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African and Non-African Refugees' Perceptions of Police: A Study of Two American Cities

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Abstract

Although there is an enormous amount of scholarship on public perceptions of the police, few studies have had an interest in refugees' opinions. Using a survey instrument, the current study aims to understand the adaptation of refugees to the American criminal justice system by focusing on how they perceive police officers in two mid-sized cities in the northeastern region. We explore whether there are differences in perceived police prejudice, police effectiveness, and respect for the police between African and non-African refugees. In addition, we identify factors that affect refugees' perceptions. Findings from ordinary least squares and multinomial regression analyses indicate that, overall, African refugees perceive the police in a way similar to non-African refugees. Two non-demographic characteristics also play a significant role: Fear of crime and poor communication most likely result in refugees' negative evaluations of the police.

Keywords: refugee, race, police, law enforcement, perception

Introduction:

Historically, the United States has been one of the countries to which people from around the globe migrate in search of humanitarian protection. In 2010, the United States accepted roughly 66% of all refugees submitted to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) for resettlement (UNHCR, 2011). Refugees present unique challenges to law enforcement because unlike other legal immigrant groups (e.g., international students, green card holders, etc.), refugees are more likely to lack education, less likely to speak English, and more likely to be of lower socioeconomic status. In fact, the Department of Justice's Office of Community Oriented Policing Services has identified policing refugee communities as a new challenge for law enforcement agencies (Lysakowski, Pearsall, & Pope, 2009).

Researchers have examined police/refugee relationships in domestic violence cases (e.g. Muftić & Bouffard, 2008; Shiu-Thornton, Senturia, & Sullivan, 2005; Sullivan, Senturia, Negash, Shiu-Thornton, & Giday, 2005). These studies, however, did not look at refugees' opinions of the police. Moreover, the few

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studies examining refugees' and/or immigrants' perceptions of police in the United States and Canada have centered mainly on Asian and Hispanic populations (Chu & Hung, 2010; Chu & Song, 2008, 2015; Chu, Song, & Dombrink, 2005; Correia, 2010; Culver, 2004; Davis, 2000; Davis & Hendricks, 2007; Menjívar & Bejarano, 2004; Song, 1992; Torres & Vogel, 2001; Wu, Sun, & Smith, 2011; Wu, Smith, & Sun, 2013). With an increase in the number of refugees from Africa and the Middle East in recent years due to political unrest, research in the topic of refugee perceptions is long overdue.

To our knowledge, no study has examined refugees from different countries in general and has compared perceptions of U.S. police officers between African and non-African refugees in particular. Additionally, researchers have not used multivariate analysis to identify key determinants of refugees' views of the police (e.g., Song, 1992). To fill the research gap, this study aims to provide some insight into the perceptions of police by refugees from two mid-sized U.S. cities in the northeastern region. In the U.S., a refugee refers to "a person who is unable or unwilling to return to his or her native country due to a well-founded fear of persecution or because the person's life or freedom would be threatened" (Steimel, 2010, p. 221; see also Martin & Yankay, 2013, p. 1). We define an African refugee as an individual who migrated from an African country to the United States as a refugee, whereas a non-African refugee refers to an individual who migrated from a country outside of Africa to the United States as a refugee. The purposes of this study are twofold. First, we compare perceptions of police officers between African and non-African refugees. Second, we attempt to identify factors that affect refugees' perceptions. Specifically, we focus on the potential effects of prior victimization, prior police contact, fear of crime, and verbal communication.

Perceptions of the Police by Refugees

Although recent empirical evidence has suggested that immigrants evaluate the police more favorably than native-born Americans (Davis, 2000; Davis & Hendricks, 2007), there is scarce research on refugees' perceptions of the police. To our knowledge, the only quantitative research that has investigated refugees' perceptions of the U.S. police is Song's (1992) study, which found that compared to Chinese immigrants, Vietnamese refugees had significantly higher levels of fear of crime and held more adverse views of the police in Los Angeles. This study provided evidence to support different experiences with law enforcement officers between refugees and immigrants. Unfortunately, Song (1992) did not conduct a multivariate analysis to discover the individual effects of each potential factor on attitudes toward the police, nor did he examine the experience of victimization and prior police contact. With little research on refugees' perceptions of the police, the following literature review focuses on minorities' and immigrants' perceptions.

