unfair, inattentive to what they had to say and unwilling to explain what was going on. The measures of positive and negative experiences account for 17 per cent of the explained variance described in Table 1. The coefficient associated with having a negative citizen-initiated encounter was almost four times that for being an African-American; recalling a bad police-initiated encounter had twice the impact. This highlights the extreme importance of how people are treated as the police conduct their routine business. At a time in which there is much discussion of “problem-oriented policing” and “intelligence-driven policing”, there is evidence pointing to the importance of “process-oriented policing” as well.

Figure 1 illustrates the magnitude of the statistical differences presented in Table 2. The left-hand panels depict the average confidence scores reported by respondents recalling positive and negative encounters with police. They are centred at the city average. The substantial dissatisfaction registered by those recalling a negative encounter that they had themselves initiated is apparent there, as is the large difference between the effects of positive and negative encounters generally. Of course, some of these differences in opinion are due to *who* was stopped or reached out for police assistance, so the right-hand panels in Figure 1 depict the distribution of confidence scores once the other important individual characteristics and perceived neighbourhood factors listed in Table 1 are taken into account statistically. The “residualized” differences in views of the police once they are accounted for are smaller, but still not favourable to the police. Taking into account who police stopped

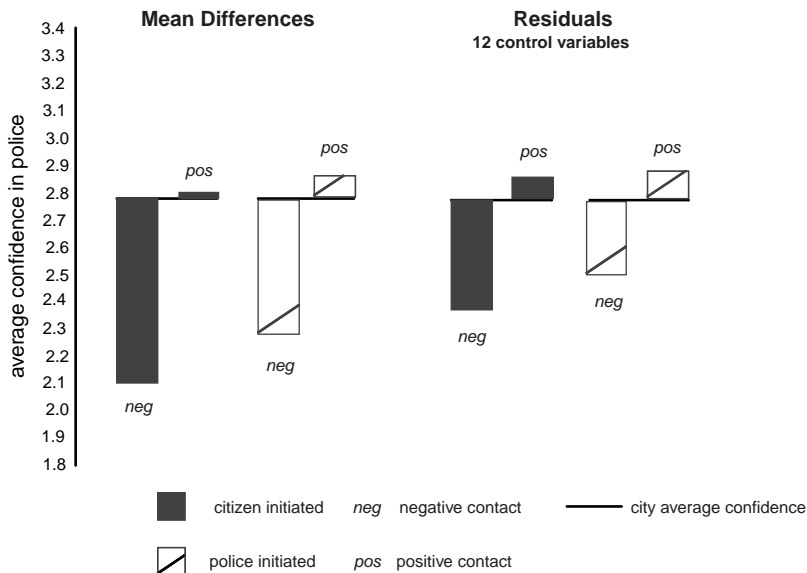


Figure 1 Raw and residualized impacts of experience.

or responded to decreased the apparent magnitude of the impact of negatively rated encounters (recall that young, African-American males are *very* likely to be stopped), but this did not add much on the positive side of the equation.

Among the limitations of this study is the fact that the control variables included in these calculations do not encompass all of the factors that might influence confidence in the police. There are no measures of vicarious experience with the police, for example. This would include knowing about or even talking with *other people* who had a tale to tell about an encounter with the police. A 1991 Gallup poll found that African-Americans were far more likely than whites to know someone else who had been mistreated by police, and to have an abused family member (Gallup Organization, 1991). Weitzer and Tuch (2004) find a strong independent effect of knowing other people who have been abused, on a measure of perceived police misconduct.

There is also no evidence here concerning the possible impact of the media. Weitzer and Tuch (2004) find that self-reports of the frequency with which people read about or hear about police misconduct on television has a strong effect on their perceptions of the extent of misconduct by their neighbourhood police. This effect was strong for all races, and there was an additional media effect among people who reported living in high-crime areas. However, patterns of media consumption are linked to almost every feature of our lives, and it is my judgment that the jury is still out on media effects. This is an area of research that calls for randomized experiments that can plausibly rule on the independent impact of both media modalities and content.

Finally, the Chicago study did not include measures of a wide variety of *informal* contacts between police and residents. Maxson et al. (2003) report that encounters at meetings and events such as those associated with community policing are received more favourably than emergency calls and stops, but no measures of those are available here.

