Fear of Crime and It’s Effect upon Opinions of the Police Related to Police Professionalism and Police Efficiency: A Secondary Data Analysis

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Abstract

Understanding what effects opinions of the police is vital to police officers and departments as it has been found that police are more likely to reach their goals if they have support, cooperation and trust from the citizens within the areas they work. That said, this secondary data analysis investigates whether or not fear of crime has an effect on an individual’s opinion of the police related to aspects of police professionalism and police efficiency. Initial results have shown that the higher an individual’s fear of crime is, the more likely they are to view police professionalism and efficiency more negatively. It also shows that the lower an individual’s fear of crime is, the more likely they are to view police professionalism and efficiency positively. Fear of crime is something that officers and departments need to monitor and reduce in order to increase individual opinions of the police which will help with gaining support, cooperation and trust. This will help police in reaching their goals and with their everyday functioning within communities.
**Introduction**

For decades, there has been an intense examination on the topic of the way police are perceived by different groups in society. This topic has recently become increasingly important as police agencies have begun to look for ways to make community-policing more effective than it has been in the past. This has occurred since it has been found that the police are more likely to reach their goals if they have support, cooperation, and trust from the citizens that are part of the community they work in. Even though this may be true, it has also been found that police agencies are facing the challenge of being able to have effective services along with maintaining a positive reputation.

All of that said, in the past, research on perceptions of police has focused upon looking at the view of the public or the view of a community. It has been found that the view of most of these populations is positive. Along with this, previous research on the topic of individual perceptions of the police has looked at many variables as important in impacting the public, individual or community opinions. In the beginning, research related to this topic studied citizen demographics such as race, age, and sex (Wentz & Schlimgen, 2011, Miller et al., 2004). Later on, research also began to examine the impact of neighborhood characteristics on opinion of the police (Wentz & Schlimgen, 2011). Even more recently, the additional variable of police-citizen contacts, in terms of how the contact itself and different aspects of the contacts effect opinion of the police, has begun to be researched too (Wentz & Schlimgen, 2011, Miller et al., 2004).

However, through all of this research, there has been a slim amount of recent research that focuses only on the population of individuals who have a fear of crime. There also has been little research that examines, in part or in whole, the impact that fear of crime, depending on an individual’s level of fear, has on perceptions of the police as a whole.
That said, this analysis looks to answer the question “What is the impact of fear of crime on an individual’s perception of police professionalism and police effectiveness?” In doing so, this study’s main purpose is to determine whether and, if so, in what respects individual’s perceptions or evaluation of the police are influenced by their fear of crime. In particular, the study focuses on assessments of police professionalism and police effectiveness. This study contributes to the existing body of literature through specifically comparing perceptions between individuals who have different levels of fear rather than simply looking at fear of crime in general. It also contributes because the variable of this study, fear of crime, is one that has been examined the least when compared to other variables such as race and age. This variable is also one that is even further divided up by research based on the causal pattern of these two variables as to whether fear of crime effects opinion, opinion effects fear of crime or through studying a reciprocal relationship. In this breakdown, there is an even smaller number of research that focuses upon each causal pattern. This secondary data analysis will focus upon the first causal relationship mentioned. That said, the contribution of this study in looking at this causal relationship helps to add evidence as to whether or not there is a causal link in this direction. This is an important contribution because limited research has focused on this causal direction. Lastly, this research contributes to the existing literature by being a comparison focused solely on these two variables in trying to understand the impact fear of crime, and fear of crime alone, has on an individual’s perception of the police.

**Literature Review**

**General Knowledge of Citizens’ Opinions and Perceptions of the Police**

There are many general conclusions that can be made as to what research has shown about individuals’ opinions of the police. The first is that a vast amount of research has found
that American citizens hold a favorable view of their local police overall (Wentz & Schlimgen, 2011, Miller, Davis, Henderson, Markovic, & Ortiz, 2004, Cao, Frank and Cullen, 1996, Schafer, Huebner and Bynum, 2003). A second conclusion is that even though most people do view their local police favorably, there are still several factors that influence an individual’s opinions of the police, either negatively or positively. The main category of influences involves demographic factors such as race, age, sex and socioeconomic status (Wentz & Schlimgen, 2011, Miller et al., 2004). Another avenue that research has begun to focus on involves non-demographic factors. The first of these factors includes studying the way in which neighborhood characteristics influence an individual’s opinion of the police (Wentz & Schlimgen, 2011). The second of these factors includes studying citizen-police interaction (Wentz & Schlimgen, 2011, Miller et al., 2004, Skogan, 2009). In almost all of the research present today, it can be found that the main categories of citizen demographics, neighborhood characteristics, citizen-police interactions, as well as many other factors such as fear of crime, are extremely important because policing currently has a strong focus on police-citizen relations. It is these relations that guide and help form police services and responses (Wentz & Schlimgen, 2011, Schuck, Rosenbaum & Hawkins, 2008).

Citizen Demographics:

Race

An individual’s race is one factor under citizen demographics that has shown to be a predictor of an individual’s opinion of the police. A great amount of research shows that individuals who are part of the minority population view the police more negatively than those who are white (Wentz & Schlimgen, 2011, Cao et al., 1996, Skogan, 2006, Weitzer & Tuch, 2005, Skogan, 2005). In other words, whites have the most favorable views of the police, blacks
have the least favorable views of the police and hispanics fall somewhere in-between (Miller et al., 2004, Schuck et al., 2008, Reisig & Parks, 2000, Skogan, 2006, Weitzer & Tuch, 2005, Skogan, 2005). These minorities also have feelings of being targeted by the police and have feelings of being treated more harshly by police than whites (Schuck et al., 2005).

