The Citizens' Views on Biased Policing

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Police departments all over the country address the issue of bias-based policing. Because bias-based policing undermines relationships between the police and the public, a considerable amount of research has been conducted to uncover and prevent its occurrence. Past research has focused primarily on assessing the level of bias-based policing that occurs during traffic stops; however, traffic stops are only one of the many ways police interact with the public. To broaden the assessment of bias-based policing, this research project surveyed citizens to determine their perception of bias-based policing practices in police departments, either theirs or others. The results of this research found that 21% of survey respondents believe that officers in their department practice bias-based policing, and 25.9% believe that officers in other Virginia police departments practice bias-based policing.

The issue of bias-based policing/racial profiling continues to be debated. The debate surrounds whether actions police officers take are a response to the race of the individual or the result of diligent police work. Much of the criminal justice system's assessment of the occurrence of racial profiling or bias-based policing focuses on police traffic stops. Too often police departments ignore the issue of bias-based policing or refuse to believe it is a problem until it rears its ugly head through a citizen complaint that captures the media's attention. This study reviews these issues from the perspective of both the officer and the citizens they serve. In this article, we address the citizen's view of bias-based policing.

Most people cannot define what constitutes bias-based policing (Malti-Douglas, 2002; Smith & Alpert, 2002). As we learned through citizen surveys, citizens often perceive officers as rude and confuse rudeness with racial bias. Obviously, the definition of rudeness is open to interpretation. A citizen might perceive an officer who does not engage in friendly chitchat with the citizen as rude when in fact the officer is not rude but simply sticking to business.

Defining bias-based policing practices is a difficult task primarily because there is no single accepted definition of bias-based policing. During our research, the authors were unable to identify a standard definition of racial profiling. Certainly, a police officer's open admission to stopping a Black person for no other reason than he was a Black man walking in an all-White neighborhood is a form of racial profiling. But if the situation was reversed and an officer stopped a White person walking in a Black neighborhood known to be a high drug trafficking area, is that racial profiling or good police work? Because no universally accepted definition of biased policing or racial profiling exists, the authors created the following operational definition for use in this study: *bias-based policing includes practices of individual officers and supervisors, managerial practices, and departmental programs, both intentional and non-intentional, that incorporate judgments based on sex, race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, economic status, religious beliefs, or age that are inappropriately applied*.

Until recently, research conducted on bias-based policing has focused on the review of secondary data, such as traffic citations or perceptions provided by citizens, and the source of this data was traffic stops (Lundman & Kaufman, 2003; Riksheim & Chermak, 1993; Sherman, 1980). Conclusions about the extent of

racial profiling that occurs are based on this traffic stop data. Policing involves much more than traffic stops and has many other opportunities for bias to influence a police officer's judgment and actions. Newspaper columnist Vivian Martin summarizes the issue of bias-based policing quite well: "It's about a lot more than traffic stops; it's about a way of life" (1999, p. A11). The researchers involved in this project believe that attempting to determine the extent of bias-based policing or racial profiling through traffic stop data alone ignores all other areas and their potential for bias-based policing.

In assessing the citizens' view of biased-based policing, we developed a two-pronged approach: questionnaires and focus group interviews. First, we met with focus groups throughout the Commonwealth of Virginia to obtain the citizens' assessment of bias-based policing practices. From these meetings, we developed two separate questionnaires that we administered to both citizens and officers throughout the Commonwealth of Virginia. The citizens' questionnaire sought to obtain data on the citizens' experiences with police in a variety of different encounters of which a traffic violation stop was only one possible encounter.

While the entire Virginia study is extensive, this article focuses on the findings obtained when the citizens of Virginia were asked to provide their view of bias-based policing and racial profiling.

