Satisfaction With Police: Explaining Variation by Race

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SATISFACTION WITH POLICE: EXPLAINING VARIATION BY RACE

by

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B.S. May 2005, Old Dominion University

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of
Old Dominion University in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

APPLIED SOCIOLOGY

OLD DOMINION UNIVERSITY
August 2012

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ABSTRACT

SATISFACTION WITH POLICE: EXPLAINING VARIATION BY RACE

Megan N. Centeno
Old Dominion University, 2012
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Past research has shown that race is an important factor in predicting satisfaction with the police. Past research, however, has been inconclusive as to why this is such a significant variable. This study is designed to see if quality of life and fear of crime differences by race help explain the race and police satisfaction relationship. Data for this study comes from the “Criminal Victimization” Survey (Smith, S. K., Steadman, G.W., Minton, T. D., & Townsend, M. and 1999). The results conclude that quality of life, physical disorder and fear of crime help mediate the relationship between race and satisfaction with police, but do not fully explain why African Americans are less satisfied with the police than their white counterparts.
This thesis is dedicated to my Mom and Dad. Through all their motivation and patience I finally finished!!
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

There are many people who have contributed to the successful completion of this thesis. I extend many thanks to my chair, Dr. Ruth A. Triplett, and my other committee members, Dr. Randy A. Gainey and Dr. Allison Chappell Maggard for their patience and hours of guidance on my research and editing of this manuscript.

I would also like to give a special thanks to my family for their understanding, patience, and endless love, through the duration of my studies. Especially my Mom, Deborah, and Dad, William, who never gave up on me and helped me get through. And my husband, Robert, for his love and support. And finally, to my son, Rylan, who makes me want to be the best I can be.
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“Public service agencies such as the police must secure the support of the public if they are to provide efficient and effective services” (Schafer, J., Huebner, B. and T. Bynum 2003, p.441). Both support from the public and public perceptions of the police are very important in determining their effectiveness as a public institution. Over the past several decades, numerous studies have been written on public attitudes toward the police (Reisig and Parks 2000; see also Michalos 2003; Glauser and Tullar 1985; and Tewksbury and West 2001). Typically, most citizens have a positive attitude toward the police, but this is not consistent across every demographic group. Research has found that there are significant differences by race when looking at satisfaction levels with the police (Frank, J., B.W. Smith, and K.J. Novak 2005; see also Tuch and Weitzer 1997). About 80% of the overall public displays favorable attitudes toward the police; however, only about 55% of African American citizens report positive attitudes toward the police (Reisig & Parks 2000; see also Tuch & Weitzer 1997).

Variation in satisfaction with the police by race is one of the most important findings in the policing literature. The finding that African Americans are not as satisfied with the police as Caucasians first became apparent in the 1960s. During the 1960’s, the police were faced with a racial crisis in the community and had to seek ways of improving relations between the police and minorities. During the Civil Rights Movement, members of the peaceful demonstrations, sit-ins, freedom rides and boycotts,
were often faced with police violence and brutality. Activists such as Martin Luther King fought for equal rights, but more needed to be done (Wendt 2007). During this time

“it was argued that when equality of rights for every citizen became widely accepted, police departments had to consider not only the interests of the mainstream (Whites), but also the interests of the historically ignored voices—the poor, African Americans, and Hispanics—to whom the police did not have a good relationship” (Garcia and Cao 2005, p.191).

There is agreement throughout the literature that satisfaction with the police varies by race. It is not clear, however, what explains why African Americans have lower levels of satisfaction. Reisig and Parks (2000) pose several good questions: (1) Are African Americans treated more harshly by the police than Caucasians? (2) Are African Americans more critical about quality of life than Caucasians? (3) Is neighborhood context a reason for dissatisfaction among Blacks? Some researchers suggest certain variables for police satisfaction, such as contact with police (O’Connor 2008), prior victimization (Cao, L., Frank, J., & Cullen, F. 1996), neighborhood crime levels (Murphy 2009) or personal attributes like education, gender, and age that can affect levels of satisfaction with the police. Some variables with limited research on satisfaction with the police are marital status, political affiliation, and occupation.

There are several theories, then, as to why satisfaction varies by race with, as yet, no complete explanation. The current study has been set up to look at two additional explanations of variation by race in satisfaction with police. These two explanations involve quality of life and fear of crime. The explanation involving quality of life focuses on perceptions of neighborhood conditions, such as crime, social disorder, and physical decay. Prior research has found that citizens living in neighborhoods with crime, disorder and physical decay show lower levels of satisfaction with the police.
The explanation centering on fear of crime focuses on the perceived amount of crime within an area (Reisig and Parks 2000). It has been noted in prior research that citizens with a higher fear of crime tend to have lower levels of satisfaction with the police (Cao et al. 1996; see also Tuch and Weitzer 2005; and O’Connor 2008). Quality of life and fear of crime are important variables to focus on because they affect every race (Zhao, J. S., Scheider, M. and Thurman, Q. 2002).

Overall, this study was designed to see if quality of life and fear of crime mediate or explain the relationship of race to satisfaction with police. Data from the “Criminal Victimization” Survey (ICPSR Study by Smith et al. 1999) was used to explore three broad questions: Is race significantly related to satisfaction with police? Are perceptions of quality of neighborhood life, including disorder, and fear of crime, significantly related to satisfaction with police? Do quality of neighborhood life measures, including disorder, and fear of crime, explain the relationship between race and satisfaction with police?
CHAPTER II
LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter starts with a review of the general literature on satisfaction with police. It will include research indicating significant differences by race in satisfaction with police and the explanations that have been given for this relationship. The discussion will then turn to the relationship of quality of life, including disorder, and fear of crime with satisfaction with police. The chapter will conclude with hypotheses drawn from past research that will be tested in this study.

Satisfaction with the Police

Public satisfaction with the police is an important topic to research because it is related to confidence in and support of citizens for the police. Satisfaction with police increases citizen’s willingness to report crimes and obey the police allowing the police to better control crime (Hinds 2009). Frank and colleagues (2005, p.212) state that

“understanding the reasons why citizens hold certain attitudes toward the police will permit police agencies to develop new strategies that will improve public attitudes, change policies that are determined to be detrimental to positive attitudes, and reinforce those behaviors that are responsible for positive behaviors.”