This can partly be explained through understanding the self-control theory. This theory directly correlates because it discusses the difference in level of self-control among social groups. Individuals from minority families often come from families where there is ineffective parental supervision while those not of the minorities often do not have this problem (Gottfredson and Hirschi, 1990). Parental supervision and discipline are extremely important in the process of learning self-control (Gottfredson and Hirschi, 1990). As a result, failure to learn self-control can lead to impulsivity and a likelihood of delinquency. This then causes minorities to view the police negatively because they have a lack of self-control in terms of interactions with the police as well as in their life and the choices they make overall. On the other hand, non-minority populations do not face this problem as much and therefore have more positive views (Gottfredson and Hirschi, 1990).

However, it is important to note contradicting views. Some studies have found ethnicity to be a poor predictor of opinion of the police (Jesilow, Meyer, and Namazzi, 1995, Reisig & Correia, 1997, Ren, Cao, Lovrich and Gaffney, 2005). Others have also found there are variables that have more of an impact in predicting attitude than race and other variables that make race insignificant in findings. This occurs regardless of the fact that race has been labeled one of the most important variables for consideration when looking at opinion of the police. (Cao et al., 1996, Ren et al., 2005, Weitzer & Tuch, 2005).

*Age*
Research that has focused upon the demographic of age has ultimately produced mixed findings (Wentz & Schlimgen, 2011). Nevertheless, in most research, it has been found that age is positively correlated with having a favorable opinion of the police in that older individuals view the police more positively than younger individuals (Wentz & Schlimgen, 2011, Cao et al., 1996, Jesilow et al., 1995, Reisig & Correia, 1997, Reisig & Parks, 2000, Ren et al., 2005, Schafer et al., 2003). This relationship often stems from the fact that younger citizens feel that freedom and autonomy are most important while older citizens feel that safety is most important (Wentz & Schlimgen, 2011, Reisig & Correia, 1997). These differences in importance lead to younger people having a higher propensity to participate in activities that police pay more attention to. This causes there to be an increase of interactions between citizens and the police in this age group (Wentz & Schlimgen, 2011). Along with that, younger people have been found to view the police as less effective than their older counterparts. They are also more likely to view the police as more prone to misconduct than their older counterparts (Miller et al., 2004, Weitzer & Tuch, 2005). This may stem from the fact that the young are more critical of authority than older individuals who have more of a stake in keeping order in their neighborhood (Jesilow et al., 1995) However, other research has found that age is ultimately insignificant in terms of predicting citizen opinion of police (Wentz & Schlimgen, 2011).

**Sex and Gender**

Research that has focused on sex or gender has yielded inconsistent results as research has progressed (Wentz & Schlimgen, 2011). Some research has found that females have more positive opinion of the police than males (Wentz & Schlimgen, 2011, Miller et al., 2004, Cao et al, 1996). However, other research has found that males view police more positively than females (Wentz & Schlimgen, 2011). On another avenue, a number of studies have found that an
individual’s sex or gender has no significant impact on opinions of the police at all (Wentz & Schlimgen, 2011, Jesilow, 1995, Reisig & Parks, 2000, Ren et al., 2005). Lastly, some research has found that if there is an impact on opinions of the police by sex or gender, that relationship is very limited overall (Ashcroft, Daniels & Hart, 2003, Reisig & Correia, 1997).

In order to understand these results in part, it is important to understand the General Strain Theory. This theory directly connects with sex and gender and creates part of the explanation as to why research has found these results. Males normally have strains dealing with finances, peers, jealousy, competition and conflict while women have strains dealing with relationships, low prestige at work or family, gender based discrimination, and restrictions on behavior (Agnew & Broidy, 1997). Women respond to these strains through escape and avoidance while men respond through anger (Agnew & Broidy, 1997). These different strains and responses are what causes individuals to have a more positive or negative view of the police. This happens because the strain causes them to either have more or fewer interactions with the police that may be positive or negative as a result of the strains that they are placed under (Agnew & Broidy, 1997). Nevertheless, it is true to say that the majority of females and males react a certain way to certain strains. However, this does not mean that all females and males must react the same way and does not void out the possibility that women may act different than other women and the same with men. This is what can cause mixed findings related to opinion of the police and gender or sex.

**Socioeconomic Status**

In most research, socioeconomic status is measured through analyzing income, employment status, education levels, whether an individual rents or owns a home and the length of time an individual has been at a residence (Wentz & Schlimgen, 2011). Studies have often
found that there are three main predictors of negative police opinions involving socioeconomic status. These three main predictors are low income, low education level and being an individual who rents a home (Wentz & Schlimgen, 2011, Schuck et al., 2008). This can be seen directly through a study on Hispanics and Africans in which it was found that Africans and Hispanics reported more positive attitudes in the middle class, than the poor. They also reported more negative attitudes in disadvantaged neighborhoods than those in the middle class (Schuck et al., 2008). On the other hand, it can be seen that individuals with high incomes, high education levels and those who owned their own home perceived the police more positively (Wentz & Schlimgen, 2011, Cao et al., 1996, joilles, 1995). For some research, it also has been found that education level may not be that significant (Cao et al., 1996) All in all, most research has found that a lower socioeconomic status is often tied to individuals having a more negative and pessimistic opinion of the police while the opposite can be seen for individuals with a higher socioeconomic status (Ashcroft, Daniels & Hart, 2003).