Literature Review

Past research relies primarily on citizen reports, and little research has been done that incorporates the police view (Lundman & Kaufman, 2003; Riksheim & Chermak, 1993; Sherman, 1980). Lundman and Kaufman argue that while secondary data and citizen reports are valid means of measuring the influence of race, ethnicity, and gender on traffic stops and police actions, these measures do not take into consideration other factors that might explain perceived bias-based police actions, such as the ethnic make of the neighborhood in which the stops were made. Lundman and Kaufman's recognition of the limitations within current bias-based policing research led them to recommend a triangulated data collection process that uses police-reported data, citizen self-reports, and trained observers. Each of these data collection approaches has been used separately in the past (Lundman & Kaufman, 2003; Riksheim & Chermak, 1993; Sherman, 1980) but not triangulated as Lundman and Kaufman suggest. One important consideration missing from Lundman and Kaufman's work is that because police perform tasks other than traffic stops, bias-based policing has the potential to present itself in other areas of police work equally. As an example, bias can exist in how police treat minority citizens who become victims of crime. The question researchers must ask, therefore, is does disparity exist between how police treat minority victims of crimes and how they approach majority victims?

Researchers find traffic stops attractive for several reasons. Perhaps the most compelling reason relates to the "Driving While Black" (Harris, 1999; Rice, Reitzel & Piquero, 2004) syndrome where the driver has done nothing wrong but the police stop the vehicle simply because the driver is Black. This type of traffic stop often leads to negative encounters with minorities.

The war on drugs has resulted in many negative encounters between police officers and minority groups stemming from the false premise that minorities commit most drug offenses (Coker, 2003; Dateline NBC, 2004; for a counterview see MacDonald, 2001). Coker contends that police look for drugs primarily among Blacks and Latinos; therefore, they find a disproportionate number of these individuals with

contraband (2003) then create a profile that results in more stops of minority drivers (Coker, 2003; Harris, 1999; Harris, 2002). Harris points out that Blacks constitute 13% of the country's drug users but 37% of those arrested on drug charges, 55% of those convicted, and 74% of all drug offenders sentenced to prison (1999).

The reliance on traffic stops as the sole means of measuring bias-based policing has caused state legislatures to take various forms of actions. In Texas, agencies are required to capture racial profiling data, but they are not required to report that data to anyone. The state of New Jersey has gone as far as making racial profiling by police a felony (An Act Criminalizing Deprivation of Civil Rights, 2002): the crime of official deprivation of civil rights makes it illegal for law enforcement officers to use race, religion, ethnicity, handicap, gender, age, or sexual orientation to discriminate against any individual ("New Jersey: New Law," 2003). This law, however, creates confusion because it does not specify when use of these elements is considered a legitimate part of an investigation and when it is considered a part of normal patrol functions.

Many researchers recognize that much of the research accomplished to date has major pitfalls (Fridell, Diamond, Kubu, & Lunney, 2001; Kruger, 2002). As Kruger writes, "The simple collection of data will neither prevent so-called 'racial profiling' nor accurately document a law enforcement agency's activities as a means of protecting it from public criticism, scrutiny, and litigation" (2002, p. 8). It is difficult, if not impossible, to judge the motives involved in traffic stops, citations, and searches by individual officers (Farrell, McDevitt, Bailey, Andresen, & Pierce, 2004). If the research conducted on traffic stops is not methodologically sound it can lead to misrepresentations and further divide the police and the communities they serve (Gold, 2003; Kruger, 2002; Smith & Alpert, 2002; Wortley & Tanner, 2003).

Moving away from traditional policing methodologies and toward community-oriented policing can help alleviate the current focus on crime reduction as a measurement of success as agencies that establish a culture focused primarily on crime reduction are more likely to experience bias-based policing and increases in officer misconduct (Davis, 2001). When the attitude within an agency is to reduce crime by any means necessary, in many cases the outcome is targeting people based on race, biases, and stereotypes. The "War on Drugs," "War on Crime," "Scorched Earth," and "Zero Tolerance" strategies all have led to agencies focused on crime reduction. These programs may contribute to a culture of community intolerance and a "we versus them" mentality, which ultimately contributes to poor community relations (Davis, 2001). Harris (1999) also contends that blame for the rampant abuse of power may be laid at the feet of the government's War on Drugs program. Harris refers to this program as a fundamentally misguided crusade enthusiastically embraced by lawmakers and administrations of both parties at every level of government.

Most of the research completed to date focuses on Blacks and proclaims police bias. Hispanics also claim to experience a disproportionate number of stops, although they fall within a unique category. Hispanics have views more favorable toward the police than their Black counterparts have but less favorable than Whites have (Carter, 1983; Cheurprakobkit, 2000; Dunham & Alpert, 2001; Weitzer & Tuch, 2002).

