

## Confidence in the Police and Perceptions of Risk

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### **ABSTRACT**

*This study tests the hypothesis that there is a reciprocal, negative relationship between perceptions of risk of criminal victimization and confidence in the police, using data from a survey of the residents of Asheville, North Carolina, conducted by the Asheville Police Department. Factor analysis is employed to create composite measures of perceptions of risk and of confidence in the police, and these factors were the dependent variables in multiple regression analyses. Respondents' demographics such as age and race were found to be predictors in determining confidence in the police. On the other hand, respondents' education, family income, and experience as being a victim or a witness were found to be crucial indicators of risk perceptions. Most importantly, this study's results showed confidence in the police and risk perceptions were negatively correlated. Such a negative reciprocal relationship suggests that increased confidence in the police may diminish risk perceptions, and vice versa.*

**KEYWORDS:** perceptions of risk; confidence in the police; fear of crime; criminal victimization.

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A number of studies have tested the hypothesis that perceptions of risk from crime may influence confidence in the police. Some studies have also examined the effects of perceptions of disorder and crime problems in the neighborhood on such attitudes. A hypothesis that has received less attention is that "there is a reciprocal, negative relationship between perceptions of risk of criminal victimization and confidence in the police." Logically, citizens' dissatisfaction with police performance or lack of confidence in the police may derive from a high anxiety about victimization in their neighborhoods. Such an interaction between perception of risk and confidence in the police, if it exists, may provide a further understanding of the mechanisms of risk assessment. Accordingly, the present researchers attempt to examine the actual impact of confidence in the police on people's perceptions of risk in their communities.

### **PERCEPTION OF RISK**

Previous researchers (Ferraro 1995; Forde 1993; Rountree and Land 1996; Thompson, Bankston, and St. Pierre 1992) have uncovered an important distinction between perceived risk of criminal victimization and fear of crime among the public. According to Ferraro (1995), "fear of crime" has become a major indicator to measure

people's perceptions of victimization. In the National Crime Victimization Survey of U.S. Department of Justice, for example, "fear of crime" is indicated with the question: "How safe do you feel or would you feel being out alone in your neighborhood at night?" In the General Social Survey, which is developed at Queens College of the City of New York, "fear of crime" is indicated with the question: "Is there any area right around here--that is, within a mile--where you would be afraid to walk alone at night?" Ferraro (1995) argues that these measures are better indicators of perceived risk rather than fear of victimization, because the perception of risk is a part of the "definition of the situation" which emerges from an actor's interaction with the environment. Therefore, each individual may evaluate the risk differently and such a perceived risk may not parallel the actual level of risk in a situation. In contrast, fear of crime is an emotional response to the perception of risk in one's environment (Ferraro 1995). As this implies, previous studies (Baker, Nienstedt, and McClery 1983; Baumer 1985; Block 1971; Box, Hale, and Andrews 1988; Garafalo 1979; Hale, Pack and Salkeld 1994; Sprott and Doob 1997) which intended to measure fear of crime by employing indicators from either the National Crime Survey or the General Social Survey might actually assess the perceived risk exclusively.

The judgment of risk involves a cognitive process. Researchers (Ferraro 1995; Skogan 1990; Wilson and Kelling 1982) indicate that the judgment of risk from criminal victimization may be influenced by the prevalence of disorder in an individual's immediate environment. Ferraro (1995) suggests that there is a link between perceptions of personal risk of victimization and perceptions of neighborhood risk of victimization due to the prevalence rate of criminal activity in that neighborhood. In other words, people who perceive their neighborhoods to be risky places are more likely to perceive themselves to be at risk. As this implies, confidence in the police may play a role in such risk perceptions. People who believe that the police perform well at their tasks are likely to evaluate the risk of victimization as less than those who do not have such confidence in the police. This study will address both these possibilities.