A majority of these results can be explained through understanding the General Strain Theory. This theory directly correlates because it considers the unequal distribution of wealth and power, frustration and alternative methods of reaching certain goals to decrease strains (Siegel, 2001). The lower class, those with the strains of low income, education and renting a home, are usually in support of criminal activity (Siegel, 2001). As a result, they may have more negative interactions with the police because of what they do to meet their goals. On the other hand, those who do not have to resort to crime to meet their goals will be more likely to have no interaction or mostly positive interactions with the police.

**Non-demographic Factors:**

*Neighborhood Characteristics*
Research has found many important things become present in the relationship between neighborhood characteristic and opinion of police. It has been found that citizens in disadvantaged neighborhoods are less likely to have a positive opinion of the police than citizens from neighborhoods in which there are better socioeconomic standings (Wentz & Schlimgen, 2011, Schuck et al., 2008, Jesilow, 1995). Another characteristic that research has focused upon is neighborhood crime rate. Research has found that citizens who view a neighborhood as having a high crime rate are more likely to have a negative opinion of police than those who do not view their neighborhood in this way (Wentz & Schlimgen, 201, Ashcroft, Daniels & Hart, 2003, Reisig & Parks, 2000). Some other characteristics that research focuses upon is that of a neighborhood being unsafe, high disorder and violent. Research finds that citizens in these neighborhoods view police more negatively as they hold police accountable for the disorder that is occurring in the neighborhood (Wentz & Schlimgen, 2011, Cao et al., 1996, Ren & Parks, 2005). It also finds that the opposite occurs for those in neighborhoods with less disorder, which is that there are less negative neighborhood attitudes (Schuck et al., 2008) Another characteristic that is focused upon is that of police presence in the neighborhood. Some of the research in this area has found that the level of patrol presence has no influence on citizen’s opinions (Wentz & Schlimgen, 2011). However, some of the research has found that there is a slight increase in satisfaction and reduction in fear with a higher police presence. Other research has also found that an increase in foot patrol leads to an increase in fear among females but ultimately has no effect on opinions (Wentz & Schlimgen, 2011).

**Police-Citizen Interactions**

Significant research has been conducted examining the interactions that occur between police and citizens. Many studies focus on this through analyzing voluntary or citizen
initiated interactions, involuntary or officer-initiated interactions and vicarious interactions (Wentz & Schlimgen, 2011). That said, research has found that voluntary interactions, which are often informal, cause citizens to have a more positive opinion of the police than involuntary interactions (Wentz & Schlimgen, 2011, Ashcroft et al., 2003, Reisig & Parks, 2000, Ren et al., 2005, Skogan, 2005). On the opposite side, involuntary interactions, which are often more formal, cause citizens to have less positive opinions of the police (Reisig & Parks, 2000, Wentz & Schlimgen, 2011, Ren et al., 2005, Schafer, 2003, Weitzer & Tuch, 2005, Skogan, 2005).

Oppositely, it has also been found that involuntary interactions did not make individuals significantly more likely to evaluate police more negatively (Reisig & Correia, 1997). Research has also shown that the more frequently citizens initiate interactions with the police, the less satisfied they are and the more negative opinions they have of the police (Wentz & Schlimgen, 2011). On the other hand, a slim number of studies show that number of contacts increased opinion (Ren et al., 2005) Those who had no interactions generally held either more positive views, unless being compared to someone who had what they deemed to be a positive interaction with the police (Ashcroft et al., 2003, Reisig & Parks, 2000). Another interesting finding among many studies is that citizen’s opinions of the police increase only slightly when a positive interactions occurs, but decreases dramatically when a negative experience occurs (Wentz & Schlimgen, 2011, Skogan, 2006). In other words, negative experiences with the police have a profound negative association with public opinion, which causes them to view the police as less effective and more prone to misconduct, while positive experiences do not have that profound effect (Miller et al., 2004, Schafer, 2003, Skogan, 2006). The reason behind this is because people with negative interactions feel that they were treated badly and we are more likely to remember and focus upon negative interactions than positive interactions. On the other hand,
those who had a positive experience had similar views to individuals who reported no interactions at all (Wentz & Schlimgen, 2011, Skogan, 2006). In terms of vicarious interactions, those who had negative experience had a worse opinions of police while those who had positive experiences held the same opinion of those with no interactions, which was more positive (Schuck et al., 2008, Ashcroft et al, 2003, Weitzer & Tuch, 2005). Neutral vicarious encounters tended to cause citizens to have worse opinion as well (Weitzer & Tuch, 2005). In the end though, the influence of vicarious experience has shown to be less powerful than direct personal experience in some research.