A review of the literature reveals the need for more quality research if we are to gain a true perspective of the bias-based policing issues this country faces. While most of the research to date focuses on statistics and citizen self-reports, one study focused on Black officers' perceptions of bias-based policing and showed that Black police officers of the Milwaukee Police Department reported being victims of racial profiling

(Davis, 2001). While the results of surveys intended to assess actions police chiefs have taken to alleviate biased policing practices are available (e.g., Fridell, Diamond, Kubu, & Lunney, 2001), surveys intended to measure officers' perspectives could not be located.

The literature review revealed another significant omission: research tends to focus on the police and ignores, almost entirely, the potential for other bias-based criminal justice practices among District Attorneys, Courts, and Corrections.

While the scope of this study did not allow us to investigate bias-based practices among other criminal justice agencies, we designed the study to obtain information about bias-based policing practices from the perspectives of both officers and citizens. The citizen questionnaire measured the citizens' perspective, and a comparison of the police and citizen perspectives was conducted to identify any gaps between the two.

Methods

To assess the citizen views on bias-based policing in the Commonwealth of Virginia, the researchers used a two-pronged approach. We first conducted a series of citizen focus group meetings throughout the Commonwealth. From these meetings we developed a questionnaire that we used to survey the citizens of Virginia.

Citizen Focus Groups

Seven sites were selected to hold the citizen focus group meetings. At each of the seven focus group sites, research staff asked the chief of police to invite community leaders to a citizen focus group meeting. The focus group meetings were held in public buildings, usually a public school gym or library. In an effort to ensure citizen participation, the researchers wanted to be certain that, at a minimum, community leaders were invited. Invited individuals included representatives from minority groups such as the NAACP, citizen police academy graduates, known community leaders, and ministers.

The second meeting took place in each location immediately after the first. The first meeting consisted of civic leaders, and the second meeting was open to all other citizens. Any citizen in the community who wanted to attend this meeting was welcome to do so. Both groups were polled. A staff member of the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS) asked area television stations, newspapers, radio stations, and other media to run a public service announcement. In excess of 230 people attend the citizens' focus groups throughout the Commonwealth. The majority of participants were Black; however, Whites, Latinos, and Asians were also represented. The citizen focus group meetings were held not only to obtain information on the issues facing Virginia regarding bias-based policing but to help the researchers refine the questionnaires.

The meetings were informal and designed to provide the maximum freedom for participants to address any issues they thought were important for the researchers to be aware of.

Survey Instruments

The researchers developed the Virginia Police Public Contact Survey instrument to assess citizen perceptions for the present study. Researchers modified a survey used by the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) in a 1999 national study of contacts between the police and the public, revising survey items and

adding additional items to represent the issues discovered by the research staff through the citizen focus group meetings.

The final survey was the product of a lengthy literature review, a number of information gathering sessions with citizens in Virginia, and a series of meetings among the research staff. The staff reviewed questions proposed by the senior analysts, provided text for new questions, and assisted in rejecting questions that did not directly address issues relevant to this project. The Virginia DCJS also reviewed the citizen questionnaire and provided input.

Sample

To conduct the telephone survey, researchers purchased from a telemarketing firm a random sample of 20,000 phone numbers of citizens throughout the Commonwealth of Virginia. From this sample, the researchers initially selected a stratified random sample of 10,000 telephone numbers for the telephone survey. A stratified random sample was preferable to a completely random sample because it ensured that the number of telephone numbers from particular regions of Virginia were proportionate to the population data and that respondents with identified characteristics were represented in the study.

Six hundred and eighty (680) citizens completed the telephone survey out of approximately 11,000 phone calls. After removing the data errors, the total sample consisted of 659 respondents. The sample was 65% female, 35% male, 21% Black, and 79% White. Due to the small number of respondents indicating race as "Other," we conducted comparisons on White and Black respondents only.

In an effort to make the sample more representative of the population of Virginia, we reduced the sample to 386 respondents of which 52% were female, 48% were male, 74% were White, and 26% were Black. We accomplished this by randomly deleting complete data sets from within each demographic category until the sample more closely resembled the population distribution of Virginia. The final sample of 386 cases yielded an error rate of 5%.

Results

The survey issued to the citizens captured information in ten critical areas where police were likely to have contact with citizens. The following are the survey findings in each of these areas.

