

YOUTH PERCEPTIONS OF THE POLICE IN TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO*

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This study details young adult's perceptions of the police in Trinidad and Tobago. Data come from the 2006 Trinidad and Tobago Youth Survey (N=2,376), which examined attitudes toward the police, self-reported delinquency and gang involvement, neighborhood and family characteristics, and other attitudes and behaviors. We first explore young people's views of the police across a variety of domains, and then examine the correlates of youth perceptions of police fairness, responsiveness, use of force, and overall satisfaction using multivariate analyses. We compare and contrast our findings with studies conducted with adolescents in the United States and other nations, and discuss the implications of the results for policing in Trinidad and Tobago.

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Introduction

Effectively policing a democracy requires the cooperation and involvement of its citizens. In the absence of citizen cooperation, policing either devolves into the oppressive style often seen in dictatorships or the police retreat from interactions with the populace and become ineffective agents of social control. Two streams of recent criminal justice scholarship support the view that cooperation between the police and the public is crucial for effective policing in democracies.

The first source of support comes from the scholars of legal legitimacy and public respect for the law, criminal justice, and the police. Tyler and his colleagues (Sunshine & Tyler, 2003; Tyler & Huo, 2002; Tyler, 2006) have found that people are more likely to comply with the law and to assist police if they view the police and the law as legitimate. Legitimacy, according to these scholars, is rooted in procedural justice. To the extent that police officers treat citizens with respect and handle matters in a fair manner, they will be viewed as legitimate. A closely related stream of scholarship has investigated the *defiance hypothesis*, which posits that citizens who experience interactions with the criminal justice system which they view as unfair are more likely to reoffend in the future (Paternoster, Brame, Bachman, & Sherman, 1997; Sherman, 1993).

The second source of support for the importance of public opinion concerning the criminal justice system comes from a loose grouping of scholarship called "citizens as coproducers of police productivity." This co-producer viewpoint is based on observations that police in democracies tend to be reactive and rely heavily upon

information and cooperation from citizens in order to be effective at crime control (Skogan & Antunes, 1979). In the United States, for example, the majority (between 60 and 87 percent) of interactions between police officers and citizens are initiated by citizens (Reiss, 1971; Parks, Mastrofski, Dejong, & Gray 1999). Police effectiveness is hampered when citizens do not report crime. For instance, approximately 60 percent of violent crime victims in the United States do not report their victimization to the police (Pastore & Maguire, 2003, p. 209). It is difficult for the police to investigate crimes which they know nothing about.

Given the importance of citizen involvement for effective policing, scholars have long investigated public perceptions of the police. The majority of the academic research on this topic has examined the views of adults, and much of it has been conducted in Western democracies where people generally hold favorable views of the police and perceive them to be effective. It is important that research on citizen attitudes toward the police is expanded to include different groups and numerous contexts, so that theories and findings can be compared cross-culturally.

The present study adds to our body of knowledge in two ways. First, we examine youth attitudes toward the police. Investigating the views of young adults is a necessary step for developing a more comprehensive understanding of how the public views the police. Given their high offending rates, young people are likely to have contact

with police, and the attitudes they form in adolescence will have a lifelong impact. Second, the data for this study come from Trinidad and Tobago, a developing nation that has faced an epidemic increase in violent crime in recent years, and where the police are often viewed as corrupt, aggressive, and ineffective (MORI International, 2003; 2005). The results of this research have important implications for the future of police-citizen relationships in Trinidad and Tobago.

Background

Youth Attitudes Toward The Police

Although research has investigated young people's attitudes about the police in the United States since the pioneering work of W.E.B. DuBois in 1904 (Hurst & Frank, 2000), the literature on youth attitudes has expanded greatly since the 1960s. Some of this research examines attitudes toward legal institutions or legal authority (combining police and the courts together) (e.g. Clark & Wenninger, 1964), while other studies investigate attitudes toward the police more specifically. The latter set of research studies is further divided into two groups: those which focus on general or diffuse attitudes toward police (such as overall satisfaction with, or support for, the police), often measured with scales that combine numerous items tapping perceptions of police behaviors, activities, and effectiveness (e.g., Griffiths & Winfree, 1982; Hurst, McDermott, & Thomas, 2005; Taylor et al., 2001), and those that focus on specific topics, such as procedural justice and legitimacy (e.g. Fagan & Tyler, 2005; Hinds, 2007; Piquero et al., 2005), perceived interactions with police (Brandt & Marcus, 2000), or trust in police (Lacks & Gordon, 2005).

Overall, studies find that young people report less favorable attitudes towards the police than do adults. Indeed, prior studies in the United States indicate that about 40 percent of youth feel favorably about the police (Taylor et al., 2001), whereas adult favorable approval rates run between 60 and 80 percent (see Hurst and Frank (2000) for a review). In order to understand the formation of youth attitudes toward the police, researchers have generally investigated three classes of variables: individual level attributes; individual level experiences; and community and contextual level variables.

We briefly discuss each of these groups of independent variables below, although we caution the reader that some analyses do not subject their variables to multivariate analysis and there are issues with the differential operationalization of the dependent variables, as noted above.

