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PEER REVIEWED ARTICLE

# Cooperating with the Police as an Act of Social Control

*Trust and Neighbourhood Concerns as Predictors of  
Public Assistance*

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## ABSTRACT

Calling upon and assisting police officers are acts that link informal and formal mechanisms of social control. In this paper, we draw upon data from a survey of seven London electoral wards to investigate some of the factors predicting public willingness to assist police. We find that such cooperation is associated, first, with high levels of public trust in police; second, with confidence that local residents will intervene on behalf of the collective good; and third, with heightened concerns about disorder and the loss of authority and discipline in society. We conclude with the idea that cooperation may be influenced not only by peoples' relationships with police, but also by their (real and imagined) relationships with each other. Notably, police may garner public cooperation when social cohesion is perceived to be high *and* when there seem to be challenges to the established moral order.

## Keywords

Trust in the police, informal social control, public cooperation with police

## INTRODUCTION

To call the police, to report crime or suspicious activities, to provide information to help police identify a criminal – these are acts of ‘the community to regulate itself and the behaviour of residents and visitors’ (Bursik & Gramsik, 2003: 15). Linking formal and informal mechanisms of social control, such cooperative acts constitute a certain kind of normative order. They also imply recognition of the police role in maintaining order and ‘fighting crime’, and endorsement of the legitimacy of the police as the appropriate institution to deal with such issues (cf. Beetham, 1991).

Public cooperation is central to effective and equitable day-to-day police work, with the vast majority of criminal offences becoming known to the police through being identified first by a member of the public. Cooperation from citi-

zens is then required throughout the criminal justice process. An absence of cooperation impairs the efficiency of the police and other criminal justice agencies, and erodes the fairness of their operations (Goudriaan, Wittebrood and Nieuwebeerta, 2006). For instance, if crimes are less likely to be reported by people living in certain areas, then police resources will be allocated in ways that do not reflect the ‘true’ distribution of crime, favouring those areas where people are more likely to report (even if the incidence of crime is lower).

Why do people cooperate? Procedural justice theory is the dominant account in this area of research (Tyler, 2009; Huq, Jackson and Trinker, 2016), but in this paper we contribute to the literature by assessing not just the associations between trust in police fairness (and effectiveness) and willingness to cooperate, but also the role of wider social concerns. Positioning it as indicative of informal social control in a sense close to Carr’s (2003) ‘new parochialism’, we argue that cooperation with police can be seen as an act of social control initiated at the informal level – because it stems from the way people react to the characteristics of, and events in, their social environment – but implemented at the formal or public level, because they invoke the police and, in almost all cases, hand the problem over to the officers who arrive (Waddington, 1999).

Understood in these terms, public cooperation with the police may have a number of antecedents. The first area of interest is public trust in police fairness and group engagement – this is closely linked to motive-based perceptions of shared group membership, and legitimacy (Bradford, Murphy and Jackson, 2014; Van Damme, Pauwels and Svensson, 2015). Second, opinions about police effectiveness more narrowly defined should not be forgotten. This may be an important predictor of intention to cooperate, being an assessment of the ‘job done’ by the police organization across its wide range of tasks. Third, concerns about the condition of local social order, and of society more generally, may be associated with cooperation (mediated, perhaps, by public trust in police), whether these be couched in terms of social or moral decline, increasing neighbourhood disorder, or community cohesion or collective efficacy (Jackson, Bradford, Hohl & Stanko, 2013; Jackson & Bradford, 2009; Kochel, 2016; Nix, Wolfe, Rojek and Kaminski, 2015).

Testing these potential antecedents of public cooperation, we highlight a complex set of associations between perceptions of social cohesion and moral consensus, trust in the police, and willingness to cooperate with these agents of formal social control. Public cooperation may be shaped not only by people’s relationships with police but also by their relationships with each other. In particular, when individuals experience a strong sense of social cohesion and collective efficacy, they may be more likely to cooperate with police. Yet, equally, willingness to cooperate with and support police may be higher among those who perceive threats to social and moral order.

## WHY DO PEOPLE CALL THE POLICE – AND WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO DO SO?

Many recent studies concerned with public cooperation with the police have focused primarily on the extent to which such cooperation is an outcome of trust and/or legitimacy judgments (Sunshine & Tyler, 2003; Jackson et al., 2013; Murphy, Sargeant & Cherney, 2015; Van Damme et al., 2015). Often concerned with issues of procedural justice, such research has tended to see cooperation as a more or less ‘natural’ outcome of positive police-public relationships. Yet, individuals may have many reasons for seeking to contact and cooperate with police (or not), some of which may have little to do with the extent to which they trust and grant legitimacy to officers and institution. We examine here the calls that citizens imagine they might make to the police to report crimes or anti-social behaviour, and the situations in which they could assist the police through the provision of information. These are types of cooperation that might not involve matters of personal concern to those involved, but are nonetheless indicative of the application of social control, and we therefore assess alongside issues of trust the extent to which people’s perceptions of and concerns about their social environment might encourage or inhibit such cooperation.