Citizen Police Academies

The first several questions on the survey addressed the practice of providing citizen police academies. About 15% of respondents indicated that their police department offers a citizen police academy with 13.1% of Whites answering affirmatively compared with 22.7% of Black respondents, which represents a statistically significant difference ($p < .017$). One of the most interesting findings from this section is that 69.1% of the citizens participating in the survey did not know whether their police department provides a citizen police academy. Most police departments believe that citizen police academies are effective at promoting positive relations in the community; however, citizen police academies cannot be very effective if the majority of citizens do not know they exist. It also appears that White and Black citizens are both somewhat uninformed about the existence of citizen police academies as 69.7% of Whites and 67% of Blacks did not know whether their department offers one, which is a significant difference ($p < .017$) between White and Black citizens. Of respondents who knew their departments provided a citizen police academy, 85.7% believed that they were valuable in promoting positive relations with the community. Furthermore, 91.2% of White citizens who were aware of citizen academies thought they promoted positive relations, while only 77.3% of Black citizens thought they were effective at promoting positive relations, which is a significant difference ($p < .022$). This finding could have implications for marketing or publicizing citizen police academies. Quite simply, the police need to make additional efforts to inform both White and Black residents of the existence of their citizen police academy and make contact information readily available. Departments might also want to increase the offering of citizen police academies to take advantage of this community interaction forum. Further, departments should determine why Blacks are less inclined to think that citizen police academies promote positive relations.

Trustworthiness and Responsiveness

Concerning whether citizens trust their police departments to do the right thing, 71.4% indicated that they trust the police to act appropriately. While Black and White citizens differ somewhat on this item, with 62.6% and 74.5%, respectively, trusting their department, it is important to note that the majority believe that their departments are trustworthy, and this difference is not statistically significant. Additionally, 89.4% of respondents reported that police officers are responsive or somewhat responsive to the needs of their community. White and Black respondents differed considerably in response to this question with 91.9% of Whites indicating that police are responsive or somewhat responsive to the needs of their community compared with 84.2% of Black respondents, which is a significant difference ($p < .015$). In both instances, there is room for the police to improve; however, it is encouraging to see public perceptions of the police this high on such important items.

Satisfaction With Police Services

Respondents were asked about their satisfaction with the services their police department provides, and 90.7% reported that they were satisfied or somewhat satisfied with the police services their department provides. Again, Black and White citizens differed considerably on this item with 93.4% of White citizens reporting they are satisfied or somewhat satisfied with their police service compared with only 83.4% of Black citizens. This difference is statistically significant ($p < .001$) and indicates that the levels of satisfaction

with police services differ significantly depending on the race of the citizen. Additionally, when asked about the amount of police presence in their neighborhood, 61% of citizens responded that no change was needed, 35.6% responded that more presence was needed, and only 3.4% responded that less presence was needed. Of those participating, 64.5% of White citizens and 51.5% of Black citizens believed no change in presence in their neighborhood was needed.

Interesting discussions transpired between Black and White citizens during the various focus groups the research staff conducted. The intensity of Black citizens' distrust and dissatisfaction with the police on various levels came out clearly. Unexpectedly, Black citizens were as concerned about Black officers as they were about White officers. Departments throughout the country have enhanced their recruiting and hiring practices to ensure, to one degree or another, racial diversity throughout the department. Certainly, this is less true as one ascends the ranks, overall, but significant strides have been made. Black citizens were, on the one hand, quick to applaud the inclusion of minorities in the ranks of the police, but, unexpectedly, they would later make a statement such as, "They do what their White masters tell them." When asked "If it was wrong, why would Black officers do those things?" The response was, "If they didn't, they would get fired."

Such statements are disturbing on several levels, but we will address this result as it directly affects the intent of this study. To begin, one of the perceived advantages of ensuring a racial distribution among officers that mirrors the racial distribution of the population policed is that the department will become more sensitive to the community. Now, we discover that this assumption might not be completely accurate. In fact, officers, White and Black, admitted to the researchers that some Black officers are harder on members of their own race than are White officers. There seems to be an effort on those Black officers' part to prove themselves to their colleagues. It represents a form of overcompensation, and/or possibly a reaction to embarrassment they experience about members of their racial group posing a problem for the police.