Previous studies that attempted to predict perceptions of risk with measures of confidence in the police had conflicting results. Some studies (Baker et al. 1983; Box et al. 1988) found that confidence in the police was significantly correlated with perception of risk. Other studies (Garofalo 1979; Hale, Pack, and Salkeld 1994), however, failed to find such an association. In all of the above-mentioned studies, both perception of risk and confidence in the police were measured using single-item indicators. By employing multiple-item indicators of perception of risk and confidence in the police, Bennett (1994) who surveyed residents of London and Birmingham (England) found a moderate zero-order correlation between confidence in the police and a risk measure which was combined with fear of crime and perception of risk. However, Bennett (1994) employed factor analysis to identify scales measuring perceptions of crime in the neighborhood, perceptions of disorder, perceptions of the probability of victimization, concerns about victimization, and police visibility. Once these variables were introduced into a multivariate analysis, the relationship between confidence in the police and perception of fear or crime (or perception of risk) disappeared. The results also showed that confidence in the police was not correlated with the measures of the perception of the probability of victimization and concern about victimization.

### **CONFIDENCE IN THE POLICE**

Previous researchers had specified three distinctive factors that might contribute to the public's confidence in the police: (1) fear of crime, (2) risk of victimization, and (3) safety of neighborhood. Bennett (1994) found that confidence in police was predicted by perceptions of area crime and perceptions of neighborhood disorder. Perceptions of neighborhood safety were also found to

be significantly correlated with confidence in the police (see, for example, Apple and O'Brien 1983; Brown and Coulter 1983). Thomas and Hyman (1977) found that a measure that combined indicators of personal risk, neighborhood risk, and fear of crime was correlated with the measure of confidence in the police. Smith and Hawkins (1973), however, found no relationship between the favorableness of attitudes toward the police and perceptions of the risk of property crime victimization. A study in Cincinnati (Cao, Frank, and Cullen 1996) reported mixed findings which indicated that confidence in the police was not related to fear of crime, but was predicted by perceptions of neighborhood disorder and collective security in the neighborhood.

Undoubtedly, law enforcement agencies heavily depend upon the cooperation of citizens to perform their work efficiently, and confidence in the police is crucial to acquire citizens' participation in a variety of community-related police assignments. Assessing citizens' confidence in the police has special relevance to attempts to implement community policing (Albrecht and Green 1977; Brandl et al. 1994; Cao et al. 1996; Huang and Vaughn 1996; Jesilow, Meyer and Namazzi 1995). Researchers have used only a few indicators to measure confidence in the police in terms of the quality of police protection (Apple and O'Brien 1983; Baumer 1985; Box, Hale and Andrews 1988; Garofalo 1979; Peek, Lowe and Alston 1981) or the fairness or equality of treatment by the police (Lasley 1994; Smith and Hawkins 1973). The most common methods are to combine four or five diverse items in a scale (Cao et al. 1996; Parker, Onyekwuluje and Murty 1995; Thomas and Hyman 1977) or to create multiple scales (Dunham and Alpert 1988; Webb and Marshall 1995) to measure the public's confidence in the police. Only a few studies (Bennett 1994; Scaglione and Condon 1980; Sullivan, Dunham and Alpert 1987) have employed factor analysis to examine the underlying structure of the public's attitudes toward the police and perceptions of risk as well.

Most recently, U.S. Department of Justice (2001a) reports that the police-community relation has significantly improved in the past several decades, but confidence in the police is still low in minority communities. In addition to disproportionate media coverage of race-related issues such as racial profiling or police use of force against racial minority members, the minority residents often regard "interactions with police officers are motivated by bias and prejudice" (U.S. Department of Justice, 2001a:1). Not surprisingly, African-Americans are less likely than whites to possess a high level of confidence in the police (U.S. Department of Justice/Sourcebook, 2000b). Furthermore, results from a comprehensive study of contacts between police and the public (U.S. Department of Justice, 2001b)

revealed that 21 percent of U.S. residents had a contact with the police in 1999 and 52 percent of those contacts were in traffic stop situations. Even though a vast majority of drivers (84%) considered stops were legitimate, and almost 90 percent of drivers perceived the police conducted themselves properly, Hispanic and African-American drivers were less likely than Caucasian drivers to consider that the police behaved properly during the traffic stops. Racial disparity in confidence in the police was significant.