## CALLING THE POLICE AS AN ACT OF INFORMAL SOCIAL CONTROL

According to Bursik and Gramsik (1993; see also Warner, 2007) there are three types of ‘informal’ social control: private social control, which is embedded in the relationships between family and close friends; parochial social control, exerted by more diffuse networks of people usually imagined to be operating within a geographically and/or socially bounded area; and indirect informal social control, or what Warner (*ibid*: 101) calls public control, something that is bound up in the readiness and ability of individuals and social networks to ‘secure public goods and services that are allocated by agencies located outside the area’ (Bursik and Gramsik, 1993: 17; quoted in Warner, 2007: 101). Informal social control sits alongside, interacts with, and is generative of formal social control – the most important and salient mechanism of which is, in many circumstances, the police. Most obviously, one way an individual can seek to challenge the behaviour of others, or attempt to assert order, is to summon police officers to deal with the issue.

Carr (2003) usefully blurs the line between parochial and public social control. In his view, low levels of social cohesion might be expected to weaken parochial social control (people are less willing to get involved if they do not feel that others around them share similar concerns and would support them). But this does not necessarily mean that informal social control is absent in areas with low social cohesion. The ‘new parochialism’ describes situations in which individuals, although perhaps not ready to ‘have a go’ themselves, are willing to call on and cooperate with agents of formal social control, creating ‘a partnership between parochial and public spheres’ (*ibid*: 1252), wherein

these different types of control are not separate from each other but intimately linked. This type of social control is initiated at the personal level and implemented at the public – or formal – level. Such behaviour will not, of course, be limited to areas with generally low levels of social cohesion; Carr's ideas build on earlier conceptions that also stressed the mutual interdependence of the parochial and public orders and the forms of social control that maintain them (Hunter, 1995: 221).

Criminological research often measures social control mechanisms at the community level (e.g. Jackson et al., 2012). The relative strengths or weaknesses of social control mechanisms are related to factors such as the social composition of an area, population stability, and relationships with the police (Carr, 2003; Sampson, 2012; Sampson & Bartusch, 1998; Sampson, Raudenbush and Earls, 1997; Silver & Miller, 2004; Wells, Schafer, Varano and Bynum, 2006). But our focus in this paper is at the individual level. We are concerned with the factors that influence the decisions of citizens to invoke the police – to summon officers and assist them when they arrive. People summon and cooperate with police when they witness transgressions social norms, such as crimes or disorderly behaviour: 'conduct regarded as undesirable from a normative viewpoint, that is ... *conduct which ought not to occur*' (Black, 1993: 22, emphasis added; see also Bursik & Gramsik, 1993: 14). Social control and reactions to deviancy are then intimately bound up with the function of the police as envisaged by Bittner (1990: 249). All are oriented to the problem posed by events or behaviours that *ought not* to be happening, and 'about-which-someone-had-better-do-something-now', and aim to correct transgression and restore normative order. People's willingness to contact and cooperate with the police should therefore be related to their normative assessments of the place in which they live and of those they share it with – what ought or ought not to occur, what should be done about deviancy, and whether it is worth getting involved.

## TRUST AND PUBLIC COOPERATION WITH POLICE

Despite this, much of the empirical evidence on public cooperation with the police links, as noted, cooperation to procedural justice via the intervening mechanisms of legitimacy and social identity (Tyler, 1990; 2006; Tyler & Huo, 2002). The central concern is with the extent to which relations between police and policed shape cooperation. In this body of work, the experience of procedurally just treatment at the hands of authorities is associated not only with satisfaction with decisions and decision-makers, but also with increased propensities to offer them assistance. These effects are held to emerge partly because the experience of procedural fairness fosters in people feelings of motive-based trust in – and shared group membership with – the authority concerned (Murphy, Bradford & Jackson 2016). Fairness encourages the idea that citizens and the police have a shared set of ends and should work together to achieve them. By treating people justly and equitably, police communicate to citizens

that they are valued members of the social group that the police represent (Tyler, 1990; Tyler & Blader, 2000) – a group that can be conceptualized as the nation, state, or community (Bradford et al., 2014; Jackson & Bradford, 2009). Conversely, unfair treatment communicates division, social denigration and exclusion, fostering an ‘us and them’ situation. Under such conditions, trust, legitimacy, identification with the group the police represent, and therefore cooperation, will decline, and this might encourage or force authorities to take a more punitive and/or aggressive stance – one which may well be perceived as procedurally unfair by members of the public, leading to a downward spiral of increasing distance and antagonism between police and public (Bradford, 2015; Brunson, 2007; Carr, Napolitano & Keating, 2007; McAra & McVie, 2005).

Central to procedural justice theory, then, is not only the fairness of police activity, but also what fairness *communicates* to citizens. One reason why the behaviour of officers is identity-relevant to citizens is that police represent dominant social categories, and it is across the dimension of fairness that people draw conclusions about their status and belonging within the categories involved. Yet, the symbolism of police – what this institution means to people – may have implications for public relationships with it that go beyond questions of fairness.