Throughout the literature, it has been noted that several factors can influence satisfaction with the police. Some of the more important factors in shaping satisfaction with the police include contact with the police (O’Connor 2008), the quality of the interaction, and prior victimization (Cao et.al 1996). In one study by Reisig and Parks (2000), citizens were presented with a list of task oriented behavior and asked whether they expected officer to do these things and whether or not they actually did them. The
results showed that there was a clear link between expectation and fulfillment with police behavior. It was noted that citizens who received police service that met their expectations were more satisfied with the police. Other important variables include neighborhood factors such as quality of life in the neighborhood, crime, or fear of crime (Murphy 2009). In addition, there are a number of personal attributes like education, gender, and age that can affect levels of satisfaction with the police.

Overall, it can be seen that there are several reasons for satisfaction with the police. No matter what the reason, good or bad, attitudes toward the police help shape citizen-police relations. In summary, “positive attitudes are associated with the extent to which police conform to an idealized notion of appropriate police behavior. Negative attitudes occur when police behavior falls short of this idealized notion (Liu and Crank 2010, p.109).” This police-citizen relationship will be discussed further in the next section.

Race and Satisfaction with the Police

When looking beyond levels of general satisfaction, studies of citizens' attitudes toward the police have questioned whether there are differences in perceptions across demographic characteristics, for example, race. Difference by race in satisfaction with police is probably one of the most consistent findings in the literature on policing. Typically research suggests that African Americans hold less favorable attitudes toward the police than do Caucasians (Gallagher, C., Maguire, E. R., Mastrofski, S. D., & Reisig, M. 2001; Reisig and Parks 2000; Kusow, A., Wilson, L. and Martin, D. 2007; Cao et.al 1996; and Tuch and Weitzer 1997).
One specific study conducted by Dowler and Sparks (2008, p.400), was designed to “build on prior research by examining minority attitudes toward police, while assessing the interaction effects of neighborhood context, victimization, contact with police, and community and police force characteristics, through an analysis of data from multiple sites.” Dowler and Sparks used sequential linear regression and multivariate analysis to test their variables. The findings showed that there was a significant association between race and police satisfaction. African Americans were less satisfied with the police than their Caucasian counterparts. This held true after controlling for gender, age, education, and income. In Holmes and Goodman’s (2010) review of the literature, they noted that African American are also more likely to be more critical of police, have less trust in them, and report more unprovoked searches, rude language, and unfair treatment.

Finding an explanation for why there are race differences in satisfaction with police is important. Over the years, numerous explanations have been developed. Gallagher and colleagues (2001) summarized two explanations that are often presented in existing research. The first explanation argues that police interactions are different across various groups of citizens with minorities having more negative interactions (see also Payne and Gainey, 2007). In support of this view, Maxson and colleagues (2003) find that African Americans are more often than Whites to perceive they are being mistreated by police (see also Wu, Y., Sun, I. and Triplett, R. 2009). A second explanation posited by Gallagher and colleagues (2001) is that citizens of different races have different expectations for the police which can lead to various interpretations of police behavior. Blacks may have lower satisfaction of the police because they were “less likely to think
that local police were trustworthy, fair, helpful, concerned, and respectful of others in both orderly and disorderly neighborhoods (Maxson, C., Hennigan, K., & Sloane, D.C. 2003, p.9).”

One study done by Tuch and Weitzer (1999) was designed to examine the effects of race and class on citizen attitudes toward the police. Respondents attitudes toward the police and criminal justice system were measure with five questions: (1) “Who do you think is treated more harshly in this country’s criminal justice system – Blacks or Whites—or are they treated about the same?” (2) “Do you think police protection in Black neighborhoods is better, worse, or about the same as in White neighborhoods?” (3) “How much confidence do you have in police officers in your community in terms of treating Blacks and Whites equally—a great deal, a fair amount, just some, very little, or no confidence?” (4) “Have you personally ever felt treated unfairly by the police or by a police officer specifically because you are [White/Black]?” and (5) “How widespread do you believe the problem of racism against Blacks is among police officers in this country?” Social class was also measured through educational attainment and family income. The results show that the Black respondents expressed much more dissatisfaction with the criminal justice system and the police than did Whites. Blacks were also more likely to perceive racial discrimination from the criminal justice system. Social class was also found to be significant.

The above explanations focus on individual characteristics, attitudes and perceptions. Other possible explanation however are suggested by those such as Cao and colleagues (1996) who argue that attitudes towards the police may not be determined by an individual’s race, but more so by the social context in which the individual lives. In
Cao and colleagues study (1996; p.4), they looked at “the impact of a range of variables on confidence with the police.” The variables used in their study to measure confidence in the police were crime experience (fear of crime and having been a victim of crime), social/physical disorder (incivilities), and informal collective security. Multivariate analysis was used to determine if these variables influenced confidence in the police. The conclusions of the study showed that race was not a significant determinant of confidence in the police per se, but that citizen’s perception of disorder, informal collective security, and fear of crime were important. Another study done by Tuch and Weitzer (2005, p.1009) “analyzes national survey data on citizens’ views of, and reported personal experiences with, several forms of police bias—including differential treatment of individuals and neighborhoods, police prejudice, and racial profiling.” When looking at experiences with police discrimination, two questions were asked: (1) “Have you ever felt that you were treated unfairly by the police specifically because of your race in your city/neighborhood?” and (2) “Have you ever felt that you were stopped by the police just because of your race or ethnic background?” Perceptions of racial bias were determined by the question “Do you think the police in your city/neighborhood treat whites and blacks equally, do they treat whites worse than blacks, or blacks worse than whites?” Three parallel questions followed to get a more in depth view of racial bias. It was concluded that blacks are more likely than whites to believe that racial bias exist, the police provide worse services to blacks, and view police prejudice as a problem.

Thus, variation in neighborhood crime rate could explain why there is so much variation of citizen’s satisfaction with the police by race (Reisig & Parks 2000). Research suggests that satisfaction levels may also be a function of the real or perceived
crime and disorder problems within neighborhoods. Overall, it is not clear what explains the relationship between race and satisfaction with police. For the purpose of this study, two concepts central to the context in which individuals live, the quality of life and fear of crime will be evaluated as explanations for differences by race in satisfaction with police.