Rarely have researchers examined the underlying structure of the public's attitudes toward the police. Most studies only examined the relationship between perceived risk and confidence in the police unilaterally, but did not consider the possibility of reciprocal effects. Just as it is plausible to hypothesize that confidence in the police affects the perceived risk of criminal victimization, it is also possible that perceived risk affects confidence in the police. Thomas and Hyman (1977) suggest that a positive correlation may exist if the public perceives the risk of victimization to be high. Cao et al. (1996:4) indicate that "the assumption is that when crime is more salient in a person's life, confidence in the police is undermined." Accordingly, the present researchers attempt to explore such interrelationships of perception of risk, perception of safety in the neighborhood, and confidence in the police.

## **METHODS**

### **Research Site**

The City of Asheville, with a population of approximately 69,000, comprises an area of 42 square miles in western North Carolina. The City of Asheville is the county seat of Buncombe County, the largest city in western North Carolina, and the tenth largest city in the State of North Carolina. Lush mountains, many with elevations above 5,000 feet, surround the City of Asheville. The City of Asheville is consistently ranked among the best places to live and retire due to its natural and architectural beauty, moderate climate, or other factors.

In 1994, the Asheville Police Department (APD) received a grant from the North Carolina Department of Crime Control and Public Safety, the Governor's Crime Commission, and the City of Asheville to establish community-based policing programs. The objectives of community-based policing programs are: (1) to determine the public's concerns about the quality of life in their communities and neighborhoods in general, and about their fear of victimization in particular; (2) to measure public perceptions toward the Asheville Police Department (APD) and APD personnel; (3) to gain an understanding of the public's concern about crime

within their neighborhoods across the city; and (4) to enhance police functions and develop strategies to address the concerns of community members.

In the early 1990s, the APD adopted a proactive, community-oriented approach attempting to solve crime-related problems across Asheville neighborhoods. Most community-based programs such as the "Public Housing Community Policing Team" focused on minority-dominated communities. In this program, the APD assigned three officers and one sergeant to address a variety of concerns of residents who live in public housing projects across the city. The APD also cooperated with neighborhoods in initiating several community-based programs such as the "Asheville Residents and Government in a Unified Strategy" (ARGUS) and the "Anti-crime Team" (ACT) to address specific crime problems in those neighborhoods. For example, ACT was designed to identify specific crime problems in high-crime neighborhoods and to provide administrative efforts in order to reduce identifiable crimes such as drugs in public housing projects.

Based upon the APD crime statistics, property crimes were a widespread problem across neighborhoods in the city. For example, there were on average 3,680 larcenies and 1,410 burglaries reported annually to APD during the period of 1990-94 (while implementing community-based policing programs). On the other hand, the total violent crimes actually declined. In the period of 1990-94, there were a total of 45 murders, 182 rapes, and 871 robberies reported to APD. Annually, only 319 arrests were drug-related in that 5-year period. However, the local media sometimes reported that the public's fear of victimization was rising across the city. In order to better understand residents' perceptions about the police, personal safety, and neighborhood safety, the APD commissioned community surveys in 1995 and 1996, which contained identical questions. Data from the two surveys are combined for the purpose of this study.

### **Sampling and Sample**

To draw a representative sample of Asheville residents, a systematic sampling procedure was employed. Based upon characteristics (e.g., crimes) of neighborhoods across the city, the APD has divided the city into 27 patrol beats. At the first stage, the researchers randomly selected 15 out of 27 beats as target areas for surveying residents. These 15 randomly selected APD patrol beats consisted of a variety of neighborhoods, ranging from high-income to low-income neighborhoods. In addition, all 16 public housing projects in the City of Asheville were included regardless of the results of the random selection of target neighborhoods. Residents of public housing

projects are primarily low-income and disproportionately African-American. From the selected beats and public housing areas, one of every three residents listed in the Asheville Water Department records was selected. Surveys were mailed to 5,000 residents. A total of 1,454 surveys, 712 surveys in 1995 and 742 surveys in 1996, were returned. The return rate was 29.1 percent. With listwise deletion of cases, only 1,066 surveys were usable for the purposes of this study.