### **SOCIAL CONCERNS AND PUBLIC COOPERATION – A BRITISH PERSPECTIVE**

In British criminology, Reiner (2010), Loader (2006) and others have developed distinctive accounts of the cultural significance of the police. In this work, the police are held by citizens to be representatives of law and order, the nation-state, respectability, and even a certain form of Englishness or Britishness (Girling, Loader & Sparks 2000; Jackson & Bradford, 2009; Loader, 2006; Smith, 2007; Waddington, 1999). We might ask therefore: what opinions, outlooks or ‘structures of feeling’ (Williams, 1964; see Loader & Mulcahy, 2003) are implicated by adherence to the police as representative of, for example, a stable, cohesive national past (Girling et al., 1998, 2000; Reiner, 2010)? And what do such representations imply for public propensities to cooperate with police?

It has been suggested that the nature of the relationship between police and public in Great Britain can be explained not, primarily, by reference to crime – concerns about crime *per se* often have only a tangential connection with assessments of the police (Jackson et al., 2009; but see also Sindall, Sturgis & Jennings, 2012) – but by reference to a range of ‘deeper’ social concerns (albeit that many of these concerns shape the way people think and talk about crime itself, Sasson, 1995). When many British people think about the police and their activities, it seems they also think about the erosion of norms and social ties (signified perhaps by crime and disorder) and about policing as the

organized defense of those norms and ties (Bradford & Myhill, 2015; Girling et al., 2000; Jackson & Bradford, 2009; Loader & Mulcahy, 2003). When thinking about ‘the state of society’ and its apparent direction of travel, those who are concerned about long-term social change, who perceive a modern world in long term moral and social decline, or who buy into a ‘community lost’ narrative, seem often to blame the police as representatives of the social order that allows these things to happen, and their trust in police is undermined (Jackson & Bradford, 2009). At a more local or neighbourhood level, assessments of community cohesion, social control and civility, which may of course themselves reflect wider concerns about the breakdown and fragmentation of society, also seem to damage trust in the police (Jackson & Sunshine, 2007).

This is a perspective that positions the police as exactly the kind of ‘proto-typical group representatives’ (Sunshine & Tyler, 2003) envisaged by the procedural justice model. Concerns about cohesion, disorder and collective efficacy are thought to be associated with informal social control (Carr, 2003; Sampson 2012; Sampson & Bartusch, 1998; Sampson et al., 1997; Warner, 2003, 2007; Wells et al., 2006), with lower levels of social cohesion and collective efficacy linked to lower propensities to engage in social control activity – including, we argue, cooperation with police. Citizens hold accountable group authorities perceived to be allowing the norms, values and standards of public behaviour erode, motivating withdrawal from relationships with those authorities. Conversely, cooperation with police should be reinforced by high levels of social cohesion. This latter argument finds echoes in other studies that have looked at the effect of community level characteristics on individual behaviour. In a study that examined the associations between area-level characteristics and crime reporting, Goudriaan et al. (2006) found that high social cohesion, measured at the aggregate level, was associated with higher chances of reporting crime victimization at the individual level. Similarly, Warner (2007) reports a strong association between aggregate social cohesion and trust and individual propensities to engage in ‘direct’ social control (self-assessed readiness to involve landlords, police or others in neighbour disputes). We investigate here whether the relationship between social cohesion and cooperation with police holds in a British context, but at the level of individual perception only. We ask, that is, whether the relationships people feel they have with others in their social environment are associated with their propensity to cooperate with the police. One hypothesis is that concerns about neighbourhood disorder and social cohesion are associated with low cooperation – that people withdraw from the police when social order appears fragmented.

However, it may equally be that those who perceive social and moral order to be in decline, who think the established order is under threat, and/or who think that many things are happening which ought not to be, may be more ready to invoke the police, representatives of order and stability, to correct what they see to be a deteriorating state of affairs. Indeed, such individuals may wish to invoke police to not only deter, but punish those they see as a threat (Harkin, 2014). Rather than undermining cooperation, perceived threats to social order

may *motivate* people to provide assistance to an institution they feel stands between themselves and the risk of harm (c.f. Kääriäinen & Sirén 2011). We therefore test in this paper the extent to which broader social concerns are associated with propensities to cooperate with the police, to our knowledge the first time this question has been considered within the context of the procedural justice literature.

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS/HYPOTHESES

Drawing on the discussion above, four hypotheses guide the current study:

H1: Those who perceive the police to be procedurally just will have a greater propensity to cooperate.

H2: Those who perceive the police to be effective will have a greater propensity to cooperate.

H3: Those who perceive a situation of general social or moral decline will similarly profess a greater propensity to cooperate with police, since they turn to police to reproduce/reinforce social norms.

H4: Perceptions of the local area – about disorder, social cohesion, and collective efficacy – will equally be associated with differences in propensity to cooperate. This is a two-part hypothesis. Perceptions of disorder and a decline in social cohesion may be linked with lower propensities to cooperate with the police because police lose public support when local order seems fragile or undermined (H4a); but, on the other hand, in as much as perceptions of disorder and of declining cohesion and efficacy are expressive of the same underlying concerns as ‘moral decline,’ they could be associated with a *greater* likelihood to cooperate (H4b).