**Fear of Crime**

Lastly, many researchers are in agreement that fear of crime is more prevalent than actual crime itself simply because it reflects direct and indirect victimizations as well as other conditions related to disorder within the community and this disorder is a source of citizen’s fear of crime (Xu, Fiedler, Flaming, 2005). In knowing that, it is easy to understand the reasoning behind why there has been a decent amount of research that links fear of crime to many other variables, perception of the police being one of those variables. In almost all studies that focus upon looking at the mentioned relationship of opinion of the police and fear or concern of crime, it is found that they are robustly correlated (Skogan, 2009). The previous research related to this topic uses three main models to research and analyze the relationship between fear of crime and opinion of the police.

First, opinion of the police is treated as an independent variable and research looks at its impact on fear of crime (Skogan, 2009). This has been deemed the reassurance model in which research shows that where formal social control is strong and the police “in charge”, the public will become more confident and have a better opinion of the police. This is to say that if
individuals have a positive opinion of the police as a result of being reassured that police-community relationships are healthy and crime is being dealt with effectively, they are more likely to not fear crime in their area (Skogan, 2009). Another way to say this is that reductions in fear of crime flow from increasing positive opinions in the police so if you have a positive opinion, you will be less fearful and if you have a negative opinion, you will be more fearful (Skogan, 2009). There have been studies, such as a study by Randa and Lytle and a study by Skogan, that have shown the exact findings mentioned above. There also have been studies that have found that there is no significant relationship between the two in this causal way (Scarborough, Like-Haislip, Novak, Lucas, & Alarid, 2010). There also has been some research that discusses what can be done to increase reassurance which in turn increases opinion of the police and decreases fear of crime. Some suggestions include fixed post officers and making cops more recognizable in neighborhoods (Bahn, 1974).

A second way that this research has been analyzed is through the accountability model in which researchers treat fear of crime as the independent variable and examine its impact on opinion of the police. In most of these studies, it is found that where fear of crime is high, opinion of the police is lower and more negative and when fear of crime is increased, the opinion of the police becomes lower and more negative (Skogan, 2009, Skogan, 2006, Iykovick, 2008). The opposite has also been found in that if fear is decreased or low, the more positive the opinions of the police are or become (Skogan, 2009, Skogan, 2006, Iykovick, 2008). The reasoning behind this is because of the claim which states that individuals hold the police responsible for neighborhood conditions and individuals who are fearful of crime believe it is because the police are not willing or not able to help deal with their problems or neighborhood (Xu et al., 2005, Skogan, 2009). This alone can imply that fear may translate into evaluations of
the police (Xu et al., 2005) However, there has been some research that has found this relationship to not be statistically significant and therefore found that the relationship is one that is not very strong (Skogan, 2009, Smith & Hawkins 1973, Xu et al., 2005, Ren & Parks, 2005, Iykovick, 2008). There has also been a slim amount research that shows that fear of crime actually increases opinion of the police (Ren & Parks, 2005).

Lastly, the third model examines the reciprocal relationship that may occur between these two variables in that fear impacts opinion of police and opinion of the police impacts fear of crime together. There has been very limited research on this relationship. The research that has been conducted however shows that there is no evidence of a reciprocal causation (Skogan, 2009).

**Methodology**

**Study Purpose**

The data for this research came from ICPSR 29742 entitled Developing Uniform Performance Measures for Policing in the United States: A Pilot Project in Four Agencies. The principal investigators were Davis, Robert C., RAND Corporation; Ortiz, Chris, New York Institute of Technology; Cordner, Gary, Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies; Hartley, Craig, Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies; and Newell, Reggie, Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies.

The purpose of the original study was to examine the cost and feasibility of implementing performance indicators as a way to measure police performance and as a method of improving accountability and police services.

**Research Site**
There were three main sites that participated in the study. These included a medium sized police department in Knoxville, Tennessee, a small police department in Kettering Ohio and a large sheriff’s office in Broward County, Florida.

**Time Period and Method**

A survey of the residential populations of these three jurisdictions were conducted between August 12, 2008 and October 27, 2008. The survey was done only at one point in time and so the data are cross-sectional.

**Unit of Observation and Universe**

The unit of observation for the community survey was individuals. The universe included all individuals living within the jurisdictions of Knoxville, Tennessee and Kettering, Ohio police departments and the Broward County, Florida sheriff’s Office who had telephone access during the spring and summer of 2008.

**Sample and Sampling Method**

The sample was comprised of 458 individuals which included 150 from Kettering, 150 from Knoxville and 158 from Broward County. Sampling for both Knoxville and Broward County was based upon the use of random digit dialing that involved screening questions to be positive that the respondents were living within the geographic bounds of the jurisdiction being sampled. The Kettering Ohio Sample used a different sampling method as a result of the geographic area of Kettering being much smaller than the others. For this sample, the use of directory assisted numbers was applied. This directory was purchased from Survey Sampling, Inc. and it listed numbers that pre-identified individuals who lived in Kettering. All calling for the three areas of interest were done through the use of the Schaeffer Center’s CATI system. This system controls the number of attempts and eliminated calls to each town until the
completion target of 150 was reached. This system allowed for up to six attempts to be made to a household before removing it from the working sample. In Kettering, the target was reached after 1,277 of the 1,500 sample households were contacted. In Knoxville, the target of 150 was reached after 2,898 households. In Broward County, the target of 150 was reached after 3,201 households were contacted. These calls led to telephone interviews as the method of collecting data for the community survey. The response rates are not available for this survey.

Variables

The community survey included 55 variables total including questions relating to police professionalism and police effectiveness, questions about victimization and fear or worry about crime, neighborhood problems and demographic variables. Analysis of this data required reverse-coding of some variables as well as the construction of a scale of fear of crime.

