This paper reports the results of a survey of attitudes toward police and police service among 273 citizens in 4 neighborhoods in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Extensive socioeconomic and personal history data were collected for all individuals. Results indicate that personal history, particularly respondents' perceptions of the way in which specific officers have related to them personally in previous encounters, is a more significant determinant of general attitudes towards police than were all socioeconomic variables including race and income. Results thus suggest that positive styles of policing will significantly affect police-community relations, and that police-community relations programs stressing officer-citizen interaction in a law enforcement context will have the highest probability of success.

DETERMINANTS OF ATTITUDES TOWARD CITY POLICE

RICHARD SCAGLION
RICHARD G. CONDON
University of Pittsburgh

An increasing concern over police-community relations in urban areas throughout the United States has prompted researchers in the field of criminal justice to investigate the nature of community attitudes toward police and police service. Much of the published literature derived from this research has been primarily descriptive.

AUTHORS' NOTE: The data presented were gathered while the senior author was in the research department of the Police-Community Relations Project in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. The sponsoring organizations for the project, the Project Administration Committee and project staff, the Pittsburgh Bureau of Police, and the volunteer interviewers are all gratefully acknowledged. A grant from the Center for Studies of Crime and Delinquency, National Institute of Mental Health (Research Fellowship Award 1 FO 1 MH 58700-01), which provided funds for a related project, is also acknowledged. Keypunching services were provided by the Social Science Computer Research Institute of the University of Pittsburgh, and computer time was provided by the Computer Center of the University of Pittsburgh. In addition, the authors would like to thank Michael J. Lowy, Ian Rawson, and Allen L. Tan for useful comments and suggestions at various stages of this project.

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in nature. Such studies have been useful in illuminating the socio-economic variables which are related to the evaluation of police and police service (Lohman and Misner, 1966; Bailey and Mendelsohn, 1969; Bouma, 1969; Jacob, 1971; Scaglion, 1973) and the manner in which these attitudes are embedded in the infrastructure of law and the criminal justice system (Jacob, 1969; Albrecht and Green, 1977). These studies have demonstrated that lower income minority groups have less favorable attitudes towards police than do middle income whites, that white nonethnics tend to have less favorable attitudes towards police than do white ethnics, and that young people tend to have less favorable attitudes than older people. While such studies have provided a more than adequate data base, preoccupation with the examination of socioeconomic variables has tended to obscure other factors which may contribute to attitude formation. Few studies have taken into account such factors as the frequency and nature of past contacts with police officers, residential history, arrest record, and so on; nor have they attempted to examine the relative contribution of such factors in the formation of attitudes toward police and their function in urban areas.

This study was designed to examine and compare the relative importance of socioeconomic and personal contact variables in determining attitudes toward police. Aims of the study were to (1) identify those variables which have direct relationship with attitudes toward police, (2) determine the relative significance of each of these variables through the use of multiple regression analysis, (3) examine causal relationships among these variables through the use of path analysis, and (4) make suggestions as to how these findings may be applied in the area of police-community relations, particularly in the area of styles of community policing by patrol officers. Results suggest that personal contact (particularly respondents' perceptions of the way in which specific officers have related to them personally in previous encounters) is a more significant determinant of general attitudes towards police than are major socio-economic variables such as race and income.

BACKGROUND

Data for the study were collected by the Police-Community Relations Project in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, of which the senior
author was research director. The primary goal of this project was to assess the state of police-community relations in the city and to produce specific recommendations for the improvement of police-community relations. As part of the assessment process, police service was evaluated by 273 citizens in 4 neighborhoods in the city: a low income black neighborhood, a comparable low income white neighborhood, a racially heterogeneous but predominantly black low income neighborhood, and a white upper-middle-class neighborhood having no particular ethnic composition. Respondents were randomly chosen and were interviewed by trained interviewers, generally of the same race, in relatively intensive sessions which lasted an hour or more.

The questionnaire which was administered consisted of three parts. The first part was designed to elicit the respondent's attitudes toward certain police issues. The respondent read a statement, decided to what degree he or she agreed or disagreed with the statement along a five-point Likert-type scale, and marked the appropriate response. The second section was designed to disclose all encounters which the respondent had had with police over the past two years and asked for an evaluation of the service received. It included other personal history information, such as detail on contacts which friends or relatives may have had with police and which may have affected the respondents' attitudes. The third section was designed to obtain basic sociometric data on the respondent.