## DATA AND METHODOLOGY

The 2008 ‘Safer Neighbourhoods Survey’ (SNS) was commissioned by the London Metropolitan Police Service, with respondents drawn from a random sample representative of residents (aged 16 and over) of seven electoral wards in London.<sup>1</sup> A total of 2,836 face-to-face interviews were carried out between the 1<sup>st</sup> of May and the 31<sup>st</sup> of July 2008, with topics covering public trust in the

1. The seven areas were chosen to represent a diverse cross-section in socio-demographic terms and to be spread throughout London. A three-stage sample selection process was employed within each ward, entailing: random probability sampling of household addresses; the random selection of a dwelling unit in cases where a single address included more than one unit; and the random selection of an adult to be targeted for interview in cases where a household contained more than one adult.



police, perceptions of crime and disorder, attitudes towards and contact with the police, victimization, and the fear of crime.

The structure of the sample is shown in Table 1. While not representative of the population of London, let alone Great Britain, the sample is broadly representative of the areas of London from which it is drawn. It is also worth noting that the SNS sample is considerably more ethnically diverse than a sample drawn from London as whole would be (where the population was estimated to be 60 per cent White British/Irish in July 2007 – Office for National Statistics, 2009).

**TABLE 1. SAMPLE STRUCTURE**

Percentages		Percentages	
<b>Gender</b>		<b>Ethnic group</b>	
Male	44	White British/Irish	46
Female	56	Black African	11
<b>Age</b>		Black Caribbean	8
15–21	8	Indian	8
22–24	6	Pakistani/Bangladeshi	5
25–34	22	Other	22
35–44	20	<b>Car access</b>	
45–54	14	Yes	58
55–64	12	No	42
65–74	9	<b>Recent victim of crime</b>	
75 plus	8	Yes	14
<b>Housing tenure</b>		No	86
Home owner	39	<b>Recent contact with the police</b>	
Social renter	39	No	77
Private renter	17	Yes and satisfactory	15
Other	4	Yes and unsatisfactory	8
<b>Total n (numbers)</b>	2,836		

*Source: London Metropolitan Police Safer Neighbourhoods Survey 2008*

## MEASURES

A number of variables were needed to investigate the issues at hand. To represent the key sets of public opinions required, we estimated a simultaneous confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) model with nine latent constructs and a total

of 44 separate indicators using MPlus (Version 7.1), with the indicators identified as categorical variables. Factor loadings and fit statistics are shown in Table 2, and model fit was adequate. All items used Likert-type response scales.

TABLE 2. KEY MEASURES – CONSTRUCTS AND INDICATORS

Standardized factor loadings from confirmatory factor analysis	
<b>Cooperation with the police:</b> How likely would you be to do the following things?	
Call the police to report a crime occurring in your neighbourhood?	0.88
Help the police to find someone suspected of committing a crime by providing them with information?	0.93
Report dangerous or suspicious activities in your neighbourhood to the police?	0.92
<b>Perception of local collective efficacy</b>	
People in this neighbourhood can be trusted	0.76
People act with courtesy to each other in public space in this area	0.73
You can see from the public space here that people take pride in their environment	0.73
Local people and authorities have control over the public space in this area	0.70
If I sensed trouble whilst in this area, I could get help from people who live here	0.70
The people who live here can be relied upon to call the police if someone is acting suspiciously	0.66
<b>Perception of crime problem:</b> Are these things a problem in this area?	
Burglary	0.74
Mugging, by this I mean being robbed on the street by a person using violence or the threat of violence	0.84
Nonviolent theft, for instance, pick pocketing/bag snatch	0.81
Car crime – stealing cars or from cars	0.76
Rape/other sexual assault	0.74
Racially motivated attacks/ harassment	0.75
Knife crime – people carrying or using knives to threaten or commit violence	0.59
<b>Trust in police effectiveness:</b> How well do the police actually carry out these services?	
Tackle gun crime	0.84
Support victims and witnesses	0.84
Tackle dangerous driving	0.83
Tackle drug dealing and drug use	0.81
Enforcing road legislation to improve traffic flows	0.78
Responds to emergencies promptly	0.78
Provide a visible patrolling presence	0.75

TABLE 2. KEY MEASURES – CONSTRUCTS AND INDICATORS (CONT.)

Standardized factor loadings from confirmatory factor analysis	
<b>Trust in police fairness and community engagement</b>	
They would treat you with respect if you had contact with them for any reason	0.63
The police in this area treat everyone fairly regardless of who they are	0.69
The police in this area are friendly and approachable	0.72
The police in this area are helpful	0.82
They are dealing with the things that matter to people in this community	0.83
They understand the issues that affect this community	0.80
They can be relied on to be there when you need them	0.80
The police in this area listen to the concerns of local people	0.79
<b>Concerns about neighbourhood disorder: Are these things a problem in your area?</b>	
Noisy and/or nuisance neighbours	0.78
Teenagers hanging around in the street	0.79
Drinking in the street	0.75
<b>Worry about crime: How worried are you about:</b>	
Having your home broken into and something stolen	0.70
Being mugged	0.81
Being physically attacked by strangers	0.88
Being insulted or pestered by anybody while in the street or any other public place	0.86
<b>'Interviewer-coded disorder'</b>	
In the immediate area, how common is litter/rubbish?	0.85
In the immediate area, how common is vandalism, graffiti or damage to properties?	0.88
In the immediate area, how common are houses in a poor condition/run down?	0.82
<b>Concerns about moral decline in society</b>	
Young people today don't have enough respect for traditional values	0.71
People who break the law should be given stiffer sentences	0.75
Schools should teach children to obey authority	0.78
<b>Fit statistics</b>	
Chi square	5201
p	<0.005
CLI	0.96
TFI	0.96
RMSEA	0.04
<i>Source: London Metropolitan Police Safer Neighbourhoods Survey 2008</i>	