The Relationship between Satisfaction with Police, Quality of Life in Neighborhoods and Race

According to Reisig and Parks (2002), the most important factor shaping peoples' satisfaction with the police is their perceptions about the quality of their lives. As mentioned earlier, quality of life focuses on perceptions of neighborhood conditions, such as crime, social disorder, and physical decay (Reisig and Parks 2000). Generally throughout the literature, it is noted that citizens who have a better quality of life tend to be more satisfied with the police (Holmes and Goodman 2010; see also Reisig and Parks 2002 and Tuch and Weitzer 2008). This may be due to the fact that a majority of citizens hold the police accountable for the quality of life within their neighborhood (Gallagher et.al 2001).

Several studies have explored the relationship between satisfaction with police and various indicators of quality of neighborhood life. The Justice Center conducted the Anchorage Adult Victimization Survey in the spring of 2002 to gather data from residents, 18 years and older, about their experiences with crime as well as their perceptions of their city and the local police (Giblin 2003). As part of the survey, respondents were asked whether or not certain conditions existed in their neighborhood.
These conditions included social/behavioral disorder (illegal public drinking/drug use, public drug sales, prostitution, panhandling/begging, loitering/hanging out, truancy, transients or homeless sleeping on streets or benches) and physical disorder (abandoned cars/buildings, rundown/neglected buildings, poor lighting, overgrown shrubs/trees, trash, empty lots, vandalism or graffiti). The results showed that more than 85% of the respondents said they were satisfied with the quality of their neighborhood. This was measured by taking the total number of responses for very dissatisfied, dissatisfied, satisfied, and very satisfied. Researchers concluded that the police were doing a good job at keeping their neighborhoods safe and clean (Giblin 2003).

Reisig and Parks (2002) noted incivilities as a major variable for quality of life within a neighborhood. LaGrange and colleagues (1992, p.312) define incivilities as “low-level breaches of community standards that signal an erosion of conventionally accepted norms and values.” These can include items such as litter/trash, vandalism, gangs, abandoned buildings, and drug use. In Reisig and Parks (2000) study, telephone interviews were conducted with 6,125 adult residents in Indianapolis, IN and St. Petersburg, FL. Quality of life (perceptions of crime and incivilities) and satisfaction with police were two of the variables studied. Perceived incivility was measured by a six-item additive scale, measuring neighborhood problems (litter/trash, loitering, vandalism, gangs, abandoned buildings, and drug dealing). They were each measured as 1 = not a problem, 2 = minor problem, and 3 = major problem. Perceived neighborhood crime was a dummy variable (1 = neighborhood crime is getting worse, 0 = otherwise). Satisfaction with the police was measured by asking “How satisfied are you with the quality of police service in your neighborhood?” with the answers 1 = very dissatisfied, 2
= somewhat dissatisfied, 3 = somewhat satisfied, and 4 = very satisfied. One-way ANOVA and multiple comparison tests were used to analyze the relationships among these variables. It was concluded that those who perceived neighborhood conditions, such as crime and disorder, as a problem viewed the police with more negative feelings. This theory held true controlling for race, sex, age, homeownership, and education.

Two other studies resulted in similar conclusions. Gallagher and colleagues (2001) further agree that there is a relationship between satisfaction with the police and neighborhood resident’s rating of crime, disorder, and physical decay. A study done by Alpert and Dunham (1988) found that neighborhoods are very important in determining satisfaction. Citizens may be inclined to view the police in a particular way based on the experiences and norms within their neighborhoods.

The finding that quality of life in a neighborhood is important in shaping satisfaction with police suggests that it may be useful in analyzing race differences in satisfaction with police. Priest and Carter (1999) conducted a study of the African American community in Charlotte, NC on quality of life (perceived safety and attitude towards neighborhood) and satisfaction with the police. The survey interviews included a Likert-format item which stated: “Charlotte-Mecklenburg police are doing a good job.” Respondents of the survey were asked whether they strongly agreed, agreed, disagreed, or strongly disagreed with the statement. The perceived safety survey statement was “I fear for my safety in my neighborhood.” The respondents were asked whether they strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree. Also respondents were given the statement, “I like my neighborhood.” The responses were coded from 1 to 4 with the strongly agree responses as 4. It was found that perceptions and evaluations of
neighborhood safety and conditions were positively related to police performance among blacks.

The Relationship between Satisfaction with Police, Fear of Crime and Race

Fear of crime is also considered one of the most important factors in determining satisfaction with police in neighborhoods. Fear of crime focuses on the perceived amount of crime within an area (Reisig and Parks 2000). A common question in surveys about fear of crime asks, “How safe do you feel being outside and alone in your neighborhood at night?” (Zhao et.al 2002). Generally, the research findings indicate that the more fear of crime that people have, the more likely they are to be dissatisfied with police performance (Cao et.al 1996; see also Tuch and Weitzer 2005 and O’Connor 2008). In Holmes and Goodman’s (2010) review of the literature, it was noted that citizens who do not see crime as a problem in their neighborhoods present higher satisfaction levels for the police.

In a study done by Xu and colleagues (2005, p.160), The Citizen Survey was used “to get citizen input on issues such as neighborhood disorder, crime, victimization, citizen’s fear, perceptions of community environment, and their evaluations of police effectiveness and accountability.” Structural equation modeling was used to analyze the data. The sample came from residents 18 and older living in the Colorado Springs area. It was mentioned that citizen’s fear of crime together with perception of quality of life is an important basis on which citizens evaluate the police. Structural equation modeling was used to analyze their variables. It was concluded that “citizen’s fear and perceived quality of life have significant effects on satisfaction with the police (p.172).” Xu and
colleagues (2005, p.152) further state, “When people have fear they tend to conclude that the police are unwilling or unable to deal with neighborhood problems. This implies that citizens’ fear and perceptions of neighborhood conditions may translate directly into residents’ evaluations of police performance.”