Perceptions of the Police by Minorities and Immigrants

Much of the contemporary literature examining public opinion of police has focused on the impact of citizens' race/ethnicity. As noted by Rosenbaum, Schuck, Costello, Hawkins, and Ring (2005), for instance, surveys conducted at both national and local levels consistently show a difference in attitudes toward the police across racial/ethnic groups. Overall, compared with Whites, African Americans express less satisfaction with, have less positive sentiments toward, or feel less appropriate treatment by the police (e.g., Dowler & Sparks, 2008; Garcia & Cao, 2005; Hagan, Shedd, & Payne, 2005; Reisig & Parks, 2000; Reitzel, Rice, & Piquero , 2004; Rosenbaum et al., 2005; Vogel, 2011; Weitzer, 2002; Weitzer & Tuch, 2004, 2005a, 2005b; Weitzer, Tuch, & Skogan, 2008; Wortley & Owusu-Bempah, 2009). The perceptions of Hispanics are closer to those of African Americans (Garcia & Cao, 2005; Rosenbaum et al., 2005), closer to those of Whites (Vogel, 2011), or more negative than Whites but more positive than African Americans (Dowler & Sparks, 2008; Hagan et al., 2005; Reitzel et al., 2004; Weitzer, 2002).

Unnever and Gabbidon (2011) have recently proposed that the African American group embraces a worldview of the relationship between race and criminal justice different from that held by other racial or ethnic groups. This worldview, overwhelmingly shared by African Americans, suggests that there is a general perception of prejudice and injustice against them within the criminal justice system (Unnever, 2008; Unnever, Gabbidon, & Higgins, 2011). Such prejudice and injustice based on the historical relationship between Whites and African Americans make the latter greatly disadvantaged in criminal justice processing (Unnever & Gabbidon, 2011). This worldview further shapes the belief that African Americans commonly lack confidence in criminal justice decision makers, including police officers, prosecutors, judges, and correctional officers (Unnever et al., 2011).

To complicate matters further, whether the shared worldview among native-born Blacks (i.e., African Americans) is also embraced by immigrant Blacks (i.e., from Africa) merits careful consideration. There are reasons to believe that immigrant Blacks may hold a different opinion of the U.S. criminal justice system from native-born Blacks. First, compared to native-born Blacks, immigrant Blacks have not been exposed to the influence of historical racism in the United States. From slavery and segregation, the long-standing conflict and stratification between native-born Blacks and Whites have resulted in the former's deep distrust of the white-dominated criminal justice system (Healey, 2003; Unnever & Gabbidon, 2011, 2015). Such distrust has been carried over from generation to generation. For immigrant Blacks growing up in predominantly racially homogenous countries, racism may have been not a thorny issue. In fact, many immigrant Blacks are not willing to be identified with native-born Blacks because of their low social status and poor images in American society (Waters, 1994). Second, immigrants' experiences with criminal justice agencies in their home countries may affect their expectations and perceptions of American police (Davis, Erez, & Avitabile, 1998). A vast majority of immigrant Blacks have

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migrated from third-world countries, whose corrupt criminal justice agencies may lead them to praise the U.S. system for its law and order as well as for its attention to human rights. In short, immigrant Blacks' negative experiences in their countries of origin may reinforce positive views of U.S. law enforcement.

Unnever and Gabbidon (2015) empirically tested the argument that immigrant Blacks and native-born Blacks would differ in their worldview, including attitudes toward the U.S. criminal justice system. Although there was no support for a difference in perceived police prejudice against Blacks, immigrant Blacks were significantly less likely than native-born Blacks to perceive prejudice from the U.S. criminal justice system. While the observed differences were not statistically significant in Unnever and Gabbidon's (2015) multivariate analysis of police prejudice against Blacks, the data in their study reflected a lower mean score (i.e., less perception of police prejudice) for immigrant Blacks than for native-born Blacks. Other evidence presented also pointed to a differential worldview between the two Black groups, particularly with relatively negative attitudes toward the police among native-born Blacks. These findings, together with the recent designation of immigrant Blacks as the new model minority group (Freeman, 2002; Thomas, 2012; Unnever & Gabbidon, 2015), may suggest that the worldview of this subgroup within Blacks tends to be close to that of other immigrant groups rather than to that of native-born Blacks. This assumption is based on the fact that immigrant Blacks and other immigrants are all newcomers who generally have a similar level of understanding of the United States.

The aforementioned argument can be further extended to refugees, who, similar to immigrants, have migrated from one country to another. To apply Unnever and Gabbidon's (2011, 2015) theoretical framework, the orthodox approach lies in a direct comparison in perceptions of the police between African refugees and native-born Blacks (i.e., African Americans). However, survey questions in the present study have been designed specifically for refugees from outside the United States. Thus, the following hypothesis indirectly taps into Unnever and Gabbidon's argument based on comparisons between African and non-African refugees:

> **H1:** African refugees' perceptions of the police will be similar to non-African refugees' perceptions.