As would be expected, some of the latent constructs shown in Table 2 had relatively high covariances, which might imply that the separate latent constructs involved were mis-specified and should be combined. However, since the largest such covariance, between ‘perception of the crime problem’ and ‘concerns about neighbourhood disorder’, was .64 and did not therefore exceed the standard ‘cut-off’ point for poor discriminant validity (.80); we retained the nine separate measures in the subsequent analysis. Note that we also include a second measure of disorder derived from the survey *interviewers’* assessments of the condition of the area immediately surrounding the respondents’ addresses – because this can be interpreted as a more ‘objective’ measure of disorder, it provides a contrast to the subjective assessments made by respondents themselves.

Some further discussion of the nature and content of the other key measures is in order. Firstly, we began by measuring trust in police fairness (procedural justice) and trust in police engagement with the community separately (Bradford et al. 2009). Yet, while these can be seen as conceptually distinct, the measures were so highly correlated there was little option other than to treat them as one (or else suffer multicollinearity problems). This in itself is an interesting finding: it suggests that people living in London draw very little distinction between, on the one hand, the fairness with which officers wield their authority, and, on the other, the extent to which the police understand and represent citizens at the group level (see also Jackson et al. 2012).

Similarly, while ideas about community cohesion (‘people in this neighbourhood can be trusted’) and perceptions of informal social control (‘local people and authorities have control over the public space in this area’) are also conceptually distinct, answers to these individual questions (and indeed the distinct latent constructs underlying them) were also so highly correlated that it again made little sense to treat them as separate ‘things.’ One interpretation of this is that when people in these seven London wards thought about how cohesive their communities were, they did so in a way that heavily implicated assessments of the extent of informal (and formal) social control and efficacy. We can therefore treat this combined indicator as a measure of collective efficacy, since it reflects both respondents’ trust in those around them and, in a closely related way, their sense that other people are willing to intervene on behalf of the public good (Sampson, 2012; Sampson et al., 1997).

The measure of moral decline is central to the analysis, and the focus here is on behaviours of young people, punitiveness, and the role of schools in teaching respect of authority. While we label this measure moral decline, this is a quite particular type of morality (indeed, one could treat these items as indicative of a particular, authoritarian ideology). It is concerned mainly with order, authority, and what should happen to those who defy it. Unlike many of the other variables included in the analysis, these measures do not access ‘local’ concerns; they are, implicitly at least, directed to the national level.

Finally, the slightly ambiguous nature of the ‘cooperation with police’ questions should be recognized. The wording of the preamble – ‘How likely would you be to do the following things’ – is such that some respondents might interpret it to mean, ‘How likely is it that the following things might happen about which you might have to do something.’ Answers could then be predicated, in part, on ideas about the level of crime and disorder in respondent’s local areas. This does not seem to be an excessive risk, however, as we have measured respondent perceptions of the extent of crime in their neighbourhoods, and the extent to which they worry about crime. We use these as control variables to partial out (to some extent) the perceived need for the police, thus honing in on the propensity to cooperate as opposed to the need to cooperate. Controlling for interview-coded disorder also means that respondents’ ideas about local disorder can more firmly be related to the underlying themes of moral and social change that are central to the current argument.

### ANALYSIS STRATEGY

We estimated fixed effects linear regression models (controlling for electoral ward) predicting the cooperation variable, using Stata 12.1.<sup>2</sup> To operationalize the latent variables described above, we extracted the factor scores from the CFA model and imported these into Stata. Included as covariates in the regression models were a range of control variables: gender, age, ethnicity, car access, housing tenure, crime victimization, contact with the police and the two measures of ‘crime concern’. This analysis approach allows us to model, in an easily interpretable manner, the extent to which cooperation with the police is shaped not only by people’s perceptions of and relations with police but also by their relationships with others in their social environment.