Just as incivilities within an area can affect quality of life, they can also cause higher levels in fear of crime (Worrall 2006; see also Taylor and Covington 1993; and LaGrange, R.L., Ferraro, K.F., and Supancic, M 1992). Police are a way of controlling incivilities. Kusow and colleagues (1997) suggested that officers foot patrolling increased a feeling of safety throughout neighborhoods. This may be due to the increase of police presence, which allows for a higher risk of being caught and thus less crime allowed and a greater feeling of safety (O’Connor 2008). Tuch and colleagues (2008, p.402) study on community policing found that it could increase fear or “amplify friction between officers and residents,” but overall, the safer feeling promotes an increase in satisfaction with the police.

When comparing fear of crime and race, it is important to focus on predominantly African-American communities. These communities typically carry a large number of incivilities such as physical decay, youth delinquency, and loitering (Taylor and Covington 1993). All these factors can produce higher levels of fear of crime (Worrall 2006). LaGrange and colleagues (1992) further agreed in their review of the literature that incivilities may produce greater fear than crime itself. One study that explores the relationship between fear, satisfaction with police and the role of race is Taylor and Covington. Taylor and Covington (1993) conducted a study using sixty-six neighborhoods that were randomly sampled around the Baltimore area. Respondents
were asked how safe they felt being out alone in their neighborhood. The answers ranged from very safe to very unsafe conditions. Their conclusions showed that race and fear of crime in neighborhoods with more African-Americans had substantially higher levels of fear. This may be due to the higher level of incivilities within predominantly African American neighborhoods.

Beyond Race

When looking at satisfaction with police in general, there are demographic variables, beyond race, that must also be considered. “Examining differences of opinion along demographic lines...provides useful information and a foundation upon which research can be built (Wells 2007, p. 613).” Among these are gender, age, and education which are factors that are consistently included in research. For all three, research finds contrasting conclusions about which group has greater satisfaction for police.

In terms of gender, according to Frank and colleagues (2005), it is not known whether males or females hold greater satisfaction levels for police because no significant values were concluded from their study. Kusow and colleagues (1997) also found that gender was not significantly related to satisfaction with the police. However, in a study done by Cao and colleagues (1996), it was found that females were more satisfied with police than males.

In terms of age, research typically finds that younger people were less satisfied with police (Murphy 2009; see also Reisig and Parks 2000, Tuch et al. 2008, and Dowler and Sparks 2008). For example, Gallagher and colleagues (2001) found that national samples of high school seniors rated the police substantially lower than older citizens.
They argued that this could be due to the fact that the younger age group tend to have more contact and are more likely to be arrested. Later research, however, showed older age groups having less positive attitudes for police (Murphy 2009).

Research has also examined the role of education levels with varying results. Frank and colleagues (2005) found that citizens with a higher education tend to hold more positive views of the police (see also Dowler and Sparks 2008). Cao and colleagues (1996), however, found that there was no relationship between education and satisfaction with police. Holmes and Goodman (2010) also found that education does not have a significant impact on satisfaction.

Overall, there are contrasting findings about satisfaction with police and the factors related to it. A majority of the studies indicate, however, that race does play a major role in determining satisfaction. In the current study, racial differences in quality of life and fear of crime are examined as explanations for satisfaction with police. The following hypotheses will be tested:

Hypothesis (1): Race is significantly related to satisfaction with the police with African Americans being less satisfied with the police than whites. Furthermore, the significance of this relationship will hold after statistically controlling for gender, age, education, location, and police contact.

Hypothesis (2): Perceptions of physical and social disorder are significantly related to satisfaction with the police and at least partially mediate the race-police satisfaction relationship.
Hypothesis (3): Perceptions about the quality of neighborhood life are significantly related to satisfaction with the police and at least partially mediate the race-police satisfaction relationship.

Hypothesis (4): Fear of crime is significantly related to satisfaction with the police and at least partially mediates the race-police satisfaction relationship.
CHAPTER III
METHODOLOGY

This chapter starts with a discussion of the purpose of the current study and a brief description of the data set used for the analysis. The discussion will then describe the sample and the dependent, independent, and control variables. The chapter will conclude with a description of the method of analysis used.

The purpose of this study is to examine differences by race in quality of life and fear of crime with satisfaction of police. Specifically, this study seeks to determine the answer to three questions. First, is race significantly related to satisfaction with police? Second, are perceptions of quality of neighborhood life, including disorder, and fear of crime, significantly related to satisfaction with police? Finally, do quality of neighborhood life measures, including disorder, and fear of crime, explain the relationship between race and satisfaction with police?

Description of the Data

The current study uses a data set entitled “Criminal Victimization and Perceptions of Community Safety in 12 United States Cities, 1998” (“Criminal Victimization” Survey). The data set resulted from a joint effort between the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services and the Bureau of Justice Statistics. The purpose was to collect city-level information on criminal victimizations, perceptions, and satisfaction with local police (Smith et.al 1999).
The data set includes information from residents in 9,327 households from each of 12 major cities across the United States. The participating cities include Chicago, IL, Kansas City, MO, Knoxville, TN, Los Angeles, CA, Madison, WI, New York, NY, San Diego, CA, Savannah, GA, Spokane, WA, Springfield, MA, Tucson, AZ, and Washington, DC. Cities were chosen for inclusion in the study to represent various stages in the development of community policing (Smith et.al 1999). The total sample size was 13,918 respondents.

The researchers who developed the data set surveyed households within the selected cities' jurisdictional limits to account for the area served by the local police department. The survey did not capture victimizations experienced by those who lived outside the city limits, but that may have occurred within the city.

Sample

According to the “Criminal Victimization” Survey (ICPSR Study by Smith et.al 1999), the respondents in the data set were contacted through random digit dialing. Phone lists were developed based on zip codes and city boundary information. The interviews were conducted during February, March, April, and May of 1998 from Census Bureau telephone call centers in Maryland and Arizona. The age group of the study was 12 years old and above (Smith et.al 1999).

Each respondent was interviewed over the telephone. A series of screening questions were asked to determine if the respondent had been a victim of crime during the six-month period preceding the interview. If the respondent qualified for the survey, he or she was asked the remainder of the survey questions.
The survey consisted of three parts. Part One included household information covering the number of household respondents, their ages, type of housing, size of residence, number of telephone lines and numbers, and language spoken in the household. Part Two of the survey included personal demographics such as respondents' sex, relationship to head of household, age, marital status, education, race, time spent in the housing unit, personal crime and victimization experiences, perceptions of neighborhood crime, job and professional demographics, and experience and satisfaction with local police. Finally, Part Three covered the details of the crimes in which the respondents were involved and the police response to the crimes (Smith et. al 1999). For the purpose of this study, only Part Two of the survey will be used.