Individual Experiences or Feelings and Perceptions Toward the Police

In addition to race being an important individual characteristic for citizens' opinions of the police, empirical work has explored how an individual's previous victimization, previous contact with police, fear of crime, and communication ability affect his or her perceptions. A body of research on immigrants in North America has likewise followed this line of inquiry. The following literature focuses on public perceptions in general and immigrant perceptions in particular.

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Regarding previous victimization, researchers have commonly used a dichotomous variable to measure whether the respondent has been a crime victim or not. A number of studies have found no effect of prior victimization (Chu & Hung, 2010; Chu & Song, 2008, 2015; Garcia & Cao, 2005; Reitzel et al., 2004; Wortley & Owusu-Bempah, 2009; Wu et al., 2011, 2013). Other evidence has demonstrated that previous victimization influences citizens' negative perceptions of the police (Brown & Benedict, 2005; Cao, 2011; Davis, 2000; Dowler & Sparks, 2008; Payne & Gainey, 2007; Vogel, 2011; Wortley & Owusu-Bempah, 2009). Chu et al.'s (2005) finding that previous victimization has led Chinese immigrants in New York City to perceive police effectiveness in combating crime is unconventional. Despite conflicting results, much evidence from research on immigrants' perceptions has found no significant association between prior victimization and perceptions of the police (Chu & Hung, 2010; Chu & Song, 2008, 2015; Wu et al., 2011, 2013). Therefore, the following hypothesis is formed:

> **H2:** Refugees who or whose household members were previously victimized will evaluate the police in a way similar to those who or whose household members had no direct or indirect experience of victimization.

Research on the effect of previous police contact has found mixed results. Some studies have found unfavorable perceptions by citizens with previous police contact, whether personal or vicarious (Cao, 2011; Chu & Song, 2008; Chu et al., 2005; Hagan et al., 2005; Hawdon & Ryan, 2003; Skogan, 2009; Warren, 2011; Weitzer & Tuch, 2005a, 2005b; Wortley & Owusu-Bempah, 2009), whereas others have found no significant effect on overall or most perceptions (Chu & Hung, 2010; Chu & Song, 2015; Correia, 2010; Davis, 2000; Lurigio, Greenleaf, & Flexon, 2009; Rosenbaum et al., 2005; Sims, Hooper, & Peterson, 2002; Wu et al., 2011, 2013). Regardless of statistical significance, much research using immigrant samples has broadly demonstrated the negative effect of previous police contact on various types of opinions of the police (Chu & Song, 2008, 2015; Chu et al., 2005; Correia, 2010; Wortley & Owusu-Bempah, 2009; Wu et al., 2011). Therefore, we extend this line of inquiry and hypothesize the following:

> **H3:** Refugees who or whose household members had prior contact with the police will perceive them more negatively than those who or whose household members had no prior contact.

The question used to measure the influence of a respondent's fear of crime has been drafted in several ways across studies. First, fear of crime is measured by asking respondents about the degree of fear of crime or going out at night because of crime. As shown by research, fear of crime inversely predicts perceptions of adequate protection by the police (Chu & Song, 2015), satisfaction with the police (Dowler & Sparks, 2008), and police effectiveness in dealing with crime (Chu et al., 2005). However, one study on Chinese immigrants has found

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that the high level of fear of crime leads to less police prejudice (Chu & Song, 2008), and two others have shown no effect of this variable on prejudice, effectiveness, integrity, demeanor, and global satisfaction (Wu et al., 2011, 2013). Second, fear of crime is measured by asking respondents about the degree of fear of becoming a crime victim. This variable has been found to inversely predict satisfaction with the police (Chu & Hung, 2010) and police effectiveness in controlling crime (Hawdon & Ryan, 2003). Several studies have found no effect on confidence in the police (Cao, Frank, & Cullen, 1996; Sims et al., 2002; Skogan, 2009). Third, fear of crime is measured by asking respondents about the degree of safety they felt. Feelings of safety have been found to positively predict confidence in the police (Cao, 2011), satisfaction with the police (Garcia & Cao, 2005; Reisig & Parks, 2000; Weitzer & Tuch, 2005a), and overall work performance (Payne & Gainey, 2007). That is, unsafe feelings about the neighborhood lead to unfavorable opinions of the police. However, one exception is Weitzer and Tuch's (2005b) study, showing no such effect on perceived police prejudice/racial profiling overall. Lastly, fear of crime is measured via a proxy by asking respondents about the seriousness of crime problems in the neighborhood. Perceptions of crime seriousness positively predict dissatisfaction with the police (Dowler & Sparks, 2008; Schafer, Huebner, & Bynum, 2003), perceived police prejudice/racial profiling (Weitzer & Tuch, 2005b), and perceived police misconduct (Weitzer et al., 2008). These results imply that high levels of fear of crime lead to unfavorable opinions of the police. Taken together, with varying outcomes examined, the above empirical findings tend to support an inverse association between fear of crime and perceptions of the police, regardless of statistical significance. As such, the following hypothesis is formulated:

H4: Fear of crime will result in the refugees' negative perceptions of the police.

Language barrier and poor communication may be closely associated with immigrants' and refugees' perceptions of the police. The rapid growth of the foreign-born population over the past 30 years has posed a challenge to local police departments because of the issue of immigrants' English capability as well as limited language support systems in most police departments (Lewis & Ramakrishnan, 2007). Researchers find that language barrier and poor communication may cause immigrants' negative opinions of the police or affect the relationship between immigrants and officers (Chu & Song, 2015; Correia, 2010; Culver, 2004; Menjívar & Benjarano, 2004). Others, however, find English proficiency as a proxy for communication to be an insignificant predictor for a number of outcomes (Cao, 2011; Chu & Song, 2008, 2015; Wu et al., 2013). Given conflicting findings, we formulated the following hypothesis:

H5: Poor communication will result in refugees' negative perceptions of the police.

Methods

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Data and Sampling Procedures

Data were collected from refugees in two mid-sized cities in the northeastern region. One city is about 75 miles away from the other, and both cities have a city population between 200,000 and 300,000 and a metropolitan population around 1,000,000 (United States Census Bureau, 2010). Given the small size of the refugee population, the names of the two cities are not disclosed to prevent the risk of identifying subjects involved in this research.

We replicated a survey instrument from Song's (1992) research on Chinese immigrants' and Vietnamese refugees' perceptions of the police in Southern California. This survey instrument has also been used in several other studies (see Chu & Hung, 2010; Chu & Song, 2008, 2015; Chu et al., 2005). Subjects targeted for the present study were African and non-African refugees of different nationalities who were relocated to the U.S. through refugee resettlement programs. Surveying refugees has been a serious challenge not only because they represent a diverse set of characteristics but also because they belong to a hard-to-reach population (Bloch, 1999; Song, 1992). Without a definite population list or sampling frame, it was unlikely to get a random sample from the refugee population.

Consistent with Bloch's (1999) networking and snowball sampling strategies for surveying refugees (see also Song, 1992), our study employed a two-stage sampling method. First, we identified social service organizations, such as refugee agencies and organizations. Refugee service centers and Catholic charities are major refugee resettlement agencies in our research cities. Beginning February 2011, researchers in this study attended monthly meetings and other events held by these community organizations, where they established contact with refugee community leaders. Refugee community leaders in one of the cities also referred the researchers to leaders in the other city. Next, we recruited participants through community leaders, who contacted refugees in their communities to complete the questionnaire.

Researchers pre-tested a few questionnaires on community leaders before surveys were administered to the rest of the subjects by their individual community leaders with close supervision from researchers. Each community leader was given clear instructions on how to go about the entire process, including reading information from a copy of the consent form to participants to ensure a voluntary participation. At the beginning of the questionnaire was a cover letter, reminding all participants of the anonymity of the survey and assuring them of the confidentiality of information collected. One hundred eighty questionnaires were distributed to participants in two cities at different times. Participants in the first city (65% of the sample) received an incentive of $10, but those in the second city (35% of the sample) did not, because the small grant that we received was only allocated for one city. That is, we later extended our research to include surveys in the second city without being supported by

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funding. The response rate was 70% for both cities (i.e., 126 out of 180 questionnaires returned, see also Table 1).

Dependent Variables

To measure different dimensions of refugees' perceptions, three dependent variables were examined—perceived police prejudice, perceived police effectiveness, and respect for police (see Table 1). Perceived police prejudice was measured by a single item that asked "How serious is [the issue of prejudice against refugees by police] in the city where you live?" Respondents rated the issue on a scale of 1 (not serious at all) to 6 (very serious). To measure perceived police effectiveness, we used an item that asked whether "The police in the city where you live are generally effective in dealing with crime problems." Responses to this item ranged from 1 (strongly agree) to 6 (strongly disagree). Reverse coding was performed to reflect a low score for ineffectiveness (1 = not effective) and a high score for effectiveness (6 = effective). Respect for police was measured by an item that asked "Considering everything about the way police do their job in the city where you live, would you say that you have great respect for the police, mixed feelings about them, or little respect for them?" Subjects responded as great respect (coded 3), mixed feelings (coded 2), or little respect (coded 1). Respondents who answered "I don't know" were excluded from analysis.