TABLE 3: CORRELATION MATRIX FOR KEY EXPLANATORY VARIABLES

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Cooperation (1)	1								
Police procedural justice and community engagement (2)	0.26	1							
Police effectiveness (3)	0.18	0.57	1						
Crime problems (4)	-0.03	-0.36	-0.25	1					
Worry about crime (5)	0.16	-0.20	-0.17	0.67	1				
Community cohesion and collective efficacy (6)	0.19	0.44	0.30	-0.52	-0.42	1			
Interviewer coded disorder (7)	0.01	-0.15	-0.18	0.31	0.25	-0.44	1		
Respondent perceived disorder (8)	0.11	-0.32	-0.23	0.75	0.58	-0.54	0.40	1	
Perception of moral decline (9)	0.50	0.03	-0.03	0.17	0.34	-0.14	0.17	0.32	1

\* =  $p < 0.05$ ; \*\* =  $p < 0.01$ ; \*\*\* =  $p < 0.001$   
 All variables coded such that high = more (trust, worry, disorder, greater moral decline etc.).  
 Source: London Metropolitan Police Safer Neighbourhoods Survey 2008

2. The small number of wards in the sample (seven) precluded the use of multi-level modeling.

## DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS AND BIVARIATE CORRELATIONS

Table 3 shows that there were weak to moderate correlations between all the potential explanatory variables and the ‘cooperation’ response variable, with only two exceptions: perceptions of the local crime problem, and interviewer-coded (‘objective’) disorder. Strikingly, the variable most highly correlated with cooperation was perception of moral decline; next, and some way behind in terms of predictive power, came trust in police fairness and community engagement.

## RESULTS

Results from three regression models predicting the cooperation measure are shown in Table 4. Model 1 contains only control variables; Model 2 adds the measures of neighbourhood and social concerns; and Model 3 adds the trust measures. This modelling strategy allows us to investigate whether the statistical effects of the neighbourhood and social concern measures on cooperation are mediated by trust in the police.

**TABLE 4: LINEAR REGRESSION PREDICTING STATED PROPENSITIES TO ASSIST THE POLICE (HIGH SCORES = GREATER PROPENSITY).**

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	$\beta$	se( $\beta$ )	$\beta$	se( $\beta$ )	$\beta$	se( $\beta$ )
(Constant)	-0.07	0.05	-0.02	0.05	-0.04	0.04
<b>Gender</b> (ref: male)						
Female	-0.02	0.03	0	0.02	-0.01	0.02
<b>Age</b> (ref: 75 and over)						
15–21	-0.02	0.07	0.11*	0.06	0.13*	0.05
22–24	0.04	0.07	0.11	0.06	0.15*	0.06
25–34	0.08	0.06	0.11*	0.05	0.12**	0.05
35–44	0.13*	0.05	0.13**	0.05	0.15**	0.05
45–54	0.08	0.06	0.08	0.05	0.11*	0.05
55–64	0.11	0.06	0.06	0.05	0.08	0.05
65–74	0.14*	0.06	0.06	0.05	0.06	0.05
<b>Ethnic group</b> (ref: White British/Irish)						
Black African	-0.06	0.05	-0.09*	0.04	-0.11**	0.04
Black Caribbean	-0.06	0.05	-0.05	0.04	-0.03	0.04
Indian	0.07	0.06	-0.03	0.05	-0.03	0.05
Pakistani/Bangladeshi	-0.1	0.06	-0.16**	0.05	-0.17***	0.05
Other	-0.01	0.04	-0.02	0.03	-0.03	0.03

**TABLE 4: LINEAR REGRESSION PREDICTING STATED PROPENSITIES TO ASSIST THE POLICE (HIGH SCORES = GREATER PROPENSITY). (CONT.)**

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	$\beta$	se( $\beta$ )	$\beta$	se( $\beta$ )	$\beta$	se( $\beta$ )
<b>Car access</b> (ref: no)						
Yes	0.09**	0.03	0.06*	0.02	0.06**	0.02
<b>Tenure</b> (ref: Home owner/other)						
Social renter	-0.06*	0.03	-0.10***	0.03	-0.11***	0.03
Private renter	-0.07	0.04	-0.05	0.03	-0.06	0.03
<b>Victim of crime</b> (ref: no)						
Yes	-0.13**	0.05	-0.10*	0.04	-0.09*	0.04
<b>Contact with the police</b> (ref: none)						
Satisfactory contact	0.19***	0.04	0.11**	0.04	0.08*	0.03
Unsatisfactory contact <sup>1</sup>	-0.04	0.05	-0.06	0.05	0.02	0.04
<b>Interviewer coded disorder</b> <sup>2</sup>						
	0.02	0.02	0.03	0.02	0.03	0.02
<b>Crime problems</b> <sup>2</sup>						
	-0.30***	0.03	-0.21***	0.03	-0.18***	0.03
<b>Worry about crime</b> <sub>2</sub>						
	0.38***	0.03	0.18***	0.03	0.17***	0.02
<b>Disorder</b> <sup>2</sup>						
			0.18***	0.03	0.19***	0.03
<b>Social cohesion and collective efficacy</b> <sup>2</sup>						
			0.32***	0.02	0.25***	0.02
<b>Perception of moral decline</b> <sup>2</sup>						
			0.60***	0.02	0.58***	0.02
<b>Procedural justice and community engagement</b> <sup>2</sup>						
					0.14***	0.02
<b>Police effectiveness</b> <sup>2</sup>						
					0.09***	0.02
<b>R<sup>2</sup></b>						
	0.09		0.37		0.39	
<i>n</i> = 2,836						
* = $p < 0.05$ ; ** = $p < 0.01$ ; *** = $p < 0.001$						
<sup>1</sup> includes 'neither' and 'don't know'.						
<sup>2</sup> Coded such that high = more (trust, worry, disorder, greater moral decline etc.).						
Source: London Metropolitan Police Safer Neighbourhoods Survey 2008						