The researchers used the current National Crime Victimization Survey questionnaire as a basis for their study, but added a series of supplemental questions measuring the attitudes of respondents in each city to determine the levels of satisfaction with their police interactions. The respondents were asked about incidents that occurred within the 12 months prior to the phone interview.

As a result of skip patterns and missing data, the sample in the study was reduced from the original sample size of 13,918. First, this study required dropping respondents under the age of 16 from the analysis, because the survey only asked questions about neighborhood satisfaction to those 16 and older. This reduced the sample size from 13,918 to 13,260 (658 under age 16). Second, since the focus is on race, particular attention was paid to the distribution of the sample by race. Since most of the respondents were Caucasian (69.6% of original sample) or African American (19.2% of original sample) respondents of other races were dropped from the sample. This reduced
to sample to 11,943 (1,317 respondents). Third, given that this study focuses on individual perceptions of quality of life and fear of crime, responses to these questions were important for analysis. For that reason, only those who responded will be analyzed requiring the elimination of the “Blank,” “Don’t Know,” and “Refused” answers from the dependent, independent and control variables. Consequently, this reduced the sample to 10,678. Finally, after eliminating the missing respondents from the new disorder variable (see below for information about how it was constructed), the final sample size was reduced to 10,522 (156 missing).

**Dependent Variable**

Satisfaction with police is the primary focus of this study. Overall satisfaction with the police is measured by a single item. Each of the respondents in the data set was asked “Are you satisfied with the neighborhood police?” The responses were measured using the Likert-type scale depicting satisfaction levels: (4) “Very Satisfied,” (3) “Satisfied,” (2) “Dissatisfied” and (1) “Very Dissatisfied.”

**Independent Variables**

There are three main explanatory variables that will be used to predict satisfaction with police. These are two measures of quality of life and one measure of fear of crime. In terms of quality of life, the first measure was a single item where respondents were asked:

- How satisfied are you with the quality of life in your NEIGHBORHOOD? The responses were measured using the Likert-type scale depicting satisfaction levels:
The second measure of quality of life captured respondents’ perceptions of physical conditions or disorder within the neighborhood. Respondents were asked if any of 14 conditions, which are abandoned buildings/cars, rundown buildings, poor lighting, overgrown trees, trash, empty lots, public drinking, public drug use, vandalism, prostitution, panhandling, loitering, truancy, and transients, were seen in their neighborhood. These 14 variables were combined into a new disorder variable. In order to save the sample size it was decided that 10 variables out of the 14 were a good representation of the neighborhood level of disorder. Thus if 10 or more of the 14 variables for a particular case had complete answers that case was included. Using this method reduced the sample by only 156 cases where there were fewer than 10 items that had complete answers.

Finally, fear of crime is measured by a single item. Respondents were asked:

- How fearful are you about crime in your neighborhood? The responses were measured as follows: (4) “Very Fearful,” (3) “Somewhat Fearful,” (2) “Not Very Fearful” and (1) “Not At All Fearful.”

The main question of interest throughout the study was satisfaction with police among different races, with a focus on African American and Caucasian. For the purpose of this study, race was recoded and measured as (0) “Caucasian” and (1) “African American” to examine only the differences between the two groups, excluding American Indian, Eskimo, Aleut, Asian or Pacific Islander, and Hispanic.
Control Variables

Though the focus is on race, quality of life and fear of crime research suggests a number of other factors that may be important in understanding satisfaction with police. The control variables used are city code, contact with police, reported a crime to police, neighborhood disorder, and demographic variables.

City Code:
For the purpose of the study, there will also be a control for location or city of the respondents’ surveyed. City was originally measured as (1) “Chicago, IL,” (2) “Kansas City, MO,” (3) “Knoxville, TN,” (4) “Los Angeles, CA,” (5) “Madison, WI,” (6) “New York, NY,” (7) “San Diego, CA,” (8) “Savannah, GA,” (9) “Spokane, WA,” (10) “Springfield, MA,” (11) “Tucson, AZ” and (12) “Washington, DC” but was recoded into dummy variables for the analysis. It is important to control for city because different locations have different surroundings, residents and different police agencies allowing for community bias (Tuch et al. 2008).

Police Contact Variables:
The current study will also control for whether or not the person surveyed contacted the police and whether the person reported a crime to the police. Dowler and Sparks (2008) controlled for police contact in their study as well due to its importance throughout the literature. Tuch and colleagues (2008) concur with their study by finding that police contact can influence satisfaction with police. In general, if contact with the police indicated negative evaluations then there will be more negative attitudes toward the police (Cao et.al 1996). Contact with the police is measured as (1) “Yes” and (0) “No.” Reporting a crime to the police is measured as (1) “Yes” and (0) “No.”
Demographic Variables:
Though the focus of the study is on race, quality of life and fear of crime, research suggests a number of other factors should be controlled (Frank et al. 2005; see also Reisig and Parks 2000 and Dowler and Sparks 2008). The demographic control variables used in this study are gender, age, and education. Gender is measured as (0) “Male” and (1) “Female.” Age was measured as (1) “12-16,” but all respondents under the age of 16 were eliminated and therefore was recoded as (1) “16,” (2) “17-21,” (3) “22-26,” (4) “27-31,” (5) “32-36,” (6) “37-41,” (7) “42-46,” (8) “47-51,” and (9) “52 and above.” Education is measured as (1) “Never Completed High School,” (2) “Completed High School,” (3) “Some College,” and (4) “Completed College or Above.”

Method of Analysis
The analysis for this study included several techniques. Initially, descriptive statistics such as frequencies and means were used to check for missing data for each variable used. To allow the examination of the relationships between the independent, dependent, and control variables, bivariate analysis was used and displayed in a correlation matrix. This determined if the relationship between two variables were statistically significant. These relationships may be moderated by other variables and therefore, ordinal logistic regression was used. Ordinal logistic regression is appropriate since the dependent variable in this study can be ranked, but the real distance between categories is unknown. The respondents of the survey were given choices from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree” on answering satisfaction with the police.