Secondary Data Analysis Measures

In order to analyze this data for the purposes of this secondary data analysis, an index of fear of crime was created. This index was created though combining what was labeled as Q17, Q18, Q19, Q20, Q21, and Q23 in the data set. Q17 asked “In your neighborhood, how much do you worry about having you car broken into or stolen? Would you say you are…?”. Q18 asked “In your neighborhood, how much do you worry about having your home broken into? Would you say you are…?”. Q19 asked “In your neighborhood, how much do you worry about being assaulted or robbed? Would you say you are…?”. Q20 asked “In your neighborhood how much do you worry about being out at night? Would you say you are…?”. Q21 asked “In your neighborhood, how much do you worry about people selling and using drugs? Would you say you are …?”. Lastly, Q23 asked “How much do you worry about being hassled by youths or others? Would you say you are…?”. For all of these questions, the answers could have been very
worried, somewhat worried, not at all worried, or refused with the exception of Q23 which only included very worried, somewhat worried and not at all worried. Any answers of refused were noted as missing values. The fear index was then recoded so that any individual who received a score of 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 or 11 received a score of 1, any individual who received a score of 12, 13, 14 or 15 received a score of 2, and any individual who received a 16, 17, or 18 received a score of 3. In this recoding, 1 stood for high fear of crime, 2 stood for moderate fear of crime and 3 stood for low fear of crime.

This index was then crosstabulated with the data four times for four questions that were asked, two which were related to police efficiency and two which were related to police professionalism. The two relating to effectiveness were Q1 and Q5. Q1 asked “In terms of fighting crime, would you say the police in your neighborhood are doing?” Responses could be a very good job, a somewhat good job, a somewhat bad job, don’t know and refused. Q5 asked “Overall, how effective are the police in dealing with the problems that concern people in your neighborhood? Would you say…?” Responses could be very effective, somewhat effective, somewhat less than effective, not at all effective, don’t know and refused. The two relating to professionalism were Q6 and Q10. Q6 asked “In your opinion, how common is it for the police in your neighborhood to stop people on the street, or people driving in their cars, without good reason. Would you say it…?” Responses could be never happens, is very uncommon, is somewhat uncommon, is somewhat common, is very common, don’t know and refused. Q10 asked “Overall, in terms of dealing with residents in a fair and courteous manner would you the say the police in your neighborhood are doing…?” Responses could be a very good job, a somewhat good job, a somewhat bad job, a very bad job, don’t know and refused. For all four of these questions, don’t know and refused responses were noted as missing values. These
crosstabulations created the tables that will be analyzed in order to answer the research question for this secondary data analysis.

**Findings**

Figure 1 and 2 present crosstabulations of variables related to police efficiency with an index that measures fear of crime for individuals in the three jurisdictions that were part of the sample in this study.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Count</th>
<th>INDEX_FearofCrime</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.00 - High</td>
<td>2.00 - Moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FIGHTING CRIME - POLICE IN YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD ARE DOING</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. A very good job</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>32.3%</td>
<td>57.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. A somewhat good job</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>46.8%</td>
<td>35.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. A somewhat bad job</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>16.1%</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. A very bad job</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4.8%</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>172</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 1 illustrates the impact that fear of crime, whether it be a low fear, moderate fear or high fear, has on an individual’s perception of how well neighborhood police are doing in fighting crime. The individuals could either have a low, moderate or high fear crime. For variable one related to police efficiency, they could either believe the police did a very good job, somewhat good job, somewhat bad job or a very bad job at fighting crime.

An important aspect of the data to notice first is the overall frequencies for each variable separately. The row totals for the variable of fighting crime show that the majority of individual’s, regardless of fear of crime, fell into the very good job category with the second highest number falling into the somewhat good job category. The minority of individuals fell into the categories of somewhat bad job and very bad job. This shows that even without accounting for fear, most individuals view the police in a positive manner overall, as previous research has shown, and believe they are efficient in fighting crime. In looking at the column totals for fear of crime, almost an equal number of individuals fell into the low fear category as
the moderate fear category, with the majority being in the low fear category. The fewest individuals fell into the high fear category. All of this is regardless of their view on how good of a job the police is doing in terms of fighting crime.

In looking at the effect that fear of crime itself has on an individual’s perception of how good of a job the police are doing in fighting crime, the results showed many things. 76.1% of those who had a low fear of crime viewed the police as doing a very good job while only 32.3% of individuals who had a high fear of crime gave an equally high rating. On the opposite side, 4.8% of individuals who had a high fear of crime view the police as doing a very bad job in fighting crime while a mere 2.7% of individuals who had a low fear of crime viewed the police as doing a very bad job in fighting crime. This means that individuals who have a low fear of crime are more likely to view the police as being more effective than individuals who have a high fear of crime. It also means that individuals who begin to fear crime more, for whatever reason, and move from the low fear of crime category to the moderate or high fear of crime category have a higher chance of their view of police effectiveness being lowered as a result of that increased fear. They will then also be more likely to view the police as doing a very bad job at fighting crime as will individuals who already have a high or moderate fear of crime.