DESCRIPTIVE RESULTS

Basic descriptive results have been published in greater detail elsewhere (Scaglion, 1973) so that only a summary is intended here. Since there were seventeen attitudinal variables concerning police and police service, a single measure of overall satisfaction was needed to simplify data analysis. One of the attitudinal questions, which asked for an overall evaluation of whether the local police were doing "a good job," was found to correlate highly with most of the other measures. An R-factor analysis of the attitudinal responses of both whites and blacks produced a "satisfaction" factor as the first factor, with this general satisfaction variable receiving the highest loadings for both groups (Scaglion and Condon, 1978: 7). This
variable was thus used as a diagnostic variable measuring overall attitudes toward police.

While socioeconomic variables were associated with attitude toward police in much the same way as reported in previous studies, certain of the personal history variables proved to be even more interesting in the analysis of police-community relations. For example, it was found that respondents who had spoken with police officers in an informal but official way (such as asking for directions or information) reported having satisfactory contacts and tended to have a better opinion of police than those not having such contacts. While only a minority of citizens (93 out of 226, or 41.2%) reported some sort of informal contact of this nature with police, 93.7% of those having had such contact judged these encounters as satisfactory. (The police were courteous, took pains to give the proper directions, and so on.) It is not surprising, then, that those who had such informal contact tended to be somewhat less critical of police than those who had not. It is interesting to note that those citizens who had friends or relatives who were police were not inclined to be less critical of police than those who did not. Also, people who had some sort of social contact with police (at parties or other functions) were only slightly less critical of police than others.

Thus, it seems that having close relationships with a few police officers is not likely to affect an individual’s feelings toward the Bureau of Police as a whole. However, citizens who ask for directions from an anonymous officer seem to be generally satisfied with their contacts and seem to come away with a better opinion of police in general. This fact underlines the importance of courtesy by police officers in dealing with the public in routine law enforcement situations.

The personal history variable which seems to have been most closely associated with attitude toward police was the evaluation of service received in calls made to police. Respondents were asked to evaluate the service received for all calls they had made to police in the past 2 years. The following 5-point rating scale was used: (1) excellent (2) good (3) average (4) below average (5) poor. A combined “evaluation of service” index was constructed for each respondent by computing a mean rating for all calls made by each individual. These evaluation indices explained more of the variance in opinions than any other factor.
MULTIVARIATE ANALYSIS

It is quite likely, of course, that many of these variables covary. In order to control for such effects, a multiple regression analysis was performed, with attitude toward police as the dependent variable and selected personal contact and socioeconomic variables as independent variables. Since we were primarily interested in examining the relative effects of personal contact variables vs. socioeconomic variables rather than merely attempting to explain as much of the variance as possible, only the evaluation of service score (mean satisfaction score for all contacts resulting from respondent's calls to police) was included in the regression equation. Virtually all of the socioeconomic variables were included. For variables which were not measurable along interval scales, dummy variables were constructed to provide dichotomous categories.

A stepwise multiple regression procedure utilizing the SPSS REGRESSION subprogram (Nie et al., 1975) was used. Since some respondents were hesitant to report their incomes, the inclusion of the "income" variable in an equation constructed by utilizing listwise deletion of cases would have resulted in a rather small sample size. As a result, two regression equations were constructed: one using listwise deletion of cases and not including income, the other using pairwise deletion of cases and including income. Results of both regression analyses were similar, and, in order to conserve space, we have reported only the regression equation including income.

It is quite obvious that evaluation of service is the single most important determinant of attitude toward police in general, explaining more than 30% of the variance. Race is also an important determinant. When the effects of differential evaluations of service by blacks and whites are controlled for, race still accounts for some 6% of the variance in attitudes towards police. None of the other socioeconomic variables has a significant determinant effect. F tests were significant at the .001 level for effects of evaluation of service (\(F = 75.58, \text{d.f.} = 1,172\)) and evaluation of service plus race (\(F = 49.354, \text{d.f.} = 1,171\)).