Six models are used to determine the outcome of the dependent variable. Model 1 included race as the only variable, other than the city code, predicting satisfaction with the police to see if there is a significant relationship between the two variables. Model 2
retains race and adds the controls age, gender, education, location, and contact with police. These models tests hypothesis 1 which predicts that race is significantly related to satisfaction with the police with African American being less satisfied with the police than whites. Furthermore, it predicts that the significance of this relationship will hold after statistically controlling for gender, age, and education, location and contact with police.

Model 3 allows for an examination of race and satisfaction with the police to see if there is a significant relationship when controlling for the disorder variables, age, gender, education, location, and contact with police. This model tests hypothesis 2 which posits that perceptions of physical and social disorder are significantly related to satisfaction with the police and at least partially mediate the race-police satisfaction relationship. The significance of this relationship will hold after statistically controlling for gender, age, and education, location and contact with police.

Model 4 allows for an examination of race and satisfaction with the police to see if there is a significant relationship, when controlling for quality of life, age, gender, education, location, and contact with police. This model tests hypothesis 3 which posits that perceptions about the quality of neighborhood life are significantly related to satisfaction with the police and at least partially mediate the race-police satisfaction relationship. The significance of this relationship will hold after statistically controlling for gender, age, and education, location and contact with police.

Model 5 allows for an examination of race and satisfaction with the police to see if there is a significant relationship when controlling for fear of crime, age, gender, education, location, and contact with police. This model tests hypothesis 4 which posits
that fear of crime is significantly related to satisfaction with the police and at least partially mediates the race-police satisfaction relationship. The significance of this relationship will hold after statistically controlling for gender, age, and education, location and contact with police.

Model 6 allows for an examination of race and satisfaction with the police to see if there is a significant relationship when controlling for quality of life, fear of crime, disorder variables, age, gender, education, location, and contact with police. This model will test if having all three variables (quality of life, fear of crime, and disorder) shows a better fit between race and satisfaction with the police.
CHAPTER IV

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter includes the results of the analysis. The discussion starts with descriptive statistics and bivariate correlations. The discussion then turns to the six regression models which allow for the testing of the four hypotheses under examination.

Findings

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics

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<th>Variable</th>
<th>Mean/SD</th>
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<th>Maximum</th>
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<td>4.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Quality of Life</td>
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<td>1.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Satisfied</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Dissatisfied</td>
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<tr>
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<td>4.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Not at all Fearful</td>
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<td>Police Contact</td>
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<td>Reported Incident</td>
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<td>1.00</td>
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<td>.00</td>
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<td>90.00</td>
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<td>Education</td>
<td>2.62/.531</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>3.00</td>
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</table>

Total sample size is 10,522 citizens in 9,327 households
As is found in other studies on police satisfaction, most people in the sample were satisfied with police. The mean (as shown in Table 1) is 3.07 (std=.648). The frequency distribution shows that 65.7% of the respondents are satisfied and 22.1% are very satisfied with the police. In addition disorder, the mean of which is .208 (std=.240), indicates that there is a wide range in disorder in the neighborhoods respondents live in. In terms of quality of life (mean 3.21, std=.713), 52.6% of the respondents reported they were very satisfied with their quality of life. Fear of crime (mean 2.15, std=.845) indicates that only 4.5% reported being very fearful of crime and 24.7% not at all fearful. As for race, the mean shows that 81% of the sample is white, leaving 18.9% of the sample African American. As for sex, the mean shows that 45.5% of the sample is male.

A correlation matrix is presented in Table 2 to show the relationships between the variables. As predicted, there was a significant association between race and satisfaction with the police (r = .157, significant at the .01 level). It was found that Caucasians are more satisfied with the police than African Americans. It was also noted that quality of life (r = .229, significant at the .01 level) disorder (r = .11, significant at the .01 level) and fear of crime (r = -.084, significant at the .01 level) are all significantly related to race and in the expected direction. African Americans have significantly lower levels of satisfaction with the police because of a worse quality of life, more disorder, and higher fears of crime than Caucasians. Finally, when looking at the control variables, there was a significant association with satisfaction with police for many of them. Respondents that were older (r = .148) and educated (r = .021) were more likely to be satisfied with the police. Sex is not significantly related to satisfaction with the police (r = .00). Finally,
those respondents who reported a crime to the police were less likely to be satisfied ($r = -0.11$).
Table 2. Bivariate Correlation Matrix ($n = 10,522$)

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>X1</th>
<th>X2</th>
<th>X3</th>
<th>X4</th>
<th>X5</th>
<th>X6</th>
<th>X7</th>
<th>X8</th>
<th>X9</th>
<th>X10</th>
<th>Y</th>
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<td>X3 Fear of Crime</td>
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<td>Y Satisfaction with Police</td>
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<td>-.04**</td>
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<td>.00</td>
<td>.15**</td>
<td>.02*</td>
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**Correlation significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed)
*Correlation significant at the 0.05 level (1-tailed)
Table 3. Parameter Estimates, Significance Level and Standard Errors for Ordinal Logistic Regression Predicting Satisfaction with the Police (n=10,522)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th>Model 2</th>
<th>Model 3</th>
<th>Model 4</th>
<th>Model 5</th>
<th>Model 6</th>
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Table 3. Continued.

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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tucson, AZ (11)</td>
<td>.379**</td>
<td>.383**</td>
<td>.267*</td>
<td>.311**</td>
<td>.342**</td>
<td>.259*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.105)</td>
<td>(.105)</td>
<td>(.106)</td>
<td>(.107)</td>
<td>(.106)</td>
<td>(.108)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washington, DC (12)</td>
<td>0*</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nagelkerke (Pseudo R²)</td>
<td>.044</td>
<td>.082</td>
<td>.139</td>
<td>.220</td>
<td>.126</td>
<td>.233</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Test of Parallel Lines (Chi-Square)</td>
<td>82.547**</td>
<td>239.394**</td>
<td>242.761**</td>
<td>209.715**</td>
<td>246.139**</td>
<td>231.384**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Number beside variable is the estimate
Number in ( ) is the standard error
**p < .01 and *p < .05
*a This parameter is set to zero because it is redundant
These relationships may be moderated by other variables and, therefore, ordinal logistic regression was used to determine whether or not the hypotheses were supported. The Nagelkerke value and Test of Parallel Lines was also tested to show the significance and relationship of the variables. The Nagelkerke value is a test of model fit. It shows how much variation in the dependent variable is explained by the independent variables. The test of parallel lines is examined to see whether a major assumption of ordinal logistic regression was met. More specifically, according to www.norusis.com website,

"When you fit an ordinal regression you assume that the relationships between the independent variables and the logits are the same for all the logits. That means that the results are a set of parallel lines or planes—one for each category of the outcome variable. If the lines or planes are parallel, the observed significance level for the change should be large, since the general model doesn’t improve the fit very much. The parallel model is adequate."