Asymmetry across Cities

Is the disproportionate impact of negatively evaluated personal experience with the police just a Chicago phenomenon, or is it a general one? This is an important question because of the implications of asymmetry for practice. We saw above that some studies identified significant effects of positive encounters, although in not many could the balance of positive and negative effects be interpreted. In order to examine the jurisdictional generality of this apparent asymmetry in police-public encounters, I recoded and examined surveys conducted in other places over a ten-year period. The *metric* of the measures was similar in every study. The dependent variable (confidence in the police) was always measured on 4-point scales, so deviations around city means like those presented in Figure 1 are comparable. The *measurement strategy* employed in studies was the same as well. They all screened separately for recent citizen and police-initiated contacts, then asked follow-up

questions that could be used to classify the encounters as positive or negative in character. I weighted the surveys to accommodate their sampling designs, and to standardize the sex and (when possible) racial distribution of the data at approximately Census figures. The Appendix describes the surveys and presents some general information about the measures; a table detailing the measures used in each study is available upon request from the author.

These points of convergence do not mean that there were not significant differences between the studies. They varied in the *wording of the questions* that they used to assess popular confidence in the police; they varied in the *kinds of experiences* that were included in the screening questions; and they varied in *how they assessed what happened* on the scene when people were stopped or had contacted the police. There was some minor variation in the demographic factors measured by the surveys, and more in the questions used to assess neighbourhood conditions. The studies varied a great deal in the *number of questions* that went into each of the analytic measures that were developed. Confidence in the police is always measured using a multi-item scale, but the number of items ranges between two and ten questions. The screening questions identifying respondents who had contacted the police ranged from one to nine in number. In some studies, only one question, and in others as many as six, were used to classify police-initiated encounters as positive or negative in character. This diversity certainly reduces what we might call the “mechanical comparability” of the studies. However, if the findings are still comparable—and they are—it increases our confidence in their robustness and generality. That they are comparable across diverse operationalizations of the basic constructs (police-citizen encounters, perceived quality of treatment and confidence in the police) may be seen as further evidence of the generality of the asymmetric impact of experience with the police across time and space.

Figure 2 presents the first of these cross-city comparisons. It is based on the four most comparable surveys in the set. The Chicago and Washington, DC surveys were identical in format, and the St Petersburg, Russian Federation, questionnaire was translated with modifications (and few questions about the neighbourhood) into Russian from the Chicago study. Each comparison is centred on the mean level of confidence for the city as a whole. The figure displays “residualized” deviations from the city means that are similar to those presented in Figure 2. They were calculated after controlling for eight demographic factors and (except for St Petersburg) four scales reflecting respondent’s assessments of neighbourhood conditions. (More details are presented in the Appendix.) There was not much difference in levels of confidence in the three American cities: Seattle, Washington, DC and Chicago; the average level of confidence in the Russian Federation, was considerably lower. The Russians surveyed were also much less likely to contact the police: only 27 per cent recalled having done so in a year’s time, compared to 49 to 52 per cent of the residents of the three American cities. On the other hand, 35 per cent of St Petersburgers reported being stopped by the police, in contrast to the 19 to 21 per cent who were stopped in the United States.

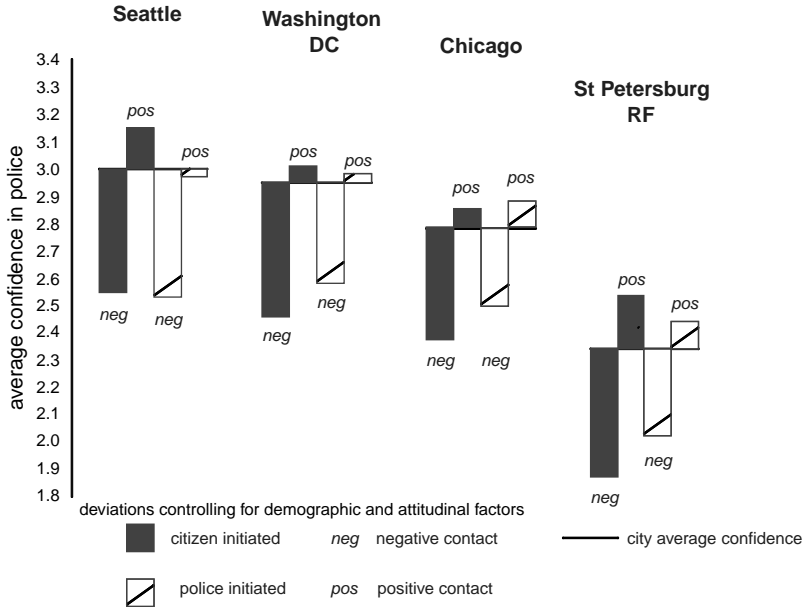


Figure 2 Impact of experience in four cities.