The return rate of this study was not very high due to two identifiable factors. First, the APD clearly specified in its project operation that the target areas of the community surveys included low-income neighborhoods and public housing projects. Thus, a total of 1,950 surveys, 450 surveys in 1995 and 1,500 surveys in 1996, were mailed to public housing residents, and the return rate was 21 percent. Meanwhile, a total of 950 surveys, 450 surveys in 1995 and 500 surveys in 1996, were mailed to residents who lived in primarily low-income areas, and the return rate was 22 percent. Second, no follow-up surveys were attempted. The APD clearly specified to the selected resident that the survey was completely anonymous and that no identifying information (e.g., name) needed to be included in the return survey. This sampling strategy was intended to increase the reliability of the residents' responses in regard to their confidence in the police and perceptions of risk in their neighborhoods. As this study's results revealed, 22 percent of 1,066 usable surveys were returned from respondents who lived in public housing projects and 37 percent of respondents had an annual income under 14,000 dollars. The characteristics of the sample provided further understanding of people's perceptions of victimization and confidence in the police across a variety of respondents' backgrounds.

### **The Study Group**

The demographic characteristics of the study group closely resemble those of the population of the City of Asheville. According to U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000, 78.0 percent of the city population were Caucasians, 17.6 percent African-Americans, and 8.2 percent Hispanics or other races. The median age of the city population is 39.2, and 22.5 percent of residents were age 60 or above. Approximately 53.2 percent of city residents were female. More than 54 percent of residents were considered as family households, and the average of family size was 2.81. However, the ownership of the housing units was around 56.8 percent in the City of Asheville. According to the 2002 U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis report, the average annual wage per job in Buncombe County in 2001 (including of the City of Asheville) was \$28,363. Buncombe County's average

annual wage per job is below both the State of North Carolina (\$31,430) and national (\$35,550) averages.

Based on the returned and usable surveys, 41 percent (432) of respondents were male and 58 percent (618) were female, but 1 percent (16) of respondents' gender was unknown. This study group consisted of 29 percent (307) African-Americans, 69 percent (732) Caucasians, and 1 percent (13) respondents whose racial identity were unknown. Sixteen percent (167) of respondents were under age 30, 50 percent (533) of respondents were between 30 and 59 years old, and 32 percent (341) of respondents were age 60 or above. The educational levels of respondents were distributed as college degree (38%), high school degree (36%), junior high school degree (18%), elementary degree (3%), and others (5%) were unknown. Results also showed that 55 percent (587) of respondents owned their homes, 20 percent (217) rented apartments, 22 percent (234) lived in public housing projects, and 3 percent (28) of the respondents' housing status were unknown. Regarding the respondents' income, 37 percent (393) of respondents had an annual income under 14,000 dollars; 9 percent (98) of respondents had income between 14,000 and 49,999 dollars; 14 percent (154) of respondents had income between 50,000 and 99,999 dollars; 6 percent (67) of respondents had income of 100,000 dollars or above; but there were 9 percent (95) of respondents whose incomes were unknown.

### **Dependent Measures and Index Variables**

This study intended to examine the contributing factors such as respondents' demographics to risk perceptions and confidence in the police. However, perceptions of risk and confidence in the police are an "open-textured construct" (Cronbach and Meehl 1955) that is interrelated with a set of attributes such as perceived victimization and neighborhood safety. As Table 1 indicates, the survey measured multiple indicators of confidence in the police and personal risk perceptions. For each indicator, responses were measured on an eleven-point (0- 10) scale--with zero (0) indicating the strongest disagreement and ten (10) indicating the strongest agreement. In order to efficiently reduce the multiple indicators, the present researchers employed principal components factor analysis. This strategy aims to understand the underlying structure among conceptualized interrelated variables in determining perception of risk and confidence in the police. Two separate factor analyses were conducted to identify two sets of index variables--one for indicators of confidence in the police and one for indicators of personal risk perceptions. Thereafter, each of index variables was employed as a dependent measure in a multiple regression analysis to explore the

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Demographic and Risk Perception Variables