Individual Level Attributes

Individual level variables include attributes of the adolescents themselves, such as race/ethnicity, gender, age, education, and income level. Research on attitudes towards the police in the United States demonstrates that race is one of the strongest predictors of young people's views and that the dimensionality of police attitudes also varies by the racial/ethnic background of youth (Sullivan, Dunham, & Alpert, 1987).

Studies show that black youth report the least favorable attitudes towards the police (Fine, Freudenbergr, Payne, Perkins, Smith, & Wanzer, 2003; Geistman & Smith, 2007; Hurst & Frank, 2000; Leiber, Nalla, & Farnworth, 1998; Rusinko, Johnson, & Hornung, 1978; Sharp & Atherton, 2007; Taylor, Turner, Esbensen, & Winfree, 2001), while white youth report the most favorable attitudes towards the police (Fine et al., 2003). This pattern also holds true for black girls, as compared to white girls (Hurst, McDermott, & Thomas, 2005). Latinos, when studied, generally report attitudes towards the police between those of blacks and whites (Taylor et al., 2001).

Similarly, a study comparing white and Native American students found that Native American youth had less favorable attitudes toward the police (Cockerham & Forslund, 1975). Taylor et al. (2001) found that the attitudes of Asian youth are similar to those of white youth, while the attitudes of Native American young people mirror those of Hispanic youth. These findings concerning youth and ethnicity are generally replicated with adults in the United States (Hurst & Frank, 2000; Webb & Marshall, 1995), although some studies find that race differences disappear when other variables are held constant (such as Hurst, Frank, & Browning, 2000).

Researchers have also studied the influence of gender and age on adolescent attitudes towards the police. Most studies either find no difference between male and female youth (Clark & Weninger, 1964; Cockerham & Forslund, 1975; Fine et al., 2003; Geistman & Smith, 2007; Winfree & Griffiths, 1977), or find that girls rate the police more favorably than do boys (Brandt & Marcus, 2000; Fine et al., 2003; Hurst et al., 2000; Taylor et al., 2001). Hurst and

Frank (2000) however, found that female high school students reported less favorable attitudes towards the police even when other variables were controlled.

In addition to gender, Hurst et al. (2000) and Hurst et al. (2005) found that older adolescents, and older girls, rate the police more favorably than do younger adolescents and younger girls, respectively. Smith and Hawkins (1973) found that younger whites held more negative views of the police than did older whites, while age did not have a significant effect on the police attitudes of blacks. Finally, although income and education have been shown to predict adult attitudes toward the police, studies of juveniles have not focused on these variables.

Individual Level Experiences

Contact with police, victimization, and delinquency also influence adolescents' attitudes toward the police. Researchers have investigated how young people's interactions with police influence their attitudes towards the police. Griffiths and Winfree (1982) found that contact with the police (both positive and negative) was among the most important variables predicting attitudes toward the police among American and Canadian youth. Generally, juveniles reporting that they experienced a positive interaction with a police officer reported more favorable attitudes (Hurst & Frank, 2000; Hurst et al., 2005; Rusinko, Johnson, & Hornung, 1978). Conversely, youth who experienced a negative contact with a police officer (such as being arrested or detained), and youth reporting

that they experienced a negative interaction with a police officer expressed negative attitudes towards the police (Brandt & Marcus, 2000; Geistman & Smith, 2007; Hurst & Frank, 2000; Hurst et al., 2005; Leiber et al., 1998; Rusinko et al., 1978), although one study found that contact had no effect (Giordano, 1976). Personal and vicarious experiences of racial discrimination, harassment, and misconduct may be one reason that minority young people in the United States and England have more negative attitudes toward police than other groups (Brunson, 2007; Brunson & Miller, 2006; Fine et al., 2003; Sharp & Atherton, 2007).

Indeed, studies examining police legitimacy find that the quality of the interaction between the police and young people is important. Perceived police legitimacy is linked to procedural justice: perceived legitimacy increases when young people believe the police treat them with respect and fairness (Fagan & Tyler, 2005; Hinds, 2007; Piquero et al., 2005). Similarly, Guarino-Ghezzi and Carr (1996) argued that negative attitudes toward the police among youth in Boston were rooted in the belief that the police make decisions and enforce the law inconsistently and unfairly. Jones-Brown (2000) also noted that the quality of the interaction between police and young black men is an important component of their attitudes toward police.

Young people appear to develop attitudes vicariously about the police in the absence of direct contact, and these vicarious experiences influence their views of the police. For instance, juveniles reporting that they heard about improper police behavior experienced by someone else were less likely to hold favorable opinions about the police (Hurst et al., 2000; Hurst & Frank, 2000). In a study of girls, vicarious exposure to police misconduct was the

strongest predictor of attitudes toward police in a multivariate analysis (Hurst et al., 2005). Victimization has also been shown to influence the attitudes of juveniles toward the police. Studies show that young people who had been victimized reported less favorable opinions of the police (Geistman & Smith, 2007; Hurst & Frank, 2000; Hurst et al., 2000), though one study on young girls found no significant effect (Hurst et al., 2005).

In addition to contact and victimization, studies indicate that delinquency is also an important predictor of youth attitudes toward the police. Past research shows that young people who are involved in delinquency or who express delinquent attitudes hold less favorable attitudes toward the police, specifically (Cox & Falkenberg, 1987; Leiber, Nalla, & Farnworth, 1998; Levy, 2001; Rusinko et al., 1978), and toward legal institutions more generally (Clark & Wenninger, 1964). Moreover, Geistman and Smith (2007) found that acceptance of drugs and personal drug use were the strongest predictors of youth attitudes toward police in their multivariate analyses.