Model 2 in Table 4 shows a strongly significant positive association between perception of moral decline and stated propensity to cooperate with the police – on average, the more a respondent perceived the general moral order to be under threat the more ready they were to say they would cooperate with and support the police. Perceptions of both disorder and collective efficacy likewise had significant associations with the response variable, but the effects appear somewhat contradictory. Controlling for all other variables, those who perceived a greater level of disorder in their local area were slightly more

likely to say they would cooperate with the police. But those who saw higher levels of collective efficacy (likely to be linked to *lower* perceived disorder – see Table 2 above) were also more likely to report an intention to cooperate; and this was by some margin the larger statistical effect. One way to interpret these findings is that people who felt they lived in areas with *lower* levels of collective efficacy were less likely to call on and offer assistance to the police – because they felt less secure and empowered than others, for example, or because they felt the people around them would not do the same. And yet, at a given level of perceived cohesion, those who felt their area was more disordered were more likely to cooperate with the police (perhaps because they felt a need to reassert order in the face of local decline).<sup>3</sup>

Model 3 added perceptions of the police. Trust in police-community engagement and fairness had a strongly significant positive association with the response variable, as did trust in police effectiveness. Interestingly, adding the trust measures to the model had relatively little impact on the coefficients of the other variables of interest. The coefficients for disorder and moral decline were essentially unchanged in Model 3 compared with Model 2, although that for collective efficacy did diminish in size somewhat (from .32 to .25, i.e. somewhat less than 20 per cent). This suggests that while some the statistical effect of collective efficacy on cooperation may be mediated by trust – people who experience their neighbourhoods as more cohesive and efficacious tend to trust the police more (Bradford & Myhill, 2015; Jackson & Bradford, 2009; Jackson et al., 2012), and are therefore more likely to say they would cooperate – the associations between perceptions of disorder and moral decline on the one hand, and cooperation, on the other, were largely *independent* of trust in police.

Turning to the control variables, satisfactory contact with police had a positive statistical effect on trust, while unsatisfactory contact had no significant impact (this runs counter to the expectation of negative asymmetry in the effect of personal experience of the police – Skogan, 2006 – and might be considered to be something of an unusual finding in the context of the wider police contact literature). Having been a recent victim of crime was associated with less readiness to provide assistance to the police, but the two variables representing respondents' ideas about crime had seemingly contradictory relationships with cooperation. Perceiving more crime in the local area was associated with a *lower* propensity to cooperate. Those respondents who saw more crime around themselves were not more likely to say they would contact and assist the police (which would have implied that they answered the cooperation questions on

3. Further analysis supported this idea. We estimated models identical to that shown in Table 4 from which disorder and then collective efficacy were each removed. These demonstrated that without disorder, collective efficacy concerns retained a strong negative association with cooperation. However, without collective efficacy, the coefficient for disorder lost its statistical significance – it was only at a given (fixed) level of perceived collective efficacy that greater perceived disorder was associated with a greater propensity to cooperate with the police.



the basis of the perceived likelihood of need). Yet, controlling for assessments of crime levels and the other explanatory variables included in Model 1, higher *worry* about crime was associated with greater cooperation – perhaps because police were seen as a symbolic resource that might provide reassurance and assert order. These results suggest that respondents were indeed answering the cooperation questions in ways amenable to the research design.

## DISCUSSION

In this paper we have drawn together social-psychological and sociological work to provide an empirical assessment of the associations between public trust and cooperation that locates individual's ideas and opinions of the police within their wider social context. Psychologically, we applied aspects of Tyler's procedural justice model (Tyler, 1990, 2006; Tyler et al., 2015; Tyler & Huo, 2002) and assessed the association between trust in police procedural justice and cooperation. Sociologically, we concentrated on concerns about community and narratives of moral decline that may shape such cooperation and provide a broader background against which people experience, and judge, the police. The police, we argue, are both held accountable for such problems (as representatives of nation, state and/or community they are held responsible for low cohesion and moral consensus) and invoked by the public through their calls and assistance, in order to defend and reinstate cohesion and moral consensus.

There are three main findings. First, as proposed by Hypotheses one 1 and 2, high trust in police procedural justice and to a somewhat lesser extent effectiveness was positively associated with a greater propensity to cooperate with the police. Second, in findings that confirmed and also extended Hypothesis 3, perceptions of high social threat (not only beliefs in the decline of morality and authority in society, but also worry about crime) were associated with a greater propensity to call upon the police: as, we argue, a resource of social order and control. Third, there was a positive association between cooperation and the belief that local residents were willing to intervene on behalf of the collective good (controlling for worry about crime and concerns about the extent of the crime problem, helping to hold constant the perceived need to call the police). Yet, controlling for other factors, high levels of concern about disorder were *also* linked to a somewhat greater readiness to cooperate. This can perhaps be interpreted in light of the proposed link between social threat and cooperation. Perceived disorder may act as a visual cue for more serious problems and prompt increased willingness to cooperate. Evidence regarding Hypothesis 4 was therefore mixed, with ideas about the local area having differential associations with the cooperation variable.