Description of Variable	n	Mean	S.D.
<b>Demographic</b>			
Age	1038	49.81	17.71
Education (1=Elementary; 5=Graduate)	1038	3.54	.95
Sex (1=Female)	1050	.59	.49
Race (1=Black)	1039	.30	.46
Family Income (1=Under \$14,000; 5=\$100,000 or more)	971	2.39	1.33
Victim/Witness (1=Yes)	1066	.21	.41
<b>Risk Perception*</b>			
Home likely to be broke into	1054	4.84	3.03
Property likely to be stolen	1057	4.86	3.20
Likely to be assaulted or robbed	1059	4.17	3.11
Likely to be shot	1057	3.15	3.00
Get drugs easily	1044	5.27	3.78
Child involvement in drugs	1024	4.52	3.24
Neighborhood unsafe due to gangs	1030	3.41	3.21
Neighborhood not as safe as others	1058	3.86	3.50
APD does a good job	1037	7.86	2.03
Police respond to minorities fairly	973	7.09	2.58
Comfortable asking APD for assistance	915	8.41	1.95

\*All attitude statements are measured on a 0-10 scale, with 10 indicating the strongest agreement with the statement.

independent relationships of respondents' demographics to risk perceptions and confidence in the police, respectively. Meanwhile, the interrelationship between risk perceptions and confidence in the police was also examined.

### Independent Variables

Consistent with previous researches of risk perceptions and confidence in the police, this study also examines the following variables: race, gender, age, income, education, and experience as a victim or a witness. Previous researchers (Dean 1980; Huang and Vaughn 1996; Smith and Hawkins 1973) found that the extent and nature of police-citizen contacts such as a victim of crime had significant effect on people's confidence in the police. In this study, each respondent was asked about the nature of his or her contact(s) with the Asheville police in the past 12 months. However, the findings of earlier research on the effect of victimization experiences on confidence in the police and perceived risk of victimization were mixed. Researchers (Apple and O'Brien 1983; Bennett 1994; Brown and Coulter 1983) found that victimization experiences negatively affected confidence in the police. However, Baker et al. (1983) and Smith and Hawkins (1973) found that victimization experience was not statistically correlated with confidence in the police. Regarding the perception of risk, researchers (Apple and O'Brien 1983;

Ferraro 1995) have reported that victimization experiences may positively affect estimates of the level of risk from victimization, but others (Baker, et al. 1983; Garofalo 1979) fail to find such an effect. Results of this study indicated that 44 percent of respondents' contacts with the police were derived from personal victimization or witnessing a crime. To assess the effect of this experience, the present researchers created a dummy variable: one (1) indicated that the respondent had a police contact as a victim or a witness, and zero (0) indicated that they had no such experience.

The effects of respondent's demographics (gender, race, and age) on risk perceptions and confidence in the police were also examined. Researchers (Baker et al. 1983; Baumer 1985; Bennett 1994; Box et al. 1988) found that women were likely to perceive a greater risk from criminal victimization. Some researchers (Brown and Coulter 1983; Cao et al. 1996; Ferraro 1995; Thomas and Hyman 1977; Webb and Marshall 1995) found that gender was significantly correlated with confidence in the police when controlling for other factors such as perceptions of victimization.

A significant body of research consistently shows that African Americans are likely to express a negative attitude toward the police and a low confidence in the police as well (Baker, et al. 1983; Brown and Coulter 1983; Huang and Vaughn 1996; Thomas and Hyman 1977; Scaglione and Condon 1980; Webb and Marshall

1995). Only a few studies found that the effect of race on confidence in the police was not significant while controlling for other variables (Cao et al. 1996; Jesilow et al. 1995). Generally, African Americans tended to perceive a greater risk from crime than whites did (Baker et al. 1983; Box et al. 1988; Ferraro 1995).

Meanwhile, previous researchers (Baumer 1985; Bennett 1994; Box et al. 1988; Ferraro 1995) consistently reported that respondents' age had a positive relationship to risk perceptions. Somewhat paradoxically, age was associated with higher levels of confidence in the police (Apple and O'Brien 1983; Baker et al. 1983; Brown and Coulter 1983; Jesilow, Meyer and Namazzi 1995; Parker, Onyekwuluje and Murty 1995; Peek, Lowe, and Alston 1981; Thomas and Hyman 1977; Webb and Marshall 1995).

This study also carefully examined the effects of respondents' education and income on confidence in the police and perceptions of risk in the neighborhoods. Baker et al. (1983) and Ferraro (1995) found a negative relationship between education and assessment of risk; however, education was not a significant predictor of confidence in the police when other variables were controlled. Regarding the effect of income, Apple and O'Brien (1983) found a positive relation between income and perception of risk. Thomas and Hyman (1977) and Webb and Marshall (1995) also found that respondent's income was positively associated with confidence in the police, but Parker et al. (1995) indicated a negative relationship for a sample of African Americans.