Community/Contextual Factors

Community and contextual factors, such as the socioeconomic status of the community, neighborhood crime rates, or community demographics, may also affect young people's attitudes toward the police. Janeksela (1999) cited two unpublished studies that found youth from lower socioeconomic backgrounds had more negative views of the police than young people from

higher socioeconomic strata. Hurst and Frank (2000) found that youth who thought their community crime rate was greater than other communities rated the police less favorably, as did youth in urban (as opposed to rural) schools. In contrast, Griffiths and Winfree (1982) found that neither socioeconomic status nor urban residence had much of an influence on the police attitudes of American and Canadian youth. Finally, in an exploratory study of youth living in high crime, low income communities, Lacks and Gordon (2005) found that young black boys and girls reported greater respect for and confidence in the police than has been found in studies of adults in similar neighborhoods (a finding that is inconsistent with the past studies on age and police attitudes noted above).

As this review of the research demonstrates, the body of knowledge about youth attitudes toward the police is small, but growing. However, much of the research is limited to examining the views of youth in Western, developed countries where public attitudes toward the police are generally positive. This study extends the literature by examining the views of young people in Trinidad and Tobago, a developing nation where the public generally lacks confidence in the police. Given the dearth of previous research in this setting, the present research is primarily descriptive and exploratory.

Research Setting and Methods

The Republic of Trinidad and Tobago is a two-island nation located in the eastern Caribbean, about seven miles off the northeast coast of Venezuela. Although Trinidad and Tobago obtained its independence from Great Britain in 1962, it remains a member of the Commonwealth of

Nations (a voluntary association consisting largely of former British colonies) and the British influence is evident in many sectors. The country's official language is English and its legal system is modeled after English common law.

As Harriott (2000) notes, many of the constabularies in the ex-colonial nations in the Caribbean have struggled to maintain the confidence of the public, and Trinidad and Tobago is no exception. Indeed, Trinidad and Tobago has experienced an epidemic increase in violent crime since 2000, and the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service (TTPS) has faced serious public image problems as a result. Surveys of the general public reveal that the TTPS is viewed as ineffective, corrupt, and brutal (MORI International 2003; 2005).

Survey Questionnaire

Data for this study come from the 2006 Trinidad and Tobago Youth Survey (TTYS), which was modeled after the 2006 Arizona Youth Survey (AYS) and designed to collect reliable and valid information on substance abuse, anti-social behavior, and risk and protective factors among youth.¹ Although Trinidad and Tobago is an English-

¹ Many of the questions contained within the TTYS were originally developed by the Social Development Research Group at the University of Washington in the United States. The questions were later refined through the Diffusion Consortium Project, which involved seven states, the National Institute of Drug Abuse (NIDA), the Safe and Drug Free Schools Program, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, and the Center for Substance Abuse Prevention. The survey is currently being used as the core instrument for the U.S. *Monitoring the Future* survey (Arizona Criminal Justice Commission, 2006).

speaking nation, important differences in language and culture were taken into account during instrument development; officials from Trinidad and Tobago's Ministry of Education assisted in modifying the AYS to reflect local language and culture. The final survey instrument contained 222 survey items designed to measure sixteen risk factors and thirteen protective factors falling within four domains: community, school, family, and peer/individual. The instrument also included a series of questions measuring attitudes toward the police, as well as questions tapping alcohol use, drug use (including marijuana and cocaine), and delinquent behavior (including gang involvement, gun use, gambling, theft, and fighting).

Survey Participants

The target population for the Trinidad and Tobago Youth Survey was defined as all public secondary students who attended one of the nation's five largest school districts and were enrolled in forms three and five (roughly the equivalent of the eighth and tenth grades in the United States). According to the Ministry of Education, 67 schools met the criteria, but 19 were ineligible because of a concurrent education-based research project being administered by a local university. Of the 48 eligible schools, 22 (46%) agreed to participate in this research project.²

² Thus, the sample covers 62.5 percent (5 of 8) of the public school districts and 23.7 percent (22 of 93) of the public secondary schools in Trinidad and Tobago. Surveys were collected from schools in the following districts: Port-of-Spain and the surrounding environs (10 of 15 schools), St. George East (3 of 15), Northeastern Division (2 of 10), Caroni (5 of 13), and Victoria (2 of 14). The school-level response rate was fairly typical by international standards, and was moderately high compared with other studies conducted in developing nations (Bulmer, 1993; Gfroere et al., 1997; Kellerman et al., 2003; Prais, 2003; Wild et al., 2003).

The TTYS was administered to 2,552 students during their homeroom period between March and June 2006.³ The survey took approximately 30-50 minutes for students to complete. A number of the 2,552 surveys were excluded from the following analyses because of missing data or concerns about the validity of self-report data. At the end of the survey, all respondents were asked: "How honest were you in filling out this survey?" If the respondent did not answer the question or indicated "I was not honest at all" his or her responses were not included in the analyses reported here. Similarly, if a respondent admitted to using the non-existent drug phenoxydine, or failed to answer a single question on the instrument, his or her survey was also excluded. After removing these cases, 2,376 surveys remained in the dataset and were used for the present study.