Independent Variables

The main independent variables included refugees' race, prior victimization, prior police contact, fear of crime, and poor communication (see Table 1). Race was a dichotomous variable, capturing African refugees (coded 1) and non-African refugees (coded 0). Prior victimization was measured by a dichotomous item (1 = yes; 0 = no) that asked respondents: "Have you or anyone in your household ever been a victim of a crime in the United States?" Prior police contact was measured by asking respondents the following question: "Have you or anyone in your household ever had any contact with the police?" Respondents chose either yes (coded 1) or no (coded 0). Fear of crime was measured by a question that asked respondents: "Because of crime some people are afraid going out at night to get together with friends and relatives. How often do you feel this way in the city where you live?" A dummy variable was created, with "frequently" or "sometimes" coded 1 and "rarely" or "never" coded 0. Poor communication was measured by an item that asked refugees to rate "How serious is [poor communication between police and refugees] in the city where you live?" Responses were based on a scale of 1 (not serious at all) to 6 (very serious).

Data that were collected about refugees' evaluations of police distinguished between personal and vicarious victimization, property and violent victimization, and types of police contact. Vicarious victimization in this research included victimization experienced by the respondent's household members, which might have influenced his or her perceptions. Coding for fear of crime in our original

data also captured four levels of fear. However, further or multi-item categorization of the aforementioned measures in regression analysis would inevitably increase the number of independent variables controlled for and in turn reduce statistical power. Examining additional subcategories would require an increase in the number of cases to meet the criterion of at least ten cases per independent variable (Kleinbaum, Kupper, & Muller, 1988), as well as the creation of mutually exclusive categories. Given the small sample size and the possibility of more than one type of contact/victimization for the same individual in our data, it is inappropriate to examine multiple categories with multivariate regression. We therefore chose dummy coding for prior police contact, prior victimization, and fear of crime.

In addition to refugees' race, statistical models (i.e., OLS and multinomial regression analyses, see Statistical Analyses in the next section) controlled for several refugees' characteristics, including gender (male = 1; female = 0), age, education (college graduate or some college = 1; no college = 0), English ability (no problem at all = 1; limited ability = 0), and length of stay in the United States (see Table 1). Five dummy variables capturing the age effect (i.e., 25-34, 35-44, 45-54, 55-64, and 65 or older, with age 18-24 as the reference) were initially included in the analyses of police prejudice and police effectiveness. The preliminary findings consistently displayed no statistical significance for this characteristic across all models. To reduce the number of independent variables for the conservation of statistical power (Kleinbaum et al., 1988), age was simplified to a dichotomy for the analyses of police prejudice and police effectiveness (1 = age 35 or older; 0 = 34 or younger), but it remained as a six-category variable for the analysis of respect for the police. Length of stay was continuous, capturing the number of years they had stayed in the United States.

Statistical Analyses

Ordinary least squares (OLS) regression was performed for the analyses of police prejudice and police effectiveness, based on the contentions that it is appropriate for a dependent variable with five or more ordered categories (Chu & Song, 2008; Zumbo & Zimmerman, 1993) and that the distance between any two points on a scale is equal. Collinearity was not an issue because all Variance Inflation Factor values in regression models were smaller than 2 (Studenmund, 1997). Regarding the respect for police variable that was operationalized as an ordered, trichotomous variable, we initially conducted analysis using ordinal regression. However, the assumption of parallel slopes in the examination of each possible link function was violated, suggesting that ordinal regression should be replaced with multinomial logistic regression (Borooah, 2002; Long, 1997). We, therefore, presented findings for this dependent variable based on multinomial regression models.

Findings

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As shown in Table 1, slightly more than half of refugees gave the top half of police prejudice scores that reflected the seriousness of the problem (mean = 3.59 on a scale of 1 to 6). In contrast, respondents indicated that the police were relatively effective in dealing with crime problems (mean = 3.89 on a scale of 1 to 6). Although one-third of respondents had great respect for the police, the majority of respondents had mixed feelings about respect for the police (53%).