However, when looking at the categories for how well the police are doing in fighting crime of somewhat good job and somewhat bad job, the highest percentage occurs in the high fear category when compared to the percentages in moderate fear and low fear. This may seem as if individuals with a high fear of crime are more likely than the others groups to view officers as somewhat good or somewhat bad at fighting crime. However, it is important to note that this may be because of the fact that a large majority of individuals in the low fear category, 76.1 percent, fall into the very good job category which then leaves only 25% to be spread between the other
three categories. A large majority of the moderate fear category, 57.6%, also fell into the very good job category which again only leaves about 42% to fall into the other three categories. In the end, all of this shows that individuals with lower levels of fear tend to see the police as doing a better job of fighting crime and the opposite can be seen for those with a high fear of crime.

Figure 2 shows the impact that fear of crime can have on an individual’s perception of how effective the police are in dealing with problems that concern people in their neighborhood. The individuals could either have a low, moderate or high fear crime here as well. For variable 2 of police effectiveness, they could either believe the police were very effective, somewhat effective, somewhat less than effective or not at all effective in dealing with problems that concerned people in their neighborhood.

As done previously, this paragraph discusses the overall frequencies for the variables in figure 2. Similar to figure 1, in looking at the row totals for police effectiveness in dealing with problems, the majority of individuals fell into the very effective category and that number gradually decreased as you went to somewhat effective, somewhat less than effective and not at all effective. This is regardless of the category of fear that they fell into. Similar results as the above figure occurred when looking at the column totals for fear of crime.

In discussing how fear of crime impacts an individual’s perception of police effectiveness in terms of dealing with problems that concern people in their neighborhood, the results showed similar results to the findings for figure 1. The lower the fear of crime an individual had, the more likely they were to view the police as very effective in dealing with problems that concerned people in their neighborhood and the less likely they were to view the police as not at all effective. The higher the fear of crime, the more likely they were to view the police as not at all effective and the less likely they were to view the police as very effective. However, it is
interesting to note that a large percentage of the individuals in the high fear of crime category rated the police as very effective or somewhat effective at 62.9% which shows that even with a high fear the majority still see the police as effective. The other levels of fear however did have a higher percentage of individuals in those two categories together with moderate having 88.3 percent and low fear having 94.9 percent. From the low fear to the high fear that difference is about 32% and from moderate to high fear the difference is about 25% which definitely shows the decline in effectiveness ratings depending upon level of fear.

Figure 3 and 4 present crosstabulations of variables related to police professionalism with an index that measures fear of crime for individuals in the three jurisdictions that were part of the sample in this study.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HOW COMMON IS IT FOR POLICE IN YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD TO STOP PEOPLE WITHOUT GOOD REASON?</th>
<th>index_FearofCrime</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Never happens</td>
<td>1.00 - High</td>
<td>2.00 -Moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Is very uncommon</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Is somewhat uncommon</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Is somewhat common</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Is very common</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>147</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 4: IN TERMS OF DEALING WITH RESIDENTS IN A FAIR AND COURTEOUS MANNER, WOULD YOU SAY THE POLICE DO * index_FearofCrime Cross Tabulation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>INDEX_FearofCrime</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.00 - High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IN TERMS OF DEALING</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WITH RESIDENTS IN A</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FAIR AND COURTEOUS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MANNER, WOULD YOU</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAY THE POLICE DO</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. A very good job</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>32.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. A somewhat good</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>job</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>43.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. A somewhat bad</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>job</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>14.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. A very bad job</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3 deals with the intersection between fear of crime and how common people believe it is for the police to stop people without good reason. As above, the individuals could either have a low, moderate or high fear of crime here. For variable one of police professionalism, they could either believe it never happens, is very uncommon, is somewhat uncommon, is somewhat common or is very common that the police stop people without good reason.

It is also important to discuss the overall frequencies for the variables in figure 3. In looking at the row totals for stopping people without good reason, somewhat different from the previous figures, the majority of individual’s fell into the very uncommon category with the second highest number of individuals falling into the never happens category. Significantly fewer individuals fell into the categories of somewhat uncommon, somewhat common and very common, in that order. This shows that even without accounting for fear, most individuals view the police in a positive manner overall and believe they are more professional than
unprofessional. Similar results as the above figures occurred when looking at the column totals for fear of crime.

In discussing how fear of crime impacts how common individual feel that the officers stop people without good reason, the difference in percentages are not as large as seen with the police effectiveness crosstabulations. However, it can still be seen that individuals in the lower fear of crime category are more likely to believe that it is less common for police in their neighborhood to stop people without good reason and less likely to believe that that is occurring more commonly, regardless of whether or not the police actually do or do not stop people with or without a good reason. This can be seen because for the never happens and very uncommon category the percentages decrease as you go from low fear of crime to high fear of crime. For example, the percentage of individuals who believe the police never stop people without good reason is 31.1% for individuals with a low fear of crime, 23.1% for individuals with a moderate fear of crime and 21.4% for individuals with a high fear of crime. On the other hand, the percentages increases from low fear to high fear when looking at the category of it is very common for the police to stop people without good reason with 9.6% for those with low fear of crime category, 11.6% for those in the moderate fear of crime category and 23.2% for those in the high fear of crime category. With this data, one interesting thing is that in the in-between categories of very uncommon, somewhat uncommon and somewhat common, the highest percentages of individuals fell within the moderate fear of crime category when compared to the percentages in the low fear of crime and high fear of crime category. This shows that individuals who fall in the in-between category tend to also fall in-between in their ratings of how common it is for the police to stop people without good reason. Those at low fear are more likely to believe it never happens and those with high fear are more likely to believe it is very common. It
is important to note however that the largest percentage of individuals with a high fear of crime did fall into the very uncommon category with the second highest being it is very common. This shows that level of fear can definitely cause a greater percentage of individuals to view the police as being less professional in terms of how common they stop people without good reason, but that does not necessarily mean that all individuals who have a high fear of crime will ultimately end up viewing the police in a more negative light.