A profile of the 2,376 students is shown in Table 1. The students ranged in age from 13 to 18 with a mean age of 15.35. Nearly 60 percent were female. About 41 percent of

³ One limitation of this study is that only about 36 percent of eligible students took the survey (those interested in obtaining information on the number of respondents by school can contact the third author). As a comparison, similar school based studies in the United States had response rates of 40-70 percent (Beyers *et al.*, 2004). Determining the accuracy of the response rate is very difficult, however. Indeed, several inquiries were made about enrollment and absenteeism in participating schools for the purposes of calculating a response rate. Several officials in the Ministry of Education stated that such data were not routinely collected and that the enrollment data that were available were not accurate. School officials estimated that 5-10 percent of students are absent from school on any given day. The Education Ministry officials explained that those who skip school most often are also those who are involved in the most delinquency. Thus, the findings in this study only reflect the perspectives of those students who were present in their homeroom on the day the survey was administered, and may not be generalizable to all youth in Trinidad and Tobago.

the respondents were African and 23.7 percent were East Indian (compared with national population figures of 37.5 percent African and 40 percent East Indian).⁴ English was the primary language spoken at home for 94.2 percent of the respondents.

Dependent Variables and Coding

Eleven questions in the TTYS measured attitudes toward the police, and are listed in Table 2. Response options for these items ranged from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree" on a four-point scale. Four of the items, measuring perceptions of fairness, responsiveness, use of force, and overall satisfaction, were selected for more detailed multivariate analysis (and are marked as such in Table 2).

Two of these items were chosen because they best represent the concepts that are usually examined in police attitudes research: procedural justice (fairness) and general support for the police (satisfaction). The remaining two items were selected because they represent two issues that are currently very salient in Trinidad and Tobago: responsiveness and use of force. For the multivariate analyses, the response options for these variables were collapsed into "agree" (coded 1) and "disagree" (coded 0) categories and analyzed using logistic regression analysis.

⁴ We lack sufficient data to state with confidence why East Indian students are under-represented in our sample. Local authorities explained to us that the East Indian population is wealthier on average than the African population and therefore more likely to send their children to private schools (which were not included in the sample).

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics

	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD	Percentage%	Alpha
Fairness DV	0	1			36.1 %	
Responsiveness DV	0	1			43.0 %	
Use of force DV	0	1			55.2 %	
Satisfaction DV	0	1			36.8 %	
Age	10	19	15.35	1.09		
Male	0	1			40.3 %	
African	0	1			41.3 %	
East Indian	0	1			23.7 %	
Afro/Indian	0	1			14.9 %	
Other	0	1			20.1 %	
Alcohol use in past 30 days	0	1			34.3 %	
Marijuana use in past 30 days	0	1			4.6%	
Gang involvement	0	1			19.7 %	
Antisocial behavior index	0	7	.17	.47		.79
Attitudes favorable toward antisocial behavior index	1	4	1.41	.50		.75
Academic failure	1	5	2.11	.57		
Low commitment to school	1	5	1.38	.74		
Parental attitudes favorable toward drug use	1	4	1.08	.36		
Parental attitudes favorable toward alcohol	1	4	1.55	.87		
Parental attitudes favorable toward anti-social behavior index	1	4	1.38	.52		.66

Table 1 (continued)

Antisocial peers index	0	4	.742	.59		.67
Drug using peers	0	4	.65	1.26		
Community disorganization index	1	4	1.94	.77		.75

Independent Variables and Coding

Several independent variables were included in the regression models. As suggested by previous research, the models included measures of academic failure, low commitment to school, and attitudes favorable toward antisocial behavior, as well as recent alcohol use, recent marijuana use, antisocial behavior, and gang-involvement. Given the important influence of peers and parents on youth, the models also included measures tapping contact with antisocial peers and peers who use drugs, as well as parental attitudes favorable toward drug use, alcohol use, and antisocial behavior. Basic demographic and background variables were also included. Descriptive statistics for these variables are shown in [Table 1](#) (based on the coding described below); the specific items and original response options are shown in the [Appendix](#).

Academic failure was measured by asking respondents about their grades the previous year. Response options ranged from "mostly 80-100" (coded 1) to "mostly 29 and below" (coded 5). Low commitment to school was measured with the question: How important do you think the things you are learning in school are going to be for your later life? Scores on this variable ranged from "very important" (coded 1) to "not at all important" (coded 5). Dummy variables measured recent alcohol and marijuana

use. Respondents who reported drinking alcohol in the past 30 days were coded 1, those who did not drink alcohol recently were coded 0. Similarly, those who reported marijuana use in the past 30 days were coded 1, while those who did not use the drug recently were coded 0. Gang involvement was also a dummy variable, coded 1 if the respondent reported that s/he was currently in a gang or had been a gang member in the past, and 0 if the respondent had never been in a gang.

The attitudes favorable toward antisocial behavior index was created by averaging the responses to six questions tapping views about the acceptability of behaviors like taking a gun to school, picking a fight with someone, or stealing. Scores on this index ranged from 1 to 4, with higher values indicating more favorable attitudes toward antisocial behavior. The alpha for the index was .75. The antisocial behavior index was created by averaging responses to eight questions which examined the student's actual behavior in the past twelve months (e.g. carrying a handgun, being suspended from school, being arrested, etc). This index ranged from 0 to 7, with higher scores indicating more antisocial behavior. The alpha for the antisocial behavior index was .79.