Treatment of Citizens

Two questions asked whether citizens believe that police officers treat minority groups and White people with respect. In response to these questions, 57.7% of respondents indicated that they think police officers treat minority groups with respect, while 76.2% think that police officers treat White people with respect. In general, Black and White respondents responded quite differently with 46.5% of Black respondents indicating that minority groups are treated with respect, while 63.7% of Whites think that minority groups are treated with respect, which constitutes a significant difference ($p < .000$). Black and White respondents were in more agreement concerning how the police treat White people with 77.7% of White respondents indicating that White people are treated with respect and 72.7% of Black respondents indicating that police treat White people with respect.

The previous data raise two obvious concerns. First, while differences exist between the response of Whites and Blacks, a large percentage of members of both groups do not think that police treat either minority groups or Whites with respect. Second, minority groups are far more likely to perceive that Blacks are not treated with respect. There is considerable ground for the police to cover regarding the issue of respect. Black citizens in the focus groups often commented on how they were demeaned, or they would make statements such as "You are stripped of your dignity," "You don't feel part of the community," or "They make you feel like a Black life isn't worth anything." The citizens attending the focus groups were respected

members of the community. They were not a group of ex-felons lamenting about their bad luck at being caught and blaming the police for all the ills of society. The attendees were concerned citizens who had experienced, in many cases, first-hand poor treatment. In fact, several attendees were retired police officers. These comments simply add credence to the problem and further emphasize the point that officers must do more to ensure that interactions do not bring about such perceptions of abuse. This is true whether the citizen is Black, White, or the member of another racial group. This theme seems to resonate with Black citizens across the country, and this finding is similar to that of the Police Executive Research Forum's National Study on "Racially Biased Policing" (Fridell, Diamond, Kubu, & Lunney, 2001).

Bias-Based Policing

Several questions on the survey addressed citizens' perceptions of the prevalence of bias-based policing in Virginia and their hometown department. It is of concern that 42.8% of respondents believe that Virginia police departments currently practice bias-based policing; however, it is not surprising considering the publicity this issue has gained in the past few years. In fact, it is more surprising that a larger percentage did not report a perception that bias-based policing occurs in Virginia. While the majority of residents believe that the police do not practice bias-based policing, one cannot ignore that a large percentage of the population believes that bias-based policing occurs. In fact, as expected, Black and White respondents differed significantly ($p < .000$) in response to this question with 60% of Black citizens indicating that bias-based policing is currently practiced in Virginia compared with 35.6% of White citizens. When asked to what extent they think bias-based policing is an issue for their department, 16.5% responded that it is a serious issue, 35.4% think it is somewhat of an issue, and 21.5% think it is not an issue in their department. Interestingly, 60.6% of Black respondents think bias-based policing is not an issue in their department compared with only 35.9% of Whites. These findings are consistent with the PERF study, which revealed 59.9% of the blacks surveyed do not believe bias-based policing is a significant issue (Fridell et al., 2001). The responses to these two questions are somewhat perplexing. On one hand, Black citizens believe that bias-based policing occurs in Virginia, but about the same percentage think it is not an issue in their department. Perhaps respondents took a "not in my backyard" approach to the question by indicating that bias-based policing occurs but not in their area.

A total of 29.6% indicated that police officers' behavior is affected by the race of citizens, and 20.1% indicated that minority officers are more fair in dealing with minorities. Interestingly, only 22.1% of White respondents believe that police behavior is affected by the race of citizens compared with 47.5% of Black citizens, and only 16.3% of White citizens think minority officers are fairer in dealing with minorities compared with 29.3% of Black respondents.

Information

Three questions on the survey concerned collecting information about bias-based policing and the manner in which this information is shared with the public. When asked if they thought the police should collect information concerning bias-based policing, 61.9% responded yes. To this question, White and Black citizens responded somewhat differently with 58.9% of White citizens agreeing that bias-based policing

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information should be collected while 68.8% of Black citizens responded affirmatively. However, this difference in perception is not significant.

When asked whether the police department openly shares information with the public, 41.5% of respondents indicated that the police openly share information. White respondents indicated that the police openly share information with the public at a higher rate than did Black respondents (45.3% to 34.7%, respectively), and this represents a significant difference ($p < .001$).