In each case, the negative deviations from the city mean associated with negatively rated encounters with the police were larger than the positive deviations associated with positively rated encounters (excepting Seattle, where on average everyone stopped by the police was unhappy to some degree). The *ratio* of each pair of residualized deviations is one measure of the asymmetry in the credit and blame that is garnered by these contacts. For Chicago, the benchmark city in this study, the blame-to-credit ratio was 6 to 1 for citizen-initiated encounters and 3 to 1 for police-initiated contacts. The ratios for Seattle and the District of Columbia were in the 3 to 1 to 8 to 1 range, although police in Seattle actually received no credit at all for positively rated encounters. Blame-to-credit imbalances were smaller in Russia (about 2 to 1) because police there got a bit more credit when they appeared to be doing a professional job.

Figure 3 presents data for another group of city comparisons. As detailed in the Appendix, the surveys in New York City, Indianapolis and St Petersburg, Florida, used fewer measures to assess the frequency and character of police-citizen contacts, and generally had fewer measures of confidence in the police. The St Petersburg and Indianapolis questionnaires were identical, part of the same study. The British Crime Survey was a national study using a questionnaire that strongly influenced the design of the Chicago project. For this analysis, I selected only respondents living in urban areas in England and Wales.

In each case there was again considerable asymmetry in the impact of positive and negative experiences with the police. The blame-to-credit ratio was large New York City (for citizen-initiated encounters it was 11 to 1, and for police-initiated contacts it

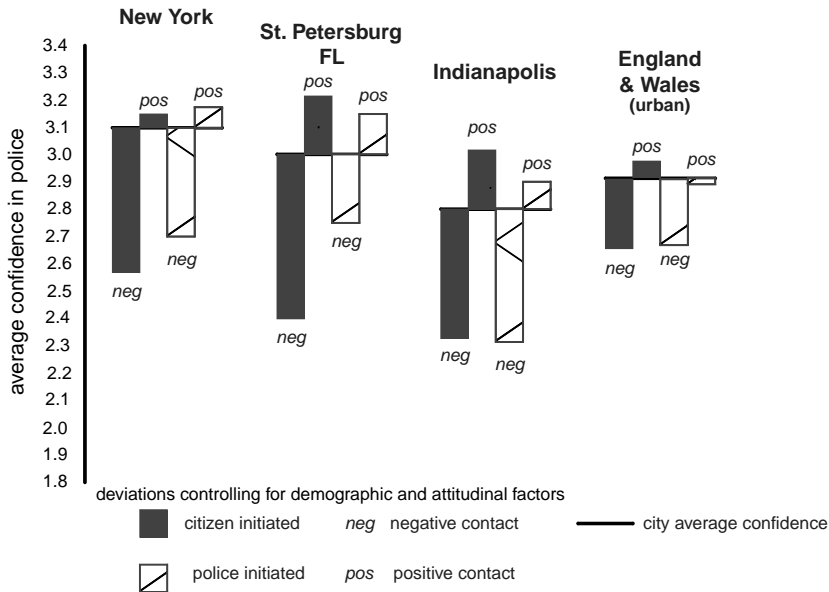


Figure 3 Impact of experience in four additional cities.

was 5 to 1). They were smaller in St Petersburg, Florida: 3 to 1 and 2 to 1. The loss of confidence associated with negatively rated contacts with police were smaller in England and Wales, but there was little credit to be had there, so for citizen-initiated contacts the blame-to-credit ratio was still 5 to 1. No credit at all was allocated to positively rated police-initiated encounters in England and Wales.