Peer drug use was measured with the question: Think of your four best friends. In the past year, how many of your best friends have used marijuana? Response options ranged from 0 to 4. The antisocial peers index was created by averaging responses to six items tapping the behavior of the respondent's best friends in the last year. The index

ranged from 0 to 4, with higher scores indicating more antisocial behavior. The alpha for this index was .67.

Parental attitudes toward drug and alcohol use were measured with the following items, respectively: How wrong do your parents feel it would be for you to smoke marijuana? and How wrong do your parents feel it would be for you to drink beer, wine or hard liquor regularly? Response options for each item ranged from "very wrong" (coded 1) to "not wrong at all" (coded 4). The parental attitudes favorable to antisocial behavior index was calculated by averaging responses to three items measuring perceived parental approval for the respondent stealing, drawing graffiti on buildings, and picking a fight with someone. The index ranged from 1 to 4, with higher scores indicating parental attitudes favorable toward antisocial behavior. The alpha for this index was .66.

Basic demographic and background variables included gender (male=1, female=0), age (in years), race/ethnicity (dummy variables for African, Indian (omitted), Afro-Indian and Other Race) and community disorganization. The community disorganization index was calculated by averaging the responses to four questions about the presence of physical and social disorder in the respondent's neighborhood (specifically, crime and/or drug selling, fighting, empty/abandoned buildings, and lots of graffiti). The community disorganization index ranged from 1 to 4, with higher scores indicating more disorganization. The alpha for the index was .75.

Findings

Youth Perceptions of the Police

The distribution of responses to the eleven policing items is shown in Table 2. As these results demonstrate, young people in Trinidad and Tobago were almost evenly divided when asked about the service quality of the TTPS. For example, just under half of respondents (43.2%) believed that the quality of services provided by the police is consistent and predictable (combining the strongly and somewhat agree categories). A slightly larger percentage (54.9%) agreed that the police are easy to contact. However, only one third of respondents (36.1%) believed that it was easy to get the police to come to them when needed. Similarly, only 43.0 percent of young people reported that the TTPS is responsive to the needs of citizens.

Several questions measured perceptions of police treatment and procedural justice. Only 34.6 percent of the youth in Trinidad and Tobago agreed that the police address citizens in a respectful manner and appropriate tone, though slightly more (42.4%) reported that the police show care and concern for the citizens they deal with. However, only one in three young people (36.1%) believe the police are fair and neutral when dealing with citizens. The pattern continues when respondents were asked about police misconduct. Only 39.1 percent of respondents agreed that the police know how to carry out their duties properly, and over half (56.8%) believe the police accept

payments or favors from known criminals. About the same percentage of young people (55.2%) report that the police use too much force with citizens.

In sum, it is clear that young people in Trinidad have a relatively negative view of the police, regardless of whether they are asked about service quality, fairness of treatment, or police misconduct. Considering all the results above, it is perhaps not surprising that only 36.8 percent of respondents agreed that they are satisfied with the services provided by the police. Indeed, most (41.5%) disagreed strongly on this issue. In order to examine the factors that influence youth perceptions of the police, we now turn to multivariate analyses of four of the police items – fairness, responsiveness, use of force, and overall satisfaction.

Multivariate Results

The results of the multivariate analyses appear in [Table 3](#). Four logistic regression models were calculated; one for each of the dependent variables (fairness, responsiveness, use of force, and overall satisfaction), and each model appears as a column in [Table 3](#). The same independent variables were used in each of the four models, and both logistic regression coefficients and odds ratios (e^b) are shown. To ease the interpretation of Table 3, statistically significant variables are marked with an asterisk, and our review below focuses on the significant independent variables.⁵

⁵ The total Ns for the models in Table 3 are lower than the Ns reported for the dependent variables in Table 2 because listwise deletion of missing data was used for the logistic regression analyses. This strategy produced better fitting and more stable models than other strategies for addressing missing data.

Table 2
Youth Perceptions of the Police in Trinidad and Tobago

	Percentage Distribution
The quality of service provided by the TTPS is consistent and predictable.	
Strongly disagree	28.7 %
Somewhat disagree	28.1
Somewhat agree	29.0
Strongly agree	14.2
(N)	(2162)
It's easy to contact the police when I need them	
Strongly disagree	25.6
Somewhat disagree	19.5
Somewhat agree	29.9
Strongly agree	25.0
(N)	(2310)
It's easy to get the police to come to me when I need them	
Strongly disagree	37.9
Somewhat disagree	26.0
Somewhat agree	22.8
Strongly agree	13.3
(N)	(2270)
TTPS constables know how to carry out their official duties properly.	
Strongly disagree	30.9
Somewhat disagree	30.0
Somewhat agree	26.7
Strongly agree	12.4
(N)	(2211)
The TTPS is responsive to the needs of citizens.*	
Strongly disagree	29.0 %
Somewhat disagree	27.9
Somewhat agree	26.7
Strongly agree	16.3
(N)	(2176)

* Dependent variable in the multivariate analyses.