Overall, citizens do not perceive that the police share information with the community as a whole, and this belief is most pronounced in the Black communities. In discussions with department personnel, we learned that many of them perceive that they do much to inform the public and to interact with them. A review of the programs and efforts of several of these departments indicates that they had numerous programs designed to assist in opening communications with the public. However, many citizens do not participate or are uninformed of the programs available in the community regardless of the efforts by the department to inform citizens, and often it is the same group of citizens who work with the police.

Finally, in the information category, citizens were asked whether the media reports bias-based policing incidents honestly, to which only 26.6% answered yes. Given the influence the media have on such issues, it is curious that such a small percentage of the respondents think that the media report such incidents honestly. While these results are an obvious indicator of distrust of the press, they also serve to further demonstrate the hurdles departments have to overcome in their efforts to be seen as responsive and ethical to the public they serve.

Crime Reporting

Next, respondents were asked whether they had ever contacted the police to report a crime. Those who answered affirmatively were asked several questions about the respondent's role in the crime and the manner in which the police handled the situation. In response to a question asking whether the victim's rights were explained to the victim, 44.2% indicated that the victim's rights were explained to the victim. Black and White citizens differed considerably on this item with only 22.2% of Black respondents reporting that the victim's rights were explained compared with 50% of White respondents. While these percentages are significant, this difference is not statistically significant. Concerning written reports, 74.5% indicated that the officer made a written report in response to the contact. By race, responses to this item differed with 79.1% of White citizens reporting that a written report was made compared with only 57.1% of Black citizens. This difference also is not statistically significant.

Of those who indicated a report was not written, 27.3% believed that a bias was the reason no report was written. It is very interesting that Black and White respondents completely disagree in response to this question. Zero percent of White citizens thought that bias was the reason police officers failed to write a report, while 100% of Black citizens thought that bias was the reason police did not write a report on the incident. This is a significant difference ($p < .008$) and warrants more attention and investigation. This variation illustrates that, regardless of what the actual reason might be, citizens make presumptions regarding officer behavior relative to their perceptions of the police as a whole. As much as any question on the citizen questionnaire, this single question demonstrates the need for departments to attain and maintain the respect and trust of the entire community. It further demonstrates the need for officers to communicate

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better to inform citizens what they are doing, why officers take such actions, and what the citizen should expect to occur as a result of the actions of officers. It is clear throughout the study that citizens often perceive officer behavior as arrogant, unresponsive, abusive, and racially biased especially in Black communities. This appears to be a consistent theme and matches the findings of the national survey conducted by PERF (Fridell et al., 2001).

When asked about follow-up contact regarding the report, 55.3% of respondents indicated that the police department did not contact them to follow up on the report. White respondents were split evenly in responding to this question with 50% reporting follow-up contact after reporting a crime, while Black respondents reported less follow-up contact (22.2%). It is troubling to discover that White respondents were almost 10 times more likely to receive follow-up contact from police than Black respondents.

When asked whether racial bias was exhibited in handling the incident, 90.4% of respondents indicated that bias was not exhibited. Again, Black and White responses differed on this item with only 2.4% of White respondents indicating that racial bias was exhibited during the incident compared with 36.4% of Black respondents, which is a significant difference ($p < .05$). When asked whether gender bias was demonstrated during the handling of the incident, 90.4% of respondents indicated that bias was not demonstrated. Police departments should conduct efforts to determine why perceptional differences exist and to institute policies and procedures, training, and management strategies that will help to alleviate problems where they occur.

Traffic Stops

Respondents also were asked whether they had ever been stopped by the police while in a motor vehicle. Of those who had been involved in a traffic stop, 59.6% were stopped for speeding (of which 74.7% were White and 23% were Black), 3.4% were stopped for running a red light (of which 80% were White and 20% were Black), 5.5% for a vehicle defect (of which 62.5% were White and 25% were Black), 7% for a roadside check for drunk drivers, and 3.4% to check their license plate, driver license, or registration (of which 40% were White and 60% were Black). Seventy percent of those involved in a traffic stop indicated that they thought the police had a legitimate reason for stopping their vehicle with 74% of White respondents believing the stop was legitimate compared with 61.3% of Black respondents. While this difference appears considerable, it is not statistically significant. Overall, the responses in this category indicate that Blacks and Whites perceive that they are treated similarly by the police in Virginia.