Regarding individual characteristics, 18% of respondents were non-African refugees, and the rest of them came from Africa. The majority of respondents were male, received education beyond high school, and had no problem with English at all. Most respondents were over 34 years old, having been in the United States for an average of 7 years. With their household members' experiences included, a quarter of respondents had prior victimization, and slightly more than half of respondents had prior police contact in the United States. Two-thirds of respondents indicated fear of crime on a "frequent" or "sometimes" basis, and that poor communication between the police and residents were relatively serious in the city where they lived.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Mean or %	SD
Dependent variables		
Police prejudice (6-point scale: 1 = not serious at all; 6 = very serious)	3.59	1.53
Police effectiveness in crime problems (6-point scale with reverse coding: 1 = not effective; 6 = effective)	3.83	1.38
Respect for police		
1 = little	0.13	0.34
2 = mixed	0.53	0.50
3 = great	0.34	0.48
Independent variables		
African refugee (1 = yes; 0 = no)	0.82	0.38
Male (1 = yes; 0 = no)	0.58	0.50
Age 35 or older (1 = yes; 0 = no)	0.53	0.50
College or above (1 = yes; 0 = no)	0.71	0.45
English ability (1 = no problem at all; 0 = limited)	0.59	0.49
Years in U.S.	6.91	3.95
Prior victimization (1 = yes; 0 = no)	0.26	0.44
Prior police contact (1 = yes; 0 = no)	0.53	0.50
Fear of crime (1 = frequently or sometimes; 0 = rarely or never)	0.67	0.47
Poor communication (1 = not serious; 6 = serious)	3.63	1.59

Note: n = 126. Missing cases exist for various variables.

Turning to multivariate analyses, Table 2 presents the findings of main effects on the perception of police prejudice (F = 3.029, $p < 0.01$) and the perception of police effectiveness (F = 2.326, $p < 0.05$). A refugee's educational level and

perceived communication problems significantly predicted the perception of police prejudice. Respondents with some college education, a college degree, or a graduate degree perceived police prejudice as a less serious issue than those without education beyond high school (b = -0.865, p < 0.05). In addition, an increase in the level of perceived poor communication led to the increase in the level of perceived police prejudice (b = 0.420, p < 0.001). Regarding police effectiveness in dealing with crime, the only significant variable that predicted this outcome was refugees' perceived communication problems. Consistent with its unfavorable effect on police prejudice, poor communication undermined a positive perception of police performance. Respondents who viewed poor communication as a serious problem tended to feel that the police dealt with crime less effectively than those who did not view it as a serious problem.

Table 2. OLS Regression Models for Refugees' Perceptions of the Police

	Police prejudice			Police effectiveness		
	B	SE	*t*	*b*	SE	*t*
African	0.060	0.418	0.144	0.318	0.375	0.848
Male	-0.124	0.284	-0.436	0.268	0.253	1.059
Age 35 or older	0.199	0.295	0.672	-0.292	0.265	-1.105
College or above	-0.865*	0.359	-2.411	0.455	0.320	1.421
English ability	-0.052	0.325	-0.159	0.076	0.285	0.265
Years in U.S.	0.030	0.041	0.745	0.023	0.037	0.626
Prior victimization	0.120	0.359	0.333	-0.422	0.326	-1.295
Prior police contact	-0.288	0.336	-0.857	0.034	0.299	0.114
Fear of crime	0.473	0.339	1.394	-0.365	0.298	-1.225
Poor communication	0.420***	0.099	4.247	-0.277**	0.086	-3.210
R²		0.240			0.195	
N		107			107	

* p < 0.05; **p < 0.01; ***p < 0.001

Results from multinomial regression for refugees' respect for the police are shown in Table 3 (χ = 42.982, p < 0.01). Because of the trichotomous dependent variable, three models were analyzed: great respect compared with little respect (Model 1), great respect compared with mixed feelings (Model 2), and little respect compared with mixed feelings (Model 3). The length of stay in the United States and fear of crime were statistically significant in Model 1 of Table 3. An increase in the number of years in the United States decreased the odds of refugees indicating great respect for the police versus little respect (odds ratio = 0.758, p < 0.05). Refugees who were frequently or sometimes afraid to go out at night were less likely than those who were rarely or never afraid to go out at night to have great respect for the police versus little respect (odds ratio = 0.059, p <

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0.05). Regarding Model 2 of Table 3, the only statistically significant variable was fear of crime, when great respect was compared with mixed feelings. Refugees who were frequently or sometimes afraid to go out at night were less likely than those who were rarely or never afraid to go out at night to have great respect for the police versus mixed feelings (odds ratio = 0.243, $p < 0.05$). Lastly, none of the variables in Model 3 were statistically significant in the comparison between little respect and mixed feelings.