In general, by looking at the test of parallel lines, it has been noted that the values for each model are large and therefore significant. In this case, the test of parallel lines shows that the null hypothesis of parallel lines should be rejected for each model. This is often the case with a rather large sample size. The results are shown in Table 3 above.

Model 1 looks at race and satisfaction with the police, controlling for city. Model 2 adds the control variables to race and satisfaction with the police. The findings for models 1 and 2 support hypothesis 1. Hypothesis 1 stated race is significantly related to satisfaction with the police with African American being less satisfied with the police than whites. Furthermore, the significance of this relationship will hold after statistically controlling for gender, age, education, location, and police contact. The Nagelkerke for Model 1 is .044. Note that the value is small showing that model only explains a small
portion of the variance in the dependent variable (4%). This goes for Model 2 as well whose Nagelkerke is .082 (8% of the variance explained).

Model 3 examines hypothesis 2 and indicates support for it. Hypothesis 2 stated that perceptions of physical and social disorder are significantly related to satisfaction with the police and at least partially mediate the race-police satisfaction relationship. This model includes race, the disorder variable, and controls. The results indicate that the disorder variable is significantly related to satisfaction with police. Those respondents that live in neighborhoods with more disorder report less satisfaction with the police. In addition, race was found to be a significant variable. It is important to note that the parameter estimates for race decreased in size but remained significant indicating that disorder helps partially explain the relationship between race and satisfaction with police. This holds true when controlling for age, gender, education, location, and police contact. The Nagelkerke value is also small here (.139) showing that the model only explains a small portion of the variance in the dependent variable (14%), and therefore does not fully explain the satisfaction with police relationship.

Model 4 tests hypothesis 3 and finds support for it. Hypothesis 3 stated perceptions about the quality of neighborhood life are significantly related to satisfaction with the police and at least partially mediate the race-police satisfaction relationship. This model was set up to see if there was a significant relationship between race and satisfaction with the police when controlling for quality of life and other demographic controls. The results indicate that the quality of life variable is significantly related to satisfaction with police. Those respondents that mention a higher quality of life in their neighborhoods reported a greater satisfaction with the police. In addition, race was found
to be a significant variable. It is important to note that the parameter estimates for race (-.346) decreased in size from Model 1 (-.671), but remained significant indicating that quality of life has the highest level of explanation for the relationship between race and satisfaction with police out of all the variables, but still only explains part of this relationship. This holds true when controlling for age, gender, education, location, and police contact. Reisig and Parks (2000, p.620) concluded similar results in their study stating that the findings “support the tenet of the ‘quality of life’ model: that individual feelings about the state of the neighborhood (both positive and negative attributes) are associated with levels of satisfaction with police. Once again, the Nagelkerke value is small here (.220) showing that the model only explains a small portion of the variance in the dependent variable (22%), and therefore does not fully explain the satisfaction with police relationship.

Model 5 tests hypothesis 4 is and finds support for it. Hypothesis 4 stated fear of crime is significantly related to satisfaction with the police and at least partially mediates the race-police satisfaction relationship. This model was set up to see if there was a significant relationship between race and satisfaction with the police when controlling for fear of crime and other demographic controls. The results indicate that the fear of crime variable is significantly related to satisfaction with police. Those respondents that mention higher levels of fear of crime reported less satisfaction with the police. In addition, race was found to be a significant variable. It is important to note that the parameter estimates for race decreased in size but remained significant indicating that fear of crime helps partially explain the relationship between race and satisfaction with police. This holds true when controlling for age, gender, education, location, and police
contact. The Nagelkerke value is also small here (.126) showing that the model only explains a small portion of the variance in the dependent variable (13%), and therefore does not fully explain the satisfaction with police relationship.

Model 6 was set up to see if there was a relationship between race and satisfaction with police when all variables are contained in the model - disorder, quality of life, fear of crime, and the control variables. After testing the previous model, it was concluded that parameter estimates were reduced in size when the control variable was added. Then, by looking at all three variables in one model it was noted that most of the effect of race remained the same. The model did not fit better with all three variables used. Finally, the Nagelkerke value is small here as well (.233) showing that the model only explains a small portion of the variance in the dependent variable (24%), and therefore does not fully explain the satisfaction with police relationship.
CHAPTER V
CONCLUSION

This study, much like others (Gallagher et al. 2001; Reisig and Parks 2000; Kusow et al. 2007; Cao et al. 1996; and Tuch and Weitzer 1997), showed that race is a significant indicator of satisfaction with the police. After testing for satisfaction with police and race, my hypotheses were supported in explaining the race and police satisfaction relationship. This held true when controlling for quality of life and fear of crime. It was concluded in the current study that quality of life and fear of crime mediate or at least partially explain the relationship between race and satisfaction with the police, but do not fully explain the race and police satisfaction relationship. African Americans were found to be less satisfied with the police, but the variables tested were not proven to be the exact reasons why. The conclusions showed that after controlling for quality of life and fear of crime, race was still a significant factor and therefore it cannot be suggested that these variables prove why African Americans are less satisfied with the police. Quality of life was found to have the most affect on the race and police satisfaction relationship. Reisig and Parks (2000) concluded similar results in their study.