Concerning the outcome of the traffic stop, 15.1% of those responding indicated they received a warning, 56.2% Indicated that they received a citation. Of the traffic stop outcomes, no significant differences occurred between Blacks and Whites for receiving a warning, a traffic ticket, being arrested, or questioned about being in the area. Of those responding to this section of the survey, 21.9% (n = 32) indicated that someone was mistreated by the police officers during the encounter. This mistreatment included verbal abuse (5.5%), rudeness (11.6%), and the use of physical force (1.4%). White citizens reported instances of verbal abuse at a slightly higher rate—57% for Whites and 43% for Blacks—and more instances of rudeness and physical force. The reader should keep in mind that while these findings are of interest, the n for each of these categories was too low, and the data are not statistically significant.

The data demonstrate clearly that both Blacks and Whites perceive equally that officers were rude in the situations this series of questions described. Officer verbal abuse and rudeness are management

issues, and every department should ensure that such behavior is not tolerated and is addressed quickly when discovered. It should also be understood, however, that regardless of how diligent departments become in their attempts to stop these forms of harassment, they likely will never be harassment-free. This statement is not offered as an excuse to ignore the problem but to counsel departments to be realistic in their attempts to rid the department of such behaviors and to encourage continued vigilance. Further, there appears to be no significant differences in officer rudeness reported by Blacks and Whites. During the focus group meetings we heard a significant number of complaints about rudeness on the part of the officers during a traffic stop. This was consistent with the PERF national study, which also found the same type of citizen complaints pertaining to traffic stops. This suggests a need to evaluate traffic stop procedures and to develop training and administrative oversight to ease this problem.

Use of Force

In general, very few incidents involving the use of physical force were reported by respondents in the sample. Only 18 respondents indicated that they had experienced situations where a police officer made a threat to use or used force against them or someone who was with them. Obviously, the information provided about the use of force was statistically significant.

Demeanor of Police Officers

The final section of the survey asked citizens to describe their contact with police officers in the following situations: traffic accidents, crime investigations, citizen matching the description of a wanted person, or officer(s) serving a warrant. Of those who answered questions in this section of the survey, 87% indicated that they were informed of the reason for the contact with the police. White and Black citizens reported being informed of the reason at about the same rate (88.6% and 87.5%, respectively).

Interestingly, 25.2% indicated the police treated them or others present rudely during such contacts, and of these 23.7% were White and 39.1% were Black. This difference is not significant. Additionally, respondents were asked to identify the race of the person treated rudely by the officer(s). White citizens were the target of this rudeness nearly four times as often as Black citizens. Seventeen percent of those reporting rude treatment by the police were White, 4.4% were Black, 1.5% were Hispanic, and 0.7% were Asian. Of those treated rudely, 14.9% thought that it was due to race, 8.1% thought it was due to gender, and 8.1% thought it was due to lifestyle. Black respondents were twice as likely as Whites to perceive the rudeness as related to race.

Conclusion

Overall, the citizen questionnaire provided insight into the citizens' perception of how police departments in the Commonwealth of Virginia interact with the public. Some promising findings include the fact that the majority of respondents believe police respond in a reasonable amount of time when summoned, 70% of respondents trust the police, and 90% are satisfied or somewhat satisfied with their police departments. These results indicate that the Commonwealth of Virginia police are keeping their citizens satisfied, in a broad sense, while building a rapport with the people. Additionally, citizens reported that call takers at the police station were generally courteous and polite. A compelling 100% reported that the officers were

courteous when the citizens walked in to the department or stopped a police vehicle to make a complaint or report a crime.

Some discouraging findings of the citizen questionnaire include the significant differences between citizen perceptions when examined by race. Both Whites and Blacks believe that the police treat Whites with respect, but more Blacks than Whites believe that Black citizens are not treated respectfully. Despite those findings, White citizens who participated in the survey were four times more likely to be the target of rudeness from the Virginia police. This represents a perplexing finding considering that Black citizens should have been more subject to rude treatment if they are indeed less likely to be treated with respect. One would assume that rudeness and disrespect go hand-in-hand. As a side note, the majority of citizens represented in the survey do not believe that the media report police incidents honestly.

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