Figure 4 deals with the crosstabulation between fear of crime and the police dealing with residents in a fair and courteous manner. Fear of crime had the same categories as above. For variable 2 of police professionalism, they could either believe the police do a very good job, somewhat good job, somewhat bad job or a very bad job in dealing with residents in a fair and courteous manner.

In analyzing this data, the overall frequencies showed many things. In looking at row totals for dealing with residents in a fair and courteous manner, the majority of individual’s fell into the very good job category with the second highest number of individuals falling into the somewhat good job category. The lowest number of individuals fell into the categories of somewhat bad job and very bad job. This, once again, shows that most individuals view the police in a positive manner overall and believe they are act professionally in terms of dealing with residents. Similar results as in the earlier figures occurred in looking at the column totals for fear of crime.

In discussing how fear of crime impacts individual perceptions of whether or not the police act in a fair and courteous manner, the percentage differences depending upon fear of crime were similar to the variables related to police effectiveness. Individuals rated police professionalism, in terms of the police dealing with residents in a fair and courteous manner, in a
more positive manner if they had a low fear of crime and this positive rating was lowered as fear of crime increased. This can be seen because in terms of treating residents in a fair and courteous manner, 71.9% of individuals in the low fear of crime category, 59.1% of individuals in the moderate fear of crime category and 32.8% in the high fear of crime category viewed the police as doing a very good job. Similarly, individuals rated police professionalism, in terms of the police dealing with residents in a fair and courteous manner, in a more negative manner if they had a high fear of crime and this rating was less negative as fear of crime decreased. This can be seen because in terms of the police dealing with residents in a fair and courteous, 9.4% of individuals in the high fear of crime category, 2.3% of individuals in the moderate fear of crime category and 0% of individuals in the low fear of crime category felt that the police did a very bad job of dealing with residents in a fair and courteous manner. It is also important to note that for those in the high fear of crime category, the highest percentage of individuals fell into the somewhat good job category, then the very good job category, then the somewhat bad job and then very bad job. This shows that even though they had a high fear of crime, the largest percentage of individuals rated the police as doing a very good or somewhat good job. However, it is still the case that the proportion who viewed the police as doing a somewhat bad or very bad job increased with high fear of crime. For moderate and low fear of crime, the highest percentage fell in very good job category, then somewhat good job, somewhat bad job and lastly, very bad job. The difference between these two is that the moderate fear of crime category had a significantly lower percentage in the very good job category than the low fear of crime category but had higher percentages of individuals in the somewhat good category than the low fear of crime category. Another difference is that a higher percentage of individuals in the moderate fear
of crime category rated the police officers as doing a bad or very bad job at 5.8% while only 1.7% rated in those two categories for individuals in the low fear of crime category.

In conclusion, these results show that fear of crime does impact an individual’s perception of police professionalism and police effectiveness. It does so in the fashion that the higher an individual’s fear of crime is, the greater a chance there is that they will view the police, in terms of effectiveness and professionalism, in a negative light. However, it is important to keep in mind that even with a fear of crime, whether high or low, the majority of individuals still view the police in a positive manner related to these two aspects. Nevertheless, fear of crime can impact some individuals in a negative manner for the police so it is important to keep this in mind as police officers and departments go forward with their duties.

**Discussion and Conclusion**

This research addresses and updates an important issue that helps police officers and police departments around the world as well as provides evidence which can help guide future research related to this topic. The issue addressed may seem to be one that has been researched a few times and has been researched in various ways, but it is research just like this and assumptions made related to this topic that shape police policy, actions, resource allocation and how entire police departments function. As mentioned earlier, there are three main ways to research this topic of opinion of the police as it is related to fear of crime.

The first view is that of the accountability view. In this view, fear of crime is what explains negative and low opinions of the police related to many different values, such as police professionalism and police efficiency (Skogan, 2009). These studies either find that opinion of the police is lower in areas where individuals have a higher fear of crime, higher in areas where individuals have a lower fear of crime or typically find that fear of crime has no impact upon
opinion of the police (Skogan, 2009, Skogan, 2006, Iykovick, 2008, Smith & Hawkins 1973). They also typically see that residents with a fear of crime believe, more often than those who do not have a fear of crime, that officers perform very poorly in fighting crime and keeping order within a neighborhood and are not responsive to local issue. This is very important because it is related to topics such as police professionalism and efficiency as studied within this research. As a result of these findings showing that opinion of the police in part depends upon fear of crime as well as the fact that in this view people normally hold the police accountable for the conditions that make them fearful, this model has been declared the “accountability” model (Xu et al., 2005, Skogan, 2009).