The findings support the hypothesis that race is related to satisfaction with the police through physical neighborhood disorder, quality of life, and fear of crime. Hypothesis 1 stated: Race is significantly related to satisfaction with the police with African American being less satisfied with the police than whites. Furthermore, the significance of this relationship will hold after statistically controlling for gender, age, education, location, and police contact. The findings supported this hypothesis and are in
line with previous research which found that race does have a significant relationship with police satisfaction (Gallagher et. al 2001; Reisig and Parks 2000; Kusow et. al 2007; Cao et. al 1996; and Tuch and Weitzer 1997).

Hypothesis 2 stated: Perceptions of physical and social disorder are significantly related to satisfaction with the police and at least partially mediate the race-police satisfaction relationship. The results indicate that the disorder variable is significantly related to satisfaction with police. Those respondents that live in neighborhoods with more disorder report less satisfaction with the police. This also supports previous research which has found that incivilities mediate the race relationship to police satisfaction. As Taylor and Covington (1993) found, African American communities typically carry a large number of incivilities such as physical decay, youth delinquency, and large groups hanging out on street corners which can lead to dissatisfaction with the police.

Hypothesis 3 stated: Perceptions about the quality of neighborhood life are significantly related to satisfaction with the police and at least partially mediate the race-police satisfaction relationship. The results show that quality of life is related to satisfaction with the police and that quality of life helps explain the relationship between race and police satisfaction. Those respondents that reported a better quality of life in their neighborhood were more likely to be satisfied with the police. This conclusion supports previous research such as Alpert and Dunham (1988) who suggest that citizens may be inclined to view the police in a particular way based on the experiences and norms within their neighborhoods, which can influence attitudes toward the police.
Gallagher and colleagues (2001) further agree that a majority of citizens hold the police accountable for the quality of life within their neighborhood.

Hypothesis 4 stated: Fear of crime is significantly related to satisfaction with the police and at least partially mediates the race-police satisfaction relationship. The results show that fear of crime is significantly related to satisfaction with police and helps explain race and satisfaction with police. When looking at fear of crime, race, and satisfaction with the police, those respondents that reported higher levels of fear of crime in their neighborhood were less likely to be satisfied with the police. Xu and colleagues (2005, p.152) state, “When people have fear they tend to conclude that the police are unwilling or unable to deal with neighborhood problems. This implies that citizens’ fear and perceptions of neighborhood conditions may translate directly into residents’ evaluations of police performance.”

Overall there is a significant relationship between race and satisfaction with the police when looking at quality of life and fear of crime, however, it is not possible to say how far these variables go in explaining why race is related to satisfaction with the police. This study concluded that the six models used could not fully account for race and police satisfaction relationship. By looking at Model 6 and seeing all the variables together, the results concluded that this study only explains about 24% of the race and police satisfaction relationship.

Policy Implications

The satisfaction level of police among African Americans is a topic of concern. It is important to examine public preferences regarding police reform for several reasons.
Studying general opinions of police “reflect the level of diffuse support for or legitimacy of one’s local police department” (Tuch and Weitzer 2005; p.280). Tuch and Weitzer (2004) also examine three explanations.

“First such knowledge may be useful in informing public policy. Widespread popular support for a specific change may indicate that a problem needs to be addressed. If implemented, the reform may help to reduce police misconduct or improve police practices more generally. Second, certain kinds of reforms may have a significant impact on public trust and confidence in the police. Whether the reform actually changes police practices, it may be symbolically important and enhance public confidence in the police. Third, reforms that affect police-citizen encounters may increase citizens’ willingness to cooperate with the police.”

Dowler and Sparks (2008, p.410) mentioned in their similar study, “this research was especially important in understanding the rift that often exists between minority communities and police agencies.” African Americans are often times overrepresented in the criminal justice system in terms of arrests and convictions, which can lead to negative attitudes as well, but it is also important to look at increasing satisfaction between African Americans and the police when it comes to neighborhood conditions. As Reisig and Parks (2000, p.626) proclaim, “if individual perceptions of quality of life reflected actual neighborhood conditions, we could argue for the widespread implementation of community policing initiative designed to address physical decay, social disorder, and other correlates of neighborhood crime.” In terms of looking at policy, this could create a greater satisfaction between African Americans and the police. “Future research should examine the role police play, apart from crime control, in maintaining quality of life in a community” (Dowler and Sparks 2008, p.410). Tuch and colleagues (2008) concur with their argument that neighborhood disorder allows for abuse of power which results in
those high-disorder neighborhoods having dire relationships with the police. The police and residents need to work together to recognize and resolve neighborhood issues.

**Limitations and Strengths**

There were some important limitations noticed when completing this study. One limitation to this study is the use of a secondary data set. Use of a data set by a researcher who was not involved in the data collection, leaves room for error during data collection of which the current user is unaware. Second, while the data set has a large sample size, there are only 12 cities in the sample and it does not represent the nation as a whole. Third, another limitation is the police contact variable (contact with police and report a crime to police). In the current study, there was no indication of how the contact with police was perceived by the citizens. Thus there is no way to tell if the interaction was good or bad. Fourth, the data is cross-sectional in nature. The relationship between quality of life and satisfaction with the police could be entirely spurious and may really only have to do with a general outlook on life. The final limitation of this study is that the sample size needed to be reduced because of “blanks,” “don’t knows,” and age which gives a less accurate representation of the cities.

As for strengths, the current data set produced several factors for the physical disorder variable in order to give a good representation of neighborhood conditions. In the current study, I was also allowed to control for several factors that may influence satisfaction with the police such as contact with police, location, age, gender, and education allowing a more accurate analysis for the race and police satisfaction relationship.
Future Directions

In terms of future research, three possibilities are noted. First, future research should try to include variables that were missing in this research. One particular variable, as mentioned earlier, would be to know the outcome of the police contact and tie that into a similar study to see if that yields different results. It would also be important to see if the demographics of the police officers within each location produce a change in the race police satisfaction relationship.

In addition an interesting finding in this study might warrant further attention by researchers. After designing the parameter estimates table, it was noticed that all the cities were ranked more positively than Washington, DC. It would be fascinating to see if city context produces a change in satisfaction with police.

Finally, future researchers need to be more creative in uncovering the factors that explain satisfaction with police. This study only revealed about 25% of the race and police satisfaction relationship. Future research may need to address more factors in a single study to try and explain the remaining 75%; perhaps including both direct and indirect experiences with the police.
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