Summary and Conclusions

This article examined the impact of personal experience on popular assessments of the quality of police service, arguing that it is an important issue for policy and practice. Past research had made note of a possible asymmetry in the relationship between experience and attitudes, but in only a few studies could the reader ferret out interpretable information about the relative strength of positive and negative encounters, and that was never the central focus of the study. Past research has indicated that it is also important to take into account the influence of other factors that are known to have strong impact on attitudes toward the police before examining the impact of recent experiences. Research in psychology on the impact of positive and negative experiences has revealed a strong “negativity bias”, and this is consistent with an asymmetry hypothesis. Negative events are given more weight, people pay more attention to negative cues, the lessons they carry are learned more quickly and negative experiences have more impact on behaviour. Negativity bias thus provides a psychological foundation for possible asymmetry in the consequences of police activity on the street.

A significant feature of the findings reported here is that asymmetry holds for both police- and citizen-initiated encounters. These are somewhat different groups; in Chicago, 20 per cent of residents recalled being stopped, but more than half reported contacting the police on their own. The latter were contacting them concerning a wide variety of matters; for about half, their call concerned reporting an accident or some other emergency, asking for advice or information, or calling the police to give them information about some non-crime matter. Although many (e.g., Decker, 1981) have characterized police-initiated and citizen-initiated encounters as fundamentally different in character, in every case examined here both kinds of contacts showed strong asymmetry. In most instances, citizen-initiated contacts showed stronger asymmetry than police-initiated contacts.

The importance of this observation is further justified by the fact that citizen-initiated encounters are much more *common* than police-initiated contacts. Only in the Russian Federation did more people report being stopped by the police than had contacted them. In the other cities, citizen-initiated contacts were between 2½ and 3 times more frequent than police-initiated encounters. This serves to multiply the potential consequences of the asymmetry with which publically initiated encounters were rated.

The multiple replications presented here also document that the asymmetry effect is robust across time and across countries. Estimates of its magnitude—the blame to credit ratio discussed above—also do not seem to vary systematically with how the measures are operationalized. There was wide variety in the number and wording of the measures used to screen for contact with the police, to assess the positive or negative character of the resulting encounters, and to measure general attitudes toward the police, but in every case blame exceeded credit by a significant margin, and in some instances there was no credit allocated at all.

The concept of negativity bias, which is consistent with the evidence presented here, also supports the general argument advanced by Brandl et al. (1994). It is consistent with their position that people's general views of the police have a more powerful impact on how they interpret their experiences, compared to the impact that experience has on their general views. They thought of this as stereotyping, but negativity bias accounts more easily for the heavily one-sided direction of the effect.

Why does all of this matter? Popular opinion matters in part because widespread confidence in the police makes their work *easier* and *more effective*. Tyler (2004) concludes that the degree to which people view the police as legitimate influences whether they comply with police orders or requests. People accept their decisions when they believe the police have acted fairly and openly with them (Tyler & Huo, 2002). Observational studies of on-street encounters find that experiencing disrespect from the police reduces citizen compliance with their instructions (Mastrofski et al., 1996; McCluskey et al., 1999). Controlling for other factors, McCluskey (2003) found that people who were observed receiving respectful treatment were twice as likely to comply, and those receiving disrespectful treatment were nearly twice as likely to rebel. Likewise, he found that when police patiently discussed a situation with them,

people were more than twice as likely to comply with their requests. There is also evidence that how people are treated by the police influences their willingness to obey the law when the police are not around (Sunshine & Tyler, 2003; Tyler, 1990). Variations in police conduct have been shown to influence later re-offending (Paternoster et al., 1997; Paternoster, 1987). Favourable views of the police *may* influence how ready people are to step forward to help the police by reporting crimes, identifying offenders and serving as witnesses (Brown & Benedict, 2002), but I wish the evidence were stronger on this point.

By inference, the large asymmetry we observe in many places—and in particular the small credit that most people seem to give to police actions even when they describe them in generally positive fashion—could be interpreted as implying that the quality of service rendered does not matter very much. Few would want to press that point normatively, however. As a normative question, the answer seems quite clear: democracies are committed to both equality of treatment and an objectively fair level of treatment through almost every aspect of their laws and constitutions. Yet the one-sided interpretation of those efforts remains a huge stumbling block for well-meaning practitioners. As Katz et al. (1975: 129) concluded thirty years ago in their study of encounters with bureaucracies: “It is almost as if agency people can do nothing to improve the general public image of government officers through consideration of clients and fairness of treatment, but they can do a great deal to impair it by unfair and inconsiderate handling of clients.” The empirical message is, unfortunately, “You can’t win, you can just cut your losses.” No matter what you do, it only counts when it goes against you.