Table 2 (continued)

	Percentage Distribution
TTPS constables are neutral and fair when dealing with citizens.*	
Strongly disagree	34.2
Somewhat disagree	29.7
Somewhat agree	24.3
Strongly agree	11.8
(N)	(2205)
TTPS constables address citizens in a respectful manner and appropriate tone.	
Strongly disagree	36.9
Somewhat disagree	28.4
Somewhat agree	23.3
Strongly agree	11.3
(N)	(2190)
TTPS constables show care and concern for the welfare of the citizens they deal with on the job.	
Strongly disagree	30.3
Somewhat disagree	27.2
Somewhat agree	29.4
Strongly agree	13.0
(N)	(2169)
TTPS constables use too much force with citizens.*	
Strongly disagree	22.0
Somewhat disagree	22.8
Somewhat agree	29.4
Strongly agree	25.8
(N)	(2176)
TTPS constables accept payments or favors from known criminals.	
Strongly disagree	24.7
Somewhat disagree	18.5
Somewhat agree	26.5
Strongly agree	30.3
(N)	(2158)
Overall, I am satisfied with the services provided by the TTPS.*	
Strongly disagree	41.5
Somewhat disagree	21.7
Somewhat agree	22.5
Strongly agree	14.3
(N)	(2226)

* Dependent variable in the multivariate analyses.

Six independent variables (male, African ethnicity, alcohol use in past 30 days, gang involvement, low school commitment and community disorganization) are all significantly related to perceptions of police fairness in the first multivariate model in Table 3. Most of these variables affect perceptions of police fairness as expected. Youth who have used alcohol recently, who have low school commitment, who are involved in gangs, and who are African all perceive the police as less fair. Similarly, youth from communities that are more disorganized perceive the police as less fair than their counterparts in less disorganized communities. The results also show that boys are more likely than girls to perceive the police as fair.

Five independent variables significantly affect perceptions of police responsiveness (Model 2 in Table 3). Older youth, those who have recently used alcohol, youth with a low commitment to school, and those from disorganized communities all rated the police as being less responsive to the needs of citizens. Oddly, adolescents who are facing academic failure rate the police as more responsive to citizen's needs.

Model 3 in Table 3 shows the results for the use of force logistic regression. Three variables predict the perception that the police use too much force with citizens. Youth who have used alcohol in the past 30 days are more likely to report that the police use too much force than young people who have not used alcohol recently. Contrary to expectations, young people who are involved in gangs and

Table 3
Logistic Regression Analysis of Youth Perceptions
of the Police in Trinidad and Tobago

	Fairness			Responsiveness			Use of Force			Satisfaction		
	B	S.E.	OR	B	S.E.	OR	B	S.E.	OR	B	S.E.	OR
Age	-0.091	0.052	0.913	-0.119*	0.050	0.888	-0.011	0.049	0.989	-0.078	0.051	0.925
Male	0.264**	0.108	1.328	0.033	0.104	1.033	-0.008	0.103	0.992	0.254*	0.107	1.290
East Indian (Reference category)												
African	-0.387**	0.135	0.679	-0.005	0.132	0.995	0.152	0.131	1.164	-0.093	0.134	0.911
Afro-Indian	-0.257	0.171	0.774	-0.095	0.166	0.909	0.152	0.165	1.164	-0.061	0.170	0.940
Other	-0.269	0.157	0.764	-0.075	0.152	0.927	0.203	0.151	1.225	-0.165	0.156	0.848
Alcohol use in the past 30 days	-0.303*	0.121	0.739	-0.449**	0.115	0.638	0.234*	0.114	1.264	-0.228	0.119	0.796
Marijuana use in the past 30 days	-0.181	0.316	0.834	0.099	0.288	1.104	0.280	0.285	1.323	-0.179	0.379	0.836
Gang involvement	-0.333*	0.159	0.717	-0.248	0.150	0.780	-0.526**	0.147	0.591	-0.437**	0.159	0.646
Antisocial behavior index	0.007	0.133	1.007	-0.057	0.133	0.945	-0.318*	0.136	0.727	-0.135	0.151	0.874
Attitudes favorable toward antisocial behavior index	-0.162	0.145	0.850	-0.192	0.138	0.825	0.015	0.131	1.015	-0.148	0.143	0.862
Academic failure	0.124	0.098	1.132	0.294**	0.094	1.342	-0.089	0.094	0.915	0.088	0.096	1.092
Low commitment to school	-0.379**	0.083	0.684	-0.392**	0.077	0.675	-0.045	0.070	0.956	-0.446**	0.084	0.640
Parental attitudes favorable toward drug use	-0.022	0.194	0.978	-0.199	0.187	0.820	-0.031	0.173	0.969	-0.189	0.201	0.828
Parental attitudes favorable toward alcohol	-0.062	0.070	0.940	0.050	0.065	1.051	0.082	0.065	1.085	-0.046	0.068	0.955
Parental attitudes favorable toward anti-social behavior index	0.098	0.134	1.102	0.058	0.127	1.060	-0.206	0.124	0.814	0.164	0.131	1.178
Antisocial peers index	0.127	0.115	1.136	0.141	0.108	1.151	0.053	0.108	1.055	0.102	0.113	1.108
Drug using peers	-0.053	0.051	0.949	-0.048	0.048	0.953	0.073	0.047	1.076	-0.063	0.050	0.939
Community disorganization index	-0.342**	0.075	0.710	-0.330**	0.071	0.719	0.102	0.070	1.107	-0.151*	0.073	0.859
N	1753			1791			1734			1769		
Nagelkerke R Square	0.097			0.095			0.032			0.075		

* p< .05, ** p< .01

young people who display antisocial behavior are significantly less likely to believe the police use too much force.