## **FINDINGS**

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics (e.g., mean) for respondents' perceptions of neighborhood safety, the likelihood of personal victimization, and attitudes toward the police. As Table 1 indicates, respondents were moderately concerned about risk of personal victimization by a variety of criminal offenses such as breaking and entering, burglary, or assault. Respondents also believed that drugs could be easily obtained in their neighborhoods. They were more likely to evaluate their neighborhoods as unsafe due to gang problems. Respondents expressed a high regard for the police and felt comfortable to call the police for assistance. They generally perceived that APD officers were likely to respond in a fair manner toward different ethnic residents or communities, and the overall rating of the Asheville Police Department was moderately high.

Bivariate correlations between the variables are presented in Table 2. Contrary to the previous studies (Baumer 1985; Bennett 1994; Box et al. 1988; Ferraro 1995), for example, this study's results showed that the correlation between age and perception of risk was

negative. In other words, younger, rather than older, respondents were likely to perceive a high possibility of victimization in their neighborhoods. Most importantly, the correlation matrix indicated that a set of variables in relative to risk perceptions, and confidence in the police as well, were statistically and significantly correlated. For example, interrelationships of personal perceptions of victimization and neighborhood safety (X7 through X14 in Table 2) were statistically significant and relatively high.

The results of the factor analyses of risk perceptions and confidence in the police are presented in Table 3. Variables that had a loading of at least .60 on the factor are presented. The first factor (risk perceptions) was extracted, accounting for 59 percent of the variance, because of high loading of 8 variables ranging from "Home likely to be broken into" to "Neighborhood not as safe as others." The second factor (confidence in the police) was extracted, accounting for 75 percent of the variance, due to high loading of 3 variables—"APD does a good job," "Police respond to minorities fairly," and "Comfortable asking APD for assistance." The factor analysis showed that zero-order correlations among the indicators of risk perceptions and confidence in the police were considerably strong. Meanwhile, the overall risk factor was quite efficient at representing the structure of respondents' perceptions regarding both personal and neighborhood risk.

In order to examine the independent effects of respondents' characteristics (e.g., age) on "risk perceptions" and "confidence in the police," ordinary least square (OLS) multiple regression was employed. In Table 4, two regression models are presented examining these effects and the relationship between two factors—"risk perceptions" and "confidence in the police." In the first model, "risk perceptions" (as the dependent variable) was regressed upon all respondents' characteristics, including the factor—"confidence in the police." In the second regression model, "confidence in the police" was administered as the dependent measure and was regressed upon all respondents' characteristics, including the factor—"risk perceptions." This study intended to examine any possible reciprocal relationship between "risk perceptions" and "confidence in the police" while holding other independent variables (e.g., age) constant.

Regarding the determinants of perception of risk, results showed that education, income, experience as a victim or a witness of crime, and confidence in the police were statistically correlated with perception of risk. Two highly correlated indicators of respondents' socio-economic status—education and income—were found to be the most important predictors of risk perceptions.



*Confidence in the Police*

*Table 2. Correlation Matrix (Pearson's r) of respondents' Demographics, Confidence in Police, and Perceptions of Risk*