Appendix

This appendix describes the surveys used in this analysis. Detailed tables summarizing and comparing the questions used in each survey are available upon request from the author.

Chicago

The 2003 City of Chicago survey involved telephone interviews with 3,005 respondents with complete data for this study. Sample telephone numbers were generated at random to ensure that both listed and non-listed number households were included. In households with more than one eligible adult aged 18 and older, the respondent was selected randomly. The survey was conducted in Spanish and English by the Survey Research Laboratory of the University of Illinois. The resulting response rate was 35 per cent. For descriptive purposes, the data were weighted to adjust for multiple telephone numbers (which increase the chance of a household being sampled) and the number of adults in the household (which decreases the chances of each individual being selected). For more information, see Skogan and Steiner (2004).

British Crime Survey

The 1992 British Crime Survey (BCS) involved personal interviews with households in England and Wales selected from the Postcode Address file, a national listing of all postal delivery points. Respondents were chosen to make up a representative sample of persons 16 years of age and older living in private households. Field work was conducted from January to March 1992, and the survey's response rate was 77 per cent. Weights are used to adjust for the over-sampling of inner-city households and for differential household size. The analysis examines the subset of 3,138 respondents living in urban areas who had complete data for this study. The survey uses a robust ten-item screener for encounters with police. It shared four of Chicago's seven follow-up questions about citizen-initiated encounters, and five of six follow-up questions about the most recent police-initiated encounter. The 7-item dependent variable includes questions concerning non-enforcement effectiveness (helping and supporting crime victims, giving the public crime prevention advice, and working with groups to solve crime and other problems) and questions about controlling social disorder, violent crime and motoring offenses. The multivariate analysis controlled for eight demographic factors and four measures of neighbourhood crime and social disorder, fear of crime and neighbourhood satisfaction. For more information, see Skogan (1994).

Indianapolis

The City of Indianapolis survey involved telephone interviews with 4,628 complete-data respondents. Interviews were conducted during 1996. The data were collected using separate samples of the fifty patrol beats that make up the city of Indianapolis. The target number of respondents per beat was 100; this quota was not fully met in downtown Indianapolis beats. Potential survey households were selected randomly from residences with listed telephone numbers. Interviews were completed by telephone with a household respondent selected randomly from among residents 18 years of age and older. The survey response rate was 53 per cent. In this analysis, weights were used to compensate for the over representation of female respondents and to readjust the beat samples to reflect their true proportion of the city-wide population. Two items are used to measure confidence in the police: a rating of the job police were doing working with people in their neighbourhood to solve local problems, and respondents' overall satisfaction with the quality of police services in their neighbourhood. Two questions screened for citizen-initiated contacts with police (reporting a crime and calling for assistance), and one for police initiated contacts (stopped by police, but *excluding* traffic stops). Responses to two items measured satisfaction with citizen-initiated encounters (satisfaction and if they took care of the problem) and one (satisfaction) assessed police-initiated encounters. The multivariate analysis controlled for seven demographic factors and four measures of

neighbourhood crime and social disorder, fear of crime and neighbourhood satisfaction. For more information, see Reisig and Parks (2000).

New York

The New York City survey involved telephone interviews with respondents living in five police precincts. The interviews were conducted in nine waves between January and October 2002, with a target quote of 40 respondents per wave per precinct. A total of 1,887 complete-data interviews were conducted by the University of Baltimore's Schaefer Center for Public Policy. The questionnaire shared four of Chicago's six measures of confidence in the police, adding "promptly respond to calls for assistance". It used one-item measures to screen for citizen and police-initiated contacts with police, and one-item measures of satisfaction with encounters (in each case, "how well were you treated?"). The multivariate analysis controlled for eight demographic factors; no perceptual measures of neighbourhood conditions were included in the survey. For further information, see Miller et al. (2004).