Table 3. Multinomial Regression Models for Refugees' Perceptions of the Police

	Model 1 Great respect (vs. little respect)			Model 2 Great respect (vs. mixed feelings)			Model 3 Little respect (vs. mixed feelings)		
	b	SE	Exp(b)	b	SE	Exp(b)	b	SE	Exp(b)
African	1.708	1.153	5.516	-0.310	0.822	0.733	-2.018	1.074	0.133
Male	0.356	0.802	1.428	-0.765	0.591	0.465	-1.121	0.703	0.326
Age	-0.187	0.421	0.830	-0.538	0.310	0.584	-0.352	0.357	0.704
College or above	0.758	1.036	2.134	0.895	0.695	2.449	0.137	0.928	1.147
English ability	-0.491	0.896	0.612	-0.144	0.602	0.866	0.348	0.807	1.416
Years in U.S.	-0.277	0.123	0.758[*]	-0.137	0.086	0.872	0.140	0.106	1.151
Prior victimization	-0.750	0.935	0.472	-1.137	0.731	0.321	-0.386	0.829	0.680
Prior police contact	-0.289	1.076	0.749	1.076	0.658	2.932	1.365	0.998	3.914
Fear of crime	-2.823	1.223	0.059[*]	-1.415	0.658	0.243[*]	1.408	1.173	4.087
Poor communication	-0.117	0.274	0.890	-0.205	0.181	0.815	-0.088	0.260	0.916
Nagelkerke R^2	.407			.407			.407		
N	100			100			100		

* $p < 0.05$

Discussion and Conclusion

There is a long line of research on public attitudes toward police officers; however, much of this research has focused on perceived differences between White and minority respondents. Surprisingly, few studies have examined public's perception of the police from a refugee's perspective. Therefore, the present study contributes to research by exploring refugees' perceptions of American police in two northeastern cities. A specific interest of this study is to examine racial and/or ethnic difference in the perceptions of police by African and non-African refugees.

Findings from this study revealed several patterns. First, consistent with Hypothesis 1, our findings did not reveal statistically significant differences between African and non-African refugees. All refugees in the two cities expressed similar sentiments across all outcomes—police prejudice, police effectiveness in dealing with crime, and respect for the police. These findings were contrary to previous research findings that suggested more negative opinions held by African Americans than by other racial/ethnic groups (e.g., Dowler & Sparks, 2008; Garcia & Cao, 2005; Hagan et al., 2005; Reisig & Parks, 2000; Reitzel et al., 2004; Rosenbaum et al., 2005; Vogel, 2011; Weitzer & Tuch,

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2004, 2005a, 2005b; Weitzer et al., 2008). Our findings have nevertheless rendered indirect support for Unnever and Gabbidon's (2011, 2015) argument that foreign-born and U.S.-born Blacks might hold different worldviews and attitudes due to the different life experiences of the two groups. It may be that African refugees' backgrounds and experiences in home countries might account for their positive, or at least similar, views of the American police. Approximately 70% of African refugees in our sample believed that the police in their home countries accepted bribes, whereas only 33% of non-African refugees held such a belief. The negative experiences for African refugees in their home countries might lead them to evaluate American police officers positively. Evaluations by African refugees deviated from those embraced by U.S.-born Blacks and became close to those held by other racial/ethnic or refugee groups.

Second, our findings confirmed many previous results from immigration research that did not find any significant effect of prior victimization on perceptions of the police (Chu & Hung, 2010; Chu & Song, 2008, 2015; Wu et al., 2011, 2013; but see Chu et al., 2005). In contrast, Hypothesis 3 regarding the negative association between prior police contact and the opinion of the police received no support. Our analyses failed to produce any significant result of this measure across all models. Furthermore, our findings, in partial support of Hypothesis 4, revealed the mixed effects of fear of crime, which was a significant determinant for the analysis of respect for the police, but not a significant one for the examination of police prejudice and police effectiveness. It should be noted that survey questions about prior victimization and prior police contact tapped responses into actual experiences, including the respondent's personal and vicarious experiences. These actual experiences, as used to predict more experience- or knowledge-based outcomes such as police prejudice and police effectiveness, appeared to be insignificant measures and failed to generate a pattern of how prior experiences played a role. These findings suggest that refugees might be able to make sensible judgments by relying on preexisting knowledge about American police or on other situational factors. On the other hand, the survey question regarding fear of crime reflected abstract feelings about future crime that might not be realized. The question about respect for the police also provided "mixed feelings" as one of response choices. When fear of crime as a particular type of abstract feeling was applied to the prediction of the less experience- or knowledge-based outcomes such as respect for the police, significant findings emerged and were in stark contrast to its insignificant effects on police prejudice and police effectiveness. This indicates that the factor from the psychological dimension coincided with the sentiment-based outcome for a relationship.