Three independent variables are significantly related to satisfaction with the police, as shown in the fourth model of Table 3. Boys report higher satisfaction levels than girls, while youth who are involved in gangs, who have a low commitment to school, and who live in disorganized communities are all less satisfied with police. With the exception of gender (for which previous studies find mixed results) these effects are in the expected direction.

Discussion

Overall, the four multivariate models in Table 3 reveal two overarching themes about youth attitudes towards the police in Trinidad and Tobago. First, several of the variables found to significantly affect youth attitudes towards the police in Western countries do not significantly affect young people's attitudes towards the police in Trinidad and Tobago. Second, despite the general failure of many of the independent variables to significantly affect youth attitudes, several commonalities emerged across the four multivariate models. We address each theme in turn below as well as the policy recommendations of our findings.

The findings show that several of the variables that were important predictors of youth attitudes toward the police in the U.S. and other countries were not consistently

significant predictors of young people's perceptions of the police in Trinidad and Tobago. For example, although age, gender, and race/ethnicity have been shown to consistently influence attitudes toward the police in many past studies, age and race (African) were each significant predictors in only one of the four regression models, while gender was significant predictor in only two models. At the same time, several of the variables that were important in past studies also emerged as significant predictors of youth attitudes in this study, such as delinquency (including alcohol use, gang-involvement, and antisocial behavior).

Several explanations for the differences across studies are plausible. Perhaps the most straightforward explanation is that context matters - the nature of police-youth relations and the factors that influence young people's attitudes toward the police may be different in Trinidad and Tobago than they are in other countries. However, several methodological explanations may also help explain why the results reported here do not mirror the findings from past studies.

First, our analyses differ from previous research because we have operationalized attitudes towards the police as four distinct attitudes (fairness, responsiveness, use of force, and satisfaction) whereas some prior studies combined such views into one homogeneous variable. Further, we used multivariate analyses which let us control for the simultaneous effects of the other independent variables. In contrast, many prior studies of youth attitudes toward the police have relied only on bivariate analyses. Third, our analyses do not include several variables that past research suggests are important predictors of young people's views of the police, such as

personal or vicarious contact with the police, and victimization. Despite the methodological differences between past research and the present study, the failure of many of the independent variables to significantly and consistently affect attitudes in the multivariate context is notable and suggests that the social forces which influence the police-related attitudes of young adults in Trinidad and Tobago may not be the same as those which influence their counterparts in other countries.

Although some of the variables in the multivariate analyses did not perform as expected, several did have generally consistent significant effects across the models. For example, the findings suggest that youth who use alcohol perceive the police as less fair and less responsive to the needs of citizens, and were more likely to believe that the police use excessive force when dealing with citizens. Similarly, young people who are involved with gangs perceive the police as less fair and are less satisfied with the police than youth who are not involved in gangs. It is plausible that young people who use alcohol or who are involved in gangs have greater contact with the police and these contacts might be slightly aversive, thus leading to their less favorable perceptions of the police.

A clear relationship between a young person's low commitment to school and his/her more negative rating of the police on fairness, responsiveness, and overall satisfaction with the police is also evident. Perhaps youth who have a low commitment to school develop negative attitudes about authority figures (such as teachers) and

these attitudes diffuse to the police. Or perhaps youth who are less committed to school spend more time on the streets and thus have more interactions with police officers. If the latter explanation is correct, we would expect that young people who have dropped out of school (and are therefore not included in our survey) may have even more negative evaluations of the police than were captured in this study.

The community disorganization variable also had a consistent effect across three of the four models, indicating that youth who come from disorganized communities hold less favorable views of the police in terms of fairness, responsiveness, and overall satisfaction than their counterparts in more organized communities. Finally, it is noteworthy that neither the parental attitude variables, nor the peer variables, influence youth perceptions of the police in any of the models.

Conclusions

The results of this research have important implications for the future of policing in Trinidad and Tobago. As discussed previously, public opinion polls show that the general population has a negative assessment of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service. Unfortunately, the results of this study indicate that young people in Trinidad and Tobago also have quite negative perceptions of the police. If these attitudes hold as the youth get older, the TTPS will continue to face a serious public image problem, and continue to have difficulty developing the positive police-community partnerships that are necessary for effective policing.

As this study shows, young people who are committed to school, who stay out of gangs, and who refrain from delinquent behaviors have more positive views of the police. One avenue for improving the relationship between the TTPS and young people might be to develop police/community programs, such as athletic leagues or police-youth clubs (see Leiber et al., 1998). Moreover, the TTPS may be able to improve students' commitment to school while simultaneously improving youth attitudes towards the police by creating programs modeled on School Resource Officers (SRO) or Gang Resistance Education and Training (GREAT) (Esbensen et al., 2001). Both programs post police officers in schools so that students and officers interact informally, as well as during scheduled educational activities which are conducted by the police officers. These educational activities are carefully designed to prevent students from joining gangs, and evaluations indicate that students' attitudes about the police are also improved by these interactions. To the extent that the police can help foster attachment to school or other pro-social activities among the youth of Trinidad, they should reap more positive ratings from the citizens they serve.