The results of the multiple regression analysis provide a firm foundation for the conclusion that personal contact with police is the major determinant of overall attitudes toward police. The multiple regression table, however, does not supply any statement con-
TABLE 1
Stepwise Multiple Regression Analysis,
Predicting General Satisfaction with Police and Police Service
(with pairwise deletion of cases and income)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent Variables</th>
<th>Multiple β</th>
<th>R²</th>
<th>R² Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation of Service</td>
<td>.5491</td>
<td>.3015</td>
<td>.3015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race</td>
<td>.051</td>
<td>.0661</td>
<td>.0646</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religion</td>
<td>.6088</td>
<td>.1706</td>
<td>.0045</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>.6125</td>
<td>.1752</td>
<td>.0046</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex</td>
<td>.6112</td>
<td>.1760</td>
<td>.0008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital Status</td>
<td>.6134</td>
<td>.1762</td>
<td>.0002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>.6135</td>
<td>.1764</td>
<td>.0001</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

cerning the causal connections between the major independent variables included in the original regression equation. It may be the case that, while evaluation of service is the major causative factor for general satisfaction, socioeconomic variables may be working indirectly through evaluation of service to affect general satisfaction. As a result, path analysis was performed to investigate the causal connections among the dependent and independent variables. To construct the path analysis diagrams, repeated multiple regressions were performed. The results of the path analysis are presented in Figures 1 through 4.

The path analysis illustrates that both race and evaluation of service has significant effects upon the general satisfaction variable, with evaluation of service receiving a higher weighting. It is important to note that race does not have a major effect upon evaluation of service, nor do any of the other socioeconomic variables, with the exception of marital status. Those individuals in the sample who were separated or divorced were less likely to report favorable evaluations of past police service (beta = .19; P < .05). The causal connection, however, is a weak one. Thus, most of the variance in evaluation of service is not explained by race, religion, income, marital status, or education. The path analysis consequently supports our contention that personal contact with police is a more significant determinant of general satisfaction than all other variables combined.
DISCUSSION

The results of this study have implications for the planning of police-community relations programs. It has been shown that citizen opinion appears to be most affected by actual contact with a uniformed officer in an official or semiofficial capacity. As a result,
we would predict that police-community relations programs aimed at "educating the public" by emphasizing the positive side of the police role but lacking personal officer-citizen interaction are likely to have limited success. An example of this approach would be a public relations program emphasizing widespread publicity of crime reports.
and clearance statistics. It would also seem that programs which are based upon community service in which the officer is not acting in a police context (athletic programs, and so on) would not alone build strong police-community relations, since knowing a police officer personally was not a major determinant of citizen attitudes. Broad-based programs which bring together citizens and police officers acting in an official capacity would seem to have more positive impact than generally assumed. Examples of such strategies would be increasing the ratio of beat to car patrols or instituting "walk-ride" patrols in urban areas in order to maximize police-citizen interaction.

The study also has implications for the practice of various styles of community policing by patrol officers. Wilson (1968) proposed a threefold typology of policing styles: the watchman style, stressing order maintenance; the legalistic style, stressing law enforcement; and service style, stressing order maintenance through positive action and referral rather than merely through arrest. Similarly, Kuykendall (1974) separates policing styles into positive methods which place police officers in a counseling (i.e., helping, supporting) role, assisting in community self-determination efforts to deal with public order problems and negative methods, placing police officers in an enforcing (i.e., applying negative sanctions) role. He further suggests (1974: 235-236) that policing styles designed to personalize police-citizen encounters in a positive manner may generate positive support for police and may also generate public assistance in crime control efforts. The results of the present study support Kuykendall's speculations. They refute the opinion that certain segments of the community will have negative opinions of police regardless of how patrol officers behave. Socioeconomic factors such as race, age, and income appear to have little direct effect on attitudes toward police. The primary factor determining general satisfaction with police and police service seems to be actual personal contact with specific police officers in a positive context.

REFERENCES


Richard Scaglion is an Assistant Professor of Anthropology at the University of Pittsburgh. He has special interests in the anthropology of law, comparative studies of police, and in quantitative methods. He was the research director of the Police-Community Relations Project in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. He is presently on leave from the University of Pittsburgh and is directing a project on legal change and customary law for the Law Reform Commission of Papua, New Guinea.

Richard G. Condon is a doctoral candidate in anthropology at the University of Pittsburgh, where he is specializing in psychological anthropology. He is presently completing his doctoral research in the Canadian Arctic, where he is investigating the effects of seasonality upon interpersonal stress and emotional reactivity.