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
1. Age	--															
2. Education	-.85*	--														
3. Sex	-.14*	-.20*	--													
4. Race	-.15*	-.38*	.19*	--												
5. Income	.09*	.61*	-.31*	-.53*	--											
6. Victim/Witness	-.16*	.06	.05	.00	.02	--										
7. Home likely to be broke into	-.05	-.16*	.08	.01	-.12*	.14*	--									
8. Property likely to be stolen	-.07*	-.25*	.13*	.18*	-.29*	.13*	.63*	--								
9. Likely to be assaulted or robbed	-.09*	-.23*	.11*	.14*	-.30*	.12*	.57*	.55*	--							
10. Likely to be shot	-.14*	-.28*	.13*	.26*	-.34*	.12*	.42*	.48*	.67*	--						
11. get drugs easily	-.16*	-.34*	.20*	.29*	-.45*	.11*	.37*	.47*	.53*	.56*	--					
12. child involvement in drugs	-.08*	-.21*	.10*	.18*	-.28*	.13*	.39*	.43*	.49*	.52*	.70*	--				
13. Neighborhood unsafe due to gangs	-.04	-.25*	.13*	.19*	-.29*	.14*	.37*	.40*	.51*	.58*	.57*	.56*	--			
14. Neighborhood not as safe as others	-.16*	-.25*	.14*	.27*	-.39*	.16*	.39*	.47*	.53*	.59*	.61*	.57*	.64*	--		
15. APD does a good job	.28*	-.11*	.04	-.08*	-.01	-.06	-.09*	-.10*	-.12*	-.13*	-.10*	-.13*	-.09*	-.14*	--	
16. Police respond to minorities fairly	.27*	-.03	-.04	-.24*	.10*	-.02	-.07	-.10*	-.09*	-.13*	-.12*	-.11*	-.06	-.15*	.27*	--
17. Comfortable asking APD for assistance	.24*	-.02	-.00	-.17*	.10*	-.10*	-.12*	-.09*	-.18*	-.20*	-.13*	-.16*	-.15*	-.17*	.38*	.56*

\* p < .01



Indicators of socio-economic status (SES) had not received a great deal of attention in earlier research on risk perceptions. When the correlations between the SES indicators and the indicators of risk perceptions were examined, an interesting pattern emerged in the present study. Most of the bivariate correlations were statistically significant but negative. These indicators were especially effective at discriminating between lower SES and higher SES respondents. In other words, respondents who had lower education and family income were likely to perceive a high likelihood of being victimized.

Results also showed that respondents' demographic characteristics such as age and race were statistically correlated with confidence in the police. African-American respondents expressed a low level of confidence in the police as compared with Caucasian respondents. This study's results showed that the effect of experience of being a victim of a witness of crime and the contact with the police was not statistically correlated with confidence in the police. However, a further analysis revealed, if confidence in the police was regressed on the victim/witness variable and each of the other predictors in a series of two-predictor equations, the relationship between the victim/witness variable and confidence in the police became positive when the former variable was paired with race, contact satisfaction, or the risk factor. The results indicated that respondents who were African American and had experience of being a victim or a witness of crime were likely to have lower confidence in the police. Furthermore, the effect of the respondent sex on confidence in the police and risk perceptions made no significant addition to the prediction.

This study's results showed that risk perceptions and confidence in the police were negatively correlated. In other words, respondents who perceived that the likelihood of being victimized was high had low confidence in the police. To gain further understanding of the possibility of a reciprocal relationship between risk perceptions and confidence in the police, the present researchers examined the correlations between the risk factor and the individual variables represented in the factor of confidence in the police. The results showed that all of the correlations were similar to the correlation between these two factors (risk perceptions and confidence in the police). For example, the police-related variable—"APD does a good job"—had a correlation of -.15 with the risk factor. The correlations of the risk factor with two police-related variables—"Police respond fairly to minorities" and "Comfortable asking APD for assistance"—were -.13 and -.21, respectively. The same procedure was followed for the

items that composed the risk factor variable. The correlations between those items and the factor of confidence in the police ranged from -.12 to -.21. No pattern of stronger correlations for personal risk indicators or for neighborhood safety indicators was discernable. These results suggested that the correlation between the factors (the risk factor and the confidence factor) efficiently represents the structure of the relationship between risk perceptions and confidence in the police for this sample.

*Table 3. Rotated Factor Matrix of Confidence in Police and Perceptions of Risk*

Variable	Factor 1	Factor 2
Home likely to be broke into	.67	
Property likely to be stolen	.73	
Likely to be assaulted or robbed	.80	
Likely to be shot	.80	
Get drugs easily in neighborhood	.80	
Children involvement in drugs in neighborhood	.76	
Neighborhood unsafe due to gangs	.76	
Neighborhood not as safe as others	.81	
APD does a good job		.89
Police respond to minorities fairly		.85
Comfortable asking APD for assistance		.85

Note: All factor loadings reported were significant ( $r > .60$ ). Factor 1="Risk Perceptions," and Factor 2="Confidence in Police."