St Petersburg, Florida

The St Petersburg, Florida, survey involved telephone interviews with 1,788 complete-data respondents. Interviews were conducted during 1997. The surveys were conducted as 12 separate samples of police beats in St Petersburg, plus an additional four samples in St Petersburg collected to represent the remainder of the city. The 12 St Petersburg neighbourhoods are a subset of that city's 48 beats. The target number of respondents was 100 per beat. Potential survey households were selected randomly from residences with listed telephone numbers. Interviews were completed by telephone with a household respondent selected randomly from among residents 18 years of age and older. The survey response rate was 42 per cent. In this analysis, weights were used to compensate for the over representation of female respondents and to readjust the beat samples to reflect their true proportion of the city-wide population. The questionnaire was identical to the Indianapolis survey. Two items were used to measure confidence in the police: a rating of the job police were doing working with people in their neighbourhood to solve local problems, and respondents' overall satisfaction with the quality of police services in their neighbourhood. The survey used two questions to screen for citizen-initiated contacts with police (reporting a crime and calling for assistance), and one for police initiated contacts (stopped by police, but *excluding* traffic stops). Two items measured satisfaction with citizen-initiated encounters (satisfaction and if they took care of the problem) and one (satisfaction) assessed police-initiated encounters. The multivariate analysis controlled for eight demographic factors and four measures of neighbourhood crime and social disorder, fear of crime and neighbourhood satisfaction. For more information, see Reisig and Parks (2000).

St Petersburg, Russian Federation

The 2003 City of St Petersburg, Russian Federation, survey involved interviews with 1,788 complete-data respondents. There was considerable missing data for the first ten questions, which opened the survey by gathering respondent's attitudes toward the police, reducing the effective sample size by about 15 per cent. Samples of 200 households each were selected in St Petersburg's 13 centre-city administrative districts, and interviews were conducted using a quota sample stratified by sex and age. The survey questionnaire was translated, with some modifications, from that used for the Chicago study. Responses to nine questions were used to measure general confidence in the police. Two questions gauged citizen-initiated contacts with police (contacted the police and reported a crime), and respondents were asked five follow-up evaluative questions. Two items screened for police-initiated contacts (stopped while in a car and stopped on the street), followed by four follow-up questions. The multivariate analysis controlled for six demographic factors; no perceptual measures of neighbourhood conditions were included in the survey. The survey was conducted with support from the Ford Foundations's Human Rights Project, administered by the Vera Foundation, and was directed by Professor Yakov Galinski of the St Petersburg Institute of Sociology.

Seattle

The Seattle survey involved telephone interviews with 1,344 complete-data respondents. Both citywide RDD samples and listed number samples were drawn. Responding households were screened for race in order to generate a completed sample consisting of 400 interviews with each of four target ethnic groups: whites, Asians, Latinos and African-Americans. Interviews were completed from May to July 2003. The survey was conducted in both English and Spanish. In most households with more than one eligible respondent age 18 and older, the respondent was selected randomly. No estimates are available of the survey response rate. For the analyses presented here, weights were used to adjust the sample to represent 2000 Census figures for Seattle. The survey shared five of Chicago's six measures of confidence in the police, adding "promptly respond to emergency calls for assistance". It included five of Chicago's nine questions screening for citizen-initiated contacts with the police, and both screening questions for police-initiated contacts. It shared three of Chicago's seven measures of what happened during citizen-initiated encounters, adding two more ("treated professionally and respectfully" and "kept informed of the status of the case"). It shared one of Chicago's six measures of what happened during police-initiated encounters, adding four. The multivariate analysis controlled for seven demographic factors and four measures of neighbourhood crime and social disorder, fear of crime and neighbourhood satisfaction. For more information, see Davis et al. (2004).

Washington, DC

The Washington, DC survey involved 2,049 complete-data respondents. It was conducted to provide a benchmark for an evaluation of reform in Washington, DC. Telephone numbers in the sample were generated at random to ensure that both listed and non-listed number households were included. Adults age 18 and older were eligible for interviewing. In multi-adult households, interviews were conducted with alternating male and female respondents. Interviews were completed during December 1999 and January 2000 by MACRO International. The response rate for the survey was 48 per cent. The Washington, DC survey questionnaire mirrors that used for the Chicago study. The multivariate analysis controlled for eight demographic factors and four measures of neighbourhood crime and social disorder, fear of crime and neighbourhood satisfaction.

Notes

- [1] Analyses that use the ratings to score each encounter by the *extent* to which it was rated positively or negatively do not yield much more information, and this increased the difficulty of comparing the impact of the experience measures with the influence of other dichotomous measures in the model.
- [2] Technically we can only say that the coefficients associated with positive police and citizen-initiated encounters are “not statistically different from zero,” but the values reported in Table 2 are still the best estimates of the effect sizes associated with those experiences.

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