The second view is that of the reassurance view. This view focuses upon the opposite relationship as discussed in the accountability view (Skogan, 2009). Studies that focus upon this view hold that an individual’s opinion of the police, whether negative or positive, explains, partly, an individual’s fear of crime. In other words, the causal arrow runs in the opposite direction in that fear is driven by views of the police (Skogan, 2009). That said, if the police can change the opinions people have of them through reassuring individuals that they are fighting crime, “in charge”, being efficient, and other related things, they will then be able to lower fear. Therefore, this has been named the reassurance model (Skogan, 2009).

The final view is that fear of crime and opinion of the police impact one another in a fashion that is reciprocal (Skogan, 2009). This view is not often researched or studied as researchers normally choose either opinion of the police or fear of crime as their dependent variable which then leaves the other to be the independent variable. A reasoning behind this may simply be because of the fact that reciprocal causation involves heavier data and analytic demands than the others (Skogan, 2009).
The secondary data analysis of this study focuses upon the accountability view and gives evidence that the causal direction may run in this direction. The higher an individual’s fear of crime grew, the lesser and more negative of an opinion they began to have of the police in terms of issues related to police professionalism and police efficiency. This fear could have grown as a result of different reasoning but, for the most part, the relationship between these two variables show that simply having a fear of crime increases the chance that you will have a more negative view. This is not to say that if you have a fear of crime, you will definitely have a more negative view of the police, but that in general, the higher fear of crime an individual has, the higher chance they have of forming negative opinions. This is an important finding because it gives evidence as to one aspect within an individual’s life that can affect their perception of the police. This allows police officers and departments to understand what may be causing entire communities or specific individuals to have a negative opinion of the police in that area. As a result, officers and entire police departments can begin to target this issue specifically in order to raise individual and community perceptions which in turn will then help them with community policing and performing their functions on a daily routine.

Along with the strengths of this secondary data analysis and the evidence it was able to find, there however were a number of limitations. This study was conducted in three cities and different types of police departments. As a result, the findings may only be generalizable to similar places, people and departments but may not be generalizable to other peoples, places and departments. The sample size is also small so this may also be another limitation to the study.

This data analysis also did not include many of the variables that are known to be related with opinion of the police or fear of crime, with race being one of the most powerful and influential variables. The reason that these variables, especially race, could not be studies or
controlled for simply dealt with the fact that it was not included in the publicly accessible data archived from the original study. Other studies have also examined many other variables, such as age, other neighborhood characteristics, and other police reforms effects. However, in this analysis none of these factors were measured or controlled for and it is important to note this omission. Along with this, in some instances some crimes make individuals more worried than others. This index of fear of crime did not include all crimes possible which in turn meant that there were crimes that were omitted from evaluation, was very specific in terms of fear and did not simply ask about fear of crime in a general manner. In other words, the measure of fear here was confined to specific kinds of crimes of household, personal and individual offenses.

Nevertheless, these findings may have implications for not only further research but for police officers and departments as a whole. For research, it gives evidence that supports the accountability view that has been discredited by researchers, such as Skogan (2009) or Like-Haislip (2010), who say that this relationship either does not exist or states that the causation does not occur from fear to opinion but occurs the opposite way. This research also pushes for there to be future research completed around the world on different populations, departments and individuals in order to see if this same type of correlation can be seen elsewhere. Future research could also use panel surveys as a method of conducting research in order to better address questions related to causal direction. The presence or absence of this correlation, or any of the others mentioned earlier on, could be very helpful when it comes to putting these results in practice.

That said, for practice, these findings show that it is important to keep in mind that simply having a fear of crime can affect opinion of the police. This is not to say that fear of crime is the only thing that affects opinions of the police, but it is definitely something to take
notice of within individuals and communities that the police are patrolling in as a whole. This also does not state that crime is the only thing that affects fear in individuals, but it is something that can play a role so it is important to always keep this in the back of all officers and police departments’ minds as they go forward. In knowing this, it is important to restructure the way officers handle situations, interact with citizens and perform their duties on a daily basis in order to decrease fear of crime. This fear that individual’s may have is something that can be combated, to an extent, through increasing the quality of policing that is occurring in a neighborhood. This could involve training officers and supervisors on the correct way to handle situations with citizens, whether bad or good, in terms of being polite, concerned and helpful rather than abrasive, concerned or unresponsive. Another method could be through simple things such as making patrols more visible, putting police accomplishments in the public eye, and increasing foot patrols and police-public meetings to shed light on activities that the public may not know about. This includes investigative efforts, new technologies, sophistication and training of leaders and rational resource allocation as well as any efforts to reduce crime in said neighborhood. It is these practices that will lower an individual’s fear of crime within a neighborhood because they then feel that the police are doing their job in controlling crime and making the neighborhood safe. This should increase an individual’s opinion of the police in relation to police professionalism and efficiency as well as many other aspects of policing.

In the end, this research shows that fear can have an impact and then suggest that fear-reduction is something that may be possible in order to increase the opinion of police. If the police can be seen doing more things that make individuals within the community believe that they are safer and show that they are holding themselves accountable for the disorder occurring within neighborhoods as well as showing how they are reducing crime, then an individual’s fear
of crime should subside to a lower level than before. This too will then help with community policing initiatives as officers try to build a better relationship with communities in order to facilitate their work and build trust with communities. That may help them in catching criminals and reducing crime which is their overall goal. This claim for the importance of looking at the accountability view in policing may prove even more important, if further tests on this relationship prove that there is a direct causal link between these two variables in this order.
Bibliography