Third, there was moderate support for Hypothesis 5 that poor communication would be detrimental to refugees' perceptions of the police role. When poor communication became a major problem, refugees tended to evaluate the police unfavorably, at least with respect to the issues of prejudice and effectiveness in dealing with crime. Most of the effects of poor communication were in line with

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those in some of Chinese immigrant studies (see Chu & Song, 2008, 2015; but see Chu & Hung, 2010). It is worth noting that refugees' English ability did not play a role in predicting their perceptions of the police (for similar results, see also Chu & Song, 2008, 2015; Wu et al., 2013). In comparison with no effect of English ability on all outcomes, the effects of poor communication on police prejudice and police effectiveness suggest that refugees did not view language barrier as a condition associated with poor communication between them and police officers. Correia (2010) noted that communication was much more complex than language itself. In other words, poor communication should be understood in the broader context of situational conditions surrounding police-refugee encounters than as the language barrier alone.

Finally, there was evidence that the length of refugees' stay in the United States negatively affected their perceptions of the police, at least concerning their respect for the police. When the length of a refugee's stay in the United States increased, the odds of indicating his or her great respect (relative to little respect) decreased. Despite this significant effect from our findings, prior research on Chinese immigrants' perceptions of the police in New York City and Toronto did not find the same result (Chu & Song, 2008, 2015). Length of stay negatively affected Chinese immigrants' perceptions primarily with police officers' response, prejudice, and provision of protection (Chu & Hung, 2010; Chu & Song, 2008, 2015; Wu et al., 2013). These findings suggest that refugees and Chinese immigrants had different points of view on the role of the police, thereby reinforcing our research goal to distinguish refugees from immigrants.

Although this study has provided important insights into the understanding of refugees' perceptions of police, two limitations exist to serve as implications for future research directions. First, our adoption of non-probability sampling techniques calls for caution because it reduces the power of generalization of our results to other similar populations. Also relevant to the sampling issue is our small sample size. Given the difficulty locating fairly isolated refugee populations, it is not very likely for researchers to develop a sampling frame and obtain a large random sample. Our use of refugee agencies and community organization networks was intended to reach out to the largest number of refugees available in the two target cities. To enhance representativeness, our sample also included refugees of different races and ethnicities from more than 15 countries. Future research should focus on major U.S. metropolitan areas with large refugee populations. Second, results from this study may serve as a catalyst for further examination of perceptions of the police by not only refugees but also asylees from different countries. Refugees, as well as asylees, represent very diverse populations. For example, Somali refugees may have quite different experiences and therefore different perceptions of police officers when compared to Burmese refugees. Refugees' experiences might also differ from asylees' experiences, leading to varying perceptions of law enforcement officers. Thus, researchers should study refugees or asylees from one or two specific countries through qualitative research (e.g., intensive interviews) to gain an in-depth understanding of how their perceptions vary from those by native-born

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Americans and other immigrant groups. Qualitative information will be beneficial to the discovery of the causal mechanisms involved in explaining refugees' perceptions of the police.

Taken together, the strongest predictor of negative sentiments from refugees in this study has been found to be perceived poor communication with police officers. Law enforcement agencies need to secure citizens' cooperation to work effectively. If there is a communication breakdown between refugees and police officers, refugees most likely will not cooperate with law enforcement officers to report crime or participate in the criminal justice process. This in turn may create refugee-police conflicts and worsen their relationships. As policy implications, police department may consider the following strategies for improving the issue of poor communication as well as for building refugees' trust in the police. First, police departments may add a cultural awareness program to their personnel training. Given that refugee populations differ from the general immigrant population, this program should include components that address specific refugee issues and needs. Second, police departments may reach out to refugee communities by sending representatives to meetings held by refugee community organizations or services agencies. At these meetings, refugees often express concern about community affairs that may involve law enforcement. Participation in refugee meetings can help police departments learn about critical issues that need to be addressed in a timely fashion. Lastly, refugees of the same race or ethnicity are often concentrated in specific neighborhoods. It is worth highlighting that language serves as a primary tool to explore a different culture and exchange information. Police departments may rethink how to build up a good rapport with refugee communities by employing bilingual officers to further cultural understanding for enhanced communication.

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