This study therefore highlights the complex and at times contradictory relationship people have with the police. Our findings support the idea that there are at least two routes toward public cooperation. On the one hand, those who

saw the police as fair and engaged with the community (thus demonstrating that they are group representatives who both communicate high group status to citizens and represent and defend community norms and values) – and those who saw police as more effective – were more likely to offer their assistance. On the other hand, relationships with the police were influenced by ideas and feelings running through the second path, based ultimately, perhaps, on the idea that the moral order of society is in decline and/or under threat. This pathway had diverse implications for cooperative behaviour. Holding opinions of the police constant, those who perceived moral decline were more likely to say they would engage in social control by contacting and cooperating with police, as were those who perceived more disorder in their local environment. By contrast, propensities to cooperate with police were *also* enhanced when social cohesion and collective efficacy seemed stronger. When respondents felt that others in their area were trustworthy and would support them and work together, then they were more willing to cooperate with the police; but if they felt their neighbours were untrustworthy and unsupportive they tended to withdraw from such cooperation.

The limits of the present study must be recognized. Most importantly, we were unable to predict actual acts of cooperation, but rather stated propensity to cooperate. Saying one will cooperate may be easy, and more socially acceptable, than the alternative – actually doing so may be more difficult. But while it is clearly optimal to capture both in a given study, it is still valuable to examine stated propensities. Arguably, survey responses indicating a readiness to cooperate with the police not only capture people's intentions but may in themselves express recognition of a particular role for police in terms of the need for social ordering and the way this should be achieved, and thus tap into the underlying symbolism of police and the implications for police-public relationships. A second limitation of this study is that it is cross-sectional in design. We cannot know whether the direction of the paths traced here are as formulated or whether, for example, there are feedback loops at various levels. Future studies using panel data would be a welcome addition to work on this topic.

## CONCLUSIONS

This paper appears in a volume largely dedicated to Scandinavian perspectives on policing. It is appropriate, then, to reflect on the implications of our findings for public relations with police in cohesive, high trust societies, which is of course how most Scandinavian societies are perceived. We found that cooperation with the police was higher among individuals who viewed a strong collective will in their neighbourhood to regulate behaviour in public space and defend civil norms and values, and that police garner cooperation from (perceptions of) community-level processes. It seems that cooperation between police and public cannot easily be separated out from other forms of social collaboration, and the mutually reinforcing effects of different forms of social and

institutional trust are highlighted by our results. To the extent that public cooperation with police is influenced by citizens' relationships with each other, we would expect police in high-trust societies to garner public support as a result. Indeed, there seems to be a strong potential for positive and negative feedback loops here. When informal processes of social control were felt to be strong, people's readiness to invoke formal agents of social control also tended to be higher – potentially making the job of those agents easier and further enhancing the abilities of residents and authorities local areas to regulate crime and disorder. Conversely, those living in what they felt to be less cohesive neighbourhoods tended to be less likely to say they would cooperate with police, thus, possibly, further undermining what was already a fragile state of affairs as the work of formal social control agents was made more difficult by a lack of public support.

Yet propensity to cooperate was also higher among individuals who saw threats to their safety and to moral values in society: people saw a need for the police in terms of both future uncertain harm and the loss of broader moral authority. The idea that the police are 'prototypical group representatives', associated at a fundamental level with the existing social order and its reproduction over time, is supported by the data described above. One implication of our findings is that the position of the police as a monopolistic force within the wider field of social ordering *pushes people toward acts of cooperation*. Those who wish to assert order and stave off social threat are motivated to cooperate *with* police independently of their assessments *of* police. This is in many ways a troubling finding. It suggests the police power to intervene in citizens' lives and assert particular forms of social order is mandated, at least by some of those citizens, by a subjective need for order and a desire to control those seen to be marginal, challenging or threatening to that order. And this set of motives for cooperation seems to be independent of their judgements of police fairness and effectiveness.

The relationships people imagine they have with each other can, then, influence their willingness to invoke and cooperate with police, who garner public support from social processes and 'structures of feeling' (Williams, 1964), apparently quite removed from the quotidian activity of officers; most pertinently, a general sense that established moral values are under threat. Yet, people's relationships with the police remain important. As with other research (e.g. Tyler & Jackson, 2014), we found that public cooperation was higher among individuals with higher levels of trust in the police. Procedural justice concerns and assessments of police effectiveness were predictors of cooperation, thus opening up the space for more critical evaluations of police. Although calling the police may stem from a perceived need to assert and maintain order, what subsequently transpires likely reflects back onto future propensities to cooperate. If officers are found to act in an unfair or unjust manner, if they fail to communicate shared group membership to those with whom they have contact, then propensities to support or cooperate in the future may suffer. Extant social structures and processes may predispose people toward

cooperating with the police, but they do not determine such a view, and the onus remains on the police to ensure it is worthy of the public's help and assistance.

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