Another avenue for improving the relationship between the TTPS and juvenile and adult residents in Trinidad is by developing neighborhood-based community-oriented policing programs. Given the results of this research, developing positive police-citizen partnerships is particularly important in more disorganized communities. Many community policing programs in the U.S. use

problem-oriented policing (POP) strategies to address physical and social disorder in neighborhoods. Incorporating POP strategies that involve police-citizen partnerships to improve conditions in disorganized communities may be another way for the TTPS to improve public perceptions of their organization. To be sure, the importation of any police-school innovations or community-oriented policing strategies from the U.S. would require that they be tailored to reflect cultural differences in Trinidad and Tobago, and officers must be carefully selected for such programs.

Given the exploratory nature of this study, more research on the police-related attitudes of young people in Trinidad and Tobago (as well as other developing countries) is needed. Future studies should examine the dimensionality of youth attitudes toward police and explore additional correlates of these views, including potentially important variables such as positive and negative contact with the police. Moreover, studies should examine the perceptions of adolescents who do not attend school (and may score higher on delinquency measures) as their views and experiences likely differ from the students who were sampled for this study. Finally, future studies should further consider how context matters, and why the views of young people in Trinidad and Tobago may differ from their counterparts in developed nations like the United States or Canada.

APPENDIX
Table A.1 - Items and Index Construction

Question Item	Original Response Options
Alcohol use in past 30 days On how many occasions (if any) have you had beer, wine or hard liquor to drink during the past 30 days?	Never; 1-2; 3-5; 6-9; 10-19; 20-29; 30-39; 40+
Marijuana use in past 30 days On how many occasions (if any) have you used marijuana during the past 30 days?	Never; 1-2; 3-5; 6-9; 10-19; 20-29; 30-39; 40+
Gang involvement Have you ever belonged to a gang?	No; No, but would like to; Yes, in the past; Yes, belong now; Yes, but would like to get out
Antisocial behavior index How many times in the PAST YEAR (12 months) have you: a) Been suspended from school? b) Carried a handgun? c) Sold illegal drugs? d) Stolen or tried to steal a motor vehicle such as a car or motorcycle? e) Been arrested? f) Attacked someone with the intention of seriously hurting them? g) Been drunk or high at school? h) Taken a handgun to school?	Never; 1-2; 3-5; 6-9; 10-19; 20-29; 30-39; 40+ Same as above Same as above Same as above Same as above Same as above Same as above Same as above Same as above
Attitudes favorable toward antisocial behavior index How wrong do you think it is for someone your age to: a) Take a handgun to school? b) Steal anything worth more than \$30? c) Pick a fight with someone? d) Attack someone with the intention of seriously hurting them? e) Stay away from school all day when their parents think they are at school? f) Take a handgun to school?	Very wrong; Wrong; A little bit wrong; Not wrong at all Same as above Same as above Same as above Same as above Same as above Same as above
Academic failure Putting them all together, what were your grades like last year?	Mostly 29 & below; mostly 30-39; mostly 40-59; mostly 60-79; mostly 80-100
Low commitment to school How important do you think the things you are learning in school are going to be for your later life?	Very important; Quite important; Fairly important; Slightly important; Not at all important

APPENDIX

Table A.1 - Items and Index Construction (continued)

Question Item	Original Response Options
Parental attitudes favorable toward drug use	
How wrong do your parents feel it would be for YOU to smoke marijuana?	Very wrong; Wrong; A little bit wrong; Not wrong at all
Parental attitudes favorable toward alcohol use	
How wrong do your parents feel it would be for YOU to drink beer, wine, or hard liquor (for example vodka, whiskey, or gin) regularly?	Very wrong; Wrong; A little bit wrong; Not wrong at all
Parental attitudes favorable toward anti-social behavior index	
How wrong do your parents feel it would be for YOU to steal something worth more than \$30?	Very wrong; Wrong; A little bit wrong; Not wrong at all
How wrong do your parents feel it would be for YOU to draw graffiti, write things, or draw pictures on buildings or other property (without the owner's permission)?	Same as above
How wrong do your parents feel it would be for YOU to pick a fight with someone?	Same as above
Antisocial peers index	
Think of your four best friends (the friends you feel closest to). In the past year (12 months), how many of your best friends have...	
a) Been suspended from school?	0, 1, 2, 3, 4
b) Carried a handgun?	Same as above
c) Sold illegal drugs?	Same as above
d) Stolen or tried to steal a motor vehicle such as a car or motorcycle?	Same as above
e) Been arrested?	Same as above
f) Dropped out of school?	Same as above
Drug using peers	
Think of your four best friends (the friends you feel closest to). In the past year (12 months), how many of your best friends have used marijuana?	0, 1, 2, 3, 4
Community disorganization index	
How much does each of the following statements describe your neighborhood:	NO!, no, yes, YES!
a) Crime and/or drug selling?	Same as above
b) Fights?	Same as above
c) Lots of empty or abandoned buildings?	Same as above
d) Lots of graffiti?	

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