## DISCUSSION

The results of this study support the hypothesis of a reciprocal relationship between confidence in the police and risk perceptions. These two variables are inversely related, and remain important predictors of each other in multivariate regression analyses. Confidence in the police probably has significant impact on risk perceptions in relative to satisfaction with police contacts as being a victim or a witness of crime (see, for example, Brandl et al. 1994). The present study's results suggest that confidence in the police may be understood as the independent factor, simply because confidence in the police may produce positive assessments of police-citizen contacts as well as reducing perceptions of risk and the possibility of victimization. Nevertheless, longitudinal research is needed to further examine the interrelationships between these factors.

Cao et al. (1996) revealed that the relationship between race and confidence in the police became insignificant when indexes of community disorder and

Table 4. Multiple Regression Analysis of Risk Perceptions and Confidence in the Police.

Variable	Risk Perceptions			Confidence in the Police		
	b	$\beta$	t-ratio	b	$\beta$	t-ratio
Age	-.01	-.04	-1.18	.01**	.22	5.82
Education	-.11*	-.10	-2.48	-.01	-.07	-1.48
Sex	.01	.04	1.08	.13	.06	1.63
Race	-.01	-.04	-1.03	-.39**	-.18	-4.32
Family Income	-.23**	-.32	-6.91	-.01	-.08	-1.57
A Victim or A Witness of Crime	.39**	.16	4.72	.13	.05	1.39
Risk Perceptions (Factor 1)	--	--	--	-.25**	-.24	-6.13
Confidence in Police (Factor 2)	-.20**	-.21	-6.13	--	--	--
F ratio	33.07**			16.88**		

\* p < .05 \*\* p < .01.

informal collective security were introduced as predictors in a multiple regression analysis. Contrary to the results of the study by Cao et al. (1996), the present researchers found, on the basis of Beta statistics, that race was the most important predictor of confidence in the police. This finding was consistent with previous studies that included both race and risk perceptions as predictors of police attitudes while examining confidence in the police (Brown and Coulter 1983; Thomas and Hyman 1977). One plausible explanation for such a discrepancy is that both African-American and lower income people were underrepresented in the Cincinnati study by Cao et al. (1996). In contrast, the sampling design of the present study deliberately sampled more residents who lived in public housing projects and in low-income areas as well. Therefore, the present study obtained a large sample of African-Americans and low-income residents. Undoubtedly, Cao et al. (1996) employed a unique approach to examine the issues of perceptions of risk and confidence in the police while introducing a set of well-defined measures of fear of crime, community disorder, and informal collective security. Future researchers should consider employing the variables used in the present study as well as those measures created by Cao et al. (1996) in order to further assess the impact of race on perceptions of risk and confidence in the police.

This study's results showed that income, experience with crime as a victim or a witness, and confidence in the police, were primary predictors of risk perceptions. Income, in particular, may function as an indicator of the objective level of risk of criminal victimization and concern about the safety of the neighborhood as well. One can reasonably conclude that low-income respondents are likely to reside in high-crime areas such as public housing projects. As the findings of the National Crime Victimization Survey consistently indicate, lower-income residents are, in fact, at greater risk of criminal victimization (Zawitz, et al. 1993).

Furthermore, people who have actually experienced contact with the police as a victim or a witness tend to expect that the police can aggressively resolve crime problems in their neighborhoods, which may, directly or indirectly, alleviate the risk perceptions. This study's results showed that respondents would feel safe if the police patrolled their neighborhoods frequently, regardless of respondents' socio-economic status. Accordingly, confidence in the police functions to lessen risk perceptions.

The value of comparing the predictors of confidence in the police and risk perceptions becomes apparent. In addition to respondents' demographic characteristics and socio-economic status, the present study also reveals that the experience of victimization is an important predictor of risk perceptions and confidence in the police. The results suggest that confidence in the police may significantly intensify if the police satisfactorily manage the police-citizen contacts. At the same time, this study's results also imply that increased confidence in the police may diminish risk perceptions. This reciprocal relationship suggests that strategies such as community-based policing that are designed to address the perceived risk of criminal victimization and the fear of crime may also enhance confidence in the police. Enhanced confidence, in turn, is not only desirable for its own sake, but because it produces a reduced perception of risk.

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